

# Indispensable revolutionary leaders?

The roles of Orange and Cromwell in the Dutch and English revolutions



**Student: Aart van Noord**

**Student number: 3794970**

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**Lecturer: dr. L. Behrisch**

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## Introduction

Tu Siculo primus cervicem frangere monstro  
Venisti, tu sponte viros animumque dedisti  
Civibus exhaustis tanto discrimine rerum.<sup>1</sup>

It is unthinkable to look at the Dutch revolution of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the English revolution of the 1640s without two names coming to mind: William of Orange (1533-1584) and Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658). These two men seem to have been indispensable for the revolutions they took part in. The 16<sup>th</sup> century writer Georgius Benedicti wrote an epos about William of Orange in 1586. The Latin text shown on the top of this page is part of this. It says about Orange: *'You were the first to come to break the neck of the Sicilian monster. You gave voluntarily courage and troops to the citizens who were exhausted by the dangerous circumstances.'*

Benedicti depicted Orange as a classic hero, a Dutch Cesar who, by the grace of God, came, saw and conquered. Although Benedicti was probably aware himself that he exaggerated the role Orange played in the Dutch revolt, he helped to construct a revolutionary memory. The revolution was, according to the text of Benedicti, a religious struggle in which a heroic leader played a major role.

Eric Selbin has argued that the construction and telling of a revolutionary story are at the root of every revolution. They create a revolutionary climate by showing people new possibilities for a better future.<sup>2</sup> Selbin stated that revolutionary leaders are very important as well, though without the involvement of the people, their work would be fruitless.<sup>3</sup> The leaders are the heroes of the revolutionary epos who *'... are often asked to rise above their present, often dreary circumstances and imagine a new future, to set out a new vision to which they can aspire and yet which somehow is made to seem within reach, even if there are at times substantial demands for self-abnegation and sacrifice.'*<sup>4</sup> Selbin has given several examples of how stories and leaders were of decisive importance in modern revolutions. He

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<sup>1</sup> G. Benedicti, *De krijgsgedaden van Willem van Oranje*, 1586 (Leiden 1990) 40.

<sup>2</sup> Eric Selbin, *Revolution, rebellion, resistance: the power of story* (London 2010) 81.

<sup>3</sup> Selbin, *Revolution, rebellion, resistance*, 83.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, 30.

mainly wrote about revolutions that took place in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>

In this thesis I want to discuss the roles that the main leaders, William of Orange and Oliver Cromwell, played in the pre-modern revolutions in the Netherlands and England (revolution of the 1640s). I will compare both leaders to bring similarities and differences between them to the fore. A comparison between the two leaders may contribute to the knowledge about how leaders influenced revolutionary processes.

### **Dutch and English revolutions**

Much has already been written about the Dutch and English revolutions. The Dutch revolution has often been used as the first example of a revolution in a modern nation state. The English revolution received much attention because of the trial and execution of the king and because of its consequences for revolutions that still had to come. It is possible however, to discuss whether the events that took place in the early modern Netherlands and England could be described as revolutions at all.<sup>6</sup> Do they meet all the necessary requirements to deserve a place in the short list of ‘real revolutions’? In this thesis I will not take part in this debate about whether or not the events qualify for the revolution category, but merely follow the example of David Parker who gave both revolutions a place in the volume he edited, *Revolutions and the revolutionary tradition in the West 1560-1991*.<sup>7</sup>

In this volume Marjolein ‘t Hart argued for applying the term national revolution to the events that took place in the Netherlands from 1566 onwards. She explained that the broad involvement of the Dutch people, from noblemen and bourgeoisie to the sea beggars, and the different ideologies that played a role, made the events more eligible for the term revolution than for being named a revolt or a bourgeois or religious struggle.<sup>8</sup> In the same volume Ann Hughes wrote, after having discussed the lasting impact of the English revolution, the following: *‘There seems to be no reason why we should not join eighteenth-century revolutionaries in assigning the events in mid-seventeenth-century England to the modern*

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<sup>5</sup> Eric Selbin, ‘Revolution in the Real World,’ in: J. Foran (ed.), *Theorizing revolutions* (London, New York 1997).

<sup>6</sup> E.g. G.E. Aylmer, *Rebellion or Revolution* (Oxford, New York 1986).

<sup>7</sup> David Parker (ed.), *Revolutions and the revolutionary tradition in the West* (London 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Marjolein ‘t Hart, ‘The Dutch Revolt 1566-81,’ in: D. Parker (ed.), *Revolutions and the revolutionary tradition in the West* (London 2000) 30-31.

*revolutionary tradition*.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in this essay I will follow the example of these writers and describe the events in the early modern Netherlands and England as revolutions.

Not only has there already been written a lot about the English and Dutch revolutions, also their leaders received much attention from historians. There are dozens of biographies written about Orange and Cromwell.<sup>10</sup> However, so far nobody made a comparison between Cromwell and Orange. This thesis aims to take up that challenge.

My research will be based on biographies of Orange and Cromwell and on works on the Dutch and English revolutions. Moreover, I will use primary sources like letters from Cromwell and Orange and *The Apologie*, the answer of Orange to his excommunication by the Spanish king Philip II.<sup>11</sup> I will use the comparative method to find similarities and dissimilarities between Orange and Cromwell. The similarities and differences can tell us more about the role and importance of these leaders in their revolutions. As we will see in the following chapters, a sufficient amount of similarities between the leaders exist to make a comparison sensible. And exactly through these similarities, differences can come to the fore.

This thesis will focus on the role of the leaders before and during the main revolutionary events. As explained by Charles Tilly, the transfer of power in (parts of) a country is the major revolutionary moment in every revolution.<sup>12</sup> For the Dutch revolution this moment was when Brille was taken by the sea beggars in 1572, and other cities followed Brille's example in declaring themselves independent from the Spanish authorities. For the English revolution, the transfer of power that had already started during the civil wars of the 1640s, culminated in the trial of king Charles I in 1649. Thus, I will mainly describe the role of Orange and Cromwell in the time leading up to, and during, the main revolutionary moments in 1572 and 1649.

### **What causes a revolution?**

Some revolutionary theorists would agree with Selbin and Benedicti that leaders and ideas are the main initiators of, and driving forces behind, revolutionary processes whereas others would argue that structural causes lay behind each revolution. The American sociologist Theda Skocpol attempted in her elaborate work of 1979, *States and Social Revolutions*, to

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<sup>9</sup> Ann Hughes, 'The English Revolution of 1649,' in: D. Parker (ed.), *Revolutions and the revolutionary tradition in the West* (London 2000) 51.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Barry Coward, *Oliver Cromwell* (Singapore 1991) and K.W. Swart, *Willem van Oranje en de Nederlandse Opstand 1572-1584* (The Hague 1994).

<sup>11</sup> All the used sources are listed in the bibliography.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions. 1492-1992* (Oxford, UK, Cambridge, USA 1993) 8-9.

show the structural causes of the social revolutions in France, Russia and China.<sup>13</sup> By using the comparative analysis method, she argued that international competition between states and peasant uprisings were two of the major causes of social revolutions, whereas leaders and ideologies were of lesser importance.<sup>14</sup> Her argument has been a watershed in the writing about revolutions in the last decennia. Those theorists who wrote about revolutions after 1979 had to deal with Skocpol in either agreeing with her, or in making clear in what way they disagreed.

Some theorists attacked Skocpol's view by pointing out the lack of attention for cultural factors in her theory.<sup>15</sup> One of the theorists that criticised the theory of Skocpol on the basis of the lack of cultural aspects was the earlier mentioned Eric Selbin. He advocated the return of agency in the writing on revolutions and argued that revolutions are human creations that are shaped by ideas and leaders. Although Selbin did not deny the existence of structures, he stated that more attention for human actions was needed: *'The interplay of circumstance and action – neither of which can exist without the other – creates human history; options are considered, choices are made, paths are pursued. Meaningful explorations and satisfactory answers lie with those theories which can take agents and structures, both with meaningful roles, into account.'*<sup>16</sup> Selbin wrote about the leaders of revolutionary action in Latin America and the Caribbean. He stated that the acts and legacies of heroes, such as Ché Guevara, influenced the way revolutions developed and that they inspired future revolutionary generations.<sup>17</sup>

Discussion about the causes of revolutions and the influence of leaders will continue. The question that has not been conclusively answered is whether revolutions arise from structural causes or are created by human actions. Some theorists follow Skocpol in her structural approach, whereas other, more culturally focussed, theorists seek the reasons for the outbreak of revolutions in ideas, symbols, language and leaders. However, there are also theorists who try to combine both the structural and cultural approach. An example of this last group is Jack Goldstone, who argued that the causes for a revolution are mainly to find in structures, i.e. in demographic changes, whereas the outcomes of a revolution are determined by human actions, i.e. the choices made by elite groups.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions. A comparative analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge 1979) 43.

<sup>14</sup> Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, 41.

<sup>15</sup> J.A. Goldstone, *Revolution and rebellion in the early modern world* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford 1991) 19.

<sup>16</sup> Selbin, 'Revolution in the Real World,' 131.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> Goldstone, *Revolution and rebellion*, 27.

In the conclusion of this thesis I will briefly relate the findings of the comparison between Orange and Cromwell to the theories of Skocpol, Selbin and Goldstone. None of these theorists wrote about the Dutch revolution and only Goldstone wrote about the English revolution. Therefore it is clear that I will not attempt to prove or disprove their theories in this thesis. I will rather use the theories to place the findings in a broader perspective. The connection between the comparison and the theories may be an interesting contribution to the debate about the importance of leaders in revolutions.

### **Structure essay**

In the first chapter of this essay I will compare the moments when both leaders came to the fore. Did they take the lead at the start, the middle or at the end of the revolution? Chapter two will be about the thinking of both leaders. Did their ideas change over time? Chapter three, subsequently, will discuss briefly in what ways Orange and Cromwell influenced the revolutionary paths. Finally, in the conclusion, I will recapitulate the most important similarities and differences between both leaders. Moreover, the conclusion will relate the findings of the comparison to the theories of Skocpol, Selbin and Goldstone.

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century American abolitionist Wendell Philips once made the following statement: *'Revolutions are not made; they come.'*<sup>19</sup> Was he right and were Selbin and Benedicti wrong? This thesis will partly answer this question for the Dutch and English revolution by discussing the roles of the leaders William of Orange and Oliver Cromwell in the Dutch and English revolutions.

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<sup>19</sup> Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, 17.

# **1. In what phase of the revolution did Orange and Cromwell come to the fore as revolutionary leaders?**

Skocpol has stressed that leaders and ideologies are not starting or causing revolutions. According to her, leaders and ideologies only come to the fore during the revolutionary process.<sup>20</sup> Skocpol focussed her research on the revolutions in France, Russia and China. This chapter will discuss the same issue for the major leaders in the Dutch and English revolutions. In what phase of the revolution did Orange and Cromwell take the lead? How did they come to the fore?

## **1.1 Orange**

In the 1560s resistance in the Low Countries grew against the religious policy and tax demands of the Spanish king Philips II. The Spanish monarch, who lived in Spain and spoke only Spanish, was out of touch with his subjects in the Low Countries.<sup>21</sup> In April 1566 a group of 400 lesser nobles under the leadership of Hendrik of Brederode presented the *Petition of Compromise* to the regent Margaret of Parma. In this petition the nobles asked for a relaxation of the heresy laws.<sup>22</sup> William of Orange, 'stadhouder' for the Spanish king in Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht had been in touch with these nobles but did not openly support the petition.<sup>23</sup> Although Margaret of Parma agreed, at least temporarily, to the request of the nobles, this could not prevent the 'iconoclasm fury' from breaking out during the summer of 1566.<sup>24</sup>

't Hart called the iconoclasm of 1566 the 'irrevocable turning point' of the Dutch revolution. Following the iconoclasm, discontent spread throughout the Low Countries fuelled by disagreement with the heresy laws; economic depression; rumours that the Spanish inquisition would be imposed and the fear among nobles that their powers were threatened by the central government. In reaction to the growing unrest, Philip II sent in December 1566 the

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<sup>20</sup> Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Graham Darby, 'Narrative of events,' in: Graham Darby (ed.), *The origins and development of the Dutch revolt* (London 2001) 16-17.

<sup>22</sup> Darby, 'Narrative of events,' 17.

<sup>23</sup> Alastair Duke, 'Van 'trouwe dienaar' tot 'onverzoenlijke tegenstander van Spanje': K.W. Swarts interpretatie van Willem van Oranje, 1533-1572,' in: K.W. Swart, *Willem van Oranje en de Nederlandse Opstand 1572-1584* (The Hague 1994) 27-28.

<sup>24</sup> Darby, 'Narrative of events,' 17.



Duke of Alva to the Low Countries to restore order. William of Orange did not take any initiative at this time.<sup>25</sup>

Orange's brother, Louis of Nassau, and Hendrik of Brederode were the leaders of the resistance. They started to collect an army to fight against the Duke of Alva. Orange refused the offer of the Calvinists to become the leader of the armed resistance. Instead, he tried to re-establish the relationship with the Spanish king. In the spring of 1567 Orange decided to leave the Low Countries for his German lands to be safe for a possible prosecution by the duke of Alva.<sup>26</sup>

Orange decided in March 1568 that an armed resistance against Alva was inevitable.<sup>27</sup> And since Hendrik of Brederode had passed away in February 1568, Orange now became the new leader of the armed resistance. He organized the invasion of the Netherlands by several armies from 1568 onwards. These invasions were, however, not very successful. The invading armies were all defeated by the forces of Alva.<sup>28</sup>

In 1572 the Sea Beggars conquered Brill and placed it into the hands of Orange. Other cities in Holland and Zeeland, the two north-western provinces of the Low Countries, would follow this example and become part of new independent territory.<sup>29</sup> When Orange's armies in the south were defeated, Orange decided to go to Holland and Zeeland to continue the resistance from there.<sup>30</sup> The Estates of the province of Holland decided in a meeting on 19 July 1572 that William of Orange would be their new 'stadhouder.' In the future Orange would receive political and financial support from the Estates of Holland.<sup>31</sup> Although the Eighty Years War between Spain and the Netherlands would continue until the Peace of Münster was signed in 1648, the shift of power, that had taken place in the Northern Netherlands in the early 1570's, would prove to last. Already in 1572, William of Orange declared to the Estates General that he, as the preeminent member of the Estates General, was responsible for protecting the country against tyrants and suppressors and to uphold the old privileges and rights.<sup>32</sup> William of Orange would remain the leader of the Dutch revolution until his death in 1584.

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<sup>25</sup> 't Hart, 'The Dutch Revolt,' 16-18.

<sup>26</sup> Duke, 'Van 'trouwe dienaar,' 28-29.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, 29-30.

<sup>28</sup> Darby, 'Narrative of events,' 18.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, 18-19.

<sup>30</sup> Duke, 'Van 'trouwe dienaar,' 32.

<sup>31</sup> 't Hart, 'The Dutch Revolt,' 15.

<sup>32</sup> Duke, 'Van 'trouwe dienaar,' 33.

As will be discussed more in-depth in the next chapter, William of Orange was involved from the beginning in the Dutch opposition to some of the policies of Philips II. His path, however, was not revolutionary until he saw no other option than taking up arms in 1568. By that time, others had already started what ultimately led to the national revolution. When independent Dutch territory emerged, starting with Brille in 1572, Orange became, in cooperation with the Estates General, the leader of the new independent territory. This was the moment that he came, through support of the Estates General and the independent cities in Holland and Zeeland, decisively to the fore as the leader of the revolution.

## 1.2 Cromwell

Cromwell was a member of the Long Parliament from November 1640 onwards.<sup>33</sup> His first important success as a politician was in supporting the creation of a parliamentary army that had to defend the parliament from being overthrown. In addition he put a motion forward that would place the military forces of England in the hands of parliament.<sup>34</sup>

When in 1642 King Charles did not agree in handing over more powers to the parliament and decided to leave London to mobilize his army and fight against the parliamentary forces, the first civil war of the 1640's broke out.<sup>35</sup> Cromwell took the lead in the army of the parliament in Cambridge.<sup>36</sup> This was Cromwell's first experience in the military. Although he started with just a small army, the size of his army rapidly increased when Cromwell mustered his own soldiers of 'honest godly men' for his regiment.<sup>37</sup> Later on, Cromwell and his political allies set up the New Model Army of which Cromwell would become one of the commanders.<sup>38</sup> In 1646 the first civil war was over. The peace, however, was fragile: *'it was a peace which the king, who had lost the war, believed that he could either turn or end to his own advantage.'*<sup>39</sup>

In 1646-47 attempts were made by members of the parliament to disband the New Model Army. This was something that Cromwell and his political allies, the Independents, resisted. When a revolt broke out in the army in the spring of 1647, Cromwell chose to leave

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<sup>33</sup> J.S.A. Adamson, 'Oliver Cromwell and the Long Parliament,' in: John Morill (ed.), *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (Singapore 1990) 50.

<sup>34</sup> Adamson, 'Oliver Cromwell and the Long Parliament,' 53-54.

<sup>35</sup> Blair Worden, *The English Civil Wars 1640-1660* (London 2009) 40.

<sup>36</sup> Adamson, 'Oliver Cromwell and the Long Parliament,' 55.

<sup>37</sup> Austin Woolrich, 'Cromwell as a soldier,' in: John Morill (ed.), *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (Singapore 1990) 93-95.

<sup>38</sup> Woolrich, 'Cromwell as a soldier,' 102.

<sup>39</sup> Worden, *The English Civil Wars*, 76.

Westminster to join his soldiers.<sup>40</sup> Officers in the New Model Army, who were connected with the opponents of Cromwell in the parliament, now were replaced by officers who were more faithful to Cromwell.<sup>41</sup> In August 1647, when the independents were removed from their places in the parliament, the army marched to London to reinstall them by force.<sup>42</sup>

At the same time Cromwell became the chairman of the General Council, the representative body of the army. Cromwell and his political friends wrote *the Heads of Proposals* in which they asked for a more democratic elected parliament and more religious freedom.<sup>43</sup> These proposals were used as the basis for talks with Charles about a possible new settlement for the state. The talks between the army and Charles started in the summer of 1647.<sup>44</sup> The General Council of the army, however, did not accept *the Heads of Proposals*, because the more radical members of this Council asked for a more extreme reform of the government. These so-called 'Levellers' succeeded in having their proposal, *the Agreement of the People*, discussed in the General Council in November 1647. This discussion led to the famous Putney debates between Levellers and army officers, including Cromwell.<sup>45</sup> When some of the radicals started a revolt against their own officers, the Council adopted a motion of Cromwell on 8 November which said that all agitators should go back to their regiments. When some soldiers kept on disobeying their officers, Cromwell acted furiously. This reaction resulted in bringing back the discipline into the army within a week.<sup>46</sup>

By this time Cromwell had given up the hope that the army could work together with the king and the House of Lords on a solution for the country. When also the parliament put a stop to the negotiations with Charles at the beginning of 1648, a second civil war followed. In this war Cromwell's regiment fought against a Scottish army over the summer. During the battles Cromwell earned even more fame as a very capable general: '*his whole conduct of the Preston campaign displayed generalship of a high order.*'<sup>47</sup> Cromwell continued the war by advancing to Edinburgh.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, the parliament had opened negotiations with the king again. The army, in absence of Cromwell, had written a remonstrance that asked for the punishment of the king. When the parliament refused to listen to the army, the army took the initiative. Ireton, one of

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<sup>40</sup> Barry Coward, *Oliver Cromwell* (Singapore 1991) 46-50.

<sup>41</sup> Worden, *The English Civil Wars*, 89.

<sup>42</sup> Hughes, 'The English Revolution of 1649,' 47.

<sup>43</sup> Coward, *Oliver Cromwell*, 53.

<sup>44</sup> Worden, *The English Civil Wars*, 91.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, 94.

<sup>46</sup> Woolrich, 'Cromwell as a soldier,' 107-108.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, 110.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, 109-110.

the political allies of Cromwell, was in charge. The army, under leadership of Colonel Pride, purged the parliament of the members who wanted to treat with the king. This event was named Pride's Purge. The leftover of the House of Commons came to be known as the Rump parliament. The House of Lords and the authority of the king were abolished.<sup>49</sup>

Cromwell went back to London from his army in the north just after Pride's Purge had taken place. Until then he was not convinced that the king had to be tried.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, following on his arrival in London, he agreed with Pride's Purge and became convinced of the necessity of the trial of the king. Cromwell's vote was very important in this matter: '*Cromwell probably had a crucial say in who should represent the army on the High Court of Justice.*'<sup>51</sup> Following the execution of the king, the Rump government took office. Interestingly, most of the members of the parliament who were involved in the opposition to the king at the beginning of the 1640s were out of parliament by this time.<sup>52</sup>

The Rump government gave Cromwell orders to lead the army in Ireland in its fight against the resistance to the government. In May 1650, after the Irish opposition was almost defeated, Cromwell went back to England and became Lord General. In September 1651 he won the battle against Charles II and his Scottish army.<sup>53</sup>

The army was not satisfied with the Rump government. Cromwell at first warned other army officers not to bring down the government but in 1653 Cromwell himself expelled the government. The Barebone's government that followed, offered Cromwell a seat in the parliament, which he refused to take. However, following Barbone's resignation after only five months in office, Cromwell became Lord Protector.<sup>54</sup> The governments that came after the execution of king Charles never managed to become fully legitimate and stable and in 1660 Charles II would become the new king.<sup>55</sup>

As a member of parliament and army officer, Oliver Cromwell was involved in the protest and fight against the political power of king Charles from the beginning. Through his growing importance in the army and politics, Cromwell's influence on the events grew over time. Cromwell's successful campaigns as an army officer were important in defeating the armies of king Charles in both civil wars. Following the first civil war, Cromwell's opposition

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<sup>49</sup> Worden, *The English Civil Wars*, 98-99.

<sup>50</sup> Woolrich, 'Cromwell as a soldier,' 109-110.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, 110.

<sup>52</sup> Worden, *The English Civil Wars*, 102.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, 110-114.

<sup>54</sup> Woolrich, 'Cromwell as a soldier,' 114-115.

<sup>55</sup> Worden, *The English Civil Wars*, 103.

against the radical demands of the Levellers was important in reducing the power of the most radical ideas. In the execution of the king, Cromwell's vote was crucial. The growing influence of Cromwell culminated in bringing him to power in 1653 as Lord Protector. During the most revolutionary activity, the trial of the king, Cromwell had an influential say. However, he was not the main leader at that moment. Rather there was a group of political allies, among them Cromwell, together in charge. Cromwell decisively took the lead and came to the fore after the governments, that followed the execution of the king, did not meet up to the expectations of the army. The army then installed Cromwell as Lord Protector.

### **1.3 Comparison**

A first important similarity between Orange and Cromwell is that they were both involved from the beginning in the events that led to the revolutions. Orange supported the opposition to the heresy laws from the start and Cromwell, as member of the Long Parliament and army officer, was involved in the opposition to the political decisions of king Charles from the start onwards. Both leaders asked for more rights from the king, including the demand for more religious freedom. Both leaders were quite moderate in their demands for reforms compared to the more extreme groups in the Dutch and English revolutions. The next chapter about the thinking of both leaders will discuss this in more depth.

In line with their quite moderate views, Orange and Cromwell were both not very eager to take the lead on a revolutionary path. Orange had tried to work together with the Duke of Alva, and restore his relationship with the Spanish king, as long as possible. Cromwell did not want the trial of the king and looked for alternatives. Only when he saw no other option he decided to support the execution of Charles I. Furthermore, both leaders were not in charge when revolutionary activities started, they came to the fore and took the lead when they were asked and pressed upon by others, at a moment when the (possible) revolutions were already underway.

Both leaders seem to have had a central role in the revolutions. Orange decided to be part of the opposition against the strict religious laws and the changes in taxation; he chose to become the leader of the revolutionaries abroad and, finally, he accepted the role as leader of the independent parts of the country offered to him by the Estates General. Cromwell played an important role in winning battles as an army leader, in partly de-radicalizing the army and in his decision to support the trial of the king. What the influence was of both leaders on the revolutionary paths will be discussed in chapter three.

There are also important differences in the ways Orange and Cromwell came to the fore. First, Orange was already an important political figure at the start of the protests. Under the Spanish king he was a prominent political figure from the higher nobility and 'stadhouder' in Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht, whereas Cromwell was a common, not particularly important, member of parliament who belonged to the minor political group of the Independents. Cromwell grew in importance during the revolutionary process helped by his successes in the army. The amount of success in the army is another important difference. While Cromwell was a very successful military leader, Orange's attempts to fight the army of the Duke of Alva were mostly crushed at the start.

Cromwell was not the central leader when the most important revolutionary event, the trial of the king was carried out, whereas Orange became just that, when the main revolutionary event in the Dutch revolution took place. Orange got the leadership position when independent territory emerged. Also the way in which both leaders worked together with representative institutions differed. Orange worked together with and even received much of his power from the Estates General. Cromwell, on the other hand, would at first work together with his political allies in the House of Commons. Later, however, he and his allies were responsible for purging the House. And in 1653 Cromwell would even dissolve the Rump parliament altogether.

## 2. The thinking of Orange and Cromwell

*'People's thoughts and actions – even if haphazard or spontaneous – are the mediating link between structural conditions and outcomes.'*<sup>56</sup> As mentioned earlier, Selbin advocated the return of agency in the writing about revolutions. He stressed the importance of people's thoughts and actions. This chapter will be about the thoughts and convictions of Orange and Cromwell. Which goals were they pursuing? Are there striking similarities or differences between these two leaders?

### 2.1 Orange

This part will shed light on two parts of Orange's convictions. It will look at Orange's religion and at the position of Orange towards a revolt against the Spanish rule. The religion of Orange is important, because religion was one of the major factors in the Dutch revolution.<sup>57</sup> With regard to Orange's stance towards an armed revolt, it is important to keep in mind that, as we have already seen in the first chapter, this changed over time. This part will discuss how this transformation took place.

Orange was baptized in the Lutheran Church and was raised in the Lutheran way at the family lands of the Nassau family in Germany until he was eleven. Then he was brought to Brussels, to live at the court of Charles V and to be educated in the Roman Catholic faith. During his time in Brussels, he probably came in contact as well with humanistic ideas. Orange eventually became one of the confidants of king Charles V.<sup>58</sup>

Until the beginning of the 1560s there was not much doubt about Orange's Catholicism. This changed, however, when he decided to marry the Lutheran princess Anna of Saxony. When Orange was forced to confirm to the relatives of Anna of Saxony that she would be allowed to confess her own religion whilst at the same time he had to uphold the image of being a good Catholic to the Spanish court, he played a double role. Following his marriage with Anna, Orange stayed in touch with German, Lutheran princes, who he had befriended during his time in Germany. At this time it became increasingly clear that he was sympathetic towards the Lutheran faith, although he would not break officially with the Roman Catholic Church until years later.<sup>59</sup> Orange also came into contact with Calvinistic

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<sup>56</sup> Selbin, 'Revolution in the Real World,' 126.

<sup>57</sup> 't Hart, 'The Dutch Revolt,' 25.

<sup>58</sup> H. Klink, *Opstand, politiek en religie bij Willem van Oranje 1559-1568. Een thematische biografie* (Heerenveen 1997) 75-76.

<sup>59</sup> Klink, *Opstand, politiek en religie*, 103-107.

ideas through his brother Louis. However, he was cautious in approaching the more radical branches of Calvinism.<sup>60</sup>

Also during the first years of the 1560s, the Estates and some of the higher nobles, among them William of Orange, started protesting the policies of Philips II in regard to the reform of the Catholic hierarchy; the introduction of new taxes and the implementation of stricter religious laws. This led to a growing suspicion towards William of Orange from the side of Philips II and cardinal Granvelle, one of the king's confidants in the Low Countries, who was chairman of the Council of State.<sup>61</sup> In 1663-64 Orange and other higher nobles forced Philips II to call Granvelle back from his office in Brussels. The dispute between Orange and Granvelle was mainly about the growing authoritarian power of Philips II and the desired degree of freedom of religion.<sup>62</sup> Orange was especially concerned about the possible introduction of the inquisition in the Netherlands. In *The Apologie*, his answer to his banishment by Philips II in 1581, Orange wrote the following about the reform of the Catholic hierarchy and the introduction of the inquisition:

‘A little while before this time, there was egerlie pursued, and at the last obteyned, the installing of the newe Bishoppes, whiche had bin so long tyme before debated, by reason of the inconveniences, which all wise people, and lovers of the Countrey, and haters of the tourmenting of mens consciences, did foresee, would insue thereupon: which thing also I my selfe, write even unto the King: that I may saye nothing, of the warnings, that I gave to the Dutschesse, sometime in open counsel, and oftentimes els where: all these their purposes, tending to no other ende, but to set upp the cruell Inquisition of Spaine, and to establishe the sayde Bishoppes, that they might serve, in steede of Inquisitours, burners of mens bodies, and tyrauntes over their consciences.’<sup>63</sup>

In November 1565 it became clear that Philips II would not allow more religious freedom in the Netherlands. *The Petition of Compromise* of the lesser nobles was offered to Margareta of Parma in April 1566. Although Orange had been in touch with these protestors, he had not signed the petition. In August 1566 the Iconoclasm followed.<sup>64</sup> Orange used the iconoclasm to

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<sup>60</sup> Klink, *Opstand, politiek en religie*, 178.

<sup>61</sup> Ibidem, 141-145.

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem, 151-154.

<sup>63</sup> Loyseleur de Villiers, *The Apologie of prince William of Orange against the proclamation of the king of Spaine*, 1581, Wansink, H. (ed.), (Leiden 1969) 98-99.

<sup>64</sup> Andrew Pettegree, ‘Religion and the revolt,’ in: Graham Darby (ed.), *The origins and development of the Dutch revolt* (London 2001) 74-75.



advocate for more religious freedom in the Low Countries. At this time, William of Orange was still trying to find a peaceful solution for the political and religious problems. Not only was he opposed to the strict religious laws of Philips II, he was also wary of fanatic Calvinists, whom he described as being impatient and mutinous.<sup>65</sup>

Orange hoped that, under the pressure of the Lutheran, German princes, Philips II would be forced to change his religious policies towards the protestants.<sup>66</sup> That Orange still sought for a better relation with the Spanish king in 1567 can be seen in the letter he wrote to welcome the Duke of Alva to the Netherlands. *‘Je suis certe esté bien ayse que Sa Majesté at chosy Votre Excellence pour donner quelque ordre aux affaires du Pays-Bas tant nécessaire, saichant que nulluy eusse peu mieulx effectuer ceste charge que icelle, tant pour la grande affection qu’elle at tousjours démontrée au service de Sa Majesté Impérialle que Royale...’*<sup>67</sup>

When Orange went to his German lands in 1567, he started to show his interest in the Lutheran faith more openly. He asked, for example, for a Lutheran preacher. During this time Orange was both in touch with the rebels as with the Spanish court. Some servants of Philips II did not trust Orange anymore because of his connection with the insurgents.<sup>68</sup> In 1568, when Orange had failed to regain the trust of Philips II, he decided to take up arms against the Spanish armies. He gave several reasons for this decision: he wanted to protect old privileges; stop the king running the country in an unfair way, where people were not allowed to confess the true religion and stop the ruining of the country by Alva. Moreover, there were also groups of suppressed people, who pressed upon Orange to take up his responsibility and to realize the preaching of the true religion in the Netherlands. Orange carefully avoided attacking the Spanish king in the reasons he gave for his support to the revolt. He argued that he would serve the king the best he could by fighting the Duke of Alva and avoiding the implementation of the counselors’ bad policies.<sup>69</sup> The turn that Orange had made from welcoming the Duke of Alva in 1567 to starting a fight against the armies of the same Alva, is shown clearly if we compare what Orange wrote to Alva in 1567, cited above, with a part of a letter from Orange from 1571:

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<sup>65</sup> Klink, *Opstand, politiek en religie*, 229-231.

<sup>66</sup> Duke, ‘Van ‘trouwe dienaar,’ 28.

<sup>67</sup> Orange to Duke of Alva, 08-09-1567, The correspondence of William of Orange no. 10884, 6 December 2014. <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/wvo/brief/10884>.

<sup>68</sup> Duke, ‘Van ‘trouwe dienaar,’ 29.

<sup>69</sup> Klink, *Opstand, politiek en religie*, 379.

‘Doen te weeten, dat alsoe wy niet op en houden alle nutte ende bquame middelen te zoeken om metter hulpe ende genade Goidts die Nederlanden eens te verlossen van het jammer, ellende, slavernye ende tyrannie daer die geode ingesetenen derselver landen jegenwoirdelyck innegestelt syn door die grouwelyckheden ende ongoirde boosheden, by den hertoge van Alva ende synen aenhanck voirtsgekeert sedert syne aencompste aldaer...’<sup>70</sup>

As mentioned before, Orange had been suspicious of the more radical Calvinist groups. This suspicion worked both ways. The Calvinist groups abroad were at first not very eager to help William of Orange in his fight against Alva. In 1569 Orange started to negotiate with the French Huguenots, and these negotiations led ultimately to a decisive alliance between the Calvinists and Orange.<sup>71</sup> In 1573, Orange even became a member of the Calvinist church. Though, according to Swart, he would never become a real fervent Calvinist and he would disagree with the sometimes intolerant attitude of Calvinists towards other religions. Orange was convinced that his fight against the Spanish tyranny, as he called it, would be blessed by God.<sup>72</sup>

In a nutshell, Orange had been in opposition to some of the policies of Philips II from the start of the 1560s. Orange was against centralisation, the abolition of old privileges, the strict religious laws and the reform of the hierarchy in the Catholic Church. He was not in favour, however, of a revolt against the Spanish king until 1568. Only when he had lost the trust of the king and he was asked to join and lead the rebels, he changed his mind and joined the resistance. On a religious level, Orange was in favour of more religious freedom. He seemed to have been quite pragmatic about his own adherence to a religious congregation and switched from the Catholic, to the Lutheran to the Calvinistic Church.

## 2.2 Cromwell

Cromwell was raised in the protestant faith and went for at least one year to a puritan college.<sup>73</sup> He adhered to the Calvinist explanation of receiving salvation through God’s grace

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<sup>70</sup> Orange to Jacob Blommaert, 26-08-1571, The correspondence of William of Orange no. 6960, 8 December 2014. <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/wvo/brief/6960>.

<sup>71</sup> Pettegree, ‘Religion and the revolt,’ 78.

<sup>72</sup> K.W. Swart, *Willem van Oranje en de Nederlandse Opstand 1572-1584* (Den Haag 1994) 46-48.

<sup>73</sup> C. Hill, *God’s Englishman. Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (Birkenhead 1970) 38-40.

and not through one's own works.<sup>74</sup> In many letters he expressed his faith in God and his believe that he was fighting for the just cause. He wrote, for example, to his son Richard that he was convinced that Richard was placed by God at the right place and he advised Richard to make seeking the Lord his main business in life.<sup>75</sup> Cromwell's conviction that he was an instrument of God, fighting against Satan, is shown in another letter, when he wrote the following about the Scots: '*...who were, I verily think, Godly, but, through weakness and the subtlety of Satan, 'were' involved in Interests against the Lord and His People.*'<sup>76</sup>

Cromwell was in favour of religious tolerance and freedom of conscience. He was convinced of the principle itself and he also won support because of this standpoint from dissenters who agreed with him.<sup>77</sup> In a letter from 1643 Cromwell defended an officer in the army who was accused of being an Anabaptist.<sup>78</sup> In another letter, from his time as protector, Cromwell wrote to the French cardinal Mazarin that he was trying to give Catholics more religious freedom.<sup>79</sup> In *the Heads of Proposals*, written by Cromwell and his allies, the standpoint of freedom of religion was also expressed. It proposed a National Church where bishops would have no coercive powers and where people would be free to decide whether to attend the National Church or to worship in their own way.<sup>80</sup>

Much of the support for Cromwell came from the army. Cromwell had assembled his own regiment of Godly men. These men were convinced that they were fighting for the good cause. The regiment of Cromwell was more disciplined and better behaved than other troops. Notwithstanding the traditions in the army, Cromwell promoted men of all ranks to serve as officers in his regiment.<sup>81</sup> For Cromwell it was important to take care of his soldiers' material wellbeing and he promoted freedom of worship and preaching in his regiment.<sup>82</sup> However, Cromwell did not agree with the more radical demands from parts of his troops. He was against the extension of the voting right to every man as was demanded by the Levellers.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Hill, *God's Englishman*, 46.

<sup>75</sup> Cromwell to his son, Richard, 02-04-1650, Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, letter no. 125, 16 December 2014, [http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters\\_and\\_speeches/letters/Letter\\_125.pdf](http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters_and_speeches/letters/Letter_125.pdf).

<sup>76</sup> Cromwell to Mr. Cotton, Pastor of the Church at Boston in New England, 02-10-1651, Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, letter no. 169, 16 December 2014, [http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters\\_and\\_speeches/letters/Letter\\_169.pdf](http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters_and_speeches/letters/Letter_169.pdf).

<sup>77</sup> Worden, *The English Civil Wars*, 84.

<sup>78</sup> Cromwell to Mr Hitch and Major-General Crawford, 10-03-1643, Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, letter no. 7, 16 December 2014, [http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters\\_and\\_speeches/letters/Letter\\_7.pdf](http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters_and_speeches/letters/Letter_7.pdf).

<sup>79</sup> Cromwell to Cardinal Mazarin, 26-12-1656, Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, letter no. 199, 16 December 2014, [http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters\\_and\\_speeches/letters/Letter\\_199.pdf](http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters_and_speeches/letters/Letter_199.pdf).

<sup>80</sup> Coward, *Oliver Cromwell*, 53.

<sup>81</sup> Hill, *God's Englishman*, 64-66.

<sup>82</sup> Woolrich, 'Cromwell as a soldier,' 109-110.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibidem*, 107.

Cromwell was, as already stated in chapter one, at first not in favour of a shift in power and the removal of the king. In a letter to the mayor of London, Cromwell wrote in June 1647: *'We have said it before and profess it now, We desire no alteration of the Civil Government. As little do we desire to interrupt, or in the least to intermeddle with, the settling of the Presbyterial Government.'*<sup>84</sup> Also *the Heads of Proposals* expressed a preference for the restoration of the monarchy after the first civil war. The return of the king, however, should, according to Cromwell, not be unconditional. The king should have to agree to a reform of the parliamentary representation and to regular meetings of the parliament.<sup>85</sup> Only in 1648, when Cromwell came back from the Scottish front to London and got acquainted with the purge of the parliament, Cromwell decided, when he found no alternative, that the trial of the king was inevitable.<sup>86</sup>

Cromwell seemed not to have been pursuing the role as protector or military dictator for himself. When the Rump government was dissolved in 1653 the chance was there for him to become the leader of his own government. Instead, he and the Council of Officers decided to hand over power to a temporary government until elections would have been organized.<sup>87</sup> When this temporary Little Parliament was being installed, Cromwell highlighted in a speech that the parliament was in full power. The temporary State Council of Cromwell *'... having no authority or continuance of sitting, except simply until you take farther order.'*<sup>88</sup> When this temporary government brought their own downfall upon them, by becoming too radical in their measures, Cromwell decided to intervene again. Then he became, with the help of the army, Lord Protector.<sup>89</sup>

Cromwell was in favour of more religious freedom and brought this into practice in the army. Also he had some egalitarian ideas, though he was not as radical as the Levellers. Cromwell had a strong puritan, Calvinistic faith and he believed that he was fighting for the good, Godly cause. He was not in favour of a shift in power and a trial of the king until this became inevitable. It seemed that Cromwell was not pursuing the role of leader of the country for

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<sup>84</sup> Cromwell to Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council of the City of London, 10-06-1647, Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, letter no. 43, 17 December 2014, [http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters\\_and\\_speeches/letters/Letter\\_43.pdf](http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters_and_speeches/letters/Letter_43.pdf).

<sup>85</sup> Coward, *Oliver Cromwell*, 53.

<sup>86</sup> Worden, *The English Civil Wars*, 100.

<sup>87</sup> Woolrich, 'Cromwell as a soldier,' 114-115.

<sup>88</sup> Cromwell's speech to the Little Parliament, 14-07-1653, Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, speech no. 1, 17 December 2014, [http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters\\_and\\_speeches/speeches/Speech\\_1.pdf](http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters_and_speeches/speeches/Speech_1.pdf).

<sup>89</sup> Worden, *The English Civil Wars*, 127.

himself. This central role he got when the army was not satisfied with the parliament and he was pressed upon by others to become Lord Protector.

### **2.3 Comparison**

There are several similarities to find in the thinking of Cromwell and Orange. A first one is that both leaders were in favour of more religious freedom. Through this standpoint they gained support from dissenting groups and the more tolerant adherences of the mainstream religion. Both leaders saw themselves as fighters for God's, good cause and for the freedom of the practicing of the true religion.

Another similarity was, as already mentioned in chapter one, that Orange and Cromwell were both not in favour of the overthrow of the old government until they saw no other option. Both changed their views towards a shift in power during the revolutionary process. Both leaders were quite moderate in their demands for reform and did not agree with the more militant groups. Orange did not agree with the more radical Calvinists and Cromwell resisted the demands of the Levellers for more extreme reforms. Both leaders only hesitantly took up the leadership positions in the revolutionary forces.

Differences between the two leaders are visible as well. Cromwell seemed not to have changed much in his puritan Calvinistic religion whereas Orange switched from the Catholic, to the Lutheran, to the Calvinistic faith. Secondly, support for Cromwell mainly came from the army, whereas Orange had to gather his own army when he went abroad to find support for the war against the forces of the Duke of Alva. Important support for William of Orange came from refugee groups like Calvinistic congregations and the sea beggars.

### 3. What was the influence of Orange and Cromwell on the revolutionary paths?

*'A state crisis may lead to revolution; but it may also lead to an unsuccessful attempt at revolution (as in Prussia in 1848) or to a successful reform (as in the English reform crisis of 1830-1832).*<sup>90</sup> Goldstone argued that whether a state crisis leads to a revolution depends on several actors.<sup>91</sup> This chapter will discuss briefly the influence of Orange and Cromwell on the paths of the Dutch and English revolutions.

#### 3.1 Orange

Orange was not the main instigator of the protests against the policies of the Spanish king during the 1560s. Also without him, resistance would have occurred. This is, for instance, demonstrated by *The Petition of Compromise* of the lesser nobles.<sup>92</sup> Orange came in an important, revolutionary position when he chose to become the leader of the revolutionaries abroad and when he accepted the role as leader of the independent parts of the country. His first attempts to free the country from the Spanish troops failed, however, miserably. Only when the sea beggars took Brill and other cities followed, the rebels gained a power base in the Netherlands. The taking of Brill happened without the instigation of Orange and he was at first not even pleased with the move of the sea beggars. The Estates General decided to cooperate with Orange in the beginning of the 1570s when their privileges were increasingly threatened by the Duke of Alva.<sup>93</sup> When Orange received the support of the rebel cities and the Estates General, he became the most important person on the rebel side of the revolution, and his influence increased. Partly due to Orange's diplomatic skills and his perseverance the revolt against the Spanish troops managed to succeed during the 1570s.<sup>94</sup>

From the above we can see that Orange did not have much direct influence on the revolutionary path from the 1560's until 1572. Apparently, Orange became really influential after the most important revolutionary events had already taken place. It is hard, however, to measure how important the indirect influence of Orange until 1572 was. Without Orange, another revolutionary leader should have had to be found. However, would there have been someone else who was able to get support from different groups of society? To give an

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<sup>90</sup> Goldstone, *Revolution and rebellion*, 10.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem*, 9-10.

<sup>92</sup> 't Hart, 'The Dutch Revolt,' 25.

<sup>93</sup> Darby, 'Narrative of events,' 17-19.

<sup>94</sup> Swart, *Willem van Oranje*, 37-38.

example: would the Sea Beggars have handed over Brill to another revolutionary leader? Would the Estates General have entrusted the faith of the provinces of Holland and Zeeland into the hands of someone else than William of Orange?

Maybe the indirect influence of Orange, via the connection of his name with the revolutionary cause, was already of great influence on the revolutionary path. The questions mentioned above are very hard, or even impossible, to answer. For now we will only focus on the direct influence and conclude the following: Orange had no great direct influence on the revolutionary path until the most revolutionary events were already over, in 1572.

### **3.2 Cromwell**

Cromwell played an important role in winning battles as an army leader. Especially during the second civil war his victories were very important and sometimes even decisive for the parliamentary side.<sup>95</sup> A second important influence of Cromwell is to find in his contribution to the suppression of the ideas of more radical reformers in the country by opposing the more radical reform proposals from the Levellers and Diggers in the army.<sup>96</sup> Also, Cromwell was influential during the most revolutionary moment of the revolution, the trial of the king. He was one of the leaders who decided to have the king executed.<sup>97</sup>

The above shows that Cromwell had an important influence on the revolutionary path. At the most revolutionary moment, the trial of the king, Cromwell was one of the leaders and decision makers. It was not that Cromwell could decide how the revolution developed, because of the structural factors, and besides these, Cromwell was not the only leader. However, if Cromwell had opposed certain decisions or would, for example, have supported the ideas of the radicals, things might have gone different. Hence, we can conclude that Cromwell had direct influence on the revolutionary path.

### **3.3 Comparison**

In this chapter we saw an important difference between the influence of the two leaders on the revolutionary paths, before and during the most important revolutionary moments in the Dutch and English revolutions. Orange did not have much direct influence on the revolutionary path until independent land emerged, whereas Cromwell was an important factor in the time before and during the trial of the king. Cromwell influenced the revolutionary path by his military

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<sup>95</sup> Worden, *The English Civil Wars*, 130.

<sup>96</sup> Woolrich, 'Cromwell as a soldier,' 107-108.

<sup>97</sup> Coward, *Oliver Cromwell*, 64-65.

successes; by the role he played in suppressing the radical ideas in the army and by his contribution to the trial of the king. Although his possibilities might have been constrained by structural conditions, the decisions he took within his possibilities were definitely of influence for the revolutionary path of the English revolution. Orange's actions, on the other hand, seemed to have had no great direct impact on the revolutionary path of the Dutch revolution until the most revolutionary events were already over in 1572.



## Conclusion

In this thesis I compared the two leaders of the pre-modern revolutions in the Netherlands and England, William of Orange and Oliver Cromwell, to see what their roles were in the revolutionary processes. I focussed on the periods of the revolutions in which the most important revolutionary moments took place. For the Dutch revolution this was the time before and during 1572, when independent territory emerged. For the English revolution the focus laid on the time leading up to the trial of the king in 1649. I used the comparative method to show important similarities and differences between how the leaders came to the fore, the thinking of both leaders and the influence of both leaders on the revolutionary paths.

In chapter one we saw that both men only came reluctantly to the fore as revolutionary leaders when the revolutionary events were already underway. Both leaders, as was shown in chapter two, had no revolutionary intentions until they found themselves in situations in which they decided that the best next step was to undertake revolutionary actions. By that time other people had already started what eventually came to be known as revolutions. Both leaders were in favour of more religious freedom and less central power. Orange and Cromwell did both not belong to the most radical reformist groups in society and they even were both wary of the more radical demands of those groups.

Important differences between both leaders have been discussed as well. These differences are mainly to find in their religious adherences and in the way both leaders came to the fore. Cromwell was a puritan Calvinist all his life, whereas Orange changed his religion several times during the revolutionary process. Cromwell came in an important position due to the army, whereas Orange was already a very influential person before the start of the revolutionary process.

Chapter three has shown that Cromwell had an important impact on the revolutionary process leading up to the trial of the king. Orange, on the other hand, seemed not to have had an important direct influence until Dutch independent land emerged. Orange was neither the instigator of the revolt nor were his attempts, as leader of the armed resistance, to invade the Netherlands successful. However, we need to take into account that we cannot measure the indirect influence of such an important figure as Orange being connected with the revolt. Cromwell had a clear direct influence on the revolutionary process. He was of importance with his successes in the army, his suppression of radical ideas and with the role he played in the decision for the trial of the king.

Thus, we have seen that there are interesting similarities and differences between both leaders. The findings clearly show that both leaders were not the instigators of the revolutions. Orange and Cromwell only reluctantly agreed with the taking of revolutionary steps. These steps, that led to a shift in power, were even contrary to the earlier thinking of both leaders. The roles of Orange and Cromwell clearly differed in the ways they influenced the revolutionary events. Orange did not have much direct influence before 1572, whereas Cromwell clearly had direct influence on the revolutionary events leading up to the trial of the king in 1649.

### **Findings and theories**

As mentioned in the introduction, this conclusion will briefly relate some of the findings of this thesis to the ideas of the theorists Skocpol, Selbin and Goldstone. Chapter one of this thesis has shown that Orange and Cromwell were both involved in the opposition to government policies from the beginning. However, they only decided to take the lead and come to the fore when revolutionary activities had already begun. Only when they found themselves in certain situations, and were pressed upon by other people, they decided that revolutionary activities were inevitable and that they should take the leadership positions of the revolutionary groups. These findings remind of the theory of Skocpol, which stressed that leadership changes during a revolution and that the ideas at the start of a revolution are often different from those at the end. Furthermore, the ways in which Orange and Cromwell were influenced in their decisions by the circumstances, show the importance of structural causes, as also explained by Skocpol: *'States and Social Revolutions focused on "structures," or patterned relationships beyond the manipulative control of any single group or individual. Such social structures, understood in historically concrete ways, give us the key to the conflicts among groups that play themselves out in revolutions, producing results outside of the intentions of any single set of actors.'*<sup>98</sup>

The findings of chapter two, which compared the thinking of both leaders, seem also to be mostly in line with Skocpol's theory. We saw a change in the opinion of both leaders on a possibly revolutionary shift in government. Both tried to avoid the start of real revolutionary actions until they ran out of alternatives. It seemed that the thinking of the leaders adjusted to the circumstances, rather than that Orange and Cromwell created new circumstances based on their ideas. The latter would have been more in line with the theory of

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<sup>98</sup> Theda Skocpol, *Social revolutions in the modern world* (New York 1996) 200.

Selbin, which puts more emphasis on the importance of ideas, and in line with Goldstone, who argued that, although revolutions were caused by structural conditions, agency determined the outcome.

Chapter three showed that Cromwell had more direct influence on the revolutionary path of the English revolution than Orange had on the Dutch revolutionary path. Without Cromwell, things might have gone different. This influence of Cromwell can be seen as in line with the theories of Goldstone and Selbin. Goldstone argued that elite groups, of which Cromwell became a member during the 1640s, were of great influence on the revolutionary path.<sup>99</sup> And according to Selbin: ‘*Structural conditions may define the possibilities for revolutionary insurrections or the options available after political power has been seized, but they do not explain how specific groups or individuals act, what options they pursue, or what possibilities they may realize.*’<sup>100</sup> Applied to the situation in the English revolution this means that, although Cromwell might have been constrained in his options by structural conditions, he still had different possibilities to choose from. And the choices he made, would influence the revolutionary process.

## **Recommendations**

Although the connections made here between the findings and the theories are very brief and therefore incomplete, they show that it is possible for revolutionary theorists to include the revolutions of early modern Western Europe in their writing on revolutions. For researchers who investigate the importance of revolutionary leaders, there is no reason to overlook the leaders of the Dutch and English revolutions. Furthermore, the above shows that it might be worthwhile to use the ideas of the different revolutionary theorists in the research on the Dutch and English revolutions. Considering the interesting connections with the findings of this thesis, particularly, the theory of Skocpol might be of good help in getting a better understanding of the Dutch and English revolutions.

More opportunities for further research follow from the comparison between Orange and Cromwell. In chapter three we came across the possible indirect influence of Orange on the revolutionary path. This indirect influence can be linked to the theory of Selbin about the importance of stories for a revolution. Another interesting possibility for further research is to compare, instead of the roles of the two revolutionary leaders, the roles that king Philips II and king Charles I played in the revolutionary events in the Netherlands and England. How

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<sup>99</sup> Goldstone, *Revolution and rebellion*, 10.

<sup>100</sup> Selbin, ‘Revolution in the Real World,’ 126.

did they influence the revolutionary paths, for example, by the way in which they dealt with the threats to their power? Finally, it would be interesting to compare the roles of Orange and Cromwell in their revolutions with the roles that other revolutionary leaders played in their revolutions.

This thesis' comparison between Orange and Cromwell has brought interesting similarities and differences between both leaders to the fore and has shed light on the roles that both leaders played in their revolutions. The conclusions have shown that Benedicti, when he depicted Orange as a Dutch Cesar, definitely exaggerated the role that Orange played in the Dutch revolution. Discussion will continue, however, about to what extent leaders, such as Orange and Cromwell, and persons in general, are creating revolutions, and to what extent revolutions are caused by structural conditions. I hope that future connections between the general theories on revolutions and the early modern revolutions in the Netherlands and England will, besides leading to a better understanding of the revolutions, also lead to further contributions to the structure-agency debate.

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### **Pictures on front page**

- William of Orange: [http://www.marlowe-society.org/marlowe/work/massacre/images/william\\_of\\_orange.jpg](http://www.marlowe-society.org/marlowe/work/massacre/images/william_of_orange.jpg), 16 October 2014.
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