

## Week 8: The Year of Revolutions

### A. Definitions

- a. “Springtime of people” → great optimism with >50 uprisings across Europe
- b. New constitutions to regulate government, re-draw national lines
- c. Political activism + Economic inclusion

### B. Key Debates

- a. Causes (long term vs short term; conflict inevitable vs accidental)
  - i. Growth of reforming ideologies, coinciding with agricultural, industrial, financial crises, poor urban conditions and lack of reform led to unrest
- b. Dynamics (why quick success followed by quick failure?)
  - i. What does this indicate about the nationalist groups
- c. Effects (were the revolutions ultimately blips, or did they have long-term consequences?)
  - i. ‘In the context of longer-term national histories, 1848 has generally been regarded as a missed opportunity to set most of Europe permanently on a liberal, constitutional path. The implication, of course, is that if the revolutions had succeeded, the horrors of twentieth-century totalitarianism would have been avoided.’ - Rapport, *1848: year of revolution*

### C. Contexts of 1848

- a. Geography
  - i. Europe was made-up of empires not nation-states  
*Clash in cultures, goals and believes which bred uncertainty, division and failure.*
    - 1. Empires were multi-cultural
    - 2. National aspirations were cultural/heritage based
    - 3. New constitutions were put in place for liberal rule and inclusive economic growth
- b. Crises of 1840s
  - i. Economic + Social Crisis
    - 1. Agricultural crisis
      - a. potato blight in Ireland destroyed the principal food crop of 1846 leading to the death of half a million and widespread emigration
    - 2. Population
      - a. Grew quickly over the century before 1848 → strained food supplies
        - i. Worsened by the poor harvests of 1845 and 1846
      - b. Increase in the prices of food and when 50% of a worker’s wages go towards food there is no excess to spend
    - 3. Emergence of increasing urban density brought together the poor and the rich → tension in the social fabric
      - a. Greater awareness that it was the middle class which held the capital and led to profit (causal link is weak though)