

1. Uprisings and riots in early modern Europe

2 Knowledge and didactic objectives

This activity deals with rebellions against authority in the period 1400-1800: uprisings in all shapes and sizes. A variety of sources are used to engage students in historical inquiry. The focus questions are:
What were the causes of all these revolts?
Who were involved, who took the lead?
How did the authorities respond? Could rebellions also succeed?

Students:

- can give examples of different types of uprisings from the early modern period in Europe
- can explain with examples that the causes of revolts are usually a mixture of factors from the political, socio-economic and cultural-mental domains
- can explain the value of visual sources in addition to text sources
- can explain with examples that the failure or defeat of a revolt does not mean the complete restoration of the old situation

3. Timing

About 240-300 minutes

(five lessons of about 50 minutes)

4. Grouping of students

Groups of 3 or 4.

It is possible to apply the expert method; not all students need to study all the sources themselves.

5. Historical thinking skills

Identifying causes and consequences

- identify different types of causes and explain how different types of causes can reinforce each other

Reasoning with and about sources

- reason about the motives of (groups of) people to rebel against 'legitimate' authority and identify similarities / analogies

6. Development or sequence of the activity

Study the sources

Students study the sources first, preferably in groups of 3 or 4 students who together are assigned a random selection of 8-12 sources from the whole. More and less overlap can be created when assigning sets of sources to students.

Assignments

Students need to have access to the full set of sources as well.

After studying the sources, students make the 6 assignments in groups.

Closing

When students have finished the assignments, a brief class discussion follows.

7. Assessment techniques and instruments

Use a classroom discussion and/or classroom assessment techniques to determine the extent to which students have achieved the learning objectives.

Feedback can be provided on students' written answers.

8. Complementary resources

A set of a total of 40 sources accompanies this assignment (see Annex). They all deal with rebellions against authority in the period 1400-1800: uprisings in all shapes and sizes. What were the causes of all these revolts? Who were involved, who took the lead? How did the authorities respond? Could rebellions also succeed?

9. Annexes

Background information about crime and punishment and uprisings throughout history can be found at the HistoryLab website:

<https://historylab.es/persecuted-by-justice/> (Persecuted by justice: rebels, renegades and outcasts in the history of Europe)

Information about teaching causal reasoning (e.g. scaffolds) can be found in several articles.

Card, Jane: *History pictures: Using visual sources to build better history lessons*. Hodder Education: London. 2008.

Chapman, Arthur: (2009). *Cause and consequence. Developing historical explanation*. Historical Association/Institute of Education, University of London: London. 2009.

Chapman, Arthur: "Causal explanation". In Davis, Ian (Ed.): *Debates in history teaching*. London, England: Routledge. 2017, pp. 1-22.

Chapman, Arthur: "Camels, diamonds and counterfactuals: a model for teaching causal reasoning". *Teaching History*, 112, 2003, pp. 46-53. Lee, Peter / Shemilt, Denis: "Is any explanation better than none? Over-determined narratives, senseless agencies and one-way streets in students' learning about cause and consequence in history". *Teaching History*, 137, 2009. pp. 42-49.

Lévesque, Stéphane: *Thinking historically. Educating students for the twenty-first century*. University of Toronto Press: Toronto. 2008.

Seixas, Peter / Morton, Tom: *The big six historical thinking concepts*. Nelson Education: Toronto. 2013.

- Stoel, Gerhard / Van Drie, Jannet / Van Boxtel, Carla: "The effects of explicit teaching of strategies, second-order concepts, and epistemological underpinnings on students' ability to reason causally in history". Journal of Educational Psychology, 109(3), 2017, pp. 321–337. Retrieved from: <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/edu0000143>
- Stoel, Gerhard / Van Drie, Jannet / Van Boxtel, Carla: "Teaching towards historical expertise. Developing a pedagogy for fostering causal reasoning in history". Journal of Curriculum Studies, 47(1), 2015, pp. 49–76. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2014.968212>

Annex - Uprisings and riots in early modern Europe

Assignment

The 40 sources below all deal with rebellions against authority in the period 1400-1800: uprisings in all shapes and sizes. What were the causes of all these revolts? Who were involved, who took the lead? How did the authorities respond? Could rebellions also succeed?

Answer the following questions. (You can collaborate in a group)

- 1 Which sources deal with a peasant uprising, which with an urban uprising, and which sources do not make that difference? Make three columns and write down the number of the source.
- 2
 - a) For many uprisings, in addition to a text source, a picture source is included. Note which combinations you can make.
 - b) In many cases the image source of the revolt does not add that much to the text source about that revolt. Think of a reason for that.
 - c) Provide an example of information that an image (in some cases) does add to the text about a revolt. Explain your answer.
- 3
 - a) For each source, argue what the causes of the revolt at the center of the source were: political causes, socio-economic causes and religious causes.
 - b) Thesis: "Many uprisings arose from a mixture of different types of causes". Point out five sources in which this is the case. Substantiate your choice.
- 4 In many uprisings different groups worked together, coming from different social strata of the population. Give three examples of this. Substantiate your choice.

- 5 Remarkably often, insurgents initially got their way but were later ruthlessly persecuted. Point out three examples of this pattern and argue why this was a common pattern.
- 6 Thesis: "If a rebellion was put down, nothing changed". Make a substantiated comment on this statement.

Sources

Source 1

Cancelled crusade leads to peasant revolt - Hungary 1514

In 1514, there was a great rush among peasants, artisans and students to sign up for a crusade against the Turks that was being planned. The nobility decided to cancel that campaign, fearing that it would lead to emancipation or even liberation of the peasants.

Enraged by the cancellation of the holy war, the peasants now turned against their rulers. An "army" of thousands of peasants raced through the land, taking castles, until it was defeated by a superior knight's army. The peasant leader Dosza (1470-1514) was burned alive. Thousands of peasants were hanged, and the Hungarian Diet (parliament) passed a law that bound peasants to their land forever.

Between 1672 and 1685, new peasant uprisings took place, and in 1697 the peasants again raised an army. In 1703 they started an uprising that would culminate in the - failed - War of Liberation against the Habsburg monarchy; the leader of that uprising was Ferenc Rákóczi (1676-1835), a national hero in Hungary.

Source 2

Portrait of Prince Ferenc Rakoczi II, made by the Hungarian painter Adam Manyoki (1673-1757).



www.wikigallery.org/wiki/painting_298748/Adam-Manyoki/Prince-Ferenc-Rakoczi-II

Source 3

The Lincolnshire Rising, 1536

The Lincolnshire Rising was a brief revolt in October 1536 by Roman Catholics against the establishment of the Church of England by King Henry VIII (1491-1547) and the dissolution of the monasteries by Prime Minister Thomas Cromwell (1484-1540). Both rulers thus wanted to make their church and country independent of interference from Rome. Henceforth, the king was to be supreme over religious affairs as well.

The dissolution of the monasteries brought most possessions, including land, into the hands of the Crown. Not only land was confiscated, but also jewels, gold crosses and bells. Silver chalices were replaced by chalices of tin. In some cases, these items had been donated by local families in gratitude for a supposed blessing or in memory of a family member.

There was also opposition to the recently passed Statute of Uses, a type of tax on land ownership; the proceeds went to the Crown.

On September 30, 1536, a senior representative in the diocese of Lincoln addressed the assembled clergy. He informed them of the new rules and taxes. One of those rules was that clergy would be subject to higher literacy requirements. This caused consternation, probably especially among the less educated clergy. News of this speech and rumors of confiscations spread through the area like wildfire.

The revolt began on Oct. 1, 1536, at St James' Church in the market town of Louth, shortly after the closure of the monastery there. The purpose of the rebellion, the rebels themselves said, was to protest the oppression of the monasteries, not the rule of Henry VIII himself.

Led by a monk and a shoemaker named Nicholas Melton, some 22,000 people in the surrounding villages and small towns soon joined the rebellion. The supreme leader of the diocese of Lincoln - the man that had addressed the clergy - was dragged out of bed and beaten to death by the mob. Commissioners' records (used to calculate the amount of taxes) were confiscated and burned.

The protesters were outraged by the actions of the king's representatives. They demanded that the collection of the new taxes be stopped. The dissolution of monasteries and persecution of "heretics" also had to stop, the rebels felt. Supported by the local nobility, a mob of up to 40,000 marched on Lincoln and occupied the cathedral there. They demanded the freedom to remain Roman Catholics and protection of church property in Lincolnshire.

The protest ended on October 4. The king informed the occupiers to disperse, or the Duke of Suffolk's soldiers, already mustered, would teach them a lesson. By October 14, there were almost no insurgents left in Lincoln. Two of the main leaders, a parson and an artisan, were captured and hanged at the infamous Tyburn gallows, just outside London.

Most of the other local leaders were executed over the next 12 days. Some were not only hanged but then quartered. The Lincolnshire revolt and the brutal manner in which it was put down was an important source of inspiration for the much more widespread rebellion of the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Were the causes for the Lincolnshire rebellion purely religious? This is unlikely. The role of the nobility in the revolt shows that it was also about resistance to the centralization of power by the king and his prime minister.

Probably, economic factors also played a role. In the 16th century, the population in England was growing. Nowhere did this happen more rapidly than in the county of Yorkshire in the northeast. More people meant more land was cleared for cultivation, leaving less and less common land -

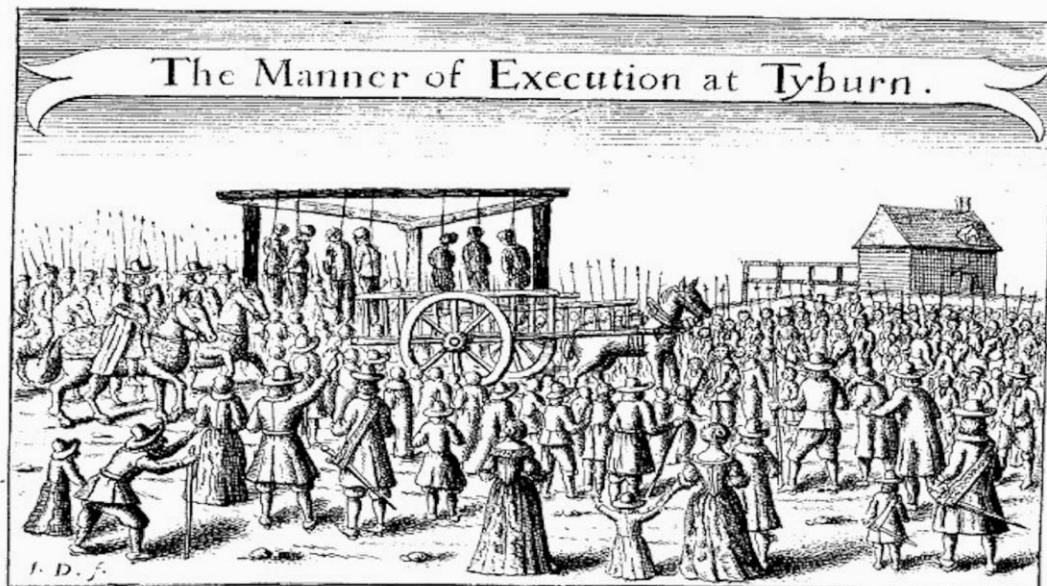
where commoners could graze their own livestock. It also created a huge pool of available labor; this meant that day laborers were hired at lower and lower rates. At the same time, the prices of almost all goods jumped. This, and the lack of paid work more broadly, fueled civil unrest. In 1535 and 1536, harvests were poor in many places in England. In some places, grain prices were as much as 80 percent higher than in 1534.

See for more information

www.bbc.co.uk/lincolnshire/content/articles/2009/07/03/lincolnshire_uprising_feature.shtml

Source 4

Tyburn's gallows field. The executions there were, on the one hand, notable for their cruelty; on the other, they were the highlight of a "day out" for quite a few Londoners.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Manner_of_Execution_at_Tyburn.jpg

Source 5

Pilgrimage of Grace – England 1536

This great peasant revolt in England in the 14th century began with protests from the low nobility. The gentry of Lincolnshire and York opposed the dissolution of monasteries at the behest of Henry VIII (who led his own reformation) and the confiscation of all church property under the reign of Thomas Cromwell (1485-1540). The "common" people especially ran against the abolition of Catholic holidays and the introduction of new taxes.

Leader of the rebellion was the lawyer Robert Aske. He and other ringleaders of the revolt instructed their followers, majority peasants, to wear on their clothing a sign of the stigmata: the wounds of Christ.

The peasant army took the city of Lincoln. The king sent the Earl of Suffolk with a strong army to put down the rebellion. He also had Cromwell warn the peasants to show their loyalty to the king and go home. They did so.

Meanwhile, in the north, the city of York was overrun by an army of 30,000 disciplined peasant soldiers, who installed a kind of their own "government of the north". There the rebels made their demands: the English church was to be brought back under the authority of Rome and a

parliament was to be convened that could deliberate without interference from the king. King Henry VIII again sent an army, but with 6,000 soldiers it was not strong enough to choose the attack. The Earl of Suffolk, who had moved north to take command of the royal army, decided to negotiate with the rebels.

A temporary truce was concluded. Suffolk pledged some demands to the insurgents; other points would be discussed in a northern parliament to be specially convened, to which the king would also come. Satisfied with this outcome, the leader of the rebels, Robert Aske, went to his headquarters. There it turned out that some of the other leaders had decided to continue the rebellion as usual. One of them had gotten his hands on a letter from Cromwell in which he vowed to strike down the rebellion so hard that no one would ever again dare stand up to the king.

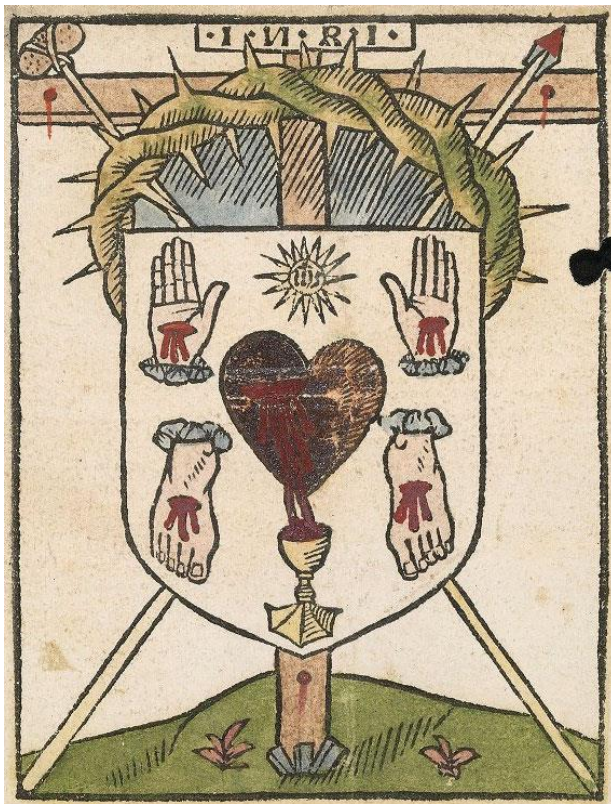
Eventually it came to a meeting between what was left of the rebel army and Suffolk's troops. The rebels were wiped out. Almost all of their leaders were captured and executed.

What is remarkable about this rebellion is the orderliness with which it proceeded, the high-ranking leaders who participated, and the strong belief of participants in the righteousness of their cause - hence the name, Pilgrimage of Grace.

See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilgrimage_of_Grace

Source 6

The "logo" of the Pilgrimage of Grace (1536): the five "holy wounds" of Christ. Drawing made about 1495. Bodleian Archives.



The Sacred Heart and the Wounds of Christ displayed on a Cross ('Arms of Jesus Christ'), c1495. Bodleian MS Arch. G f.13.

<https://it.aleteia.org/2019/07/02/sapete-qual-e-una-delle-piu-antiche-rappresentazioni-del-sacro-cuore/>

Source 7

Treaty between the insurgents of the Pilgrimage of Grace and the representative of the English king, the Duke of Suffolk. After signing the agreement, Robert Aske sent the insurgents home. But the agreements of the truce were not kept. There are ample sources to show that the king (Henry VIII) had never intended to do so - much to the dismay of Suffolk, for whom such treachery was incompatible with his values as a nobleman. Nevertheless, he remained loyal to the king. Mary Evans Picture Library.



<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/the-pilgrimage-of-grace-a-rising-mary-evans-picture-library.html>

Source 8

Execution of Robert Aske, one of the leaders of the Pilgrimage of Grace, in the Tower of London in 1537. He was hanged at his own request; then he was quartered.



<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/290341507197679257/>

Source 9

Riots over tin - Bordeaux 1675

In Bordeaux in 1675, an angry mob rallied against a tax on tin. The mob first attacked the houses of two tin merchants about whom it was said they had already paid the hated tax - thus undermining the protest of the others. Then they seized a man about whom it was claimed he was assistant to the royal intendant and who might have challenged them, and beat him to death. Now followed a ritual procession with the body: it was dragged through the streets of the wealthier citizens, knocking on the doors of royal officers. It ended at the house of the victim's alleged boss: there the mutilated corpse was placed on the owner's carriage and set on fire, while the mob ransacked his house.

Popular Protest and Rebellions in J. DeWald (Ed.). (2016). *Europe, 1450 to 1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World*.

Source 10

Morticians riot - Amsterdam 1696

In 1696, the States of Holland decided to introduce a number of new taxes to cover the costs of the war against France. One of these was a new tax on burials. In Amsterdam, the mayors simultaneously wanted to use the opportunity to turn the liberal profession of aanspreker (mortician) into a municipal office and appoint so-called "city carriers". This was to prevent a number of abuses, but it also meant that the mayors could thus help family and friends get a nice job.

On January 30, 1696, there was a stampede of murmuring people on Dam Square. The next morning the flame caught in the pan. Only a week later, after a hundred or so rioters had been caught, branded, flogged or exiled, and after twelve "ringleaders" had been hung from the window of the Waag on Dam Square, did peace return to the city.

Bond broker Joris Craffurd wrote about the riot:

“Meanwhile a very large crowd of wives and boys had gathered, who began to drum on small kegs and tin buckets. They tied their apron-clothes to a chair, which were their banners, and as weapons they carried brooms, sticks, diaper rakes, scrubbers, pit hooks, pieces of firewood and more of that kind of domestic stuff. They marched with very great noise along the streets and along the ramparts. The crowd grew rapidly, and they even ventured across Dam Square and right past the Town Hall, very undaunted, much to everyone's amazement. It is told that they had even posted at the City Hall: “This house is for rent. To be occupied at once.”

There were also eight to ten thugs who had a stretcher. On it they put one of them, as if dead, and over it they laid a mat of straw. One, who walked in front, played the role of an addresser. This one had a long mat over him, from his head to his feet. The one lying on the stretcher was carried by five or six people. But many walked beside and behind, including hundreds of boys. And whenever the one lying on the gurney moved even for a moment, the others called out, “Lie still you dog. We do it pro bono, otherwise it costs a lot more. Lie still or we'll get the city carriers.” This display also came to Dam Square.

It is certain that the nobles had decided to proclaim on this morning a warning against the dreaded calamity, with severe punishments against those who would cause, or keep or help to keep in motion, directly or indirectly, any popular movement by advice or by deed. The windows of the town hall had already been opened for that purpose, the pillows were in them. But when they saw what was happening they took an entirely different decision. They decreed that the provisions on burials would be suspended and postponed for another six weeks.”

Mak, G. (1997). *Ooggetuigen van de vaderlandse geschiedenis* (pp. 82-86). Amsterdam: Prometheus.

Source 11

Amsterdam during Morticians riot, 1696, Amsterdam City Archives.



<https://onh.nl/verhaal/boze-begrafenisondernemers-bestormen-burgemeesterswoning>

Source 12

Tenant revolt - Amsterdam 1748

In the summer of 1748, a popular revolt against the tax system in Friesland spread to Amsterdam. A shootout occurred on the Buttermarket (now Rembrandt Square). Subsequently, an angry mob stormed numerous rich canal houses. In particular, the property of taxpayers had to suffer.

After four days the riot had died down. The main ringleaders, including the frantic Mat van den Nieuwendijk and the "mayor" Pieter van Dord, were sentenced to be hanged at the Waag, then still standing on Dam Square.

Bystander Abraham Chaim Braatbard wrote about this tenant riot:

“At the stroke of twelve o'clock three prisoners were brought from the town hall to the Waag, where they were to be hung from the window. They were followed by the entire government. These wore their robes of justice, as usually happens at the execution of a sentence.

As soon as the three prisoners came out of the Town Hall, the drummers began to beat their drums, so that whoever stood on the Dam could not understand his own words, except those who were very close, and to prevent all the people, who wished to attend the sentence, from hearing the woman's screams. But she cried out very miserably, “Vengeance, vengeance my dear citizens, stand by me. For ye now let me die so shamefully, when yet I have not fought for myself. Surely I did it for the whole country, against the coercion of the tenant farmers, by whom we citizens are so tormented, and who forcibly took from us our money and property for rent.”

But her screams and shrieks came to nothing. She had to hang anyway. Immediately one saw the pulley move, thus that woman was hoisted from the window with great difficulty. It hurt to watch the execution. When she was hoisted from the window, one also heard her screaming and nothing but, “Vengeance, vengeance!” as long as she could. And so she hung from the window and floundered until she was dead.

When the second one was hoisted out of the window, to be hung next to the woman, in the same way as had been done to her, and the people saw this, they became so curious that they began to crowd in, for everyone wanted to see the execution properly. This made the citizens very anxious, for they thought that this was happening to start riots, whatever would have happened if the government had not taken precautions. When the citizens saw the scramble, they shouted in a loud voice: “Stand wide, stand wide.” But the people did not bother with their shouts and pushed even more. For the urging happened only among the people, and even if they had wanted to stand still, they could not have done so. For “he”, whom I do not wish to call by his name, had gained power over them, and they could no longer stand still.

When the captains saw that the dragoons could not hold it any longer and had to give way, they thought, that all this was done to cause unrest. So they gave orders to fire among the people, which they did. Thereupon the first rank gave fire with loose powder and the people thought it was sharp as had been the case on the Butter Market, with the shooting at the abolition of the lease, for which there was still fear. Thus there was fear on both sides, the citizens were afraid that another riot would begin among the people. And the people, who wanted to see the execution, thought that the citizens were shooting with live ammunition. And thus each wanted to save his own body.

During this uproar, the second was also hanged. This was "the mayor," whom the gentlemen themselves had captured and brought up from a vegetable cellar on Prinsengracht, when the rioting had begun. And when the people saw and heard shooting, the pushing became so fierce and took such a hold that there was no stopping it. Everyone ran wherever he could. Many

jumped into the water so that it could not be described. People lay in the water near get raadhuis on top of each other, so that one could walk over heb, and the water was almost invisible from the many people lying in it. The Damrak was almost muffled by the many people. The number who drowned no one will ever in his life days find out. March each missed their own.

Others were trampled, so that it cannot be described (...) The noise and confusion lasted for five quarters of an hour. The third, who also should have been hanged from the Waag, was not hanged from the Waag, but no one knows what happened to him.”

Mak, G. (1997). *Ooggetuigen van de vaderlandse geschiedenis* (pp. 86-88). Amsterdam: Prometheus.

Source 13

Tenant riot - Netherlands 1748

On June 24, 1748, Amsterdammers looted some 25 tenant houses. Furniture was smashed, standing clocks thrown into the canal and valuables taken. The next day, looters also began attacking the homes of other rich people. The militia initially refused to act against the angry mob. Riots also broke out in towns of Haarlem and Leiden without any militia acting. Citizens' committees were formed everywhere to urge Stadholder William IV to overthrow the "corrupt regent clique" and give the lower classes more say, such as the right to appoint mayors. The latter went much too far for the stadholder. He replaced a number of administrators and left it at that.



<https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pachtersoproer> and

<https://www.executedtoday.com/2020/06/28/1748-marretje-arents-for-the-pachtersoproer/>

Source 14

On the nature of riots

Explanation of the nature of riots from a standard work on the history of violence:

“Riots were characterised by geographically limited violence, of relatively brief duration, that generally arose over local issues like the high cost of necessities such as bread in local markets.

In rebellions, local protests, often beginning as riots, merged with more general issues to affect more than one locale and to extend for more than a few days when protestors secured effective leadership, often by social elites. Revolutions drew the support of a national group, or of a single ethnic group within one of the ethnically composite states emerging in our period, to seek fundamental countrywide change.”

Ruff, J.R. (2020). Riots, Rebellions and Revolutions in Europe. In R. Antony, S. Carroll, & C. Dodds Pennock (Eds). *The Cambridge World History of Violence*. Volume V: Popular Protest and Resistance, Chapter 24. Cambridge University Press.

Source 15

In 1655, Dutch painter Jan Steen (1626-1679) painted a wealthy citizen on the doorstep of his home in Delft. He is just sitting reading a letter when he is disturbed by a beggar woman who asks him for money. The woman looks much older than she is, due to years of hard work. Now she can no longer walk well. You can see that in her cane. She has become poor, because those who cannot work do not get paid. Her little son looks up to the rich man with hope. But the question is whether he will give anything. He does not seem to be pulling out his money. Nor does his daughter, dressed in the most expensive silk, care about the poor beggar woman. The 17th century in the Netherlands is often called the Golden Age because the economy was doing so well then. A lot of money was made. But even in that century, most people in the Netherlands were poor. The difference between rich and poor was much greater than today. The rich were not ashamed of that, as you can see from Jan Steen's painting. They thought it was perfectly normal for beggars to come to the door, even though begging was officially forbidden.



[https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolf_en_Catharina_Croeser_aan_de_Oude_Delft#/media/Bestand:Jan Steen - Adolf en Catharina Croeser aan de Oude Delft 1655.jpg](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolf_en_Catharina_Croeser_aan_de_Oude_Delft#/media/Bestand:Jan_Steen_-_Adolf_en_Catharina_Croeser_aan_de_Oude_Delft_1655.jpg)

Source 16

Revolt of woolcombers, Florence 1378

Through craft and trade, some city citizens earned so much that they began to call themselves a "third class". But most city residents were poor. The city's high lords kept wealth and power for themselves.

Sometimes poor city dwellers rebelled against this; for example, the woolcombers in Florence in 1378. Wool combing was hard and simple work that most people looked down on: getting raw wool ready to be spun. The wool combers had no guild. Of all the townspeople, they were treated the worst. In a history book about his city, the Florentine Machiavelli (1469-1527) described how they rebelled:

“While the high lords of the city deliberated, an impatient crowd with banners stormed into the square. They shouted loudly and furiously. All the lords became frightened. One of them pretended to guard the door on the street, but he fled the city hall to his home. He did not manage to do so secretly. When the crowd saw him, they didn't do anything to him, but they shouted for all the gentlemen to leave City Hall. If they did not, they would kill their children and set fire to their houses.”

At first the lords gave in to some of the demands of the woolcombers, but later they retracted it. They persuaded the leader of the rebellion to take their side. Thus they succeeded in suppressing the rebellion. The woolcombers were bloodily defeated.

Leobovici, M. (2002). From Fight to Debate: Machiavelli and the Revolt of the Ciompi. *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 28, 6, 647–660: 647.

Source 17

Uprising of the Ciompi (woolcombers) in Florence, 1378. Drawing by Italian Lodovico Pogliaghi from 1895.



[https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tumulto_dei_Ciompi#/media/File:G. L. Gatteri, Il tumulto dei ciompi, Trieste, CMSA.jpg](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tumulto_dei_Ciompi#/media/File:G._L._Gatteri,_Il_tumulto_dei_ciompi,_Trieste,_CMSA.jpg)

Source 18

John Ball's speech, 1381

The growth of cities also affected farmers. When they came to a city to sell their produce, they saw that there was more freedom there than in their farming village. You could also hear news in the city, for example stories about rebellions.

In addition, around 1350 a great plague epidemic broke out in Europe: the Black Death. In some regions, half the population died. Few farmers were left to work the land. The peasants who did survive knew they were valuable. They began to make demands of their lords, such as to be paid properly. In England, the priest John Ball (1338-1381) took their side. He made this speech in 1381:

'Good people, in England things cannot go well as long as goods do not belong to all in common, as long as serfs and nobles exist, as long as we are not all equal. To what have the rich deserved this? Why do they keep us in slavery? Surely we are all descended from the same father and mother: Adam and Eve? How can they prove that they are more lordly than we are? They are dressed in silk and velvet, and we, we are dressed in shabby fabrics. They possess wines, spices and good bread; we have rye, bran and straw, and we drink water. They have rest and beautiful homes; we have the toil and work, the rain and wind on the fields, and we have to live by our toil. They call us serfs and they beat us if we do not immediately perform their services.'

The peasants revolted. The English king became frightened and at first allowed everything, even abolition of serfdom. But when in a fight the peasant leader was killed, the rebels were violently dispersed. The king went back on his promises and punished the peasants very cruelly.

Textbook 'Forum. Geschiedenis 1 HV', p. 157.

Source 19

Speech by John Ball. English mural in the Essex County Council building in Chelmsford, created by Bernard Fleetwood in 1938.
an John Ball. English mural in the Essex County Council Building in Chelmsford, created by Bernard Fleetwood in 1938.



[John Ball \(spartacus-educational.com\)](http://spartacus-educational.com)

Source 20

Ranks and positions in the Netherlands, 17th century

A large capitalist business could make much more profit than an artisan business. As a result, the wealth of capitalist entrepreneurs grew. Their share of total property grew. In the Dutch city of Leiden, for example, in the year 1500, the richest one percent of the population owned one-fifth of all property. By 1625 it was one-third of all property and by 1700 it was half. The wealthy entrepreneurs and merchants, about 10 percent of the population, became increasingly wealthy, while the incomes of other groups remained about the same.

How did these other groups fare, for example, in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century? After the richest came the middle class: a group of about 25% of the population who had a reasonably good life. These were people who had studied, such as lawyers and doctors, or people with well-run craft businesses, or innkeepers and shopkeepers. In rural areas, it was the farmers with their own farms.

This was followed by wage laborers. They made up about 40 percent of the population. In rural areas, these were the farmhands who were hired by the day. If they had work, the wage workers could just about make ends meet. But they immediately had a problem if bread prices suddenly rose rapidly because of a failed harvest or a war. Three-quarters of all wages went on food, 40% on bread alone.

About 10% of the population consisted of domestic servants employed by the rich, such as cooks and maids. They were comparable to wage laborers, but they had a slightly more secure existence. They were not employed by the day or week, but for longer periods of time. The last 15% were the poor who could not take care of themselves because they earned little or nothing. They had to apply to the poor for support. They were not entitled to this just like that. The poor caretakers decided whether they got anything or not. And those caretakers were strict. For example, a certain Neeltje from Delft, who had married the stone cutter Joost in 1605, received three pennies a week from 1609. This was because she could not buy food for the children she had. Three nickels was very little; a laborer's daily wage was about 10 to 20 nickels. Nevertheless, the poor caretakers stopped supporting her in 1614, because at that time they felt "that Neeltje can make do". Thus, she had to beg for support again and again. Only when the children were old enough to work were Neeltje and Joost able to make ends meet. People who were sick or disabled, or too old to work, always had to go to the poor, unless their family happened to be rich enough. Many of the poor were widows whose husbands had died at sea, or as soldiers in war, or through accident or illness. There were so many of them that in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century there were 139 women for every 100 men. However well the widows did their best to earn a living as seamstresses or maids or in other ways, they often could not survive without support.

Textbook 'Forum. Geschiedenis 1 HV, p. 159-160.

Source 21

Beggar with wooden leg. Drawing by Rembrandt, made about 1630.



<https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-OB-419>

Source 22

Naturally equal

In the 18th century, a small group of people first thought that poverty was not to be taken for granted. These were thinkers and writers who had less regard for religion. They used common sense to come up with new ideas. Was it actually reasonable for some people to be dirt poor and others to be stone rich? Where did that difference come from? Because if you thought reasonably, you could see that people were actually all the same. They were born equal. So they were 'naturally' equal.

As people had become more and more "civilized," things had gone wrong. That's what the French-Swiss writer Rousseau (1712-1778) thought. He compared "civilized people" from France to peoples in Africa and Asia whom he considered "savages. Those 'savages' actually had a better life than the people of France:

'If a savage has enough to eat, he is completely content and the friend of all his fellow men.' But the life of a civilized man looks very different. For him, it's about getting what he needs first, and then lots of other, superfluous things. First come his pleasures and then he wants ever greater wealth and subjects and slaves. He does not have a moment's peace. The strangest thing is that the less he needs things, the more effort he makes to get them. Eventually, such a person will squander many riches and destroy many fellow human beings. Finally, he will cut everyone's throats until he is the sole master of the universe.'

Source: Textbook Wilschut e.a., Forum Geschiedenis, HV1, p. 160

Source 23

Rousseau on education

French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) wrote a book about education. According to him, children should not be brought up as affluent, civilized people, but simply as people who lived in nature did. Included in that view, of course, is a criticism of French (Western) society, which Rousseau knew closely. An excerpt from the book, which centers on the boy Emile:

'I will teach Emile how to keep himself alive. In doing so I make no distinction between rank, station or fortune, because people of all positions are the same. The rich man's stomach is not bigger than the poor man's, nor is his digestion better. The master's arm is not any longer or stronger than the slave's. A great man does not have a bigger body than someone from the common people. According to nature, everyone needs the same thing. So everyone should also have the same chance to get what he needs. Raise people as they are, and not according to the class they belong to. Don't you understand that if you raise someone to fit only his station, you don't make him fit for anything else? In the future, if anything changes in the differences between the ranks, suddenly the rich can do nothing! They can't even support themselves! Nothing is more ridiculous than a nobleman going to beggary.'

Source 24

On poverty – the case of Heino (a small town in the Dutch province of Overijssel)

Poverty is of all times. Many of our ancestors had great difficulty building a decent life. There was a lack of food, clothing, fuel, and housing often left much to be desired. In order to prevent worse, church and private institutions had to step in to meet the worst needs. As everywhere else, in Heino the deaconesses of the churches played a particularly important role.

In the Middle Ages there were regular years when people starved to death because of crop failures. Later, during the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648), the violence of war brought countless people - often literally - to begging. Even after this war, the situation was far from rosy. In the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, the population in Overijssel increased so rapidly that food shortages developed, partly due to the failure of grain harvests. In 1772, there was a famine throughout the province. That year, the sheriff of Heino sent messenger Lambert Hendriks to Zwolle to have cargoes of rye and beans brought to the village by barge from there.

The poverty affected the whole way of life. Poor nutrition, lack of clothing and housing, and thus poor hygiene made people susceptible to diseases such as cholera, smallpox and typhoid. On top of that, drinking water was often of very poor quality, making infectious diseases commonplace.

The number of poor in Heino is difficult to determine exactly. But probably 20 to 25% of the population belonged to the poor.

The death of a breadwinner could also cause major problems. The surviving widow usually had no means of providing for herself. For orphans, another family or an orphanage had to be found. When the Heinose poor hunter Coenraat Bok died in 1765, his wife was left with a "silly daughter" and a foster child. She knocked on the door of the marke Heino for help. It was decided that marke and deaconry would each pay half of the necessary support in the form of money for room rent, clothing, clogs, bread and other foodstuffs. There was one condition, however: the widow had to get rid of her foster child, because this child was not born in Heino. Poverty also came to the village from outside. During and after the Eighty Years' War, the countryside was plagued by beggars and vagrants from all over the country, driven by hunger in search of food or money. Like other places, Heino took strict action against these people. It was felt that caring for the poor was difficult enough for its own population. Arm hunters like Coenraat Bok made sure that the unwanted foreigners were put back across the border. People who wanted to settle legally in Heino had to submit a statement from the church in their previous place of residence. In it, that church guaranteed any financial or other support for the newcomer during the first few years.

The poor, as well as widows, orphans and the physically and mentally deficient were almost entirely dependent on the deaconesses of the churches of Heino and Lierderholthuis. But these were hardly able to combat poverty sufficiently. However, the churches regularly received gifts, donations and bequests from individuals, which were to benefit the poor. They also obtained money, for example, from the sale and rental of houses. In addition, the churches collected monthly. In Lierderholthuis there were collection boxes not only in the church, but also in private homes, in the cafes and later in the stores.

A completely different way of caring for the poor was that the poor and orphans were accommodated in host families. There they had to help on the farm or in the household. Those who cared for the poor received board from the poorhouse. In the 19th century, this consisted of an annual sum of 40 florins. For long-term sick or infirm people, the host family received 60 florins.

It was not always easy for the poor to ask for support, also because the conditions - in our eyes - were often downright humiliating. Thus, in 1839 the pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church ordered that the needy of Heino hand over a stamp card to the deaconry with which they could prove that they had attended church services. Maintenance money was cut according to the number of times they had missed a service. Most of the poor often tried to save themselves first. Many Heinoans still had a single cow, a goat or a pig, or a piece of land to grow something on. Moreover, in case of illness or pregnancy, all kinds of forms of neighborly help were common. Starting in the 19th century, municipalities increasingly took over the role of the churches in caring for the poor. In 1854, the first Poor Law was introduced, which ensured that poor people who did not belong to a church were also eligible for help. Only in the 20th century was the social security system introduced with which we are still familiar today.

Source: [Armenzorg - Canon van Nederland](#)

Source 25

Bread distribution in Amsterdam. Painting from 1627.



<https://rkd.nl/en/explore/images/1302>

Source 26

A farmer brings his lord a portion of his harvest and the rent (rents) for his land. The money bag reads, "The more the devil has, the more he wants." The bottom left reads, "The nobleman is the spider, the peasant is the fly." Engraving by Lagniet Guerard, France, Paris approx. 1789.



Fototeca Gilardi / Getty Images

Source 27

Resistance to punish heretics - Netherlands 16th century

The Habsburg Emperor Charles V (1500-1558) wanted to cleanse his territories of the heretical Protestant faith. In the Netherlands, where he was squire over all the provinces, he ordered the administrators to take strict action against letters. These did not like the strict policy. In this 16th-century text, administrators from Nijmegen explain their policy.

'In Nijmegen we pronounced ten sentences against heretics. They all expressed regret, except one, a certain Martinus Andelft. That one looked more like a seditionist and a defender of heretics than a mere stray. We have not obeyed the strict laws of his imperial majesty. Rather, we have been lenient. Thus everyone can see, that we are trying to win souls and that we are not out to punish. We have found that we have done more good to the community with this approach. Nor would I know how the strict laws against the heretics could be observed here in Holland or

Friesland.'

Source 28

Iconoclasm - Flanders 1566

Richard Clough stayed in Antwerp on Aug. 20, 1566. In a letter to an acquaintance he wrote:

'We have had a terrible movement here: all the churches, chapels and houses of worship have been stripped, nothing in them left whole, but everything broken and destroyed. Last night at five o'clock it began in the great church. The priests were just about to offer the praise, when some boys began to sing psalms. Pretty soon their numbers grew and at six o'clock they got up and started moving. First they destroyed the statue of the Mother of God; then they destroyed the whole church, the most beautiful in Europe. From there they went to the parish churches and houses of worship and caused such devastation there, that I do not believe such a thing was ever accomplished in one night. The astonishing thing, however, is, that they were few in number, for I saw in some churches not more than ten or twelve that broke, mostly angry boys and other riffraff; but there were many onlookers and instigators standing by.'

Source 29

Destruction of the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp on Aug. 20, 1566. Engraving made by Frans Hogenberg, an Antwerp artist who sympathized with the Reformation and had to flee to Cologne after the Duke of Alva's army arrived in 1567.



[Frans Hogenberg Bildersturm 1566 - Beeldenstorm - Wikipedia](#)

Source 30

Rebellion against the king - Netherlands 1581

Beginning in 1566, the Dutch rebelled against the policies of their landlord, Spanish King Philip II. Their resistance was based on a mix of religious, political and economic grievances. After Philip outlawed the leader of the rebellion, Prince William of Orange, the States General decided to renounce him as their legitimate monarch. An excerpt from their 'bill of abandonment', 1581:

'It is clear to everyone that a king is one placed by God at the head of his subjects to take them under his care. He must protect them from all injustice, suffering and violence, just as a shepherd watches over his sheep. And when he fails to do so and instead of protecting his subjects, causes them suffering, deprives them of freedom, privileges and ancient customs, and rules over them like slaves? Then such a person should not be considered a king but a tyrant. Then the subjects have the right to no longer recognize him as sovereign. They may then discard him and accept in his place another, who protects them, as sovereign.'

Source 31

Where each goes his own way - Netherlands 1674

William Temple (1628-1699) was British ambassador to the Republic. In his "Observations upon the United Provinces", publishes in 1673, he sought an explanation for the arrival of so many foreigners in the Republic:

'What drove these men to settle here rather than in one of the many better countries, will have been, in the first place, the great strength of the cities of Holland, for, owing to their position in relation to the sea and the nature of the country, which is low and flat, the Dutch, by the aid of their sluices, could flood all the land around their cities over so great a distance, as to render them inaccessible to any land power. A second reason was the state regulation, according to which neither the States General nor the prince have any power within the jurisdiction of a town to infringe upon the personal liberty or property of anyone there.

It was these circumstances that made the bank of Amsterdam enjoy so great a confidence, and this was also a reason why people came here and deposited here all the money they could transfer and for which they could not find a safe investment in their own country. Not only those who themselves came to this country invested their money here, but also many who did remain in their own country, but took measures for a district place, or against a storm, and considered this the safest place and that from which they could most easily transfer their money to all parts of the world.

To this was added the general freedom and ease not only in matters of conscience, but also in all other things that contribute to a convenient and quiet life, in which everyone goes his own way, minding his own business and asking little about those of others. I suppose this is because so many people of different religions and customs have flocked here from so many nations, that no one finds anything strange or new, and also because of the general inclination, to devote themselves entirely to work, for only people who have nothing to do are curious.

Source 32

The people lynch regents - Netherlands 1672

On Aug. 20, 1672, Johan de Witt and his brother Cornelis were lynched by an angry mob. Rotterdam tile maker Joachim Oudaen was an eyewitness. After the brothers were stabbed with knives and killed by rifle bullets, the crowd poured on the bodies. Clothes were torn off and body parts amputated.

'One cut the fingers from the hands, another cut the noses from the faces, the lips from the mouths, the ears from the heads, the tongues from the mouths, the toes from the feet. Everything was then sold to bystanders, one member for less, the other for more money. Even the pubic parts had to go. The limbs were shown by those who had bought them to close acquaintances as oddities, saying, "Now I too have something of that devilish country traitor, knave," and other swear words. It was now beginning to be late, about eight o'clock, when I heard people say, 'Let us cut open the knaves, take out the heart, and throw it into their devilish goblins.' Some said, "Do that, mate. At that moment I took off, because it was already late, but mostly because I could not see this inhuman cruelty, and I thought: they will still end up throwing the pieces at each other's heads, and the bystanders will start sharing in the spoils.'

Source 33

The Murder of the De Witt Brothers. Painting by Jan de Baen from 1674.



[File:Jan de Baen- De lijken van de gebroeders de Witt.jpg - Wikipedia](#)

Source 34

Edict of Nantes - France 1598

In 1598, France's King Henry IV published the Edict of Nantes. An excerpt from the Edict:

'In order that no occasion for unrest and strife may arise among our subjects, we permit the adherents of the so-called reformed religion to live and dwell in all the cities and towns of our kingdom and in the countries over which we have power. They shall not be detected there or forced to do anything against their conscience.

We forbid all preachers, professors and others who appear in public, to use any words and utterances which have the purpose of inciting the people; we have inculcated in them moderation and modesty, and to say nothing which cannot serve to teach and educate the hearers.

We also forbid by force and kidnapping children of adherents of the so-called reformed religion, to be carried away against the will of their parents and to have them baptized or educated in the Catholic religion. To further conciliate these subjects and prevent complaints, we declare that all those who claim to belong to the so-called reformed religion may hold public offices, dignities and functions.

Source 35

The cheese and bread revolt, Haarlem 1492

On the evening of May 3, 1492, an army of farmers and citizens from Kennemerland and West Friesland armed with pitchforks, scythes, clubs and halberds appeared before the walls of Haarlem. They carried banners on which were painted cheeses and loaves of bread and demanded to be let into the city. The fearful city council ordered the gates to be kept closed. But the besiegers had allies in the city. These managed to open the Cross Gate from the inside.

The rabble then marched through the streets and seized the town hall. Sheriff and tax collector Claes van Ruyven was dragged out and stabbed to death under the leadership of the Haarlem linen weaver Willem Dirksz. The rebels left his dismembered body in a basket for his widow, accompanied by the wry rhyme: "O female van Ruyven, of these bones you shall munch". Then it was the turn of the houses of wealthy Haarlemmers, which were thoroughly plundered.

The explosion of brute force did not come out of the blue. The revolt of the 'cheese and bread people' had already had a precursor in the North Holland countryside the year before. Political unrest and crop failures had led to a tripling of food prices. In the process, farmers, as well as artisans and small middlemen in the towns, were bitter about the high taxes they had to pay. Famine threatened. The flame was fanned when lord Maximilian of Austria ordered an increase in "horsemen's money," a tax for the upkeep of his troops. He used the proceeds to force rebellious Dutch cities into line and wage expensive wars far beyond the borders.

Popular anger was initially directed against local tax collectors, members of the wealthy urban elite. Groups of penniless countrymen flocked to Hoorn and Alkmaar, some with pieces of cheese and bread pinned to their chests to make it clear that they were fighting hunger. Alkmaar became the focus of the riot. An outbreak of violence had already occurred in the city in April 1491, during which the servant of the grave steward Claes Corff had been beaten to death.

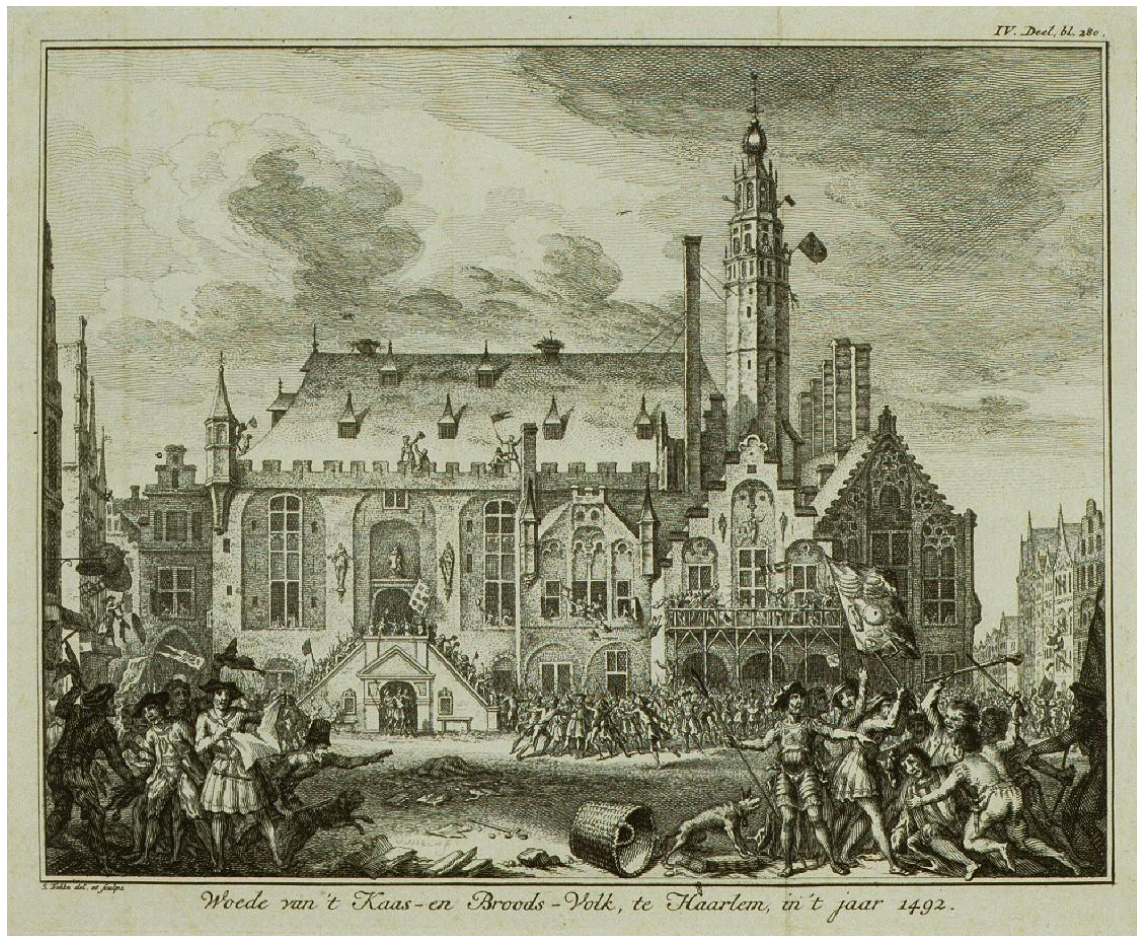
After the cheese and bread people had passed through Kennemerland in triumph and occupied Haarlem, their army, which had grown to a few thousand men, marched on Leiden. There they were beaten back before the city gates. Meanwhile, in Noordwijk, an army of Maximilian's German mercenaries had gathered. The soldiers marauded through Zandvoort, Wijk aan Zee and Beverwijk while driving the fleeing insurgents ahead of them. Finally, in the cemetery of Heemskerk on May 15, they made bloody short work of the last remnants of the little army of the people.

Maximilian of Austria's response to the events was ruthless. Three hundred citizens from the

North Holland towns and villages had to beg for mercy from his highest representative in Holland bareheaded, barefoot and dressed in linen shirts. Haarlemmer Willem Dircksz ended up on the scaffold along with other instigators of the riot. The cities that had failed to put down the riot were fined heavily and temporarily lost their city rights. Alkmaar had to knock down its walls and gates. Haarlem managed to buy off plunder by the German mercenaries for a sum of 26,000 Rhenish guilders, but was punished with the quartering of a garrison of government soldiers. As an additional obligation, the city had to have a stained glass window placed in the choir of the Grote Kerk in memory of the horribly murdered bailiff Claes van Ruyven.

Source 36

Rebels live it up on the Grote Markt in Haarlem. On the right, the murder of bailiff Claes van Ruyven. Drawing by Fokke Simon, made around 1750.



[Het Kaas- en Broodvolk - Canon van Nederland](#)

Source 37

Revolt of the Comuneros, Castilla 1521

The Revolt of the Comuneros (Spanish: Guerra de las Comunidades de Castilla, "War of the Communities of Castile") was an uprising of citizens of Castile against the rule of Charles I and his government between 1520 and 1521. At its height, the rebels controlled the heart of Castile and ruled the cities of Valladolid, Tordesillas and Toledo.

The rebellion was the result of political instability in the crown of Castile following the death of Queen Isabella I in 1504. Isabella's daughter Joanna succeeded to the throne. Because of Joanna's spiritual instability, Castile was ruled by the nobles and her father, King Ferdinand II of Aragon, as regent while Joanna was imprisoned. After Ferdinand's death in 1516, Joanna's 16-year-old son Charles was proclaimed co-monarch of both Castile and Aragon; while Joanna also succeeded as queen of Aragon, she remained imprisoned with her own son during her co-regency.

Charles had grown up in the Netherlands with little knowledge of Castilian. He arrived in Spain in October 1517, accompanied by a large retinue of Flemish nobles and clergy. These factors resulted in distrust between the new king and Castilian social elites, who saw a threat to their power and status.

In 1519, Charles was elected Holy Roman Emperor. He left for Germany in 1520, leaving the Dutch Cardinal Adrian of Utrecht to rule Castile in his absence. Soon a series of anti-government riots broke out in the cities, and local city councils (Comunidades) took power. The rebels chose Charles' own mother, Queen Joanna, as an alternative ruler, hoping to control her madness. The rebel movement took on a radical anti-feudal dimension and supported peasant uprisings against the landed gentry. On April 23, 1521, after nearly a year of rebellion, the reorganized supporters of the emperor dealt the comuneros a crippling blow in the Battle of Villalar. The next day, rebel leaders Juan López de Padilla, Juan Bravo and Francisco Maldonado were beheaded. The army of the Comuneros disintegrated. Only the city of Toledo kept the rebellion led by María Pacheco alive until its surrender in October 1521.

The character of the revolution is a matter of historiographical debate. According to some scholars, the revolt was one of the first modern revolutions, particularly because of its anti-adversarial sentiment against social injustice and its foundation on ideals of democracy and freedom. Others see it as a more typical revolt against high taxes and perceived foreign control. Since the 19th century, the revolt has been mythologized by various Spaniards, mostly liberals who drew political inspiration from it. Conservative intellectuals traditionally took a more pro-imperial view of the revolt, and were critical of both the Comuneros' motives and government. With the end of Franco's dictatorship and the creation of the autonomous community of Castile and León, positive commemoration of the Comunidades has grown. April 23 is now celebrated as Day of Castile and León, and the incident is often referenced in Castilian nationalism.

Source 38

Execution of the leaders of the rebellion of the comuneros (poor): Juan López de Padilla, Francisco Maldonado and Juan Bravo. Painting made in 1860.



[Comuneros - Revolt of the Comuneros - Wikipedia](#)

Source 39

Portrait of Juan Lopez de Padilla. Image from the book ' Martyrs for the Freedom of Spain' published in 1853, written by Spanish nationalists Victoriano Ameller and Mariano Castillo.



[Juan de Padilla | Real Academia de la Historia \(rah.es\)](#)

Source 40

The Battle of Villalar. Painting from 1887 by Manuel Pico Lopez. In this battle on April 23, 1521, Charles V's army defeated the Comuneros (common people) rebels. The three main leaders of the rebels, Juan de Padilla, Juan Bravo, and Francisco Maldonado, were captured and executed the next day, thus breaking the rebellion against Carlos.



[BatallaDeVillalar - Battle of Villalar - Wikipedia](#)

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