

# 1848

VS.

# 2011

## In the shadow of the past

BY KURT ANDERSEN

LIKE NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST TODAY, continental Europe in the 1840s consisted of monarchs ruling impoverished masses who were suffering acute economic distress. Political liberalization was inching along too slowly to satisfy the intelligentsia and the new middle classes in the cities.

In Paris, 163 years ago last month, the regime threatened to put down a peaceful protest, which resulted in thousands of angry protesters taking to the streets and demanding democracy. The mobs swelled, streets were torn up, demonstrators fraternized with national guardsmen, relatively small numbers of protesters were killed, the army didn't intervene—and within days, King Louis-Philippe had abdicated, a republic was declared, freedom of speech was allowed, and elections were scheduled.

A decade earlier, what happened in Paris might have stayed in Paris. Instead it triggered a continental wave of democratic revolution, with the news spreading rapidly by new technologies: the electric telegraph, newspapers printed by steam-powered presses, railroads.

A week after the startling French success, protests arose in Munich, driving out the Bavarian King, and a week after Munich, protests erupted in Berlin, the Prussian capital, where troops attacked demonstrators. But then the King withdrew his soldiers, ended censorship, appointed a liberal Cabinet, agreed to parliamentary elections and fled the city. The wave hit Vienna, the capital of the Habsburg Empire, forcing the great power broker Metternich to resign. Then came days of street fighting in Milan, which caused the occupying Austrian army to retreat, and a rebellion in Venice forced out the Austrian rulers there. Only a month had passed since the Paris uprising, and the revolutionary tide kept rolling all spring in dozens more places.

But as we look at the parallels with this year's uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East, we should remember what came next. In France, the radicals pushed too far too fast, essentially demanding socialism and provoking a backlash. Elsewhere the empire simply struck back. By fall, most of the revolutions had been reversed; the rest were crushed within a year. And in 2011? We'll know soon enough. ■

Andersen's best-selling novel *Heyday* won the Langum Prize for best American historical fiction in 2007

### TWO YEARS AND A CHANGED WORLD

<b>1848</b> Monarchies..... Feeble parliaments..... Brutal police..... Limited suffrage..... Limited freedom of expression.....	<b>2011</b> Crypto-monarchies..... Feeble parliaments..... Brutal police..... Limited suffrage..... Limited freedom of expression.....
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### REVOLUTIONARY CONTAGION SPREADS QUICKLY

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|--|---|---|
| <b>2010-11</b><br>1. TUNISIA<br>DEC. 17, 2010<br>2. ALGERIA<br>JAN. 5, 2011<br>3. JORDAN<br>JAN. 14<br>4. OMAN<br>JAN. 17<br>5. YEMEN<br>JAN. 22 | 6. EGYPT<br>JAN. 25<br>7. LEBANON<br>JAN. 25<br>8. WEST BANK<br>FEB. 2<br>9. IRAQ<br>FEB. 3 | 10. KUWAIT<br>FEB. 6<br>11. BAHRAIN<br>FEB. 13<br>12. IRAN<br>FEB. 14<br>13. LIBYA<br>FEB. 15<br>14. MOROCCO<br>FEB. 20 |
|--|---|---|

### 1 ECONOMIC WOES

**1848** Failed harvests led to spikes in food prices, which, with high unemployment, impoverished the masses. The region was industrially backward compared with Britain and the U.S.

**2011** Recent spikes in food prices and high unemployment impoverished the masses. The region is industrially backward compared with the E.U., U.S. and East Asia

### 2 AT THE ROOT OF THE TURMOIL

## A NEW, GROWING, POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY AND CULTURALLY FRUSTRATED MIDDLE CLASS 1848 AND 2011

### 3 DEPOSED RULERS' COMFY EXILE

French King **Louis-Philippe** to England



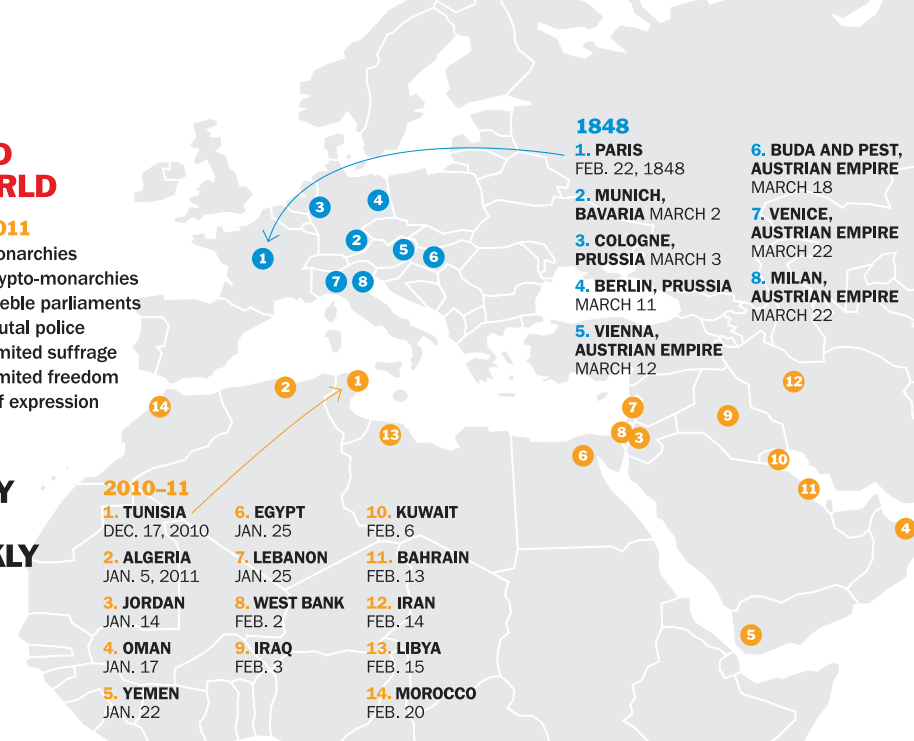
Tunisian President **Zine el Abidine Ben Ali** to Saudi Arabia



### 4 SUDDEN, UNEXPECTED SUCCESSSES

**1848** In February, after the government suppresses peaceful protests in France, three days of massive street protests and riots follow. The King abdicates, a republic is declared, and a hopeful democratic chaos ensues

**2011** In January and February, in Tunisia and Egypt, after the government suppresses peaceful protests, 29 and 18 days (respectively) of massive street protests follow. Kinglike Presidents resign, and a hopeful democratic chaos ensues

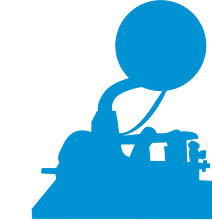


### 5 AMBIVALENT ARMIES

**1848** French national guardsmen fraternize with street protesters

**2011** Tunisian and Egyptian soldiers fraternize with street protesters and refuse to fire on them. Some Libyan officers and troops join rebels

### 6 NEW TECHNOLOGY HELPS SPREAD THE WORD



**1848** Revolutionary news is transmitted as never before by telegraph, steam-powered-printed newspapers and railroads



**2011** Revolutionary news is transmitted as never before by cell phones, the Internet and cable television

### 10 RICH, UNBUDGING REACTIONARY TO THE EAST

Russian Czar **Nicholas I**

**1848** The Czar sends troops to help his fellow monarchs

Saudi King **Abdullah**

**2011** The multibillionaire King says the Egyptian uprising was the work of foreign "infiltrators"

### 7 ONE-LINER BY VERY ODD RULER

**'But are they allowed to do that?'**

—Austro-Hungarian Emperor **Ferdinand** after his Chief Minister, Prince Klemens von Metternich, told him his people were having a revolution

**'They give them pills at night, they put hallucinatory pills in their drinks, their milk, their coffee, their Nescafé.'**

—Libyan leader **Muammar Gaddafi** on why young Libyans are rebelling

### 8 WASHINGTON'S COZINESS WITH OLD REGIMES

**1848** U.S. Navy trains and supplies Prussian imperial navy during the year

**2011** U.S. military trains and supplies Egypt's military for decades

### 9 DEMOCRATIC AMERICA IS PLEASED ...

"The world has seldom witnessed a more interesting spectacle than the peaceful rising of the French people, resolved to secure themselves enlarged liberty."  
—PRESIDENT **JAMES POLK**



### ... BUT ALSO DUBIOUS, BECAUSE ...

"It's a beginning. I'm sure there will be difficult days ahead, and many questions remain unanswered."  
—PRESIDENT **BARACK OBAMA**

"There are very few moments in our lives where we have the privilege to witness history taking place ... For Egyptians have made it clear that nothing less than genuine democracy will carry the day."  
—PRESIDENT **BARACK OBAMA**



"They have decreed a republic, but it remains for them to establish one."  
—SENATOR **JOHN C. CALHOUN**



### ... YOU KNOW, THOSE PEOPLE ARE JUST SO, WELL, UNCIVILIZED

"The Italian character is so thoroughly imbued with intolerance and sentiments of hatred ... as to forbid the establishment of any form of government founded on mutual concession ... for the common good."  
—NATHANIEL NILES, U.S. Congressman and envoy to Torino



Arabs "are simply not ready for free and fair elections."  
—BERNARD LEWIS, Princeton professor emeritus of Near Eastern studies

### 11 DEMONIZING TAGS FOR PROTESTERS

**RADICALS**  
**SOCIALISTS**  
**ISLAMISTS**

### 12 A FLOOD OF REFUGEES

**1848** Poor, displaced Europeans, many of them Roman Catholic and darker-skinned, flee postrevolutionary chaos, immigrate to Protestant U.S.

**2011** Poor, displaced North Africans, mostly Muslim and darker-skinned, try to flee postrevolutionary chaos, immigrate to Christian E.U.