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Global ‘revolution’ in the early nineteenth-century Finnish press

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ABSTRACT

This article sheds light on the period of revolutionary turbulence by demonstrating how the concept of revolution was introduced in the Finnish print culture through foreign news reports during the early nineteenth century. The examination draws on the use of multilingual digital newspaper collections provided by the National Library of Finland. By combining key word searches to a close reading of newspaper texts, the article explores the ways in which different revolutionary movements were present in the Finnish newspapers during the early decades of the nineteenth century. The article proposes that the role of foreign news flow was crucial in the process of shaping the understanding of revolution in Finland.



KEYWORDS

Revolution; newspapers; history of concepts; early nineteenth century; digital newspaper collections; Finland

1. Introduction

This article traces the understanding of revolution in the Finnish print culture during the early decades of the nineteenth-century. My point of departure is a situation, where hardly any individual reflections or editorial texts dealing with the theme of revolution were published in Finland. Is there any point in my search if there we no thinkers publishing something on the theme? The study of past thought, after all, often operates with certain key texts or authors.¹ This article seeks to demonstrate how a concept is introduced and formulated within a culture without clear authorship. My aim is to provide a reading of ‘revolution’ in a public discussion, more precisely in newspapers, in early nineteenth-century Finland.

The French Revolution of 1789 was an epochal media event communicated throughout Europe by newspapers and other printed material.² The role of the press in delivering news and ideas of the French Revolution has been vividly studied especially from the French perspective.³ The ties between the French republic and press also work in the opposite direction: the Revolution launched a rapid growth of the printed media in France.⁴ Despite the centrality of France, revolutionary turbulence was by no means only a French phenomenon. Instead of 1789 and France, one might focus on

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¹On the other hand, for example David Armitage has recently called for the *longue-durée* and big history instead of concentration on individual actors and their formulations of ideas and concepts. See David Armitage, ‘What’s the Big Idea? Intellectual History and the Longue Durée’, *History of European Ideas* 38, no. 4 (2012): 495–7.

²Rolf Reichardt, ‘The French Revolution as a European Media Event’, in *European History Online* (EGO), published by the Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz 2012-08-27, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/reichardt-2010-en> (accessed November 8, 2017).

³See, for example, Robert Darnton and Daniel Roche, eds., *Revolution in Print: The Press in France, 1775–1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Jeremy D. Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789–1799* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990); *Press, Revolution, and the Social Identities in France, 1830–1835* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2002).

⁴Dominique Kalifa, ‘The Press’, in *The French Republic: history, values, debates*, ed. Edward Berenson, Vincent Cuclert and Christophe Prochasson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 189–91.

more global developments, as has been done, for example, in *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context* by David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam.⁵ The experience of revolutionary turbulence was thus a global phenomenon.

In this article, I expand the perspective from the years of the great Revolution of France towards a wider time span, including the revolutionary turbulence in different countries during the first half of the nineteenth century. My article also shifts the focus from dominant European countries to the northernmost parts of Europe, situated far away from the centres of revolution. My case is Finland, a European periphery where print culture was only beginning to develop during the time of the French Revolution. Moreover, in 1809, Finland – a territory that had belonged to the Swedish realm for centuries – was incorporated into the Russian empire, the most anti-revolutionist country in Europe. Did the theme of revolution have any media presence in circumstances of this kind? In this article, I examine how the revolutionary turbulence was followed and reported by the early Finnish newspapers and how the term ‘revolution’ appeared in the emerging Finnish print culture. Drawing on the U.S. newspaper material, Ryan Cordell has argued for a model of collective authorship in the early nineteenth-century print culture. Cordell refers to the practice of circulation and reprinting of texts from one publication to another.⁶ This idea of collective authorship is useful also in the Finnish case. I argue that the role of foreign news flow was crucial in the process of shaping the understanding of revolution in Finland.

Cultural historian Helge Jordheim has stressed that European countries have not proceeded in equal speed in their social and political developments and that this temporal difference also becomes evident on a conceptual level.⁷ In the case of ‘revolution’, it has been argued that the French Revolution was a turning point after which ‘revolution’ received its modern political meaning as an upheaval that strives for a permanent change in power relations.⁸ But how vast and synchronous was this understanding and experience of revolution? In the case of Finland, previous studies have emphasised a certain backward situation and location of the country. From a press-historical point of view, the development of the Finnish newspaper field was modest during the first half of the nineteenth century. Expansion of the press – and the breakthrough of the foreign news flow – only happened during the second half of the century.⁹ In the study of concepts, Risto Alapuro has considered the European revolutionary turbulence of 1848 – not 1789 – as a crucial impulse for the formation of the Finnish concept of revolution.¹⁰ From this perspective it could be argued that Finland was developing at different speed than many other European countries. In this article, my focus is on the period before 1840s and those opportunities there were for the word ‘revolution’ to appear in Finnish newspapers. Juhani Paasivirta has also examined this period in his study on the coverage of international political crises in Finland but has not concentrated only on revolutionary events.¹¹ An important factor motivating my study is also the fact that, compared to earlier investigations, I have benefited from the digitisation of Finnish newspapers offering new perspectives also for the study of concepts.

⁵David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁶Ryan Cordell, ‘Reprinting, Circulation, and the Network Author in Antebellum Newspapers’, *American Literary History* 27, no. 3 (2015): 418, 429–30 and passim. The circulation and reuse of texts in Finnish newspapers and journals is examined in the ongoing project Computational History and the Transformation of Public Discourse in Finland, 1640–1910 (COMHIS), <https://www.utu.fi/fi/yksikot/hum/yksikot/kulttuurihistoria/tutkimus/Sivut/comhis.aspx>

⁷Helge Jordheim, ‘Europe at Different Speeds’, in *Conceptual History in the European Space*, ed. Willibald Steinmetz, Michael Freedен and Javier Fernández-Sebastián (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2017), 47–9.

⁸See Reinhart Koselleck, ‘Revolution’, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Band 5, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 654, 725–7 and passim; Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 40–6.

⁹Päiviö Tommila, ‘Yhdestä lehdestä sanomalehdistöksi 1809–1859’, in *Suomen lehdistön historia 1: Sanomalehdistön vaiheet vuoteen 1905*, ed. Päiviö Tommila (Kuopio: Kustannuskiila 1988), 68, 178, 223 and passim.

¹⁰Risto Alapuro, ‘Vallankumous’, in *Käsitteet liikkeessä. Suomen poliittisen kulttuurin käsitehistoria*, ed. Matti Hyvärinen et al. (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2003), 523–6 and passim.

¹¹Juhani Paasivirta, *Suomi ja Eurooppa. Autonomiakausi ja kansainväliset kriisit 1808–1914* (Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä, 1978).

2. Source material and methods

My examination draws on digital newspaper collections provided by the National Library of Finland (NLF). The NLF contains all newspapers and journals published in the Finnish territory beginning from the very first newspaper from 1771.¹² All material published before 1930 is available for users in the digital collections of the library. This material is computer-read, meaning that the old journals have been scanned and converted into machine-encoded text with optical character recognition (OCR).¹³ In this article, I have benefited from NLF's digitised material by browsing the newspapers with key word searches (provided by NLF's search engine). This enables me to explore the occurrence and frequency of the word 'revolution' in the Finnish press year by year or during certain time frames. This statistical (distant) reading tells little about the meaning of 'revolution' as a concept, however. Therefore, I have added some close reading analysis to my case study.

One special feature of the Finnish newspaper history is its multilingual nature. Newspaper publishing started in the Finnish territory within the Swedish realm and in the Swedish language. Swedish also remained as the dominant language in official and literary use within the Grand Duchy of Finland. Despite this fact, the first attempt to publish a newspaper in the Finnish language was made already in the 1770s, and from the 1820s onwards a Finnish-language newspaper came out regularly. Moreover, during the 1820s and the 1830s, a German-language newspaper was also published within the Finnish territory.

Another feature of the Finnish press is that for a long time, practically until the 1840s, one official newspaper dominated the field, especially in terms of foreign news reports. Furthermore, a long-time editor of this official paper was known to be a conservative rather than liberally minded.¹⁴ The opportunities for 'revolution' to spread in the Finnish use were thus limited. Still, newspapers offer more information on the uses of the term than any other printed material available. The study of the meanings of 'revolution' in Finland rests heavily on the analysis made by Alapuro. He has argued that during the early decades of the nineteenth century the meaning of the term was vague, indicating that in Finland 'revolution' was not really acknowledged as a severe rupture in a political system, as a will to change things for good. Alapuro's argument is strongly based on the fact that before the mid-nineteenth century, the Finnish language lacked a proper translation for revolution. A word used for the French Revolution and other revolutionary movements was *kapina* (uprising or revolt) or *meteli* (clamour, ruction) which made no distinction between uprising and revolution.¹⁵ Alapuro's argumentation is solid as such but I suggest that he pays too little attention to the Swedish language which was, after all, the dominant literary language of the time. Therefore, in this article, my primary focus is on the Swedish language.

According to the NLF's corpus of digitalised newspapers, the Swedish word 'revolution' appeared on 2,605 pages in the newspapers during the time period from 1809 until the end of 1848.¹⁶ Swedish term appeared already prior to 1809 but the search results are few (54 hits) and include very little news material (Table 1). Therefore, I have in this article concentrated on the period beginning from 1809, this being the year when the Grand Duchy of Finland was established. Before the

¹²In this article, only newspapers are included in the analysis. As a rule, the journals did not contain news-like material although there might be some exceptions to this rule. The division between newspapers and journals has been made by NLF. The National Library of Finland digital newspaper collections, <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/sanomalehti/search>.

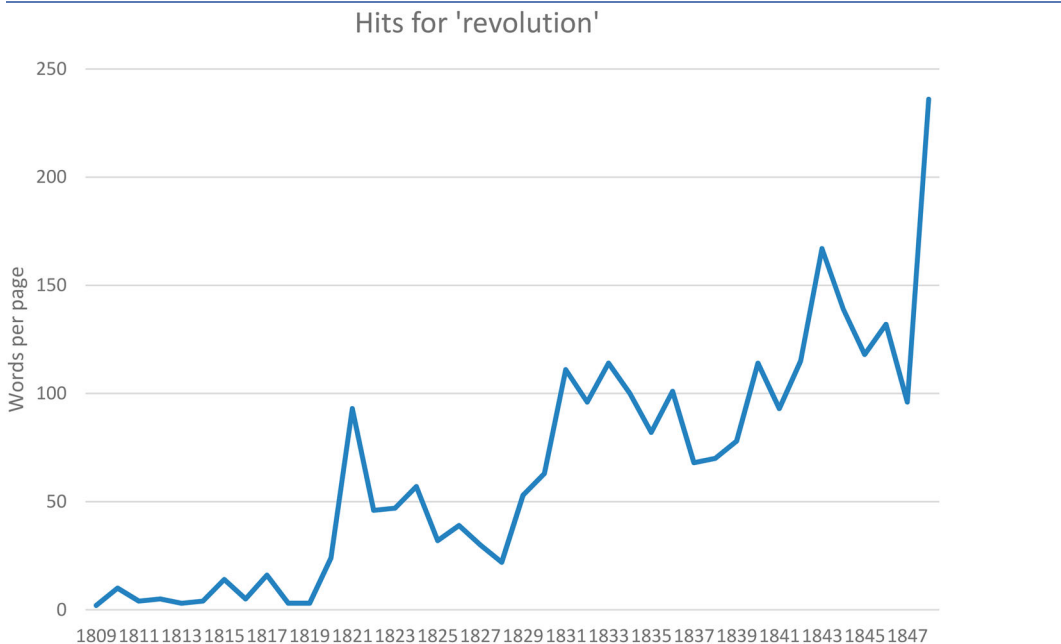
¹³Due to the poor quality of some newspapers and the Gothic (Fraktur) typeface commonly used in Finnish newspapers, OCR has not always converted the words correctly and the machine-read text contains errors, which has to be kept in mind when working with the data.

¹⁴Tommila, 'Yhdestä lehdestä sanomalehdistöksi', 110–12.

¹⁵Alapuro, 'Vallankumous', 521–4. Alapuro's distinction between 'uprising' and 'revolution' is based on the reading of Koselleck. An uprising is a temporary state of disorder in a political system but it does not really threaten the very ideas of the system as a revolution does. See, for example, Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 44.

¹⁶Note: the NLF's keyword search gives results in pages, not in words, meaning that there might be more than one word hit on one page. In my preliminary analysis phase I have made some closer comparisons of these search results year by year. In many cases the search word appeared only once on a page but there are also pages where the word occurred several times. This variation does not change the overall picture, thou. It should be also noticed that due to the poor quality of the OCR reading, these results may contain some errors and the exact numbers are not completely reliable.

Table 1. Hits per page for key word search for ‘revolution’ (Swedish) during 1809–1848. The hits have not been scaled to the total amount of newspaper pages per year.



early 1820s, there are only some search results per year. The frequency of hits is highest in 1848 (236 hits), supporting Alapuro’s argument on the importance of this year. On the other hand, before 1848 the total number of hits is 2,369, meaning that ‘revolution’ did exist and was being discussed in Swedish also prior to the turbulence of 1848. For the Finnish language *kapina* (the nearest match to revolution), the search gives 303 hits during the same period. The result is modest compared to the Swedish language and shows the unbalanced relation between the Swedish and Finnish language press. The German language results are excluded from this study (Table 2).¹⁷

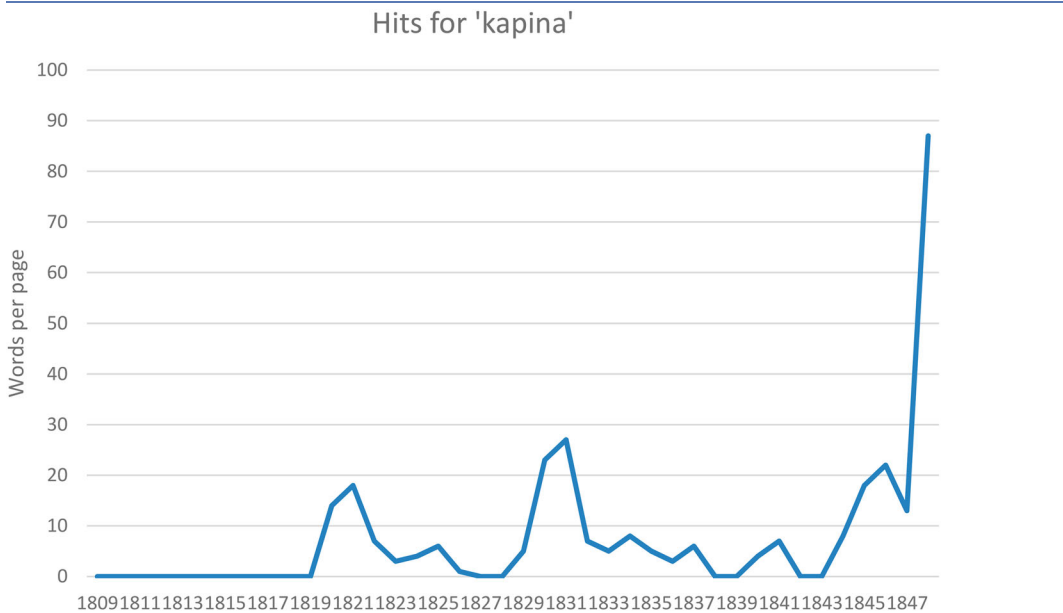
The graphics show some peaks in the search results. The first peak is in the early 1820s, the second in the early 1830s. In the Swedish language, there is also a peak in 1843. After this comes the explosion of ‘revolution’ in 1848. One can easily guess the reason for the peak in 1848: a revolutionary wave swept across Europe during 1848 and affected various countries. What about the other peaks? It seems that there is a condensation in the appearance of ‘revolution’ in the early 1820s and 1830s.¹⁸ What happened in the Finnish newspapers during these years? We know that some revolutionary movements also occurred in Europe and Latin America during the early 1820s and 1830s, and it seems that the appearance of ‘revolution’ (or *kapina*) in the Finnish newspapers follows these revolutionary waves.¹⁹ In my article, I will concentrate on these peaks prior to the 1840s. To be able to draw conclusions on the meanings of ‘revolution’ in the newspaper material, I have picked the peak years from the material and manually gone through those pages including *revolution* or *kapina*. To trace the wider contexts of the news published in the Finnish newspapers, I have also benefited from some other national digital newspaper archives, namely the British Newspaper Archive, the Swedish Svenska dagstidningar database and the Austrian Newspapers Online (ANNO). Before

¹⁷The main reason for this is that the number of hits during the whole period is only 50.

¹⁸The peak of the early 1820s is clearest, also if scaled to the total number of pages published.

¹⁹In a previous study it has been noted that the amount of foreign news raised in official newspaper during the political turbulence of 1820s and 1830s. Osmo Apunen, *Hallituksen sanansaattaja: Virallinen lehti – Officiella tidningen 1819–1969* (Helsinki: Valtion painatuskeskus, 1970).

Table 2. Hits per page for key word search for 'kapina' (Finnish) during 1809–1848. The hits have not been scaled to the total amount of newspaper pages per year.



proceeding to my analysis, however, I will present the press-historical situation in Finland at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

3. The emergence of the Finnish newspaper

Early Finnish newspaper history is in many respects also Swedish press history. The first Swedish newspaper came out as early as in 1645, and in the second half of the eighteenth century the number of newly established publications was counted in several dozens.²⁰ The first newspaper that came out in the Eastern part of the Swedish realm, namely in Finland, in 1771 had regional aims but was nevertheless a Swedish newspaper. This paper was published in the city of Turku²¹, and it was not focused on news material but on literary topics together with different kinds of local or regional notices.²² During the eighteenth century, there were only a few Swedish newspapers that actually published foreign news material. In this respect, the Turku paper was not an exception.

Prior to 1809 the Turku paper had been a local or regional Swedish publication but in 1809 it became the only newspaper published within the Grand Duchy of Finland. This change launched a new kind of development of the Finnish newspaper. During 1808 the Swedish-Russian war broke out and the Russian troops marched to the Finnish territory. In 1809 Tsar Alexander confirmed the new status of Finland within the Russian empire. The political change of 1809 changed also the status of the newspaper that came out in the Finnish territory. From the year 1810 onwards, its function shifted from a literary journal into a newspaper delivering not only local or regional

²⁰Many of the newspapers and magazines were short-lived but the total number of publications was high enough so that the closure of some publications did not result in the decline of the press as such. See, Karl Erik Gustafsson and Per Rydén, *A History of the Press in Sweden* (Gothenburg: Sylvan 20, 2010), 15, 33, 47. As a comparison, the first paper in France came out in 1631. In Germany and the Netherlands there had already been newspapers during the early years of the 17th century.

²¹Turku was one of the few university towns in the Swedish realm, and the launch of the newspaper was a project conducted by the scholars within the Academy of Turku/Åbo (Swedish name of the city).

²²In the collections of the National Library of Finland, it is nevertheless classified as a newspaper, not as a literary journal. This paper came out with slightly varying names. Päiviö Tommila, *Suomen lehdistön levikki ennen vuotta 1860* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1963), 149.

announcements but also official information and news material.²³ Apart from the increasing news material, the year 1809 brought a change of perspective for the Turku-based newspaper: in writing the news, the Finnish newspaper editor had to think how it would be read from the Russian perspective. At this point there was not a clear degree of censorship subjected to Finland by Russia but censorship was practised for example by monitoring the subscriptions of foreign newspapers in Finland.²⁴ The Finnish newspaper also started to publish news reports taken from Russian sources. This meant the emergence of the ‘Russian view’ in the Finnish newspaper.

This change of perspective can be seen, for example, during 1812. The French troops had marched to Moscow (in September), and on 24 November the Finnish newspaper published a four-page-long and quite detailed report on the disgraceful behaviour of the French troops in the city.²⁵ The text strongly condemned the actions of the French army, stating that the behaviour of the French in Moscow was barbaric and without any sign of honour. The paper called the French army ‘robbers, arsonists, murderers, shameless oppressors of humanity’.²⁶ This kind of propagandist view was offered to the Finnish audience during the Franco-Russian war. During 1813–14 many declarations by the tsar or general Kutuzov were published in the Finnish newspaper.²⁷ The Finnish audience was thus well informed of the success of the Russian troops and the fall of Napoleon. At the end of March 1814, the allied troops marched to Paris. It took time for this news to reach the Finnish newspaper. On 5 May, *Åbo Allmänna Tidning* stated on the front-page that ‘the good cause has won – Paris is, in the true meaning of the word, liberated’.²⁸

The above-mentioned example shows that the travel of news could take time. In the case of foreign news, the sources of information were usually other newspapers. The circulation of news can be highlighted with the following example. On 21 June 1817, *Åbo Allmänna Tidning* delivered a news report from London dated on 27 May. This report included information on a revolution in Brazil. According to the news, a revolution had broken out on 7 April – it thus took a long time for the news to reach the Finnish territory.²⁹ The sources of this kind of circulation of information were mentioned only every now and then. Such a procedure, copying news items from other newspapers, had also been quite common elsewhere. The first regular British daily newspaper *Daily Courant* translated news from Dutch and French newspapers during the early eighteenth century. By the time of the French Revolution (1789), however, *The Times* already had reporters of its own delivering revolutionary news straight from Paris.³⁰ In this respect, the Finnish paper was lagging behind the development of the press in Europe. Its foreign news sources were other newspapers even during the nineteenth century.³¹ But in what way was this news material being benefited from and how did ‘revolution’ appear in the texts the Finnish newspapers published? I will next continue to analyse this.

4. Revolutionary wave of the 1820s

During the 1820s, the number of Finnish newspapers started to increase. This development was still very modest. At the beginning of the 1820s, there were three newspapers published in the Grand Duchy of Finland, and by the end of the decade the number had grown to eight. As can be seen

²³Paasivirta, *Suomi ja Eurooppa*, 45. At this point the name of the newspaper was changed to *Åbo Allmänna Tidning*.

²⁴Yrjö Nurmio, *Suomen sensuuriolot Venäjän vallan alkuaikoina vv. 1809–1829* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1934), 64–78.

²⁵This text was apparently based on a Russian newspaper source, at least the report was dated in Moscow on 17 October.

²⁶*Åbo Allmänna Tidning*, November 24, 1812. All translations from the Swedish and Finnish language are by the author.

²⁷Paasivirta, *Suomi ja Eurooppa*, 58.

²⁸*Åbo Allmänna Tidning*, May 5, 1814. The news about the allied troops in Paris was first reported on 3 May in the same paper.

²⁹*Åbo Allmänna Tidning*, June 21, 1817. The newspaper also explained that the reason for this revolution had been a common dissatisfaction among the military groups, police and the people. What then follows is a fairly long description of the incidents in Brazil. It is quite possible that at least part of these international news were copied to the Finnish newspaper from a Swedish paper. This use of Swedish newspapers as mediators of foreign news was not usually mentioned, however.

³⁰Mick Temple, *The British Press* (Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Open University Press, 2008), 11, 15.

³¹There is no inclusive list available of those foreign newspapers that were used by the Finnish editors.

from the search word diagram (see Table 1), the appearance of ‘revolution’ was very uncommon in the newspaper before the 1820s. The term appeared only occasionally, offering very little material for any kind of analysis. The conclusion one can make from the absence of the term is that it did not have any important function in the public discussion.

In European history, the post-Napoleonic era is marked with a series of revolutionary movements challenging the existing political and social order. In the early 1820s, there was a transnational wave of uprisings sharing some basic elements of their ideological agenda, namely the idea of constitutional rights and representation – that is, the idea that any government should receive its legitimation only from the ‘people’. This wave included the liberal reign of Spain during 1820–23, the Lisbon revolt in 1820, the constitutional government in southern Italy (Naples and Sicily) in 1820–21 and the Greek war of independence starting in 1821.³² On the other hand, the great European powers joined their forces in order to prevent the spread of revolutionary movements. As Mark Jarrett states, ‘after 1815, the principal goal of European statesmen shifted from defeating Bonaparte to combating the threat of social revolution.’³³

In the early 1820s there is a clear peak in the use of ‘revolution’ in the Swedish language. At the same time, the Finnish-language newspaper appeared and started to write about ‘revolts’ – this is the first time that this kind of discussion appeared publicly in the Finnish language. The peak in the use of both ‘revolution’ and ‘revolt’ (*kapina*) in Finnish newspapers is clearly connected with a revolutionary wave appearing in southern Europe (and Latin America). These events were noticed in the Finnish newspapers, and through the reports on these incidents the Finnish reading audience was being introduced to the concept of revolution in a new way. At this point, there was no parliamentary life in Finland. Despite the autonomous position of the Grand Duchy, the Finnish estates were summoned by Tsar Alexander only once in 1809. Furthermore, in the Finnish newspapers there was no discussion on domestic political or social issues. The only manner in which the Finnish papers could somehow discuss topical political issues was through foreign news reports.³⁴

To introduce a concept through foreign news clips translated from several languages makes one think about the nature of this practice. In recent times, there has been a wide interest towards translation understood as a complex cultural practice.³⁵ Is it thus possible to study the uses of ‘revolution’ in the Finnish press without discussing the multiply sources of translated passages? Since my focus is not on the process of transferring for example the English or French notions of revolution into the Finnish use, the question of source language and its possible meanings is of secondary importance here.³⁶

The rise in the reports on revolutionary movements already appeared during 1820 when *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* followed and reported news from Spain and Naples almost on a regular basis.³⁷ The reports on the revolutionary movements were fairly neutral, sometimes even positive in their tone. In May 1820, *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* referred to news from Madrid, stating that the situation in Spain was quite different from what had been seen in France during the revolution. In the case of Spain, ‘people are not striving for extremes; but the events show that there is a deep mistrust’,

³²Maurizio Isabella, *Risorgimento in Exile: Italian Émigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 21–2, 32–3. See also James Maxwell Anderson, *History of Portugal* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing, 2000), 20; John Anthony Davis, *Naples and Napoleon: Southern Italy and the European Revolutions (1780–1860)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 295.

³³Mark Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna: War and Great Power Diplomacy after Napoleon* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 209.

³⁴Jussi Kurunmäki has argued that reports on parliamentary life in other countries were a way for the Finnish official newspaper to somehow keep the theme of political representation alive in Finland, although it was not possible to directly write about the Finnish situation. Jussi Kurunmäki, ‘Political Representation, Imperial Dependency and Political Transfer: Finland and Sweden 1809–1819’, *Journal of Modern European History* 15, no. 2 (2017): 255–7.

³⁵See, for example, Doris Bachmann-Medick, ‘Introduction. The translational turn’, *Translation Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): 2–16.

³⁶In some cases it is possible to find the foreign news report the Finnish newspaper probably referred to but it is quite impossible to trace all the possible sources the papers were using.

³⁷At this point the official paper came out three times a week.

the paper stated.³⁸ Similarly, in the case of southern Italy, the news were quite positive. In August 1820, the paper reported on the Italian attempts to write a constitution acknowledging press freedom and freedom of religion, for example.³⁹ The liberal aims of the revolutionaries were thus acknowledged in the Finnish newspaper. Through the news reports ‘revolution’ became connected with a change in power relations and new kinds of liberties, such as press freedom. These news reports were suggesting that it was possible to seek a new kind of political order through uprisings. It is thus justified to say that through these news reports a very essential element of ‘revolution’ – striving for a permanent change in the political system – was present in Finland.

How was this kind of writing possible? Finland was, after all, a part of the autocratically ruled Russian empire. Juhani Paasivirta has suggested that these foreign news reports were possible due to great distance between the southern European movements and Finland. Russia did not consider the commenting of these distant events as a threat.⁴⁰ This could be the case, at least to some extent. This argument holds also in those cases when the Finnish paper reported on the political movements in Latin America. In January 1821, for example, *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* published pieces of republican declarations by Simón Bolívar, the central leader of Latin American independence movement in several countries.⁴¹ However, during 1821 the tone in which the Finnish newspaper was writing on the European revolutionary movements was clearly harshening. Practical reason for this change was the intervention of the Holy Alliance, including Russia, in the Italian uprising. The rising fear of the spread of revolutionary activities brought a change of style to the Finnish news reports. ‘Revolution’ now became increasingly paralleled to disorder and disturbance.

5. Order vs. disorder

In late 1820, the European sovereigns and their ministers gathered in Austria, Troppau (present-day Opava) to discuss the political unrest in Europe, especially due to the Neapolitan Revolution. The outcome of the meeting was the so-called Troppau Circular published in December 1820, designed with the lead of Russia, Austria and Prussia and confirming the common measures that could be undertaken against illegal actions of the revolutionary states.⁴² The Troppau meeting appeared as a continuous theme of foreign news reports in *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* throughout January 1821.⁴³ These reports reveal the slow travel of news: still at the end of January 1821, the paper was referring to foreign newspaper information dated in December 1820. On 1 February 1821, the Finnish newspaper finally reported on the outcome of the Troppau meeting. Referring to news from Hamburg, the paper informed on the statement by the heads of state in the following manner:

Revolts in Spain, Portugal and Naples should raise concern and unrest among those Powers fighting against the Revolution. They must feel that they are called to put a stop to new misfortunes that threaten Europe. Those same principles that have united the great Powers of the continent to free the world from one man’s military despotism, which proceeds from the bosom of the Revolution, must now show actions against the newly erupting force of revolutionary spirit.⁴⁴

³⁸*Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, May 31, 1820. Foreign news source dated on 18 April.

³⁹*Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, August 25, 1820. Foreign news source dated on 2 July.

⁴⁰Paasivirta, *Suomi ja Eurooppa*, 90.

⁴¹The news item in question was about the republican regime in Colombia. *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, January 20, 1821. On Bolívar’s role in the revolutionary turbulence of Latin America, see John Lynch, *Latin America between Colony and Nation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

⁴²Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna*, 248–50, 264–65.

⁴³During January the paper published 12 numbers, nine of them discussing the Troppau meeting. In 1821 *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* came out three times a week. There were four other newspapers published in Finland during 1821, of which one was Finnish-language, one German- and two Swedish-language newspapers. News material was mainly delivered by the official newspaper.

⁴⁴*Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, February 1, 1821. Apparently, the Finnish newspaper benefited from the information delivered by a newspaper in Hamburg (January 5, 1821), which for its part quoted a Viennese source, the conservative *Oesterreichischer Beobachter* from December 27, 1820. ANNO, Austrian Newspapers Online database, <http://anno.onb.ac.at/>. Swedish original: Statshälfningarna i Spanien, Portugal och Neapel måste nödvändigt väcka bekymmer och oro hos de Makter, som kämpat mot Revolutionen. De måste känna sig kallade att sätta en gräns för de nya olyckor, hvilka hotade Europa. Samma grundsatser

The case of the Naples uprising was followed throughout the spring by the Finnish official newspaper which published reports on the new Congress of the major European powers in Laibach (present day Ljubljana). This meeting resulted in the Declaration of Laibach (signed on 12 May) strictly condemning the illegal revolutionary actions.⁴⁵ *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* published a report on the contents of the Declaration in June.⁴⁶ In addition, the new Finnish language newspaper *Turun Wiikko-Sanomat* reported on the events in southern Europe. On 17 February it mentioned a meeting by the heads of state in Laibach and the attempt to solve the problem of unrest and uprisings in Europe. In this text the Neapolitan uprising was called a revolt or mischief (*vallattomuus* in Finnish, literally also meaning lack of power). There was an attempt to prevent the spread of this unrest, otherwise it might damage the peace in other parts of Europe.⁴⁷ It can be noticed that in order to describe the revolutionary actions, the Finnish language paper had to use several different words somehow explaining to its readers what was going on in southern Europe. The Swedish language paper could just use the term ‘revolution’.

In May 1821, *Turun Wiikko-Sanomat* explained to its readers that the people of the South are by nature more ‘passionate’, ‘corrupting’ themselves with their revolts. This is not the case in Finland, however, the paper states. The text reminds the readers that one could learn from this example the lesson of not taking part in this kind of ‘godless clamour’.⁴⁸ Godless clamour referred here to revolutionary movements. The message of the reports was clear: what was going on in southern Europe was an illegal uprising, a state of disorder and the legitimate task of the Holy Alliance was to bring order back to Europe.

Despite these strict tones condemning revolutionary activities, the Finnish newspaper also published discussions delivered by the British press offering an alternative opinion on the case of European rebellions. Due to disagreements between the central powers, Britain had not signed the Declaration of Laibach. On 26 July 1821, *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* published news from London, including reports on the discussions in the House of Commons. The report stated that there were views in Britain criticising the harsh tones of the allied forces in the Laibach Circular. According to the critics, the circular included principles the British government could not approve. The problem was the following: The sovereign monarchs did not acknowledge any reforms that did not ensue from their own free will, thus practically considering all reform attempts as illegal uprisings.⁴⁹ The Finnish paper quoted the British source:

If that were the public law of England, he [the speaker] would ask the House of Commons whether the liberty which they enjoyed would have been ever accomplished? The liberties of England were won by their ancestors by arms, and always against the wishes of the Monarch.⁵⁰

The Finnish paper published a Swedish translation of this statement delivered by *The Morning Chronicle*. The message of this discussion was that not every reform movement was automatically an illegal one.

This example shows that although the reports on the proceedings of the Troppau and Laibach meetings were reported mostly from the perspective of the main architects of the meetings (that is Russia, Austria, also Prussia) which underlined the strict attitude towards all revolutionary

som förenat Continentens största Makter, att befria werlden från en mans militair-despotism, hwilken uttgått ur Revolutionens sköte, måste nu wisa sig werksamme mot upprorsandans å nyo utbrytande kraft.

⁴⁵As a result of the Congress of Laibach, Austrian military forces were sent to put an end to the Italian liberal revolution.

⁴⁶*Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, June 16, 1821.

⁴⁷*Turun Wiikko Sanomat*, February 17, 1821.

⁴⁸*Turun Wiikko-Sanomat*, May 19, 1821.

⁴⁹This problem had already been discussed in Troppau, and it had caused disagreements among the European leaders. British newspapers had criticised the actions of the Sovereigns and the formulations of the Troppau Circular. The problem was similar in the case of France. Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna*, 263–4, 271–2, 277–9.

⁵⁰Quote from *The Morning Chronicle*, June 22, 1821. The British Newspaper Archive database, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>. *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* (July 26, 1821) published a direct translation of this statement: ‘Wore detta den allmänna Lagen i England, – –, så måste jag fråga, om den frihet, som wi nu åtnjute, någonsin hade kunnat ernås? De Engelska fri- och rättigheterna äro förwärfwade genom våra förfäders wäpenstyrka och alltid emot Monarkens wilja.’

movements, the Finnish newspaper managed to shed light on another perspective by also publishing news items from the British newspapers. This brought a more moderate tone to the discussion on revolutionary movements. It has been argued that the Finnish newspaper acted in its news reports according to the lines of loyalty in the Holy Alliance; it never published anything negative about the closest allies of Russia but could act differently in the case of British news sources.⁵¹ This may be the case but I argue that the Finnish newspaper could also benefit from those sources coming from beyond the closest allies of Russia. Although it was not possible to directly criticise the Alliance (or other political undertakings in which Russia was involved), some hints of an alternative opinion were given to the readers through British newspaper reviews. Was this a hidden policy of the editor of the official newspaper? It is interesting as such that the long-time editor of the Finnish official paper, Alexander Blomqvist (1796–1848), was a conservative rather than liberally minded but he still chose to publish material that relativised the view of the Holy Alliance towards uprisings. One motivating factor probably was that although Blomqvist was anti-liberal he was still sceptical towards the Russian political system as well.⁵²

There is one foreign event in which the Finnish newspapers, the official *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* and the Finnish-language *Turun Wiikko-Sanomat*, clearly took a stand for the revolutionaries. This was the case of the Greek uprising. In this case, the Finnish-language *Turun Wiikko-Sanomat* was also active in delivering news about the rebellions in the Ottoman Empire.⁵³ The newspaper also gave some reasons for the uprising, explaining that the Greeks thought the Turkish regime had been too harsh on them.⁵⁴ The paper also stated that the Greeks had been denied of their rights as the subjects of the Turkish rule.⁵⁵ These statements justified the rebellion of the Greeks.

Both the Swedish- and the Finnish-language press published reports on the Greek uprising in a positive tone. These reports were also among the news material during 1822. In the case of the Greek uprising, the undertakings of the Greek became attached to freedom for which the Greeks were striving. Thus, revolution was not understood as disorder but as a means to create new order. In 1823 the Finnish language newspaper received a ban for publishing any news material. Apparently, the reason for this ban was the tightening attitude of Russia towards the Greek uprising.⁵⁶ This ban can also be seen in the wider context of increasing monitoring of the publishing field and intellectual life in Finland. These measures included the closure of the politically-minded newspaper *Åbo Morgonblad* in 1821 and the removal of certain ‘suspicious’ persons from the Finnish university.⁵⁷ In this political situation it was too much that the Finnish newspaper wrote enthusiastic reports on the Greek uprising.⁵⁸

6. A new wave of revolutionary news in the early 1830s

During the 1820s, the question of censorship actualised in a new way in Russia as well as in the Finnish territory. Within the Russian empire, the new strict censorship act was introduced in 1826. One

⁵¹Paasivirta, *Suomi ja Eurooppa*, 73.

⁵²Moreover, Blomqvist clearly considered diverse news reports as a duty of the newspaper editor. Tommila, ‘Yhdestä lehdestä sanomalehdistöksi’, 110–112, 171.

⁵³*Turun Wiikko-Sanomat* during 1821; for example, in 17 February, 31 March, 2, 23 and 30 June.

⁵⁴*Turun Wiikko-Sanomat*, June 23, 1821. The newspaper also published reports on the brutal ways the Turks treat the Greek (civilians). *Turun Wiikko-Sanomat*, August, 4; September 22, 1821.

⁵⁵*Turun Wiikko-Sanomat*, September 22, 1821.

⁵⁶In the case of the Greek revolt, Tsar Alexander was in a difficult position: on the one hand, he received peals for defending the Orthodox Christianity from the Turkish ‘unbelievers’, on the other hand, the Greek uprising was an illegal demonstration of disorder – as the Naples revolution had been. See Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna*, 289–308.

⁵⁷Matti Klinge, *Helsingin yliopisto 1640–1990*, vol. 2, *Keisarillinen Aleksanterin yliopisto 1808–1917* (Helsinki: Otava, 1989), 62–84. This suspiciousness was related to too daring political views, as was the case with *Åbo Morgonblad*’s editor Adolf Ivar Arwidsson, who was (quite wrongly) accused of being a Jacobin. Liisa Castrén, *Adolf Ivar Arwidsson isänmaallisenä herättäjänä* (Helsinki: Suomen historiallinen seura 1951), 363.

⁵⁸Especially harmful was the fact that *Turun Wiikko-Sanomat* was aimed at the Finnish-speaking people. Paasivirta, *Suomi ja Eurooppa*, 92; Nurmio, *Suomen sensuuriolot*, 184–190. Another expression of sympathy for the Greeks in Finland was an appeal for those Greeks that had fled to Russia. This fund-raising was quite a successful one. Nurmio, *Suomen sensuuriolot*, 191–3.

motivating factor behind this act was the fear of revolutionary movements within the empire: in 1825 the Decembrist revolt by a group of army officers had broken out in St. Petersburg. The Grand Duchy of Finland had not had a clear degree of censorship after 1809 but it was introduced in 1829.⁵⁹ Moreover, during the early 1830s, several Swedish newspapers were banned in Finland.⁶⁰ In Sweden the newspapers formed a platform for public discussion and political debates. Now new measures were taken in order to prevent the Finnish audience from following these discussions. Despite these actions, ‘revolution’ was present as a topic in the Finnish newspapers also in the early 1830s.⁶¹

As one can note from the statistics (see [Tables 1 and 2](#)), the peaks of the 1830s appearance of ‘revolution’ are in 1831 and 1833, not in 1830, during the year of the July Revolution in France. The peaks of 1831 and 1833 are approximately the same size but in this article I have concentrated on the year 1831. Reason for this is the fact that this year’s material is richer in its content.⁶² During 1831, several news touched upon the Polish uprising but also some other movements such as the Belgian revolution. In Belgium, the revolution had broken out during the autumn of 1830⁶³ but it still received news space in the Finnish official paper during early 1831. In January 1831, for example, *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* reported on the Belgian events by referring to the revolution as a fever. Later, the same paper stated that the Belgian revolution was a warning example both for the people and the ruling powers.⁶⁴ The epidemiological aspect has belonged to the vocabulary of the revolution already since the French Revolution of 1789. Edmund Burke, for example, propagated the idea of revolution as a contagious disease comparable to the venereal disease of syphilis, commonly known as the ‘French disease’.⁶⁵ In a similar manner, the main architect of Europe’s post-Napoleonic conservative politics, Prince von Metternich, stated on the French revolution of 1830 that ‘when France has a cold, all Europe sneezes’.⁶⁶ This epidemiological terminology underlines the irrationality of a revolutionary movement: people catch it like a cold, and it makes them behave in ways that are strange, sometimes even uncontrollable.

Latin American events also appeared in the Finnish news during 1831. In January, *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* reported that a revolution had broken out again in Colombia. The same paper included a short report on how Brazilians in Rio had taken part in the celebrations of the Parisian revolution of 1830: the city had been illuminated to honour the French events.⁶⁷ On 17 March, *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* reported on the death of Simón Bolívar. This item of news included a translation of a proclamation that was said to be the last decree of Bolívar issued to his fellow Colombians. The Finnish paper mentioned that this news came from London and was dated on 18 February. On the day at least *The Standard* published news of Bolívar’s death, including the English version of the same decree that was also published in the Finnish paper as a Swedish translation.⁶⁸ It is very probable that the same content was circulated in several newspapers in Europe and that the papers copied the text from each other. The Swedish newspapers published the information on Bolívar’s death

⁵⁹This meant that the whole publishing field was now set under the preventive censorship. Nurmio, *Suomen sensuurilolot*, 195–201, 326–333; Paasivirta, *Suomi ja Eurooppa*, 94. On the censorship in Russia, see also Charles A. Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804–1906* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 52–5.

⁶⁰Tommila, ‘Yhdestä lehdestä sanomalehdistöksi’, 102–5; Onni Pekonen, *Debating “the ABCs of Parliamentary Life”: The learning of Parliamentary Rules and Practices in the Late Nineteenth-Century Finnish Diet and the Early Eduskunta* (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2014), 39.

⁶¹In 1830–31 there were eight newspapers published in the Grand Duchy of Finland, five in Swedish, two in Finnish and one in the German language. *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* came out six times a week.

⁶²In the analysis phase, I have gone through the material of 1833 as well.

⁶³On the Belgian case, see Els Witte, Jan Craeybeckx and Alain Meynen, *Political History of Belgium: From 1830 Onwards* (Brussels: Academic and Scientific Publishers, 2009), 21–4.

⁶⁴*Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, January 21, and February 1, 1831.

⁶⁵Steven Blakemore, ‘Revolution and the French Disease: Laetitia Matilda Hawkins’s Letters to Helen Maria Williams’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 36, no. 3, Restoration and Eighteenth Century (1996): 675.

⁶⁶Geoffrey Ellis, ‘The Revolution of 1848–1849 in France’, in *The Revolutions in Europe 1848–1849. From Reform to Reaction*, ed. R. J. W. Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 27–8.

⁶⁷*Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, January 8, 1831.

⁶⁸See the British Newspaper Archive database.

some time earlier than the Finnish paper.⁶⁹ The publishing of Bolívar's 'last words' can be seen as an act of recognition of his work in Latin American revolutionary movements. On the other hand, in the same text the Finnish paper also quoted the French *Gazette de France* commenting on Bolívar's actions and giving a more critical judgment of his importance. Quoting *Gazette*, the paper stated that these rebels were heaven's new plague on the people of the earth. Bolívar had caused nothing but racket and bloodshed.⁷⁰ Thus, in its report the Finnish newspaper presented two differing ways of interpreting revolutionary action: it could be seen as an admirable struggle for freedom or as a miserable curse. The last say on the matter was left to the readers of the paper.

American revolutionary wars did not have straightforward effects on the northern parts of Europe. In the case of the Polish uprising, the situation was different – now the revolutionary threat became an internal problem for Russia. In the late eighteenth century, the Polish-Lithuanian lands had been divided between Russia, Prussia and Austria. In 1815, after the Congress of Vienna, the Kingdom of Poland was created within the Russian empire. Poland had a considerable degree of autonomy, including a constitution and a two-chamber assembly – something that Finland did not have. This degree of freedom did not last long, however. In November 1830, the Polish insurrection broke out, leading to the armed intervention by Russia.⁷¹ The Polish uprising was present in the Finnish newspapers during 1831, mostly through Russian sources. In January 1831, *Helsingfors Tidning* reported on the insurrection in the section of 'domestic news', referring to the information given by the newspapers in St. Petersburg.⁷² *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* (17 February) referred to the newspapers in St. Petersburg and the manifest of the emperor, highlighting the patient and peace-loving nature of the ruler, which had now been misused. The Finnish-language newspapers *Turun Wiikko-Sanomat* and *Oulun Wiikko-Sanomia* also reported on the Polish uprising, giving a very negative impression of the Polish rebels.⁷³ Unlike in the case of the outbreak of the Greek uprising a decade before, the Finnish-language papers did not (and probably could not) show any sign of sympathy towards the Polish revolutionaries.

The Swedish-language official paper also published harsh judgments on the Polish case. In April, *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* published reports taken from the Russian newspaper *Severnaia Pchela*⁷⁴ referring, for example, to the rebellions in Europe – Belgium, Poland and Italy were mentioned. The copied text explained the revolutionary movements deriving from the 'criminal plans' of some groups of people who whipped up destruction and anarchy, and who twisted around 'all that is high and holy in humanity, religion, laws and morality'. The text continued by stating that, 'It is a holy duty to fight against the evil, and by trying to set a limit to the mischief and arrogance of the rebels, Russia fulfils its duty to both its own subjects and to the civilized world'.⁷⁵ These grave words completely and utterly condemned all acts of revolt. Moreover, the text suggested that the rebellions were promoted by some 'criminal' groups wanting to cause disorder.⁷⁶ This argument rejected the possibility that rebellions derived from a sincere need or will to change things.

⁶⁹The news was on several papers on 5 March. On 11 March Swedish *Post- Och Inrikes Tidningar* published a similar 'degree of Bolívar' that *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* did some time later. The texts are not completely similar, however, and it is possible that the Finnish paper translated the news from other sources than the Swedish one. Svenska dagstidningar, database provided by the National Library of Sweden, <https://tidningar.kb.se>

⁷⁰Bolívar had already been introduced to the Finnish readers in the same paper in the late 1810s and early 1820s.

⁷¹See David Kirby, *The Baltic World 1772–1993. Europe's Northern Periphery in an Age of Change* (London: Longman, 1995), 84–5.

⁷²*Helsingfors Tidningar*, January 12 and 15, 1831.

⁷³These reports included, for example, the information that the rebels were drunk when doing their violent deeds (*Oulun Wiikko-Sanomia*, January 29, 1831). The newspapers also called the rebels criminals acting in a state of madness (*Turun Wiikko-Sanomat*, March 13, 1831).

⁷⁴The Finnish newspaper used the Swedish name of this paper, Nordiska Biet, meaning the northern bee. This was a semi-official political newspaper that came out in St. Petersburg and was a loyal supporter of the reign of Nicholas I. Ruud, *Fighting Words*, 60, 63–6.

⁷⁵*Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, April 12, 1831.

⁷⁶This view seems to refer to some rumours of secret Jacobin clubs promoting rebellions all over Europe. On the other hand, these clubs were also real to some extent: revolutionaries in different countries did communicate with each other. See Isabella, *Risorgimento in Exile*, 22.

However, the Polish case was also being discussed indirectly through reports on the discussions of the French chamber of deputies published in *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*. During spring 1831, the paper published French discussions on the revolutionary movements in Europe, including debates on how one should understand the relation between these topical events and the earlier French revolutions. The idea of spreading French liberty among other nations as well had indeed been included in the rhetoric of the 1789 revolution.⁷⁷ It is quite clear that France was considered a forerunner and (either an admirable or warning) example of revolutionary actions. On 1 March (item of news dated in Paris 30 January), the Finnish newspaper published French discussions on whether France should somehow react to the Polish situation. According to the report, the minister of foreign affairs (Duke Sebastiani) was asked if Poland should be supported or just left on its own. During the following week, the newspaper continued to publish these discussions, including some views on the meaning of the (latest) revolution in France and its effect on other countries. According to the newspaper, Quizot emphasised in his own address that France should maintain its own revolution in legal ways and that it should not be driven by ‘a demon of revolution’ and spread its principles to other countries. General Lafayette, for his part, stated that France should show sympathy for Poland.⁷⁸ It would have been difficult or impossible for a Finnish journalist to write that the Finns felt sympathy for the Poles in their insurrection. However, through a report dealing with the French discussion it was possible to state in a Finnish newspaper that someone felt sympathy for Poland and considered its uprising justified. This case shows, again, that by picking material from various international sources, the Finnish newspaper was able to shed light upon the sensitive theme of revolution from more than one (Russian) perspective. Therefore, the reader of the paper was able to interpret the ‘revolution’, at least in principle, either as a temporary state of disorder or as an upheaval aiming at a permanent change in political order.

As one can see from the cases presented here, the travel of news from other European newspapers to the pages of the Finnish paper still took time in the 1830s. On the other hand, the careful reading of foreign newspapers enabled the versatile use of this source of information. Sometimes the Finnish newspaper managed to report on quite recent events. This kind of case is the publication of Chateaubriand’s work *De la restauration et de la monarchie élective*⁷⁹ published in late March 1831 and already presented in the *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* in May 1831. This was possible due to the use of French newspapers as source material.⁸⁰ The Finnish paper quoted some direct extracts⁸¹ of Chateaubriand’s ideas, including his views on liberty and revolution. Chateaubriand was sceptical of the possibility of uniting these two ideas, stating, for example, that it was an illusion to think that liberty would be the highest ideal (of France). Chateaubriand also wrote about two types of revolutionaries: the first type, very rare, wants revolution with liberty while the second group (majority) relates it to power.⁸² It seems clear that Chateaubriand himself belonged to the latter group. The Finnish paper presented these views of Chateaubriand in several numbers without taking any clear stance on his ideas.

⁷⁷Mark. H. Lerner, ‘The Helvetic Republic: an Ambivalent Reception of French Revolutionary Liberty’, *French History* 18, no. 1 (2004): 53.

⁷⁸*Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, March 8, 1831. This discussion was further followed in another issue (21 April), including some discussion on whether France could somehow be considered responsible for the Polish revolt (by giving an example). The same issue was also brought up in May (*Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, May 7, 1831).

⁷⁹François-René de Chateaubriand, *De la restauration et de la monarchie élective, ou réponse a l’interpellation de quelques journaux sur mon refus de servir le nouveau gouvernement* (Paris, March 24, 1831). Electronic version provided by the Internet Archive digital library: https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_ekKdiCpo_UkC

⁸⁰It is possible that *Finlands Allmänna Tidning* was also benefiting from the Swedish newspapers that published information on Chateaubriand’s work already in April. *Stockholms Posten* published a very similar text discussing Chateaubriand’s ideas on 20 April. See Svenska dagstidningar databate, National Library of Sweden. However, the translation in the Finnish newspaper is not identical with *Stockholms Posten*, meaning that the Finnish paper did not copy the text directly from the Swedish paper and it might even be its own translation from the French source.

⁸¹The Swedish translation follows Chateaubriand’s French words quite carefully, albeit the translation was probably based on a French newspaper quoting the original work.

⁸²Chateaubriand, *De la restauration*, 9. French original: – – les uns désirent la Révolution avec la Liberté: c’est le tres petit nombre; les autres veulent la Révolution avec Pouvoir: c’est l’immense majorité.

7. Conclusion

This article has aimed to provide a new reading of ‘revolution’ and its emerge in the Finnish print culture by focusing on the foreign news flow in the early Finnish newspapers. During the period under investigation, there were hardly any authentic editorial texts discussing the theme of revolution in Finland; instead, the topic was present in newspapers through foreign news reports. This reflects the overall state of the newspaper field in Finland: there were no resources or possibilities for a strong editorial view, both due to the part-time nature of paper editing and the restrictions of press freedom. On the other hand, as Ryan Cordell has stated, the reprinting of circulated information was a common procedure also beyond the Finnish print culture. Through the publishing of copied news material Finnish newspapers were able to introduce indirect discussions on the theme of revolution. The political culture of the time favoured this kind of anonymity. When the editor of a newspaper did not speak with his own voice, he was not that easily accused of taking a stand on issues that were too explosive.

By copying material from foreign newspapers, the Finnish newspapers were transmitting information but also different meanings related to revolutionary actions. Through this practice of copying and translation, the concept of revolution was being formulated as a response to those events that were taking place elsewhere, mainly in Europe but also in Latin America. In this article I have not been interested in the quality of the translations in relation to the sources of news. Instead, my aim has been to show that by delivering information on different revolutionary incidents and describing the events, the editors of Finnish newspapers were also offering different formulations of ‘revolution’ to the readers. Although not directly presenting their own views, the editors did have the power of deciding which news to use in their own reports and which expressions and tones to choose when translating the news items of foreign newspapers.⁸³ In this way, at least to some extent, the Finnish newspaper editors became forced to take a stand when reacting to the foreign news flow.

My case study has also demonstrated how unbalanced the early nineteenth-century Europe was in terms of the speed in which information was circulating and also in terms of opportunities for public discussion on topical political issues. During the early nineteenth century, Finland was lagging behind countries such as France or Britain, but also the former mother country Sweden, in the development of those forms and forums that enabled modern political culture. Despite this difference in the rate at which the society was developing, and despite Finland’s location in the northernmost periphery of Europe, early Finnish newspapers – and most importantly the official newspaper – did deliver information on revolutionary movements on a global level. Through this news material, different positions towards revolutionary movements were present in the Finnish print culture.

As mentioned in the introduction, the importance of the French Revolution of 1789 has been emphasised in the conceptual history of ‘revolution’. This view stresses the synchrony of historical experience and the history of thoughts – and their expressions, the concepts. The Finnish case shows that, for various reasons, these developments are not always simultaneous. Before the 1820s, the Finnish culture more or less lacked those arenas that would have made it possible to communicate different notions of revolution.⁸⁴ In the case of Finnish language, the difficulties of communication were concrete due to the lack of terminology. To be able to describe the revolutionary turbulence in Italy, for example, one had to use several words which leaves it quite open, if there was any understanding of revolution separable from minor revolts. It could be argued that this distinction does not even have a relevance, since almost all revolutionary movements were considered as harmful rebellions (against the legitimate order). On the other hand, in the Swedish language one finds a more

⁸³Jussi Kurunmäki, who has studied the topic of political representation in the early nineteenth-century Finland and the role of the official newspaper in delivering news about the parliamentary life in other countries, has similarly argued that although news discussing the political issues in other countries were descriptive in nature, they were based on a selection. Kurunmäki, ‘Political Representation’, 258.

⁸⁴To study the notions of ‘revolution’ in Swedish print culture would be another case.

nuanced uses of ‘revolution’, including a chance of understanding revolutions as a political force striving for a new kind of order. Although a concept in the making and embedded with different meanings, ‘revolution’ was thus present in the Finnish public sphere – not primarily in relation to France and 1789 but as references to wider revolutionary waves.

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