

Why did people go to war in 1642?

Case study 1: 1637-39 – Source 1

A proclamation by Charles I on playing cards and dice, 1638

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What is this source?

This is a royal proclamation (announcement or order) from 1638. Charles was effectively taking control of the trade in playing cards and dice.

The main purpose of a proclamation was to make people aware of a new law or rule. It would be read out in a public place, often the church on Sunday.

What's the background to this source?

Parliaments often gave the king the right to control certain trades. This was usually to make sure that products in a particular trade were safe. Goods that were approved were given the seal of approval. Most trades accepted that they should pay a small fee to get the seal of approval.

Parliament usually gave the king the right to control a trade for a certain number of years. However, the king always controlled some important trades (e.g. the salt trade). Charles took control of many trades during the 1630s. In many cases he sold the control of the trade to one merchant or company, giving them a monopoly (sole control of a trade). Not surprisingly, many other merchants who got left out were upset by Charles's actions.

It's worth knowing that ...

People accepted that kings would try to use regulations like this to raise money, but in the 1630s many people felt Charles was going too far. From 1629-40 he ruled without calling Parliament (the Personal Rule) and instead used measures like this to get the money he needed.

For example, he banned the growing of tobacco except on royal plantations in 1638. He brought in strict laws in 1635 that made people pay fines for swearing and cursing. Many MPs were concerned that

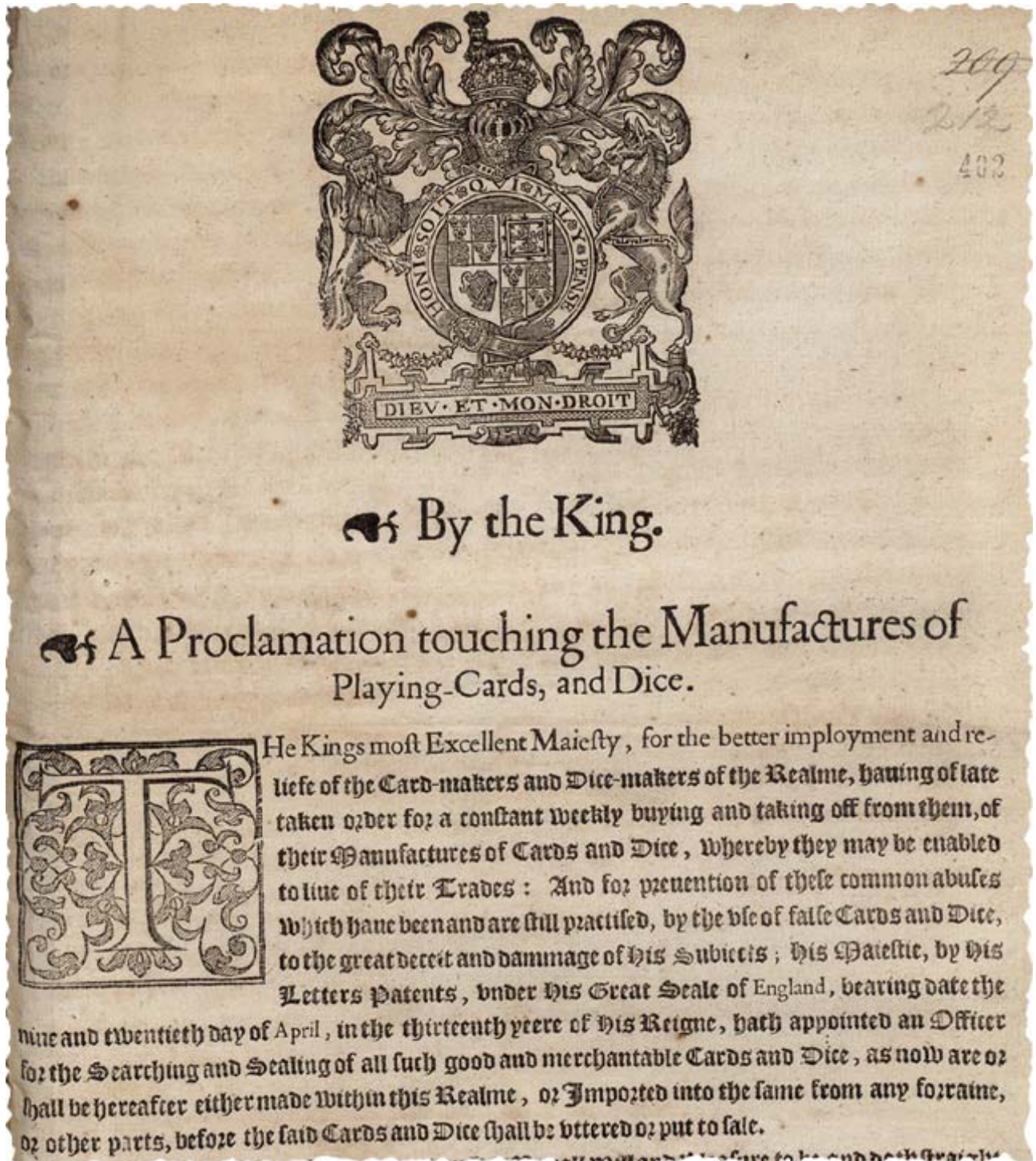
Charles was trying to find ways to raise money so that he could rule without ever calling Parliament.

Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. How do we know that this is a genuine royal proclamation?
2. Study source 1a. The king claimed that this regulation was to protect the public from poor quality dice and cards. Do you think the public were really worried about poor quality dice or cards?
3. Study source 1b. What do makers or sellers of cards or dice now have to do?
4. Will it cost them money?
5. People today often complain about having to pay taxes on too many things. Do you think this proclamation would have led to complaints?
6. Does this source give us any clues about why the kingdom went to war in 1642?



Source 1a





Source 1b

His Maiesty therefore doth hereby declare His Royall Will and Pleasure to be, and doth straightly Charge and Command, That all person or persons whatsoever, aswell Makers of Cards and Dice within the Realme, as Merchants or others, who shall import the same from Forrain or other parts, do from henceforth from time to time, bring the same Cards and Dice to His Maiesties Officer, or his Deputies in London, and other remote places, to be there viewed, examined, and sealed, if they shall be found good and merchantable; paying to His Maiesties said Officer, or his Deputies, vpon the sealing thereof, such allowance and Fee, as by His Maiesties said Letters Patents is appointed in that behalfe.