

## *Why did people go to war in 1642?*

### Case study 2: 1640-42 - Source 4

#### Images from the trial of Thomas Wentworth, the Earl of Strafford

(4a: John Rushworth, *The Trial of Thomas Earl of Strafford*. Published in London, 1680. 4b: SP 16/479/28, 4c: Wenceslaus Hollar D1317, 1641 [National Portrait Gallery](#))

#### What is this source?

Here is a portrait of the Earl of Strafford, an extract from the final speech he made on 13 April 1641, and a picture of his execution in May 1641.

Strafford was accused of treason (betrayal of one's country or king). He believed his enemies in the House of Commons had given him an unfair trial. He made this speech to the House of Lords in 1641, shortly before Strafford faced a vote by Parliament on whether he was guilty of treason or not.

The speech did no good and he was found guilty and executed. The picture shows that event, which took place in London in May 1641. (You can see the Tower of London in the background.)

The portrait of Strafford comes from a book published in 1680, which told the story of the trial. In the 1680s many books and pamphlets marked the anniversary of the events of the 1640s.

#### What's the background to this source?

Strafford was Charles I's right-hand man during the Personal Rule. This was the period from 1629-40 when Charles ruled without once calling Parliament. Charles's opponents in Parliament (led by John Pym) feared Strafford. When Parliament finally met in 1640, Pym accused Strafford of treason. The penalty was death. Basically, Pym and his supporters were trying to have Strafford killed.

Pym and other Parliamentary leaders were afraid of Strafford for several reasons.

- Strafford was a very tough man, although he was also a loyal and effective government official.



- From 1628-32 he was in charge of the Council of the North. He carried out Charles's policies in the North of England and crushed anyone who was against him.
- From 1632 Charles put him in charge of Ireland. He recruited a large army in Ireland and used this to stop opposition there. In Ireland he treated Catholics quite fairly. He did not favour them, but he did not victimise them either. This made some hard-line Protestants suspicious about him.
- In 1639 Charles called Strafford back from Ireland to go to Scotland. Pym was afraid that if Strafford used his army to crush the Scots who were rebelling against Charles, he could then crush all opposition to Charles in England – including people like Pym!
- Strafford was also probably the only leader who could gain the support of neutral MPs and get them to support Charles.

## It's worth knowing that ...

The evidence against Strafford was very weak. The trial dragged on into 1641 and fell apart. John Pym then accused Strafford again, using a Bill of Attainder. This was a legal process that allowed Parliament to simply vote on whether he was guilty rather than basing the judgement on evidence in a fair trial. Strafford was found guilty. Many MPs disliked the way Pym twisted the law to get Strafford executed. Pym's actions eventually led many MPs to support Charles.

Strafford was very unpopular, but Charles would not agree to sign the death warrant. He was always loyal to his ministers. Eventually Strafford agreed to die for the good of the country. He thought the country could avoid civil war if he died. Charles reluctantly agreed, but he was tortured with guilt over the decision. It was another reason why he was so hostile to Parliament.

## Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. What was Strafford accused of?
2. Look at the extra information in the notes on this source. Does this information suggest other reasons why Strafford was put on trial?
3. According to Strafford's speech, what methods did his enemies use against him in his trial?



4. How did Strafford's opponents justify what they did to bring him down?
5. In 1640 most MPs were critical of Charles I. However, by 1641 many Lords and some other MPs were concerned about the actions of Pym and the other leading opponents of Charles. What impact do you think Strafford's speech might have had on those concerned MPs?
6. Look at the image in source 4c. How would you describe this scene if you were commenting on it for a radio broadcast?
7. How can you tell that this was an important event?
8. Does this picture suggest that Strafford was popular or unpopular?
9. How do you think this event might have affected Charles I's views towards Parliament?
10. Does this give us any clues about why the kingdom went to war in 1642?



## Source 4a





## Source 4b

yo<sup>r</sup> yo<sup>r</sup> Estates yo<sup>r</sup> p<sup>r</sup>esentatives by all at yo<sup>r</sup> Stat<sup>e</sup> of such Barons  
 Count as those whose Lungs are well acquainted w<sup>th</sup> such  
 proceedings shalbe started out against yo<sup>r</sup> if yo<sup>r</sup> friends, yo<sup>r</sup>  
 Somers, dovids Ardes to yo<sup>r</sup>, if yo<sup>r</sup> p<sup>r</sup>ofessors Evidence  
 admitted to witness against yo<sup>r</sup>, if every word intencion  
 circumstances of yo<sup>r</sup> be alldged as unreasonable, not b<sup>e</sup>cause  
 of a Statute, but a confu<sup>s</sup>ion a const<sup>r</sup>uction of Lawe heard  
 by in a high Histori<sup>c</sup>all strain, and a number of suppos<sup>d</sup>  
 probabilities. I leave it to yo<sup>r</sup> Lo<sup>r</sup>s consideration to consider  
 what

what may be yo<sup>r</sup> fear of so dangerous for sover<sup>e</sup>ign p<sup>r</sup>esentatives.  
 These Gentlemen tell me they speak in defence of yo<sup>r</sup> Common  
 weale against my Arbitrary Lawe, give me leave to say that I  
 speak in defence of yo<sup>r</sup> Common weale against their Arbitrary  
 Exaction for if their Liberties be admitted, no p<sup>r</sup>judice shall follow  
 to yo<sup>r</sup> King, to yo<sup>r</sup> Countrey if yo<sup>r</sup> and yo<sup>r</sup> posterity be defalld  
 by yo<sup>r</sup> same means yo<sup>r</sup> greatest affaires of yo<sup>r</sup> Kingdome.  
 For my poore selfe, if it were not yo<sup>r</sup> Lo<sup>r</sup>s Interest and yo<sup>r</sup> Interest  
 of a Saint in Heaven, who hath left me two pledges, here on earth





## Source 4c

