



Why did people want the king back in 1646?

Case study 2: Viewpoints, 1645-46 - Source 2

A letter written by Charles I to Parliament about a treaty, 26 December 1645

(Catalogue ref: SP 16/511/87)

What is this source?

This is part of a letter written by Charles I to the Speaker of the House of Parliament in December 1645. The two sides were attempting to work out the terms of a treaty to end the war.

It was one of a series of letters which Charles and Parliament sent to each other in this period.

What's the background to this source?

By the time this source was written it was clear that Charles was losing the war. He eventually surrendered in May 1646. The problem for both sides was to work out peace terms.

Most MPs were so sick of war that they just wanted to restore Charles as king and stop paying taxes to support the army. However, there were some MPs and many army commanders who wanted to force Charles to accept some restrictions on his power. They wanted him to agree to listen to Parliament more and to stop raising taxes. They also wanted him to obey the law and not simply put his opponents in jail. Many Puritan MPs and soldiers also wanted to undo all the changes Charles and Archbishop Laud had brought into the church. They wanted simpler churches with no decorations and simpler church services based on Bible reading.

It's worth knowing that ...

Charles tried to make peace with both Parliament and the Scots in 1645. The Scots had been against him since 1637 and Parliament had been at war with him since 1642. Parliament and the Scots had become allies in 1643 and fought together against Charles.

Although Parliament and the Scots defeated Charles in battle, there was no question of ruling without him. The idea of ruling without a king was not acceptable to any of the MPs, army officers or Scots. The main issue was whether Charles would be king with no restrictions on his power, a few restrictions, or a lot of restrictions.

Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. According to this document, what did Charles want?
2. Does the source suggest Charles was being fair and reasonable?
3. From what you know about Charles, why do you think he asked for a treaty?
4. How does this source help to explain why Charles gained support in 1646?



Source 2

If therefore his Ma^{ty} may have the engagement of y^e
two Houses of Parlt at Westm^r, the Com^{rs} of the
parts of Scotland, the Ma^{ty}s Assen^{ty} in Canon
Counsell & Militia of London, of the sh^{es} Comand^{rs}
in Sr Thomas Fairfaxs Army, as also of those in
the Scotts Army for his Ma^{ty}s free & safe coming
to & abode in London or Westm^r: wth such of his
servants now attending him & their followers (not
exceeding in all the number of three hundred) for
the space of forty dayes & after the said tyme for his

free & safe repaire to any of his Guarisons of
Oxon Worcester or Newark, wth his Ma^{ty} shall
nominate at any tyme before his going from
London or Westm^r: his Ma^{ty} propounds to have a
personall Treaty wth the two Houses of Parlt
at Westm^r & the Com^{rs} of the parts of Scotland
upon all matters w^{ch} may conduce to the restoring
of peace & happynesse to those miserably distressed
Kingdomes