

Why did people want the king back in 1646?

Case study 2: Viewpoints, 1645-46 - Source 3

Extracts from a letter written by Parliament to Charles I, 13 January 1646

(Catalogue ref. SP 16/513/10)

What is this source?

This letter to Charles was signed by the speakers of both Houses of Parliament and by the Commissioners for the Parliament of Scotland.

This letter is their reply to Charles's letter of December 1645, which you can read in source 2 of this case study.

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 ...

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.

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.

Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. What was Parliament's answer to Charles's request to meet and talk?
2. Did Parliament treat Charles with respect in this document?
3. What did Parliament want Charles to do?
4. Why did Parliament think its proposals would be a good basis for peace?
5. MPs and army officers were divided in 1646 between moderates (people who took a middle point of view) and hard-liners. Does this source suggest the moderates or the hard-liners were in charge of Parliament?
6. How does this source help to explain why Charles gained support in 1646?



Source 3

Concerning the personall Treaty desired by yo^r Ma^{ty}: there having
been so much innocent blood of yo^r good Subjects shed in this Warr,
by yo^r Ma^{ty}'s Cominands, & Commissions:

Wherby the three Kingdoms are brought
nearer to utter ruine & destruction; Wee conceive that untill
Satisfaction, & security be first given to both yo^r Kingdoms; yo^r
Ma^{ty}'s coming hither cannot be convenient, nor by Dissentments.
Neither can Wee apprehend it a means conducing to Peace, that
yo^r Ma^{ty} should come to yo^r Parliamt for a few days, with any
thoughts of leaving it: especially with Intentions of returning
to hostility against it.

their Authority.
That such yo^r Ma^{ty} against the freedom of the Parliamt imposes
in both yo^r letters, with many darrest expressions, as it in no other
way than that propounded by yo^r Ma^{ty}, the Peace of yo^r Kingdoms
could be established; yo^r Ma^{ty} may please to remember, that in
our last letter Wee did declare, That Propositions from both Kingdoms
were speedily to be sent to yo^r Ma^{ty}, wch Wee conceive to be the

only way for the attaining a happy & well-grounded Peace: and yo^r
Ma^{ty}'s Assent unto those Propositions, will be an effectuall means
for giving satisfaction & security to yo^r Kingdoms; Will assure a
firm Union betwixt the two Kingdoms, as much desired by each
for other, as for themselves; And settle Religion & secure the Peace
of the Kingdom of Scotland.