



## Why did Britain become a republic?

### Case study 1: Death of Charles I

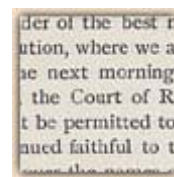
The years 1647-49 were filled with many important and sometimes shocking events. Find out more from these documents.



**Request from army leaders at Putney, 1647**



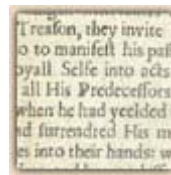
**Plan for a treaty between King & Parliament, 1648**



**An account of Pride's Purge, December 1648**



**Extract from the trial of Charles I, January 1649**



**Reaction from the King of France, 1649**

## Case study 1: Death of Charles I - Source 1

A request from army leaders at Putney to Parliament, October 1647  
(Catalogue ref: SP 9/245 f5)

### What is this source?

This comes from a news sheet published regularly during the 1640s. News sheets were similar to modern newspapers.

This particular news sheet supported Parliament and the army during the Civil War.

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

At the time of this source the army had effectively moved in on London and taken over the city. After the war many MPs became concerned about the cost of the army and the increasing power of its leaders.

- In July 1647 the army set out its proposals for a peace settlement with Charles I. They planned to bring back Charles as king, but with a series of restrictions on his powers (e.g. he would have to call regular Parliaments). The army also recognised that some of the main complaints of the Levellers should be tackled.
- Many MPs were alarmed by the army's views. In July some MPs tried to bring back Charles as king without consulting the army leaders.
- The army leaders responded by marching on London in August.
- Throughout the summer and autumn of 1647 relations between the majority of MPs and army leaders got worse.
- In October 1647 the army leaders and some radical political leaders (the Levellers) began a series of debates at Putney about what Britain should be like in the future. This document emerged from the debates.
- Many soldiers (some of them senior officers) were influenced by the ideas of the Levellers. You can find out more about the Levellers from the [key people, & events](#) section.



## It's worth knowing that ...

The source gives a clear sense of the growing power of the army in the later 1640s. Although the tone of the document was polite, requesting that Parliament deal with key issues, in reality the army was putting great pressure on the MPs. The biggest problem was pay, but there were other problems too.

Cromwell and other army leaders wanted more religious freedom. MPs were afraid of new and different political and religious groups and tried to crush them. Cromwell wanted a more tolerant approach to these groups, as long as they did not cause trouble.

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

1. What was the main complaint of the army in this source?
2. What did they want done?
3. How would you describe the tone of this source – angry, respectful or careful? Try and think of some other words to define it.
4. Read the supporting notes. How would you outline relations between most MPs and the army by late 1647?

## Source 1

**V** Hereas by a paper delivered to the Commissioners of Parliament, residing with the Army, from and in the name of this council (Bearing date the twenty-third day of September) wee did upon the grounds, and for the reason therein expressed, desire, That if the Arrears due from the City to this Army should not by the time then limited be paid in the Parliament would thinke of some course by way of penalty to increase the sum and give power to the General, [with directions from the Committee of the Army] to levy upon the refusers, both the summe formerly due & also the additionall penalties. Now for as much as the said Arrears are not yet paid in nor levied, wee hereby renew our humble desires to the Parliament, that they would be pleased to be satisfied, either for the Church or for the Army.

## Case study 1: Death of Charles I - Source 2

### Initial plans for a treaty between Charles I and Parliament after the Second Civil War, 6 September 1648

(Catalogue ref: SP 16/516/86)

#### What is this source?

These are extracts from a document setting out the process that Parliament's negotiators had to follow as they tried to work out a peace treaty with Charles I after the Second Civil War.

This is just a few from a list of more than 20 instructions.

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

After the first Civil War ended in 1646 Charles refused to reach a settlement with his enemies. His enemies were divided so he played them off against each other. Late in 1647 he escaped from London. He allied with the Scots. Royalist supporters across the country also rose to support him. However, Parliament and the New Model Army defeated Charles again in this Second Civil War in August 1648.

This document shows that in September 1648 MPs were once again trying to reach a settlement with the king. While these talks were being planned, the leaders of the army were planning more radical action.

#### It's worth knowing that ...

Charles's actions in starting a Second Civil War led the leaders of the army to believe he could not be trusted.

In November 1648 they demanded that the king should be put on trial for treason (for betraying his country and leading it into war). Most MPs were appalled by the idea.

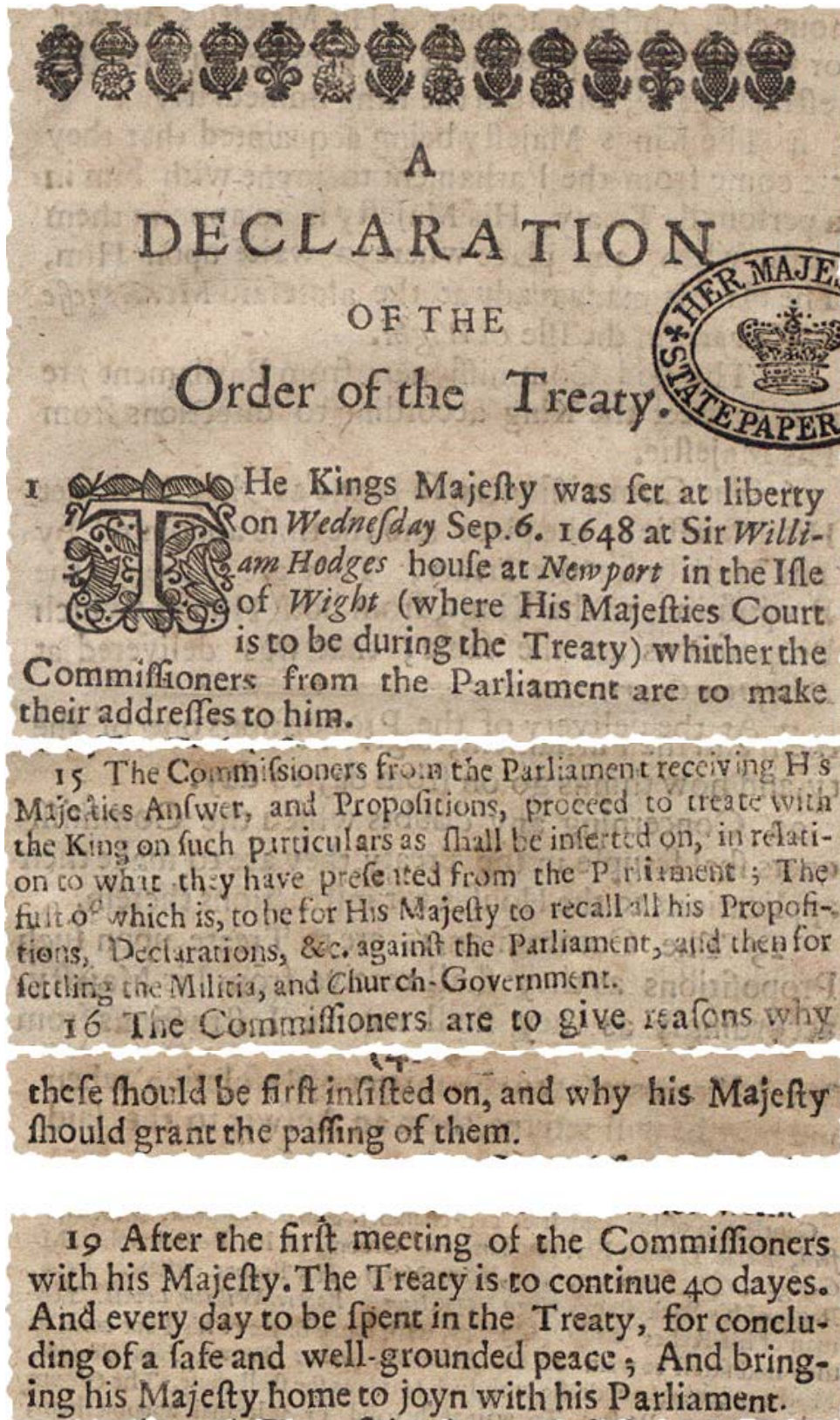
#### Your turn: What can we learn from this source?



1. What was the purpose of this document?
2. What did Parliament's Commissioners have to do?
3. What did they want Charles I to do?
4. Where did they want the king to end up?
5. How would you describe the tone of this document in the way it dealt with the king?
6. Reading this document, do you think that most MPs were very anxious to achieve a final treaty settlement with the king?



## Source 2



## Case study 1: Death of Charles I - Source 3

### An account of Pride's Purge, 6 December 1648

(By permission of Oxford University Press: Firth (ed.), *The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow, Lieutenant-General of the Horse in the Army of the Commonwealth of England, 1625-1672*, Vol. 1, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1894, p. 210)

#### What is this source?

This is an extract from the memoirs of Edmund Ludlow. Ludlow was an officer in the New Model Army. He was a strict opponent of the king and a supporter of Oliver Cromwell.

Ludlow later turned against Cromwell when Cromwell became Lord Protector (ruler) of Britain in April 1653. Ludlow felt that Cromwell betrayed his principles in order to become ruler.

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

In September and October 1648, after the Second Civil War, Parliament tried to make a treaty with Charles. However, in November 1648 army commanders decided that Charles must be put on trial instead. As a result, they effectively took over Parliament. This event was known as Pride's Purge. A purge means a clean out or removal.

Radical (extreme) MPs and army officers wanted to put Charles I on trial for treason (betraying his country) after the Second Civil War. However, most MPs were moderates (taking a middle viewpoint). They wanted to make a treaty with Charles and restore him to power. They were more afraid of the army and radical MPs than they were of Charles returning.

#### It's worth knowing that ...

Colonel Pride 'cleaned out' Parliament by excluding from Parliament or arresting the MPs who were the harshest critics of the army. The MPs who were left were called the Rump Parliament. Many of them were not supporters of the army either, and were horrified at what the army had done. It was completely illegal.

Many of the MPs who stayed in the Rump remained because they felt they could be of more use arguing for their views in Parliament. They

believed that if they left Parliament, that would leave the army completely in charge without any opposition at all.

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

1. What did the army do in December 1648, according to this source?
2. Was this a coup, that is, a military takeover? To help you decide, study some newspapers or news websites to find examples of military coups today.
3. The author of this source was one of the men involved in the Purge. Do you get the impression that the author felt that they did the right thing?





## Source 3

officers of the army withdrew into a private room, to consider of the best means to attain the ends of our said resolution, where we agreed that the army should be drawn up the next morning, and guards placed in Westminster Hall, the Court of Requests, and the Lobby; that none might be permitted to pass into the House but such as had continued faithful to the publick interest. To this end we went over the names of all the members one by one, giving the truest characters we could of their inclinations, wherein I presume we were not mistaken in many; for the Parliament was fallen into such factions and divisions, that any one who usually attended and observed the business of the House, could, after a debate on any question, easily number the votes that would be on each side, before the question was put. Commissary-General Ireton went to Sir Thomas Fairfax, and acquainted him with the necessity of this extraordinary way of proceeding, having taken care to have the army drawn up the next morning by seven of the clock. Col. Pride commanded the guard that attended at the Parliament-doors, having a list of those members who were to be excluded, preventing them from entering into the House, and securing some of the most suspected under a guard provided for that end;

## Case study 1: Death of Charles I - Source 4

Extract from a report of the trial of Charles I, January 1649  
(Catalogue ref: SP 16/517)

### What is this source?

This is an extract from an official Parliamentary report of the trial of Charles I.

The main exchanges here are between the king and Lord President Bradshaw. Bradshaw was the man prosecuting the king.

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

After the Second Civil War many radical (extreme) MPs and army officers wanted to put Charles I on trial for treason (betraying the country). In December 1648 the army and radical MPs effectively took over Parliament. They put the king on trial and executed him in January 1649.

Most MPs were moderates (taking a middle viewpoint). They wanted to make a treaty with Charles and restore him to power. They were more afraid of the army and radical MPs than they were of Charles returning. However, in November 1648 army commanders decided that Charles must be put on trial. They took over Parliament in an event known as Pride's Purge. Of those MPs left in Parliament after the purge (clean out), the majority were still not prepared to support the trial or find Charles guilty.

### It's worth knowing that ...

During the trial the king claimed that the court was not legal because there was no court that could put a king on trial. He refused to accept the authority of the court right up to the end.

Charles probably had more sympathy and support in the country at this time than at any other time in his reign. Despite this, he was doomed. Once the army commanders put him on trial, there was no way they would allow him to be found innocent.

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

1. What was the king accused of?
2. What was the king's response?
3. How did Bradshaw react to the king's statement?
4. From this exchange between the king and Bradshaw, do you think there was much chance of the king being found innocent? Explain your answer.
5. There are many documents on this website that refer to the king. In what ways is the attitude towards the king in this document different from other documents?
6. Do you think people at the time would have been shocked to hear or read these words?



# Civil War

Civil War > Why did Britain become a republic? > Death of Charles I

## Source 4

*Lerke* *Kinge* *Thou Godlike rōde*  
 Charles Stuart King of England you are accused on  
 the behalf of the People of England of diverse huge crimes  
 & treason w<sup>ch</sup> charge hath bin made vnto you the Court  
 now assembled you to giue so final a P<sup>ro</sup>uisione of  
 way off the charge or anyall of the charge.  
 I say againe that so I might giue satisfaction to the People  
 of England of the wrongs of my goeing (not by way of answer


*Not in that way but to satisfie you that I haue done nothing  
 against the Court that hath bin committed to mee) I will doe it  
 But to acknowledge a new Court against hisse p<sup>ro</sup>uisione to  
 allow all the fundamentall Lawes of the Kingdom in hisse behalf  
 I cannot performe.*

*Lo: P<sup>ro</sup>s* *Kinge*  
 This is the first time that you haue publickly disowned the  
 Court & put an affront vpon it, How farre you haue  
 & howed the fundamentall Lawes & the freedom of the Subiect,  
 & what hande you haue put vpon the Court, I cannot intencious and  
 v<sup>er</sup>ie to be shewen to hisse Nation, You haue committed your  
 meaning in bloud, & the w<sup>ch</sup> hath brought the whole Kingdom  
 But I haue not vnderstande your meaning.  
 Alaske I would the default of Gentlemen you hat  
 brought the Parliament take him back againe.

*Kinge* I haue said p<sup>ro</sup>ceede to you, if it were only my particular  
 intereste I would not

*Lo: P<sup>ro</sup>s* *Kinge*  
 If you haue heard the pleasure of the Court & you are (though  
 you will not vnderstand it) to giue that you are before a Court  
 of Justice

*Kinge* Well I giue I am before a Court  
 I would haue giue in a lower Court at how was  
 going away



## Case study 1: Death of Charles I - Source 5

### Reaction from the King of France to the execution of Charles I, 1649

(Catalogue ref: SP 116/292)

#### What is this source?

This is part of a declaration by King Louis XIII of France, reacting to the death of Charles I.

Louis announced that he was banning all trade with England. He also said he intended to raise an army to help Charles's son (also called Charles).

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

In December 1648 the army and radical (extreme) MPs effectively took over Parliament. They put Charles I on trial and executed him in January 1649.

They charged Charles with treason, of betraying his country. During the trial the king claimed that the court was not legal because there was no court that could put a king on trial. He refused to accept the authority of the court right up to the end.

#### It's worth knowing that ...

Charles probably had more sympathy and support in the country at this time than at any other time in his reign. Putting a king to death was a deeply shocking thing to do. The execution was held in public outside Charles's own hall at Westminster. When he died, the crowd groaned.

Putting a king to death was a challenge to the established order not only at home but also abroad. Rulers and people across Europe would have been shocked and nervous of what would happen next.

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



1. How does this source describe Charles's behaviour?
2. What words does this source use to describe Charles's enemies and their behaviour?
3. What did the court accuse the king of?
4. According to Louis, who were kings answerable to?
5. Louis was Charles's nephew so had reason to be appalled by what happened. Do you think ordinary people at the time would have been shocked at the death of the king?



## Source 5

*A DECLARATION of the most  
Christian King, LOUIS the XIII.  
KING of FRANCE, and NAVARRE.*

At length with Kisses and  
All-hailes in the fore-front of their Treason, they invite His Majesty to a Personall Treaty; who to manifest his passionate desire to peace, spread His Royall Selfe into acts of Grace and Favour; going beyond all His Predecessors in munificent Concessions: Yet even when he had yeilded beyond their hope and expectation, and surrendered His most indisputable Rights and Prerogatives into their hands: with malice as inexorable as the grave, deep and bottomlesse as hell, they abruptly break off, and by force of Armes drag him to the Bar; where Vassals took upon them to judge

their Sovereigne, and call him to an accompt, who owed an accompt to none but God alone, and having Blasphemously upbrayded him with the unjust infamies of Tyrant, Traytour, and Murderer; and sufficiently sported themselves with scorne and contempt, after a small intervall of time, in Triumph they convey him to the Scaffold, which in aggravation of his sorrow, they had prepared at the entrance into his Royall Pallace, where in the sight of his Subjects they committed a most Barbarous Assassination upon his Sacred Person, by severing his Royall Head from his Body, by the hands of the Common Hang-man;