

Why did Britain become a republic?

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;