



Why did Britain become a republic?

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;