



Why did people want the king back in 1646?

Case study 2: Viewpoints, 1645-46 - Source 1

Extract from a letter written by a lady wanting peace, 17 October 1645

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What is this source?

This letter was found in the State Papers from the reign of Charles I. A lady wrote it, but we do not know any more about her.

It is possible that a Royalist supporter in an area controlled by Parliament wrote it, but we cannot be sure of this.

What's the background to this source?

By October 1645 the vast majority of the population were completely sick of war. The death toll of the war was very high from fighting, disease and damage in events like sieges. Historians think that a higher percentage of the population died in the Civil War than died in the World War of 1914-18. Not surprisingly, many people longed for peace.

Another factor that worried many was the increasing power and influence of people with new and radical or extreme ideas. In Parliament, and especially the army, hard-line Protestants called Puritans had become increasingly important. Other groups with radical political ideas, like the Levellers, were also writing pamphlets and gaining some support. For people like this lady, peace and the return of the king were priorities.

It's worth knowing that ...

By the time this letter was written Charles was facing military defeat. His last chance for victory disappeared at the Battle of Naseby in June 1645. He fought on until May 1646, but with no real hope of winning. Despite this, there was no question of getting rid of Charles. No leader on the Parliament side wanted to have a republic, a country not lead by a king. They simply wanted to make Charles listen to Parliament and follow the rule of law.

By late 1645 divisions were beginning to appear within the ranks of the Parliament forces. Some MPs wanted to end the war and stop paying for the New Model Army. Some were concerned about the rise of hard-line Puritan leaders in the army like Oliver Cromwell.

Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. What did this lady want?
2. Do you get the impression she would accept Charles as king without any restrictions on him?
3. Study the notes that support this source. Who do you think the lady was referring to when she mentioned people who did not want peace?
4. How did the war affect this lady?
5. How does this source help to explain why Charles gained support in 1646?



Source 1

can not but hope a ^{generall} peace is at hand, is unwise
a, some be to have it so, but all the reason is left
me ~~te~~ me it must be so, and I trust you are of
that minde; althoe I wonder under fauer I hear
no moer talke of it in this partes that it is
a thinge desired by your master and thos about
him, and befor this that som thinge had bin done
but I fear to name or a gainst this blessing
had wee anie thinge to chuse of, in this day
tractions it maught be disputed; but I thinke
that past time a dae after so muche ille
succes; it tis not feet for me to see anie
moer, but praie for peace and to be content
with the suche a one as wee can gette,