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The sealed knot

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The Interregnum 1649 - 1660

Parliament during the Interregnum

Following the execution of Charles I on 30 January 1649, monarchy was abolished by Parliament a week later on 6 February. From that day until the restoration of Charles II on 23 April 1660, England was ruled by Parliament.

That rule was not without its problems. Cutting off the King's head, also cut off the head of government. Without a Head of State to guide the business of Parliament, the conflicting interests of its members slowed progress. In the event, Oliver Cromwell, backed by the army, took control. Subsequently offered the crown he rejected it, taking the title Lord Protector instead.

Parliament also faced problems from supporters of the young Charles Stuart who wanted to re-establish the monarchy. The fear of rebellion was ever-present and risings erupted in 1651, 1655 and 1659.

Following the death of Oliver Cromwell on 3 September 1658, Parliamentary rule ended less than two years later with the restoration of Charles II.

Questions

The Interregnum raises a number of issues.

What was the significance of the Interregnum Parliaments in the wider context of the shift of power from the Monarch to Parliament during the Seventeenth century?

Why did Parliamentary rule collapse so spectacularly following the death of Oliver Cromwell?

Why and when did General George Monk decide to support the restoration of Charles II?

To what extent did Royalist conspiracies play a part in destabilising Parliamentary rule?

Was the policy adopted by the Sealed Knot too cautious?