Oliver Cromwell and the English Commonwealth

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Background: Oliver Cromwell

- Born April 25 1599
- Owned enough land and money to be considered a member of the gentry
- Wasn't particularly powerful and was fairly obscure for first 40 years of his life
- In the 1630s he converted to Puritanism and joined the long parliament
The Rule of Charles I

- Charles I inherited the English Crown on March 27, 1625 from his father James I. His reign was filled with controversies that led to the English Civil War and the establishment of the English Commonwealth.

- Political/Economic Issues
  - Charles I wanted to join the 30 years war and needed money.
  - Parliament didn't give Charles I the right to collect tonnage and poundage because parliament didn't want to be involved in an expensive land war.
  - Charles tried to collect tonnage and poundage anyway and also made members of the upper class pay “forced loans” which was seen as tyrannical.
  - Charles declared war on the Spanish and took part in the 30 years war and 80 years war, which was known as the anglo-spanish war.
The Rule of Charles I

Political/ Economic Issues

- In 1629 Charles calls parliament to discuss tonnage and poundage again but instead it's members created resolutions against armenianism and Charles' collection of tonnage and poundage
- Charles dissolved parliament and arrested nine parliament members who became martyrs to parliament's cause
- That began the personal rule of Charles I where he didn't call parliament again for 11 years
- Charles I couldn't afford the anglo-spanish war without Parliament so he called for peace which disappointed English protestants
- To collect money without parliament Charles instituted the ship money tax and the distraint of Knighthood fine
The Rule of Charles I

- Religious Issues

Charles I was sympathetic to anti-calvinist Armenians and supported Richard Montagu who published several pamphlets against Calvinist predestination. Puritans suspected he supported Montagu to strengthen Catholicism.

Charles I appointed Armenian William Laud as archbishop of Canterbury in 1633.

William Laud tried to unify religion in England by punishing puritan preachers and opponents to his reforms with the Court of the Star Chamber.

Charles I and William Laud tried to convert Scotland to Anglicanism by creating a common book of prayer but Scotland rebelled and started the Bishops War in 1639.

Charles needed funds to fight the Scottish so he called Parliament again.
Background to English Civil War

- To get funds for the Bishops War Charles I called parliament for the first time in 11 years, however parliament was more concerned with reform and Charles dissolved it in less than a month (short Parliament).
- Scotland Invaded northern England in 1640 and badly defeated the English at the battle of Newburn.
- Charles had to call another Parliament and of the 493 members over 350 were opposed to Charles I’s rule. Oliver Cromwell was a member.
- Parliament passed the Triennial Act which kept Charles from dissolving Parliament and had Parliament meet every three years (Long Parliament).
- Parliament outlawed ship money, the fines in distraint of knighthood, and the court of the star chamber.
- Parliament also began impeaching many of Charles I’s advisers, including the Lord of Ireland and Charles I’s right hand man, Charles Stafford, which sparked a rebellion in Ireland.
Background to English Civil War

- Charles Now had to deal with Scotland invading, Ireland rebelling, and his enemies in parliament.

- In 1642 Charles discovered a plot where several members of Parliament were working with the invading Scots.

- Charles entered the house of the commons to have them arrested, however all five escaped.

- Charles' invasion of the house of commons to arrest some of it's members was seen as treasonous and shortly afterwards parliament seized London, Charles fled to Oxford, and both sides began to arm themselves for war while England divided itself between Royalists and Parliamentarians.
The First English Civil War

- The first battle was the battle of Cropredy Bridge in 1644 where the Parliamentarians lost.
- The same year the Parliamentarians won a major victory at the battle of Marston Moor. Oliver Cromwell lead the Calvary charge and played a key role in the victory.
- In 1645 the Parliamentarians created a new professional army of which Cromwell was second in command under Thomas Fairfax.
- In June of the same year Cromwell routed Charles' army at the battle of Naseby and beat his army again at Langport in July.
- Cromwell and his army laid siege to Oxford and Charles was forced to flee disguised as a servant.
- Charles went to the Scottish to plead for their help, but they ransomed Charles back to Parliament.
The Second English Civil War

- After the capture of Charles I there were still those who wanted to keep him king of England.

- While that was being debated in 1647 Charles convinced his royalist allies to rebel and convinced the Scottish to invade again in return for converting England to Presbyterianism.

- Cromwell and Fairfax put down the rebellions and defeated the scottish.

- In December 1648 Thomas Pride, a colonel in the Parliamentarian army, marched his troops on Parliament and forcefully removed anyone who still supported Charles I creating a “rump parliament.”

- Thomas Fairfax, the leader of the army, disagreed with this and left his post, making Cromwell the new leader of Parliamentarian army.

- The rump parliament held a trial and beheaded Charles I in January 1649.
The Commonwealth

- Shortly after Charles I was beheaded the rump parliament passed the "Act prohibiting the proclaiming any person to be King of England or Ireland, or the Dominions thereof" which made England into a republic known as the commonwealth.

- Under the commonwealth the rump parliament exercised executive and legislative authority.

- The rump parliament passed a number of strict morality laws that closed down theaters and required strict observance of Sundays. Another act, The Adultery Act of May 1650, made adultery and incest punishable by death.

- The rump parliament made English court proceedings happen in English instead of French or Latin.
In 1651 the rump parliament passed the navigation act which declared that all English trade should be carried on English vessels.

This was the beginning of English mercantilism, which they were imitating from the French.

The navigation act angered the Dutch who relied on trade, especially since the navigation acts were often used as an excuse to steal Dutch ships.

This began the first of the Naval Anglo-Dutch Wars.

Netherlands won initial victories at the battles of Kentish-Knock and Dungeness in 1652, however the Dutch lacked the Naval strength to make any real progress.

The war continued after the end of the English Commonwealth.
The commonwealth's progress ground to a halt after four years mainly because of a lot of infighting between factions that opposed the current law system or were more concerned with personal commercial success.

The rump parliament sent Cromwell to Ireland with his army to put down the rebellion and Cromwell massacred thousands of Irish-Catholic civilians.

Cromwell then went to Scotland to defeat the army that Charles I's son Charles II had raised. He crushed the Scottish army at the battle of Worcester in 1651 and Charles II fled to France.

When Cromwell returned in 1653 he was frustrated by the fighting between factions with the rump parliament and its inability to get anything done so in Cromwell led troops into the parliament chamber and forced them to dismiss.
Establishment of the Protectorate

- After the rump parliament fell, Cromwell didn't want to turn England into a military dictatorship and instead established a nominated assembly known as Barebone's parliament.

- Barebone's parliament was ridiculed for being comprised of people with little political experience.

- They got very little done because of even more disagreements and little political knowledge.

- After less than a year, Barebone's Parliament voted to dissolve itself out of fear that radicals within the group would take power.

- After the end of Barebone's Parliament, John Lambert created a new constitution called Instrument of Government that gave Cromwell sole power over England for life.
Cromwell's Reign

• Cromwell sought to reform the church and he established a set of triers to determine who could join the clergy and ejectors to remove members of the clergy

• Cromwell established strict rules banning swearing, theater, make up, colorful dresses, and Christmas

• England was divided into 15 military districts that were watched over by a Major-General. This was to ensure taxing and following of his strict moral rules.

• The military districts were abolished in 1656 due to a lack of support

• Additionally in 1654 the Anglo-Dutch war was still happening and was putting an economic drain on both countries. Cromwell made peace with the Dutch in the Treaty of Westminster.
Cromwell's Reign

- Despite the strict moral codes Cromwell actually supported a degree of religious toleration in England and protected Baptists, Presbyterians, and Independents under the law.

- Cromwell encouraged the Jews to return to England. Jews had been banned since Edward I expelled them nearly 350 years ago. Cromwell did this because he saw how helpful the Jews were in the Netherlands' economy and because he wanted to convert them to Christianity.
After Cromwell

- Cromwell ruled for only five years until his death in 1658.
- After Cromwell died his son, Richard Cromwell, took over for a year, however he didn't have the support of the army and Richard was forced to resign.
- The English Monarchy was restored in 1660 when Charles II published the Declaration of Breda where he promised a pardon for all crimes against the crown if he was given power.
- Parliament met once again and decided that Charles II had been the rightful monarch all along.
- Shortly after Charles II took over the throne he post-humorously executed Oliver Cromwell by cutting off his corpse's head.