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# The Trial of Charles I

*David Lagomarsino, Charles T. Wood*

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**The Trial of Charles I** David Lagomarsino, Charles T. Wood
On January 6, 1649, the House of Commons passed an act for “the Trying and Judging of Charles Stuart, King of England.” By month’s end, the King’s judges had found him “guilty of High Treason and of the murders, rapines, burnings, spoils, desolations, damage, and mischief to this nation” committed during the recently concluded Civil War. The sentence, ordering his execution “by severing of his head from his body,” was carried out in full public view on January 30.

How and why a King--God’s annointed--could be executed for treason are questions that underscore the profound changes that politics and political thought were undergoing at this time. To provide a window into this pivotal period, accounts of the trial and execution taken from contemporary newspapers, pamphlets, and official records, are collected here and edited for modern readers. This compilation of eyewitness accounts has been arranged to sketch a dramatic day-by-day narrative of that fateful month, introducing the important issues in a way that brings readers close to the making of these great events. The speeches at the trial make especially vivid the clash between two contrasting theories of government--that of a divine monarchy in which a king is deemed essential to the true liberty of his people, and that of a commonwealth in which sovereignty rests with the people and is exercised by its representatives.

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