

**History of English Language and Literature**  
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**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology Madras**  
**Lecture No 8a**

**The Caroline Period or The Age of Milton and The Interregnum (Continued)**

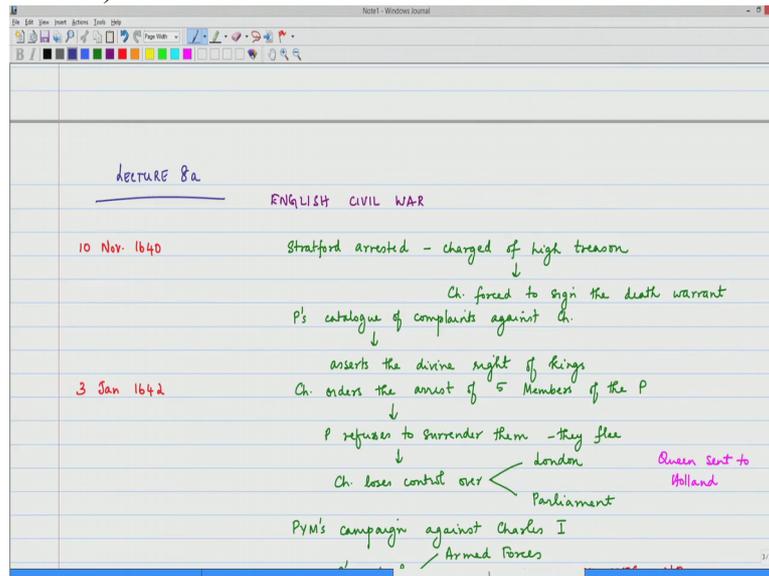
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Hello everyone. Welcome to yet another session on the NPTEL course, The History of English Language and Literature. Today's lecture is the continuation of the previous lecture and we continued to locate the various socio-political events that served as the background for the Caroline Age or The Age of Milton or the period of Interregnum that followed.

So let us begin this lecture by looking at the turn of events which led to the English Civil War. In the previous session, we noted that the fifth and the final meeting that Charles had with the Parliament in 1640; it also inaugurated a long and deadly struggle between the monarch and the Parliament. And here we were going to take a look

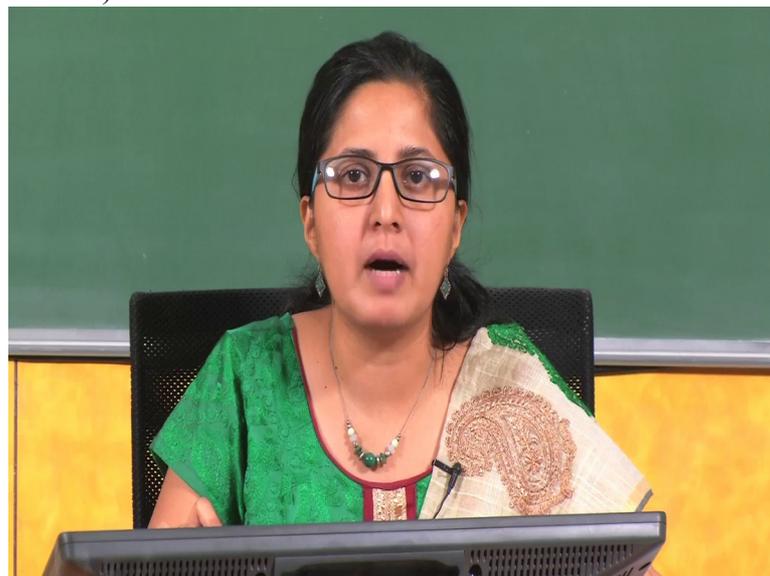
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at series of events that led to the English Civil War.

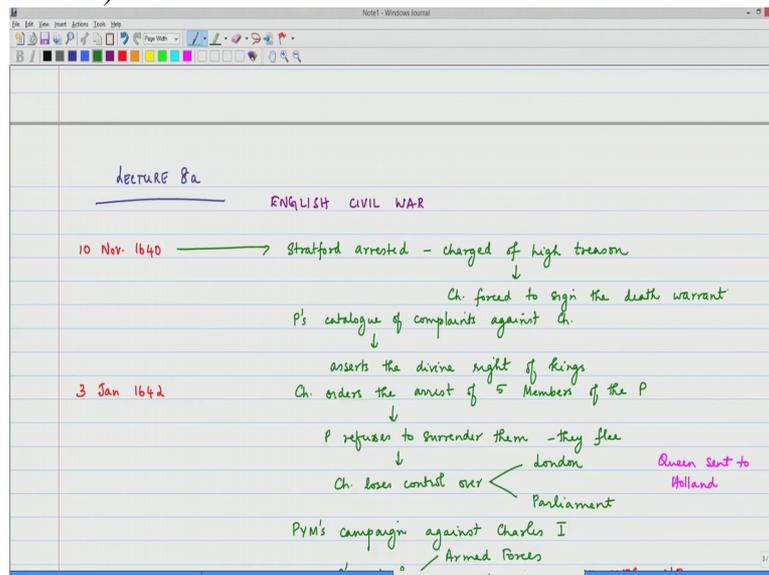
On tenth November 1640, we find the Parliament taking more charge and they also get Strafford, Earl of Strafford who was Charles' advisor arrested. He is charged of high treason. There was actually no particular reason to arrest him and charge him for high treason. This is only one of the smart ways through which the Parliament thought they could curb the powers of, it is only one of the ways through which they thought they could curb the

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powers of the advisor and also bring in some form and also in some form clip the extensive powers that Charles enjoyed in

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England there.

So he is charged of high treason and sent to Tower and Charles is also forced to sign the Death Warrant which he does very reluctantly. Initially he completely refuses to sign the Death Warrant because he thought it was completely against his conscience and also he was also not convinced about what he was going to do but some political thinkers and historians (O) to point. They also feel that if Charles had agreed to sign

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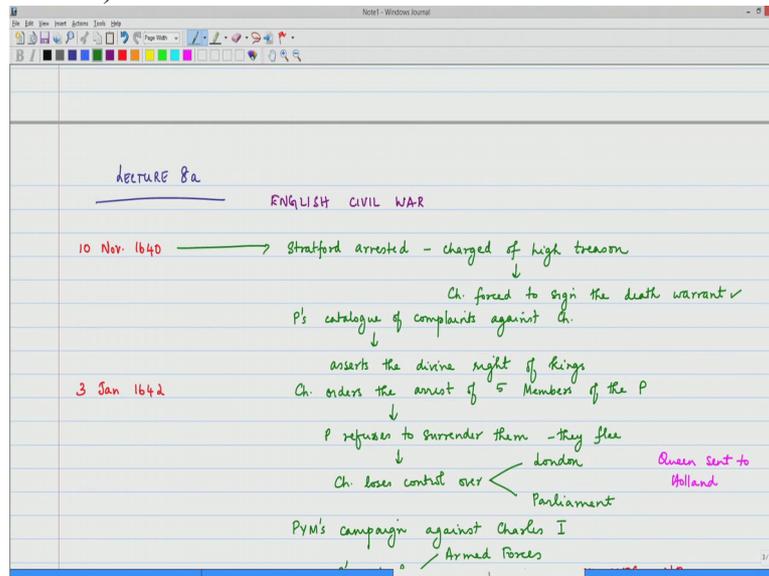


the Death Warrant of the Earl of Strafford right away he could have perhaps found a scapegoat and could have perhaps negotiated into a better relation with the Parliament. He could have laid the blame of the Scottish Rebellion on the Earl of Strafford and could have

come out fairly innocent from the entire issue that he had created in Scotland in terms of introducing the religious prayer book The Anglican Prayer book in Scotland.

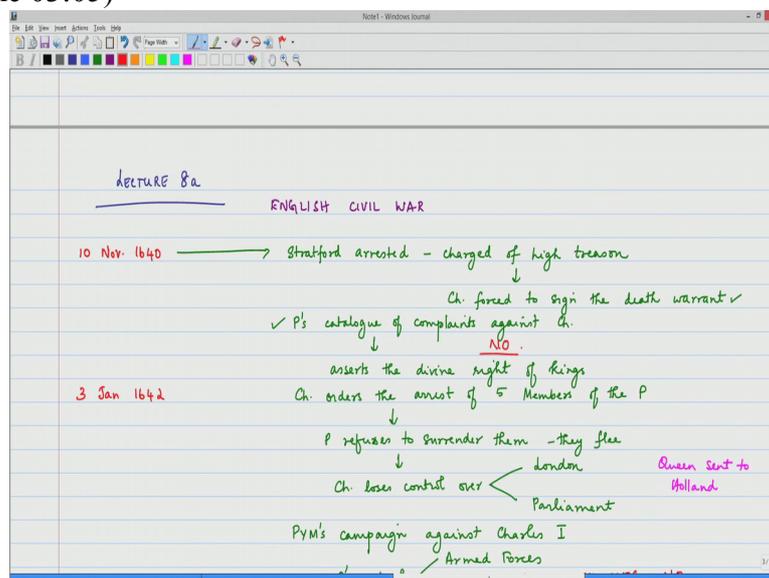
But however we do find him being very

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reluctant to sign it initially but the Parliament threatened to end the lives of the Queen and his children and so fearing all of this catastrophe he signs the Death Warrant of the Earl of Strafford. And soon after that the Parliament also presents a series of catalogue of complaints against King Charles the First and Charles is in no mood to listen to any of those things. We find him saying a, and in fact ignore to any of the

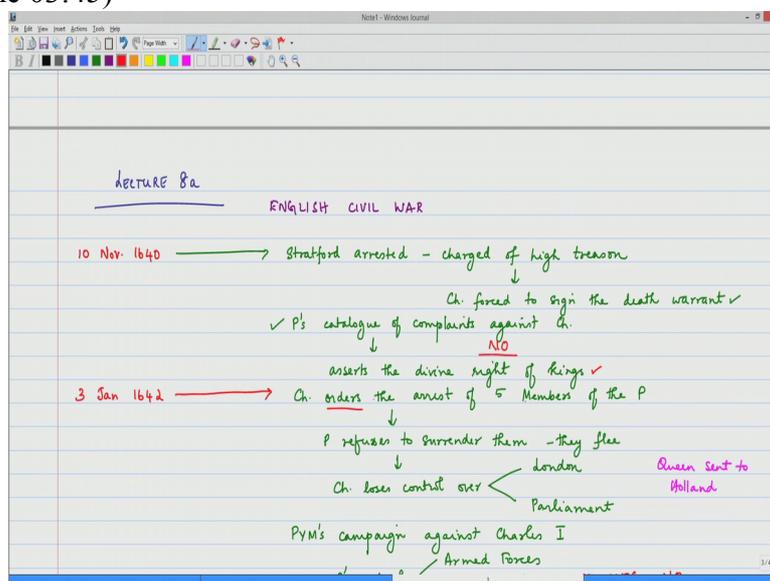
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negotiations or any of the proposals that the Parliament was putting forward. He continues to assert the divine right of kings. And we also find him being quite arrogant even to the point of foolishness in believing in the divine right and in the terms of absolutism monarchy.

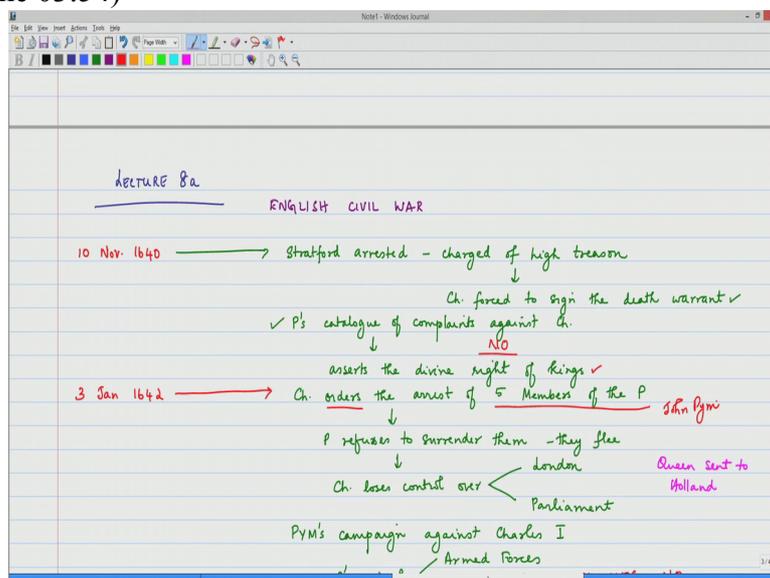
And in the meantime the Parliament also asked him to impeach the Queen because they also thought that the Queen was holding a lot of evil influence over Charles. But by then Charles decides that he has had enough and he goes on to take this a very drastic step. On third Jan 1642 we find Charles ordering the arrest of

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five members of the Parliament including John Pym. But the Parliament

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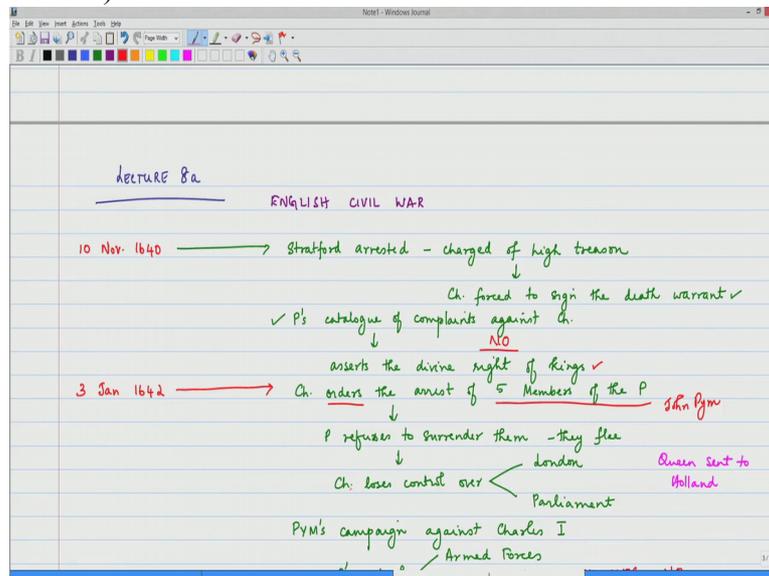
by then, they also was in no mood to take on any kind of confrontation from the King. They refused to surrender these five members and they all flee London and also particularly John Pym, he had a lot of

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support from the public during the time that he, the King had completely managed to enrage not just the Parliamentarians but also the

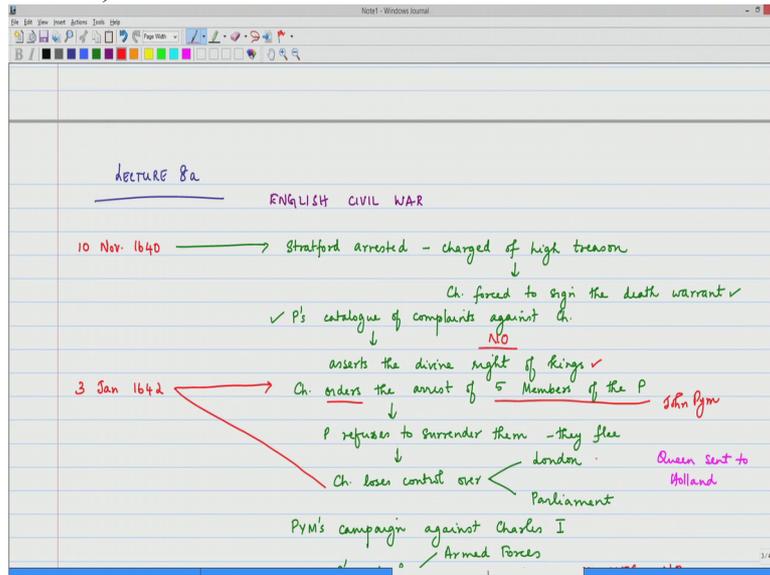
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commoners by then.

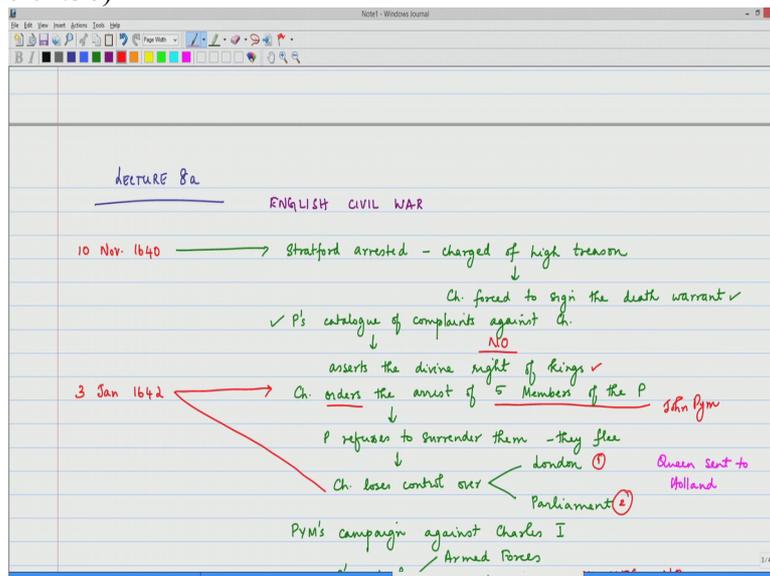
And also we begin to see that this becomes a perhaps a momentous thing and a fatal thing that Charles did and with this, around this time he also loses control over, not just the Parliament

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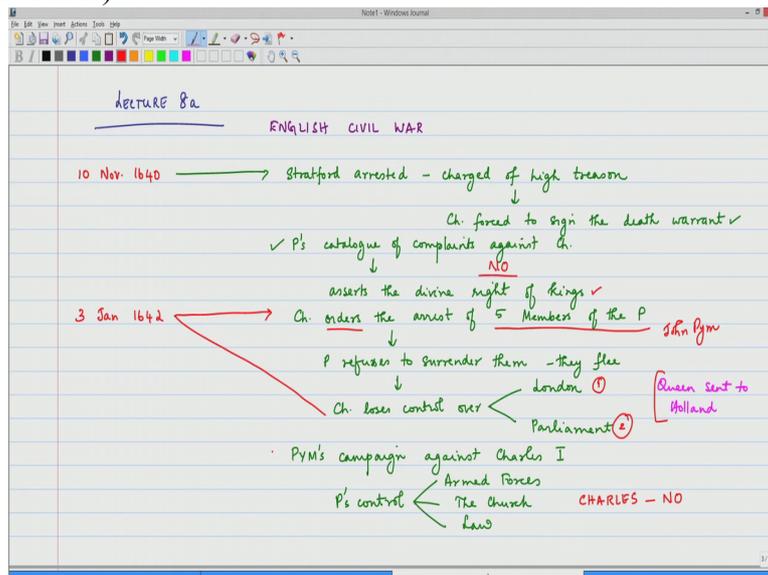
but also the City of London. So the City of London and

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the Parliament becomes quite loggerheads with Charles and he also sends the Queen to Holland for her safety. And during this time, we find

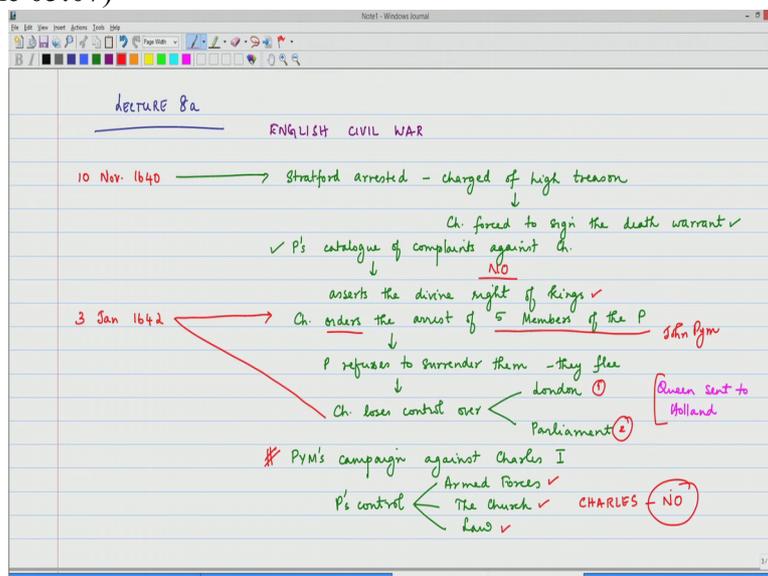
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John Pym launching a campaign against Charles First. So he had three things in mind when he launched this campaign. He asked for, he in the sense, he as the representative of the Parliament, he asked for control over three things, the Armed Forces, the Church and the Law.

And Charles obvious response was no to the Parliament. He was

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in no mood to listen to any of these things or to negotiate with the Parliament even to a little bit. Here it is important to reiterate that the Parliament even at this point, they did not even imagine getting rid of Charles and they did not even imagine getting rid of a monarch from the

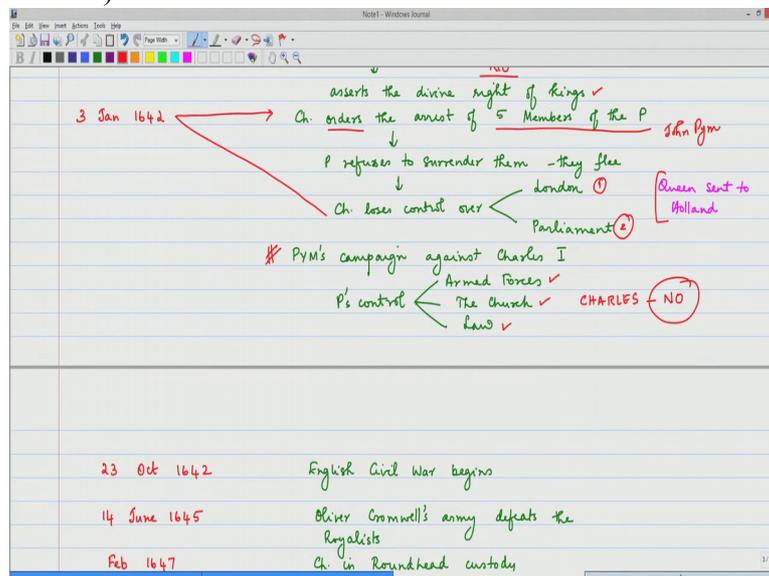
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island of England but all that they had in mind was to introduce a set of principles and the set of, to introduce the set of principles that could perhaps bring in a more balance of power in England.

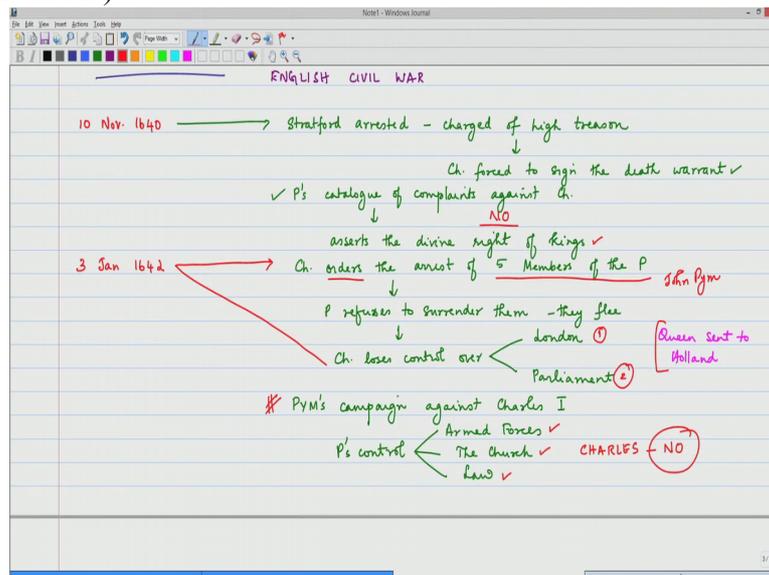
And Charles does not

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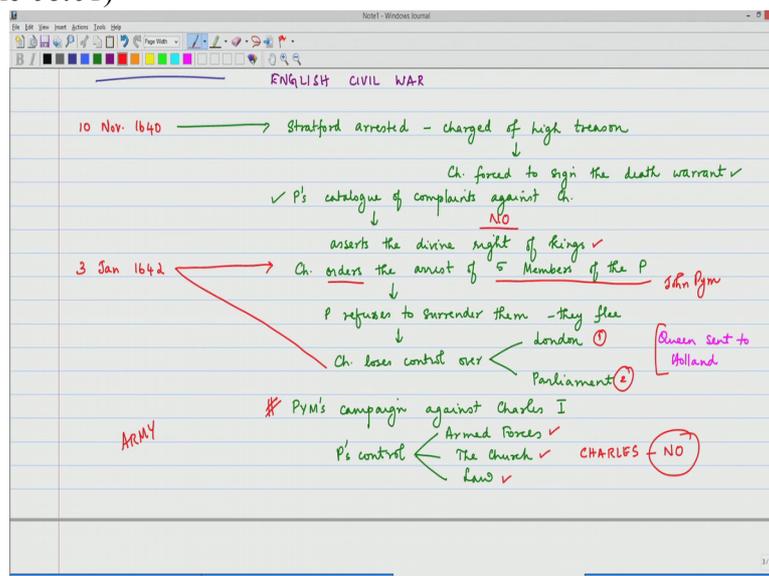
seem to get any of these clues and he just marches on right away with, Charles does not

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seem to agree to any of the terms that they put up and at this point we find that John Pym enlists an army. And Charles also

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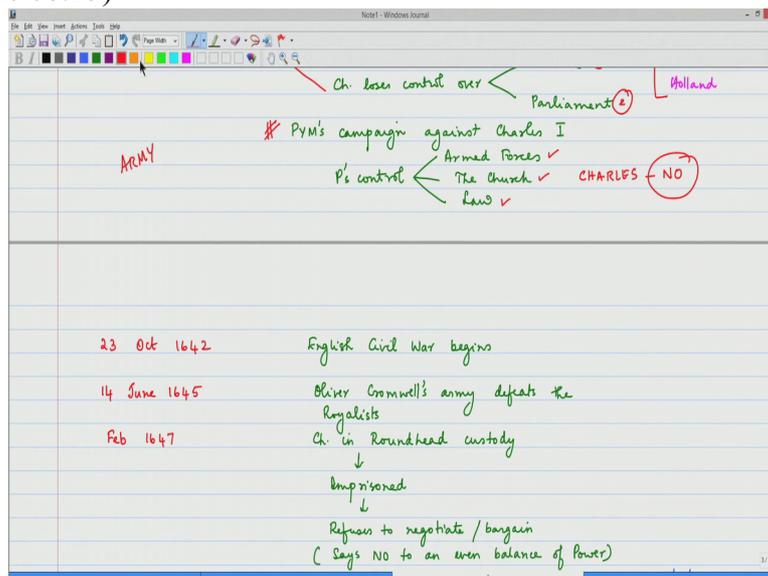
enlists another set of army. With this we find the English Civil War breaking out. This was initially not something that Charles or the Parliament had in mind but we begin to see that it just

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led to the eventuality which

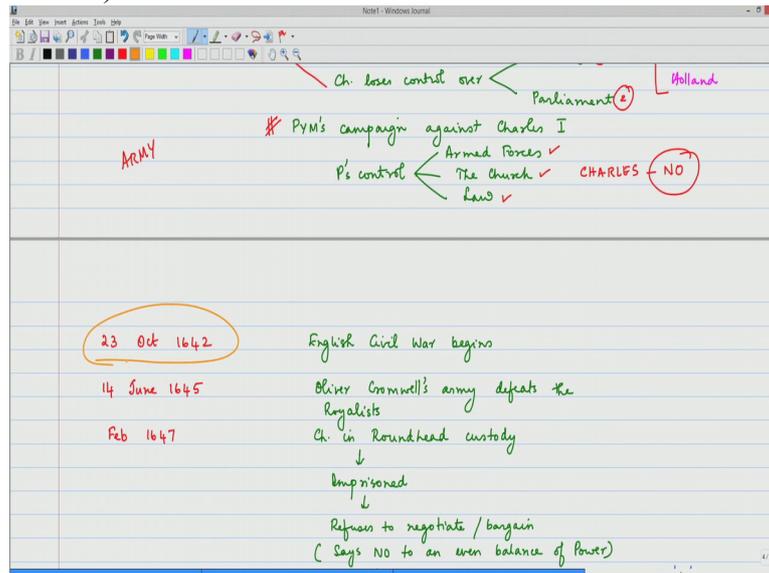
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had to eventually happen.

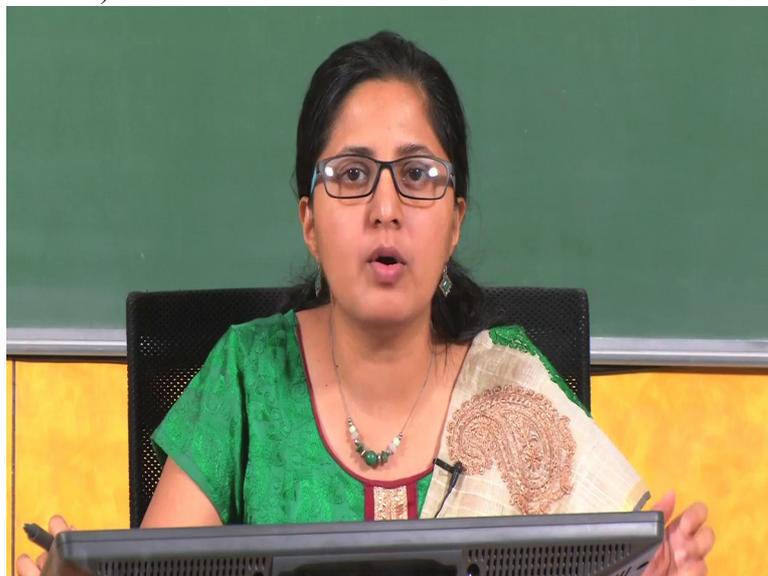
So on twenty third October 1642 we find the

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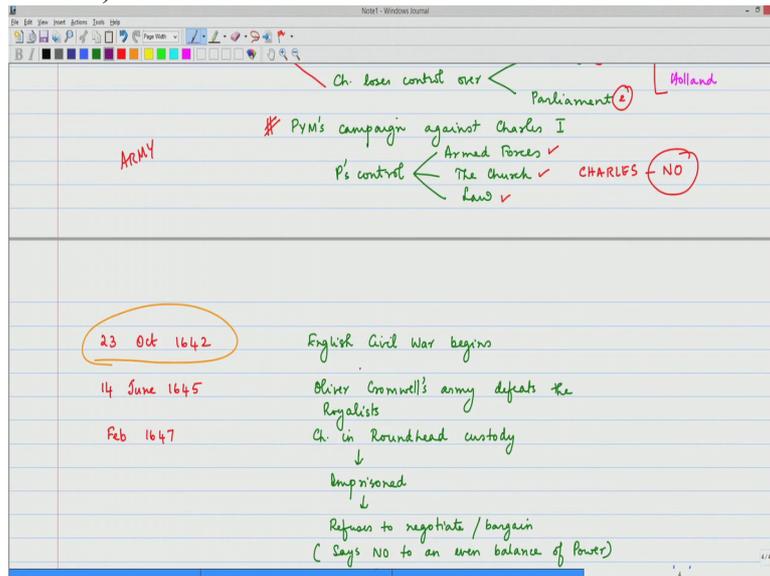
English Civil War breaking in England. And initially the royalists had a lot of successes, a series of successes in fact and the Parliamentarians were continually getting defeated. We also saw in the previous sections, in the previous session who supported who, who the supporters of the King were and who the supporters of the Parliament were. So in that sense the King

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already had an army which was well-trained so the Parliament did not have that kind of ability in them. So they find themselves continually facing failure and lot of difficulties in maintaining a disciplined

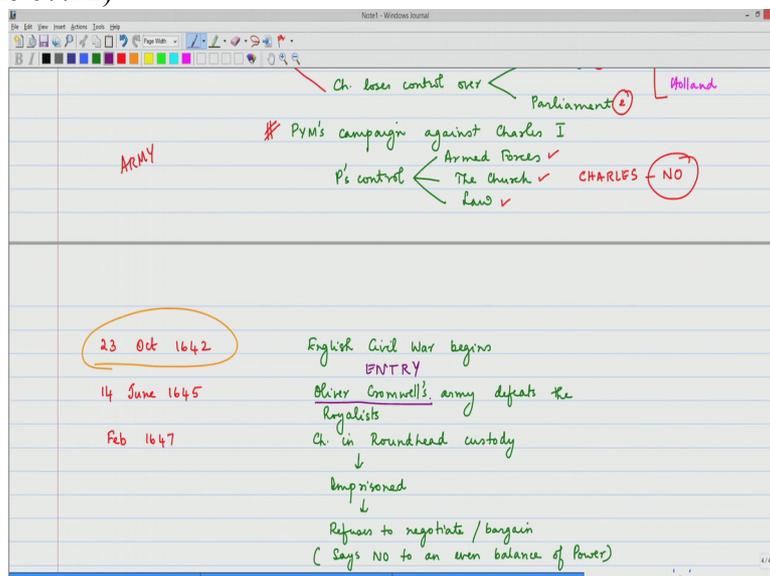
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army as well.

It is at this point that we find the entry of Oliver Cromwell. It is at this point that we find the entry of Oliver Cromwell.

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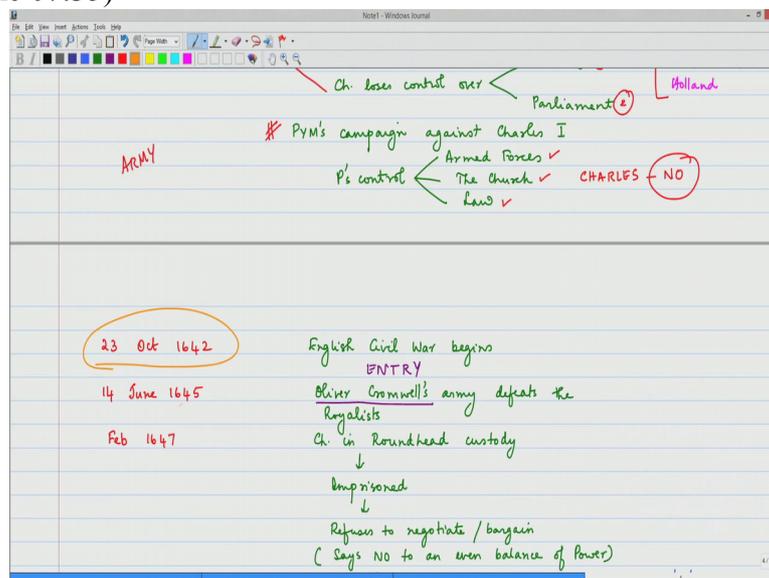
Oliver Cromwell was a staunch Puritan. We shall shortly take a look at who he really was

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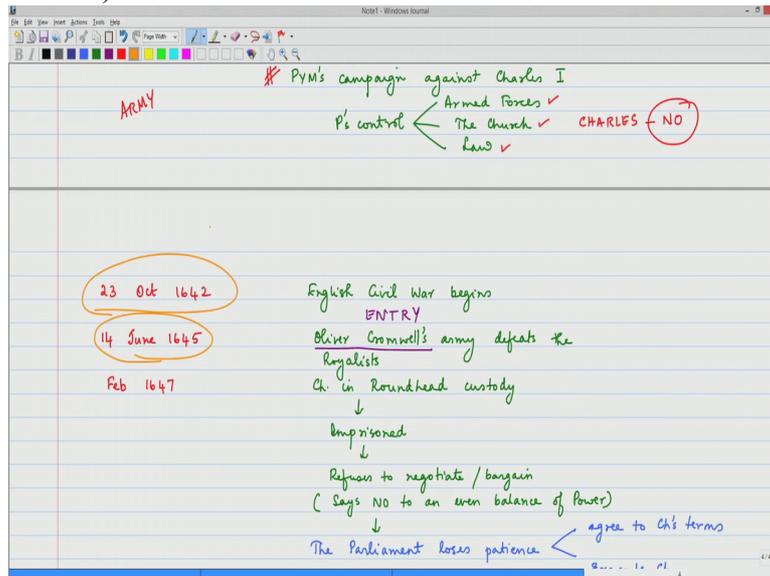
and what the kind of influence he had on England. He managed to create a very disciplined army and within three years we find that his army could outwit the Royalist army. So by fourteenth June 1645, so

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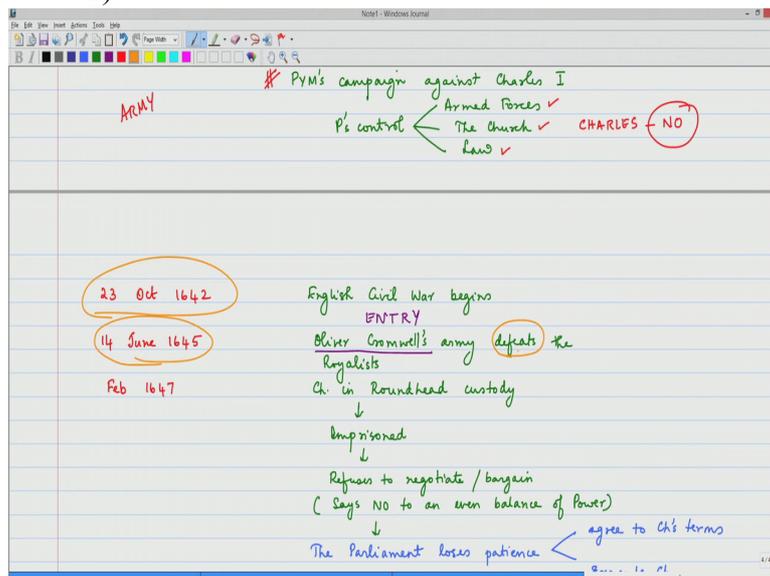
by fourteenth June 1645 we find Oliver Cromwell's army defeating the Royalists. This

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does not really mark the end of the Civil War. We also find the series of wars happening back and forth with the support of Scotland, Ireland,

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we find the Commonwealth entirely getting dragged in this imbroglio but nevertheless we shall not be going into the details

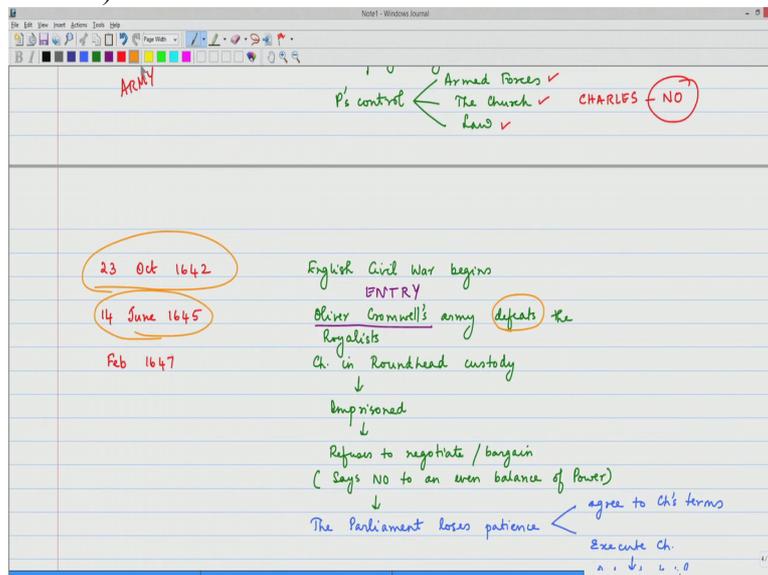
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of this right away and by 1647 the inevitable happens.

King Charles is in Roundhead custody and he is imprisoned.

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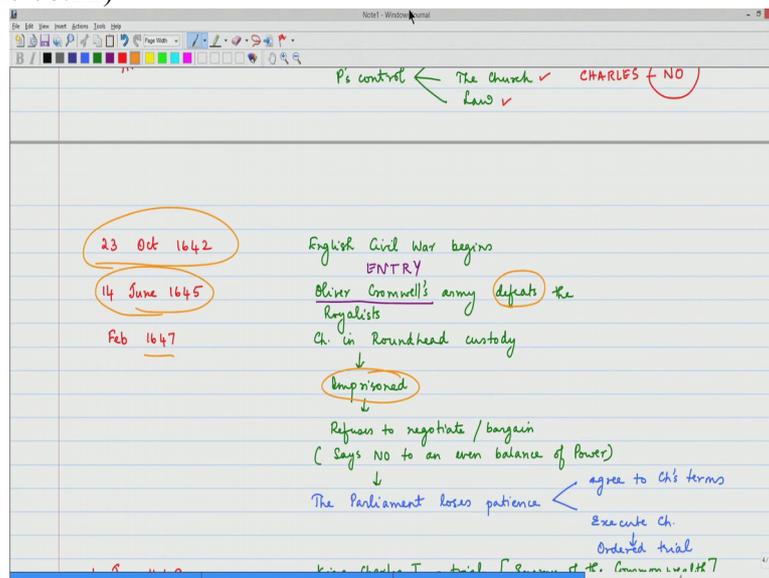
But even at this point of time we find him continuing to be the arrogant believer in the divine right of kings. He just refuses to negotiate with the Parliament. He continues to say no to all kinds of proposals

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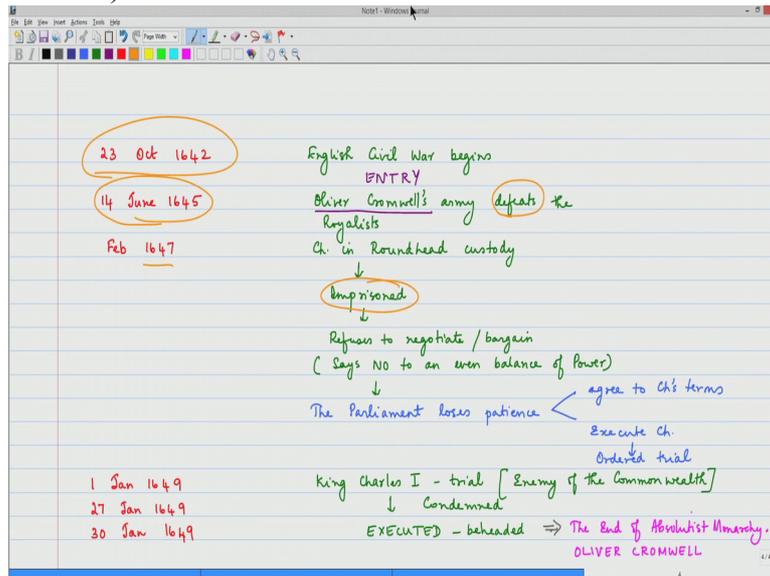
the Parliament was trying to bring in.

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At this point of time, even one of King's closest friends, the Duke of Richmond, he thought the King was being very foolish in refusing to bargain at this point of time. We find Richmond making this statement. A crown so nearly lost was never so easily recovered as this would have been. So many of even the King's supporters, they begun to realize that King was making a very foolish decision at this point of time being imprisoned and unwilling to negotiate with the Parliamentarians.

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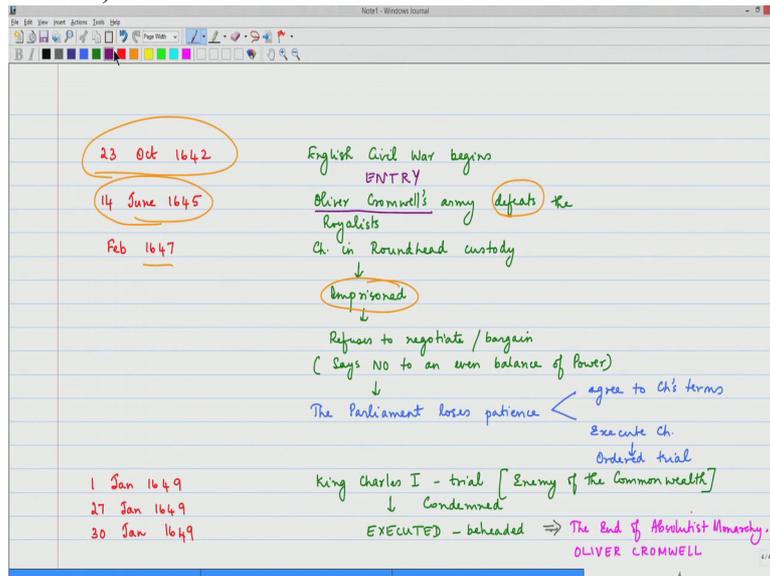
So as they move on, Charles continues to be imprisoned and also in-between he manages to flee to Scotland but he is not, does not find much favor over there as well. He is again imprisoned and handed back to the English Parliament.

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So the Parliament also loses patience because they had been trying to deal with this King for about two decades and he is not relenting at all. So they

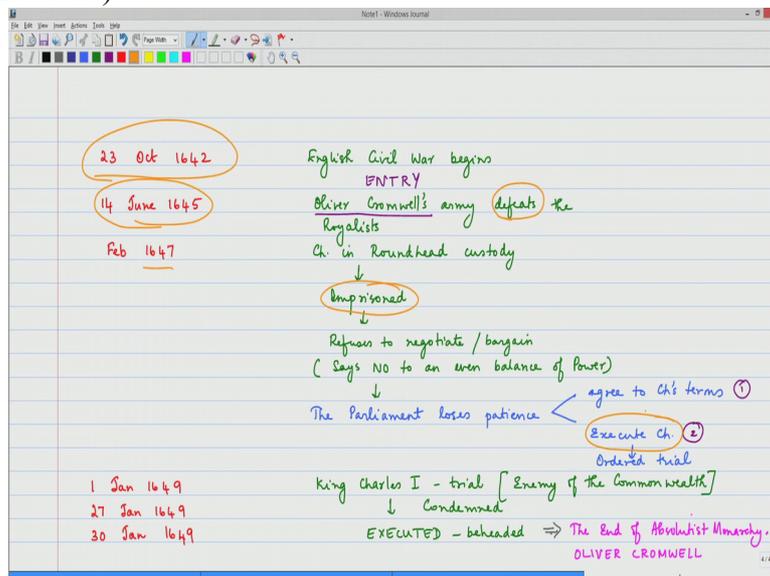
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eventually lose patience and they realize that they have got only two, and they realize that they have got only two options with them. One was to agree to Charles terms which obviously they could not because he was not willing to negotiate at all. The second one was to execute Charles.

So we find that Parliament goes ahead with this decision to execute

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Charles. This was an unprecedented thing in England. The King being executed or even putting a King under trial, nobody knew how to go about the procedures. Nevertheless the trial is ordered. In fact, according to the contem, according to the Laws of England at that

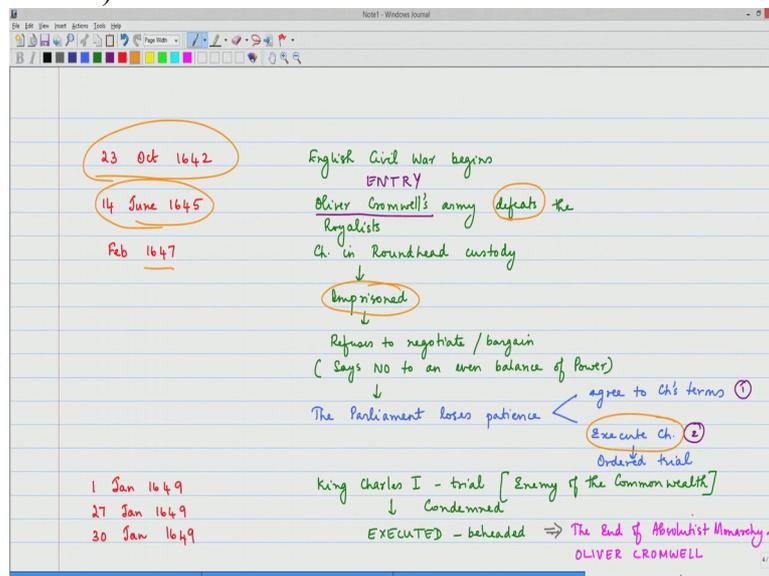
point of time, no king could be trialed on a court because no court had the kind of, because no court had the

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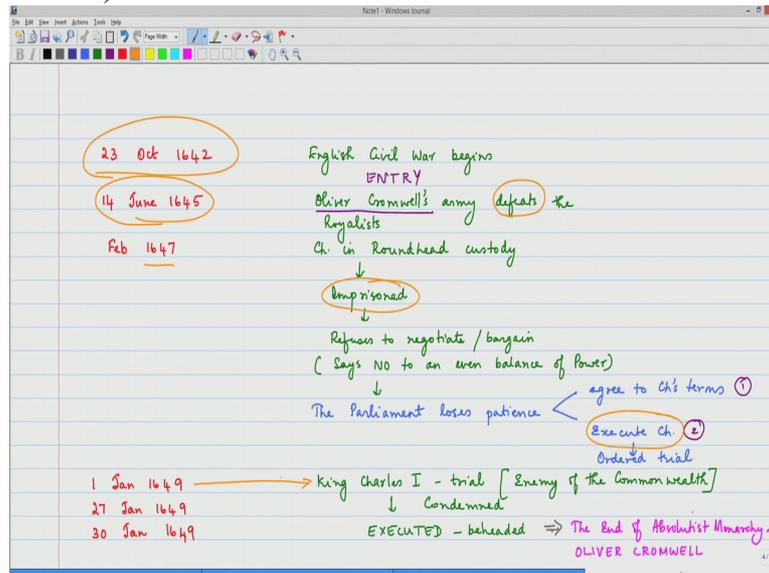
authority over any

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monarch. Anyway the trial is ordered and we find that the trial happening on first Jan,

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we find that the trial happening on the New Year Day of 1649, King Charles First is tried and he is also condemned for being the enemy of the Commonwealth. This was for the kind of things he inflicted on England, Scotland, Ireland put together.

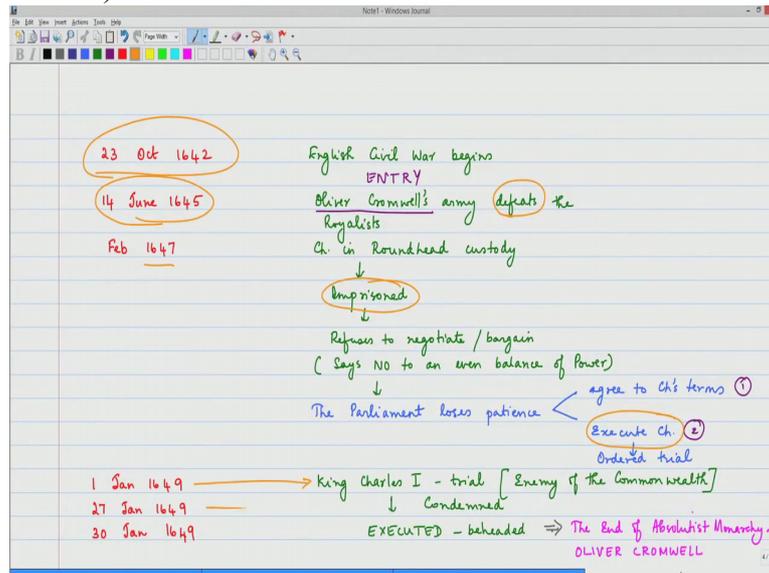
We also find it at this

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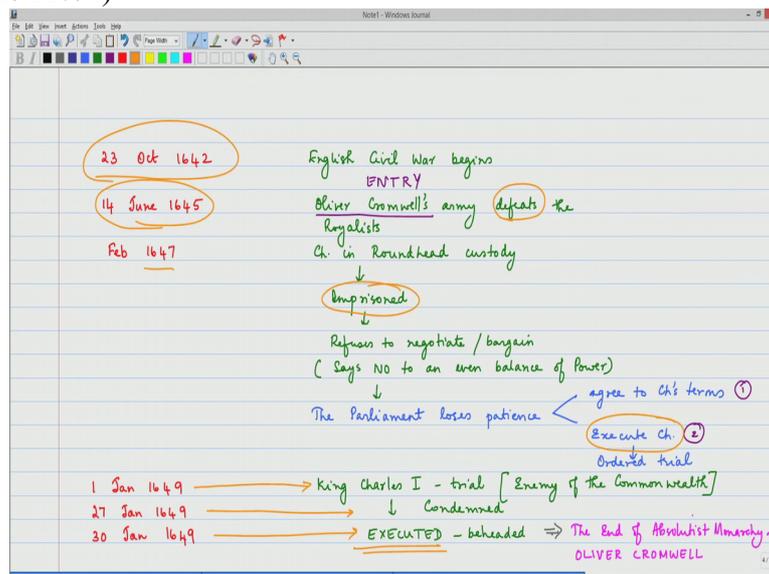
point of time the King continues to be arrogant. He refuses to accept the authority of the court to put him under trial and he also thought he was quite (( )) by then and he had lost most of, almost of his powers he continues to be a very composed person during the trial. Nevertheless he is condemned on twenty seventh Jan

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1649 and on thirtieth Jan 1649 we find that he is executed.

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He is in fact beheaded and history tells us that he accepted this decision with much composure and he also tried to convince himself that this was the punishment that God was giving him for signing the Death Warrant of Earl of Buckingham eight years before.

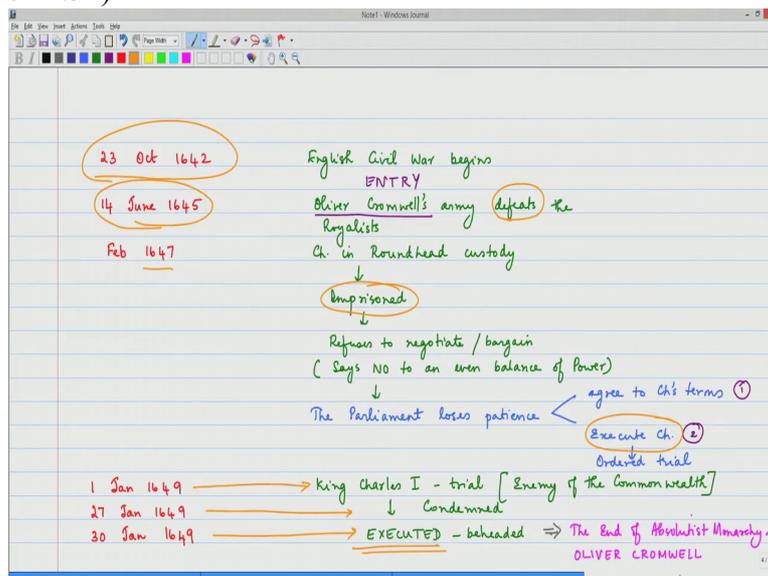
And this was in fact not the beginning of another golden period for England. This was

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not the beginning of democracy

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in England. This is, this had only put an end to absolutist monarchy. And we also

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do not see England marching to a better future immediately. Oliver Cromwell comes into scene at this point of time. He was also the one who engineered the victory of the Parliamentarians against the Royalists. So at this point of time it becomes very important for us to take a look at who Oliver Cromwell really was and what his role was in shaping English history after the beheading of Charles the First.

Oliver Cromwell was

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**+ Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658)**

- 'A man of good family' – related to important persons in the House of Commons – a gentleman farmer
  - Saw Land as a means of making livelihood – not as hereditary possession or a matter of social and family pride
- A staunch Puritan
- One of the signatories of Charles I's death warrant in 1649
- The Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland (1653-1659)
- England falls into confusion after Cromwell's death – 1658
- A controversial figure in history – a dictator OR a hero of liberty
  - Condemned for genocide in Ireland, Scotland
  - His corpse dug up, hung and beheaded after the Restoration of monarchy

born in 1599 and lived till 1658. And 1599, we noted multiple times, it was an important year in English literary history. It was the year when the Globe Theatre was erected and also the year when Edmund Spenser died. Oliver Cromwell was from a good family. Many historians

talk about him as a man of good family. He was fairly wealthy. He was related to important persons in the House of Commons. He was also a gentleman farmer. And he also had very idealistic views about life. He owned a little land which he cultivated but he never saw land as a means of making livelihood and it was not a hereditary, for him it was not a hereditary possession and a matter of social and family pride. In that sense he was a true gentleman and he refused to succumb to the dominant mercenary

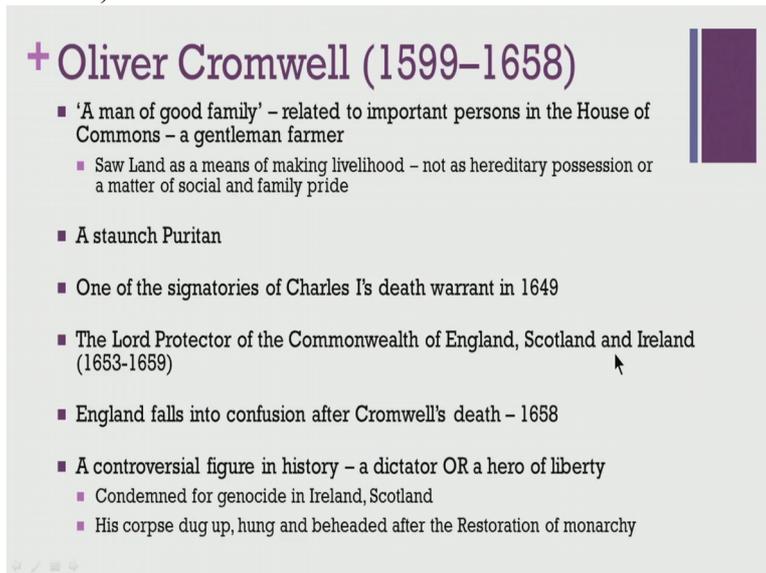
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ideas which were, which were dominating England during those times.

And due to certain turn of events in his own personal life he also becomes a staunch Puritan and we find him displaying a strong belief in Puritanism and also this was perhaps the thing which helped him to enlist a disciplined army and achieve success against the Royalists. And he was not a soldier but we do find him displaying the skills of a very fine lieutenant and he also rises to power very quickly.

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## + Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658)

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He was also one of the signatories of Charles' Death Warrant in 1649 and then he assumes power as the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland. This was from 1653 to 1649.

We also find England falling into confusion after his death and Cromwell continues to be seen as a controversial figure in history. Irrespective of the kind of leadership that he gave to the Parliamentarians for their, for their victory against the, against the Royalists one is not too sure whether he is a hero of liberty or whether he was a dictator. He was condemned and continues to be condemned for his, for the genocide that he committed in Ireland and Scotland and in fact soon after the beheading of Charles the First, he ensues this reckless kinds of raids in Scotland and Ireland in order to wipe out the Catholic population and also he goes a little overboard when he tries to catch hold of

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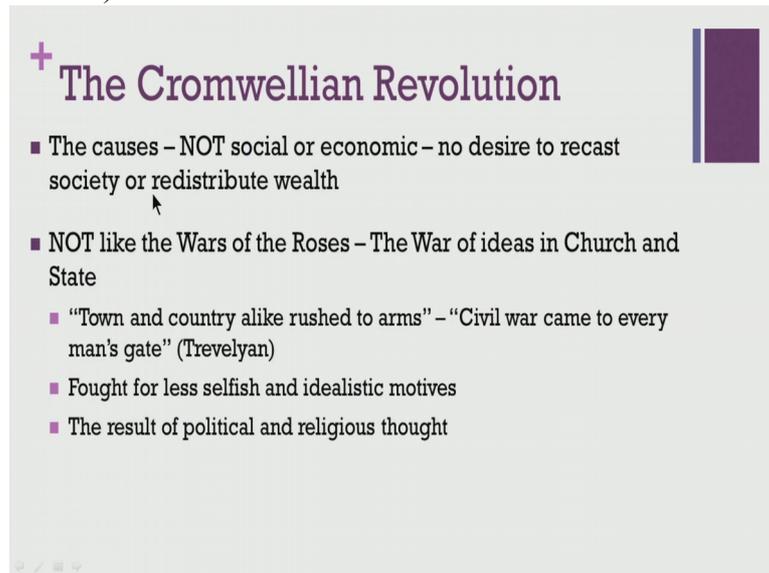


any Royalists who were remaining even after the end of the Civil War.

So he does not become a popular figure in England and at a later point of time, with the restoration of monarchy in 1660 we even find a very gory thing happening. His corpse was dug up, hung and beheaded as soon as the restoration of monarchy happens. So in that sense it is very difficult to figure out what kind of image he had in England during that time. And also the ironic thing that we begin to see is that even after the beheading of Charles First, even after the end of absolutist monarchy there is a way in which Cromwell also assumes to power and begins to make the same kind of mistakes that Charles made. He also dissolves the Parliament and he begins to assume the form of a dictator and makes decisions entirely on his own.

In that sense at this point of time, the English people also fall in a kind of uncertainty and confusion about their own discretions in making decisions and the Parliament is also quite ineffectual at this point of time. And looking from the Cromwellian Revolution in fact it is quite

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## + The Cromwellian Revolution

- The causes – NOT social or economic – no desire to recast society or redistribute wealth
- NOT like the Wars of the Roses – The War of ideas in Church and State
  - “Town and country alike rushed to arms” – “Civil war came to every man’s gate” (Trevelyan)
  - Fought for less selfish and idealistic motives
  - The result of political and religious thought

different from any of the other things that had happened in England until that point of time. The causes for the Revolution interestingly were not social or economic. There was no desire to recast society or re-distribute wealth. It is also quite different from the War of the Roses which we saw in the early centuries. This was more like a, this was never a struggle for power; this was never a struggle for property. So the Cromwellian Revolution during his period, it was more dominated by the ideas of, it was more characterized by a war between the ideas of Church and state.

And in terms of the Civil War and the Cromwellian Revolution that followed Trevelyan makes this interesting observation that town and country alike rushed to arms. Civil War came to every man's gate. So it was quite a different kind of experience for the English people and for the same reason

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shaped the English conscience and all things English

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**+ The Cromwellian Revolution**

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  - Fought for less selfish and idealistic motives
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for many other centuries to come. And this is also fought for less selfish and more idealistic kinds of motives that also garnered certain kind of support for this new movement that had come in. And this also did not have any kind of personal or vested

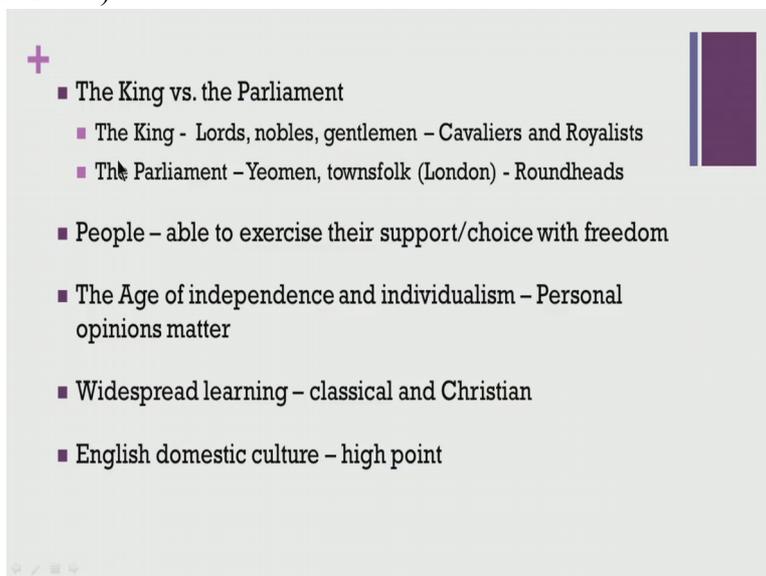
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agenda; it is a different matter that Cromwell rises to an unconditional kind of power but also at the same time this also had led to a lot of revolution in religious and political thoughts in England.

And also this was also perhaps the first time the King and the

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Parliament had come to loggerheads with each other. This also gave impression to the common people that they had more power than they had ever imagined. They were also able to exercise their support or they were able to express their opinions with a lot of freedom. And in that sense we find the promise of liberal humanism and the promise of secular spirit which began with the

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Elizabethan period and English Renaissance, it comes to a certain kind of fruition with this after this

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- +
- The King vs. the Parliament
  - The King - Lords, nobles, gentlemen – Cavaliers and Royalists
  - The Parliament – Yeomen, townfolk (London) - Roundheads
- People – able to exercise their support/choice with freedom
- The Age of independence and individualism – Personal opinions matter
- Widespread learning – classical and Christian
- English domestic culture – high point

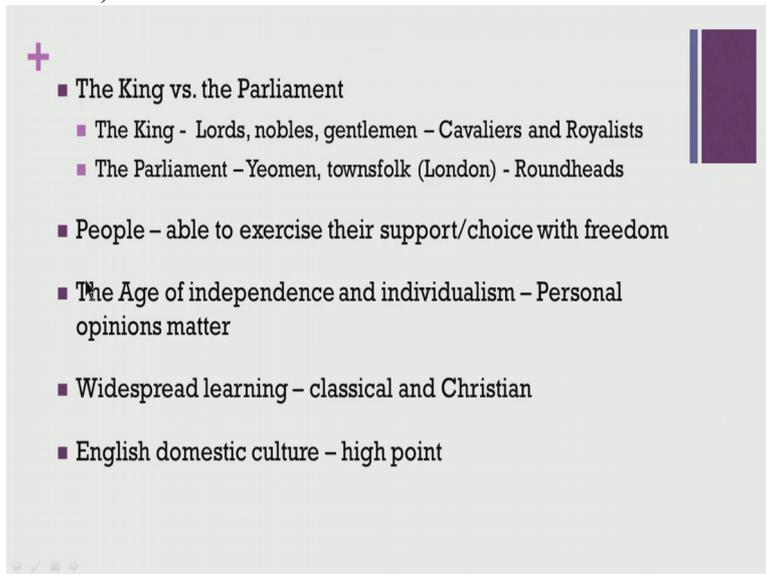
Civil War. And this was also the Age of Independence and Individualism.

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Though in theory everything was promised to the English people from the beginning of the Renaissance, with the Civil War and the end of the absolutist monarchy, the people begin to feel a sense of participation in the,

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in matters of governance. They also began to realize that the personal opinions do matter in the running of the state. And in terms of the other things it was also the high point of culture and we also find widespread learning

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happening both classical and Christian. Perhaps it is just another irony that this period which was quite turbulent internally, it also led to the emergence to the Age of Milton, which was one of the greatest ages in Literature and we also find that though Milton himself was a Puritan, we also find in him a fine spirit of literary excellence as well.

So many of those things we would be taking a look at in one of the later sessions. Now it is time to quickly take a look at the period of Interregnum

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**+ The Interregnum (1649-59)**

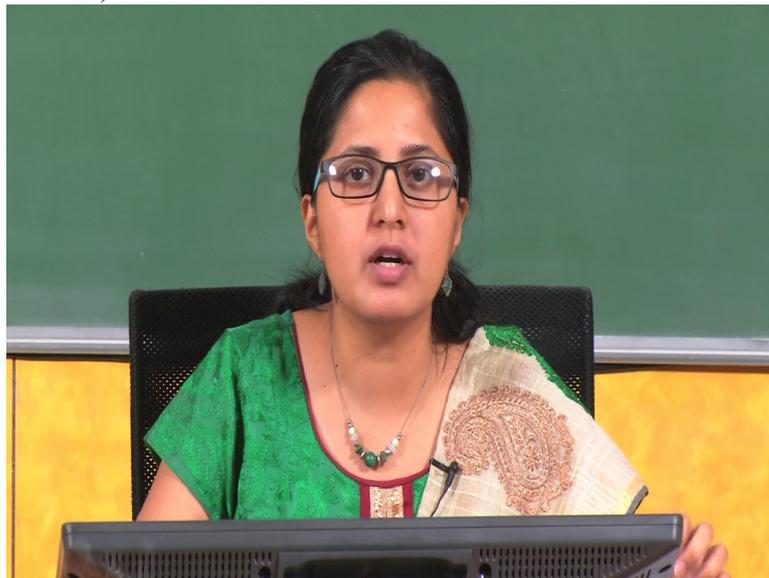
- The period between the civil war and the Restoration of monarchy with Charles II
- Oliver Cromwell
- The transition between Caroline and Restoration periods
- A period dominated by social and political uncertainty
- The literature was heavily influenced by new political ideas

from 1549 to 59 and to see what had been happening in England after the Civil War. So the term Interregnum is used to describe the period between the Civil War and the Restoration of monarchy in 1660 with Charles the Second and this period was dominated by the rule of

Oliver Cromwell, the many details of which are, we shall not be going into and in terms of literature, art and culture this marks the transition between the Caroline and Restoration period. So what was the high point of literary arts that had begun from the Elizabethan period onwards?

This had, it had run its course and this was the time to transition towards another phase which we shall be taking a look at later, with the beginning of the Restoration period. And this period was dominated by social and political uncertainty. Here we need to recall that when James First had come to power many English people and the Parliament, they welcomed this possibility with a lot of applaud and a lot of celebration because they thought that the field of political stability had got inaugurated in England yet another time. And they also assumed that since James First was married and he also had kids which would

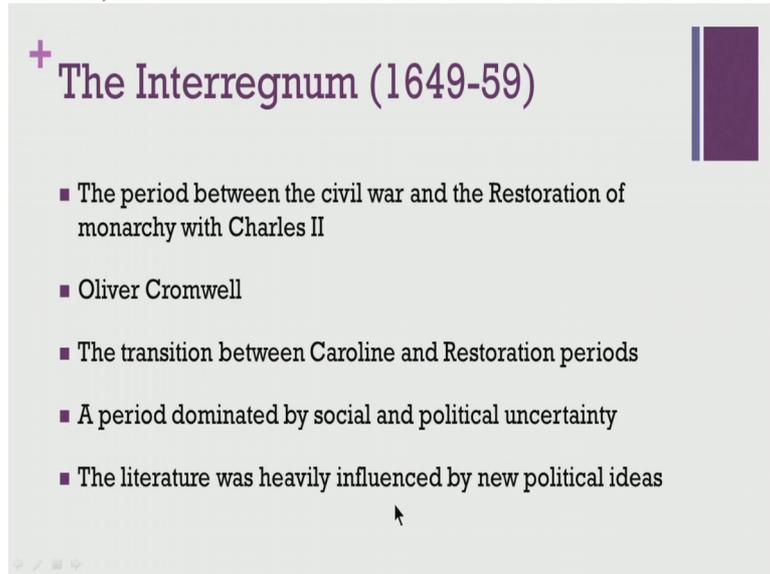
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ensure a proper kind of succession, they had ruled out any kind of problems which would come in by way of the rule of monarchy.

But we do find that the English history takes a very different turn of events and Civil War and the events that followed were the least things they had in mind when the seventeenth century had inaugurated. And this nevertheless had lot of positive influence

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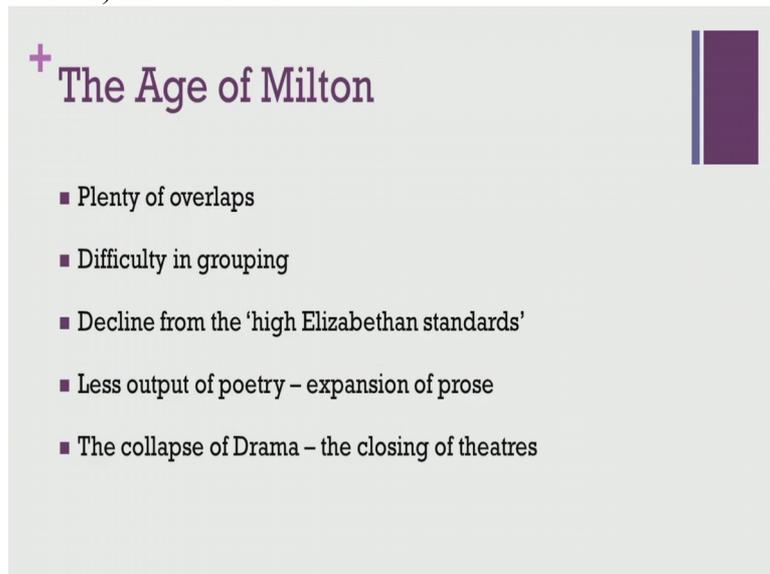


**+ The Interregnum (1649-59)**

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later on because the literature gets heavily influenced by these new political ideas which were revolutionary, which were also hitherto unseen.

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**+ The Age of Milton**

- Plenty of overlaps
- Difficulty in grouping
- Decline from the 'high Elizabethan standards'
- Less output of poetry – expansion of prose
- The collapse of Drama – the closing of theatres

Now having seen how the monarchy was laid to rest during the Caroline period, it is also important now to take a look at the other, it is now important to take a look at the other way in which the Age was fashioned in terms of The Age of Milton and we shall be seeing at a later point that there were plenty of overlaps when we talk about Elizabethan, Jacobean and the Caroline period. And the Age of Milton is no different and we also will find that some of the characters, some of the major literary figures, they appeared over and again in the age of Milton as well.

And there is a difficulty in classifying and grouping them into three different periods because of the same reasons,

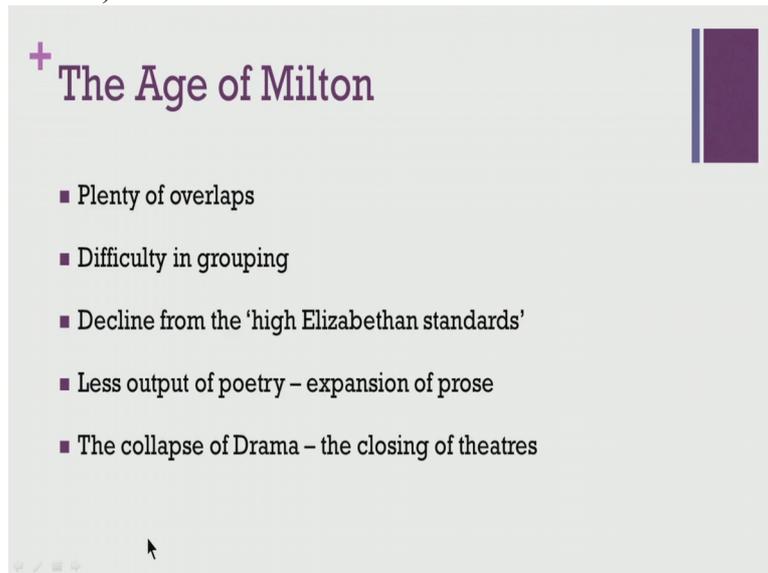
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some historians talk about the long English Renaissance clubbing in the Elizabethan, Jacobean and the Caroline period together. But some historians have tried to bring about distinction among the three groups but though they were politically very distinct, though the socio-religious tendencies were very different, though the state was getting fashioned and projected in three different ways we find that the literature in certain sense continues in a seamless way and there are certain literary figures which also show a marked departure from the previous one.

And the Age of Milton, though Milton continues to be the towering figure and he is still considered as one of the greatest poets ever in, if we do a general assessment of the Age of Milton, many historians and critics are of the opinion

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that there is a decline from the high Elizabethan standards of the early 60s, from the high Elizabethan standards of the sixteenth century. And couple of things characterize, a couple of things that generally characterize this Age were as follows.

There was very less output of poetry and again it is very difficult to come, reach these conclusions because the Milton was also one of the greatest poets. And it is this period we find the expansion of the prose when apart from the towering figure of Milton, we do not find many budding poets, we also also notice that prose is subjected to lot of experiments.

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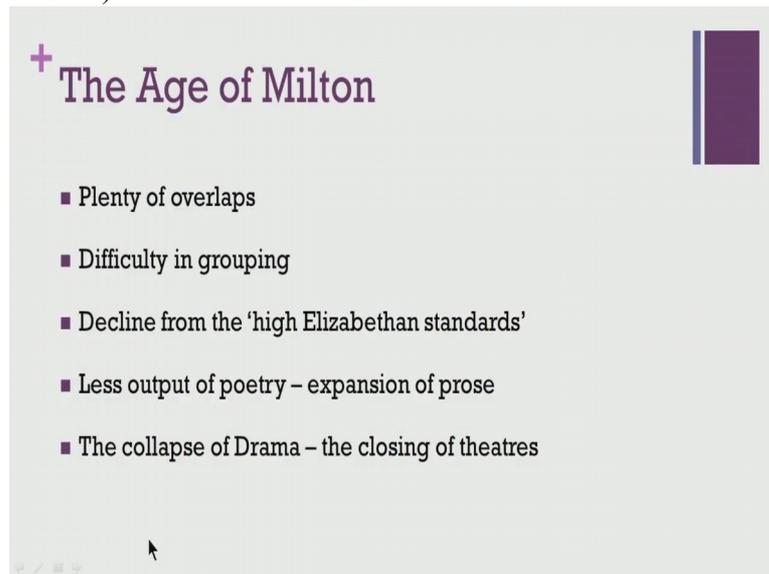


This is in a certain way predominance of prose in literature from this period onwards. And the most important and the dramatic thing that happens during this period is the closure of the

theater and also the end of, also the collapse of drama. So we do not have many noted dramatists to talk about. Theater also goes out of fashion for a while but this also leads to a major comeback with the Restoration time which is part of another lecture.

So with this socio-political background and the brief introduction to literature, we begin to wind up today's lecture.

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And in the next session we shall be taking a detailed look at the

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literary output of the Age of Milton including Milton and many of his contemporaries. We shall also be taking a detailed look at how the socio-political forces shaped literature in

particular ways. So that's all we have got for today's lecture. We look forward to seeing you in tomorrow's session. Thank you for listening.