



Revolution in England

During the 1600s, England had a civil war, a military dictatorship, and a bloodless takeover by a new monarchy. In one century, the government changed drastically.

James I became king of England in 1603. Like all the other monarchs in Europe, he believed in the divine right of kings. This means that monarchs get their power to rule from God. During James's rule, religion became an issue. The Puritans were a Protestant group that wanted the Church of England to become more Protestant. They wanted to take all the Catholic rituals out of the Church of England.



Charles I, who ruled after James, tried to get the Church of England to have more rituals. This caused problems with the Puritans. They thought that Charles was trying to bring back Catholic practices. Parliament's House of Commons had many Puritan members. Parliament revolted against the king.

From 1642 to 1649, parliamentary forces, called Roundheads, fought the king's supporters, called Royalists, in the English Civil War. Oliver Cromwell led the Roundheads and defeated the Royalists. Cromwell took control and the king was put to death. Cromwell set up a military dictatorship, which means the army ruled. England did not have a monarch for almost ten years, until Cromwell died in 1658.

A year later, the British people were tired of military rule. In 1660, Parliament brought back the monarchy. They invited Charles II to come back to England from exile. Charles II was a popular ruler. His brother, James II, inherited the throne in 1685 upon Charles' death. Unlike Charles, James was unpopular. He appointed Catholics to high government offices. Again, many Protestants were afraid that James would bring the Roman Catholic Church back into power.

Parliament decided to solve the situation with the unpopular king. In 1688, leaders in Parliament invited James's Protestant daughter, Mary, and her husband, William, to rule England. When William and Mary arrived with their army, James fled, or ran away to France. No battles had to be fought. The bloodless takeover became known as the Glorious Revolution.

In 1689, William and Mary accepted several acts passed by Parliament, which are now called the English Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights gave England a government based on a system of laws and a freely elected Parliament. A monarch could not interfere in parliamentary debates or suspend laws. English monarchs now had to obey the law and govern together with Parliament.