

# 6.4 Oliver Cromwell's Reputation

## Who was Oliver Cromwell?

Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) was a prominent English military and political leader during the 17th century. He is best known for his role in the English Civil War. Cromwell was a key figure among the Parliamentarians and became the commander of the New Model Army, a disciplined and effective military force that played a decisive role in the war.

After the Civil War, he served as Lord Protector of the Commonwealth in the republican government that temporarily replaced the monarchy, effectively ruling England as a dictator until his death in 1658.

## Why did Cromwell want to re-conquest Ireland in 1649?

In 1641, there was a rebellion in Ireland by Irish Catholic rebels in Ulster as a result of tensions between Irish Catholics and Protestant English settlers. As a result, the English Parliament sent troops to Ireland which caused a series of conflicts lasting for many years.

Cromwell's actions in Ireland continue to be a subject of historical debate and controversy, with some seeing him as a ruthless oppressor and others as a military leader fulfilling his political and religious goals.

## How has Cromwell's reputation changed over time?

After Cromwell's death and the restoration of the monarchy, Cromwell was declared a traitor. His body was dug up and posthumously executed and his head put on a spike.

During the 19th century, Cromwell's reputation started to become more positive, as his foreign policy influenced Victorian imperial expansion and his role in opposing tyranny was emphasised. In the 20th century, however, with the rise of fascism in Nazi Germany, Cromwell was described as a "proto-fascist".