

APOLOGY OF THE SOLDIERS TO THEIR OFFICERS

28 April 1647

We, your soldiers, who have served under your commands with all readiness to free this, our native land and nation, from all tyranny and oppressions whatsoever, and that by virtue and power derived from this present Parliament, given not only to his Excellency Sir Thomas Fairfax, our now-present General, but likewise under all the late generals, his predecessors, under whom we, even the whole soldiery, have served both the state and you faithfully and diligently;

By which means God has been pleased to crown us with victory in dispersing our common adversaries, so that we hoped to put an end to all tyranny and oppressions, so that justice and equity, according to the law of this land, should have been done to the people, and that the meanest subject should fully enjoy his right, liberty, and properties, in all things; which the Parliament have made known to all the world in divers of their declarations, to which they have so often bound themselves to perform, by their oaths, vows, covenants, and protestations.

Upon this ground of hope we have gone through all difficulties and dangers, that we might purchase to the people of this land, with ourselves, a plentiful crop and harvest of liberty and peace.

But instead of it, to the great grief and saddening of our hearts, we see that oppression is as great as ever, if not greater, yea, and that upon the cordial friends to the Parliament and us, and to the just rights and liberties of this nation; that they with us are slighted, abused, beaten, and dragged to gaols, yea, to the utter ruin of their estates, and loss of their lives; yea, the best and most candid intentions and actions of theirs and ours, grossly and foully mis-construed, even to such a height as deserving no less than to be declared as troublers of, and enemies to, the state and Kingdom.

And such as have been and are now the enemies of the Parliament and Kingdom are countenanced and honoured to be in places of general trust, and are made judges of them and us for our lives and estates.... From whence, we believe, springs all our miseries, and that so many of our fellow soldiers that have been disbanded have been so rigorously dealt withal as imprisoned, indicted, and hanged for things done in time and place of war, and necessity of the Parliament's service, required in their low condition, and without which they could not have safely sat in the House of Parliament with their heads on.

And the reason of all this, we judge, is because our very enemies are made our judges. Yea, such is our condition. Though we be oppressed, we may not cry, as it is too apparent. When of late we did in a humble and petitionary way seek to make known our grievances to our General, such was our offence as that we must presently, without being heard, be declared enemies to the state....

Therefore, brave commanders, the Lord put a spirit of courage into your hearts that you may stand fast in your integrity that you have manifested to us, your soldiers. And we do declare to you that if any of you shall not, he shall be marked with a brand of infamy for ever as a traitor to his country and an enemy to this Army.

Read and consider. Was there ever such things done by a Parliament to proclaim us enemies to the state, as they have done about the late petition? (The Lords and they could quickly agree to this, though they will be very tedious when anything is offered that is for the good of the commonwealth.) And to keep the hirelings' wages, and not to give them that which they have so dearly bought with their blood and lives, even their pay; and not only so, but to leave them to the merciless malice of their wicked enemies!

Is it not better to die like men than to be enslaved and hanged like dogs? Which must and will be yours and our portion if not now looked into, even before our disbanding....

We have been quiet and peaceable in obeying all orders and commands, yet not, we have a just cause to tell you, if we be not relieved in these, our grievances. We shall be forced to that which we pray God to divert, and keep your and our hearts upright, desiring you to present these things to the General as our desires:

- (1) That the honour of this Army may be vindicated in every particular, especially about the late petition, and reparations given, and justice done upon the fomenters.
- (2) That an act of indemnity may be made for all things done in time and place of war.
- (3) That the wives and children of those that have been slain in the service, and maimed soldiers, may be provided for.
- (4) Our arrears, under this General, to be paid us; our arrears under other generals to be audited and stated, and security given for the payment.
- (5) That we that have served the Parliament freely may not be pressed out of the Kingdom.
- (6) That the liberty of the subject may be no longer enslaved, but that justice and judgment may be dealt to the meanest subject of this land according to old law.

Now, unless all these humble requests be by you for us, your soldiers, and yourselves stood for to be granted, it had been better we had never been born, or at least we had never been in arms, but that we had by the sword been cut off from the misery we and you are like to undergo. So we rest in hopes of your faithfulness,

Your soldiers

The Apologie of the Common Souldiers of his Excellencie Sir Tho. Fairfaxes Army (London: 1647)