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Whereas Charles Stuart, late King of England, Ireland, and the territories and dominions there unto belonging,
hath by authority derived from Parliament been declared to be justly condemned, judged to die, and put to death for many treasons, murders, and other heinous offences committed by him.
And whereas it hath been found by experience that the office of a king in this nation and Ireland is unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous to the liberty, safety, and public interest of the people,
be it therefore enacted and ordained by this present Parliament, that the office of a king in this nation shall not henceforth be exercised by any one single person.
And by the abolition of the kingly office provided for in this act, a most happy way is made for this nation to return to its just and ancient right of being governed by its own representatives,
from time to time chosen and entrusted for that purpose by the people, as shall most conduce to the lasting freedom and good of this Commonwealth.
So Tom Holland, the year is 1649. King Charles I has had his head cut off.
And as a loyal reader of The Guardian, you're probably delighted by those words that are read out, aren't you?
I was just thinking what a wonderful way to mark the coronation year.
You read out the sentence pronounced on Charles I and the abolition of the monarchy.
It's such an astonishing moment, isn't it?
And we did two episodes on the trial of Charles I, which I still think is the single most extraordinary episode in the whole of English history.
Well, obviously the question is, what are people doing next?
What happens next?
Because they have cut off the head of the king.
And then there's this decade, which has sort of dropped out of the British imagination, hasn't it?
When people think about the 1650s, the years of the Republic and the Commonwealth, they do so in the context of Oliver Cromwell and of the abolition of Christmas.
That's what people always talk about.
Oh, they banned Christmas. Terrible years, terrible years.
But actually the extraordinary details of it in the sense that it's both a sort of, well, is it a dead end or is it a great experiment?
I think that's really worth exploring, isn't it?
Always. Absolutely.
I mean, the idea of England, especially in this year of all years, the idea of England becoming a republic and what its experience of republicanism was and whether that experience was so traumatic for people,
that that is one of the factors in why we are celebrating the coronation of the king this year, I think are very timely questions.
And Dominic, there has been a superb book published on this very theme.
Has there not that was nominated by yourself as your book of the year last year?
It was my book of the year, Tom.

So I read a book which I'm sure we'll be talking about later in this podcast called An Instance of the Finger-Boast.
My favourite historical novel, Dominic.
It's a great, it's a mystery, isn't it?
It's set in the 1650s and I thought at the time, by Ian Pairs, and I thought at the time when I read it, I would love to read a sort of social and cultural history of the 1650s that brings alive actually what it was like.
Not just the politics, but to live through that period when everything had been, the world had been turned upside down, as people said at the time.
Go on, Tom, I can see you're itching to do some name-dropping.
Well, absolutely, because I've been going on and on about Instance of the Finger-Boast, how it's my favourite historical novel.
And I actually met Ian Pairs, the author, at the Jaipur Literature Festival, which was held earlier this year.
Of course you did.
Where I also met the author of The Restless Republic, written without a crown, Anna Kay, who was the author of the book that you nominated as your history book of the year.
It's a wonderful book.
It's a really wonderful book.
So everything connects.
So Anna is with us.
Thanks so much for joining us, Anna.
Oh, it's such a pleasure.
I'm quite a Restless History groupie, so I'm feeling a bit starstruck.
Well, we are also starstruck, because I just finished reading The Restless Republic, and I would have nominated it as my history book of the year as well.
We're both fanboying here.
You both can, that's fine.
So Anna, Charles I had his head chopped off.
The silly thing about this is that it's something that, this is not why people went to war against the king in the Civil War.
Right the way up to the moment of his execution, large numbers of people on the parliamentarian side, very opposed to it.
This begs the question, what on earth are they going to put in its place?
What's the process?
What do they decide on?
Well, the amazing thing is, and it is really amazing, that at the point when Charles I is executed when the blade hits his neck, nothing has been decided.
And there's no clarity about whether this is just the execution of an errant king, whether it's the removal of the Stuart dynasty, or whether it's the end of kingship itself.
I mean, it is completely at large that question.
It's because the execution had been kind of hurried through on the back of an army coup, basically, because as you say, the Civil War hadn't been about whether there should be a republic or whether there should be a monarchy.

It was about kind of what form the monarchy should take and what form the church should take.
So it had been rushed through very quickly, and it took a matter of weeks before the kind of formulation was agreed upon as to what came next.
So the first question had to be decided on was whether just the House of Commons could act alone, which is what had led to the execution of the king, or whether the House of Lords still had a place in the Constitution.
And there was a vote on that, was quite close run, among those who voted for the retention of the House of Lords was Oliver Cromwell, interestingly.
And Oliver Cromwell at this point is, I mean, he's not even the leader of the army, is he?
No, I mean, he's a very senior figure in the army, but he's not number one.
And he's not the sort of leading light of the trial of Charles I.
He was out on the road when the decision was made to purge parliament, which was what was the kind of precursor to the trial.
So he's one of the crowd, if you like, of people who are at the centre of things, but he's not number one.
So anyway, essentially, there's a kind of terrible kind of kerfuffle in the weeks after the execution of Charles I,
when working out what the new constitutional formulation is going to be is under discussion.
And to cut to the chase, what is decided upon is that the House of Lords is defunct,
and that what they call a Commonwealth, which is sort of a republic in modern lingo,
is the regime that is determined in its place.
And that will be run by parliamentary bigwigs in alliance with the army.
But there's obviously attention there from the very beginning, because the parliamentary bigwigs and the army officers,
I mean, I'm being very, very simplistic, but the army tend to be more radical than the people in parliament.
This is one of the big tensions of the period.
So on the one hand, you've got the army, which had become very fired up with particularly sort of religious kind of political radicalism during the course of the 1640s.
And then you've got what we call parliament, which at this stage is the House of Commons.
And it's not just the House of Commons, but the House of Commons minus about half its MPs,
who have been deliberately excluded, purged in something called Pride's Purge,
on the basis that they're not radical enough.
So you've got two, you've got two as it were relatively radical groupings,
but the army more radical, even than the Purge parliament.
And during the course of the 1649, some of the people who are purged come back into the House of Commons,
so it begets a bit more moderate.
And the tension between the two is one of the big kind of fissures of the period.
And Anna, meanwhile, there are people who are even more radical in their ambitions of what might happen.
And I suppose the most famous of these in 1649 is Gerard Wynne Stanley,
who is a man who leads a group of people called the Diggers.
So can you tell us about them?

The Diggers.
So many of us first encountered the Diggers in a song by Billy Bragg,
which I don't know if anyone listens to anymore,
but yeah, they were a group of radicals of a very kind of otherworldly sort.
I mean, essentially what happens is during the 1640s, during the course of the war,
because all the sort of institutions that you're used to are thrown up in the air,
and all sorts of things are challenged that had been absolutely taken for granted forever,
like bishops and the monarchy and so on.
And so various groups come to light coming up with quite sort of wacky ideas
about what a new way of doing things might look like.
And among these is this actually very small group,
but they came to be very well known called the Diggers.
And they're led by this rather dreamy figure called Gerard Wynne Stanley,
who was a failed cloth merchant and who, having had an emotional breakdown,
moved to the countryside.
And when he was walking one day through his fields in Surrey,
he has this great vision, that sort of epiphany,
that the answer to everyone's problems is that land ownership is, you know,
should sort of evaporate.
And instead of people work together and planted the soil and chilled together
in sort of common endeavor, they would be enough for everyone.
I mean, it's not a very carefully thought through political program.
It's a sort of dreamy, optimistic, uplifting vision of the future.
It's a teenager, basically.
Well, the thing I love about it is that the place that they end up kind of settling and digging
is the same place that John Lennon had his house in the 60s.
Yeah, I mean, I don't know if you've ever been to St George's.
Something very imagined.
Well, it's impossible to get on it because it's now a gated community.
It is.
I tried to go and find the spot where Wynne Stanley had started planting his beans.
But you can't get in because it's got sort of cameras
and it's got these ginormous mansions that each cost, you know, 50 million pounds.
Golf courses.
And a golf course.
Yeah, I know.
Talk about sort of upending of, you know, his vision.
Anyway, so he sets about doing this.
Much of the bafflement of a lot of people around and about.
But, you know, it's part, I suppose, of the spirit of the age
that these kind of ussily sort of innovative or unexpected takes on the world
get oxygen in a way that they wouldn't have done before.
So how many people does he get?
And it's kind of like a commune, isn't it?

It's like an agrarian commune.
How many people does he get?
So he manages to recruit about 50 people from Cobham in Surrey.
And there's the guy who's a shoemaker and there's the guy who's a brick maker
and there's somebody's second son and so on.
And they all trot up the hill to St George's Hill,
which is basically a bit of kind of untilled land.
Actually in the next door parish, which turns out to be a bit of a mistake,
and they start planting their beans and peas and things there.
And they start publishing about it, which is one of the crucial things.
So even though it's only a really quite small operation,
people start reading about this because when Stanley's own account
of how this is going to free everybody from, you know, the sort of captivity
of ownership is, you know, that's getting out there.
And does it end well?
Well, funnily enough, Tom, it doesn't end well.
It doesn't end well.
And it doesn't end well, not because the new Republican regime, you know,
is appalled by this radicalism.
The new Republican regime in the form of the head of the army,
Thomas Fairfax, who goes out to see what's going on,
thinks it's all rather touching and kind of harmless
and aren't bothered by it really.
But the people who are really appalled by it are the next door neighbors
who are very respectable and the thought of these sort of slightly hippie-ish figures,
you know, with their dreamy account of how property ownership is going to dissolve,
is appalling to them.
So basically, these guys are eventually hounded out by the people
from the next door parish determined to get rid of the weirdos who've set up on that.
Kind of militant nimbyism.
Yeah, exactly, exactly that, exactly that.
So there's kind of the radical extremes on the left, you might say.
But then there are also still royalists who are active, aren't there?
And perhaps the most famous is this extraordinary woman.
Well, tell us about her.
Yes, the person that I talk about at some length
is this amazing woman called Charlotte Countess of Derby.
She was actually a French woman.
She was Charlotte de la Tremueille as her maiden name.
And she married the Earl of Derby, a big land owner,
and so obviously Charles I executed in 1649.
England is under the control of the sort of victorious parliamentarians,
but lots of other bits of Charles I's dominions are still to be kind of brought to heel.
And the sort of last one really to fall is the Isle of Man.

And Charlotte Countess of Derby is on the Isle of Man
because it's part of the Stanley family, her husband's family estates.
And so they've kind of withdrawn, they sort of retreated to the Isle of Man
and they invite any royalists who want to join them
to come to sort of mass on the Isle of Man ready for a reinvasion,
which they're totally ill-equipped to do.
But she manages to hold it till the last moment really with great drama.
I mean, what I love about it is that there is a lot of drama
and there's a lot of back and forth, but there is a sort of,
it's not quite as vicious and as, you know, in a civil war,
the aftermath is often incredibly bloody and disputatious and repressive.
So, you know, the Spanish Civil War or something.
But the English Civil War, one of the things that surprised me about your book
is you don't get that sense.
So there's a sort of, is it weird to talk about a kind of sportsmanship
in the sort of, you know, she's a defeated opponent,
but she's not humiliated, she's not dragged through the streets, she's not.
And that's the case with a lot of royalists, isn't it?
We're not put to the death.
Her husband did so, isn't he?
Yeah, so what happens is that she and her husband hold up on the Isle of Man
and then, of course, in 1651, Charles II,
so who has been in exile, son of Charles I,
reappears on the scene, riding down into England from Scotland
and a lot of Scots in his makeshift army to try and retake the kingdom.
And the Earl of Derby goes to join him and Charlotte is left to hold the Isle of Man.
Charles II is defeated at the Battle of Worcester,
famously goes on the round and hides in an oak tree in bosquable wood for a while.
But the Earl of Derby is captured and he is executed.
Now, even the fact that he was executed was considered to be quite hardcore
by people on both sides.
Again, Oliver Cromwell, among others, argued that he should be showed clemency
in the end, partly because of the kind of lobbying of people
who had fought against him during the Civil War up in the Northwest.
He is executed, but it's quite telling, as you say, Dominic,
because there was very little kind of bloodlust there,
even though the Derbys, I mean, Charlotte, kind of Derby,
had, during the Civil War itself, had herself led the defense of Latham-Hass,
their biggest states up in the Northwest, in a prolonged siege.
Lots of people were killed and so on.
But the sort of appetite for bloody retribution is surprisingly kind of curtailed
or sort of limited, given what had just gone on.
But what about financial retribution?
Because the government is basically bankrupt,

and presumably all these royalists with their estates must be very tempting to fleece them.
And that's another thing I think you just have to sort of remember
about the English Civil War in our revolution, which definitely was a revolution,
in my view, is that it's not like a kind of let's bring down the aristocracy
and execute all the dukes kind of revolution.
It's a lot of it's to do with religion and about the extent of royal power.
And so when the republic comes to the fore,
they're not trying to kind of exterminate the sort of the aristocracy.
But what they are, as you say, is broke, and so they're very keen to raise money.
The formulation that's hit upon, which is one of the things
that I always think is amazing about this period,
is how well they manage the kind of admin of it all,
because there's so much admin involved in essentially resting the property
off the defeated royalists, granting them back a fifth of the value of their estates
and then forcing them to pay a big fine, which is what they do in the end,
to regain the rest of their estates, which is quite a kind of clever way
of realizing a lot of money very quickly,
which they can then use to pay the army and do various other things.
So for example, in the case of the derbies,
even though they're about as hard-bitten a lot of royalists as you could imagine,
by the end of the period, by the end of the 1650s,
they essentially have managed to regain all their estates,
which happened pretty much across the piece eventually,
I mean, at a big financial cost, but nonetheless without actually losing land.
There's one more person we want to talk about before the break,
but just before we do, is one reason that there's not more repression
and there's not more sort of bloodshed.
I mean, you talk about the Commonwealth regime, but also the royalists.
Is it the case that actually most people,
the vast majority of people who are probably no more interested in politics
than people are today, that most people are instinctive royalists
and the revolution has happened sort of despite them rather than because of them
and the regime knows, you know, the people running the regime
all the millenarian kind of apocalyptic enthusiasm, some of them anyway,
they know they can't push the public too far
because the public are kind of grumblingly plodding along as they always do.
It's really interesting question.
I mean, yes, I think it's true that the vast majority of people
weren't clamouring for a republic.
Most people don't even know what that meant, what that was.
There's not a lot of republicanism around in the 17th century.
But on the other hand, it is very telling that when Charles II re-enters England in 1651
with his standard held high, ready for everyone to join up and say,
you know, hooray, the monarchy's back, this is what we always wanted.

Practically nobody joins him.
I think there's also a big thing which is just about people want some peace.
You know, they've had a war for seven, eight, nine years
and they haven't been able to, you know,
to kind of blow down their next crops
because the seed corns all been fed to the horses of an army and so on.
So I think even more than people being inherently royalist,
I think people inherently just want to get on with life
and there's all sorts of unsatisfactory things that might be happening
kind of up there or over there.
But ultimately that the power of that desperate desire for peace
and normality is the biggest thing.
And presumably a constitutional settlement, oven ready,
one might almost say.
We love those.
Yeah, so all the oven ready constitutional settlements
over the course of the decade turn out not to be as entirely oven ready
as perhaps their promoters say.
And so actually this yearning for peace,
this yearning for some kind of a chance to breathe
never actually arrives.
And so I'm wondering, do people just kind of block everything out,
the vast mass of the people?
Do they just kind of ignore what's happening?
Or are there people who are changing their minds
and changing their loyalties in response
to all the kind of convulsions and changes that are happening?
I think for the vast majority of people,
what the kind of franchise was
or what the sort of constitutional formulation was,
whether there was a protectorate or a Commonwealth or whatever,
I think it meant very little to most people.
I think most people notice what the sort of form of worship is
in the parish church that they go to week in, week out.
They notice who the people are who are calling the shots,
the county of sizes and the justices of the peace
and that kind of thing.
Because the vast majority of government in the 17th century is local.
The central state is tiny.
The scale of it compared to anything that we'd recognized today is micro.
So I think they're clearly those who are very political,
who are mostly in Westminster or as MPs or participants
in big politics who care intensely about all that stuff.
But I think for the vast majority of people, that's quite a long way away.

And one of the things I wanted to try and do,
writing the books to get more of a sense of that,
because I think we can all home in much too much
on what the bill that was introduced into Parliament on Tuesday afternoon was.
And actually, if you're an innkeeper in Lancashire, so what?
Tom mentions people changing their minds
or sort of trimming their colors or whatever.
And my favorite character, I think, in the book,
which probably says a great deal about my own instincts and glimpses,
is this guy, Martyrmont Needham,
who was initially a firebrand newspaper man
in favor of the royalists, wasn't he?
And then he just completely changes.
So he ends up running my curious politicus.
I mean, some people say he's the first great newspaper man,
because he basically, he tailors his opinions to the regime, doesn't he?
That's unheard of.
Well, I mean, nobody involved with the rest of his history
would ever behave like that.
I think it's fair to say.
No.
So tell us a bit about him and tell us whether he's,
is he cynical and ruthless as he appears,
or is he actually, is there a case to be made for him?
But anyway, tell us who he is.
OK, so yeah, Martyrmont Needham.
So he is something that you could literally never have been
in any previous generation, which is a newspaper man,
a newspaper editor, because the rise of newspapers
has been a big, fascinating thing that happens
during the 1630s and 40s.
And Martyrmont Needham, actually, he starts very originally,
starts off as a parliamentarian newspaper man.
Then he switches to editing a paper with a royalist line.
And then just after Charles I's execution,
he is captured and put in prison by the New Republican regime
because he writes this wonderful,
utterly sort of scurrilous, excruiting prose
in his newspapers.
It's easy to think of 17th, the idea of 17th century newspaper
as being a really heavy, going, you know,
sort of stodgy thing to read.
But actually, if you read these now, they're still around.
Anyway, so Martyrmont Needham is put in prison

by the New Republican regime because he publishes
this pro-royalist newspaper that's full of sort of slanderous
caricatures of Oliver Cromwell.
He calls him the town bull of Ely.
They're characterised in this kind of monstrous,
boorish figure.
But then because, as we've been talking about,
because the regime has quite a significant PR problem
because it wasn't brought to being
on the tide of popular delight and excitement.
It was a military coup that brought the republic into being.
They've got a real problem with how to kind of win
people's hearts and minds.
Made all the trickier because the massive bestseller
of the early 1650s is a book that is purports to be
Charles I's sort of final sort of musings
called Icon Basilica, which goes through scores
and scores of editions.
So what happens is that he, that Martyrmont Needham
is hired by the Republican regime,
who he had just been insulting daily or weekly in his paper
to start this new paper, MacCurius Politicus,
which is to be a kind of, you know,
a great sort of standard bearer for the delights
and joys of the new republic.
And so he, you know, he is a turncoat completely.
I mean, he switches between these different sides,
but I don't think that's, and probably, I don't know,
I'm not a journalist, but I suspect journalists would say
themselves today that just because you might, you know,
work for titles that have different editorial lines,
it doesn't mean that you are sort of morally bankrupt.
You know, it's just, you know, you...
Can we think of someone who writes for newspaper
who isn't necessarily morally bankrupt because of it, Dominic?
I can't imagine who you're talking about, Tom.
I really can't.
Shall we take a break and we can pawn with that question?
But just quickly, one last thing.
Most people are like...
Yeah, I've not changed a subject.
I'm actually returning to that.
I'm like a dog returning to his vomit, Tom.
Martyrmont Needham,

most people are like him in the 1650s, aren't they?
I mean, they're not...
You know, when I studied this at school
or when people read about it,
the tendency of historians is to be drawn to the...
It's always to be drawn to the marginal, to the extremes,
to the people who are the most articulate
and the most politicized.
But aren't most people...
I mean, as you were saying, most people...
It's extraordinary to me that most people do just kind of,
even though they were probably monarchists deep down,
they just kind of crack on and carry on with life.
They trim their cloth to the demands of the new regime,
whether it be parliamentarian, whether it be Cromwell,
because Cromwell carries out a coup in 1653, doesn't he?
To take power.
And once again, you know,
people are maybe grumbling about it in villages a week later,
but they're just kind of plod along with life.
The reality is that most people aren't great
sort of ideological standard bearers.
They're trying to get on, trying to buy their neighbor's field,
whatever it is.
And, you know, most people didn't fight for either side
in civil war.
Most people kept their heads down.
And a lot of people, like Marchman Needham,
were looking around them thinking,
well, maybe there's an opportunity for me here
to, you know, make a bit of money.
Yet again, Dominic Cast himself is the voice of Middle England.
And with that customary maneuver,
I think we should go to a break.
And when we come back,
and you mentioned that Cromwell's stage is a coup in 1653.
Let's talk about that when we get back.
She saw strange things,
a Christ-like figure surrounded by children bathed in light,
a sinister white citadel being attacked by phalanxes of the wise,
a great oak whose roots were so shallow it crashed to the ground,
then more immediate scenes, a herd of oxen,
one with the perfect face of Oliver Cromwell,
who appeared benign at first,

but then pinned her down with his great pointed horn pressed to her chest.
The town bull of Ely had taken a new guise.
Anna, that's from your wonderful book, The Restless Republic.
And it's describing a vision that a young woman called Anna Trappnell had
in the autumn of 1653 against the backdrop of the coup
that we mentioned just before the break.
So first of all, who is Anna Trappnell?
And then what's the significance of this vision she is having
of Cromwell as a bull?
Yeah, so Anna Trappnell is the daughter of a shipwright,
grows up in the East End of London,
not the poorest of the poor, but certainly from the, you know,
the kind of working communities along the River Thames.
And she's orphaned in her teens,
and she is a member of one of the new religious sects
that have come to the fore during the course of the 1640s.
She's what's called the Fifth Monarchist.
And she is given to these extraordinary visions.
She kind of falls into trances when she starts sort of speaking
in kind of poetic verses,
and then she describes when she comes to what it is she's seen.
And the reason this sort of slightly sort of unlikely figure
comes to be like a household name, which she does,
is because she starts having visions which seem to be,
seem to foretell really big political things that then happen.
So she has a vision of Oliver Cromwell expelling the MPs
from the House of Commons.
And then four days later, Oliver Cromwell does indeed
march into the House of Commons and tells all the MPs to clear off
and says, you know, in words that are famously rehashed later,
you know, you've sat here too long for all the good you've done.
Essentially, because he comes back from basically conquering Ireland
and Scotland, and he and his men, who have kind of covered in blood
and seen all the horror, feel that the MPs of the Trump Parliament
have been complacent and haven't brought about the kind of degree
of reform of church or state that they hoped for.
But Anna Trappner becomes very significant because having foretold this
and one or two other things that then seem to happen,
she then starts to have visions of Oliver Cromwell, one of whom,
one of which you just read, where instead of being a kind of heroic figure,
he becomes a sinister figure.
And those people who are unhappy with his actions seize upon her
as God's spokeswoman and try to use her to sort of discredit
the regime that Cromwell is part of.

And do we know what happened to her or did she just disappear from the records?
Well, so a group of MPs who are very unhappy with Cromwell
dismissing their Trump Parliament decide that they're going to take her
on a sort of campaign and they take it to Cornwall,
which is because they're MPs from Cornwall, to introduce it to people
and get her to sort of speak of her visions to sort of spread the word
that maybe Cromwell isn't the answer.
So there's a kind of poor woman.
She gets sort of presented to various groups of people in Cornwall
and told to speak her truth.
There's great discontent locally amongst the sort of the JPs and so on
that she's sort of disruptive for, so she's put on trial.
And then anyway, she eventually ends up in prison in Bridewell,
which is horrified about because she's a very respectable young woman.
And Bridewell is for strumpets and all that kind of stuff.
Bridewell is full of kind of murderers and prostitutes and things.
And this is not her world.
She might have kind of slightly strange visions,
but she's not part of the underbelly of society
and the way that she felt these people around her were.
But she comes out having an utterly indignant at this treatment
and then having, until this point, not particularly been a political creature,
she was somebody who had visions.
She becomes very seized that this regime is in fact completely corrupt
and doomed to failure.
And her own treatment and the injustice that she suffered
becomes a kind of talisman of that.
And so she becomes a spokeswoman for people we might refer to as Cromwell skeptics.
Yes.
They, I mean, essentially Cromwell in getting rid of parliament altogether
is behaving much worse than I was supposed to have done.
Well, this is the great irony.
I mean, you know, and I say it as someone who's, I don't,
I'm not a kind of taker of sides on it.
You know, I have great sympathy and sort of sense of criticism of both sides.
But when you look at the sort of score chart between Charles I and Cromwell
in terms of wanting to dispense with MPs who didn't agree with you,
wanting to extend your powers, wanting to tell people how to worship,
wanting to tax people hard.
I mean, Cromwell is, you know, he does it in spades on each camp
compared to Charles I.
Cromwell is in a very difficult position though, Anna, isn't he?
I mean, he's just trying to institute efficient governments.
OK, Dominic.

Cromwell has been very corrupt and incompetent.
I think Cromwell is greatly maligned here.
So, Dominic, I have to come in on this whole topic
because if we're talking about Cromwell skepticism, it is, of course,
an absolutely living tradition on the other side of the Irish Sea.
And when I mentioned that I'd be talking to you,
you know, the theme of the episode would be the English Republic,
somebody said that she'd be very keen on the podcast
but she wouldn't be listening to this
because Cromwell was the epitome of evil, essentially.
And we can't talk about the English Republic
without referring to its policy in Ireland.
So, just very briefly, give us your sense of how Cromwell behaves in Ireland.
Is he kind of completely beyond the pale there?
Is he behaving according to the rules of law?
How bad is his behavior
and how bad is the regime that he sets up in Ireland
after he comes back to England?
Yeah, so, I mean, I think my big headline would be
English people's behavior in Ireland is appalling
and there's absolutely the English attitude
and in that Scottish attitude to Ireland
is sort of shockingly denigratory.
I mean, Irish people were considered to be not really kind of full human beings, you know,
people because they were Catholics.
So, is it more than that?
Is it a Protestant-Catholic thing or is it something more than that?
It's definitely a Protestant-Catholic thing.
It's also a kind of the colonized and the colonizer thing.
You know, Ireland had been colonized by the English,
well, right back in the Middle Ages originally
but it pretty sort of comprehensively changed the 16th and 17th centuries.
So, it's the sort of superiority, I suppose, of the colonizer.
But it also is definitely religion.
You know, the Irish Catholic, they answer to the Pope,
who's not an Englishman and, you know,
it's a sort of treacherous treasonous thing to do.
Anyway, the reason for saying that is that
the whole nature of England's interaction with Ireland
throughout this period is one that I think is obviously horrible to us now
where even the formulation long before the execution of Charles I,
before even the Civil War in England had broken out,
was that the investors who put up the money to send soldiers,
English soldiers to Ireland would be paid in lands

that were confiscated from the defeated Irish.
So, then to sort of home in on the specifics,
Cromwell, Oliver Cromwell is sent to Ireland
by the Republican regime to basically reconquer it
and because by 1649, time of Charles I's execution,
it's still not under the thumb of the English parliamentarians.
And in the course of that campaign, unquestionably,
awful atrocities are carried out on the battlefield
in a number of particular cases
and generally involving the execution or the killing of people
who'd already surrendered
and involved in the killing of lots of civilians.
And that, I think, is without question.
I mean, and Cromwell's leading that campaign,
you can't excuse him that.
I think what you can say contextually is that
the treatment of the Irish on the battlefield
wasn't out of or killed her with what was happening
during the Thirty Years' War in terms of the treatment
of defeated people in conflict of this time
in a kind of religiously motivated context.
So, it's not kind of uniquely awful, but it is awful.
But the thing in a way which is, I would argue,
has much bigger sort of long-term practical implications
is then the mass dispossession of Irish landowners that follows.
And the way you tell that story in the book is really interesting
because you tell it through a character called William Petty,
who in a different context,
so he goes to Survey Island, doesn't he?
And he's an extraordinary figure
because on the one hand, he's part of that very dark story.
And yet, in a different context, one would see him.
He's a political scientist.
He's sort of almost a proto-enlightenment kind of thinker.
He's friends with Robert Boyle, isn't he?
He's really in with all these kind of scientific
and he's part of the scientific revolution, I suppose.
He's part of that milieu that we often think of
as coming a little bit later,
because we think, oh, the 1650s is all drab puritans,
banning Christmas and being horrible to the Irish.
But actually, those two stories through Petty
are completely intertwined.
So do you think sort of repression

and the sort of anglicization of Ireland,
could you almost see that as part of that sort of scientific,
that proto-scientific kind of worldview?
Well, I think what happens is that, as you say,
I mean, just because this is something that's happening
across Europe, across the West at this point,
which is what we would have judged to be
when modern science is beginning.
Copernicus and Galileo and so on have kind of
given a new view of what the nature of the universe is
and scientific examination through experimentation,
rather than just through reading Aristotle,
is happening all over the place or beginning to.
And so you've got a kind of confluence, I suppose,
of something which is happening anyway, beginning to.
William Harvey is saying that the blood circulates around the body,
it doesn't just go outwards and then disappear.
And so we have intersex with a moment of great change.
What happens with Ireland is that there,
because there is a sort of, you know,
a kind of whole new dawn in Ireland,
for the good or bad, and a kind of redistribution of land,
the need to kind of rebuild infrastructure and towns and trade
and so on after the devastation of the wars,
this community of kind of new thinkers
who are thinking about economics as well
and natural resources and so on,
as well as about the elements come together.
And so William Petty is a very good example of that
and quite a lot of the scientists of the mid-1650s
are interested in Ireland because they see it as a sort of,
okay, take a country and imagine that it has so many rivers
and so many bridges.
How might you build something more prosperous from these parts?
So I think it's incredibly interesting time
for the, as I say, these things coming together,
sort of how are we going to do this thing
with a whole world of new ways of thinking,
which are much more kind of original
and much more evidence-based than had been the case before.
But there is something, I mean,
I thought slightly chilling about us,
more than chilling about him,
because you introduce him,

we mentioned the instance of the finger post earlier.
So he provides inspiration for an episode
that happens in the instance of the finger post
where he is a colleague who wanted to dissect the body
of a woman who's been hanged for murdering her baby.
And she comes back to life.
She was never dead.
And there's a sense when he goes over to Ireland
that he's kind of committing dissection
on a great living entity.
And the atrocities that, I mean,
it's not just dispossession, is it?
It's forced transplantation.
I mean, it's the kind of thing that people
from the Assyrians through to the Nazis were doing.
I mean, it's on a horrendous scale.
And he is kind of complicit in that,
even though Henry Cromwell, who goes out to Cromwell's son
and he serves with him,
I mean, he slightly rains in the full monstrous scale of it,
but it's still, I mean, terrible.
I mean, there's no doubt that what we're doing in Ireland
in the 1650s is, I mean, completely terrible.
There's ethnic cleansing on a kind of massive scale.
But I propose William Petty, this scientist,
this Oxford professor of anatomy who's out there
and who then undertakes the mapping of Ireland
that is necessary for this redistribution of land to happen.
I don't know. I mean, I think he's pretty clear
that he thinks that transplantation,
as the policy is called, is misconceived and is unfair.
He still does it.
Oh, he still does it. Oh, yeah.
He was only obeying orders.
Well, he doesn't...
Well, he undertakes the mapping process,
which then is the basis for the land redistribution.
So, yeah, I mean, he doesn't resign and saying,
I'll have no part of this. It's shocking.
Equally, he says, if this is going to happen,
it should at least be based on good maps and good evidence,
because otherwise, it's going to be even worse.
The picture of Cromwell that comes out of your book
is, I would say, reasonably sympathetic.

So, he's a very human figure.
He's not... I mean, he's in religious terms,
sort of by the standards of Charles I's reign,
he was reasonably radical.
But certainly in the mid-1650s,
he's a pragmatist who is grappling with the enormous challenge
of putting the state back together
and satisfying the different factions and so on.
So, for example, the dilemma about whether or not he will be king,
I mean, he doesn't just sort of leap at the chance
and say, great, supreme power is what I've always wanted.
He agonizes, doesn't he, about whether or not to accept the crown,
though there are some people who, sort of,
probably more moderate people who think he should,
because a country needs a king,
and then there are the old army radicals who think he shouldn't.
I mean, do you think...
In terms of his sort of attempting to restore order,
do you think he deserves high marks or not?
I think he deserves high marks for...
It's not about self-aggrandisement.
That's quite unusual in people in very high positions historically.
I think on the whole, the kind of, yes, I'll take supreme authority.
Thank you very much.
And that country has some money and some jobs for my children, et cetera.
It's usually what you expect.
And I think Cromwell, to me, has taken on his own terms,
has an integrity that I think is pretty rare, actually,
amongst people in that sort of position of power.
I think he's not a good politician, because he...
Although, yes, you're right,
that he is trying to reconcile what the army wants,
how to keep the peace, what the MPs want, and so on.
He doesn't manage it well, ultimately,
because his eyes are always going up,
they're always looking up to heaven to see what God's...
I always think of him as somebody dividing for water with those sticks,
waiting to see when they're going to twitch and cross over,
and that being the thing that...
So there's this great sort of new kind of intense military regime
that's set up called the Major Generals in the mid-1650s.
And it's really prompted by the fact that a force sent to the Caribbean
to try and grab some land from the Spanish fails desperately,
and Cromwell is absolutely devastated by this defeat,

not so much because of the loss of lives and so on,
because if God was on his side and approved of him,
he wouldn't have sent him a defeat,
and then so this business of setting up the Major Generals regime
is a sort of direct response to that.
I've got to do more, I've got to go harder,
I've got to be more reforming.
I mean, I think he is trying to reconcile all these things,
but it's pretty difficult to do that
when you've got the kind of endless wild card
of the signs that God is sending you.
Right, and so if you were thinking that,
and I guess that most of the more radical supporters
of the Republic do think that,
the fact that Cromwell dies,
his son Richard Cromwell is briefly becomes Lord Protector
and then it all fizzles out,
and then essentially the question of what do we do,
how do we get out of this becomes such an imponderable one
that God sends a general up in Scotland
and his extraordinary wife to solve the problem.
Yes, so as you say, Cromwell dies having not managed
to find a satisfactory kind of constitutional compromise,
they try all these different things,
having something called the Protectorate in two different ways,
him maybe becoming King and then he refuses to do it,
and then on his deathbed he names his successor,
which he's allowed under the Constitution to do,
and he names his poor hapless son Richard Cromwell,
who knew nothing of this until three hours before his father dies,
and then is somehow expected to be able to sort it all out,
which clearly is...
I mean, one of the things I think is a bit...
Big ask.
It's a big ask, and actually to Dominic's point about, you know,
what's our kind of scorecard on Cromwell,
I mean, it might seem a trivial point
compared to some of the other things he does,
but what an awful thing to do to your child, to your son,
to just hand him all this without...
Not having said, I'm going to do it,
so let me make sure you know these people
and you've learned about this,
and just chucking it at him at the last possible minute.

Anyway, it ends terribly,
and he's given the shove very quickly,
but the chaos that results, as you say,
is something that a number of people looking on,
thinking, what on earth can we do about this,
but most of them have no means to intervene
because it's basically...
There's still, as is the thing all the way through this period,
there is a great big whopping, you know,
10, 20,000 strong army backing up the regime
in the middle of things,
but the one person who is in a position to do something
is the general who's in charge of the army in Scotland,
who's a remarkable figure, George Monk,
who's the kind of so little talked about
in the study of British history,
which I find amazing, given how sort of seismic
his intervention was,
because it is essentially him...
He was a friend of Oliver Cromwell's,
he was a virtual loyal parliamentarian general
of the north of Scotland,
and yet he is the one who makes the decision,
I mean, to the sort of disbelief of his army brethren
down in London,
that he is going to stand up for parliament,
and he is prepared to march on London
and to fight to the final drop of blood in his veins
to see them allowed to meet
and to carry out their sort of constitutional responsibility.
So, hold on, he's standing up, so George Monk,
when he decides, and he makes this extraordinary decision,
he's going to lead his troops down to London.
He's not doing that in a verticom as to restore Charles II,
it's to restore parliament, and those are two different things.
Completely different things.
He is absolutely clear this is not about restoring Charles II.
The fact that he would be in a position potentially to do that
was obvious, and so there have been various attempts
to send kind of messages with kind of letters from Charles II,
and he refuses to even open them.
His intervention is to allow parliament to meet
because the army's expelled parliament again
and there's just an army kind of junta in control,

and that doesn't seem to be a kind of bit of obfuscation.
It seems to be very clearly held in his view in his mind
that that ship has sailed, we've sold all the road lands,
we've melted down the credentials, you know, that's gone.
This is about having a republic that's based on
sort of this kind of proper parliamentary sovereignty.
But Anna, this is where his wife comes in, right?
Who seems the most extraordinary woman, Anne,
who is from a very humble background,
who actually has a big marriage once she's married George Munk,
and he's completely devoted to her,
and she is a bit of a royalist,
and they're very much a kind of a team.
And is she kind of playing a crucial role in saying,
well, what about bringing back the king?
She plays an utterly crucial role.
I mean, it's an amazing thing because he was the son of a knight.
You know, it's a pretty gentry, established family.
She was the laundry woman at the Tower of London
when he was a prisoner there in 1640.
She literally came and, you know, collected his socks.
Washed his pants.
Yeah, exactly. Brought them back.
And they fell in love.
And as you say, I mean, it turns out that she was already married,
but her husband quietly shuffled off somewhere,
and they set up shop to go there.
So when, this is some years before the events at the end of the 1650s,
but when it push comes to shove and everyone's looking at the chaos
after the death of Oliver Cromwell,
it is she who has the kind of relationship with her husband
and it's spoken and uncumbled by sort of convention
who says to him, surely you've got to do something,
surely you've got to act, you've got to intervene.
Both initially to intervene for the restoration of Parliament.
And then when it becomes clear, having done that,
that the run parliament, which is the thing that gets restored,
is going to demand that General Monk do various things
to sort of oppress the city of London and so on to say,
surely now you've got to think about the King.
Not so much because I think she was always, you know,
died in the Royalist, but because I think she was very clear-sighted
and she didn't have some hang-ups about,
we can't possibly do this, that ship sailed.

She just sort of saw that that was going to be the only way
that this was going to end well.
And is there an alternative universe in which it ends differently,
in which it doesn't, the 1650s don't end with the restoration of Charles II
or do you think, so in other words, is the story of this decade
a series of experiments that for different contingent reasons don't work
or is it genuine in the story of a cul-de-sac, a kind of dead end,
and the King was always coming back because most people deep down were monarchists?
I don't think it was inevitable.
I think if Oliver Cromwell, when he was dying, had named his second son Henry Cromwell,
rather than his oldest son Richard Cromwell as a successor, for instance,
Henry Cromwell got very able soldier, politician, moderate,
done a very good job of reconstruction in Ireland,
then I think it could well have taken root.
And so what then, it would be a hereditary lord protectorship?
Yeah, it would be a kind of lord steward of the nation kind of thing.
So I suppose you could argue about to what extent is that actually not just sort of monarchy?
Because that would be filling a monarchy-shaped hole, wouldn't it?
Yeah, it would be, it would be, but nonetheless,
it wouldn't have been the restoration of the monarchy
from before the revolution in a way that did then happen.
But I think the thing to say is that I think it's really narrow-minded to think of it as a cul-de-sac,
and I think because constitutionally it was a failure,
the regime or the series of different regimes that were tried,
but this period as in terms of the influence that it had on what was to come afterwards,
it just has some soaring significance because so many of the things,
although that came to the fore or would first experience
or what kind of flourished during those years, religious toleration, for example,
the Great Britain as a construct, because of the union between England and Scotland during this period,
the size of the state really expanding to something which actually meant
you had something big enough to have an army and fund overseas expeditions and all this kind of stuff.
The idea that Parliament, that MPs in Parliament are the basis of sovereignty,
all these things really originate or germinate and kind of start to grow during this decade,
and for all that come 60 and 60, the kind of constitutional formulation returns to monarchy,
all those things are still there.
So loads of interesting thoughts there, Anna,
and your book, The Restless Republic, Britain Without a Crown, I believe, is now in paperback.
Yes, yes, it is.
With absolutely top historians endorsing it, as I understand Tom.
Yeah.
Tom Holland Not Among Them, I'm sad to say.
No, sadly it wasn't his book of the year, otherwise it could have been on the cover.

It tells its own rather lamentable story, doesn't it?
Right, on that bombshell, Anna, thank you so much for joining us.
It's an amazingly interesting story.
I heartily recommend it, and Tom, we'll be back next time
with more historical shenanigans of various kinds.
Bye-bye.
Bye-bye.
Goodbye.
The Restless Republic.