LONDON NEWSBOOKS AND NEWS MANAGEMENT DURING THE INTERREGNUM 1649-1660

GEOFFREY PHILIP MEDDELTON

MASTER OF ARTS BY RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is news management in London during the Interregnum and early Restoration, 1649-1661. The focus will be on an area of media History previously neglected by scholars. There is a historical consensus that within London there was considerable opposition towards the governments of the Interregnum. However, the role of state sponsored news management as a mid-seventeenth Century innovation has been overlooked. The threat of royalist press, in particular *The Man in The Moon,* was that it directly challenged the official news spin in the Capital and aimed to mobilise discontent towards the authorities. Recognising the effect of critical print in mobilising discontent there, the regime made it a priority not only to stamp out the London based royalist underground press but also to cultivate a metropolitan news spin of its own. In fact, the passage of the licensing act in September 1649 was a watershed because it gave rise to a new experiment in state policy, the sponsoring of an official press. In a period when access to news became progressively restricted to known supporters of the regime in power in London, the official journals were, effectively, state institutions. Over the course of The Interregnum, they evolved from the more informal style copied from the royalist journals towards a much clearer delivery of news and even publicising of state policy. The journals also sought to manufacture a metropolitan identity and a civic patriotism.   The Restoration government copied this experiment of news manipulation in the Capital but placed it on a legal basis. However, by highlighting the challenges to authority, London featured in the press as an issue of security, the official media drew attention to the degree of metropolitan dissent and pluralism and, therefore, the limits to effective news management.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University.   All sources are acknowledged as References.

Chapter One: Early Modern London; a political and social entity as represented in the historiographical debates of the mid-seventeenth century

The context of this thesis is London at times of acute political crisis during the mid-seventeenth century. The thesis focuses specifically on how the regimes in power during the Interregnum sought to manipulate the presentation of news. The intended purpose of which was in order to shape opinion within the Capital. In focusing on news management in London, The thesis aims to address the limitations in the historiography of the mid-seventeenth century. As will be shown later, for the years 1650-1661, scholars have tended to neglect the way in which governments sought to exploit the London press. The newsbook, the forerunner of the newspaper, was a relatively new medium by which the public could be canvassed and advised. This neglect is in stark contrast to the well-established literature and historiographical debate on the period from 1641- 1650 in which scholars have recognised the existence of a pluralist press, especially in London, competing for attention among a politically diverse population. Yet, it will be shown how the restoration of press censorship from 1649 onwards created new opportunities for the innovation of an officially 'inspired press.'[1] The development of this new policy aimed at social and political control in the Metropolis[2]. Indeed, in London over the course of the 1650s, there was the development of an increasingly systematic and even sophisticated news management. From 1660, the governments of Charles 2nd were to copy this as a means of social and political control in the Capital. Historians have recognised the significance of London as a problem of state policy. Mid-seventeenth governments, especially during the interregnum, viewed the Capital as a

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[1] In this thesis, the term 'inspired press' is a convenient descriptor for newsbooks such as *Mercurius Politicus* and, later, *The Publick Intelligencer.* These two newsbooks held a monopoly over the London newsbook trade during the 1650s. They depended on official sources for news, the reproduction of which confirmed their reputations as providers of genuine news as opposed to rumour.

[2] In this thesis 'Metropolis' is used as a term to refer specifically to the City of London, Westminster and their neighbouring districts.

major problem of law and order and security.[3] However, a factor which has tended to be

overlooked in the historiography is the continued concern of the authorities concerning the

state of opinion in the Capital and particularly how official management of the news could

act as an ally in countering dissent. A motive to manipulate the news in the Metropolis was

driven by several factors. First and foremost, there was concern that London and its

surrounding neighbourhoods harboured communities whose presence there threatened the

security of the State. As will be demonstrated in later chapters, the curtailing by the

Commonwealth of royalist newsbooks and pamphlets was recognition of the presence of a

fifth column within the Capital. These journals, which kept alive active dissent to the

republican authorities, also sought to exploit opportunities for fomenting rebellion. This led

to another consideration behind the policy of managing news. As will be shown in later

chapters, the official press was used to demonstrate, to those at home and abroad, the strength

of the regime in London. This was an acknowledgment that printed representation of London

news and opinion was watched from afar by exiled royalists and their continental supporters

who harboured malevolent intent against both the Commonwealth and Protectorate regimes.

A third factor behind a state sponsored press strategy was a growing recognition that the

development of London into the largest metropolis in Europe exacerbated the problems of

policing and control. Indeed, throughout the 1650s, those in power were well aware of the

limits to their capacity to contain urban unrest. The growing sophistication of the manner in

which the 'inspired' press presented news to a London audience and the developing

relationship between journalists and official circles represented a significant shift in the

relationship between rulers and ruled. Historians have recognised the combination of a

number of factors which, during the mid-1640s, generated an embryonic public opinion. As

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[3] J.F. Merrit, *Westminster 1640-1660: A Royal City in a time of Revolution* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 70-77.
According to Merrit, the militarisation of Westminster, in particular, was in response to the perceived threat to
the security of the State.

a result, in place of outright censorship, there was the development of news management. However, the focus for this debate has largely centred on the periods either leading up to the outbreak of civil war in England or, later, during the Restoration. In fact, a survey of newsbooks during the 1650s is illustrative of the importance of this decade, in particular, in terms of innovation in the techniques of news presentation in the Capital. This innovation reflected a realisation that London and London society was changing in ways which required a modernisation of the relationship between official circles and the public. The London press was the medium through which this transformation would occur.

It will be the aim of this chapter to set out London within a particular historical and historiographical context of the mid-seventeenth century. This is important for two particular reasons: Firstly, scholars have recognised there, the development of a vibrant and distinctly metropolitan political culture. However, there is acknowledgment among observers, both contemporary and modern, of the difficulty in giving shape and meaning to what London was. A second priority in this chapter is the consideration of the current historiography of the development and impact of print on London during the seventeenth century. The focus of this debate has been on the print culture up to 1650 and therefore largely prior to the period covered in this thesis.

The chapter will be divided into two sections: Section A will focus on the place of London in the historiography of England during the seventeenth Century and Section B will focus on the Metropolis as it appears in the current debate on contemporary newsbooks during the era of civil war and the Interregnum.

Section A: Seventeenth century London as represented in the historiographical literature.

The recognition of London as a special entity.

Until the 1980s, London has generally been neglected by scholars of the Early Modern period. During the 1970s, for example, social historians tended to focus on social class or on a village or county. It was not until the middle of the following decade that a more systematic collation of essays was published under the editorship of A.L Beier and R Finlay, *The Making of the Metropolis; London 1500-1700.*[4] Historically, London had always been the largest town in Britain, but it was during the course of the seventeenth century in particular, both in terms of physical size and population, that London and its suburbs grew exponentially. With the notable exception of the Ottoman capital at Constantinople, London exceeded the population of that of every other European city; by the end of the century with perhaps 'more than half a million inhabitants [London was] arguably the largest urban place in Europe.'[5] Of the continental counterparts to London in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, 'none grew as fast as London and most unlike London slumped in the seventeenth century.'[6] This was at a time when compared with a number of its near neighbours on the continent such as France, Italy and the Netherlands, the population of the British Isles was small. In the first half of the seventeenth century alone, the population of the Metropolis had grown from 200 000 in 1600 to 375 000 in 1650. Although the rate of growth was lower in

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[4] Paul Griffiths and Mark Jenner, 'Introduction' in P. Griffiths and M. Jenner eds., *LONDINOPOLIS: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* (Manchester, 2000), pp.1-23, (p.1).

[5] Vanessa Harding, 'London Change and Exchange' in Henry Turner ed., *The Culture of Capital: Property, Cities and Knowledge in Early Modern England* (New York, 2002), pp. 129-138.

[6] A.L. Beier, 'Introduction: The Significance of the Metropolis' in A.L Beier and R. Finlay, eds., *The Making of the Metropolis: London 1500-1700* (Harlow, 1986), pp. 1-33, (p.1). See also Nuala Zahedieh, *The Capital and the Colonies: London and the Atlantic Economy, 1660-1700* (Cambridge, 2010), p.20. He also wrote, 'Only in Holland, another trading nation, does one city appear to have approached London's dominance. In 1650, Amsterdam had a population of about 150 000 people and contained 8% of the Dutch total, but it then ceased to grow. Meanwhile, London had outstripped all continental rivals to become, by 1700, the largest city in Western Europe.'

the second half of the century, the overall pattern was one of continuous population

expansion. This was in sharp contrast to the impact of the Black Death in middle of the

fourteenth century.[7] The pre pandemic population which may have been as high as 100 000

in London in the mid-1340s was not reached again for two hundred years. In sharp contrast,

however, was the expansion in London's population from the middle of the sixteenth century.

Between 1550-1650 alone, London's population increased by six fold, such a rate of

demographic expansion was 'unprecedented in scale and significance'[8] Towards the end of

the seventeenth century, 'extramural London parishes like St Dunstan's, Stepney and St

Martin's in the Fields were as large as any other city in the British Isles.'[9]

Migration and economic opportunity as the key in generating growth

The growth of London's population was the result of internal migration, not natural increase.

Indeed, throughout the seventeenth century, a particularly high population density there only

exacerbated the public health problems created by the insanitary conditions endemic to urban

living during this period; 'London births were not numerous enough to maintain the capital's

size let alone fuel growth.'[10] Indeed, in each of the five major outbreaks of Plague (1563-

1665) mortality rates accounted for about a fifth of the current population.[11] However,

despite high rates of infant mortality and endemic outbreaks of plague, the population of

London and its neighbouring districts continued to account for a high percentage of the total

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[7] Griffiths and Jenner, 'Introduction' in *LONDINOPOLIS*, p1. In terms of its population, London by far exceeded any other English city. As evidence see Nuala Zahedieh, *The Capital and The Colonies*, p.20, 'London far outstripped all English rivals, and, in 1700, accounted for 70% of the urban population. Norwich, the second city had a population of 30 000 in 1700 and Bristol the third city and second seaport had 20 000'.

[8] Vanessa Harding 'London Change and Exchange', p. 129.

[9] Griffiths and Jenner, *LONDINOPOLIS*, 'Introduction', p.3.

[10] Vanessa Harding, 'London Change and Exchange', p. 131.

[11] Beier and Finlay 'Introduction: The Significance of the Metropolis', p.9. See also E.A. Wrigley and R. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-187: A reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1981), p.167. They observed that between 1550-1799, records of baptisms in London parishes fell short of recorded burials.

population of the British Isles. Internal migration is the reason why by the end of the century about 10% of the population of the British Isles lived in London[12].

Economic factors are key to explaining the phenomenon of exponential population growth in the Metropolis. There were a variety of economic incentives encouraging migration to the Capital. One of these was higher wages as a remedy to the endemic labour shortages in the Capital. On average, wages in seventeenth century London were 50% higher than those in the provinces.[13] An economic factor drawing in people from around the country was the expanding manufacturing economy in the Metropolis. One of the effects of this was an increase in the average annual intake of apprentices. In the early 1500s, the annual number of new apprentices in London was around 1500. By the early 1600s, it was between 4000-5000.[14] Higher wages and expansion in economic opportunities were key factors encouraging internal migration. This was the main cause of the rapid expansion of the population as 'very high child mortality, pestilence and epidemics effectively blocked any natural [population] increase'.[15] By the end of the seventeenth century 'perhaps one in eight of the nation's population either lived or spent some of their lives there.'[16] Migration into the Capital was also a result of push factors, rural poverty as a result of commercialisation of agriculture helped to swell the numbers of immigrants.[17]

By the late seventeenth century, London which was drawing in annually about 1000 migrants meant that a very high proportion of all adult Londoners were first generation immigrants. Indeed the migrational pull of London extended across the whole social spectrum of Early

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[12] Vanessa Harding, 'London Change and Exchange', p.131; 'very high child mortality, pestilence and epidemics effectively blocked any natural increase.'
[13] Beier and Finlay, 'Introduction: The Significance of the Metropolis', p.17.
[14] Ibid., p.15. See also F.J. Fisher, *London and the English Economy 1500-1700* (London, 1990), p.191. He concluded that over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the economic importance of London grew from being the largest mercantile centre in the country to becoming the centre of the economy.
[15] Vanessa Harding, 'London Change and Exchange.' p.131.
[16] Ibid. See also Ben Coates, *The Impact of the English Civil War on the Economy of London 1642-1650* (Aldershot, 2004), p.197.
[17] Beier and Finlay, 'Introduction: The Significance of the Metropolis.' p.15.

Modern English society.   Bonds of familiarity and tradition which played such a key role in legitimizing authority were therefore in the process of formation and subject to challenge on a scale never before encountered.   Indeed, in a study of the London suburb of Southwark during the first half of the seventeenth century, Jeremy Boulton alluded to the growing complexity of social relationships within the enlarged Metropolis. This was, in essence, the unique position of London in British social and political life during the Century. He argued that even then London should be viewed as a mosaic of neighbourhoods rather than 'one single amorphous community'. In support of this assertion, he drew on surviving contemporary evidence which suggests that by the turn of the century, it was becoming common for contemporaries to refer to the 'the heterogeneous neighbourhoods of which the Capital was made up'.[18]

The development of political awareness in Early Modern London

A growing body of historical research has focused on the development of London politics and also of the importance of London in the political crisis of the 1640s.   Andy Wood in *Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* has written on the significance of towns and cities in Early Modern Europe as centres of political pluralism. He argued that in such urban settings, popular politics 'seemed at its most heterogeneous, vibrant and disputatious'[19] This was due to a number of factors: the substantially higher rates of literacy; the presence of printing presses; the greater population density and the proximity of political institutions. A unique feature of a capital city was the presence there of national as well as local institutions of governance.   Furthermore, he described what he defined as 'an intimate political geography to the Early Modern town, the significance of which social historians are

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[18] Jeremy Boulton, *Neighbourhood and Society: A London Suburb during the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1987), p.293.

[19] Andy Wood, *Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 116.

only beginning to appreciate'[20] Importantly, He alluded to the political awareness which

crossed the social divide:

> The buzz of news within the metropolis of Early Modern London did not respect
> administrative boundaries between the City, Southwark, Westminster and the
> privileged islands of the Inns of Court any more than it followed the socio-
> political boundaries between elite and plebeian.[21]

In noting the development of a vibrant street culture in the Capital, he is representative of

revisionist historians who have challenged the consensus that 'the crowd' or 'plebeian'

elements were the pawns rather than the instigators of political debate and action:

> the heterogeneous diversity of popular politics was at its most turbulent in Early
> Modern London…London's most prominent streets and open spaces were
> charged with political electricity.[22]

Underdown's research has been an important contribution to the historiography of popular

politics. He identified a variety of public spaces within Early Modern London which served

as venues for the transmission of news and for lively political debate.   He identified the

courtyard outside Parliament as 'the most important channel for street politics.'[23] Lambeth

Palace, the London residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Strand (the location of

the London residences of many noble families), were important arenas for political discourse

because of their connections with influential political circles. Other areas which he identified

as centres for street politics were Charing Cross, Cheapside, Fleet Street and St Paul's

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[20] Ibid. See also Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 14. He noted the tendency of scholars to be largely sceptical about attributing political consciousness to the London crowd.

[21] Andy Wood, *Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England*, p.116.

[22] Ibid., p.120.

[23] Ibid. See also Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II,* p.21; 'in a variety of informal settings people became embroiled in discussion of the political and religious issues of the time.' Earlier studies have tended to focus on developing political consciousness in the 18th Century. See Nicholas Rogers, 'Popular Protest in Early Hanoverian London,' *Past and Present*, Number 79, May 1979, pp.90-100. On p.100, he challenged the view that popular protest was directed by elites.   In his view there were 'self-generating aspects of plebeian political culture.'

Churchyard.[24] St. Paul's Churchyard was the location where many book and pamphlet sellers established their stalls. Yet, there were numerous other places where a lively and disputatious discourse might ensue. Market places were places where official proclamations were read aloud. In a large city such as London, such places were numerous, and 'their centrality in the physical area of the town meant they became contested sites for popular politics.'[25] . At Inns, taverns and crossroads, places where travellers met, there was pressure to exchange news. This encouraged the transmission of current affairs and views which could spill over into public debate. At a time when most people still relied upon the oral transmission of news, '[f]or most people it was a case of hearing and not reading the news', these places had a particular importance for popular acquisition of political and religious affairs.[26] The development of informed discourse was aided and abetted by a more systematic organisation of the postal services. A monopoly was established in 1629 for the carriage of private correspondence on the London- Plymouth road and was extended in 1635 into a more comprehensive system covering England and extending to Holyhead and Edinburgh.[27] In fact, 'the newly invented post had acted as a catalyst by establishing a regular traffic in news and ideas' [28] Internal improvements in postal communications was paralleled by developments in continental postal services. This now made possible a regular supply of European news. The latter was to become the staple of the political news in London newsbooks during the 1650s. Indeed, 'throughout the seventeenth century, there was a constant improvement in the postal and communications services available to the general

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[24] Andy Wood, *Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England*, p.120.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ian Atherton, 'The Itch Grown a Disease: Manuscript Transmission of News in the Seventeenth Century', in Joad Raymond ed., *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London, 1999), pp. 38-65, (p.38).
[27] J Crofts, *Packhorse, Waggon and Post: Land Carriage and Communications under the Tudors and Stuarts* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 100-101.
[28] Ibid., p.103. See also p.102 for an example of the impact of the postal system which had been established on the London- Plymouth road. Crofts stated that the time taken for letter sent from a supplier in London to reach a shop keeper in Barnstaple decreased from three weeks or more to about eleven days.

public.'[29] The increased availability of more current news broke down barriers of isolation and allowed greater connectivity between the Capital, the provinces and beyond. A factor neglected by scholars, however, is how Interregnum governments responded to the growing appetite for news. As will be shown in later chapters, the authorities attempted to develop a sustained policy of news management aimed at manipulating opinion in the Capital.

London as a centre for diverse views

There is recognition among historians that seventeenth century London harboured a variety of opinions and views, many of which clashed with those of the authorities of the day. Indeed, this was vital in the forming of a public receptive to a pluralist press during the 1640s. If Early Modern London was unique partly because of the variety of its public discourse, this uniqueness was fed by the greater sense of political independence and participation in elected civic life; 'in the course of the sixteenth century, this corporate citizenship was infused and enthused by Renaissance notions of public service.'[30]   Long before the outbreak of the Civil War, there had been a well-established series of representative institutions in the Capital. The development of elected assemblies in the City government, in particular, provided opportunities for participation in public life. In turn, this helped to create a particular sense of community identity which historians have recognised as unique. The taking part in local office contributed to a sense of civic pride and community; 'the political traditions of the City were grounded in the ideas of fairness, duty and conscience and were connected to ideas of

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[29] Paul Arblaster, 'Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers: England in a European system of Communication,' in Joad Raymond, ed., *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain*, pp. 129-134, (p.129).
[30] Phil Withington, 'Public Discourse, Corporate Citizenship and State Formation in Early Modern England,' *The American Historical Review*, volume 112, Number 4, October 2007, pp.1016-1038 (p.1017).

personal autonomy and public service'.[31] Indeed, 'for the middling groups', participation in public office was a form of political education.[32]

Historians have identified a number of factors aiding the development of political discourse in London; street politics, higher levels of literacy, the expanding access to print and the heterogonous nature of the population all served to support of diversity of political opinion. In the political crisis of the early 1640s, this spilled over into public debate both on the street and in pamphlets and was to lead to fierce competition for elected office. In this, of course, Londoners were drawing on established traditions of autonomy and independence. In the City, for example, there was a well-established representative institution in the Common Council, elected annually and London also retuned four members to Parliament[33]. Nevertheless, among scholars, it has been recognised that, for London, the early 1640s were a watershed in the development of mass politicisation of ordinary Londoners. This was the direct result of the collapse of centralized authority in the wake of the disagreements between King and the Parliament. A key cause of dissent between rulers and ruled was religious controversy. In turn, this led to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642. Civil wars necessarily lead to the breakdown of a monopoly of power and authority. As a prelude to this, from the 1630s, there was an opening up of religious debate at 'all social levels.'[34] Indeed, the appearance in London, late in 1641, of the first newsbook which printed domestic political

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[31] David Haris Sacks, 'The Metropolis and The Revolution: Commercial Urban and Political Culture in Early Modern London', in Turner ed., *Culture and Capital* , pp. 139-162 (p.153)

[32] Ian Atherton, 'Popular Politics in the 16th and 17th Centuries' in P. Griffiths and M. Jenner eds., Londinopolis, pp.26-46, (p.26).

[33] Beier and Finlay, 'The significance of the Metropolis.' p.24. In fact, the electorate was broad; '[t]he City itself had a freeman franchise meaning that almost half the adult male citizens voted in scot and lot franchises, in Southwark and for Westminster it was even wider.'

[34] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics During The English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 289.

news was symptomatic of the inability of the regime of Charles 1st to maintain the ban on the printing of domestic news.[35]

In London, a developing awareness led into direct political action. In this there were three interconnected developments, the effects of which had a long term impact on City politics and religious life. These effects were the rise of mass petitioning of Parliament, the impact of the Common Council elections of 1641 and the Presbyterian takeover of the churches in the City. Taking each of these in turn, the rise of mass petitioning of Parliament was a significant development of widespread political awareness. By December 1640, for example, 15 000 Londoners had signed the 'Root and Branch' petition to be presented to Parliament calling for reform of the Church.[36] The petition itself was the reflection of a high degree of local initiative in organisation as well as growing politicisation:

Drafting petitions and canvassing signatures involved careful planning. Subscriptions to the September Petition for a Parliament were gathered in a systematic and orderly fashion in the City's wards.[37]

It has been asserted that the mobilisation of large numbers of Londoners in mass petitioning had a direct impact on the Common Council elections in the City in December 1641. The elections were especially disputatious and led to profound changes which, in turn, had a dramatic impact on government in the City. Indeed, among scholars, there is a consensus that these elections were important in transforming the political landscape of politics in favour of reformers supportive of policies to undo the religious reforms of Archbishop Laud. Prior to the elections, a variety of factors converged to intensify popular dissatisfaction with the King's government and its allies in the City. Puritan opposition to the government's religious

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[35] Richard Cust, 'News and Politics in Early Seventeenth Century England,' *Past and Present*, number 112, August 1986, pp.60-90 (p.60).

[36] Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997), p. 4.

[37] Ibid., p.33. In the following extract, Lindley drew attention to the sophistication of grass roots political activism and mass participation; '[t]hree hundred citizens queued up in one venue to read and subscribe the petition, twenty or thirty at a time. To have gathered so much support at the start of the new Parliament was no mean achievement and indicates an impressive level of expertise, local organisation and enthusiasm.'

policy, unemployment and plague coalesced into popular unrest so that 'London was a hotbed of discontent.'[38] In the elections to Common Council, opponents of the status quo called upon electors to reject candidates who were 'not zealous for change'.[39] In this context, radicals and conservatives, terms used by Lindley, are modern labels. They become convenient labels used by historians to differentiate between those who wanted to overturn the Anglican religious settlement on the City's churches and those who were prepared to defend the status quo which upheld royal control. The impact of the elections on the composition of Common Council was such that radical candidates had a convincing lead over conservatives.[40] The ability of those in support of far reaching church reform in the Capital was such that in most wards, incumbents in the Common Council had been replaced by newcomers 'wholly devoted to the Puritan faith.'[41] The third development of the politicization of Londoners in the early 1640s was the effect of the elections on the transformation of the City churches. An important result of this sea-change was in the composition of the Common Council committees, where radicals pressing for reform of the City's churches outnumbered their more conservative counterparts. In 1641, the Committee for Scandalous Ministers, established in December of the previous year to receive complaints about incumbent clergy, was replaced by The Committee for Plundered Ministers. It received petitions from the parishes of the City demanding the removal of incumbent clergy. It has been estimated that over the course of the decade, 81% of all City parishes saw a removal of their incumbent clergy. A priority of the radicals on Common Council and their supporters in the City was to establish a Presbyterian religious settlement. .[42]

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[38] Valerie Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution: City Government and National Politics, 1637-1645* (Oxford, 1961), p. 107.
[39] Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London*, p.189.
[40] Ibid., p.199.
[41] Ibid., p.189.
[42] Ibid., p.50.

The development of political and religious opposition in mid-seventeenth century London

The mobilisation of Londoners in the mass petitioning, City Council elections and the Presbyterian takeover of the churches was crucial in the parliamentary takeover of the City on the eve of the Civil War. However, a factor recognised by contemporaries was the persistence of heterogeneity of opinion within the Metropolis. Any attempt to impose a uniform religious settlement was bound to counter stiff opposition and resistance.[43] In fact, far from heralding a new religious uniformity, the 1640s coincided with a vigorous plurality in religious ideas, as a range of protestant sects found the ability to establish themselves in the Metropolis without fear of a state sponsored repression.[44] In fact, within London itself, the coalition which had come together to defeat the King during civil war was brittle and quickly broke down. Essential for the victory of Parliament in the Civil War was its control over the material and manpower resources of the Capital yet 'London was at no stage unquestionably parliamentarian.'[45] Within the Metropolis, two examples of how this coalition was fragile stood out. These were the Fifth Monarchists and the Levellers. The Fifth Monarchists were a millenarian sect, whose supporters saw the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of a parliamentary republic as presaging Christ's Kingdom on Earth. However, quickly disillusioned with the Interregnum regimes, by late 1651, their opposition had crystallised into a distinct London based movement.[46] The emergence of the

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[43] Lindley, Ibid, p.271.

[44] Ibid., p.281. He referred to a range of sects which emerged in the Metropolis during the 1640s. There were the 'Gathered Churches' where membership was restricted to the 'godly'. For further examples of the range of London based sects see p.284; by the mid-1640s there were seven 'Particular' Baptist churches whose congregations believed that salvation was reserved for a select few and five 'General' Baptist churches whose congregations believed in redemption. By the middle of the decade, he claimed that around 10 separatist churches were headed by lay pastors.

[45] Ibid., p.44.

[46] Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth Century English Millenarianism* (London, 1972), pp. 55-57. See also p.59; 'All Hallows The Great' in Thames Street was patronised by leaders of the movement as a location for their weekly lectures.

Fifth Monarchists was, of course, a reflection of internal divisions within the coalition of groups and interests which had opposed the Stuarts during the Civil Wars. A further reflection of the fragility of this coalition was the emergence of the Levellers. Their aims were for greater accountability of those in authority. This was to be achieved through annual elections to Parliament and a wider franchise for the election of the City government. The leaders of the movement had a shared experience of apprenticeships in London trades.[47] At various London locations, the movement maintained a printing press for their publications. The fact it had to move with relative frequency was testament to the concern which the Leveller activities aroused in official circles.[48] It will be shown how at different times both the Levellers and the Fifth Monarchists became a cause of serious concern for governments. This was because of the influence they were deemed to have on fomenting dissent within the Capital. A factor overlooked by scholars is the exploitation by the underground royalist press of London based Leveller disagreement with the authorities of the Commonwealth.

The presence of Catholicism and the royalist underground in post-war London

Within London, not only had the authorities to contend with the fragility of the parliamentary coalition but also the natural enemies of the Commonwealth and later, of course, the Protectorate. Within the Metropolis, Catholicism and underground royalism stood out as two particular examples of threats to the regime. . The survival of Catholicism in London was a source of concern for government both at a local and national level. Catholicism openly opposed the Commonwealth because of the latter's support for a more fundamental and anti-Catholic form of Protestantism. Furthermore, the Interregnum authorities were either convinced of, or deliberately played up, the idea of a significant Catholic fifth column operating in the Capital:

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[47] Joseph Frank, *The Levellers* (New York, 1969), p.394.
[48] Ibid., p.399. See also p.149, 'London was the hub of the Leveller activities, the country was their orbit.'

> London was said to be swarming with popish priests mainly Irish, often sheltering in foreign embassies and it was believed rightly or wrongly that they fomented dissension among the numerous Protestant sects.[49]

The main concern of those in authority was the perceived threat posed by those who supported the Stuart cause. London harboured a substantial royalist underground which, amongst its supporters, included men of influence. This has been the subject of historical investigation which has shed light onto support for the Stuarts from among metropolitan based elite groups. Research has shown that out of 350 Londoners whose property was sequestered by Parliament during the 1640s, 60% had addresses in the City.[50] Indeed, 'London royalism could count on strong support from the capital's mercantile and financial elite'.[51] However, royalist sympathies extended much deeper into metropolitan society, 'it could also attract allegiance from lesser merchants, shopkeepers, artisans and even among the middle and lower ranks of the gentry.'[52] Royalist newsbooks continued to circulate in the Capital up until 1654, well into the period of more stringent state censorship. Such an achievement was only possible because of the existence of opinion there sympathetic to those who continued to proselytise for the Stuart cause. The Interregnum authorities were determined to remove public display of royalist iconography. In early December 1650, the Council of State gave specific instructions to the Lord Mayor to take action to inspect public places for any display of images of the late King:

> the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen of London, to take notice that in many churches and halls of companies in London, and other public meeting places, the arms and picture of the late King still remain, and to require them to make strict inquiry in all those places, and cause all those arms and pictures to be taken down, and certify thereon.[53]

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[49] Daisy Lucie Hobman, *Cromwell's Master Spy: A study of John Thurloe* (London, 1961), p.16
[50] Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London*, pp.253-254.
[51] Ibid., p.255.
[52] Ibid.
[53] BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 2, 1650, p.453; 'Council of State Day's Proceedings, December 3rd.'

Throughout, the duration of the Interregnum, the authorities remained concerned at the prospect of a royalist fifth column in the Capital. At times of acute domestic tension, therefore, the authorities resorted to expelling those it viewed as an internal security threat. In such circumstances, Parliament gave the Council of State wide ranging powers:

> dismiss from London and Westminster, and any place within 20 miles, any person whose abode there shall appear dangerous to the safety of the Parliament or peace of the commonwealth; such persons to conform thereto, upon pain of the penalties in the Act for removing all Papists, &c. from London and Westminster.[54]

Indeed, for much of 1651, the Council of State made a concerted effort to keep ahead of potential threats;'[w]e have frequent notice of the designs of the enemy for stirring up insurrections and troubling the peace, and particularly within the city of London and some neighbouring counties '.[55] Therefore, it urged the city authorities in early April to maintain the inconvenience and cost of a prolonged mobilisation of the militia:

> The horse raised by you in the city and liberties must be kept up for two months longer, to the number they were first raised to, that they may be ready for service, unless we in the meantime shall give other order, which we shall willingly do, and abate this charge and trouble, as soon as our care of the common safety will permit; but meantime we find it requisite to give you this order, and doubt not of your ready compliance. [56]

To conclude, the fact that the Commonwealth faced challenges to its authority in the Capital meant that in spite of the decisive defeat of the cause of Charles Stuart in the Third Civil War, Parliament's grip on the Capital was never secure. In fact, scholars of the period have overlooked the significance of this to the development of a more sophisticated means by which the successive Interregnum regimes sought to counter this threat. There was, in fact, a growing realisation that, outwardly at least, government had to appear more responsive and

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[54] BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 3, January- October 1651, p.44; 'Order in Parliament, February 13th.'
[55] Ibid., p.131; April 4th, Whitehall, 'Council of State to the Militia Committee of the City of London'.
[56] Ibid.

accountable in their relationship with the populace who were increasingly being portrayed in alliance with the authorities of the day as loyal citizens.

Section B: The current historiography of the role of print in the Capital during the seventeenth century

There is a well-established body of historical research on the development of print culture in England during the seventeenth century. Indeed, there is a consensus that a plurality of opinion within the Metropolis was, in large measure, due to the increasing accessibility and diversity of print concerning the religious and political controversies of the day. It has been asserted that 'by the 1620s and probably well before, a scholar or a gentleman residing at London would have had little difficulty in acquiring most of the books he desired.'[57] Scholars have identified a number of reasons why this was the case. Firstly, studies have commented on the high levels of literacy in the Metropolis compared with elsewhere in the country. Between the 1580s and 1670s, for example, the percentage of London tradesmen and craftsmen able to sign their name whilst giving evidence at the ecclesiastical courts rose from 59% to 78%.[58] These figures are, in general, supported by other sources. There is a growing body of evidence, for example, that literacy rates in the Metropolis 'went relatively deep into the social order'. Indeed, a factor commented on by foreign observers was the number of women who were literate compared with their counterparts on the Continent.[59] However, by the late seventeenth century, the majority of labourers remained illiterate.[60] A second factor identified by scholars was the unparalleled access seventeenth century

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[57] F.J. Levy, 'How Information Spread among the Gentry 1550-1640', *Journal of British Studies*, Volume 21, November 1982, pp.11-34 (p.17).

[58] Mark Jenner, 'London' in Joad Raymond ed., *Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 294-307, (p.294).

[59] David Haris Sacks, 'The Metropolis and the Revolution; Commercial, urban and political culture,' p.155.

[60] Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles 2nd*, p. 27; Tim Harris estimated that although 70% adult male Londoners were literate although 80% labourers were illiterate. The urban figures were in sharp contrast to those in rural areas. See David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1985), p.1: 'male illiteracy averaged about 70% in rural areas.'

Londoners had to a growing variety of printed material. Items could be purchased through a variety of means such as the bookshops and stalls in St Paul's Churchyard or from 'mercury women and other itinerant sellers who hawked cheap print along London streets.'[61] The market for print was such that during the seventeenth century it could support those who made a living solely by producing printed works in a variety of forms. In this way, therefore, it led to the development of professional journalism.[62]

Social historians of popular protest in London have emphasised the importance of access to print in mobilising dissent across London society to an extent, hitherto unforeseen. In the political crisis of the 1640s, which set an alliance between radicals in the City and their supporters in Parliament against the government, it was necessary for the protagonists to 'appeal to the people'. This was aimed at involving them in the political discourse as never before. In this, print played a crucial part precisely because it could reach out to the public. An early example of this was, of course, the emergence of mass petitioning to Parliament, a phenomenon deliberately exploited by parliamentary critics of the government.[63] In such times, print had a clear advantage over scribal texts, for example, because it could be reproduced at a fraction of the cost.[64] Crucially, it extended the range of social groups which could be accessed directly, thereby developing their politicisation and independence. It has been recognised how print, for example, played a vitally important role in educating the public about parliamentary proceedings, in the process of which it was breaking down the barriers between the political elite and the governed. It broke with the established orthodoxy jealously guarded by government circles that political affairs were the concerns only of the political and ruling elite. A term which Peacey uses to describe the democratization of

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[61] Jenner, 'London', p.294.
[62] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics during the English Revolution*, p.196-197
[63] Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London*, p.199
[64] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics During the English Revolution*, p. 251.

political knowledge is 'vulgarization' of news.[65] He concluded that access to print shaped reactions to it and had a lasting impact on social habits; cheap print had made more open what had been previously privileged. This was a key factor enabling a growing politicised public to obtain insight into the workings of Parliament and, importantly, 'to make informed judgments about whether or not their representatives were fulfilling their duties and putting public service before private interests.'[66]

Access to print was politicising the nation, not merely extending entry to the world previously open only to a privileged elite. Peacey asserted that print helped to transform society and, as a consequence, played a vital part in its integration.   Through forming judgments on what they had read, 'contemporaries from all walks of life' were able to develop a more informed and thereby sophisticated understanding of political processes which, in turn, enabled them to remodel their methods of protest and lobbying. Availability of cheap print, and the impact it had, broadened the political nation by enhancing 'the potential for participation.'[67]   Historians concur that a key feature of the English Revolution was greater political awareness across the social spectrum as 'political life [had become] both popular and shared if it was not necessarily equal.'[68] The vital contribution which Peacey's work has made in developing an understanding of how print impacted on in the seventeenth century notwithstanding, nevertheless, his work has focused more on English society in general rather than London. There, higher levels of literacy were crucial in the formation of a unique political discourse based on the dissemination of printed news.

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[65] Ibid., p.251. See also Jason Peacey review of 'Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution' by Ted Vallance in *The English Historical Review* Volume 130, Number 545, August 2015, pp.992-993.

[66] Peacey, *Print and Public Politics during the English Revolution*, p.392.

[67] Ibid., p.329.

[68] Ibid., p.402.

The historiography of the London newsbook

An innovation of the seventeenth century which was a response to the growing public demand for reliable and, therefore, printed news was the newsbook. Indeed, there has been extensive research on the development of this phenomenon. Its emergence in London coincided with the rise in the rapid politicisation of London society during the 1640s. This, in turn, increased the demand for reliable printed news. The newspaper first appeared in Amsterdam in 1620; the first newspaper in English and concerned primarily with domestic news appeared in November 1641.[69] Soon, there were about thirty four newsbooks in circulation in London.[70] Historians writing on the early developments of English printed news have noticed two simultaneous developments associated with the origin of the newsbook; firstly, their focus specifically on appealing to a London based metropolitan audience and secondly, the contribution of these journals towards the development of an independent and increasingly informed public discourse over which competing journals vied for influence and patronage. It is true that the Metropolis was not the only centre where there existed a developing market for commercial print, 'there were a good number of readers in most towns and among the middling sorts as well as the gentry and nobility resident in rural England.'[71] Yet, ironically, this development in the country at large also furthered the growing importance of London as the national centre for the news trade. Surviving correspondence from this period illustrates the dependence of even a politically aware audience outside of the capital on news provided from commercially produced sources in London; '[g]iven the frequency with which inhabitants of provincial England resorted to

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[69] Joseph Frank, *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper 1620-1660* (Cambridge, Mass, 1961), p. 21.
[70] David Haris Sacks, 'The Metropolis and the Revolution: Commercial, Urban and Political Culture in Early Modern London,' p.155.
[71] Ibid.

London to acquire pamphlets and newsletters, it must be assumed that booksellers in the localities were unable to satisfy the demand.'[72]

In their attempt to locate the appeal of the newsbook towards a London based audience, scholars have sifted the text for clues which indicate that the Capital and its neighbouring districts was, indeed, the target audience. In his study of the royalist underground press in the years 1647-50, for example, McElligott concluded that absence of reference to news from rural England suggests that there was a deliberate aim at targeting readers in London and its immediate vicinity. In particular, he noted the lack of news reporting concerning food shortages prevalent throughout rural England in the second half of the 1640s.[73] The style of writing, it has been claimed, was deliberately aimed at reaching a mass audience:

> The preponderance of simple vernacular English suggests that they [royalist newsbooks] implicitly tried to attract readers lower down the social scale...
> [M]ost of the middling sort and some of the poorer citizens would have been able to read English with varying degrees of fluency.[74]

Relatively low cost of print enabled men and women of relatively modest means to acquire them, the price of a London royalist newsbook fluctuated between one and two pence.[75] It also made possible mass production which, in turn, facilitated mass consumption of news.[76] Given the higher literacy rates in London, there was a large potential audience across the social spectrum to which these journals could appeal. In the historiography of the rise of the Early Modern London press, there has been focus on the role which it played in the formation of large communities of public opinion. Readers were enabled to feel part of a wider

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[72] Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, p.63.

[73] Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 37.

[74] Ibid., p.41. Furthermore, on p.39, McElligott concluded that the target audience were ordinary citizens in London and its neighbouring districts who were 'believed to be alienated by the high tax and slow trade [and] by the erratic and unpredictable behaviour of Parliament.'

[75] Ibid., p.27.

[76] Ibid., p.28. The normal print of a newsbook in mid-century was between 1500-2000 copies per impression.

community beyond their own parochial neighbourhoods. This was very much the result of a key function of a newspaper which was to '[span] linguistic communities and geographical entities.'[77] However, the role of the seventeenth century newsbook in helping to specifically define London as a metropolitan society has largely been overlooked by scholars. In fact, the newsbooks of the 1650s especially, played a key role in consciously seeking to manufacture a wider metropolitan identity which cut across the neighbourhoods of which London was composed.

Historians have identified a variety of ways in which newsbooks facilitated in the development of an independent public opinion especially in London by the 1640s. Regularity of production (London newsbooks were published weekly and on the same day) ensured continuity both in the supply of news and also readerships. Newsbooks presented story lines in a way which assumed the ability of their readers to 'relate items back to previous issues to follow stories as they developed.'[78] Among readerships this developed patterns of remembering 'and active involvement rather than the culture of passivity and forgetfulness.[79] A second factor in developing public opinion was the role played by newsbooks in generating public awareness. It has been asserted, for example, that during the 1640s 'there were hardly any events or issues that did not feature in the pamphlets of the period.'[80] Scholars have come to see this varied discourse as a phenomenon which emerged first in London during the seventeenth century.[81] A third factor identified by researchers, is the impact which a pluralistic media had on encouraging metropolitan society to challenge authority. This was

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[77] Joad Raymond, 'The Newspaper and Public Opinion in the Public Sphere in the 17th Century' in Joad Raymond ed., News, *Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain'*, pp. 69-140 (p.130).
[78] Ibid., p.131.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Dagmar Freist, *Governed by Opinion: Politics, Religion and the Dynamics of Communication in Stuart London, 1637-1645* (London, 1997), p.164.
[81] Ibid., p.21. See also p.305; confronted with 'opinions in every house and street and a King and Parliament utterly divided, ordinary men and women had to fall back on their own private conscience in order to discern their public duty.'

part of a deliberate strategy on the part of rivals for power in government and the City to gain favour and support. It was a realisation of how times had changed under the combined impact of political and religious crisis and the availability of cheap print. The cultivating of dissent in print undermined authority.[82] Historians have challenged the conclusions made earlier by Jürgen Habermas on the formation of what he termed as a 'public sphere'.[83] By this he meant the formation of public opinion. A key characteristic of this was independence from any official control. Only then could it act as a critique of established authority. In the process of which, governmental institutions were put into a position of having to justify their legitimacy before the critical organs of a free media.[84]   This was a phenomenon which Habermas saw emerging first in London in the 1690s.[85]   In sharp contrast to Habermas, however, later historians have seen its emergence earlier in the 1640s. In writing on London in the years prior to the First Civil War, Freist wrote 'public opinion is characterised by division and it poses a potential challenge to authority, questioning its monopoly on the definition of meaning.'[86] These conditions he saw developing during the 1640s. Through the method of petitioning, Parliament became more accessible to a growing proportion of Londoners and here print played a key role in the process of acclimatising people to what had been a privileged world. Amongst historians, a new consensus has emerged.   Firstly, print was crucial in both the formation and sophistication of public opinion. It has, for example, been seen as key in the effective channelling of opinion in order to influence policy. A second factor on which a new consensus has emerged is the role of print in political education. It removed the barriers between the political elite and the public. As

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[82] Valerie Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution*, p.130.

[83] Jürgen Habermas, translated by Thomas Burger with assistance from Frederick Lawrence, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass, 1991).

[84] Ibid., p.25.

[85] Ibid., p.16. See also, p.21; Habermas was dismissive of the early newsbooks as evidence of an independent public opinion. The 'irregularity of published reports of recent events were not comparable to the routine production of news.'

[86] Dagmar Freist, *Governed by Opinion*, p.305.

parliamentary proceedings began to appear in print, active citizens were now able 'to make [informed] judgments about whether or not their representatives were putting public service before private interests.'[87]   Finally, historians now agree that through facilitating the process of lobbying, print made access to politicians easier, broadened the political nation and thereby enhanced 'the potential for participation'. Joad Raymond more directly challenged the chronological development of the public sphere put forward by Habermas, arguing that its origins lay a generation earlier:

> 1695 was not a watershed in the emergence of a public sphere of popular political opinion; it was the 1640s that saw the most rapid development of informed popular debate, building on an expansion of political communication dating from the early 1620s. Debate was driven by heterodoxy of religious belief and by conflicting discourses of social and political thought.[88]

As historical consensus developed over the significance, especially in London, of the 1640s as the watershed when it became clear that a 'public sphere' had developed, historians have accepted that this was now a permanent feature which also constrained governments. Scholars now dismiss the perception that social disorder was largely the manipulation of popular unrest by the elite. Whereas Underdown asserted 'the gentry could expect, and draw upon, a deep fund of deference'[89], Harris argued that the 'crowd' was far more autonomous; '[p]olitical matters were discussed by societies meeting in ward clubs and in taverns and coffee houses where gentry, shopkeepers and artisans mixed freely.'[90]

On writing of the long term impact of print on English society, Peacey asserted that public opinion had become a permanent feature and that   there could be no turning back the clock towards a blanket form of censorship of publication of political news. The Carolean regime accepting this fact, he argued, acknowledged that the general public could no longer be

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[87] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics during the English Revolution*, p.251.

[88] Joad Raymond, 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion and the Public Sphere.' p.128.

[89] David Underdown, Revel*, Riot and Rebellion,* p. 121; concerning participants in popular agitation, he wrote '[t]hey were not autonomous, they were, in fact, the pawns and agents of their superiors.' Underdown's research drew on the counties of Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire.

[90] Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the reign of Charles 2nd*, p.27.

excluded from news concerning the affairs of state. The Carolean authorities therefore opted

for a policy of manipulation and management of news as official state policy:

> It seems that the return of Charles 2nd did not represent a watershed in English
> political culture. Whether in terms of the consumption of news and comment, the
> accessibility and transparency of the Westminster system or the development of
> petitioning and lobbying, it seems that the majority of the experiments and
> improvisations of the mid-17th Century became settled and standard practices. At
> the level of daily political life, the Civil Wars and Interregnum generated not
> merely short lived experimentation but permanent change.[91]

Long before freedom of the press was established under parliamentary statute:

> A substantial proportion of the public pursued in print and coffee houses, events
> and issues that interested them. Late Stuart governments did not try to control
> public opinion by supressing or preventing the forums for news entirely, but by
> manipulating them to their advantage.[92]

Conclusions

Research on the place of London in the development of a wider public discourse has focused

on either the 1640s or the Restoration and its aftermath. In sharp contrast, London during the

1650s has been largely neglected by scholars. In part, at least, it would seem this was due to

the impact of press censorship from September 1649. The development of the press during

the 1650s has generally been overlooked. Indeed scholarship focusing on the newsbook has

largely been on periods when there seemed to be genuine pluralism both before and towards

the end of the Interregnum:

> The fortunes of the uncensored press seesawed in motion with the ebb and flow
> of central state power. With the return of political instability upon the death of
> Oliver Cromwell in 1658, restrictions upon printing became increasingly

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[91] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, pp. 412-413.
[92] Joad Raymond, *'The Newspaper, Public Opinion and the Public Sphere in the 17th Century.'* p. 109.

inefficient and the press returned to its role as an important medium for the communication of news and the definition of political discourse.[93]

It was certainly the case that from the autumn of 1649, legislation was enacted to control and thereby suppress the publication and sale of printed items of which the Commonwealth disapproved.[94] Furthermore, the restrictions imposed on printing in 1649 were the focus of further legislation throughout the next decade.[95] However, what scholars have tended to ignore is the continued concern of authorities throughout the Interregnum of the importance of their hold on power in the Capital. The perception that print had the capacity to enhance as well as to undermine the legitimacy of authority was key in the development of a state sponsored policy of news management. The importance of London in the development of this was due to several factors. First and foremost was the presence there of disputatious communities willing to challenge authority both in word and print. A second factor was the perception of print in its ability to create imagined communities which cut across neighbourhoods. These imagined communities aimed to establish a shared consciousness with others either in opposition to or in support for the authorities. A third factor overlooked by scholars is the impact of the growing politicization of Londoners by the 1640s on the development of the metropolitan press during the following decade. It enabled more sophisticated experimentation in the presentation of news. In fact, London during the Interregnum is illustrative in both evolution of and changing patterns in the relationship between the State and printed news. At first, it was dominated by repression to silence the press critics of the regime yet, during the course of the 1650s, this had evolved into a permanent relationship between the State and the official press in what was to become an increasingly sophisticated management of London news. As this relationship broke down in the political instability 1659-60, elements of the press once again broke free. The return of a

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[93] Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion*, p.175.
[94] C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660,* Volume II (London, 1911), p.249.
[95] Ibid. pp. 696-697; on 7th January 1652, the provisions of the earlier act of 20th September 1649 were reapplied.

system of state censorship with the Restoration of the Monarchy in the spring of 1660, however, deliberately continued the policy of news management practised during the previous decade. However, ultimately the failure of news management was a reflection of the vibrant and disputatious society which London had become.

<u>Chapter Two: The survival of the opposition press in the Metropolis during 1649-50</u>

The focus of this chapter is the survival of a pluralist press within the Metropolis 1649-50. It

focuses on the situation both immediately before and then after the re- imposition of press

censorship in September 1649.[1] A survey of the London press in the period following the

trial and execution of Charles 1st is illustrative of the ways in which opposition to the

republican regime used the press in order to criticise the legitimacy of the authorities and

even to encourage dissent. It was during this period that the last vestiges of a genuinely

independent press were able to operate within the Capital and surrounding areas. The

emergence of a free press able to report on domestic political news was, after all, an

innovation of the gathering political crisis at the beginning of the decade when the growing

rift between the King and Parliament led to the collapse of effective censorship.[2] This is a

phenomenon which has received much comment in the historiography of the period,

'hundreds of pamphlets appeared'[3] Among historians, there is disagreement as to the extent

of literature being made available to the public, yet scholars agree that the growing quantity

of unlicensed literature made it difficult for those in power to rely on traditional patterns of

authority and loyalty. Contemporaries were concerned at what they saw as the destabilising

impact of an increased accessibility of printed news and views, 'which exposed the workings

of government, stripping it bare of its opaque privileges and thereby led to unruly behaviour

by the rude and undiscerning multitude.'[4] After all, during the political crisis of the 1640s, it

was the newsbook which first made publicly available a regular supply of political news; 'in

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[1] 'An Act against Unlicensed and Scandalous books and pamphlets and for the better regulation of printing', 20th September 1649, in Firth and Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum,* Volume II (London, 1911), pp. 245-251.
[2] Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age* (London, 1983), p.163. In this thesis, the term 'free press' refers to those newsbooks which placed themselves in opposition to the authorities in power both in the State and London.
[3] Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting King and Commonwealth in England 1603-1660* (London, 2010), p.336. As further evidence of the degree of plurality of the media in the second half of the 1640s see Joad Raymond, *Making the News, An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England, 1641-1660* (Moreton-in-Marsh, Glocs, 1993), p.5
[4] Joad Raymond ed., *Making the News*, p.6.

the war decade [newsbooks] were produced regularly, usually once a week.'[5] Furthermore, their circulation was broad and reached a socially diverse population.[6]

Among scholars, there is recognition of the importance of London as a key factor in promoting the survival of press pluralism in the aftermath of the defeat of the royalist cause after the Second Civil War and abolition of the monarchy.[7] It is generally accepted that in the later 1640s, London remained the focus of English journalism and the news trade. Indeed, throughout the 1640s, 'newsmen wrote primarily for a London audience.'[8] It is only possible to make informed judgments as to whom the intended readers were, based on the selection of news content and the way it was presented.[9] Indeed, it is also possible that newsbooks either aimed to attract a non-metropolitan audience or to make their urban readers aware of a wider picture of distress outside of the capital.[10] The consideration by scholars of the survival of a clandestine news trade within post-war London raises interesting questions as to why this was possible, given that London was an enemy capital.[11] In their consideration of the London royalist press in the second half of the decade, scholars have

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[5] Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England 1640-1660* (London, 1994), p.54.

[6] Ibid., p.54. Indeed, 'the capacity of the newsbook 'mercury' or diurnal publication to cross barriers of social difference was motivated by the divergent backgrounds from which the newsbook writers came-Sir John Berkenhead and Marchamont Nedham were gentlemen, Henry Walker was an ironmonger turned independent minister, John Dillingham a tailor and innkeeper, Samuel Pecke possibly a scrivener before he became a journalist.'

[7] 'An Act Prohibiting the Proclaiming of any person to be King of England, Ireland or the Dominions thereof', 30th January 1649' in C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum,* Volume I (London, 1911), pp. 1263-1264.

[8] David Underdown, *A Freeborn People: Politics and the Nation in Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford, 1996), p.105. See also Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge, 2007), p.4. His study focuses on a relatively small number of journals published in London between 1647-50.

[9] Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England,* p.38. See also pp.40-41; 'the royalist newsbooks envisaged their readers to be male Londoners of the upper and middle sort and some of the poorer citizens would have been able to read English with varying degrees of fluency. The intended appeal was therefore wide and to include those 'with [at least] a modicum of schooling.'

[10] *The Man in The Moon* issue 2, 16/4/1649-23/4/ 1649, p.13. Reference was made of a general famine across England. Food prices in Lancashire were quoted; wheat being traded at 20 shillings a bushel, pease and beans at 17 shillings and oats at 13 shillings. Furthermore, in a single day issue of the newsbook dated 16th April 1649, 'Famine is coming pretty fast in London.' This appeared on page 5/5. The comments on food shortages in the Capital are important because this challenges McElligott's assertion that food shortages were not an issue in the capital. Page numbering in *The Man in The Moon* is often erratic or even non-existent.

[11] Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (London, 1997), p.404.

suggested the existence of an audience receptive precisely because there were many Londoners opposed those who held power both locally and at a national level.

Historical consensus holds that the survival of a London based royalist media was evidence of the persistence there of popular royalism. Indeed, such was the strength of this community that *The Man In The Moon* was able to continue for well over a year after the re-imposition of press censorship in September 1649; 'it could count on a steady sale among the London middling sort.'[12] The focus of historical scholarship on the clandestine press in the second half of the 1640s has been on the following themes: readership; circulation; use of language and imagery. Scholars have commented on how these newsbooks viewed the overthrow of monarchy as creating an inverted order; 'rebellion had turned the nation upside down.'[13] Royalist journals took it for granted that a divinely ordained social hierarchy in the human world was reflected in nature. In the analysis of the text, scholars have put particular emphasis on the use of language in royalist journalism. As an example, metaphors from the natural world were used to underscore what was assumed as the wicked and unnatural state of rebellion.[14] For McElligott, therefore, the inference which readers of the royalist journals were expected to draw was that only with the 'restoration of legitimate authority' back into the hands of the monarchy would the proper world order be restored.[15]

An area neglected by scholars of the survival of the London based royalist press in the second half of the 1640s has been the contribution it played in the manufacturing of a sense of a metropolitan identity. In the previous chapter, there was a discussion on the difficulty faced by scholars and contemporaries alike of how to define London in the seventeenth century. In

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[12] David Underdown, *A Freeborn People*, p.111.
[13] McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship,* p.54.
[14] Ibid., p.50.
[15] David Underdown, *A Freeborn People*, p.108.

the sixteenth century, contemporaries were already describing London as a metropolis.[16] It is

the assertion of this thesis that the emergence of a regular commercialised news service

during the 1640s, helped to create, within London, a civic identity. The royalist underground

press manufactured an imagined sense of community. It encouraged people to identify with

thousands of others whom they would never meet. Furthermore, by the creation of this

shared sense of identity, the embryonic press also served to generate a sense of metropolitan

politics. London and its neighbourhoods were becoming a distinct voice and arena within

which the national political drama was played out. The role which the newsbook could play

in establishing a shared consciousness is illustrated by the fact that 'the Early Modern

metropolis was a new phenomenon with a population most of whom were new to urban

living'.[17]

The means by which the royalist newsbooks attempted to create a sense of belonging to a

wider, metropolitan community can be illustrated more directly in a number of episodes by

which events were presented as a distinctively London phenomenon or within a context

which was distinctly metropolitan: the trial of John Lilburne 1649; circulation of rumours

concerning the Irish campaign of the same year; the representation of elites in the City

government and at Whitehall. That this was, indeed, an aim is indicated by the assumption

that the readers were in sympathy with the partisan and anti-republican views being

expressed. In so doing, however, the royalist press were becoming the authors of their own

demise. In September 1649, there was the return of stringent state censorship of the press,

the effectiveness of which was demonstrated by the virtual elimination of the London based

royalist press within a year of the introduction of the act. Yet, the existence of the royalist

press beforehand, albeit short lived, had served to create a more permanent relationship

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[16] Vanessa Harding, 'London Change and Exchange', in Henry Turner ed., *Culture and Capital; Property, Cities and Knowledge in early Modern England,* (London, 2002), pp. 129-138 (p.129).
[17] Ibid., p.131.

between those in authority and a metropolitan populace. Indeed, a factor which is generally overlooked by scholars is that 1649-1650 was a watershed because it led to the permanent and more formal relationship between government circles and the news media. In the next chapter, it will be shown how the arrival of a state sponsored newsbook had the potential to perform multifarious functions. The more important of these was the regular provision of what counted for reliable news. However, there was another vital purpose. There was the opening up of a permanent dialogue between rulers and the governed which helped to crystallise the idea of the wider metropolis as a distinct political community. This borrowed from the aims of the royalist underground press which had been suppressed. From 1650, however, it was a process which was to develop in sophistication as the decade wore on.

The Man in The Moon **as an example of the underground London based royalist press during the 1640s.**

In this section, the reasons why *The Man in The Moon* has been selected as a case study will be outlined. The current research on this newsbook will be considered as well the limits which will be an aim of this chapter to address.

Of around fifty royalist newsbooks which emerged in London during the years following the end of the First Civil War, most were short lived, some even appeared only as a single issue. Even before a tightening of post war censorship by the beginning of September 1649, only two royalist titles *The Man in The Moon* and *Mercurius Pragmaticus were* still in circulation. Indeed, the tightening of censorship by the printing act of 20th September had the effect of reversing the press pluralism of the previous years; '[i]n the months after the promulgation of the printing act in September 1649 only two new short lived royalist titles were published.'[18]

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[18] Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England,* p. 24. Indeed, such was the impact of the new restrictions on the press that by, 'late May and early June 1650, the authorities suppressed the last of the surviving newsbooks.'

For the purposes of this chapter, *The Man in The Moon* has been selected for two factors, its longevity, and the seriousness of its political message to a London audience. In considering the first factor, it is important to note that was one of the last of the royalist newsbooks to go out of circulation in June 1650. Indeed, its survival when other journals ceased publication has attracted the attention of scholars as evidence of 'the existence of a significant anti-Puritan royalism even in London'.[19] In the scholarship on the readerships of seventeenth century newsbooks, there has been a particular focus on that of *The Man in The Moon.* Because of its comparatively low cost, it was half the price of its competitors, it has been suggested it 'aimed at a more down market readership than that of other royalist weeklies.'[20] Historians have, therefore, stressed that it appealed to a broad, if literate, audience who 'would have found *The Man in The Moon* easy to read and simple to understand.'[21] Support for this view has also been seen in the title of the journal and, of course, themes which it tended to cover. It has been suggested that the journal addressed popular resentment at Puritan attempts to impose a strict moral order.[22] The title, *The Man in the Moon* 'was a familiar figure in folklore and nursery tales, the old man banished to the moon for gathering sticks on a Sunday.'[23] From the very outset, therefore, the journal announced its anti-Puritan credentials. In recognising the underlying political role and importance of royalist publications of the period, Underdown questioned the historical consensus that such papers should be dismissed as merely 'frivolous and pornographic.'[24] Indeed, he explicitly singled out the more serious aim of *The Man in The Moon* in particular, as it 'was certainly more

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[19] David Underdown, *A Freeborn people,* p.111.
[20] Ibid., p.98. Furthermore, he claims the price meant it was within the means of craftsmen.
[21] Ibid., p.99.
[22] Bernard Capp, *England's culture Wars: Puritan Reformation and its Enemies in the Interregnum 1649-1660* (Oxford, 2012), p.3. Furthermore, he wrote, 'Puritan ethos of godly discipline and moral reformation was pitted against a rival ethos of 'good fellowship' and festive traditions.'
[23] David Underdown, *A Freeborn People*, p. 99.
[24] Ibid., *A Freeborn People*, p.97.

explicitly political.'[25] Yet, in spite of the growing acknowledgment of the political importance of the royalist press and of its support among metropolitan society, there has been a general neglect among scholars as to how the royalist press sought to mobilise Londoners against the Commonwealth authorities in power both in the government of the City and at Whitehall.[26] A purpose of this chapter is to show how *The Man in The Moon* is a particularly good example because of the more overtly political opposition it offered to the republican authorities in London, an area overlooked even by Underdown. Indeed, as will be shown later, the reintroduction of strict controls over printing was to remove the threat posed by the London based royalist press. Although he acknowledged the London focus of the intended audience for post-war royalist newsbooks, Peacey did not explain the way story lines were developed specifically on London events with which its readership could identify.   Indeed, it will be explained how in four particular episodes covered by *The Man in The Moon,* it aimed to challenge directly the news spin of the authorities and to keep alive London based royalist opposition. These will be considered in the following order: representation of elites in the Commonwealth and the City; the trial of John Lilburne; censorship and finally Cromwell's Irish campaign. That its intended audience was metropolitan was evidenced in the masthead of the journal. For example, although it claimed to report on intelligence from across the British Isles, 'The City' is referred to specifically.[27] The London focus of the journal is shown further by the extensive coverage of events and personalities impacting directly on the Metropolis or being interpreted from a specifically London perspective.

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[25] Ibid., p.98; indeed, the importance which Underdown placed on the political aims of the royalist underground press has been supported by later historians. As an example, in his definition of a royalist newsbook, Jason McElligott makes very clear the political purpose of the writing; 'a royalist newsbook is defined as a serial which argued or agitated for the return of the Stuarts to power on their own terms or, failing that, the best possible terms available;' Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England*, p.23.

[26] Lois Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature 1641-1660* (Cambridge, 1989), p.15. In referring to the journals edited by John Crouch who was also the editor of *The Man in The Moon,* the following observation was made on p.15, '[n]ews is the wrong word in which the context should be read'. Instead it should be seen more as 'satiric fantasy tempered with a talent for verse'.

[27] *The Man in The Moon* 10/4/1649- 7/5/1649 issue 4.

1. The focus on London and the representations of elites

Scholars have tended to focus on the defamatory manner in which the City and regime figures were represented in the text of the royalist press. It has been asserted that the preponderance of scurrility was unsurprising; these journals were 'produced and distributed by clandestine means usually to convey a message hostile to authority.'[28] The conclusion which has been made is that scurrility made up for a lack of hard and serious news. The royalists and their supporters 'actively employed print to satirize military and parliamentary figures.'[29] As an example, a service of thanksgiving held by the Commonwealth authorities at Grocer's Hall, London provided an opportunity for *The Man in The Moon* to deride and undermine the solemnity of the occasion with 'scatological and otherwise insulting descriptions of the participants.'[30] In its character assassinations of the republican elites, *The Man in The Moon* has been dismissed as 'royalist propaganda of the crudest kind.'[31]

Historians have commented on the increased focus of royalist negative propaganda on the 'constructing of a popular image of Cromwell.'[32] *The Man in The Moon* focused on 'Cromwell's most striking characteristic, his prominent nose.'[33] Indeed, Underdown lists the various epithets by which Cromwell's nose was mentioned there ; 'Nose Almighty', 'his noseship' and 'King Copper-nose'[34] The parodying of the Commonwealth leaders was not merely intended to amuse but had a more serious and political aim, namely 'to destroy the reputation and credibility of the King's enemies. Underdown drew attention to the charge that Cromwell could not protect the reputation or honour of his wife. This implied he lacked

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[28] Lois Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writing, p*. 15.

[29] Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell; Ceremony, Portrait and Print 1645-1661 (*Cambridge, 2000), p.13.

[30] Ibid., p.46.

[31] David Underdown, *A Freeborn People*, pp. 95-96.

[32] Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell*, P.15.

[33] David Underdown, *A Freeborn People*, p. 101.

[34]Ibid., p.101. Other labels by which Cromwell was parodied were 'beelzebub's chief ale-brewer' and 'King Noll, King Oliver the Devil's godson, even God Noll.'

authority.[35]   In proposing the alleged ineptitude of the Commonwealth leadership, the view of

the royalist newsbooks was again reflected in the imagery and language employed.

McElligott listed the range of 'noxious animals' such as snakes, hornets, scorpions, horse

leeches, locusts, toads, frogs, lice and fleas by which Commonwealthsmen were described in

the royalist literature.[36].

 Using *The Man in the Moon* as a case study, a factor overlooked by scholars is the degree to

which it was in the story lines that a metropolitan focus becomes apparent. The newsbook

also took for granted a developed sense of political awareness among its intended audience

whom it assumed would readily understand the inferences being drawn between individuals,

many of whom were officials of the City and not just well known public figures such as

Oliver Cromwell or Thomas Fairfax. A second factor to consider is that the journals were

able to draw on familiarity and the existence of a vibrant public discourse where knowledge,

even if only through gossip, of the alleged impropriety of the individuals concerned was well

known. A third point is that it highlighted the importance of the printed word both in

disseminating views and in creating a community of dissent. Finally, it emphasised the

Metropolis as a source of anti-Commonwealth feeling and, in turn, this would explain why

the authorities were concerned to clamp down on the London based opposition press there in

particular. A careful reading of other journals edited by John Crouch, editor of *The Man in*

The Moon, reveal their London focus; and thereby the intention to keep alive dissent in the

Capital. *Mercurius Fumigosus*, which ran between June 1654 until October 1655, displayed

its appeal to a metropolitan audience through referring to places, the names of which would

have been known to Londoners such as Bear Garden, Bridewell, Hackney Gaol, Lud-Gate

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[35] Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England*, p.51. See also David Underdown, *A Freeborn People*, p.102; another prominent Commonwealth personality singled out for ridicule was Thomas Fairfax, referred to in the royalist press as 'Tom Ladle' or 'his Ladleship'. This was a reference to his being henpecked. This was another example of the inversion of the moral order. In this case, the reversal of roles in the family was symptomatic of the inversion of the political order with the overthrow of the monarchy.
[36] Jason MCElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England,* p. 51.

and Hatton- Gardens.[37]   The reference to the Bear Garden is significant because it drew on

popular memory as it had been closed years previously along with other public venues for

entertainment such as the theatre. In its use of language, *Mercurius Fumigosus* made liberal

use of popular sexual imagery, the effect of which deliberately obscured meaning but was

intended to draw on popular prejudices at the hypocrisy of local authority:

At first encounter there had been old knocking but that the sheetroopers yielded upon
guarantee of delivery of their arms upon promise of their lives. Some thrusts were made on
both sides but no great mischief done. [38]

The reference to 'knocking' alludes to 'knocker' or 'sexual athlete.'[39] The stem 'Shee' was

used in a variety of contexts to denote prostitutes or promiscuity among women. 'Yielded'

meant to 'submit sexually'[40] The reference to 'arms' was a reference to genitals.[41]

If journals such as *Mercurius Fumigosus* appeared a-political and merely for salacious gossip

and scandal, this belied a more sinister and political message directed at a London audience.[42]

Its allegorical stories portrayed an image of London starkly at odds with the attempted moral

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[37] *Mercurius Fumigosus*, 21/6/1654-28/6/ 1654 issue 4, pp. 27, 29, 31, 32. Also see *Mercurius Fumigosus*, 28/6/1654-5/7/ 1654 issue 5. There are references to other London names with which a metropolitan audience would have been familiar such as Lincoln's Inn Commons, p.36 and Crowner of Islington, p.37. The reference to Bear Garden also assumed popular knowledge of how the term was a local expression for 'rowdiness', Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature,* Volume I (London, 1994),p.88.
[38] *Mercurius Fumigosu*s 13/9/ 1654- 20/9/ 1654, quoted in Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language* , Volume II, pp. 767-768.
[39] Ibid., pp. 767-8.
[40] Williams, Volume III, p. 1559.
[41] Williams, Volume I, p.39.
[42] David Underdown, *A Freeborn People*, p.97. The later journals edited by Crouch only 'pretended to   avoid politics altogether'. Indeed, 'Crouch's stories uphold a very traditional moral order, and his instances of sexual transgressions nearly always involve hypocritical Puritans or women who have rebelled against masculine authority.' However, there remains a debate as to whether Crouch had a particular political message as opposed to a more general attack on the Commonwealth and its leaders. See Jason McElligott in H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography from Earliest Times to 2000* , *Volume 14 (*Oxford, 2004), pp.464-465. Jason McElligott, the biographer of John Crouch wrote on *The Man in The Moon*, 'it recounted little news and relied instead on obscene stories and rhymes to fill its pages.'

reformation which was being pursued by the Rump Parliament authorities.[43] In sharp

contrast to *Mercurius Fumigosus*, *The Man in The Moon* was much more direct in its political

message, referring by name to local personalities, confident that its audience would

understand the connections being inferred. Peacey has gone further than other scholars in

identifying that a process of denigrating the Commonwealth elites had a serious political

motive to challenge the authority of the regime itself. Nevertheless, scholars have not

appreciated the degree to which these references are illustrative of a growing political

sophistication specifically in the Metropolis. Crucially, it represented the development of a

dialogue between the journals and their readership based on a shared understanding of

inference and coded referencing. *The Man in The Moon* referred to personalities in a way in

which it assumed local knowledge of the individuals being cited. A review of the names

mentioned, the biographical details of who can be subsequently traced, reveal a distinctly

metropolitan focus. Given that London and Westminster was the seat of government, a

number of these figures were, obviously, well known such as William Lenthall (Speaker of

the House of Commons)[44] or John Bradshaw, the judge who presided over the trial of Charles

1st in late January 1649 and was later permanent President of the Council of State   and

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.[45] However, what is more clearly revealing of the

metropolitan focus is the expectation that the readership would have been familiar with the

personality and the inference which was being drawn. It hoped the audience would be aware

of the stories of popular prejudices, sexual promiscuity or financial mismanagement even

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[43] Bernard Capp, *England's Culture Wars*), pp. 3-27; in particular see p.24, the Rump Parliament passed a range of moralistic legislation, the aim of which was 'to remould the values and behaviour of the nation.' *Mercurius Fumigosus* was clearly highlighting what it saw as the inconsistency between the legislation governing sexual promiscuity and actual practice, The Rump Parliament passed a range of measures aimed at imposing a strict moral code. One of these measures was 'An Act for suppressing the detestable sins of Incest, Adultery and Fornication,' 10th May 1650 in C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, Volume II, pp*. 387-389.

[44] *The Man in The Moon,* 21/5 1649-30/5/ 1649, issue 7. As the page numbering in *The Man in The Moon* became so erratic and even inconsistent only the dates and the issue numbers will be supplied in the footnotes.

[45] *The Man in The Moon*, 28/5/1649-5/6/ 1649 issue 8.

corruption of the individuals concerned. In referring to the appointment in April 1649 of commissioners for the Customs House, an appointment which necessarily required financial probity, it listed the appointees by surname, itself an indication that the audience should be familiar with the personalities (Estwick, Tichborne, Harvey, Holden, Parke and Taylor). The derogatory epithets which followed, 'Brewer, baker, Linen draper, Tailor, souldier, fool' again indicate that the assumption that the audience would be familiar with City gossip about the backgrounds of local politicians.[46] Stephen Estwick referred to above was an alderman.[47] Another, Robert Tichborne, was one of the regicides who signed the death warrant of Charles 1st. He was a leading member of an Independent Congregation at St Pancras.[48] Here, *The Man in The Moon* ridiculed his personality, pointing out the contradiction between the piety he assumed in his public life and private personal greed. It also assumed the audience was aware of the salacious gossip about this individual. Unlike the others, Tichborne, in particular, was singled out for ridicule and contempt; 'Tichborne need not cry what do yee lack gentlemen since he has got the customs by land and sea in his own hands.'[49] Another preacher featured in the editions of *The Man in The Moon* was Hugh Peters; again, there was the suggestion of hypocrisy. In this case the mismatch between public godliness and private promiscuity; 'Hugh Peters, the state ram came into the House puffing, swearing and blowing as if he had newly ended the exercise.'[50] The reference to 'state ram' clearly assumed knowledge that this was a public figure (he was a preacher and a colonel in Cromwell's Irish expedition) but also drew on the hostility of popular London royalism against a known

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[46] *The Man in the Moon*, 23/4/ 1649-30/4/ 1649 issue 3.
[47] Valerie Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution; City Government and National Politics 1625-1643* (Oxford, 1961), p.315. The reference used by *The Man in The Moon*, 'Cozzens of the City' also identifies all six as aldermen.
[48] Keith Lindley in H.C.G. Matthews and Brian Harrison eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Volume 54, pp.757-758.
[49] *The Man in The Moon*, 23/4/l649-30/4/ 1649 issue 3. See also Matthews and Harrison eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* pp. 757-758. In 1656, Tichborne was removed from his post on allegations for fraud.
[50] *The Man in The Moon*, 21/5/ 1649- 30/5/1649 issue 7.

regicide. He was also placed in charge of the confiscation and sale of the royal property at St James' Palace.[51] A London politician whom historians have recognised was singled out by the opposition press for ridicule because of his alleged lack of physical courage was Alderman Thomas Atkins. Indeed, *The Man in The Moon* referred to him pejoratively as 'shit breech' Atkins. [52] This was a reference to his supposed loss of control over his bodily functions in the face of enemy fire.[53] Following the end of the First Civil War, he became prominent in London politics, serving on committees for finance and poor relief and was also a member of the Rump Parliament.[54] What is significant, however, is the assumption being made about the collective memory of the readership of The *Man in The Moon.* It was confident that the insulting label which was applied eight years previously required no further explanation.[55]

2. The Trial of John Lilburne

In the previous chapter, reference has been made to the Levellers, a distinctly metropolitan group whose radical vision increasingly placed them at odds with the more conservative aims

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[51] Carla Pastina Pestana in Matthews and Harrison eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 43,pp. 863-869.

[52] *The Man in The Moon*, 21/5/ 1649-30/5/ 1649 issue 7.

[53] Matthews and Harrison ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Volume 1, p. 825, In 1642, appointed commander of a regiment of the City of London militia, he was 'coarsely ridiculed as cowardly'

[54] Ibid.

[55] It was not just London politicians who were mentioned. Individuals who held prominence in their own localities were also mentioned in the newsbook. As examples were were Norwich alderman Tooley and John Utting. They are referred to in issue 25 (10/10 1649-17/10/1649). Utting who became a Member of parliament and was also a former Mayor of Norwich was fined and imprisoned for illegally petitioning for a treaty with Charles 1st   A London politician referred to in the newsbook was Rowland Wilson in 24/10/1649-31/10/1649 issue 27. His biographical details can be found in Mathews and Harrison eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Volume 59, pp. 635-636. He was an alderman in 1648 and later Sheriff of London. Following the death of Charles 1st. He was rumoured to have committed suicide as did Thomas Hoyle whose suicide is recorded in same issue of The *Man in The Moon.*   Philip Skippon was mentioned in The *Man in The Moon* 20/6/ 1649-27/6/1649 issue 11, there is a reference to Philip Skippon, see Ian Gentiles in Matthews and Harrison eds; *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Volume 50, pp. 876-899. Ian Gentles wrote that Skippon achieved notoriety in the capital for the manner in which he extended his personal control over the Metropolis during the Second Civil War; 'it was Skippon who kept a deeply unhappy city in Parliament's grip from the outbreak of the Second Civil War to the King's trial.'

of the authorities in power who aimed to stymy any attempt at a wider social and political

revolution. In arguing for a more accountable Parliament, Lilburne and his supporters

specifically appealed to a London based audience which was excluded from the political life

of the nation. For example, in a seditious pamphlet An *Outcry of the Young Men and*

Apprentices of London, Lilburne goaded the Rumpers with phrases such as 'made

Parliament', 'shadow of a Parliament' and 'seeming authority'. Deliberately aiming to

provoke a response, the phrases were couched within inverts.[56]   With their radical social

and political vision, the Levellers were the natural enemy of the King during the Civil War.

However post war London royalism as expressed in The *Man in The Moon*, found it

pragmatic to take the side of John Lilburne whose opposition to the Rump authorities caused

the latter to attempt to silence him.[57] Indeed, the very fact that Lilburne condemned the

killing of the King as regicide and its replacement as government by the Commonwealth as

tyrannical echoed the sentiment of the royalist Press. Therefore, amongst the opposition

press, a more broadly based consensus was in formation. It united former enemies during the

Civil War against the new republican authority in place. Traditional forms of authority based

on law, custom and religion, themes all recognised by a seventeenth century audience, was

replaced by a progressive militarisation of government. This was succinctly put in *An Outcry*

of the Young Men and Apprentices of London; 'the military power being thrust into the very

office and seat of the civil authority.'[58] The opportunity for The *Man in The Moon* to voice

support for its 'new ally' came in April 1649 with the arrest and imprisonment in the Tower

of London of Lilburne and other Leveller leaders on charges of sedition, which was then a

capital offence. Over the course of the next seven months, Lilburne was a regular feature in

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[56] John Lilburne, *An Outcry of the Young Men and Apprentices of London, 1649*, Thomason/E.572 [19].
[57] Following the execution of Charles 1st, the Leveller London base journal, *The Moderate Intelligencer* denounced the Commonwealth as a usurping authority lacking any popular mandate; 25/1/1649-1/2/1649, issue 202.
[58] John Lilburne, *An Outcry of the Young Men and Apprentices of London*.

the news reportage, at times extensively and other times the reference was brief.[59] In its

coverage, *The Man in The Moon* displayed an ambiguity in approach. In an issue covering

10th April and 7th May 1649, on a masthead of four verses on the title page, Lilburne and his

followers were referred to in more derogatory terms as a 'pack of levellers'.[60] Again, in a

later edition, the journal took delight at the schism between Lilburne and his supporters on

the one hand and the Rump authorities on the other; 'when thieves fall out.'[61] Yet clearly, the

journal saw advantage in promoting the cause of John Lilburne as a champion of English

rights and liberties against what it saw as unlawful authority in the hands of a republican and

upstart regime. In the last quarter of April 1649, for example, it entreated Lilburne in the

following rallying call 'Stand to them our champion thou shalt be.'[62]

The common ground with what had been an enemy of the royalist cause during the Civil War

tied in with another concurrent theme followed in the newsbook, that of censorship. The

focus on warning its readers of state censorship further illustrated the seriousness of the

political message conveyed in *The Man in The Moon*. It encouraged readers to make

connections between state persecution of a well-known London personality and what it saw

as a broader and more sinister state policy namely that of censoring criticism. Therefore the

newsbook's support for the Levellers was perhaps natural:

> They were the one group which throughout the period was consistently
> committed to open publication and debate. They sought publicity constantly
> making capital out of every arrest, publicising the account of every argument,
> every trial.[63]

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[59] The first reference to Lilburne in *The Man in The Moon* was in a single dated issue 16th April 1649. On the last page, 19/41 lines or just under half the total text was devoted to his case.
[60] *The Man in The Moon* 10/4/1649- 7/5/ 1649 issue 4.
[61] *The Man in The Moon,* 24/10 /1649-31/10/ 1649 issue 27.
[62] *The Man in The Moon*, 23/4/ 1649-30/4/ 1649 issue3.
[63] Lois Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writing; Royalist Literature 1641-1660*, p.30.

The degree to which the Levellers publicised their cause in support of free speech made them recognisable to a literate metropolitan audience and possible for a royalist journal such as *The Man in The Moon* to come to their defence. Indeed, by defending Lilburne, albeit at first in an ambiguous fashion, it hoped its readership would understand that there was no contradiction being made in supporting a war time opponent of the royalist cause:

> There was a brief period during which royalists and Levellers shared at least a common satiric idiom. The way was prepared for a somewhat uneasy alliance early in 1647 when Lilburne who had been pilloried under Charles 1st informed Parliament that he now regarded their tyranny as far worse.[64]

The seriousness of the political message in *The Man in The Moon* can be summarised thus; only through open debate and criticism could the hypocrisy of republican leaders be exposed to a London audience. An aspect of the arrest and trial of John Lilburne neglected by scholars, is the connection between his stand for free speech and the moves by the State to reimpose more stringent censorship of the press in the autumn of 1649. The coverage of the trial coincided with the immediate aftermath of the return of official censorship in September. For *The Man in The Moon,* there was an obvious connection between the defence of freedom of expression both in the courts and in the press. Indeed, the newsbook's coverage of the arrest, imprisonment and later trial of Lilburne coincided conveniently with the September act '[f]or gagging the mouths of the press and suppressing the pamphlets that tell tales. They cannot suffer the press to be at liberty.'[65] The journal was pessimistic at the outcome of events. In its issue covering the trial of Lilburne in London in October, the sombre mood of *The Man in The Moon* was conveyed in verse;

<div style="text-align:center">

John Lilburne now comes to be tryd

Thy brethren cannot save him

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[64] Ibid.

[65] *The Man in The Moon* 12/9/1649-19/9 1649 issue 22.

He is already cast by Pryde

John Bradshaw he must have him[66]

With the acquittal of Lilburne, *The Man in the Moon* was triumphant, according it primary

importance in its twenty seventh edition. In fact, in an issue which coincided with the first

reporting of the atrocities committed by the parliamentary forces at Drogheda, a total of three

pages or 60% of the total prose was dedicated to commentary on the acquittal.[67] In a marked

contrast to the more ambiguous support cited earlier, here John Lilburne was hailed as both

popular and magnanimous in victory:

> like a man of generous spirit, at his departure out of the Guildhall, gave the
> sergeants that waytd forty shillings to drink and at night great joy was expressed
> all the city over by ringing of bells and Bonfires whilst his new judges were
> hissed through the streets.[68]

In its description of city wide popular acclaim, *The Man in The Moon* was encouraging its

audience to be in sympathy with others who challenged the newly constituted republican

authorities. The trial of Lilburne was political; it was an attempt by the State to silence one

of its more vocal critics.[69] Of even more concern to the regime was that through its

politically motivated support for Lilburne, *The Man in The Moon* suggested to its readers

that, even in the courts, there was both a legitimate and legal challenge to the machinations of

the Rump authorities in their attempts to silence critics. It also suggested that, within

London, popular dissatisfaction with the Commonwealth was sufficiently widespread to be

made visibly manifest through public demonstrations of support for an opponent of the

regime. The ringing of church bells, for example, referred to in *The Man in The Moon* not

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[66] *The Man in The Moon* 10/10/ 1649- 17/10/ 1649 issue 5.
[67] *The Man in The Moon* 24/10/1649-31/10/ 1649 issue 27.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Alan Cromarties 'The Rule of Law' in John Morrill ed., *Revolution and Restoration; England in the 1650s* (London, 1991), pp. 55-69 (p.62). Furthermore, '[h]is defence was an astonishing display of eloquence allied to sub-legal sophistry, and the presence of a menacingly sympathetic crowd enabled him to dominate proceedings.'

only alluded to the continued presence of opposition to the regime from among the ranks of the London clergy, but also to their confidence in the support of their parishes. The role of the royalist press could, in some measure, be seen as to construct an imagined community of dissidents across London. In this sense, therefore, The *Man in The Moon* as a self-proclaimed mouthpiece of the anonymous multitude in opposition to the Interregnum regime served to create a communal identity. This could cut across the myriad of neighbourhoods, out of which new identities could be formed by which Londoners could make sense of the visibly more urban environments in which they lived their lives. In seeking to identify with a metropolitan audience, *The Moon Man in The Moon* invented a sense of community and shared civic identity. In the process of which, it interconnected neighbourhoods where rapid and long term population growth was dependent on internal migration and therefore bringing together people for whom there was often no shared experience of long term communal traditions.

3. Press Censorship and Ireland

As has been argued earlier, the trial of John Lilburn was exploited by *The Man in The Moon* as an opportunity to warn its readers of the measures being constructed by the State to suppress freedom of speech. However, in its 1649 coverage of Cromwell's Irish campaign, it ratcheted up its defence of freedom of expression precisely because it was defying the attempts by the Commonwealth to re-impose effective press censorship. This was achieved through a deliberate strategy of contradicting the official version of events in Ireland which spun a very positive image of the military successes of Cromwell. A factor which has been neglected by scholars is how the presentation of contradictory versions of events escalated

the news war in London. In the process, it made *The Man in The Moon* an early objective for the authorities charged with implementing the new act.[70]

The focus of historical research on the censorship during the Interregnum has focused on the difficulty in restricting the production and dissemination of printed items. London, in particular, has been recognised by scholars as posing a variety of problems in the detection and confiscation of contraband print. The number of printers in what was the centre of the print trade in Britain hindered detection. As research by Lindley has shown, determined opponents such as the Leveller Press were able to relocate as necessity dictated.[71] There has been considerable research on the variety of ways in which printed material was disseminated throughout London and in ways which impeded detection, 'any attempt to clamp down could never be entirely successful'.[72] Indeed, '[t]he irrepressible fluidity of print, evidently provided many ordinary folk with a good living. In London seamstresses were allegedly observed selling cheap print.'[73] Finally, scholars of the London based royalist press have argued that these journals by necessity operated under clandestine conditions and deliberately strove to avoid detection. It has been suggested that between 1500-2000 copies of each of the royalist journals were made, the 'normal print run during the mid-seventeenth century'. A remarkable achievement given that they were in effect operating in an enemy capital city. It is, however, suggestive of the degree of popular London based royalism during the early years of the Interregnum.[74] Given the range of logistical problems involved with policing

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[70] Michael McNally, *Ireland 1649-52; Cromwell's Protestant Crusade* (Oxford, 2009), p.11. The Council of State decided on Cromwell as commander of an army of 12000 men to be sent to Ireland to secure it for the Commonwealth.

[71] Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London*, p. 399. In fact, between 1644 and 1645, the Leveller printing press moved five times. First established at Tews Coleman Street in October 1644, when the latter was raided by the authorities in January 1645, it moved to Larner's premises in Bishopsgate Street, then to a premises at Goodman's Hill before returning once more to Bishopsgate Street.

[72] Jason McElligott, Royalism*, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England*, p.32.

[73] Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars*, p.335.

[74] Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship*, p.24. He does acknowledge that it is only possible to make generalisations on print runs. See also J Frank, *Cromwell's Press Agent: A Critical Biography of Marchamont*

London, the State appeared unwilling to make censorship anything other than a selective affair; 'any overzealous attempt to enforce the licensing provisions would waste considerable amounts of time and effort'[75] Therefore, it has been suggested censorship was selective reinforced by 'selective punishment of those whom the authorities decided to prosecute'[76]

The Man In The Moon and the reaction to State censorship 1649

In focusing on the logistical problems of operating a policy of censorship in mid-seventeenth century London, scholars have downplayed the genuine concern which authorities felt at the impact of the royalist Press in London in fomenting opposition there. Indeed, throughout the Interregnum, the authorities feared the existence of a fifth column within the Capital. In the previous chapter, it was explained how legislation was periodically reintroduced to expel those whom the authorities viewed with suspicion. Furthermore, 'loyal' citizens were called upon to assist in denouncing of those of their neighbours who gave sanctuary and support to Jesuit priests.[77] The broad and generalised category 'diverse delinquents' is illustrative of the degree to which the authorities feared widespread opposition throughout metropolitan society. It will be shown later in this chapter that the authorities deliberately targeted the royalist press in the Capital because of its support for more active dissent towards the very legitimacy of the republican regime. Therefore, journals such as *The Man in The Moon* were viewed as a more serious threat than has been acknowledged by scholars. [78] As Cressy argued, much of the day to day opposition to the authorities was limited to 'nostalgia for King Charles or expressions of support for his son', but there was the real fear that this could,

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Nedham (Lanham, 1980), p.88. He suggests that average weekly run of *Mercurius Politicus* during the 1650s was 1,000.

[75] Jason McElligott, 'A couple of hundred Squabbling small tradesmen: Censorship and the Stationers Company and the State in Early Modern England' in Joad Raymond ed., *Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London , 1999), pp.85-102, (p.97)

[76] Ibid., p.97.

[77] C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum* Volume II, p.349.

[78] McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship*, p.24 He tends to link popular dissatisfaction to specific policies such as tax or as a reaction to slowing down of trade.

indeed, be mobilised into active resistance, even rebellion.[79] For this reason, *The Man in The Moon* represented a threat which the authorities could not ignore.

In the autumn of 1649, the Commonwealth authorities had determined to deal decisively with the opposition posed by the royalist press. On 20th September, Parliament enacted legislation which reimposed stringent censorship of the press. Printing was restricted to London and the two English universities, the only exceptions being the printing of bibles at presses in York and Finsbury. Only licensed works were allowed to be printed; 'the title page of each book prefixed with the author's name with his quality and place of residence or at least the licensers names'.[80] The act also aimed at a crackdown on the itinerant news vendors:

> no such hawkers shall be any more permitted and all ballad –singers wheresoever they may be apprehended shall forfeit all books, pamphlets, ballads and papers…and shall by virtue of the act be conveyed and carried to the House of Correction there to be whipt as common rogues and then dismissed…[81]

A factor generally overlooked has been the probable motive to tackle head on the London based royalist press. In its preamble, the act referred to 'seditious and libellous pamphlets, papers and books vended and dispersed by the malignant party at home and abroad for the better conspiracy of their wicked ends.'[82]

Royalist journals, in particular, were discriminated against. This was precisely because they encouraged those who opposed the new regime in London that their concerns were, indeed, widely shared. They suggested that resistance was, therefore, not only justifiable but the duty of all subjects loyal to the exiled Charles 2nd. For the City authorities, the fact that pluralistic and heterogeneous London was seen as a magnet for dissent, the existence of these journals

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[79] David Cressy, *Dangerous Talk; Scandalous, Seditious, and Treasonable Speech in Pre-Modern England* (Oxford, 2012), p. 198.
[80] C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum,* Volume II, pp. 245-254.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.

became a potential if not necessarily actual problem of law and order which ultimately made toleration of them unacceptable.

Whilst McElligott acknowledges the effect of the legislation on the closing down of the royalist press, he does not make a connection between this and the ratcheting up of the news war in the Capital during the autumn and winter of 1649. Indeed, in implementing the new censorship measures, the authorities were reacting specifically against the threat posed by royalist versions of events.[83] It is precisely because of this that the State was willing to prioritise resources on the removal of *The Man in The Moon* from circulation in the Capital. A factor also neglected by scholars is the role played by this newsbook in challenging the new restrictions being imposed upon the press. During mid and late September, it followed the passage of the legislation in Parliament. Indeed, the episode is illustrative of the way in which the journal performed a serious political function in alerting readers both to impending legislation and the manner in which it was to be enforced. In this, it was moving beyond anti-regime propaganda. The week before Parliament passed the act, the mid-September edition of *The Man in The Moon* alerted the reader to the bill being discussed by MPs '[a] crack came forth this week for Gagging the mouths of the press and suppressing the pamphlets that *tell* tales.'[84] An important technique which the journal then went on to employ and which showed the sophistication of its political reporting (a device which was to be copied later in the following decade by the Cromwellian press) was to remind the reader of how current events connected with the past. It reminded readers of attempts made by the authorities earlier in the decade to secure the removal of those London clergy who had previously spoken out against the regime.[85] In so doing, it implied that there was a change in state policy towards a general suppression of alternative voices. In this, it was hinting at the vulnerability

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[83] McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship*, p.24. Furthermore he writes that royalist publications were shut down between September 1649 and June 1650 when *The Man in The Moon* also disappeared from circulation.
[84] *The Man in The Moon* 12/9/ 1649-19/9/ 1649 issue 22.
[85] Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London,* p.50.

of the authorities as to their actual grip on power within the Capital; '[t]hey have done their best to stop the mouths of ministers and cannot suffer the press to be at liberty.'[86] Indeed, the employing of phrases such as 'done their best' and 'cannot suffer' undermine the apparent forcefulness of the act, suggesting it reflected weakness and insecurity as to the actual hold on power. The following week, with the act now in force, *The Man in The Moon* reiterated the view that the act was part of a wider strategy. It therefore warned its readers through the reference to 'subtle tayles' of the implicit and thereby sophisticated nature of the news spin of the Commonwealth; 'the people must be kept in blind ignorance till they be inthralled in their tyrannical and subtle tayles.'[87] In the same issue, the journal made clear how the act was to be enforced; '[t]he company of stationers are impowered in their old trade of breaking open doors, plundering and taking any presse, letters or books that still print   anything against them.'[88]

The journal displayed a capacity for investigative journalism in reference to the man responsible for enforcing the act within the Metropolis. A direct reference was made to George Bishop.[89] A Commonwealth London administrator and provost martial, Bishop had a talent for intelligence work and from 1650 was employed to investigate royalist conspiracies.[90] The employment of a man with these particular talents to carry out the task of enforcing the act in London suggests the seriousness with which the authorities viewed the influence of The *Man in The Moon* on fomenting dissent. It might therefore not be an exaggeration when, during the week when the act came into force, *The Man in The Moon*

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[86] *The Man in The Moon* 12/9/ 1649-19/9/ 1649 issue 22.
[87] *The Man in The Moon,* 19/9/1649-26/9/ 1649 issue 23.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid. See also the following comment made about Bishop, 'where be the Bishop's men who stop the mouths of the press.'
[90] H.C. Matthews and Brian Harrison ed., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Volume V, pp. 865-866.

already suggested that the newly appointed authority had it within its sights; 'the [b]eagles are on the scent already.'[91]

The Man in The Moon and the London news war concerning Ireland

In October, *The Man in The Moon* evolved its strategy against the Commonwealth. It deliberately sought to exploit London based resentment over the cost of the military campaign in Ireland into general opposition towards the Commonwealth. In this, it was part of a broader based opposition within the Metropolis which had support amongst the City clergy.[92]The authorities, ever concerned at the state of opinion in London, had even more reason to be concerned given the significant financial contribution made by the City for the cost of the campaign. In cash alone, the sum of £100 000 raised there for Cromwell's 'war chest' represented the equivalent of a quarter of the annual revenue raised in taxation from the Metropolis for the national exchequer.[93] The Irish campaign, therefore, had a particular poignancy to the Capital. Heavy taxation and the raising of loans there to pay for the expedition meant that events across the Irish Sea would be seen as directly relevant to the Metropolis, whose citizens had been called upon to bear the greater share of the cost of the expedition. If events went well for the Commonwealth expedition, it would serve as an opportunity for the authorities to manufacture a positive propaganda spin on events in order

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[91] *The Man in The Moon*, 19/9/ 1649-26/9 1649 issue23.

[92] In 1641 rebellion had broken out in Ireland; Catholic landowners had risen up against the attempts by the English colonial administration based in Dublin to create a Protestant landowning class in Ireland. What particularly incensed the rebels was that this was to be achieved through expropriation of lands from Catholics in order to form the Ulster Settlement. The distraction of civil war in England meant that the rebels, united in the Irish Confederate Association, were able to exploit this opportunity by seizing control over most of the country as early as 1642. There was the exception of Dublin which remained a Protestant enclave. In the summer of 1649, an army under Cromwell was despatched to Ireland. The aim of the campaign was the subduing of Ireland to the authority of the Commonwealth regime in London.

[93] Michael McNally, *Ireland 1649-1652, Cromwell's Protestant Crusade*, p.23 Furthermore, on behalf of the government, The City 'generated enough credit so that the regiments could be at least be given a new issue of clothing.' See also Keith Roberts, *Cromwell's War Machine: The New Model Army 1645-1660* (Barnsley, 2005), p.235. With the expeditionary force which set sail from England in the summer of 1649 was £100 000 in funds. This was intended for pay, provisions and bribes to persuade local elites to change sides in support of Parliament. In anticipation of siege warfare, Ireland was one of the most castellated countries in Europe, with the army, was included a strong, and expensive artillery train.

to boost morale, and to whip up populist anti-Catholic feeling in the capital. As a result, great care was made to publish the accounts sent back by its commanders in the field. Soon after the despatch to Ireland of the reinforcements under Cromwell and Ireton, the Council of State in London gave instructions that news of early victories in the field be widely communicated throughout the City and its churches:

> It having pleased God to give a most signal victory to a small handful of our forces against the whole army of Ormond that was before Dublin, we have ordered the particulars received from Lieut.-Gen. Jones to be printed and published in all the churches within the lines of communication, and desire you to order all the ministers within your jurisdiction to publish the same, that God's great goodness may be acknowledged.[94]

In fact, the despatches sent back by the commanders were written deliberately for public consumption. For example, on 2nd October 1649, the Council of State called upon the support of the City authorities to ensure that Cromwell's reports on the taking of Drogheda and adjacent strongholds in rebel hands be read out in the churches; 'all ministers in London and within the lines of communication [shall] publish the same tomorrow (Sunday) and stir the people to give thanks.'[95]

The descriptions of the campaign from officially inspired sources, unsurprisingly, were unapologetic for the actions of the Protestant forces in laying siege to rebel held towns and fortresses. Indeed, great care was taken to ensure that readers were repeatedly made aware that the rules of seventeenth century warfare were carried out by the army under Cromwell's command and that the rebels were accorded the opportunity to surrender and the opportunity even repeated once fighting had started. In fact, in his account of the taking of Wexford in October 1649, Cromwell's account to Parliament suggested both patience and restraint on his

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[94] BHO; CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 2, August 1649, p.272, 'Proceedings of the Council of State'.
[95] BHO; CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 3, October 1649, pp. 327-328, 'Proceedings of the Council of State'.

part. This was in contrast to the alleged perfidy of the rebels, whom he claimed exploited a

truce to await arrival of reinforcements. He was very careful to send back copies of the

correspondence between him and the commander of the garrison at Wexford as 'proof' that

quarter had been granted and accepted. Therefore, this was evidence of the 'perfidy' of the

rebels; the reproduction of the correspondence between the two men representing nearly a

third of the total print coverage in the despatch to Parliament. [96] Furthermore, he made the

reader aware of what he intended to convey as the senseless brutality of the rebels in

deliberately drowning in the harbour over one hundred and fifty Protestant civilians whom he

claimed had been callously crammed into an unseaworthy vessel.[97]   In contrast to official

accounts of events, however, was the view of *The Man in the Moon.* In its account of the

storming and fall of the town of Drogheda, published just over a month after the ending of the

siege on 11th September 1649, it was unequivocal in its denunciation of what it described as

a massacre in the taking of the town. In its version, it included among the victims, non-

combatants; 'these bloody monsters had sacrificed in Tredagh [Drogheda] men women and

children to their cursed rage.'[98] In sharp contrast to the semblance of order and discipline

suggested in the Cromwell despatches, the journal portrayed the Commonwealth army as a

disorderly rabble. The description in *The Man in The Moon* was clearly an attempt to

deliberately challenge the official view. In his despatches from Ireland, Cromwell admitted

ordering the killing of armed combatants but as a necessary precaution and after offer of

surrender had been rejected. For example, in reference to the taking of Drogheda, Cromwell

wrote to Parliament. 'being in the heat of action I forbade them [his troops] to spare any that

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[96] 'Letter from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to the Honorable William Lenthall, Esquire, Speaker of the Parliament of England; Giving an Account of the Proceedings of the Army there under his lordship's command and several transactions between his Lordship and the Governor of Wexford' dated 1649, Thomason/E. 576 [2].
[97] Ibid.
[98] *The Man in The Moon*, 17/10/1649-24/10/1649 issue 26. Two pages were devoted in the issue to the description of the alleged actions of the parliamentary forces on the taking of the town.

were in arms in the town and I think that night they put to the sword about two thousand men.'[99]

In his version of events concerning the taking of Drogheda, Cromwell was at pains to point out that the defenders at Drogheda had refused terms and again when over thirty defenders who had taken refuge in St Peter's Church and were subsequently burned alive, Cromwell alleged that they had first refused to surrender. The version supplied to Parliament by Cromwell differed from the description in *The Man in the Moon* on an important point of detail. Whereas Cromwell suggested that only combatants were killed, *The Man in The Moon* made clear that the majority of deaths were, in fact, non-combatants; 'three thousand indeed they killed but two thousand were women and children and divers aged persons that were not able to support themselves much less able to resist them.'[100] Deliberately stoking a London based propaganda war with the Commonwealth authorities; The *Man in the Moon* even suggested that there had been a deliberate cover up of events in Ireland. The Man in the Moon clearly intended its readers to be fully aware that the authorities viewed the actions of the Commonwealth forces engaged in Ireland to be too shocking to be published:

> The news from Ireland now forbidden so much as to be peep'd into by the juncto. The post that brought letters sworn into secrecy and the letters burned in the grave of oblivion: order likewise given to seaports to swear that care over secrecy.[101]

That the newsbook was deliberately countering what it saw as an official cover up of an atrocity can be attested by the phrase 'yet all this will not do' which was its reply to the alleged secrecy before it gave its stark, if brief condemnation of the actions of the

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[99] 'Letter from the lord lieutenant of Ireland to the Honorable William Lenthall esquire, Speaker of the parliament of England; Relating the Several great successes it hath pleased God to give unto the Parliament forces there in the taking of Drogheda, Trym, Dundalk, Carlingford and the Nury', dated 2nd October 1649; Thomason/E.575 [7].
[100] *The Man in The Moon*, 17/10/1649- 24/10/1649 issue 26.
[101] Ibid.

Commonwealth forces at Drogheda.[102] Indeed, according to the journal, the cover up went further. It was alleged that Drogheda was only taken at a heavy price, some five thousand of the besieging army having been lost in the process of investiture of the town.[103] In this, the journal was developing a story line which it had begun weeks earlier at the start of Cromwell's Irish campaign when news first filtered to London concerning the casualties suffered by the parliamentary forces there engaged.[104] The attempts, however, to suggest that the authorities in London were deliberately trying to bury bad news from the front in Ireland revealed the limits of access to reliable newsfeed. As events soon showed, where the parliamentary forces scored significant military success against the Irish confederate forces, *The Man in The Moon* had got it badly wrong and had been reproducing hearsay. This included gossip concerning the deaths from action in Ireland of leading personalities, names widely known to a metropolitan audience such as Henry Ireton and 'one of the young Cromwells' a reference to Henry the younger son of Oliver Cromwell.[105]   Realising its mistake by the end of the month, *The Man in The Moon* did correct its news coverage in a statement which inferred it was admitting it had been in error; '[i]nstead of Cromwell being routed he has taken half Ireland.'[106] Nevertheless, in order to deliberately downplay the scale of Cromwell's success, the journal still qualified its erratum:

> I dare lay a good wager with this juncto [reference to the Commonwealth authorities at Whitehall] that he [Cromwell] hath lost eight thousand men since he went over besides what the flux and new diseases took away.[107]

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[102] *The Man in The Moon*, 17/10 /1649- 24/10/ 1649, issue 26.
[103] Ibid.
[104] *The Man in The Moon*, 26/10/ 1649-10/10/ 1649 issue 24. 40% of the print on page numbered 208 concerned allegations of a cover up by the authorities of the news coming from Ireland in order to hide stories of heavy casualties; 'they have digged a hole in the *Abbey* at Westminster and burned the letters because they should not come to light to dishearten the rest of the regicides.' See also Roberts, *Cromwell's War Machine*, p.235; military service in Ireland was not popular amongst the veteran units of the New Model Army called upon to serve there. Recruits for the campaign were chosen by casting lots.
[105] McNally, *Ireland 1649-52*, p.16 mentions that Henry Cromwell served in the Irish campaign.
[106] *The Man in The Moon,* 24/10/ 1649-31/10/ 1649 issue 27. On the page where the erratum is printed just over 40% of the print coverage is on Cromwell's campaign in Ireland.
[107] Ibid.

The figure cited was clearly an exaggeration, the size of Cromwell's army at the start of the campaign was around 12 000 and such a high casualty rate would have rendered his position in Ireland untenable[108]. Nevertheless, in the reference to the thinning of parliamentary ranks through disease, the journal was on surer ground. Indeed, in this instance, it was correct in the inference which it made that the authorities were covering up bad news. As the year wore on, 'the weather worsened and many of the army fell sick, including Cromwell.'[109]

The government viewed with increasing concern the impact of the news war being stoked up by opposition print. The Council of State urged the City authorities to take action against transgressors in the press. Opposition reporting, which deliberately challenged the veracity of official version of events, inevitably undermined efforts to build a consensus of support for the Commonwealth. As an example, in London, official propaganda had attempted to vilify Irish Catholic rebels by reference to sectarian atrocities committed by them. As examples of the alleged brutality against Protestants was Cromwell's vivid description of the drowning of civilians by the defenders at Wexford. They were also accused of treachery in the breaking of the terms of a truce. Indeed, from the beginning of Cromwell's campaign, great care had been taken by the authorities to ensure publicising of the official news from Ireland. The degree to which the Council of State saw the printing of dissenting voices as a direct threat to its authority and control over opinion in the Metropolis is shown by the instructions which it wrote to the Mayor. It made very clear that the purpose of the printing act was to end press pluralism by a joint effort by the government at Whitehall and the City authorities in stamping out the opposition:

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[108] McNally, *Ireland 1649-52,* p .22.
[109] Ibid., p.16. In fact, disease claimed the life of a prominent parliamentary commander, Lieutenant General Jones on 10th December.

> There has been great mischief by the licence and irregularity of the press and the spreading of foolish, malignant, seditious and treasonable pamphlets and invectives; great care has been taken to pass an act that will put an end to that mischief.[110]

The impact of the news war in London

In the autumn of 1649, the news war in London was to have a profound impact on the development of news services in the Capital. Firstly, it led to an intensification of the official drive to stamp out seditious literature which directly challenged the Commonwealth regime of which *The Man in The Moon* was the most defiant example. In the course of 1650, it developed as a story line the long drawn out campaign to close it down; in early January it asserted 'the man in the moone is still bark'd at and hunted by their beagles; it is comfort that he scapes [their] traps and Ginnes'[111] Towards the end of the month, it boasted that there were employed by the Commonwealth authorities in London 'fifty paid officials to betray *The man in The Moon's* dog but Towser fears them not'.[112] However, eventually the luck ran out and the last issue in the Thomason collection is for the week beginning 26th December 1650. As if an admission of defeat, *The Man in The Moon* warned its readers to '[b]eware of Dogs, traps, toyles and nets; the Westminster printers will pursue their game for blood'.[113] *The Man in the Moon* also wrote pessimistically about the tightening grip of the authorities on all forms of dissent referring, for example, to a law forbidding residence of within a radius of twenty miles of a broad range of persons whom the Commonwealth felt were at risk to the security of the regime. In this, it drew some comparison between the government of the

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[110] BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 3, October 2nd 1649, p. 328, 'The Council of State to the Lord Mayor, aldermen and Common Council of London.'   See also Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England 1640-1660 (*London, 1994),p.1 Furthermore he wrote [n]ever before in English History had written and printed literature played such a predominant role in public affairs and never before had it been felt by contemporaries to be of such importance.'
[111] *The Man in The Moon*, 2/1/1650-9/1/1650 issue 38.
[112] *The Man in the Moon*, 30/1/1650-6/2/1650 issue 41.
[113] *The Man in the Moon*, 26/12/1650-2/1/1651 issue 36.

Commonwealth and the collapse of the democracy in Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian War two millennia before:

I feare London will be in a far worse case than Athens when thirty tyrants hanged up all the chief citizens that were honest or richest, brought their famous citie under sudden confusion.[114]

The long drawn out campaign to close down *The Man in The Moon* is suggestive of survival in London of significant pockets of resistance to the regime. Throughout London, there were those who were willing to defy the draconian penalties imposed by the 1649 act. In various ways, there were Londoners who supported the newsbook either by printing, distributing or through purchase. Through this, they kept alive a journal and the serious political and anti-republican message which it contained. It has been the aim of this chapter to offer a new interpretation of the royalist press which survived in London during the mid and late 1640s. Using *The Man in The Moon* as a case study, the newsbook deliberately focused on mobilising dissent and even opposition towards the Commonwealth. In this, it aimed to appeal to a broad section of society by offering an interpretation of news in the Capital deliberately at odds with that offered by the Commonwealth authorities. Its access to reliable news may have been restricted but there was always a serious underlying political message directly relevant to Londoners. In its last edition, the learned reference to Ancient Athens showed how far the journal had developed in terms of the sophistication of the analogies it was making between the present and the past and between different historical contexts. In the course of which it had moved into a less familiar and more learned context. Yet for those who could understand the connection being made, the inference was clear. The silencing of the independent royalist press which saw itself as a champion of English liberty against the Commonwealth tyrants at Whitehall was analogous to the overthrow of the democracy in Fifth Century BC Athens.

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[114] Ibid.

In conclusion, the size of London in terms of population and geographical reach made it unique within the British Isles in terms of the plurality of views of its citizens. Indeed, such was the diversity of opinions held that never was London truly a parliamentary let alone republican stronghold. The pluralism of opinions being expressed openly in print intensified with the revolutionary act of regicide and republican experiment. Defeated decisively on the battlefields of the Second Civil War, the supporters of the royalist cause formed a fifth column within the Capital and, largely through the medium of print, assailed the fledgling republican regime directly on two fronts. Firstly, it repeatedly refuted and undermined the pretensions of the new authorities to legitimacy. In a second line of attack, the royalist journals sought to side with radical sentiment in the factional struggles which broke out within the parliamentary side. In particular, *The Man in The Moon* was to champion the Leveller leader and pamphleteer, John Lilburne. The common ground found here was the manufacturing of an imagined alliance with the Levellers, and others, based on a defence of freedom of speech.

The Commonwealth regime adopted a broad strategy to what it perceived as a serious threat towards its authority within the Capital, a threat which had the potential to foment outright opposition. One response was, of course, repression. However, as will be shown in the next chapter, another policy was devised. This was in direct response to the news war of 1649. The royalist press and the impact it had in London was to lead to profound and permanent change in the relationship between the State and the media. The activities of the royalist press had raised concerns at the resilience of royalist opposition in the Capital. The result of this was a new policy as the Commonwealth developed its own press strategy. This was specifically directed at shaping public opinion in support of the Commonwealth. This came

to represent an important development in the relationship between rulers and ruled. Those in power recognised the need to legitimize, on a more or less regular basis, their right to rule. It was a response to what the experience of journals such as *The Man in The Moon* had amply demonstrated through their short existence, that metropolitan society was pluralist and disputatious. Increasingly the subjects were willing to challenge the right of those who claimed power over them to govern, it was necessary for the authorities to respond to this challenge.

Chapter three: news management in London during 1650-8

The focus of this chapter is on the development, during the course of the 1650s, of a close relationship between the Commonwealth and, its successor, the Protectorate with two state sponsored London newsbooks both of which were edited by Marchamont Nedham. Whilst there is now a growing body of research both on the career of Nedham and the development of official newsbooks, scholars have neglected the importance of the symbiotic relationship between press and the State. This was news management and the attempt at manufacturing of a metropolitan public opinion at least compliant, if not necessarily enthusiastic, towards the Interregnum authorities. This omission is surprising, as the regimes which held power were often vulnerable and especially so in the Capital.[1] In the process of developing an embryonic relationship with the London based news media, a lasting relationship was formed between the State and civil society. An innovation which failed to build lasting support for the Interregnum was, nevertheless, developed under the Restoration to build and preserve a consensus behind the Stuart dynasty.

Historians have recognised the importance of the newsbook in the 1640s as symptomatic of the rise of a news market in England. These prototype newspapers helped to create an enduring expectation of reliable and accurate news of current events both domestic and foreign. However, the development of a system of state news management in London during the 1650s has been overlooked. In fact in, 1649, when the government suppressed the unstamped press, it was realized that there could be no turning back of the clock. In short, there could not a return to a situation whereby the government deliberately excluded access to political events to all but the privileged few. As a consequence, the reaction, especially in

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[1] J.F. Merrit, *Westminster 1640-1660: A royal City in a time of Revolution* (Manchester, 2013) p. 73. Furthermore he wrote, '[t]his sense of fundamental insecurity was heightened by the relative fragility of the regimes to the constant revelation of a series of locally based plots to overthrow them and to assassinate Cromwell that punctuated the 1650s.'

London, during the Interregnum, was the evolution a policy which aimed to selectively

sponsor journals which peddled the official line on what was considered events belonging in

the public domain. This development in public policy, effectively an embryonic form of

news management, was of fundamental significance and of long lasting importance. It

continued beyond the fall of the fledgling republic and became a permanent feature of

government. As will be shown in the next chapter, the Carolean authorities sought to

continue what had begun during the Commonwealth. This was the process of communicating

directly to an informed opinion, the official spin on political affairs.

By the end of the 1640s, there were a series of factors which had first made possible the

development of a state management of news, a process in English governance which was

without precedent. From their appearance in London late in 1641, the printed newsbooks

were the principal means to obtain access to a regular supply of news and current affairs.[2]

Later, the licensing act of 1649 had created a virtual monopoly of news printing within

London.[3] Surviving archival sources suggest a dramatic decline in the variety of political

publications available. From 1655-1659 only two newspapers, both of which were edited by

the officially endorsed Marchamont Nedham, were allowed.[4] As will be shown later in this

chapter, access to news was restricted by the progressive closing of outlets alternative to

those provided by and, indeed, doctored from within official circles. Action was taken also to

prevent private sources from providing an alternative supply of political news. Deputy

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[2] Official announcements were broadcast in public venues, often with fanfare such as at The Palace Yard, Westminster. As an example, on 19/12/1653, the public proclamation of the investiture of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector was reported in *Mercurius Politicus* 16/12/1653-22/12/1653 issue 184, p.3054.   See also Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013), p.87. Peacey wrote, 'by the 1650s, the practice of 'posting up on railings' of blasphemous libels was fairly widespread by sectaries and political radicals. Another practice was indiscriminate scattering.'

[3] C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum* Volume II (London, 1911), p.245.

[4] Lois Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writings, Royalist Literature 1641-1660* (Cambridge, 1989), p.19. She also wrote, '[t]he total number of publications recorded in the catalogue of Thomason's collection of tracts drops from eighty seven in July 1649 to forty two in September and twenty in December.'

postmasters were instructed to ensure that none should be allowed to 'ride post from London without warrant of his Highness, The Council, the Generals of the Fleet, Admiralty and Navy Commissioners and [postmaster general].'[5]   As a result of the closing off of alternative routes of accessing news, journalists became ever more dependent on official sources in Whitehall and Westminster. In this way, therefore, at least within England, London was in a position to dominate the news market to an unprecedented extent.

There is a growing body of scholarship on the news media in the 1650s away from a focus primarily on the 1640s, 'oppositional print in the later 1640s has received most of the attention of historians and literary critics.'[6]   As a result, the dominance in the news market by *Mercurius Politicus*, a dominance which it was to share from late 1655 with its sibling journal, *The Publick Intelligencer,* has been the subject of more recent scholarship. Indeed, there has been considerable research on the relationship between Marchamont Nedham, editor of these two journals most closely tied to the fortunes of the Commonwealth and later the Protectorate. Peacey has asserted that the appointment of Nedham as a paid propagandist of the Commonwealth, which effectively made *Mercurius Politicus* the mouthpiece of the regime, was a new development in the relationship between politicians and the press. As a direct result of his obtaining official patronage, he was the first known example of the State hiring and paying an author or news manager.[7] The relationship did not stop at remuneration for services rendered. Indeed, the Interregnum regimes patronised *Mercurius Politicus* by providing it with 'material granted from government records and private archives'.[8] It has also been suggested that such was the closeness of the connection developed between

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[5] BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 42, 1653-4, 1653, undated December, p.328.

[6] Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell: Ceremony, portrait and Print 1645-1661* (Cambridge, 2000), p.18.

[7] Jason Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda in the English Civil War and Interregnum* (London, 2004), p.194.

[8] Ibid., p.229.

Nedham and John Thurloe, the secretary to the Council of State, that even contemporaries were aware of this partnership.[9] Peacey's conclusions on the relationship between Nedham and official circles in London has been preceded by the research of Joseph Frank, who concluded that '[b]ecause of his official backing, Nedham was kept well informed about what was going on inside the government.'[10] Acknowledging Nedham's growing dominance of the London news market, historians have even suggested that there was a decline in the quality and variety of the reporting of domestic news, 'by defrauding readers with harmless and less important reports.'[11] Historians have tended to dismiss the importance of the new addition to Nedham's news monopoly in London: 'The *Publick Intelligencer* merely replicating about 'half of the contents of *Mercurius Politicus*.'[12] Indeed, drawing on surviving contemporary evidence such as that provided by John Fitz Jones who bemoaned that the pamphlets had 'grown so dull of late', McElligott argued that readers were 'quick to comment on the perceived decline in the quality of available news.'[13] Hence, one London resident, a certain James Waynwright having concluded that *Mercurius Politicus* was not worth reading, stopped sending copies to his friend.[14]

In fact, as will be shown later in this chapter, current research on the career of Nedham during the 1650s has been limited by the fact that scholars have neglected the importance the newsbooks played in an attempt to shore up the regime. Nedham has proved a problematic figure because of the apparent laxity of his political allegiances; in a tumultuous career during

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Joseph Frank, *Cromwell's Press Agent: A critical biography of Marchamont Nedham 1620-1678* (Lanham, 1980), p.88.

[11] Joad Raymond, 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion and the Public Sphere in the 17th Century.' In Joad Raymond ed., Newspapers *and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London, 1999), pp.109-140, p.125.

[12] 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion and the Public Sphere in the 17th Century',p.125.

[13] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, p.115

[14] Ibid*.,* p.120. There were, as a result, subtle shifts in how people used texts. ' For cynical observers such as Sir Edward Nicholas, Cromwell's newspapers came to be used primarily as sources for European news and he marvelled at their ability to obtain accurate information from within the Louvre even as he grew sceptical about their reliability regarding English affairs.'

the Civil War decade, he wrote both for Parliament and the King. There has been a tendency among scholars to debate on whether Nedham had consistent principles.[15] For some scholars, Nedham's apparent inconsistency was not unusual; at a time of acute political upheaval; people were forced to reassess their allegiances.[16] Yet, the scholarship on Nedham has stopped short of assessing the significance of his role in news presentation in his attempt to manage opinion in the Capital. To all intents and purposes, he had become a paid agent of the State under the guise of a member of civil society engaged in the production and sale of commercially produced news.[17] Merrit quoted extensively from *Mercurius Politicus* and Worden acknowledged the importance which Nedham placed on the presentation of news:

> The Commonwealth faced with an overwhelming hostile public was fearful of provoking it. Yet Nedham was sure that the battle for the news, no less than that of the sword, must be fought and won.'[18]

However, neither Worden nor Merrit explains the vitally important part which was being played by Nedham in managing opinion in the Metropolis. The role was important precisely because the Interregnum regimes were, in fact, justified in their insecurity over their hold on power. Throughout its existence, the threat to the Protectorate posed by royalism remained substantial.[19] Press censorship, not withstanding, it was impossible to stop the circulation of

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[15] Blair Worden, *Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England: John Milton, Andrew Marvell, Marchamont Nedham* (Oxford, 2009), p.18. Furthermore, Nedham's concern for his life may well have been motivated by the recent passage of the Treason act which invoked the death penalty for the writing of seditious material. Scholars continue to debate Nedham's motives. Worden suggests that Nedham remained a supporter of republican government, citing the reprinting 'The Excellencie of a Free State 1656' during the Protectorate. This suggested his opposition to what was a semi- monarchical form of government, *Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England*, p.113. In stark contrast, however, are the views of Merrit in *Westminster, 1640-60*, p14. He castigated Nedham as the 'serial turncoat of the Puritan Revolution.'

[16] Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge, 1972), p. 97. Furthermore, in the following McElligott contributed to the debate on changing loyalties during the 1640s, 'there were very many men and women who moved between royalist and parliamentarian and vice versa.'

[17] The role of Nedham as a clandestine public servant in the pay of the state also took the form of a spy and informer. He was employed, for example, to report back on meetings of the London congregations of the Fifth Monarchy Movement. An example of the detailed reports which he wrote and which were discussed by the Council of State is BHO, CSPD, Interregnum volume 42, December 20th, p.304.

[18] Worden, *Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England*, p.21.

[19] C.H. Firth, 'The Royalists Under the Protectorate', *The English Historical Review*, volume 52, 1937, pp.634-648 (P.637).

seditious literature and the fomenting of dissent which, at times, threatened state security.[20]

This in turn leads to another factor overlooked by scholars, the fact that state sponsored newsbooks of the 1650s had two broad aims; firstly and, more permanently, for consumption of news both at home and abroad and, secondly, they were deliberately metropolitan in their focus.[21]. The need for a more energetic role by the State in the supplying of news to sympathetic journals suggested first by Nedham was quickly realised by influential circles within the Commonwealth. It was influenced by two factors. One factor was the difficulty in enforcing a blanket censorship of views with which the regimes disapproved. A second factor was the power of the printed word on mobilising opinion in London. Taking each of these in turn, the government remained concerned at the limited effectiveness of censorship, especially in London. The provisions of the printing act of September 1649 were stipulated to last until 20th September 1651.[22] Yet, the restrictions which were renewed in 1652 set no time limit for when the provisions of the new act would lapse.[23] This suggests the difficulty which the authorities had faced in enforcing censorship of literature and its dissemination especially in the Metropolis as it remained the centre of both a London and national market for printed items.[24] It has been asserted that the legislation passed towards the end of the first

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[20] Bernard C. Capp, *The Fifth monarchy Men; A Study in Seventeenth Century English Millenarianism* (London, 1972). Throughout the 1650s, the pamphlets produced by this sect attacked the political, religious and economic establishment which underpinned the Protectorate regime. As Examples of titles these pamphlets, see p.231*; Mr Feake's Thyme: August Ye 11.1653*; William Aspinall, *The Abrogation of the Jewish Sabbath* (1657) *and A Brief Description of the Fifth Monarchy or Kingdome* (August 1653); *An Alarum to the Corporations* (1659) and *An Alarum to the City and Souldiery* (6th June 1659) and *An Advertisement touching the Fanaticks Late Conspiracy (28th January 1661).*

[21] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in The English Revolution*, p.44. In his survey of the private correspondence of individuals residing outside of the capital, Peacey has demonstrated the importance of London as the centre of a national trade in print with individuals forming a long term relationship with London booksellers.

[22] C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum,* Volume II, pp. 245-253.

[23] 'An Act for the Reviving of the Former Act', 7th January 1652 in C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum,* Volume II, pp., 696-7.

[24] Ibid*., P.696. The preamble to the legislation indicated clearly the difficulty with which the authorities were faced in regulating the print trade and suppressing unlicensed publications. It was asserted that, ' the discontinuance thereof [1649 act] both occasioned some lewd press and presses to resume their former

Commonwealth in January 1653, and then during the Protectorate 1655, toughened up the restrictions on printing and was the basis for a monopolisation of the news trade by the semi-official organs of the press.[25] However, the new powers only illustrated further the repeated failure of regimes to prevent the spread of seditious print in the Capital.[26] In turning to the second explanation for more energetic state involvement in in news management, there was a growing perception of the power of print. In particular, the authorities repeatedly made the connection between London based royalist conspiracies and, the dissemination there, of seditious print.[27] Recent scholarship has questioned the effectiveness of the attempts by the State to control print for its own ends; print remained an arena in which competing voices on the unresolved political, social and religious conflicts thrown up by the experience of the Civil Wars continued to be fought.[28] The term 'oppositional print' has been used to provide a convenient adjective for the myriad voices of dissent during the Interregnum[29]. In London, the continued circulation of contraband print had become a salient feature of the seventeenth century. It fed a growing demand for 'the regular supply of news which was considered very necessary.'[30]

The focus of scholarship has been on evaluating the effectiveness of censorship and, as a result, the significance of the rise of the first state sponsored newsbook, *Mercurius Politicus*

boldness in writing, printing and dispersing unwarrantable, seditious and scandalous papers, books and pamphlets.'

[25] Joad Raymond, 'Introduction: What News?' In Joad Raymond ed., *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649* (Oxford, 2005),pp. 1-19, (p.14), '*Politicus* had a monopoly between October 1655 and April 1659.'

[26] Bernard Capp, *England's Culture Wars*, p. 59.'

[27] Ibid., p.60. Indeed, '[i]n August 1655, following a wave of royalist conspiracies and republican dissent Cromwell issued draconian new orders on the press. John Barkstead, Lieutenant of the Tower, with two colleagues was to seek out and suppress unlicensed publications and any others judged subversive or immoral.'

[28] Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell*, p.5. Furthermore, she observed that 'the very act of representing Cromwell in print made Cromwell vulnerable to misrepresentation and rejection.'

[29] Ibid., p.18.

[30] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, p. 49. In his analysis of the surviving accounts, Peacey referred to 'not just the scale of spending on cheap print, but also its frequency.'

has been downplayed. However, government circles responded positively to Nedham's request for the sanctioning of a new journal because it offered an opportunity to manage the flow of news in the Capital. Nedham assured he would be the voice of the Commonwealth and, as it later transpired, the voice of the Protectorate. The suppression of an independent and critical press could never be an end in itself. Concurrent with the efforts to supress the royalist underground press within the Capital, therefore, the government showed interest in Nedham's suggestion that there should be a regular weekly newsbook, 'comprising the sum of all intelligence and affairs and designs now in foot in the three nacons of England, Ireland and Scotland.'[31] The aim of the journal, *Mercurius Politicus*, was to serve the interests of the Commonwealth '[i]n defence of the Commonwealth and for the information of the people.' This was a clear hint at its proposed function as a state propagandist. [32] Importantly, the decision was made to formalise this relationship by paying Nedham a £100 a year for services rendered:

> 100l a year to be paid by Mr Frost to Marchamont Needham, as a pension, whereby he may subsist while endeavouring to serve the Commonwealth, this to be done by one year as probation.[33]

Scholars have tended to view Nedham primarily as 'a state propagandist'[34] However, this was only part of the purpose of Nedham and of the journals he edited. As will be shown, the depth of the reporting in *Mercurius Politicus* marked a quality of journalism embedded in detailed descriptive accounts which set it far apart from the more sketchy and scurrilous reporting of the oppositional press. In contrast to *Mercurius Politicus*, these lacked access to

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[31] BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Supplementary, Volume 95: General 1643-1652 (SP 4/95.f.281)
[32] SP 4/95.f.281.
[33] BHO, CSPD, Volume 9, May 1650; 'Proceedings of the Council of State', 24th May, p.174 See also Jason Peacey *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, p.187. He wrote, 'one of the most significant ways in which writers came to be hired and paid was as editors of newspapers, the regularity and longevity of which obviously required writers who could work on a more than a part-time or ad-hoc basis. Prior to the Civil War there appears to have been little inclination to retain the services of journalists. The growing importance of news during the Civil War, however, provided the impetus for greater exploitation of newspapers and of journalists.'
[34] Ibid., p.194. See also Joad Raymond, 'Introduction, What is the news?', p.14. He dismissed the content of *Mercurius Politicus* as 'more or less propaganda.'

privileged sources of information which only official patronage could provide. What is clear

is that *Mercurius Politicus* and the later addition, *The Publick Intelligencer,* were London

based journals most directly focusing on a metropolitan market although with a view as to

how it would impact abroad (the exiled Stuart court and foreign governments). This was

designed to discourage foreign support in the fomenting of unrest in London.

Mercurius Politicus as a metropolitan or London newsbook

Mercurius Politicus originally claimed its purpose was to act for the Commonwealth; on its

first edition it was unashamed as to its support for republican government seeking to address

what it saw as the imbalance between journals representing the Commonwealth and those

which supported the Stuart cause. On its first page, Nedham proclaimed 'why should not the

Commonwealth have a fool, as a well as the King had.'[35] On the one hand, the title of the

newsbook suggested it had a broader, more cosmopolitan focus,

'Comprising the sum of all Intelligence

With the Affairs and designs now

On foot, in the three nations of

England, Ireland and Scotland.[36]

However, its first story and one which was to dominate from then until mid-October 1650

and again from the end of November until mid-October 1651, was the presence of a royalist

fifth column in the Metropolis. This was aided and abetted by Presbyterian ministers in

support of Charles Stuart, declared King in Scotland. The newsbook, therefore, came into

being at a time of intense crisis for the Commonwealth but significantly at a time when the

threat to its authority in the Capital appeared acute; '[t]he Parliament's principall work this

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[35] *Mercurius Politicus*, 6/6/50-13/6/50 issue 1, p.1.
[36] Ibid.

day was to set six hundred honest men on horseback, at the discretion of the *City Militia* to defend *Parliament and City*.'[37]   In its placing emphasis on *City* a clear connection was being suggested to the reader that the interests of the State and the Metropolis were intertwined. Indeed, back in February 1650, Parliament renewed legislation requiring the removal from the Metropolis of a range of people, loosely categorised as 'papists, officers and soldiers of fortune and diverse other delinquents'.[38]

That both Mercurius *Politicus* and *The Publick Intelligencer* should be seen as metropolitan did not mean that there was a conscious aim of reporting only on events which could be interpreted as specifically London. Indeed, *Mercurius Politicus* set out to provide intelligence from far and wide as possible. London and its neighbouring districts was more the audience than the focus of the paper. It was a case of extrapolating and managing news for the Capital. The newsbooks could provide a variety of roles and uses both for its audience and for its official backers. Detailed coverage of news and intelligence on events both domestic and foreign were of use to business interests. Indeed, the focus on news from outside London had a direct relevance to the growing London economy which was a major trading centre both nationally and internationally. London based business and financial interests required a regular supply of accurate news from far and wide. Yet there were other ways in which *Mercurius Politicus* catered for a distinctly metropolitan community. For London, the regularity of *Mercurius Politicus* produced weekly from June 1650, made possible the development of a regular readership; it served to create, cater for and maintain a metropolitan audience and, at times, remind them of their civic and collective

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[37]Ibid.,p.3.

[38] C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum,* Volume II , p. 349. Furthermore, the act encouraged citizens to 'to discover priests and Jesuits and their receivers and abetters.' The alleged link between Jesuit priests and a royalist fifth column was taken up later by Nedham who incorrectly referred to Presbyterian ministers as priests.

responsibilities.[39] The proximity to London to the institutions of government and the State such as Parliament, Whitehall and Westminster Abbey (the focus for the rituals of state pageantry) provided further opportunities through which Londoners could be reminded of the responsibility of the City in its support for the State.[40] What scholars have tended to overlook, is the way in which state sponsored newsbooks were manufacturing a symbiotic relationship between the City elders and the State. London provided financial resources and manpower on which the Interregnum depended for its very survival. As will be shown in the next chapter, the Commonwealth could not long outlive the breaking down of this relationship in the course of 1659-60. At all London based official functions of the period, therefore, the presence of the Lord Mayor, Court of Aldermen and representatives of the City livery companies was always emphasized in the reporting by *Mercurius Politicus*.[41]

Evidence from adverts which first appeared in *Mercurius Politicus* from mid-August 1650 are important because not only do they attest to the appeal and reach of the newsbook as advertisers saw it worth their while in purchasing column space, but also the wide readership for which the journal catered.[42]   It also sheds light on the often metropolitan focus of the audience. At times, a variety of adverts could jostle for column space, ranging from religious commentaries, mathematical works, and cookery books to an advert from a purveyor of medicines warning potential customers against imposters who fraudulently sold lozenges

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[39] *Mercurius Politicus*, 13/4/51/20/4/51 issue 41, p.658. In particular, citizens were called upon to assist in the capture of a Thomas Cook, who had escaped custody having been arrested on charges of treason.

[40] Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell*, p.72. Commenting on Cromwell's entry and reception into London in February 1658, she wrote, 'such a public ceremony seemed to legitimise state power and to stage and publicise a harmonious and mutually supported Protectorate and City relationship.'

[41] There were many examples of the alleged closeness of the alliance between City of London and the Protectorate reported on by *Mercurius Politicus.* Among the more notable examples are the following: 16/12/53-22/12/53 issue 184, pp. 3052-4 (Cromwell's investiture as Lord Protector; 3/9/57-10/9/57 issue 380, 'Whitehall September 4th, 'pp. 1606-1607 (Funeral of Admiral Blake) and 18/11/58-25/11/58 issue 443, pp. 30-32 (Funeral of Oliver Cromwell).

[42] *Mercurius Politicus*; 3/10/50-10/10/50 issue 18, p.308, an advert on a book teaching a new form of 'short writing' or 'Zeilographia'. The publisher was the same as that for the newsbook, Matthew Simmons, London.

under his name. The offended supplier warned customers against those 'who counterfeit the same about the City of London'. Another common focus for advertisements was appeals for the return of lost or stolen goods, often horses.[43] In the case of adverts involved in trading of goods, in most cases, the place of sale or location was London.[44] Although specifically metropolitan news did not feature as a regular item in the reporting of *Mercurius Politicus*, advertising which catered for a broad and, at least moderately, literate society helped to sustain it as a journal relevant to a broad range of society. The process of advertising in a London based journal was a way in which a metropolitan society could communicate across neighbourhoods and make connections and develop an awareness of their place within a broader urban environment. In short, it helped to create a sense of collective urban identity, an identity which *Mercurius Politicus* would go on to exploit directly for state purposes in times of crisis.   In a vital sense, therefore, *Mercurius Politicus* aimed to manufacture a sense of being part of a broader collective. As will be shown later, in the reporting and analysis of various schemes and plots hatched in the capital, the journal called upon the collective duty of Londoners to be vigilant. It was reacting to the need of the State to develop effective methods of governance appropriate to the largest metropolis in Europe. London's size, in terms of both geographical reach and population, exacerbated the problems faced by Early Modern governments in policing towns and cities. For administration purposes, the Interregnum governments found it convenient to treat London, Westminster and the adjacent neighbourhoods as a totality, a recognisable unit.[45] *Mercurius Politicus,* a London based

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[43] *Mercurius Poilticus*, 18/11/58-25/11/58 issue 443, pp. 28-9. The page numbering is an example of how there was not always continuity.   See also 12/12/50-19/12/50 issue 28, p.464- an advertisement for 'the art of making devices, emblems and reverses and medals to be sold at the Anchor in the New Exchange.' This was aimed at craftsmen.

[44] Mercurius Politicus, 18/11/1658 -25/11/1658 issue pp.28-9. An exception was the publication at Oxford of 'Treaties' and 'Expositions' of a deceased cleric. Often, the place of sale was at or near a public tavern in London such as 'Sun in Fleet Street', 'The Anchor in the New Exchange' or 'Sign of the Star, Fleet Street off St Dunstan's Church' or 'The King's Arms at St Paul's Churchyard'.

[45] Parliament repeatedly passed legislation which required the forced removal of persons suspected of being or potentially hostile to the Commonwealth and, later, the Protectorate. As an example of this see C.H. Firth

journal, sought to transform the administrative convenience which treated the Metropolis as a whole into a social reality. Towards this end, it set itself up as the voice of London; '[t]he parrot begins to prattle! Tis the talk of the town who and what this *Politicus* is'.[46] In a witty wordplay the author imagined how different sections of London society reacted to the journal:

> Fine gentlemen say he is a w*itty fellow* because they as yet do not understand him…the ladies have him too because tis a *bable* their *fools* commending. The *cavaliers* like him because he writes true English and gives them good counsel about the *Scots.* But as for the *Presbyters* they carry out that *Politicus* is an atheist because he senses he senses their hypocrisie. [47]

What Constituted News?

As the focus of the next two chapters is on news management, it is necessary to define what constituted as London news.

Mercurius Politicus was a metropolitan journal catering mainly for a London community but it consciously sought to uphold the interests of the regime in power. Indeed, the bulk of its news came from abroad and here, it has been suggested it benefitted from its official contacts in government, especially through the office of John Thurloe: '*Mercurius Politicus* must have received all its foreign intelligence from Mr Thurloe's office since there were no other sources of continuous information from overseas.'[48] London and Westminster featured in the news reportage and editorial comment both directly and indirectly. The term 'indirect' is

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and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum,* Volume II, p.349. An act calling for removal of delinquents from London and Westminster also imposed upon citizens to assist the authorities in handing over Jesuits and their supporters.

[46] *Mercurius Politicus* 13/6/1650-20/6/1650 issue 2, p.17. The phrase 'talk of the town' links the newsbook to London.

[47] Ibid., p.17.

[48] D.L. Hobman, *Cromwell's Master Spy; A study of John Thurloe* (London, 1961), p.25. See also Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, p.228; Peacey wrote that in September 1655, Thurloe's agent in Hamburg (Richard Bradshaw) asked Thurloe to pass specific papers to Nedham. See also p.230, 'it was certainly expected therefore that Thurloe's role should include careful monitoring of Nedham's paper to ensure that certain stories were not printed.'

appropriate because of the geographical convenience of Westminster and London in close

proximity to the institutions of state; Parliament, Whitehall, Westminster Abbey and the

courts to which *Mercurius Politicus* was to have exclusive access. From mid-August 1650,

Mercurius Politicus began to headline news columns with locations such as Parliament,

Whitehall and the Courts. In so doing, the newsbook provided a sense of regularity of

national events near to London, even if London was not necessarily the focus. Another way

in which news reporting from the capital was, indirectly, London news was the opportunity

for *Mercurius Politicus* to comment on the various state occasions held during both   the

Commonwealth and Protectorate.[49] Yet state events were also opportunities for Londoners to

be reminded of their collective identity and, in particular, of a close partnership between

London and the City with the State. As an example, was the style of reporting on a muster of

the trained bands, the citizen militia, on 25th August 1651, the day that Parliament declared

Charles Stuart a traitor:

> This afternoon the trained bands of London and other forces drew out into Moor
> Fields, about twelve thousand in all, where was present the speaker and several
> members of Parliament. A great appearance in arms hath not been these ten
> years. A declaration this day was passed the Parliament, declaring Charles Stuart
> a traitor to the Commonwealth. Also the letter sent by him to the Lord Mayor of
> London to stir up the citie to appear for him was ordered to be burnt by the hand
> of the common hangman.[50]

The image of the City elders, parliamentarians, representatives of the government and

citizens engaged in collective action as a symbol of unity between the State and London was

a theme to which *Mercurius Politicus* would return repeatedly at times of crisis. A survey of

the issues of *Mercurius Politicus* during the years 1650-8 indicates that London focused more

specifically as a news item at times of specific threats to the authority of the Interregnum

regimes. These threats ranged from encouraging popular dissent, planned assassination

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[49] *Mercurius Politicus* reporting on investiture of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector, *Mercurius Politicus* 16/12/1653-22/12/1653, p.3053, quoted in Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell*, p.70.
[50] *Mercurius Politicus* 21/8/1651-28/8/1651 issue 64, p.1020.

attempts and plots of rebellion. Therefore, in *Mercurius Politicus,* London news represented times of crisis and the reaction of authorities to this. By and large, London news was crisis news. In the columns of the pro regime newsbooks, metropolitan news was manufactured in a context of crisis. This may have been deliberate as a state reaction to plots involved heavy handed intrusion into civil society which disrupted daily life. Following the discovery of plots, the authorities authorised mass arrests of potential suspects, many of whom were released after questioning.[51] London news reporting was both news management and crisis management. Over and again where authorities reacted to news of plots fomented in the Capital such as spring of 1651, the Gerard Plot 1654 and the Sindercombe Plot 1657, London, Westminster and the adjacent districts were treated as a totality; 'general searches were made throughout both the City and the suburbs.' In reporting on these crisis events, therefore, the newsbook should be seen as manufacturing a collective metropolitan or London identity. It was attempting to foment division between the assumed loyalty of the majority of the citizens and the dangerous minority who threatened to plunge the Metropolis into disorder and chaos; 'the peevish boldness of many *priests* about the nation and particularly about *London* who teach sedition above doctrine mutiny instead of piety…'[52] By ratcheting up the nature of the threat, Londoners were being required to look beyond their immediate locality and identify with those of their fellow citizens who were loyal. In this sense, therefore, it could be argued that the aim was to create a distinct form of civic identity To put it bluntly, *Mercurius Politicus* could be seen as exploiting the plots in an attempt to encourage a localised, defensive form of patriotism:

> their designs was upon the City as well as the suburbs; they intended not only to have secured Whitehall and St James' and the Mews but at the same time to have seized the persons of the Lord Mayor, and the City magistrates and to have

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[51] *Mercurius Politicus* 8/6/1654-15/6/1654 issue 209, p.1604.
[52] *Mercurius Politicus* 19/9/1650-26/9/1650 issue 16, p.261. Here, London was used as a generic term, ignoring any jurisdictional boundaries within the Metropolis.

attempted a possessing of the Tower of London that they might without control have executed their revenge and lust upon whom they pleased in all the City.[53]

The above is an example of another theme followed in *Mecurius Politicus*. In a large and heterogeneous metropolis, it was relatively easy to play on the fear of chaos and of the fragility of social order which could easily be disrupted by malevolent forces at work.

A factor which has been overlooked by scholars is the way in which the newsbook sought to create and manipulate opinion within the Metropolis. In this, of course, it was assisting broader state policy; management and control of opinion. Over time, in style and format, *Mercurius Politicus* became more obviously official.[54] In a society still embedded in oral culture, where reliability of news was easily diluted by sensationalism and exaggeration [55] the advantage of the newsbook was that it could make a claim for authority of the news presented and that it was keeping a watchful eye on rumour.[56] *Mercurius Politicus* as the mouthpiece of the establishment had another role to play, that of challenging the claims made in anonymous print.[57] That the authorities were sensitive to the impact of print on opinion and,

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[53] *Mercurius Politicus* 8/6/1654-15/6/1654 issue 209, p.1604.

[54] As examples of legislation reproduced in *Mercurius Politicus*; 21/11/1651-28/11/1650 issue 25, p.420 (Act of Parliament imposing a day of thanksgiving to be observed in all churches and chapels about London. This was to celebrate the victory at Dunbar); 23/1/1651-30/1/1651 issue 34 p.564 (an act of Parliament concerning the raising of the militia); 31/7/1651-7/8/1651 issue 61, p.991 (Act Parliament forbidding correspondence with Charles 2nd and his party). Further examples of legislation and proclamations being published in the newsbook include 28/8/1651-4/9/1651 issue 65, p.1040, '[t]hat whatsoever persons have or shall have in their custody any of the printed papers entitled 'His Majestie's Declaration to all his Loving Subjects of the Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales' bee informed to bring the same to the Council of State, the Lord Mayor of the City of London or the next Justice of the Peace, who are to cause the same to be burnt by the hand of the common hangman;' 29/6/1654-6/7/1654 issue 212, p.3604 (An ordinance prohibiting horse races for six months).

[55] Dagmar Freist, *Governed by Opinion: Politics, religion and the Dynamics of Communication in Stuart London 1637-1645* (London, 1997), pp. 19-20. Furthermore, 'the majority of society possessed only moderate literacy skills, symbolic acts, the power of images, rituals, processes, political songs and the spread of news by word of mouth were still all part of popular communication.'

[56] *Mercurius Politicus* 15/5/1651-22/5/1651 issue 50, p.814 '[t]he Dutch Post fails by reason of a cross winde: Nor have we any further of Scotland; notwithstanding the many fictitious rumours spread by the wild mint masters of intelligence.'

[57] Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, p. 359.

importantly, on stoking disorder has been recognised by historians.[58] However, a factor

which has been overlooked by scholars is the way in which newsbooks, supportive of the

regime, could directly challenge the 'veracity' of anonymous print. This was particularly

important in London. After all, in a crowded metropolis, the practice of 'scattering' of print

by those who sought to foment dissent and even unrest added to the security concerns of the

regime.[59] *Mercurius Politicus* alerted its readers to the malicious intents of the authors of this

form of dissent, referring to them as 'the mint masters of intelligence:'

> a fictitious letter superceded to Baron Rigby at his house in Holborn near Greys
> Inn it was dropt in the walks and I suppose on purpose by some of the special
> mint masters of intelligence that it might pass about to blast the reputation of our
> army.[60]

Changes in the style and format of *Mercurius Politicus*

A factor which has been overlooked by scholars is the manner in which the reporting of news

concerning London changed over the course of the 1650s.[61] In fact, it is possible to discern a

significant shift in the manner in which events were reported. These changes were

illustrative of both a growing sophistication in style of reporting and indicative of the close

partnership during the Interregnum between the State and press. This was a relationship

which developed over the course of time as the newsbook became more overtly associated

with the interests of the Protectorate. There was a development of a journalistic style and

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[58] Ibid., p.300. Furthermore, he made the following observation, '[b]y 1653 the perceived connection between political agitation and violent insurrection was shown to be entirely rational. Following another of Lilburne's trials, the Levellers openly used print to incite violence and copies of 'A charge of High Treason' were 'scattered about the streets [urging] all people to mobilise 'in every county town' to 'elect and choose new MPs and exhort them to rebellion'. See also p.361 'in the years after 1653, the authorities repeatedly investigated the role that printing played in the plots against the regime.'

[59] Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, pp.87-8. 'Scattering' was a new development during the 1650s. In January 1655, for example in London copies of a pamphlet 'A Declaration of the Members of Parliament lately dismissed' were 'scattered about the City.'

[60] *Mercurius Politicus* 15/8/1650-22/8/1650 issue 11, p.176. See also SP 46/94 'it must be written in a jocular way, or else it will never be cried up' quoted In Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, p.195.

[61] Joad Raymond, Introduction: What News? in *The Invention of The Newspaper,* p.14 generalises about *Mercurius Politicus,* 'it moved away from the controversial writing of the 1640s and instead supplied high quality news both domestic and foreign.' See also Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars , Promoting Kings and Commonwealths 1603-1660* (London, 2010), p.420, '[a] time server in some measure, Nedham continued to serve to serve the Protectorate but it has rightly been noted that his style flattened after 1653.'

reporting which set the two London newsbooks of the later years of the Protectorate apart from *Mercurius Politicus* at the beginning of the decade. So close was the connexion that it became a symbiotic relationship. Indeed, the Protectorate looked upon the newsbooks for support in return for access to news which was only available from official sources. Yet it also reflected the degree to which the regime felt threatened by malignant interests and factions within the Capital. To counter this, it expected the state sponsored newsbooks to manufacture an image of efficient state surveillance. This was as likely for foreign as it was for domestic consumption. In so doing, therefore, the officially sanctioned newsbook was becoming a vital part of the apparatus of state. In the mid-seventeenth century, an embryonic form of news management was an innovation of state policy. It was a response to the need to devise new strategy to govern a large metropolitan society. Terms such as news management, official sources, government circles, and the drip feeding of information represent vocabulary more familiar in a twentieth and twenty first century context.[62] Nevertheless, the Interregnum regimes, aware of the power of print critical of government, secured favourable reporting by sponsoring allies of their own. Therefore, the use of terms more directly associated with the relationship between the state and the media over the course of the last century become relevant to the relationship which was, in fact, first emerging in the course of the mid-seventeenth century.

The development of news management in London during the 1650s.

The following points represent not only those occasions whereby the Metropolis featured as a dominant news item in the newsbooks but are also illustrative as to how this relationship evolved to meet the changing security needs of the Interregnum within the Capital;

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[62] James Margach, *The Abuse of Power; The war between Downing Street and the Media from Lloyd George to Callaghan* (London 1976) A former lobby correspondent, he explained the arcane vocabulary by which story lines in the media could be traced to circles close to the government.

Opposition from the City churches in the summer of 1650; the Christopher Love conspiracy 1651, The John Gerard Conspiracy of 1654 and the Sindercombe Plot 1657.

1. Opposition from the City Churches in London during the summer of 1650

In its first few months, *Mercurius Politics* it lived up to the more jocular and semi-formal style which it advertised to the readers of its first edition:

> Long may the Scotch *Royall* Progeny and priesthood *be* all fellows at football and enjoy sunshine once a quarter for the reviving of *factions* that they may never return again to *stroke the gills of the City.*' [63]

However, behind the jocular style lay a more serious aim, the need to respond to the powerful challenge to the Commonwealth posed by the opposition among the City's Presbyterian churches. The first edition of *Mercurius Politicus* in June 1650 coincided with a time of conflict between the Commonwealth authorities and sections of the London ministry. Indeed, this conflict had been commented on earlier in *The Man in The Moon.*[64] In January 1650, Parliament sought but, as events showed, failed to impose restraint on its critics through passing of the Act of Engagement.[65] In a society where communication between state and people relied heavily on the support of local authority figures such as the clergy, it was vitally important that ministers be publicly sympathetic towards the interests of the State, especially in the more densely populated Metropolis. After all, it was there where the problems faced by governments in building consensus were compounded. In London, the existence of a pluralistic urban culture presented a far greater variety of alternative voices to challenge the government. Indeed, from the start, *Mercurius Politicus* identified sections of the London

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[63] *Mercurius Politicus* 6/6/1650-13/6/1650, issue 1, p2.

[64] *The Man in The Moon* 5/9/1649-12/9/1649 issue 21 , 'Mr Love, Mr Jaggar and others would not acknowledge their [Commonwealth] Government to be lawfull: For Mr Hall they silenced him; and Mr William was forcibly pulled from the pulpit and divers of his parishioners wounded in a most barbarous, cruel and uncivil manner.'

[65] All men over the age of eighteen were required to give the following oath ' I do declare and promise that I will be true and faithful to the Commonwealth of England as it is now established without a King or House of Lords., in C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, volume II, pp.325-9.

ministry as a malignant faction in the heart of the Commonwealth. It identified the influence

of the ministers on their congregations as the threat not only to the Commonwealth but to

peace and order within the Metropolis. In a play on words, it used military terminology in

describing what it saw as the damaging impact of the oppositional clergy in the Capital;

'[t]hey are so impudent to make a mortar piece of the pulpit, shooting squibs and granadoes

to blow up Parliament.'[66] In June, *Mercurius Politicus* adopted a style of attack with which

readers of the royalist newsbooks would have been familiar, especially *The Man in The*

Moon. Like the royalist newsbooks it accused its opponents (in this case Presbyterian

ministers) of moral laxity. Their verbal attacks against the Commonwealth are dismissed on

the grounds that 'they are so lost in ale.'[67] Sexual metaphor was used to describe their

alleged conspiracy with Charles Stuart and his supporters in Scotland; '[t]hese people have a

world of *lechery* they be not taken napping for their adulterie with the *great whore of*

Scotland.'[68] In this illustration, the newsbook was drawing upon popular anti-Catholicism.[69]

More importantly, it even deliberately misrepresented them as priests, 'London Priesthood'

thereby also drawing on populist anti-Catholicism.[70]

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[66] *Mercurius Politicus* 6/6/1650-13/6/1650, p.9. See also 11/7/1650-18/7/1650 issue 6, p.11 'Pulpit Incendiary' and 29/8/1650-5/9/1650 issue 13, p.193: 'Pulpit incendiaries.' Furthermore, the ministers were portrayed in alliance with the Scots; see 12/9/1650-19/9/1650 issue 15, p.225 'Scotch confederacy' and 3/10/1650-10/10/1650 issue 18, p.306 'Scottish Faction.'

[67] *Mercurius Politicus*, 6/6/1650-12/6/1650 issue 1, pp. 2-3.

[68] Ibid., p.9. See also 29/8/1650-5/9/1650 issue 12, p.193, '[t]hese are greedy dogs which can never have enough and they are sheepbeards that cannot understand.' The reference to sheepbeard is sexual, it was a colloquial expression for pubic hair, see Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature,* Volume I (London, 1994), p. 86.

[69] Ivor H. Evans, revised, *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable: Centenary Edition* (London, 1971), p. 64. The whore of Babylon was a Puritan epithet for the Roman Catholic Church. 'the allusion is to Rev. xvii-xix where Babylon stands for Rome, the embodiment of luxury, vice, splendour, tyranny and all that the early church held was against the spirit of Christ.' See also *Mercurius Politicus* 29/8/1653-5/9/1650 issue 13, p.193; 'it is for their *pride* their *Kirk-domination* and their *Mammon*'. The reference to Mammon is of course a suggestion of avarice.

[70] *Mercurius Politicus*, 6/6/1650-12/6/1650 issue 1, p.9. In Issue 18, 3/10/1650-10/10/1650, p.306, the ministers were referred to as 'Priests'. During the course of the early years of the Interregnum, there was recurrent legislation concerning the forced removal of Catholics from the Metropolis; C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Commonwealth,* Volume I, pp. 1040-1041 (May 23rd 1648), pp. 1166-1168 (June 16 1648) and Volume II pp.349-354 (February 26 1650).

The first appearance of *Mercurius Politicus* also coincided with renewed conflict between England and Scotland. This was the war between the Commonwealth and Charles Stuart backed by the Covenanter army in Scotland. Charles' new found support for the Covenant gained him support from Presbyterian critics of the Commonwealth in England. Of particular concern to the republican regime, was the support he was gaining among sections of the London clergy. By September, the situation for the Commonwealth looked desperate.[71] Given the official backing for its founder and editor, Marchamont Nedham, it would be logical to conclude that he had at least unofficial sanction for the attack mounted by his newsbook on those ministers who sought to challenge the legitimacy of the Commonwealth. Indeed, the latter, emboldened by support they gathered from amongst their congregations, felt confident to use the pulpit to speak out against the government.[72] Following the news of the victory of the Commonwealth forces at Dunbar on September 3rd 1650, for example, the Council of State instructed the Lord Mayor to direct the City churches to give thanks for the victory:

> The relation of the success of the army against the Scots to be set to the Lord
> Mayor and [he]be desired to order the publication thereof in all the Parish
> churches within the Lines of Communication and thanks to be returned to God for
> his great mercy shown to the nation in that happy success.[73]

However, the clerical opposition to this was widespread, and *Mercurius Politicus* would again take up the mantle as the official mouthpiece of the regime in condemning those of the London ministry who had refused to comply. The vitriol with which *Mercurius Politicus* attacked ministers notwithstanding, it did not single out individual ministers for criticism.[74] This was in contrast to alderman Bunce 'the wandering alderman', who was ridiculed in the

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[71] Blair Worden, *The English Civil Wars, 1640-1660* (London, 2009), p. 112, 'If Cromwell had lost the ensuing battle [Dunbar], England would have lain open to the Scots and the restoration of the monarchy at their hands.'
[72] As evidence of local resistance to attempts by the authorities to remove the influence of critical ministers see *The Man in The Moon*, 5/9/1649-12/9/1649 issue 21.
[73] BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 11, 1650, p.330.
[74] Indeed, Londoners would have been familiar with the names of London ministers who had come into conflict with the authorities see *The Man in The Moon*, 5/9/1649-12/9/1649 issue 21.

following sarcastic commentary '[t]he worm of the brain begins to work wonders and create Scotch armies by thousands as appears as if the author had been secretary to Master Bunce, the Wandering alderman.'[75] In its approach towards criticism of the London clergy, *Mercurius Politicus* was outwardly cautious, and felt it necessary to justify its stand:

> For as long as I saw no action elsewhere, I could not chuse but to take notice of their *Drumming, Trumpeting* and giving *fire* in the pulpit so that I was fain make myself felt a fool in print to represent their *foolery*.[76]

This also represented a shrewd tactical device for it allowed the journal to avoid being drawn into direct conflict with specific ministers and their congregations. It did, however, enable the journal to be less cautious in its generalised condemnation of those ministers it held in contempt:

> if men shall cloak their own ill grounded *humours*, opinions and phantasies with their fair cover of conscience to clash with so lawful a command as is this day for a thanksgiving and rejoicing before God certainly they deserve rather a whip than an argument for better satisfaction.[77]

The issue of the first week of October 1650 represented the end of the first phase of London and the Metropolis as a focus of domestic news reporting in *Mecurius Politicus*. The phase had coincided with the immediate threat to Parliament in Scotland when, until the defeat of Charles Stuart at Dunbar, attention was also on the Capital as a source of opposition towards the Commonwealth. In its condemnation of those London priests who ignored the Act of Parliament calling upon the City churches to observe a day of thanksgiving in celebration for the victories in Scotland,[78] the newsbook, nevertheless had drawn attention to the extent of

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[75] *Mercurius Politicus* 18/7/1650-25/7/1650 issue 7, p.97. See also 6/6/1650- 12/6/1650 issue 1, pp. 14-15 'Massey, Bunce, Graves and captain *Titus* are their journey at the Hague and the main engineers that endeavour to lay the *golden conduit pipe* of contribution from London to Scotland.'

[76] *Mercurius Politicus* 18/7/1650-25/7/1650 issue 7, p.97.

[77] *Mercurius Politicus*, 19/9/1650-26/9/1650 issue 22, pp.262-3. See also p.263, 'Thursday September 19th. ' It referred to London ministers known to be critical of the Commonwealth who had then refused to attend a summons to the Committee of the City Militia to answer whether they intended to observe a day of thanks giving ordered by parliament in celebration of the recent victory at Dunbar on 3/9/1650.

[78] Blair Worden, *The English Civil Wars*, p.113. He wrote that the victory at Dunbar was won against heavy odds, Cromwell's force been outnumbered by a Scottish force nearly four times the size of his own. Furthermore, '[h]is victory had an impact on his army's sense of identity and mission as significant as those of

opposition within the capital in which it claimed that most churches 'neglected to observe this day.'[79] Perhaps inadvertently, as a metropolitan newsbook, it had made it clear to a wide audience the extent of the opposition towards the Commonwealth within the Capital.

2. The development of the newsbook by the summer of 1651

It has been asserted that under the direction of Marchamont Nedham, there was a policy of ignoring domestic news in 'a deliberate attempt to manipulate public opinion by defrauding readers with harmless and less interesting reports.[80] However this judgement can be challenged when looking at crisis management in mid-seventeenth century London. Indeed, the opinion that there was a slighting of domestic news fails to acknowledge that there was a deliberate management of London news in order to serve the interests of the State in promoting security. Central to this was encouraging citizens living and in working disparate metropolitan communities to think of themselves as part of a broader community with shared interest in supporting the government. In this perception, the regime was being held up as the only guarantor both of the safety of the Metropolis and of the rights and privileges of the citizens therein.

By the summer of 1651, the style and format of *Mercurius Politicus* was evolving; this was made manifest in the boldness with which it was prepared to challenge the clerical opposition to the Commonwealth and also in the manner in which it presented news. A key change was a move away from the ambiguity which characterised much of the prose in the previous year towards a clearer delivery of news. It represented an innovation in the format of a newsbook into a style of prose and format more appropriate to the delivery of news stories. In a second

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the earlier triumphs at Naseby and Preston. It brought a dizzying consciousness of divine favour, and intensified the conviction of the soldiers that they were entitled to a say in England's post-war settlement.'

[79] *Mercurius Politicus* 3/10/1650-10/10/1650 issue 18, p.306, Tuesday October 8th.

[80] Joad Raymond 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century' p.125.

change, *Mercurius Politicus* made clearer that it had official accreditation for its story lines. This would appear as a deliberate policy to enhance the newsbook as a serious news journal worthy of authority in its reporting of news. Finally, a concerted attempt was being made to take advantage of the fact that, unlike its royalist predecessors, it did not have to operate under clandestine circumstances, ever watchful for the agents of state censorship. In drawing attention to story lines from previous issues, it assumed, therefore, that it had a regular audience, 'remember what I told you in number five. [81] At the same time, it was encouraging a more discerning readership. The newsbook organised the presentation of news in a way which offered readers the choice of selecting from a dense text, those items which might be of particular interest to them.[82]

From June until October 1651, London again became a focus in the editions of *Mercurius Politicus*. It reflected the increased security concerns there associated with several contingent factors which raised the alarm held in circles both in the City administration and government. These were the prospect of a London based royalist fifth column, secondly the prospect of a third civil war and, finally, invasion of England from Charles Stuart.[83] Unlike the previous summer, in June 1651, the threat to the regime in London was greater. It focused on a conspiracy in support of Charles Stuart, and added to mounting fears over the security of the Capital from enemies within.[84] The discovery of a London based plot

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[81] *Mercurius Politicus,* 15/8/1650-22/8/1650 issue 11, p.210. See also Joad Raymond, 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century', p.132. The regularity of news which the weekly appearance of *Mercurius Politicus* provided meant 'readers were required to relate items back to previous issues, to follow stories as they unfolded. This is more likely to develop patterns of remembering and active involvement than the culture of passivity and forgetfulness.'

[82] *Mercurius Politicus*, 15/8/1650-22/8/1650 issue 11, p.166, for the first time, there were by lines indicating whence news had come, 'From Rome the 23rd July'.

[83] Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: A History of England, 1603-1714* (London 1980), p.216. Furthermore, he wrote '[b]efore Worcester the Rump was faced by the prospect of invasion and with almost universal international hostility provoked by the execution of Charles 1st.'

[84] There was already a heightened state of tension and nervousness in the capital; BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 15, 1651, p.44. On February 13th, The Council of State approved the presentation of a bill to Parliament to enforce the removal from within twenty miles of London and Westminster, 'persons whose

involving elements of the clergy raised alarm, no doubt exacerbated by the fact that they had support of senior military officers.[85] It confirmed previous suspicions as to the more serious political threat ministers posed to the Commonwealth precisely because of the influence they held within their communities:

> The Presbyterian yet holds a silent power, by means of the divines and the interests of some of the gentry and nobility especially in London and the great towns.[86]

Indeed, such was the fear of unrest in the Capital, 'the designs of the enemy for stirring up insurrections and troubling the peace particularly within the City of London', that the authorities were determined to maintain a visible military presence there; requiring of the Militia Committee for the City of London, 'the horse raised by you in the City must be kept for two months longer.'[87]

During the course of the summer, the manner in which *Mercurius Politicus* reported on the uncovering of the plot in London reflected the change of style in the newsbook as it moved away from the more informal style of the previous year and reflected a more conscious attempt at news management. In this, it sought specifically to both denigrate and isolate the opponents to the Commonwealth. As before, it played up the threat posed by the London clergy but there was a decisive shift away from the ambiguity of expression which had featured prominently in the previous year. There was a more personal and direct attack on ministers in order to undermine the considerable support upon which the clerical opposition had relied. It also aimed to unite London society against the threat posed by the enemy

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abode there shall appear dangerous to the safety of Parliament and peace of the Commonwealth.' The said act appears in C.H. Firth and R.S.Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum,* Volume II, p. 503. See also BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 15, 1651, p.32: Two troops of Colonel Harrison's regiment of horse were ordered to redeploy from Wales to London 'for the safety of these parts.'

[85] BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 15, June 1651, p.249 'Colonel Sowton, Lieutenant Colonel Jackson and Ralph Robinson, Minister, to be committed to the Tower for the same cause as others who were having a hand in the London conspiracy.' See also p.252. On June 14th 'Captain Farr to be brought before the Committee of Examinations.'

[86] BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 9, March 1650, p.69, Views of Col.H. Price.

[87] BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 15, April 1651, letter dated April 4th, p.131.

within. Here it again returned to the recurrent theme of stoking up fears of chaos and disorder. This was portrayed as both the aims of the London conspirators and the inevitable consequence if the Commonwealth was overthrown.

Moving cautiously at first, Christopher Love was singled out for defamation.[88]   The attack on Christopher Love was based around three themes; his character and personality. There was also a deliberate distancing of him as a schemer and traitor as opposed to a church minister. Finally, there was an attack on his personal religion. Christopher Love was being used as an example of a more general opposition by *Mercurius Politicus* towards the opposition among the London Presbyterian ministry

The attack on the character and personality of Christopher Love

The assault on Love's character and personality aimed to directly undermine his status as a figure of trust and of moral guidance. Reporting on his demeanour at his treason trial in late June 1651, the journalist implied cowardice and dishonesty in his defence; the 'veracity' of the description being deliberately enhanced by writing in a way to suggest the journalist was present, whether or not this was indeed the case. This was achieved in a lengthy description covering over 96% of the news reporting on that page:

> as to the man's carriage and behaviour (as far as reason may collect) he
> discovered as much ridiculous impudence, equivocation and hypocrisy (both now
> and yesterday) as even any person did upon the like occasion. In him you might

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[88] *Mercurius Politicus*, 12/6/1651-19/6/1651 issue 54, p.878. Referring to the detaining of Christopher Love in the Tower of London, see the comment on p.878. The newsbook emphasized the political nature of the charges against Christopher Love in the following, 'not for any matter of doctrine (as many give it) but for high treason and conspiracy against the Commonwealth of England.' See also E.C. Vernon biography in H.C.G Matthews and Harrison eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 34 (Oxford, 2004), pp.493-496. He was one of the ministers who had been constructing a Presbyterian church government in the City. He opposed the execution of Charles 1st and was in favour of a restored 'regulated monarchy' under Charles 2nd. He was persuaded by William Drake to hold meetings of likeminded men at his London home.

have seen the true character of his faction. Full of spleen and void of all ingenuity.[89]

Again, at his sentencing for the crime of High Treason, *Mercurius Politicus* challenged both his honesty and strength of character:

> he endeavoured to patch up his credit so much lost through his first protestations by pronouncing new ones every jot as bad as the former for they ran upon the same base strain of Equivocation. Nor was his impudence any whit the less when after the sentence he made bold to abuse a text of scripture to justifie himself in an uningenious and most insolent manner.[90]

In both observations, the personality of the man was being stripped away to reveal a person who was flawed, treacherous and vacillating in his own defence. In this subjective view, therefore, *Mercurius Politicus* was challenging his claim to moral authority. The style of the character assassination differed markedly from the generalised attacks on the London ministry mounted the previous year by *Mercurius Politics*. There was no return to sexual insults or comments about drunkenness. This represented a shift in the tone of the reporting which reflected the gravity of the charges against Christopher Love. An innovation in the attack on him was wordplay on his name to illustrate the apparent incongruity of his public image and the reality of the malevolent and secretive persona:

> Do you think that I should entitle him my be*loved* brother? Do ye think that I should represent him and his Treason in such a *lovely* strain without any abhorrent reflections upon so horrid a crime? [91]

The distinction made between Christopher Love as a minister and a schemer and rebel

In the summer of the previous year, the attacks made by *Mercurius Politicus* on the London clergy were in the form of sweeping, generalised and often scathing remarks; ' those *pulpit*

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[89] *Mercurius Politicus,* 19/6/1651-26/6/1651 issue 55, p.886 'Saturday June 20th.' There was no indication as to the source of the story. It remains unclear, therefore, whether this was an eyewitness account.
[90] *Mercurius Politicus*, 3/7/1651—10/7/1651 issue 57, p.908, 'Saturday July 3rd.' Only the date and not the source of the story is given and it covers just under 37% of the text on the page.
[91] *Mercurius Politicus*, 17/7/1651-24/7/1651 issue 59, editorial, p.923. The editorial continues onto the next two pages, but the numbering goes awry as p.23 is followed by pages 934-935. The editorial which focuses on the trial and verdict covered all of 923,934 and 67% of 935.

incendiaries who carry sharp swords in their tongues'[92] In 1651 a public trial at the High

Court in London, provided a an opportunity for the journal to be much more specific in its

attack on Christopher Love as an example of a minister who was conspiring with circles close

to Charles Stuart against the Commonwealth:

> in their attempt to conceal their identities in correspondence, all their letters must
> be subscribed without any name but only a single letter in some dark character
> which none but themselves understand. Their instructions and dispatches
> likewise must pass un-signed without any names of the conspirators.[93]

What emerged more clearly in the account of the trial of Christopher Love was a deliberate

attempt to distance the man from his position as a church minister. In this, the newsbook was

attempting to persuade the reader that through his alleged treason, Christopher Love had both

forfeited his position as a minister and by doing so his trust. This was accompanied by a

redefinition of the term minister as a secular not religious position. In so doing, the editorial

was emphasizing the dishonesty and malevolence all the more serious because it represented

a betrayal of trust of a role which held a great deal of authority and respect in the community:

> [Love should be seen as] minister only to the World (not God) to carry on
> worldly ends and interests and serve only as *Minister* of *State* (on the behalf of
> foreigners) to overthrow the peace and freedom of their native country which they
> would betray unto the Scots as it doth appear clearly to the World upon the trial
> of Mr Love before the High Court of Justice.[94]

The distinction made between the position of respected minister and a traitor was made more

stark when he was convicted for High Treason. In an extensive exposition representing

100% of the text on page 886 just over 72% of the text on page 887, the editorial, in effect,

denied he was a church minister:

> Do not to consider what he hath been but what he is, they must not look upon him
> as a godly minister (for the title is forfeited if you'll believe what he confessed of
> his guilt with his own mouth before the high Court) but as a man who (as it
> appeared out of his own defence) must give an accompt for the last year's

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[92] *Mercurius Politicus*, 29/8/1650-3/9/1650 issue 12, p.193.
[93] *Mercurius Politicus,* 19/6/1651-26/6/1651 issue 55, pp.879-881, editorial.
[94] *Mercurius Politicus* 19/6/1651-26/6/1651 issue 55, pp. 879-881.

bloodshed at Dunbar and since. And so look upon him as wallowing in the blood of so many thousands.[95]

The attack on the religion of Christopher Love

Earlier in the chapter, attention was paid to the manner in which *Mercurius Politicus* made

the deliberate error of referring to ministers who spoke out against the Commonwealth as

priests. In the summer of 1651, it again associated protestant, Presbyterian critics of the

Commonwealth with Catholicism but its attack was now more bitter. During the trial of

Christopher Love, it implied that he and other ministers who were involved in the plot were

even more of a threat than the Jesuit priests and in this was again drawing on populist anti-

Catholicism.[96] In its editorial, *Mercurius Politicus* developed the analogy, associating the

treason of ministers such as Love with the alleged machinations of the Jesuit priests believed

to be in the Capital; 'what a misery it is that the Jesuits spewed out of other nations seems to

have taken sanctuary in our own and by a kind of transmigration is become altogether

English walking up and down with the garb and title of a Protestant minister.'[97] In October,

the editorial went further in its attack on the religious beliefs of the clerical critics of the

Commonwealth; in a direct challenge to the legitimacy of their convictions it referred to them

as 'the projecting apostates of the Presbyterian party.'[98]

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[95] *Mercurius Politicus* 26/6/1651-3/7/1651 issue 56, pp. 885-887, editorial. See also 11/9/1651-18/9/1651 issue 67, editorial, pp. 1061-1063; 'All our evils have been derived from the corruption of the clergy and much of the laity as have been wedded to their ends. The first war may truly be called Bellum Episcopale, the bishop's War…The last two wars may either of them as truly be called Bellum Presbyteriale being raised by the ranting Presbyters for erecting a new Tyranny upon the ruins of the old one,

[96] 'Act for Removing Papists and all other officers and soldiers of fortune and diverse delinquents from London and Westminster,' 26th February 1650 in C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum,* Volume II, pp. 349-354.

[97] *Mercurius Politicus*, 19/6/1651-26/6/1651, pp. 879-891, editorial, 'farr outstripped the Jesuits both in practice and profit'.

[98] *Mercurius Politicus*, 2/10/1651-9/10/1651 issue 70, pp. 1135-1137, 'Westminster'.
   The names of the accused were listed on p.1137; Colonel Joseph Vaughan, lieutenant colonel Jackson, Captain Hugh Massey, Dr Drake, Mr Case; Mr Arthur Jackson, Mr William Jenkins, Mr Watson, Mr Ralph Robinson' See also 11/9/1651-18/9/1651 issue 67, pp. 1061-1063, editorial, 'it was
 Mr Love who being helpt to beat down the old malignant standard and then turned apostate to set up a new one lost his head upon Tower Hill as a judgment of God for his implacable Apostacie.'

In its attack on Christopher Love, *Mercurius Politicus* was acting as the undeclared mouthpiece of the regime. Concealing behind the appearance of a commercial newsbook, it was as vitriolic as the royalist press had been previously in its condemnation of those whom it viewed as legitimate targets. It too issued insults and allegations. In *Mercurius Politicus*, the focus given on the trial reflected a variety of factors; the high profile of the London conspiracy, the nature of the allegations being made, the evidence which was being presented in court, the involvement of senior officers and, finally, the support which Christopher Love had in London.[99] To this, the editorial posed a rhetorical question:

> suppose now that some Gentlemen of utopia were found a murderous traitor and condemned for the Bloody treason; suppose too that he were one that had been my friend and as my own profession and that good nature should lead me so far as to petition on his behalf. [100]

In its reporting of the London conspiracy, in a variety of ways, *Mercurius Politicus* contributed to the idea of London as a collective identity. It did this negatively through the scare mongering of the intentions of the plotters 'that war which they endeavoured to form in the City.'[101] Yet, in a positive sense, it was also attempting to build a sense of civic identity. This was done by reminding the readers of a shared interest in maintaining social harmony, responsibility for which was a collective endeavour. This shared identity imposed upon its citizens a collective duty of civic loyalty and responsibility:

> No state can permit ministers to pick scruples appoint meetings and committees of their own to dispute the power it will not stand with their safety to permit it considering the ugly train of consequents that will follow, for the merchants, the mercer or any other society of men in London as elsewhere may well as much reason to take the same boldness and pretence so that whilst all have liberty to dispute and scruple the power there will be no more obeying it.[102]

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[99] *Mercurius Politicus*, 10/7/1651-17/7/1651 issue 58, p.928; in response to a petition whose signatories included 'diverse ministers' asking for a reprieve of the death sentence imposed, Parliament granted the reprieve until 15th August.
[100] *Mercurius Politicus*, 17/7/1651-24/7/1651 issue 59, p.923.
[101] *Mercurius Politicus,* 12/6/1651-19/6/1651 issue 54, pp. 863-865, Editorial
[102] *Mercurius Politicus* 24/7/1651-31/7/1651 issue 60, pp. 949-951, Editorial.

Londoners were reminded of the consequences of actions of those living amongst them holding positions of trust who then abused the authority given them and threatened the livelihoods of their fellow citizens; '[l]ooke you this is one that hath both laboured to betray your wives and children, your estates and your country into the hands of hungry forrainers.'[103] Finally, a sense of collective solidarity was being suggested through exhorting citizens to stand together against the threat posed by the invasion from Scotland of a royalist army. Londoners were informed of their civic duty to hand in copies of the letter subscribed to Charles Stuart calling upon Londoners to rally to his cause:

> That whatsoever person or persons have or shall have in their custody of the printed papers Entitled by his Majestie's Declaration to all his loving subjects of the Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales bee informed forthwith to bring the same unto the Council of State, the Lord Mayor of the City of London, or the next Justice of the Peace who are caused the same to be burnt by the hand of the common hangman.[104]

It was not only in times of danger that a collective metropolitan identity was being manufactured. Indeed, following the defeat of the army under Charles Stuart at Worcester on 3rd September, Cromwell's triumphant return to London was portrayed as an example of solidarity between people, the City elites and the Commonwealth:

> All the fields were thronged with innumerable people that came to see his coach of state and many thousands of quality on horseback. There was also the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, sheriffs and militia of London, with Guards of soldiers both horse and foot who also testified their joy in his victorious return by loud volleys and acclamations.[105]

As at Dunbar the previous year, the victory at Worcester was exploited by the Commonwealth as an opportunity to involve both church and state in common celebration.[106]

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[103] *Mercurius Politicus*, 26/6/1651-3/7/1651 issue 56, Editorial, pp. 885-886. See also 'nor must we forget the Groans and cries of the poor country who might have been at ease from those taxes that we are forced to raise for maintaining of the war had it not been for him.' The reference was to Christopher Love.

[104] *Mercurius Politicus*, 28/8/1651-4/9/1651 issue 65 , p.1040, 'Monday September 1st.'

[105] *Mercurius Politicus*, 11/9/1651-11/9/1651 issue 67, p.1071, 'Westminster 12th September'.

[106] *Mercurius Politicus*, 25/9/1651-2/10/1651 issue 69, p.1104, 'Westminster 26th September'; Parliament ordered an act of general thanksgiving of the Late Mercies (Dunbar, the taking of Leith and Edinburgh).

In an article referring directly to the act of Parliament it was summarised in plain type as opposed to the more obscure full reproduction in gothic type as had been customary. Also, the reader was advised as to the future date of the day of general thanksgiving (24th October) and the newsbook urged its readers to 'take notice which *priests* do neglect it.' By September 1651, the newsbook was developing an additional role that of promoter of state policy, this was through publicising new Acts of Parliament and instructions from the City authorities. It also served another function; by proclaiming laws and instructions it could pass comment, even exhorting citizens to be vigilant and to play their part in ensuring effective administration.

The development of the newsbook by the summer of 1654

The central thrust of this chapter has been an analysis of how the official newsbooks developed in response to the changing security needs of the Interregnum regimes. The appearance and development of *Mercurius Politicus* 1650-1651, at a time when the survival of the Commonwealth hung in the balance, was prompted by the need of the State to get its message across to a wider public which had become used to political debate on national affairs. In attempting to manage metropolitan opinion during times of crisis, Nedham manufactured an idea of a collective London community and identity. Over the rest of the decade, the continuing threat to the State within the Capital ensured that the officially sanctioned newsbook remained an important agent of the State in face of a hostile presence in the Capital.

Historians have generally accepted the significance of the royalist defeat at Worcester on 3rd September 1651 as a turning point, Underdown, for example concluded, 'the [royalist] cause had collapsed even more disastrously and the process of revival was correspondingly

prolonged' [107] Whilst there has been a tendency among scholars to downplay the significance of the many abortive royalist plotting throughout the rest of the decade '[p]rospects of a successful rising were made dimmer by the shambolic nature of royalist planning,' [108] more recent scholarship has recognised the impact these had on stoking the inherent insecurity felt by both the Commonwealth and later the Protectorate on its grip on power. Throughout the Interregnum, rumours of plots and insurrections repeatedly raised fears of security within the Capital:

> Planned rebellions might sometimes be designed to begin in provincial areas but the seizure of the Capital was always part of the plan and indeed planned rebellions might be planned and coordinated in the Capital. This led to constant new proclamations and ordinances ordering royalists out of Westminster. [109]

Scholars have, however, tended to pay limited attention to the importance of the official newsbook in the recurrent crises during the Interregnum. In fact, the newsbook remained a vital means by which the state sought to control the Capital. It remained so for a number of reasons. A key reason was that *Mercurius Politicus*, was read mainly by a metropolitan audience and that it continued in circulation throughout the 1650s. [110]   A second reason was despite the decisive victory over its domestic enemies at Worcester, the Interregnum regimes were never easy in their grip over the Capital; 'the great majority [royalists] had refused to become reconciled to the new regime.' [111] Indeed, a further reason was that defeated in pitched battle, royalist opposition was forced to develop new stratagems. In particular, it resorted to clandestine plotting and assassination attempts in a bid to destabilise the regime

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[107] David Underdown, *Royalist Conspiracy in England* (New Haven, 1960), p.56. His verdict on the significance of the aftermath of Worcester on the Royalist cause has been accepted by later scholars such as Barry Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate* (Manchester, 2002), p.55. See also Lloyd Bowen, 'David Underdown, Royalist Conspirators and the Character of English Politics', in *History Compass*, Issue 5, Volume 11, pp.341-351. See also Blair Worden, *The English Civil Wars 1640-1660* (London, 2009), p.113 'many Royalists resigned themselves to submission.' See also Christopher Durston, *Cromwell's major-generals: Godly Government During The English Revolution* (Manchester, 2001), p.4. See also E.S. De Beer, ed., *The Diary of John Evelyn* (London, 1959), p.308, entry 22/9/1651: ' Arived the newes of the fatal Battail at Worcester, which exceedingly mortified our expectations.'

[108] Barry Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate* (Manchester, 2002), p. 55.

[109] J.F. Merritt, *Westminster 1640-1660*, p.75.

[110] Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649*, p.14.

[111] Durston, *Cromwell's major-generals,* p.4.

and provoke a wider revolt. In this, the cover of anonymity which the Capital provided meant that the regime had to deal with a new threat and develop more its apparatus of surveillance. As a result of these factors, therefore there was required greater state intervention in the management of civil society. Indeed, this also created new challenges for the state sponsored press in the strategy of manufacturing a collective, albeit siege, mentality in the face of the alleged internal threat. The role of *Mercurius Politicus* as a form of state propaganda has long been accepted, but what needs to be recognised is how the newsbook responded to the crises of plots hatched in the Capital.[112]

Among scholars, there is agreement that Nedham was able to exploit the close contact he had within governments in order to boost the reputation of his newsbooks. In particular, there was a close relationship between Nedham and John Thurloe, the head of the Protectorate security services and, successor to John Milton, the official licenser of Nedham's journal, *Mercurius Politicus*; 'with his occasional guidance, Nedham was enabled to lift trial balloons, spread certain rumours and suppress a few dangerous stories.'[113] Furthermore, it has been asserted that 'Nedham was being given access to state correspondence.'[114] It is the assertion of this thesis, however that *Mercurius Politicus* became a pioneer of state supported management of news. At times of crisis, it consciously developed an interpretation of London both as a geographical entity and as a collective society with mutually binding obligations. Both contemporary and modern observations of the press during the Cromwellian period have ignored the significance of this development which, in itself, was a

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[112] Nigel Smith, *Literature in Revolutionary England 1640-1661* (London, 1994), p.18, 'use of the newsbook for the purpose of governmental propaganda was a feature of the 1650s.'

[113] Joseph Frank, *Cromwell's Press Agent: A Critical Biography of Marchamont Nedham, 1620-1678.* (Lanham, 1980), pp. 104-5. See also p.58, 'the news in *Politicus* was fuller and more reliable than that of any other newspaper.

[114] Joad Raymond, 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century', p.125.

response also to a need to give meaning and identity to an expanding metropolis with an ever more diverse and pluralist civil society.[115]

In the presentation of news, *Mercurius Politicus* never gave the impression that its story was directly lifted from official or semi-official briefing and, indeed, Nedham was not entirely dependent on official contacts for material.[116] However, as the 1650s progressed, there were a number of factors which point very strongly to a greater involvement of official sources in the management of news presentation in the official newsbooks. Firstly, there was the progressive censorship legislation. By the middle of the decade there was a virtual monopoly of news in the hands of Nedham. This was the desire of the regime to ensure that only its version of news was made publicly available; 'in October 1655, Cromwell ordered that the licensing laws should become more thoroughly applied.'[117] A second factor was the repeat London focus for news as a result of various plots over the decade. Increasingly, the newsbook developed story lines which might evolve over a number of editions. These followed the sequence of events from searches for conspirators, arrests, the trial and evidence. In large measure, details for these were dependent on official collaboration either formalised or through established contacts. Finally, the manner in which stories of plots were being presented for public view strongly indicates the source as official. This was done by the more regular citation of location for stories such as Westminster, the High Court or Whitehall. This represented a significant shift away from presenting domestic news in calendar form as was the case 1650-1651, for example. Therefore, far from having 'grown

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[115] A way in which *Mercurius Politicus* could, of course, create a sense of a wider civic community was through advertising. See Joseph Frank, *Cromwell's Press Agent,* p.105. He concluded that 'by the mid-decade advertising revenue had become a staple source of income for the newsbook. The weekly circulation was small at around a thousand a week, but its regularity would assist in the creation of a regular readership and this is certainly what the newsbook expected as it referred its readers back to previous editions'.

[116] Ibid., p.58 '[Nedham] was able to count on the services of two correspondents in Scotland. He had sometimes three knowledgeable men in Paris who kept him *au courant* on European news and usually a regular correspondent at The Hague.

[117] Joad Raymond ed., *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Early Modern England* (Moreton-on-the Marsh, Glos., 1993), p.236.

dull of late', throughout the decade, *Mercurius Politicus* was innovative in the development of journalism.[118]

3. <u>The case study of the Gerard Plot in May 1654</u>

On 25th May 1654, *Mercurius Politicus* alerted its readers to the reason for at the sudden arrests in the Capital of which they must have been aware. This was the Gerard Plot which was to assassinate Cromwell and then seize control of both Westminster and the City.[119] Influence of official circles becomes apparent in the presenting of the story under the heading 'Whitehall, May 20th.' Readers were informed of the broad reasons for the recent arrests involving a plot; portrayed as an attempt at 'a villainous assassination to have turned the state into blood and confusion.' The names of those arrested were also revealed.[120] News stories, could of course, be leaked from a range of sources all of which may be loosely termed official. Therefore, it was possible that the initial reports of the Gerard Plot came through a more informal contact with an insider source. Whatever, the case, it is undeniable that some form of official contact played a role. A clear indication of this was the ability of the newsbook to list the names of those recently arrested and their backgrounds, details of which would have been taken under official interrogation.[121] That the government was seeking to influence the newsbook is illustrated by the inclusion in clear, as opposed to Gothic type, of a proclamation from the Lord Protector informing citizens of the searches being undertaken throughout London for suspects. The proclamation also required householders to provide 'a

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[118] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, p.115. Peacey was quoting a contemporary observation made by John Fitz James.

[119] David Underdown, *Royalist Conspiracy in England 1649-1660*, pp. 100-102. As to the significance of the plot, the 2nd Gerard Plot, He wrote that it 'was much more serious'. There is no consensus on the numbers involved in what would have been a coup at the heart of the institutions of State. On p.101, Underdown, disputes the figure of 500 asserted by the Venetian ambassador. However, far higher figures than this were suggested. See, John Birch ed., *Thurloe State Papers, Volume 2, 1653-1654*, pp.341-342. Evidence from the examination of Charles Gerard 2/6/1654 suggested at least 900 were involved.

[120] *Mercurius Politicus*, 18/5/1654-25/5/1654 issue 206, p.3508, 'Whitehall May 20th.'

[121] Gilbert Gerard, John Gerard (brother), Humphrey Bagaley, Sidney Fotherby, John Jones (Apothecary) Thomas Tudor. Thomas Tudor was a surgeon, see Thurloe State Papers, Volume 2 1653-1654, p.353; 'The Examination of John Gerard taken the fifth day of June 1654.'

list of the names of such persons as do now or did lodge in their respective houses on Friday night last'[122] From the penultimate edition of *Mercurius Politicus* in May, on all but two occasions, official accreditation was given to reports of the Gerard conspiracy. The most common location whence the news came was given as Whitehall, but Parliament (Westminster) and also the High Court were also given as sources for the news.[123] On at least two occasions, reports relating to the conspiracy in London were incorporated into other reports. The correspondent from Rotterdam reporting on news and views from the Continent on June 19th, for example, ended his despatch with a reference to the searches for suspects in London; '[a]nd as for the conspiracy against the Lord Protector, men do here question there was any such thing in reality intended against him'.[124] The newsbook certainly saw an opportunity in exploiting its official contact in order to persuade readers to purchase the next weekly instalment, 'a conspiracy undertaken by diverse persons concerning which more hereafter.'[125]

The Gerard Plot as an example of news management in London

The manner in which *Mercurius Politicus* reported on the Gerard Plot is revealing of the symbiotic relationship which had been developed linking the newsbook so very closely to the Protectorate. The newsbook as it was licenced to print news was expected to do so in a manner which supported the wider aims of the State. The authorities were convinced of the reality of a conspiracy in the Capital, aided and abetted from abroad; 'divers of them have

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[122] *Mercurius Politicus*, 18/5/1654-25/5/1654 issue 206, pp. 3507-3508, 'By the Lord Protector.'
[123] Whitehall is given as source of news on following editions: 18/5/1654-25/5/1654 Issue 206, p.3508 ; 25/5/1654-1/6/1654 issue 207, p.3524; 15/6/1654-22/6/1654 issue 210, p.3572 ; 22/6/6/1654-29/6/1654 issue 211, pp. 3587-3588; 6/7/1654-13/7/1654 issue 213, pp. 3614-3611. Westminster is given as the location on 29/6/1654-6/7/1654 issue 212, pp. 3599-3602. The High Court of Justice is given as location 6/7/1654-13/7/1654, pp. 3614-3615.
[124] *Mercurius Politicus*, 15/6/1654-22/6/1654 issue 210, p.3565, 'From Rotterdam June 19th '. See also 22/6/1654-29/6/1654 issue 211, pp. 3587-3588, 'Whitehall June 27th.' See also 8/6/1654-15/6/1654 issue 209. On the last page (no page numbers, 'From Sterling June 5'. There followed a lengthy report on the searches being conducted across London.
[125] *Mercurius Politicus*, 18/5/1654-25/5/1654 issue 206, p.3508, 'Whitehall May 20th. '

lately repaired to London as well from beyond the seas as from several parts of the Commonwealth.'[126] The speed at which the searches by the parish constables was to be conducted 'forty eight hours' and the restrictions imposed on the freedom of movement; 'no person or persons whatsoever lodging within the lines of communication to change his or their several lodgings or depart out of the said lines of communication for ten days', was effectively a security lock down in the Capital.[127] The searches and arrests which were being made across London necessarily disrupted the normal functioning of civil society. The journalistic style of *Mercurius Politicus* has been compared to that of a modern tabloid; 'in some ways *Politicus* was the forerunner of the best tabloid journalism of today.'[128] Indeed, the newsbook did sensationalise the story, between the first mention of a security sweep in the Capital in issue number 206 (18-25th May 1654) and up until issue 210 (15-22nd June 1654) it kept readers in a state of anticipation on the progress of the investigation as more people became implicated.[129] Such a technique may have been motivated to boost sales,[130] but that is not a sufficient explanation. Indeed, for *Mercurius Politicus* London only became a news item at times of acute crisis in the Capital. At such points, it reflected the enhanced state of nervousness felt by the Interregnum state at its hold over power. At such times, therefore, the newsbook acted as a vital conduit linking the authorities and the citizenry. In publicising the Ordinance of May 23rd, it served to disseminate details of legislation affecting the Metropolis but it also explained and clarified the motivations behind state policy. Over

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[126] CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 71, May 1654, May 23rd, pp. 184-185. See also *Mercurius Politicus,* 18/5/1654-25/5/1654 issue 206, pp. 3507-3508;'By The Lord Protector'.
[127] By the Lord Protector quoted in *Mercurius Politicus* 18/5/1654-25/5/1654 issue 206.
[128] Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars*, p.419.
[129] As examples on how *Mercurius Politicus* attempted to keep the story going across a number of weeks; 18/5/1654-25/5/1654 issue 206, p.1654 'Discovery was made of a barbarous conspiracy undertaken by divers persons which more hereafter '; 25/5/1654-1/6/1654 issue 207, p.3524 'divers persons have been apprehended and examined since my last'; 1/6/1654-8/6/1654 issue 208, p.3538 'a full account will be given in due time '; 8/6/1654-15/6/1654 issue 209, 'Divers persons have been committed to The Tower and St James and more are to follow whose names you are referred to another time (no page numbers in the issue). See also 15/6/1654-22/6/1654 issue 210, p.3572; names of prisoners committed to the Tower were given.
[130] J Frank, *Cromwell's Press Agent,* p.105.

the course of five weeks from the middle of May until June 1654, it maintained a regular

commentary informing readers of the searches and arrests being carried out across London.

This is illustrated in the table below:

18/5/1654-25/5/1654	Discovery was made of a barbarous conspiracy undertaken by divers persons which more hereafter '
25/5/1654-1/6/1654	divers persons have been apprehended and examined since my last'
1/6/1654-8/6/1654	a full account will be given in due time ';
8/6/1654-15/6/1654	'Divers persons have been committed to The Tower and St James and more are to follow whose names you are referred to another time' and 'in due time you will have particulars'
15/6/1654-22/6/1654	Names of prisoners committed to the Tower for High Treason: Earl of Oxford, Mr Phil. Porter, Somerset Fox, one Fox, his brother, Major Bailey, Wentworth, formerly believed chamber man to Charles Stuart, 'Further enquiries are still being made into the late desperate plot.'

The conspirators had scattered print across London in in the form of black propaganda to

spread dissent:

> And they had the Art to endeavour to make the Lord Protector odious to the people in turning the design against him by a libel which was scattered up and down London that his Highness and the army had a design to massacre all but their friends in all parts of England.[131]

What was significant is that the conspirators believed that the propaganda would strike a

chord and therefore were confident on being able to exploit widespread discontent in the

Capital in order to stage a coup d'état.   Central to the manner in which the newsbook

presented the scheme was the supposition of a wider threat the plotters posed to civil society

beyond the overthrow of the Protectorate.   It also drew upon popular prejudice held against

foreigners and, of course, Catholics. In the process of linking these threats, it was implicitly

upholding the status quo upon which stable civil society depended. In suggesting to its

readers that the plotters had a broader and more sinister plan beyond removing the current

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[131] *Mercurius Politicus*, 29/6/1654-6/7/1654 issue 212, 'Westminster Friday 30th June', pp.3601-3602. Furthermore, 'this libel was written by Mr Henshaw which he got printed by one at Newgate Market and Mr Vowell had one of them.'

leadership, *Mercurius Politicus,* focused on the role which The Tower of London was to have played. Once in rebel hands, it would have enabled them to exert control across the Capital and inaugurate a purge of those whom they classified as hostile to their cause. The rebels hoped that through 'possessing of the Tower of London they might without control have executed their revenge and lust upon whom they pleased in all the city.'[132] Indeed, as reported in the newsbook, the government had responded by reinforcing the garrison at The Tower to 1200 men.[133]

In its portrayal of the conspiracy, *Mercurius Politicus s*tressed a connection with the exiled Stuart Court in France and with Scotland. In this, it reflected the concerns of the regime about the influence from abroad on conspiracy hatched in London. By drawing the attention of its readers to this, it was attempting to undermine popular sympathy for a plot which was part of a foreign plan to wreak havoc and chaos in the Capital. Indeed, the Gerard Plot envisaged the ambush and assassination of Cromwell en route to Hampton Court. The tactics were dismissed as cowardly and *Mercurius Politicus* saw an opportunity to stress the hand of malevolent foreign influence behind the conspiracy:

> their intent was by villainous assassination to have turned the state into blood and
> confusion. A piece of treason so much more to be detested in England in regard
> to the genuine nature of the English doth usually abhor such unmanly practices so
> that they have rarely been heard among us.[134]

At the trial which took place at the end of June and beginning of July, the alleged involvement of the exiled Stuart Cause and also of the Scots suggested to the reader the treachery of the conspirators who were willing to treat with England's old enemies.

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[132] *Mercurius Polticus*, 8/6/1654-15/6/1654 issue 207,' From Sterling June 5th '(no page number).
[133] Mercurius Politicus, 1/6/1654-8/6/1654 issue 208, 'Whitehall June 6th,' p.3540.
[134] *Mercurius Politicus*, 18/5/1654-25/5/1654 issue 206, 'Whitehall May 20th,' p.3508.

According to the prosecution, Prince Rupert 'had engaged to send ten thousand Scots, English and French to land in Sussex and other places.'[135] In stoking up anti-foreign sentiment, of course, *Mercurius Politicus* was able to draw on memory of recent events, the searches in the Capital which focused on newcomers.[136] By stoking populist anti-Catholicism, the newsbook also aimed to undermine the popular credibility of the plotters. Their involvement in the plot was alleged to be significant and involved inciting mutiny: Catholics were alleged to have 'had a great hand in the design'. Two soldiers, both of whom were Catholics, were brought into the conspiracy.[137]

Alleged Catholic extremism was later taken up in the reporting of the last speech of Peter Vowell before the gallows at Tyburn; 'Vowell spoke little of the crime but the main of his discourse was to proclaim how great a zelot he was to the old way of religion.'[138]

The manner in which the newsbook allocated column space also suggested a deliberate policy of propaganda to destroy the credibility of the accused. In the coverage of the first week of the trial, it devoted a total of four of the seventeen pages, or 20% of the total of the issue, to the case for the prosecution, detailing the evidence being brought against the defendants.[139] In contrast, when the case for the defence was reported the following week, an equivalent of about 78% of a page of text was given over to the trial of which barely 3% was on the

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[135] *Mercurius Politicus*, 29/6/1654-6/7/1654 issue 212, 'Westminster Friday 30th June,' pp. 3600-3602.
[136] See also BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 71, May 23rd 1654, pp. 184, 'Council of State to governor of Port of Dover', 'You are to suffer no person to pass your port or its precincts for 14 days for any part beyond seas….You are also to stay all persons coming from beyond seas within that time…'
[137] *Mercurius Politicus*, 29/6/1654-6/7/1654 issue 212, p. 3601.
[138] *Mercurius Politicus*, 6/7/1654-13/7/1654 issue 213, 'Whitehall July 10th,' pp. 3618-3619. The defiance was unusual. Last speeches of the condemned were expected to be contrite. See James Sharpe, 'Last Dying Speeches: religion and Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth Century England' in *Past and Present*, number 107, 1985, pp.144-167; 'Defiance at the gallows was unlikely to be permitted and even less reported.' (p.164).
[139] *Mercurius Politicus*, 29/6/1654-6/7/1654 issue 212, 'Westminster Friday June 30th,' pp. 3599-3602.

defence; 'Mr Gerard and Mr Vowell spoke much to excuse themselves not withstanding what had been proved against them.'[140]

4. <u>News management of the Sindercombe Plot January-February 1657</u>

During the mid-1650s, Cromwellian state control over the press reached its apogee; at the end of September 1655, stringent new restrictions were imposed:

> Order was given to silence the many pamphlets that have hitherto presumed to have come abroad in pursuance of the following order which cannot but be acknowledged most necessary because of the many falsehoods and great confusions heretofore hapnd in matters of intelligence and to the prejudice to the truth the abuse of the people and dishonour of the nation.[141]

Crucially, the new measures had given the State and, more directly, John Thurloe, the Secretary of State, far greater control over public access to news and of who should be allowed to disseminate news about public affairs: 'Ordered by the Lord Protector and Council that no person whatsoever do presume to publish in print any matter of public news, or intelligence without leave or approbation by the Secretary of State.[142] The new measures were a response to the failure of previous legislation to contain the threat seditious print posed to both the authority and integrity of the Interregnum regimes. Even as late as 1655, 'it was clear that London stationers were supplying hawkers with new kinds of material.'[143]

Scholars have recognised the advantageous position Nedham had; already assured access to a regular supply of news from official sources, '*Politicus* had a monopoly (control of the commercial market in news) between October 1655 and April 1659.'[144] The paper was not

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[140] *Mercurius Politicus,* 6/7/1654-13/7/1654 issue 213, pp. 3612-3613.

[141] *Mercurius Politicus,* 27/9/1655-4/10/1655 issue 277,'Whitehall September 28th,' pp.5659-5670.

[142] *The Publick Intelligencer*, 1/10/1655-8/10/1655 issue 1.

[143] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, p.66.

[144] Joad Raymond, The *Invention of the Newspaper*, p.14. . See also Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, p.120. He made the following observation, '[s]crutiny of Nedham's work became particularly obvious when he was granted a journalistic monopoly in 1655 on print.'

the only supply of regular weekly news to the metropolitan market; at the beginning of October 1655 a new journal began circulation, *The Publick Intelligencer,* issued on Mondays whereas *Mercurius Politicus* came out on Thursday. However, this was not competition as both journals were controlled by Nedham; *The Publick Intelligencer* 'duplicated about half of the contents [of *Mercurius Politicus*]'.[145] It tended to follow the lead set by *Mercurirus Politicus*, where the story line first was printed.[146] Among scholars, there has been a tendency to ignore the impact this had on both the development of the style of news reporting and also on the management of news in London in the later Protectorate. Rather, the assertion has been that that there was a decline in the quality of news available from officially sanctioned sources. It has been observed, for example, that during the Protectorate contemporaries were 'quick to comment on the perceived decline in the quality of available news.'[147] There has been recognition, however, of the willingness of John Thurloe, to exploit the even closer relationship he now had with Nedham, to secure the publication of his version of events:

> It seems that Thurloe supplied at least some of the paper's intelligence. During the investigation of a conspiracy against the Cromwellian regime in February 1657 for example, Thurloe's account of the plot was sent not merely to Parliament but also to *Politicus*.[148]

Nevertheless, there has been a neglect to see how tighter official control over what was published enabled the State to manipulate news in an attempt to manage public opinion. This directly reflected a persistent concern at the threat of unrest in the Capital. Indeed, there

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[145] Joad Raymond, pp.109-140, 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century.'

[146] As examples of identical news reporting see 'A Brief Relation' in *Mercurius Politicus* 15/1/1657-22/1/1657, issue 345, pp.7541-7543 reprinted in *The Publick Intelligencer*, 19/1/ 1/1657-26/1/1657 issue 67, pp. 1136-1138, 'Some heads of the speech spoken by Mr Speaker to his Highness' in *Mercurius Politicus* 22/1/1657-29/1/1657 issue 346 pp. 7588-7600 reprinted in *The Publick Intelligencer* 26/1/1657-31/1/1657 issue 68, pp. 1155/1156   and 'A Relation of the plot I formerly gave you but not then all the particulars' in *Mercurius Politicus* 29/1/1657-2/2/1657 issue 347, pp. 7575-7576 reprinted in *The Publick Intelligencer* 2/2/1657-9/2/1657 issue 69, pp.1169-1170.

[147] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution,* p.115. See also Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Martlesham, Suffolk, 2007), p.120. McElligott observed changes in patterns of behaviour as 'awareness gradually developed that authors and journalists were controlled by political authority.'

[148] Jason Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers,* p.228.

remained a considerable military presence within the Metropolis.[149] Furthermore, in fear that

the disaffected might become armed or in positions of authority in the militia, the government

was careful to ensure that the loyalty of those in command be assured.[150]

Interregnum news management in the Capital reaches its apogee

The Sindercombe Plot of early in January 1657 was made public following discovery by

agents of the Cromwellian state. It was uncovered at a time when the Cromwellian regime

was especially nervous over the prospect of internal malevolent forces working in concert

with the Protectorate's enemies abroad; '[t]he common enemie is certeinly stirring and that

very vigorously. They threaten an invasion some tyme in March, and have directed their

partye here to prepare for it.'[151] For London, this conspiracy was significant for a number of

reasons. Firstly, it was conspiracy in the heart of the Capital aimed at the assassination of the

Lord Protector. A second reason was the wider threat to metropolitan society. This was later

deliberately ratcheted up by the State into a scheme involving the exiled Stuart Court in

alliance with Spain, with whom England had been at war since 1654. Thirdly, at a time when

the government was facing growing internal discontent over rising levels of taxation, it had

also to contend with the prospect of foreign invasion.[152] Fear of attack from abroad, it was

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[149] CSPD; Interregnum, Volume 95, March 1655, p.66 Five infantry and one cavalry regiment was stationed in and around the Capital. On March 9th, the militia commissioners for London were instructed to raise three regiments of foot and one of horse 'as necessary for the safety of the City.'

[150] *Mercurius Politicus,* 15/2/1655-22/2/1655, Issue 245, 'Whitehall February 16th,' p.5147, 'persons nominated by his Highness to be a committee of the militia of the City of London.' See also, 22/3/1655-29/3/1655, issue 250, p.5218. On agreeing to a request by the Militia Committee for the refounding of the Honourable Artillery Company, the proviso was made 'none should be taken in but such as are well known to be well affected to his highness and the present government.'

[151] *The State Papers of John Thurloe, Volume 6, 1657-1658*, p.53.

[152] Barry Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate*, p.95 'First and foremost' amongst the problems faced by Cromwell in the latter part of his Protectorate was 'escalating debts incurred by the regime's costly war against Spain and by the maintenance of large standing armies throughout the British Isles.' See also Christopher Durston, 'The Fall of Cromwell's Major Generals,' *The English Historical Review*, Volume 113, Number 450, February 1998, pp.18-37. He observed that the stability of Cromwell's regime was undermined by persistent and serious financial crisis (p.19).

hoped, would limit objections to further heavy taxation for the maintenance of what was becoming a permanent and costly military establishment.

The official newsbook coverage of the Sindercombe Plot revealed important changes of presentation. Compared with the reporting of the Gerard Plot, news was presented in a clearer and outwardly more informative manner. Therefore, the official London newsbooks had developed markedly over the course of the decade. As a result, they were better able to aid and abet the wider policy aims of the State. Given their monopolistic control over the printed news trade, their function was now on investigative journalism. Effectively, agents of the State, their main purpose now was to promote the survival of the Protectorate against all threats both domestic and foreign. Nevertheless, in the developing of a plainer written style and of a format of presentation which made news more accessible to the reader, these journals were developing a style of prose which much later was to become the foundations of what later would become investigative journalism in a pluralist media.

The importance of the Sindercombe Plot in the development of the official London newsbooks can be viewed in the following themes; changes in news management, the presentation of the threat to the Capital, the link with wider state policy (war and taxation) and changes in style and format.

The way in which news of the conspiracy was relayed to the public demonstrated the approach which the Cromwellian authorities were now taking towards a more formalised and systematic news management. Historians have recognised that the authorities used the press to pursue particular story lines in order to influence public perception of events. However, what has been neglected is how this was done to ensure a presentation of news favourable to the establishment view and in a way conducive to the broader aims of state policy.[153] In fact,

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[153] Jason Peacey, *Politicians and pamphleteers*, p.228.

a close review of the manner in which the official newsbooks developed the story of the Sindercombe Plot demonstrates the way in which official sources were manipulating the press for specific purposes of the State. Over the course of mid-January through to early February 1657, there was clear evidence of official influence in the reporting of the story in the London newsbooks. Indeed, the newsbooks were being made aware of what officials knew of the scheme much earlier than previously assumed by scholars.[154] News of the conspiracy was reported first in *Mercurius Politicus* in the third week of January; 'A brief Relation of the late dangerous plot and traitorous design for the destruction of his Highness' person.'[155] On the 19th, John Thurloe had presented to Parliament details of the conspiracy.[156] Given the restrictions imposed on printing of public news since September 1655, the newsbook could only print with official sanction. Indeed, the government intending that its version of events be made widely publicised, appointed 20th February as a day of thanksgiving in England, Scotland and Ireland, requiring 'ministers to read the narrative to the congregations and the significance to the Protector and the country.'[157] What is significant is, that in advance of this, the official newsbooks had the opportunity first to publicise the story to a London audience. In fact, both London newsbooks promoted the official version of events several weeks before a day of thanksgiving when the official narrative was intended to be read out in churches. [158] On February 3rd, *Mercurius Politicus*

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[154] Ibid. He also asserted that John Thurloe passed his account of the plot simultaneously to Parliament and *Mercurius Politicus* in early February 1657.

[155] *Mercurius Politicus*, 15/1/1657-22/2/1657 issue 345, pp. 7541-7543.

[156] Ibid., p.7543, 'Westminster January 19th,' 'there was presented to the House by Mr Secretary a relation of the wicked design to take away the Lord Protector's life and to fire Whitehall together with the examinations of certain persons thereupon which were read out.'

[157] BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 153, February 1657, February 2nd , pp. 258-259; Council of State ordered the 'sending of the declaration of thanksgiving through the three nations'.

[158] The Sindercombe Plot was first reported in *The Publick Intelligencer*, 19/1/1657-26/2/1657 issue 67, pp. 1136-1138.

reported on the latest of the official investigation into the London plot which was presented that day to Parliament.[159].

The presentation of the Sindercombe Plot as a threat to the Capital.

The threat to the Capital was specific and was based on the threat to State institutions, the existence of a fifth column in London and the misappropriation of London resources for malevolent ends.   All of these were deliberately and meticulously built up by the official press in the pursuit of broader policy aims of the State

1. The threat to the State institutions

Central to the Sindercome Plot was assassination; the conspirators had, allegedly, devised a variety of scenarios involving locations in the Capital and wider metropolis. One of the scenarios involved the use of an explosive device to carry out the act of assassination in the chapel at Whitehall. The significance of this was physical destruction within a core institution of the State. Not only was this of symbolic importance as an assault of a pillar of central government but the very act of committing the act in a chapel was, in itself, sacrilegious and alluded to the fanatical nature of the conspiracy:

> a basket filled with a strange composition of combustible stuff and two lighted matches aptly placed which matches had been rub'd on with gunpowder on purpose to keep the already burning and by the length thus it was conceived they will have given fire to the basket about 'O clock in the morning.[160]

The fanaticism of the conspirators was also inferred in the official press by the methods they were prepared use. One proposal included the assassination of Cromwell in public between

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[159] *Mercurius Politicus*, 29th January- 4th February 1657 issue 347, 'Westminster February 2nd,' pp. 7575-7576. See also *The Publick Intelligencer*, issue 69, 'Whitehall February 2nd, 'pp. 1169-1170.
[160] *Mercurius Politicus*, 15/1/1657-22/2/1657 issue 345, 'A Brief Relation of the Dangerous Plot and Traitorous Design for the Destruction of His Highness.', pp. 7541-7543.

St Margaret's Church (Westminster) and Parliament, for which they had secured specialist weaponry; 'pistols which had a strange sort of long range bullets in the nature of slugs.'[161]

2. The London based fifth column

The official press played up the seriousness of a London based rebellious fifth column within the military. Importantly, this was a threat which lay at the heart of the State, involving members of the Protector's own household. Only they could provide the conspirators with vital details of his daily routine on which the success of the plotters depended; 'some person near his Highness to be a partaker of the design and acquaint them in what part of the coach his Highness might sit going to Hampton Court so they might be sure not to misse him.'[162]

3. The misappropriation of London's resources for malevolent ends

Finally, the newsbooks developed the link to London by detailing the various locations selected by the conspirators whence they might carry out the act of assassination, Hammersmith, Hyde Park, between Westminster Abbey and Parliament and Whitehall Palace. The wider involvement and, indeed, importance of London to the scheme was in the availability of supposedly suitable locations from which the scheme could take place but also in the provision of resources vital to the success of the conspiracy; the plotters 'bought up divers of the fleetest horses in London.'[163] As will be shown, the manufacturing of the wider threat towards London was part of a wider aim of state policy. This was linked to war and taxation; both of these themes were developed in the official newsbooks for their direct relevance to London.

The Wider aims of state (war and taxation)

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[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.

1. <u>Threat from abroad.</u>

In its reporting of both the Gerard Plot in 1654 and the Sindercombe Plot of January 1657, the official press stressed the connection between a conspiracy in London and support from abroad. However, the summer of 1654 was a time of peace, whereas in 1657 England was at war with Spain. In 1657, the government took the threat of foreign invasion very seriously:

> we hear that the Cavalier and Popish party are shortly intending a new insurrection and that the late King's son in conjunction with the Spanish intend an invasion with an army from Flanders where he now is. For safety of this nation the forces must be put into a posture to prevent and repel these intentions. You are therefore to give notice to all the officers and soldiers of your troop to provide themselves with horses and arms to be prepared, on the first notice of danger, to come to a rendezvous.[164]

The connection between the plotters and circles in foreign courts hostile to the Protectorate was played out in the press; 'it is to be observed how restless the enemies are on the other side of the water to disturb the peace of this nation.' [165] In the official newsbooks, the influence of the exiled Stuart Court was assumed; 'it seems that Charles Stuart thinks his debauched and ranting remnants will hardly be able to affect anything upon England as long as his Highness is alive.'[166]

A connection was made more directly with Spain, with whom the Protectorate was at war. Readers were informed that the foreign correspondents with whom the plotters were in contact were influential and included Don Alonso, the former Spanish ambassador.[167] The suggestion that the conspiracy was being funded from foreign governments was alluded to in

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[164] BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 153, February 1657, p.287, 'February 19, Whitehall', The Lord Protector to the officers of Militia. Also the officers were ordered to look out for signs of conspiracy e.g. if persons known to be disaffected towards the regime started to keep more horses than usual. See also p.287, February 19/29, Secretary Thurloe to Ambrose Lockhart; 'There is no alteration of affairs here, we are alarmed by the malignant party and are preparing against them all we can.'
[165] *Mercurius Politicus* 15/1/1657-22/1/1657 issue 345, pp. 7541-7543 and *The Publick Intelligencer* 19/1/1657-26/1/1657, pp.1136-1138.
[166] *Mercurius Politicus,* 29/1/1657-4/2/1657 issue 347, pp. 7561-7562,' From Edenburg, December 27th. '
[167] *Mercurius Politicus* 15/1/1657-22/1/1657 issue 345, pp. 7541-7543 and *The Publick Intelligencer*, 19/1/1657-26/1/1657 issue 67, pp. 1136-1138.

the large sum of money which was offered to one of Cromwell's lifeguards (Toop) to

provide information as to Cromwell's daily routine. The sum was huge; the £1500 bribe was

almost equivalent to the monthly tax assessment charged to the City of Westminster and 38%

of that charged for the City of London in June 1657.[168] The evidence would suggest such an

inducement could only come from a foreign government which harboured malevolent designs

towards England.[169] The Spanish connection was ratcheted up in early February, with further

intelligence supplied both to the official newsbooks and to Parliament by John Thurloe.

According to the source being reproduced in *Mercurius Politicus*, an invasion force 'were

waited in ships hired at the charge of Spain'. [170]

The building up of a London based plot encouraged from overseas and linked both to the

exiled Stuart court gave it a degree of importance above previous conspiracies because of the

more direct connection it was held to have with Spanish invasion plans.   It is the assertion

here, that the management of news was probably motivated by wider government policy. It

is the assertion here that the State encouraged the official press to impress readers of the

seriousness of the conspiracy because of its relevance to London. The uncovering of the

conspiracy 'the more dangerous because [it was] less subject to discovery,' was a propaganda

coup for the State in its ability to play up its network of security within the Metropolis.[171]

There was even the implication of the plan being infiltrated by Thurloe's agents. Initially,

Mercurius Politicus reported that the discovery was due to conspirators being caught placing

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[168] The bribe is quoted in *Mercurius Politicus,* 15/1/1657-22/2/1657issue 345 and *The Publick Intelligencer,* 19/1/1657-26/1/1657 issue 67 in 'A Brief Relation, see also C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum,* Volume II, p. 1058.

[169] See also *Mercurius Politicus*, 14/1/1658-21/1/1658 issue 399, pp. 251-255, 'A Narrative touching Edward Sexby, who lately dyed a prisoner in the Tower.' In an alleged suicide note, Sexby confessed to have 'received a large sum of money from the Spaniard to make what confusion I could in England, by endeavouring the killing of the Lord Protector.'

[170] *The Publick Intelligencer* 2/2/1657-9/2/1657 issue 69, 'Westminster Tuesday February 3rd 'pp. 1169-1170 and *Mercurius Politicus* 29/1/1657-4/2/1657 issue 347, pp. 7575-7576. See also BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 153, February 1657, pp. 258-9, February 2nd.

[171] *Mercurius Politicus*, 22/1/1657-29/1/1657 issue 346, pp. 7558-7650, 'Some Heads of the Speech spoken by the Speaker to his Highness,' reprinted in *The Publick Intelligencer* 26/1/1657-31/1/1657 issue 68, pp.1155-1156.

the bomb in Whitehall Chapel and the confession of one of the principal actors a Cecil who 'cast himself upon the good grace and mercy of his Highness.'[172] However, the role of a double agent was more clearly alluded to in a later report; 'one of the plotters being his heart wrought upon came and discovered the matter to his Highness.'[173] In its reporting both on the presentation of the evidence first to Parliament and then at the trial of Miles Sindercombe, *Mercurius Politicus* gave the strong impression of the professionalism of the security network in the capital. This was shown in the detailed analysis by Thurloe's agents of the timed explosive device discovered in the chapel; '[t]he basket being removed and trial made of some of the ingredients. It appeared to be most active in fanning off.'[174] Reference was also made to the skill of the interrogation; 'many particulars of discourse' by which '[t]hese things are made manifest.'[175]

The alleged ability of the Cromwellian security services to infiltrate and then break up a London based plot which had been aided and abetted from abroad appeared to enhance the impression of a close grip by the authorities over the Capital. News of the Sindercome Plot circulated abroad, the suppression of which might demonstrate to others the efficiency of the Protectorate's Intelligence network; Thurloe's agent in Hamburg wrote about the effect abroad of the events in London. Importantly, he inferred that the reports printed in the official press were, indeed, circulated abroad, 'I trust soe much is known as will be a means effectually to disappoint them.[176]

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[172] *Mercurius Politicus*, 15/1/1657- 22/1/1657 issue 345, 'A Brief Relation', pp. 7541-7543 reprinted in The *Publick Intelligencer* 19/1/1657-26/1/1657 issue 67, pp. 1136-1138.

[173] *Mercurius Politicus*, 29/1/1657-4/2/1657 issue 347, pp. 7575-76

[174] *Mercurius Polticus* 15/1/1657-22/1/1657 issue 345, pp. 7541-7543. See also the investigation of the firearms. The following observation was made about the bullets; they were 'designed on purpose to render and tear.'

[175] *Mercurius Politicus*, 22/1/1657-29/1/1657 issue 346.

[176] *The State papers of John Thurloe,* Volume 6, *1657-1658*, p.53. 'Mr Bradshaw, resident at Hamburg to Secretary Thurloe, 3 March 1657.' In the letter, he was referring to the suicide note of Sindercombe written in the Tower of London. In this, Sindercombe confessed to the plot and the note was reprinted in the official press. See also notes 194 and 195 below. See also *Mercurius Politicus*, 5/2/1657-12/3/1657 issue 348, pp.

2. <u>The connection with taxation in London</u>

The breaking of the story of the Sindercombe Plot coincided with debates in Parliament over legislation to raise taxation for the ongoing war with Spain, the foreign power alleged to be behind the enterprise.   The coincidence was fortunate given the considerable tax burden imposed under the Protectorate; 'government revenue increased by over 120 percent between the 1630s and the 1650s.'[177] In London, the story of the conspiracy was being publicised in the official newsbooks as Parliament debated how the enormous sum of £400 000 was to be raised.[178]   The sum deemed necessary for continuing the prosecution of the war with Spain was a very significant additional burden.[179] To put it into perspective, it represented double the annual income allocated to Cromwell in 1653 'for defraying the expenses of government.'[180]   That Thurloe chose to present to Parliament new evidence concerning the Sindercombe Plot, which now gave more specific details of Spanish involvement in the conspiracy, was a deliberate act of news management. He did it with the knowledge that it would be reported on in the media. Furthermore, the official newsbooks had the monopoly over the reporting of parliamentary news and the presentation of the evidence coincided with news concerning parliamentary discussion on the means of raising the revenue for the war

7588-7601; In the evidence presented against Sindercombe, Sexby was identified by the prosecution as the man entrusted to negotiate with Spain for the sending of troops and ships from Flanders. The invasion was to occur once Cromwell had been assassinated. See also Alan Marshall in H.C.G. Matthews and Brian Harrison eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Voume 49, pp.847-849. Sexby was described as a republican who, opposing the Protectorate regime, fled England, conspired against Cromwell's government and made contacts with royalists abroad. He also conspired with the Spanish governor in Flanders and with the royal court in Spain. He wrote 'Killing Noe Murder' in which he denounced Cromwell as a tyrant. Arrested whilst trying to escape back to the Continent, he died in the Tower of London 13th January 1658. See also *Mercurius Politicus*, 29/1/1657-4/2/1657 issue 347, p.7561; 'From Edenburg, December 26' p.7561. The following warning was made, 'If Charles in the meantime or any of his dare venture over into the nation we are in a good position to receive them and he will finde but few here that will meddle in his matters.'

[177] Barry Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate*, p.165.

[178] *Mercurius Politicus*, 29/1/1657-4/2/1657 issue 347, p.7567, 'Westminster 30th January'; 'the House resolved into a Committee of the whole House to decide on how sum could be 'speedily and effectively raised.'

[179] Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales 1658-1667* (Cambridge, 1993), p.12. Furthermore, Parliament failed to vote sufficient funds for either the Dutch War or the war against Spain. See also p.13, 'At his death, Cromwell's government was £2m in debt and had no opportunity to borrow further.'

[180] Quoted in David Smith, 'The Struggle for New Constitutional and Institutional Forms.' In John Morrill ed., *Revolution and Restoration: England in the 1650s* (London, 1991), pp. 15-34, p.21.

against Spain.[181]   Parliamentary debates on this issue had a particular relevance to London because of its share of the national wealth.[182]   Indeed, to contribute towards the raising of the revenue for the war against Spain, Parliament passed a fine, levied on properties built in the City, London and its suburbs 'not being four acres of ground thereupon.'[183] Given that the population of London had increased by a little over 58% between 1600-1650, a very substantial number of new and small residential properties would have been erected there. It is logical to assume that London's substantial contribution to this additional tax would be paid out of this levy. Indeed, there was a popular association of the property tax with military spending, it was known as 'the army tax.'[184]. At a time when there was growing concern over the rising level at what appeared to be permanent taxation for military purposes, it is clear, therefore why it was in the interest of the government to deliberately play up the threat posed to the Capital from foreign sponsored plots against the Protectorate.[185] It was seen as important that the official newsbooks stressed how these conspiracies were aimed at fomenting confusion and chaos in the Capital. The inference was that heavy taxation was necessary because of the increased threat posed by the malevolent designs of foreign powers on the safety and security of the Commonwealth and London.

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[181] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, pp.173-179.

[182] Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate*, pp.164-165; Furthermore, 'new taxes had been devised, principally monthly assessments (a land tax that set quotas to be raised county by county that took account of distribution of regional wealth in the country) and the excise tax (a purchase tax on most everyday consumables)

[183] *Mercurius Politicus* 5/2/1657-12/2/1657 issue 349, 'Westminster, 13th February.' See also C.H. Firth and R.S.Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum,* Volume II, p.1058.

[184] Hutton, *The Restoration*, P.5.

[185] There is a consensus among historians that the seventeenth century witnessed a sharp increase in military costs. See Michael Braddick, *The nerves of state: Taxation and the financing of the English State, 1558-1714* (Manchester, 1996), p.29; 'the costs of active campaigning rose dramatically in the seventeenth century.' See also James Scott Wheeler, *The Making of a Modern World Power: War and the Military Revolution in Seventeenth Century England* (Stroud, 1999), p.197. He wrote, the need for permanent high levels of taxation to meet military expenditure, 'forced the English to abandon many of their fiscal ideas and practices and to replace them with financial techniques and concepts of a particularly modern form.'

Changes in style and format

In the official newsbooks, the representation of details about the Sindercombe Plot and its aftermath represented a significant evolution in style of presentation and reporting. Indeed, there was a clear contrast with the way news about the Gerard conspiracy had been reported two years previously. Then, the trial was introduced without any heading. No attempt was made to draw the attention of the reader to the significance of the trial for a conspiracy aiming at the overthrow of the Protectorate. In the reporting of the Gerard trial there had been extensive coverage, representing about 28% of the total news coverage for issue 213. Then continuity was broken up and interspaced with foreign news.[186] In clear contrast, however, was how the official newsbooks reported on the trial of Miles Sindercombe in London. In this instance, both *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Publick Intelligencer* adopted an identical style of reporting. The text was laid out in a manner which deliberately enhanced the importance of the trial. The coverage given two years earlier by *Mercurius Politicus* to the trial and sentencing of the principal actors in the Gerard Plot was only three lines fewer than that for the Sindercombe trial (184 lines on Gerard plotters and 187 lines on Sindercombe). However, in the case of the Sindercombe trial, there was a clear attempt to ensure the reader focused on the story. As there was no interspacing with reports of other events, the magnitude of the Sindercome Plot and resulting trial could be built up through a progression of events. It started from an introductory narrative at the beginning in bold italics in large type. There was the use of subheadings to take the reader through the criminal trial proceedings from indictment, the not guilty plea, setting up of the jury, the evidence to prove the indictment and, finally, defence and sentencing. Furthermore, to aid comprehension, notes were appended in the margins; ''It was the first day of the Parliament', 'This Sindercombe had engaged to kill General Monk in Scotland and would have engaged the

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[186] *Mercurius Politicus*, 6/7/1654-13/7/1654 issue 213, pp. 3612-3615.

said Mr Cecil there also' and 'Hilton deposed fully concerning the viol case and trunk of arms.'[187] Just 60% of the coverage was on the evidence to prove the charges whereas barely 3% was allocated for the defence. The imbalance in reporting allowed for a far greater emphasis on the seriousness of this plot and thereby built up the threat posed by a foreign backed plot not only to the State but also to the security and stability of the Capital. A style of reporting which aimed to draw the reader towards the article was also a feature on other occasions in the same month. For example, on 23rd January, the Speaker of the House of Commons addressed the Lord Protector to congratulate him on the discovery of the conspiracy. Only the salient points were given and these were numbered with Arabic numerals and the reader was informed, 'he was but short because of his infirmity of body by sickness.'[188]

As the Sindercombe Plot was a dominant story line followed in the press throughout January and into February 1657, successive issues referred back to previous reports, indicating how the newsbook was now in a position to give fuller details. Through the process of deliberating cross referencing between different issues of the newsbooks, an attempt was being made to build up a regular, committed readership. In this way, therefore, the exploitation of incidents for their newsworthiness, especially to a metropolitan audience, created the opportunity for discourse among Londoners for whom both the events and locations had direct relevance. Over a period of four weeks of reporting, the audacity of the conspiracy and the technologies the conspirators intended to use had the potential to engage reader interest on focusing specifically on security in the Metropolis. As an example, in the issue in the last week of January, the following appendage to the article was added, 't]hese

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[187] *Mercurius Politicus*, 5/2/1657-12/2/1657 issue 347, pp. 7598-7600 reproduced in *The Publick Intelligencer*, 9/2/1657-16/2/1657 issue 70, pp. 1183-1187.
[188] *Mercurius Politicus*, 22/1/1657-29/1/1657 issue 346, pp. 7558-7560. The same article was reproduced in *The Publick Intelligencer* 26/1/1657-31/1/1657 issue 68, pp. 1155-1156.

are the particulars which may be added to the relations formerly put.'[189] Furthermore, the

readers in the late January edition were made more aware of the background of Sindercombe.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps the description was aimed at a character assassination. Sindercombe,

a former quartermaster in the army under the command of General Monck, was portrayed as

a deserter and agitator, cashiered for refusing to obey orders. However, what was also

important was the way in which newsbooks were able to obtain official reports from across

the country as the description of Sindercombe was the subject of a front page article from the

correspondent based in Edinburgh.[190] In order to keep the enquiry as a topic of public

discourse in London, advantage was also taken of the connection between *Mercurius*

Politicus and *The Publick Intelligencer*. As an example, when news broke of the suicide of

Sindercombe in his cell in the Tower of London, it was reported first in *The Publick*

Intelligencer, but only briefly, with the article promising readers '[a] particular account you

may expect on Thursday'. The latter comment was a clear reference to its sibling journal

which it knew would be given access to a fuller, official representation of events.[191] As

promised, the Thursday edition of *Mercurius Politicus* carried several continuous reports on

the suicide which ran over 5 pages of the edition or 40% of the total news coverage for that

week.[192]

The suicide of Sindercombe which took place in his cell in the Tower of London, on 14th

February 1657, was illustrative of the how close the relationship between press and state had

become by the latter years of Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate.[193] Sindercombe's suicide,

presumably by self-administered poison, was seen as an opportunity for the government via a

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[189] *Mercurius Politicus,* 22/1/1657-29/1/1657 issue 345, pp.7558-7560.
[190] Ibid.
[191] *The Publick Intelligencer,* 9/2/1657-16/2/1657 issue 70, p.1196.
[192] *Mercurius Politicus,* 12/2/1657-18/2/1657 issue 349, pp. 7064-7067.
[193] *The Publick Intelligencer*, 9/2/1657-16/2/1657 issue 70, p.1196, 'Sunday February 15'. The following judgment was made that the motivation behind the suicide was 'to avoid the shame and punishment appointed to him.'

variety of contacts to bring the press further into its confidence. This was achieved by allowing access to documents relevant to the enquiry as well as access to the official inquest. The state sponsored media, granted access to the official autopsy and inquest, was encouraged to report on the medical evidence, pointing to the official verdict of suicide. As an example, the report quoted directly from the recorded findings of the opening of Sindercombe's skull by eminent doctors: 'opening of the skull found the brain much inflamed, red and distended with blood swollen as full as the skull could well contain.'[194] As further evidence of the influence of official sources on the reporting of events, the suicide note of Sindercombe was reprinted in bold italics in large font making it stand out on the page.[195] Particular attention was drawn to the note as a faithful copy of the original by the title: 'This is reprinted to a title just as he wrote it himself.'[196] The suicide of what should have been a closely guarded prisoner was an embarrassment to the regime. This was because it necessarily raised questions as to the state of security in The Tower of London. Again, the State exploited the close relationship with the newsbooks by giving them access to the measures being taken to tighten up vigilance in the Tower. At the end of February and March, precise and detailed instructions were printed in the newsbooks which made public the developments in security concerning both the supervision of prisoners and of their visitors.[197] The access to a broad range of evidence was possible because of two connected factors. *Mercurius Politicus* and *The The Publick Intelligencer* had a monopoly over the news market because their dependence on official support ensured they would always be sympathetic towards the authorities.

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[194] *Mercurius Poilitucs,* 12/2/1657- 19/2/1657 issue 349, pp. 7066-7067. The report on the suicide including the printing of the suicide note was reprinted in *The Publick Intelligencer*, 16/2/1657-23/2/1657 issue 71, pp. 1200-1204.

[195] *Mercurius Politicus* 12/2/1657-19/2/1657 issue 349, pp. 7066-7067.

[196] Ibid.

[197] *Mercurius Politicus*, 26/2/1657-5/3/1657 issue 351, pp. 7636-7639 and 5/3/1657-12/3/1657 issue 352, pp. 7655-7656.

The news coverage of the suicide of Miles Sindercombe was a watershed in the development of news reporting. It represented the apogee of the symbiotic relationship which had developed between the government and the London based official newsbooks during the Cromwellian Protectorate. The significance of the Sindercombe conspiracy and its aftermath in the process of news management can be seen in the reporting of the conspiracy to seize power in the Capital in the spring of 1658. At the end of May, news broke of the discovery of an attempt to seize control of the City, a plot which Underdown dismissed as 'ridiculous'.[198] Over the course of five weeks, the story was followed in the newsbooks.[199] In terms of style and format, news coverage and, therefore, news management followed a pattern which had become established by the previous year. Therefore, a particular emphasis was on careful presentation of detailed and supposedly accurate news. This was achieved by challenging false and allegedly dangerous rumour.[200] The presence of news feed from official sources was suggested by the citing of both Whitehall and the Tower of London.[201] As in the case of the discovery of the Gerard Plot 1654 and the Sindercombe Plot 1657, there was a great deal of newsfeed on the conspirators and their plans. As before, *Mercurius Politicus* exploited its connections with official   circles by promising readers that it would be able to offer them further details in later editions.[202] In the portrayal of the reactions of Londoners, the official press followed a similar pattern in times of London based crisis, by stressing the community of interest linking the City, citizens and the State. As an example, was the

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[198] David Underdown, *Royalist Conspiracy in England*, p.227. The plan was to seize London Bridge, the City government. See also *State Papers of John Thurloe, 1658-1660*, Volume 7, pp.137-138.
[199] *Mercurius Politicus*, issues 416-420. They cover the period 13th May- 17th June 1658.
[200] *Mercurius Politicus* 13/5/1658-20/5/1658 issue 416, 'Tower of London May 19'. No page number is given. The report challenged the assertion made that Fifth Monarchists, Anabaptists and Presbyterians were behind the plot.
[201] Mercurius Politicus 13/5/1658-20/5/1658 issue 416, p.532 'Whitehall May 15' and May 16, 'Tower of London May 19'. See also 20/20/1658-27/5/1658 issue 417, p.543 'Tower of London May 22'.
[202] *Mercurius Politicus* 13/5/1658-20/5/1658 issue 416, p.532, 'Whitehall May 15.'

reporting of the review of the trained bands mobilised in response to the threat to the security of the Capital. The report emphasized the support of the citizen militia for the Protector '[the] soldiers, being no less eminent resolution then in their affections for his Highness' service, and the defence of the City whose peculiar honour it is, that she hath been a nursery famous both in Arts and arms.[203]

The process of news management followed earlier patterns. The plot was linked to malevolent interests abroad and there was a striking similarity of reporting of events in both of the official newsbooks.[204] As in 1654 and 1657, in 1658, there appeared to be a conscious attempt to emphasize the strength of the consensus connecting the metropolitan community with the State. The loyalty of the wider community in 1658, however, was stressed by the assumption that London was a community. This was achieved simply by the insertion of London as a heading for articles on its cooperation with the State against the common enemy.[205]

Concluding comments on the news management of the Sindercombe Plot

There were a number of factors which led to an especially close relationship between the press and the State in the latter years of the Protectorate regime of Oliver Cromwell. Firstly, his government could never be truly confident in its control over news management within the Capital. The opposition press may have been seriously limited in scope by legislative

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[203] Mercurius Politicus 20/5/1657-27/5/1658 issue 417, p.544, 'London May 21'.
[204] As an example, in each of the newsbooks the treason trial of the plotters in June was covered in an identical fashion. See Mercurius *Politicus* 10/6/1658-17/6/1658 issue 420 reprinted in *The Publick Intelligencer*, 7/6/1658-14/6/1658 issue 129. For alleged involvement of foreign elements see *Mercurius Politicus*, 3/6/1658-10/6/1658 issue 419, p.577, 'Tower of London June 5'. The involvement of Charles Stuart was referred to in the confessions of the prisoners.
[205] See note 201. Also see *Mercurius Politicus*, 3/6/1658-10/6/1658 issue 419, p.576 'London June 3 and 4'. 'These two days several Aldermen of the City and colonels of the Militia, by order and appointment of his Highness the Lord Protector [are] to make an enquiry into the late bloody design in which they have made a good progress.'

diktat, but, in a sprawling metropolis, the resources available to the forces of law and order were always overstretched. For some printers, therefore, it was still worth the risk of printing unlicensed material. Indeed, the regime alluded to this in the preamble to its press proclamation in 1655. As a second factor, the State was always insecure and feared the effects of unlicensed and seditious literature. In such circumstances, therefore, there was a clear motive for restricting legal access to official news to all but a few journals. Therefore, as a third factor, the government aimed to raise the reputation of these as the only available sources of reliable news within the Capital. When official sources were the surest means of obtaining a regular supply of more or less accurate news, the reputation of a newsbook depended on its ability to quote verbatim from these sources. Finally, the State enlisted the support of the journals as agents of social control. The Sindercombe Plot, a conspiracy involving assassination attempts at various London locations involving gunpowder, experimental weapons and invasion, was grist to the rumour mill which the regime so feared would get out of control.

Concluding comments on Chapter Three

In return for exclusive rights to print political news the official journals were expected to show gratitude by reporting in a way which served wholeheartedly the interests of the regime. In short, this meant willingness to propagate official spin. The persistence of plots against the regime and the repeated concerns expressed in the Council of State over the publication of unlicensed pamphlets were a consistent reminder of the impossibility of stamping out dissent and of the special problems posed by policing there. The act of suppressing the publication of all dissenting opinion within London would have been an impossible task. Therefore, it had always been official policy to control, as far as possible, the channels of communication of reliable news. A policy which achieved its most consistent level of

success in the late 1650s was borne out of the need to make Londoners believe that the authorities had the growing capacity to infiltrate and bring to justice plots either launched in the Capital or which sought to foment unrest there in support of insurrections elsewhere in England. This was achieved by the granting of privileged access to the corridors and institutions of power to those journals whose very fortunes became dependent on the survival of the Interregnum.   Playing on popular fears of men of property, the very audience to which the newsbooks were directed, the aim was further to convince that the plots being uncovered were as much a threat to property as to the State. Indeed, by making available to the newsbooks an increasing range of evidence, official sources were deliberately stoking up, even exaggerating the threat to order posed by the general anarchy which might ensue the overthrow of the government in London. Therefore, the pro regime press was encouraged to create a sense of civic consensus behind the Protectorate.

Chapter Four: The impact of political instability on news management in London during 1659-1661

The focus of this chapter is on London and London society during a period of acute political instability. This was instigated by rapid regime change between the autumn of 1659 and the late spring of 1660. The chapter will also consider the early months of the restored monarchy up to the end of January 1661. In this thesis it has been argued that over the course of the 1650s, the relationship between the Cromwellian Protectorate and the official press had developed into a form of news management. The press, in return both for access to and the right to print political news, responded by shoring up the regime. As has been shown previously, the willingness of the press to work in the interests of the regime was most visible in representation of events in London at times of crisis. This was because at such times, the authority of the government in the Capital was facing serious challenge. Indeed, such was the closeness of the relationship between Nedham and the Protectorate that Nedham was dependent on the continuation of the Cromwellian state, the maintenance of which he had become committed for pragmatic if not necessarily ideological reasons; '*Politicus* frequently expressed opinions at odds with Nedham's own politics'.[1] His dominance in the London news market came to an end with the progressive decline of political stability from the spring of 1659 and the return to London, albeit briefly, of press pluralism. A feature of this was a renewed news war as newsbooks vied with each other to claim the mouthpiece of London opinion; '*Politicus* had a monopoly between October 1655 and April 1659 when political

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[1] Joad Raymond, 'The Newspaper, Public Opinion and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century.' in Joad Raymond, ed., *New Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain* (London, 1999), pp. 109-140. (p.125)' See also, Blair Worden, *Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England: John Milton, Andrew Marvell and Marchamont Needham* (Oxford, 2009), p.30. Worden challenged the assertion that Nedham was unprincipled; 'If there is a thread of consistency in Nedham's political behaviour from the end of The Civil War to the Restoration, it lies in his fear of a Presbyterian ascendancy and his willingness to give support to the Presbyterians' enemies.'

disorder resulted in another pamphlet war.'[2] In the historiography of the Restoration, there

has been a shift in emphasis towards the importance of grass roots organisation and

developments in popular opinion as important factors behind regime change from

Commonwealth to the Restoration; 'its assertive and highly literate citizens and apprentices

were well informed about issues…and eager to make their voices heard.'[3] The role of an

independent and politically aware citizenry within the Metropolis has been seen as especially

significant in the development of popular agitation in support for the end of the

Commonwealth and eventually the return of the King; ' the origins of the agitation lay among

the ordinary citizens of London.'[4] However, the role which the newsbooks played in this,

particularly the breaking down of a system of state management of the press has been

overlooked.

Among scholars, there has been a tendency to focus on the newsbook as a means by which

different regimes in seventeenth century England aimed to disseminate propaganda; 'use of

the newsbook for the purpose of governmental propaganda was a feature of the 1650s.'[5]

Indeed, one judgment on Nedham was that he had 'made his greatest impact in the form of

propaganda.'[6] There is acknowledgment that the Civil War which was fought in print as well

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[2] Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649* (Oxford, 1996), p.14.

[3] Gary S. De krey, *London and the Restoration*, 1659-1695 (Cambridge, 2005), p. 6.

[4] Ronald Hutton, *Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales 1659-1667* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 119-123. In particular, he emphasized the role of apprentices in populist agitation, 'apprentices launched the London campaign and the riots in other towns.' See also , Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge, 1987), p.27, '[t]he period from 1640 saw the rise of political demonstrations and mass petitioning, a   process which brought the people into direct involvement in politics in an unprecedented scale.'

[5] Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England 1640-1660* (London, 1994), p.68. See also Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealth in England 1603-1660* (London, 2010), p.420; 'It may be that he [Nedham] had less sympathy for the new regime [Protectorate as opposed to the Commonwealth] However, it was on account of his pragmatism, as well as his self-interest, that Nedham's pen followed the course of events and changes of regime. Though he served no party for long, the fact that the Parliament, royalists, Commonwealthsmen, Protectorate regimes and, in the 1670s, even Charles II all hired him testifies to the impact he was believed to make on readers.'

[6] Blair Worden, *Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England*, p.17.

as on the battlefield but not how this led to a policy of news management.[7] In the previous

chapter, it was argued that Interregnum governments encouraged *Mercurius Politicus* and,

from October 1655, *The Publick Intelligencer* to manufacture a sense of a wider and

interconnected metropolitan community. Central to this, was the idea of a shared destiny

which connected the Metropolis to the survival of whatever regime happened to be in power

in the Capital. Until towards the end of the Interregnum, each regime was able to control the

line being pursued in the official newsbooks in London. There was the articulation of the

well-being of the State and London as interconnected. As long as the regime in power

appeared united, it was possible to disseminate such a world view with the assurance that

Nedham would oblige. After all, he was, in all but name, both press agent and propagandist

of the State. However, this conception to serve state interests was hard to maintain with the

onset of political instability in 1659.

The chapter will be divided into two sections.

Section A will explain the breakdown of the strategy of news management in the last year of

the Interregnum

The onset of political instability had three devastating effects on news management. Firstly,

the short lived regimes which replaced the Protectorate failed to provide stability which had

been the justification for their power. As a second factor, successive Interregnum regimes,

weakened by internal divisions, failed to coordinate an effective management of the news

within the Capital. As a third and final factor, it became impossible for the official

newsbooks to articulate a clear defence of regimes, visibly divided and unpopular. In fact, in

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[7] Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars*, p.419.

the last year of the Interregnum, the London newsbooks became more directly associated with a sense of metropolitan identity separate from that of the government.

Section B will be on the system of news management established in London during first months of the Restoration.

As a priority in 1660-1661, the Carolean regime sought to re-establish tight control over the reporting of political news. Among scholars, there has been recognition of the long term effects of the seventeenth century revolution in print. As a result, there is a consensus that a vibrant, popular and public political discourse continued to take place after 1660; the return of Charles 2nd did not represent a watershed in English political culture.[8] However, the role played by the importance of news management has been overlooked. In fact, the Carolean regime faced with early threats to its legitimacy in the Capital both adopted and adapted techniques of news management which had been evolved during the Interregnum. In so doing, however, it exposed, as false, the impression that the regime controlled opinion in what was a vibrant and disputatious metropolitan society.

Section A: The breakdown in the strategy of news management in the later Interregnum

A definition of 'official' and 'official circles' in a period of political transition.

In the context of this thesis, news management has been interpreted as how the State via official channels sought to manage news in the Capital. From May 1659 until the Restoration

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[8] Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 412-413. See also Tim Harris, *Restoration*, p.17. An institution which facilitated the exchange of news and a lively political discourse was the coffee house of which Harris estimated there were about 2000 in Greater London alone by the end of the seventeenth century. In London new ones were being opened even at the height of the Plague of 1665-1666. For further comment on importance of the coffee house as a medium for public discourse see Steve Pincus, 'Coffee Politicians Does Create: Coffee House and Restoration Political Culture,' in *The Journal of Modern History*, Volume 67, 1995, pp.807-834. On p820, Pincus asserted that 'the coffee house was the site of learned discussion about a variety of issues.'

in the following spring, political instability lay at the heart of the State. Within this context

therefore, it is appropriate to redefine the term official circles. Prior to the overthrow of the

Protectorate of Richard Cromwell, an official circle is a convenient label to apply to those

close to the government in power at Whitehall. In the previous chapter, it has been

demonstrated how the rise of *Mercurius Politicus* to such a dominant position in the London

news market was a direct result of its official connexions. This meant it could serve the

interests of the State in its transmigration from a republic to the Protectorate. Indeed, this has

been recognised by scholars. *Mercurius Politicus* was certainly an instrument of

Commonwealth propaganda yet 'the journal under the same editor was able to transfer its

allegiance to the creation of the Protectorate from 1653'. [9] As unity in government broke

down, however, a variety of competing interests sought to influence public opinion in

London. In the course of late 1659 and up until the Restoration, therefore, fragmentation of

power opened the way for a greater variety of viewpoints to be represented. In such

circumstances, official circles is a term more appropriately applied to competing factions

which sought to gain control of the State or, in the case of the City, London elites.

Newsbooks became the arena in which this power play was enacted. As will be shown later

in this chapter, this was illustrated in two key factors, the end of the monopoly exercised by

Nedham's journals over the distribution of news within London and also the attempts by

competing interests to secure the representation of their views in state sanctioned newsbooks.

The process of fragmentation in the late Interregnum can be demonstrated through the

following episodes; breakdown of the Protectorate news management, the instability of the

restored Rump, the press strategy of the military government and the collapse of the

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[9] Lena Liapi, 'Loyal Hind, 'The Prince of Thieves': Crime Pamphlets and Royalist Propaganda in the 1650s' in Simon F. Davies and Puck Fletcher, eds., *News In Early Modern Europe: Currents and Connexions,* Volume 30 (Boston, 2012), pp. 96-115. p.103..

Commonwealth. The inability of the short lived regimes to effectively manage news in the Capital was crucial to their loss of control there.

<u>End of the Protectorate press censorship restrictions</u>

Under the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, only news which supported the government line could be made publicly available on a regular basis. From the middle of the 1650s, John Thurloe 'had total control over the dissemination of news with the banning of all political newsbooks accept the government controlled *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Publick Intelligencer*.[10] It has even been asserted that the regime used this control to stymy popular discourse and debate.[11] The regimes which succeeded the protectorate also saw the need to persuade Londoners of the community of interest between the Metropolis and the State. However, the fragility of these successor regimes undermined any pretence of unity and ultimately this only highlighted the very pluralism and heterodoxy of London society.

The need for an effective news management ironically increased given the relaxation of the strict censorship regime.[12] No longer could the State stifle debate in print. As a result, the monopoly exercised by the controlled press over the reporting of domestic news and, importantly, parliamentary business was lifted with the appearance of a new London weekly, the *Weekly Post.* In imitation of its officially sponsored rivals, *Mercrirus Politicus* and *The Publick Intelligencer*, the *Weekly Post* aimed to give its readers reliable domestic and foreign

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[10] Timothy Venning in H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography from Earliest Times to 2000,* Volume 54(Oxford, 2004), pp. 711-715.

[11] Jason Peacey 'The Print Culture of Parliament, 1600-1800' in Jason Peacey ed., *The Print Culture of Parliament 1600-1800* (Edinburgh, 2007), pp.1-16 See also Peacey pp.30-48, 'Print Culture and Political Lobbying during the English Civil War', in Peacey, ed., *The Print Culture of Parliament*, pp. 46-47. He asserted that '[d]uring the Protectorate, *Politicus* probably offered readers less information than they had grown accustomed to in what may have been a deliberate attempt to restore a degree of mystery to parliamentary proceedings.'

[12] Joad Raymond, 'Introduction, What News?' in Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, p.14.

news.[13] The relaxation in government control over the press had generated a return to press

pluralism in the Metropolis.[14] The arrival in London of additional newsbooks with access to

reliable sources of political news forced the official newsbooks to assert their authority.

From the end of May, they therefore began to insert on their title page *Published by*

Authority.[15]   However, the ability of a range of metropolitan based newsbooks to access

official and accredited news strongly suggests fragmentation both of power and authority in

the later Interregnum. Even *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, the style of which emulated the jocular

and mocking prose which had been adopted between 1649-1650 by the Man *in The Moon*,

nevertheless had access to reliable parliamentary news.[16] The return of press pluralism had a

particular impact in the Metropolis because this was where those journals which aimed to

provide news, as opposed to jocular comment, were based. Their metropolitan focus was

indicated in the London based advertisements published.[17] That they displayed adverts was

also an indicator of a regular and reliable readership.

A note concerning the breakdown in a coordinated strategy of news management

The process by which a state system of news management broke down was complex. It

began with the growing schism between Parliament and the army following the end of the

Protectorate. The fall of Richard Cromwell went relatively unnoticed in the newsbooks.

However, it belied a growing tension at the heart of the Interregnum state as both Parliament

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[13] *Weekly Post* 3/5/1659-10/5/1659 issue 1. It ran for thirty one editions, closing down at the beginning of December 1659.

[14] *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, 30/8/1659-6/9/1659 issue 1, p.1. It drew attention to the relaxation of censorship: 'By 'leave Gentlemen; pray let *Pragmaticus* have a little elbow room among you. He finds that the pen men of his profession grow numerous since the late monopoly of news hath been put down'.

[15] *Mercurius Politicus*, 2/6/1659-9/6/1659 issue 570.

[16] As an example of access to reliable newsfeed see the last two pages of *Mercurius Pragmaticus,* 30/8/1659-6/9/1659 issue 1.

[17] *Faithful Scout*, 10/6/1659-17/6/1659 issue 27, p.8, *Weekly Post* 3/5/1659-10/5/1659 issue1, p.7 and *The Weekly Intelligencer of the Commonwealth* 31/5/1659-7/6/1659 issue 5, p.39.

and the army command drew apart. [18] A factor overlooked by scholars is the disastrous consequence of this both for a policy of coordinated news management in the Capital and ultimately the survival of the Interregnum.

<u>The impact of tensions between the army and Parliament on news management in London.</u>

The transition from Protectorate to rule by the restored Commonwealth was not only a political conflict in the institutions of state at Westminster but also for control over the official press. The Protectorate's press agent, Marchamont Nedham was, albeit briefly, a casualty of the power struggle, 'he fell victim to conflict within the government when Parliament suspended him from his editorship of *Politicus*'.[19] Inadvertently, perhaps, the official press alluded to this conflict when reporting on parliamentary business, '[t]hat Mr Nedham is hereby prohibited from henceforth to write the weekly intelligence.'[20] The following week, of course, the newsbook was able to report on change of government with the publication of Richard Cromwell's letter of resignation as Lord Protector.[21] Historians have identified a number of reasons for the failure of the restored Commonwealth to achieve stability. One of these was the breakdown in relationship between Parliament and the army over the substantial arrears of army pay which had accumulated under the Protectorate.[22] A

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[18] Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration,* p.120 emphasises the importance of the army the foundations upon which the Interregnum was dependent for its power. In this, he stresses the vital role of personal relationships Oliver Cromwell established with senior military officers: 'He ensured that power became concentrated in a network of relations and favourites which only he held together.' See also p.18: In sharp contrast with his father, Richard Cromwell failed to secure either support or respect from senior officers, 'Desborough in particular resented him.' See also Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603-1714* (London, 1997), p.215. He wrote, 'Cromwell's personality, his grip over the military, and the realization that he could provide order to an exhausted nation all propped up the regime.' See also David L Smith, 'The Struggle for New Constitutional and Institutional Forms' in John Morrill ed., *Revolution and Restoration: England in the 1650s (*London, 1987), pp. 15-35, (p.31) 'Oliver's successor [Richard Cromwell as Lord Protector] was wholly unsuited to fulfil such a role. Mistrusted by both Army officers and republican politicians, he proved unable to reconcile the inherent contradictions of the Protectorate'.

[19] Joad Raymond in Mathews and Harrison eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography from Earliest Times to 2000,* Pp.318-323. Suspended on 13th May, Nedham was however reinstated on 15th August.

[20] *Mercurius Politicus* 12/5/1659-19/5/1659 issue 567, p.437.

[21] *Mercurius Politicus*, 19/5/1659-26/5/1659 issue 568, p.464.

[22] David L Smith, 'The Struggle for New Constitutional and Institutional Forms' in John Morrill ed., *Revolution and Restoration: England in the 1650s,* pp. 15-35. On p.31, he stressed mounting public debt as a key factor in

second key factor was the lack of legitimacy and thereby authority for the restored Rump.

Crucially, this was significant in causing a breakdown in the relationship between the City

and Parliament:

> the City quarrelled with the new government. Many common councilmen and
> aldermen perceived it as nothing more than an illegitimate clique of ageing
> politicians who had usurped the place of a genuine national Parliament elected
> under Richard Cromwell.[23]

The superficial image of unity between Parliament and the army which the official

newsbooks sought to present to London increasingly wore thin; both Parliament and the army

elites sought to gain control over the press. Over the course of the summer of 1659, both

Mercurius Politicus and *The Publick Intelligencer* became more overtly identified with

Parliament and this was shown in the sudden and very public display of their new and,

significantly, exclusive loyalty to the Rump. From the second week of June and for the first

time, newsbooks began to take sides in the factional struggles within the Interregnum. As a

result, there was the abandoning of the pretence of an assumed unity of purpose holding

together the rival interests behind the State.[24]   In openly declaring for Parliament, *Mercurius*

Politicus took the lead. On the title page it changed its declaration from 'Published by

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causing the rift in the coalition which had held the Protectorate together and which later undermined the cooperation between the army and the restored Rump. 'By the end of 1658, England's annual deficit exceeded £500 000, while Army arrears stood at £890 000.' For discussion on how Parliament attempted to support a large military establishment see Gary S. De Krey, *London and the Restoration 1659-1683*, p.22. In late August 1659, such was the scale of the problem that it risked stoking popular resentment by adopting 'an extraordinary London rate.' This was done through introducing an additional assessment on real estate in the City of London and the liberties; C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum,* Volume II (London, 1911), pp. 1343-1344.

[23] Gary S. De Krey, London and the Restoration, p.4.

[24] Until the beginning of June 1659, neither *Mercurius Politicus* nor *The Publick Intelligencer* openly declared for any faction. Indeed, up until the 2nd June, *Mercurius Politicus* carried the following slogan on its front page, 'For Information of the People', 26/5/1659-2/6/1659 issue 569.

Authority' to 'Published by Order of Parliament'.[25] In mid-June, *The Publick Intelligencer* followed suit, carrying on its title page, 'Published by Order of Parliament.'[26]

What had started in the press was an open admission of the factional struggles taking place in London for control over the State. For the remainder of the Interregnum, both journals openly declared their partisan support, in the process of which the carefully crafted press management achieved under the Protectorate broke down. The political divisions within the Interregnum were played out in the Capital in the institutions of power in Westminster, the press and later on the streets.

Between June 1650-October 1659, the shifts in allegiance of the official press are summarised in the table below:

Interregnum	*Mercurius Politicus*	*The Publick Intelligencer*
First Commonwealth	No specific allegiance is given- masthead – For the information of the people	--------------------------
Protectorate	Of the information of the People	First issue 1-8 October No specific allegiance stated
Restored Commonwealth	First two issues June 1659- Published According to Authority Then from issue 572 [16/6/1659-23/6/1659] Published by Order of Parliament	Issue 181 [13/6/1659-20/6/1659] Published by Order of Parliament
General Council of Officers/Committee of Public Safety	Issue 591 [13/10/1659-20/10/1659] Published According to Order	Issue 199 [17/10/1659-24/10/1659] Published According to Order

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[25] *Mercurius Politicus* 2/6/1659-9/6/1659 issue 570 and 16/6/1659-23/6/1659 issue 572.
[26] *The Publick Intelligencer,* 13/6/1659-20/6/1659 issue 181.

The overthrow of the restored Rump in the military coup of October 13th 1659 represented a

further shift in the allegiance of the controlled press away from Parliament. From mid-

October, the week of the dissolution of the Rump Parliament in a military coup, *Mercurius*

Politicus announced its changed allegiance.[27]. For the week 13th-20th October (issue 590),

the newsbook had replaced 'Published by Order of Parliament' with 'Published according to

Order'. This continued until the restoration of the Commonwealth in December.[28] *The*

Publick Intelligencer followed suit in the third week of October.[29] Regular readers of the

official newsbooks could hardly have been unaware of the change of tack which was taking

place and which demonstrated the conflict which was taking place for control over the State

and also the press. This was shown in the coverage of events at Westminster in the second

and third weeks of October.[30] In the issue of 6-13th October, the authority of Parliament on

the journal was evident in the reporting of the reply of Parliament to a petition of army

officers *The Humble Representation and Petition of officers of the army.* It made very clear

the attempt being made by Parliament to assert its authority:

> petitioners ought to be very careful both in the manner and in the matters of what
> they desire; that the way of promoting and presenting the same may be peaceable
> and the things petitioned for not tending to the disturbance of the Commonwealth

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[27] The military coup in Westminster took place on 13th October by forces loyal to General Lambert. Historians have commented on Lambert as a man of exceptional ability. See Christopher Durston, *Cromwell's major-generals: Godly Government During The English Revolution* (Manchester, 2010), p.3. See also Hutton, *The Restoration*, on p. 64, he described Lambeth as first rate soldier, statesman and administrator. See also Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age* (London, 1983), p.235. In his view, the Restored Rump 'only lasted until the autumn, because the army spent August crushing Booth's rebellion.'

[28] *Mercurius Politicus* 13/10/1659-20/10/1659 issue 591.

[29] *The Publick Intelligencer* 17/10/1659-24/10/1659 issue 199. However, the coup was first reported in the previous issue 10/10/1659-17/10/1659 issue 198, p.796, 'Westminster October 15th. '

[30] Gary S. De Krey, *London and the Restoration*, p. 28. When General lambert and other senior officers adopted a bill to raise taxes to cover soldiers' pay, a bill without parliamentary consent, they were dismissed by Parliament from their posts. See also BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 205, 1659, p.250. 'Act against the raising of money without consent of Parliament'. See also *Mercurius Politicu*s 6/10/1659-13/6/1659 issue 590. The act is printed in the newsbook. Note the page numbering goes out of sequence.

or the dishonour of the Parliament: And it is the duty of petitioners to submit their desires to the Parliament and acquiesce in the judgment thereof.[31]

The relevance of London to this struggle was illustrated if not emphasized by the reference made to 230 commanding officers in and around London who were reported to have subscribed the petition.[32] However, the following week, the change of tack was noticeable by the description of the new government, a military junta in power at Whitehall; '[a]nd to the end that the government and peace of the army as well of the Nation may be maintained they then nominated Lord Charles Fleetwood commander in chief.'[33] Furthermore, careful readers could not have failed to notice how officers such as Lambert, Desborough and Berry whom they had been notified were cashiered by Parliament on 13th were now appointed to the Council of State to run the nation's affairs.[34] Also of significance to the astute reader would be the admission of disputes and factions within the officer ranks of the army. *Mercurius Politi*cus informed that 'the several officers of the Army, who appeared active on the other side on Thursday last be for the present suspended from their charges.'[35]

 The policy of news management by the military regime in London.

The military coup in London exacerbated political instability. The conflict between Parliament and military elites transformed into an internecine struggle between rival commanders as the regime in London failed to secure a consensus of support from among the garrison commanders outside of the Capital. The threat posed by the opposition of George Monck, the commander of the Commonwealth forces in Scotland, was regarded in London as

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[31] *Mercurius Politicus*, 6/10/1659- 13/10/1659, issue 590, 'Westminster, Tuesday 11th October'. See *also Humble Representation and Petition of the officers of the Army to Parliament and the Commonwealth of England*. The petition had been presented by Major General Desborough, 'accompanied by the field officers of the army and subscribed by 230 commanding officers in and around London.'

[32] Ibid. The number was written numerically.

[33] *Mercurius Politicus* 13/10/1659-20/10/1659 issue 591, p.802, 'Whitehall October 19th. '

[34] *Mercurius Politicus* 6/10/1659-13/10/1659 and 13/10/1659-20/10/1659. The reports on the October coup were repeated in *The Publick Intelligencer*, 10/10/1659- 17/10/1659 issue 198, p. 796 and 17/10/1659-24/10/1659 issue 199, p. 802 and p.812.

[35] *Mercurius Politicus*, 13/10/1659-20/10/1659 issue 591, p.812, 'Whitehall, October 19th. '

the most serious obstacle.[36]   A factor which has been overlooked by scholars, however, is

the attempt by the authorities in London to manufacture a spin on events. Such was

perception of the threat posed by Monck, that a concerted news spin was elaborated in the

autumn of 1659. This was a deliberate attempt to secure the support of the Metropolis. The

news management had three aims; to persuade Londoners of the constitutional aims of the

officers, to ratchet up the threat to the safety and security of the Capital posed by Monck and

finally to talk up dissension in the ranks of his forces. This strategy was significant, precisely

because it was to mark the end of a coordinated news management in London during the

Interregnum.

1. The London newsbooks in support of the alleged constitutional aims of the General

Council of Officers.

The opposition of General Monck to the overthrow of the Rump Parliament exposed the coup

leaders in the Capital to the charge of illegality.   The General Council of Officers made it a

priority to publicise in the London press their intention was not to establish a military

regime.[37] The civil arm of government was to be temporarily vested in the Committee of

Safety.[38] *Mercurius Politicus* came to the assistance of the regime in London. At the

beginning of November, it published *A Declaration of the General Council of the Officers of

the Army'*. The commitment to the reconstituting of parliamentary rule was emphasised in

the following extract:

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[36] Keith Roberts, *Cromwell's War Machine: The New Model Army 1645-1660* (Croydon, 2005), pp.249-252. See also Ronald Hutton's biography of George Monck in H.C.G Matthews and Brian Harrison eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* Volume 38, pp.579-592; 'when the army began to proscribe policies to Parliament in September 1659 he expressed support for the MPs.' This, Hutton asserted may have stiffened parliamentary opposition towards the senior officers so that ', inadvertently he may have contributed to the coup which he then opposed'.

[37] The surrounding of Parliament by soldiers under the command of General Lambert was a direct response to moves by Parliament to remove him and others from their commands. See also Christopher Durston's biography of Sir Arthur Hesilrige in H.C.G. Matthews and Brian Harrison eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* pp. 73-76.

[38] *Mercurius Politicus*, 27/10/1659-3/11/1659 issue 592, pp. 833-834, and *The Publick Intelligencer*, 24/10/1659-31/10/1659 issue 200, p.27, 'Whitehall, October 26th.'

We declare we have no aim or end to set up a military or Arbitrary Government over the Commonwealth but have directly provided that the civil and executive part of government may be lodged in a Committee of Safety and they obliged in a short time to prepare such a form of government as may best suit and comport with a free state and Commonwealth without a single person, Kingship or House of Lords.'[39]

2. The willingness of the London press to participate in the propaganda war against Monck

The decision by Monck to invade England raised the prospect of renewed conflict, 'a large section of the army had turned against the rest. The fear was that a fourth civil war seemed about to begin.'[40] Monck 'had forged a disciplined and united force.'[41] The military government in London knew it was imperative to secure the willing support of the City and wider metropolis in the impending struggle as Monck threatened to march south.[42] Its failure to achieve this was critical; the lack of consensus in the Capital behind the military dominated government was crucial in its eventual downfall.[43] However, a factor which has been overlooked by scholars is the attempt by the government to use the official press to manufacture a perception of him as the threat to peace.[44] This was based on the dependence of any government in London on mustering the manpower and financial resources of the

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[39] *Mercurius Politicus*, 27/10/1659-3/11/1659, Issue 592, pp. 833-834, 'Whitehall October 29th.' The Committee ordered that the declaration be 'forthwith printed and published.'

[40] Hutton, *The Restoration*, p.38.

[41] Worden, *The English Civil Wars* (London, 2009), p.149. For discussion on the growing military weakness of the military regime in London see Hutton, *The Restoration* p.53. In his assessment, General Lambert sent north to Scotland to deal with Monck, was the ablest soldier and statesman among the major generals. Furthermore, he was in command of the most loyal of the troops available to the generals in London. However, shortage of supplies and absence of pay caused Lambert's troops to drift away.

[42] De Krey, *London and the Restoration*, p.30 'The Committee of Safety called upon the London militia Commissioners to write to Monck a public letter protesting his design.'

[43] Ibid. The public letter which the militia commissioners wrote on 3rd November only passed by one vote, thereby highlighting the intense divisions within the metropolitan elites. See also Hutton, *The Restoration*, pp.75-82. Opposition to the regime imposed by the officers began in the Capital. On p.82, he wrote that elsewhere, 'the weight of occupying troops had kept the provinces quieter than the Capital.'

[44] There is a historical debate on Monck's intentions. Worden, *The English Civil Wars*, p.130 suggested he was always consistent in his aims of overthrowing not restoring the Rump, '[f]irst invisibly and then visibly he plotted its overthrow'. For an alternative opinion see De Krey, *London and the Restoration,* pp. 39-45. In sharp contrast to the view that Monck had no long term strategy, De Krey suggested that Monck reacted as events unfolded.

Metropolis.[45]   Through their influence over the official press in London, the Committee of

Safety tried to put across the perception that the City elders were united behind the

government. The effect of news management in this could be seen in the reporting of the

Common Council in November 1659. What the official press made clear was the unanimous

decision made by the City to reject Monck's case put by him in a letter to the City; 'which

being read it was so far disliked by the Common Council that no one spake anything to

second it.'[46]   The report, in talking up the direct threat to the City, alluded to the particular

threat to London; 'all well knowing that the flourishing and security of this famous City

depends upon the peace and tranquillity of the Commonwealth; that if the peace be broken,

the City is most likely first to suffer by the common enemy and the rabble.'[47]   The reference

to 'the rabble' suggested deliberate exploiting of concerns among Londoners over the risk of

social disorder. During the late 1650s, the involvement of the Interregnum in protracted

foreign wars had disrupted commerce. For London, whose economic security was

increasingly dependent on international trade, this had serious consequences both for

employment and social stability. Indeed, as Thomas Rugg observed in November 1659, 'the

apprentices did goe under the name of discontente they ware very much unquiet for that

theire trading begane dayley to decaye.'[48]

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[45] The Committee of Safety in London also faced a mutiny of the garrison in Portsmouth. The garrison there was under the command of Nathaniel Whetham. On December 3rd, Arthur Hesilrige, a former member of the Council of State, secured the support of Whetham for the expelled Rump and the garrison mutinied against the Committee of Safety. See Hutton, *The Restoration*, p.18. The garrison at Portsmouth had been the strongest under the control of the government in London. The willingness of its soldiers to follow the lead of their commander was because the generals in London had 'diverted their pay to the soldiers in the Capital and the garrison appeared ripe for defection.' See also Christopher Durston in H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography from Earliest Times to 2000*, pp. 73-76. He wrote that Hesilrige was a staunch supporter of the rights of Parliament and opposed, therefore, the coup of October 1659. For some time he had suspected General Lambert was attempting to establish a military regime.
[46] *Mercurius Politicus* 17/11/1659-24/11/1659 issue 592, p.908, 'Whitehall, London 29th November.' The report on 29th November was replicated in *The Publick Intelligencer*, 21/11/1659-28/11/1659 issue 204, p.899.
[47] *Mercurius Politicus,* 17-11/1659-24/11/1659 issue 592, p.908.
[48] William L. Sachse ed., *The Diurnall of Thomas Rugg, 1659-1661* (London, 1961), p.9. For more precise details see also Hutton, *The Restoration;* on p.71 he wrote that privateers harassed English shipping and the

3. <u>The emphasis placed by the press on alleged dissensions in the ranks of Monck's forces</u>

The official press played up stories of dissent and defection amongst the officers serving in Monck's army. The widespread reports of desertions among officers would suggest to the public that among these, the more literate members of his forces, there was a growing concern over the legality of his actions. In London this news management served two purposes; firstly it reinforced the claim that the military government intended to restore parliamentary rule. A second purpose was to undermine support for Monck in the Capital. From mid-November, identical reports of these developments were reported in both *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Publick Intelligencer*. The initial reports were vague and aimed to circulate stories that Monck had little support:

> we hear of two and twenty commissioned officers of Colonel Fairfax's regiment that have deserted General Monck's proceedings if so then but few of the old officers are left behind, and certainly the soldiery will follow when they see an opportunity.[49]

The impression of a general collapse in morale in the troops serving under Monck was stoked up by the deliberate display of reports from different parts of the country; Newcastle, Berwick and the North were all quoted as the sources for the stories.[50] The first named officer to have deserted was Monck's personal chaplain, Mr Collins. That someone holding such a position of personal trust should desert represented a clear opportunity for the black propaganda against Monck which was being formulated in the Capital.[51] By the end of

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Baltic was closed to English commerce. In London during the winter 1659-60, house rents had fallen by a tenth.

[49] *Mercurius Politicus*, 17/11/1659-24/11/1659 issue 595, p.907, 'Newcastle November 16th.' See also *The Publick Intelligencer* 21/11/1659-28/11/1659 issue 204, pp. 898-899

[50] *Mercurius Politicus* 17/11/1659-24/11/1659 issue 595, p.908, 'Whitehall November 21st: ' 'This day also by a soldier that came from Berwick we have it confirmed that the generality of the soldiery in Scotland are dissatisfied'. See also p.908, 'Whitehall November 21st: 'This day by letters out of the north it was certified further that more of General Monck's officers had declared their dissatisfaction towards his proceedings.' The same reports are also quoted in *The Publick Intelligencer* see note 55.

[51] *Mercurius Politicus*, 17/11/1659-24/11/1659 issue 595, p.908, 'Whitehall November 21st : ''that this day also his chaplain Mr Collins had deserted him and was come away out of Scotland and had declared the grounds of his dissatisfaction and departure.'

December, the reports of officer defections contained more precise details. Both official newsbooks now published the names, ranks and regiments of one hundred and forty five officers alleged to have deserted in *A List of the officers that either have deserted General Monck, or that upon his Declaring (Being in England) have refused to return to their charges.*[52]

4. The eruption of a news war in London

In the struggle to win over hearts and minds in the Capital, through *The Faithful Intelligencer* (*Mercurius Britanicus*) Monck issued a reply from Scotland. He drew particular attention towards the manner in which the official newsbooks in London were representing him; 'those zealous untruths which the London pamphleteers can so easily digest.'[53] In fact, the letter singled out *Mercurius Politicus* for particular criticism, focusing directly on the accusations made in issue 595:[54]

> I cannot forbear to infer and begin here with a numerous and uncouth catalogue
> of Lyes which I find not to be more impudently pend than arrogantly intruded
> upon us by the late *Politicus* commenting Thursday the 17 November wherein
> amongst many other things the last recited letter is miserably belyed and
> abused.[55]

Three criticisms in particular were made of the story lines in issue 595; the meeting of the Common Council 17th November, the defections of officers from Colonel Fairfax's regiment and the defection of Mr Collins. Whereas *Mercurius Politicus* claimed that the whole of the Common Council were united in opposition to General Monck's letter of 17th November, *The Faithful Intelligencer* directly contradicted the report. Quoting from *Mercurius Politicus*

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[52] *Mercurius Politicus* 24/11/1659-1/12/1659 issue 596, pp. 922-923 and also *The Publick Intelligencer* 28/11/1659-5/12/1659 issue 205, pp. 913-914.
[53] *The Faithful Intelligencer*, *From the parliaments Army in Scotland*, 29/11/1659-3/12/1659 issue 1. The authorship is given as 'Written by an Officer of the Army there'. It was printed in Edinburgh.
[54] See notes 55 and 56.
[55] *The Faithful Intelligencer*, 29/11/1659-3/12/1659 issue 1.

'not one man spake anything to second it,' it countered this with the following; 'not above seven or eight of two hundred and twenty then present but were for it (whatever such perfidious Writers lye or print) and gave wonderful satisfaction to the generality of the Assembly there.'[56] In short, therefore, it suggested that the City was broadly behind Monck. In taking issue with the reports in *Mercurius Politicus* concerning desertions from Monck's forces, *The Faithful Intelligencer* drew attention to the naivety of the propaganda being manufactured in London.   In answer to the claim that twenty two (unnamed) officers of Fairfax's regiment had deserted, it replied 'I cannot conceive what officers of Colonel Fairfax's regiment the Book does mean.'[57] Finally, it challenged directly the claim which had been made in London that Mr Collins, chaplain to General Monck had, indeed deserted; '*Politicus r*esolves to fill his Epha up, and compleat his iniquity at the house of God.'[58] . In a sarcastic concluding comment, the journal mocked the reputation of Mercurius *Politicus* in 'we that know him are so assured of his integrity.'[59] Therefore, through *The Faithful Intelligencer,* circles close to General Monck felt it necessary to address specifically the black propaganda being manufactured in London of which he was the primary target.

The collapse of the Interregnum strategy of news management

The inability of the military backed government in London to pay and adequately supply its troops proved to be its undoing.[60] Scholars have tended to emphasize the importance of the army both in explaining the collapse of the short lived military government and the eventual Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660. In this, the divisions among senior officers and the

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[56] Ibid. See also note 52 and 55.
[57] *The Faithful Intelligencer*, 29/11 1659-3/12/1659 issue 1. Furthermore, the report continued, 'yet this I dare them, the good old man with us did never think his Regiment better officered.' The report in *Mercurius Politicus* being referred to was 17/11/1659-24/11/1659 issue 595, p.907.
[58] *The Faithful Intelligencer*, 29/11/1659-3/12/1659 issue 1.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Hutton, *The Restoration*, p.65. Furthermore, Monck's main contribution to the fall of the officers' regime in London was to keep Lambert 'tied down far from the capital until the government there had collapsed…Lambert was paralysed, unable to turn his back on Monck and unfit to attack him [the army at Newcastle was said to be short of shoes and stockings].'

indiscipline among their troops have been seen as factors crucial to the return of Charles Stuart as monarch.[61] There has also been a tendency to stress the importance of personality in the fate of the Interregnum; 'Oliver Cromwell managed to hold things together reasonably well until his death in September 1658, it proved impossible to establish a credible regime following the fall of the Protectorate…'[62] Scholars have also focused on the importance of London as the focus for the struggle for power at the end of the Interregnum.[63] However, what has been overlooked is the impact which a breakdown in effective news management had on the ability of the regime to assert its legitimacy in London. The fact that the restored Rump was only able to assert its authority over the official press superficially was crucial in the end of the Interregnum. It was both a feature of and also exposed the developing power struggle within elite groups. In the struggle for hearts and minds in the Metropolis, the conflict between the army and Parliament had now been joined by a new conflict; the struggle between Parliament and the City.

The attempt by the restored Rump to regain control over the process of news management

Following the collapse of the military regime, the Rump Parliament immediately set about to restore its control over news management London. To publicize its regained authority, the official newsbooks proclaimed their new loyalty with the following on the title page *Published by the Authority of Parliament*.[64] Furthermore, the idea of the military dominated

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[61] De Krey, *London and the Restoration*, p.30 by early December 1659, the Committee of Safety in London was facing serious obstacles in raising funds in the City; a request for a loan had been refused and 'goldsmiths had ceased business.' See also p.48; Monck was concerned about the limits of the military resources available to him when he arrived in London, in particular uncertainty as to the reliability of the trained bands. See also Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed*, p.220. In particular, Kishlansky stressed the financial considerations in influencing Monck: 'if he supported the Rump in its confrontation with the City he jeopardized his soldiers' pay.' See also *Diurnal of Thomas Rugg*, p.34, February 1660: 'They [soldiers in London] had fourteen or fifteen weeks behind of their pay.'
[62] Tim Harris, *Restoration*,, p.43
[63] De Krey, *London and The Restoration*, pp.6-14. See also Hutton, *Restoration*, pp.119-120.
[64] *Mercurius Politicus*, 22/12/1659-29/12/1659 issue 600 and *The Publick Intelligencer*, 26/12/1659-2/1/1660 issue 209.

government as being unnatural was emphasised in the use of the phrase 'late interruption.'[65]

A sudden change in reporting of the soldiers laying siege to Portsmouth also indicated a

change of news management in London. In mid-December, for example, when the

newsbooks were still under the control of the military regime, they inferred the loyalty of the

soldiers:

> our horse is so disposed to guard the severall roads and passages leading thither
> that they blocking the place and withal may be able to hinder recourse to them
> from the country in case the country should incline to give them any supply or
> succor.[66]

The report gave no hint at the underlying discontent. However, the following week, when

the control over the press in London had shifted back to Parliament, the following report was

produced which gave a very different view of the besieging force, the same soldiers 'chose

rather to return to the obedience of the Parliament.'[67] To conclude, through Parliament's

attempt to regain control over the official press in London, these journals were being

incorporated into a strategy aimed at re-establishing the idea of a consensus linking

Parliament and the military. However, a public façade of consensus behind the Interregnum

unravelled. From the summer of 1659, as one regime replaced another, the official

newsbooks became a contested arena in the emerging conflict between the City authorities

and the Rump. However, this has been overlooked by scholars.[68] One judgment was that,

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[65] *Mercurius Politicus*, 22/12/1659-29/12/1659 issue 600, p.977, 'Westminster Monday 26th December' and *The Publick Intelligencer* 26/12/1659-2/1/1660 issue 209, p.859, 'Westminster December 29th.'
[66] *Mercurius Politicus*, 15/12/1659- 21/12/ 1659 issue 599, p.963, 'Whitehall December 17th.'
[67] *Mercurius Politicus*, 22/12/1659-29/12/1659 issue 600, p.977. See also *The Publick Intelligencer* 26/12/1659-2/1/1660 issue 209, p.975, 'Westminster November 26th: The loyalty of the soldiers for the restored Rump was emphasized 'the soldiers shouted for joy again knowing they never had so good days for constant pay as under the government and care of the Parliament.'
[68] De Krey, *London and The Restoration*, p.34. In particular, he asserted that there was a growing assertiveness of the City in defence of its interests. The appointment of its own Committee of Safety 'reflected a growing belief that the Corporation should act on its own authority. See also p32 where he referred to the petition presented to the Mayor, Court of Aldermen and Common Council 5/12/1659 calling for a filling up of Parliament. See also Hutton, *The Restoration,* pp.74-5: There was a great deal of resentment in the Capital over the presence of a large number of troops. Following the killing of apprentices during rioting 5/12/59, rumour spread that the soldiers were about to carry out a general massacre. The official press played up the role of malevolent forces at work behind the apprentice riots. Here again it emphasized the support of the

'by the end of the year (1659) England seemed to be drifting into anarchy.'[69] Crucially,

however, the collapse of effective news management visibly exposed and advertised the end

of political consensus upon which control over the Capital depended. The immediate cause

of the collapse of state news management was the arrival in London, in February of 1660, of

the army of General Monck. His arrival coincided with civil disorder in the City as troops

mutinied over pay and the Common Council organised a tax strike against the London

assessment recently levied by the restored Parliament.[70] Indeed, the Council of State wrote

in February to General Monck blaming the unrest in the Capital (mutinies and apprentice

riots) on disturbances 'being fomented, as it appears, to us by our enemies in the City.'[71] The

historiographical debate on London politics in early 1660 notwithstanding, the impact of the

newsbooks in mobilising Londoners needs to be considered.[72] Initially, the official

newsbooks appeared to support Parliament which manoeuvred Monck into supporting it in its

conflict with the City. In issue 607, *Mercurius Politicus* reported on the moves which the

Rump Parliament made against the City authorities. This was the annulling of the Common

Council elections of the previous December and the destruction of the City defences.

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main body of citizenry with the State; *Mercurius Politicus* 1/12/1659-8/12/1659 issue 597, pp. 939-940: 'the substantial and sober body of the City resenting the design and foreseeing the fatal consequences that must ensue if the reins of government were once let loose to the multitude gave no countenance to that rule and tumultuous proceedings.' The report in the *Weekly Post*, 29/11/1659-6/12/1659 issue 31, p.248, which was independent of official control gave no indication that the disturbances were anything other than localised and a reflection of animosity between the soldiers and apprentices; 'some coals of dissension were kindled and brake forth between the apprentices and the soldiers.'

[69] Harris, *Restoration*, p.43.

[70] De Krey, *London and The Restoration* p.45. See also *Mercurius Politicus*, 2/2/1660-9/2/1660 issue 606, p.1073, 'Whitehall, February 4th.' It also referred to a mutiny amongst troops garrisoned in London sparked by rumours the back pay due to them was to be diverted to pay for the troops of Monck.

[71] BHO, CSPD, Interregnum, Volume 219, February 1660, p.344, 'Council of State to General Monck', February 2nd.

[72] Monck's motives remain a source of historical debate. Initially he seemed to side with Parliament in its efforts to impose its authority over the City by carrying the order to demolish the City's defences and then changed tack and supported the City demands for a filling up of Parliament. See also Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed,* p.220: 'After a day of agonizing uncertainty, on 11 February Monck threw in his lot with the City and dissolved the Rump parliament.' See also Worden, *The English Civil Wars*, p.150 ' In January Monck brought his army into England, ostensibly in support of the Rump…in February he surprised it by escorting into the Commons a large body of MPs who had ceased to sit at Pride's Purge and who now, as before the Purge, commanded a Presbyterian majority.' See also John Birch ed., *The State Papers of John Thurloe*, Volume 7, 1658-1660, p.861: 'Elizabeth Einzy to John Thurloe, 'March 20th 1660; senior military officers in London 'will not trust him [Monck], for he will play fast and loos.'

Identical reports appeared in both newsbooks.[73] The attempt at manipulation of news was implied in the support from among influential interests in the City: 'Divers visits were made to him [Monck] by many of the most eminent citizens who desired to preserve a good understanding.'[74] However, the same newsbooks which had peddled the official line propagated by circles close to the Rump quickly reversed their positions in support of the restoration of the authority of the City. The decision to suddenly shift support to the City had a profound impact on the press. Over the course of the second and third weeks of February 1660, the change in tack followed the changing allegiance of Monck and, in so doing, decisively drew the London newsbooks away from support for the Interregnum. That a decisive shift in allegiance had taken place in the newsbooks is best illustrated by comparing two examples of conflict of interest between the City and the Commonwealth. There was a move away from managing conflict in the interests of consensus towards taking the side of the City. As both incidents refereed to the relationship between the City and the Commonwealth they are a good indicator of how the relationship between them had altered in the last quarter of 1659.

1. The Mayoral election 1659 as an example of how the official newsbooks downplayed the conflict between City and Parliament

In a bid to assert its authority over the City in September 1659, Parliament annulled the forthcoming Mayor elections, enacting legislation that the present incumbent, John Ireton

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[73] *Mercurius Politicus*, 9/2/1660-16-2/1660, issue 607, pp., 1096-1097. See also The *Publick Intelligencer* 6/2/1660-13/2/1660 issue 215, pp., 1088-1089, 'Westminster Thursday 9th February.' See also De Krey, *London and the Restoration*, p.37. The Common Council elections of December 1659 were decisive, over 1/3 of those elected had not served on the previous Common Council and, among their number there were many Presbyterians. They set about purging the committees of councillors with republican sympathies, replacing them with reformed Protestants and royalist Anglicans.

[74] *Mercurius Politicus*, 9/2/1660-16/2/1660 issue 607, pp.1086-1087, 'Whitehall February 11th' and *The Publick Intelligencer*, 6/2/1660-13/2/1660 issue 215, pp. 1093-1094, 'Whitehall February 11th': The quartering of his soldiers in the City was interpreted by the report as a precaution in order to keep the peace.

remain in post.[75] News management was subtle, deliberately playing down the significance of parliamentary intervention which, after all, was a serious affront to the chartered tights of the City of London. In fact, the decision to cancel the election was given scant coverage (*Mercurius Politicus* 585). The petition of the City aldermen to Parliament requesting the reversal of the decision was mentioned but not the substance. Several weeks later, Parliament's agreeing to reverse the cancellation was given in a matter of fact way without reference to the petition or previous coverage of the story (*Mercurius Politicus* issue588) [76]

2. The restoration of the City defences and of the restoration of the Common Council elected in December 1659 as evidence of a change in tack in the London newsbooks

In February 1660, there was no downplaying of the significance of the reversal of Parliament's actions against the City. It was clear that in the official press, there had been both a change both of tack and allegiance away from Parliament towards the City. In sharp contrast with September 1659, was the reporting of the City petition to Parliament in February 1660. Then a deliberate attempt was made to draw the attention of the reader; the title was advertised in bold italics; *To the Parliament of England, the Humble Petition of the Mayor, Aldermen and Common Council of the City of London in Common Council Assembled.* [77] There were other, subtle ways by which the change in tack of the newsbook became apparent. In order to draw attention to the petition, in both *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Publick Intelligencer* the petition appeared half way down the page at eye level. The seriousness of the conflict between City and Parliament was laid bare. The petition expressed gratitude for the newly enlarged Parliament at the release of members of the City government

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[75] De Krey, *London and the Restoration*, p.27. The restored Rump 'rode roughshod over City rights'. On 2nd September 1659, fearing election of a Mayor hostile towards it, it declared John Ireton should continue in office for another year. Faced with strong City opposition, the Rump backed down although 'a relatively inconspicuous alderman, Thomas Alleyn was chosen as mayor.'

[76] *Mercurius Politicus* 1/9/1659-8/9/165 issue 585, p.706 and 22/9/1659-29/9/1659 issue 588, p. 754 and p.764.

[77] *Mercurius Politicus* 23/2/1660-1/3/1660 issue 609, p.1129 and *The Publick Intelligencer* 20/2/1660-27/2/1660 issue 217, pp. 1121-1122.

and at the decision to restore the City defences.   Those London newsbooks which had been

close supporters of the Interregnum were siding with the City interests in other ways.   The

report concluded with the following also in italicised form, *'The Petitioners do therefore*

humbly pray that the militia of London may be forthwith settled in the hands of citizens of

known integrity and interest in the City.'   In this, *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Publick*

Intelligencer were alluding to a current concern among citizens in the Capital. The City had

resented moves by the Interregnum authorities to wrest control over London's militia forces

and for deployment as they saw fit.[78] There was resentment that Parliament gave itself power

to deploy these outside of London and not just for defence of the Metropolis.[79]   Previously,

change in tack had been necessitated by a change in regime at Whitehall. Indeed, both

Mercurius *Politicus* and The *Publick Intelligencer* had been vulnerable to the weather cock of

the machinations high politics in the Capital. What occurred over the course of February

1660 was fundamentally different. The control was shifting to institutions and opinion more

directly metropolitan and away from the government. In late March, for example, the

newsbooks printed '*A Compleat List of the Commissioned Officers of the six regiments of the*

Trained Bands of the City of London' [80] Militia lists of other counties were also presented in

the newsbooks, but those for London would have greater relevance as they would be names

of influence known within their communities. Furthermore, the manner in which the lists for

London were presented was in marked contrast to that for the militia lists of other counties

which appeared in the London newsbooks. In issue 224 of *The Publick Intelligencer*, for

example it had access to the lists of officers approved by the Council of State for Kent and

also for the militia cavalry for Berkshire. Whereas readers were informed that the list for the

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[78] *The Petitioners do therefore humbly pray that the militia of London may be forthwith settled in the hands of citizens of known integrity and interest in the City* reproduced in *Mercurius Politicus* 23/2/1660-1/3/ 1660 issue 609 and *The Publick Intelligencer* 20/2/1660-27/2/1660 issue 217. See also De Krey, *London and the Restoration*, p.25.

[79] De Krey, *London and The Restoration*, p.25.

[80] *Mercurius Politicus*, 22/2/1660-29/2/1660 issue 613, pp. 1205-1206 and *The Publick Intelligencer*, 26/2/1660-2/3/1660 issue 224, pp. 1194-1195.

London trained bands was complete, the title for the Kent list was more mundane; 'The Council of State approved of the officers for the County of Kent who are as followeth (no italicisation)'.[81] Similarly, the officer list for the County of Berkshire was presented in a matter of fact way, 'The Council of State does approve of Several officers of Horse for the County of Berkshire (no italicisation).'[82] The degree of emphasis being accorded to the list for London was far greater than that for Kent. In the case of Kent the names of thirty one men are given. This was only four names fewer than the number of names recorded for *The Commissioned officers of the Six Regiments for the Auxiliary Forces for the of City of London*.[83] However, The Kent list covered just over 50% of the lines of the page, whereas that for the London list was 89% of the lines. In fact, the London lists were presented in a manner which was clearer and easier to view. The conclusion which can be inferred is that greater importance was being accorded to the London lists by the manner in which they were being presented on the page, because they were of a more direct relevance to the metropolitan audience for which the newsbook mainly catered and because the newsbook was more identifying with London interests.

By the end of March the Shift in tack towards becoming clearly metropolitan in outlook had become overt in the change of loyalty claimed by both *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Publick Intelligencer* on their mastheads.

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[81] Ibid., p.1205.
[82] Ibid., p.1206.
[83] Ibid., p., 1203.

A brief summary of the changes appears below

Mercurius Politicus (From issue 613)	*The Publick Intelligencer* (From issue 224)
Communicating the chief Occurances	Communicating the chief Occurances
AND	AND
PROCEEDINGS	PROCEEDINGS
WITHIN	WITHIN
The Dominions of England, Scotland and Ireland	The Dominions of England, Scotland and Ireland
And particularly those of the Honorable	And particularly those of the Honorable
City of LONDON	City of LONDON
Together with an Account of Affairs from	Together with an Account of Affairs from
Severall parts of Europe	Severall parts of Europe
Published by Order	Published by Order

Concluding comments on the breakdown of the Interregnum news management in London

The change in political affiliation being adopted by the London newbooks reflected the development of conflict within London which had largely remained dormant during the years of the Protectorate. Throughout the Interregnum, there remained latent fear of a royalist fifth column harbouring in the capital. The sheer size of the Metropolis in relation to any other urban settlement in Europe was a major consideration because of the cloak of anonymity it allowed for clandestine elements to plot. There was also the ever present fear of dissent spiralling out of control as the crowd took to the streets. In such circumstances, therefore, a popular perception of an alliance of interests between the State and the wider London community was crucial to the survival of the regime. However, the coup which had overthrown the Commonwealth in October 1659, brought into the open divisions among senior officers of the army. This was the very institution upon which the survival of the

Interregnum regimes depended.[84]   It was the event which triggered a cascading of successor regimes, ultimately leading to the end of the Interregnum and the English experiment in republicanism. From the perspective of events in the Capital and its neighbouring communities, the breaking down of consensus among the factions holding up the Interregnum exacerbated tensions in London.

Section B: The Carolean regime and the restoration of a policy of news management

The focus of section B will be on the policy of news management under the Restoration. It will be the contention here that the royalist regime developed a strategy aimed at managing opinion in the Capital. In this, it followed a policy which had evolved since the Commonwealth. However, the failure to reassure that London was not a disputatious society willing to challenge authority, undermined the ability of state policy to live up to the challenge it had set itself. This was the successful projection of unity of City, populace and the State.

Historical consensus concerning the Restoration policy of news management and its limitations

Among scholars there is an acceptance that restoration of monarchical government was popular and especially in London; '[i]t is usually agreed that Londoners of all ranks welcomed back the King in the spring of 1660 with positive enthusiasm.'[85] Indeed, 'the first free elections since 1640 produced the massively pro-royalist Convention Parliament' and the return of Charles Stuart in June.[86]   However, scholars also acknowledge that Charles' hold on the Capital was far from secure; 'The civic magistrates, liverymen, militia bands and apprentices who greeted Charles II included many who had supported the Protectorate of

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[84] David Smith, 'The Struggle for New Constitutional Forms' in John Morrill ed., *Revolution and Restoration, England during the 1650s* pp. 15-34, (p.32).
[85] Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II*, p.36
[86] David L Smith, 'The Struggle for New Constitutional Forms', p.32.

Oliver Cromwell in 1653-8 and others who had supported the Commonwealth 1649-53.' [87]

Indeed, among Londoners, support for the King proved to be short lived:

> the honeymoon period of the Restoration did not last long, and the rejoicing of 1660 soon gave way to disillusionment. Many who had initially welcomed and even actively strove for the return of the monarchy, found themselves facing persecution for their religious beliefs and they naturally felt betrayed. [88]

Between May 1659 and the spring of 1660, the quick succession of regimes undermined authority. Furthermore, the public parodying of the Rump in early 1660 had serious long term implications for those who assumed power in its wake; people had gained a taste for openly challenging government. [89] The Restoration has been seen as restoring 'tighter press control, and 'overt official propaganda' led to an 'emasculation of the news industry.' [90] In general, however, there has been a neglect of the continued importance of news management as a means of state policy to bolster its legitimacy in the Capital. This is surprising since scholars have recognised Charles Stuart's own *sangfroid* at the shallow basis of his new found popularity in 1660; 'the rejoicing which accompanied the return of the crown…the King himself viewed with fitting scepticism.' [91] Indeed, the need for effective news management as opposed to censorship was recognised early on. The process can be seen in the following two developments, the setting up of a news monopoly based on legal foundations and crisis management in London 1660-1661.

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[87] Hutton, *London and the Restoration 1659-1683*, p.3. For evidence of the popular enthusiasm in London at the return of the monarchy see, E.S. De Beer, ed., *The Diary of John Evelyn* (London, 1959), p. 406: Entry 29 May (14-31 May). See also *The Diurnall of Thomas Rugg*, p. 76 (May 1660, Bon Fiers), pp. 79-80 'His Majesty Proclaimed in London,' and p.90, 'May 1660 Mr John Adler makes a bonfier'.

[88] Tim Harris, *London Crowds*, p.62. See also Tim Harris, *Restoration*, p.44. At the Declaration of Breda, Charles 'had promised to heal the wounds that had been kept bleeding for so long….. [t]he trouble was, the royal physician was unable to effect a cure.'

[89] For an analysis of how print both demystified and challenged authority see Mark Jenner, 'The Roasting of The Rump: Scatology and the Body Politic in Restoration England,' *Past and Present*, Volume 177, Number 1, November 2012, pp.84-120.

[90] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, p.403.

[91] Blair Worden, *The English Civil Wars, 1640-1660*, p.152. See also De Krey, *London and the Restoration*, p.3 and Hutton, *The Restoration*, pp. 119-123. See also Buchanan Sharp, 'Popular political Opinion in England 1660-1685,' *History of European Ideas*, Volume 10, Issue 1, 1989, pp.13-29. See p. 14, the government of Charles 2nd 'spent an enormous amount of time and effort worrying about its opponents and trying to ferret out their plots.'

The placing of the news monopoly on a legal basis.

During the 1650s, the relationship between the government and the state sponsored press in London had developed into a form of news distribution and management recognisable to contemporaries. However, the effective monopoly exercised by Nedham was never formally recognised in law. With the imminent collapse of the Commonwealth, the Council of State began a process which formally transferred responsibility for public provision of news of the affairs of State from Nedham. Indeed, ten days before he was dismissed from his position as effective state press agent, Thomas Rugg was aware of the predicament facing Marchamont Nedham:

> the cittizans of London as Aldermen and others went to the Council of state about some business of cocernment among other affairs asked that Mr Needham.he that write the newes books and called the weekly intealanger might write noe more, but that another might be put in his staid.[92]

An exclusive right to publish political and parliamentary news was eventually granted to the *Parliamentary Intelligencer* and *Mercurius Publicus*, edited by Henry Muddiman and Giles Drury. Under the Restoration, as state press agent, Muddiman was to be granted a legally enforced monopoly over the supply of news. In early April, the Council of State banned all newsbooks apart from those edited by him.[93] The process by which this transfer was made public was by means of a declaration by the Council of State which was printed first in The *Parliamentary Intelligencer* and later in its sibling, *Mercurius Publicus:*

> Whereas Marchamont Nedham, the author of the weekly newsletter called *Mercurius Politicus* and *Publique Intelligencer* is by order of the Council of State discharged from writing and publishing any public intelligence: The reader is desired to take notice that by order of the said council Henry Muddiman and Giles Drury are authorised henceforth to write and publish the said intelligence,

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[92] *Diurnall of Thomas Rugg*, p.67 (March 1660-the 29).
[93] Ronald Hutton in H.C.G. Matthews and Brian Harrison eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* pp. 628-629. The monopoly thus granted to Muddiman was then confirmed at the Restoration by the Privy Council.

the one upon the Monday and the other upon the Thursday, which they do intend to set out under the title of the *Parliamentary Intelligencer* and *Mercurius Publicus*.[94]

This was significant for several reasons. Firstly, in a clear and authoritative way, the Council of State asserted its control over the dissemination of news. It was also significant because, by publicly establishing the new monopoly, it was recognition of the importance of news management as a regime support. Finally, it was a reactionary policy; through exercising control over the dissemination of news, it aimed to stifle public discourse. However, sensitive to a more discerning public which was willing to probe the veracity of reporting, it also denigrated the reputation of the Interregnum newsbooks. This was done through sophisticated cross referencing of factual errors in their reporting. The point was clear; the errors in *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Publick Intelligencer* were the result of their loss of access to reliable, official sources of news. In issue 18 of the *Parliamentary Intelligencer*, it challenged *Mercurius Politicus* concerning errors it had made on minutiae; the choice of speaker for the House of Lords and the right of a newly elected parliamentarian to participate in a Commons vote. The article concluded, 'for the rest of the news much I suppose is gleaned from the streets…and coms two or three daies after the fair.'[95] That the new officially endorsed journals were aimed primarily for the Metropolis can be inferred both in place of publication and, importantly, the advertisements listed. Both *Mercurius Publicus* and the *Parliamentary Intelligencer* were published in London (John Macock at the Newcomb) and the advertising was primarily aimed at attracting the patronage of the metropolitan public; Fish Street, St Paul's Churchyard, Holborn, Fleet Street, Queen's Street

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[94] *Parliamentary Intelligencer*, 12/4 1660-19/4/1660 issue 13. Prior to this date the authority on the masthead read *For Information of the People*. From then on, the following was also included *Published by Order of the Council of State*. The first issue of *Mercurius Publicus* was 22/4/1660-29/4/1660. The proclamation which first appeared in the *Parliamentary Intelligencer* 26/3/1660-2/4/1660 issue 14 was reprinted 2/4/1660-9/4/1660, issue 15, 9/4/1660-16/4/1660 issue 16 and 16/4/1660-23/4/1660 issue 17. It was reproduced in *Mercurius Publicus* 21/5/1660-28/5/1660 issue 22. See also *Diurnall of Thomas Rugg*, p.67 'April 1660 Mr Needham'.
[95] *Parliamentary Intelligencer* 23/4/1660-30/4/1660 issue 18, pp. 280-281.

and St Paul's churchyard are all locations with which Londoners would have been familiar.[96] In a minority of the adverts displayed, however, the vendors were from outside of London; Great Yarmouth, King's Norton, The Guildhall (Norwich) and Salops (Shropshire) were listed.[97] Clearly then, some change in distribution was occurring as the journals were, albeit in small part, attempting to cater for a broader audience beyond the Metropolis.

<u>Characteristics of early news management of the Carolean authorities</u>.

In responding to threats to its authority in the Capital, the Carolean regime showed a marked degree of continuity with practices adopted during the Interregnum. This could be seen in a number of ways all of which demonstrated the importance of news management in the eyes of those who held power in the Capital. As during the Interregnum, the Carolean State sponsored press advertised both the vigilance and ability of the authorities in infiltrating London based plots. In copying its predecessors, the Restoration press sought to demonstrate the ability of the State to exercise effective control over the Metropolis. Given the seriousness of the challenges to the new regime, the support of the loyal press had never been more important. The Carolean press in deliberately isolating the opponents of the regime from mainstream civil society, sought to project a consensus of City, citizens and the State united with a common purpose connecting the safety and security of the State with that of the Metropolis. In this, of course, it was returning to a theme familiar in the news management of the Capital during the Interregnum.

A summary of the change in stance taken by various London based journals in the transition from Interregnum towards the Restoration is summarised in the table below.

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[96] *Parliamentary Intelligencer*, 26/3/1660-2/4/1660 issue 14, pp. 222-223. See also 6/2/1660-13/2/1660 Thomason issue 8, p.7. Adverts first appeared 30/1/1660-6/2/1660, Issue 7: 'St Paul's Churchyard'. See also 6/2/1660-13/2/1660 issue 8, p.87, 'St Paul's Churchyard'.

[97] *Parliamentary Intelligencer*, 26/3/1660-2/4/1660 issue 14, p.223. See also 6/2/1660-13/2/1660 issue 8, p.223. See also 30/1/1660-6/12/1660 issue 7, p.8, 'Guildhall, Norwich'. See also 2/4/1660-9/4/1660, Thomason issue 15, pp. 232-233 'Nottingham'. See also 9/4/1660-16/4/1660 issue 16, p.246, 'Yorkshire'.

Chronology	Mercurius Politicus	The Publick Intelligencer	Parliamentary Intelligencer	Mercurius Publicus
Late December 1659	From 22/12/1659 Published by Order of Parliament	From 26/12/1659 Published by Order of Parliament	From 19/12/1659 For information of the People	N/A
Spring 1660	From 22/3/1660 Published by order	From 26/3/1660 Published by Order	From 12/3/1660 Published by Order of the Council of State	First Issue 22/4/1660 Published by Order of the Council of State

Note of the table

Mercurius Publicus and the *Parliamentary Intelligencer* were sibling journals. They came out on the same days as *Mercurius Politicus* (Thursday- *Mercurius Publicus*) and also *The Publick Intelligencer* (Monday- *Parliamentary Intelligencer*) As with the example of *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Publick Intelligencer*, news printed in *The Parliamentary Intelligencer* was replicated in *Mercurius Publicus*.

Examples of the evolution of Restoration news management in London 1660-1661

In the course of December 1660 through to January 1661, two crises in particular highlighted the extent to which the authorities were being challenged; unrest amongst discharged soldiers following the disbanding of the army in December, and the London Fifth Monarchist rising in January 1661. Both have been selected because they are illustrative of different methods by which the Carolean regime managed the flow of news in London at times of crisis.

1. News management of the soldiers' insurrection December 1660

From across various parts of the country, correspondence from its agents warned the government of the threat of rebellion; the government received 'numerous reports of alleged plots'.[98] Furthermore, '[l]ocal court records provide numerous examples of individuals accused of speaking out against the restoration of the monarchy.'[99] More ominously for the

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[98] Harris, *Restoration*, p.49.
[99] Harris, *Restoration*, p.48, See also BHO, CSPD, Charles 2nd, Volume 28, January 1661, p.472, William Delaville to Edward Grey', 10/1/1661, Gateshead; 'many of the disbanded forces lie about Newcastle and would join the fanatics to raise a new war. The pulpit blows sparks.'

government were reports of 'common discourse that the government will not last a year.'[100]

In December 1660, government agents uncovered a plot in London to overthrow the regime.

In the reporting of the soldiers' rising in London, the Restoration newsbooks followed a style

with which Nedham would have been familiar. This was the promotion of state security, the

alleged malevolent designs of the mutineers towards London and the developing of a regular

readership. Taking each of these in turn, in mid-December, the *Parliamentary Intelligencer*

alerted readers to anti-government plot involving cashiered officers. To reassure and to deter,

state vigilance was held as crucial in the defeat of the plot, 'their designs discovered from

several places and by several persons'.[101] The latter is suggestive of the intervention of agent

provocateurs, involvement of whom was reminiscent of the foiling of plots by the authorities

during the Cromwellian Protectorate. Indeed, Sir Edward Nicholas, Secretary to the Privy

Council wrote, that the government 'suffered it [plot] to ripen till it burst out a few days ago

from several persons engaged in it.'[102] The seriousness of the plot to the security of the

regime and the City was made clear in the highly partisan nature of the reporting. The

plotters were described as 'busie varlets' and 'some have confessed their horrid contrivance

against his Majesty, the Duke of Albermarle and the peace of the Nation.'[103] The names of

over forty men arrested, including senior military officers were listed. The threat to London

was alluded to in the location of the plot, the wider aims suggested of the plotters and the

involvement of senior officers. Finally, in order to maintain the interest of the reader, the

newsbooks made clear that further details would be disclosed as the investigations of the

authorities in London made progress. For example, in referring to the initial arrests and

interrogations, the *Parliamentary Intelligencer* admitted it was only able as yet to give partial

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[100] Delaville warned about the role of merchants disaffected with the present regime 'who disperse infinite quantities of powder and shot into the northern counties and Scotland.'

[101] *Parliamentary Intelligencer* 10/12/1660-17/12/1660 issue 51, pp. 823-824.

[102] BHO, CSPD: Charles 2nd, Volume 23, December 1660, December 17th, p.415, 'Sec Nicholas to Hen Bennet'.

[103] *Parliamentary Intelligencer* 10/12/1660-17/12/1660 issue 51, pp. 823-824.

reportage; 'the issue whereof is not yet fit for publication.'[104]   The story line was, however

taken up in the following issue of *Mercurius Publicus* which both corrected errors in

reporting made by *The Parliamentary intelligencer* and also gave further names of men taken

into custody.[105]   In the manner in which the newsbooks reported on the discovery of the plot,

they followed a pattern similar to that which had been employed during the Interregnum by

Mercurius Politicus and *The Publick Intelligencer.* Faced with a threat to its authority in the

Capital, the line being encouraged in the press was one of the vigilance of the State, aided

and abetted by an efficient and capable spy network. However, as under the Interregnum, in

their reports, the newsbooks were alluding to the vulnerability of the regime in the Capital.

The latter was illustrated by the proclamation calling upon cashiered officers, soldiers 'and

other persons who cannot give a good account of their being there out of London and

Westminster.'[106] Perhaps more ominously, however, and a clearer indication of the degree to

which the regime estimated the threat to its authority was the positioning of artillery, 'some

great ordnance' at Whitehall. This was the centre of government and a symbol of power in

the Metropolis, 'since nothing can be too much to prevent the designs of these bloody

contrivers.'[107]

2. <u>News reporting of the London Fifth Monarchy rising in January 1661</u>

Of particular concern to the government was that posed by religious radicalism which, it was

believed inclined adherents to particularly violent and desperate means:

> the fifth monarchy men made several attempts to disturb the public peace. They
> were taken so timely that their numbers were inconsiderable yet their taking and
> giving no quarter showed what might be expected from their barbarous rage had
> they succeeded.[108]

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[104] Ibid., pp. 822-824.

[105] *Mercurius Publicus* 13/12/1660-20/12/1660 issue 51, pp. 810-811.

[106]BHO, CSPD: Charles 2nd Volume 23, December 1660, p.415, December 17.

[107] *Mercurius Publicus* 13/12/1660-20/12/1660 issue 51, pp. 810-811.

[108] BHO, CSPD: Charles 2nd, Volume 28 January 10th, 1661, p.472, 'Sir Nicholas to Henry Bennet.'

Before the Restoration, The Fifth Monarchists had sought the overthrow of both monarchy and Protectorate, and now transferred their attention to the overthrow of the regime of Charles 2nd:

> What made Fifth Monarchists potentially more dangerous than their contemporaries was the central place they gave to the doctrine and commitment to make it a reality at any cost, including, apparently, by force.[109]

The numbers involved might be small, 'but they did succeed in frightening the government.'[110] The rising to establish the Fifth Monarchy of the Kingdom of Christ by the London based Fifth Columnists in early January 1661 was led by Thomas Venner and attracted a great deal of publicity.[111] In comparison with news management of the officers' revolt a few weeks previously, the news management of the Fifth Monarchist rising was aimed at challenging rumour and avoiding panic. It was also an opportunity for a projection of civic patriotism in defence against a determined but supposedly fanatical minority. The impact of the Fifth Monarchists in stoking the popular imagination was made evident in the diaries of both John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys. John Evelyn's reference was brief but alluded to their extremism in the following 'another rising of the phanaticks.'[112] In contrast, however, was the coverage by Samuel Pepys between 7th-9th January. His diary gave clear evidence of the disruption caused by the rising. He alluded to the swift action by the authorities to events. According to his entry on 7th, for example, 'My Lord Mayor and the whole City had been in arms, above 40 000'.[113] Even allowing for exaggeration, the impression that the authorities viewed events with alarm was clear and credible as it was so

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[109] Andrew Bradstock, *Radical Religion in Cromwell's England: A Concise History From the English Civil War to the end of the Commonwealth* (London, 2011), p.134.

[110] Harris, *Restoration*, pp. 50-51; 'there was a small rising of perhaps some fifty Fifth Monarchists in London in January 1661.'

[111] *The last speech and Prayer with other passages of Thomas Venner the late incourager and Promoter of the late horrid rebellion, 1660,* Thomason Reel Position/ Wing 521:07 copy from University of Chicago, Illinois.

[112] De Beer, ed., *Diary of John Evelyn*, entry 13th January 1661, p.415 (30 December 1660-c.29 January 1661)

[113] John Warrington, ed., *Diary of Samuel Pepys,* Volume I (London, 1966), 7th January 1661, p.126.

soon after the abortive coup at the end of the previous year.[114] That the authorities were

concerned at containing rumour and panic is suggested by the disruption caused to the

commercial life of the City. Pepys recorded on 9th, 'the streets full of trained bands and great

stories what mischief these rogues have done and I think near a dozen have been killed this

morning on both sides. The shops shut.'[115] The disruption continued into the following day;

'all the city was in arms.'[116] The sporadic but widespread outbreaks of Fifth Monarchist

risings across London encouraged panic, 'they were seen up and down in almost every place

in the City and had been in Highgate two or three days and in several other places'[117] Such

was the impact of rumour at a time when the authorities were in the process of investigating a

serious plot among army officers, that sources close to official circles sought to counter the

tension through official spin. Here, of course, the loyalist press was able to provide an

important means by which the official version could be widely publicized and exaggeration

challenged. Importantly, therefore, on the title page of *Mercurius Publicus* the following was

included '*and to prevent false news'*.[118]

As with the soldiers' revolt in December, the Restoration news spin isolated the rebels from

mainstream civil society, 'their number be very small, yet their malice and bloodthirstiness is

not easie to be equalled.'[119] A theme which was persistent in the reporting of plots in the

Capital was the inherent treachery of the rebels which both undermined their schemes but

which also set them apart from the moral norms of mainstream society. One of the plotters

had betrayed his fellow conspirators to the authorities.[120]   As before, in the way in which the

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[114] Ibid., pp.126- 127, entry 7th January 1661.
[115] Ibid., p.127, entry 9th January 1661.
[116] Ibid., p.127, entry 10th January 1661.
[117] Ibid. Indeed, Pepys noted the sporadic nature of their attacks across London. In his opinion, this explained why their numbers became inflated and also why the militia had been mobilised in force. He revised his figures from 500 rebels down to 31.
[118] *Mercurius Publicus* 3/1/1661-10/1/1661 issue 1.
[119] Ibid., pp. 12-13, January 6th.
[120] Ibid.

Gerard Plot (1654) and the Sindercombe Plot (1657) had been reported, the pro government press described the plotters as irrational and desperate, as much a threat to order and stability in the Metropolis as to the regime in power. In the case of the Fifth Monarchists, this being clearly conveyed in phrases such as *'bloody zelots', 'rogues', 'wilde rebels* and *'phanatique rebels' '.*[121] The hopelessness of the rebel cause was emphasised in the fact that at each armed confrontation with the forces loyal to the government, the rebels were forced to disperse. In contrast to the small numbers of the rebels, the forces loyal to the government were described in terms which suggested a city wide consensus in support of the authorities, 'Londoners so dispersed the rebels that none of them were to be found.'[122]

Conclusion

In the course of the first months of the Restoration, the relationship between the London based press and government had only in part been a continuation of developments begun during the Interregnum. What was a continuation was an acceptance that the public needed to be informed of state political affairs. This was to be achieved through the selective management of news disseminated through state patronised newsbooks. The closeness of this relationship with the press was made particularly clear at times when the regime felt threatened in the Capital. The response was to encourage story lines which suggested the ever watchfulness of the state and the professionalism of the forces at its disposal to effectively counter the designs of plotters. The public was being encouraged to believe that in spite of their planning, plots were doomed to failure; the apparatus of the state too widespread and efficient. As if to win over moderate and influential opinion in the Capital, the designs of those who sought to overthrow the regime were described as desperate,

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[121] Ibid., pp. 12-13 January 6th see also Pepys' diary, volume I, entry January 10th p.128, he referred to the fanaticism of the Fifth Monarchists 'A thing that never was heard of, and that so few men should dare and do so much mischief.'
[122] *Mercurius Publicus* 3/1/1661-10/1/1661 issue 1, pp. 12-13.

threatening to plunge the City into disorder and chaos. This, of course, was a fear easy to plant in the minds of those with a stake in society. Problems of policing and maintaining order were magnified in a rapidly expanding metropolis with an increasingly large, heterogeneous and, to some extent, transient population. In fact, the innovation of a state press strategy can be seen as a direct response to governing the second largest city and metropolis on the continent. It aimed to bring together otherwise disconnected groups by reminding them of a shared interest in support of authority. Yet, in spite of continuity in news management from 1650, at the beginning of the Restoration, a new development was occurring. This was a publicly acknowledged state news management. This was a result of two factors; firstly, the rapid regime change in the course of 1659-60 had fatally undermined the authority of official newsbooks to claim to speak for those in power. The inconsistency in the way in which *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Publick Intelligencer* reported, undermined their status as purveyors of reliable news from official sources.   As a result, it became necessary to make public and therefore official both the status of *Mercurius Publicus* and the *Parliamentary Intelligencer* as the new news organs of the state and their editors as official press agents. The scale of the threat to the newly established Carolean regime occasioned a further development in the relationship between press and government. What had only been an implicit aim of the Interregnum newsbooks, the Carolean press publicly assumed an additional role namely 'to prevent false news'. In this way, a standard of integrity of reporting was to be established which reflected the acknowledgment that in London there was now an independent and, importantly, discerning public opinion. In the longer term, however, it was to limit the ability of government to control news reporting; veracity of news required full coverage of events. If the news book was now an established institution in metropolitan society and the government was constrained in its ability to manipulate news, the basis was being laid for an embryonic independent press which would ultimately emerge

into a check on executive and parliamentary power. In the short term, the degree of access

being granted to pro regime journals to official sources of news and views inadvertently

painted a picture of London and metropolitan society at odds with the one which the same

sources wished to convey. In fact, the image of the Metropolis which increasingly emerges

in the press in the mid-seventeenth century is one of a disputatious and divided society where

the authority of those who claimed power was never really secure.

Conclusion

The focus of this thesis has been on both the development of newsbooks and their impact on English society during the mid-seventeenth century. It has sought to address the limits of the current research which has focused on the 1640s. There has been the development of a substantial corpus of scholarship and a lively debate on the relationship between these journals and an embryonic public opinion, independent of government control. In challenging the conclusions made earlier by Habermas[1], amongst scholars, a new consensus has emerged. There is general agreement that, in England, an independent public opinion was in existence before the outbreak of the Civil War. [2] In sharp contrast to the historiographical focus on the 1640s, the development of the newsbook during the Interregnum has been neglected.

Scholars have emphasized the importance of the newsbooks in both reflecting and stimulating the partisan conflict which characterized the political crisis in England during the 1640s. The newsbook, therefore, has been seen as symptomatic of the collapse of a system of centralized censorship which had restricted access to news of state affairs to the privileged elite. In part, the return of state censorship was a watershed because it aimed to reverse press pluralism. The most important change, however, was the beginnings of a systematic system of news management. In fact, a focus on the official newsbooks of the 1650s sheds light on their changing functions as they became an increasingly important part of state apparatus. Indeed, over the course of the decade, Mercurius *Politicus* evolved from an essentially propaganda pamphlet into an important conduit connecting the State and the metropolitan community. At times of crisis, when the power of centralized authority was threatened in the Capital, the

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[1] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambride, Mass., 1991)

[2] Valerie Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution; City Government and National Politics, 1637-1645* (Oxford, 1961)

newsbooks did not just provide official spin on events but were important means by which the reaction of the State to these threats was both communicated and justified to a metropolitan audience.

Amongst scholars, there has been recognition of the fact that mid-seventeenth century London represented a considerable problem of law and order. In particular, there is acknowledgment of the considerable royalist sympathies which remained in the Capital throughout the Interregnum.[3] What has been overlooked, however, is the role played by the official newsbook as a means by which the State sought to manage opinion in the Capital. This was a direct response to governing the largest metropolis in Western Europe. From the middle of the sixteenth century, the exponential growth of London's population was fuelled by internal migration. During the mid- seventeenth century, of course, this meant that the majority of 'Londoners' were first generation immigrants. From its appearance in June 1650, *Mercurius Politicus* appealed to a metropolitan community. In a variety of ways, therefore, the newsbooks attempted to give meaning to London as an interconnected community, thereby calling upon the reader to develop a sense of civic patriotism and a shared identity with his fellow citizens. The newsbook identified with those who had a stake in society; at times of crisis, when plots to overthrow the regime were uncovered, the reader was reminded of the importance of maintaining the political and social status quo. In this, the newsbook repeatedly drew attention to the very real threat of a loss of control in the Capital and a fear of anarchy should the State be overthrown. Yet, by drawing attention to the threats to state authority, the newsbooks reminded the reader that the Metropolis was a contested arena. This was most sharply demonstrated in the collapse of the Interregnum 1659-60. In this way, therefore, the development of an informed and independent public opinion, which had

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[3] Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997) and Jason McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Martlesham, Suffolk, 2007)

preceded the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642, was to undermine attempts by state

sponsored news management to control it.

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