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The Currency of the Word: Communications, War and Revolution in the formation of the Nation-state, 1608-1655

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Description/Abstract

An original and provocative analysis of the role of communications in the Thirty Years War and the English Revolution of 1640-1649. The years covered by the book saw the first printed new periodicals, the opening of the royal postal system to public correspondence, the monopolization of the posts by the state, and the exploitation of this communications infrastructure for surveillance and news purposes by the emerging territorial state. The book argues that all these developments were related aspects in the emergence of a currency of the word, a change in the temporal status of literate media. Printed commentary now flowed synchronously alongside the events it described creating dispersed publics and major changes in political institutions. Both the Thirty Years War and the English Revolution were simultaneous and violent reformulations of power relations among territorially dispersed political authorities.

Keywords

Communications History, Postal Systems, English Civil War, Sovereignty, Surveillance

Disciplines

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PREFACE

Odd as it may seem, this book about 17th century communications had its origins in the policy battles over 20th and 21st century telecommunications. Observing the AT&T breakup in 1984 and the spread of telecommunications privatization, competition and deregulation to Europe and Japan, the author became intensely curious about the historical origins of the Post, Telephone and Telegraph (PTT) monopolies that were unraveling. Explanations centering on the alleged economies of scope and scale offered by professional economists proved, upon careful historical investigation, to fall short. A look into the historical process shows that purely techno-economic factors had very little to do with how and why telecommunications became a monopoly in the first place.[1] While competition, market forces and consolidation did play a major role in the evolution of the telephone and telegraph in the United States, in most of Europe and the rest of the world it became evident that the roots of telecommunications monopoly lay in the state monopoly on the postal infrastructure, which later took over and absorbed first the telegraph, and then the telephone.

The author then tried to find out how and why postal systems became a monopoly. As a young researcher based on the United States, he began by investigating the development of posts in colonial America. There he found a presumption of postal monopoly. There was only one short bout of postal competition during the Revolutionary War, and that was when royalists and the American revolutionaries ran their own, separate systems. The split structure mirrored political and military contingencies more than economic ones. During normal times the communications infrastructure seemed oddly exempt from the market forces that prevailed elsewhere in the economy. But there was almost no commentary or discussion of it as a policy issue. The American colonists had simply inherited the notion of a single state-run postal system from Britain. The post office went on to become the largest department in the U.S. government during the 19th and early 20th century.[2] To solve the riddle of its monopoly status I had to go back even further in time, to England in the 17th century.

The story of how and why a postal monopoly evolved in what is now the United Kingdom proved to be a fascinating one, with deep implications for our understanding of the relationship between

[1] See Mueller. M. (1997) for an analysis of the economics of competition and interconnection in early telephone exchanges and the failure of standard supply-side economies of scale and scope explanations for the existence of monopoly.

[2] John, R. (1998).

communications and political structure. The modern postal monopoly was closely correlated with the establishment of the territorial state in the 17th century. The state postal system not only provided secure internal communication for the state, it also gave the central government more control over the circulation of printed and written communications by society as a whole, helping it to secure political and military control of its territory during the turbulence of the Reformation and the 30 Years War. In Cromwell's England it also served as the basis for a modern national intelligence agency, as correspondence was fed into a centralized hub and spoke system and brought into London for surveillance purposes. The postal system was also the backbone of the modern newspaper. Local postmasters collected 'newes' from correspondence and compiled it into publications at fixed regular intervals in order to keep current with events. There was thus a clear connection between the ability to control communications and the formation and sovereignty of the state. Once the postal infrastructure and its publicity and intelligence apparatus had taken root, it was perhaps inevitable that the telephone and telegraph were simply taken over by that institutional behemoth as a matter of course. The PTT monopoly was a highly significant institutional equilibrium for centuries, and its existence had more to do with political factors than economic ones.

To see such a sudden and radical departure from the monopoly PTT in the 1980s and 1990s indicated that something fundamental about the state was changing. The globalization of communications and the rise of market forces in their supply signaled a profound change in the form of the state. The rise of the Internet, with its enabling of a globalized cyberspace, was merely an outgrowth of this process. Once liberalization opened the door to global market forces, innovation, new entry and competition, it also became possible for new information services to ride on top of the physical infrastructure, and create a globalized virtual information economy.

This historical exploration of the English Civil War thus provides useful background for understanding the modern world. The work started as my Master's thesis at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications in the mid-1980s. By way of acknowledgements, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Carolyn Marvin, for her infectious enthusiasm about the study of communications history. Thanks also go to Dr. Klaus Krippendorff, my second reader, who provided good advice and whose work provided an even better example. The late Walter Grinder and Leonard Liggio of the Institute for Humane Studies provided valuable economic and intellectual support during a difficult period. My friends Mary Fissell, Laury Bowman and Kevin Hardwick provided much needed moral support with their comments and discussions of earlier drafts.

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

In England as in all of Europe, the second quarter of the 17th century was a time of tremendous political upheava1. No less than twelve political uprisings or peasant revolts were going on at about the same time as the English Revolution of 1642-49.[3] Beginning around 1608, a chain reaction of alliances and interventions made in a climate of religious polarization began to engulf all European powers in a general war, the so-called Thirty Years War of 1618-1648. Because at one point it engaged virtually every world power it has been called the “first world war;” because it simultaneously involved so many European states it has also been called the “European Civil War.”

In England, this historical turning point is closely associated with decisive changes in the institutions of public communication. The years 1620-1641 saw the first printed news periodicals, the opening of the royal postal system to public correspondence, the first public postal schedule, the first moves toward monopolization of the posts by the state. It is the contention of this book that all these developments were related aspects in the emergence of a “currency of the word.” The term "currency" was chosen because it neatly encapsulates the change in the temporal status of literate media – printed commentary now flowed synchronously alongside the events it described, across an extended geographic territory. It also invokes the idea that these messages circulated, like money, through the body politic. The first periodicals, in fact, were called “courantes” and "gazettes;" the Dutch used the term “Courantgeld” for money in general use, and the Italian word "gazetti" was also the name of a Venetian coin.

In more conventional terms, this is a study of the emergence, in England in the 17th century, of an apparatus of long distance, current news communication based on a new combination of posts, literate media and the press. The period covered begins in 1608 with the formation of the Protestant Union by continental enemies of the Hapsburgs and ends in 1655 with the assumption of unified control over news periodicals, the intelligence department and the Post Office by Cromwell's Secretary of State.

The appearance of periodic news publication, the above-mentioned postal developments and the

[3] Hill (1958) p. 133.

general political crisis are so closely associated in time that some kind of causal link seems likely. Yet this association has never been addressed satisfactorily by historians. Allen (1930) and Bucher (1901) provide us with a long string of dates, ranging from 1609 to 1661, concerning the first documented appearance of printed news periodicals in European states and cities. The exact correspondence between these dates and the political crisis, however, is left unremarked. At best, one finds the assertion that the Thirty Years War created a widespread public demand for news that stimulated incipient journalists to go out and cover a hot story.[4]

To say that political conflict created a demand for news which was met by the periodical is true, but begs the question. There were plenty of wars and political uprisings prior to 1609 to keep journalists and the public occupied: the wars with the Scots and France in the early 16th century; the civil wars in France and the Dutch rebellion of the latter part of the 16th century; England's war with Spain after 1588. There were numerous domestic conflicts as well: the Henrician Reformation and the Pilgrimage of Grace, the Marian persecution, the early clashes between James I and his Parliaments. We must ask why this particular war attracted so much attention and why this interest led to serial publication of news at regular intervals. The political crises of the first half of the 17th century did more than just "make news" in the contemporary sense; they literally created "the news" as we know it by bringing together the institutional arrangements supporting modern journalism for the first time.

In the process of investigating these questions I was led to the following argument regarding the history of the news periodical:

The appearance of the first printed newspapers at the same time as the Thirty Years War and the English Revolution was not coincidental. Both phenomena reflected the expanded capability for, and increased dependence on, rapid and regular long distance communication. Both the Thirty Years War and the English Revolution were simultaneous and violent reformulations of power relations among territorially dispersed political authorities. The gradual development of postal transportation and regular correspondent networks had brought these authorities into increasingly current communication with each other. In this case, however, communication did not produce cooperation and harmony but polarization and conflict. Protestants and Catholics across Europe were drawn into a coordinated series of diplomatic, military and political maneuvers. The resulting wars - both inter- and intra-national - represented the final collapse of an older system of localized and semi-autonomous political units, and

[4] Frank (1961) p. 3.

their consolidation into integrated national entities. The birth of the news periodical was associated with political crises that were national in scope and hence created a need for temporally coordinated, mechanically duplicated messages for "mass" distribution[5] over long distances.

In this context, the most salient feature of the 17th century newspaper was its periodicity. Periodicity is interpreted here as a *temporal* phenomenon, a coordinative standard similar in function to a clock. The fixed, regular publication cycle synchronized news production and transportation with other regular cycles of human activity and acted as a common time standard for geographically dispersed readers. Periodicity vested literate media with a rudimentary structure of simultaneity, just as a town clock integrates and coordinates social activity by broadcasting time signals at regular intervals. When coupled with the duplicative powers of the press, this temporally coordinated literate communication allowed a larger, territorially dispersed public to interact as a national unit. The geographic scope of simultaneous communication, previously limited by the range of the human voice, was systematically extended in scale and geographic scope through a combination of literate media, posts and periodicity.

Several distinct bodies of secondary historical literature had to be examined to establish these points. Histories of English journalism provided the crucial supporting information regarding the origins of the newspaper and its development as an institution. These studies were supplemented by works on the history of printing, literacy and education in England. I drew especially heavily on Elizabeth Eisenstein's *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, finding her concept of "typographical fixity" a useful tool to bring to the analysis of journalistic, postal and political developments. English postal histories outlined the development of an infrastructure of periodic transport and communication during the Tudor and Stuart era. Political and social histories, particularly those concerned with Parliament, the crucible of periodic news production, provided insight into the military, religious and constitutional factors contributing to the English Revolution. The importance of the international political and religious context made it necessary to consult several works on the Dutch rebellion and the events of the Thirty Years War. The history of English Protestantism and the political role of the clergy offered important clues to the links between communication patterns, religious ideology and political change. My attempt to identify periodicity with a time standard and argue for its role in the creation of a national public required consulting various works on theories of public formation and simultaneous

[5] "Mass" communication in the 17th century still meant somewhat smaller, more elite audiences of readers than in the 19th century.

communication drawn from mass communication theorists and the history of time keeping technology.

Many primary sources in this well-tilled field of historical endeavor have been printed and are available in American libraries. The 18 surviving issues of the Dutch corantos of 1620-1 were reprinted in facsimile by van Stockum in 1914. The Library of Congress possesses original copies of scattered numbers of 26 different English news books of the 1640s, including 130 consecutive numbers of *Mercurius Britanicus*. The *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic* for the reigns of Elizabeth, James, Charles I and the Interregnum was a mainstay of my investigation of political and postal history. The Acts of the Privy Council contained much data on postal matters from Elizabeth's reign to 1631. The eight volumes of the Stationer's Register list all printed publications entered in the ledger of the Company for censorship and copyright purposes from 1554 to 1708. The letters written by John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, English ambassador to The Hague for the years 1597 to 1626 have been published. Similarly, the letters of another intelligencer, John Pory, are reproduced on microfilm in Powell (1974).

The study is divided into five sections. Chapter 2 looks at how the newspaper and the themes of printing and periodicity have been handled in the existing literature. The theoretical arguments about periodicity, time standards and public formation are elaborated in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 chronicles the development of a fixed infrastructure of postal transportation radiating out from London, and analyzes the political and economic factors leading to its monopolization by the state.

Chapter 5 is concerned with the political developments of the years 1608 to 1622. It documents how the widening scope of political/religious conflict led to printed duplication of news periodicals in Germany and the Netherland s. It then focuses on the rift between the Puritan clergy and King James over foreign policy and analyzes the role of news correspondence and news periodicals in creating it. Chapter 6 begins in 1624 with the first of a series of four Parliaments called by Charles I to involve England in the European war. It shows how these Parliaments became the matrix for the development of periodic written communication about national politics. The chapter concludes by narrating the conscious centralization and monopolization of these structures of current communication under the Cromwell’s Protectorate. A concluding chapter summarizes the argument and relates it to current debates about the relationship between cybersecurity, Internet governance and the territorial state.

Chapter Two

PERIODICITY AND PRINT IN COMMUNICATIONS HISTORY

Conventional journalism history tends to treat the earliest newspapers as if they were imperfect *or* embryonic versions of today's *New York Times*. The essential characteristics of the modern urban daily are abstracted and projected into the past, and the historian's attention is limited to describing when, how and where these characteristics first appeared. This approach can obscure some of the most interesting historical questions. Why was the early newspaper published at regular, weekly intervals? Why were its contents confined to a very specific set of political and military events to the exclusion of everything else? Who read them? And why did it take so long after the invention of printing for a periodical press to appear?

This last question, concerning the relationship between the printing press and the newspaper, offers an example of how misleading the projection of a modern category into the past can be. Today, news periodicals and “the press” are virtual synonyms. But Gutenberg invented moveable metal type in 1452, long before there were printed periodicals. Within a few years of his invention political pamphlets, advertising bills, business forms, posters, calendars, maps, pictures and practically every other contemporary application of the press can be found emerging from the workshops alongside the printed book. Printed broadsheets, ballads and pamphlets concerning individual news items also date back to the earliest days of printing. Printed periodicals are the conspicuous exception; they did not appear in Europe until 1609 and in England itself until 1620.

Because the relationship between printing and journalism is a major focus of this study, this chapter combines its review of 17th century journalism history with an evaluation of Elizabeth Eisenstein’s 1979 Masterpiece *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. *Printing Press* is an historian’s response to Marshall McLuhan’s thoughts about the effect of communications media on mind and society. Unlike McLuhan, Eisenstein proceeds by examining in exhaustive detail the historical evidence concerning the cultural and intellectual consequences of the shift from scribal to mechanical duplication of texts. Her book succeeds, I think, in demonstrating a correspondence between specific forms of literate knowledge and specific techniques of book production. Her argument also bears directly on interpreting the communicative significance of periodic publication.

According to Eisenstein, the revolutionary effects of printing can be derived from the

quantity and uniformity of mechanical duplication. In contrast to the “drifting texts, migrating manuscripts, localized chronologies” and “multiform maps” generated by scribal transmission of literature, printing placed identical texts in identical format before widely scattered readers. Eisenstein sums up the contrast in the term "typographical fixity." Printing, that is, connected book readers by a common process of repeatable production no less than by the meaning of the word s on the page. Typographical fixity denotes not only the physical uniformity of the press’s output, but the stable, uniform framework of reference and interpretation constructed around it by the readers and writers of books. The standardized process through which printed texts are generated embodies much latent information. The quantity, origin, author and date of a printed edition, for example, can be deduced from its conditions of production. References to other printed works can be identified and checked more readily. This is not true of scribal duplication; as Eisenstein points out. The very idea of an "edition" is a virtual anachronism when applied to hand duplication of manuscripts.[1] Thus, printing constructed a "community of knowledge" by reducing the knowledge contained in texts to the common matrix of moveable metal type.

After pinpointing this critical difference between scribal and print transmission, Eisenstein amasses evidence of the specific ways the shift from one to the other left its mark on culture and intellectual history. Texts which previously had been isolated could now be brought together, compared, and cross-referenced. Their data could be rationalized, codified, and catalogued to improve access to and manipulation of the existing stock of knowledge. Eisenstein attributes many of the scientific advances of the 16th and 17th centuries to this legacy of printing.[2] The preservative powers of the press also enhanced cumulative progress in science and technology. The relationship between fixity and cumulative change is invoked as the explanation for the permanence of the 15th century Renaissance as opposed to earlier, ephemeral revivals of the 13th and 14th centuries.[3]

Eisenstein makes a strong case for typographical fixity's revolutionary impact on literature. But her case is not extended to include the use of printed media in public affairs. Her remarks about journalism and propaganda are confined to a brief, 8-page section entitled "From a hearing public to a reading public: some unevenly phased social and psychological changes.”[4] The discussion there skips about the period between the 16th and 18th centuries without explicitly recognizing that the use of printing as a medium of public

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[1] Eisenstein (1979), p. 11-12.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 72, 88, 566-74, 578-9.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 163-302.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 129-136.

affairs developed according to a timetable of its own, quite independently of book printing.

As I explain below, scribal duplication of news matter thrived long after hand duplication of books had vanished. The rationalization of information about news and transportation, in the form of regular public schedules, took place a century after the bibliographic rationalization of printed publications.[5] Books of the kind considered by Eisenstein were meant to be definitive and complete statements about stable subjects, lasting storehouses of knowledge. Their value to the publisher was proportional to their longevity, measured by the number of editions that could be printed and sold. The news periodical, on the other hand, was a perishable commodity, an inherently open-ended publication whose contents were always subject to revision and updating. The branches of publication Eisenstein shows to have been transformed by typographical fixity include natural sciences such as astronomy, classical literature and scholarship, maps, chronology, biblical studies and interpretation, bibliography, herbals and anatomy. All concern subjects wherein knowledge can be patiently accumulated and texts cross-referenced over time. This contrasts markedly with such subjects as Parliamentary debates and coalitions, changes in ecclesiastical policies and alliances, diplomatic maneuvering, the weather and natural disasters, battles and fleet and troop movements, which formed the stuff of the periodical. With the exception of the weather, which was only reported in extraordinary cases, all are socially-constructed rather than natural phenomena. All concern events that depend on a particular set of circumstances that will not recur.

Storage of information for future use is still a factor in new communication: the early periodicals, especially the handwritten ones, were often collated and stored to keep track of political agreements or voting records, or for historical purposes. But the dynamics of fixity are significantly different when the slice of time recorded by a text is so much narrower. Perhaps in recognition of this distinction, Eisenstein states in the Preface that she has “concentrated on culture and intellectual developments, postponing for another book problems related to political ones.”[6]

Thus it is not surprising that Eisenstein's section on the “reading public” presents a different and often less convincing set of arguments about the effects of printing than those concerning science, the Reformation and the Renaissance. Printing, she states, was responsible for the displacement of the pulpit by the periodical press. Noting that "sermons

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[5] Bibliographic rationalization of texts culminated in Gesner's "Universal Bibliography” of 1545 (see Eisenstein, 1979, p. 97), whereas rationalization of post schedules and publication days did not occur until 80-90 years later, during the 1620s-1630s.

[6] Eisenstein (1979), p. xii.

had at one time been coupled with news about local and foreign affairs, real estate transactions, and other mundane matters," she goes on to conclude that "after printing, ...news gathering and circulation were handled more efficiently under lay auspices."[7] If "after printing" means 300 years later, then this claim has some validity, for by then the news and political commentary of the pulpit had indeed been replaced by the printed newspaper. But this change had nothing to do with printing as such; the growth of a standing postal network was responsible for the motion of news handling from religious to secular institutions,[8] and the depoliticization of the clergy was a product of religious toleration.

The Protestant clergy's influence over and participation in news circulation and commentary actually was enhanced in the first 200 years after Gutenberg. The 17th century news periodical did not displace these activities of the clergy, but grew up alongside them and supplemented them. Parish preachers under Elizabeth, James and Charles were frequently the agents through which political petitions were circulated and sometimes functioned as mouthpieces of royal proclamations.[9] Their commentary on current events, whether for or against the government, was a recognized factor in English politics until the end of the 17th century.[10] Some members of the clergy actively collected newsbooks and relayed the information they contained to their congregations.[11] In light of these facts, no simple disjunction of pulpit and newspaper can be maintained. In a similar vein, Eisenstein argues that a reading public was "more individualistic and atomistic" than a hearing one, but there is nothing to support this assertion other than the kind of appealing conceptual symmetry Eisenstein roundly condemns in McLuhan.

Other assertions of hers can be squared with the historical evidence. Printing promoted "vicarious participation in...distant events" and helped to forge "larger collective units."[12] Positions taken in public controversies became more difficult to reverse when they were recorded and disseminated via the printed word,[13] thanks to the news periodical. The Bohemian rebellion of 1618, as Chapter 4 will explain, was the kind of vicariously experienced distant event that established and cemented new group identities.

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[7] Ibid, p. 131.

[8] See Chapter 4.

[9] Pearl in Hirst (1974), p. 184: Cressy (1980) p. 68-69.

[10] Davies (1939).

[11] Wa1zer (1965) p. 246.

[12] Eisenstein (1979) p. 132.

[13] Steinberg (1967) argues that printed histories written in the immediate aftermath of the Thirty Years War for propaganda purposes have distorted our view of it for centuries.

The news and propaganda periodicals of the Civil War played an essential role in superimposing national loyalties over older, more localized ones. But here a qualification central to the argument of the thesis must be introduced: printing by itself was not capable of creating these larger public entities. The ideas disseminated through the press *had to be supported and reinforced by a superstructure of temporal synchronization* before the group loyalties cultivated by common printed works could have the effect described.

The diffusion of identical books among scattered readers sowed the seeds of new group identities, but news periodicals, correspondence and posts reaped the harvest. Eisenstein's account of the "communications revolution" wrought by printing overlooks the systematic organization of the means of transporting written and printed matter in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. There is, for example, no mention of postal service in the entire book. Given her focus on books, scientific knowledge and literary elites, this omission is perfectly justifiable. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the transition from a hearing and seeing public to one in which these forms of interaction were supplemented by printed paper cannot be reduced to a change in the technology of duplication alone.

Eisenstein's notion of fixity is but one instance of a more general phenomenon: the creation of social constants capable of being used as reference bodies. This broader conception of fixity can be extended to other forms of social interaction. In this study, I will be concerned specifically with three of them: publishing on a fixed day of the week; the broadcast of time signals at regular intervals; and the establishment of public schedules for transporting people and messages along fixed routes. These ideas are taken up in Chapter 3, where I argue that periodicity added a *temporal* reference framework to written and printed matter, and that this fixing of the written and printed word in a clock-like cycle of production and distribution was a necessary adjunct to its use as a medium of public affairs.

In the English-language literature on the 17th century newspaper, "journalism" and "the press" become inextricably tangled categories. Allen (1930) uses the two terms interchangeably. Frank (1961) makes printing, periodicity and a concern with "current events" part of a three-pronged definition of the newspaper "which can be applied retroactively to determine when (it) had its beginnings."[14] Shaaber goes so far as to suggest that pre-periodical news publications of the 16th century can be divided into slots corresponding to the "departments of our daily journalism."[15] As Carolyn Marvin has observed, these accounts "suggest that the historical event, newspaper, is a special

[14] Frank (1961) p. l.

[15] Shaaber (1929) p. v.

conceptual, commercial and moral achievement with fixed characteristics ... In this setting the task of newspaper history can only be to explain how past historical actors learned by a series of successively fewer errors and bad guesses to solve the problems of our present."[16]

This "retroactive" approach has steered journalism history away from two important issues, namely the structural conditions underlying the adoption of a periodical format, and the relationship between hand copying and printing as a means of duplication.

Making periodicity a part of the definition of the newspaper at the outset tends to moot the question of why it developed when it did. The historian becomes preoccupied with identifying when and where periodicity first appeared rather than with explaining the conditions that generated its appearance or identifying its function. Thus existing accounts do not provide a flawed or inaccurate set of reasons for its emergence so much as they fail to provide an explanation at all. Shaaber, for example, states that "in 1622 (the newspaper) was in no way a novelty except in being issued in a continuous series. During this period (the first 10 years of printing) a great deal of news was indeed printed."[17]

While recognizing serial publication as a novelty, his book makes no attempt to explain its purpose and wrongly implies that news periodicals were simply newsbooks published in serial. Frank passes over the origins of periodicity in a single paragraph by noting (correctly) that postmasters collected and forwarded news and publishers began to synchronize printed compilations of news with the weekly posts.[18]

Bucher is the only historian to attempt an explanation of periodicity. In his view, periodicity "depended on the regular recurrence of opportunities to transport the news and was in no way connected with the essential nature of the newspaper."[19] This assertion can be criticized on several grounds. Transportation alone cannot explain why newspapers adopted fixed publication days and regular intervals when there were many opportunities to transport news more frequently at irregular intervals. An explanation of periodicity cannot be reduced to the mere availability of transportation but must also encompass the *synchronization* function of regular and frequent intervals. This issue is taken up at greater length in Chapter 3.

Conventional histories also focus on printed periodicals to the exclusion of hand copied news material. The standard procedure is to mention manuscript news periodicals in a single sentence or paragraph and then move on to the "real thing." Muddiman deals only

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[16] Marvin (1983) p. 23.

[17] Shaaber (1929) p. 4.

[18] Frank (1961) p. 3.

[19] Bucher (1901) p. 217.

with printed materials, and Frank, whose research came after Notestein and Relf's discovery of the manuscript Parliamentary journals, still devotes only about one page of a 300 page book to them.[20] Manuscript newsletters make a brief appearance in Shaaber, where they are again cast as a "forerunner" of printed news.[21]

Since the 1920s, however, evidence that the manuscript newsletters of the 17th century were as important a part of the history of journalism as the "prints" has been accumulating. In the course of reconstructing the Parliamentary debates of the 1620s from private journals, written and printed speeches and the correspondence of members of Parliament, Notestein and Relf (1921) unearthed two weekly manuscript newsletters which had been circulating at least since 1628.[22] The writers make a strong case that one of these newsletters was compiled and published by the same scriveners and stationers who brought out the first domestic printed weekly, the *Diurnal Occurrences* of 1641.

The importance of scribal duplication to news circulation in the 17th century is corroborated further by Peter Fraser's *The Intelligence of the Secretaries of State and their Monopoly of Licensed News, 1661-1688*. Although most of Fraser's study concerns events after 1660, he argues convincingly that the first printed corantos were the products of a "long established system of news exchanges" via written newsletters.[23] He demonstrates that written and printed news continued to coexist and complement each other in the latter half of the 17th century. The written newsletters of Henry Muddiman and Joseph Williamson of the 1660s - 1670s were products of a correspondence network run from the Secretaries of States' offices using the government postal monopoly and franking privileges. Newsletters were posted to 100-125 government officials and subscribing aristocrats every week along with the printed London Gazette.[24] Other manuscript newsletters emerged from coffeehouses during the Whig uprisings between 1677 and 1681, and flourished after the abolition of press licensing in 1695.

Fraser also offers a theory as to the distinct functions of printed and hand-copied news. The printed Gazette contained news the State deemed fit for public consumption, and was mostly confined to foreign news and official announcements, whereas the written newsletters contained more exclusive intelligence about domestic politics.

"…the newsletter would have been superseded had there not been special reasons for

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[20] See the short references on pp. 2, 3, 19-20.

[21] Shaaber [1929) p. 308.

[22] Notestein and Relf (1921) p. xlii-lv.

[23] Fraser (1956) p. 5.

[24] *Ibid*, p. 30.

its continued existence. The advantage of the Gazette was wide circulation at lower cost to the buyer. This appealed to governments, who saw in the printed article a means of getting popular support and a vehicle for their proclamations. It did not appeal, however, to the newsmonger who thought that his news was in anyway exclusive. The newsletter continued to claim the best of the domestic news of its locality, and any intelligence that came directly from ambassador and others abroad.[25]

This division of labor continued for the next 150 years. Because it was more exclusive, the hand copied news periodical was considered more trustworthy and informative than its printed counterpart.[26] Thus the decision to confine histories of early journalism to printed newspapers is wholly arbitrary. Periodicity developed first in hand copied newsletters, which were not primitive "forerunners" of printed periodicals but supplementary organs which coexisted with them for many years.

While the news periodical was not synonymous with printing, neither was printed news synonymous with periodicity. For all of the 16th century, printed news had been disseminated in England as broad sheet ballads or short, individual books describing a single event. The printed periodical represented a sharp and relatively sudden departure from these genres, but this change is often obscured or under-rated by the modern temptation to group news periodicals with "the press." It might be worthwhile, then, to back up and consider pre-periodical printed news.

The printed, broadsheet ballad of Elizabethan times represented a strange intersection of print and oral culture. Under the Tudors the travelling bards who had once composed and sung ballads were assaulted by laws against vagabondage. In their place came stationer's apprentices sent forth from London to sing and sell printed ballads.[27] There is an economic explanation for the rapid development of printed ballads: they were one of the few genres of printing left unmonopolized by the Stationer's Company. There is evidence that newly authorized master printers and those unlucky enough to lack a monopoly on some lucrative form of publication often relied on ballads to make ends meet.[28] The comparatively

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[25] Ibid, p. 42-43.

[26] Wiles (1965) p. 9-10.

[27] Graves (1927) p. 22-3.

[28] Arber (1875) II p. 18 quotes Elizabethan printer Robert Bourne in 1586: because of "privileges to...particular persons granted some for printing of lawe bokes, some for psalme bookes, some grammar bookes scoole bookes, Latyne Hebrue and Greke bookes, almanner of praier bookes bibles and service bookes, there is almost no liberty lefte for printinge but for ballettes [ballads], toyes and such like."

free market in ballads stimulated printers to press into their format the most unusual and interesting occurrences of the day: murders, political events like the gunpowder plot, etc. In this environment, the prose newsbook was not very common and its content, like that of the ballad, often concerned bizarre occurences: "the monsterus chyld which was borne in Buckenhamshyre," "A strange sight of ye sonne and in the elements at Basell."[29] Until 1588 the prose newsbook concerned with political events overseas was, quantitatively speaking, a negligible category of publication, averaging at most 5 entries per year.[30] (Reports of international affairs became more common afterwards due to England's war with Spain and the presence of troops overseas.) Ballad and newsbook printers were frequently the same people, and would often use the same subject for both genres. Sometimes ballads contained a line of type at the end referring the reader to a prose newsbook on the same subject.[31] In many ways the ballad-seller's traffic in the current and sensational was closer in kind to the mass media of the 20th century than the highly political periodicals which superseded them. The periodical, moreover, did not gradually evolve out of these forms but replaced them entirely as news organs when English printers began to imitate the Dutch corantos in 1621.

The gap of more than 100 y ears between the appearance of printed news and the first printed periodicals ought to tell us that they are products of profoundly different social conditions. The format and structure of periodicity developed first in hand-written and hand-copied correspondence. The application of printing to this format after 1609 played an important role in making its contents available to a wider audience spread out over longer distances.

Hand-duplicated periodicals, however, thrived and supplemented the printed newspaper for more than a century afterwards. The development of note is not just the sudden shift to mechanical duplication, but the emergence of periodicity and related changes in collecting, organizing and transporting information. Whether copied or printed, the periodical represented an enormous advance in current public communication. Regular correspondence from multiple sources was brought to a central point, compiled into a representation of current reality, duplicated, and retransmitted at fixed, regular intervals. This systematization is correlated with an entirely different kind of "news" than its simpler predecessors. Broadsheets, isolated newsbooks and ballads offered readers a smorgasbord of murders, bizarre astronomical or natural events, monstrous births and magic along with the

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[29] *Ibid* I.

[30] See the Table in Chapter 6 for data on the type of publications registered with the Stationers between 1565 and 1645.

[31] Shaaber (1929) p. 197.

occasional political event. The corantos and periodic newsbooks, on the other hand, were remorselessly political. Their contents were exclusively concerned with the unfolding of a single historic event. All of the information contained in the Dutch corantos related directly to the wars in central Europe; practically all of the contents of the domestic newsbooks concern the battles and politics of the English civil war. This is a qualitative change of some magnitude, and its association with cataclysmic changes in political structure is not accidental.

Chapter Three

PERIODICITY AS A TEMPORAL PHENOMENON

Up to now the periodic cycle itself has not entered into historical discussions of journalism. This is unusual because it is universally recognized as one of the distinguishing features of the newspaper. Everyone recognizes that news is of interest only insofar as it is current, and currency requires frequent publication. But this by itself is not a sufficient explanation, for *frequency* is not synonymous with *periodicity*. Why the demand for fresh news should result in serial publication at regular intervals, rather than many isolated news publications at frequent but irregular intervals, still requires an explanation.

In the following chapter I develop an argument about the function of periodicity. My contention is that periodic publication acted as a kind of time standard for dispersed readers: it synchronized message production with transportation and other regular cycles of human activity, enhancing the capability for a territorially dispersed public to interact as a polity. Periodicity, serial numbering and cumulative pagination located the products of press and pen in a common temporal reference framework, allowing them to be used as a medium for current public affairs. The establishment of this common temporal framework for literate media was as important a part of the function of early newspapers as their message content.

The role of the periodic format cannot be understood without first considering *how* and *why* time markers are used in human societies. Every form of social cooperation -- private meetings, public assemblies, markets, celebration, and production -- demands some means of getting groups of people to do things at "the same time."

Since interpersonal simultaneity does not exist it must be created, and this is done by erecting public time markers or clocks. Clocks do not "measure time," they broadcast information: a noise, a certain number of chimes, or the position of hands on a dial. By accepting this signal as a common point of reference, a community acquires an external standard for making statements about time (as long as they are within range of the same clock or a synchronized set of clocks). "The same time" can now be defined: "when that clock over there

strikes three times," etc. Thus the range of social simultaneity is defined by the visual or auditory range of the signal broadcast (and the technical constraints on synchronization). The clock is the simplest, purest example of how collectivities are defined as entities by a shared source of information.

David Landes' history of clocks shows how the expansion of commerce and industry in medieval municipalities from the 11th to the 14th century required an ever larger array of time signals. The municipal clocks of this period were deliberately public, situated in tall church towers or belfries tens of feet above the ground so they would be audible and/or visible (i.e. simultaneously present) to a local community. Standardized time in the modern sense did not exist; each city employed a variety of special peals for specific purposes, such as the start of work, meal breaks, assemblies, or the closing of gates.

One theme in Landes is of special relevance to the history of the periodical: social pressures created a trend toward the broadcast of increasingly standardized and regular temporal units. The early work clocks in the medieval textile towns were owned and operated by the employers. Since the bells regulated workers' labor time, they inevitably confronted the question whether the time they kept could be trusted.[1] The conflict of interest between worker and employer, according to Landes, produced a trend toward the broadcast of uniform, regular time signals. Special peals were supplanted by tower clocks which chimed at regular intervals, leaving the workers and employers free to bargain about which of the hours would signal the beginning and end of work. In other words, the clock became more useful as a coordinative standard as the signals it broadcast became more impersonal and regular.[2]

We can now turn to the question of what happens when written or printed messages, rather than abstract time signals, are produced and distributed at regular intervals. My argument is that the fixed, regular publication cycle coordinates literate communication among people who are not in direct contact with each other, extending a common sense of immediacy over greater distances and larger populations.

The periodic writing cycle developed first in private newsletters. To correspondents who could not hear or see each other, regularity itself was a kind of message. It told them that their

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[1] Landes (1983) p. 72.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 74.

letters had not been lost or intercepted. It let them know how soon to expect more information. Even when there was nothing to report, a letter positively saying as much was infinitely preferable to nothing at all. Once a cycle was established, moreover, any disruption of its regularity was de facto informative: it told the person on the receiving end that something was wrong, and perhaps stimulated an inquiry. Thus when professional newsletter writers or "intelligencers" began to appear in England early in the 17th century it was perfectly natural for their contract to stipulate a regular interval, almost always weekly, for the dispatch of correspondence.

Regularized correspondence shows up first in official and diplomatic communications. Most of the earliest English newsletter writers are associated with Sir Dudley Carleton, a member of the Parliament of 1604-1611 who became the English ambassador to The Hague for many years. His "intelligence" budget of 400 pounds per year supported regular correspondence from John Chamberlain and Thomas Locke.[3] John Pory, another early newsletter writer, made his living in London after 1630 writing for Sir Thomas Puckering and John, Viscount Scudamore. Pory, Chamberlain and Carleton were friends and professional associates. Pory also corresponded with another well-known newsletter writer, the Reverend Joseph Mead. Pory, Locke and Chamberlain all frequented the bookshop of the news publisher Nathaniel Butter; Pory had his pay delivered there.[4]

The correspondence of these early newsletter writers makes it clear that they observed a regular writing interval because of its coordinative value. Chamberlain wrote weekly to Carleton even though many of his letters began by complaining of how little there was to relate or of the delays of the posts. Thursday was Pory's writing day to his patron Sir Thomas Puckering in 1631, and on one occasion he wrote "the next Thursday being so near Christmas day, I must crave pardon for not writing."[5] Thus he felt obliged to explain whenever the regular writing interval was not observed. Carl Bucher's theory that periodicity was derived from the "regular recurrence of opportunities to transport the news"[6] fails to account for this phenomenon. Chamberlain's letters mention three different couriers, and his comments suggest that the day of

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[3] CSPD 1619-23, p. 465-468.

[4] Powell (1977) p. 56.

[5] Ibid, p. 55.

the week when he wrote was not dictated by their arrival and departure. Rather, he wrote at weekly intervals and then sought out the most convenient, secure and rapid means of getting the letter to its destination.[7] The demand for regular communications came first, and the rationalization of transportation schedules followed suit. Thus, beginning in the 1620s, posts and carriers began to gravitate toward a regular, public schedule. In France, the first public postal schedule was issued in 1627, and in England it occurred in 1637. The evidence suggests that transportation schedules and correspondence networks co-evolved toward regularity because of the coordinative value of periodic intervals -- the same reason that made the regularly chiming town clock an acceptable information source to workers and employers.

The development of printed newspapers shows the same progression toward a standardized interval of publication. The first printed corantos were clearly intended to be continuous publications, but at first they were issued approximately every two weeks. The actual intervals ranged from 4 to 46 days.[8] Within a few years, however, all continental corantos, with only one exception, were issued on a fixed day of the week.[9] Corantos published in England were not published on a fixed day of the week until 1641. Between May and October of 1622 they were issued at a rate of about twice a week. After the amalgamation of London news publishers into a monopoly syndicate in mid-October, the newsbooks began to be numbered consecutively and came closer to weekly intervals. Engish corantos lagged behind the continental ones in regularity because of their reliance on overseas news sources. Sea transportation was inherently less predictable than land transportation, and early newspapers often carry complaints about the delays caused by bad weather or lack of wind.[10] A coranto of January 1628 was entitled “The Further Continuation of our Weekely News...being but a part of much more Intelligence...which by contrarie winds hath beene withheld from us this two Moneths.”[11]

It is significantthat the corantos were routinely referred to as “weekly news” long before

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[6] Bucher (1901) p. 217.

[7] Zilliacus (1956) p. 63.

[8] Frank (1961) p. 3.

[9] Dahl (1952) p. 21.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Hanson (1938) p. 381.

they actually attained a weekly cycle of publication. A notice in an August, 1622 coranto referred to the “two former Weekely Relations of Newes” published on the 2nd and 13th of August.[12] Another coranto publisher noted in his paper that:

> Custom is so predominant in everything that both the Reader and the Printer of these pamphlets agree in their expectation of weekly Newes, so that if the Printer have not wherewithall to afford satisfaction, yet will the reader come and ask every day for new Newes.[13]

Thus by the 1620s the supply of current news by printers had already created an expectation that information would be provided in regular, weekly cycles. By the end of 1641, a struggling Nathaniel Butter, who was attempting to keep his foreign news periodical afloat at a time when public interest was consumed by domestic politics, found it necessary to promise that he would “keep a constant day every weeke.”[14] Butter himself speculated in print that people were refusing to buy his paper because it was not issued regularly. By June of 1642, he was reduced to the claim "that he intendeth to continue the printing of the Forrein Occurents constantly now every week, or at least every footnight.[15] The domestic periodicals of the Revolution also adhered to a weekly publication schedule. When an issue was missed, as sometimes happened when the editor was jailed or a paper's economic viability began to totter, the editors issued an explanation in the ensuing issue.[16] An inability to publish regularly detracted from the credibility and salability of news. Customers expected and needed a fixed, regular schedule for acquiring current information. News released at random intervals was harder to follow and less likely to be up to date.

A supplementary aspect of regular intervals was the creation of a framework of consecutive issue numbering and pagination. Bibliographic techniques were employed to fix the news publication in a temporal order. Readers could conveniently compile and refer to their records of events, or determine whether they had missed an issue, and if so, how far out of date

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[12] Cited in Dahl (1952) p. 78.

[13] Morison (1932) p. 10-11.

[14] Jan. 11, 1641. Cited in Dahl (1952) p. 265.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] See e.g. Frank (1961) p. 66.

they were. Issue numbering first appeared in England in 1622 and became standard after 1642. By 1643, when the *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer* and *Mercurius Britanicus* appeared, issue numbering and cumulative pagination had become permanent parts of the newsbook format.

The Parliamentary journals of the 1640s introduced another aspect of temporal coordination for the first time. The weekly posts instituted by Thomas Witherings in 1637 were supposed to have left London on Tuesday.[17] Most of the newspapers begun in 1641 and 1642 were published on Monday. Several scholars have drawn the not unreasonable conclusion that the publication day was deliberately synchronized with the departure of the posts.[18] This allowed Londoners, or gentry and members of Parliament staying in London, to post a copy to the country the next day. As appealing as this conclusion may be, there is not enough evidence to support it without qualification. The six different post roads had different schedules, and only the Berwick road is known to have had a Tuesday departure date.[19] Very little evidence of how the posts actually functioned during the Civil War survives. After 1640, when Witherings was dismissed by King Charles, who was suspicious of his political allegiances, the Letter Office became the object of violent power struggles. For intelligence reasons, Parliament seized control of the mail in 1641 as its rift with Charles widened. Then, as Parliament assumed the King's role as sovereign power, the House of Lords and House of Commons themselves fought over who would control the Post Office. One postal historian has argued that public postal service was ended by the outbreak of war in 1642 and only official communications were carried by the postmasters until 1653.[20]

Nevertheless, it is evident from both their titles and their contents that Civil war-era news periodicals were organs of *long distance* communication, dependent upon some form of regular transportation both for their news and for distribution. It is also clear that private Carriers continued to function according to routes and schedules not drastically different from those which prevailed before the war.[21] Taking these complexities into account, it still seems

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[17] Robinson [1949) p. 29 fn.

[18] Frank, p. 23 and Muddiman (1908) p. 36.

[19] Fletcher (1981) p. xxvii quotes a letter indicating that the posts along the Kent road left London on Thursdays and Fridays.

[20] Willcocks (1975).

[21] Crofts (1967).

reasonable to assume that synchronization with a specific transportation organ was initially a factor in the selection of the diurnals' publication day but that the war interrupted this pattern.

It became less ambiguously so after 1653. Public postal service was reinstituted by Parliament in that year, on a twice weekly basis. The newspapers that were allowed to publish in the increasingly restrictive atmosphere of the Protectorate also came out twice weekly. This trend toward synchronizing newspaper publication with public transportation became readily apparent in 1655 with the debut of the official newspapers *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Publick Intelligencer*. Both were edited by Marchamont Nedham and supervised by Cromwell's Postmaster General and intelligence director, John Thurloe.

By the end of the Interregnum, then, an entire apparatus for synchronizing literate communication on a national scale had been built up. This apparatus included serial publication at regular intervals, a framework of numbering and dating, and a publication schedule meshed with that of the main means of transportation. As subsequent sections will show, this was an act with powerful social consequences. The location of the printed word within a temporal framework occurred at the same time as cataclysmic wars and revolutionary changes in political structure.

It also changed the very meaning and character of literate communication. The very act of fixing its position in time made written discourse a perishable commodity, like meat or fruit. The closer the products of pen and press came to flowing directly alongside the rush of events, the more rapidly their value as information decayed. Correspondents of the 17th century began to use the word "stale" to describe letters which had been rendered meaningless by delays in delivery. John Chamberlain compared the receipt of a stale letter to eating a delicate hors d'ouerve that had no taste.[22] In his satirical "Character of a Corranto-Coiner, published in 1631, Richard Braithewaite zeroed in on the perishability of the new medium, in the process concocting two choice puns on the names of the first Engish news printers, Nathaniel Butter and Nicholas Bourne:

> our best comfort is his chymeras live not long; a week is the longest in the citie, and after their arrival, a little longer in the countrey; which past, they melt like *Butter*, or match a pipe, and so *Burne*. But, indeed, most commonly it is the height of their ambition to aspire to the employment of stopping mustard pots or wrapping up pepper pouder, staves

[22] Chamberlain *Letters* II, p. 124.

aker [an insect powder used at the time] &c ... which done they expire.

Periodicity also affected the interpretive context of printed news. An Oxford minister prayed in 1632 that Christ would "inspire the curranto-makers with the spirit of truth, that people might know when to utter praises for the King of Sweden's victories, and when to pray for him in distress. They often did both these and then found out that the supposed causes did not exist."[23] By participating directly in time, the printed coranto engaged the reader and made him a vicarious participant in distant events. Reports interpreted as current and open-ended accounts of ongoing events inspired prayers and rejoicing; the pre-periodical newsbook never elicited these kinds of reports.

[23] Dahl (1952), p. 23.

Chapter Four

POSTAL MONOPOLY AND THE NATION-STATE

The physical basis of currency in literate media was of course postal transportation. In England as in the rest of Europe, postal communications evolved into a monopoly run by the national government. Why the transmission of correspondence should be both a monopoly and an appendage of the national government is by no means self-evident. Medieval Europe possessed many private and municipal messenger services, and these flourished well into the seventeenth century when they were forcibly suppressed or coopted by the state. The idea that postal service is a natural monopoly, despite its widespread currency, is nothing more than an assertion made centuries after the fact and has never been supported with an in-depth economic analysis of the period when monopolization actually occurred. In most other areas, the trend of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was against monopoly. Royal grants of monopoly were a major bone of contention between Parliament and the King prior to the Civil War. But Parliamentary opposition was never extended to the post office; indeed, during the Interregnum the parliamentary government intensified and advanced the monopoly principle of postal organization.

Monopolization and periodicity were parallel developments. Both were responses to the novel communication requirements of centralized administration exerting authority over an increasingly integrated yet heterogeneous and territorially dispersed public. If postal communication defined the range and boundaries of social simultaneity, monopolization established the common center. The concept of monopoly as used here thus has more than the usual economic connotations of a single supplier able to charge higher prices. Monopolization of a transmission medium imposes a specific hierarchy or structure on the flow of information. The

movement of intelligence is confined to known channels and these channels are organized in such a way that control and monitoring can take place from a central vantage point.

The word "post" refers to a stage in a relay system of horses, and does not appear in the English language until the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries. "Settling" or "laying" posts, in the terminology of the time, meant dividing a road into stages of 10 - 20 miles and appointing a postmaster – usually an innkeeper – to keep horses and postboys in readiness for the transportation of government officials, foreign emissaries or packets of government correspondence. Contrary to romantic notions about the personal relation between men and their horses, long distance travelers on official business almost never used their own steed but relied on this standing fleet, going from stage to stage and paying the postmasters a standard rate per mile for the use of the horses.

Postal communications as defined here should not be confused with the various governmental and private couriers who existed for centuries before and whose messengers are sometimes anachronistically referred to as "posts." The distinguishing characteristic of postal communications was the maintenance of *standing horse relay facilities* by a central administration. Until the 16th century, posts were merely full-time messengers for the king who upon serving a warrant to local mayors, sheriffs, constables or other public officers along his route could requisition horses for his transport. So while these messengers could "ride post," no permanent facilities or people to administer horse relays were kept on the payroll, and the process of travelling through the country was more subject to chance. During the reign of Henry VIII (1509 - 1547) this ad hoc approach to communication had become inadequate and an important change in postal organization was instituted. The personal relation between the courier and sender of a message was replaced with an institutional one. "Posts" became salaried "postmasters" who kept horses in readiness for government service at specified intervals along the main thoroughfares. The postmasters were not messengers but business managers who kept an inn running, hired out horses and relied on deputies or servants to do the actual carrying.[1]

The maintenance of standing postal facilities is an important historical reference point for three reasons. First, it signals that communication between the crown and certain points throughout England had become sufficiently routine to justify keeping facilities in constant

[1] Crofts (1967) p. 63.

readiness along certain routes. Modern nations take such a relation between the center and periphery of power for granted, but the establishment of a fixed center of power with regular lines of communication radiating out from it was a departure from medieval times. The King used to circulate throughout the country while living off his subjects. The seat of national government was not fixed in a specific location.[2] Secondly, a standing infrastructure radically enlarged and complicated the problems associated with the economic sustainability of governmental communications. Whereas a personal messenger could be reimbursed for each message he carried, the postmasters' salaries had to be paid and the costs of keeping a fleet of horses in readiness recovered no matter how often they were actually used. The postal system was a modern infrastructure with high fixed costs. Finally, the administration of a fixed, geographically distributed communications system is a far more complex matter than dispatching a courier. It involves accounting for time and money over long distances and effective regulation of access to the system.

The first intimations of postal monopoly came during the reign of Elizabeth I. In 1575 the hire of government post horses to the public, which had been discouraged before, was officially sanctioned. Indeed, the postmasters were given first rights to the supply of horses to private travelers. Private travelers were forbidden from hiring horses from anyone else as long as the postmasters could supply them with a horse within 30 minutes of their request.[3] These non-official riders paid a higher per mile rate than those with a government post warrant. In this way the crown made private demand for transportation subsidize its own postal communications network.

During the Counter-Reformation this trend toward controlling transportation was reinforced by political considerations. Elizabeth's foreign and domestic Catholic enemies openly sought her overthrow and possessed an alternative monarch with a legitimate claim to the throne in the person of Mary Queen of Scots. The power struggle between these competing elites took the form of military conflict, but it was also conducted through an unprecedented war of intelligence. The State Papers from this part of Elizabeth's reign are full of the paraphernalia of

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[2] Haldane (1971) p. 3.

[3] Crofts (1967) p. 69-9.

intrigue: letters from spies abroad, letters in secret codes and invisible ink, countless intercepted letters, examinations and confessions of captured spies, documents tracking the movement of plotters or suspected plotters against the regime. Practically every month the government caught wind of a new plot: a plan to poison the Queen, burn the Oueen's ships, or smuggle spies into Court. The chaotic, secretive nature of international correspondence and the disarray in the channels through which it was transmitted reflected the centrifugal forces set in motion by the Reformation. It was in the context of efforts to establish stable new centers of authority that the policy of transforming the state posts into the backbone of a centralized information hierarchy was initiated.

Correspondence was clearly the basis of what is now known as military intelligence. An intercepted letter of 1589 contains instructions to a Catholic spy in England.[4] Like many letters of its kind, much of the content is in cipher. The information sought is of obvious military significance: what ports and havens are safe for landing in and are neglected by the military, the numbers of horses, soldiers and ships at fortresses, whether there is discontent in the country over the taxes and subsidies required to finance the war with Spain, etc. In addition to letters containing specific accounts of military conditions, regular corresponding networks of "intelligencers" kept plotters and governments informed of general conditions. An October 1601 letter from an English government intelligencer on the continent warns of the existence of a Catholic intelligence correspondence network run by the English Jesuit Robert Parsons.[5]

The government of Elizabeth had its own counter-intelligence measures. Around 1585 a double agent stationed in Paris, Thomas Rogers, apparently won the confidence of don Bernardino de Mendoza, Ambassador to Spain's Phillip II and a powerful enemy of Elizabeth's. Through this connection he was able to obtain sensitive information about the movement and correspondence of Catholics. Rogers' negotiations with don Bernardino to act as a corresponding agent upon his return to England underscore the importance both sides placed on the transmission of letters in their war. On December 28, 1585 he wrote:

> Don Bernardino wants to pass letters into England, and I have been asked whether I would receive and deliver his packets in England ...I am persuaded that the Papists have no safe means to convey any man into England, which makes them the more willing to

[4] CSPD Addenda, 1580-1625, p. 270.

[5] *Ibid*, Oct. 1601 p. 412.

get men in, by my own industry.[6]

The rudimentary postal structure initiated by Henry VIII accordingly came to play a central role in maintaining an autonomous, London-centered structure of authority. Control of communications played an important role in the maintenance of territorial boundaries. The attitude underlying the control of postal communications was expressed well by a 1596 letter to Secretary Walsingham. It complains that the Catholics "send into our country and call from us men of sufficiency to aid them unless provision be made against calling forth and sending in. Our posts must be well kept by men of sound religion and void of corruption; otherwise, notwithstanding statutes and penalties, continual conspiracies are to be looked for."[7] Faced with the need to continuously monitor events in Ireland, Scotland and along the coasts facing the continent, Elizabeth's government was forced to expand the ordinary postal facilities to include the four western roads to Chester, Plymouth, Bristol and Portsmouth. The government became painfully aware of the economic burden of supporting standing posts.

Forcing private travelers to use the state posts eased this burden as noted. But it also strengthened their function as checkpoints for monitoring the movement of aliens and Catholics. In Kent, the main conduit between England and the continent, the government decreed that "all strangers... shall take their horses from stage to stage and at the hands of the standing posts only." The postmasters were commanded to enter the names of every one riding post in their books.[8]

This period also saw the first moves toward the monitoring of overseas correspondence. A Proclamation of 26 April, 1591 aimed to make all foreign correspondence pass through official or officially-approved channels. It prohibited any one to "procure, gather up, receive, bring in or carry out" any overseas packets unless authorized by the Master of the Posts or his counterpart in a foreign administration, or unless serving as the messenger of the Secretaries of State, an ambassador or similar authorities.[9] The government did not, as is sometimes implied, monopolize overseas correspondence, but rather marshalled its entire administrative apparatus to

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[6] *Ibid*, p. 163-4.

[7] *Ibid* Oct 10, 1586 p. 189.

[8] Allen (1972) p. 15.

[9] Text in Report of the Secret Committee (1844), p. 36.

check and monitor its movement.

Except as a very expensive means of long distance transport for the aristocracy, the royal posts were not yet part of the general public's life. The messages of the rest of the population were taken care of by alternative carriers with which the royal posts, at this stage, co-existed peacefully. None of them employed horse stages; they relied on wagons and footposts.

In England, local businessmen known as Carriers circulated between the towns and London transporting goods, letters and travelers. In 1637, John Taylor's *Carriers Cosmoqraphie* listed 190 carrier routes between London and other cities in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The *Cosmographie* also lists nine footposts run by municipalities, varying in frequency from twice-weekly to weekly and bi-weekly. Crofts describes how nobles and country gentry developed personal relations with Carriers, and used them as messengers and gossip collectors.[10] A character writer of this period compared the Carrier to a whispering gallery, “for he takes the sound out of your mouth at York, and makes it be heard as far as London.”[11]

Just as the Carriers' trade routes positioned them to meet the need for domestic correspondence, so the merchant organizations involved in the import and export trade were deeply engaged in the handling of overseas correspondence. The Merchant Strangers, an organization of foreign merchants doing business in England, set up their own correspondence service around 1496.[12] Because of their extensive contacts abroad and their experience in transporting goods, credit and money, alien merchants dominated international mail arrangements until the 1630s. Indeed, for a few year after the loss of Calais ruptured the official lines of communication with the continent, the Strangers' post was the only correspondence service available.[13] It is sometimes asserted that the Merchant Strangers' service was suppressed late in the 16th century. Actually, their communication links were virtually incorporated into the government and assumed a quasi-official status. Merchant Stranger Matthew de Quester, for

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[10] Crofts (1967).

[11] Earle Microcosmographie, cited in Davies (1939) p. 3.

[12] Housden (1906) p. 739.

[13] *Ibid*, p. 740.

example, was appointed to the office of foreign post in 1604.[14] By 1619 de Quester had succeeded in attaining official recognition as Master of the Posts for Foreign Parts. His rise brought him into conflict with the domestic Master of the Posts, Charles Stanhope, who in a protracted legal dispute complained that the foreign posts had always been included in his patent. De Quester won the dispute nevertheless.[15]

Ironically, his ascension over an English national occurred even as he was being prosecuted along with 158 other alien merchants for illegally transporting gold coins out of the kingdom, and was forced to close his English sugar refinery after a complaint from the English Merchants and Refiners of Sugar against "foreign encroachment."[16] De Quester's postal service must have been much superior to that offered by English nationals to win out over Stanhope in such a xenophobic environment. Several of Chamberlain's letters indicate that he thought de Quester's service was the speediest and most reliable.[17]

The true significance of de Quester is that overseas correspondence had become so important to the conduct of government that it was possible for a separate postal organization to grow up right under Stanhope's nose. From de Quester's ascendance in 1619 until the end of the Revolution, overseas mail was probably more important than domestic mail, more advanced organizationally, and probably more profitable. Thomas Witherings, the initiator of domestic public postal service, got his start as de Quester's successor in overseas mail service. Witherings' 1635 proposal for a reformed domestic mail service noted that letters could reach Italy or Spain faster than remote parts of Great Britain. Monopolization, too, occurred first in overseas correspondence and then spread to domestic service.

Far from being innately monopolistic, the international lines of correspondence were diverse and decentralized, unsystematic and overlapping, until as late as 1627. The Merchant Adventurers, the domestic merchants' rival to the Strangers, established their own service around 1560. In a letter of December 8, 1609, the Postmaster of the Merchant Adventurers. Edward Quarles, openly solicited the carriage of the Earl of Salisbury's letters as if there were no official

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[14] CSPD 1603-10 Oct 29, 1604 p. 162.

[15] CSPD 1623-2 p. 131.

[16] Gold case: CSPD 1619-23 p. 53, 101, 173. Sugar case: Ibid p. 407, 413.

[17] Chamberlain *Letters* II, p. 182, 221.

overseas postal service.[18] During the de Quester/Stanhope patent dispute, Stanhope set up a competitive foreign post through the Adventurers' foreign postmaster Henry Billingsley. There is also evidence that other merchants involved in overseas trade carried letters.[19] A letter from Matthew de Quester to Sir Dudley Carleton complained in 1616 of the numerous letters being brought in by private agents and invokes "the Proclamation" (that of 1591) against unauthorized carriers.[20] When de Quester went to the Privy Council in 1626 in an attempt to force all merchants, including the Adventurers, to use his postal service the Council at first repudiated the monopoly principle. All merchant companies, it ruled, "should be left at liberty to convey their own letters and dispatches into foreign parts by messengers of their own."[21]

This decision, however, was quickly overturned after the intervention of Secretary of State John Coke, who insisted that control of foreign correspondence was an important exercise of the prerogative power. The authorization for Billingsley's service, he objected, "must have been obtained from the King by someone who forebore to inform him of the importance of the subject." In a strongly worded letter, Coke successfully urged Secretary Conway to get the King to revoke the order.[22]

Monopoly spread to domestic letter carriage ten years later, while Coke was still Secretary of State. From about 1615 to 1639, the costs of supporting standing postal facilities became so heavy that an economic crisis developed on two fronts. English subjects began to chafe at the postmasters' use of their horses, and the postmasters themselves revolted against the administration's failure to pay their salaries.

The King's ancient right of "purveyance" permitted the monarch to demand the use of his subjects' goods at a rate fixed by his own assessor. The use of horses for post riding was a common form of exercising this right. Before the 17th century, however, the postmaster had no power to seize horses until a traveler presented a warrant to him. Later it became the practice to furnish him with a general "warrant dormant" empowering him to take up horses (or money in

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[18] CSPD 160 3-10. p. 568.

[19] APC Nov. 22, 1626 p. 376.

[20] CSPD 1611-18 p. 401.

[21] 1626 p. 376.

[22] CSPD 1627-28 p. 591.

lieu of horses) at will within a specified area.[23] After about 1615 these requisitions became more common and resentment began to flare up among the populace. Postmasters demanding horses were resisted by their owners and local officials often took the side of the subject.[24] Resistance to these requisitions seems to have grown during the years leading up to the Civil War, as some postmasters began to blatantly exploit their requisition powers for profit. The complaints peaked between 1637 and 1639, when postmasters rated with ship money as a source of irritation in petitions submitted to the King by several counties and at the county Assizes.[25]

The resistance of local communities to post warrants was matched by the discontent of the postmasters themselves, whose salaries fell further and further behind as the use of postal communications increased. As early as 1549 the crown had allowed the salaries of its postmasters to slip into arrears.[26] A 1617 petition of postmasters claimed that they were due three years back pay. By 1637 the salaries in arrears had reached the enormous sum of £60,000. The postmasters also had grievances against the abuses of the Master of the Posts' patent rights. The Master of the Post's paymasters, for example, used their control of postal disbursements to extort fees or kickbacks from the wages of the postmasters.[27] The postmasters' grievances became so severe that in 1617 a coordinated national effort to gain redress was initiated. For 20 years they traded petitions and counter-petitions with Stanhope and his pay masters concerning the controversial fees, and bombarded the Council with demands for back pay.

This economic crisis precipitated an important change in the domestic posts' function, when in 1635 the crown decided to make money on their letter-carrying capacity. This occurred after a London merchant named Thomas Witherings, along with William Frizell, acquired the patent for foreign postmaster from an aging Matthew de Quester. After three years of diligent service in that capacity he won the support of influential men in the administration, notably Secretary of State Coke, and began to look for ways to expand the scope of his activities. In June of 1635 he drafted:

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[23] APC v. 19 p. 166, v. 25 p. 538.

[24] APC 1623-5. p. 5.

[25] CSPD 1637 - p. 390. 51.

[26] APC 1547-50 p. 360.

[27] APC 1621-23 p. 473.

> A Proposition for settling staffets or pacquet posts betwixt London and all part of his Majesties dominions, for the carrying and recarrying of his subjects' letters. The clear profit whereof to go towards the payment of the Postmasters of the Roads of England, for which his Majesty is now charged 3400 pounds per annum.[28]

Witherings' plan involved appending one or two horses to the official standing posts for carrying private letters, both domestically and overseas. All the letters along a specific road were put in a separate "Portmantle," within which letters to specific stages (or areas within a ten mile radius of the stage) were placed in a separate bag. The network structure was rather crude: all letters had to pass through London on the way to their destination. This may have been done deliberately to facilitate surveillance, or it may have just reflected the limited administrative capacities of the time.

The precipitant of this move was of course the prospect of relieving the crown of the postmasters' salaries. Another impetus came from the example of successful commercial carriage by a private business. Around 1626 a London merchant named Samuel Jude established his own letter carrying service between London and Plymouth. Within four years Jude had obtained enough business to begin to establish his own horse stages along the western road.[29] He was stopped by a ruling of the Privy Council. The Jude affair must have convinced the government that if it did not meet the demand for letter carriage someone else would.

Withering's proposition included another important innovation. He understood that service to the public at large required establishing and publicizing a fixed schedule for the arrival and departure of the posts to and from London. The postmasters had always received instructions concerning how quickly packets should be dispatched once they arrived, but the coming and going of the posts themselves followed no set timetable. Witherings proposed that:

> The day and hour of the coming and going of the said Portmantle to and from London to be always certain. By which means all stages up on the road will know at what certain hour the Portmantle is to come to that place.[30]

Landes observes that although explicit national or international time standards did not

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[28] Report of the Secret Committee (1844), p. 35.

[29] 1629 p. 252, 1630 p. 187, 291.

[30] See Report of the Secret Committee (1844) p. 515.

exist until the 19th century, there was a movement toward the establishment of “scheduled departures, designed to allow as closely as possible for the arrival of feeder carriers and the completion of customs and similar formalities” throughout Europe in the 17th century.[31]

It is probably no coincidence that Witherings' plan was contemporary with the publication of John Taylor's *Carriers Cosmographie* in 1637. The Cosmographie described itself as a "Brief relation of the Inns, Ordinaries, Hostelries and other lodgings in and near London where the Carriers, Wagons, Footposts and Higglers do usually come from any parts, towns, shires and counties, of the kingdoms of England, Principality of Wales, as also from the kingdoms of Scotland and Ireland. With nominations of what days of the week they do come to London, and on what days they return.” It was, in short, a rough approximation of a public schedule. As the first printed compilation of the carriers' termini and timetables, Taylor's book brought together information that had been kept discrete and localized, and made available to a national reading public knowledge that had once been confined to circles based on word of mouth and private acquaintances. Taylor's idea was apparently so novel that his inquiries were greeted with hostility and suspicion by the carriers. In the Preface to the book he complains of the “harsh and unsavory answers” his questions received from carriers who suspected that he was a sergeant or bailiff tracking down debtors among them, or a government official attempting to foist some new form of taxation upon them.[32] Together with Withering's postal schedule, the *Carrier’s Cosmographie* is evidence that temporal coordination of postal transportation and correspondence was beginning to take place on a national scale.

As the state entered into economic competition with alternative message carriers, the prior drift toward monopolistic control became an avalanche. Witherings’ 1635 patent gave him exclusive rights over the conveyance of domestic and foreign letters at posting speed. Armed with this patent, Witherings began a systematic assault an alternative messengers, local carriers and footposts. A Proclamation of February 11, 1637 prohibited letter carriers to travel overseas via Rye and Dieppe and forced all overseas correspondence through Witherings' Dover-Calais-Antwerp route. The municipal footpost of Hull was threatened with legal action in the Council, and was shut down. A 1637 petition of Norwich merchants claimed that “we have always had

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[31] Landes (1983) p. 93-94.

[32] Taylor (1637).

our letters safely and speedily carried by a horseman for little or no charge" and complained that their messenger had been molested and their letters intercepted by Witherings.[33] Jason Grover, a major carrier serving the clothiers of eastern England, was arrested and jailed for infringing the Postmaster General's patent in 1637.[34] The Parliamentary government did not reverse this trend; on the contrary it intensified and advanced it. Initially, this occurred for political reasons. Parliament learned of the expediency of intercepting mail when during the crisis of November, 1641 the closing of the ports gave them the opportunity to seize and open all overseas correspondence.[35] Parliament was especially concerned about the possibility that King Charles would ally with foreign powers to put down the rebellion. Mention of intercepted overseas correspondence thus turns up often in the Parliamentary newspapers: "Letters from Amsterdam... to the effect that there are forces in Denmark and France intended to land at Hull in England to fight for the King. And also another letter intercepted which came from France also, making discovery of the forces in Denmark…"[36] After the war ended in the 1650s, Parliament adopted the same policy of absorbing public correspondence to subsidize its own posts as had been pioneered by Charles I's administration.

The national government attempted to monitor correspondence and gave its postmasters limited monopoly privileges in the 16th century, but the real movement toward economic monopoly occurred between 1627 and 1641. Between these dates the state decided to absorb private correspondence into its own postal system as a source of revenue. The very act of opening the posts to public correspondence in 1637 forced the government to set regular, public schedules. Thus the critical steps toward periodicity or temporally coordinated postal communications were taken in tandem with monopolization; and this occurred at a point in time very close to the revolution that established a new kind of political order in England. The political upheaval further enhanced the pressures for centralized control by placing a premium on the power to intercept and monitor correspondence.

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[33] CSPD 1637-38 p. 177.

[34] *Ibid*, p. 171.

[35] Commons Journal II p. 143, 150.

[36] A Perfect Diurnal.. #10, 14-21 March, 1642 p. 8.

Chapter Five

THE THIRTY YEARS WAR AND CURRENT COMMUNICATIONS

The political crisis underlying the Thirty Years War can itself be understood as a product of Europe's extended powers of current communication. Maland's (1980) history of the conflict explains how the Dutch rebellion of the 1560s made it necessary for the Spanish empire to protect its lines of transportation and communication to the rebellious provinces. This tended to enmesh local rulers and local conflicts in an international web of alliances.

Similarly, Parker (1979) describes the process whereby the Low Countries became a "semi-permanent pole of political and religious dissent," dividing "international politics, both inside and outside Europe, into two hostile camps." From the 1580s on, the Dutch rebels successfully tied their fate to that of the Hapsburg's enemies in other countries. England was the first nation to formally ally itself with them in 1585. Treaties with France (1589), the Palatinate (1604) and Brandenberg (1605) followed. The scope of the conflict widened as treaties with the Turks (1611), German Protestants (1613), the Hanseatic towns and Sweden (1614), Savoy (1616) and Venice (1619) were signed.[1] According to Parker, the internationalization of the conflict followed improvements in communications "which made it easier to coordinate diplomatic and, when necessary, military contacts across continents." Improved communications encompassed diplomatic organization, better roads, faster ships, more postal links and greater

[1] Parker (1984) p. 4.

regularity of the posts.[2]

Paradoxically, the power to extend the geographic scope of human actions and decisions imposed severe constraints on the number of autonomous political entities that could coexist peacefully. Power relations had to be reformulated in a way that reduced the number of decision centers while enlarging their geographic scope. The appearance of printed periodicals must be understood as an artifact of this reformulation of power relations. They appeared first in Germany, where religious and political fragmentation was most extreme and the interests of all European powers overlapped and abutted. They spread to England with the war and its effects.

The cradle of periodicity was the Hapsburg-controlled "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation," a loose federation of cities, ecclesiastical territories and duchies encompassing much of what is now Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. With a population in 1600 of approximately 20 million, it contained 1000 separate, semi-autonomous political units.[3] Within these entities, the population was divided further into Calvinist, Lutheran and Catholic segments. The empire's territories abutted France, the Spanish Netherlands and the United Provinces. Thus a religious conversion or shift of allegiance by a local magnate could change the balance of power in favor of the Dutch or Spain.

The German province of the Palatinate was one of the most active proponents of an international alliance against the Hapsburgs. The rulers of the Palatinate were Calvinist ideologues who believed in the existence of an international Catholic conspiracy to exterminate heresy throughout Europe. All Protestant powers, they argued, should ally themselves against the Hapsburgs and the papacy. The Palatine capital of Heidelberg was also the European center of the Protestant printing industry. In 1595 Christian of Anhalt was made ruler of the Upper Palatinate and gradually assumed control of Palatine foreign policy. Anhalt made it his mission to create a network of allies capable of thwarting the ambitions of the Hapsburgs. He corresponded with "every government and individual whose services might be harnessed to this cause," including English puritans, French Huguenots and the United Provinces.[4] As early as

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[2] Parker (1979) p. 66.

[3] Parker (1984) p. 15.

[4] Maland (1980) p. 16-17.

1603 King James I was approached by a Palatine embassy seeking his leadership of a Protestant alliance.

Around 1608 the collective decision-making machinery of the empire began to break down under these pressures. In December of 1607 a Catholic Duke occupied the Imperial Free City of Donauworth to protect its Catholic inhabitants. The "Donauworth incident" resulted in a fatal rupture in the Imperial Diet, the major governing body of the empire. Representatives of seven Protestant provinces walked out of the Diet in April of 1608 and in the next month six of them joined together in a military alliance led by Anhalt called the Protestant Union. Under Anhalt's influence the Union immediately began to seek international support. Money from the United Provinces was gained and in Autumn of 1608 its Council voted to seek a marriage between Frederick V, the Prince Palatine, and James I's daughter Elizabeth. On the 10th of July 1609, an opposing League of Garman Catholic princes was formed in Munich.

Tensions continued to mount during the next year. When the Duke who ruled the territories of Julich-Cleves died without children in 1609, a conflict over the succession ensued which pitted claimants backed by Anhalt's Protestant Union against those backed by the emperor Rudolf and the Catholic League. When Catholic forces again threatened to annex the territory, Julich was laid seige by an army of French, Dutch, English and Union troops.

The needs of local courts and town governments in the Empire to stay informed was paramount under such tense and uncertain conditions. Thus from 1609 to 1620 weekly printed gazettes appear in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands like a string of alarm lights going off up and down the Rhine. Augsburg and Strassburg weeklies were produced first in 1609, followed by Basel in 1610, Frankfurt in 1615, and Cologne, Vienna, Regensburg and Hildesheim in 1620.[5] Two Dutch publishers in Amsterdam began printing Courantes in 1618. As in England in the 1640s, printed news periodicals emerged at a time when political relations between territorially dispersed but interdependent local authorities were in a state of flux.

Both the German and the Dutch corantos were merely printed versions of hand copied periodicals that had been run by correspondence bureaus and postmasters since the middle of the 16th century.[6] What happened in 1609 was not the invention of the newspaper, but a sudden shift

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[5] Allen (1930) p. 317.

[6] van Klarwill (1929) p. xxvii, Dahl (1949-50) p. 167.

from scribal to mechanical duplication.

The shift to print probably occurred because the increased demand for news made it feasible to dispose of enough copies to justify the added expense of setting the type and paying a printer. The average press run of the international coranto was estimated by Dahl to be about 400 copies, making it 4-5 times the quantity put out by scriveners.[7] It should be added that duplication by print entailed an increase in the territorial scope of distribution rather than an expanded local audience. The Dutch corantos provide direct evidence for this conclusion: they were printed and translated in order to be exported all over Europe. The same can be inferred of the German newsletters. Payment records to news correspondents and postmasters from electoral courts such as Mainz and Saxony indicate that news periodicals were prepared for and read by courts and governments, not ordinary citizens.[8] An increase in the number of periodicals duplicated allowed news to be exchanged among a greater number of such local political units at greater distances. Thus the function of the news periodical must be distinguished from that of the printed "flysheets" and "chapbooks," which were attempts to mobilize mass public opinion for a particular cause. Printed *periodicals* extended the size of an elite audience by enlarging its geographic distribution; printed *flysheets* disseminated political propaganda more intensively through the population of a given locality. This increase in geographic scope also explains why in the division of labor between printed and hand copied news periodicals, the printed products were associated with coverage of foreign affairs. The newspaper was not yet a mass medium. It was a means of informing and coordinating the activities of territorially dispersed political elites.

While a general conflict over the Julich-Cleves succession was avoided, a Protestant rebellion in Bohemia in 1618 set in motion the chain reaction of alliances and interventions that culminated in general war. Under Protestant pressure, King James had agreed to marry his daughter to the Palatine Prince Frederick V in 1613. When representatives of the rebelling Bohemian estates met in July of 1619 to draft a new constitution, they chose Frederick V as their king. By doing so they deliberately widened the conflict. The estates had been corresponding with Anhalt and believed that the election of Frederick would win the support of the Protestant Union, England and the United Provinces. Such an alliance could hardly fail to provoke a

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[7] Dahl (1952) p. 22.

[8] Bucher (1901) p. 231.

forcible Spanish response. As Dudley Carleton wrote from The Hague in September of 1619, "this business of Bohemia is like to put all Christendom in combustion."[9]

The currency of the word began to circulate in England sometime in November of 1620, when the Dutch "Currantiers" began to export English translations of their product at approximately two week intervals. The impact of the arrival of the corantos with news of the Bohemian rebellion must have been substantial, for there are numerous contemporary references to them. They are mentioned in sermons,[10] in the correspondence of Chamberlain, Mead and other newsletter writers; they were satirized by "character" writers[11] and made the subject of an entire play by Ben Jonson.[12]

It would be pointless to pretend to know exactly how much causal power can be attributed to the receipt of news in this form when so many other kinds of communication were going on at the same time: meetings of Parliament, sermons, public lectures in the universities, pamphlets, personal correspondence, travel and conversation. The printed coranto did, however, add a distinctly new element to this medley: an account of foreign news that was fixed, public, easily transportable and, for the first time, continuous and (imperfectly) regular. The features of typographical fixity, in other words, were wedded to those of current news communication. It is my contention that the temporal dimension was the essential – and heretofore missing – ingredient needed to effect the transition to a print-mediated public.

To understand the impact that news of the Thirty Years War had on English politics after 1620, some preliminary comments concerning the role of the pulpit as a news and publicity outlet must be advanced. As Christopher Hill has observed, "sermons were for the majority of Englishmen their main source of political information and political ideas."[13] Preachers were licensed by the government Church hierarchy, just as the press was. It is noteworthy that a movement to make sermons periodic was gathering momentum just before written periodicals emerged. According to Hill:

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[9] Cited in Parker (1984) p. 35.

[10] Frank (1961), Appendix A.

[11] Braithwaite (1631).

[12] Jonson (1626) "The Staple of Newes."

[13] Hill (1964) p. 32-33.

> Protestants and especially Puritans elevated the Sabbath, the regular day of rest and meditation suited to the regular and continuous rhythms of modern industrial society: they attacked the very numerous and irregular festivals which had hitherto marked the seasons.[14]

Together, the puritans' promotion of Sabbatarianism and preaching ministries fit the sermon into a regular weekly cycle and enlarged its audience. The pulpit was thus the most far-reaching instrument of mass communication in England. To attain mass distribution the news did not have to reach the English public directly. It had only to reach the overwhelmingly literate and, if puritan, actively interested clergy with its news of foreign affairs.

Unfortunately for King James, the clergy was just the group his foreign policy alienated most. Despite his daughter's involvement in the Bohemian conflict, James attempted to maintain viable contacts with Spain in the hopes of arriving at a negotiated solution to the Bohemian problem. He had balanced his daughter's Protestant marriage with proposals for the marriage of his son Charles to a Spanish princess. His desire to avoid war was strengthened by the not unreasonable conviction that England lacked the resources to fight unnecessarily in a time of economic depression, and by his dislike of popular rebellion. James's Lord Chancellor Bacon wrote in 1617 that the English government was against the current "creeping disposition to make popular estates and leagues to the disadvantage of monarchy," and that is precisely what the Bohemian rebels had done.[15] The Spanish diligently exploited all available diplomatic means to keep England neutralized. They encouraged James's desire to act as mediator, and sent an ambassador to London, the Count of Gondomar, to revive the notion of a Spanish match.

But the hook had been set. James's marriage alliance with the embattled Elector Palatine was impossible to ignore. A news and publicity apparatus had grown up alongside the European war which would make neutrality difficult to maintain. Overseas mail arrangements had been taken over and systematically organized by de Quester; foreign corantos had been circulating for several years. The market for international news was strong. Another Dutch publisher, Broer Jansz, began to export a competing coranto in April of 1621. In the summer of that year, English publishers begin to surreptitiously issue their own corantos. Having in effect consigned the

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[14] *Ibid*, p. 146.

[15] Cited in Parker (1980) p. 162.

Bohemian rebellion to defeat by refusing to come to its aid, James now had to deal with recurring public accounts of those defeats. For a time, the news of Catholic victories carried by the corantos seemed to threaten the very existence of continental Protestantism.

It was against this back ground of recurrent, public news accounts of the wars in Germany that the puritan clergy began to speak out against James's pro-Spanish foreign policy. Late in November of 1620 a Puritan minister Thomas Scott secretly published a booklet called *Vox Populi, or newes from Spayne. Translated according to the Spannish coppie*. The book purported to be a translation of the Count of Gondomar's report to the Spanish Council concerning his activities at the Court of King James prior to 1618, and its publication was timed to coincide with Gondomar's return to London. In reality, it was Scott's own view of Spanish policy, masterfully presented in a way calculated to confirm English Protestants' worst fears about Spanish intentions and Gondomar's malign influence over their King.[16]

The pamphlet was an instant sensation. Thousands of copies circulated among the gentry and the court, emboldening other anti-Spanish clergymen to take up the attack. Prominent figures like the Earl of Pembroke and the Bishop of Norwich were thought to be tacit supporters of Scott's, and he managed to flee and continue to publish from abroad. Another clergyman, a Dr. Everard, was allegedly in and out of prison six or seven times for preaching against the Spanish match.[17] Yet another compared the Palatinate to the soul and the invading Spanish general, Spinola, to the devil in a 1622 sermon.[18] James's foreign policy had created a major fissure in the ruling class.

The King responded to this unprecedented outburst of dissent with a series of Proclamations intended to curb public discussion of current affairs. On December 20, 1620 he issued a drastic Proclamation against "lavish and licentious speech about matters of state," warning Englishmen to "take heed not to intermeddle by pen or speech with secrets of empire, either at home or abroad."[19] He commanded the Bishop of London to warn his clergy not to discuss the Spanish match in their sermons, but, according to a newsletter writer, "they do not

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[16] Dahl (1952) p. 23.

[17] Davies (1939) p. 10.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid,* p. 5

obey."[20] In January he pressured the States General of Holland to ban the printing and exporting of corantos in English. The decentralization of the lines of international correspondence made this unenforceable. Its failure was apparent in the continued traffic in Dutch corantos and the first efforts of London printers to secretly publish their own. The Proclamation of December was reissued in June of 1621, but, as Chamberlain noted, "the people take no notice and corantos are issued every week."[21]

James therefore tightened the apparatus of control. In August of 1621 the London bookseller Thomas Archer was imprisoned and his presses dismantled for unlawfully issuing corantos. In September an officially licensed and censored translation of the Dutch corantos was authorized.[22] The most severe measures were reserved for preaching, however. Because a dissenting minister had invoked the teaching s of Pareus (a Calvinist whose book *Irenicon* advocated an international alliance of Protestants under the patronage of the kings of England and the United Provinces, and who supported the right of the subject to resist tyrannical sovereigns) the authorities of Oxford were commanded to search all libraries, studies and bookshops and publicly burn every copy of Pareus's works they could find.[23] At the King's order a new set of regulations governing preaching were sent from the Archbishop of Canterbury to the bishops to enforce in their dioceses. Ministers were to adhere strictly to their texts, which were reviewed in advance, and afternoon sermons were confined to catechisms, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer or other "court divinitie," as a critic dubbed it.[24] The restrictions on afternoon preaching, the Puritans complained, lost them half the preaching in England.[25]

The draconian measures required to muzzle dissent is evidence that new forces were at work in public communication. While preaching and Scott's pamphlets normally take center stage in accounts of public opinion during the 1620s, postal developments and the circulation of newspapers and newsletters about foreign affairs cannot be left out of the picture. The

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[20] *Ibid*, p. 9.

[21] Chamberlain, *Letters,* August 4 1621.

[22] Siebert (1952).

[23] Davies (1939) p. 10-11.

[24] *Ibid.*

propaganda war was, after all, about a foreign policy issue and assumed some degree of background knowledge about continental affairs. James's proclamations against "meddling with secrets of empire" notwithstanding, foreign policy now had to be conducted subject to public scrutiny and commentary. James's refusal to help the Palatinate and his pursuit of a Spanish match opened a breach between the Stuarts and the clergy that continued to widen until the Revolution.

The news periodical was not a neutral force. By introducing a new, more spatially extended medium of current communication it was beginning to bring together a new "public" whose boundaries extended beyond the established government hierarchy. News of the Bohemian rebellion was of interest primarily to those who held pro-war, anti-Spanish views; that is who published it and, so far as we can determine, that is who read it. Corantos are mentioned in the letters of the Justice of the Peace Jahn Rous, the Reverend Mead and the Lady Brilliana Harley, for example – all puritans.[26] At one point Nathaniel Butter's periodical carried a wood cut of the Coat of Arms of the King of Bohemia. From the content of the corantos it is apparent that they are written by and for Protestants. Catholic forces are referred to as "the enemie" or "the Adversarie." Frederick V is labelled "Our King," and Protestants are "those of The Religion."[27] The English printed corantos were not neutral recorders of events but organs of a dispersed ideological community. Periodicity was the means by which its members maintained a shared sense of immediate reality without directly meeting each other.

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[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Walzer (1965) p. 246.

[27] van Stockum (1914).

Chapter Six

CURRENCY AND REVOLUTION

By the end of 1623, James's idea of a Spanish match was dead. In May of that year, Prince Charles and James's court favorite, the Duke of Buckingham, had left for Madrid to personally conduct marriage negotiations. They returned as sworn enemies of Spain. Complaining of Spanish treachery, they gradually let it be known that they now advocated war. Charles and Buckingham went about reconciling themselves to the anti-Spanish party, including puritans such as Lord Saye and Sir Edward Coke. They sought a Parliament as a means of taking the initiative in foreign policy away from James, who still favored the match and a negotiated settlement in the Palatinate. Knowing that any Parliament would be overwhelmingly anti-Spanish, they would capture its leadership to rally support for their war policy.[1]

The Parliament of 1624 turned out to be the first of four separate Parliaments instigated by Charles I in an attempt to raise the money and troops required to bring England into the European war. Both the military preparations and the semi-permanent nature of Parliament during this four-year period had fateful long term consequences. "In turning to war," Conrad Russell has remarked, "Buckingham and Charles were putting pressure on English society and administration at their weakest point: the link between central and local government. War immediately implied an increased pressure by the central government on the counties."[2]

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[1] Ruigh (1971) p. 187.

[2] Russell (1979) p. 72.

By the time the Parliament of 1628 was called, England had been engaged in intensive war preparations for over two years. Charles's efforts to raise a modern army had strained the decentralized and voluntaristic structure of English government to the breaking point. The grants of money received from Parliament consistently fell short of what was needed to maintain an army capable of foreign intervention. Because it lacked the means to adequately house them, the royal government was forced to billet soldiers in private homes. Salaries for the soldiers, as for the postmasters, was continually in arrears. Eventually Charles and Buckingham turned to extra-Parliamentary means of raising money, such as the forced loan. All these practices aroused strenuous opposition. Parliament's drafting of the Petition of Right in 1628 was an attempt to defend traditional liberties against these centralizing tendencies.

Not surprisingly, 1628 is also the date of the first known Parliamentary periodical. The hand copied newsletters were short summaries of each day's proceedings at Westminster compiled weekly onto a single sheet for mailing. They were a commercial operation run by London scriveners, who assembled their reports from hearsay and private notes obtained with the complicity of some MPs. Individual issues of them are found "hopelessly interwoven" with private news correspondence, suggesting that they *were* used as labor-saving form letters by busy MPs when communicating with the localities.[3]

As in Germany after 1609, periodic news communication began to take place under a specific set of political conditions related to the need to reformulate power relations among territorially dispersed political entities. County government was still relatively independent and locally based. English kings lacked the central administrative apparatus for raising money and troops on their own, relying instead on the essentially voluntary cooperation of the county

[3] Notestein and Relf (1921) p. xlix.

gentry. In their function as unpaid Justices of the Peace, Lords Lieutenants, Deputy Lieutenants, Constables, etc. they administered the law, raised the militia and collected taxes in the counties. Charles I turned toward absolutist rule after 1629 because of the difficulty of enforcing laws, raising an army and collecting money through the agency of Parliament and the Justices of the Peace.

Parliament was the key actor in changing both political and communication institutions because of its unique role as the mediator between the court and the county gentry.[4] This mediating role made it the most sensitive to the functional break down, and ultimately the only agency capable of correcting it. It also made it the center of correspondence and news about domestic politics. During the 1620s, reports to and from Parliament about bills and controversies became increasingly current, to the point where a locality in the North could actually send instructions to its MP to include it in a bill still under consideration.[5] And as a consequence of the Thirty Years War, much of this communication concerned issues of uniform national interest rather than of a purely local or special interest.

The next nationwide political crisis took place between 1640 and 1642, and once again gave birth to news periodicals – this time with a vengeance. Charles I had given up on Parliaments after his four unsuccessful experiences. In 1629 he embarked on ten years of "personal rule" without the use of the representative body for taxation. Rebellions in Scotland and then Ireland, however, put demands on the government beyond the financial means of extra-Parliamentary taxation. Charles was forced to call two successive Parliaments to raise an army. The first, which became known as the *Short Parliament*, ended in deadlock and rapid dissolution

[4] Elton (1974).

[5] Hirst (1974) p. 178-9.

when the members insisted on redress of their grievances before any vote of supply. The outbreak of a Catholic rebellion in Ireland, however, forced Charles to call a second, which convened in November of 1640 and became known as the *Long Parliament*. While the King needed Parliament to finance the military response to the Irish rebellion, Parliament demanded a radical redistribution of the executive power and sweeping changes in Church government. The result was a grave constitutional crisis that attracted the attention of the entire country and eventually broke out into civil war.

At first the demand for news of this crisis was handled through personal correspondence and written newsletters. County inhabitants who had friends or relatives in London were urged to send regular accounts of what was happening. Simond D'Ewes sent weekly letters of news to his brother-in-law William Eliot by the Godalming carrier.[6] The Earls of Leicester, Northumberland and Salisbury all subscribed to Captain Edward Rossingham's written news service.[7] A study of the county of Cheshire by Morrill found references to news of political events from London in every surviving set of gentry family correspondence in the years around 1640.[8] Fletcher argues that "the responsiveness of the provinces as a whole to national events increased enormously between November 1640 and the battle of Edgehill two years later."[9]

An even more important reflection of the increasing amount of current communication between the center of power and the country was the parliamentary petition. These took two forms: MPs were for the first time sent to the opening session of Parliament with a petition carrying a formal agenda of grievances. Then, in 1641 and 1642, there were two separate flurries

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[6] Fletcher (1981) p. xxvii.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] Morrill (1974) p. 39-4:2.

[9] Fletcher (1981) p. x xvii.

of petitions from the public at large intended to influence the deliberations of Parliament while it was in session.

Between December of 1641 and August of 1642, for example, 35 of the 40 counties and approximately ten towns sent petitions with hundreds of signatures to Parliament expressing their views on the constitutional crisis. The political crisis had so extended the structure of social simultaneity that it had become accepted practice for the citizens of a county 50 - 150 miles away to collectively organize efforts to affect ongoing parliamentary deliberations.

Starting in November of 1641, this explosion of nationwide political communication produced the first domestic printed news periodicals. The way was cleared for this development when Parliament abolished the Court of Star Chamber in July, which had been responsible for enforcing press censorship. By November of 1641 news publishers felt secure enough about the absence of the old controls to inaugurate printed Diurnals of Parliamentary affairs. The first, John Thomas's *The Heads of Severall Proceedinqs in This Present Parliament,* covered the week November 22 - 29, 1641. It was in essence a printed version of the hand written parliamentary newsletters of the 1620s. By late December, a second and third weekly had appeared.

Printed newsbooks eased the writing burden of many a London correspondent. Sir Richard Leveson wrote to a friend in Staffordshire, “were not all the news in print I would write more largely.”[10] Henry Oxinden of Kent wrote to a friend in London:

> I desire you to send down the most material latest printed books by the Friday and Thursday posts constantly. ...if your leisure will not permit you to write what news is stirring yet pray enclose them in a paper and so send them.[11]

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[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Ibid.*

It is not my intention to argue that the information carried by printed newspapers was any more important than communication by petition, speech, sermon, pamphlet, broad sheet or procession. In terms of its immediate impact on the outcome of the Revolution, newspapers at this stage were almost certainly less important than petitions and related canvassing activities. The printed newspaper and its weekly production cycle are important, rather, as an artifact or material expression of the type of change that was shaking the structure of English society. Clearly, the demand for current, transportable news had outstripped once and for all the capacity of scribal duplication. More important, the overwhelming bulk of the news was published in periodical form. Individual prose newsbooks still existed, but were outnumbered by periodical news in the Stationers' Company register by 8 to 1.[12] This was, I submit, both a response to and a reinforcement of the geographic extension of social simultaneity created by the political crisis. By virtue of their political relations, which were in the throes of a simultaneous and systemic transformation, most of England was experiencing the same event at the same time, perhaps for the first time in history.

Obviously by the clock or even the calendar, events in London did not occur at “the same time” as the receipt of and reaction to news about them in the counties. From a purely social stand point, however, the political future of the nation rested in the hands of Parliament, and the duration of the Parliament overlapped with that of the counties' ability to organize activity or send messages that might affect its decisions. In this sense, the Long Parliament from 1641 to 1642 was a single event extended geographically through channels of current communication, and most of England was a participant in it.

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[12] See the Table below.

How else are we to explain the fact that the Long Parliament was responsible for such a prodigious birth of periodicals, as opposed to newsbooks, speeches, or any other form of printed publication? Using data from the Stationers' Company register, the following Table shows how the political crisis changed the output of the English press. From 1595 to 1645 the Register was sampled at approximately five year intervals, and all the entries for the selected years were categorized and counted in order to see how the various genres of publication -- books, newsbooks, periodicals, ballads and sermons -- changed in quantity. The predominance of periodic communication after 1643 is perhaps the most convincing evidence that temporal coordination was a necessity if a national public was to act in concert.

Before 1620, prose political news (categories B and C) comprised less than one half of 1 percent of all registrations. Between 1620 and 1632; they comprised 18 percent. During the Civil War years 1643-45 periodicals alone account for 60 percent of all entries. All of these periodicals were political weeklies covering the acts and debates of Parliament and the battles of the Civil War. The steady rise in publication by the literate, politically active clergy is also note-worthy. Not only did the printed sermon C F> become one of the major categories of publication after 1600, but 25-30 percent of all the books registered between 1613 and 1627 were by ministers or doctors of divinity.

For the first two years of its existence, the printed periodical closely adhered to the format established by the hand copied Parliamentary newsletter. Beginning in 1643 another type of periodical appeared: the propaganda organ. In these publications, accounts of current events were worked into the interpretation of a particular political faction. The royalist newspaper *Mercurius Aulicus* appeared first in January of 1643, followed by *Mercurius Civicus*. The *Parliament Scout* and, in August of 1643, *Mercurius Britanicus*, the semi-official voice of the

Parliamentary government. The power of current descriptions to influence as well as inform began to be consciously exploited. In *Mercurius Britanicus*, reports on the progress of the Civil War were worked into a narrative of events (mostly battles) through which the news accounts and arguments of the royalist paper *Mercurius Aulicus* were refuted and ridiculed. Such a fusion of propaganda and news was absolutely necessary given the state of communications during the war. If the Parliamentary forces did not publish answers to royalist claims that their troops committed atrocities or had lost decisive battles, there was a real danger that the claims would be believed, and a local community's allegiance affected. It was still possible for a royalist naval commander to sail into a port city 150 miles from London and claim that the Parliamentarians had lost all power and, for a critical period of time, raise serious doubts in the minds of its inhabitants whether to surrender or not.[13]

These news and propaganda organs take an explicitly national perspective in their relations of news. Short labels on the side margins of Mercurius Britanicus list the locations of various reports: "Coast of Wales;" "Barnstaple;" "Exeter;" etc. Devices such as “As you have heard of the affairs in the west part of Britayne a word of the Northern parts…” are common.[14] It is also abundantly clear that correspondence networks are the primary source of information: “Letters this day from Exeter dated the 12th instant signifie to this effect...” and so on. The newspaper was primarily an organ of long distance communication intended to win the allegiance of county gentry, many of whom wanted to remain neutral or had a very difficult time making up their mind about who to support.[15]

When Parliament achieved military victory over the royalists it consolidated its control

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[13] Mercurius Britanicus #1, (1643) p. 2.

[14] Mercurius Britanius #1, (1643) p. 3.

over the channels and content of current communications. An Intelligence Department was created in 1649 and in 1652 control over it was assumed by Cromwell's principal Secretary of State, John Thurloe. Public postal service was resumed in 1653. The war for monopoly had been moot during the Civil War. Once domestic order was re-established around 1650, however, private mail services began to crop up. The London Common Council, after petitioning Parliament three times to reopen mail service to Scotland without success, began to arrange its own post stages along the Berwick road. Businessmen Clement Oxenbridge and Francis Thomson ran a letter service from the early 1600s to 1630. John Hill laid his own post-horse stages along the London - York road toward s the end of 1652. Both of these private services carried letters for less than the government.

All of these alternative posts were suppressed in 1653, however, when Parliament passed new postal orders and reopened the state post to the public. Parliament's devotion to monopoly was motivated by the same combination of economic and political concerns as before. Control of the posts was a valuable intelligence tool and competition, "besides intrenching upon the rights of Parliament, ...will distract that course...by which the charge of all the postmasters of England are taken off from the state."[16] In May of 1655, Thurloe himself took direct control over the Post Office by buying out the authorized "farmer." The press, too, was muzzled by Cromwell's decree of August 28, 1655, which reinstated licensing and suppressed all news periodical s except for a twice weekly official publication. What is frighteningly impressive about Thurloe is the way he vertically integrated all the diverse apparatus of current communication which had grown up independently of each other over the years. The weekly written newsletter, the posts,

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[15] See Everitt (1969).

[16] Sir E. Prideaux, Report of Secret Committee (1844) p. 70.

government surveillance, franking of letters, and the periodical press all came together in the Secretary of State's office. Thurloe placed well-paid spies in every major city on the continent and required them to correspond weekly. In addition, he had spies in every English city and county of note and "held a constant correspondence with the Sheriffs, Justices, and Commanders of almost every county who acquainted him constantly with all that they could possibly learn."[17] Thurloe's correspondence was aided by the privilege of franking letters, which had been asserted by Parliamentary decree in 1652. The information he gathered that was deemed fit for public consumption was compiled and published in Marchamont Nedham's *Publick Intelligencer* or *Mercurius Politicus*. According to a document describing Thurloe's methods written shortly after the Restoration, the General Post Office in London was carefully and constantly monitored, "for through this office are conveyed all the poisenous distempers of the City into the whole Kingdom."[18] Isaac Dorislaus was employed to open and read letters from the closing of the Office at 11 pm to 3 or 4 am every night, and almost every post night "letters of consequence" were intercepted. If plotters attempted to rely on ordinary carriers or footposts to distribute their communications, Thurloe, upon catching wind of a planned uprising, would send out minions to seize and bring back all the packets and letters held by known carriers they could find.

The transformation of the posts into a gigantic intelligence apparatus was explicitly proclaimed in the preamble to the first legal charter of the English postal system, the Act of 1657. The law declared that a "single general letter office" was necessary to "discover and prevent many dangerous and wicked designs which have been and are daily contrived against the peace and welfare of the Commonwealth, the intelligence whereof cannot be well

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[17] Firth (1898) p. 532.

[18] Ibid, p. 30.

communicated, but by letters of escript."[19]

Cromwell succeeded in centralizing and controlling the new organs of current, public communication more effectively than any King before him. Nevertheless, the essential *continuity* of the trend toward a centralized information hierarchy must be emphasized. Regardless of who held power, the long term drift toward a monopoly postal system and an official press run from the Secretaries of States' offices went on. Diversity and freedom, when they appeared, were an accidental consequence of the fragmentation of power, never a product of deliberate policy. The absorption of private correspondence for economic and intelligence reasons by the Secretaries of State began under Charles I and was perfected under the Protectorate. After the Restoration, Thurloe's practices were consciously emulated by Charles II's Secretaries of State.[20] The change in the structure of current communications was permanent, and its essential elements remained intact until the invention of the railroad and telegraph in the 19th century.

[19] Report of the Secret Committee (1844) p. 72.

[20] Fraser (1956) p. 20, 24-25.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSION: COMMUNICATION AND THE WESTPHALIAN PEACE

From 1608 to 1655, posts and literate media were fashioned into a new system of current communication over long distances. This historical development cannot be discussed as if it were a technological change. Its specific elements -- transportation by post horse stages, writing and the press -- were hundreds or even thousands of years old by the 17th century. Rather, established technologies were combined in a new and powerful way to achieve a level of coordinated communication associated with the formation of larger-scale, modern political units. One of the most critical features of this system was not a technology at all, but the simple decision to adhere to a regular interval in the publication and distribution of written and printed news. Periodicity was the heartbeat that gave news communication its life. It synchronized publication and transportation, regulated the expectations of audiences and extended a sense of immediate reality over long distances.

The newspaper should not be treated as an episode in the history of the press, as if it were an institution that flows from Gutenberg's invention as naturally as water from melting ice. Rather, it was the culmination of literate media’s entrance into a new, temporally contingent stratum of social interaction. Originally, the printed word was a technology of memory, a way of preserving information intact over time. Following the development of postal transportation and the rise of larger-scale political units, literate media were pressed into a new role as the

conveyors of transient information over space. In addition to books, charters, accounts and records, the written word now was routinely relied upon to carry news, intelligence, conspiracies and propaganda. Because time was of the essence in this kind of communication, periodicity rather than the use of printing *per se* was the critical feature of its new social function. This change in temporal status required a thorough reconstruction of the written word's reference framework. It had to flow *in time*, not outside of it; it had to carry its own internal temporal standard in the form of periodic publication and serial numbering of issues and pages. Moreover, it had to be integrated with organs of transportation and networks of correspondents. Clearly, the causal forces at work here were mutual and reciprocal: literacy and printing assisted in the transformation of society, but the needs of a new type of society transformed the nature of literate communication.

While this achievement was economic and organizational rather than technical, its effects were nonetheless as revolutionary as those typically attributed to new inventions. The emergence of a currency of the word extended the scale and scope of social coordination in ways that helped to bring about war, revolution and new forms of government. It would be absurd to assert that a specific institution such as the newspaper *caused* the Thirty Years War or the English Revolution. But temporal coordination of news over long distances certainly *was* a causal force contributing to these conflicts. Coordination was visible on a variety of fronts: in the conduct of long distance diplomacy and the establishment of public postal and carrier schedules, as well as in the birth of news periodicals that informed, mobilized and propagandized dispersed publics. Temporal coordination embraced Europe in a common field of social interaction. This act of fusion released the enormous power latent in social communication once it is synchronized and extended to unite large, dispersed and heterogeneous populations. Old political relations were

swept away as new, geographically extended publics came into being.

The elements of the currency of the word – posts, newsletters, printed newspapers -- grew up independently and spontaneously, without any centrally organized direction or purpose. It is not surprising, then, that the social forces that coalesced around their integration into a powerful new social capability were uncontrolled and revolutionary. The political relations among the large-scale public enabled by the currency of the word were not yet defined; there were no institutional channels into which they could easily flow. Thus, the changes in communication infrastructure and practices described here are closely associated with conflict and shifting, disrupted power relations. In the early stages of these changes, in England at least, a period of unparalleled freedom of expression and political innovation resulted. New political movements, hundreds of pamphlets and dozens of news periodicals voicing diverse and radical views were published. The story ends, however, with Cromwell's government monopolizing the channels and content of current communication and vertically integrating its control over them. In other words, the creation of a stable territorial monopoly on political power was inseparable from the successful establishment of control over the newly-born apparatus of synchronous, long distance, literate communication.

The 1648 Peace of Westphalia, the treaty marking the end of the Thirty Years War, was emblematic of the new equilibrium. It signaled the institutionalization of a new concept of state sovereignty and the eventual consolidation of hundreds of smaller political units into larger territorial states. Well into the 21st century, Westphalia is still cited as a turning point in international relations, the beginning of the modern approach to sovereignty. Less well-recognized, however, is the association of that institutional landmark with a new equilibrium in the institutions of social communication. That new order leveraged a monopoly over postal

infrastructure to support news periodicals, enforce national boundaries, provide surveillance capabilities, support domestic and international intelligence networks, and tap into the growing demand for civilian communication to financially support the state's communications needs. The longevity of this equilibrium is remarkable; with the notable exception of the United States, it cruised along uninterrupted into the 1980s, incorporating into the model two potentially radical new technologies, the telegraph and the telephone, along the way. Indeed, in Japan and some other countries the PTT model had a major impact on the financial system, with an entire banking system integrated into the post office and using its geographic reach to blanket the country with its branches.

A lack of recognition of the historical linkage between nation-state formation and communication institutions persists today. Yet, interestingly, Westphalia and the so-called "Westphalian system" is constantly invoked in current discussions of Internet governance, cyberspace and cybersecurity.[1] The specter of Westphalia is used by contemporary observers to point in opposite directions. On the one hand, progressives and liberals emphasize the anti-Westphalian, border-busting, transnational nature of cyberspace and look for institutional innovations in its wake.[2] On the other hand, conservatives insist that it is only a matter of time before digital technology itself becomes Westphalian and territorial in structure; states and politics are more powerful than technology, they claim, and the desire to preserve order, control and sovereignty will win out in the end.[3]

This book is not about that debate, and is not by any means an attempt to resolve it. But the historical analysis it provides can certainly contribute something to it. If the origin of the

[1] For a typical example, see Fehlinger, 2014.

[2] See, e.g., Fehlinger, 2014; Mueller 2010.

Westphalian form of the state was closely associated with a powerful new equilibrium in the institutions of public communication, it suggests that the relationships between sovereign control, the form taken by the state, and the organizational forms taken by basic public information systems are historically contingent and evolve together. Though we cannot know for sure what specific shape the new world order based on digital communications will take, the historical research here might offer hints as to where to look for indicators and clues.

[3] See Goldsmith and Wu, 2006, and Demchak and Dombrowski, 2011.

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