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ABSTRACT

ALGERNON AND HENRY SIDNEY: A STUDY IN STYLES AND METHODS OF OPPOSITION AGAINST THE STUART MONARCHY, 1644-1688

By

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The public careers of Algernon and Henry Sidney illustrate the two-fold theme of general political opposition and the individual's efforts at political survival. In the case of each brother, opposition was directed against one or more Stuart monarchs. In Algernon's case, he not only distrusted and disliked every Stuart with whom he came in contact, but he also learned to distrust the institution of monarchy in general. Algernon's opposition was considerably broader in concept than was his brother Henry's, since it included not only certain individuals within its framework, but also basically the institution of monarchy itself. Algernon's fatal blunder was that he truly believed at times that his opposition views would be listened to and respected by the very monarchs whom he was criticizing.

Henry Sidney, on the other hand, approached the problem of opposition with a completely different perspective. He was neither a man of high and rigid principles nor an intellect with a comprehensive and critical outlook on men and institutions. Unlike his brother Algernon, Henry Sidney managed to have good relations with Charles II most of the time. Instead, his opposition was directed against

Charles II's brother, James, first as Duke of York and then as James II. Henry Sidney's concept of opposition was a curious blend of devotion to Prince William of Orange, and whatever cause he might choose for himself, and a desire to further his own interests in any way that he could. Conditions during the reign of James II allowed both of these features to coalesce for Henry. He was able to combine his natural charm and good-natured disposition with his superb ability as an intriguer to aid William's cause in 1688 and also to further his own interests. Much in contrast to his brother Algernon, Henry Sidney was a realist regarding his own opposition.

The years which receive the most emphasis and study in the course of this work are those between 1677 and 1683. During this period, Algernon was allowed to return to England after seventeen years of political exile. It also marked his re-involvement in domestic politics, namely the Exclusion Crisis, which led eventually to his trial and execution for high treason in 1683. The same political and constitutional crisis which brought about Algernon's final downfall actually launched his brother Henry's career as a diplomat and an intriguer. For it was during the Exclusion Crisis that Henry Sidney managed to construct for himself an important connection with Prince William of Orange, and this connection proved to be invaluable for both William and Henry during the crisis year of 1688. In essence then, this particular period of years is focused upon because it witnessed not only the spectacular end of one brother's career, but also the beginning and development of the career of the other.

Essentially then, this work is an explanation of how two

very different aristocratic brothers tried to survive in a turbulent period of English history. Certainly, each brother is closely examined to show precisely how his personality and adult career relate to the events and movements which are always in the background. But the lives of Algernon and Henry Sidney provide more than just an opportunity to rehash old political events. For the two brothers taken together represent in general the theme of opposition to the Stuart monarchs, though in each case the monarch opposed is different. Furthermore, each brother chose an essentially different approach to opposition, which was really a reflection of his own character and approach to life. Algernon, the proud idealist with an intellectual approach to life, chose open warfare and roundtable intriguing as avenues for his opposition. On the other hand, Henry Sidney, using his natural charm and affable manner, developed his opposition through diplomatic intrigue and intelligence work, both of which made ample use of his ability to get along well with people.

In a larger sense, though, the lives of these two brothers reveal an interesting feature of the nature of politics at that time. It was a harsh world indeed, and to survive it, one had to be quick and above all realistic about the nature of events. Algernon possessed considerable intellectual capacity, but he lacked the ability to "unbend" a little and approach matters realistically. The times demanded a realistic approach, flavored with the right amount of cynicism for people and institutions. Henry Sidney, though certainly no mental giant, did approach matters realistically and had at all times one primary goal in mind, that is, how to help Henry Sidney survive in the world. Algernon had difficulty surviving and failed in the end; on the other hand, Henry survived in admirable fashion.

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AGAINST THE STUART MONARCHY, 1644-1688

By

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To My Parents

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

A number of people helped me in the preparation of this dissertation in one way or another, and they all deserve recognition for their assistance, some to a greater degree than others. First, my parents deserve a large measure of my gratitude for their moral encouragement and financial help over the past five years. It is hoped that this effort has not been in vain. In addition, my original committee chairman and dissertation director, Professor Thomas L. Bushell, deserves special thanks and appreciation for his guidance and friendship over the past five years. Unfortunately, he died in April of 1975 before he had a chance to see the end result of my labors. The dissertation was mainly written as something for him to read. Professor Donald Lammers deserves special thanks for coming in at the last minute and guiding the dissertation through its final stages. Not an easy thing to do, by any means. Professor Marjorie Gesner's help in the preparation of chapter five is especially appreciated. Dr. Josef Konvitz and Professor Frederick Williams deserve thanks for their assistance and critical remarks.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN FOOTNOTES

- BIHR Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research
CSPD Calendar of State Papers, Domestic
DNB Dictionary of National Biography
HMC Historical Manuscripts Commission
JBS Journal of British Studies
JEH Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JMH Journal of Modern History
TRHS Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
WMQ William and Mary Quarterly

CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION

The seventeenth century witnessed a great many changes and upheavals in England, events which profoundly influenced the country along the path toward a more modern state. There was, of course, the continuing struggle between Parliament and the Stuart monarchs for a clearer working definition of prerogative power. How much power did Parliament, and in particular the House of Commons, have at its disposal? Was the King in reality as in theory a monarch who ruled by divine right as God's lieutenant on earth? The struggle for power within the framework of the constitution between King and Parliament reached a climax during midcentury in a civil war which is often referred to as the Great Rebellion or the Puritan Revolution. For a brief period, Parliament emerged supreme, but soon found it could not cope with the likes of Oliver Cromwell and his army of Saints. Besides, the war itself, like Pandora's Box in the Greek myth, turned loose a host of religious and political ideas that were in themselves revolutionary and far in advance of their time.¹ Indeed, to many people who lived through the troubled years of the 1640's and 1650's,

¹For an in-depth and scholarly analysis of the radical groups and their ideas during this period, see Christopher Hill's The World Turned Upside Down (New York: Viking Press, 1972).

England must have seemed like a world "turned upside down."

Even though the Stuart dynasty was restored in 1660, things could never be as they once had been, or as men had imagined them to be. For one thing, Parliament, especially the House of Commons, had tasted power and authority during the previous years, and this experience was impossible to erase. Between 1660 and 1681 not only did the Commons continue in its less than endearing role as a harsh critic of royal ministers, but during the Dutch wars, it also became a critic of war management and expenditure. In fact, the Commons was even bold enough to engage in criticism of national policy itself. In addition, the Commons had the audacity during the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-81 to challenge one of the very foundation stones of the monarchy itself, that of the principle of hereditary succession. Though Shaftesbury and his Whigs failed in their concerted effort to force Charles II to abandon his Catholic brother James, they demonstrated what good political organization in conjunction with national hysteria could accomplish. Indeed, a new era of political activity was emerging in England, one that involved borough manipulation on the local level and the management of factions in Parliament on the national level.

The continuing struggle for power between King and Parliament was intricately involved in another major struggle during this century, but one which is not quite so obvious at times. The second struggle involved the tendency of the Royal central government in Westminster to expand its scope of operations at the expense of local level government as carried out by the traditional gentry and aristocratic classes. These classes had their social and economic roots deeply planted in the land and were responsible for the

[illegible]

functioning of government on the local level. These landowning classes were also, of course, the politically active classes, and their beliefs and opinions found expression in Parliament. Therefore, while Parliament, especially the Commons, was grappling with the Crown over a proper balance within the Constitution, many of the same men were involved in the related struggle over control of institutions on the local level. For example, after the Whig challenge during the Exclusion Crisis, Charles II proceeded to manipulate boroughs and corporations using the weapon of quo warranto writs. This was done both to weed out the villainous Whigs and to ensure a more manageable and docile Commons. This Royal campaign worked, and as J. R. Western so aptly puts it: "The elections of 1685 were the culmination of the royal drive for greater control over the traditional institutions of power."²

A third major issue that occupied men's attention during the reigns of Charles II and James II was the issue of religion. First of all, there were the dissenters from Anglicanism who represented a wide spectrum of religious thought, a legacy from the previous decades. Many of them expected some degree of toleration from, or at least accommodation with, the Anglicans. They did not get it. But, a religious factor which was even more important during this period was anti-Catholicism, which culminated in the national hysteria of the Popish Plot and was certainly a key factor in bringing about James II's downfall in 1688. This is extremely important

²J. R. Western, Monarchy and Revolution: The English State in the 1680's, part of the Blandford Historical Series, gen. ed. R. W. Harris (London: Blandford Press, 1972), p. 69.

because anti-Catholicism was a very strong emotion in seventeenth-century England and was found in every class and section of society. In fact, according to one historian, "Anti-popery was the strongest, most widespread and most persistent ideology in the life and thought of seventeenth-century Britain."³ If people were upset and uneasy over the alleged Catholic leanings of Charles II, it is easy to see why some of them were quite shaken over the open acknowledgement by James of his Catholicism, a Catholicism that was narrow and bigoted. At a time when the Crown's prerogative was not yet clearly defined, the presence of a Catholic king could represent a very real danger not only to the Protestant establishment, but also to the very lives and liberties of English subjects. If any Englishman doubted for a minute the threat that Catholicism represented, he only needed to take a good, hard look across the Channel and observe Charles and James Stuart's royal cousin Louis XIV in action.

An excellent way in which to view the events of the period from 1660 to 1688 is through the perspective of aristocratic family history. By studying the lives of some of the members of a particular family of aristocrats, the historian can emphasize not only personal biography, but he can also relate the individual members to each other, to their immediate family connections, and to others in their class. Family study gives the historian a wider perspective with which to view personal achievements and failures. In addition, the individuals being emphasized can be easily related to the general

³ J. R. Jones, The Revolution of 1688 in England (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 75.

sweep of events and ideas developing around them.

A good example of this concept can be demonstrated with the Sidney family of Penshurst in Kent. The Sidney family name is old and well established, going back to the twelfth century to Sir William Sidney (or Sydney), who was chamberlain to Henry II. The two family members who are the central figures in this work, Algernon and Henry Sidney, were both sons of Robert Sidney, the second Earl of Leicester. Their grandfather, the first Earl, was the brother of Sir Philip Sidney, the famous Elizabethan soldier, poet, and courtier. Since both Algernon and Henry Sidney were younger sons in a large family, neither one could count on inheriting the family's title, or the prestige and responsibilities inherent in such a birthright. Sons of an aristocrat though they were, each one had to make his own way in the world, counting mainly upon his own native talents and the family connections to such notable English families as the Percies, the Saviles, the Spencers, and the Pelhams. The public and private lives of Algernon and Henry Sidney span over three-quarters of the seventeenth century (1622-1704), and they were involved in many of the crucial events and movements of the period, especially during the reigns of Charles II and James II.

Algernon Sidney, the elder of the two brothers, was born in 1622 and died in 1683, after being found guilty of high treason. For this particular Sidney, the Parliamentary war against Charles I in the 1640's and the subsequent Commonwealth and Protectorate periods in the 1650's were very real experiences, and ones which exerted a considerable influence upon his own development and his particular philosophy of government. Algernon was an ardent supporter of the

Parliamentary cause during the Civil War, and, after the fighting, he was an active participant in both Commonwealth governments of the 1650's. The emergence of Oliver Cromwell and his army onto the political stage forced Sidney into retirement, for as far as he was concerned, Cromwell was just an arbitrary ruler as Charles I had been. After the Restoration in 1660, Algernon Sidney remained unreconciled with the Stuart monarchy for seventeen long and bitter years of exile on the Continent. Indeed, at times he was little more than a wandering vagabond, having only his pride and his high principles to sustain him.

The main theme running through Algernon Sidney's adult political life was his steadfastly consistent opposition to arbitrary government and absolutist monarchy in England. Rather than discard his principles, Algernon accepted the fate of a traitor, and his name was enshrined in the Whig hall of English martyrs. For indeed, Sidney viewed himself as a martyr for his principles, and subsequent generations of Whigs viewed him as a martyr for the cause of constitutional development in England. After his return to England from political exile in 1677, Algernon Sidney continued his opposition to arbitrary Stuart rule, begun under Charles I. He was very much a part of the Whig opposition to Charles II and the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-81. Unfortunately, he was also one of the many victims of the Tory reaction and Stuart revenge upon the Whigs which followed Shaftesbury's exile and death. In essence then, Algernon Sidney's views of the English state and constitution must be seen in relation to the crucial events which helped formulate them. He must be seen in relation to larger movements and causes that raged and surged about him during his

lifetime.

The best and most detailed expression of Algernon Sidney's views on political philosophy, monarchies in general, and the English state in particular is to be found in a rather wordy and rambling work by him known simply as Discourses Concerning Government. Though the exact dates of composition have never been known, it is clear from a careful perusal of the text that most, if not all, of the work was written between the Earl of Danby's fall in 1678 and Sidney's own arrest on charges of treason in 1683. Sidney admittedly wrote this work as a refutation of Sir Robert Filmer's Patriarcha, itself a rather obscure work which sought to extol the virtues of the divine-right monarch. Simply stated, Algernon Sidney felt that no single form of government was prescribed by God for mankind; rather, He endowed men with the power of reason to create those forms of government which best suited their needs.⁴ Magistrates in power, and kings in particular, derived their lawful authority from those they ruled, and if they abused that power, the people had the right to change rulers, even using sedition and war if necessary.⁵ Lest Sidney be misinterpreted as a madcap radical, it should quickly be pointed out that he was not advocating democratic rule by all of the people for the seventeenth century. What he was advocating was a kind of mixed government, with the landowning classes exerting the dominant influence through Parliament. Nevertheless, through his actions and

⁴Algernon Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government, ed. John Toland (London: 1698), p. 130.

⁵Ibid., p. 174.

his words, Sidney made himself obnoxious enough so that the Crown had him prosecuted for high treason in 1683 and executed. It should be noted that excerpts from Algernon Sidney's Discourses were used against him at his trial to prove his evil and malicious intentions against Charles II. Such is the stuff from which political heroes and martyrs are made.

Almost an entire generation separated Algernon Sidney from his youngest brother Henry, the other central figure of this work. Since Henry Sidney was born in 1641 in Paris, the events in England of the 1640's meant little to him as far as personal development was concerned. While he may have enjoyed listening to stories of brother Algernon's military exploits as a cavalry officer under Cromwell, the more complex issues of King versus Parliament and Presbyterian versus Independent must certainly have been above young Henry's head. The differences between these two brothers do not end here, however. For, Henry Sidney developed into quite a different person altogether from his brother, Algernon. While Algernon stands out clearly as a man of high, rigid principles who was arrogant and difficult to work with, his brother Henry possessed the charm and grace of a courtier, which in turn masked a cleverness and a considerable political agility that allowed him to survive in troubled times. Indeed, as one historian has described Henry Sidney, he was a person who possessed "in a rare degree the instinct of intrigue."⁶ While both brothers were opponents of the Stuart monarchs and each one participated in different types of

⁶Thomas Seccombe, "Henry Sidney," Dictionary of National Biography (1897), Vol. LII, pp. 217-219.

intrigues, Algernon failed in his efforts and paid the supreme penalty. On the other hand, Henry Sidney, who could easily have shared his brother's fate had he been caught, not only succeeded in his intrigues, but was handsomely rewarded as well. These two Sidney brothers, one a rigid idealist and the other a courtier known as "Handsome Henry," provide a fascinating study in contrast.

The same Exclusion Crisis which saw the Whigs in the House of Commons challenge the Crown's prerogative provided Henry Sidney with an opportunity to develop his instinct for intrigue and establish a close relationship with William of Orange, which Henry found valuable later on in James II's reign. While the revelations of Titus Oates and Israel Tonge concerning the Popish Plot were fresh on the nation's mind, and while the First Exclusion Parliament was still in session, Henry was appointed special envoy to the United Provinces in June of 1679. Robert Spencer, second Earl of Sunderland, one of the shiftiest politicians in England, was one of the Secretaries of State at the time, and he sought to use his uncle Henry Sidney as the means through which William of Orange could be enticed to visit England during the Exclusion Crisis and perhaps influence events.⁷ After all, if James, Duke of York was excluded from the succession, William, a staunch Protestant, stood third in line to the English throne after James's two daughters, to one of whom (Mary, the elder), William had been married in 1677. Though Henry Sidney did not immediately succeed in furthering his nephew's scheme, he did help achieve a diplomatic

⁷Robert Spencer was the eldest son of Henry Sidney's eldest sister, Dorothy Sidney.

success against the French. But what is even more important is the fact that Sidney gained the confidence and personal friendship of Prince William, not an easy thing to do considering William's frigid nature. Henry Sidney adroitly built upon this "Dutch Connection" of his and utilized it during James II's reign to become a leading figure in William's intelligence network and in the intrigues which culminated in the famous "invitation" by the Immortal Seven to William of Orange in 1688.

The period of years which will receive the most emphasis and study in the course of this work is the period from 1677 to 1683. There are a number of important reasons for this emphasis, and they involve both Algernon and Henry Sidney. First of all, the period witnessed Algernon Sidney's return to England from his long exile and his re-involvement in political affairs, even though this was not what he had originally intended to do. This is also the period during which he very definitely wrote the great bulk of his Discourses Concerning Government, though the work was not published until 1698. Furthermore, Algernon became quite deeply involved in Whig intrigues after the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament in March of 1681. These intrigues came to a head in the famous Rye House Plot of 1683, in which it was alleged that various Whig elements had plotted to assassinate Charles II and perhaps even raise a rebellion in the kingdom. In the aftermath of Rye House, the Crown used the law of treason as a political weapon very effectively against the Whigs, and this "Stuart revenge" must be seen in relation to the Royal campaign to manipulate local corporations. Algernon Sidney, of course, was just one of the Crown's victims. In addition, as previously pointed out, Henry Sidney was appointed special

envoy to the United Provinces in June of 1679, and he served in that capacity until June of 1681. The importance of this diplomatic mission for him and his subsequent career has already been noted. It is clear that many of the same events between 1677 and 1683 affected both Algernon and Henry Sidney, though the degree and method differed in each case. In essence then, this particular period of years will be focused upon because it witnessed not only the spectacular end of one brother's career, but also the beginning and development of the career of the other. Because of the difference in ages between Algernon and Henry, it was like one generation passing away and a younger, fresher one moving in.

Essentially then, this work is an explanation of how two very different aristocratic brothers tried to survive in a turbulent period of English history. Certainly, each brother will be closely examined to show precisely how his personality and adult career relate to the events and movements which are always in the background. But, the lives of Algernon and Henry Sidney provide more than just an opportunity to rehash old political events. For, the two brothers taken together represent in general the theme of opposition to the Stuart monarchs, though in each case the monarch opposed is different. Furthermore, each brother chose an essentially different approach to opposition, which was really a reflection of his own character and approach to life. Algernon, the proud idealist with an intellectual approach to life, chose open warfare and roundtable intriguing as avenues for his opposition. On the other hand, Henry Sidney, utilizing his natural charm and affable manner, developed his opposition through diplomatic intrigue and intelligence work, both of which made ample use

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Before beginning a detailed investigation of the ideas outlined above, a few essential points must be made. To begin with, this work does not pretend to be a complete biographical study of two brothers. Rather, it is an attempt to relate the lives of Algernon and Henry Sidney to major events in the reigns of Charles II and James II with the emphasis placed upon the years from 1677 to 1683. Secondly, the scope and length of the work preclude lengthy digressions into the lives and careers of the dominant statesmen and politicians of the time. Where necessary and proper, the reader will be referred to the outstanding scholarly biographies of these people, which he can investigate on his own. Thirdly, in an attempt to clarify the muddled confusion due to the existence of two calendar systems at the time, all dates referred to in this work will be in accordance with the old Julian Calendar in use in England, unless otherwise stipulated as New

Style (N.S.). However, it can be assumed that the new year begins on January 1, instead of March 25. Finally, every effort has been made to modernize spelling in direct quotations, and in some cases the grammar and punctuation have been modernized also.

PART ONE: ALGERNON SIDNEY

CHAPTER I I

EARLY LIFE AND COMMONWEALTH SERVICE

Algernon Sidney was the second surviving son of Robert Sidney, second Earl of Leicester and was born most likely in late 1622. The baptismal registers for Penshurst parish do not list a baptismal date for Algernon Sidney, but the only possible time he could have been born was either in the autumn of 1622 or before the middle of 1623. The most reasonable date seems to be about November or December of 1622.¹ Algernon's father was the youngest son of Sir Robert Sidney, brother of Sir Philip Sidney, the famous Elizabethan soldier and poet, who was killed at Zutphen in the Spanish Netherlands in 1586. Algernon's mother was Dorothy Percy, daughter of Henry Percy, the ninth Earl of Northumberland and Lord High Admiral of England. As Algernon Sidney showed early signs of possessing considerable talents, his father personally undertook his education at Penhurst and made every effort to cultivate young Algernon's skills.²

¹Letter from the county archivist, Kent Archives Office, Maidstone, Kent, England, July 9, 1974.

²Alexander C. Ewald, The Life and Times of the Hon. Algernon Sidney (2 vols.; London: Tinsley Brothers, 1873), Vol. I, pp. 28-29.

The second Earl of Leicester possessed a talent for diplomacy and a desire to serve King Charles I, and Algernon was able to benefit from his father's work. In 1632 he accompanied his father to Denmark when his father was appointed ambassador extraordinary to the Court of King Christian IV. In 1636 Leicester was appointed ambassador to France and remained in that position until 1641. During both of these foreign appointments, Algernon's education was given special care by his father, and of course he had the additional benefit of travel experience on the Continent. It was during the five year period in Paris, according to the only biographer of Algernon Sidney, that the gifted young man acquired his belief in republicanism.³ It is suggested that he probably came in contact with intellectuals who espoused liberal principles and drew their inspiration for political ideas and institutions from Greek and Roman history. No documentary proof is offered for this, but it is further claimed that Algernon acquired his aversion to absolutist monarchy during this period, while studying the French example at firsthand. Sidney developed into a republican, but definitely not a nineteenth-century type of liberal democrat.⁴ For, as his only biographer claims, "He did not dislike the kingly office; all he disliked was the faithless man who then in England filled it."⁵ This refers to Charles I, who had just completed an eleven-year period of arbitrary rule in England without calling a Parliament. The important point to remember is that Algernon did acquire an intellectual attachment for classical republicanism that is clearly reflected in his Discourses.

³ Ibid., p. 30.

⁴ Ibid., p. 34.

⁵ Ibid., p. 35.

By 1640 Charles I was in desperate straits for money and troops and was forced to convene a parliament in November of that year. In doing so, he provided opposition elements among the gentry and aristocracy with a platform from which they could attack the King's arbitrary rule of the previous eleven years. Before the House of Commons would grant any supplies to Charles I for his latest war against the Scots, it demanded a redress of many accumulated grievances, including such matters as taxation, monopolies, alleged innovations in religion, and the King's favoritism to Catholics. The majority of those in the Commons wanted the King's two chief ministers, Archbishop Laud and the Earl of Strafford, removed from office. In addition to this, a smaller but very effectively led group in the Commons sought to go even further than this by seeking a transfer of effective power from Charles I's hands and into those of Parliament.⁶ The whole position of the King was under attack now, and Charles I realized too late that he had alienated important segments of the gentry, the mainstay of government on the local level in England. Suffice it to say that the situation at the time was not one to inspire much confidence or hope for the immediate future. The battle lines were being drawn.

Into this boiling turmoil Algernon Sidney and his father were dumped in 1641, when the Earl was recalled from Paris and appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to replace the recently executed Earl of Strafford. A Catholic rebellion had been in progress in Ireland, and

⁶C. V. Wedgewood, The King's Peace: 1637-1641 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 367.

Leicester was dispatched to bring some order out of the chaos there. Owing to a number of delays, however, Leicester never reached Ireland to perform the duties of his office, and after a full year of indecision, Charles I withdrew the commission and bestowed it upon the Marquess of Ormonde. Having thus received what he considered to be a Royal insult, Leicester retired in disgust to Penshurst to read books and write erudite essays.⁷ But before he retired, the Earl outfitted a regiment at his own expense for service in Ireland, with his eldest son Philip, Viscount De L'Isle, in command. Algernon Sidney, only nineteen at the time, was given the command of a troop of horse in this regiment.

Even though his father chose secluded retirement over active involvement in the growing controversy between King and Parliament, young Algernon was able to benefit from serving with his brother in Ireland. Lord De L'Isle's regiment was involved in a number of encounters with the elusive Irish insurgents, and Algernon gained considerable military experience. Sir John Temple, a very close family friend who was also serving in Ireland, wrote a brief account to the Earl of Leicester concerning his sons' activities in Ireland. In a letter dated January 14, 1642, Sir John wrote:

My Lord Lisle and his brother are both well, and I shall serve them with the utmost of my life and fortunes. They both deserve very well of the public here.

In 1643 a truce was arranged, and both brothers were able to return to England.

⁷Ewald, Vol. I, p. 73.

⁸Historical Manuscripts Commission, Seventy-Seventh Report, Viscount De L'Isle Manuscripts, 7 Vols., Vol. VI Sidney Papers, 1626-1698 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1966), p. 416.

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It was at this point that events and issues forced Algernon Sidney to become more involved in the struggle between Charles I and Parliament and to reach a critical decision involving commitment to one side or the other. It seems that both sides in 1643 suspected the loyalties of Algernon and his brother Lord De L'Isle because they were sons of the Earl of Leicester, who himself was still under a cloud of suspicion.⁹ To settle matters once and for all, both brothers returned to London and openly declared for the Parliamentary side in the struggle which had progressed by that time into open warfare. Fortunately, we have Algernon's own explanation of his motives during this important time in his life, even though it was written as part of his "Apology" in 1683 as he calmly awaited his execution for treason against Charles II. He stated simply that "I had from my youth endeavored to uphold the common rights of mankind, the laws of this land, and the true Protestant religion, against corrupt principles, arbitrary power, and Popery."¹⁰ He claimed, moreover, that he had acted upon these principles from 1642 until the Restoration of 1660. As proof of his new commitment to the Parliamentary cause, Algernon volunteered to serve in its army and was appointed to command a troop of horse in the Earl of Manchester's regiment in the year 1644. In one of the major engagements of the war fought in that same year, Marston Moor, Sidney was seriously wounded. When the Parliamentary Army was reorganized to form the New Model Army, Algernon Sidney was appointed one of the twenty-six colonels and given

⁹Ewald, Vol. I, p. 81.

¹⁰Algernon Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government with his Letters, Trial, Apology, and some Memoirs of his Life (London: printed for A. Millar, 1763), p. 170.

command of a troop of horse in Cromwell's own division. Sidney, however, saw no further combat service during the civil war. Instead, he decided to serve the Parliamentary cause in other ways.

From 1645 until 1653, when circumstances forced a complete break with Oliver Cromwell and necessitated a quick retirement from public life, Algernon Sidney managed to serve the cause of Parliament and the first Commonwealth government in a number of ways. In May of 1645 by an ordinance of Parliament, he was appointed governor of Chichester, and in that same year Algernon was elected to the Long Parliament as a member for Cardiff.¹¹ In 1646 Lord De L'Isle, who was Lieutenant General of Ireland, appointed his brother governor of Dublin; however, that appointment did not last long. A better position came about in June of 1648 when Sidney was named governor of Dover Castle and of the forts raised in its defense.¹² In 1647 Algernon, along with other members of Parliament, had marched with the army to London in an attempt to overawe the Presbyterians in Parliament. Groups which had once been united in the struggle against Charles I were now fighting amongst themselves for control of Parliament, and Sidney, by his actions, was in effect siding with the Independents against the Presbyterians. Sidney, however, drew the line at the army's rather heavy-handed maneuver of "purging" the House of Commons of all

¹¹ There is disagreement over the exact year of Sidney's election to Parliament for Cardiff. Ewald in his biography of Sidney claims it was in 1645 (Ewald, Vol. I, p. 114). Charles Harding Firth, however, writing the biographical sketch of Sidney in the Dictionary of National Biography, claims he was returned on July 17, 1646 (D.N.B., Vol. LII, p. 203).

¹² H.M.C., Sidney Papers, 1626-1698, p. 443.

suspected Presbyterians, viewing it as an "unjust and outrageous interference of the army."¹³ Nevertheless, Sidney retained his seat in the Commons until 1653 and served on a number of Council of State and Commons committees, including the financial committee of Navy and Customs.

At this point it is essential to examine the degree of Algernon Sidney's involvement or noninvolvement in the trial and execution of King Charles I. This is important because some of Sidney's friends and contemporaries were executed after the Restoration for varying degrees of involvement in the rebellion against Charles I and his execution. Regicide was a dangerous activity even to be remotely connected with. Moreover, since Algernon was executed for treason in 1683 on rather flimsy evidence and by perjured witnesses, there is the possibility that Charles II was settling an old score for his "martyred" father against this dedicated and confirmed republican. After all, there are enough passages in the Discourses which, if taken out of context, can be interpreted to show that Sidney was a violent radical bent upon destroying the Stuart monarchy. Algernon Sidney's commitment to the Parliamentary cause and his opposition against Charles I have already been noted. Finally, in a letter written to his father from Augsburg in September of 1660, Sidney explained that on a number of occasions, while acting as a peace mediator in Denmark in 1659, he had defended the Parliamentary government's action in executing Charles I. He said simply that "I

¹³Ewald, Vol. I, p. 120.

have many times so justified that act."¹⁴ In the minds of some, Algernon Sidney could very easily have tainted himself indirectly with the crime of regicide.

After much wrangling and dickering with Charles I, it was finally decided to bring him to trial for high treason against the state, and on January 4, 1649, Parliament created a court of 135 commissioners to try the King. Algernon Sidney was named one of those commissioners, but he refused to have anything to do with the trial itself or the warrant for Charles I's execution. The fact that his name appeared on the list of commissioners was later used against Sidney after the Restoration in 1660. Once again, we have Sidney's own account of the extent of his actual involvement in Charles I's trial, written as part of a letter to his father in October of 1660 from Venice.¹⁵ Sidney admitted that he had attended two meetings in January of 1649 of the trial commissioners and had debated with them what course of action should be taken. He further claimed that he had steadfastly opposed Oliver Cromwell, John Bradshaw, and others in the matter of bringing Charles I to trial before the newly created court. Sidney gave two reasons for his adamant position: "First, the King could be tried by no court; secondly, that no man could be tried by that court." Cromwell countered Sidney's argument by saying, "I tell you, we will cut off his head with the crown upon it." To this rather blunt prediction, Sidney claims he responded by saying, "You may take

¹⁴R. W. Blencowe, ed., Sydney Papers (London: John Murray, 1825), p. 216.

¹⁵ibid., pp. 235-240.

your own course, I cannot stop you, but I will keep myself clean from having any hand in this business."¹⁶ It is precisely at this point that Sidney claimed he left the meeting and never returned for another one. Evidence supporting Algernon Sidney's claim can be found in his father's own journal. In an entry dated January 25, 1649, the Earl of Leicester wrote the following:

My two sons Philip and Algernon came unexpected to Penshurst Monday, 22, and stayed there till Monday, 29 January, so as neither of them was at the condemnation of the King. Nor was Philip at any time at the High Court, though a commissioner, but Algernon, a commissioner also, was there sometimes in the Painted Chamber, but never in Westminster Hall.¹⁷

King Charles I was executed on January 30, 1649. Algernon Sidney's involvement was restricted to being one of the original trial commissioners, even though he boycotted most of the proceedings. He was, however, firmly dedicated to Parliament's cause and against that of the arbitrary tyrant Charles I. These two factors were enough to prejudice many royalists against Algernon Sidney and to mark him for the rest of his life.

An excellent way in which to analyze Sidney's position during the 1640's and 1650's is to study him in relation to another ardent republican whom he definitely admired a great deal during this time, Sir Henry Vane the Younger. Vane was roughly nine years older than Algernon Sidney, and their careers were similar in many respects. This is the same Sir Henry Vane who had been Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636 and who was dedicated to seeing the Kingdom of God

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 237.

¹⁷ H.M.C., Sidney Papers, 1626-1698, p. 580.

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established here on earth.¹⁸ Sidney's official duties as governor of Dover Castle brought him in contact with Sir Henry in 1649. Both were members of the Long Parliament, Vane being elected from Hull. Furthermore, both Vane and Sidney were strongly opposed to the "purge" of Presbyterians from the Long Parliament in late 1648; but yet, both continued to sit in the abbreviated "Rump" that functioned until 1653. Vane was also one of the commissioners appointed to try King Charles I, and he was observed to have been present at the beginning of Charles I's trial, although he did not sign the King's death warrant.¹⁹ Both Sidney and Vane cooperated with the new government after 1649 and served together on several Council of State and Commons committees during 1652 and 1653. When Oliver Cromwell, in a fit of temper, forcibly dissolved the quarrelsome Rump Parliament in 1653, Algernon and Sir Henry retired from public life and did not return to it until 1659. Both of these principled republicans viewed Cromwell by 1653 as an arbitrary tyrant, a Charles I without the royal title, if you will. While Sidney kept his opposition to the Lord Protector fairly subdued, Sir Henry could not, and was imprisoned at Carisbrooke on the Isle of Wight in 1656. Thus, Sir Henry Vane and Algernon Sidney sided together on a number of important political issues and causes during the 1640's and 1650's.

The issue of Sir Henry Vane the Younger has been raised here because both the man and his public career from 1649 to 1660 made

¹⁸ Roger Howell, "Henry Vane the Younger and the Politics of Religion," History Today, XIII (April, 1963), pp. 275-82.

¹⁹ H.M.C., Sidney Papers, 1626-1698, p. 580.

quite a favorable and lasting impression upon Algernon Sidney, as evidenced through Sidney's writings later on. Sidney and Vane each had to work out in his own mind a rationale for serving the Parliamentary government after Charles I's execution, but only Sidney lived long enough after the Restoration to analyze England's Commonwealth government. Many years later, as Sidney was writing his Discourses, he incorporated in them his reflections concerning that period, using it to illustrate how good government can operate when it is dedicated to the proper principles. In two sections of Chapter Two Sidney analyzed the nature of government and of government servants during Charles II's reign and during the two periods of Commonwealth government.²⁰ Hereditary monarchies tended to breed kings who were interested not in the public good, but in satisfying their own base whims. These monarchs in turn tended to attract "evil, ambitious advisers," parasites, buffoons, and bawds who themselves were interested only in serving their own interests and the base whims of the monarch they pandered to. Again, the public interest remained unserved. Obviously, Charles II was just this kind of monarch, because Sidney indicted Clarendon, Arlington, Danby, Sunderland, Jenkins, and the Duchesses of Portsmouth and Cleveland all by name as the type of adviser or bawd he most detested. Because these evil and ambitious folk worked and schemed together for just their own interests and those of the monarch who attracted them into office, the public good remained unattended, and the general tone and quality of leadership sank to a

²⁰ Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government, Chapter Two, Section 25, pp. 200-206; Section 28, pp. 215-223.

low level. In short, a poorly structured system (hereditary monarchy) fed upon a low level of servants, who in turn pandered to their master's desires.

Now then, if matters were that seedy under Charles II, exactly what were they like under the two periods of Parliamentary government during the 1650's? Needless to say, Algernon Sidney found these periods to have been vastly superior in every way by comparison to the reign of Charles II. If hereditary monarchies found it easy to appeal to evil, ambitious advisers, under a free government, it was just as easy to appeal to servants who practiced honesty and virtue. It was crystal clear to Sidney that "that society of men which constitutes a government upon the foundation of justice, virtue, and the common good, will always have men to promote those ends."²¹ For Sidney, the two periods of Commonwealth rule constituted just such a society because England was run by men chosen for their merit to do their tasks. During the Commonwealth periods, valor, industry, integrity, and incorruptible virtue were raised to a higher level than at any other time in England's history. This is much in contrast to the reign of Charles II, which was noted only for its corruption, baseness, and venality. The reason why the quality of leadership was so much higher during the Commonwealth periods was because the public servants, or magistrates as Sidney called them, had much better motivation and inspiration for their service. Certainly, this is a rather one-sided and glorified view of contemporary history by Algernon, but nevertheless, it is the one that remained firm in his

²¹Ibid., p. 218.

mind for over twenty years. Perhaps Sidney saw only what he wanted to see, or remembered only what he wanted to remember. This would seem to fit his rather pedantic nature and the tendency he had to view matters only from his own rigid perspective.

At some time after 1662, when Sir Henry Vane was executed for treason for his government services during the Commonwealth periods, Algernon Sidney wrote a brief, but glowing, tribute to his fellow republican with whom he had served before the Restoration. The essay is undated and was discovered as part of the Cowper family papers in Hertfordshire, but it could only have been written after 1662, as Sidney refers to Vane's execution for treason as the "spilling of innocent blood."²² Sidney praised Sir Henry for possessing honest and sincere principles and for being a person "whom no body ever repented trusting with the most important affairs."²³ It is clear that Sidney remembered Sir Henry Vane as being very close to an ideal public servant because "he was never a man that considered what would most likely turn to his own advantage." Rather, Sir Henry "considered only what was in itself equitable, true and just, and would probably contribute to the good of his country."²⁴ In addition, Sidney claims that Vane was thoughtful enough to have warned his friends and followers to be vigilant for "wicked ministers... who would level their pernicious practices at the subversion of the Government, and the utter extirpation of liberty and property." Thus, Sir Henry Vane

²²Violet A. Rowe, Sir Henry Vane the Younger: A Study in Political and Administrative History (University of London: The Athlone Press, 1970), "Appendix F," pp. 275-283.

²³Ibid., p. 278.

²⁴Ibid., p. 281.

is precisely that type of dedicated public servant, or magistrate, that Algernon Sidney wrote about in general, but glowing, terms in his Discourses. That is, Vane was that type of magistrate who provided such excellent public service at one period in England's history (the Commonwealth period) and whose services were so sorely lacking in another (the reign of Charles II). A careful study of the Discourses in conjunction with the brief, but quite explicit, tribute to Vane clearly indicates that it was Sir Henry himself whom Sidney had in mind when he praised the era of Commonwealth government for its high level of public service. Sidney's view of Vane is extremely one-sided, but again, it fits with Sidney's tendency to measure people and events by means of a rather exacting and rigid yardstick.

The career of Sir Henry Vane can be related to that of Algernon Sidney in another and even more important aspect as well. As previously mentioned, Sir Henry was executed for treason in the year 1662, and his indictment charged him with treason against Charles II, and not against Charles I, because of his services rendered to the two periods of Commonwealth government between 1649 and 1659. As proof of his treason, the prosecution cited Vane's membership on the Council of State and his work in naval affairs. This rather novel approach caught Sir Henry off guard, and his only defense rested upon the plea that he had only done what many other Englishmen, including Algernon Sidney, had done at that time and under the same circumstances. That is, Vane claimed he had merely cooperated with a de facto government between 1649 and 1653 and once again in 1659 and had carried out its orders. As Vane himself said, "I would gladly know that person in England of estate and fortune, and of age, that hath not counselled,

aided or abetted...and submitted to the laws and government of the powers that then were."²⁵ Even though Sir Henry had staunchly opposed the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, his involvement in government during the Commonwealth years was enough to seal his fate after the monarchy was restored in 1660.

Luckily for Algernon, he was out of the country when the Stuart monarchy was restored. Indeed, had he been present in England with his friend and fellow republican, Sidney could easily have suffered the same fate Vane did for the same reasons. After all, Algernon Sidney had served on the same Council of State with Vane and on some of the same Commons committees. He too had willingly served the established power in England at the time, namely Parliament, even though he was just as staunchly opposed to Cromwell's Protectorate as Sir Henry had been. Though Sidney did not express himself quite as explicitly concerning a person's obligations to the de facto government that exercised power in the absence of a Stuart monarch as Vane did, Sidney did leave enough evidence to make his position quite clear. In a letter to his father dated September 21, 1660 (N.S.), Sidney defended his official work as a peace mediator in Denmark, which he performed during the last period of Commonwealth rule.²⁶ As a diplomatic representative, Sidney claimed he was more or less obligated to uphold the authority of the government that sent him on the mission, and in doing so he was merely fulfilling part of his job. This is not to imply that there was any doubt in Sidney's mind, for he was fully

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 235-37.

²⁶ Blencowe, Sidney Papers, pp. 214-227.

committed to the cause of Parliament's rule in England in 1659, just as he had been in the early 1650's before the tyrant Cromwell had dissolved the Rump Parliament. The fate suffered by Sir Henry Vane for his Commonwealth service jolted Algernon Sidney into the awareness that he too could very well be liable for the same treason charges because of his service during the Commonwealth periods.

This is one of the key factors that convinced Sidney to remain in exile on the Continent, and his fears and apprehensions are plainly revealed in his letters to England in 1660. In a letter to his father in July of that year, Sidney was quite aware that if the new government chose not to overlook his previous service under the Commonwealth governments, he would never be able to return to England.²⁷ It was doubtful whether Charles II would listen with a sympathetic ear to any explanation Algernon could have given to excuse his actions in cooperation with the Commonwealth governments. Voluntary exile might be a bitter fate for Algernon to accept, but "not so much so, as the others that are in my prospect." By this time Sir Henry Vane and other noted republicans had been arrested and imprisoned. In an undated letter, but one which was written after the letter just referred to, Sidney stated emphatically that "where Vane, Lambert, Haselrige cannot live in safety, I cannot live at all."²⁸ Without a doubt, Algernon Sidney identified his own fate and security with the proceedings against Sir Henry Vane, the republican with whom Sidney had shared so many Commonwealth experiences.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 189-194.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 202. (Also, see below page 30, footnote 29.)

By now it must be fairly obvious that Algernon Sidney was a courageous and highly principled man, though both qualities were considerably distorted by a rigid perspective of life that only became more so as Sidney grew older. As an illustration of this, one only need look at Sidney's attitude and actions regarding the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell. When Cromwell dissolved the Rump Parliament by force in April of 1653, Algernon Sidney was a prominent actor in the whole dramatic incident. In his journal the Earl of Leicester wrote that after the Speaker of the House of Commons had been pulled from his chair, Cromwell pointed directly at Algernon and said to Thomas Harrison, "Put him out." Algernon, however, not to be intimidated, displayed his mettle by remaining fast. After he was told to leave a second time,

Harrison and Worstley put their hands upon Sidney's shoulders as if they would force him to go out. Then he rose and went towards the door.²⁹

This single incident revealed Algernon's opposition to Cromwell's "coup" and convinced him that this self-styled "agent of the Lord" was nothing more than a tyrant, just as Charles I had been. Sidney may very well have wondered to himself whether all those years of fighting and dedication to a cause had been worth it.³⁰

Besides abstaining completely from any overt political

²⁹ H.M.C., Sidney Papers, 1626-1698, p. 615.

³⁰ For a more indepth view of Oliver Cromwell, the reader should investigate Charles Harding Firth's classic biography entitled Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900) and also an excellent recent analysis by Christopher Hill entitled God's Englishman, Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution (New York: Dial Press, 1970).

activity regarding the new Lord Protector, Algernon was involved in one minor, but very interesting, episode involving Cromwell. It seems that at some time in the late spring of 1656 Sidney, perhaps to show how clever he could be, arranged to have Shakespeare's Julius Caesar performed at Penshurst. Sidney himself played the part of Brutus. The performance, it is said, was quite a success, and Algernon probably allowed himself a few good "chuckles" over the whole incident.³¹ The political implications of performing this particular play, however, are quite obvious. One person who was more than just a bit upset over the whole incident was Viscount De L'Isle, Algernon's brother. In a letter to the Earl of Leicester dated June 17, [1656] Lord De L'Isle complained that,

In my poor opinion the business of your Lordship's house hath past somewhat unlickily, and that it had been better used to do a seasonable courtesy to my Lord Protector then to have had a play acted in it of public affront to him, which doth much entertain the town.³²

It should be quickly pointed out that Lord De L'Isle was on Cromwell's Council of State and was no doubt concerned for his own career and image. At any rate, Cromwell chose to ignore the whole incident, and Algernon Sidney remained in secluded retirement at Penshurst, apparently choosing not to push his image of Marcus Brutus any further.

Algernon's self-imposed isolation at Penshurst and his rather haughty contempt for Cromwell were both much in contrast to the course that Philip Sidney, Viscount De L'Isle steered in regard to the Lord Protector. When the two brothers had fought against Charles I,

³¹Ewald, Vol. I, p. 198.

³²H.M.C., Sidney Papers, 1626-1698, p. 499.

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their careers had been quite parallel; however, after 1653 a marked coolness began to develop between them that would only increase over the years. For one thing, Lord De L'Isle had no qualms at all about supporting Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector. Indeed, as Algernon's biographer points out, Lord De L'Isle could apparently accomodate himself with whichever group or person was in power during the 1650's and after.³³ He had the uncanny ability always to back the winning side in the political struggles of the time and seems not to have suffered in the least for it, even after the Restoration. Not only was his lordship "nominated" as one of the 140 members of the Barebones Parliament that met in 1653, but he was also named to Cromwell's Council of State. This type of service by politicians and other prominent folk during the 1650's was harshly criticized by Algernon after he had gone into exile in 1660 as being nothing more than "base compliance with fortune."³⁴ Another reason for the growing coolness between the two brothers was Lord De L'Isle's personal jealousy over brother Algernon's influence with their father, the Earl of Leicester. In the same letter in which Lord De L'Isle complained about Algernon's production of Julius Caesar at Penshurst, he also upbraided his father for the degree to which the Earl allowed his second son to dominate him. He said quite frankly that,

not only in regard to this matter which I have spoken of, but at all times I am uncertain whether I can have the liberty to look into it or no, for it seems it is not only his [Algernon's] chamber but the great rooms of the house,

³³ Ewald, Vol. I, p. 197.

³⁴ Blencowe, Sidney Papers, pp. 214-227.

and perhaps the whole, he commands.³⁵

People were beginning to talk and question the Earl's lack of judgment. Two brothers who had worked together during the 1640's, found themselves drifting apart during the 1650's due to political and personal reasons. The split would become greater after the Restoration.

The political retirement of Algernon Sidney ended in 1659, after Oliver Cromwell's death and his son Richard's forced "retirement" from power. Once again, Sidney was given the opportunity of serving the type of government he deemed best during the revolutionary years in England, namely rule by Parliament as the duly elected representatives of the political nation. Suddenly, the old Long Parliament was resurrected and given a new lease on life. Sidney and other republicans like Sir Henry Vane apparently thought they could return to the year 1653 and renew their efforts to make government by Parliament in England a feasible operation. Such a government, however, faced an almost daily struggle for existence against the army and against ambitious generals like John Lambert and Charles Fleetwood. Algernon was quite ready to work for Parliament's cause and was one of those who endeavored to subordinate the potentially dangerous military to civilian control.³⁶ Edmund Ludlow, another ardent republican, recalled in his memoirs that in May of 1659 both he and Algernon Sidney were named by Parliament to the Council of State.³⁷ In addition to this, in

³⁵ H.M.C., Sidney Papers, 1626-1698, p. 499.

³⁶ Ewald, Vol. I, p. 200.

³⁷ Charles Harding Firth, ed., The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow, 1625-1672 (2 Vols.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1894), Vol. I, p. 84.

June Algernon along with Bulstrode Whitelocke and Sir Robert Honeywood were named as peace commissioners to mediate a war between Sweden and Denmark. Whitelocke, however, refused to serve on the peace mediation team because of the "overruling temper and height of Colonel Sidney".³⁸ Nevertheless, this view of Sidney by the former ambassador to Sweden did nothing to prevent Algernon from going on the diplomatic mission.

Before following Algernon Sidney overseas, it is essential to understand the background for this rather important mission to settle the "Baltic Problem." One of the aims of Oliver Cromwell's foreign policy as Lord Protector had been the formation of a Protestant League in the North of Europe to fight the Catholic Hapsburg Power. The Lord Protector's dream was not realized because Sweden under Charles X had ambitions of its own of increasing its power in the Baltic, primarily at Denmark's expense. Both of these countries were, of course, Protestant. The maritime nations of Europe, mainly England and the United Provinces, became alarmed lest Sweden succeed in overrunning Denmark and Norway and perhaps shutting off their trade through the Sound. When Oliver Cromwell died in September of 1658, war was in progress between Sweden and Denmark. Alarmed by the threat which the war presented to their extensive Baltic carrying trade, the Dutch decided to send a fleet and some troops to aid Denmark. This move checked Swedish aggression, but it also aroused English fear of the possibility of Dutch monopoly of the Baltic trade.³⁹ After all, the

³⁸ Op. cit., p. 204.

³⁹ Godfrey Davies, The Restoration of Charles II (Los Angeles: Anderson, Ritchie and Simon, 1955), pp. 190-98.

English received the bulk of their naval stores from the Baltic, and they simply did not trust Dutch motives.⁴⁰ During Richard Cromwell's very brief Protectorate, an English fleet under Edward Montagu was sent into the Sound to attempt to maintain some semblance of a "balance of power" and to make Sweden and Denmark come to terms.⁴¹ In addition, before Richard Cromwell was eased from power in England, a convention was signed in May of 1659 between England, France, and the United Provinces whereby these nations agreed to mediate the war between Sweden and Denmark. The Commonwealth government that replaced Cromwell dispatched three peace commissioners, Algernon Sidney, Sir Robert Honeywood, and Thomas Boone to join Montagu in Copenhagen to effect a peace settlement. Therefore, Algernon's diplomatic stint must be viewed against the background of a lingering Swedish-Danish war in the Baltic, a still strong Anglo-Dutch commercial rivalry, and a commitment between the French, Dutch, and English to attempt mediation, using force if necessary.

The serious-minded attitude and high-principled dedication to a cause that had marked Sidney's career since the early 1640's was transferred over into Algernon's rather short but important diplomatic career. While Parliament was quarreling and bickering with the army generals in England, Algernon Sidney did everything he could to secure a settlement between Denmark and Sweden. Sidney was earnest in his desire to serve the struggling Commonwealth government, and he

⁴⁰ Godfrey Davies, The Early Stuarts, 1603-1660, Vol. IX of The Oxford History of England, ed. by Sir George Clark (15 vols., 2nd ed.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 228.

⁴¹ Op. cit., p. 203.

patiently stuck to his diplomatic post at Copenhagen, though the desired peace remained elusive after months of negotiation. In a letter to his father, Algernon complained that while the King of Sweden, Charles X, was a very able and industrious monarch, he was also ruled by a violent ambition. To complicate matters further, the Danish monarch, Christian IV, was a rather dull-witted fellow who was enveloped by a mental fog most of the time.⁴² Frustrating as matters were, Sidney had hopes that something concrete could be accomplished:

I hope that whatsoever be the issue of our negotiations, as mediators of peace between these two northern Kings, we shall have this fruit of our journey, as to be able to lay a good foundation of a near alliance between the United Provinces and England.⁴³

Sidney, ever the close observer of men and institutions, was able to sharpen his skills and to add to his knowledge of government while working in Copenhagen. Later on, Algernon was quick to defend his work as a diplomat for England's Commonwealth government. He was proud not only to have served England but also the general interests of a European peace as well.⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that while in Copenhagen, Sidney scrawled some Latin words in a book, which later became known as his motto. The words were simply "manus haec inimica tyrannis," or "This hand is opposed to tyrants." These words would be held against him by some for the rest of his life.

While the diplomatic front in Northern Europe may have moved at a leisurely pace in 1659, the same could not be said for the political front in England. As Algernon Sidney labored patiently and

⁴²Blencowe, Sidney Papers, pp. 166-67.

⁴³Ibid., p. 168.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 214-15.

quietly in Copenhagen, a fierce political struggle was taking place in England, seesawing back and forth between the Long Parliament and Cromwell's old army, led by generals like John Lambert and Charles Fleetwood. Neither side trusted the other, and as the situation in England became more confused, another general, George Monk, played a key role in preparing the way for the return of the exiled Stuart monarchy. Events happened so rapidly in late 1659 and early 1660 that Algernon simply could not keep up with them. Sidney complained about this and a number of other things in a letter to Bulstrode Whitelocke in November of 1659.⁴⁵ Algernon had to rely upon Dutch diplomats for news of the latest events in England, and what news he did receive presented a very confusing picture to him. He stated frankly to Whitelocke, "Your Lordship sees how much I am in the dark as to those actions amongst you."⁴⁶ Sidney's diplomatic position in Copenhagen was being considerably weakened by political instability at home. He suspected that the position of the Commonwealth government may have been deteriorating and that a movement may have been afoot to restore the Stuart monarchy. For, in closing the letter to Whitelocke, Algernon declared:

If the government in England do continue on the good old principles, I shall be ready to serve them; if it returns to monarchy I desire nothing but liberty to retire, finding myself a very unfit stone for such a building.

Algernon Sidney would soon get a chance to test those precious "good old principles" of his.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 169-173.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 170.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 173.

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The year 1660 was perhaps the most difficult year of all in Algernon Sidney's life. From an overseas vantage point and without a clear idea of exactly how or why it was happening, he was forced to watch the last dying shudders of the old Long Parliament and the restoration to power of the Stuart monarchy. By late spring of 1660, the Commonwealth government with its "good old principles" was gone. In its place were a new Parliament and a new King, Charles II, son of the monarch whom Sidney had fought against and had helped to overthrow, but not to execute. Luckily for Sidney, he was still in Copenhagen when the Restoration occurred, or he might have shared the fate of Sir Henry Vane and other ardent republicans who were caught in England. Almost overnight, Sidney became a diplomat who in effect was representing a governmental power that had ceased to exist. A rather awkward position to be in, to say the least. He was uncertain as to exactly what the unfolding events in England meant in relation to himself, and he was also uncertain as to precisely how he would be received there if he suddenly were to arrive unannounced in England. Therefore, Algernon Sidney was immediately confronted with a situation that required much self-examination and soul-searching for a man whose dedication to the republican cause of Commonwealth England was well known by that time. In short, Algernon had to decide in 1660 whether to return to England and attempt some reconciliation with the new government, or simply to remain abroad if a reconciliation proved impossible. After observing the situation in England from Copenhagen and Stockholm for several months and analyzing the attitudes of the restored monarchy, Algernon Sidney chose the latter course of action. Thus began Sidney's long and difficult road through seventeen years of self-imposed exile.

C H A P T E R I I I

POLITICAL EXILE: 1660-1677

In the spring of 1660 a number of important events occurred in rapid succession in England that would all have an important effect upon Algernon Sidney's future. For one thing, a general election was held, producing a new Parliament which met on April 25. Public opinion was heavily in favor of restoring the old monarchy. After being shown Charles Stuart's Declaration of Breda, which was first issued on April 4, both houses of Parliament agreed that the government of England should be by King, Lords, and Commons. A proclamation was issued declaring that Charles Stuart had indeed become Charles II immediately upon his father's death on January 30, 1649. Charles II, who had learned by experience what adversity was all about, accepted the invitation to return to England, and on May 29, 1660, he triumphantly entered London.¹ On that memorable day, the Earl of Leicester wrote in his journal, "I saluted his Majesty among the rest and kissed his hand, but there was so great disorder and confusion that the King scarce knew or took particular notice of any body."² John Evelyn, loyal royalist and unshakable Anglican, probably summed up the whole

¹Godfrey Davies, The Early Stuarts, 1603-1660, pp. 257-59.

²H.M.C., Sidney Papers, 1626-1698, p. 622.

event best when he wrote in his diary, "I stood in the Strand and beheld it, and blessed God."³ The days of uncertainty and confusion had ended; the Restoration was now a fact.

With the Restoration of Charles II, Algernon Sidney found himself in a rather delicate and uncertain position, to say the least. He was no longer the diplomatic representative of a de facto government. In fact, by the very terms of the Restoration itself, Sidney had supported and officially represented in 1659 a government that now had no legitimacy at all. Matters were definitely "up in the air" for Algernon, and even though he had received official leave to return to England just prior to the election in April of 1660, he preferred to wait for official word from the new government. Toward the end of May, Sidney wrote his father a letter from Copenhagen in which he expressed as best he could his analysis of his own position and attitudes.⁴ Concerning family friends such as Sir John Temple and the Earl of Northumberland, who had been working quietly on his behalf, Algernon said, "I press nothing upon them, but that this employment... may be no prejudice unto me." His attitudes toward the new government were quite clear and uncomplicated:

Since the Parliament hath acknowledged a king, I know, and acknowledge, I owe him the duty and the service that belongs unto a subject, and will pay it. If things are carried out in a legal and moderate way, I had rather be in employment, than without any. If I am trusted, I shall perform my duty with as much fidelity and care, as any that I have ever undertaken in my life.

³E. S. de Beer, ed., The Diary of John Evelyn (4 vols.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1955), Vol. III, p. 246.

⁴Blencowe, Sidney Papers, pp. 181-187.

⁵Ibid., p. 186.

The major difficulty centered upon one key phrase for Sidney: "If I am trusted." The uncertainty of the new government's attitude toward him must certainly have left him in an unsettled frame of mind. If there were conditions attached to his return, Sidney could be "contented with a private life, or liberty to go beyond the sea." In his own mind then, in the spring of 1660, Sidney had a fairly clear idea of what he personally could do in good conscience. However, everything depended upon some word or action from the new government in England, and therein lay the uncertainty.

The situation remained nebulous throughout the month of June, and Algernon's letters to his father serve as excellent indicators of the rather ambiguous nature of his position and the degree of uncertainty surrounding his future. The strange silence existing at Whitehall concerning Sidney, plus his rather desperate financial position, combined to create an unsettled condition for Sidney to exist in, to say the least. In a letter to his father on June 16, 1660 (N.S.) from Stockholm, Algernon expressed his desire to return to England, but admitted that the entire situation was still clouded with uncertainty. He said quite frankly:

I do not at all know in what condition I am there, nor what effects I shall find of General Monk's expressions of kindness towards me, and his remembrance of the ancient friendship that was between us.⁶

George Monk had been a major general under Cromwell and virtual ruler of Scotland with his army until he very adroitly came out in favor of a restoration in early 1660. He was one of a small group working in

⁶Ewald, Vol. I, p. 273.

London on Algernon's behalf, but together their efforts were producing very few results. Matters had not improved any by June 23 when Algernon wrote the following to his father: "I am uncertain how my actions or person will be looked upon at home."⁷ By the end of June, Sidney had received no official instructions from England, and he must certainly have been experiencing some personal anxiety. On June 27, 1660 (N.S.) Sidney wrote his last letter to the Earl of Leicester before leaving Stockholm. Its tone clearly reveals the doubt and confusion that perplexed Algernon:

The news I hear from England of public things is punctual and certain enough, but my friends are so short in what particularly relates unto myself, that I can make no judgment at all upon what they say. Perhaps the truth is, they can say nothing to my advantage, and leave me to guess at the rest by public things.

As matters stood then, by the end of June 1660, considerable doubt and uncertainty surrounded Algernon Sidney's position as an ex-diplomat stranded in a foreign capital. At this point he would have been willing to return to England, acknowledge Charles II as King, and perhaps even serve the government if accepted. He could even have accepted a private retirement again at Penshurst. He refused, however, to make a final commitment for himself until the new government in England had revealed its own attitudes toward him, either by official word or else by some action. It really boiled down to whether or not Algernon Sidney could be trusted to live under the restored Stuart monarchy.

In just one month's time, however, the entire situation

⁷Ibid., p. 274.

⁸Ibid., p. 276.

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changed quite drastically, and for the worse at that. For a variety of reasons, the new government had reached a decision regarding Algernon Sidney, and that decision had been communicated to him through friends. Sidney's reaction to the current opinion of him at Whitehall was both swift and quite frank. In a letter to his father from Copenhagen dated July 28, 1660 (N.S.), he reviewed briefly the nature of his previous uncertainty, but he added quickly that "the letters of the last two posts have put me out of that uncertainty, and show me plainly what I am to expect."⁹ Even though he might still possibly be allowed an obscure retirement at Penshurst, Sidney had a good idea of what the attitude at court must really have been like concerning him. For he said that:

I have too well learnt under the government of the Cromwells, what it is to live under the protection of those unto whom I am thought an enemy, to expose myself willingly unto the same.

Algernon was quite willing to acknowledge Charles II as his lawful sovereign and to live quietly in England; however, Charles II somehow would have to show that he was in fact reconciled to Sidney as well as to others who had been "of a party contrary unto his and his father's." Unless this were to happen, said Sidney, "I shall be ever suspected, and often affronted, and upon every little tumult that may happen, be exposed to ruin."¹¹ Sidney wanted desperately to avoid placing himself in such a position in England and would sooner remain abroad. Nevertheless, Algernon would be willing to come to England and defend his

⁹ Blencowe, Sidney Papers, pp. 189-194.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 189.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 190.

actions and attitudes during the 1650's relating to his participation in the Commonwealth governments. However, he vetoed this idea since "finding myself and my proceedings disowned and slighted, I cannot expect that either the king or his council will give me the hearing, or receive any account from me." Therefore, after weighing all the factors and considering his position from every angle, Algernon Sidney reached his final decision: "I choose this voluntary exile as the least evil condition that is within my reach."¹² A tough decision indeed to make, but one which was quite consistent with Sidney's nature. It was not cowardice that kept Algernon Sidney out of England, but rather an awareness on his part of the stark reality of the attitudes at Court concerning him.

Precisely why did the English court look with such disfavor upon Algernon Sidney? Apparently a number of factors combined to produce a considerable air of hostility at Whitehall regarding the man. The fact that Sidney's name appeared on the list of 135 commissioners appointed to try Charles I for treason certainly did not help his cause any with Charles II. Algernon's staunch republican principles were well known by that time, as was his friendship with men like Sir Sidney Vane the Younger and Edmund Ludlow. Incidentally, Ludlow had fled England and was residing in Switzerland. Sidney's connection with and attachment to Sir Henry Vane have already been pointed out and developed.¹³ Vane at this time was clearly a marked man, and the fact that the careers of Vane and Sidney had been so parallel during the previous decade did not help Sidney's image either.

¹²Ibid., p. 190.

¹³Supra, pp. 22-29.

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Royalists, such as John Evelyn, might admire Algernon for his courage, but perhaps the image which stuck in their minds the most regarding Sidney, as indeed it did in Evelyn's, was that he had been an "inveterate" enemy to the last King, Charles I.¹⁴ Indeed, this particular image of Sidney, plus his reputation for stiff adherence to republican principles, followed him around like a shadow for the rest of his life, and even after his death. In addition, Sidney knew quite well, probably through correspondence from his friends, that he was regarded at Whitehall as a "fierce, violent, seditious, mutinous, turbulent" fellow.¹⁵ Sidney probably expressed the real crux of the problem regarding himself best when he wrote the following to his father: "The cause and root of all the bitterness against me is from my stiff adherence to the party they [i.e., Charles II and his ministers] hate."¹⁶ With a Stuart once again on the throne and the royalists in firm control of matters, very little sympathy or understanding could be expected regarding a staunch republican like Algernon Sidney.

Sidney may have surmised the truth behind the bitterness against him when he singled out his "stiff adherence" to the party which espoused republican principles and had opposed Charles I. This alone, however, was not enough to create the air of great hostility that existed against him at Whitehall; for, in 1660 this hostility grew to vicious proportions indeed. Quite a few rumors concerning

¹⁴E. S. de Beer, The Diary of John Evelyn, Vol. IV, p. 353.

¹⁵Blencowe, Sidney Papers, p. 196.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 231.

Algernon Sidney were churning about Whitehall, and they concerned his behavior and attitudes as a diplomatic representative of the Parliamentary government in 1659. Some of them did have a basis in fact, while others rested upon nothing but hearsay and innuendo. Taken together, they added considerably to Sidney's suspect image at Court. He was confronted with the rumors in a rather heart-rending letter from his father written in the latter part of August of 1660.¹⁷ It was definitely not safe for Algernon to return to England, as it had been believed at one time that Sidney would be excepted from the general act of pardon and oblivion. As it turned out, he was not excepted from the Act of Oblivion which received the royal signature on August 29, 1660, but the mere fact that Sidney could even have been considered for such marked disfavor certainly revealed something about the nature of the hostility with which he was viewed. The Earl of Leicester, who was at a loss now as to precisely what he should advise his son to do, said frankly:

And though I know not what you have done or said, here or there, yet I have several ways heard that there is as ill an opinion of you as of any, even of those that condemned the late king.¹⁸

General George Monk, who had done so much to make the Restoration a reality and was working on Sidney's behalf, informed the Earl of Leicester that "very ill Offices" had been done to his son. A final revealing comment came when Leicester said that "I have heard such things of you that in doubtfulness only of their being true, no man will open his mouth for you."¹⁹ From the tone of the Earl's letter,

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 205-213.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 209.

¹⁹Ibid.

one would almost think that Algernon Sidney's name had become synonymous with "Typhoid Mary."

What Leicester referred to in a rather neutral way as "things" which were in circulation concerning his son were in reality some very nasty rumors. For one thing, Sidney's motto, "Manus haec inimica tyrannis," was working to his disadvantage. Leicester also lamented that according to various reports, Algernon had treated the Danish royal family in a very scornful and contemptuous manner while he was serving as a peace negotiator in Copenhagen. If this rumor had any basis in fact, Sidney could find himself in real trouble, since the Stuarts were related to the Danish royal house.²⁰ The most vicious rumor of all that Leicester knew of concerning his son was one that involved a remark which Algernon allegedly made in relation to Charles I's execution. When asked by a Mr. Brockman if he had been one of the ones guilty of Charles I's death, Algernon supposedly remarked:

Guilty! said you, do you call that guilt! Why, it was the justest and bravest action that ever was done in England or anywhere else.²¹

Remarks such as this, lamented Algernon's father, if they were true, would make a deep and lasting impression at Whitehall, an impression that would be impossible to erase. Rumors and stories, circulated by persons who remain unnamed, had undermined Sidney's position in England and had contributed greatly to the air of hostility that now surrounded the republican's name.

The awkward position in which Algernon Sidney found himself

²⁰ Charles II's grandfather James I had married a Danish Princess.

²¹ Blencowe, Sidney Papers, p. 211.

in early 1660 rapidly had deteriorated to a very untenable one by the summer of that year. Not only had his official position as a representative of the Commonwealth government ceased to exist, but he was now viewed with such hostility at Whitehall that he could hope for little in the way of a fair hearing. Not only did Sidney have to defend his opposition to Charles I and his support for and involvement in the experiment in Commonwealth government in England, but he also had to contend with rumors about his character and actions abroad. Sidney could not defend himself from his position on the Continent, and very, very few Englishmen were willing to risk defending him at home. Sidney could not really count on being allowed to return to England and live the private life of a recluse, at least not for the immediate future. Even though he had not been excepted from the Act of Oblivion, that did not mean he would have been free from harassment by various officials, from top echelons right on down to the local sheriff. For as his father pointedly remarked to Sidney:

Yet if there be any particular and great displeasure against you, which I fear there is, you may feel the effects thereof from the ²²higher powers, and receive affronts from the inferior.

Royal displeasure and official hostility could be like infectious diseases that would follow a person like Sidney everywhere he went and would taint him for life, making others wary of keeping company with him. Once royal displeasure and hostility had been earned, Sidney would have found himself constantly under suspicion if he lived in England. Perhaps he even would have found himself the incessant target of wagging

²²Ibid., p. 213.

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tongues and mediocre minds, eager for advancement at the expense of someone like Sidney. Algernon usually found it quite difficult to keep his opinions to himself, and it would have been an arduous task indeed for this proud and decidedly stiff-necked fellow to have resigned himself to a life of quiet solitude at the age of thirty-eight at Penshurst, where the memory of Marcus Brutus still lurked about.

In trying to discover the actual sources or people responsible for the rumors and ill-feeling generated against Algernon Sidney, the historian must rely mainly upon personal speculation and intuitive hunches. This may not be a very sophisticated approach to the problem of "who was out to get Algernon Sidney," but due to the lack of any substantial or concrete evidence, there is simply not much else to go on. One possible avenue of speculation is connected with the other members of the peace mediation team who served with Sidney at Copenhagen. It is a bit peculiar that Sir Robert Honeywood, who worked with Sidney, could return to England shortly after the Restoration and be quite graciously received by Charles II.²³ It is not at all clear just how Honeywood managed to ingratiate himself with Charles II, since he too had been a member of the Commonwealth's Council of State along with Sidney and Sir Henry Vane.

Much stronger suspicion surrounds the figure of the Admiral of the Fleet, Edward Montagu, who had been sent to the Baltic area in March of 1659 with an English fleet. Instead of applying himself to his appointed diplomatic work in Copenhagen, it seems that Montagu began ingratiating himself with those who were working for a

²³Ibid., p. 212.

restoration of Charles Stuart. Sidney reported his suspicions about the admiral's "extraofficial" activities to the ruling Parliament, but before he could be officially dealt with, Montagu retired to England with the Baltic Fleet, thus undermining considerably England's influence at the conference table.²⁴ It was Montagu's own idea to retire with the fleet, and in this move he was supported by the other English peace commissioners, except Sidney who stubbornly opposed all of them.²⁵ Montagu was one of those crafty fellows who could change sides at the drop of a hat: he had fought against Charles I; actively supported Oliver Cromwell; and then rendered his services for the Restoration cause. His reward was the Earldom of Sandwich and a continued successful naval career under Charles II. One must always wonder about a political animal of this type, that is, one who can emerge from political turmoil covered with roses, while others around him are battered in the maelstrom. As far as Algernon Sidney was concerned, Montagu was nothing but a scheming time-server, and he verbally blasted the admiral in a letter to his father. He said sarcastically:

If I had regarded my own convenience, I might perhaps have known where the sun rose, how to adore him, and how to gain the benefit of his rays, as well as General Montagu.²⁶

It is not at all certain whether Honeywood and Montagu had anything to do with the verbal sabotage of Algernon Sidney at the English court. However, enough suspicion surrounds Edward Montagu at least to make him

²⁴Ewald, Vol. I, pp. 225-27.

²⁵Davies, The Restoration of Charles II, p. 207.

²⁶Blencowe, Sidney Papers, p. 223.

a good suspect.

Today it is considered quite unscholarly to advocate any "conspiracy theory" in an attempt to explain events in history, and the unwary scholar risks the scorn of his colleagues and perhaps even banishment to another discipline if he attempts to apply such a theory. Nevertheless, the circumstances surrounding the hostility generated toward Algernon Sidney in 1660 are downright peculiar, to say the least. True, he was a man of republican principles with an arrogant, stiff-necked perspective to life. In addition, he must have been rather difficult to get along with, considering his "overruling temper." It is also true that Algernon Sidney committed himself firmly to Parliament's cause during the 1640's and 1650's, though he definitely was not an actual regicide. But then, other men had opposed Charles I as Sidney had, yet they survived the Restoration in good order. One need only point to Colonel Hutchinson who had opposed Charles I and had actually signed his death warrant. Yet, he escaped with impunity apparently due to the intercession of friends on his behalf.²⁷ Instead, Sidney had to cope with the effects of the hostility generated against him by some powerful and consistent enemies at Whitehall. One of those enemies could very well have been Charles II himself. In 1670 when Algernon appeared at Paris, the French government was anxious to know how it should react in regard to Mr. Sidney. According to the French official in London who communicated to Paris Whitehall's position concerning Algernon,

The King said to me again that he did not care whether the

²⁷Ewald, Vol. I, p. 283.

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said Sidney lived in Paris, Languedoc, or any other place he pleased, provided he did not return to England, where, said he, his pernicious sentiments, supported with so great parts and courage might do much harm.²⁸

Granted, this incident occurred ten years after the period in question, but it can be considered as fairly indicative of Charles II's attitude toward Sidney. Whether the maneuvers of the other "enemies" at Whitehall actually constituted a concerted "conspiracy" to defame Algernon Sidney or not must remain a matter for speculation. They at least represent a classic example of backstabbing and character assassination, with the victim being unable to defend himself properly.

Algernon Sidney did not remain silent in the face of hostile opinions and attitudes that formed and developed at Whitehall against him. In several noble and at times passion-filled letters to his father, Sidney responded to the rumors and accusations circulating against him.²⁹ These letters contain not only denials of most of the rumors concerning himself, but also a very careful and perceptive analysis of the real reason for the hostility against him. In pinpointing his firm adherence to the Commonwealth cause as the true source for Royal enmity, Sidney defended not only his own actions

²⁸Sir John Dalrymple, ed., Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland (2 vols., 2nd ed.; London: printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1771-3), Vol. II, Appendix, Part I, p. 61.

²⁹Blencowe, Sidney Papers, letter VII, pp. 194-198; letter VIII, pp. 199-204; letter X, pp. 214-227; letter XI, pp. 229-235. Letter no. VIII is undated and is assumed by the editor, R. W. Blencowe, to have been written around August 29, 1660. However, Sidney consistently refers to Sir Henry Vane and others as having already been executed. Vane was executed on Tower Hill on June 14, 1662, and it must be assumed that the letter was written in that year. Nevertheless, the letter will be used here with the other three because it fits into the general pattern established and followed by them.

during the previous two decades, but also the "good old cause" in general for which he had fought and worked so hard. In addition to this, the letters also reveal a bitterness and biting contempt for those politicians who possessed chameleon-style consciences; that is, those who could easily abandon Parliament's sinking ship, and one set of principles in the process, and then jump merrily upon the Restoration bandwagon. In doing so, Algernon Sidney shed considerable light upon the workings of his own mind and upon his rather lofty personality with its strengths and weaknesses. Finally, these valuable letters reveal the particular way in which Sidney viewed the country of his birth and the institution of Parliament. Sidney does much more than merely defend his actions for the Earl of Leicester's benefit. For in these letters Sidney was actually attempting to champion the "good old cause" itself for anyone who was willing to listen to him. He was addressing himself to future generations of Englishmen as well as to his own father.

Algernon Sidney did his best to set the record straight for his father concerning the verbal and written comments which had been attributed to him and which had been working so decidedly to his detriment at Whitehall. In one letter from Augsburg dated September 21, 1660 (N.S.), Sidney denied making insulting or rude comments concerning the Danish Royal family.³⁰ Though he admitted that he perhaps showed partiality to the Swedish side in the peace negotiations because he admired Sweden's monarch, he insisted that his only interest was to follow his orders and affect a solution to the Baltic problem

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 214-227.

that would benefit England. Simply stated, "I did my duty, and troubled myself no further."³¹ Though Sidney specifically denied making the rather fiendish comment concerning Charles I's execution that had been attributed to him, he did admit that he publicly defended the execution in his official capacity as a diplomat.³² There is always the possibility that such remarks made their way to Charles II's ears in slightly altered or elaborated form. Once again, one must question the behavior and motives of Edward Montagu.

Sidney was well aware of the problems involved in trying to defend himself against remarks that he made while serving one government and that were being counted against him by the new power. Words, of themselves, could be extremely self-incriminating. For, as he wrote to his father in another letter: "They are in their own nature subject to various interpretations, and are almost ever variously reported."³³ So much depended upon the exact context surrounding the specific remarks in question. Apparently, Sidney's enemies at Whitehall were reaching far back into the past for ammunition to use against him, and it would have been quite impossible for Algernon to have defended himself against such a tactic. Algernon outlined the problem as follows:

Who can answer for what he hath said in eighteen years of a party unto which he professed utter enmity? I do in my heart believe that I never made many discourses that are reported of me, at least not in the manner in which they are reported: yet cannot I say they are absolutely false. Some such thing may have passed that I have forgotten, that would make my assertion a lie, or at least it would be thought so.³⁴

³¹ Ibid., p. 218.

³² Supra, p. 53.

³³ Blencowe, Sidney Papers, p. 231.

³⁴ Ibid.

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Too many events had passed and too many statements, public and private, had been uttered: both together constituted a trap from which it would have been impossible for Sidney to have extricated himself. As Sidney perceived quite lucidly, even if he could successfully refute all the accusations against him to the satisfaction of Charles II, "who shall oblige him to say he is satisfied?"³⁵ Sidney was really in that very unenviable position where he would be "damned if he did and damned if he didn't." Sidney was never one to shy away from expressing opinions, and this characteristic would ultimately contribute to his downfall. For, ironically enough, certain passages from his Discourses were read out of context at his treason trial in 1683 to prove his evil intentions against Charles II.

Certainly, some of Algernon Sidney's remarks and statements uttered during the 1640's and 1650's could be considered self-incriminating, especially if viewed by someone who was looking specifically for that type of proof. But, were they the real cause of the animosity against him? According to Sidney's own analysis of the situation, they were not. He stated the problem quite clearly to his father in a letter dated September 26, 1660 (N.S.):

I do believe my peace may be made, but not by the means that are proposed. The King doth not give any testimony of desiring to destroy all that were against him, but he will have all to submit, to recant, renounce, and ask pardon. I find this and other things are expected from me. I can do the first, cheerfully and willingly, as he³⁶ is acknowledged by the Parliament. Nothing of the others.

The problem, then, was really one of principles for Sidney. He steadfastly refused to renounce his participation in the rebellion

³⁵Ibid., p. 232.

³⁶Ibid., p. 233.

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against Charles I, and he likewise refused to ask pardon for his involvement in and wholehearted support for the Commonwealth government in England. Sidney defended himself quite stubbornly to his father on these points. As far as his own personal actions during the recent civil troubles were concerned, "I cannot find one that I can look upon as a breach of the rules of justice or honor."³⁷ Clearly, Sidney's firm adherence to a rigid set of principles was the vital source for the inner strength that sustained him. As he pointed out to his father:

If I lose this by vile and unworthy submissions, acknowledgement of errors, asking of pardon, or the like, I shall from that moment be the miserablest man alive and the scorn of all men.³⁸

If the enmity against him at Whitehall was based upon his past political activities, Sidney claimed to be not the least bit surprised:

I did not take the war in which I was engaged to be a slight matter, nor to be done by halves. I thought it undertaken upon good grounds, and that it was the part of an honest man to pursue them heartily. It is not strange that this should raise great animosities against me. It is usual to desire to destroy those that will not be corrupted. I could not expect less.³⁹

Algernon Sidney had served the Commonwealth government in good faith, and he simply refused to beg Charles II's forgiveness for having done so. In a rather naive fashion, Sidney even expected Charles II to respect him for refusing to abandon his principles.

It was indeed an ironic, and one might even say an almost tragic, situation in which Sidney found himself. For, while he had perched himself with his clear conscience upon a lofty and quite isolated pedestal, others who had shared Sidney's experiences found it

³⁷ Ibid., p. 195.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 222.

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more convenient and profitable to reach some accommodation with Charles II. The rapid changes in the political climate during these tempestuous years brought out in a number of men a certain quality of time-serving which allowed them to survive in the long run. Indeed, some of them practiced their arts with an agility that would simply boggle the average mind. For these men, Algernon Sidney felt a deep and abiding contempt. In a particularly bitter letter to his father, Sidney proudly announced: "I have in my life been guilty of many follies, but, as I think, of no meanness; I will not blot and defile that which is past by endeavoring to provide for the future."⁴⁰ With politicians like Colonel Hutchinson and Edward Montagu clearly in mind, Sidney fumed:

Let them rejoice in their subtlety, who, by betraying the former powers, have gained the favor of this; and not only preserved, but advanced themselves in these dangerous changes.

Sidney might have been able to have procured his safety in the same manner, but as he emphatically stated for his father's benefit, "I had rather be a vagabond all my life, than buy my being in my own country at so dear a rate."⁴² Other men might shed their consciences like fur coats, but Sidney must live with his. The irony of the entire situation was that while Sidney might stand upon his honesty, courage, and rigid principles, he would suffer because of it and ultimately be destroyed. The men who found it easy or convenient to change sides, for whatever reason, were the ones who survived in troubled political

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 200.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 201.

⁴² Ibid., p. 196.

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waters. The Algernon Sidneys of this world are forever butting their heads against stone walls: it is the clever, subtle, crafty people who always seem to survive and improve themselves. Sidney possessed none of the subtle arts of a courtier, and it would have been grossly dishonest of him had he even pretended that he did. Sidney was really trapped by events he could not control and by a personality that would not allow him to accommodate himself with the changing times. His life from this point on has many of the elements of genuine tragedy.

By 1662, after two years of exile, it might be thought that perhaps Algernon Sidney could somehow have found it in him to "bend a little" in his attitude. But events in England during those two years made it impossible for him to do so, even if the thought had occurred to him. Republicans like Sir Henry Vane, John Lambert, and Sir Arthur Hesilrige were arrested and imprisoned. No doubt they were too dangerous to be simply ignored by Charles II. But what about a man like Hugh Peters, the Independent preacher and army chaplain to Lord Fairfax, who was imprisoned and executed. Was he really that dangerous? In addition, Restoration government in England was definitely not being conducted along the standards by which Sidney thought it should have been. Like a man attempting to shout into a hurricane, Algernon expressed his sense of utter frustration and disapproval over the condition of England for his father's benefit in a letter written after Sir Henry Vane's execution for treason.⁴³ Instead of ruling for the general good and prosperity of his subjects, Charles II seemed more intent upon the glorification of himself and his court of time-servers.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 199-204.

The liberty that Sidney and others like him had hoped to establish in England during the Commonwealth period had been trampled under foot. The "piety, virtue, sobriety, and modesty" of the 1650's had been replaced by the "luxury and lewdness" of Restoration England under Charles II. Parliament, which used to be "the palace of our liberty, the sure defenders of the oppressed" had somehow been transformed into the very instrument of the nation's oppression. Parliament had been stripped of its honor, and England itself had been reduced to a "miserable nation". Those responsible for this decline, the King himself, his ambitious advisers, and all the pandering time-servers, must all share a guilt that was nearly as infamous as that incurred by Judas himself. For a patriotic man like Sidney who was proud of the part he played in Commonwealth government, exile from his homeland was clearly a "great evil." Nevertheless, rather than attempting to learn the "vile court arts" that others used so well, Sidney could readily accept a life among strangers in exile.

Algernon Sidney's harsh and emotional evaluation of Restoration England in 1662 was more than just the embittered cry of a frustrated exile. For he was by that time already displaying those particular ideals and interpretations which would reach their full development in his own Discourses and in the writings of others during the Exclusion Crisis of 1678-81. In short, Sidney was clearly showing signs of becoming what would later be termed a "Whig," though the word itself in 1662 had no political implications at all. When Sidney referred to the English Parliament as "the palace of our liberty" and the "defenders of the oppressed," he was clearly laying the foundation for an intellectual interpretation that would later be expanded upon

in his Discourses. In his later writing, Sidney stated quite emphatically that it was Parliament's duty and right to provide for the public good of the nation, and that it ought not to be dissolved until this had been accomplished.⁴⁴ In 1662 Sidney could also interpret Parliament as an assembly of men "who formerly could bridle kings, and keep the balance equal between them and the people."⁴⁵ Parliament in addition could make England "glorious and happy" as Sidney obviously thought it had during the Commonwealth period.

In 1662 Sidney was doing more than just praising Parliament's role during the 1650's. He was also displaying early signs of a decidedly "Whiggish" interpretation of government, with a special emphasis upon Parliament's importance within the constitution. Algernon Sidney clearly was willing to credit Parliament with being a much more essential institution in the English state than any Stuart king would ever have allowed. In criticizing Restoration government in 1662 for being lewd and corrupt and for not being interested in the nation's prosperity, Sidney was laying the basis for the conclusion in his later Discourses. There he stated that the real difference between good government and evil government was that a good government used the power it had for the good of the people.⁴⁶ For Sidney, the Restoration government of Charles II deserved all the scorn he could heap upon it. But, beneath Sidney's scorn and sense of frustration can be detected the embryonic foundation for an intellectual interpretation that he

⁴⁴ Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government, ch. 3, sec. 38, pp. 421-26.

⁴⁵ Blencowe, Sidney Papers, p. 202.

⁴⁶ Op. cit., ch. 3, sec. 45, pp. 455-57.

would later expand upon into a decidedly "Whiggish" view of English history and government.⁴⁷

It is easy to see why Algernon Sidney's sole biographer, and a Whiggish one at that, could interpret him as a sincere and patriotic republican whose vision of an ideal commonwealth in the seventeenth century closely matched the reality of England's constitutional monarchy of the 1870's.⁴⁸ It is claimed that Sidney was able to discern in the seventeenth century the keystone of the arch of English parliamentary government in the nineteenth and the secret of England's national happiness and tranquility when he observed that "the whole body of a nation cannot be tied to any other obedience than is consistent with the common good according to their own judgment."⁴⁹ Problems arise because of this tempting, but very misleading, interpretation. In the first place, this interpretation is nothing more than a variation on the standard Whig song of the steady organic development of the English constitution and its inevitable advance towards that time period from which the particular Whig interpreter is looking backward. By doing this, Algernon Sidney naturally looks like a nineteenth-century type of prophet who had the misfortune to have lived in the seventeenth century. Admittedly, the tone and wording of certain passages in letters written in the early 1660's make Sidney sound like an early Whig "crying in the political wilderness." But rather than view Sidney as a man looking ahead to a

⁴⁷Op. cit., pp. 201-202.

⁴⁸Ewald, Life and Times of Algernon Sidney, Vol. I, pp. 256-66.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 266.

new era or epoch for England, it would be much more accurate to view him as someone who longed for the "good old cause" (i.e., Commonwealth government of the 1650's) to be re-established in England. This is really what Algernon Sidney was getting at in chapter three of his Discourses when he wrote that changes had to be made in the English constitution to restore England to its ancient liberty, dignity, and happiness.⁵⁰ Algernon Sidney's gaze was not directed primarily into the future, but rather constantly back to the "good old days" of the 1650's.

The particular quote used by Sidney's biographer to show the parallel between Sidney's concept of a Commonwealth and the author's view of his own period is dangerously misleading on a number of other points also. If read closely, it can make Algernon Sidney sound like a democratic republican who was willing to place his trust in a kind of consensus rule of the people. It should, however, be quickly pointed out that there is a consistently aristocratic tone running through the Discourses that shatters this false illusion. For Sidney, the English Parliament was not only the one institution that should counterbalance the Royal power, but it was also the means through which the aristocratic families could maintain their political power within the concept of "mixed government". Sidney was not the least bit interested in reform measures that would have widened the franchise or redistributed seats in the Commons. Indeed, the idea probably would have sent him into a vicious tailspin. Sidney was the product of an

⁵⁰ Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government, ch. 3, se. 37, pp. 418-420.

aristocratic environment, not a liberal democratic one. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that his view of English politics during his long exile was a backward looking one. Rather than honor Sidney as a liberal-Whig type of political philosopher who would have enjoyed living in the late nineteenth century, it would be much more accurate to place him nearer to his friend Sir Henry Vane. For it was Vane who probably expressed the real essence of their political position in terms with which Sidney could readily have agreed when he said simply, "Sovereignty ought to be in the whole body of the people that have adhered to the cause."⁵¹ That cause was the "good old cause" that saw its best days from 1648 to 1653.

In addition to the imprisonment of some of Sidney's friends, the political apostasy of old comrades, and frustration over his exile, Algernon Sidney also had to struggle under the burden of personal family problems at the same time. A split between Algernon and his father, which had developed because Algernon had returned to Commonwealth government after Cromwell's death, became much more intense and harsh after the Restoration.⁵² Not only did the old Earl of Leicester refuse to send his son monetary help, but he also neglected to answer most of Algernon's letters. The struggle between father and son can be accurately established and followed in their correspondence in 1660 and 1661. It was a struggle on the son's part to justify his position and principles before his father, and an equal struggle on Leicester's part to comprehend and accept his son's exile and perhaps

⁵¹ Rowe, Sir Henry Vane the Younger, p. 254.

⁵² Ewald, Vol. I, pp. 266-67.

bring himself to offer some advise and help.⁵³ Sidney was clearly disturbed and perplexed by his father's seeming inability to understand his decision to remain abroad in 1660. The problem of communication was made more difficult and frustrating because Leicester rarely bothered to write his son. In fact, communication was so one-sided that by August of 1660, Algernon was complaining that his last twenty letters to his father had been unanswered.⁵⁴ The letters written by Algernon Sidney in exile were mainly attempts to explain carefully the reasons for his self-imposed exile to his father and to implore his father not to interpret his absence from England as any personal act of disloyalty to him. That Sidney was concerned lest his father misinterpret his actions is plainly evident in a letter written from Augsburg in September of 1660 in which Sidney said:

Your lordship may perhaps think you have a son that is headstrong and violent, or guilty of some other faults of which he is often accused; but you shall not find I have any quality that is dishonorable to you, or your family.⁵⁵

Leicester, for his part, blamed his inability to write upon age and poor eyesight, but these reasons were not the primary reasons, though they probably compounded the problem.⁵⁶ The aging aristocrat also chided his second son rather severely for what he termed his "neglect" when Algernon left his father "sick, solitary, and sad at Penhurst." Perhaps Leicester could not quite comprehend his son's lofty sense of duty or his dedication to republican principles. But

⁵³ Blencowe, Sidney Papers. See in particular letter V, pp. 181-88; letter VII, pp. 194-98; letter IX, pp. 205-213; letter X, pp. 214-227.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 194.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 223.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 205-213.

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there were other factors as well that combined with Algernon's absence to produce a rather chilly atmosphere at Penhurst. For one thing, the Earl's beloved countess had died in August of 1659 while Algernon was in Copenhagen. In addition, his son-in-law, Lord Strangford, who had married the youngest of the Sidney daughters, turned out to be a first-class scoundrel. Not only had he nearly ruined himself by wild extravagance, but apparently he had refused to fulfill his marriage contract.⁵⁷ What made matters worse was the fact that apparently the daughter herself was not a completely innocent victim. To add to the Sidney family problems was the fact that Leicester may still have been estranged from his eldest son, Viscount De L'Isle, who had assaulted the Earl at Penhurst in late 1652.⁵⁸ It is no wonder that the Earl of Leicester was an aging and sick man in 1660; for it must have seemed to him as though the very structure of his family was crumbling before his eyes. All of these family problems no doubt prevented Leicester from viewing Algernon's absence from England in the proper way. Indeed, he may possibly have viewed his second son in part as merely a younger edition of his eldest, that is as a hard-to-manage ingrate. In one of his few letters to Algernon in 1660, the old Earl unburdened himself:

And concerning you, what to resolve in myself, or what to advise you, truly I know not; for you must give me leave to remember of how little weight my opinions and counsel have been with you, and how unkindly and unfriendly you have rejected the exhortations and admonitions which in much affection and kindness I have given you on many occasion.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 191.

⁵⁸ H.M.C., Sidney Papers, 1626-1698, p. 614.

⁵⁹ Blencowe, Sidney Papers, p. 208.

Algernon Sidney's inability to accept the Restoration government may easily have been the last of a long series of family crises which combined to undermine the Earl's existence at Penhurst and erode his patience and his capacity for understanding.

As the year 1660 lengthened into 1661, the estrangement between Algernon and his father worsened. Leicester continued to withhold financial help and stubbornly maintained his silence at Penhurst. Sir John Temple, who was Master of the Rolls in Ireland and an old and trusted family friend, endeavored to mediate on Algernon's behalf and offer the Earl some advice. Writing to Leicester in November of 1660, Sir John tried to counsel him concerning his son:

I shall most humbly offer it to your lordship, whether you will not think fit to write somewhat to him. That may let him know you shall continue your affections to him, and take care of his subsistence.⁶⁰

As a family friend who had a son of his own, Sir John was perhaps apprehensive lest the burden of Algernon's exile combine with Leicester's coldness toward his haughty son to push the exile into a dangerous position. For Temple warned Leicester:

I confess I think him in very great danger; and that he may run such a course, (for he speaks of going to serve against the Turk)⁶¹ as will deprive his friends of all means of his recovery.

Unfortunately, Sidney's continued alienation from his father brought out the worse in him, and the bitterness, frustration, sarcasm, and pure spite so garishly thrown at Leicester were quite unbecoming and even pathetic. In December of 1660, Algernon put it this way to his

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 245-246.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 246.

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father:

I write to your Lordship sometimes because I am not forbidden; not often, because I am neither commanded, nor have reason to think that diligence would be acceptable to you.⁶²

Algernon's emotional nadir was reached in January of 1661 when he wrote the following to his father: "According to my custom, I give your Lordship this testimony of my being alive; which I think necessary since your Lordship gives no sign of remembering I am so."⁶³ Forced to reject his country at this time, it is sad indeed that Algernon Sidney should also have to struggle under the burden of his own father's temporary rejection of him.

At some time during the first half of 1661 the Earl of Leicester experienced a change of heart regarding his vagabond son, who by this time had settled in Rome. In June of that year Leicester broke his long silence, and the frigid relations between father and son experienced a considerable thaw when the Earl actually began sending money to his son. He could only advise his son to remain outside of England, but at least at that point he seems to have accepted Algernon's exile as a fact of life.⁶⁴ Sir John Temple, who probably had a lot to do with Leicester's change of heart, sincerely approved of the Earl's new resolution to help his son and was quick to analyze the possibilities of the situation. On July 31, 1661, Temple wrote to Leicester concerning his new attitude:

⁶² Arthur Collins, ed., The Sidney Letters and Memorials of State (2 vols.; London: printed for T. Osborne in Grey's Inn, 1746), Vol. II, pp. 702-704.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 704-705.

⁶⁴ Ewald, Vol. I, p. 385.

I believe you could never do it in a more seasonable time. The last letter I received here [Dublin] from him, which bore date some months since, was full of high discontents expressing the great sense he had of his friends' neglect of him.⁶⁵

As Sir John plainly saw, the new and improved relations between father and son were not without possibilities for the future:

If your Lordship would be pleased to express now your fatherly care of him, and to send him such a supply at present as might express your affection to him, I think it were a work worthy of you, and such as would be a perpetual tie and obligation upon him for the future.⁶⁶

This change of heart in 1661 on Leicester's part concerning his son was not a temporary one, for in 1671 the Earl mortgaged Leicester House for four thousand pounds, two thousand of that amount being designated for Algernon.⁶⁷

In July of 1660 when Algernon Sidney committed himself to an exile from his native England, he could not possibly have envisioned the seventeen-year odyssey upon which he was embarking. Nor could he have foreseen the dangers and intrigues that he would be involved in. For in his endeavors to find a suitable place to settle, Sidney was forced to spend much of his time traveling about from one European country to another, sometimes just a few steps ahead of would-be assassins. After rejecting France and especially the "drunken countries of Germany," Sidney finally determined to settle in Italy, arriving in Rome by the fall of 1660.⁶⁸ He found life in the Eternal City and its surrounding area much more to his liking than the

⁶⁵ H.M.C., Sidney Papers, 1626-1698, pp. 513-14.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 514.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 530.

⁶⁸ Blencowe, Sidney Papers, pp. 190-91.

melancholy North of Europe. In Rome Algernon was befriended by a few of the Cardinals in the Vatican and was able to study the administrative and political sides of Catholicism at first hand, and with a surprising degree of impartiality at that.⁶⁹ It is one of the great ironies of his life that Algernon should have gotten along so well with the high princes of the Catholic Church, when, as an Englishman, he shared the strong hatred and fear of Papists which most of his native countrymen possessed. But then, Sidney was a very good observer of men and events, and apparently for once in his life he kept any offensive opinions he might have had to himself.

Sidney found other benefactors in Italy besides a few of the high princes in the Vatican. During the summer of 1661, Algernon was entertained as the guest of Prince Pamfili, nephew of Pope Innocent X, at his splendid villa near Frascati.⁷⁰ Because of the hot, stifling air that settles over Rome in the summer, it was (and still is for that matter) a city which those who could afford it abandoned for the healthier climate in the surrounding hills. Near Frascati, Algernon Sidney found a peace and contentment which he had not known for many months. Sidney rapidly adjusted to a hermit-like existence at the villa, where he contented himself by reading books and taking nature walks. He could even write to his father that his "natural delight in solitude" had been greatly increased, and he hoped to continue in his new residence.⁷¹ In fact, Sidney's correspondence during this period takes on a much different tone from the bitter letters of the previous

⁶⁹ Ewald, Vol. I, pp. 328-68.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 356.

⁷¹ Collins, Sydney Letters and Memorials of State, pp. 718-19.

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months. The frustration and spiteful sarcasm are in a great part replaced by a more subdued, but yet lofty, stoicism tempered by a sort of bleeding-heart awareness of his own political self-martyrdom. In one particular letter to his father written on July 3, 1661 (N.S.), Sidney evaluated his current situation:

I cannot but rejoice a little to find that when I wander as a vagabond through the world, forsaken of my friends, poor, and known only to be a broken limb of a ship-wrecked faction; I yet find humanity and civility ⁷²from those who are in the height of fortune and reputation.

Algernon even ventured to speculate that perhaps his "half burial" in Italy might induce his enemies at Whitehall to view him now as a rather harmless, dull, and lazy fellow.

This rather idyllic Italian interlude ended very abruptly and rudely for Algernon Sidney when the first of two assassination attempts was made upon his life, thus forcing him to take to the highroad once again in search of safety. In his Apology, written twenty years after the incident, Sidney asserted that he was a target for assassination attempts because certain people in Whitehall found him particularly offensive, due to his incorruptible nature, and wanted him destroyed. Sidney claimed that he had been practicing nothing offensive at the time against the English government and merely desired to be left alone and even managed some backroom maneuvering to prevent him from serving with any foreign government.⁷³ Forced to abandon Italy, Algernon decided upon a flying trip to

⁷²Ibid., pp. 720-21.

⁷³Algernon Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government with his Letters, Trial, Apology, and Some Memoirs of his Life, pp. 170-71.

Switzerland, arriving at Lake Geneva in the autumn of 1663. There he encountered another exile from the "good old days", his comrade and fellow republican, Edmund Ludlow. The two exiles got along famously together, with Sidney, according to Ludlow, "assuring us of his affection and friendship, and no way declining to own us and the cause for which we suffer'd."⁷⁴ After leaving Edmund Ludlow behind in Switzerland, Algernon Sidney wandered quite restlessly across Flanders, the United Provinces, France, and Germany for four years. His odyssey did not lack excitement, however, for in 1663 a second attempt was made on Sidney's life, this time in Augsburg, Germany. In his Apology Sidney named a certain Andrew White as being among the gang that had been sent by Whitehall to assassinate him this time.⁷⁵ In his Memoirs Edmund Ludlow substantiated Sidney's charge, claiming that some of the same ruffians had been dispatched to assassinate him also.⁷⁶ It seems that Ludlow too was found to be obnoxious by Whitehall. Being an English republican in exile at that time had become a very risky business indeed.

Sidney's connection with Edmund Ludlow in exile runs much deeper, however, than merely the three weeks he spent with Ludlow at Lake Geneva, reminiscing about the "good old cause." These two staunch republicans and firm enemies of Charles II were involved in intrigues with other English exiles who endeavored to involve the Dutch in a scheme to re-establish a Commonwealth government in England in 1665

⁷⁴Firth, ed., The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow, 1625-1672, Vol. II, p. 346.

⁷⁵Op. cit., p. 170.

⁷⁶Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 382.

and 1666. The connection is worth exploring here because Algernon Sidney was involved in these intrigues to a much greater degree than was Edmund Ludlow. In 1665 England was at war with the United Provinces, and Sidney appeared in The Hague, having recently fled from Augsburg and the unsuccessful attempt upon his life. The Hague at this time was a veritable beehive of disaffected English exiles, and Sidney was upset enough with Whitehall to get involved with these exiles in their intrigues. In his History of His Own Time, Bishop Burnet narrates that in 1665 Algernon Sidney and other men of the Commonwealth party went to John De Witt, the Grand Pensionary of the United Provinces, and pressed him for a Dutch invasion of England. Their objective was to establish another Commonwealth government in England, and they assured De Witt of strong support for the cause within England itself, a sort of "fifth column" movement that would spring into action in conjunction with a Dutch invasion.⁷⁷

What all of this meant, of course, was revolution, and Algernon Sidney, by his subsequent involvement and actions, merely demonstrated to his enemies in Whitehall that he was that very same "dangerous fellow" they had suspected him of being all along. In his Memoirs, Edmund Ludlow stated that in April of 1666, pressure was exerted on him by English exiles on the Continent and by friends of the cause back in England to join the intrigues and help make some arrangements with the Dutch. He further stated that Algernon Sidney and a certain Mr. Say "both endeavored to the utmost of their power to

⁷⁷Thomas Burnet, ed., Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time (2 vols.; London: printed by B. McMillan, 1809), Vol. I, p. 317.

engage me in this affair."⁷⁸ It must have seemed, for Sidney at least, that this was a golden opportunity to transform the mere talk of the "good old cause" into a much more substantial reality, with Dutch help of course. According to Ludlow, Sidney wrote to him and attempted to enlist Ludlow's participation in a scheme by which the two of them would journey to Paris and negotiate with the Dutch ambassador there for some aid. He further claimed that Sidney had obtained for both of them a promise of safe conduct across France from Louis XIV himself.⁷⁹ During this same period, 1665-66, Sidney wrote to one Benjamin Furley, an English merchant in Rotterdam, who was known to have contacts with several of the English exiles in the Netherlands. The letter is undated and rather vague in places, but it is clear enough to implicate Sidney in some intrigues and very likely those about which Edmund Ludlow wrote.⁸⁰ The general tone of the letter is that of an exile who was no longer content with a life of solitude or "half burial," for Sidney clearly expressed a desire to make himself useful in this world. Perhaps Whitehall's incessant hounding of Sidney wherever he went produced a change of attitude in him and jolted him out of his passive retirement. At one point Sidney assured Furley: "The work in hand is great and good; I am a weak instrument employed in it with others."⁸¹ Philosophizing about certain undertakings which were very likely intrigues with elements of the exiled Commonwealth party, Sidney confided to Furley:

⁷⁸Firth, The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow, Vol. II, p. 391.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 390-393.

⁸⁰Blencowe, Sidney Papers, letter XVIII, pp. 258-60.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 259.

I do not know what success God will give unto our undertakings, but I am certain I can have no peace in my own spirit, if I do not endeavor ⁸²by all means possible to advance the interest of God's people.

The fact that there were English spies lurking about The Hague probably accounts in great part for the rather guarded wording of this particular letter. Nevertheless, it definitely seems to fit into the general pattern of the intrigues in 1665-66 as related by Bishop Burnet and Edmund Ludlow. All of these pieces fit together. Algernon Sidney was involved in intrigues with other English exiles to breathe life into the cold embers of the "good old cause," and in doing so, Sidney was demonstrating the pattern of the opposition to the Stuart monarchy established in the 1640's and which formed a very important aspect of his political life.

That the government of Charles II was aware of these intrigues being hatched in the Netherlands by discontented elements of the old Commonwealth party, including Algernon Sidney, is quite evident when one carefully investigates the Domestic State Papers. In a letter dated February 10, 1666, Benjamin Harrison commented to Sir Thomas Peyton about the extent of "disaffection" in England, especially around Dover. More importantly, he claimed to have knowledge of secret intrigues at home and abroad. Men and arms were waiting under cover to join forces with a suspected Dutch invasion, to be led by either Richard Cromwell or Edmund Ludlow.⁸³ In addition, on April 9, 1666, Algernon

⁸²Ibid., p. 260.

⁸³Great Britain, Public Record Office, Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, of the Reign of Charles 2, Vol. CXLVII (1666): February, 1666, Benjamin Harrison to Sir Thomas Peyton, pp. 239-40.

Sidney's name was added to, but eventually removed from, a list in a proclamation ordering certain men to return to England and stand trial, or else suffer attainder and forfeiture for treason.⁸⁴ It was indicative of Whitehall's mood that Algernon's name should even have appeared on the list in the first place. On July 15, 1666, Charles II issued a circular letter to all lords lieutenant in England, warning them of the possibility of a Dutch invasion in conjunction with English fugitives in Holland and disaffected people in England. Charles II instructed the lords lieutenant to sharpen their vigilance in particular for the sudden ownership of guns and horses by men whom such items would normally have been beyond their means.⁸⁵ It was wartime, and Charles II was definitely skeptical over the loyalty of some of his subjects. The government also sent spies across the Channel to gather information. An elusive character named Mrs. Aphra Behn was one of these, and from August through December of 1666 she was on a secret mission to gather information about the movements of English fugitives residing in the United Provinces.⁸⁶ The whole business has heavy overtones of a seventeenth-century James Bond thriller, but it should be remembered that both sides in the matter were quite serious about their attitudes and actions. Subsequently, the English government merely had its long-standing suspicions confirmed concerning these exiles, especially that turbulent fellow Algernon Sidney.

This web of intrigue spun by exiled elements of the English

⁸⁴ Ibid., Vol. CLII (1666): 9 April, 1666, p. 342.

⁸⁵ Ibid., Vol. CLXIII (1666): 15 July, 1666, p. 538.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Preface to Vols. CLXVI-CXCV.

Commonwealth party on the Continent was all for naught, however. According to Bishop Burnet, Grand Pensionary De Witt rejected the idea of aiding the Commonwealth exiles in their schemes because he was afraid that the French might take advantage of the situation by declaring war on the Dutch. In addition, De Witt perceived quite shrewdly that the general discontent upon which the exiles were basing their plans simply did not seem to be present in England, at least not to the extent that these exiles claimed it was.⁸⁷ Another major factor was undoubtedly De Witt's reluctance to aid in the establishment of another republican type of government in the very nation which recently had been such a strong commercial and naval rival during its Commonwealth period.⁸⁸ As much as Algernon Sidney and the other English political exiles may have dreamed of re-establishing a Commonwealth in England in 1666, that shrewd Dutchman, John De Witt, was determined not to get involved in their incessant intrigues.

Before Algernon Sidney slipped into quiet obscurity in France, the Grand Pensionary of the United Provinces did, however, perform one service to him. Using diplomatic influence with the French ambassador at The Hague, the Comte D'Estrades, De Witt suggested that Sidney be issued a passport to go into France. D'Estrades obliged and even recommended Sidney to a French government official as one who "desires to place himself under the protection of his Majesty [Louis XIV], and to go himself to France to offer his services if occasion

⁸⁷Burnet, History of His Own Time, Vol. I, p. 317.

⁸⁸Ewald, Vol. I, p. 401.

should present itself for their exercise."⁸⁹ Sidney eventually did retire into France, after getting nowhere with his intriguing, and settled in Montpellier for about ten years. Hardly any evidence exists to document this period of Sidney's exile, but apparently he was left unmolested by the government of Charles II. Sidney may have contemplated weighty matters that were later incorporated into his Discourses, or he may simply have brooded about the fate which had been dealt him, thereby adding to his already developing sense of martyrdom. Whatever the case, he virtually disappeared from view for ten years until 1677.

⁸⁹Firth, ed., The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow, Vol. II, p. 396, n. 1.

C H A P T E R I V

EXCLUSION CRISIS: REINVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS, 1679-81

Montpellier is a small city in the South of France, which during the seventeenth century possessed a reputation as a health resort specializing in the treatment of phthisis, or pulmonary tuberculosis.¹ Algernon Sidney settled there in approximately 1667 after repeated attempts to interest John De Witt and Louis XIV in English republican intrigues had ended in failure. Unfortunately, precious little evidence exists to document Sidney's ten-year residence in Montpellier, or his activities during those years. Algernon did communicate to Sir William Temple in Brussels his decision to settle in the French resort city, and he asked Temple to inform his friends and family of his decision.² It is known that Sidney was in Paris in 1670, the year in which the Secret Treaty of Dover was negotiated between Charles II of England and Louis XIV of France. It was at this time also that Charles II expressed to a French official his displeasure of Algernon Sidney and the sincere desire that Sidney would remain outside

¹Maurice Cranston, John Locke (New York: Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 160.

²Alexander Ewald, The Life and Times of Algernon Sidney, Vol. II, p. 1.

of England.³ Except for these unspectacular bits of information, very little else is known about this particular period of Algernon Sidney's long exile. He simply slipped into quiet obscurity for ten years in Montpellier, France.

In 1677 the long exile on the Continent came to an end for Algernon Sidney. The old Earl of Leicester was in his eighties, and he expressed the desire to see his second son once again before he died. As the maneuvering got under way on both sides of the English Channel to ensure Algernon's safe return to England, the important family connections of the Sidneys were brought into play. Leicester himself appealed to his grandson (Algernon's nephew) Robert Spencer, the second Earl of Sunderland, to use his influence with Charles II to allow Algernon to return to England.⁴ For this particular purpose, the prominent Savile family proved to be even more important. Sir George Savile, later the Marquis of Halifax, was married to Dorothy Spencer, the Earl of Sunderland's sister. Sir George's brother, Henry Savile, was the English ambassador at Paris. A combination of Algernon's personal appeal to the French court and the efforts of Henry Savile in Paris on his behalf resulted eventually in Algernon's return to England. Savile used his influence with Henry Coventry, the English Secretary of State for the South, to secure an assurance of safety and a passport for Algernon Sidney from Charles II.⁵

The King's aversion to Sidney was the principal obstacle

³ Supra, pp. 51-52.

⁴ Ewald, Vol. II, p. 34.

⁵ Helen C. Foxcroft, The Life and Letters of George Savile, Bart., First Marquis of Halifax (2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1898), Vol. I, p. 137.

that had to be overcome. Henry Savile must have exerted considerable pressure upon Whitehall through diplomatic and political channels because in the end the opposition of Charles II was removed. In a letter dated December 18, 1676 (N.S.), Algernon expressed his gratitude to Savile for the services performed on his behalf:

My obligation unto you is the same, and I so far acknowledge it to be the greatest that I have in a long time received from any man, as not to value the leave you have obtained for me to return into my country after so long an absence, at a lower rate than the saving of my life.⁶

Sidney claimed that his only business in England concerned himself and his family. If he could not live in England to the complete satisfaction of Charles II, Sidney would be content to live out the rest of his life in Southern France. But, he was nonetheless deeply grateful to Henry Savile for the chance to return to England and see his aging father before the Earl died. Robert Sidney, second Earl of Leicester, died on November 2, 1677, at the age of eighty-two, just two months after his son Algernon had returned to England from his long exile abroad.

Shortly after his father's death, Algernon wrote to his friend Benjamin Furley in Rotterdam and informed him of his plans for the future. Furley, of course, was the wealthy Quaker merchant with whom Sidney and other republican exiles had had contacts in relation to the intrigues to re-establish a Commonwealth in England. In his letter to Furley, dated November 29, 1677, Sidney claimed that permission to return to England was quite easy to get, considering that he had to wait seventeen years for it. He admitted to Furley that he had inherited a considerable sum from his father, both in ready cash and in land, which

⁶Ewald, Vol. II, pp. 35-36.

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would provide a steady income for him. With his financial situation seemingly bolstered, Sidney earnestly desired to retire to a small place outside of Bordeaux in Gascony and live out his life on his inheritance. In preparation for this move, Sidney asked Benjamin Furley for some advice on a possible safe, but sure, investment for his money.⁷ Algernon Sidney was confident that he could retire unmolested from England at this point and leave others the more complicated matters of business and politics.

Unfortunately, ever since 1660 things had rarely gone exactly as Sidney had planned that they would. The pattern did not change very much after the exile's return to England. The Earl of Leicester had left Algernon fifty-one hundred pounds in his will. Before he could realize his father's legacy, however, Algernon had to wage a long and extended fight in Chancery Court against his elder brother Philip Sidney, now the third Earl of Leicester. The third Earl disputed his father's will and challenged Algernon's right to the money.⁸ The two brothers, it will be remembered, had been drawing further apart since the days of Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate.⁹ This struggle over Algernon's right to receive his legacy certainly did not help the already strained relations between the two brothers. Moreover, Algernon was not the only member of the Sidney family who had legal difficulties with the new Earl; for, the youngest brother in the family, Henry Sidney, also had to wage a similar battle in Chancery Court over

⁷ T. Foster, ed., Original Letters of John Locke; Algernon Sidney; and Anthony Lord Shaftesbury (London: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1830), pp. 79-81.

⁸ Ewald, Vol. II, p. 37.

⁹ Supra, pp. 31-32.

his legacy. The point to remember is that Algernon Sidney's extended court fight kept him in England much longer than he had originally anticipated.

It is essential at this point to leave Algernon Sidney and his personal problems for a time and concentrate upon political and constitutional problems in England during the late 1670's. The major constitutional issue during Charles II's reign was the problem of working out a more clearly defined relationship between King and Parliament. This, of course, involved a proper, working definition of the Royal prerogative. It was a very difficult matter to define the limits of the Royal prerogative, and as the reign of Charles II lengthened, the tension between the King and his Parliament increased. The bishops could be expected to uphold the King's prerogative power in the House of Lords; however, it was the House of Commons that became increasingly more difficult to deal with. The problem of the extent of the Royal prerogative came to a climax in March of 1672 when Charles II, invoking his prerogative and his supreme power in ecclesiastical matters, issued his famous Declaration of Indulgence. This was an attempt by the King to suspend all of the penal laws which had been in effect against Protestant nonconformists and Catholic recusants. This use by Charles II of his prerogative power stirred up a veritable hornet's nest in Parliament, and before the Commons would agree to vote any supplies for 1673, they forced the King to cancel the Declaration of Indulgence. Charles II could then continue his new war against the Dutch, but he had been forced to back down on his policy of religious toleration.

This rather aggressive challenge by the Commons of the Royal

prerogative in 1673 represented much more than merely a sudden awakening by sleepy-eyed squires and country gentlemen from a prolonged slumber. Instead, it should be viewed as part of a pattern that had been developing throughout the seventeenth century in the relations between the Stuart monarchs and the third estate. As the House of Commons gradually became more skilled in its techniques and developed a greater self-awareness of its own potentialities, it became bolder in its assertions. Though the precise role of the Commons was still very ill-defined by the 1670's it had won the right to initiate money grants and control taxation. When the Commons realized the potential power it had through its control of the purse strings, it gradually became more critical of Royal policies in both domestic and foreign areas. The tension produced by the struggle between the King on the one hand to get what he wanted from the Commons without making concessions, and the Commons on the other to avoid becoming a mere cipher, put a severe strain on the constitution in the seventeenth century. The verbal eruption in 1673 over Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence was only one battle in the century long struggle between the King and Parliament, and in particular between the King and the House of Commons.¹⁰

Sidney himself was well aware of the struggle taking place within the framework of the constitution and the tensions and discord produced because of this struggle. In his Discourses he commented on

¹⁰ For a more detailed analysis of the reign of Charles II, the reader should investigate David Ogg's excellent book entitled England in the Reign of Charles II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967) and also Sir George Clark's The Later Stuarts, 1660-1714, Vol. X of The Oxford History of England (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965).

the fact that the seventeenth century had witnessed a decided shift in the balance of power within the constitution. By this he meant that the position of the nobility had been altered, and they were no longer the "natural leaders and advisers" who at one time had been able to check the monarch. Instead, Sidney now saw the struggle within the constitution as being one between the King and the Commons, with the "true noblemen" of England being driven to seek common cause with the House of Commons. The bitter divisions and factions which characterized the years of the Exclusion Crisis were seen by Sidney to be the effects of this shift in the balance of power.¹¹

In the continuing struggle between Charles II and the House of Commons over the use of power and the voting of supplies, the King possessed a number of potential advantages that stood to work in his behalf. Since it was not yet established practice that Parliament had to be summoned on a regular basis, Charles II only needed to call a parliament when he was getting desperate for money. The need for money usually involved expensive foreign endeavors such as the Dutch wars. In addition, the actual life of a Parliament was controlled by the King's will: he could use his prerogative power and either prorogue it or dissolve it, as he saw fit. Parliament was not yet an absolutely indispensable part of the English constitution and would not become so until after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. As matters stood in the 1670's, Charles II could have been less dependent upon his touchy and temperamental Commons if he could have brought some organization to his

¹¹ Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government, ch. 3, sec. 37, pp. 418-420.

decidedly chaotic financial situation.

From 1673 until 1679, Charles II possessed another advantage in the person of Sir Thomas Osborne, the Earl of Danby, who served as Lord Treasurer during those years. Danby, who was vehemently anti-French, wanted to restore the Crown's financial independence by building a working majority in Parliament based upon a foundation of Church and King. His importance, as seen by one historian, was that for the first time the King had a minister who drew his entire resources from Parliament and who represented the King with a clear, coherent program of action.¹² But even the Earl of Danby, who possessed considerable ability in administrative and financial matters, found the management of the Commons to be a difficult and nerve-racking job. A major problem which worked against Danby was the fact that Parliament could not yet accept the need for organization as a natural corollary to its desire to act as a critic of Royal policy. Parliament, and especially the House of Commons, objected to being organized by anyone for any reason because it was felt that organization was simply "incompatible with liberty."¹³ Acting as Lord Treasurer, and actually as chief minister, Danby was partially successful in bringing some organization to the rather chaotic Royal finances. Nevertheless, even with these potential advantages, Charles II found Parliamentary sessions after the crisis of 1673 to be increasingly more difficult.

Two revelations came to light in 1678 which had the effect

¹² Keith Feiling, A History of the Tory Party, 1640-1714 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 154.

¹³ Andrew Browning, "Parties and Party Organization in the Reign of Charles II," TRHS, 4th. series, XXX (1948), pp. 21-36.

of upsetting the very delicate and tenuous balance that existed in English political affairs. The first and more important of these concerned the allegations by Titus Oates and Israel Tonge that are known collectively as the Popish Plot. In August of 1678, Oates alleged that a Jesuit plot existed to assassinate Charles II and place his Catholic brother, James the Duke of York, on the throne, all with the assistance of the Pope and Louis XIV of France. Using their vivid imaginations to fill in the general outline with lurid details, Oates and Tonge managed to play upon the intense hatred and fear of Catholics that existed in England during the seventeenth century. The hysteria produced by the revelations of Oates and Tonge may seem difficult to comprehend today, and perhaps even a bit ludicrous, especially since Catholics comprised only a very small percentage of the total population of England at that time. Anti-Catholicism, however, was a very strong emotion in England, and as one historian has pointed out, the English public had a reputation for being the most unstable and excitable in Northern Europe.¹⁴

When Parliament met in October of 1678, more pressing matters, such as Charles II's desperate financial position, became overshadowed by the rumors and allegations of the Popish Plot. While the House of Commons was investigating the various allegations of the plot, another bombshell exploded when Ralph Montagu presented the Commons with documentary proof that the Earl of Danby had been engaged in secret negotiations to secure a treaty with France and a pension

¹⁴J. P. Kenyon, "The Exclusion Crisis," History Today, XIV (Part One, April, 1964), pp. 252-9.

for Charles II. Danby's effective position as Charles II's chief minister was immediately destroyed. Utilizing the maxim that "The King can do no wrong, but his ministers could," the Commons reacted swiftly and impeached the Lord Treasurer for high treason. The delicate balance which Charles II had tried to maintain in his relations with Parliament was very seriously upset. In an attempt to save his chief minister and perhaps to prevent complete chaos from developing, Charles II dissolved his eighteen-year-old Parliament on January 24, 1679.

Elections were quickly held, and the new Parliament, which met in March of 1679, has come to be known as the first Exclusion Parliament. If Charles II had hoped that by dissolving one Parliament and calling a new one the political tension would be lessened, subsequent events proved him to have been quite mistaken. Not only did the House of Commons continue with its preoccupation with the Popish Plot, but it pressed home its attack upon Danby with a vengeance, even going so far as to declare the King's pardon of his Lord Treasurer to be illegal. But, even more important than these two items was the fact that the Commons now turned its attention to the heir of the throne, James, Duke of York. After carefully expressing its concern for the safety of Charles II and the security of the established Protestant religion, the Commons actually began to question the right of the Catholic Duke to succeed his brother Charles II as King of England.¹⁵ The Commons was doing more than merely challenging the Royal prerogative on certain points, because in questioning the

¹⁵ Charles II at that time (1679) had no legitimate sons, and it was doubtful if he ever would have any.

principle of hereditary succession, the House of Commons was challenging the very foundation of the monarchy itself. In the emotion charged debate over the Duke which took place in this first Exclusion Parliament, Sir John Knight probably expressed the fears of a number of his countrymen and fellow M.P.'s when he offered the following analysis:

It is impossible that the Protestant religion should be preserved under a popish prince; as inconsistent as light and darkness. The King's coronation oath is to maintain religion, and that is the Protestant religion.

Sir John ended his emotional speech with a rather bizarre prediction:

If the Pope gets his great toe into England, all his body will follow. Something ¹⁶ must be done, but I dare not venture to propose what.

Other members of the Commons were not as undecided over solutions as Sir John apparently was. On May 15, 1679, the first Exclusion Bill, which simply declared James to be incapable of inheriting the crowns of England, Scotland, and Ireland, was introduced and passed its first reading. To protect his brother's right of succession to the throne, Charles II first prorogued and then dissolved the first Exclusion Parliament on July 11, 1679.

Thus began the Exclusion Crisis which lasted until March of 1681 and which represented an extremely dangerous threat to the political and constitutional stability of England. What first had begun as a reaction to the Popish Plot became intermingled with and yet overshadowed by the debate over James's fitness to be King and the concerted efforts to exclude him from the succession to the throne.

¹⁶ Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England (35 vols.; London: R. Bagshaw, Brydges Street, 1806-1820), Vol. IV, p. 1131.

Englishmen of the time viewed a Catholic prince as a symbol for arbitrary power and absolute rule. In addition, if a Catholic were to become King of England, not only would the established Protestant Church of England be endangered, but so too, it was believed, would be the property and liberty of all Englishmen. When all of the full implications of "popery" are understood, it becomes easier to comprehend the national hysteria that developed because of the Popish Plot and the Duke of York's Catholicism. Sir John Knight's gloomy prediction of a Papal invasion of England may seem ludicrous to readers today, but to Protestant Englishmen of the seventeenth century, the fear and distrust of anything Catholic was part of the very fiber of their established society. When all of this is understood, the emotional and rhetorical outpouring that accompanied the Exclusion Crisis becomes less surprising.

The Exclusion Crisis, moreover, can be viewed in a broader scope than merely traditional English fear of Catholicism. As previously pointed out, the struggle between King and Parliament for a clearer, working definition of power had been a constant theme throughout the seventeenth century. Neither the Royal prerogative nor the position of Parliament, especially the House of Commons, within the constitution was as yet clearly defined in the modern sense. The House of Commons in particular, with its control of the purse strings and its aggressive criticism of foreign and domestic policy, represented an increasing challenge to the King and his own view of what was properly within the Royal prerogative. Because of the changes in relationships taking place within the constitution, the Exclusion Crisis simply intensified the struggle between the King and Parliament, and especially between the King and the House of Commons. According to one historian, the

possibility of the succession of a Catholic heir to the throne brought many underlying issues to a head and put a serious strain upon a constitutional system undergoing change. The Exclusion Crisis itself provided the occasion for a valuable debate on authority, prerogative power, and the relationship between Parliament and the Crown that would prove advantageous during the confrontation in 1688.¹⁷ In the view of another historian, the move to exclude the Duke of York from the succession to the throne "expressed the frustration and anger of the Parliamentary classes, or large sections of them, with the King's foreign policy since his restoration, and his domestic policy since 1672."¹⁸

The pattern established during the first Exclusion Parliament was transferred into the next two, as Charles II and Parliament continued the struggle which focused on the Duke of York. Over a year separated the first from the second Exclusion Parliament which finally met in October of 1680. The year's break between these two parliaments did nothing to lessen the tension created during the first Exclusion Parliament. In fact, the Commons proved to be even more determined to press on with its attack against James. On the opening day of the second Exclusion Parliament, Lord William Russell urged his fellow M.P.'s in the Commons to consider carefully the threat that Popery represented to England and the Protestant religion.

¹⁷ Carolyn A. Edie, "Succession and Monarchy: the Controversy of 1679-1681," American Historical Review, LXX (January, 1965), pp. 350-70.

¹⁸ J. P. Kenyon, "The Exclusion Crisis," History Today, XIV (Part Two, May, 1964), pp. 344-9.

Popery, claimed Russell, could destroy everything in England, even Parliament itself. Therefore, the assembled members of the Commons should "resolve to take into our consideration in the first place, how to suppress Popery, and to prevent a Popish successor."¹⁹ An Exclusion Bill was introduced into the Commons and passed its third reading after much heated debate. It was then sent up to the House of Lords where it was defeated after a debate between the Earl of Shaftesbury and the Earl of Halifax. The Commons were furious, but the issue of exclusion was left hanging because on January 18, 1681, Charles II dissolved his unruly Parliament. A third Exclusion Parliament met in March of 1681 at Oxford, and the Commons again attempted to take up the matter of James's fitness to ever become King. This third and last Exclusion Parliament lasted only four days, as Charles II, secure in his knowledge of a substantial French subsidy which had been promised him, dissolved Parliament on March 28, 1681. The Duke of York's right of succession had been successfully defended, but a clearer settlement over the broad issue of power would have to await another day.

Besides the constitutional issues which were interwoven in the Exclusion Crisis, the struggle over Exclusion witnessed important political developments as well. The crisis years of 1679 through 1681 saw the emergence of a two-party system in England, and the formation of this system centered upon the issue of James's fitness to rule. It was during this Exclusion Crisis that the terms "Whig" and "Tory" were

¹⁹Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England, Vol. IV, p. 1162.

first used in a political sense. The word "Whig" was a shortened form of "Whiggamore," an abusive word which referred to Presbyterian outlaws in the southern Uplands of Scotland. Therefore, when Court supporters of Charles II applied the word to the opposition forces in Parliament who backed Exclusion and favored limits on the Royal prerogative, the word was meant to convey considerable contempt and disgust. The opposition forces to the Court retaliated in kind by adopting the word "Tory" to refer to their opponents. This abusive word referred to dispossessed Irish outlaws who would rob and murder English settlers in Ireland.²⁰ It is difficult to say exactly who received the worst of it in this name calling contest. Whigs were also referred to as "Petitioners" because of their tactic of petitioning Charles II to call a Parliament in 1680. Because the Tories abhorred this Whig tactic, viewing it as an insolent outrage, they in turn came to be called "Abhorrrers." The bitter emotionalism and rhetoric surrounding the use of these words reflected the political divisions taking place in England during the years of the Exclusion Crisis.

It is essential to understand the Whigs and their objectives because they really provided the driving force behind the effort in Parliament to exclude James the Duke of York. Essentially, the Whig party was a collection of various groups and interests which were bound together by common distrust of the Stuarts, fear of Catholicism in general, and fear of James's Catholicism in particular. The Whigs drew support from such aristocratic families as the Russells, the Capels,

²⁰P. J. Helm, Jeffreys: A New Portrait of England's Hanging Judge (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1966), p. 56.

the Cavendishes, and the Sidneys. But, the Whigs also drew support from Nonconformists and commercial interests in London, as well as from other, smaller incorporated boroughs.²¹ In fact, metropolitan London, with its merchants and small tradesmen, was a principal source of Whig strength, and it remained a continuous trouble spot for Charles during the entire Exclusion Crisis. It was Anthony Ashley Cooper, the first Earl of Shaftesbury, who provided the political leadership necessary to combine and unify all the elements of opposition in the attack against James. Shaftesbury, who has been called the most important statesman between the Restoration and the Revolution of 1688, was bitterly anti-Catholic and anti-French. This capable, but very ambitious, aristocrat felt that political power in England should be based on Parliament and that it should be enjoyed in direct proportion to the ownership of property.²² This was the gifted politician who was ridiculed by the poet John Dryden as "the false Achitophel."

Organizing around Shaftesbury's leadership in Parliament, the Whigs pushed vigorously for the exclusion of James and advocated restraints upon the use of the Royal prerogative. For the Whigs the exclusion of the Duke of York was a matter of self-preservation, for they claimed that as King the Catholic Duke would be an active agent of arbitrary power and would endanger both religion and liberty.²³ The

²¹Wilbur C. Abbott, "What Was a Whig?" in The Quest For Political Unity in World History, ed. by Stanley M. Pargellis (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1944), pp. 253-67.

²²J. H. Plumb, "The First Earl of Shaftesbury," History Today, III (April, 1953), pp. 266-70.

²³The best single secondary work on Shaftesbury's Whigs is J. R. Jones's excellent study entitled The First Whigs: The Politics of the Exclusion Crisis, 1678-83 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

Whigs, of course, needed Parliament as a base from which to mobilize popular support and also to press home their demands upon Charles II. This is why the elections for the three Exclusion Parliaments acquired such a degree of importance. As divisions in the Commons became more clearly defined along lines of "Whig," or "Tory," the election on the local level for seats in the Commons became disputed and more reflective of the divisions on the national level in Parliament itself. This is not to imply that every M.P. in the Commons during the Exclusion Crisis was either a Whig or a Tory, with no choice in between. For such was certainly not the case. Nevertheless, the initiative was clearly with the Whigs during the crisis, and in three successive Parliaments between 1679 and 1681 the Whigs comprised a majority in the House of Commons, though they remained a minority in the Lords.²⁴ The political divisions were sharp, and the struggle in the Commons was bitter and at times even furious. As skilful as the Whigs were in their propaganda and electioneering techniques, they had to have Parliament in session in order to maintain their initiative. For, without Parliament as a platform, or forum, from which they could operate, the Whigs could not maintain their steady pressure for James's exclusion. Thus, when the third and last Exclusion Parliament was dissolved on March 28, 1681, and it began to look as if another one would not be called, the only recourse left was rebellion, a step which most Whigs refused to take.

As the Popish Plot unfolded and the struggle against the Duke of York began to take shape, Algernon Sidney became increasingly

²⁴O. W. Furley, "The Whig Exclusionists: Pamphlet Literature in the Exclusion Campaign, 1678-81," Cambridge Historical Journal, XIII (no. 1, 1957), pp. 19-36.

more involved in the English political scene, both as an observer and as an actual participant in the events of the Exclusion Crisis. Forced to remain in England because of his lawsuit in Chancery Court, Sidney was thus compelled to abandon his planned retirement to France. During 1679 Sidney wrote a number of letters to his good friend Henry Savile in Paris, and in these letters, Sidney again displayed his talent for keen observation of men and events. The letters provide interesting insights and opinions by Sidney on the events happening around him. But, in addition to this, Algernon Sidney became actively involved in those events by seeking election to the House of Commons on three different occasions. Moreover, it was during these years of the Exclusion Crisis that Sidney wrote most, if not all, of his Discourses Concerning Government. This work in part reflected Sidney's growing concern over England's political and constitutional crisis and the fitness of the Stuarts to be Kings. The Discourses also represented Sidney's commitment to a cause, because his Whiggism reveals itself in a clear and unmistakable fashion. In essence then, Algernon Sidney became more dedicated to a cause as he became more deeply involved in the rapidly unfolding events of the Exclusion Crisis.

During the year 1679, Algernon Sidney stood for election to the House of Commons on two different occasions, and in each instance he utilized the connection he had developed with the well-to-do Quaker, William Penn. It was a curious political alliance indeed to behold: William Penn the Quaker and pacifist and Algernon Sidney the veteran classical republican who believed that violent rebellion could be used as a last resort to redress grievances against an unjust government. Penn and Sidney were, however, in agreement on enough principles so

that they could work together for the elections in 1679 for the first and second Exclusion Parliaments.²⁵ In the elections held for the first Exclusion Parliament in 1679, Sidney, with Penn's backing, stood for Guildford in Surrey. Algernon received a majority of the votes, but his opponent, Thomas Dalmahoy, won the election. It seems that both the mayor and the magistrates of Guildford were adherents of the Court Party, and the mayor refused to make Sidney a freeman of the town, which was a requirement for election.²⁶ In addition, a number of votes for Sidney were not allowed because the sheriff claimed that these voters had not pronounced Algernon's name properly. After the election was finished, William Penn wrote a letter to his friend Algernon in which he offered Sidney some soothing words of comfort:

Thou... had a conscientious regard to England; and to be put aside, by such base ways, is really a suffering for righteousness. Thou hast embarked thyself with them, that seek, and love, and choose the best things; and number is not weight with thee. I hope it is retrievable, for to me it looks not a fair and clear election.²⁷

Sidney tried to petition the House of Commons, claiming a false return. The petition, however, was referred to a committee, where it was promptly buried in a remote corner and never again saw the light of day.²⁸

Since the first Exclusion Parliament had been dissolved in July of 1679 and another one was called for in October of that year,

²⁵Mary Maples Dunn, William Penn: Politics and Conscience (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 33-4.

²⁶The "Court Party" was the nucleus for the developing Tory Party, which was formed to counteract the Whigs.

²⁷Collins, Sidney Letters and Memorials of State, Vol. I, p. 154.

²⁸Dunn, William Penn: Politics and Conscience, pp. 36-7.

Sidney and Penn thought they saw a second opportunity to win a seat in the Commons. In the elections for the second Exclusion Parliament, which actually did not meet until October of 1680, Algernon Sidney stood for election to the Commons from Amersham in Buckinghamshire. This time, both Sidney and Sir William Drake were returned on a double return. Both of them submitted petitions to the House of Commons, but the Commons decided that the election for Amersham would go to neither Drake nor Sidney. Undaunted, Penn and Sidney decided to support Sir Charles Worsley for Bramber for the same Parliament. They were sure that they could count upon the support of such friends of the Sidney family as Sir John Temple and Sir John Pelham, Algernon's brother-in-law.²⁹

Interference suddenly appeared from a very unexpected and unwelcome quarter, when Algernon's youngest brother Henry Sidney, recently appointed as envoy to the United Provinces, decided that he too would stand for Bramber. Henry Sidney's campaign was skillfully managed by his faithful steward Gilbert Spencer. After the Pelham family decided to back Henry Sidney rather than Algernon's candidate, Gilbert Spencer convinced the third candidate, Percy Goring, that for a sum of eighty pounds he should drop out of the contest altogether. Henry's faithful steward also spent almost two hundred pounds more in luring supporters away from Algernon's candidate by "treating" the folks to wine, brandy and fresh buck. The detailed facts of this corrupt, but by no means uniquely corrupt, election are documented in Henry Sidney's Diary in a letter written by Gilbert Spencer to his

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 38-9.

master in The Hague.³⁰ Victory in this closely fought election for Bramber went to Henry Sidney, who never even made an appearance on his own behalf. Needless to say, Algernon Sidney was more than merely irritated with his brother Henry for his interference and ultimate victory.

This contest for the little borough of Bramber takes on a double, and a very ironic, significance when one considers the political connection that existed between Algernon Sidney and his election backer William Penn. Earlier in 1679 Penn had written a pamphlet entitled England's Great Interest in the Choice of This New Parliament in which Penn had criticized various campaign practices, such as bribery, entertainment, and absenteeism, which existed in the English elections for Parliament.³¹ Penn's support of Algernon Sidney for Parliament in 1679 should be viewed as an attempt to put into practice the ideas and criticisms developed in his pamphlet. Both Penn and Sidney made a genuine effort to conduct what they thought were honest campaigns during the various elections in 1679. The ironic twist to this entire episode comes when the observer realizes that Penn and Sidney were defeated at Bramber by the very same campaign abuses which William Penn had written about and criticized in his pamphlet. Henry Sidney was indeed guilty of practicing bribery, voter "entertainment," and absenteeism to get himself elected, and the fact that he was Algernon's own brother merely rubbed salt into an open wound. Algernon tried for

³⁰ Henry Sidney, Diary of the Times of Charles II, ed. by Robert W. Blencowe (2 vols.; London: Henry Colburn Publisher, 1843), Vol. I, pp. 114-20.

³¹ Dunn, William Penn: Politics and Conscience, p. 31.

a third and final time to get himself elected to the Commons when he stood for Amersham in the election for the Oxford Parliament in 1681, but he was unsuccessful in this attempt also.

After analyzing the various tactics and practices that either prevented Algernon Sidney from being elected to the House of Commons, or else helped his brother Henry to get elected, one might be led to conclude that Algernon Sidney was unduly victimized. Or, it might be argued that what happened to Algernon in his various election attempts was somehow unique. It should be noted, however, that the many practices which we today would immediately label as "campaign irregularities" and piously condemn as being blatantly corrupt, were very much a part of the English election process at that time. This was especially true during the tense and heated elections for Parliament during the Exclusion Crisis. There existed in England a considerable lack of uniformity in methods by which elections were conducted, and this lack of uniformity bred evils and disputed elections.³² Chances for fraud and irregular practices were many, due not only to the cumbersome, outmoded system, but also to the rapid succession of Parliamentary elections during the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-81. Local sheriffs could, and frequently did, arbitrarily change the date or actual polling place for an election in order to prevent either Whig or Tory sympathizers from turning out in force. As one historian of the subject has remarked concerning election practices on the county and borough level, "Every possible pretext, in fact, for tricking the electors was resorted to, and often only too

³² Ephraim Lipson, "Elections to the Exclusion Parliaments, 1679-1681," English Historical Review, XXVIII (January, 1913), pp. 59-85.

successfully."³³ When all of this is understood, it becomes clearer that what happened to Algernon Sidney, first at Guildford and then at Bramber, was by no means unique or really too unusual.

When not actually involved in the elections for the two Exclusion Parliaments of 1679, Algernon Sidney proved to be a careful observer and commentator of the events unfolding around him. Most of his thoughts and observations were written down in the form of letters to his friend and benefactor Henry Savile, the man who had done so much to secure Sidney's safe return from exile.³⁴ Sidney commented upon a wide range of topics including the Popish Plot, the Parliamentary assault upon the Earl of Danby, and the general uneasiness of the times. In one letter, dated May 5, 1679, Sidney recounted for Savile the tense struggle taking shape in Parliament concerning the Duke of York and Exclusion. Sidney offered the opinion that if James were to be excluded from the succession, the most plausible choice to take his place would be William of Orange. However, some people in England were hesitant about putting William on the throne, fearing that the Commonwealth party in Holland would be driven into the arms of Louis XIV. Commenting upon the revelations concerning the Popish Plot and the growing sentiment to exclude the Duke of York, Sidney posited that,

When I have said what I can upon this business, I must confess I do not know three men of a mind, and that a spirit of giddiness reigns amongst us, far beyond I have ever observed in my life.³⁵

³³ Ibid., p. 60.

³⁴ Algernon Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government with His Letters, Trial, Apology and Some Memorials of His Life, pp. 60-102.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 77.

Sidney found it impossible to conceal his enthusiasm for the growing pressure in the Commons to secure a judgment against the Earl of Danby, impeached earlier for high treason. Commenting upon Danby and the tenseness in the political atmosphere, Sidney professed:

We live in a time that no man, by what is passed, can well judge what is to be expected for the future; but I am much inclined to believe that Danby having in this last act followed his own disposition, that ever delighted in juggling and indirectness, will, by the tricks he hath played, have found a way to hang himself.³⁶

A number of factors coalesced to add a considerable degree of uneasiness to the times.

After the first Exclusion Parliament was dissolved in July of 1679, a new one was called for October of that year, only to be prorogued until October of the following year. The ensuing delays and prorogations merely added to the tenseness and uneasiness of the times. Sidney, of course, attempted to get elected to the second Exclusion Parliament and promised to inform Henry Savile in detail of the developments that might transpire in Parliament. At this time he was apparently confident of his being returned, but he did express his concern over the security of the postal system. It was simply not safe to attempt to send too much information, or the wrong kind, through the mail.³⁷ In October of 1679, Sidney wrote a letter to his old friend Benjamin Furley in Rotterdam and tried explaining to him the tense situation in England. He observed for Furley's benefit that,

We are here in the strangest confusion that I ever remember to have seen in English business. There never was more intrigues, and less truth.

³⁶Ibid., p. 79.

³⁷Ibid., p. 97.

The tension and uneasiness had been increasing steadily since the previous May, primarily because of the Exclusion business. Sidney was keenly aware of the disturbed state of political affairs around him, and he was motivated to observe that, "Things are so entangled, that liberty of language is almost lost; and no man knows how to speak of anything."³⁸ Shortly after writing to Furley, Algernon Sidney wrote to Savile concerning the scheduled Parliament and his own possible position in it:

I am not able to give so much as a guess, whether the parliament shall sit the 24th of January or not, and though I think myself in all respects well chosen, am uncertain whether I shall be of it or not, there being a double return; and nothing can be assured, until the question arising thereupon be determined, unless it be that as I and my principles are out of fashion, my inclinations going one way my friendships and alliance with those that are like to give occasion for the greatest contests drawing another, I shall be equally disliked and suspected by both parties, and thereby become the most inconsiderable member of the house.³⁹

The unsettled nature of the times is clearly revealed through these letters by Sidney to Benjamin Furley and Henry Savile.

During these crisis years, and even before, Louis XIV of France had been in the practice of channeling funds into England to two different destinations. Louis not only provided his Royal cousin Charles II with a pension on certain occasions, but he also in effect "subsidized" the Parliamentary opposition to Danby and Charles by providing various members of the Country Party with funds. Charles II accepted the French pension because he was usually in dire need of the

³⁸ Foster, ed., Original Letters of Locke, Sidney, and Shaftesbury, pp. 97-8.

³⁹ Op. cit., p. 98.

money and because he would like to have ended the necessity of always having to ask the House of Commons for more funds. An empty exchequer for Charles necessitated the calling of a parliament, which usually meant enduring the Commons' abusive criticisms on foreign and domestic policy. Charles II could not afford the luxury of much criticism or a close scrutiny by the Commons because he had a treaty with Louis XIV to keep secret. King Louis shrewdly provided opposition elements in Parliament with funds in order to keep the English political situation in a state of turmoil. If England could be kept politically weak and divided, it would be in no position to pursue a vigorous anti-French foreign policy by possibly siding with the United Provinces on the Continent.

All of this is relevant to Algernon Sidney because he had been accused of accepting a French pension during 1679. At first glance this charge would seem to contradict the life-long pattern of Sidney's character up to that year. As an adult, his high principles and stubborn honesty had been prominent features of his character. In fact, it was his very outspoken honesty that frequently got Sidney into trouble: he even naively believed that an honest and high principled approach to life would be respected by his enemies. Unfortunately, honesty was not a standout virtue in English public affairs at that time. But, in addition to the man's character, were his personal experiences with English elections and electioneering practices during 1679. Neither at Guildford nor at Bramber was there any evidence to show that Algernon Sidney employed any "irregular" practices in these campaigns, even though such practices were certainly used to great advantage by the opposition. It would seem strange that a man of

Sidney's ilk would suddenly reverse himself and begin filling his pockets with the French money that was being handed out by the French ambassador to England, Paul Barillon.

The charge against Algernon Sidney of having accepted a French pension in 1679 is substantiated by evidence uncovered in the French Foreign Affairs Archives in Versailles by Sir John Dalrymple, a Scottish lawyer, in the eighteenth century. The damaging documents are part of Barillon's official dispatches. First of all, in his official account of the funds which he paid to various members of the Country Party in England, Barillon listed Algernon Sidney as having been paid five hundred guineas on each of two different occasions.⁴⁰ The second piece of evidence consists of a letter written by Barillon to Louis XIV on December 14, 1679, from England.⁴¹ In this letter Barillon provided Louis with the names and brief descriptions of the various individuals who were in what he termed the "Popular Party" in England. In Barillon's humble opinion, these Englishmen seemed to be willing to support France (i.e., take money), and the French ambassador seemed hopeful that they would prove useful. Besides identifying Lord Holles as a man who might definitely respond to a good bribe, Barillon singled out Algernon Sidney for close analysis. According to the French ambassador:

Mr. Sidney has been of great use to me on many occasions. He is a man who was in the first wars, and who is naturally an enemy to the Court. He has for some time been suspected of

⁴⁰ Sir John Dalrymple, ed., Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. II, First Appendix, pp. 315, 317. (1000 guineas equalled 1050 pounds.)

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 260-264.

being gained by Lord Sunderland; but he always appeared to me to have the same sentiments, and not to have changed maxims. He has a great deal of credit amongst the independents, and is also intimate with those who are the most opposite to the court in parliament. He was elected for this present one. I gave him only what your Majesty permitted me. He would willingly have had more, and if a new gratification was given him, it would be easy to engage him entirely. However he is very favorably disposed to what your Majesty may desire; and is not willing that England and the States General should make a league.⁴²

Barillon terminated his commentary on Algernon Sidney by saying, "I believe he is a man who would be very useful if the affairs of England should be brought to extremities."

Most historians, except Sidney's only biographer, have simply accepted the accusation against Algernon Sidney and the evidence cited above. Alexander Ewald rejected every aspect of the charge concerning Sidney, and he even attacked the personal credibility of Barillon himself as a commentator. Reasoning that the moral standards of the time were lax and that "desperate evils require desperate remedies," Ewald argued that the Country opposition needed French aid in order to thwart Charles II's drive toward absolutism. If Sidney accepted French money for himself, then he can be accused of having taken a bribe. On the other hand, if he merely received the money from Barillon in order to distribute it to others for the purpose of organizing the Country opposition, then Sidney cannot be accused of any wrong doing. Sidney, according to Ewald, did not accept any money from Barillon. Nobleness of purpose had always characterized Sidney's behavior in the past. The charge against Algernon Sidney was simply rejected outright by Ewald not only because of Algernon's known standard of behavior, but also

⁴²Ibid., pp. 261-62.

because of the character of Barillon himself, which was known to be "avaricious, unscrupulous, sensual, and luxurious."⁴³

The argument presented by Algernon Sidney's sole biographer to exonerate him of bribery charges is simply too pro-Sidney and ignores too many other avenues of approach to the problem. Admittedly, the problem is a difficult one to unravel because of the scarcity of evidence other than that provided by Barillon. Nevertheless, an attempt at a solution can be made utilizing an approach not considered by Sidney's biographer. To begin with, a pro-French connection is fairly easy to establish for Sidney. Before he slipped into obscurity in Montpellier, Sidney had approached Louis XIV over the possibility of French aid to English exiles who were intriguing to re-establish a Commonwealth government in England. Louis rejected the idea, but he did allow Sidney to settle in France. It was partly due to French help that Sidney was allowed to return to England in 1677. Secondly, Sidney's dedication to the idea of a Commonwealth government in England has been shown in previous chapters. He sincerely believed that a revival of the type of government which existed in England between 1649 and 1653 was the best remedy for the state of corruption and arbitrary rule that had developed in England under Charles II. These two threads come together in a letter written by Paul Barillon to Louis XIV in September of 1680. Barillon claimed that Algernon Sidney was one of several Englishmen who believed that it would be more in the interests of France to have England a republic than it would to have William of Orange on the English throne. Essentially,

⁴³ Ewald, Life of Sidney, Vol. II, pp. 152-175.

an English republic (assuming the Duke of York would be excluded from the succession) would represent no danger to France. According to Barillon, "Mr. Sidney is one of those who talks to me with the most force and the most openness on the matter."⁴⁴

It is impossible, and even a bit dangerous, simply to ignore the personal dispatches and financial accounts of Paul Barillon concerning Algernon Sidney. To question the documents closely because they contradict the general pattern of Sidney's character performance up to 1679 is one thing. But to ignore them and argue that perhaps Barillon was being mean and unscrupulous against Sidney is something entirely different. Algernon may very well have accepted money from Barillon to help offset his expenses incurred in his lawsuit against his brother in Chancery Court. He may have kept some of the thousand guineas for himself and passed the remainder on to other Whigs. It is very likely that Sidney's personal observations of Charles II's rule combined with his firsthand experiences in the elections in 1679 to convince him that the English system had become totally corrupt. This approach might very well have justified in Sidney's mind the taking of some French money. A thousand guineas was not that much when one considers that Barillon was contemplating bribing Lord Holles with a box of precious jewels. Bishop Burnet commented in his History that a number of people had suspected Algernon Sidney of being a pensioner of France because Sidney had argued strongly against England's entry into

⁴⁴ Dalrymple, Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. II, First Appendix, p. 313.

any war against France upon his return from exile in 1677.⁴⁵ There are simply too many gaps in our knowledge to permit us to make an absolute pronouncement one way or the other regarding this matter. Nevertheless, the existing evidence against Sidney must be considered, and he must remain under very strong suspicion of having accepted money from Barillon for reasons and purposes known only to him.

The period of years from 1679 through 1681 witnessed a considerable outpouring of political publications and writings of different types. In connection with their campaign to force Charles II to call a Parliament in 1680, the Whigs turned out a voluminous amount of pamphlet literature and newspaper propaganda to bolster their cause of exclusion. Besides purely propaganda literature, however, other and more sophisticated works were either published or composed. Their authors were certainly motivated by the Exclusion Crisis, but the works did more than merely rehash contemporary events, for they included not only evaluations of governmental institutions themselves, but also investigations of types and theories of government. A renewed interest in classical republicanism was evident when Henry Nevile published his work entitled Plato Redivivus, which was meant to influence Charles II and the Oxford Parliament early in 1681. Nevile, keenly interested in the old Roman Republic and in the Republic of Venice, would like to have seen the English monarchy remodeled along different lines.⁴⁶ Also

⁴⁵ Thomas Burnet, ed., Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time, Vol. II, p. 193.

⁴⁶ Zera S. Fink, The Classical Republicans, no. 9 in Northwestern University Studies in the Humanities (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Co., 1945), p. 129.

in 1681, James Tyrrell published a book entitled Patriarcha Non Monarcha, or The Patriarch Unmonarched, an attack upon Sir Robert Filmer's Patriarcha which the Tories were using to defend the Royal prerogative power. It has also been contended that John Locke, inspired by the issues of the Exclusion Crisis, began work on his Two Treatises at about this time.⁴⁷ One historian has even asserted that Locke's Treatises should not be viewed as justification for the successful Revolution of 1688, but rather as a political tract inspired by the Exclusion Crisis.⁴⁸ The Tories produced their own propaganda materials and published in 1680 for the first time Sir Robert Filmer's work.

Even though Algernon Sidney's Discourses Concerning Government were not published until 1698 for the first time, a very convincing case can be argued to show that he probably composed most of the work (at least two of the three chapters) between the years 1680 and 1683. At his treason trial in 1683, Sidney argued that these works (he never actually admitted that they were his, even though they were found in his study) had been written fifteen or twenty years prior to 1683. Sidney was being intentionally misleading because there is simply too much internal evidence within the Discourses themselves that proves him wrong. In two different sections of chapter two, Sidney consistently referred to the Earl of Danby by name as being merely one of the several evil ministers who had held power under

⁴⁷Cranston, John Locke, p. 207.

⁴⁸Peter Laslett, "The English Revolution and Locke's Two Treatises of Government," Cambridge Historical Journal, XII (no. 1, 1956), pp. 40-55.

Charles II.⁴⁹ Danby fell from power as Lord Treasurer at the very end of 1678. Sidney's purpose in attacking Danby was to demonstrate that a corrupt monarchy, as most monarchies which adhered strictly to the principle of hereditary succession were, attracted corrupt, unscrupulous ministers. A bit later in the same chapter, Sidney indirectly referred to the Exclusion Crisis and the Duke of York within the general context of Charles II's "friendship with France." Sidney postulated that if any Englishman doubted the trend of recent events, or their meaning,

He may soon see a man in the throne, who had rather be a tributary to France than a lawful king of England, whilst either parliament or people shall dare to dispute his commands insist upon their own rights, or defend a religion inconsistent with that which he has espoused; and then the truth will be so evident as to require no proof.⁵⁰

Clearly, this is a reference to James and his known (and greatly mistrusted) Catholicism. In one section of chapter three, Sidney argued forcefully for the necessity of having annual Parliaments in England, reasoning that it was only through the institution of Parliament that the basic law could be changed and the King's use of his power could be properly judged.⁵¹ During the height of the Exclusion Crisis, Charles II used his prerogative power to delay the meeting of a parliament from July of 1679 until October of 1680.

The most concrete evidence within the Discourses themselves comes near the end of the last chapter. It is in section forty-three that Algernon Sidney finally made a clear and unmistakable reference to

⁴⁹ Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government, ch. 2, sec. 20, pp. 151-53; sec. 25, pp. 200-206.

⁵⁰ Ibid., ch. 2, sec. 27, p. 211.

⁵¹ Ibid., ch. 3, sec. 27, pp. 376-79.

the Exclusion Crisis, something he had been building up to since the middle of chapter two.⁵² In no uncertain terms, Sidney made his position quite clear concerning the Duke of York. If James ever became King of England, he would be a threat to the liberties of England, both because of his religion, which was not known for its tolerance of humaneness, and because of James's pronounced tendency to view his own will as being above the law. In addition, Sidney mentioned that Sir Robert Filmer's Patriarcha, which he had been criticizing from the beginning of chapter one, had just recently been "brought to light." Filmer's work was not published for the first time until 1680.

There are other factors also that support the contention that Algernon Sidney composed the vast majority of his Discourses during the turbulent years of the Exclusion Crisis. Sidney did not write in an intellectual vacuum. The composition of the Discourses fits into the general pattern of intellectual and political writings which were motivated by the Exclusion Crisis. Like Nevile, Sidney was a fervent admirer of the Roman and Venetian Republics. Algernon's attachment to classical republicanism is positive and unqualified. In addition to Sidney's attack on the theories and ideas of Sir Robert Filmer, Tyrrell and Locke each did essentially the same thing in their works. Whipping Sir Robert Filmer with pen and ink was one of the favorite indoor sports among Whig intellectuals during the Exclusion Crisis. Finally, many of the same concerns for England and fears for its future can be found in both Sidney's Discourses and in the letters he wrote in 1679 to Henry Savile and Benjamin Furley. The same gnawing

⁵²Ibid., ch. 3, sec. 43, pp. 445-50.

uneasiness that was present in Sidney's mind over the general trend of events can be found both in his political writings and in his letters to friends. Algernon Sidney was deeply concerned over the extremely low quality of English government on the national level under Charles II. Furthermore, he was more than just a bit frightened over the probability of the Catholic Duke of York's succession to the throne. Algernon Sidney was motivated by the turbulence of the Exclusion Crisis to compose his ideas on governmental theory and practice in England. It is not known whether he had any direct contacts with John Locke or James Tyrrell, but the very nature of Sidney's work and the patterns of his thought reflected therein certainly fit into the general scope of the Exclusion Crisis years.

Before beginning a chapter by chapter analysis of Algernon Sidney's Discourses, it would be wise to look at the Tory work which provided such ample grist for the mills of Whig intellectuals like Sidney. Sir Robert Filmer, the author of Patriarcha, was born in 1588 and died in 1653. Patriarcha itself was written in the late 1630's or early 1640's, and the political concepts expressed in the work belonged essentially to the Elizabethan Era. Filmer strongly defended the Royal prerogative in his work, and the term "Filmerism" has come to stand for a defense of the established order and the exaltation of the family in society.⁵³ Simply stated, Filmer believed that the authority of a king over his people was instituted by God and was based on the authority of a father over his children. Or, stated another way, the King was to

⁵³ Peter Laslett, "Sir Robert Filmer: The Man Versus the Whig Myth," *WMQ*, third series, V (October, 1948), pp. 523-46.

his subjects as a father was to his children. As one historian has pointed out:

Filmer's object was to assert that all government was by nature and God's will despotic, that men had no time voluntarily placed themselves under government and at no time could so place themselves, and that at no time had men, at no time could they, impose conditions on government.⁵⁴

This is the work that was literally dragged from obscurity in 1680 and used by Tory defenders of the Royal prerogative to counteract Whig propaganda and political writings during the Exclusion Crisis. Little wonder that Whig intellectuals like Tyrrell, Locke, and Sidney went out of their way to refute the ideas expressed in Patriarcha.

Algernon Sidney's contribution to Whig doctrine and theory, his Discourses Concerning Government, is divided into three major divisions or chapters. Within each chapter, Sidney developed a few general theories and attempted to connect his ideas by his constant criticisms of Filmer's Patriarcha. Generally speaking, Sidney's ideas and examples became more specific in nature as he progressed from chapter to chapter. Chapter one is a brief introduction to the rest of the work and includes a basic criticism of Filmer's Patriarcha. Needless to say, Sidney found Filmer's ideas to be completely unsound and thoroughly upsetting. Sidney attacked the whole concept of monarchy by Divine Right, and he used this first chapter to initiate his own approach to the nature of government. In the second chapter, which is really the heart of the entire work, Sidney analyzed the nature of man, the origins of government, and the weaknesses to which

⁵⁴Raymond W. K. Hinton, "Husbands, Fathers and Conquerors, I: Filmer and the Logic of Patriarchalism," Political Studies, XV (no. 3, 1967), p. 297.

monarchies seemed susceptible. It is in this chapter that Sidney introduced his concepts of the compact theory of government, popular consent, and the public good. In the third and last chapter, Sidney brought his theories and arguments closer to home by analyzing specific events and institutions in England. He even offered some specific remedies to the evils he saw around him. Besides being a refutation of Filmer's Patriarcha, Sidney's work is an analysis of government in general, monarchies in particular, and a criticism of England's system under Charles II.

Denying that there was anything mysterious, or divinely inspired about the institution of hereditary monarchy, Sidney proceeded in chapter one to undercut Filmer's basic ideas by asserting that man was created naturally free and could not justly be deprived of his liberty without cause. A mere crown did not bestow any extraordinary qualities upon the person wearing it. God had not singled out monarchical rule as the only type of government that was good for mankind. Instead, God gave to men the capacity for judging what is good for themselves and the liberty of inventing those forms of government which best pleased them. According to Sidney, the foundation of all just government was general consent, and he saw the best type of government as that which mixed the democratic, aristocratic, and monarchic elements together in a nice blend. What man essentially wanted most of all was to form his own society in his own way and for his own good. Assaulting Filmer's position with a fury, Sidney denied that any man could be singled out by God alone and given dominion over the rest of society. In Sidney's view, there existed no general law to govern all people in the process of creating constitutions, "but every people is by God and nature

[reason] left to the liberty of regulating these matters relating to themselves according to their own prudence or convenience."⁵⁵ Sidney simply rejected outright the theory of monarchy by divine right as being a complete absurdity.

Placing great emphasis upon man as a rational creature, Sidney was quick to disagree with Filmer over the ends toward which governments were established. The basic consideration that motivated the freemen (Sidney's word) of any community to form a society and governmental authority was the consideration of their public good. Freemen consented to give up some of their original freedom in order to acquire more safety, convenience, and protection under the laws which they agreed to preserve. No governmental power, said Sidney in chapter two, was just unless it was founded upon consent. God endowed man with the gift of reason, or understanding, and man used this gift to choose those institutions and forms of government which best pleased him. The situation differed from one nation to another, of course, and if the French wanted a monarchy, while the Dutch were happy with their own peculiar system, that was fine with Sidney. Each nation had to work out a system which best suited its needs. Sidney, incidentally, greatly admired the Dutch system of government. Using their rational natures, the freemen delegated power to parliaments which in turn used their delegated authority to act in the name of the original body of freemen. Magistrates, or Kings, in positions of executive authority were bound to act strictly within the law and for the public good.

⁵⁵ Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government, ch. 1, sec. 18, p. 48.

Sidney realized the importance of a society based upon authority, order, and law, but he repeatedly emphasized that the ultimate goal of governmental institutions and power was the public good.

Sidney's rationale for the establishment of a government by rational consent of the governed was all very logical, though a bit naive, and cannot be considered offensive in any way. It was when Sidney developed his second major concept of chapter two, the right of the people to engage in rebellion to overthrow an unjust ruler, that he began crawling out on a limb from which there was no retreat. Sidney believed that if officials in power abused their position of trust, either by assuming power not originally granted to them or by somehow ruling outside of the law, this constituted sufficient grounds for a resort to force in order to check those officials abusing their power. The first step was to attempt a redress of grievances by any legal, or judicial, means provided by the system itself. If all judicial methods available failed to correct the abuses in question, then those poor folk groaning under unjust rule could, as a last resort, turn to armed rebellion, sedition, or even war, and be assured that such violent action was indeed justified by the laws of God and man. In Sidney's own words, "Extrajudicial proceedings, by sedition, tumult, or war, must take place, when the persons concerned are of such power, that they cannot be brought under the judicial."⁵⁶ In other words, sedition can have a just goal, the deliverance of an oppressed people from a wicked magistrate. Such action, according to Sidney, was sedition for the public good. It is this whole concept of resorting to armed

⁵⁶ Ibid., ch. 2, sec. 24, p. 180.

rebellion which would ultimately bring Algernon Sidney to the executioner's block.

Interwoven with these two major concepts in chapter two is a direct attack upon monarchies in general and an implied attack upon the rule of Charles II, which is also carried over into chapter three. Sidney found absolute monarchies to be an insidious evil because they extinguished the liberty which was a fundamental aspect of man's nature. But Sidney tended to dislike monarchies in general for a number of reasons. In the first place, monarchies were usually based upon the principle of hereditary succession, which was a great weakness because there was always the chance that a fool, an idiot, or an unscrupulous tyrant would inherit the throne. Monarchies were also more prone to civil disorders than were commonwealth governments. In addition, monarchies were much more susceptible to corruption than were other types of governments: monarchies just seemed naturally to attract evil, ambitious advisers, like Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, and Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland. All of these men were prominent political figures in the reign of Charles II, a reign which Sidney found to be greatly lacking in moral direction and quality of leadership. As Algernon Sidney surveyed the seventeenth-century world about him, he concluded that monarchies generally did not do an adequate job of providing for that ultimate good of all established governments, namely the public good. A wise and good King was the exception, not the rule. Therefore, while Sidney emphasized the weaknesses of the monarchical institution in general, many of the examples he used related directly or indirectly to England's monarchy and Charles II in particular.

One of the concepts in Patriarcha which Sidney found to be the most dangerous was Filmer's claim that no law could be proposed to restrain Kings because there had been Kings long before any laws were made. Sidney steadfastly maintained that Kings could not assume any power or position not granted to them by the law. The law existed in society before magistrates or Kings were created, and further laws were made periodically to direct, to instruct, and if need be, to restrain magistrates. Sidney emphatically asserted that no one could be a rightful King, except by law. For instance, Kings might have the delegated power to appoint judges, but the power itself came from the law and was not inherent within the office of the King. Only those who made the law in the first place were capable of judging whether the King was using his power correctly. It was absurd to think that a King could be left free to be the sole judge of his own actions. To Sidney's way of thinking, Parliament and the people had the power of making Kings because they possessed the sovereignty of a nation and could direct or limit the exercise of it. Sidney crawled even farther out on his limb by maintaining that those who had the power of making the laws for a nation also had the power of making a King, or any other magistrate for that matter. By now it should be clear to anyone why Algernon Sidney was viewed as a violent and dangerous fellow: the full implications of his political theories were simply too much for a seventeenth-century Stuart monarch like Charles II to accept.

Claiming that the English monarchy was a monarchy established by consent and that the King's power was established by Magna Carta and other laws, Algernon Sidney concluded his Discourses by analyzing the condition of the English constitutional system and monarchy during his

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own time. Even though the basic English system was all right, Sidney observed that certain defects had arisen over the centuries and were being aggravated by recent changes in practice and by what Sidney termed "the corruption of the times." When the "mixed monarchy" was first put into practice in England, the balance of power had been held by the nobility, who had a real function in the power structure. But, by Sidney's time, the position of the nobility had become altered to the point where they were no longer the natural leaders and advisers who were able to check the King. For Sidney, the old union of class interests represented by the idea of "mixed monarchy" had been shaken beyond repair. The basic, old constitution of England was all right, but time had produced too many innovations. Therefore, changes had to be made in order to restore England to its ancient liberty, dignity, and happiness. The need for "corrective surgery" was imperative because Sidney observed that in recent years the King of England had been able to corrupt far too many men in England.⁵⁷

A number of observations immediately come to mind concerning Sidney's work. For one thing, Algernon Sidney viewed the historical process as being one of gradual change. One set of laws or one system of government simply could not survive the onslaught of time unchanged. When Sidney scrutinized governments and institutions in relation to society, he emphasized that it was better to inquire after what was best, rather than what was oldest. Sidney did not believe in preserving what was old just because it was old. He preferred to apply a simple but

⁵⁷ The edition of Algernon Sidney's Discourses Concerning Government used in the preceding analysis is the one that was published in 1698 and edited by John Toland, a copy of which can be found in the Special Collections of the Michigan State University Library.

rather absolute standard when evaluating institutions: did they function under the law; and did they provide for the public good. One of the constitutional changes envisioned by Sidney was the need for annual Parliaments in England, a necessity if the growing power of the Stuarts were to be checked. In his Discourses, Sidney was not the least bit interested in discussing social or economic factors in society. Using his refutation of Filmer's Patriarche as a starting point, Sidney progressed from an investigation of the origins and nature of government to an analysis of England's constitutional system and the reign of Charles II in particular. As Sidney looked about him, he found the corruption of Charles II's Court to be disgusting, and he found the ominous figure of James, Duke of York, to be a direct threat to English liberties. Sidney's Discourses should not be viewed as a formula for progressive or liberal change which could be projected into the future. He was not attempting to devise a new system of government which would incorporate such liberal ideas as franchise or campaign reforms. Algernon Sidney's gaze was frequently directed back in time to England's Commonwealth period, a period which he believed had provided England with the best leadership in its history. What he immediately favored, in all likelihood, was James's exclusion and sufficient restraints upon the Royal prerogative to prevent absolutism in England. The point at which Sidney differed from most Whigs was where he seriously advocated armed rebellion as a last resort in order to redress political grievances. The Discourses reveal quite clearly that Algernon Sidney would have been much happier living in a republic: the institution of monarchy simply possessed too many inherent weaknesses that prevented it from providing adequate or capable leadership.

CHAPTER V

THE COUNCIL OF SIX, RYE HOUSE, AND TREASON: 1681-83

In his Discourses Algernon Sidney had come out strongly in favor of annual parliaments in England, a measure which he felt was necessary if the Stuart monarchy was to be restrained within the law. Perhaps Sidney foresaw, to some extent at least, the consequences of a situation in which the King would rule without a parliament; for, after the third Exclusion Parliament was dissolved in March of 1681, another parliament was not called until after Charles II's death in 1685. During this four-year period, Charles was able to take advantage of a distinct Tory reaction in favor of the Crown and carefully exact his "revenge" against the Whigs for their bold challenge during the Exclusion Crisis. According to Charles II's most recent biographer, the King himself directed the counterattack against the Whigs, which consisted of a three-part program. First, he was determined not to call another parliament unless actually driven to it by a war in the Netherlands. Second, he decided to make every effort to place Tories into positions of authority and influence not only in London, the main citadel of Whig strength, but also in the provinces. This part of Charles II's program included an attack upon the corporation charters of towns and cities, since many of the incorporated boroughs were controlled by the Whigs. Again, one of the main targets was London.

Finally, Charles II decided to use a "legion of informers" against the Whigs themselves.¹ When Charles II was through exacting his "revenge", not only had the Whig Party been smashed, with most of its leaders either exiled or executed, but the Royal prerogative had been increased to a point which Sidney would have considered extremely dangerous. Algernon Sidney himself was merely one of the Whig victims of Charles II's revenge.

As one might well expect, the Earl of Shaftesbury was one of the first Whig leaders Charles II went after. On July 2, 1681, Shaftesbury was arrested at Thanet House, his London home, and lodged in the Tower of London on a charge of high treason. He remained in the Tower until November 24, when the London grand jury met at Old Bailey to consider the treason charge preferred against him. Shaftesbury was refused bail under the very Habeas Corpus Act which he had been instrumental in pushing through Parliament in 1679. It was no coincidence that John Dryden had published a few days previously his satirical poem Absalom and Achitophel, a brilliant work which contains some of the most vicious lines of personal abuse and ridicule in English poetry, all directed against Shaftesbury. The grand jury, which had been carefully selected by the Whig sheriffs of London, returned a bill of ignoramus (not a true bill of indictment) in the Earl's case. Shaftesbury was free, but by no means out of danger. One year later, after the Duke of Monmouth's arrest, Shaftesbury fled

¹Maurice Ashley, Charles II: The Man and the Statesman (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 283.

England disguised as a Presbyterian minister.² He died on January 21, 1683, in the Netherlands: the Whig Party had lost its principal leader and organizing genius.

As important and formidable an adversary as Shaftesbury was for Charles II, the King had even greater objectives in mind during this period than the mere hounding of one political figure. Charles II realized that the Whig Party would have to be attacked at its very foundation, the incorporated towns and cities of England. By controlling so many of the incorporated boroughs, the Whigs were assured not only of local governmental control in those areas, but also of the election of Whigs to the House of Commons on the national level. This is why Charles II found himself confronted by such a strong and aggressive Whig opposition in the Commons during the three successive Parliaments of the Exclusion Crisis. If the Whigs could be rooted out of their entrenched positions of power and influence in England's towns and cities, the trouble makers would cease flocking into the Commons, and Charles II could count upon a more subservient Parliament in the future, if the time ever arose for one.

The key to Charles II's campaign against Whig strongholds was his assault upon the charters of incorporation for the towns and cities. This was by no means the first instance during the seventeenth century in which the central government of Westminster had tried to

²The Duke of Monmouth was Charles II's eldest illegitimate son, an attractive and colorful, but rather simple-minded character. Monmouth at one point was Shaftesbury's candidate to replace the Duke of York, assuming the struggle for Exclusion had ended in a Whig victory. Monmouth was a member of the Whig "Council of Six" along with Algernon Sidney, and he was eventually executed for treason in 1685 by James II.

manipulate borough charters for its own advantage. Oliver Cromwell had tried it during the Protectorate, and Charles II had attempted it to a limited degree earlier in his reign. The assault by Charles II during the last few years of his reign upon borough charters was the greatest and most thorough campaign attempted by the central government up to that point. The campaign assumes an extra degree of importance when one realizes that the incorporated towns and cities of England returned four-fifths of the House of Commons.³ Using a variety of legal, but sometimes very technical, excuses, Charles II succeeded in obtaining the forfeiture of the charters of some of the smaller towns. Then, using a writ of quo warranto, Charles obtained in 1683 the forfeiture of London's charter. With London sufficiently humbled, the King proceeded against the lesser cities of England. When new charters were issued for the towns and cities, the central government made sure that the terms of these new charters would ensure Tory corporations. With this established first, the Crown could be assured of Tory sheriffs, Tory juries, and Tory members in any future Commons.⁴ Very recent research has demonstrated that for this campaign against the Whig strongholds, Charles II utilized a long-standing resentment by the gentry on the local level against the incorporated boroughs and the gentry's desire to extend their influence into the towns. The result of Charles II's thorough campaign against the towns and cities was twofold: Whig sympathizers were rooted out of their positions of

³J. R. Western, Monarchy and Revolution: the English State in the 1680's (1972), pp. 69-70.

⁴S. Reed Brett, The Stuart Century: 1603-1714 (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1964), p. 279.

influence on the local level, and in their places Tory country gentlemen began infiltrating into positions of influence within the corporations.⁵

The Royal assault against London deserves special study because Algernon Sidney was living there during that time and because he would ultimately be brought to trial after the city had been secured for the Tories by Charles II's policy. One of the special privileges enjoyed by London as an incorporated city was the right to appoint two sheriffs for the shire of Middlesex. Normally, sheriffs were Royal nominees, but London was a special case. The sheriffs, in turn, were the officials who empaneled the juries for court trials. Thus, with the Whigs strongly entrenched in London and its administrative system, it is easy to see why Charles II was so eager to bring the great city under his control. London had become a veritable hotbed of Whig dissidents and potential trouble makers. In 1682 Charles II secured the election of two Tory nominees as sheriffs for Middlesex. But the crippling blow came in June of 1683 when London was finally forced to surrender its charter and subsequently lost the privilege of appointing its sheriffs. It should be mentioned that at this same time, June of 1683, the first testimonies concerning the Whig intrigues, which have come to be known collectively as the Rye House Plot, were just breaking the surface in London. With London successfully humbled and remodeled along Tory lines, the Crown could now be assured of a more favorable type of justice. There would be no more Whig grand juries returning verdicts of ignoramus, as was the case with the Earl of Shaftesbury.

⁵Op. cit., pp. 73-6.

In the months after the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament in March of 1681, the Whig opposition found itself to be in an increasingly awkward and even precarious position. The keynote of the Whig effort in Parliament had been the move to exclude James, Duke of York, from the succession. Charles II, ignoring the Triennial Act of 1664, did not summon another parliament for the remainder of his reign.⁶ Thus, with no parliament in session, the Whigs were denied the best platform from which they could have applied constant pressure on Charles II. In conjunction with the Royal attack upon the city charter of London, Charles II also had the Whig news sheets in London silenced. The Whigs actually found themselves in a quandary after 1681. From their vantage point, it appeared as though Charles II had no intention of calling another parliament, and it seemed equally certain that the Catholic James would eventually succeed his brother Charles after all; that is, unless something drastic were to be done to prevent it. Therefore, with the Whigs in a temporarily confused state and with Shaftesbury clearly a marked man for Royal revenge, it was the Crown itself which now enjoyed a position of considerable strength.

The real problem, then, for the Whigs in 1681 and 1682 was one of deciding what steps to take in order to keep their opposition alive, now that the initiative had clearly passed to Charles II. Some historians claim that it was at this point that the Earl of Shaftesbury committed himself to a plan of action that bordered on actual rebellion. The Duke of Monmouth's semi-royal progress through Cheshire is

⁶The Triennial Act of 1664, passed by Charles II's Cavalier Parliament, simply stated that no more than three years were to elapse between one parliament and another.

interpreted as the initial unfolding of Shaftesbury's plan.⁷ The author of Shaftesbury's most extensive and scholarly biography, however, contends that even though it is very likely that the possibility of a rebellion was discussed at Thanet House by the Earl and some of his trusted Whigs, there is no good evidence to prove that during Shaftesbury's lifetime the discussions went beyond that stage.⁸ Actual contemporary evidence, that is, discussions among Whig leaders as to what they were planning, has not survived. Accounts which have survived and which implicate Shaftesbury in a planned rebellion were written by rather dubious characters like Robert Ferguson and Lord Grey of Wark after they had fled England in 1683 and were safely in exile. The blame for a great many things could then be dumped with impunity into Shaftesbury's lap. Nevertheless, it seems certain that Shaftesbury at least discussed with other Whig leaders different alternatives open to them in their deteriorating political position at that time. It is also fairly certain that Shaftesbury personally favored the Duke of Monmouth over the Dutchman, William of Orange, as a possible alternative to the Duke of York. But whether this backing was ever transformed into an actual, planned effort to put Monmouth on the throne, or whether Shaftesbury was merely using the Protestant Duke for his own personal ends, it is extremely difficult to say. Monmouth may have been personally popular in and around London, but he was an incredibly shallow-minded character. Shaftesbury may have had his

⁷ Brett, The Stuart Century: 1603-1714, pp. 277-78.

⁸ Kenneth H. D. Haley, The First Earl of Shaftesbury (Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 708.

faults, but a dull mind and an unobservant nature were not among them.

Difficult as it may be to penetrate the tortuous windings of Shaftesbury's mind, it is certain that during the early 1680's Shaftesbury and the Whigs were being watched closely by the Court and its supporters. Not only that, but Charles II was beginning to utilize informers to implicate Shaftesbury and certain other Whigs in anything which might be construed as being treasonous. Sir John Reresby, M.P. from Yorkshire for the second Exclusion Parliament and a staunch, dedicated Tory, observed in his memoirs for 1680 that the Whig opposition to the Court had conducted a number of meetings during that year. These meetings, dubbed "cabals" by Reresby, were attended mainly by Monmouth, Shaftesbury, Lord William Russell, and Lord Cavendish and were frequently shifted from place to place to ensure more privacy.⁹ In February of 1682 an informer named John Fitzgerald claimed that in June of 1679 the Earl of Shaftesbury had approached him and asked for any information he might have concerning the Dukes of York, Ormonde, and Lauderdale, whom Shaftesbury regarded as the greatest enemies of England. Fitzgerald in addition claimed that Shaftesbury had verbally attacked Charles II, saying that he was no better than a fool for allowing those three "notorious enemies of all Protestant interests" to remain in power. Concluding his belated confession, Fitzgerald said, "Much after the same manner have I heard Major Wildman, Col.

⁹ Andrew Browning, ed., Memoirs of Sir John Reresby (Glasgow: Jackson, Son & Co., 1936), p. 193. Russell would perish on the block in 1683 for complicity in the Rye House Plot. Lord Cavendish would be one of the signatories of the invitation to William of Orange in 1688, along with Henry Sidney. Cavendish was rewarded with the Dukedom of Devonshire.

Sidney and others speak treasonable expressions."¹⁰ Fitzgerald was merely among the first of many informers and witnesses used by the Crown in an attempt to discredit the Whigs.

Besides the hearsay testimonies and secondhand reports, which can be found in the Calendar of State Papers for 1682 and which indicate more than just a passing interest in the Whigs by official sources, there are clear indication that people outside the government were also concerned about Whig activities. One such example is a letter written by Dr. Matthew Fowler to his friend Dr. William Bell, who was the vicar of St. Sepulchre's Church in London. Expressing a deep concern over the Whigs and their possible intriguing in 1682, Fowler was prompted to remember the days of Cromwell's Protectorate when the local gentry used to meet at horse races and cock fights to plan intrigues and designs. This is why the Lord Protector forbade all meetings of this nature. Concerning the more contemporary opposition to Charles II, "Our Whigs are of late much given to such kind of sports, and I wish a watchful eye were on them to observe their motions." Dr. Fowler was very concerned over the Duke of Monmouth's tour through Cheshire and Staffordshire in 1682 because those two shires in particular were notorious for being "very rotten and full of potent Whigs and malcontents." Fowler confided his deep uneasiness to Dr. Bell:

I think you believe me at 65 to be no vain fellow nor apt to be afraid, where no cause of fear is, but with an enemy it is better to play the fore than the after game. The Whigs, finding their cause and party daily declining in London, will endeavor what they can to buoy it up again by

¹⁰CSPD, Vol. CDXVIII (1682), pp. 65-6.

raising some considerable tumults in the country and I conceive no parts are at this day so proper, on which to erect a stage, of rebellion, as Lancashire, Cheshire and Lincolnshire.

The acceptance of a loyal opposition within the political system was an alien concept at this time in England. Whigs represented more than just opposition to Charles II, for to good Tories, they must have represented a sinister force at work trying to undermine the ordered establishment. Because of this, the Whigs needed to be watched.

The problems of the Whigs, as an opposition group, multiplied after Shaftesbury's flight in November of 1682, and their position deteriorated rapidly. On this problem too, as with the exact nature of Shaftesbury's plans, it is difficult to find agreement among historians as to precisely what was going on. Nevertheless, there is general agreement over the existence of a Whig "council," or "inner circle," during the years 1681-83. Sidney's biographer claims that the Whig council was formed after Shaftesbury's flight and included Algernon Sidney as one of its original members. The council's purpose was to serve as sort of a "standing committee" for the Whigs and to prepare for Parliamentary elections, if any were ever called during Charles II's reign. According to this interpretation, the Whig council merely "discussed" the best possible course of action to follow in trying to resist Charles II's drive for arbitrary power.¹² Other historians claim that the Whig council, or "inner circle" of advisers, existed prior to Shaftesbury's exile, and the members busied themselves

¹¹CSPD, Vol. CDXIX (1682), pp. 313-14.

¹²Ewald, Life of Sidney, Vol. II, p. 206.

discussing different alternatives and perhaps even advancing into the initial stages of a rebellion to force Charles II to summon a parliament. Under this interpretation, Algernon Sidney was not admitted into the trusted "inner circle" of Whigs during Shaftesbury's lifetime, mainly because there existed mutual distrust and dislike between these two Whigs.¹³ Sidney merely became the new member of the "inner circle," maintaining and coordinating the existing plans for an actual rebellion after Shaftesbury's flight to Holland.

This Whig "inner circle," which has come to be known as the Council of Six, was comprised of a noticeably diverse collection of Whigs and clearly reflected the factionalism that existed in Whig ranks as a whole. In addition to Sidney, there were Arthur Capel, the Earl of Essex, and young John Hampden, grandson of the John Hampden who had won fame in 1634 for forcing a test case involving Charles I's ship money tax. Both Hampden and Essex were under Sidney's influence, and the three of them, especially Sidney and Essex, comprised the most radical faction of the Council of Six.¹⁴ Bishop Burnet claimed that Algernon Sidney had taken the Earl of Essex into such close confidence and actually had ruled Essex to such a degree that Sidney "became master of his spirit."¹⁵ In addition to the above three, there were the Duke of Monmouth and Lord William Russell, son of the fifth Earl,

¹³ Haley, The First Earl of Shaftesbury, p. 718. J. H. M. Salmon, "Algernon Sidney and the Rye House Plot," History Today, IV (October, 1954), p. 700.

¹⁴ Maurice Ashley, John Wildman: Plotter and Postmaster (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), p. 233.

¹⁵ Burnet, History of His Own Time, Vol. II, p. 193.

and later first Duke of Bedford. Monmouth, the charming crowd pleaser, wanted to preserve the monarchy with himself as the monarch, while Russell merely insisted upon the exclusion of the Duke of York and the redress of some basic grievances.¹⁶ The sixth member of the Council was William, third Baron Howard of Escrick, whom Burnet claimed had been personally befriended by Sidney.¹⁷ Lord Howard, a relative of the Duke of Buckingham, had at one time sat on the Lords' committee that had credited Titus Oates' allegations concerning the Popish Plot. He possessed a long career of political intriguing and furtive designing which dated back to Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate.¹⁸ The man possessed few scruples and even fewer principles: his main interest seems to have been his own betterment. This is the man who turned King's evidence in 1683 to save himself and became the prosecution's star witness against two of his fellow Council members, Lord William Russell and Algernon Sidney. This Whig Council of Six encompassed a wide spectrum of political thought, from Sidney's classical republicanism to Lord Howard's back-stabbing self-interest.

Supposedly, the Council of Six was the coordinating body between London intriguers and malcontents in Scotland, all of whom were trying to formulate plans for an armed insurrection against Charles II. But again, because of a wide variety of contemporary claims and latter-day interpretations, it is extremely difficult to

¹⁶ Ewald, Life of Sidney, Vol. II, p. 208.

¹⁷ Op. cit., p. 193.

¹⁸ Kenneth H. D. Haley, William of Orange and the English Opposition, 1672-74 (Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 28.

get a clear picture in one's mind as to exactly what the Council of Six was up to. The Crown's version of what the Council of Six had been intending was based almost entirely upon Lord Howard's incredible story, which he recited for Charles II and the Privy Council on July 9, 1683. Howard insisted that it was the Council of Six into whose keeping had been placed the general ideas and schemes of Shaftesbury after the Earl's death. The council existed to give direction and guidance to the opposition.¹⁹ In addition, he maintained that this "select council" met regularly at the homes of John Hampden and Lord William Russell, and it was at those two places where a general rebellion against Charles II was resolved upon by the Council. Lord Howard further claimed that Scotland was included in the plans, and he identified Algernon Sidney as the Council member responsible for establishing the Scottish connection through a man named Aaron Smith.²⁰

Both at his treason trial and in his Apology, Algernon Sidney denied that the Council of Six was planning an armed rebellion against Charles II. Sidney declared that the Council of Six was not a secret cabal, as the Crown was inclined to believe, and that there existed no concerted effort among the men fingered by Lord Howard to conspire together. The whole idea was absurd, claimed Sidney, because he personally did not even know five men in all of England who would have followed him in any such venture.²¹ According to John Hampden, who

¹⁹ Cobbett's Complete Collection of State Trials (33 vols.; London: R. Bagshaw, Covent-Garden, 1809-26), Vol. IX, p. 434.

²⁰ CSPD, Vol. CDXXVIII (1683), p. 80.

²¹ Algernon Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government with His Letters, Trial, Apology and Some Memorials of His Life, p. 178.

survived Charles II's purge of the Whigs with a fine of forty thousand pounds and a prison term, the Council's actual "plans" were no more revolutionary than those of the "Immortal Seven" who invited Prince William to England in 1688.²² His assertion does not throw much light at all on the problem of what the Council was actually doing in 1682 and 1683. Lady Russell, whose husband was convicted on Lord Howard's testimony, claimed that the meetings at her husband's house consisted merely of "loose talk" and speculations of a very general nature, not concerted efforts to plan a rebellion.²³

Modern historians tend to reject Lord Howard's claim that the members of the Whig Council of Six had acted as a cohesive unit and were seriously planning an armed rebellion against Charles II. David Ogg contends that with the exception of Lord Howard of Escrick, the members of the Whig Council were actually rank amateurs at the profession of plotting and intriguing.²⁴ They were in reality rather harmless, but unfortunately, some of them were also involved with less scrupulous and much more dangerous Whigs. Another historian, P. J. Helm, insists that by 1682 the extreme wing of the Whig Party had been reduced to a perpetual state of largely theoretical conspiracy. After Shaftesbury's death in 1683, the actual control of Whig discussions had passed into the hands of much less practical men like Sidney, Essex, Russell, and Hampden. These not very cautious Whigs became

²² Caroline Robbins, The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 29.

²³ Ewald, Life of Sidney, Vol. II, p. 208.

²⁴ Ogg, England in the Reign of Charles II, p. 643.

"enchanted by the mystique of conspiracy" and simply included too many other Whigs in their discussions. With more people involved after Shaftesbury's death, the chances that a "leak" would develop greatly increased.²⁵ Due to the lack of trustworthy evidence relating to the problem of the Council's activities, the approach outlined above is probably the safest one to take. Lord Howard's incredible story and his reasons for turning King's evidence, plus his own personal history of professional intriguing, naturally lead one to suspect the man and his story. It does appear certain, however, that the Council of Six did hold at least informal discussions during 1682 and 1683. But, the exact nature of those discussions and the extent to which they had progressed by March of 1683 are impossible to determine with any degree of accuracy. Besides, the Council itself was too split by diverse opinions really to act as a cohesive body.

It is interesting to study the various types of Whigs during the period of 1681 through 1683 because there existed a sort of "pecking order" within the Whig ranks. After the much studied Council of Six came other orders of Whigs, and many of these Whigs had connections either with individual members of the Council or originally with Shaftesbury at Thanet House. One case in point is that of Robert Ferguson, one of Shaftesbury's associates and another one of those professional plotters like Lord Howard. Supposedly, Ferguson was not only the connecting link between the Russell-Monmouth faction on the Council itself and the more ruthless band of conspirators allegedly contemplating a Royal assassination, but he was also supposed to have

²⁵p. J. Helm, Jeffreys, pp. 90-91.

been the main link between the Sidney faction in England and the malcontents in Scotland under the ninth Earl of Argyll.²⁶ In his own account of his life and intrigues, written in exile after Shaftesbury's death, Ferguson did admit to considerable internal dissention and factionalism among the Whigs. It is interesting to note that Ferguson somehow managed to ingratiate himself with William of Orange and subsequently accompanied the Dutch invasion fleet in 1688. After that, he involved himself in numerous assassination plots and Jacobite intrigues until he died in 1714. Hardly a man whose person account of Whig intrigues could be accepted without question.

Another fascinating character of the same order as Ferguson was Major John Wildman, a man appropriately named because of his very radical political beliefs. Originally an advocate of a democratic republic for England, Major Wildman became a close associate of Algernon Sidney after Shaftesbury's flight, and he eventually adopted Sidney's political position of a greatly limited monarchy.²⁷ This truly incredible character spent over fifty years of his life just conspiring and plotting. He spent a fifth of his active political life in prison for his efforts, but in the end he became one of the richest aldermen in London.²⁸ True perseverance can have its own reward. Wildman's biographer asserts that the actual Rye House Plot for assassinating Charles II and James originated as a figment of Wilman's imagination.

²⁶ James Ferguson, Robert Ferguson the Plotter (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1887), p. 64.

²⁷ Ashley, John Wildman: Plotter and Postmaster, pp. 238, 280.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

According to this theory, after Wildman had abandoned the assassination plan, it was retrieved by Robert West and John Rumsey, two London dissidents who were on a level further down the pecking order, and then given embellishment by them.²⁹ Professional plotters like Ferguson and Major Wildman existed on a level which at times was outside of and yet at other times merged with the members of the Council of Six. Their contacts ran in two directions at once, for these intriguers had intimate personal contacts with members of the Council of Six and also with some of the dissidents and malcontents in the city of London.

It was this group of Londoners, with their contacts in the country, who existed on the bottom of the pecking order and who proved ultimately to be the key factor in the Royal purge of the upper orders of Whigs. Some of the Whigs on this level, like Robert West, a barrister from the Middle Temple, John Rumsey, the ex-cavalry officer under Cromwell, and Richard Goodenough, an ex-undersheriff of London, were contemptuously referred to as "Lord Shaftesbury's creatures" by Bishop Burnet, as if they had somehow been created in the Earl's own image to spread mischief about the kingdom. These three, plus Josiah Keeling, the bankrupt Anabaptist dyer, belonged to the London faction that was allegedly planning to assassinate Charles II and his brother. Burnet, incidentally, dismissed the notion of an actual assassination plot by insisting that "all was but talk."³⁰ This particular group plus Sir Thomas Armstrong and Lord Grey of Wark used to meet at the house of Thomas Sheppard, a rich London wine merchant, and indulge

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 239-40.

³⁰ Burnet, History of His Own Time, Vol. II, pp. 197-98.

themselves extravagantly in "loose talk," and some of Sheppard's wine, no doubt. Robert Ferguson figured prominently in those meetings at Sheppard's home, as to some extent did Monmouth and Russell.³¹ It was because of Russell's carelessness regarding his attendance at one of those meetings that he found himself very vulnerable to at least a charge of misprision of treason, and admitted as much himself.³² The connecting link from this group of London plotters to the country malcontents was Colonel Richard Rumbold, the actual owner of the Rye House, which was situated at Hoddesdon in Hertfordshire.

At times it is extremely difficult even to think of West, Rumsey, Goodenough, Keeling, and the other members of this bottom order of Whigs as having very much in common with the Whigs at the top like Sidney and Russell, or even to think of them as "Whigs" at all, for that matter. Some of them, like Rumsey and Rumbold, appear more like discontented, and perhaps even maladjusted, ex-Cromwellian soldiers whom time had simply passed by. They had once fought for a cause under a magnetic leader, and they may have found the drudgery of peacetime to be too boring for their tastes. Charles II had had trouble with men of this type early in his reign. Sidney and Russell were at least men who possessed political principles and beliefs, even though they were undoubtedly careless and naive in consorting with some of the members of this London gang. Admittedly, not enough is known about this lowest order of plotters in London, but too many of

³¹ Bryan Bevan, James Duke of Monmouth (London: Robert Hale and Co., 1973), p. 155.

³² Harold Armitage, Russell and Rye House (Letchworth, Hertfordshire: Letchworth Printers Limited, 1948), pp. 166-67.

them simply appear to have been men discontented with life for one reason or another and subsequently drawn like moths to men like Ferguson and Wildman and their dangerously imaginative schemes. Because of this, these London malcontents proved to be exceedingly dangerous for the Council of Six since they were the ones who turned informers and bargained for Royal pardons, implicating just about everyone they could think of in their testimonies. As a result, Sidney and Russell perished on the block.³³

The actual existence of the conspiracy, which has come to be known as the Rye House Plot, first became known officially on June 12, 1683, when Josiah Keeling, one of the London gang, signed a statement for Sir Leoline Jenkins, the Secretary of State. His testimony consisted mostly of secondhand, hearsay stories, embellished by his own fertile imagination. He implicated Goodenough and Monmouth in the city itself and Rumbold in the country. It took several days to extract the information from Keeling. But as June progressed, Keeling's memory became more "convenient," and his testimony soon assumed the proportions of a small tidal wave. Following Keeling, there was literally an avalanche of testimonies from Rumsey, West, and Sheppard in June, and of course from Lord Howard of Escrick in July. In addition, other Crown informers began emerging from the woodwork in June, and they added their own details to the rapidly increasing mass of testimony that was almost entirely hearsay in nature. The individual members of the Council of Six were implicated in all sorts of tortuous

³³ Undoubtedly, the Earl of Essex would have suffered the same fate, but he committed suicide in the Tower of London by slashing his throat with a razor before he could be brought to trial.

intrigues and were tied together by a sticky web of circumstantial and hearsay evidence. These testimonies in June and July, 1683, make fascinating but rather bizarre reading. The London intriguers literally fell all over one another in their efforts to come up with improved versions of Whig intrigues and plots. The rush to testify and secure a pardon became a stampede, and many of the plots and intrigues "uncovered" by the witnesses can best be described as being simply hare-brained to the tenth degree.³⁴

After carefully sifting through the complicated and at times contradictory testimonies in June and July of 1683, what emerges is sort of a grand pattern of Whig intrigue that subdivides itself into two main alleged plots. The first of these concerned the conspiracy to assassinate Charles II and the Duke of York at Rumbold's Rye House in Hertfordshire. Supposedly, the Royal pair were to be attacked on a narrow lane beside the Rye House as they were returning from the Newmarket races in March of 1683. According to Crown informers, everything had been prepared in advance, but a sudden fire in Newmarket forced Charles and James to curtail their holiday and return to London earlier than anticipated, thus ruining the conspirators' time schedule. Josiah Keeling in his testimony claimed that the murders of Charles and James were to be blamed upon Catholics and thus linked with the previous Popish Plot.³⁵ Not to be outdone, Rumsey claimed that the assassination attempt was planned as part of a general rising that had been master-minded by the Earl of Shaftesbury for the previous autumn. In addition

³⁴Cobbett, State Trials, Vol. IX, pp. 365-434.

³⁵Ibid., p. 372.

to Shaftesbury, Rumsey put much of the blame upon the shoulders of West, Goodenough and Rumbold, implicating Lord William Russell in the process.³⁶

The second major part of the alleged Whig designs concerned plans for some sort of an armed uprising centered upon London, that was or was not connected with the assassination conspiracy, depending on whose testimony is believed. It is this aspect of the overall picture of intrigue that is the most nebulous and difficult to unravel. It was the same people who did the informing concerning this general plot, and many of the same intriguers were implicated in the expanding web of pure hearsay testimony, plus some additional Whigs. Rumsey and West were the star informers regarding this conspiracy. According to Rumsey, London had been divided up into twenty districts for the purposes of raising money and troops (sometimes referred to as "brisk boys") for an insurrection. Ferguson and Monmouth were identified as two of the major planners in this London plot. By hearsay only, Rumsey also identified Algernon Sidney, the Earl of Essex, Lord William Russell, and John Hampden as being the agents who were actively engaged in negotiating for help with Scottish malcontents.³⁷ Robert West, whose memory improved with each day of testimony, claimed that Ferguson had told him that if only London could be secured by insurgents, the rest of England would "fall in" with the plan. West also insisted that Lord Howard of Escrick, Algernon Sidney, and young John Hampden had been pointed out to him as being three of the managers in a joint

³⁶Ibid., pp. 374-75.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 376-81.

insurrection for England and Scotland.³⁸ On June 26 and again on July 12, 1683, West claimed that Algernon Sidney and Major John Wildman had been managing the negotiations with the Scots. The negotiations, however, collapsed because both Sidney and Wildman insisted upon a Commonwealth if the general insurrection was successful; whereas, the Scots refused to declare for a type of government that would mean the eradication of the Stuart family.³⁹ The second major intrigue, then, allegedly consisted of at least a rising in London with the likelihood of a general insurrection for England and Scotland in the making also.

These revelations in June and July of 1683 were a godsend for the Crown, a blessing in disguise that would enable Charles II to crush most of the life out of the Whig Party by rolling the heads off a few of its leaders. Just as the Whigs had previously used the revelations of Titus Oates and the uproar of the Popish Plot to pressure Charles II over the issue of Exclusion, the King now had a golden opportunity to "turn the tables" on his political enemies and pursue them relentlessly. Needless to say, the Crown did not let the opportunity slip through its fingers. By the use of informers and offers of pardons, the Crown adroitly managed to link the alleged assassination conspiracy with the alleged intrigues to plan a rebellion and tie them both together. In the public's mind, therefore, the term "Rye House Plot" came to mean several Whig plots that were somehow all connected together. The Crown was not really after the "little people," the creatures like West, Rumsey, or Goodenough; instead, it was after as many of the Whigs in the higher echelons of the party as possible.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 389-411.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 398, 546.

This is why Lord Howard's testimony in July was such a handy tool for the eager Crown to use. With the offer of a Royal pardon dangling before him, Lord Howard described the existence of the Council of Six in such a way, that it appeared to be a sort of Whig board of directors exercising a unified and overall control over the whole business. Howard turned King's evidence and saved himself, but the other five members of the Council of Six were trapped, enmeshed in a complex web of hearsay testimonials and circumstantial evidence. Using Lord Howard's tale plus the stories of Rumsey and West, the Crown was able to connect the Whig Council with just about anything it wanted to.

Noninvolved contemporaries expressed a variety of opinions concerning the Rye House Plot and related intrigues. One of those contemporaries was John Evelyn, a staunch loyalist, who had remained completely aloof from the political intrigues of the Restoration period. In his Diary for June of 1683, Evelyn calmly observed that certain lords and other people "disaffected to the present government" had designed the King's death along with a general uprising, with special emphasis being placed on London. He further remarked that few people actually believed that Russell and Essex had intended anything evil against Charles II.⁴⁰ Evelyn also mentioned Algernon Sidney as being one of those connected with the plot and one who possessed "Commonwealth principles." Worse than that, Evelyn viewed Sidney as a man of "tragical principles" who wanted to turn everything "topsy turvy."⁴¹ Another contemporary account worth noting is that written

⁴⁰E. S. de Beer, ed., The Diary of John Evelyn, Vol. IV, pp. 322-23.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 329.

by Sir John Reresby, the Tory M.P. from Yorkshire and former protégé of the Earl of Danby. Reresby's personal account of the unfolding Rye House Plot runs as follows:

Came the report of a dangerous conspiracy against the life of our sovereign lord the King, laid by the anti-court party, composed of such as had been disappointed of preferments at Court, and of Protestant dissenters. It was also against the Duke of York and intended to have shot the King and the Duke coming from Newmarket in his coach... by forty men well armed, and who after the blow given was to fly to London, and to report that the papists had done it, where there was a body of men ready to rise to make themselves masters of the city and Tower and consequently of the whole kingdom, the Prince of Orange being in Holland (the next right heir to the Crown), and the Duke of Monmouth being ready to head the rebels.⁴²

Despite Sir John's peculiar grammar, his account is fairly close to that given by the informer Josiah Keeling. Only one final contemporary version needs to be looked at, and that is by Sir John Bramston. In his autobiography Sir John claimed that it was the Earl of Shaftesbury who was the chief conspirator. Bramston believed that there were two separate conspiracies, one to assassinate the King and one to raise insurrection in England and Scotland, and he named Robert Ferguson as the connecting link between the two major conspiracies, first through Shaftesbury and then through Monmouth.⁴³

Even before the month of June had ended, Crown authorities decided to move swiftly against the Whigs. On June 26, 1683, both Russell (now styled Lord Russell because of the death of his older brother) and Algernon Sidney were arrested on charges of high treason,

⁴²Browning, ed., Memoirs of Sir John Reresby, p. 304.

⁴³Sir John Bramston, Autobiography, Camden Society, Old Series, no. 32 (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1845), pp. 181-82.

Russell at his house overlooking Bloomsbury Square and Sidney at his house in Jermy Street as he was eating his dinner. When Sidney was arrested, the authorities also impounded some manuscript papers they found in his study. Both Russell and Sidney were lodged in the Tower of London, as was the Earl of Essex who was arrested a few days later. Two days after his arrest, Sidney was questioned closely by members of the Privy Council concerning his alleged connection with a certain Aaron Smith and a possible conspiracy. Sidney refused to answer any questions until he was informed of the specific charges against him and until he knew who his accusers were.⁴⁴ A few days later, Sidney's house, money, and personal goods were all seized. Sidney was imprisoned in the Tower until November of 1683 without being informed of the specific nature of the treason charges against him. For several weeks after his arrest, he was not even allowed such simple conveniences as a change of linen. It took the personal intervention of the Earl of Halifax to obtain relief for Sidney from some of his personal grievances while imprisoned.⁴⁵ While in the Tower, Algernon Sidney petitioned Charles II for legal counsel to help him prepare his defense. Permission was finally given at the end of October for some lawyers and a solicitor to visit him in the Tower. He was also allowed the use of paper, pen, and ink.⁴⁶ While Sidney was incarcerated in the Tower, Lord Russell was tried and found guilty of high treason on July 13, 1683, the same day that the Earl of Essex committed suicide.

⁴⁴CSPD, Vol. CDXXV (1683), p. 364.

⁴⁵Foxcroft, Life and Letters of George Savile, Vol. I, p. 397.

⁴⁶CSPD, Entry Book 56 (1683), pp. 64-5.

In his Apology, Algernon Sidney denounced the Crown's procedures against him and his imprisonment in the Tower of London on three major points. First, Sidney maintained that a defendant's property and goods could not be seized until after he had been convicted. Sidney's goods, of course, had been confiscated a few days after his arrest on June 26, and he was not tried until November 21. Furthermore, Sidney stated that both his life and health were placed in great danger. Finally, he objected strenuously to the fact that he was shown no indictment nor told the names of any of the witnesses whom the Crown would be using against him until November 7, 1683.⁴⁷ In Sidney's view the entire business of his imprisonment was contrary to the laws of England.

In his Apology, Algernon Sidney also remarked that during June of 1683 his name was being linked with the alleged intrigues disclosed by Keeling and West "in every coffee-house" in London. Furthermore, he asserted that the Crown had been attempting for some time to connect his name with every domestic discontent and "sham plot" in England.⁴⁸ There is enough evidence in the Calendar of State Papers for September of 1683 to add a considerable degree of credibility to Sidney's entire case. The Crown did indeed use Sidney's imprisonment in the Tower as an opportunity to connect his name with a variety of plots and evil designs. For instance, in a letter to Secretary of State Jenkins dated September 5, 1683, a certain Dr. John Standish

⁴⁷Algernon Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government With His Letters, Trial, Apology and Some Memorials of His Life, p. 173.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 171.

suggested that the probable author of the so-called "libel of the Black Box" was none other than Algernon Sidney.⁴⁹ Apparently, certain people had been busy comparing the manuscripts seized in Sidney's study with this infamous libel, several copies of which had been found in Mr. Sheppard's house. The actual "libel of the Black Box" was a paper professing the existence of a black box which supposedly contained written proof that Charles II had actually married the Duke of Monmouth's mother, Lucy Walters. Charles II had publicly denied this. On September 21 an entry was made in the Calendar of State Papers stating simply that the so-called "Paper of Association" was to be compared with Algernon Sidney's "Discourses," for similarities in style and handwriting no doubt.⁵⁰ This very nebulous "Paper of Association" was allegedly a document implicating Shaftesbury, Monmouth, and several Baptist dissenters in a plot to kidnap Charles II during the Exclusion Crisis. Honors for its authorship first had been given to Shaftesbury, since the document had been discovered in his closet, but after Sidney's imprisonment, suspicion was directed his way. One of the very last entries in the Calendar of State Papers for September of 1683 is simply entitled "Things that may be proved." Authorities were digging back to the mid-1660's to establish that Sidney and Edmund Ludlow had negotiated with the Dutch authorities for the purpose of making a rebellion in England. According to this item, both Sidney and Ludlow had demanded £200,000 and forty ships from the Dutch, while claiming that they

⁴⁹CSPD, Vol. CDXXXI (1683), p. 366.

⁵⁰CSPD, Vol. CDXXX (1683), p. 412.

could produce forty thousand men in England for a rebellion.⁵¹ Crown authorities were definitely making a concerted effort to dig up enough material on Algernon Sidney to demonstrate that his past life exhibited a clear pattern of treasonous activities and sinister intentions. Even though Sidney may have felt that he was being harshly treated, such procedure by the Secretary of State was by no means unusual in a case involving alleged treason.

At the time when Algernon Sidney and the Whigs were supposed to have been designing most of their plots and intrigues, Gilbert Burnet was busy writing his History of the Reformation. Later as the Bishop of Salisbury, when he wrote History of His Own Time, Burnet included a personal and detailed analysis of Algernon Sidney's character. Burnet had more than just a scholar's interest in Sidney, since he was a defense witness at Sidney's treason trial. He had found Sidney to be "a man of the most extraordinary courage, a steady man, even to obstinacy, sincere, but of a rough and boisterous temper that could not bear contradiction." As to any religious aspect to his character, Burnet said that Sidney "seemed to be a Christian," but in a peculiar, individualistic way all his own. Sidney was against public worship and institutional churches in general; instead, his approach to religion was a philosophical one. Politically, Burnet characterized Sidney as a man who was "stiff to all republican principles" and opposed to anything that looked like monarchy. Burnet did acknowledge, though, that Sidney "had studied the history of government in all of its branches beyond any man I ever knew." In a

⁵¹CSPD, Vol. CDXXXIII (1683), p. 443.

slightly sinister comment, Burnet stated that "Sidney had a peculiar way of insinuating himself into people that would hearken to his notions, and not contradict him." Bishop Burnet did not elaborate on this statement much, except to say that during late 1682 and early 1683, Algernon Sidney had exerted a very great influence over Arthur Capel, the Earl of Essex.⁵²

The man whom Algernon Sidney would have to face at his treason trial was Sir George Jeffreys, who was appointed Lord Chief Justice of the Court of the King's Bench in September of 1683. The trial of Algernon Sidney was Jeffreys' first state trial. One modern legal historian has characterized Judge Jeffreys with this comment: "Though a man of ability and industry he was insatiably ambitious and totally unprincipled."⁵³ Jeffreys, who can best be described as a High Tory, was a firm believer in the notion that kings ruled by Divine Right and that the law was properly their instrument. He was steadfastly opposed to any belief that kings were subservient to parliaments or in any way accountable to their people.⁵⁴ In his Discourses Sidney had been careful to point out that even though the King might be entrusted with the power to appoint judges, the authority by which those judges acted was derived from the law, as was the King's own power. A judge's first duty was to the law, not to the King's

⁵²Burnet, History of His Own Time, Vol. II, pp. 192-93.

⁵³Alfred F. Havighurst, "The Judiciary and Politics in the Reign of Charles II," Law Quarterly Review, LXVI (April, 1950), p. 246.

⁵⁴P. J. Helm, Jeffreys, p. 63.

personal desires.⁵⁵ By an ironic twist of fate, when Algernon Sidney had stood for Amersham in 1679, Jeffreys had worked for the Tory opponent.⁵⁶ Thus, when Sir George Jeffreys at his first state trial confronted Algernon Sidney, the stage was set for a very drastic clash of completely opposite political philosophies.

The crime of treason has been, and still is for that matter, by its very nature a political crime. In a harsher vein, treason is a special crime reserved for losers. In the past, people charged with treason were usually those who had planned or taken part in some wickedly clandestine or sinister plot to overthrow their government. If they failed and were apprehended, they had to face prosecution for a crime which really had no equal for sheer infamy and baseness. Of course, the ignominious and vile connotation attached to the crime of treason was put there by the established government, the very enforcer of the treason law. If, on the other hand, the conspirators had succeeded with their designs and became the new established power, treason would be the least of their worries. But in addition to this, the frequency of a government's use of its treason law and the severity of its application had been in the past directly proportional to that government's degree of established security. A stable, secure, and mature government usually has had little fear for treason plots. But if for some reason a government does not feel safe or secure, then it must protect itself with harsh and widely encompassing treason laws.

⁵⁵ Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government, ch. 3, sec. 26, p. 370.

⁵⁶ G. W. Keeton, Lord Chancellor Jeffreys and the Stuart Cause (London: Macdonald and Co., 1965), p. 271.

For instance, if a society is undergoing a complex series of changes, or if the government itself is faced with a serious political crisis, all at a time when the state itself is neither secure nor mature, then the law of treason must be resorted to in order to ensure that government's protection and survival.

This interpretation can be applied quite readily to the early 1680's in England. The constitutional system had been experiencing changes and adjustments throughout the seventeenth century. Not only that, but the nation by 1683 was just emerging from a severe political crisis that included a direct challenge to the very foundation of the monarchy itself. To make sure that the monarchy would remain on a relatively safe and secure footing after 1681, Charles II needed to exact his revenge upon the Whigs and certain members of their front ranks. Many of the aspects of this "Stuart Revenge" have already been explored.⁵⁷ As a corollary to his attack upon the city of London and the other Whig strongholds in the provinces, Charles II also used the judiciary itself as a political weapon against the Whigs. Because security of tenure for judges was not established until after 1688, Charles II was able to replace judges who might return unfavorable opinions with judges like Jeffreys who could be relied upon zealously to uphold a strong monarchy. One historian of the period has pointed out that unless judges during that time were prepared to further Royal policy, they simply could not expect promotion to the highest judicial offices.⁵⁸ The judiciary was brought under strict Royal control during

⁵⁷ Supra, pp. 121-126.

⁵⁸ Keeton, Lord Chancellor Jeffreys and the Stuart Cause, p. 95.

Charles II's reign and became an integral part of his administration. Thus, the English judiciary became inevitably involved with the political and constitutional struggle during the Exclusion Crisis and its aftermath. This was particularly true regarding state trials involving treason. Thus, justice in a very real sense "became political action disguised by judicial forms."⁵⁹ Not only was compliance expected by the Crown from its judges, but the law of treason itself was used to pursue and eradicate political enemies. Therefore, when Algernon Sidney faced Chief Justice Jeffreys at his trial, he was being confronted not only by a strict High Tory, but also by an entire judicial system that was harsh and authoritarian by nature and also politically slanted against the Whigs by 1683.

If these factors were not enough to intimidate a Whig like Algernon Sidney being tried for treason in 1683, the very nature of a treason trial in England and the procedures used in its conduct all operated against the defendant. To begin with, the guilt of the defendant was simply assumed: the burden of proof was on him to clear himself of treason charges. The defendant was not entitled to an itemized list of the specific charges against him: no copy of the actual indictment was given to him. Moreover, the defendant in a treason trial was not entitled to legal counsel which could speak for him. Instead, he had to petition the Crown to be allowed counsel which could merely help him prepare his defense. As a case in point, Sidney's petition for counsel was not approved until the end of October of 1683, and he was formally arraigned on November 7 of that year. Thus, from

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 94.

our point of view today, a defendant frequently did not have adequate time to prepare his defense. In addition, although prosecution witnesses testified under oath at a treason trial, witnesses for the defense were not allowed the same procedure. Thus, the prosecution's argument naturally carried more weight before a jury. Furthermore, testimony of a purely circumstantial or hearsay nature was quite admissible at a treason trial.

There was yet another factor which worked against the defendant in cases of treason. The basic treason act, which was passed in the year 1352 in the reign of King Edward III (25 Edward III), was quite vague in places. Consequently, it had been the practice, especially in the seventeenth century, for judges to extend the scope of the clauses of the statute by making judicial constructions or interpretations as to the specific meaning or intention of those clauses. This was by no means a judicial attempt to declare new types of treason, but rather it was a necessary process by which certain ambiguous words and phrases in 25 Edward III were clarified. The overall effect of these interpretations by judges was to make the original law of treason much more encompassing in nature. Thus, the interpretations and rulings by Judge Jeffreys at Sidney's trial concerning the nature of treason were simply the latest steps in a long process that had greatly expanded the scope of treason as defined in 25 Edward III.

On November 7, 1683, Algernon Sidney was brought to the bar of the court of King's Bench in Westminster and formally charged with having committed the crime of high treason against his sovereign lord and King, Charles II. Sidney was addressed as a false traitor "not having the fear of God in his heart, nor weighing the duty of his

allegiance, but moved and seduced by the instigation of the Devil." Sidney's alleged treason was so defined in his indictment as to fall into two main categories. First, the indictment alleged that on several recent occasions Algernon Sidney, along with others, did "conspire, compass, imagine, and intend" to deprive Charles II not only of his life, but also of his title and power as well. Second, it was charged that Sidney also conspired to stir up an insurrection and rebellion against the King. The indictment also specified two overt actions on Sidney's part that allegedly proved his treasonous and false intent. It was alleged that Sidney dispatched a man named Aaron Smith to Scotland to incite other people to join certain conspiracies being designed in England. The indictment further asserted that Sidney wrote a "false, seditious, and traitorous" libel to persuade people that it was lawful to foment insurrection and rebellion against the King. Referring to Sidney's manuscript of his Discourses, the indictment further specified certain sentences, mainly lifted out of context from chapter two, which clearly proved the vicious nature of the ideas contained within the libel. The quoted excerpts emphasized the authority of Parliament and the idea that the law in England set limits to the King's authority. Also included in the list of excerpts from the Discourses was Sidney's statement to the effect that the King had to conduct himself properly or risk being removed from office. This last excerpt was the one which placed Algernon Sidney in the worse possible position, since from the prosecution's point of view it was clearly indicative of Sidney's evil and treasonous nature. In a verbal wrangle over procedural matters, Sidney insisted on being allowed first to take exception to some of the allegations in the indictment and then

to enter his plea. Jeffreys refused and Sidney eventually had to plead "not guilty." The defendant, however, was granted two weeks in which to plan his defense.⁶⁰

The trial of Algernon Sidney began at 10:00 A.M. on the morning of November 21, 1683. He was informed that he was being tried under the Statute of Treasons passed in 1352 (25 Edward III) which defined several categories of treason, only two of which were used to catch Sidney: compassing or imagining the King's death and levying war against the King within his realm. The prosecution (Sir Robert Sawyer and Mr. Heneage Finch) contended that Sidney's treason clearly fell within the scope of 25 Edward III because he was guilty of imagining the King's death and of conspiring to levy war against Charles II. The act of conspiring to levy war is not specifically included in the actual wording of 25 Edward III, and Algernon Sidney was quick to make a major issue of that fact, claiming that what was not specifically included within that particular treason statute could not be applied to him. A treason statute enacted in 1661 (13 Charles II) did make it treason to conspire to levy war against the King, but there was a six months statute of limitations on it. At any rate, Algernon Sidney was not being tried under that act. Sidney insisted that levying war and conspiring to levy war were not the same thing.

Sidney's objection that the act of conspiring to levy war was not within the scope of 25 Edward III was countered by an official

⁶⁰ The Arraignment, Trial & Condemnation of Algernon Sidney, Esq. for High Treason (London: printed for Benjamin Tooke at the Ship in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1684), pp. 1-3. The same material may also be found in Cobbett's State Trials, Vol. IX, pp. 817-836.

interpretation of the treason law by Chief Justice Jeffreys. It was ruled that any overt act committed under one section of 25 Edward III might be used to prove a man guilty of treason under one of the other sections of the same statute. In addition, any act which showed a person's intention to compass or imagine the King's death was sufficient to prove high treason. For a person merely to imagine in his mind the King's death without declaring himself by action did not constitute treason. But if that person declared himself openly by some action, that action could be used to prove that he was imagining the King's death. Therefore, Judge Jeffreys was telling Sidney that plotting and conspiring to levy war, without actual war being levied, did constitute an overt act proving treason and did fall within the scope of 25 Edward III.⁶¹

In pursuing the Crown's case against Algernon Sidney, the prosecution utilized the testimony of the Crown's star informers along with the actual manuscripts which had been seized in Sidney's study. Robert West and John Rumsey testified as to the general existence of a Whig plot to raise a rebellion, and they linked the members of the Council of Six to the alleged secret meetings and plottings held at Thomas Sheppard's establishment in London. West and Rumsey, however, did all of this by hearsay testimony only, and Jeffreys admitted that it was hearsay. Nevertheless, such testimony was introduced under oath before the jury and allowed to stand. The stellar performance was given by Lord Howard of Escrick, who was the Crown's only real witness to show actual conspiracy on Sidney's part. With a straight

⁶¹ Trial of Algernon Sidney, pp. 47-52.

face, Howard affirmed that Algernon Sidney was one of the prime movers in the organization of the Council of Six and also in the plot to raise a rebellion. It was also alleged by Howard that Sidney had tried to coordinate the planned rebellion in England with a similar uprising in Scotland. According to Lord Howard, the rebellion was designed by the Whigs because of Charles II's misgovernment, especially his actions taken against London after the Whig attempt at excluding the Duke of York. The prosecution also contended that while attempts were being made to foment an uprising in Scotland, Sidney had written his seditious libel. Sidney's Discourses clearly demonstrated that his heart and mind were entirely engaged in rebellion because the whole purpose of the work was to convince the people of England that they had the right to set aside their King. The entire book, according to the prosecution, was an argument for the people to rise up in arms.⁶² Therefore, from the Crown's point of view, the treason case against Algernon Sidney was quite clear. Lord Howard was one witness to prove conspiracy on Sidney's part to raise a rebellion, and Sidney's manuscript papers clearly proved him guilty of imagining the King's death.

Sidney's defense was aimed at exposing the weak points in the prosecution's case and was conducted in a surprisingly calm manner, considering his reputation for having a violent temper. Since two witnesses were needed to convict in a treason case, Sidney emphasized that the prosecution had produced only one witness for the charge of levying war, and that was Lord Howard of Escrick. Sidney then proceeded

⁶²Ibid., pp. 12-27.

to undermine completely Lord Howard's credibility as a witness. He pointed out that Lord Howard had obviously been granted a Royal pardon in advance and that Howard was trying to secure his own indemnity by destroying others. Sidney even produced Witnesses, Gilbert Burnet among them, who all testified that Lord Howard was lying. Next, Sidney turned his attention to the manuscript papers which had been introduced as evidence by the prosecution. While never admitting that the papers were his, Algernon Sidney maintained that the arguments in them were obviously made upon general principles and did not apply to any government in particular. The manuscript papers in question represented merely one man's thoughts, political speculations on paper as it were, and a person should be able to write what he wanted to in private, as long as the material was not published. Besides, Sidney argued that the King had two different capacities to his existence, his natural, physical capacity as a person and his political capacity as a monarch. The statute of 25 Edward III covered only attempts to deprive the King of his physical capacity for life: it did not cover any attempts to deprive the King only of his political capacity to rule. Sidney denied that the papers found in his study imagined the death of the King, and he contended that to argue from those manuscript papers was pure conjecture by the prosecution. Moreover, mere written words did not constitute an overt act of treason. Finally, Sidney claimed that the power to determine "constructive treasons," as he mistakenly labeled Judge Jeffreys' interpretations, belonged only to Parliament, not to any court.⁶³

⁶³Ibid., pp. 27-45.

Algernon Sidney conducted a good, spirited defense on his own behalf. But Chief Justice Jeffreys issued a series of opinions and rulings of his own on the nature of treason and courtroom procedures that undermined Sidney's arguments and pushed him into a legal corner from which there was no escape. Concerning the matter of witnesses at a treason trial, Jeffreys ruled that the two witnesses did not have to testify to the same act of treason. Instead, their testimony need only show "a tendency to the same treason." Neither was Jeffreys convinced by Sidney's hair-splitting over the two separate capacities of the King. The Lord Chief Justice ruled that merely plotting to imprison the King was high treason. In fact, if any person tried to force or compel the King to do anything which he might not otherwise do, that was high treason within the scope of 25 Edward III. Conspiring to levy war was clearly within the scope of the same statute. Furthermore, words need not be published in order to be considered treasonous. Mere written words on paper constituted an overt act proving high treason, or as Jeffreys succinctly phrased it, scribere est agere (to write is to act). Clearly, the most arbitrary and questionable decision on Jeffreys' part was in allowing Sidney's manuscript of his Discourses to stand in court in place of an actual witness.⁶⁴ When Jeffreys had finished his legal interpreting, Algernon Sidney was doomed. The prosecution had its two witnesses, Lord Howard, a known informer, and some manuscript papers which had been read out of context. Jeffreys had succeeded in interpreting high treason in such broad terms that the act of conspiring to levy war could be construed as placing the King in

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 47-56.

physical danger. Therefore, both Lord Howard and Sidney's Discourses could stand as witnesses attesting that Algernon Sidney did "conspire, compass, imagine and intend" the death of Charles II.

After studying the transcript of Sidney's trial, it is very difficult not to come to the conclusion that Chief Justice Jeffreys was more zealous at times for a conviction than was the prosecution. His constant interpretations of the defendant's answers prevented Sidney from turning his trial into a platform from which he could attack England's judicial system or promulgate his own political philosophy. The interpretations and rulings by Jeffreys definitely proved advantageous for the prosecution, to say the least. The trial produced some interesting exchanges between Jeffreys and Sidney that demonstrated the unbridgeable gulf separating the High Tory from the Whig classical republican. They also demonstrated what Sidney was up against when he tried to debate Jeffreys. For instance, when Algernon Sidney explained that it was a "right of mankind" to put one's private thoughts down on paper, Jeffreys exclaimed indignantly:

Pray don'd go away with that right of mankind, that it is lawful for me to write what I will in my own closet, unless I publish it; I have been told, curse not the King, not in thy thoughts, not in thy bedchamber, the birds of the air will carry it. I took it to be the duty of mankind to observe that.⁶⁵

When Sidney was actually sentenced, another verbal exchange occurred between the defendant and the Lord Chief Justice. Sidney insisted that there was nothing in the manuscript papers found in his study that was treasonous. To this, Jeffreys replied, "There is not a line in the

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 35.

book, scarce, but what is treason." One of the other justices replied that the problem was that Sidney simply did not believe it to be treason. Jeffreys refused to let the matter rest and belabored the point relentlessly:

That is the worst part of your case; when men are riveted in opinion that Kings may be deposed, that they are accountable to their people, that a general insurrection is no rebellion, and justify it, 'tis high time, upon my word, to call them to account.⁶⁶

The opinion of the Lord Chief Justice was quite clear: Algernon Sidney's book not only encouraged but justified all rebellion.

Chief Justice Jeffreys wanted to be sure that the jury understood the dangerous and revolutionary ideas held by Algernon Sidney and expressed in his manuscript papers. At the very end of the trial, Jeffreys went out of his way to impress upon the jury that Sidney's manuscript expressed principles which were strongly reminiscent of the previous "unhappy rebellion" in the reign of Charles I. In an obviously flagrant attempt to prejudice the jury against Sidney, Jeffreys skillfully drew a parallel between Sidney's political principles and the beliefs which had been used to bring Charles I ("the late blessed King") to the block.⁶⁷ The implications of Jeffreys' maneuver were clear enough for even the dullest jury member to grasp and meditate upon. During this particular period in England, the word "revolution" in a political sense usually meant a complete cycle of political movement or development. But it was also beginning to mean a drastic change or disruption in government.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 63.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

⁶⁸ V. F. Snow, "The Concept of Revolution in Seventeenth Century England," Historical Journal, V (no. 2, 1962), pp. 167-74.

Thus, when Jeffreys drew a parallel between Sidney's political beliefs and those which had been responsible for Charles I's execution, he was implying that Sidney was indeed a "revolutionary" because he desired a return to the unhappy times of the 1640's (i.e., that a full cycle or "revolution" would take place). But Jeffreys was also implying that Algernon Sidney was a revolutionary because in his manuscript he advocated the belief that monarchs could be replaced if they did not rule properly. Algernon Sidney was dangerous no matter how you defined the word "revolutionary," and Jeffreys went out of his way to prejudice the jury in that respect.

The trial of Algernon Sidney for high treason would naturally impress a modern reader as having been incredibly unfair and a gross miscarriage of justice. But it should be remembered that this was indeed a treason trial held during a time following a great political upheaval and also at a time when the British state was definitely insecure. The court procedures used against Sidney at his trial were not really unusual when one considers both the nature of the crime itself and the period in which the trial took place. The Crown obviously must have considered Algernon Sidney to have been a dangerous fellow, because it certainly pursued him with relentless zeal and energy. Charles II undoubtedly regretted letting Sidney return to England from exile in 1677. Charles II's relentless pursuit of the Whig leaders was merely part of his concerted effort to discredit their names and destroy their party. Algernon Sidney was simply one of those Whig leaders.

The question remains, then, of what was Sidney actually guilty? That he detested the Stuarts there can be no doubt whatsoever.

A careful reading of Sidney's Discourses reveals that he was serious when he advocated armed rebellion to overthrow a tyrannical monarch, but only as a last resort after all legal methods had been used to redress grievances. This was probably Sidney's greatest mistake: he incriminated himself on paper by advocating a philosophy which he must have known would be anathema to Charles II. If he did not realize that, then he was one of the most incredibly naive men who ever lived. His second greatest mistake was in associating himself with men like Major John Wildman and Lord Howard of Escrick. Algernon Sidney can certainly be reproached for having been politically naive, foolish and reckless. Moreover, like William, Lord Russell, Algernon Sidney may very well have been guilty of misprison of treason, that is, of having secondhand knowledge of a treason plot and not reporting it to the authorities. As to whether Sidney was involved in actual treason, especially to the extent that Lord Howard claimed he was, this must remain a matter for conjecture. Lord Howard and some of the other informers were as accomplished in the art of lying as Titus Oates had been. One fact does emerge from the tangled mass of hearsay testimonies, the hints and rumors of grandiose Whig designs, and the judicial interpretations of treason. The Crown believed Algernon Sidney to be a dangerous political opponent and used the law of treason as a political weapon to get him.

On November 26, 1683, Lord Chief Justice Jeffreys sentenced Algernon Sidney to the traitor's death of hanging, drawing, and quartering. Charles II commuted that sentence to simple beheading. While awaiting his death, Sidney wrote his Apology, which he termed his "testimony unto the world." This Apology is actually a rehashing

of Sidney's treason trial, complete with specific reasons as to why he thought the trial was unfair, plus a final indictment of England's judicial system under Charles II.⁶⁹ Specifically, Sidney complained that the indictment against him was too long and involved: several crimes, each one distinct in nature, were all deliberately entangled together to confuse the issues. He denied that the Council of Six was a select body organized for the purpose of conspiracy, and Sidney further maintained that he never endeavored to take the life of Charles II. He objected strenuously to the prosecution's use of the manuscript papers found in his study. In fact, Sidney denounced the entire trial procedure as a gigantic fraud perpetrated upon him. Special vituperation was reserved for Chief Justice Jeffreys who was accused of misrepresenting the evidence at the trial and of making absurd constructions of treason that no judge had ever made before. Sidney blamed the guilty verdict upon Jeffreys because, "He did probably fear he should not be taken for Caesar's friend, if he did let this man go."⁷⁰ Jeffreys had deliberately made the law a "snare" with which to entrap Sidney. Indeed, the jury itself was "an ignorant, sordid and pecked jury" and was not composed entirely of forty shilling freeholders as the law specified for a treason trial held in the shire of Middlesex. Concluding his Apology, Sidney claimed that the tyranny of Charles I had been bad enough because of his drive for arbitrary power. But now, under Charles II "the tyranny over consciences is

⁶⁹ Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government with His Letters, Trial, Apology and Some Memorials of His Life, pp. 170-98.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 190.

principally affected, and the civil powers are stretched into this exorbitant height, for the establishment of popery."⁷¹ England was in very serious trouble, especially since some Englishmen had lost "the integrity of their principles." Sidney knew he was going to be executed and so had nothing really to lose by speaking out frankly.

Algernon Sidney was executed on the morning of December 7, 1683. Three days before the execution, James, Duke of York, had written to William of Orange and had made reference to Sidney's impending fate:

As for the news here, Algernon Sidney is to be beheaded on Friday next on the Tower-hill, which besides the doing justice on so ill a man, will give the lie to the Whigs who reported he was not to suffer.⁷²

On the day of the actual execution, James wrote to Prince William: "Algernon Sidney was beheaded this day, died very resolutely and like a true republican."⁷³ Among Sidney's last words to the sheriffs of London were, "I have made my peace with God and have nothing to say to men, but here is a paper of what I have to say."⁷⁴ Much to the chagrin of Charles II and James Duke of York, Sidney's brief paper somehow was published very shortly after his death and was circulating around London in no time. Sidney's death was mercifully quick, the head coming off at a single blow of the executioner's axe. The executioner, incidentally, had insisted upon a rather stiff gratuity from Sidney of

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 197.

⁷² Dalrymple, Memoirs, Vol. II, Appendix, Part I, p. 54.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 54-55.

⁷⁴ CSPD, Vol. CDXXXV (1683), p. 137.

nearly five guineas in advance, no doubt to ensure a quick death.⁷⁵

In his Memoirs, Sir John Verney remarked upon Sidney's almost complete indifference while awaiting death, noting, "He met death with an unconcernedness that became one, who had set up Marcus Brutus for his pattern."⁷⁶ Algernon Sidney was buried quietly at Penshurst.

Thus died Algernon Sidney the staunch classical republican and bitter opponent of Charles I, Oliver Cromwell, and Charles II. The Whig party was temporarily crushed, and some of its top leaders had been eliminated. It would only remain for James II to push the limits of the Royal prerogative power even further than Charles II had, and to lose his throne in the process. After Sidney's execution, an anonymous "Elegy on A. Sidney" was written:

But where's his wandering spirit gone,
Since here he suff'ered martyrdom?
To heaven? Oh! It cannot be,
For heaven is a monarchy.
Where then I pray? To Purgatory?
That's an idle Romish story.
Such saint as he can't go to hell?
Where is he gone, I pri' thee tell,
The learned say to Achitophel.

⁷⁵ Ewald, Life of Sidney, Vol. II, pp. 316-18.

⁷⁶ Margaret Mary Verney, ed., Memoirs of the Verney Family From the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660-1696 (4 vols.; London: Longman, Green and Co., 1899), Vol. IV, p. 272.

⁷⁷ Fink, The Classical Republicans, p. 149.

PART TWO: HENRY SIDNEY

C H A P T E R V I

DIPLOMACY AND THE EXCLUSION CRISIS

Much in contrast to Algernon Sidney stood his youngest brother Henry, who was Algernon's junior by nineteen years. Whereas Algernon was proud, short-tempered, and difficult to get along with, Henry Sidney was easygoing, polite, charming, and unassuming. Whereas Algernon could go out of his way at times to irritate and upset his contemporaries, his brother Henry was the ideal picture of a charming courtier who got along well with nearly everyone. Henry Sidney possessed those personal qualities and social graces which allowed a person of this type to move easily and freely within the ranks of those families which really counted in seventeenth-century England. Known to different people as "Handsome Henry" or "le beau Sidney," Henry Sidney reveled in the social life of Restoration London, a lifestyle that repelled his brother Algernon. Henry Sidney possessed quite a reputation as a ladies' man among his contemporaries, and he supposedly developed a distinct weakness for the bottle before he was forty.¹ In fact, Henry Sidney's image has suffered continuously at

¹Nesca Robb, William of Orange: A Personal Portrait (2 vols.; London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1966), Vol. II, p. 138.

the hands of historians ever since Jonathan Swift first viciously characterized him as "an idle, drunken, ignorant rake, without sense, truth, or honor."² There does seem to be some truth in this characterization, however, because in the early 1680's Henry Sidney abandoned his mistress of twenty years, Mrs. Grace Worthley, and their child. Sidney even refused to listen to her pleas for financial support, hiring bodyguards instead to protect himself against her threats.³ On the whole, though, Swift's opinion of Henry Sidney should be viewed as an obvious attempt at character assassination. Compared with his brother Henry, Algernon led a distinctly austere lifestyle.

These two brothers, moreover, differed from each other in other respects besides their personal qualities. Algernon was staunchly opposed to tyranny of any kind, and he measured governments and political institutions by a very rigid standard. His principles were clear and distinct, and he defended them consistently throughout his life. In contrast to this approach, Henry Sidney was mainly concerned with his own survival and in pleasing the right people. He was not driven by the same type of ambition for power that drove his nephew Robert Spencer, the second Earl of Sunderland, or that drove the Hyde brothers or even John Churchill. Henry Sidney had a streak of laziness in him, but he did possess enough good sense and native intelligence to utilize his personal gifts for his own advantage. Henry Sidney was a Whig only in the sense that he consistently favored the Duke of York's

² Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. I, Introduction, p. xxxvi.

³ Ibid., pp. xxvi-xxxv.

exclusion. From 1679 until the end of his life, he was entirely devoted to William of Orange. But this was a personal attraction between the two men themselves, and it did not really involve a rigid adherence to any political or constitutional principles on Sidney's part. In short, Henry Sidney was an expert in the art of political survival in the decidedly vicious and unstable political atmosphere of late seventeenth-century England. Algernon Sidney could never climb off his pedestal and adjust himself to the seamy world about him. By contrast, Henry Sidney never bothered to construct a pedestal for himself, and yet he survived the political turmoil in admirable fashion. This is as much a commentary upon the times themselves as it is upon the differences between these two Sidney brothers.

Henry Sidney was the youngest son of Robert Sidney, second Earl of Leicester, and Lady Dorothy. He was also the second son to bear the name Henry, the first son of that name having been born in 1621 and surviving only a year.⁴ Henry Sidney was born in Paris in the spring of 1641, toward the end of his father's term as English ambassador to France. Henry returned to England in October of that year after the second Earl had been appointed lord lieutenant of Ireland. Henry's boyhood was spent at Penshurst and at Althorp, the Spencer family estate. Henry Sidney was only a few months older than his nephew Robert Spencer, who was born in Paris on September 5, 1641. The two of them were raised together and developed an intimate friendship and relationship which would prove extremely useful to both

⁴ Letter from the county archivist, Kent Archives Office, Maidstone, Kent, England, July 9, 1974.

of them later on in their lives. From his youth, Henry Sidney was favored by both of his parents, especially by his mother who, on her deathbed, beseeched her husband to take special care of "our dear boy." The Countess left her favorite son two hundred pounds per year for twenty-one years and also a considerable quantity of personal possessions such as her French plate, porcelain, books, and furniture.⁵ On April 5, 1675, by means of a codicil to his will, the second Earl of Leicester left his son Henry the manor and estate of Long-Itchington in Warwickshire, plus twenty-five thousand pounds.⁶ This youngest son of the Sidneys was well provided for by his parents.

The early years of Henry Sidney's adulthood can best be described as having been leisurely for the young man. In 1658 Sidney briefly accompanied his nephew and Spencer's Oxford tutor, Dr. Thomas Pierce, abroad to Europe. In July of 1663, Spencer began a three-year trip abroad with his uncle Henry Sidney and also with his brother-in-law, Henry Savile. At various stages of this "grand tour," the trio was joined by William Penn, Sidney Godolphin, Henry Compton, and George Savile.⁷ In fact, until Robert Spencer married in 1665, the years immediately following the Stuart Restoration were a period of fun and good times for Sunderland, Henry Sidney, and the Savile brothers. Henry's brother Algernon at that time was brooding in exile and scheming with English exiles in the Netherlands. After the Earl

⁵ Collins, Sidney Letters and Memorials, Vol. I, pp. 161-2. Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. I, Introduction, pp. xiv-xv.

⁶ Collins, Sidney Letters and Memorials, Vol. I, pp. 161-2.

⁷ J. P. Kenyon, Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland 1641-1702 (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958), pp. 5-8.

of Sunderland married, Henry Sidney lived the life of a fashionable "beau" in Restoration London, but he remained linked to the Sunderlands by strong ties of friendship and affection.⁸

Besides putting his social graces to good use during this time period, Henry Sidney also managed to obtain a few positions at court during the 1660's and 1670's. In 1665 Sidney secured an appointment as Groom of the Bedchamber in the Duke of York's household. He was also appointed as Master of the Horse to the Duchess of York. Trouble developed, however, and Sidney was dismissed from his positions when he carried his infatuation for the Duchess too far for James to ignore. Henry Sidney's relationship with the Duchess of York became a Court scandal, but as Sir John Reresby noted in his memoirs:

She was a very handsome woman, had a great deal of wit; therefore it was not without reason that Mr. Sidney, the handsomest youth of his time, then of the Duke's bedchamber, was so much in love with her, as appeared to us all, and the Duchess not unkind to him, but very innocently. He was afterwards banished the Court for another reason, as was reported.

Ten years passed before Henry Sidney received another position at Court. He remained at Court with his nephew, Lord Sunderland, Sir George Savile, and Sidney Godolphin rather than follow the Earl of Shaftesbury into opposition against Danby.¹⁰ In 1675 Sidney was appointed to the office of Gentleman and Master of the Robes for Charles II, a very lucrative post worth five hundred pounds per year.

⁸ J. P. Kenyon, "The Earl of Sunderland and the Revolution of 1688," Cambridge Historical Journal, II (no. 3, 1955), pp. 272-96.

⁹ Browning, ed., Memoirs of Sir John Reresby, p. 55.

¹⁰ Kenyon, Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, p. 29.

In 1678 Henry Sidney was made colonel of a regiment of foot. Up to the early months of 1679, when the Exclusion Crisis began to develop in Parliament, Henry Sidney had not displayed any real talent for political intrigue or diplomatic work. At the age of thirty-eight, Sidney had spent most of his adult life either traveling around Europe or else lounging about the city of London enjoying the good life. His reputation at this time was largely a negative one. Despite this, on June 1, 1679, Charles II informed Henry Sidney that he would be sent as Special Envoy to the United Provinces at The Hague, replacing Sir William Temple. According to Sidney's Diary, Charles II had not intended to send him to this important post, but William of Orange, Stadholder of the United Provinces, had asked specifically for Henry Sidney.¹¹ Prince William, a cold man but a very keen diplomat and judge of men, had met Henry Sidney during one of his visits to England and had been impressed with the young socialite.¹² Charles II may have had his reservations over Prince William's apparently unlikely choice of Mr. Sidney as Special Envoy, but the appointment gave Henry Sidney the opportunity to display the distinct talent he did have for political intrigue and diplomacy. As one historian has analyzed the situation, it would eventually become apparent that Henry Sidney's rather dubious external habits merely veiled his considerable political ability and diplomatic tact.¹³

¹¹ Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. I, p. 1.

¹² Henri and Barbara Van Der Zee, William and Mary (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 152.

¹³ Foxcroft, Life of Sir George Savile, Vol. I, p. 164.

It soon became apparent that Henry Sidney's diplomatic mission to the United Provinces would concern two important matters, and both matters were related to the unfolding Exclusion Crisis in England. In his official capacity as Charles II's Special Envoy to the United Provinces, Sidney was charged with the task of negotiating a stronger and more permanent alliance with the Dutch States General. An alliance had been negotiated the year before with the Dutch when Sir William Temple had been the English envoy, but the alliance had fallen short of what the English had desired. The Dutch were leaning toward a general alliance, or league, that would include Spain, the Empire, and any other European power that distrusted the French. Charles II, by contrast, insisted upon a new, single treaty between just England and the United Provinces that would "guarantee" the peace between France and Spain. A new treaty had to be negotiated first; then, other European powers could be brought into the arrangement after the basic foundation had been constructed. Charles II was extremely cool towards the idea of making Spain a partner in any general anti-French league, because of the contempt he had for the weak Spanish monarchy.¹⁴ To secure a new treaty with the Dutch, Henry Sidney found himself working closely with his nephew, the second Earl of Sunderland, who was the Secretary of State for the North at the time, and also with Sir William Temple, who was then on the Privy Council.

In order to fulfill his official capacity as Special Envoy, Henry Sidney discovered that he would have to overcome a number of complex and interrelated problems. For one thing, he would have to

¹⁴ Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. I, pp. 87-8, 110-14.

prove to a number of people that he was worthy of the appointment. One of those people was his own brother Algernon, who was reported to have viewed the project as a joke, rather than as something serious.¹⁵ Henry was untested and untried in diplomatic work, and he would have to establish himself with the Dutch States General and also with leading Dutch citizens. He could rely upon advice from Temple and Sunderland, and he could also be assured that he had at least one potential friend at The Hague in the person of William of Orange. But even with these advantages bolstering his position, Henry Sidney would have to seize every opportunity and apply himself to the task of negotiating with the Dutch.

The main problem for Henry Sidney as Special Envoy to the States General would be the Dutch themselves and their own assessment of English affairs and of Charles II and his intentions. There was an active "peace" faction centered at Amsterdam, and this faction, which was composed of wealthy Dutch merchants, was very susceptible to French pressure and threats exerted by Louis XIV's ambassador at The Hague, Jean-Antoine de Mesmes, Count d'Avaux. This peace faction usually favored a "soft-line" approach to relations with France, fearing for Dutch trade and commerce if it did otherwise. Opposed to this peace faction was the "Orange" faction that followed Prince William, who took a decidedly hard-line approach to France, viewing that nation as a threat to European peace and security. Henry Sidney, who was anti-French himself, had to deal with both factions.

¹⁵ Dalrymple, Memoirs, Vol. II, First Appendix, pp. 261-2. (Paul Barillon to Louis XIV, December 14, 1679)

But, in addition to their constant preoccupation with French intentions, the Dutch were also concerned over events in England. As Sunderland pointed out to his uncle in a letter at this time, the Dutch were very concerned over the unsettled state of affairs in English politics, and this concern was definitely related to the Dutch reaction to French diplomatic pressure.¹⁶ To the Dutch, the English Exclusion Crisis decidedly weakened England's position at the negotiating table. On the one hand, England was asking for a strong treaty of "guarantee" with the Dutch, a treaty that would very likely involve the commitment of English troops and English money on the Continent. This would involve approval by Parliament. On the other hand, Parliament, especially the Commons, demonstrated that it was not about to agree to anything until the matter of exclusion had been dealt with. Charles II was just as determined to preserve the principle of hereditary succession. With English politics in a turmoil, the Dutch were understandably hesitant about trusting England's ability to fulfill her obligations in any defensive treaty. As it eventually turned out, the Dutch were anxious for Charles II to come to some sort of agreement with his Parliament, even if it meant the Duke of York's exclusion. If Charles II desired to cut an imposing figure in European affairs, he would have to put his domestic affairs in order first. This would give strength to England's position at the negotiating table. Added to the Dutch concern over England's domestic political weakness, was the nagging distrust they had regarding Charles II's actual sincerity in wanting a treaty in the first place. The Dutch were fearful that

¹⁶Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. I, p. 111.

perhaps the English King's overtures to them were merely a diversion to mask his real intentions, a separate Anglo-French treaty that would leave the Dutch isolated. After all, the Dutch themselves had done nearly the same thing the previous year at Nijmegen. Henry Sidney had his work cut out for him in his official capacity of negotiating with the Dutch.

By the early summer of 1679, it was clear that the Exclusion Crisis in England would not be of short duration and that it was having an effect upon Anglo-Dutch diplomacy. Even before Henry Sidney had left England to assume his post as Special Envoy, it was made clear to him by certain pro-William supporters at Court that he was to have a second and "unofficial" capacity as a diplomat. As it turned out, Henry Sidney would be as much the official envoy of Charles II to the Dutch States General as he would be the personal envoy and contact man of Temple, Sunderland, Halifax, Godolphin, and a few others to William of Orange himself. Algernon Sidney, who was living in London at that time, wrote to Henry Savile in Paris in July and tried to assess his young brother's diplomatic appointment:

I have long since found that the design of sending H. Sidney into Holland was like the rest of Sir William Temple's projects, a matter of great depth, and kept so close, that not one of them would speak to me of it.

The group referred to by Algernon as "them" was in reality this close and clannish group of court politicians and office holders that had refused to join Shaftesbury in opposition, though they themselves (with the exception of Halifax) favored the Duke of York's exclusion.

¹⁷Algernon Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government With His Letters, Trial, Apology and Some Memorials of His Life, pp. 93-4.

The "project" that no one would clarify for Algernon's benefit, involved using Prince William of Orange as a counterweight to both the Catholic Duke of York and the Protestant Duke of Monmouth. The ultimate goal of "Temple's project" was to entice Prince William to make a trip to England during the Exclusion Crisis in order that he might influence a settlement between Charles II and Parliament. The medium through which this group hoped to make its plan operational was Henry Sidney, the Special Envoy to the States General.

Sir William Temple, who was credited by Algernon Sidney as being the mastermind of this "project", was attempting to implement his own foreign policy through the medium of Henry Sidney. Temple, a skilled diplomat and expert in European affairs in his own right, felt that France was definitely a threat to the peace and security of Europe. Therefore, English policy should be directed toward the preservation of Flanders against any French designs. To do this, it was imperative that the English Court and nation be united at home. To Temple's way of thinking, the political situation in England divided the nation into two warring factions, and this division prevented any meaningful involvement in Continental diplomacy. Without help from England, the smaller countries in Europe would eventually have to give way to French designs and pressure.¹⁸ Sir William gave Henry Sidney considerable "coaching" in relation to both of Sidney's duties as a diplomat. Sidney noted in his Diary that Temple "advised not to mistrust Holland in their trade, commerce, or anything else, for he was sure we should

¹⁸ Jonathan Swift, ed., The Works of Sir William Temple (4 vols.; Edinburgh: printed for G. Hamilton, et al., Glasgow, 1754), Vol. I, Memoirs, pp. 468-70.

find a faithful alliance there."¹⁹ Both Temple and Sidney agreed that Prince William should make a trip to England as soon as possible, and if he did, he could bring a treaty for a strict alliance between England and the United Provinces along with him.²⁰ It all sounded so neat and almost predestined, with Sir William Temple and Henry Sidney designing the maneuver.

Prince William of Orange, who became the focal point for the designs of Temple, Sunderland, Sidney, and others at the English Court, found himself in a difficult position in 1679. William was the son of Charles I's daughter, Mary, and William II of Orange. Therefore, after the Duke of York and the Duke's two daughters, Mary and Anne, William stood next in line to the English throne. This was assuming that neither Charles II nor James would produce a legitimate son. In addition to this, however, William was married to James's eldest daughter, Mary, and this factor greatly increased his interest in England's Exclusion Crisis. If James were to be excluded from the succession, William stood a chance of becoming the successor to the throne. As Prince of Orange and Stadholder of the United Provinces, William had a twofold interest in English politics. First, he wanted a strong foreign policy from Charles II that would entail a general alliance against France. This was impossible as long as English politics remained in a state of turmoil. Second, William was naturally interested in his own and in his wife's interests regarding the English throne. Therefore, William was quite willing to listen to members of

¹⁹ Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. I, p. 10.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

the anti-York faction in England when they approached him through Henry Sidney over the possibility of making a trip to England in 1679. Despite the urgings from Sidney and his friends back in England, however, Prince William realized that such a trip in the midst of a political crisis might produce the wrong result, thus damaging his image both in England and in the Netherlands. William felt that it was urgent that England's domestic affairs should be put in order, if only to get a strong foreign policy from Charles II. But he was very wary and cautious over what he should do, since the wrong move from him at the wrong time might prove disastrous for all parties concerned.²¹

The maneuvering and intriguing to bring Prince William to England began in early June of 1679 and were in full swing before Henry Sidney even officially began his duties at The Hague in mid-July of that year. Sidney's Diary provides ample evidence that not only was Sidney himself an enthusiastic supporter of the project from the beginning, but that a number of anti-York politicians at Court were using the occasion of Sidney's appointment to build connections for themselves to William. On June 6, Sidney noted in his Diary that he and his nephew Sunderland both agreed,

that we thought it would be very good for him and everybody else, for him to come over in October, and take his place at the council and in the House of Peers; and we thought it would be a great strengthening to our party.

Sidney even proposed to Sunderland that William might be granted the Dukedom of Gloucester.²² In that same month the Duke of Monmouth was

²¹The best and most convincing analysis of William's policy and intentions can be found in Stephen Baxter's excellent biography entitled William III (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1966).

²²Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. I, pp. 3-4.

dispatched to Scotland by Charles II to put down the Revolt of the Covenanters, a task at which he was successful. Charles II's use of his illegitimate son caused some concern among Sidney's group that the Duke's success in Scotland might enhance his position in England as a Protestant champion. According to Sidney, "These, with several other things, made us conclude how necessary it was for the Prince to come to England, nobody to know it but Sir William, Lord Sunderland, and I."²³ It is quite clear from Sidney's Diary entries, however, that by the end of June, Viscount Halifax and Sidney Godolphin had been informed of the plan and had approved of it.²⁴ Just prior to Sidney's departure for The Hague in mid-July, Sir Arthur Capel, the Earl of Essex, presented Henry Sidney with a letter for William and explained to Sidney how advantageous it would be if William were to come to England. In this letter Essex addressed himself to Prince William as follows:

Upon so good an opportunity as Mr. Sidney's going to wait on Your Highness, I could not omit the giving Your Highness assurance of my real devotion to your service. All good Protestants here do agree in this, that a firm conjunction between England and the States of the United Provinces is the only expedient now left to preserve both; and therefore I cannot but congratulate Your Highness on this subject, when two so powerful interests do thus happily conspire in doing that which is for your advantage.²⁵

In addition, the Earl's younger brother Sir Henry Capel was a backer of the whole project to bring William to England. All of these men made a

²³ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 15-19. Viscount Halifax was created the Earl of Halifax on July 16, 1679, and Marquess of Halifax on August 22, 1682.

²⁵ Nicolaas Japikse, ed., Correspondentie Van Willem III en Hans Bentinck (4 vols.; The Hague: 1927-37), Vol. II, part 2, p. 297. Sidney, Diary, Vol. I, p. 29.

point of keeping in contact with Henry Sidney after he had arrived at The Hague.

The diplomatic maneuvering and arm-twisting necessary to convince Prince William to journey to England constitute a major theme in Henry Sidney's Diary, and the effort that Sidney made to achieve that end occupied a great deal of time during his first few months in The Hague. Early in September of 1679, Sidney noted that William was as yet not convinced of the wisdom of going to England during the Exclusion Crisis. In fact, William saw no advantage at all in making such a trip. Sidney endeavored to convince him otherwise, arguing that such a trip would be of great service not only to William himself, but to England as well. Sidney confided that "I told him that the Duke would never inherit the Crown, and he is of that mind; and if the succession is not settled somewhere, it will certainly turn to a Commonwealth."²⁶ After two days of discussions with Sidney over this matter, William was still not convinced of the wisdom of making a trip to England. Undaunted, Sidney merely increased the pressure upon William:

But I told him the Monarchy was absolutely lost, unless he recovered it. He is convinced the Duke [of York] will never have the Crown, and I find would²⁷ be very willing to be put into a way of having it himself.

Somehow or other, using either his patience and charm or the power of persuasion, Henry Sidney finally managed to wear down William's resistance to the proposed trip. On September 7, Sidney communicated

²⁶ Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. I, p. 129.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 130.

to his nephew Sunderland the long-awaited news, plus some suggestions of his own:

The Prince was not easily to be persuaded that his coming would be of any advantage, but he is at last, and bids me write to you to know what is the best time, either before the first of November this style, or after the last, for he must be here [The Hague] the whole month of November. The design of bringing him into the Council and House of Lords he likes well; but he doubts it will not be, because he cannot take the oath of allegiance. If you can find an expedient for it, he desires you send it to him. I think it would do as well to have²⁸ him created Duke, though he left England the next day.

Henry Sidney appeared to be on the threshold of bringing Sir William Temple's "project" to fruition.

By mid-September, however, a rapid succession of events in England and a reevaluation of the situation by Prince William drastically altered the entire situation. Charles II had undergone a serious illness, and the Duke of York had returned from his semi-exile in Brussels to be with his brother. Consequently, the Duke of Monmouth had been sent into exile, and the Catholic Duke was now accepted back at Court. William of Orange, from his vantage point at The Hague, feared that this sudden turn of events meant that James now "had the King's ear." In addition, he strongly suspected that Charles II had given his brother assurances that Parliament (i.e., the Second Exclusion Parliament) would be dissolved if it took up the matter of the succession. Therefore, William judged that the time simply was not right for him to make a "flying trip" to England. If the new Parliament, which was scheduled to meet the following month, took up the business of succession and exclusion while William was in England, he feared

²⁸Ibid., pp. 130-1.

that the Duke of York would personally blame him. Also, if Charles II had to dissolve Parliament to save his brother with William present, William feared he might be blamed for this, too.²⁹ Ever the diplomat, however, William told Henry Sidney that he would leave the door open on the project of a proposed trip, provided that the English political situation improved. Concerning William's attitudes, Sidney recorded the following notation:

All that he desires for the present is that he might be declared the third heir to the crown; and he does advise the King by all means to agree with his Parliament. He is for having acts passed to exclude all Catholic kings, without naming the Duke, and if he was in the House, he believes he should give his vote for it.³⁰

The English political situation got worse instead of better, and the project of a trip to England for William, pushed so hard by Henry Sidney and his nephew Sunderland, had to be shelved until a more opportune time arrived.

While Henry Sidney and his nephew Sunderland were conducting the maneuvering with regard to William's trip, Sunderland was conducting some intriguing of his own on a project that came dangerously close to undermining Sidney's position at The Hague and ruining England's position in Continental diplomacy. The project involved Sunderland's establishing himself with the French connection at Whitehall of Charles II, the Duchess of Portsmouth, and Paul Barillon, the French ambassador.³¹ But, it also involved Sunderland's very untimely angling for a possible

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 142-44.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 143.

³¹ Louise Renée de Kéroualle, Duchess of Portsmouth, was one of Charles II's mistresses. She had been a lady-in-waiting to Charles II's sister, Henrietta, Duchess of Orléans.

Anglo-French alliance that would have isolated the Dutch. Henry Sidney was alerted as to what was developing at the English Court by a frantic communication from his nephew's wife. In mid-August the Countess had written to Sidney:

I have somewhat on my spirits, that I must of necessity communicate to you, but 'tis a secret of such vast consequence, that I am ruined if it be known to any body living. Therefore I dare not venture it but by an express, and then in cipher.³²

The letter alluded to by the Countess has not survived, but Sunderland's biographer is probably correct in interpreting her great "secret" as being a warning that her husband was in fact "double-dealing" Henry Sidney and his friends.³³

This devious maneuvering on Sunderland's part came at a most inopportune time for all parties concerned, for the main thrust of French diplomacy soon became apparent. Through his ambassador at The Hague, Louis XIV was exerting considerable pressure on the Dutch to enter into a French alliance that would isolate England. By September and October of 1679, the Dutch were understandably worried because the French ambassador, Count d'Avaux, was working overtime to undermine England's image at The Hague. In addition, he was "barnstorming" various Dutch towns and using a combination of soft words and threats in an effort to convince them that a close French alliance was in their best interests. It appeared that either the English were about to abandon the Dutch for the French, or they were so paralyzed by the turmoil of exclusion politics that decisive action on their part was

³² Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. I, p. 85.

³³ Kenyon, Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, p. 36.

impossible. Charles II's wavering and Sunderland's scheming were aided by Paul Barillon, who began spreading rumors about English intentions to panic the Dutch. In October Henry Sidney was warned by Conrad Van Beuningen, the leading and richest citizen of Amsterdam, that if England did not do something soon to help the Dutch, the States General would have to make a treaty with France.³⁴ These developments naturally placed a heavy burden of responsibility upon Sidney's shoulders.

As October drew to a close, Henry Sidney took an urgent leave of absence from his post to communicate to Charles II and Sunderland exactly what was happening in the Netherlands, and no doubt to inform them concerning France's true intentions. If Sidney's conferences with Charles II and Sunderland resulted in any harsh recriminations or frayed nerves on Sunderland's part, there is no direct evidence of such results in Sidney's Diary. Sidney had a peculiarly cryptic way of writing his Diary that bordered on almost complete indifference at times. It is almost as if Henry Sidney were bored with the whole business, yet such was not the case as events would clearly show. One can only surmise that the Earl of Sunderland was beginning to stew in his own juice and perhaps to regret his earlier intriguing with the French. It is uncertain exactly what ensued behind the closed doors at Whitehall during Sidney's leave of absence, but a change in attitude is clearly discernible in Sidney's new instructions from Charles II and Sunderland. On November 15

³⁴ Background material for the early autumn of 1679 is detailed in Sidney's Diary, Volume One. See in particular pp. 147-49 and pp. 169-71.

Sidney recorded that:

I am to endeavor to hinder any alliance with France. I am to tell the Prince that the King will prorogue the Parliament, that there was no remedy, that they would have his crown. He [Sunderland] desired me to tell him how he was his servant, and that it must be he at last that must settle us.³⁵

Even in the face of possible disaster, Sunderland never missed a chance to build connections for himself.

When Henry Sidney resumed his post at The Hague, the diplomatic maneuvering to upset French designs began in earnest. The struggle to neutralize French diplomacy and prevent a Franco-Dutch alliance lasted until January of 1680, and the main responsibility for action devolved upon Henry Sidney. He had to combat not only the pressure and threats which the Count d'Avaux was applying relentlessly against the Dutch, but Sidney discovered that he also had to deal with the rumors being circulated by Barillon through the Dutch ambassador in London. In addition, Sidney had to counteract the pronounced Dutch anxiety over England's apparently hopeless political crisis, an anxiety that only increased when the Dutch learned of Charles II's prorogation of Parliament. Sidney had to convince the Dutch that Charles II was in a better condition in England than they thought him to be in, and he had to persuade them that the French rumors that Charles II merely desired a French treaty for himself were obvious nonsense from Barillon and the Count d'Avaux.

In his diplomatic struggle against d'Avaux, Sidney worked in close harmony with Prince William, and William constantly gave Sidney advice as to what tactics he should use. In essence, Sidney did

³⁵Ibid., p. 186.

exactly what the Count d'Avaux was doing, only he did it better. He followed the French ambassador around the Provinces and spoke in the same towns and to the same people d'Avaux did, articulating the English position communicated to him from Charles II through Sunderland. Sidney read memorials before the States General Assembly, and these memorials were proofread and revised when necessary by William himself to ensure they would have the best possible effect. According to James Ralph, who wrote a history of this period based largely upon pamphlet literature, Henry Sidney simply told the Dutch that Charles II would view any defensive alliance between the United Provinces and France as a league against him. If, however, the Dutch rejected the French overtures and proposals, Charles II "would not only punctually comply with what was stipulated and agreed in the defensive treaty of 1678, but also stand by them to the utmost, in case they were attacked by France."³⁶ Sidney and William were in constant touch during this struggle, and Prince William exerted all the personal influence he could muster upon the individual deputies of the States General Assembly. He kept Henry Sidney constantly posted as to what the French were doing: any information William was privy to, he shared with Sidney. Prince William and Henry Sidney worked together doggedly to defeat the French diplomatic efforts, but this alone was not enough to win over the Dutch.³⁷

Some type of direct and decisive action was needed from

³⁶ James Ralph, The History of England During the Reigns of K. William, Q. Anne, and K. George I (2 vols.; London: printed by Daniel Browne, 1744), Vol. I, p. 495.

³⁷ Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. I, pp. 195-6, 213, 227-8.

Whitehall, and it came in early January 1680 from Charles II himself. In response to urgent requests from Prince William and Henry Sidney, Charles II sent a special, sealed letter to William via Sidney, and the contents of this letter had an immediate effect upon the Dutch and Prince William. According to Ralph, Charles II personally assured the States General Assembly not only that he would assist the Dutch in time of need, but also that he would meet with Parliament in April.³⁸ Acting upon Charles II's assurances, the Dutch rejected the French treaty.

Because of the part he had played in the struggle, Henry Sidney suddenly found himself in the spotlight. Sidney had kept Whitehall well informed of the struggle against d'Avaux with a regular flow of dispatches from The Hague. In response to these dispatches Sunderland complimented his uncle in a letter dated January 13, 1680:

His Majesty bid me tell you that he is very well satisfied with the success your negotiations will, in all appearances, have; and that he does entirely approve of all your proceedings in it, as having done what you ought in pursuance of the orders he sent you.³⁹

As far as William was concerned, Sunderland instructed Sidney to "pray assure his Highness the King considers his interests as his own." On the same day the Countess of Sunderland wrote to Sidney and assured him that his diplomatic efforts had gained a considerable reputation for him in London. She further claimed that her husband was so pleased with Sidney's performance and with the memorials he had read before the Dutch States General that he remarked to some friends: "Let them but

³⁸ Ralph, History of England, Vol. I, p. 496.

³⁹ Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. I, pp. 229-30.

know how poor Harry Sidney has behaved; I don't care a pin for myself."⁴⁰
 Now that the immediate crisis was over, Sunderland could heave a sigh of relief. It was largely due to the efforts of his uncle and Prince William that Sunderland's own position had been saved and that a possible English diplomatic disaster had been avoided.

After only six months on the job as Special Envoy, Henry Sidney had proven his ability in relation to both of his duties as a diplomat. In his official capacity as Charles II's representative at The Hague, Sidney had reacted swiftly when he realized that his nephew's infernal scheming with Barillon and Portsmouth could have ruined everything. Alerted by Sidney's dispatches and his quick trip to England, both Charles II and Sunderland realized that their flirtation with the French could only have led to possible diplomatic isolation for England. Henry Sidney deserves much of the credit for thwarting the diplomatic efforts of the Count d'Avaux in the autumn of 1679. In addition, Sidney had proven his value as the unofficial "contact man" between the Court group in England led by Temple, Sunderland, and Halifax, and Prince William at The Hague. Henry Sidney had worked skillfully to bring Sir William Temple's "project" into realization, only to have his work negated at the last minute by events in England. Sidney became his nephew Sunderland's chief communications link with William of Orange, transmitting not only the Earl's official business as Secretary of State for the North, but also his never-ending attempts to ingratiate himself with William for any future contingency. Sunderland even used his wife's correspondence with Henry Sidney to

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 231.

build up his connections with Prince William. Other members of Temple's group, such as Halifax, Godolphin, and Sir Henry Capel, also consistently used Henry Sidney as their main connection to William of Orange.

In addition to these accomplishments and services, Henry Sidney was able to do something very important for himself at the same time. While working in his various capacities as a diplomatic representative and as a contact man, Sidney was able to build up his own personal connection and rapport with Prince William. Apparently, Sidney possessed the type of personality that allowed him to win the friendship of a man who otherwise was exceedingly cold and austere. All of the social graces which had made "le beau Sidney" such a social success in London, worked to his distinct advantage at The Hague also. Not only did William and Sidney work together constantly, but they frequently dined together and attended various social functions at night, such as tea parties and card parties. Sidney's social life became really an extension of his official work, since he and William frequently discussed business and the affairs of England as they dined or hunted together. Sidney, moreover, quickly established himself with important people like William Bentinck, Conrad Van Beuningen, and other Dutch officials or friends of William. But the important thing is that Henry Sidney was able to construct for himself an excellent relationship with Prince William. In the course of William's stay at The Hague, a firm and deep friendship eventually developed between these two, and by the time Sidney was recalled from his post in June of 1681, he had become entirely devoted to William. Sidney built upon this personal connection he established with William and used it during James II's brief reign to become the head of William's

intelligence network in England.

The diplomatic victory which Henry Sidney had helped so much to achieve in January of 1680 did not settle by any means the original, basic problem of an Anglo-Dutch treaty. Charles II still wanted a new treaty with the Dutch, while the Dutch, still fearful of offending the French, could only offer to reaffirm the treaty of 1678 with England. The Count d'Avaux applied continuous pressure on the Dutch, taking advantage of Dutch fears and the still active "peace faction" at Amsterdam. But this problem assumed a secondary importance as Sunderland began steadily pressuring Henry Sidney in the spring of 1680 to get William to agree to make a trip to England. Sunderland had been toying with the idea of having Prince William make an appearance when the next Parliament met. By the end of April, however, Sunderland had decided that a trip by William should take place before any future parliament had a chance to meet.⁴¹ Sunderland, ever the incessant schemer, may actually have thought that a sudden appearance by William would have the effect of neutralizing the Duke of York's influence at Court, or of bringing some degree of stability to a worsening political situation. Whatever reasons prompted the Earl's maneuvering, it is clear that he and a number of others in the long run underestimated Charles II's determination to preserve his brother's right of succession. Constant pressure was applied upon William through Sidney to get him to accept Sunderland's plan. But by the end of May, Sidney noted William's intentions: "As to his coming to England, he thinks it will do him a great deal of hurt here [the Netherlands], may make him worse with the

⁴¹ Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 51-2.

Duke, and he does not know what good it can do."⁴² William seemed firm in his decision not to come, but Sunderland refused to abandon his "grand design."

Henry Sidney spent the month of June, 1680 in England on official leave. Supposedly, it was a combination of rest and business that included conferences on Dutch affairs and on a new Spanish treaty that was signed on June 11 at Windsor. Sunderland had something else up his sleeve, however, besides official business, and Sidney was a willing partner in this particular maneuver by his nephew. On June 15 Sidney recorded the following entry in his Diary: "They think his being here will put an awe upon people and hinder them from being stark mad, which is all we desire."⁴³ Sidney was referring to Sunderland, the Earl of Halifax, Sidney Godolphin, and Lawrence Hyde, who was a son of Edward Hyde, the first Earl of Clarendon. Sidney huddled with these politicians at Althorp and sometimes at Sheen, Sir William Temple's estate. The conferences were actually strategy sessions masterminded by Sunderland for the purpose of figuring out a way to get William to visit England before Parliament met. This group felt that William's presence was urgently needed in England to combat the influence of Monmouth, who was presenting himself to the nation as a Protestant champion. This was basically the same project that had been designed in June of 1679, but there was much more urgency attached to it now. This group of politicians also wanted the Dutch ambassador to do his part by urging Charles II to come to an agreement with his next parliament. Once again, Henry Sidney was to serve as the contact

⁴²Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 59-60.

⁴³Ibid., Vol. II, p. 75.

man and connecting link between Sunderland and his friends in London and Prince William in The Hague. Before returning to his post, Sidney received his final instructions from his nephew: Sidney was to see his "uttermost endeavors with the Prince to come over, that without it nothing can be done."⁴⁴

Henry Sidney returned to The Hague in early July dutifully to perform his assigned task for Sunderland and also to secure Dutch ratification of the new alliance between Spain and England. The Earl of Sunderland was determined not to give up the project upon which he placed so much importance. Three letters, dated July 21, from Sunderland to his uncle represent the climax of the Earl's drive to bring Prince William to England before the next Parliament.⁴⁵ They clearly demonstrate the hold which the entire project had come to have on Sunderland's mind, and they also reveal a growing sense of desperation on Sunderland's part. In his biography of Sunderland, J. P. Kenyon points out that by this time, the Earl had already decided to support exclusion. He was willing to gamble everything now upon the proposed three-way alliance with Spain and the Duke of York's exclusion, for which he needed William's help.⁴⁶ The first letter was meant for Sidney's eyes only and revealed part of Sunderland's approach:

The Prince's coming over is so necessary that I do not at all doubt that he will be persuaded to it. For, all that you and I talked of just before you went away is far

⁴⁴ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 77. See also pp. 75-6.

⁴⁵ J. P. Kenyon, "Charles II and William of Orange in 1680," *BIHR*, XXX (1957), pp. 95-101. The article contains the three letters from Sunderland to Sidney printed in full.

⁴⁶ Kenyon, Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, pp. 51-2.

advanced. In a word, the King and his people must agree at their next meeting, and the King is convinced of it.⁴⁷

The Earl sounded out his uncle as to whether William would be willing to meet certain conditions for a visit; namely, would he allow himself to be guided by Charles II. Sunderland was clearly counting upon future events to turn the way he wanted them to turn, and he admitted frankly to Sidney that the upcoming Parliament would be "the critical time to settle or ruin us all." Sunderland did not realize at the time how prophetic his words would be.

The remaining two letters of July 21, 1680, were for William to read. In one, Sunderland admitted that he had decided to approach Charles II himself on the possibility of a trip by William. The Earl felt certain that an approval by Charles in advance would be the best possible argument in try to convince William to come. According to Sunderland, Charles II thought that William's coming "may be of great use provided he does it willingly with a resolution of assisting and supporting him in those measures he is now upon."⁴⁸ In the last letter, Sunderland expressed his supreme confidence that Prince William's presence in England would actually help create an understanding between Charles II and his Parliament. He could think of no better position for William to be in than that of a "mediator between the King and his people by whose means all jealousies may be removed." Saving the most attractive bait until the end, Sunderland stated that Charles II personally had commanded him to write Henry Sidney and instruct his

⁴⁷Kenyon, "Charles II and William of Orange in 1680," p. 99.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 100.

uncle that he might persuade William to come to England.⁴⁹ Perhaps Sunderland viewed the arts of diplomacy and politics as being similar to a game of chance, a personal vice of his for which he paid dearly every time he lost heavily at London's fashionable gambling houses. On this occasion, Sunderland was gambling a great deal just on William's coming to England, and he was matching wits with two minds which were far more subtle than his own, those of Charles II and William of Orange.

As so often happens when a design or plan is based mainly upon suppositions and future conditional events, when one variable factor turns against the designer, the entire structure collapses in a heap of rubble. The Earl of Sunderland's "great design" for the fall of 1680 is a case in point. It contained a number of variable factors, and they all turned against the Earl. To begin with, the Dutch rejected the Spanish treaty offered to them by Sidney and his nephew. In addition, despite Henry Sidney's persuasive arts, Prince William coolly rejected the bait offered to him by Sunderland in July and refused to come to England in the midst of a political and constitutional crisis. William, no doubt, wanted to "wait upon events" in England and see if Charles II could control the situation. There was simply too much at stake both for himself and his wife to risk everything at that time by a trip that would make him appear more like a meddler than a mediator. The last blow came when the Earl of Halifax, one of the original group had been maneuvering since June of 1679 to bring William into England, led the fight in the House of Lords against the Second Exclusion Bill. Sunderland helped his own sinking ship to the bottom

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 100-101.

with his own vote for the Duke of York's exclusion. Sunderland's great gamble had failed, and the position he had rashly assumed to be firm quickly turned to mere quicksand beneath his feet. Even though he gamely fought on and continued his efforts to entice William over to England in November and December of 1680, his position was really untenable. Before the end of January, 1681, Sunderland had been forced from office in disgrace.

Henry Sidney was in England from September 16 until November 1, 1680, and he found himself swept up in the hectic pace leading up to and including the meeting of the Second Exclusion Parliament. Sidney had been elected one of the two M.P.'s from Bramber, but he made no notations in his Diary to indicate that he participated in any of the parliamentary proceedings during this important Parliament. It is clear from his Diary, however, that Sidney spent much of the time from September 16 to October 21 conferring with Sunderland, Temple, Halifax, Godolphin, Lawrence Hyde, and Sir Henry Capel. These politicians most likely discussed the project regarding William of Orange and also their strategy for the upcoming Parliament. Parliament began on October 21, and Sidney remarked cryptically in his Diary on October 28, "I asked the King his commands, and he immediately fell upon the proceedings in Parliament with great heat."⁵⁰ It is unclear whether Sidney had personally done something to incur Charles II's wrath, or whether the King was merely venting his spleen in general upon a handy bystander. An eighteenth-century French scholar, Paul Rapin de Thoyras, claimed that Charles II was angry with his Special Envoy and Master of the

⁵⁰ Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. II, p. 116.

Robes because Henry Sidney had spoken in favor of and had voted for the exclusion of the Duke of York.⁵¹ Henry Sidney makes no mention in his Diary of having done that. It is just possible that he may have voted for one or more of the petitions and resolutions which were considered by the Commons between October 21 and 27. If indeed Henry Sidney did any voting and speaking at all in the Commons before he left London on November 1, no proof can be found in either his Diary or in Cobbett's Parliamentary History that he did so. It is certain, however, that Henry Sidney was at his diplomatic post when the actual fight over the Second Exclusion Bill occurred, first in the Commons and then in the Lords.

England's political and constitutional crisis had a disturbing effect upon concerned parties at The Hague. William, who relied upon Henry Sidney for information on English affairs, wrote to Sir Leoline Jenkins, who earlier had replaced Sunderland as Secretary of State for the North, and he expressed to Jenkins his concern over the inability of Charles II and Parliament to reach an agreement on anything. He said, "I foresee infallibly an imminent danger for the King, the royal family, and the greatest part of Europe."⁵² Disturbed over reports about the extent of the crisis in England, William wrote another letter to Jenkins a few days later. His concern was not only for the present, but for the future as well:

You know I have always wished a good intelligence between the King and his Parliament; and that I wished to have been able to contribute to it.... I must also own to you that I was much surprised to learn of mitigations of the royal authority being spoken of, in case the Crown should fall to

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 116, footnote 1.

⁵² Ibid., p. 127.

a Papist. I hope that his Majesty will not incline to suffer ⁵³ anything to be done so prejudicial to all the royal family.

William realized that if any part of the Royal prerogative were to be bargained away by Charles, it would be irretrievable in the future for any successor. In addition to William's concern, several deputies to the Dutch States General Assembly had become agitated over the Exclusion Crisis in England. Henry Sidney wrote to Sunderland about their concern:

Several of the States coming to me, crying they were lost and ruined, that they had rejected all other alliances, and thrown themselves entirely upon England: and now they saw there was like to be such a disunion, that they ⁵⁴ did almost despair of any support or assistance from thence.

Shares in the Dutch East India Company had fallen, and apparently the only cheerful face at The Hague belonged to the Count d'Avaux, who was described by Sidney as being in a state of "great joy" over England's political turmoil.

According to Sir William Temple, one of the main reasons why Charles II was on such bad terms with Sunderland by the end of 1680 was a memorial the King had received from The Hague. This paper strongly implied, among other things, that Charles II should not break with Parliament, even if it meant passing the Second Exclusion Bill. This tactic caught Charles II and his advisers by surprise: "For they believed it a thing directed and advised from hence; and, in a word, by Lord Sunderland to Mr. Sidney his uncle, as a matter that would be of weight to induce the King to pass the bill." Charles II suspected Sunderland of having written the offensive paper, but Temple was

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 138-9.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 132.

certain it had been written by Gaspar Fagel, the Grand Pensionary of Holland. He, in turn, had talked Henry Sidney into sending it to Charles II.⁵⁵ Stephen Baxter, Prince William's biographer, insists that Fagel and Sidney concocted the document together in an obvious eleventh-hour attempt to influence Charles II's mind on the Second Exclusion Bill.⁵⁶ Gilbert Burnet, who was very close to the Princess Mary, claimed that Sunderland and Sidney both encouraged the States General to draw up the memorial. Gaspar Fagel managed it, and Prince William unofficially approved and supported it.⁵⁷ Whoever was responsible for writing the memorial, it caused repercussions that were felt immediately back at The Hague.

Henry Sidney casually mentioned in his Diary for December 15, 1680, that he had just received a "reprimand" from his immediate superior, Sir Leoline Jenkins, for his part in the whole episode.⁵⁸ Apparently, Charles II was displeased with Sidney for having sent the memorial, because Jenkins implied that the document caused a mild uproar when it was read before the King and his committee of intelligence: "All my Lords took exceptions to the paper, as taking too much upon it to advise in our great affairs." Jenkins cautioned Sidney that as a minister in the foreign service of Charles II, it was his job to proofread papers of this type before forwarding them to Whitehall. Any

⁵⁵ Swift, ed., Works of Sir William Temple, Vol. I, Memoirs, pp. 462-3.

⁵⁶ Baxter, William III, p. 171.

⁵⁷ Burnet, History of His Own Time, Vol. II, p. 118.

⁵⁸ Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. II, p. 142.

potentially offensive passages were to be either deleted completely or otherwise toned down so that the papers would not offend His Majesty. Sidney could do that, or he could refuse to send the papers in the first place. In other words, if the Dutch could not mind their own business, Sidney should let them do their meddling through their own ambassador in London. But he should not appear so eager to let the Dutch use his own office and position in their attempts to influence affairs in England.⁵⁹ Henry Sidney wrote to Jenkins in response to his reprimand, and with an air of hurt innocence he expressed surprise over Jenkins' previous letter. In an outburst of mild sarcasm, which was extremely rare for Henry Sidney, he inquired whether Charles II and the Lords on the committee were only interested in receiving Dutch news sheets and information about the fashionable night-life at The Hague. Sidney could not resist a parting jab at Jenkins by telling his superior that he had just seen the great comet of 1680.⁶⁰ All sarcasm aside, Henry Sidney would have to watch himself in the future, for he was apparently under suspicion as being too pro-Dutch, and perhaps too close to William of Orange.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of Henry Sidney was his ability to survive and take care of himself, even in the face of adversity. He was usually able to help his own cause by utilizing his connections with the right people for his own advantage. As a case in point, ever since August 6, 1680, Henry Sidney had been casting covetous eyes upon the position of commanding general of the six English and Scottish regiments then in the service of the Dutch. The

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 143-4.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 145-6.

former commander, Thomas Butler, Earl of Ossory and eldest son of the Duke of Ormonde, had died suddenly on July 30. Sidney thought he saw a perfect opportunity to advance himself and at the same time remain in the United Provinces close to William. The status of those six regiments had never been clearly defined. Collectively, the King of England had no control over them; however, by courtesy, the King had been allowed to nominate their commanding officer.⁶¹ In August Sidney had presented himself to William as the best candidate to fill the vacant position. William agreed with Sidney, but he cautioned him that nothing could be done until Charles II was informed of the idea and had approved of it.⁶² The project had to be shelved for several months due to all of the events relating to the second Exclusion Parliament, but Henry Sidney never abandoned his ambition to command those six regiments.

Henry Sidney's design on the Earl of Ossory's vacant position assumed an extra degree of importance and urgency in early June of 1681 when Sidney was recalled from his diplomatic post at The Hague. This action by Charles II should be viewed as part of a general housecleaning by the King of pro-Williamites from positions of importance. Not only had Sidney's nephew, Sunderland, been deprived of his important position as Secretary of State for the South, but he had also been removed from the Privy Council. In addition, Sir William Temple, who had been an avid pro-William supporter for some time, was removed from the Privy

⁶¹F. C. Turner, James II (New York: the Macmillan co., 1948), p. 349.

⁶²Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. II, pp. 93-4.

Council. Henry Sidney was merely the last of the group to get the axe. Sidney's dismissal from office was probably the culmination of a number of factors: his connection with Sunderland and Temple, his stand in favor of the Duke of York's exclusion, and the memorial he had sent to Charles II from the Dutch. Something else which definitely worked against Henry Sidney was the ill-feeling which the Duke of York had against him. The Duke's dislike of Sidney is clearly revealed in a letter which James wrote to Lawrence Hyde on December 14, 1680. After first attacking Sunderland, the Earl of Essex, and Sidney Godolphin, the Duke made these remarks about Henry Sidney:

I see his Majesty has taken the paper sent him over by Mr. Sidney as he ought to do, and am glad he has sent a reprimand to him about it; and methinks it would be requisite to remove him from that employment, and to have somebody there his Majesty could trust, which he cannot do him. Besides that, it must be very prejudicial to his Majesty's affairs to have such a one as he there, who is so related, and has such dependence on his nephew, I mean Lord Sunderland.⁶³

According to one historian, after James had been banished to Scotland in the fall of 1680, he began to view himself as the victim of a conspiracy, whose members included Temple, Sunderland, Prince William, and Henry Sidney.⁶⁴ If so, this would very easily explain the Duke's attitude in his letter to Lawrence Hyde. The reader should recall that the Duke had not been particularly enamored of Algernon Sidney either.

Henry Sidney may have lost his job in Charles II's foreign service, but as future events would clearly demonstrate, he still

⁶³Samuel Weller Singer, ed., Correspondence of Henry Hyde, Earl of Clarendon and His Brother Lawrence Hyde, Earl of Rochester (2 vols.; London: Henry Colburn, 1828), Vol. I, pp. 47-51.

⁶⁴Baxter, William III, p. 170.

retained his important connection with William of Orange. Sidney now attempted to put that connection, which he had been carefully building for two years to good use for himself. Even though the Oxford Parliament had just been dissolved and nothing had really been settled from the Whig point of view, William was seriously considering making a trip to England. Prince William had two main reasons for favoring a trip at this time (June, 1681). First, William's personal relations with Charles II needed considerable improvement, especially since William had expressed his great displeasure with Henry Sidney's replacement at The Hague, Sir Bevil Skelton. Second, William wanted to convince Charles II that Sidney should be given command of the six regiments in Dutch service. Therefore, Henry Sidney immediately began sounding out his contacts in London, friends like Temple, Godolphin, and Halifax, as to the advisability of a visit by William.

In response to Sidney's overtures and constant proddings, both Temple and Godolphin wrote letters to William on July 28, 1681. Temple realized that William probably considered such a trip to be necessary to repair the sagging relations between himself and Charles II, but Sir William himself was now decidedly cool to the whole idea. His real objection to such a trip Temple refused to entrust to his letter. But he did venture this advice:

I am not apt to believe you will find at this time what you may propose by a journey into England, nor that any discourses between his Majesty and your Highness are likely to end in any mutual satisfaction or agreement upon the present state of public affairs.

If William was that convinced that a trip to England would prove valuable, he should direct all of his correspondence to Charles II

through Henry Sidney.⁶⁵

In contrast to Temple, Sidney Godolphin was much more enthusiastic about William's journey to England. In approaching Godolphin initially, Henry Sidney had presented the idea of a trip as if it had originated with William himself, whereas in reality, both Sidney and William had worked out the plan together. Godolphin admitted that the "good understanding" between William and Charles II was in danger of being lost unless William made some initiative. Henry Sidney had suggested that Prince William should use the pretext of a social visit to camouflage his real intentions. Godolphin was against this, however, and reasoned that William should approach Charles II directly and tell His Majesty exactly what was bothering him, namely, Sir Bevil Skelton's appointment and Charles II's refusal to accept Henry Sidney as the commanding general of the six British regiments. An honest, straightforward approach would work wonders.⁶⁶

Henry Sidney followed up his person diplomacy in England with a lengthy letter of his own to William. This letter was actually a progress report for William's benefit on the status of affairs which affected both of them, and it included an up-to-date analysis by Sidney of the English Court and certain people in it. Sidney stated that since Charles II's sweep of pro-Williamites from the Privy Council, the men who seemed to have the most influence with the King were "the Duke's creatures." These and other inconvenient characters

⁶⁵ Dalrymple, Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. II, Appendix, Part One, pp. 2-5.

⁶⁶ Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. II, pp. 209-12.

were attempting to portray William as an enemy of Charles II. According to Sidney, these men at Court and on the Privy Council were doing everything they could to cause a breach between Charles II and William. This was obviously bait by Sidney to convince William that he simply had to come to England. Sidney claimed that Temple, Godolphin, and Halifax were still enthusiastic supporters of William, even though Halifax was sometimes obliged to agree to matters which were "against his inclinations." He strongly hinted that perhaps Lawrence Hyde could not be trusted, because he was "for what the Duke would have, right or wrong." Sir Edward Seymour, a former Speaker of the House of Commons, was named by Sidney as being the chief villain at Court, and the one person who was working hard "to make the King and your Highness fall out." Concerning Sidney's own position and the job he was seeking, he had the following analysis for William:

These Lords [Halifax and Hyde] say that I am very likely to contribute a great deal towards a breach between the King and the Prince. I told them I had rather be hanged. Their reason is that the King is resolved never to give his consent to my having the command of the troops; that if your Highness and I persist in it, his Majesty would take it ill of your Highness, and never be kind or reconciled to me.

Feigning that familiar air of hurt innocence, Sidney asserted that he simply could not understand why Charles II would not allow him to have the position of commanding general that he wanted so badly, especially since Charles II had promised Sidney the position in September of 1680. At this point, Henry Sidney had not yet made a satisfactory submission to Charles II, and he was probably counting heavily upon a trip by William to help out his cause.⁶⁷

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 212-219.

Prince William's trip to England, for which Henry Sidney had been carefully preparing the groundwork for two years, finally became a reality in late July and early August of 1681. Despite Sidney's planning and his high expectations for what such a trip might accomplish, the trip itself proved to be a failure. Charles II refused to consent to giving Henry Sidney the command of the six British regiments, even though he could not prevent William from giving Sidney the command of one of those regiments. In addition, according to William's biographer, Prince William failed in his attempts to get help from Charles II to combat French aggression on the Continent. The trip by William did not bring about an improvement in relations between the two sovereigns. In fact, as Baxter points out, "William and Charles parted in a very bad mood, each regretting the visit had taken place."⁶⁸ Henry Sidney's connection had not worked this time the way that he had wanted.

Because Sidney's Diary entries become very sporadic after June 28, 1681 (the final entry being dated January 13, 1682), it is difficult to trace Sidney's whereabouts and activities for the rest of Charles II's reign. He spent the remainder of the year 1681 mainly lounging about London and Althorp. He also conducted a whirlwind courtship of Lady Ogle, who later married Charles Seymour, the seventh Duke of Somerset.⁶⁹ On January 13, 1682, Henry Sidney took his leave of Charles II and paid a visit to William in the Netherlands, but by March 21 of that year Sidney was back in England for the races at Newmarket.⁷⁰ On December 7, 1683, a warrant was issued to the sheriffs

⁶⁸ Baxter, William III, pp. 173-75.

⁶⁹ Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. II, pp. 222-4.

of London and Middlesex to allow the delivery of Algernon Sidney's body to his brother Henry, Master of the Robes, for a private burial.⁷¹

Later that same month, Henry Sidney petitioned the Crown for a grant of the forfeited real and personal property of his recently executed brother Algernon. It seems that Algernon had died indebted to his brother Henry for fifteen hundred pounds, and there was also a mortgage on the land that Algernon had inherited from his father.⁷² In 1684 Henry Sidney finally got around to making up his accounts as Master of the Robes for the two-year period which ended in 1681. After all expenses had been deducted, there was a surplus of almost two thousand pounds, which Henry was allowed to keep as a "free gift without account."⁷³ Henry Sidney must have reached a reconciliation with Charles II for his past "offenses," because he eventually received the command of the six British regiments, only to lose it a few months after James had succeeded his brother as King.

Henry Sidney had proven himself in a number of ways to a number of different people between 1679 and 1682. He had proven his worth as a Special Envoy by alerting Whitehall as to the true intent of French diplomacy in the fall of 1679. Anyone who worked as hard as Sidney did to combat the Count d'Avaux could hardly have been "an idle, drunken, ignorant rake, without sense, truth, or honor." In addition, Sidney had quickly established himself as the major communication link

⁷⁰ CSPD, Vol. CDXVIII (1682), p. 133.

⁷¹ CSPD, Entry Book 54 (1683), p. 138.

⁷² CSPD, Entry Book 55 (1683), p. 173.

⁷³ CSPD, Entry Book 335 (1684), p. 21.

between his nephew, Sunderland, and Prince William at The Hague. In fact, he had been utilized by an entire group of pro-William exclusionists at the English Court for the same purpose, communication with William of Orange. At times, Henry Sidney was operating as an unofficial news service between London and The Hague. More important for Sidney's own future, however, was the fact that he had quickly established an excellent working relationship and deep friendship with William of Orange. Henry Sidney was one of the very few Englishmen whom William liked and trusted. The two of them worked well together, and if Sidney's Diary is a true indicator of their compatibility, there were no secrets between them. While he was Special Envoy, Henry Sidney was actually William's chief source of information for English affairs and also for conditions at Charles II's Court. Realizing Sidney's closeness to the Prince of Orange, politicians and statesmen wishing to communicate with William did so through Henry Sidney. In effect, then, Sidney became William's trusted eyes and ears, mainly because William could rely completely upon him. This important connection established by Henry Sidney would prove even more valuable during the brief reign of James II, when William would call upon his trusted friend to render an even more valuable service for him.

C H A P T E R V I I

JAMES II AND THE DUTCH CONNECTION

Despite Henry Sidney's connections with a number of outright Whigs and Court exclusionists, it is not as easy to prove or document his Whiggism as it is his outspoken brother Algernon's. Unlike his brother Algernon, Henry Sidney left no written explanation of his own political or constitutional beliefs. Algernon Sidney's Whiggism, as it emerges from his Discourses, is clear and unmistakable, and Algernon practiced it with a rigid consistency. Henry Sidney's Diary and surviving letters do provide the historian with valuable insight as to his methods and particular style of operation, but they provide very little help in pinpointing any principles or theories which might be termed "Whiggism." For the most part, therefore, one must allow Henry Sidney's actions to speak for themselves and to reflect any principles he might have had.

Based on this approach, Henry Sidney can be called a Whig for two main reasons. First of all, he definitely favored the exclusion of the Duke of York from the succession to the throne. He did not, however, trust the Earl of Shaftesbury and did not follow the Earl into active and recognizable opposition during the Exclusion Crisis. His opposition was more covert in nature, and it can best be described as "backroom maneuvering" that was carried on with other

anti-Yorkists at Court of varying degrees of commitment. Because he apparently avoided Shaftesbury like the plague, Henry Sidney's name was never associated with the Whig discussions at Thanet House or with the shady intrigues and designs that were connected with the Rye House episode. Since Henry Sidney was not an opponent of Charles II, as Algernon was, he could remain at Court and utilize the King's power of patronage for his own benefit. Since his primary goal in life seems to have been his own advancement, Henry Sidney probably saw no real advantage in abandoning his Court connections for the wilderness of political opposition.

Directly related to his opposition to James was Henry Sidney's firm attachment to Prince William of Orange as a Protestant champion. In this respect, Sidney can be identified with other middle-of-the-road Whigs like Sir William Temple, Sir Henry Capel, and Sir Henry Savile. It is clear that Sidney regarded Prince William as the logical and best successor to Charles II, provided that the Duke of York's exclusion had become a reality. Looking into the immediate future, Henry Sidney thought that the best prospects for the English monarchy's survival lay with William of Orange, not with the Duke of York, and certainly not with the Duke of Monmouth. It is also clear that Sidney's commitment to Prince William bordered on hero-worship of the Dutchman. Henry Sidney never bothered to articulate his own political or constitutional principles (if indeed he had any), but his actions for the most part identify him as a middle-of-the-road Whig who was interested in just three things: the Duke of York's exclusion, Prince William's success in whatever he chose to do, and his own personal survival and advancement.

Henry Sidney had realized early in life that one of the best ways for the youngest son of an aristocrat to survive was to utilize any existing connection he might have and to build new ones whenever possible. He proved the validity of this generalization during his two-year term as Special Envoy to the United Provinces. His connection with his nephew, the second Earl of Sunderland, was a well-known fact of English Court life, although having the Earl as his relative proved to be a distinct liability at times for Henry Sidney. When this connection failed him, Henry Sidney had his burgeoning Dutch connection to fall back upon. It was only natural, then, during the brief reign of James II for Henry Sidney to resort to this connection with Prince William at The Hague and exploit it for all that it was worth. Not only did Sidney and William continue their close personal friendship during the reign of James II, but William continued to utilize Sidney as a source of information on English affairs and as a contact man with certain individuals in England. These were both roles that Sidney had learned to play to perfection. The reign of James II, then, saw Henry Sidney continue his Dutch connection and build upon it until he became a very important, though inconspicuous, member of Prince William's intelligence network.

As Prince William gradually came to the realization in 1687 that his personal intervention in English domestic affairs would be necessary, Henry Sidney's connection with the Prince of Orange became closer and more valuable for both of them. Even though it is clear that Sidney acted as the head of the English end of William's intelligence system from the end of 1687 through the summer of 1688, it is very difficult to document his actual day-to-day activities,

because of the lack of source materials that might throw some light on those activities. Considering the type of work in which Sidney was engaged for William, this lack of documentation is not too surprising. Though it may not be too surprising, it is certainly a frustrating circumstance for the historian to deal with. The documents and materials which have survived do provide valuable information on Henry Sidney's activities during this time, but often the information is only of an indirect nature. Nevertheless, a general pattern of activity can be established for Henry Sidney during 1687 and 1688, and some specific activities, which definitely link Sidney with Prince William's "grand design" against England, can be accurately documented. One of the best indicators that Henry Sidney did indeed perform a very valuable service for William during 1687 and 1688 is that in the years immediately following James II's "abdication," Henry Sidney was awarded a number of honors and high offices. Not only was Sidney created Viscount Sidney of Shepey and eventually the Earl of Romney, but he also served as Secretary of State for the North for two years and for a brief time as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. William of Orange was by no means a "soft touch" when it came to rewarding or honoring people. But the nature and the quantity of the honors bestowed upon Henry Sidney indicate that William was very much in his debt for valuable services rendered.

On February 16, 1685, Charles II of England died, and the Catholic Duke of York became King James II, an event which Whigs like Algernon Sidney had dreaded with an almost paranoiac fear. Henry Sidney, always eager to please, tried his best to remain in the good graces of James II, but he was not successful. Sidney was involved in

a curious incident during James II's coronation. It seems that when the Archbishop of Canterbury placed the crown on James's head, it immediately began to fall off. According to a popular story, Henry Sidney was close enough to James so that he could reach out and steady the crown on James's head. As he performed this potentially symbolic gesture, Sidney was reported to have said: "This is not the first time, your Majesty, that my family has supported the Crown."¹ If this story is true, James II neglected to show proper gratitude to Henry Sidney for his "support."

James II insisted upon Sidney's resignation as commanding general of the Six British regiments in Dutch service. This move by James should have come as no surprise, because his dislike for Henry Sidney is easily documented. In 1681 James had written to William regarding the effort to give the Earl of Ossory's command to Sidney:

I should be very sorry to see Mr. Sidney at the head of such a body of men of his Majesty's subjects that is so influenced by some of the greatest enemies I have in the world. I could say much more upon this subject to let you see how very unfit a thing it would be to let him have such a command.²

Despite this, when James II insisted upon Sidney's recall, Prince William intervened with the King on Sidney's behalf. On June 25, 1685, William wrote the following to James II:

I cannot dissemble with your Majesty that I could have wished your Majesty had thought proper to have left him here, since I can assure you that there never was a minister in this country who succeeded better, or who did more faithful services. It is also impossible that any person can be more

¹F. M. G. Higham, King James the Second (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1934), p. 219.

²Marion E. Crew, William Bentinck and William III (London: John Murray, 1924), p. 64. Also, supra, p. 202.

zealous to your service, for which I can answer.³

The strength of William's appeal on Sidney's behalf certainly reflects the closeness with which Henry Sidney stood to William, and it also shows the high regard William had for his friend. The Prince's effort was wasted, however, and Sidney had to surrender his command.

Out of work and out of favor, Henry Sidney naturally resorted to his Dutch connection in the summer of 1685. In August of that year, Sidney returned to the United Provinces with William Bentinck, Prince William's most trusted Dutch adviser. Bentinck had been in England on a diplomatic mission to try and hold James II to his promise of renewing the existing treaties between England and the United Provinces. Sidney and Bentinck had become fairly close during Sidney's two-year term as Special Envoy, and they had frequently entertained each other at various social functions. But Sidney, who always referred to Bentinck in his Diary as "Mr. Bentem," was never as close to William Bentinck as he was to the Prince of Orange. While Henry Sidney was in The Hague renewing his Dutch connection, his nephew Sunderland, who was once again enjoying Court favor as Secretary of State for the South, instructed the English envoy at The Hague to "cooperate unreservedly" with Henry Sidney and report any important matters directly to him.⁴

Henry Sidney returned to England in late September of 1685 and immediately began performing a role which, by that time, he must have become accustomed to doing. That is, Sidney performed the valuable function as contact man between William of Orange and certain

³ Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. II, pp. 251-3.

⁴ Kenyon, Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, p. 121.

individuals in positions of influence at Court. This time, the target was Lawrence Hyde, now Earl of Rochester; and Prince William was anxious to contact Rochester on a matter of great importance, the details of which William refused to entrust to any letter. Instead, he entrusted Henry Sidney to deliver an oral message to the Earl of Rochester. Prince William addressed Rochester in the following manner:

I cannot let Mr. Sidney depart for England without renewing to you the assurances of my services, and beg you to do him good in all that is in your power, and although I know you are his friend, I hope that, for the love of me, you will have some consideration for him, knowing how much I esteem⁵ him; and certainly he merits it as much as any man I know.

William also made it perfectly clear to Rochester that Henry Sidney had his complete confidence in all matters. The important affair which Sidney was to discuss with Rochester, however, remained a secret.

This interesting correspondence between Prince William and the Earl of Rochester, with Henry Sidney as an involved third party, continued through October of 1685. Rochester's answer to William's letter is permeated with an air of guarded caution. He was not very specific about William's affair which Henry Sidney had communicated to him, but Rochester did say that he foresaw several difficulties connected with it. Concerning William's request in relation to Henry Sidney, Rochester said:

As for what you are pleased to command me in relation to Mr. Sidney himself, your Highness may be confident that all the little services I can do him shall never be wanting to him, and I am the more obliged to it, for his having let your Highness know that I have at all times been his servant, and so I will be to anybody that you are pleased to think fit to

⁵ Singer, ed., Hyde Correspondence, Vol. I, p. 162.

recommend to me.⁶

Whatever it was that Prince William and Henry Sidney were trying to get from Rochester must remain a matter for speculation. It may have concerned James II's two daughters, Mary and Anne, and their rights of succession. Or Prince William may have been using Henry Sidney to find out how close Rochester actually stood to James II, since the Earl was indeed a brother-in-law to the new King. In June of 1681, Sidney had cautioned William that perhaps Lawrence Hyde was a bit too close to the then Duke of York to be trusted.⁷ This particular mission by Sidney may have been a follow-up on Sidney's original evaluation of Hyde. Whatever the case, Prince William continued to press Rochester on the matter of this affair.⁸ If this secretive business reveals nothing else, however, it does reveal that Henry Sidney had Prince William's complete confidence. It also demonstrates that Sidney in 1685 was establishing a pattern of activity for himself which he would continue throughout the remainder of James II's reign.

Henry Sidney's activities become extremely difficult to trace for the remainder of 1685 and for all of 1686. In the summer of 1686 Prince William used Sidney for the same purposes as he had in the previous autumn. In a letter written on August 19, 1686 (N.S.), to the Earl of Rochester, William mentioned that he was responding to an earlier letter from the Earl which Sidney had personally delivered to

⁶ Japikse, ed., Correspondentie, Vol. II, p. 717.

⁷ Supra, p. 205.

⁸ Singer, ed., Hyde Correspondence, Vol. I, p. 164.

him.⁹ Prince William also mentioned that he had just recently paid two visits to the Elector of Brandenburg at Cleves. The purpose of these visits by William was to lure the Elector into the League of Augsburg against France. It is known that Henry Sidney, along with William Bentinck and Gilbert Burnet, had accompanied Prince William on at least one of those trips to Cleves for what amounted to a nine-day conference with the Elector.¹⁰ It is also known that after the conference at Cleves, Henry Sidney proceeded to Düsseldorf where he made contact with a certain John Hutton, who later became the Princess Mary's personal physician and one of William Bentinck's chief agents for affairs in England.¹¹

The exact nature of Sidney's activities at Cleves and at Düsseldorf is not at all clear. Prince William may have been integrating his trusted English friend along with others into a more thorough and comprehensive diplomatic and intelligence network during the years 1685 and 1686. His missions to Cleves and Düsseldorf may very well have been the culmination of two years of training for Henry Sidney in European diplomacy and intelligence gathering. But this is educated speculation based primarily upon Sidney's past record and upon events in 1688. One thing is clear, however, and that is, when it came to contacting and working with people, Henry Sidney was a very skilled and smooth operator.

⁹ Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁰ John Carswell, The Descent on England (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1969), p. 79.

¹¹ Kenyon, Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, p. 150.

For a period of several months which spanned the fall of 1686 and the winter of 1687, Henry Sidney mysteriously disappeared into Italy. No documents survive to shed any light at all upon why Sidney suddenly went to Italy after his mission to Düsseldorf or even what he did there. It is as if the earth simply swallowed him up. Two theories have been advanced to explain Sidney's strange disappearance in Italy. According to Gilbert Burnet, who was privy to a number of secrets connected with William of Orange, Henry Sidney was more or less forced to "exile" himself to Italy for several months. This was because he had become very apprehensive of the dangers that his Dutch connection had placed him in. Because Henry Sidney by 1686 had become too well-known as a close confidant of William of Orange, he decided (or it was decided for him) to travel in Italy for several months.¹²

James Ralph, the eighteenth-century English scholar, however, proffered an alternate explanation for Sidney's sudden trip to Italy. Ralph suggested that it was no coincidence that Sidney was in Italy at the same time the Earl of Castlemaine was there on a mission from James II to the Pope.¹³ According to Ralph, Henry Sidney was sent to the Vatican on a special diplomatic mission by Prince William:

He was admitted to several private audiences in the closet, when his Excellency could scarce be favored with a public one: that tho' Sidney had no public character, he was instructed by the Prince of Orange with some secrets to be communicated to the Pope: and that some people have even

¹²Burnet, History of His Own Time, Vol. II, p. 494.

¹³Roger Palmer, Earl of Castlemaine, had married Barbara Villiers, one of Charles II's cast-off mistresses. James II used Castlemaine as his diplomatic representative to the Vatican.

fancied that the Revolution was one of them.¹⁴

Admittedly, James Ralph's explanation of Sidney's Italian sojourn is much closer to pure speculation than is Gilbert Burnet's explanation. Besides, Burnet himself was a contemporary of Sidney and Prince William, and he even served as the Princess Mary's private chaplain. Therefore, the weight of opinion is probably more on Burnet's side than it is on Ralph's. Nevertheless, Henry Sidney's mysterious trip to Italy in 1686 and 1687 has never been satisfactorily explained.

By 1687, William of Orange had put together an extensive and very smoothly operating intelligence system for himself. The purposes of the system were to gather information about English affairs and to establish and maintain contacts with as many potential opponents of James II as possible. In order to circumvent the ordinary mail service, Prince William used a number of the operatives to carry materials into England and to transport letters out of England in 1687 and 1688.¹⁵ But the normal mail service was also used, and when it was, precautions were taken to guarantee the security of the operation. One of the favorite methods used was to scramble secret messages written in invisible ink along with ordinary, innocuous business correspondence. When the business letters were soaked in special solutions, the secret messages would appear in what had been blank spaces.¹⁶ Propaganda

¹⁴ Ralph, History of England, Vol. I, p. 957.

¹⁵ Some of these letters for the year 1687 have survived and can be found in Dalrymple's Memoirs, Vol. II, Appendix, pp. 190-98 and pp. 202-211.

¹⁶ J. R. Jones, The Revolution of 1688 in England, pp. 223-24. Carswell, Descent on England, p. 131.

materials were even smuggled into England in wholesale quantities aboard Dutch cargo ships. It would be an understatement to say that during 1687 and the first half of 1688 the traffic in agents and printed materials in and out of England was decidedly "brisk." Perhaps the most amazing thing about this operation itself is that during its entire existence, only one agent was ever apprehended, and he was not caught until the early autumn of 1688.¹⁷ Either William was able to maintain a degree of discipline and secrecy that would be the envy of twentieth-century governments, or the English officials were utter fools as to what was going on around them.

Though William of Orange utilized the services of a number of men during 1687 and 1688 for intelligence purposes, he depended for the most part on just four trusted friends and confidants to organize and sustain his important work. Prince William relied heavily upon William Bentinck; Everaard van Weede, lord of Dykvelt; Frederick van Nassau, Heer van Zuylestein; and Henry Sidney as special, personal ambassadors to England. Bentinck, Dykvelt, and Zuylestein managed the Dutch end of William's network, and the leading part at the English end was played by Henry Sidney. The three Dutch representatives were used to explain William's own views and opinions to various important groups and individuals in England. The information they gathered was used to supplement reports which William received from his English agents and from Arnoud van Citters, the Dutch ambassador in England. Henry Sidney was valuable because of his connections with a number of aristocrats like Halifax and Sunderland and also because of the

¹⁷ Jones, The Revolution of 1688 in England, p. 224.

contacts he had maintained with a number of officers in James II's army. Many of those officers would later defect to William's cause after he had invaded England.¹⁸ Sidney was also valuable because Prince William trusted him completely. It was William's policy during 1687 and 1688 to have at least one of these four trusted confidants always in England, and oftentimes two of them would be there. Indeed, these four men, Bentinck, Dykvelt, Zuylestein, and Sidney, apparently had no difficulty in deceiving James II and in maintaining secrecy for William's plans.

Ever since Jonathan Swift first dumped ridicule and scorn upon Henry Sidney, many historians have found it difficult to take Sidney very seriously, either dismissing him as a dissipated flunkey or simply ignoring him. Because of this, Henry Sidney's role in the events leading up to William's invasion have never been fully understood, much less completely appreciated. This is true despite the fact that Gilbert Burnet clearly identified Henry Sidney as the one person "who had the secret of all the correspondence that was between the Prince and his party in England."¹⁹ Burnet stood very close to both William and Mary during 1687 and 1688, and he was privy to much of what was being designed concerning England in those years.

A very recent interpretation, based on exhaustive research, by Professor J. R. Jones should go a long way toward revising and modernizing the standard image of Henry Sidney. According to Professor Jones, "Sidney consciously used his reputation as a man of pleasure to

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 216-22, p. 226.

¹⁹ Burnet, History of His Own Time, Vol. II, p. 483.

cover his clandestine work." By his very nature and personal talents, Henry Sidney was well suited to any situation or job that required the arts of personal negotiation and persuasion. Sidney may have been a hard-drinking man of the world, but he was also a suave, self-assured extrovert who enjoyed political wheeling and dealing and diplomatic maneuvering. Though never a deep thinker or philosopher by nature as Algernon Sidney was, Henry Sidney was a shrewd and clever operator who succeeded in concealing his true abilities and talents behind the rather bland image of a dissipated rake.²⁰ Not enough people took him seriously, and Sidney counted on this fact to help conceal his clandestine intelligence work from the English authorities. This is the most convincing interpretation yet produced to explain how Henry Sidney was able to conceal the true nature of his trips in and out of England during 1687 and 1688 and his activities while he was actually in England. If Henry Sidney had ever been caught in possession of some of the documents and letters that he regularly toted about with him on his missions, he would have found himself in a very embarrassing position to say the least. The fact that Sidney was never caught, and apparently never even suspected, is a tribute to his skill as a shrewd intelligence operative.

The success of Henry Sidney and his fellow intelligence agents and operatives raises questions immediately as to why James II apparently never caught on to the operation of William's intelligence system that existed beneath his very nose. Was the man utterly blind and unable to see Prince William's agents scurrying to and fro? Or

²⁰ Jones, The Revolution of 1688 in England, pp. 223-6.

was James II merely the biggest fool in Christendom, taking the position that "nothing like that could ever happen here in England"? The best explanation for James II's apparent inability to see what was happening around him rests partly upon his almost complete preoccupation with domestic policy during 1687 and 1688, and also partly upon the nature of the man himself. From the end of 1686 through the summer of 1688, James II concerned himself almost entirely with two main domestic programs, and both of these programs were so closely interrelated that they were inseparable from each other. James II, himself a convert to Catholicism, wanted to secure the repeal of the Test Act of 1673 and the penal laws against Catholics. In all probability, James was not attempting to establish Catholicism as a state religion, but rather he was trying to secure recognition for Catholics of religious freedom and political rights.

To secure full, legal sanction for his policy regarding Catholics, James II needed Parliament's approval in statute form. To ensure a completely subservient Parliament that would acquiesce in James II's Catholic policy, the King decided upon an intensive remodeling of the parliamentary boroughs. This took time to accomplish, and until the King, working with Sunderland, could pack a parliament, he relied upon the questionable use of his prerogative power simply to dispense with the operation of the Test Act and the penal laws. James II was so preoccupied during 1687 and 1688 with his program to achieve toleration for Catholics in England and to pack a parliament that he either could not or would not pay attention to anything else. It is very ironic indeed that Prince William's intelligence system was originally established in part to determine exactly what was going on

in England. James II simply could not understand that his domestic policies could have any foreign repercussions.

The domestic program of James II was thoroughly upsetting to Englishmen in a number of ways, and their uneasiness over the King's intentions made the intelligence work of Henry Sidney, William Bentinck, and the other agents all the more necessary and valuable. To good Anglicans, James II's motives regarding Catholics appeared sinister: the King was trying to subvert the Church of England and institute Popery. Anti-Catholicism permeated every aspect of English life at that time. Simply stated, Catholicism in England was synonymous with absolutism in government and with an attack upon the precious rights and property of all Englishmen, but especially of those in the political and economic power structure. James II's use of the dispensing power merely sharpened suspicions that the King was aiming at an absolutist system patterned after that of his Royal cousin in France. In addition, James II's effort to remodel parliamentary boroughs can be viewed as a major effort by the central, national government in Westminster to extend its power and control out into the provinces, thus upsetting the English concept of local government control. Charles II had remodeled the local corporations in the early 1680's in order to smash the Whig party. But in 1687 James II was using paid agents of the Crown, many of whom were ex-Whigs themselves, to undermine Anglican-Tory strength in the corporations and boroughs to ensure a packed Parliament for the future.²¹ In attacking the Tories

²¹ J. R. Jones, "James II's Whig Collaborators," Historical Journal, III (1960), pp. 65-73.

on the local level, James II in effect was undermining one of the major supports for the monarchy. Tories eventually found themselves in the unenviable position of having to choose between their King and their Church. Viewing opposition as simply disloyal and wrong-headed, James II could not begin to understand the fears and apprehensions generated by his two-part domestic policy.²²

The intelligence gathering activities of Henry Sidney and the three Dutchmen, Bentinck, Dykvelt, and Zuylestein, in 1687 and 1688 must be seen in relation to James II's implementation of his domestic policy. The two operations coincided in time, and William's intelligence system quite often responded either to rumors of what James II was doing in England or to actual reports from agents as to the status of affairs in England. As a case in point, from February through June of 1687, Dykvelt was in England on a very personal and delicate mission for Prince William. Officially, Dykvelt was to try to effect a reconciliation between William and James II. Unofficially, however, Dykvelt was instructed to contact various individuals and groups and carefully explain Prince William's position in relation to them. Dykvelt contacted Tories and assured them that William would be firm in his support of the Church of England. He also cautioned Protestant dissenters to be wary of James II's promises of toleration for them in return for their support of his Catholic policy.²³ More important,

²²The best background narrative for James II's domestic policy can be found in two very recent studies: The Revolution of 1688 in England by J. R. Jones (1973), and Monarchy and Revolution by J. R. Western (1972).

²³James Muilenburg, The Embassy of Everaard Van Weede, Lord of Dykvelt, to England in 1687. University Studies of the University of Nebraska, Vol. XX, no. 4 (October, 1920), pp. 22-3, 44-6.

however, were the contacts Dykvelt made with certain political leaders in England. Gilbert Burnet, who drew up the actual instructions for Dykvelt and received reports directly from him, is quite specific on this important point. According to Burnet:

He [Dykvelt] desired, that those who wished well to their religion and their country would meet together, and concert such advices and advertisements, as might be fit for the prince to know, that he might govern himself by them.²⁴

During his stay in England, Dykvelt met often at the Earl of Shrewsbury's home with the Marquess of Halifax, the Earls of Shrewsbury, Devonshire, Danby, and Nottingham, the Lords Mordaunt and Lumley, Admirals Arthur Herbert and Edward Russell, and Henry Compton, Bishop of London. Most of these men were later assigned secret number codes by Henry Sidney for purposes of correspondence, and six of them, Shrewsbury, Devonshire, Danby, Lumley, Russell, and Compton, along with Henry Sidney, actually signed the famous invitation to Prince William in June of 1688. During Dykvelt's embassy to England, James II issued his first Declaration of Indulgence, thus inaugurating his policy to achieve toleration for Catholics. Dykvelt was able to rally various parties to William's cause, and viewed in overall perspective, Dykvelt's embassy represented the beginning of the offensive against James II.²⁵

Dykvelt's embassy to England was certainly the first of the major intelligence operations against James II in 1687, but it should also be viewed as part of a general pattern of operations directed against James II during that year. In August of 1687, Prince William

²⁴Burnet, History of His Own Time, Vol. II, pp. 421-2. See also pp. 416-17.

²⁵Muilenburg, The Embassy of Dykvelt to England, p. 70.

sent Zuylestein to England ostensibly to convey William's condolences over the death of the Queen's mother. In fact, however, Zuylestein was to contact many of the same politicians to whom Dykvelt had made overtures during his mission. Zuylestein's mission coincided with the beginning of James II's attempt to pack his future Parliament. He personally carried letters from his contacts back to Prince William, but these letters are very guarded in nature and simply do not reveal much.²⁶ By November of 1687, Henry Sidney, who had been residing in the Netherlands since the end of his mysterious Italian trip, was back in action again. Prince William sent Sidney to investigate the rumor that James II's Queen was pregnant. After being briefed by William Bentinck and John Hutton, both of whom had preceded Sidney to England, Henry Sidney proceeded to organize the dispatch of intelligence and propaganda materials in and out of England.²⁷ With this flurry of activity by William's agents in England in 1687, it is very hard not to conclude that English officials were either blind or sound asleep. After investigating the Crown's efforts to manipulate the local parliamentary boroughs, Sidney made the following report to Bentinck:

'Tis certainly believed by all our wise men, except Milord Halifax, that we shall have a parliament, and they say, more certainly, that it will be a packed one, chose only by those that return it; and that the Prince should take his measures what he will do in that case, for that we must never expect to see a free parliament here under the present state of affairs.²⁸

²⁶ Jones, The Revolution of 1688 in England, p. 222. The letters themselves can be found in Dalrymple's Memoirs, Vol. II, Appendix, pp. 202-211.

²⁷ Kenyon, Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, p. 167.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 174.

This matter of a "free Parliament" (i.e., one that was not controlled and manipulated from the local level by the central government) played a prominent part both in the actual invitation to William of Orange in June of 1688 by the "Immortal Seven" and in William's own declaration, which was issued at the end of the summer.

After many months of intelligence gathering and the implementing of a policy of constant surveillance, Prince William reached a decision to intervene personally in English affairs. Burnet stated that in April of 1688, Admiral Russell went to The Hague and prodded William as to what his intentions were. In response to Russell's exhortations, William reportedly said that:

If he was invited by some men of the best interest, and the most valued in the nation, who should both in their own name, and in the name of the others who trusted them, invite him to come and rescue the nation, and the religion, he believed he could be ready by the end of September to come over.²⁹

William's decision was based upon a number of reasons. As his biographer pointed out, Prince William had expected to inherit the English throne since his childhood, and he had married James's eldest daughter to consolidate his claim. William had kept himself constantly informed about events in England ever since 1685, and by the spring of 1688, he decided that he had to intervene in England in order to capture control of a conspiracy of politicians and aristocrats. Supposedly, Russell had told William that if he did not join the English conspirators, they would go on without him. William was concerned that the conspirators might succeed and establish a republic in England. This had been a recurrent Dutch fear since the days of Oliver Cromwell.

²⁹Burnet, History of His Own Time, Vol. II, p. 469.

Another important factor motivating William was his desire to protect the United Provinces from France by bringing England into an anti-French alliance. To do this, he needed control over England's foreign policy.³⁰ In addition, James II's Queen was indeed pregnant, and the King's attentions were directed even more toward the success of his two-part domestic policy.

Until the right moment came for Prince William to make his move against England, he was more or less forced to wait upon events and to rely upon his intelligence system to keep him informed. Henry Sidney remained in England from November of 1687 until August of 1688. During that time, Sidney more than proved his value as one of the four chief operatives of William's entire system. One of the main sources for Sidney's activities during the early months of 1688 is Gilbert Burnet's History. It is clear that Prince William relied upon Henry Sidney to be his chief representative to the English aristocracy during those crucial, early months of 1688. Burnet, who had access to many of the reports coming out of England, described Sidney as "the man in whose hands the conduct of the whole design was chiefly deposited, by the prince's own order." Above all Englishmen, Henry Sidney had long enjoyed the highest measure of William's trust and favor. Sidney's closeness to Prince William was a well-known fact among the aristocracy, and anyone who wished to recommend himself to William did it through Henry Sidney. Sidney carefully approached the Marquess of Halifax over the possibility of an intervention by William. At first Halifax pretended he did not understand what Sidney was talking about, but

³⁰ Baxter, William III, pp. 223-32.

under constant pressure from Sidney, the Marquess finally admitted that he viewed such a project as impractical. Sidney did, however, bring the Earl of Danby into the scheme, and Danby in turn brought in Henry Compton, the outspoken Bishop of London.³¹ Sidney also drew up for William's benefit a master key for the code numbers being used in their correspondence. The code numbers corresponded to important aristocrats, and they included not only the seven men who eventually signed the invitation to William, but also the Marquess of Halifax and the Earls of Nottingham and Bath.³² The Earl of Bath had begun corresponding with William soon after James II's electoral agents had started challenging his local authority and influence in Devon and Cornwall.³³

June of 1688 proved to be a very important month as events moved rapidly toward a conclusion. On June 20 James II's Queen, Mary of Modena, gave birth to a male heir. If William had dreamed of achieving power in England through his wife's likely inheritance, or if he had planned on inheriting the crown himself, this single event changed the entire picture. The new Prince of Wales would be brought up a Catholic, and after the King's death, the Court would most likely be dominated by a Catholic Queen. This single event added a great deal of urgency to William's planning with regard to England. The Earl of Sunderland, who rarely missed an opportunity to ensure his own survival, announced his sudden conversion to Catholicism. Sunderland, who was detested and thoroughly mistrusted by a number of the men

³¹Burnet, History of His Own Time, Vol. II, p. 494.

³²Dalrymple, Memoirs, Vol. II, Appendix, p. 227.

³³Jones, The Revolution of 1688 in England, pp. 160-3.

intriguing for William's success, was urged to resign his position as Secretary of State by his uncle, Henry Sidney.³⁴ Also in the month of June, seven Anglican bishops went on trial in London for refusing to allow the reading of the King's second Declaration of Indulgence in their dioceses. They objected to the Declaration, not on religious grounds, but because it was based upon a power (i.e., the dispensing power) that had been declared illegal in Parliament.³⁵ The bishops were acquitted on June 30, the very same day that Admiral Arthur Herbert left England disguised as a seaman and carried the famous invitation from the "Immortal Seven" to Prince William of Orange.

The month of June 1688 found Henry Sidney very active himself in the intelligence operations that were also building to a climax. In fact, it would not be an exaggerated claim to say that during this crucial month of June, Henry Sidney was really the focal point for Prince William's entire operation. Sidney for some time had been working intently to line up support for William's cause and to collect pledges from various aristocrats. In response to William's demand in April that he would move against James II only if invited by "men of the best interest," Sidney and Admiral Russell had been putting pressure on the group of intriguers that had been meeting at the Earl of Shrewsbury's house. Sidney was eventually forced to give up on the Marquess of Halifax, who himself preferred a policy of "waiting upon events." The Earls of Bath and Nottingham both supported

³⁴Kenyon, Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, p. 197.

³⁵R. Thomas, "The Seven Bishops and Their Petition, 18 May 1688," Journal of Ecclesiastical History, XII (1961), pp. 56-70.

Prince William's cause, but they refused to commit themselves to the actual written invitation, something that Prince William and Henry Sidney would have preferred.

Henry Sidney could not do all the intelligence gathering and necessary leg work himself, and he needed help from Russell, Shrewsbury, and James Johnston, a cousin of Gilbert Burnet. Burnet claimed that as events in June progressed to the crisis stage, Henry Sidney slipped into his old lazy habits, thus jeopardizing the entire operation.³⁶ Burnet, no doubt, was trying to build up the reputation of his cousin in claiming that Johnston was brought into the operation at the last minute to "save the day" for Sidney. Actually, Johnston was merely one of several operatives (like John Hutton) who worked under William and Sidney. It is very possible that Sidney sustained a stomach injury of some kind and needed some help at the last minute.³⁷ At any rate, Count Zuytlestein made a flying trip to England ostensibly to congratulate James II on the birth of his son, but in reality his chief business was to cooperate with Sidney, Russell, and the others in bringing Prince William's great matter to a conclusion.³⁸

By June 30, 1688, that conclusion, so cherished by latter-day Whig historians, was reached. The drive by the Immortal Seven to put their invitation to William in final form, along with Sidney's efforts to collect personal, written pledges for William, coincided with the

³⁶ Burnet, History of His Own Time, Vol. II, p. 494.

³⁷ Henry Sidney, Diary, Vol. II, pp. 275-78. Letter from the Countess of Sunderland to Sidney, September 11, 1688.

³⁸ Ralph, History of England, Vol. I, p. 999.

birth of James II's son and the famous trial of the seven bishops. The actual invitation to Prince William was written by Henry Sidney, and it represented the collective efforts of the entire group known as the Immortal Seven.³⁹ Because Henry Sidney both wrote it and collected the signatures for it, the invitation must be viewed as the closest thing to a statement of principles for him that the historian will ever find. Sidney and the other members of the Immortal Seven were trying to convince William that they had most of the nation steadfastly behind them. Speaking in a collective manner, they addressed William:

We have great reason to believe, we shall be every day in a worse condition than we are, and less able to defend ourselves, and therefore we do earnestly wish we might be so happy as to find a remedy before it be too late for us to contribute to our own deliverance.

The remedy they had in mind was obvious, Prince William's personal intervention. Specifically, they asserted that the people in England were dissatisfied with James II because of his invasion of their "religion, liberties, and properties." The document also contains a complaint about James II's large standing army, and it clearly implies the fear these men possessed that the concept of a "free parliament" in England was in great danger. It was made clear in the invitation that "nineteen parts of twenty of the people" desired a change in England and would willingly work for it if given the chance. In addition, it is also stated in the invitation that "the greatest part of the nobility and gentry" was dissatisfied with James II's rule, although some of them could not be counted on for actual support if William invaded.

Taken in its entirety, the invitation to William reads

³⁹Dalrymple, Memoirs, Vol. II, Appendix, pp. 228-31.

almost like a last-minute plea for help from desperate men who deliberately exaggerated the support they represented. Henry Sidney and his friends seemed to be saying to William, "The English ship of state is sinking, and only your personal intervention can save the nation from utter ruin." In their own minds, the Seven no doubt believed that if James II was allowed to complete his plans for packing a parliament, the situation in England would be beyond repair. It is little wonder that Whig historians have elevated the invitation itself onto the high altar of constitutional government. The exact timing of the invitation might lead one to conclude that it was the critical step in forcing William's hand. To conclude this would be to ignore the fact that William's final decision to intervene in England had been made after many months of intensive intelligence gathering. William's mind was fixed at least by April of 1688 after Admiral Russell's visit, and William very likely had made up his own mind even earlier than that. For William, then, the invitation of June 30 represented a commitment on paper to his cause by seven men who could then be held as political hostages by William. As one historian has analyzed the Immortal Seven and their invitation: "They merely provided the means by which William could now justify to himself and to England his decision to indeed come over."⁴⁰ William's mind had already been made up by June of 1688: what he wanted from the English conspirators was a written guarantee of support.

The importance of Henry Sidney and his fellow English

⁴⁰ Stuart Prall, The Bloodless Revolution: England, 1688 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1972), p. 205.

conspirators in bringing William to England has been the subject of considerable debate among historians.⁴¹ J. P. Kenyon in particular has claimed that the importance of the Immortal Seven has been greatly exaggerated by historians. Sidney and his friends were neither "considerable" men, nor were they "representative" members of the English ruling class. Two main factors contributed towards James II's downfall after William's invasion of England: the Lords Lieutenant in the western shires abandoned their King; and most of the influential gentry and aristocracy either "waited upon events," or they pretended not to know what was going on. According to Kenyon, less than ten per cent of the English peerage was involved in the so-called "Revolution" of 1688.⁴²

In contrast to this view, it has been pointed out that the Immortal Seven, Sidney, Russell, Shrewsbury, Devonshire, Danby, Lumley, and Compton represented in fact "the tip of an iceberg." They by no means "stood alone," and William of Orange was quite aware of this fact.⁴³ A document found in the Bentinck archives at The Hague substantiates this interpretation. The document is a classification of the English peerage according to each member's attitudes regarding James II, and in all likelihood it represents the end result of Dykvelt's mission to England in 1687. The largest single group on the

⁴¹ See in particular: J. R. Western, Monarchy and Revolution, p. 235; J. P. Kenyon, The Nobility in the Revolution of 1688, An Inaugural Lecture Delivered in the University of Hull on 2 May 1963 (University of Hull Publications, 1963).

⁴² Kenyon, The Nobility in the Revolution of 1688, pp. 9, 19.

⁴³ Prall, The Bloodless Revolution, p. 205.

list (85 out of 161) are clearly listed as opponents of James II. This group of eighty-five was comprised of both Whigs and Tories, and it included the Duke of Somerset, the Marquess of Halifax, and the Earls of Bedford, Danby, Pembroke, Suffolk, Leicester, Devonshire, and Rutland. The list also classified most of the English bishops as being opponents of James II.⁴⁴ Based on this list of peers and on the individual pledges of support delivered to William, the Prince of Orange knew quite well that the Immortal Seven represented more than just themselves.

When Admiral Herbert left England on June 30, 1688, with the famous invitation for William, he also carried with him a valuable personal letter from Henry Sidney to the Prince.⁴⁵ As the head of the English end of William's intelligence operation, Sidney was greatly concerned over the success of the Prince's "great affair":

The bearer [Herbert] hereof carrying him a letter from the most prudent and most knowing persons that we have in the nation, ... it is a presumption in me to think of adding anything else; but you, I have ever told you every thought of my heart. I am too much concerned for your interest, your life, and your reputation to say a word of persuasion to you to undertake this matter. You know your own business best, what power you have over the fleet and army, and whether you can transport men with privacy, for it is most certain that, if it be made public a fortnight before it be put in execution, all your particular friends will be clapped up, which will terrify others, or at least make them not know what to do, and will, in all probability, ruin the whole design.

Sidney took the liberty of recommending Marshal Schomberg, then in the service of the Elector of Brandenburg, to Prince William as a man who

⁴⁴Kenneth H. D. Haley, "A List of the English Peers, May, 1687," English Historical Review, LXIX (April, 1954), pp. 302-6.

⁴⁵Sidney, Diary, Vol. II, pp. 269-71.

"will be very useful to you." Schomberg had written to Sidney in September of 1687 and had expressed a keen interest in the condition of England. The tone of his letter to Sidney also suggests that Schomberg was well aware of Sidney's close relation to William of Orange.⁴⁶ Henry Sidney was also justifiably concerned for his own safety, as he implored William to burn both the letter and the accompanying invitation. Luckily for posterity's sake, William did not comply with his friend's request.

Henry Sidney remained in England until the end of August collecting last-minute letters and pledges from various Englishmen. Again, one can only wonder about the apparent inadequacy of the English security system. If Henry Sidney had been caught at any time between June and August of 1688 with some of his very incriminating documents, his own safety and the security of the entire project would have been placed in jeopardy. As it was, Sidney was allowed to go about his intelligence activities for William completely unmolested. One of the letters collected by Sidney was from the Marquess of Halifax. Cautious and noncommittal to the very end, Halifax could only venture the opinion that the trial of the seven bishops was an event which had united all Protestants in England. It had also been a bad blunder by the Crown and was something that would not easily be forgotten. Admiral Russell was not as oblique as Halifax enjoyed being, and he advised William that "the number of your friends here daily increase."

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 265-68. Schomberg, whose mother was English, accompanied William's invasion fleet to England and was created a Duke after William became King. The House of Commons voted him £100,000 for his services. He died fighting for the English at the Battle of the Boyne.

The most interesting letter to William was written by John Churchill, a lieutenant-general in James II's army:

Mr. Sidney will let you know how I intend to behave myself: I think it is what I owe to God and my country. My honor I take leave to put into your Royal Highness's hands, in which I think it safe.⁴⁷

Sidney left England at the end of August under the pretext of visiting Aix-la-Chapelle for his health. In fact, he went straight to Prince William, who was then at his hunting residence of Het Loo, and delivered his reports, letters, and a verbal message from Churchill.

William and his closest Dutch advisers, Bentinck, Dykvelt, and Gaspar Fagel, anxiously awaited Sidney's arrival in the United Provinces. Sidney still had some important work to do, and tight security precautions were still in effect. On August 27 (N.S.) Prince William wrote the following to Bentinck concerning their mutual friends:

At last Mr. de Sidney has come here safe and sound, having been a long time at sea, and has passed through Flanders, and as he said he was going to Aix he has come incognito to Appeldorn, whence he has come this evening and has been talking with me up till now. He goes away tomorrow the first thing in the morning to Utrecht and will embark the same night in order to be at Lassum on Sunday morning. This is the place that I have recommended to him since⁴⁸ he dare not go to the Hague for fear of being recognized.

Two days later William wrote again to Bentinck concerning Henry Sidney and the plans for England. Sidney had been entrusted with the task of delivering to Bentinck the draft of Prince William's intended Declaration for the upcoming invasion of England. Bentinck was to meet Sidney, explain the Declaration to Dykvelt and Fagel, and then

⁴⁷All of these letters collected by Sidney can be found in Dalrymple's Memoirs, Vol. II, Appendix, pp. 235-9.

⁴⁸Grew, William Bentinck and William III, p. 123.

make any necessary corrections in it. In his Declaration William blamed James II's "evil councillors" for the subversion of England's laws, religion, and liberties, not the King himself. William's stated reason for invading England was to ensure the sitting of a free parliament, and he was concerned lest this would make him too dependent upon that institution:

You see from the conclusion that I throw myself entirely on the mercy of a Parliament, although I much fear that that cannot be otherwise, and yet to put one's fate in their hands is no small task.⁴⁹

With the delivery of William's Declaration to Bentinck, Henry Sidney's important role in the Prince's "great affair" was finished. Sidney had only to keep out of sight until the actual invasion day arrived.

News of Henry Sidney's whereabouts had filtered back to England by September of 1688, and the Sunderlands were quick to realize what was going on. Concerned for his position in England if William actually succeeded in his venture, the Earl used his wife as a medium by which to contact his uncle. Because of Sidney's known closeness to Prince William, the Sunderlands were trying to use their connection with Sidney to ingratiate themselves at the last minute with William and to prepare a suitable future for themselves. The tone of the Countess's letter to Sidney, dated September 11, 1688, strongly suggests that the Earl was fearful he would be blamed for what was going on in England.⁵⁰ His fears were probably justified, for undoubtedly Sunderland was one of the "evil councillors" referred to in

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 123.

⁵⁰Sidney, Diary, Vol. II, pp. 275-78.

William's Declaration. Concerning the Prince's intentions, the Countess wrote: "If his design be against England, God send he be not failed, for think what terrible ruin it must bring England and the Protestants if the people fail." Sensing that Henry Sidney had been playing an important part in William's "design" against England all along, the Countess was anxious to have Sidney use his valuable connection to help them out. She implored Sidney:

It would be the kindest thing, and the only request I am likely to make you at present, if you would but freely write me word, and with all speed you can, what place you'd advise my Lord to go to, you are too good-natured to want compassion to us.

In what appears to be an attempt to beg forgiveness for the Earl's recent collaboration with James II, especially his conversion to Catholicism, the Countess beseeched Sidney: "Oh how happy should I be if we might be allowed the comfort of ending our days at Althorp." The Sunderlands were not taking any chances: the best prospects for the future very likely would lie with William of Orange. Knowing the hatred many people felt for Sunderland, the Countess was asking a great deal from Henry Sidney.

William of Orange landed at Torbay in the West of England in the first part of November, and the Sunderlands' fortunes began to decline rapidly from that point. After borrowing some money and selling his Irish pension, the Earl and his wife fled England on December 10, 1688, for Rotterdam. The Countess returned to England shortly to drum up support for her husband. The best she could do was to obtain an assurance from Henry Sidney that William would not seek vengeance on them. In the first month of 1689, Sunderland entered a long period of depression, reconversion, and repentance for his past

ains. What the Sunderlands really wanted was permission to return to England so they could live in retirement at Althorp. As Sunderland was wallowing in his own self-pity and despair, Admiral Herbert appeared in Rotterdam and pressured city officials into throwing the once proud and arrogant aristocrat into jail. The Earl languished in jail for the first half of February, 1689, but was eventually released through the personal intervention of both William and Mary. Through the efforts of Henry Sidney and others, the Sunderlands were eventually allowed to return to England. To demonstrate to the world that he was a changed man, the Earl even began reading books, which he borrowed from John Evelyn, on horticulture and gardening.⁵¹

After the Sunderlands' fortunes had taken a turn for the worse, one of the first persons they turned to for help was Henry Sidney. If there were ever a time when two people needed a friend and relative with high connections, it was during the first few months of 1689 for the Sunderlands. Accordingly, both the Earl and his Countess literally deluged Henry Sidney with letters during those months in an effort to use Sidney's connection with William to improve their position.⁵² The letters clearly reveal not only the nadir into which the Sunderlands had fallen, but also the extent to which they were willing to impose upon Henry Sidney's good natured disposition to help them out of the depths. The Countess worked tirelessly on her husband's behalf. In one letter, she implored Sidney to use his influence with William to help them:

⁵¹ Kenyon, Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, pp. 227-43.

⁵² Sidney, Diary, Vol. II, pp. 291-312.

The Prince is so absolute here [the United Provinces], besides the inclination of the people to retain their liberty in that point, that certainly a miserable man that had not the benefit of being Mr. Sidney's nephew and friend, might hope to find favor with a Prince that all the world allows to be just and merciful.⁵³

After the Earl's release from jail, his letters to his uncle were filled with expressions of person gratitude and a sort of fawning humility that bordered on pathetic hypocrisy. Sunderland knew that his best chance of getting back to England depended on his connection with Henry Sidney, and his efforts to ingratiate himself with his uncle were constant. At one point Sunderland wrote to Sidney:

The countenance of my friends, and chiefly of such an one as you, is the ruin or saving of me, therefore, pray take care that a man in absentee ^{is} not too much run down, neither in jest nor earnest.⁵⁴

With help from Sidney, the Earl of Sunderland did eventually return to England and Althorp, but for a man of his proud stature, he had suffered a great humiliation and disgrace. Sidney's efforts to repair his nephew's shattered image culminated on April 26, 1691, when he introduced Sunderland, who had recently reconverted back to Protestantism, into the Court of William and Mary.⁵⁵

A study of Henry Sidney's important role in bringing William of Orange to England would not be complete without a close look at the awards and honors that Sidney collected after 1688. On February 14, 1689, Sidney was appointed to the Privy Council, and two weeks later he was made a gentleman of the bedchamber. In March Sidney was made

⁵³ ibid., p. 294.

⁵⁴ ibid., p. 301.

⁵⁵ Narcissus Luttrell, A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs from 1678 to 1714 (6 vols.; Oxford: the University Press, 1857), Vol. II, p. 216.

colonel of the King's regiment of footguards. In the following April, he was raised to the peerage as Baron Milton and Viscount Sidney of Shepey, on the same day that William Bentinck was made Earl of Portland and Lord Lumley was created Viscount Lumley. He was Lord Lieutenant of Kent from 1689 to 1692 and again from 1694 until his death in 1704. Sidney accompanied King William III to Ireland in 1690 and was present at the Battle of the Boyne. He was made one of the lords justices of Ireland after receiving fifty thousand acres of confiscated Irish land. From 1690 until 1692, Sidney served as Secretary of State for the North. Also in 1692, Sidney served briefly as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, but he was an utter failure at this job. In 1693 he was made Master-general of the Ordnance, a position which had been vacant since Marshal Schomberg's death in 1690; and on May 14, 1694, Henry Sidney was created Earl of Romney. From 1691 until 1702, Sidney was Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports.⁵⁶

Henry Sidney did more than merely collect titles and honors like ribbons at a fair, however. From 1689 until King William's death in 1702, Sidney's relationship with his close friend remained much the same as it had been before the Revolution of 1688. Sidney continued to be firmly attached and loyal to William III, and subsequently to Queen Mary when William was absent from England, and no doubt some of his honors after 1690 stemmed directly from his continued loyalty. Henry Sidney could always be counted on to perform a variety of

⁵⁶DNB, Vol. LII, pp. 21-219. A more detailed discussion of Henry Sidney's activities after 1689 can be found in Narcissus Luttrell's A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs from 1678 to 1714, Vols. I-III.

services for either William or Mary, whether they were mundane services like arranging fireworks displays to celebrate victories against the French, or whether they were more arduous in nature like reorganizing the Irish militia in 1690. For instance, on February 8, 1691, Sidney represented William III as godfather at the christening of the Earl of Nottingham's son.⁵⁷ On May 26, 1692, Sidney with other lords of the Privy Council helped arrange a loan for Queen Mary of £100,000 from the city of London.⁵⁸ William was campaigning on the Continent at the time, and Queen Mary was acting as Queen Regent during his absence. Sidney delayed his departure for Dublin in the spring and summer of 1692 in order to be available to advise Queen Mary, since at that particular time the fear of a possible French invasion was quite strong. On May 28, 1692, Sidney, along with the Earls of Portland and Rochester, was sent by Queen Mary to Portsmouth to distribute 50,000 among the seamen of Admiral Edward Russell after his famous victory over the French at La Hogue.⁵⁹

Sidney's subsequent career at Court after 1689 was not entirely without mishap, however. On March 31, 1692, he appeared before the Privy Council to answer bribery charges which had been lodged against him by Sir Rowland Gwyn. According to Narcissus Luttrell, Sidney was accused by Sir Rowland of having sold several offices when he had served as Secretary of State for the North. This may simply have been an attempt to discredit Sidney before Queen Mary (King William being absent from England at the time) so that Sir

⁵⁷ Luttrell, Brief Relation of State Affairs, Vol. II, p. 174.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 463.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 465.

Rowland could advance either himself or a protégé waiting in the wings. At any rate, Henry Sidney exonerated himself before Queen Mary and the Privy Council, and the accusation itself was declared to be "false, frivolous, and scandalous."⁶⁰

Henry Sidney died of smallpox on April 8, 1704. Like his older brother Algernon before him, Henry had never married. Henry Sidney's death followed the pattern of his political and diplomatic life style: it was quiet and perhaps even a bit obscure. Henry's demise certainly lacked the spectacle and drama that his brother Algernon's death possessed. But this was so much like the man himself. In life Henry Sidney was quite content simply to perform his official and unofficial duties without a lot of heroics or grand flourish. He loved working behind the scenes and was a first-rate intriguer whose loyalty could be depended upon. Unlike his brother Algernon, Henry Sidney was skilled in the arts of political survival. Even though he possessed a streak of laziness and would have been bored beyond description with his brother's meticulous analysis of political theory and practice, Henry Sidney possessed to a high degree the instinctive ability to look out for and protect his own interests.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 412. See also pp. 404, 407.

CHAPTER VIII

A CONCLUSION

The public careers of Algernon and Henry Sidney illustrate the two-fold theme of general political opposition and individual efforts at political survival. In the case of each brother, opposition was directed against one or more Stuart monarchs. In Algernon's case, he not only distrusted and disliked every Stuart he came in contact with, but he also learned to distrust the institution of monarchy in general. A good and wise King was an exception, not the rule as far as Algernon Sidney was concerned. Thus, Algernon's opposition was considerably broader in concept than was his brother Henry's, since it included not only certain individuals within its framework, but basically the institution of monarchy itself. Algernon's critical gaze, which was very harsh and demanding most of the time, was broader and much more intellectual in nature than was Henry's. Algernon's fatal blunder was that he truly believed at times that his opposition views would be listened to and respected by the very monarchs whom he was criticizing. His naiveté on some occasions knew no bounds. Algernon's opposition was based upon a comprehensive study of contemporary political institutions in general and on English political institutions and history in particular. It is ironic indeed that for an intelligent man with his developed sense of history, Algernon Sidney

should have been so careless and naïve regarding his approach to opposition under a Stuart monarch like Charles II. The modern concept of a loyal opposition never found any favor with a Stuart monarch, and yet Algernon at times behaved and thought as if such a sophisticated concept was in fact acceptable and even welcome.

Henry Sidney, on the other hand, approached the problem of opposition with a completely different perspective. He was neither a man of high and rigid principles nor an intellectual with a comprehensive and critical outlook on men and institutions. Henry never bothered to articulate his political philosophy, if indeed he possessed one at all. His reasons for opposing James II are obscure at best. If he possessed his brother's hatred and fear of Catholicism, there is no clear indication of it in his Diary or in his surviving letters investigated for this study. Henry Sidney's concept of opposition was more a curious blend of devotion to Prince William of Orange, and whatever cause he might choose for himself, and a desire to further his own interests any way that he could. Conditions during the reign of James II allowed both of these aspects to coalesce for Henry. He was able to combine his natural charm and good-natured disposition with his superb ability as an intriguer to aid William's cause in 1688 and also to further his own interests. Much in contrast to his brother Algernon, Henry Sidney was a realist regarding his own opposition. Though he lacked Algernon's intellectual prowess and his ability to analyze critically on a wide scale, Henry compensated for this by being a practical man who kept a cool head at all times.

Both Algernon and Henry Sidney deserve to be classified as Whigs, but for different reasons. Each brother was representative of

a different type of Whig, and the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-81 allows the historian to examine both brothers in action at the same time, each pursuing his own style of Whiggery. In the case of Algernon, his Whiggery was much more in the open and more easily recognizable. He viewed Charles II as a corrupt and decadent monarch who possessed a natural tendency toward absolutism. Just as important, however, was Algernon's loathing and fear of the King's Catholic brother. This distrust and fear of James, Duke of York, was really the cement which held most of the Whigs together during the Crisis years of 1679-81. Algernon made it quite clear that England would be in great peril if James ever became King. Because of his personal experiences with Stuart monarchs, Sidney contended that restraints had to be placed upon the Royal power. In his Discourses, he developed the compact theory of government and the related concept of the right of the people to overthrow an unjust monarch. By the term "the people," Algernon meant the traditional aristocracy and gentry of England; he was no leveling democrat who viewed the masses as competent voters and judges. To the Whiggism that arose from the Exclusion Crisis, Algernon contributed not only his philosophical speculation and analysis of government, but he also injected his own devotion to classical republicanism. In his devotion to this particular creed, Algernon stood almost alone during the Crisis years. Other English devotees to this concept of government either had died by 1679, or had been exiled. Algernon envisioned for England a type of government reminiscent of the two periods of brief Commonwealth rule during the 1650's. That was Algernon Sidney's ideal, a classical republican commonwealth for England.

Conditions and circumstances in England during the 1680's demonstrated that Algernon's style of Wiggism and concept of opposition would not occupy the center stage of the political arena. Events would not be influenced or managed by theorists or philosophers. Instead, events would be managed (with a considerable amount of luck and good timing) by Whiggish politicians of a more practical type among whom Henry Sidney could be listed. When the Exclusion Crisis began in 1679, Henry decided that his own personal interests could best be served by remaining at Court where positions could be obtained, not by joining the Earl of Shaftesbury and his followers in the wilderness of organized political opposition. Although Henry was not particularly fond of James, Duke of York, he did get along well with Charles II. Besides, his main goal in life was still the furthering of his own interests, and that could best be done at Court. During his term as Special Envoy to the United Provinces, Henry Sidney was able to develop a strong connection for himself with Prince William of Orange. Like many middle-of-the-road English politicians who favored the Duke of York's exclusion, but who were also reluctant to break openly with Charles II, Henry Sidney preferred to follow a policy of "waiting upon events." In this respect he shared much in common with Court politicians like the Savile brothers, Sir William Temple, Sir Henry Capel, and Sidney Godolphin. As was the case with these politicians, Henry's forte was diplomacy and intrigue. Only once did Henry Sidney find himself in an uncomfortable political situation, and that was in 1680-81 over the Second Exclusion Bill. Even so, he merely lost his diplomatic position, not his head. Henry was able to utilize his important connection with William of Orange during

James II's brief reign to the point where he performed a significant function in William's "grand design." From Henry Sidney's point of view, three distinct but related types of interests coincided in the critical year of 1688: his own, Prince William's, and England's. This Sidney brother was not concerned with philosophical hair-splitting, but rather with his own political survival, and that survival could best be ensured by hitching his wagon to William's rising star.

The problem now remains of trying to determine the degree to which each brother was a success or a failure. It would be pointless and rather simplistic to attempt rating each Sidney brother on an absolute scale. Even though Algernon would certainly have done it that way, such a method contracts one's historical perspective down to an intolerably narrow margin. Success is a relative quantity: It is a combination of a number of factors such as the times themselves, an individual's personality, luck and good timing, and the individual's personal interests and goals. A proper measurement of success also depends to a great extent upon whether the historian is basing his determination upon a short-term basis or upon a long-term one. Finally, when any historian attempts to measure success or failure for an historical personality, he invariably injects part of himself and his own background into the whole process. This is unavoidable because, in truth, the historian is making a subjective, though supposedly intelligent, judgment.

With these factors in mind, let us consider Henry Sidney first of all. One of his most striking characteristics was his ability to get along well with people. He was a natural courtier at a time and place when this type of a person could carve out a niche for

himself, with a little effort and the proper connections. Henry used his talents and connections extremely well, and he managed to survive a turbulent political period in admirable fashion. His goals in life were his own survival and advancement, and since he achieved both, he must be judged a success on that basis. In addition to this, Henry Sidney played an important role in bringing William of Orange to England in the fateful year of 1688. History will remember Henry as one of the Immortal Seven, although he will probably remain one of the more obscure members of the group, like Lord Lumley. Nevertheless, he has achieved a small degree of historical immortality, even though the historian must look long and hard to catch a fleeting glimpse of him. Henry Sidney did not influence any events after 1688, much less after his own death in 1704. Because of this and because he left posterity with few written records of himself besides his Diary, Henry has sunk into a timeless obscurity. It is hoped that this work lifts away some of that obscurity and brings Henry Sidney a bit closer to the fringes of centerstage where he loved to maneuver. Henry should be judged a considerable success in his own lifetime, and that is precisely what he wanted for himself.

The process of evaluation for Algernon Sidney, however, leads the historian to an entirely different set of conclusions. Algernon was proud of the fact that from the 1640's until his death in 1683, he had rigidly adhered to a set of principles and had opposed tyranny in whatever form he encountered it. Indeed, this is a very admirable quality in a human being. Unfortunately, this same quality, combined with his pride and arrogance, helped bring about his downfall. Algernon's trial and execution for treason in 1683 proved that he

lacked the ability to survive as an opposition figure in a turbulent period of English history. Neither was Algernon Sidney very successful or influential as a Whig philosopher or theorist in his own lifetime. Even though a number of Englishmen shared Algernon's devotion to classical republicanism during the 1650's, by the 1680's Algernon found himself practically alone in his devotion to that creed. When Sidney perished on the executioner's block for his alleged treason, classical republicanism, as a major current of Whig thought, essentially died with him. The eighteenth century might remember this Sidney brother as a political martyr to Stuart absolutism, but it would not honor him as one whose writings had helped shape that century's political or constitutional attitudes. In fact, his writings would not even be honored as having had the same influence upon events in 1688-89 as those of John Locke were so honored, despite the fact that chapter two of Sidney's Discourses is very similar to Locke's second treatise as far as content is concerned. Even though both works were inspired by the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-81, John Locke has mistakenly received all the credit for having articulated those ideas and concepts that were later used by eager Whigs to justify the events of 1688-89 in England. This is true despite the fact that Sidney also articulated such concepts as the compact theory of government and the right of the people to overthrow an unjust King. Since the same political crisis inspired both men to come up with similar ideas about the nature of government, Algernon Sidney is entitled to at least some of the credit which John Locke has had entirely to himself all of these years.

Even though Algernon Sidney's writings and ideas had very

little impact upon eighteenth-century English Whiggism, they definitely had an impact upon the American counterpart during the Revolutionary period. After closely examining the English constitution, American Revolutionary leaders in the 1760's and 1770's decided that it had been crippled almost beyond repair by a hopelessly corrupt Parliament and by a tyrannical King. In their search for political principles and concepts with which to bolster their cause, these American Whigs naturally turned for inspiration to classical Greece and Rome and also to English political thinkers of the seventeenth century like John Milton, James Harrington, John Locke, and Algernon Sidney. The seventeenth century was really a Golden Age of English political writing, and its best philosophers provided American Whigs not only with political concepts, but with inspiration for a cause as well. In short, the eighteenth-century American concept of Republicanism was based quite heavily upon English political philosophy articulated in the seventeenth century, plus the American notion of Old World corruptness.¹

Algernon Sidney's ideas can be linked directly to two important American Revolutionary leaders in particular, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. A careful reading of Sidney's Discourses formed part of Adams's early education, and clear references to a number of Sidney's ideas can be found in some of Adams's later political

¹For an excellent discussion of the intellectual background for American Whiggism, see in particular Gordon S. Wood, The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1789 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 3-45. Also well worth investigating is A. J. Beitzinger, A History of American Political Thought (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1972).

writings.² As a very elderly man, Adams extolled the virtues of Sidney's Discourses for the benefit of his friend Thomas Jefferson. In a letter to Jefferson dated September 17, 1823, Adams propounded:

I have lately undertaken to read Algernon Sidney on government. There is a great difference in reading a book at four-and-twenty and at eighty-eight. As often as I have read it and fumbled it over, it now excites fresh admiration that this work has excited so little interest in the literary world.

Adams felt that Sidney's Discourses should be published in America not only because of the "intrinsic merits of the work," but because of the evidence the book provided of the "bitter sufferings of the advocate of liberty from that time to this."³

In the case of Jefferson, there is evidence proving that Sidney's Discourses provided some of the inspiration for that brilliant Virginian when he wrote the Declaration of Independence. In a letter written by Jefferson to Henry Lee on May 8, 1825, Jefferson denied that his original intention in 1776 had been to articulate new political principles or philosophical arguments. Instead, the Declaration itself was intended to be "an expression of the American mind." The actual authority for this expression rested upon what Jefferson termed "the harmonizing sentiments of the day," or those ideas that had been made manifest in works by such thinkers as Aristotle, Cicero, John Locke, and Algernon Sidney. The political writings of these four men, and others as well, were termed "elementary books of public right" by

²Charles Francis Adams, ed., The Works of John Adams (10 vols.; Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1850-56), Vol. IV, pp. 80, 420-23.

³Ibid., Vol. X, pp. 410-11.

Jefferson.⁴ It is clear, then, that Algernon Sidney's ideas on the nature of government did survive him, and they definitely helped influence and inspire certain men in a revolutionary cause, but in a manner which Sidney could never have envisioned.

⁴Andrew A. Lipscomb, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (20 vols.; Washington, D.C.: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1904), Vol. XVI, pp. 117-19.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Before looking at the basic primary and secondary source materials that are essential for the study of each Sidney brother separately, it is necessary to investigate a few types of sources that were applicable to both brothers. The beginning stages of the dissertation would have been much more difficult without Restoration England, 1660-1689 (Cambridge: 1971), which is a superb bibliographical handbook compiled by William L. Sachse for the Conference on British Studies. Every bibliography essentially is outdated as soon as it is published, but this particular work will dominate its field for some time. Also of merit was Stephen Leslie and Sidney Lee, eds., Dictionary of National Biography, 63 vols. (London: 1885-1900). Volume LII of this work provided a valuable article on each of the Sidney brothers, and other volumes provided useful background material for such people as Gilbert Burnet and John Evelyn. A work commonly referred to simply as the G.E.C. Peerage, which is a revised and enlarged edition of George E. Cokayne, The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain, and the United Kingdom, 13 vols. (London: 1910-59), is the best source to consult for detailed information on specific aristocratic titles and noble families prior to the twentieth century. When the need arose for information of that nature, this source proved to be invaluable.

There are a few primary source materials found applicable

for both brothers. The Memoirs of Sir John Reresby, edited by Andrew Browning (Glasgow: 1936), is one of the best sources of this type available to the student of the Restoration period. Sir John was a careful observer, and his comments and opinions, though frequently in need of grammatical revision, are of considerable value for the historian. Also valuable for both Sidney brothers, but especially for Henry Sidney, is the collection of letters and documents edited by the eighteenth-century Scottish lawyer, Sir John Dalrymple, and entitled Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland, 2 vols., second edition (London: 1771-3). The peculiar organization of this work makes it a bit confusing at times to work with, but it contains literally dozens of extremely valuable letters. A very careful perusal of the Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, of the Reign of Charles II, Vols. CXLVII-CDXXXIII (Great Britain: Public Record Office) turned up a wealth of detailed information on the Sidney brothers. Information is sometimes difficult to extract from these volumes because of poor indexing, but the patient researcher is ultimately rewarded for his labors. It is indeed fortunate that the Michigan State University Library possesses a complete set of the Historical Manuscripts Commission's Seventy-Seventh Report, the De L'Isle Manuscripts, 7 vols. (London: 1966). This is an extremely valuable collection of Sidney family letters and papers. Volume VI, Sidney Papers, 1626-1698, proved to be very useful for this dissertation. A letter received from the county archivist, Kent Archives Office, Maidstone, Kent, England on July 9, 1974, provided some beneficial information on Algernon Sidney's birthdate.

A source which deserves special mention, especially because of its relation to Henry Sidney's career, is Thomas Burnet, ed.,

Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time, 2 vols. (London: 1809).

Gilbert Burnet has the personality of an old maid aunt, but his work is interesting to read and is a rich source of information for the Restoration period. In many ways the work is more like a personal memoir, since Burnet literally knew most of the people of his time. Technically speaking, however, the work was compiled after the events discussed in it actually took place. Nevertheless, no serious student of the period can call himself an expert unless he has thoroughly acquainted himself with this work.

There are numerous secondary works that provide the serious student with a thorough and comprehensive background for the seventeenth century. The appropriate volumes in the Oxford History of England deserve mention first: Godfrey Davies, The Early Stuarts, 1603-1660, second edition (Oxford: 1963), and Sir George Clark, The Later Stuarts, 1660-1714, second edition (Oxford: 1965). The most prolific writer (and perhaps the best writer) on the seventeenth century is Christopher Hill. Most of his efforts are concerned with the years prior to the Restoration. Nevertheless, everything he has written should be eagerly consumed, especially his latest work entitled The World Turned Upside Down (New York: 1972). Two books by David Ogg deserve praise for their careful scholarship and readability: England in the Reign of Charles II, second edition (New York: 1967), and England in the Reigns of James II and William III (New York: 1969). The best background for the problems leading up to the civil war in Charles I's reign can be found in C. V. Wedgwood, The King's Peace, 1637-41 (New York: 1955). A short, but quite good, overview of the century can be extracted from S. Reed Brett, The Stuart Century: 1603-

1714 (London: 1964). The best single volume dealing with the Earl of Shaftesbury's Whigs is J. R. Jones, The First Whigs: The Politics of the Exclusion Crisis, 1678-83 (London: 1961). The best history of the Tories is Keith Feiling, A History of the Tory Party, 1640-1714 (Oxford: 1929). An excellent recent study, which should be read by anyone who considers himself a scholar of the period, is J. R. Western, Monarchy and Revolution: The English State in the 1680's (London: 1972).

Fortunately, there are a number of important printed collections of primary source materials pertaining to Algernon Sidney that are available to the scholar in this country. The very best edition of Sidney's Discourses Concerning Government is the one edited by John Toland (London: 1698). It is auspicious indeed that the Michigan State University Special Collections possesses one of the few copies of this rare book. An edition published in 1763 includes his Discourses plus a number of other items: Discourses Concerning Government with his Letters, Trial, Apology, and Some Memoirs of his Life (London: 1763). A number of valuable letters can also be found in R. W. Blencowe, ed., Sydney Papers: Consisting of a Journal of the Earl of Leicester, and Original Letters of Algernon Sydney (London: 1825), and Arthur Collins, ed., The Sydney Letters and Memorials of State, 2 vols. (London: 1746). A few useful letters can be found in T. Foster, ed., Original Letters of Locke, Algernon Sidney, and Anthony Lord Shaftesbury (London: 1830). Sidney's treason trial is available in two other sources in addition to the one listed above: Arraignment, Trial and Condemnation of Algernon Sidney, Esq. for High Treason (London: 1684), and Cobbett's Complete Collection of State

Trials, Vol. IX (London: 1811). The two specific sources that fall into the category of personal chronicles and that are very useful are E. S. De Beer, ed., The Diary of John Evelyn, 6 vols. (Oxford: 1955), Charles Harding Firth, ed., The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow, 1625-1672, 2 vols. (Oxford: 1894). A genuine feeling for and understanding of the political and constitutional aspects of the Exclusion Crisis can be secured by reading the appropriate speeches and debates in Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England, Vol. IV (London: 1808).

The only biography of Algernon Sidney was written by Alexander C. Ewald in the latter part of the nineteenth century: The Life and Times of the Hon. Algernon Sidney, 2 vols. (London: 1873). Criticisms of Ewald's Whiggish interpretation of Sidney can be found throughout Part One of this work. Suffice it to say that the work is in desperate need of revision: Algernon Sidney deserves a good, short scholarly biography. The work does have one tremendous strongpoint, however: dozens of important letters are printed in full for the reader's benefit. This alone makes the book worthwhile.

Numerous other biographical studies of Algernon's contemporaries should be briefly noted. The most scholarly study of the talented Earl of Shaftesbury is Kenneth H. D. Haley, The First Earl of Shaftesbury (Oxford: 1968). A good, recent biography of Charles II is Maurice Ashley, Charles II, the Man and the Statesman (London: 1971). Other pertinent biographies are Maurice Ashley, John Wildman: Plotter and Postmaster (New Haven: 1947); Maurice Cranston, John Locke: A Biography (New York: 1957); Mary Maples Dunn, William Penn: Politics and Conscience (Princeton: 1967); James Ferguson, Robert Ferguson the Plotter (Edinburgh: 1887); and Helen

Foxcroft, The Life and Letters of George Savile, Bart., First Marquis of Halifax, 2 vols. (London: 1898). Two recent biographies of Judge Jeffreys should be investigated by any scholar interested in shaking off any remaining vestiges of Lord Macaulay's Whiggish interpretation of the man before whom Sidney was tried for treason: P. J. Helm, Jeffreys: A New Portrait of England's "Hanging Judge" (New York: 1966), and G. W. Keeton, Lord Chancellor Jeffreys and the Stuart Cause (London: 1965). Algernon Sidney's connection with Sir Henry Vane can be better appreciated by reading Violet Rowe, Sir Henry Vane the Younger: A Study in Political and Administrative History (London: 1970).

A few monographs and non-biographical secondary works deserve particular mention. A decidedly dull but necessary book is Zera S. Fink, The Classical Republicans (Menasha, Wisconsin: 1945). A work which proved to be very necessary in the preparation of chapter five is William Holdsworth, A History of English Law, Vols. VI, VIII (London: 1925). This work is a definitive classic, and the sections dealing with treason were invaluable. Finally, sections of Caroline Robbins, The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman (New York: 1968) were interesting.

An excellent background for Algernon Sidney's connection with the American Revolution can be established with the following books: Gordon Wood, The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787 (Chapel Hill: 1969), and A. J. Beitzinger, A History of American Thought (New York: 1972). These secondary works should be supplemented with the following primary source collections: Charles Francis Adams, ed., The Works of John Adams, 10 vols. (Boston: 1850-56); Andrew A.

Lipscomb, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, 20 vols. (Washington, D.C.: 1904); and Paul Wiltach, ed., Correspondence of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson (New York: 1966). This writer is also indebted for his overall view of the American Revolution and pre-Revolutionary society to a series of lectures delivered by Professor Peter Levine of Michigan State University during the spring term of 1974.

There are a few scholarly journal articles that can provide an excellent background for the turmoil of the Exclusion Crisis. Two articles in particular concern themselves with the political terminology of the period: Wilbur C. Abbott, "What Was a Whig," The Quest for Political Unity, ed., Stanley Pargellis (Washington, D.C.: 1944), and Robert Willman, "The Origins of 'Whig' and 'Tory' in English Political Language," The Historical Journal, XVII (June, 1974), 247-64. Other very beneficial articles include: Carolyn A. Edie, "Succession and Monarchy: the Controversy of 1679-81," American Historical Review, LXX (January, 1965), 350-70; J. P. Kenyon, "The Exclusion Crisis," History Today, XIV (April, May, 1964), 252-9, 344-9; and Ephrim Lipson, "Elections to the Exclusion Parliaments, 1679-1681," English Historical Review, XXVIII (January, 1913), 59-85.

There exists a wealth of journal articles that provided pertinent information and useful concepts on various aspects of Algernon Sidney's life. There are two important articles on Sir Robert Filmer and his ideas: William H. Greenleaf, "Filmer's Patriarchal History," The Historical Journal, IX (no. 2, 1966), 157-71; and Peter Laslett, "Sir Robert Filmer: The Man Versus the Whig Myth," WMQ, third series, V (October, 1948), 523-46. Two weighty articles by Raymond W. K. Hinton deserve special notice: "Husbands,

Fathers and Conquerors, I: Filmer and the Logic of Patriarchalism," Political Studies, XV (no. 3, 1967), 291-300; and "Husbands, Fathers and Conquerors, II: Patriarchalism in Hobbes and Locke," Political Studies, XVI (no. 1, 1968), 55-67. Also of considerable value are the following: A. F. Havingturst, "The Judiciary and Politics in the Reign of Charles II," Law Quarterly Review, LXVI (January, April, 1950), 62-78, 229-52; Roger Howell, "Henry Vane the Younger and the Politics of Religion," History Today, XIII (1963), 275-82; Peter Laslett, "The English Revolution and Locke's Two Treatises on Government," Cambridge Historical Journal, XII (no. 1, 1956), 40-55; J. H. M. Salmon, "Algernon Sidney and the Rye House Plot," History Today, IV (October, 1954), 698-705; and V. F. Snow, "The Concept of Revolution in Seventeenth Century England," Historical Journal, V (no. 2, 1962), 167-74.

Whereas there is an abundance of printed primary source material relating to Algernon Sidney, such is certainly not the case with his elusive brother Henry. The best single printed source for Henry Sidney is his Diary, edited in two volumes by R. W. Blencowe (London: 1843). On many occasions, Henry was a less than enthusiastic compiler of his own thoughts, and consequently, several notations have all the zest of an abbreviated weather report. Fortunately, however, the editor included a large number of personal letters, and these letters are a considerable help in clarifying and explaining the circumstances surrounding many of Henry's cryptic entries. On occasions, Henry could write detailed entries in his Diary, but more often he would put his thoughts into letters. Because of his streak of laziness, Henry was prone to be incredibly careless concerning the spelling of

personal names and place names. In two years, he never mastered William Bentinck's name.

A few other printed sources, after a long and patient search, yielded a few stray letters and documents that added to the knowledge about Henry Sidney. Of some use was Nicolaas Japikse, ed., Correspondentie van William III en van Hans William Bentinck, 4 vols. (The Hague: 1927-37). The following collections yielded some worthwhile ideas and facts: Samuel W. Singer, ed., Correspondence of Henry Hyde, Earl of Clarendon and his Brother Lawrence Hyde, Earl of Rochester, 2 vols. (London: 1828), and Jonathan Swift, ed., The Works of Sir William Temple, Bart., 4 vols. (Edinburgh: 1754). The best source for Henry Sidney's activities after 1688 is Narcissus Luttrell, A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs from 1678 to 1714, 6 vols. (Oxford: 1857). This particular work is repetitious, dull, and anything but "brief," but it does contain much valuable information on this Sidney brother. It is unfortunate that the process of scholarly extraction must be so monotonous. Henry Sidney is also mentioned briefly in a very recent publication: Henry Horwitz, ed., The Parliamentary Diary of Narcissus Luttrell (Oxford: 1972).

A considerable number of secondary books proved to be quite valuable for a solid background of the contemporary people and events relating to Henry Sidney. The most outstanding biography of William of Orange is still Stephen Baxter, William III (London: 1966). A very recent work by Henri and Barbara Van Der Zee, William and Mary (New York: 1973), is prejudicial in its treatment of Henry Sidney. A good, short work on these two monarchs is John Miller, The Life and Times of William and Mary (London: 1974). This particular book also contains

an outstanding reproduction of a portrait of Henry Sidney by the noted English painter Godfrey Kneller. Another very useful biography is J. P. Kenyon, Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland 1641-1702 (London: 1958).

Two old, but still useful works are James Muilenburg, The Embassy of Everaard Van Weede, Lord of Dykvelt, to England in 1687 (Lincoln, Nebraska: 1920), and James Ralph, A History of England During the Reign of K. William, Q. Anne, and K. George I, Vol. I (London: 1744). Ralph was a surprisingly good scholar who not only did his research well, but who also cited the sources for his statements.

There are quite a few good monographic studies on the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and the serious student should read them all. An outstanding book which gives an overall view of the events leading up to 1688 is John Carswell, The Descent on England (London: 1969). Another superb work which contains the most recent interpretation of the Revolution is J. R. Jones, The Revolution of 1688 in England (London: 1973). Two other scholarly and salient efforts are Maurice Ashley, The Glorious Revolution of 1688 (London: 1966), and Stuart Prall, The Bloodless Revolution: England, 1688 (Garden City, New York: 1972).

There are only a few journal articles of importance that have any direct bearing on Henry Sidney or on the events relating to him. Jenneth H. D. Haley, "A List of the English Peers, May, 1687," English Historical Review, LXIX (April, 1954), 302-6, contains a valuable document. Three invaluable letters from Sunderland to Henry Sidney are printed in J. P. Kenyon, "Charles II and William of Orange in 1680," BIHR, XXX (1957), 95-101. Also of importance are the

following: J. R. Jones, "James II's Whig Collaborators," The Historical Journal, III (1960), 65-73; J. P. Kenyon, "The Earl of Sunderland and the Revolution of 1688," Cambridge Historical Journal, XI (no. 3. 1955), 272-96; and R. Thomas, "The Seven Bishops and Their Petition, 18 May 1688," JEH, XII (1961), 56-70. Unfortunately, no scholar has bothered to take much more than a passing interest in Henry Sidney or even to publish any essays of a biographical or interpretive nature on this man. Admittedly, he is much more difficult to trace than is his brother Algernon, but he still deserves some scholarly research on his life and career that would lead to publication. Perhaps that situation can be changed.

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