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THE INTERNATIONAL ENTREPÔT AT DOVER IN CRISIS:  
ENGLISH FISHING ENTREPRENEURS, DUNKIRK  
PRIVATEERS, GOVERNMENT POLICY, AND THE  
CHARACTER OF KING CHARLES I, 1637-1640

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I

During the Thirty Years' War (1618-48) an international entrepôt developed at the port of Dover.<sup>1</sup> It was the product of the English government's attempt to tax Continental Europeans for their use of English neutral shipping. England's neutrality during most of the period made her merchantmen more attractive carriers than the relatively more efficient Dutch *fluit* ships which had previously dominated the European carrying trade. After the renewal of warfare between Spain and the United Provinces in 1621, the lightly armed and manned *fluits* were no match for Spanish privateers operating from Dunkirk. As a result, English vessels were employed by merchants of the Continental belligerents (including merchants of Dunkirk) for commodity trade through the English Channel and by Spanish government financiers for shipping silver from Spain to Hapsburg armies in Flanders. Except for the years from 1625 to 1630 when England was at war with Spain and France, the English government used naval power and diplomacy to force the two branches of this carrying traffic into Dover to pay taxes. The govern-

<sup>1</sup> The first section of this article is based on my book, *The Exchange of Christendom: The International Entrepôt at Dover, 1622-1651*, Leicester University Press (1976), chapters I-IV, VI; appendixes D-F, I. A nearly identical description of the development of the entrepôt appeared in my 'Entrepôt Policy Versus Projects for Perquisites in the Administration of Dover Harbour: the Dispute over Charges for Passing the Boom, 1635-1638', *Arch. Cant.*, xcvi (1979), 53-6. See also my 'Fiscal Aspects of the English Carrying Trade during the Thirty Years War', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., xxv (1972), 261-83, and Harland Taylor, 'Trade, Neutrality, and the 'English Road'', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., xxv (1972), 236-60.

ment's action eventually produced an entrepôt for both commodities and silver.

The commodity entrepôt developed in the early 1620s and again after the Anglo-Spanish peace in 1630. The Channel Fleet, acting for the Customs Farmers,<sup>2</sup> forced into Dover English ships carrying directly between foreign ports and foreign vessels seeking to reload their goods into English merchantmen in the Downs. When these ships entered Dover harbour, the Customs Farmers' agents assessed their cargoes. A group of factors resident in the town paid the required re-export duties on behalf of the European merchants involved. Many of these foreign merchants soon realised, however, that their factors in Dover could be put to better use than merely paying duties on goods in transit. They increasingly preferred to send their goods in foreign or English ships directly to factors in Dover for storage. They would then order their factors by 'letters of advice' to reshipe the goods in English vessels at a later date. The advantage of this system was that the factors, unlike their Continental employers, always had a supply of English shipping immediately available at Dover and could thus ship goods more quickly to take advantage of favourable market conditions.

The basic *modus operandi* of the silver entrepôt was also established in the 1620s. Before the outbreak of the Anglo-Spanish war in 1625, the Channel Fleet seems to have made no deliberate attempt to force English ships carrying Spanish silver into Dover. When these silver carriers did call at an English port, however, the government would not allow them to continue their voyages to Flanders until the silver had been coined at the Mint in London and Mint charges had been paid. This procedure was formalised by an Anglo-Spanish diplomatic accord in 1632. It provided that English vessels freighting Spanish silver should always stop at Dover in order to unload two-thirds of their cargoes for coinage in London. The silver removed from the ships was transported over the Dover Road to the Tower Mint, and London factors for the Spanish government financiers paid the Mint charges for coinage. The factors then used the new coins to buy bills of exchange from London merchants redeemable in Flanders. The silver remaining in Dover was usually re-exported immediately for Dunkirk.

<sup>2</sup> For the operations of the various syndicates of merchants who acted as Customs Farmers from 1604 to 1641, see F. C. Dietz, *English Public Finance, 1485-1641* (2nd edn.; 2 vols.; London, 1964), ii, 328-61, and Robert Ashton, *The Crown and the Money Market, 1603-1640* (Cambridge, 1960), 79-112. The key members of the syndicates for the 'Great Farm' were Sir Paul Pindar, Sir John Wolstenholme, Sir Abraham Jacob (1625-38) and Sir George (Lord) Goring, Sir Nicholas Crisp, Sir Abraham Jacob, Sir John Nulls (1638-40).

Before 1635 only these silver shipments from Dover to Dunkirk had been convoyed by the Channel Fleet. Commodity carriers had had to rely merely on their status as neutrals when they met Dutch warships or Spanish Dunkirk privateers. However, the entry of the French into the Thirty Years' War in May 1635 forced a change in this convoy policy. Unlike the Spanish and Dutch, the French did not try to court England's support by respecting her neutrality. French warships began to stop and even to seize un-convoyed English vessels, and the Dutch and Dunkirkers quickly followed suit. As a result, the Customs Farmers convinced the government to apply its *Mare Clausum* policy to protect commodity shipping at Dover. By August 1635, the Channel Fleet, strengthened by Ship Money,<sup>3</sup> was providing effective periodic convoys for all commodity carriers using the Dover entrepôt. The English warship captains received fees from merchant shipmasters for this service, but the charges were probably no more than one per cent *ad valorem*.

From Christmas 1635 to the end of March 1636 the Customs Farmers initiated another new policy at Dover by reducing re-export duties on the commodity traffic, an action which they termed 'composition'. Acting under pressure from the pro-Spanish government in London, the possible adverse effect of the new convoy charges, and an increasing tendency by English vessels in the foreign carrying trade to attempt to avoid Dover because of high duties, the Farmers 'compounded' their charges downward from  $6\frac{1}{4}$  per cent to  $2\frac{1}{2}$ – $3\frac{1}{3}$  per cent on Spanish and Flemish goods while leaving the rates unchanged on Dutch, German, and French products (except wines). Ironically, the government permitted the Farmers to compensate themselves on the more secure silver traffic by applying a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent duty on all Spanish silver re-exported directly from Dover to Dunkirk.

The new policies of convoy protection for commodities and customs rate reductions soon had gratifying results. Shipping in the entrepôt trade carrying cargoes from Dover harbour jumped from 153 vessels in 1635 to 307 in 1636 and 369 in 1638. The English share of these totals was 107 in 1635, 245 in 1636, and 275 in 1638. This means that by 1638 the

<sup>3</sup> In July 1634, Charles I had attempted to further his rapprochement with Spain by offering to maintain enough English warships to guarantee Spanish communications with Flanders—provided that Philip IV would subsidise the cost. Philip, however, would only agree to this, if Charles would use his fleet directly against the Dutch, an action that Charles was unwilling to risk. The English Channel fleet, therefore, had to be financed by the imposition of Ship Money. See Simon Adams, 'Spain or the Netherlands? The dilemma of early Stuart foreign policy', in (Ed.) H. Tomlinson, *Before the English Civil War: Essays on early Stuart politics and government*, (London, 1983), 84–5.

Dover entrepôt gave some degree of employment to about half the English merchant marine engaged in any kind of foreign trade.<sup>4</sup>

Now, predictably, all this shipping activity in the late 1630s made the Dover entrepôt an obvious source of potential exploitation for those English maritime interests who had grievances against Dunkirk privateers. The presence of Dunkirk merchantmen in Dover harbour and the large quantities of Dunkirk cargoes in English ships and Dover warehouses seemed made to order for reprisals, and this idea was especially attractive to powerful elements in the English fishing industry who had been particularly hard hit by the ubiquitous Dunkirkers.

The object of this article is to describe two attempts by English fishing entrepreneurs to recoup their losses to Dunkirk privateers at the expense of Dunkirk merchants engaged in the composition trade. It will also be argued that while these ventures were mainly unsuccessful they do reflect the Privy Council's changing policy toward protecting the Dover entrepôt and King Charles I's political inconstancy in the realm of government finance.

## II

The first reprisal attempt came from Jacob Brames, the Customer of Dover and Sandwich, who had been in the fishing business since his youth. He had inherited a quay, wharves, and 'herring houses' at Dover from his father in 1611.<sup>5</sup> During the 1630s he had spent £3,000 'in building of houses at Dover to fit and accomodate this ffishing business. . .'.<sup>6</sup> William Eldred's survey of Dover Harbour in 1641 shows that Brames had leased a considerable amount of property from the Warden and Assistants for these houses and that a street at the base of the harbour had even become known as 'Braems, his Street'.<sup>7</sup>

Brames's first serious losses occurred in September 1637 when two of

<sup>4</sup> This is an estimate based on the Venetian ambassador's contention that by 1635 England possessed at a minimum 540 merchantmen exclusive of colliers in the Newcastle-London coasting trade. The ambassador estimated the number of colliers at 400. *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian Series (1632-1636)*, 365.

<sup>5</sup> Last Will and Testament of Charles Brames, Merchant of Dover, 18 July 1611, Kent County Archives Office, Maidstone, Kent, P.R.C. 32/42, fol. 90.

<sup>6</sup> Public Record Office, Privy Council Register 2/53/50.

<sup>7</sup> William Eldred, MS Plans of Dover Harbour and Town (1641), Dover Harbour Board, Drawings, no. 10,672.

his busses were taken by Dunkirk privateers. Through Flemish friends<sup>8</sup> he heard that the vessels had been sold, and he tried unsuccessfully to buy them back. In the end he lost ships and fish worth £2,000 and had to pay £1,000 in ransom for the fishermen.<sup>9</sup>

Brames naturally desired to recover his losses. On 21 October, 1637, Sir Henry Marten, Judge of the High Court of Admiralty, recommended that letters of reprisal be issued to Brames authorising him to recompense himself at the expense of Dunkirk shipping.<sup>10</sup> Brames, however, was known to have abused his office as Customer by illegally exporting both commodities and gold from Dover,<sup>11</sup> and the Lords of the Admiralty would not grant him letters of reprisal. Instead, on 25 October, they ordered Sir John Pennington, Commander of the Channel Fleet, to stay enough Dunkirk ships to make restoration to Brames. Pennington acknowledged the receipt of this order on 2 November. He stated gloomily that most Dunkirk vessels were built as men-of-war and were faster and better cared for than his own ships. He felt that it would be impossible for his relatively slower vessels to capture any of these merchant-privateers.<sup>12</sup>

The business of reprisals did not in fact proceed happily for Brames. A small Flemish vessel laden with salt was taken at Plymouth in January 1637/8, and Brames petitioned the Council that he should have her. His petition was referred to the High Court of Admiralty, but the issue of it is unknown.<sup>13</sup> In July 1638, Brames took matters into his own hands by seizing the *Jerome of Dover* and the *St. George of Sandwich* as the two vessels entered the Downs to pay customs on their cargoes from Dunkirk. He used as his authority the order of 25 October, 1637, which had been given to Pennington. The merchants of Dover petitioned the Council on 22 July to have Brames relinquish the ships, and the Council ordered him

<sup>8</sup> Brames owned property near Dunkirk, and one of his ancestors had been a secretary to the Hapsburg imperial authorities in Flanders. (Ed.) Robert Hovenden, *The Visitation of Kent, Taken in the Years 1619-1621 by John Philipot, Rouge Dragon, Marshal and Deputy to William Camden, Clarenceux*, Vol. XLII of the *Publications of the Harleian Society* (London, 1898), 215.

<sup>9</sup> P.R.O., P.C. 2/53/50; (Eds.) Dorothy O. Shilton and Richard Holworthy, *High Court of Admiralty Examinations, 1637-1638*, Vol. II of *Publications of the Anglo-American Records Foundation* (London and New York, 1932), 173.

<sup>10</sup> C.S.P., *Domestic Series* (1637), 490.

<sup>11</sup> See the depositions taken at Sandwich in May, 13 Chas. I (1637), P.R.O., Exchequer 178/6027. These have been printed in (Eds.) Joan Thirsk and J. P. Cooper, *Seventeenth-Century Economic Documents* (Oxford, 1972), 489-91.

<sup>12</sup> C.S.P., *Dom.* (1637), 511.

<sup>13</sup> C.S.P., *Dom.* (1637-1638), 151; Shilton and Holworthy, *High Court of Admiralty Examinations, 1637-38*, 245.

to appear before it on 29 July. After a full hearing, with King Charles I himself presiding, Brames was ordered to restore the two vessels to their owners. He was advised that he could, if he wished, proceed against the owners in the High Court of Admiralty. At the same time, however, the Council ordered the Attorney General to proceed against Brames in the Star Chamber because he had made fraudulent use of Pennington's warrant and had also seized some Dunkirk ships and goods while they were in Dover harbour.<sup>14</sup>

There is no record surviving in the Star Chamber proceedings of Charles I relating to Brames and his seizures of Dunkirk shipping and cargoes.<sup>15</sup> Fortunately, however, a brief against Brames on behalf of the merchants of Dover has been preserved in the State Papers, Domestic. It describes the case against Brames regarding his seizures and discusses other unrelated charges brought against him in the Star Chamber. It also describes the general importance of the entrepôt at Dover. The parts of this brief having to do with the composition system and Brames's tampering with it are as follows:

Mr. Jacob Brames is att present his Majesties Customer at the Porte of Sandwich and the members thereof.

This Port comprehends Dover, Sandwich, ffeversham, Milton, and Rochester, being all porte townes; where Custom houses are kepte, and much profittable busines for the said Customer in pointe of fees there dispatch.

The Composition Trade att Dover for Spanish silver and other rich goods hath of late years extended to a vaste busines of proffit, both to his Majestie, and the respective officers there, but especially to the Customer. . . .

All the dispatches of goods in and out with in the downes, is done by warrant from this Customer, and is very beneficiall to him in pointe of fees. . . .

At Dover all the Bollion and other goods which doe passe out and home for the kinge of Spaine's subiects in the Netherlands, doe pay Customs, Compositions, and Convoy Monyes, which . . . doth bringe a greate yearely benefitt to the Customer by ffees and ca. . . .

The said Customer is upon evident grounds iustlie prosecuted in the Starre Chamber, for . . . unwarrantable stayinge, and Compoundinge for divers Merchants Shippes and goodes at dover, to the valew of 10,000 L, under Collor of two fishing busses taken by ye dunkerkeres because fraughted by Hollanders. . . .

Most of these offences doe already evidentialie appeare upon Record and otherwise, and it is by conference with ye wittnesses before examinacion conceived that the charge . . . of disturbing ye Composition trade at Dover

<sup>14</sup> P.R.O., P.C. 2/49/169, 174.

<sup>15</sup> Only two volumes of Proceedings survive: P.R.O., Star Chamber 9-10.



(which is of exceedinge greate consequence) is already sufficiently proved. . . .

The Marchants at Dover interessted for the kinge of Spaine's Subjects in the Composition Trade there, doe amongst other things complaine against Mr. Jacob Brames for the followinge perticulers [:]

1. That his pretended Losse by the Dunkerkes was but 1800 L.
2. That he hath possessed himselfe of Dunkerkes goods for satisfacion thereof to the value of about 5000 L.
3. That he hath stayed sundry other Shippes and goods belonginge to Dover, and bound thither, according to the Treaties and agreement with the Merchants concerninge the Composition Trade there.
4. That by the said Mr. Brames his unwarrantable doeings in stayinge their Shippes and goods and threatninge to doe the like to others with out lymittacion: the Trade there hath bynn in dainger to bee wholie diverted, and much Bollion and Rich goods hath bynn conveyed other wayes: whereby his Majestie hath susteyned greate losse.
5. That Mr. Brames did alsoe threaten by force to take their goods out of their storehouses at Dover in soe much as sundry of those Marchants did wrighte to their principalls beyond the Seas to forbear sendinge their goods thither doubtinge [fearing] a generall Embargo from the State here; for soe Mr. Brames carryed it, though he had not warrant [for] direcions in that kinde.
6. They doe alsoe affirme that the two Busses taken by the Dunkerkes, did a greate parte of them belonge to the Hollanders, and although that he doth sett out fishing Busses from Dover in the name of the English yet it willbe proved that the Hollanders have the greatest benefitt by their fishing and employment, and not the kings Subiects.
7. The said Marchants doe likewise complayne of divers other foule Matters against the said Mr. Brames, and it is very probable that they are well able to prove it, being all men of good worth and credit.<sup>16</sup>

No record of the sentence in the Brames case has come down because no Star Chamber sentences survive.<sup>17</sup> Although Brames retained his position as Customer of Sandwich and Dover,<sup>18</sup> there is no evidence that he ever again molested the composition trade. It is probable that he suffered a heavy fine.

After Brames lost his means of effective retaliation, the Dunkirkers resumed their attacks upon his fishing vessels. He complained before the Council in 1640 that since November 1638 he had lost six busses which cost him in terms of cargo and ransoms paid £8,400.<sup>19</sup> He had tried to

<sup>16</sup> P.R.O., State Papers 16/408/153 (undated).

<sup>17</sup> See G. R. Elton, *England, 1200-1640*, Vol. I in (Ed.) G. R. Elton, *The Sources of History: Studies in the Uses of Historical Evidence* (London, 1969), 63-4.

<sup>18</sup> See the Declared Account authorising his wages for 1639 and 1640. P.R.O., Audit Office Records 3/297/5, 19.

<sup>19</sup> P.R.O., P.C. 2/53/50-51.



secure immunity from the Dunkirkers' attacks by having the Dutchmen he employed as fishermen made English denizens, but this manoeuvre had failed.<sup>20</sup> Brames died in June 1641 before he could take action to recoup his new losses.<sup>21</sup>

## III

The second attempt by English fishing entrepreneurs to effect reprisals upon the Dunkirkers through the composition trade was initiated by the 'Lord Chamberlain's Association', one of three small subsidiaries of a larger joint stock company launched by King Charles and the Privy Council in 1632 as the 'Society of the Fishery of Great Britain and Ireland'.<sup>22</sup> By 1640, the Lord Chamberlain's Association had lost an undetermined number of busses to the value of £5,000.<sup>23</sup> After the loss of two busses in 1639 the Privy Council had ordered Lord Admiral Northumberland to make reprisals upon the Dunkirkers, but only one Dunkirk merchantman had been taken.<sup>24</sup> On 9 February, 1639/40, the Earl of Pembroke, the Lord Chamberlain and principal member of the Association, delivered a Remonstrance to the King in which he requested a lottery to refund the Association and letters of marque against the Dunkirkers to make good the £5,000 loss. The King and Council agreed that if the Association's agent in Flanders could not secure restitution, then letters of marque might be issued.<sup>25</sup> The Association then used its new privilege to press another petition upon the King for an order which

<sup>20</sup> P.R.O., P.C. 2/53/50. Brames had been granted the right to have 50 people made denizens, and he first used this power to grant denization to 16 fishermen in February 1637/8. (Ed.) William A. Shaw, *Denizations and Naturalizations of Aliens in England and Ireland, 1603-1700*, Vol. XVIII of *The Publications of the Huguenot Society of London* (Lymington, 1911), 58.

<sup>21</sup> C.S.P., *Dom.* (1641-1643), 30, 38-9.

<sup>22</sup> See F. J. Fisher, 'Some Experiments in Company Organization in the Early Seventeenth Century', *Economic History Review*, iv (1933), 187-9; Ephraim Lipson, *The Economic History of England* (3 vols.; Vol. I, 12th edn.; Vols. II-III, 6th edn.; London, 1956-1959), iii, 150; W. R. Scott, *The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720* (3 vols.; Cambridge, 1910-1912), ii, 364-71; Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, 1992), 250-2.

<sup>23</sup> P.R.O., P.C. 2/53/50.

<sup>24</sup> C.S.P., *Dom.* (1638-1639), 596, 602; Edmund Rossingham, Newsletter to Lord Scudamore, 7 October, 1639, British Library, Add. MS. 11,045, fol. 62.

<sup>25</sup> C.S.P., *Dom.* (1639-1640), 440-1. See also Scott, *Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720*, ii, 372.

would allow it to take its reprisals by seizing the goods of Dunkirk merchants at Dover.<sup>26</sup>

The Farmers of the Customs naturally objected to this new threat to the composition system. An anonymous memorandum on their behalf stated their case as follows:

His Majestie by his Privy Seale graunted to ye Farmers of his Customs power to compound with the Marchants Strangers of Flaunders and c., for half-Subsidie for all goodes brought in and shipped out at Douer having Libertie of English Shipping and Conuoy for their Safetie, and hereuppon ye Farmers [made] article with the Marchants, Whereuppon the saide Marchants are inuited to that trade, have their owne Factors residing at Douer, and have free Libertie of bringing in and carrying out their goodes from that place.

The Lord Chamberlaine and ye Adventurers in ye Fishing, for some iniury don them by the Dunkerkeres, in taking away some of their busses and detaining the persons of severall men, sue to his Majestie for satisfaccion to be given by the staying of the goodes of Flaunders Marchants in Douer to the value of 5,000 L which goodes came in upon ye Composition as aforesaid.

If this course take effect that trade would instantlie be destroid, which is soe considerable and [hath] advanced Revenue to his Majestie; besides [it would cause] the loss of the employment of English Shipping, and give occasions to ye Marchants Strangers in all partes to beleave they were surprised wherein these Marchants of Flaunders have not only an interest but those of Fraunce, Spaine, and Italie; and the knowledge thereof would soon spread to the manifest ruin of that trade which is now well-settled.

The Farmers humblie desire that the goodes upon the Composition of Douer may be free as formerly, otherwise they must suffer much in their undertaking, and be forced to sue for defalcacion, and that they [the Association] may seeke satisfacion otherwise then upon those composcion goodes.<sup>27</sup>

There is no evidence that the Association ever received letters of marque or that any Dunkirk vessels or goods were ever stayed at Dover on their behalf. In fact, the Association's parent, the 'Society of the Fishery of Great Britain and Ireland', proved to be a total financial failure

<sup>26</sup> C.S.P. Dom. (1640-1641), 367.

<sup>27</sup> P.R.O., S.P. 16/475/51 (undated). Composition revenue had been £22,550 for the year ending at Christmas 1638. See my *Exchange of Christendom: The International Entrepôt at Dover, 1622-1651*, 167. If this level of income was maintained in 1640, it would have amounted to 13 per cent of the total rent of £172,500 on the Great Farm of the Customs. See Ashton, *The Crown and the Money Market, 1603-1640*, 97. In early 1640, the Great Farm was still held by the Goring-Crisp-Jacob-Nulls Syndicate. See Dietz, *English Public Finance, 1485-1641*, ii, 336, and Ashton, *The Crown and the Money Market, 1603-1640*, 104.

by 1641,<sup>28</sup> and the developing domestic political crisis left the Council no time for protecting the ailing fishing industry.

## IV

Although the plans of the Lord Chamberlain's Association for retaliation against the Dunkirkers came to nothing, their permit for private letters of reprisal against Dunkirk shipping marked a significant change in government policy. From 1637 to 1639 both Brames and the Association had been legally enjoined to rely on the Channel Fleet's capture of Dunkirkers as their sole means of redress. But, as Pennington had warned, his fleet proved totally inadequate for this task. Therefore, the fact that in 1640 the Association was allowed to use private vessels, which probably would have been more effective, indicates that the King and Council were moving toward a more belligerent policy to protect the English fishing industry at the expense of the Customs Farmers' interests at Dover. This shift in the government's attitude cannot be explained by any evidence recorded in the surviving State Papers, but it is certainly plausible to assume that the aristocratic backers of the Association had used their superior social position to gain new conciliar support for an enterprise which had originally been created by the Council itself in response to the King's personal initiative.

And, finally, regardless of its motivations, what is most significant about the government's new position is that it stands as yet another example of the political inconstancy of Charles I, a character flaw which is arguably the main cause of the coming Civil War.<sup>29</sup> Knowing full well that in the winter of 1637/8 the Customs Farmers had stretched themselves financially to increase their annual rents to the Crown, Charles was ready to defend their interests in the summer of 1638 against a local bureaucrat like Brames. However, when the Farmers' operations at Dover were potentially endangered early in 1640 by a group of influential peers connected to the fishing society initiated by the King himself, Charles promptly acquiesced in the Council's decision to allow these noble investors to compensate themselves by methods that would threaten the Farmer's income – and thus their ability to pay increased

<sup>28</sup> See Lipson, *Economic History of England*, iii, 150; Scott, *Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720*, ii, 366–8, 370–1.

<sup>29</sup> For a recent discussion of the revisionist idea that Charles I was personally responsible for the Civil War, see Charles Carlton, *Charles I: The Personal Monarch* (2nd edn.; London, 1995), xv–xviii, and *passim*.

rents. And, of course, the King permitted all this at the very time when the receipts from Ship Money were declining and the Bishops' Wars with Scotland were maximising the Crown's need for revenue.<sup>30</sup> So, ironically, even though one of Charles's principal reasons for establishing the original society for fisheries of Great Britain had been to help fill the royal coffers,<sup>31</sup> his rush to defend the Lord Chamberlain's branch of this group was clearly a potential threat to his own financial existence.

In any event, the Civil War had the effect of ending any threat of privateering reprisals by English fishing interests against Dunkirk ships and cargoes at Dover. The King could not logically issue letters of marque against Flemings after Spanish authorities permitted Royalist privateers to operate from Dunkirk in 1643,<sup>32</sup> and Parliament certainly had no reason to grant reprisals to backers of a failed project of the royal government. As a result, Dunkirk merchants at Dover faced no threat from either of the rival English governments, and the Dover entrepôt – especially its silver component – continued to function with Parliament's active support.<sup>33</sup>

In fact, both the silver and commodity branches of Dover's unique international trade came to an end only in the late 1640s. The crucial blow occurred in 1647 when adverse exchange rates for the English pound caused Spanish agents to shift their silver entrepôt to Zeeland, whose government was willing to ignore the official state of war between the United Provinces and Spain. This arrangement was so successful that the Continental merchants in the composition trade in commodities also immediately deserted Dover for Zeeland.<sup>34</sup> And, finally, the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 gave all Dutch ships the status of neutral carriers in the continuing Franco-Spanish war, and the result was that the entrepôt for Spanish silver shifted permanently to Amsterdam under precisely the same arrangements that had been in effect at Dover.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> A good brief summary of Charles's financial difficulties by 1640 may be found in Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age* (2nd edn.; London, 1994), 180. Annual rents on the Great Farm of the Customs were increased from £150,000 to £172,500 as of Christmas 1638; annual rents on the Petty Farm were increased from £60,000 to £72,500 as of 25 March 1639. See Ashton, *The Crown and the Money Market, 1603–1640*, 97, 102, 109.

<sup>31</sup> See Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I*, 777.

<sup>32</sup> See my *Exchange of Christendom: The International Entrepôt at Dover, 1622–1651*, 89.

<sup>33</sup> *Exchange of Christendom*, 85–90, 94–8, 167–8.

<sup>34</sup> *Exchange of Christendom*, 90, 98.

<sup>35</sup> *Exchange of Christendom*, 100.