

PROTEST AGAINST CROMWELL

Sir Miles Hobart

circa 1645

About the middle of December, now almost two years since, the now Lieutenant-General Cromwell being then captain of a troop of horse under the command of the Earl of Essex, I, well-knowing he had some part of his estate lying in the Isle of Ely and a good part of my own estate lying in the same Isle and I well understood the daily approach of the enemy upon our bordering counties, and that the enemy and many of the inhabitants did plot to take that Isle for their quarters, so to annoy all the adjacent counties that bound upon the said Isle.

These motives moved me to go to Captain Cromwell and acquaint him with it, and did desire his assistance in that matter. He well conceived the danger and how it might be prevented, whereupon he moved the House to take it into their consideration. And he, being in some hopes to attain his desire, told me he would not go upon the business without I would take command and go with him, which I could ill have done, I having so much business both in the city and country. Yet I left all and raised a troop of dragoons—horse, arms, bridles, and saddles—at my great charge, and paid my troop and officers for ten weeks together out of my own money by Captain Cromwell's persuasions and many promises that I should have all my money with the first. To this day I have never received one penny, though there has been great sums of money paid him, and he and some of his officers did, as I conceive, take away great sums of money from the subject injuriously and contrary to the ordinances of the Parliament.

Now, to give an account of what I have observed and what I have heard and seen to do this bleeding state service, here I shall declare Colonel Cromwell raising of his regiment makes choice of his officers, not such as were soldiers or men of estate, but such as were common men, poor and of mean parentage, only he would give them the title of godly, precious men. Yet his common practice was to cashier honest gentlemen and soldiers that were stout in the cause as I conceive, witness those that did suffer in that case.

I have heard him oftentimes say that it must not be soldiers nor Scots that must do this work, but it must be the godly to this purpose. When any new Englishman or some new upstart Independent did appear, there must be a way made for him by cashiering others, some honest commander or other, and those silly people put in their command. If you will examine this you will have proof enough.

If you look upon his own regiment of horse, see what a swarm there is of those that call themselves the godly; some of them profess they have seen visions and had revelations. Look on Colonel Fleetwood's¹ regiment, with his Major Harrison, what a cluster of preaching officers and troopers there is.

Look what a company of troopers are thrust into other regiments by the head and shoulders, most of them Independents, whom they call godly, precious men; nay, indeed, to say the truth, almost all our horse be made of that faction. If you look on Colonel Russell's² regiment, Colonel Montagu's,³ Colonel Pickering's,⁴ Colonel Rainsborough's⁵—all of them professed Independents entire, and besides in most of our regiments they have crammed in one company or other that they or their officers must be Independents. When will our wars be ended by those whose command glories in themselves whilst we have war, and will be their shame when we have peace?

The first winter after some business was done in Huntingdonshire, and the enemy had taken Crowland and fortified it; he then commanded me to Wisbech, and there to maintain guard upon the Crowlanders, which I

¹ Charles Fleetwood (1618–1692)

² Francis Russell

³ Edward Montagu (1625–1672), cousin of Samuel Pepys

⁴ John Pickering

⁵ Thomas Rainsborough (1610–1648), pre-eminent spokesmen for the Levellers at the Putney Debates.

did with my own troop only, and at the spring took that town in. Yet that service, and all other done by me and others, must go in his name or else all was not well. Colonel Cromwell, perceiving what might be done in the Isle by a small party, at my coming to him at Cambridge told me he would make the Isle of Ely the strongest place in the world, and that he would out with all the wretches and ungodly men, and he would place in it godly and precious people, and he would make it a place for God to dwell. I spoke to him to help me to some of moneys that I had laid out of my purse long before and some moneys to pay my soldiers. He told me I might set a tax upon the inhabitants of the Isle to pay myself, which I denied and thought it was not fit for me to raise moneys to pay myself.

About the siege of Lynn, Colonel Cromwell made Major Ireton Deputy-Governor of the Isle of Ely,¹ who did report well of him. But he no sooner came among us there but he began to levy great sums of money, some by ordinance of Parliament, some other ways, pretending he would fortify the Isle, and it is reported to me and others by the treasurer that he in eleven months did receive at the least £15.000. Yet at this day the Isle is in no posture than it was in at the time when he came into it, only it is become a mere Amsterdam, for in the chiefest churches on the Sabbath day the soldiers have gone up into the pulpits, both in the forenoon and the afternoon, and preached to the whole parish. And our ministers have sat in their seat in the church and durst not attempt to preach, it being a common thing to preach in private houses night and day, they having got whole families as Independents into that Isle from London and other places under their command, likewise having made poor men of that Isle. Captains only, as I conceive, because they profess themselves Independents, and such as have filled dung carts both before they were captains and since; they frequently re-baptize the people of that Isle. And those captains have power to commit to prison, and by a letter from Colonel Cromwell to the Committee, the copy whereof I have, he does command that Committee that they should not release any prisoner committed by his officers, so that the whole Isle is so awed that they dare not seek for their liberties.

I see at Ely upon the file of letters to that Committee a letter from Colonel Cromwell to them that they should pay to his wife £5 per week towards her extraordinaries, which has been duly paid her a great while. I am sure there is no ordinance of Parliament for that.

Major Ireton is still making a show of raising fortifications, but it is verily believed it is but a pretence to get moneys; covetousness does best agree with a coward.

About a year since, they were very forward to drain that Isle, and I had some speech with Colonel Cromwell here at London, I well knowing what their aim was. The Colonel told me he would drain it by the labour of the soldiers, and Sir Cornelius Vermuyden² should do it, and by draining he would fortify it and make it invincible, and make £100.000 a year of those grounds. I then asked the Colonel how the gentlemen that were the undertakers should be satisfied for their moneys laid out. He told me they did it for their own ends and let them loose their moneys, and this should be for a public good to settle godly men in. About that time Colonel Cromwell and Major Ireton were suitors to the Committee at Cambridge for three-score pieces of ordinance to strengthen that Isle, and other vast demands they made to that Committee, as the Committee will satisfy you.

At our first being at Stamford after Crowland was taken,³ there was news brought to Colonel Cromwell that there were some lords of the King's side slain, and he replied that God fought against them, for God would have no lording over his people, and he verily believed that God would sweep away that lord in power out of this nation.

I did hear Colonel Cromwell about a year since say to a gentleman as we were going to the Earl of Manchester's quarters in Saint James that if he had but Marsland and Holland joined to the Isle of Ely, he would make it the

¹ August 1643

² Cornelius Vermuyden (1595–1677), Dutch engineer already prominent for numerous drainage projects throughout England. His son was an infantry colonel in the army of the Eastern Association.

³ Crowland fell on 28 April 1643

strongest thing in the world, for there he had three of the finest ports of the world, and that he could keep them against all the strength that could be made against them.

About some 4 days after there came two of Colonel Cromwell's troopers and another man to my house in London and showed me a petition with a great many of hands and marks to it, and desired my hand to it, and I read the petition, and it was to the Parliament for liberty of conscience. I was troubled at it and told them I would have my hand cut off before I would set my hand to it, and told them if any nation in the world were in the ready way to Heaven, it was the Scots. They told me they thought I had been a godly man, but now they perceive what I was and went away; ever after Colonel Cromwell did slight me.

At the spring, I being at Cambridge, we having there intelligence that Prince Rupert¹ was coming to raise our siege at Newark,² I walking over the market hill there with Colonel Cromwell spoke to him thus, "Sir, if you would march up to Newark with but 1.500 of your horse, you would spoil Prince Rupert's market." He said Sir John Meldrum³ and the rest would take the town for all the Prince. I said to him again it was as cheap for our horse to march as to lie still in the stables, whereupon he was angry and bid me hold my tongue, I spoke I knew not what. Yet he had then gallant horse, and I have heard him say that he had more horse in his troop at Edgehill than the Earl of Essex had in his whole army.

When Colonel Cromwell this last summer quartered near Ferrebridge, I was with him there and I spoke to him to quit me from the army. He gave me very good words, but delayed me till I came near York. There Lieutenant-Colonel Whalley⁴ took me by the hand and told me that if I would not be so violent, but resolve to agree with them, he knew his Lieutenant-General would make me colonel of their regiment.

Shortly after I went to Wetherby to Colonel Cromwell to dispatch me, whereupon he told me if I had been ruled by Major Ireton in the Isle then that all would have gone sweetly on, and the business of the Isle had been in a good forwardness, but yet if I would march with him and be but conformable to precious, godly men, I should see that I should have better preferment then I did imagine. But I did desire to be gone and have my dispatch. Whereupon he wrote to the Earl of Manchester to let me have three months' pay, my troop recruited with horse and arms, so many as I marched withal from London, and to have the public faith for the rest of my moneys and arrears.

When we were last at Huntington, there was the first report that the Earl of Essex was routed, and that he had totally lost his artillery and foot, whereupon the Independents many of them there did, as it were, show themselves so joyful as though it had been a victory new gained to themselves. There is many a gentleman I believe had as sad a heart as myself that day will bear me witness of their rejoicing. Yet I do believe that if the state should protest against that sect, and they should have no command, the best part of them would be no Independents, for there is many of them of the opinion of their preferment. But for the absolute Independent, he is cruel; without mercy; covetous without measure; he will have the spirit, though it be a false one; lying is their best guard, by which he defends himself and offends others by taking away the esteem of a man. Then his will is a law to do what he will with him. This I can say by experience; the Lord of Heaven deliver every honest man out of their hands.

John Bruce, ed. *The Quarrel Between the Earl of Manchester and Oliver Cromwell* (Westminster: Nichols and Sons, 1875):71–77.

¹ Rupert (1619–1682), Count Palatine of the Rhine and Duke of Bavaria, nephew of Charles I and the leading Royalist commander.

² The second siege of Newark began on 6 March 1644. The besieging Parliamentary forces surrendered to Prince Rupert on 22 March 1644.

³ Sir John Meldrum (–1645), commander of Parliamentary forces besieging Newark. He was surprised and defeated by Prince Rupert.

⁴ Edward Whalley (1607–1675)