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# Secret Printing, the Crisis of 1640, and the Origins of Civil War Radicalism

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*Past & Present*, Volume 196, Issue 1, 1 August 2007, Pages 37–82,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtm043>

**Published:** 01 August 2007

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For all the ink spilled over the many varieties of radicalism that emerged during the 1640s, we remain surprisingly ignorant as to the question of how and under what circumstances these striking and novel forms of radicalism came into being. Partly this is a consequence of the waves of revisionism that

swept the field of early modern British history beginning in the late 1960s. By stressing the consensual and conservative nature of early Stuart political culture, and by de-emphasizing the dramatic constitutional and religious conflicts that had exercised earlier historians, revisionist scholars tended on the whole to downplay the significance of Civil War radicalism.<sup>1</sup> Yet even those Whig and Marxist scholars who preceded the revisionists never managed to offer a satisfactory account of how these innovative forms of religious and political ideology and practice emerged. Nowhere is this clearer than in...

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