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1649–1660

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THE BRITISH REPUBLIC 1649–1660

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For the Peerage of Redbridge,
long ago:
Bramwell Tovey,
David Pearl
and
Christopher Freeman

PREFACE

I agreed to write this book at the importunity of a friend, the commissioning editor, Jeremy Black. It was the first which I had ever attempted which synthesised the work of many colleagues with my own, so that for much of the time I was deploying the research of others. As such, I found the prospect of it rather forbidding: it was ‘microwaved history’, a heap of everything that seemed to be known upon the subject, heated through briefly with my own opinions and served up to the general reader. It is the hardest type of book with which to please professional colleagues, for what accords with their opinions will seem familiar and dull to them, and what does not will often seem irritating. My principal reason for agreeing to undertake it was that it represented an opportunity to provide students and the general public with the very latest picture of an important episode of history, in an accessible form and at an accessible price. In doing so, I was also closing a gap between the two periods in which most of my existing work has been concentrated, the 1640s and the years from 1658 to 1685, and so completing a sequence of four books. Some of the ground was covered in my previous publications upon the Restoration and upon Charles II, and I have had to consider all of it during the years in which I ran a Special Subject upon the British Republic at Bristol University. It is customary for academics who chair such courses to comment upon the amount that they have learned from their students. I endorse this whole-heartedly, but

I have gained a great deal from three of them in particular: Dominic Stuttaford, Bruce Yardley and Philip Norrey. The last became a research student at Bristol and produced a superb doctoral thesis upon the Restoration period before having to seek employment outside academe because of the current absence of opportunities within it. Wherever you are when this book is published, Phil, I hope that it gives you pleasure, for you could have written it better than I.