

## Lecture four : The Tudors

### A1-Henry VII (1485-1509)

Henry VII believed that war was bad for business, and that business was good for the state. So, he avoided quarrels with Scotland and France. Trade started to grow, population growth started to speed up and a new sense of nationhood was arising. Henry reformed the legal system by the revival of the *Court of Star Chamber* (traditionally the king's council chamber) to deal with lawless nobles and their armed men who had broken justice during the wars of roses. Henry wanted to make the Crown financially independent. The lands he restored after many of the old nobility died during the wars, and the fines he took through trials and taxes helped him do this. (but still he knew how to keep the friendship of the merchants and lesser gentry classes) He created a new nobility from merchants and middle class gentry. (like him they wanted peace and prosperity and they knew that their rise to importance was completely dependent on the crown. He also built a merchant fleet because he believed that England's future wealth would depend on international trade.

### A2- Henry VIII (1509-1547)

Unlike his father, he was wasteful with money, interested in pleasing himself and his cruelty earned him the description of *a despot under the law*. His trial to become an important influence in European politics failed; France and Spain were now more powerful than England, and his alliance shifts between Spain and France did not bring him anything. His father's saved money was soon gone (when his father died in 1509 he left behind a huge total of 2 million pound). Gold and silver from newly discovered America added to economic inflation, and the English coinage was reduced to a seventh of its value within twenty-five years.

## A2-1-The reformation

Henry disliked the power of the church <sup>because</sup> and wished to centralize state authority. ( church was huge landowner but no longer important to economic and social growth, many monks no longer led a good religious life but lived in wealth and comfort. Henry and his chief minister Cardinal Wolsey had another reason to hate the church. In 1510 Henry got permission from the pope to marry Catherine of Aragon, the widow of his elder brother Arthur. Catherine gave him a daughter, Mary I but all her sons died at birth. Henry, much concerned with the future of the Tudor line, asked the pope to pronounce the divorce in 1526, but the pope refused. (the pope was controlled by Charles V who was Holy Roman emperor and king of Spain, and also Catherine's nephew, so for these political and family reasons the pope was forced to do as Charles V wanted, so he forbade Henry's divorce. In 1534 Henry decided to break with the pope and made himself supreme head of the new Protestant Church of England after the Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy. So, the reformation was a result of the divorce. Henry divorced Catherine and married Anne Boleyn. They had a daughter, later Elizabeth I. Again, Anne failed to give the king a male heir. He, later, had Anne executed for adultery. His third wife was Jane Seymour who died giving birth to a son, later Edward VI. Henry married his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, for political reasons seeking a strong link with the Protestant Germany, but soon divorced her. Catherine Howard was Henry's new wife. She too was executed for adultery. Henry's sixth and last wife was the protestant Catherine Parr who was very kind with his children from previous marriages.

## A2-2 The dissolution of monasteries

Though Henry VIII was Supreme Head of the English Church, he did not control a large part of it. Over 800 monasteries and nunneries still owed obedience to the pope and were very rich in land and treasure. The King and his new minister Thomas Cromwell

decided on the destruction of the monasteries. So, royal inspectors were sent to make reports about these houses. (inspectors were determined to prove that monks and nuns were not keeping their vows and were superstitious and worldly) ( the report on the important monastery of bury st edmund's, in Suffolk included: he delighted in playing at dice and cards, spent much money, women coming and resorting to this monastery, among the relics we found much vanity and superstition....). In 1536 an Act of Parliament started dissolving monasteries. By 1539 all buildings and possessions were transferred to the crown, but made allowance for pensions to be paid to displaced abbots and abbesses and for humbler monks and nuns to take up residence in larger surviving houses. Some monks and nuns had run schools, cared for the poor and sick, and provided hospitality for travelers. By 1536 many of Henry's subjects were worried by the changes in the Church. A protest march called the *Pilgrimage of Grace* was led by Robert aske whose main demand was that the power of the pope, as well as the monasteries, should be restored. Aske was hung in chains from the walls of York castle, and nearly 200 rebels were similarly executed. Henry encouraged the construction of faster ships, reinforced the professionals of his navy by a crowd of conscripts in time of emergency; but once a crisis was over these auxiliaries would go back to their usual jobs.

### **A3-Edward VI (1547-1553)**

When Henry VIII died in 1547, his son Edward was only nine years old. So regents governed on his behalf. His uncle, the duke of Somerset was one of them. He seized power and declared himself protector of the boy King. Because of his arrogance and inefficiency he was pushed aside by the ruthless John Dudley, who took the title of duke of Northumberland and had Somerset executed in 1552. Both these men were protestants and had plans for the spread of Protestantism and the demotion of catholic opponents. By 1553, Edward, now

sixteen, was desperately ill. He decided to ignore his Catholic half-sister, Mary, and leave the crown to his fifteen year old protestant cousin Lady Jane Grey. Encouraged by Jane's parents, John Dudley forced her to marry his son lord Guildford Dudley. When Edward died in July 1553, Jane was proclaimed queen. However, this plan failed when Mary executed all the conspirators and became queen with the support of people in July 1553.

#### **A4-Mary I (1553-1558)**

Mary was determined to bring back the Catholic faith. Her marriage to Philip II of Spain. The most powerful Catholic country in Europe, was a clear warning to the English that they were to be steered back towards Rome. An attempt was made to restore monasteries, but the rich lords who had shared out monastic lands between them fought manfully against this. Therefore, Mary ordered hundreds of Protestants to be burned to death, for which she became known as 'Bloody Mary'. Mary's reign lasted only 5 years, not long enough to restore the Catholic Church securely. Her marriage brought her no happiness, for Philip of Spain soon left the country. England was dragged into war between Spain and France which led to the loss of Calais, her last remaining possession in Europe. Bad harvests and a killer influenza epidemic in 1557 increased the gloom. She had no children, and after her death on 17 November 1558, she was succeeded by her half sister Elizabeth.

#### **A5-Elizabeth I**

Elizabeth I, the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, was a strong and clever woman who controlled the difficult political and religious situation of the time with considerable skill. (Bad harvests, food shortages and the costs of war pushed up prices, unlike her father, Elizabeth hated spending money. She built no new palaces and the rich velvets, silks, and jewels in her gleaming dresses were used several times). Elizabeth chose the

experienced William Cecil had served Edward VI's Duke of Northumberland and although he was protestant had managed to avoid trouble in Mary's reign. She was right about him he remained the most important adviser on her Council for the next forty years. During her reign the country's economy grew very strong and the arts were very active and England became firmly protestant under her rule.

Among John Hawkin's officers was Francis Drake. When Hawkins was appointed treasurer of the navy and applied himself to rooting out corruption and incompetences. Drake set up on his own and harried the west indies, returning each time with shiploads of plunder. This was a tantamount of slap in King Philip's face. It made non sense of Elizabeth denials of complicity in the privateer trade of which Drake was known to be the most relentless exponent. The Spanish ruler began to prepare for an inevitable war.

### **A-B Mary Queen of the Scots (1542-1567)**

She was the daughter of king James V of Scotland and became Queen shortly after her birth. She was a Roman Catholic who was involved in many religious disputes with Scottish Protestants. She was desposed in 1567 in favor of her infant son James, and imprisoned in Lochleven castle. A loyal servant helped her to escape and she tried to raise an army, but was defeated and forced to flee to England where Elizabeth provided shelter for her. Mary was in fact a dangerous guest. As a direct descent of Henry VII through a line unattained by charges of illegitimacy, she was for Catholics the rightful queen of England as well as of Scotland. (because in their opinion she could restore the lost faith. By 1586 there was a network of government spies to trap Catholics. One uncovered a plot , with Mary's involvement, to murder Elizabeth. Mary was put on trial for treason, and on February 1587, she was beheaded.

**The Spanish Armada** After the execution of Catholic Mary, Philip of Spain planned the assembly of a vast armada with the purpose of wiping the English from the seas and enable the Spanish troops to invade their country. All Catholic Europe was agog, and the pope gave his blessing to the venture. The operation was delayed when Sir Francis Drake imprudently sailed in Cadiz in 1587 and burnt many of the galleons assemble there. By 1588 there was another delay of two weeks because of unfavorable wind. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of July the mighty armada, under the command of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, reached the western approaches to the English Channel. The defending fleet was commanded by lord Howard of Effingham, drake and Frobisher served under him. Faster ships were produced, and longer-range guns were installed on continuous gun-decks. The fast ships dodged in and out between the ungainly galleons and the Spaniards who had been used to the formal tactics of grappling and the fighting hand to hand were faced not with seaborne soldiers but by fighting sailors. The Spanish Armada was defeated more by bad weather than by English guns. About sixty three ships and twenty thousand men had been lost. England had lost not a single vessel and only about a hundred men. In March 1603, as she lay dying, she mumbled the name of the next ruler- James VI of Scotland, the son of Mary Queen of Scots.

Francis Drake