

THE TUDORS: 1485-1603

Summer Reading/Tasks

Task One:

Henry Tudor was 28 years old when he usurped the crown of England. Born in Pembroke Castle, Wales, he never knew his father Edmund Tudor. Instead he grew up with his mother, Margaret Beaufort, and his uncle, Jasper Tudor at Pembroke. While Henry VI and his son were alive, the young earl Henry Tudor was not important, just a valuable ward. But this changed when they both died. Henry Tudor suddenly became the main Lancastrian claimant to the throne. Recognising the vulnerable position that fate had placed his nephew in, Jasper Tudor took Henry across the Channel to safety. Henry stayed in exile in Brittany for 14 years and had no intention of claiming the English throne until Richard III usurped his nephew. He began to gather an English court around him and set sail to England on the 1st August 1485. Henry and his gathering forces finally met King Richard III and his troops outside of Bosworth, Leicestershire on the 22nd August 1485. The Tudor period began with this decisive battle.

Investigate the events of the Battle of Bosworth, and create a fact file about what happened. This should include information on the key men on either side of the battle, Henry's journey to the battle (with a map) and a summary of the key events, focusing particularly on the role of the Stanley family.

Were the actions of the Stanley family at Bosworth the key reason for Henry's victory?

<https://www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/bosworth.htm> is a good starting point for your research. You can also use the attached Wars of the Roses chapter - this is excellent extension reading.

Key people to look at:

- Richard III
- Henry Tudor
- Jasper Tudor
- Sir William and Lord Thomas Stanley

OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/tudor-england/the-battle-of-bosworth/>

<http://www.battlefieldstrust.com/resourcecentre/warsoftheroses/battleview.asp?BattleFieldId=8>

<http://www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/williamstanley.htm>

<https://www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/stanley.htm>

CHAPTER 1

Context: Revolutionary Russia in 1917

Russia's geography and peoples

In 1917, Russia covered over 8 million square miles (22 million square kilometres), an area equivalent to two and a half times the size of the USA today. At its widest, from west to east, it stretched for 5000 miles; at its longest, north to south, it measured 2000 miles. It covered a large part of two continents. European Russia extended eastward from the borders of Poland to the Urals mountain range. Asiatic Russia extended eastward from the Urals to the Pacific Ocean. The greater part of the population, which between 1815 and 1914 had quadrupled from 40 million to 160 million, was concentrated in European Russia. It was in that part of the empire that the major historical developments had occurred and it was there that Russia's principal cities, **St Petersburg** and **Moscow**, were situated.

The sheer size of Russia tended to give an impression of great strength, but this was misleading. The population contained a wide variety of peoples of different ethnicities, language (see Table 1.1), religion and culture. Controlling such a variety of peoples over such a vast area had been a major problem for all Russian governments before 1917 and would remain so after.

Table 1.1 The major nationalities of the Russian Empire according to the census of 1897 (in millions, defined according to mother tongue)

Great Russia	55.6	Bashkir	1.3
Ukrainian	22.4	Lithuanian	1.2
Turkic/Tatar	13.4	Armenian	1.2
Polish	7.9	Romanian/Moldavian	1.1
White Russian	5.8	Estonian	1.0
Yiddish (Jewish)	5.0	Mordvinian	1.0
Kirgiz/Kaisats	4.0	Georgian	0.8
Finnic	3.1	Tadzhik	0.3
German	1.8	Turkmenian	0.3
Azerbaijani	1.7	Greek	0.2
Latvian	1.4	Bulgarian	0.2

The social structure of tsarist Russia

The striking features of the social structure of Russia in 1917 were the comparatively small commercial, professional and working classes and the preponderance of peasants in the population (see Figure 1.2, page 3).

KEY TERMS

St Petersburg

The traditional capital of Russia; in 1914, for patriotic reasons, it was retitled Petrograd, a Russian form of the name to distinguish it from the original German form.

Moscow In 1918, for security reasons, the Bolsheviks made this the new Russian capital.

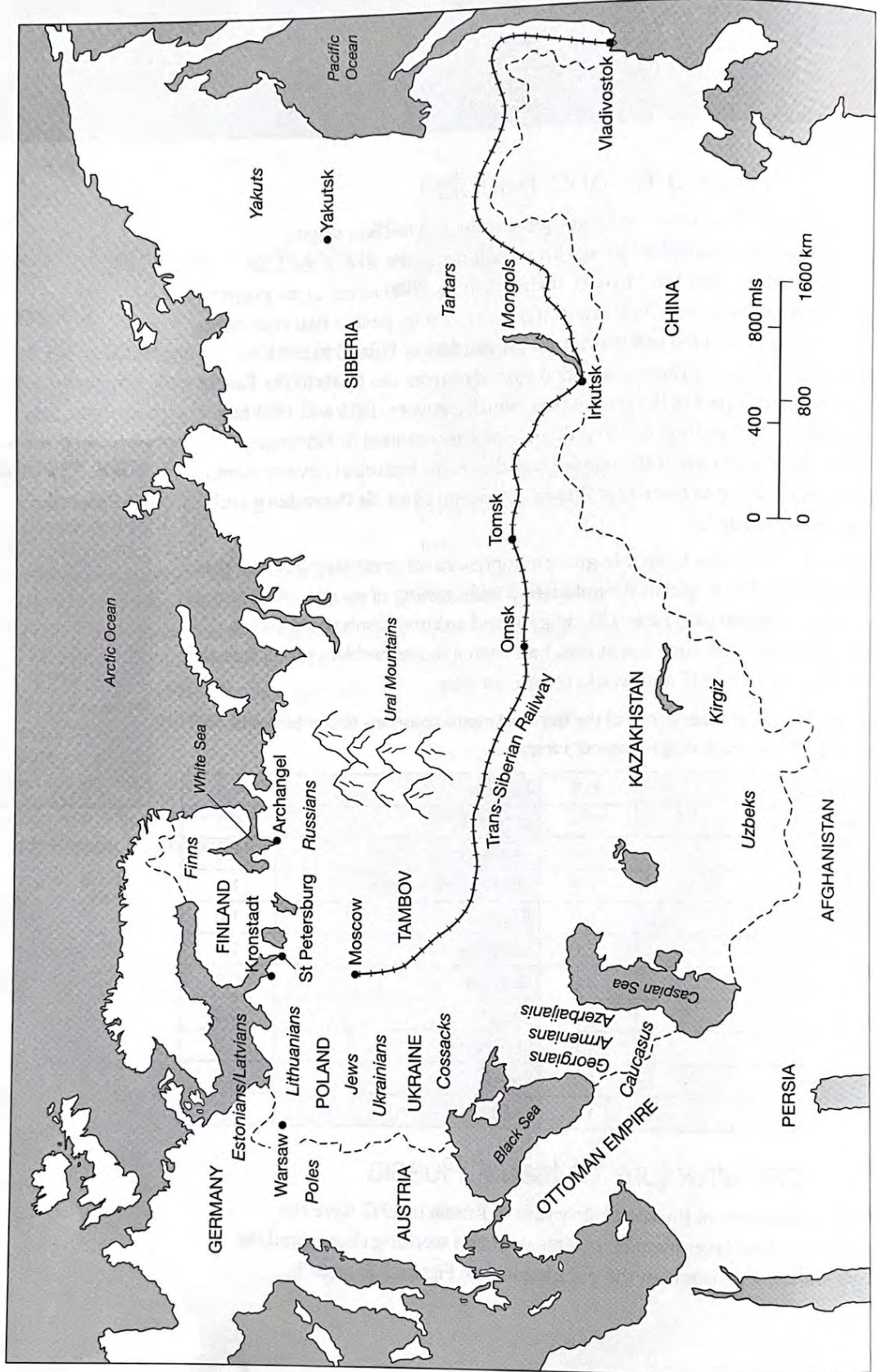


Figure 1.1 Map of Russia in 1917.

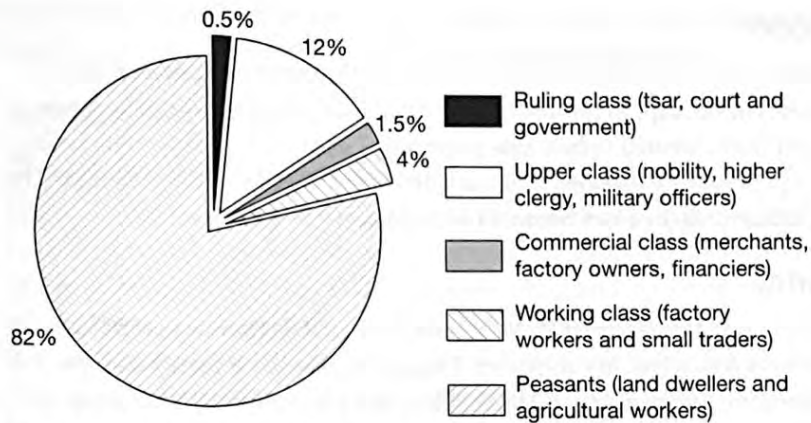


Figure 1.2 The class structure of the Russian population in 1917.

The Russian economy

Russia had been at war with Germany and Austria-Hungary since 1914. War is a time when the character and structure of a society are put to the test in a particularly intense way. The longer the war lasts, the greater the test. By 1917, Russia was in grave economic difficulties. These difficulties were evident in three particular areas: inflation, food supplies and transport.

Inflation

The war destroyed Russia's financial stability. Between 1914 and 1917, war costs meant that government spending increased from 4 million roubles to 30 million. Increased taxation at home and heavy borrowing from abroad were only partially successful in raising the capital Russia needed. The **gold standard** was abandoned, which allowed the government to put more notes into circulation. In the short term, this enabled wages to be paid and trade to continue, but in the long term it made money practically worthless. The result was rapid **inflation**, which had become particularly severe by the beginning of 1917. Between 1914 and 1917, average earnings had doubled while the price of food and fuel had quadrupled.

Food supplies

As the war continued, peasants found it impossible to sustain agricultural output. One reason for this was the **requisitioning** by the military of grain, the chief crop in most areas, fertilisers and farm horses. There was the additional problem that inflation made trading unprofitable and so the peasants stopped selling food and began hoarding their stocks instead.

What increased the problems for the ordinary Russian was that the military also had priority in the use of the transport system. The army commandeered the railways and the roads, with the result that the food supplies that were available could not be distributed easily to civilian areas.

KEY TERMS

Gold standard

The system in which the rouble, Russia's basic unit of currency, had a fixed gold content, which had given it strength when exchanged with other currencies.

Inflation A decrease in the value and, therefore, the purchasing power of money.

Requisitioning State-authorized seizure of property or resources.

Transport

It was the disruption of the transport system that intensified Russia's wartime shortages. The attempt to transport millions of troops and masses of supplies to the war fronts created unbearable pressures. The signalling system on which the railway network depended broke down; blocked lines and trains stranded by engine failure or lack of fuel became commonplace.

The army

By 1917, the war was going badly for Russia. A critical factor was that the army was hampered by a lack of equipment. This was not because there had been underspending on the military. The problem was poor administration and liaison between the government departments responsible for supplies. Despite its takeover of the transport system, the military was as much a victim of the poor distribution as the civilian population. In the first two years of the war, the army managed to obtain its supply needs, but, from 1916, serious shortages began to occur.

The suffering that the food shortages and the dislocated transport system brought to both troops and civilians might have been bearable had the news from the war front been encouraging, or had there been inspired leadership from the top. There had been occasional military successes, but the gains made were not followed up and were never enough to justify the ever-lengthening lists of dead and wounded. The enthusiasm and high morale with which Russia had gone to war in 1914 had turned by 1917 into pessimism and defeatism. Ill-equipped and underfed, the peasant soldiers who composed the Russian army began to desert in increasing numbers. It was these circumstances that encouraged political revolutionaries to believe they could seize power.

Russia's political parties

Parties in Russia pre-dated 1906 but it was only from that date that they were permitted to exist legally. By 1917, those that had been formed fell into one of two main categories: liberals, who wanted reform of the existing system, and revolutionaries, who wanted to overthrow it.

Liberal parties

Octobrists

The Octobrists were a party of moderates who had been loyal to the tsar and his government and believed that the tsarist system was capable of being improved by measured reform. They largely lost their significance once the tsar had abdicated.

Kadets (Constitutional Democrats)

The Kadets, the largest of the liberal parties and influential in the *duma*, wanted Russia to develop as a modern liberal state. Following the February Revolution, they pinned their hopes on the election of a Constituent Assembly, believing

that such a body, representative of the whole of the nation's outstanding social, political and economic interests, would be able to

Revolutionary parties

The Social Revolutionaries (SRs)

The Social Revolutionary Party began as a mass party of the peasantry, but also gained recruits from among the urban workers. Its policy of terrorism could bring necessary change. The Left Social Revolutionaries, who, while believing in revolution, were open to other parties for an immediate improvement in the conditions of workers and peasants.

The Social Democrats (SDs)

The Social Democrats had come into being in Russia by following the ideas of the revolution in Europe. They were shaped by **class struggle**, a process that operated to this process as the **dialectic**, whose final result was the triumph of the **bourgeoisie** by the **proletariat**. In 1903, the party split into two Marxist parties:

- The Mensheviks believed in a broad coalition of parties to work to bring down tsardom. The Mensheviks played a leading role in the February Revolution of 1917, most notably in the person of Vladimir Lenin, who was in exile because of their refusal to take any direct part in events.

The political situation in 1917

At war with Germany and Austria-Hungary, Russia was in violent transition. In February, the tsar abdicated on his own behalf and that of his son, Nicholas II, ending the autocratic tsarist system. There then followed the formation of the **Provisional Government**, a body composed of members of the *duma*. It was intended to be an interim government, only until an election was held later in the year. The members were based on **universal suffrage**, the members were to form a Constituent (national) Assembly with full authority.

KEY TERM

Duma The parliament that had existed since 1906.

that such a body, representative of the whole of Russia, would be able to settle the nation's outstanding social, political and economic problems.

Revolutionary parties

The Social Revolutionaries (SRs)

The Social Revolutionary Party began as a movement among the Russian peasantry, but also gained recruits from among the urban workers. It had two main wings: Left Social Revolutionaries, who claimed that only a policy of terrorism could bring necessary change to Russia, and Right Social Revolutionaries, who, while believing in revolution, were prepared to work with other parties for an immediate improvement in the conditions of the workers and peasants.

The Social Democrats (SDs)

The Social Democrats had come into being in 1898. Their aim was to achieve revolution in Russia by following the ideas of Karl Marx (1818–83), the German revolutionary, who had advanced the idea that human social development was shaped by **class struggle**, a process that operated throughout history. He referred to this process as the **dialectic**, whose final stage would be the violent overthrow of the **bourgeoisie** by the **proletariat**. In 1903, the SDs had split into two separate Marxist parties:

- The Mensheviks believed in a broad coalition of all the Russian progressive parties to work to bring down tsardom and modernise Russia. The Mensheviks played a leading role in the Petrograd **soviet** (see page 6).
- The Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin (see page 9), held the belief that only their dedicated party of Marxist believers had the necessary commitment and understanding to achieve genuine proletarian revolution. At the time of the February Revolution of 1917, most of the leading Bolsheviks, including Lenin, were in exile because of their revolutionary activities and thus played no direct part in events.

The political situation in 1917

At war with Germany and Austria-Hungary since 1914, Russia in 1917 was a nation in violent transition. In February, the tsar (emperor), Nicholas II, had abdicated on his own behalf and that of the ruling Romanov dynasty. This event, known as the February Revolution, marked the end of the centuries-old autocratic tsarist system. There then followed the formation of a **Provisional Government**, a body composed of members from the Russian parliament, the *duma*. It was intended to be an interim government which was to hold office only until an election was held later in the year. Since the election was to be based on **universal suffrage**, the members returned by it would then be entitled to form a Constituent (national) Assembly, empowered to govern with legitimate authority.

KEY TERMS

Class struggle

A continuing conflict at every stage of history between those who possessed economic and political power and those who did not, 'the haves' and 'the have-nots'.

Dialectic The dynamic force that drives the class struggle forward.

Bourgeoisie The owners of capital, the boss class, who exploited the workers but who would be overthrown by them in the revolution to come.

Proletariat The exploited industrial workers who would triumph in the last great class struggle.

Soviet Originally the Russian word for a representative council; it was appropriated by the Bolsheviks to describe their movement.

Provisional Government

A temporary body claiming authority between February and October 1917.

Universal suffrage

An electoral system in which all adults have the right to vote, something unknown in tsarist Russia.

KEY TERM

De facto A term used to denote the real situation, as compared to what it should or might be in theory or in law.

An event as significant as the setting up of the Provisional Government at this time was the formation of the Petrograd soviet. This was a body made up of 'Soldiers', Sailors' and Workers' representatives, which gathered in the Tauride Palace in Petrograd, the same building that housed the Provisional Government. Thus, it was that these two self-appointed bodies – the Provisional Government, representing the reformist elements of the old *duma*, and the Soviet, speaking for striking workers and rebellious troops – became the **de facto** government of Russia. This was the beginning of what became known as the 'Dual Authority', an uneasy alliance that was to last until October.

Steps towards the October Revolution, 1917

The weakness of the Provisional Government

The Provisional Government, which picked up the reins of authority after the tsar's abdication, was really the old *duma* in a new form. From the beginning, it suffered from the two characteristics which weakened it throughout the eight months of its existence:

- It was not an elected body, having come into being as a rebellious committee of the old *duma*, which had defied the tsar's order to disband. In consequence, it lacked legitimate authority and had no claim on the loyalty of the Russian people.
- Its authority was limited by its unofficial partnership with the Petrograd soviet in the 'Dual Authority'.

The role of the Petrograd soviet

The soviet did not set out to be an alternative government. Initially, it regarded its role as supervisory, checking that the interests of the soldiers and workers were understood by the new government. However, in the uncertain times that followed the February Revolution, the Provisional Government often seemed unsure of its own authority. This uncertainty tended to give the soviet greater prominence.

The Bolsheviks return

Once the Bolsheviks, most of whom were in exile, learned of the February Revolution, they rushed back to Petrograd. Lenin arrived in Petrograd on 3 April. The following day, he issued his *April Theses*, in which he spelt out future Bolshevik policy. To the bewilderment of those Bolsheviks who had expected to be praised for their efforts in working with the other revolutionary groups, Lenin condemned all that had happened since the fall of the tsar. He insisted that, since the Bolsheviks were the only truly revolutionary proletarian party, they must:

- abandon cooperation with all other parties
- work for a true revolution entirely by their own efforts

- overthrow the reactionary Pro
- demand that authority pass to model, had been set in place cities and towns.

Lenin had ulterior motives in Although he rejected much o power base. Circumstances' post-tsarist government. Lc in particular – offered his obtain power in the name soviets, the Bolshevik Pa

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- overthrow the reactionary Provisional Government
- demand that authority pass to the soviets, which, based on the Petrograd model, had been set in place by workers and soldiers in many other Russian cities and towns.

Lenin had ulterior motives in demanding the soviets take over government. Although he rejected much of what the soviets had done, he saw them as a power base. Circumstances had made them an essential part of the structure of post-tsarist government. Lenin calculated that the soviets – the Petrograd soviet in particular – offered his small Bolshevik Party the means by which it could obtain power in the name of the proletariat. By infiltrating and dominating the soviets, the Bolshevik Party would be in a position to take over the state.

The essence of Lenin's argument was summed up in two provocative Bolshevik slogans that he coined: 'Peace, Bread and Land' and 'All Power to the Soviets'. But these were more than slogans. They were Lenin's way of presenting in simple, dramatic headings the basic problems confronting Russia:

- 'peace' – the continuing war with Germany
- 'bread' – the chronic food shortages
- 'land' – the disruption in the countryside.

Lenin's analysis was shrewd and prophetic; the Provisional Government's failure to deal with the three principal issues he had identified would lead to its eventual downfall.

The Provisional Government and the war

From the outset, the Provisional Government was in a troubled position. The main problem was the war. For the new government, after February 1917 there was no choice but to fight on. The reason was not idealistic but financial. Unless it did so, it would no longer receive the supplies and **war-credits** from the Western Allies on which it had come to rely. The strain that this obligation imposed on the Provisional Government eventually proved unsustainable. It was a paradoxical situation: in order to survive, the Provisional Government had to keep Russia in the war, but in doing so it destroyed its own chances of survival.

Emergence of Kerensky

The Provisional Government's commitment to the war would have mattered less had the Russian army been successful, but the military situation continued to deteriorate, eroding the support that the government had initially enjoyed. An important figure here was **Alexander Kerensky**, who became prime minister in July. He campaigned for Russia to embrace the conflict with Germany as a crusade to save the revolution. But this took no account of the real situation. The truth was that Russia had gone beyond the point where it could fight a successful war. Suffering heavy defeats at the hands of the Germans and Austrians, whole Russian regiments mutinied or deserted.

KEY TERM

War-credits Money loaned on easy repayment terms, mainly by France and Britain, to Russia to finance its war effort.

KEY FIGURE

Alexander Kerensky (1881–1970)

A leading SR member and anti-Marxist socialist.

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KEY FIGURES

**Leon Trotsky
(1879–1940)**

A Menshevik before joining Lenin's Bolsheviks in 1917. He played a central role in the October Revolution; later became an inveterate opponent of Joseph Stalin. A full profile for Trotsky appears on page 60.

**Lavr Kornilov
(1870–1918)**

Distinguished by his bravery as a tsarist officer, he was a fierce patriot who hated Russia's revolutionaries.
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Kronstadt

The government's troubles were deepened by events on the island of Kronstadt, a major naval base situated fifteen miles west of Petrograd in the Bay of Finland. Sailors and workers there defied the central authorities by setting up their own separate government. Such developments tempted a number of revolutionaries in Petrograd into thinking that the opportunity had come for them to bring down the Provisional Government. The attempt to do so became known as the July Days.

The July Days

In the first week of July, large-scale demonstrations occurred in Petrograd. These were confused, disorderly affairs, but the Bolsheviks under Lenin supported them, thinking they could be exploited to bring down the Provisional Government. They were wrong. The Provisional Government was still strong enough to crush the rising and scatter the Bolsheviks. **Leon Trotsky** later referred to the July Days as a 'semi-insurrection' and argued that they had been begun by the Mensheviks and SRs. In saying this, he was trying to absolve the Bolsheviks from the blame of having started a rising that failed. Lenin thought it expedient to leave Petrograd and return to the safety of Finland, a move which he frequently made during 1917 to avoid arrest in Russia.

The Kornilov affair, September 1917

In August, Kerensky's government became involved in a crisis that undermined the gains it had made from its handling of the July Days, and allowed the Bolsheviks to recover from their humiliation. General **Lavr Kornilov**, the new commander-in-chief, declared that Russia and the government stood in grave danger of a Bolshevik-inspired insurrection. He informed Kerensky that he intended to bring his loyal troops to Petrograd to save the Provisional Government from being overthrown. Fearful that Kornilov would attack, Kerensky called on all loyal citizens to take up arms to defend the city. The Bolsheviks were released from prison or came out of hiding to collect the weapons issued by the Provisional Government to all who were willing to fight. By this strange twist in the story of 1917, the Bolsheviks found themselves being armed by the very government they were pledged to overthrow. In the event, the weapons were not needed since Kornilov abandoned the advance and allowed himself to be arrested. It was the Bolsheviks who benefited most from these events. They had been able to present themselves as defenders of Petrograd and the revolution, thereby diverting attention away from their failure in the July Days.

The political shift in Petrograd

So considerable were the Bolsheviks' gains from the Kornilov affair that by the middle of September they had a majority in the Petrograd soviet. However, this should not be seen as indicating a large swing of opinion in their favour, but

rather as a reflection of the changing character of the soviets. In the first few months after the February Revolution, the meetings of the soviets had been fully attended. Over 3000 deputies had packed into the Petrograd soviet at the Tauride Palace. But as the months passed enthusiasm waned. By the autumn of 1917, attendance was often down to a few hundred. This worked to the Bolsheviks' advantage. Their political dedication meant that they continued to turn up in force while the members of other parties attended only occasionally. The result was that the Bolshevik Party exerted an influence out of proportion to its numbers, most notably in its overrepresentation on the various Soviet subcommittees.

Lenin's strategy

From his exile in Finland, Lenin constantly appealed to his party to prepare for the immediate overthrow of Kerensky's government. He claimed that the Provisional Government, incapable of ending the war, was becoming increasingly reactionary. This meant that the Bolsheviks could not wait; they must seize the moment while the government was at its most vulnerable. In a sentence that was to become part of Bolshevik legend, Lenin declared: 'History will not forgive us if we do not assume power'. Lenin's sense of urgency arose

SOURCE QUESTION ?

Why did Lenin regard it necessary to disguise himself as shown in Source A?

SOURCE A



Photo of Lenin, clean-shaven and bewigged, in hiding in Petrograd 1917. Throughout the period April to October 1917, Lenin went in constant fear of being arrested and executed by the Provisional Government. He adopted various disguises, kept continually on the move and frequently fled to Finland. Yet, oddly, as Kerensky later regretfully admitted, the authorities made little concerted effort to capture their chief opponent. This raises the interesting question of whether Lenin exaggerated, or the government underestimated, his powers of disruption.

from his concern over two events that were due to take place in the autumn, which he calculated would seriously limit the Bolsheviks' freedom of action:

- the meeting of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets in late October
- the election for the Constituent Assembly in November.

Lenin was convinced that the Bolsheviks would have to take power before these events occurred. If, under the banner 'All Power to the Soviets', the Bolsheviks could topple the Provisional Government before the Congress of Soviets met, they could then present their new authority as a *fait accompli* which the Congress would have no reason to reject.

The elections to the Constituent Assembly presented a different problem. The Assembly was the body on which all progressives and reformers had pinned their hopes. Once it came into being, its moral authority would be difficult to challenge. Lenin told his party that since it was impossible to forecast how successfully the Bolsheviks would perform in the elections, they would not be in power before the results were announced. This would provide them with the authority to undermine the results should they go against them.

Despite the intense conviction with which Lenin put his arguments to his colleagues, there were Bolsheviks on the **Central Committee** of the party who doubted the wisdom of striking against the Provisional Government at this point. To convince the doubters, Lenin slipped back into Petrograd on 7 October.

KEY TERMS

Fait accompli

An established situation that cannot be changed.

Central Committee

The decision-making body of the Bolshevik Party.

SOURCE QUESTION

Why was the presence of the Bolsheviks in the soviet meetings shown in Source B so significant?

SOURCE B



A packed meeting of the Petrograd soviet in March 1917. Initially, huge numbers of soldiers and workers, sometimes as many as 3000, attended the early meetings, but by the autumn this had dropped to a few hundred. However, the Bolsheviks kept up their numbers, which gave them a predominant influence in the soviet.

During the next two weeks he spent exhausting hour-long Committee meetings trying to convince the waverers. The Central Committee pledged itself to an armed insurrection on a specific date. In the end, by another quirk of fate, it was the Provisional Government, not the Bolsheviks, who initiated the attack.

Kerensky makes the first move

Rumours of an imminent Bolshevik **coup** had been circulating for some weeks, but it was not until an article, written for the Bolshevik Central Committee, appeared in a journal that they had sure proof. The writers of the article, **Grigori Zinoviev** and **Lev Kamenev**, argued that it would be a mistake to attempt to overthrow the Provisional Government under the current circumstances. Kerensky interpreted this as a warning that had already been set. Rather than wait to be caught in a pre-emptive attack on the Bolsheviks, on 23 October he ordered government troops and a round-up of the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks no longer had a choice; Lenin ordered the uprising to begin.

Trotsky's role

That the Bolsheviks had a plan at all was the work of **Leonid Brezhnev**. While it was Lenin who was undoubtedly the driving force behind the October Rising, it was Trotsky who actually organised the success in this was his chairmanship of the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) to organise the defence against a possible German attack or another Kornilov-style coup. It proved a critical decision. Realising that if the MRC were to be elected they would control Petrograd, Trotsky was appointed as one of the **troika** to run the MRC. In his disposal the only effective military force in Petrograd. Trotsky drafted the plans for the overthrow of the Provisional Government. Lenin gave the order for the uprising to begin, and the **Red Guards** in their seizure of the key vantage points, including the bridges and the telegraph offices.

The collapse of the Provisional Government

In the three days (25–27 October) that it took for the Bolsheviks to gain control there was remarkably little fighting. The Provisional Government and its supporters were all shot by their own side. The simple fact was that there were hardly any military forces on which to call. The Provisional Government turned out to defend the government on previous occasions. The truth was that desertions had been widespread, including officer-cadets, a small group of **Cossacks** and

During the next two weeks he spent exhausting hours at a series of Central Committee meetings trying to convince the waverers. On 10 October, the Central Committee pledged itself to an armed insurrection, but failed to agree on a specific date. In the end, by another quirk of fate, it was Kerensky and the government, not the Bolsheviks, who initiated the actual rising.

Kerensky makes the first move

Rumours of an imminent Bolshevik **coup** had been circulating in Petrograd for some weeks, but it was not until an article, written by two members of the Bolshevik Central Committee, appeared in a journal, that the authorities felt they had sure proof. The writers of the article, **Grigor Zinoviev** and **Lev Kamenev**, argued that it would be a mistake to attempt to overthrow the government in the current circumstances. Kerensky interpreted this as a sure sign that a date had already been set. Rather than wait to be caught off-guard, he ordered a pre-emptive attack on the Bolsheviks. On 23 October, the offices of **Pravda** were occupied by government troops and a round-up of the leading Bolsheviks began. The Bolsheviks no longer had a choice; Lenin ordered the planned insurrection to begin.

Trotsky's role

That the Bolsheviks had a plan at all was the work not of Lenin but of Leon Trotsky. While it was Lenin who was undoubtedly the great influence behind the October Rising, it was Trotsky who actually organised it. The key to Trotsky's success in this was his chairmanship of the Petrograd soviet, to which he had been elected in September. On 9 October, the soviet set up the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) to organise the defence of Petrograd against a possible German attack or another Kornilov-type assault from within Russia. It proved a critical decision. Realising that if the Bolsheviks could control the MRC they would control Petrograd, Trotsky used his influence to have himself appointed as one of the **troika** to run the MRC. This meant he had at his disposal the only effective military force in Petrograd. He was now in a position to draft the plans for the overthrow of the Provisional Government. When Lenin gave the order for the uprising to begin, it was Trotsky who directed the **Red Guards** in their seizure of the key vantage points in Petrograd, such as the bridges and the telegraph offices.

The collapse of the Provisional Government

In the three days (25–27 October) that it took for the city to fall under Bolshevik control there was remarkably little fighting. There were only six deaths during the whole episode and these were all Red Guards, most probably accidentally shot by their own side. The simple fact was that the Provisional Government had hardly any military forces on which to call. The Petrograd garrison, which had turned out to defend the government on previous occasions, did not come to its aid now. The truth was that desertions had reduced the garrison to a few loyal officer-cadets, a small group of **Cossacks** and a unit known as the **'Amazons'**.

KEY TERMS

Coup An attempt, usually by a minority group, to seize power from an existing government.

Pravda ('The Truth') The Bolshevik Party's official propaganda newsheet.

Troika A team of three people.

Red Guards Despite the Bolshevik legend that these were the crack forces of the revolution, the Red Guards, some 10,000 in number, were largely made up of elderly factory workers.

Cossacks The remnants of the elite cavalry regiment of the tsars.

'Amazons' A special corps of female soldiers recruited by Kerensky.

KEY FIGURES

Grigor Zinoviev (1883–1936)

A close colleague of Lenin since the formation of the Bolshevik Party in 1903.

Lev Kamenev (1883–1936)

He was to hold various key positions under Lenin between 1917 and 1924.

? SOURCE QUESTION

From where would the Amazon recruits shown in Source C have most likely been drawn?



A contingent of Amazons being trained in 1917. Kerensky had specifically recruited these female soldiers, also known as the 'Women's Battalion of Death', as an example of the fighting spirit of Russia's women.

When the Red Guards approached the Winter Palace, which housed the Provisional Government, they expected stiff resistance, but there was none. The Bolshevik forces did not need to storm the gates; there was nobody defending them. The Winter Palace was a vast building many times larger than London's Buckingham Palace. The Red Guards simply walked in through the back doors. This was enough to make the defenders give up. The Cossacks walked off when confronted by the Red Guards. After that, it did not take much pressure to persuade the cadets and the Amazons that it was better for them to lay down their arms rather than die in a futile struggle.

The sounding of its guns in a prearranged signal by the pro-soviet crew of the cruiser, *Aurora*, moored in the River Neva, convinced the remaining members of the government that their position was hopeless. As many as could, escaped unnoticed out of the building. Kerensky, having earlier left the city in a vain effort to raise loyal troops, fled to the American embassy. He later slipped out of Petrograd, disguised as a female nurse, and made his way to the USA, where he eventually became a professor of history.

The Bolsheviks take power

The Bolsheviks did not seize power; it fell into their hands with an ease with which it had happened surprised even them. On 27 October, he said to Trotsky, 'from being one dizzy'. He then rolled himself up in a blanket and went to sleep.

On the following evening, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets met in session. They had barely completed their work when the news of what happened to be Lev Kamenev, now the supreme authority in Russia, in their name and had formed a new government. The bewildered delegates the list of names they had supposedly just appointed. At the head of the new government, *Sovnarkom* was the name of the

The SRs and the Mensheviks had lost power by the Soviets but a new government and their kind had 'consisted of' then announced to the Bolsheviks that they would now preside over the 'new society'.

SUMMARY DIAGRAM

THE OCTOBER

The Bolsheviks take power

The Bolsheviks did not seize power; it fell into their hands. The speed and ease with which it had happened surprised even Lenin. In the early hours of 27 October, he said to Trotsky, 'from being on the run to supreme power makes one dizzy'. He then rolled himself up in a large fur coat, lay down on the floor, and went to sleep.

On the following evening, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets began their first session. They had barely completed the opening formalities when the chairman, who happened to be Lev Kamenev, informed the delegates that they were now the supreme authority in Russia; the Petrograd soviet had seized power in their name and had formed a new government. Kamenev then read out to the bewildered delegates the list of fourteen names of the new government they had supposedly just appointed. The fourteen were all Bolsheviks or their sympathisers. At the head of the list of **Commissars** who made up the new **Sovnarkom** was the name of the chief minister – Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

The SRs and the Mensheviks walked out, protesting that it was not a taking of power by the Soviets but a Bolshevik coup. Trotsky jeered after them that they and their kind had 'consigned themselves to the waste basket of history'. Lenin then announced to the Bolshevik and the Left SR delegates who had remained that they would now proceed 'to construct the towering edifice of socialist society'.

KEY TERMS

Commissars The Russian word for ministers: Lenin chose the word because he said it 'reeked of blood'.

Sovnarkom The Russian word for government or cabinet.

ONLINE EXTRAS AQA

WWW

Test your understanding of the takeover of power by the Bolsheviks in October 1917 by completing Worksheet 1 at www.hoddereducation.co.uk/accesstohistory/extras

SUMMARY DIAGRAM

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION 1917



The building blocks of revolution

Soviet Order Number 1	Lenin's return	April Theses	'Bread, peace and land'
The failure of the summer offensive		'All Power to the Soviets'	The July Days
The Kornilov affair		Trotsky and the MRC	

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The February Revolution of 1917 in Russia witnessed the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the end of the tsarist system in Russia. This was followed by the establishment of a Dual Authority, which saw initial cooperation between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd soviet. This harmony had broken down by the summer months and, prompted by Lenin, who had returned in April to demand the end of their cooperation with the government, the Bolsheviks began to consider seizing power. Their attempt to do so in July proved premature and brought them close to destruction. They were saved only by the government's mishandling of the Kornilov

affair, which enabled them to act as defenders of Petrograd against tsarist reaction.

Incapable of dealing with the major problems facing Russia – disastrous war losses, food shortages and a rebellious, land-seizing peasantry – by the autumn, Kerensky's government had forfeited popular support. Although often absent from Petrograd, Lenin exerted such an influence that by late October he had persuaded his followers to strike against a hesitant Provisional Government. Unable to call on military or popular backing, Kerensky's government chose to flee rather than resist.



The Russian Revolution 100 years on: a view from below

Sarah Badcock sheds light on how ordinary Russians responded to the revolutions of 1917 that sought to change their lot and bring them freedom.

Introduction

Russia experienced two great political revolutions during 1917. The first was in February 1917, when the 300-year-old Romanov dynasty was toppled by an unlikely alliance between lower-class residents and soldiers in Petrograd and the country's political and military elites. The second revolution was in October 1917, when the Bolshevik party, led by Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, seized political power in the capital. One hundred years on, is there anything more to know about Russia's revolutions?

This article argues that we can gain insight into some of the revolution's 'big questions' by considering the ways in which ordinary people experienced it. The rich historiography of the revolution has tended to focus upon urban and political elites, labour history and events in Petrograd and to a lesser extent Moscow. The collapse of the Soviet Union opened previously inaccessible archives and shifted the ideological battlegrounds ranged over by scholars of the Russian revolution. Some of the new archival research shifted its focus away from the capitals and political elites, and sought to draw together social and political approaches to the revolution. By investigating revolutionary events outside the capitals, we can interrogate the lived experiences of revolution for Russia's ordinary people, most of whom were rural, not urban dwellers. Focus on regional histories also allows us to see that all parts of the Russian Empire's vast and complex web were connected and related to one another. The stories of 1917 are as much about the dissolution of a great empire as they are about political transformation within one state.



Ordinary people made the revolution their own, and dictated the shape of the revolution to the political elites. The failure of democratic politics in Russia did not lie solely with the political choices made by the tsar Nicholas II, the Provisional Government's leading figure Alexander Kerensky, or with the leader of the Bolsheviks, Vladimir Il'ich Lenin. Instead, ordinary people, outside the capitals and in the countryside, played an important role in defining and determining the shape of Russia's revolutionary year.

Emphasis on the lower classes in the revolutionary processes has a long and chequered tradition. Soviet historiography emphasised the working class, led by the Bolshevik party, as the central agent of the revolution. In the 1980s, our understandings of revolution were transformed by a great wave of social history that explored worker and soldier experiences in the revolutionary period.¹ Most recent scholarship has challenged the binaries of class-based histories. Individuals' identities often transcend easy categorisation – was the peasant worker conscripted into the army a peasant, a worker, a soldier or an amalgam of all three? A number of scholars have emphasised 'ordinary people', a slippery term referring to non-elites and to people on the peripheries of political power. Women have been marginalised in both the contemporary accounts and the historiography of the revolution. By looking for 'ordinary people', scholars have sought to reintegrate female experience into the historical narrative. Soldiers' wives (*soldatki*) are a good example of a group that encompass a wide range of different occupational and social groups, but who are united in their grievances, and who are marginalised in formal power structures.²

It is possible to present an overview of three defining challenges of 1917, which were famously identified by one of the Bolsheviks' best known slogans; bread, land and peace. I will argue that the options available to Russia's political elites in 1917 on these big issues were defined by the decisions and actions taken by ordinary lower-class Russians. By exploring the agency of ordinary people in 1917, we are able to reconsider the ways in which elites responded to these challenges.

Bread

One of the most profound challenges for the Provisional Government and for the subsequent Soviet administration

was supplying the country with grain. The overall crop yield for 1916 was not much down on former years, but problems arose because the yield increased in Siberia and the north, but decreased markedly in European Russia. Russia's transport system was unable to cope with the demands of 1917, which meant that the good crops in the north were not accessible to the major conurbations of Petersburg and Moscow. A major factor in the February revolution was grain shortages afflicting the urban areas. In 1917, Petrograd received only 44.1% of the grain it had received in 1913 by rail. These shortfalls became even more marked as 1917 progressed. The challenge was not restricted to the capital, but was manifested all over Russia. Some parts of the Empire, like Archangelsk in the north, and Nizhegorod province in the centre, always had to import grain to meet the food needs of its residents. Other regions, like Tambov and Kazan, had a grain surplus that they were able to sell.

The Provisional Government responded to the food crisis in two key ways, by intervening in the market, and by organising democratically-elected local committees to administer these interventions. A grain monopoly was established in an attempt



A family of Ukrainian peasants, June 1917.



to prevent grain merchants from driving prices up, and to assure the supply of grain to the cities and the army. All grain produced was to be at the disposal of the State. A fixed price was set for grain, and producers were obliged to surrender all grain that was not for their own needs. To ensure the effective local organisation of the monopoly, food supply committees were established. These had wide-ranging duties, from ensuring the appropriate use of land, and protecting the land from damage and destruction, to ensuring that the peasants were adhering to Provisional Government policy and surrendering all their grain. The food supply committees were difficult for the Provisional Government to monitor, let alone control. They were elected by local people, and accountable to them. If central policy was seen to be at odds with local needs, the committees responded to their constituents. If they did not, local communities ignored, assaulted or deselected them. The newspaper *Russkaia Vedomosti* published a lengthy and panic-stricken report about the food crisis on 24 August 1917:

The officials and food supply delegates report from everywhere about their helplessness to do anything. The population refuses to listen to them, throws them out, beats them unmercifully, and hides the grain.³

Reports came in from all over those regions that had food deficits of attacks on provisions administration. Ordinary people were frustrated by the apparent failings of the committees that they elected, and the councillors were often

accused of corruption. These attacks were characterised by collective action, as local people gathered, often on market day, and made various demands, usually focusing upon the immediate distribution of foodstuffs and the resignation of the administration, alongside threats of violence against administrators. In Gorbatov town, in Nizhegorod province, demonstrators gathered from all over the region to protest against the provisions administration for four consecutive days. The local newspaper *Narod* reported the kerfuffle:

The demands of the crowd were 'Give us grain. You will make us starve.' The crowd would not accept explanations from members of the administration. A voice was heard from the crowd, cursing foully, and threatening administration members with murder. At that moment several administration members ran away. The crowd, with the intention of lynching him, seized the president of the administration, but the commissar and armed soldiers persuaded the crowd to leave him untouched. He was then arrested by the militia, together with another administration member Sokolov, who had his beard pulled by the crowd on the way to the guardhouse, and the key of the provisions warehouse was taken.⁴

The government and the Petrograd Soviet tried to coax the rural population into meeting national expectations through appeals calling on them to protect freedom and the new Russia, and they blamed the crisis on the former administration. It became increasingly difficult to blame the former regime for the crisis as the year wore on, and the provisions crisis actually worsened. Both the Soviet and the Provisional Government imagined the rural population to be simple, untutored people who only needed to be told 'the truth' for them to conform to state expectations. Such naivety left the national government horribly exposed. Russia's ordinary people were not simple children, to be instructed on their futures, and the grain crisis was not the fault solely of a handful of speculators. The depth of the crisis was not easily resolved, and both Soviet and Provisional Government had their credibility gravely undermined by their inability to tackle this problem. In an attempt to stimulate the release of grain, the Provisional Government doubled the fixed price of grain in August. This failed to have a significant impact. The stark alternative to appeals was to forcibly seize grain reserves from producers. The Provisional Government threatened such measures but lacked both the will and the military force to implement forcible grain seizure. Lenin quickly resorted to these measures once in power, and much of the civil war was a conflict between competing ruling powers and local populations over who controlled food resources.

Land

'Water is yours, light is yours, the land is yours, the wood is yours.' (Declaration by Kronstadt sailor-agitator, Khalapsin, at Moshtaushsk village meeting, Kazan province, 14 June 1917.)⁵

The vast majority of Russia's population in 1917 made their living in agriculture as small farmers. For many rural dwellers, the 1917 revolution offered the opportunity to resolve perceived injustices in local land use and ownership. All over Russia, the norms of private ownership were transgressed, as the rural population took local power into their own hands. They grazed their cattle in privately-owned fields, took their carts and axes to the forests to harvest timber for building and fuel, seized arable land and in some places forcibly removed gentry landowners. Every locality across the great expanse of the Empire experienced its rural revolution differently. A



The First Regional Caucasian Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, 31 May 1917.

broad range of locally-defined features determined land relations, including the types of agriculture that were practised there and personal antagonisms between local landowners and rural communities.

Both the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet appealed repeatedly to peasants to wait calmly for elections to be held for Russia's first fully democratic body, the Constituent Assembly, before the land question could be resolved. Ordinary rural people largely ignored these appeals. The norms of private ownership were repeatedly transgressed in the countryside during 1917, as peasants seized land and wood. The rural population was not a random and arbitrary violent force in 1917. Where local communities infringed on private owners, they often sought to couch their actions in the new revolutionary language and appealed to revolutionary justice. The rural revolution is not easily categorised – forms of action depended on local factors, including the historic relationship between landowner and peasants and the forms of agriculture in the region. In some regions, like Viatka, there was neither significant land hunger nor high levels of non-peasant land ownership, so there the land question was less prominent in national discourse. Much of the rural revolution concerned disputes among peasants. Wealthier individuals who had separated from communal landholding were reintegrated, sometimes forcibly, into communal structures. Neighbouring villages disputed the fair use of common and noble land. Violence was often threatened but less often deployed – rural people sought to validate their

actions with the support of the new revolutionary norms, and avoided actions that brought them into open conflict with authority. Then peasants of Seitova village in Kazan region for example, were involved in an incident of illicit woodcutting. When the regional authorities challenged them, they issued a detailed apology:

We the undersigned citizens of Seitova village acknowledge that we are guilty in the unauthorised theft of wood which formerly belonged to citizen Pauluchchi, and which is now NATIONAL property. And in order to wash this stain from ourselves, [which was made] THROUGH IGNORANCE, and which we cannot with honour leave on ourselves – we ask the provincial commissar to take from us this fine gathered voluntarily from those guilty of wood theft, and use the money for the needs of a school. We have gathered the fine at 50 kopeks for every one of us guilty of stealing wood. Altogether 280 roubles have been gathered. (SIGNED)

The peasants of Seitovo recognised that the new freedoms of 1917 were balanced against requirements to uphold the law and maintain the state. This example of peasants withdrawing from their initial cause is unusual. The pseudo-legal justifications used by peasants to support their claims showed that they engaged with the language of revolution, and used this language to support their own interpretations of the new order.

Regional administrators recognised that regulation rather than

unenforceable prohibition was the best way to deal with peasant actions, and they were forced by practical exigencies to negotiate a course between demands from peasants and demands from central government. In Kazan, the peasant Soviet decreed that all privately-held land in the region was transferred to the land committees in May 1917. Peasants all over the region used this decree to vindicate their seizure of land. Local government in Nizhegorod province waited until October 1917 to overrule national policy guidance and transgress norms of private ownership. The Nizhegorod provincial commissar, Sumgin, declared to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 23 October 1917 that he had to take extraordinary measures:

The anarchy which exists in most of the province is manifested absolutely everywhere in the seizure of grain, cutting of wood continues along with arson of property. I am taking these measures, on the one hand actually transferring all land and woods to the keeping of the land committees to show the population the undoubted victories of the revolution, and on the other hand, using ranks of soldiers to cut short counter-revolutionary calls to burn and rob.

Local government had their options dictated to them by the actions of their constituents, as did the national government. After their seizure of power in October 1917, the Bolshevik government issued a land decree that authorised the transfer of all privately-held land into the hands of local land committees for the use of working



Striking Putilov workers on the first day of the February Revolution, St Petersburg, Russia, 1917
Heritage Image Partnership Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo.

people. This decree merely legitimised a process that had already gone on in the course of 1917, and shows how local actions could define national policy alternatives.

Peace?

Russia's involvement in the First World War was a crippling burden for the state. We need to exercise caution when discussing popular attitudes towards the war. Attitudes towards participation in the conflict varied over the year, and varied according to individual circumstance. What is apparent, however, is that over the course of the year the army became less and less effective as a fighting force, and that this incapacity was rooted in the unwillingness of many soldiers to obey orders. The creeping insubordination evident in 1916 gave way to open resistance and the democratisation of the army. Some regiments remained loyal to their commanders and maintained discipline, but they were in a minority. The Provisional Government's leading figure, Alexander Kerensky, believed that the Tsarist army would be transformed by the revolution into a great, free, Russian revolutionary army, with every man giving his all in the defence of Russia's newly-won liberty. Kerensky's optimism was misplaced. The revolution did indeed offer soldiers new freedoms, but these new freedoms eroded formal military discipline.

Many soldiers took advantage of the disorder initiated by the revolution, and voted with their feet by deserting. On average, of drafted reinforcements trained at the rear in April and the first

half of May, between 137 and 215 out of 250 deserted.⁶ The rate of desertion was much lower at the front than at the rear, but even there, based on General Lukomskii's estimate of five to seven men per day per division deserting, if extended to the whole army for March 1917 this would amount to 100-150,000 men out of a front army of 7,500,000.⁷

Alexander Kerensky spearheaded the so-called June offensive, which was used as an attempt to revitalise the army by engaging the enemy and ending the inactivity on the fronts. The offensive had also been promised to the allies, and was initially part of a plan for a joint offensive with the French. The big question was whether the disparate Russian troops would be capable of reforming and going on the attack. Kerensky himself is widely attributed with having made the offensive possible at all. He toured the front tirelessly, giving impassioned speeches to the troops, and often receiving rapturous responses from the listening crowds. The newly-revolutionary members of the army were being asked to sacrifice their lives not from a collective order, but as individuals choosing death of their own volition. Shklovsky described his own attempts to propagandise in favour of the June offensive among front-line troops:

One soldier said to me 'I don't want to die.' With desperate energy, I spoke to him about the right of the revolution to our lives. I didn't despise words then, as I do now. Comrade Anardovich told me that my impassioned speech had made

his hair stand on end. The audience was deciding the question of its own death, an immediate death, and the necessity of ordering men to renounce themselves. The silence of this sad crowd of thousands and the vague uneasiness caused by the proximity of the enemy stretched nerves to breaking point.⁸

The offensive began on 12 June, and after initial success was hailed as a great victory. This was premature, however, as reserves refused to relieve the men in new forward positions, and the endless meetings endemic on the front were renewed at every officer's order. Richard Boleslavskii, officer in a Polish cavalry regiment that fought with the Russians, recalled his experience of the June offensive, as those soldiers who obeyed orders and attacked were threatened from behind by their own comrades:

Along the front of the trench stood a line of shock troops, in perfect order, calmly firing their rifles. In the entrance to the dugouts back of them lounged soldiers of the Izmailovsky Guards. They were taking no part in the shooting. Right in front of me was a Sergeant with a grey beard on a young face. He had a whistle in his mouth. The end of his ear was shot off. From time to time he wiped the blood off his ear with a dirty handkerchief held in his left hand. In his right hand he was holding a big German ten-shell Mauser. The Mauser was pointed not towards the enemy but down his own trench. In front of him was a machine gun

propped up on two empty shell boxes and also pointed along the trench. I asked him what the trouble was. Almost hysterical, he exploded: 'These cowards! The sons of bitches! They won't move! They threaten they won't allow the shock troops over the top. I'm standing here and I've got to guard the backs of my men while they're fighting. Otherwise these dogs would shoot them in the back.'⁹

The June offensive was a turning point in the fortunes of the army. Soldiers were alienated from the committees that they had elected, who had supported the offensive and the Provisional Government initiatives. This contributed to the disenfranchisement of the soldiers, whose interests were no longer represented by the bodies that they had elected to represent.

Lenin came to power in October 1917 partly on the promise of immediate peace. But as with bread and land, these promises were not determined and delivered as a result of ideology or strategy. Ordinary soldiers defined Lenin's attitudes to the peace talks with Germany and possible continuation of the war. Lenin commissioned reports from a welter of military representatives to establish the state of the army. These reports, which were delivered on 17 December 1917, delivered an emphatic response – the Russian army was absolutely unable to continue fighting, because most soldiers were unwilling to fight. Lenin's only alternative was to drag out peace negotiations for as long as possible, and in the final reckoning, to secure peace at any price.¹⁰ The Brest-Litovsk treaty with the Central Powers shows us what peace at any price looked like – Russia lost almost half of her European territories, much of her industrial capacity, and committed to paying massive reparations.

Conclusions

This article has sought to take a fresh look at the driving forces shaping the 1917 Russian revolution, and to empower ordinary Russians as actors in their own narratives. Rather than the political elites manipulating the masses, or the working class 'shaping the revolution', we have a messy and discombobulating amalgam of individual, local, regional and national interests interacting to shape and decide Russia's revolutionary year. In practice, political freedom frayed the threads that connected the centre to the periphery in the Russian Empire, and by the end of 1917, these threads broke altogether in some places.

Further reading

Sarah Badcock, *Politics and the people in revolutionary Russia: a provincial history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Michael C. Hickey, *Competing Voices from the Russian Revolution* (Fighting Words) (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 2010)

Steve Smith, *Russia in Revolution 1890-1928: an empire in crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Mark D. Steinberg, *The Russian Revolution 1905-1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

Mark D. Steinberg, *Voices of Revolution, 1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001)

Willard Sunderland, *The Baron's Cloak: a history of the Russian Empire in war and revolution* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014)

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- 1 Steve A. Smith, *Red Petrograd: revolution in the factories 1917-18* (Cambridge, 1983); Diane P. Koenker, *Moscow workers and the 1917 revolution* (Princeton, 1981); Diane P. Koenker and William G. Rosenberg, *Strikes and Revolution in Russia 1917* (Princeton, 1989); Alan Wildman, *The end of the Russian Imperial army: The old army and the soldiers' revolt (March-April 1917)* (Princeton, 1980); Alan Wildman, *The end of the Russian Imperial army: the road to Soviet power and peace* (Princeton, 1987).
- 2 Sarah Badcock, 'Women, protest, and revolution: soldiers' wives in Russia during 1917' in *International Review of Social History* (2004).

- 3 *Russkaia Vedomosti*, no. 193, 24 August 1917, p. 1, in *The Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents, vol. 1*, ed. Robert Browder and Alexander Kerensky (Stanford University Press, 1961), doc. 552, pp. 639-40.
- 4 *Narod*, no. 61, 3 September 1917, p. 4.
- 5 Cited in Sarah Badcock, *Politics and the People in Revolutionary Russia: a provincial history* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 181.
- 6 L. E. Heenan, *Russian democracy's Fatal Blunder: the Summer offensive of 1917* (New York, 1987), p. 72.
- 7 Wildman (1980), *op.cit.*, p. 235.
- 8 Victor Shklovsky, *Sentimental Journey: Memoirs, 1917-1922* (Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 35.
- 9 Richard Boleslavskii, *Way of the Lancer* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1932), p. 202.
- 10 Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks in power: the first year of Soviet rule in Petrograd* (Bloomington, Ind, 2007), p. 136.

Sarah Badcock is associate professor in history at the University of Nottingham. Her research focuses on Russia in the late Imperial and revolutionary periods, and on comparative perspectives of punishment. Her most recent book, *A prison without walls? Eastern Siberian exile in the last years of Tsarism* was published by Oxford University Press in 2016. She authored *Politics and the people in revolutionary Russia: a provincial history* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) and co-edited *Russian Home Front In War And Revolution, 1914-22: Book 1. Russia's Revolution In Regional Perspective*. (Slavica, 2015).



Peasants enjoying a general holiday, dancing and celebrating on the anniversary of the Revolution in Russia, 1918.
Chronicle / Alamy Stock Photo

2N Summer work – Revolution and Dictatorship 1917 – 1953



Main task

You have been provided with an electronic copy of Chapter 1 from the textbook, *Revolution and dictatorship: Russia 1917-53*. Carefully read through the chapter and take notes using the format shown to the right. This method is called Cornell Notes and is used widely in higher education as it helps with the retention of knowledge. Here is a link to a video explaining how to create Cornell Notes in more detail - [How to Use Cornell Notes](#)

This reading task will give you a useful introduction to our topic. In our first lesson in September we will review this work.

<p>CUES</p> <p>WRITTEN SOON AFTER CLASS</p> <p>ANTICIPATED EXAM QUESTIONS</p> <p>MAIN IDEAS OR PEOPLE</p> <p>VOCABULARY WORDS</p> <p>USED FOR REVIEW & STUDY</p>	<p>NAME, DATE, TOPIC, CLASS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTES</p> <p>TAKEN DURING CLASS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * MAIN POINTS * BULLET POINTS * DIAGRAMS / CHARTS * ABBREVIATE * PARAPHRASE * OUTLINES * LEAVE SPACE BETWEEN TOPICS <p style="text-align: center;">CORNELL NOTE-TAKING METHOD</p>
<p>← 2 1/2" →</p>	<p>← 6" →</p>
<p>SUMMARY</p> <p>↑ ↓</p> <p>WRITTEN AFTER CLASS. BRIEF SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTING THE MAIN POINTS IN THE NOTES ON THIS PAGE. USED TO FIND INFO LATER.</p>	

Optional extras

Throughout your A-Level studies it is recommended that you go beyond the prescribed content to enhance your subject knowledge. Below are a set of optional tasks for you to look through. It is not expected for you to go through all of them.

Read:

1. *The Russian Revolution 100 years on: a view from below.* [pdf - on the Google Classroom]

Sarah Badcock sheds light on how ordinary Russians responded to the revolutions of 1917 that sought to change their lot and bring them freedom. Read the extract and take notes using the Cornell method.

2. *The Historical Association subject guide.*

Use the link below to access the learning guide for our subject. Focus your reading on the **Reform and the end of the Romanovs 1855-1917 section** and take notes using the Cornell method.

Login details for the HA:

14258

Password hellesdon20

Watch:

Empire of the Tsars, Romanov Russia. Watch the documentary taking notes using the Cornell method.

[Empire of the Tsars Romanov Russia with Lucy Worsley 03 The Road to Revolution](#)

Listen:

BBC – In Our Time – podcast – Lenin. Listen to the podcast and take notes using the Cornell method.

[BBC Radio 4 - In Our Time, Lenin](#)

Other:

Reading and resources list – This is the reading list given by the exam board for our course. We have a wide range of these books/textbooks at school. You do not need to buy your own textbook for this course. You may, however, want your own copy to read ahead. Lots of these books will be available in your local library and can be bought second-hand on Amazon, AbeBooks, etc..

[Reading and resources list - 2N Revolution and Dictatorship: Russia and the Soviet Union, 1917–1953](#)

The Wars of the Roses

1



INTRODUCTION

The Wars of the Roses between 1450 and 1487 may have seen little of the 'sackage, carnage and wreckage' described in '1066 and All That', but nevertheless the throne did change hands violently no less than five times: in 1461, 1470, 1471, 1483 and 1485. Moreover, three kings died violently: Henry VI in 1471, Edward V in 1483 and Richard III in 1485. Thus these wars were the most serious episode of instability in England between the wars of King Stephen in the twelfth century and the English Civil War in the seventeenth. They were the background to the precarious establishment of the Tudor dynasty which was to stamp its image so firmly on the history of England.

The origin of the Wars of the Roses stretches back to 1399 when King Richard II was deposed by his cousin who became King Henry IV. Henry was the first Lancastrian king. (He was the son of Edward III's second son, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.) Henry's right to the throne was insecure, but he survived a series of threats to his throne, and when his son succeeded him as Henry V in 1413, the Lancastrian dynasty seemed firmly established. Henry V went on to win the battle of Agincourt and conquer half of France; his authority was indisputable. However, when he died in 1422, his son, who was only an infant, succeeded him as Henry VI. A royal **minority** was always feared as a time when, without the strong leadership of an adult king, the nobility would compete for power and conflict would break out. Henry VI's capable uncles prevented this happening, but the really bad news was that, when Henry grew up, he proved to be a simple, pious man without political understanding or force of character. Under his rule, all the territories in France were lost except for Calais, and he left government in the hands of favourites who were resented by the rest of the nobility – and in particular by the powerful Duke of York, who was also a descendant of Edward III. As resentment and consequent conflict developed, the Duke of York and his followers moved from claiming their rights to claiming the throne. The Lancastrian symbol was the red rose, against the white rose of the Yorkists. The sporadic wars between these two royal houses became known later as the Wars of the Roses.

The Wars of the Roses lasted from the early 1450s until 1487. However, they were not by any means continuous. There were four very distinct episodes, each of which had its own causes and did not necessarily relate directly to previous events.

See page 5

Minority inheritance by a minor, someone under-age

- The first clash was at St Albans in 1455, although more a skirmish than a battle.
- Between 1459–61, there was serious fighting leading to the bloody battle of Towton and the overthrow of the Lancastrian Henry VI by the Yorkist Edward IV.
- Further conflict between 1469–71 saw the temporary return of Henry VI and the eventual triumph of Edward IV.
- Edward's brother, Richard III, succeeded him in 1483, and was likely to have been the murderer of Edward's sons, the Princes in the Tower. Richard was defeated and killed at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 by Henry Tudor who became Henry VII and founder of the Tudor dynasty.

Two separate issues need to be examined – first, the sequence of events that brought about the overthrow of Henry VI, Edward IV and Richard III, and second, any general causes that underlay the instability of this period.

1 ↪ HENRY VI AND THE CRISIS OF THE 1450S



PICTURE 1
Henry VI, anon.
(HM the Queen)

Henry VI was one of the most unfortunate and unsuccessful of English monarchs. The circumstances of his birth suggested otherwise. His father, Henry V, had destroyed the French army at Agincourt in 1415 and established a huge English empire in France. The Treaty of Troyes (1420) made Henry V heir to the French throne, and the French King's daughter, Katharine, became his wife.

Henry VI inherited this vast empire in 1422, but within 35 years Lancastrian power in France was confined to the port of Calais and English rule was never to return. It would be easy simply to blame Henry VI for these catastrophic disasters. It certainly did not help the English that Henry V's death (31 August 1422) followed the birth of his son (6 December 1421) by only a few months. However, the government of the country during Henry VI's childhood was relatively stable and competent and the English were able to maintain their grip in France.

France was a much more populous and wealthy country than England and English influence was always likely to decline if a stronger and more capable French government emerged. Despite the coronation of Henry VI as King of France at Paris in 1431, the French claimant to the throne, Charles VII, began to consolidate his position in the 1430s. The English had always depended for their success on alliance with the Dukes of Brittany and Burgundy. The Dukes of Burgundy were wealthy and powerful rulers, who controlled much of eastern France and the Low Countries. In 1435, the French and Burgundians allied. The destruction of the Lancastrian empire in France was now simply a matter of time.

Nonetheless, Henry VI's reaction to these events was inept. By 1437, he had taken personal control of the government of the country. His

marriage, in 1445, to Margaret of Anjou, was a typical error in political terms. She brought with her no dowry (land or money) and, therefore, no political benefit to the English Crown. Despite the lingering reputation of military invincibility, by August 1450 Normandy was lost to the King of France.

Even more devastating was the collapse of English power in Gascony in the south-west of France, as we shall see. This had belonged to the English monarchy for 300 years, but in July 1451 Bordeaux fell to the French. Dissident Gascons invited the English back the next year and an army was sent under the veteran Sir John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, the most able and feared English general. In July 1453 his army was utterly defeated at Castillon and he was killed. The Hundred Years War had ended in ignominious defeat. Only Calais remained of the English possessions in France.

It would be absurd to blame Henry VI entirely for this. It might even be argued that the campaigns of his father had been foolish and ill-conceived, and that it was unrealistic over the long term for England to challenge France. But Henry VI holds much of the responsibility for the devastating rapidity and finality of the French victory. Traditionally, war with France had been a popular policy in England, which was invariably supported by Parliament. The completeness of the English defeat was a devastating blow. With the exception of Calais, the coast-line facing England was now in enemy hands and there was growing fear of French raids. To compound the problem in the summer of 1453 Henry suffered a complete nervous breakdown, possibly caused by defeat at Castillon.

Defeat in France was not Henry's only problem. Another major source of complaint was his method of governing the country. It was essential that any monarch should attempt to gain support and popularity from all sections of the aristocracy, on whom he was so dependent for assistance in governing the country. There were few paid royal servants and the aristocracy was the main agent of government in the provinces. The main technique for gaining their support was the use of **patronage**. This meant the distribution of titles, land, and government office to the great landowners of the realm. In return, they would enforce royal authority in the shires and provide manpower for the king.

It was essential that patronage should be distributed evenly and fairly. It was in this task that Henry proved singularly inept. In the 1440s he came to rely on a small group of favourites attached to the **Royal Household**. In particular, he favoured the Beaufort family. They were of royal blood and descended, like the King, from John of Gaunt, Edward III's third son. Originally, their line was illegitimate (John of Gaunt had only married the mother of the first Beauforts after they had been born), but the family was legitimised in 1397 and quickly became prominent. By the 1440s the Beaufort family, who became Dukes of Somerset, had accumulated vast amounts of patronage and influence. Even more important was another aristocrat, not of royal blood, the Duke of Suffolk. He owed his ascendancy to his influence over the

KEY ISSUE

How far was defeat in France the fault of Henry VI?

Patronage the granting of posts or other favours to secure support

Royal Household the king's living quarters, but also the centre of much government activity which focused on him

PROFILE

HENRY VI (1421–71)

It is hard to disagree with Professor Pollard's view that Henry was 'perhaps the most unsuited to rule of all the kings of England since the Norman Conquest'. Crowned in London in 1429, and in Paris in 1431, he assumed full regal powers in 1437. In 1440 he founded both Eton College and King's College, Cambridge, and he was piously devoted to both institutions for the rest of his life. He married Margaret of Anjou in 1445, eventually siring an heir (Edward, Prince of Wales) in 1453, but by 1450 the realm was in the throes of the biggest crisis since the reign of Richard II. The territories in France were lost, Henry faced rebellion at home, and key supporters were murdered. Then, at this key time, in 1453, he suffered a mental breakdown; he could not even recognise his own child. He recovered, although it was his wife, Margaret of Anjou, who was by now the effective leader of the Lancastrian cause and Henry was a mere figurehead. With this power vacuum at the centre, war broke out. Henry was captured no less than three times – at the first Battle of St Albans in 1455, at Northampton in 1460, and, following four years of wandering in the north of England after Towton, in 1465. He resumed the throne in 1470–1 after Warwick's rebellion, but the defeat of the Lancastrians at two major battles in 1471 sealed his fate. He was murdered in the Tower of London in 1471. Henry had been the victim of ruthless opponents, but it is hard to disagree with KB McFarlane's rueful conclusion: 'Only an under-mighty ruler had anything to fear from over-mighty subjects'.

King. He and his close allies, Adam Moleyns and Lord Saye and Sele were given land, money and office by the King in a thoughtless and extravagant fashion. They became particularly prominent in East Anglia and the South-east. It seemed that the only criterion for gaining royal patronage was to be a member of the King's Household.

This might not have mattered if these had been men of ability, but they were mostly closely associated with the disastrous events in France. In particular, Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, was – with some justice – held responsible for the defeats in Normandy. At home there was further strong criticism of these men. The support of the aristocracy was vital if law and order was to be maintained in the shires. A growing number of aristocrats and other ambitious men began to believe that members of the King's Household were unduly favoured and that royal justice was being manipulated in the interests of a faction. Lord Saye and Sele, for example, was entrusted with vast amounts of land and influence in Kent by the King. He became Constable of Dover Castle and Warden of the Cinque Ports. The county, however, was notorious for its disorder and Henry was blamed for this. In his excellent biography of Henry VI, Ralph Griffiths comments: 'To ensure social stability and public order, a circumspect government needed to avoid antagonising prominent **magnates** ... Wise, and as far as politics

Magnate a leading nobleman

allowed, impartial patronage was the key to regional control'. Henry's patronage went to a narrow circle of favourites and left other powerful aristocrats out in the cold. Their resentment turned into sullen resistance and finally rebellion.

KEY ISSUE

Why did faction become a particular problem under Henry VI?

2 ↪ OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT 1450–3

The great favours granted to the house of Beaufort were bound to offend other families of royal blood. By far the most important was the family of Richard, Duke of York. He was descended from another son of Edward III and was one of the greatest landowners in the country. His estates were widely scattered throughout England and also in Ireland. He was particularly well endowed with land on the Welsh borders.

Richard was ten years older than Henry, and there seems always to have been some mutual antagonism. In July 1440, he was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Normandy for five years. There is no evidence that he made much of what was admittedly a very difficult position. It is clear that Henry favoured the Beauforts over him and that Richard left his position owed a large amount of money by the Crown. He was then sent to Ireland for ten years to recover lands lost to the Irish,

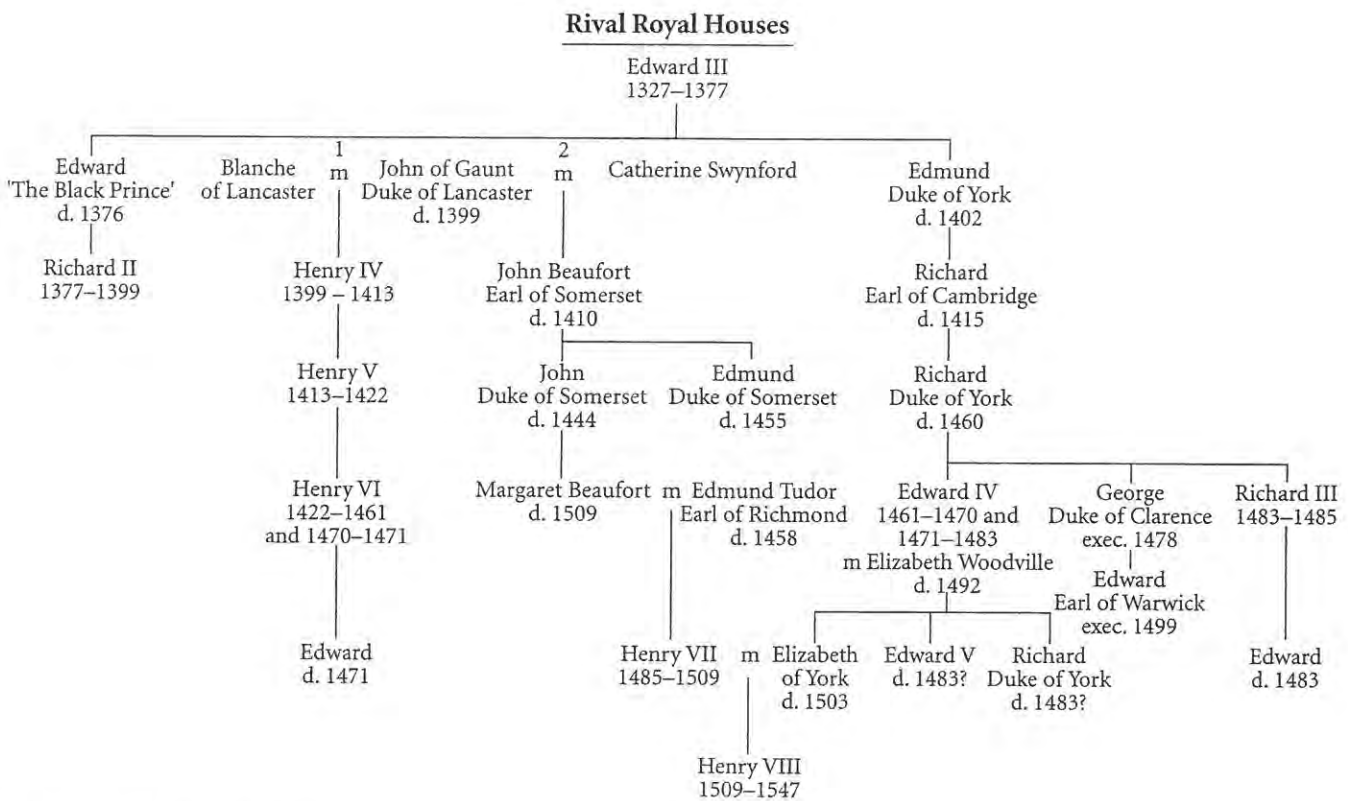


DIAGRAM 1 Rival Royal Houses

Statute a parliamentary law (as opposed to Common Law, accumulated judicial decisions)

KEY ISSUE

Why was Parliament not as compliant as normal in 1449?

Acts of Resumption parliamentary laws restoring lands to the Crown which the King had previously given away

KEY ISSUE

What was the significance of Jack Cade's rebellion?

further emphasising his isolation from the centre of affairs. It seemed likely that Henry would choose a Beaufort in preference to him as his successor should he remain childless.

As for Parliament, at this time it was the King's servant and generally very obedient. The King could summon and dismiss Parliament entirely at his own convenience and **statute** law gave authority to royal policies. However, under normal circumstances, the King was expected to 'live of his own' on the revenues of his own estates and customs duties which were traditionally granted for life. Additional taxation had to be approved by Parliament and this was rarely possible, except for a popular military campaign.

The Parliament which assembled in November 1449 was not compliant. The disastrous situation in France was becoming clear, while foreign trade was at a standstill thanks to an embargo by Philip, Duke of Burgundy. This reduced cloth exports to the Netherlands, which were the basis of English wealth, by one-third.

Parliament blamed these disasters on the clique which surrounded Henry VI. As a result of threatening political unrest, Henry's hand was forced and the Duke of Suffolk was sent to the Tower. He was released in May 1450 and then murdered as he went into exile. His close supporter, Adam Moleyns, had already been murdered the previous January by unpaid and mutinous soldiers at Portsmouth.

Finally, a genuinely popular rebellion broke out in Kent. Disaffection was understandable in this part of England; there was a growing fear of French invasion, and trade with the Low Countries had virtually ceased. Kent was a county with a large number of independent farmers, who were not closely dependent on a particular lord, and there was resentment at the patronage granted to Lord Saye and Sele, one of Henry's most unpopular supporters.

The rebellion broke out in May 1450 under the leadership of Jack Cade who claimed to be connected with the family of Richard of York. The rebels' demands were very specific: first of all that the King's Council should include all the great aristocrats of the country and second they supported Parliament in demanding **Acts of Resumption**. In this way the King would be able to live of his own and would require no parliamentary taxation. A first Act of Resumption was passed in May 1450, but a mob still executed Lord Saye and Sele in July after Henry had fled from London.

There is no evidence that the Duke of York inspired Jack Cade's rebellion. Moreover, despite the King's weakness, his wife, Margaret of Anjou, proved a formidable figure and helped to organise the dispersal of the rebels. But Richard of York did return in September 1450 from Ireland. He was not seeking the Crown, but he wanted to consolidate his position as heir to the throne, and saw an opportunity in Henry VI's political difficulties. He also resented Henry's continued favouritism towards his rival, the Duke of Somerset.

Despite its problems, Henry's regime survived. In part this reflects the power of the monarchy in the fifteenth century. A man like Richard of York may have associated himself with popular discontent, but was

clearly essentially a self-interested and disappointed intriguer. Henry also now asserted himself more effectively than ever before in his reign. Parliamentary grievances were addressed by a second and more effective Act of Resumption later in 1450. Henry also made a concerted effort to deal with problems of law and order at a time when, throughout the country, violence was believed to be increasing dramatically. In 1451, he toured Kent and in 1452–3 there were further tours to other areas in which he acted as judge and used his power and influence to enforce the law.

Richard of York did mount a half-hearted conspiracy, but was forced to back down in March 1452. By 1453, the restoration of royal authority was so complete that a Parliament at Reading voted sufficient funds to raise 20 000 men to re-conquer France.

KEY ISSUE

How did Henry VI restore his authority by 1453?

3 ↪ ROYAL MADNESS AND THE DRIFT TO CIVIL WAR 1453–9

Despite the weaknesses of Henry's government revealed from 1449 onwards – the sustained challenge to his regime arising from military failure in France, the favouritism towards a small circle of courtiers, the irresponsible distribution of land and office, and the failure to maintain order – it seemed possible by early 1453 that royal authority would be restored. It was hoped Sir John Talbot would re-conquer Gascony, and by then the most unpopular royal servants were dead. Acts of Resumption had been passed and the King had toured the South of England in a fairly successful attempt to restore order.

Two events shattered this progress. In August 1453, news arrived of the disaster at Castillon, which destroyed forever the chance of re-establishing an English empire in France. At the same time, and possibly as a direct result, Henry VI suffered a complete breakdown which lasted for 18 months. Certain diagnosis of his condition is of course impossible, but it seems likely that it was some form of schizophrenia. For the rest of his life, his mental health was always fragile.

The incapacity of the King meant that government of the country had to be reorganised with some urgency. A further complicating factor was the birth of an heir to the throne, Prince Edward, in October 1453. The Queen, Margaret of Anjou, possessed the energy and strength of character that her husband increasingly lacked. Her determination to ensure that their son succeeded Henry as king was to be at the centre of the struggle for power over the next two decades.

Richard of York was an obvious candidate to become 'Protector', who would deputise for the king while his illness lasted, but there were other claimants, such as the Duke of Exeter and Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset. Success in the struggle for power would depend on the attitude of the other great aristocrats. Most important of these was Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick.

KEY ISSUE

What were the most important consequences of the royal madness?

PROFILE

Marches border territories, either on the border with Scotland or Wales

RICHARD NEVILLE, EARL OF WARWICK, 'THE KING-MAKER' (1428–71)

Warwick is the exemplar of the fifteenth century 'over-mighty subject'. He was a leading member of the Neville family, who had risen to prominence largely by virtue of their ability to produce children and make successful marriages to great heiresses. Originally their power was concentrated in the North of England, where the need to defend the border against the raids of the Scots created a warlike atmosphere and a large number of experienced fighting men. Richard Neville inherited his family's traditional enmity towards the neighbouring northern magnate family, the Percies. With huge estates centred on the impressive castle of Middleham in North Yorkshire he vied with his Percy neighbours for royal patronage, including the prestigious wardenships of the **Marches** on the Scottish border. He became Earl of Warwick in 1449 and inherited great estates in the Midlands on his marriage to the Warwick heiress Anne Beauchamp. In dispute himself with the Duke of Somerset over land, he was a supporter of Richard, Duke of York in his quarrel with the Lancastrians, and was to be a key figure in the ensuing wars. He was to defeat and capture Henry VI at Northampton in 1460, and helped York's son to take the throne as Edward IV. Warwick, however, was to fall out with Edward in the 1460s over foreign policy and prospective marriage alliances for his daughters. Allied with the Edward's mercurial younger brother George, Duke of Clarence, who had also expected more favours from the King, Warwick rebelled in 1469. In 1470 in a dramatic change of sides Warwick, supported by King Louis XI of France, concluded an alliance with Margaret of Anjou, whereby his younger daughter Anne would marry her son Edward, Prince of Wales, and Warwick would engineer the restoration of Henry VI to the throne. This he achieved, and became known to history as the King-maker, but his triumph was short-lived. The following year Warwick was killed at the Battle of Barnet, and the Neville cause was lost.

Given the support of key noblemen, such as Warwick, Richard of York won the power struggle against Henry VI's favourites. In November 1453, Somerset was sent to the Tower, and on 27 March 1454 Richard of York was finally appointed 'Protector and Defender of the Kingdom of England and Chief Councillor of the King'.

York did not govern the country badly, but he could not pretend to have the support of all the great aristocrats. In particular, the Duke of Somerset and Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, were bound to be foes of a Yorkist/Neville alliance, and Margaret of Anjou would be suspicious that Richard of York sought the throne.

Everything was thrown into confusion by the recovery of Henry by Christmas 1454. Somerset was released from prison and restored to the vital position of Captain of Calais which gave him control of a garrison of 1000 men. York and Warwick fled to the North and were then summoned to a Great Council at Leicester in May 1455. The estates of the house of Lancaster were concentrated in this part of the Midlands, which increasingly became the centre of royal power.

To defend their position York and Warwick raised an army and marched on London. They clashed with the forces of their opponents at St Albans on 22 May 1455. This was a skirmish rather than a battle, with only a few casualties. But two of the dead were Somerset and Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland.

St Albans may have seemed a triumph for Richard of York and some benefits were gained. The Earl of Warwick became Captain of Calais and turned it into a Yorkist stronghold. For a few months between November 1455 and February 1456 Richard again acted as Protector as Henry relapsed into insanity.

But there is no evidence of widespread support for the Yorkists and Nevilles. Indeed, they had shed blood and earned the hostility of many other aristocrats. Moreover, Henry may have been in serious decline, but Margaret of Anjou was a formidable and determined antagonist, anxious to protect her son's right to the throne.

The years between 1455 and the outbreak of serious fighting in 1459 are not well documented by contemporary historians and the pattern is not always clear. Some attempts were made to reconcile the opposing factions. In March 1458, there was a 'Loveday' when the victors of the Battle of St Albans met the sons of the men who had been killed and performed a public act of reconciliation. But this seems to have been an isolated incident. More important was the exclusion once again of the Yorkists and Nevilles from government. The Earl of Warwick used his base at Calais to raise funds by piracy, while York withdrew to his estates.

Meanwhile, Margaret of Anjou governed the country increasingly from the Midlands, where there was the greatest concentration of Lancastrian estates. The city of Coventry was her main base. Coventry was a centre of cloth-making and the fourth largest city in the country; its population was loyal to the King. The move to Coventry suggested a lack of confidence amongst the Lancastrians that they could be sure of the loyalty of the people of London and of those aristocrats who were not their personal followers.

In the summer of 1459, a Lancastrian council at Coventry finally decided to accuse the Yorkists and Nevilles of treason. Their response was to raise armies. Richard of York raised a force in the Welsh Marches while the Nevilles drew on their strength in north Yorkshire and Calais. After a skirmish at Blore Heath, they moved to Ludlow shadowed by a larger royal army. The troops from Calais were led by Andrew Trollope, an able veteran of the wars in France. They were shocked to discover that they were expected to fight the King and changed sides. York and Warwick had no option but to abandon the struggle, and on the night

TIMELINE

1421	Henry VI became king
1437	Henry took personal control of government
1445	Marriage to Margaret of Anjou
1450	Jack Cade's rebellion
1451	Loss of Bordeaux
1452	Failure of conspiracy by Richard, Duke of York
1453	Defeat at Castillon Henry had a nervous breakdown Prince Edward born
1454	Richard of York became Protector Henry's recovery
1455	1st Battle of St Albans
1459	'The Parliament of Devils'

Acts of Attainder This legal procedure declared an individual a traitor, and enabled the king to confiscate his property

KEY ISSUE

Does the responsibility for the outbreak of war lie with Margaret of Anjou?

ANALYSIS

Bastard feudalism

Feudalism was the holding of land from a lord in return for military service to him. Bastard feudalism was when service was given in return for pay, favours or bribes

Retainers a noble's followers, who made up his retinue

of 12 October they decided to flee. York escaped to Ireland and Warwick returned to Calais.

The rebels had attracted very little support, but their resources were so vast that this had not really mattered. Understandably Margaret of Anjou was determined to follow up the Lancastrian triumph. A Parliament was summoned to Coventry known to Yorkists as the 'Parliament of Devils'. **Acts of Attainder** were passed against the rebels. This legal procedure effectively combined an accusation of treason with the loss of civil rights. The Yorkists and Nevilles were faced with permanent legal condemnation and the confiscation of their estates. Inevitably they would try to reverse this situation, and the Wars of the Roses proper began.

The Causes of the Wars of the Roses

Some historians have tried to find economic or cultural factors in the Wars' origins. It has been argued, for example, that landowners, suffering from falling rents and soaring labour costs, entered into a more acute and pressing competition for patronage to boost their income. However, it can be shown that most of the protagonists were in fact wealthier than their fathers, often benefiting through marriage, inheritance and royal favour.

'**Bastard feudalism**' has also been put forward as a cause. Yet this practice had existed since the beginning of the fourteenth century, so that **retainers** enrolled by cash contracts were familiar well before the crisis of the 1450s. The greatest twentieth-century historian of the fifteenth century, KB MacFarlane, pointed out that the number of retainers rarely exceeded eighty and that they were 'an expression of the Lord's need for service in peace rather than in war'. Rather than promoting instability, retaining created loyalty and helped to organise the social, political, and administrative life of the counties. He argued that 'On the whole, hierarchical bonds of loyalty and service which bound kings, lords, and retainers, made for social and political stability'.

RL Storey, however, widened the argument, suggesting that 'an escalation of private feuds' was the key component. It is not difficult to find examples of such quarrels, the best known being that between the Percies and the Nevilles in the north. AJ Pollard goes further, seeing the root cause of the wars as the excessive influence overall of the upper nobility, whose wealth and power increased from the fourteenth century onwards as many married into the royal family. This did not matter when the war with France was going well, but after 1340, Edward III 'allowed the gap in power and influence [between the King and aristocracy] to narrow'. He argues that this made the government of the country much more difficult unless the monarch was unusually able. It is certainly true

that at crucial times, the Nevilles, Stanleys and even Woodvilles determined the course of events.

The violence and instability of the period was much amplified by the weakness at the centre of government, especially when the hapless Henry VI, far from being an unusually able monarch, presided over a corrupt and partial regime. This has been emphasised by a recent authority on the war, Christine Carpenter. Henry V may well have been a hard act to follow – especially at a time when the task of monarchy was more testing than before – but it is difficult to dissent from KB McFarlane's pithy analysis: 'Henry VI's head was too small for his father's crown'.

4 ↪ THE FIRST WARS 1459–61

These two years saw the most sustained fighting of the Wars of the Roses. In June 1460 after consulting with Richard of York in Dublin, Warwick landed in Kent. Accompanied by York's son, Edward (the Earl of March and later to be Edward IV), he marched to Northampton where the Lancastrian army was defeated and the wretched King captured. The Yorkists then marched to London and summoned a Parliament to meet in October. Its main purpose, of course, would be to reverse the Acts of Attainder and so regain their positions and their estates.

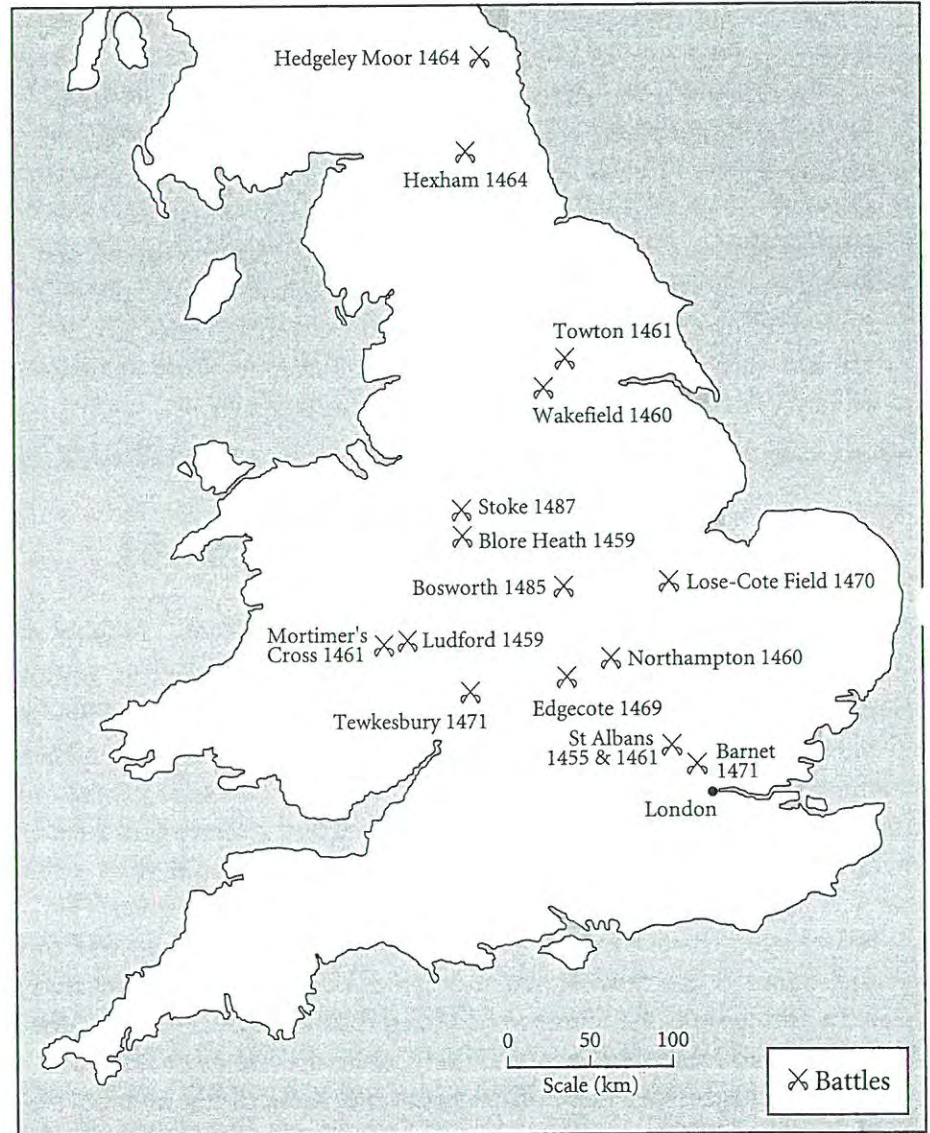
However, when Richard of York returned to England, for the first time he laid claim to the throne. There is no evidence that this had always been his aim. Indeed, he seems to have surprised his closest supporters. It was agreed that he should succeed Henry VI on the latter's death.

This was an unworkable compromise and particularly unacceptable to Margaret of Anjou whose son would be denied the throne. Further fighting was inevitable. In December at Wakefield, Richard of York was killed and it looked as though the Yorkist cause was doomed. Although in February 1461 there was a Yorkist victory under the leadership of Richard's son, Edward (now Duke of York), at Mortimer's Cross, it was cancelled out by defeat for Warwick at the second Battle of St Albans and the recovery of Henry VI by his supporters.

Margaret of Anjou now had Henry as her figurehead and a clear road to London. She failed to seize this outstanding opportunity and withdrew to the North. This seems an inexplicable decision, but her army had mainly been recruited in the North and Yorkist propaganda

TIMELINE

September 1459	Blore Heath – Indecisive
October 1459	Ludford Bridge – Lancastrian victory
July 1460	Northampton – Yorkist victory
December 1460	Wakefield – Lancastrian victory
February 1461	Mortimer's Cross – Yorkist victory
February 1461	St Albans – Lancastrian victory
March 1461	Towton – Yorkist Victory

**MAP 1**

The main battles in the Wars of the Roses

had convinced the population of London that a band of uncontrollable barbarians was approaching the city. Margaret had probably calculated that resistance to the Lancastrians would have been too great.

This hesitancy enabled Warwick and Edward of York to seize London and in March 1461 Edward was proclaimed King. Edward IV was a formidable opponent for the Lancastrians. His energy and appearance – he was a notably handsome man and well over six feet tall – contrasted starkly with the enfeebled Henry VI. He quickly raised an army and marched to meet the Lancastrians.

By far the bloodiest battle of the Wars of the Roses took place at Towton near Pontefract in south Yorkshire on 28–9 March 1461. Estimates of the numbers involved in battles of this period are notoriously unreliable, but the armies at Towton were certainly huge by the standards of the day and may have reached 25 000. The battle was fought in a blizzard and brought complete victory to Edward IV. Margaret of Anjou and Prince Edward fled to Scotland. Henry VI wandered as a fugitive in northern England until his capture and imprisonment by the Yorkists in 1465.

KEY ISSUE

Why were the Lancastrians defeated by 1461?

5 ↪ EDWARD IV: THE EARLY YEARS 1461–9

Edward had the appearance and physical dynamism of a true king. His record has been much debated. He undoubtedly made serious mistakes leading to the loss of the throne between 1469–71. His methods of government, especially after 1471, anticipate the vigorous and effective approach of the first of the Tudors, Henry VII. On the other hand much of his success appears to be the result of good luck rather than wise policies and his failure to secure the peaceful accession to the throne of his son after his death, as we shall see, must be accounted a great failure.

Edward started his reign facing major problems. In the words of his biographer, Charles Ross, ‘Towton had discredited but not destroyed the Lancastrian cause’. Margaret of Anjou and Prince Edward would be invaluable figureheads for any foreign power or discontented aristocrat who wished to challenge the King. There were still Lancastrian strongholds in remote corners of the kingdom. In Northumberland Lancastrians retained control of Alnwick, Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh castles. Twice they were driven out only to return, until their final defeat in the summer of 1464. Harlech Castle remained in Lancastrian hands until 1468.

In order to retain the throne, Edward needed broad-based aristocratic support. The Earl of Warwick’s reputation as the ‘King-maker’ is something of an exaggeration; he was less successful in battle than Edward. But his influence was still vast. In the South, he was Captain of Calais, Constable of Dover Castle, and Warden of the Cinque Ports. In the North, Warwick now held the Wardenships of both the Eastern and Western Marches on the Scottish border for the Neville family and so had sole responsibility for the defence of northern England against the Scots. The gentry of north Yorkshire provided a strongly loyal band of personal retainers with a tradition of violence.

During the 1460s, Warwick became estranged from Edward IV. This was partly a consequence of his arrogance and ambition and dislike of other Councillors, such as Sir William (later Lord) Hastings who was Edward IV’s most loyal supporter. Edward was, however, the sole author of some of his difficulties. In particular, his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville in 1464 was a crucial and avoidable error.

Romantic considerations generally played no part in the marriages of fifteenth-century kings and aristocrats. A well-chosen bride could bring a beneficial foreign alliance, or valuable land and wealth. The power of the Nevilles, for instance, was based above all on their marriages to wealthy heiresses. Edward, however, was an impulsive and sensual man, and it does seem that romantic considerations determined his decision to marry Elizabeth Woodville. Although her mother, Jacquetta of Luxemburg, came from a great European aristocratic family, her father, the first Earl Rivers, was a minor aristocrat, and the new Queen with her family were disdained as upstarts.



PICTURE 2
Edward IV, anon.
(HM the Queen)

Burgundy A powerful duchy which included modern day Belgium and the Netherlands, and part of eastern France

Lord Chancellor the head of the judiciary and the most important minister of the Crown

KEY ISSUE

How did Warwick become so great a threat to Edward IV by 1469?

The marriage was to bring Edward no political or economic benefits. The great magnates of the realm had not been consulted at a time when Warwick was actively negotiating a French marriage alliance and he was entitled to feel aggrieved. A further cause of grievance was the huge Woodville family. Elizabeth had two sons by a previous marriage, five brothers and seven sisters. The simplest way to advance their position was to find wealthy marriage partners for them. This cut across the Earl of Warwick's own ambitions. He had two daughters, Isabel and Ann, and wanted suitable husbands for them. Edward IV seems to have opposed Warwick's plan for Isabel to marry his younger brother, the Duke of Clarence.

There was also a growing division over foreign policy between the King and Warwick. Warwick favoured an alliance with France, while Edward IV and the Woodvilles looked to Burgundy. The Netherlands, ruled by the Dukes of **Burgundy**, were the most important market for English cloth and economically crucial. Anti-French policies were universally popular and it does seem that Edward's strategy was sounder than Warwick's. In 1467 a trade treaty was signed with Burgundy and Edward's sister, Margaret of York, married Duke Charles of Burgundy. Warwick's own negotiations with Louis XI of France failed completely and his brother George Neville, the Archbishop of York, was dismissed as **Lord Chancellor**.

Warwick retreated to the North and used his influence amongst his retainers to stir up uprisings against Edward. Meanwhile, his daughter, Isabel, was married to the Duke of Clarence, Edward's volatile and untrustworthy younger brother.

6 POLITICAL CRISIS 1469–71

The next two years saw a return to political chaos. Warwick and Clarence initially used Calais as a base. On their return to England they won a victory at Edgecote (26 July 1469), and this was followed by the capture of Edward IV and the ruthless execution of two Woodvilles, Lord Rivers and Sir John Woodville.

However, Warwick's lack of widespread aristocratic and popular support was soon exposed. He was forced to release Edward from Middleham Castle. Edward took steps to counter Warwick's influence in the North by restoring Henry Percy to the Earldom of Northumberland and returning many of his family estates lost after rebellion 50 years previously. Edward next returned to London in October 1469. Neither side was strong enough to defeat the other and uneasy stalemate ensued.

Warwick now proclaimed the Duke of Clarence as his candidate for the throne. They inspired a rising in Lincolnshire in March 1470, but it was easily suppressed by Edward at 'Lose-Cote Field, and in May 1470 they fled to France.

Louis XI of France was nicknamed 'the universal spider', and was a cunning and unprincipled intriguer. It was he who inspired a most

unlikely alliance between Warwick and Margaret of Anjou in July 1470. They agreed to restore Henry VI and marry Prince Edward (Henry's son) to Ann, Warwick's younger daughter.

In September 1470, Warwick returned once again to England. He was joined by Clarence and Jasper Tudor, who was the staunchest supporter of the Lancastrian cause. Edward IV has been accused of complacency in the face of these events, but he was unavoidably detained by continued disaffection in Yorkshire. What is strange is the speed with which his authority collapsed. This can be partially explained by the defection of another key supporter, John, Marquis Montagu, who was Warwick's brother and had lost both land and influence as a result of the restoration of the Percies.

In October, Edward was forced to flee virtually penniless to the Netherlands. In the legal phraseology of the day the '**re-adeption**' of Henry VI followed. Henry's new regime was always unstable. The Lancastrians and Nevilles were only united in their opposition to Edward IV, while the Duke of Clarence had gained little power and patronage from his selfish actions. In order to survive, Henry needed a vigour and unity which he was unlikely to find. He also needed an effective foreign policy to prevent Edward securing the foreign assistance he would need to reclaim his throne.

Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, was a wealthy and ambitious ruler married to Edward IV's sister, Margaret. He was naturally worried by Warwick's links with France and the political debts that the Lancastrians owed to Louis XI of France. In 1471, Henry VI's government made a treaty with France and looked set to fight Burgundy. This was neither a popular nor a sensible policy. Burgundy was England's greatest trading partner and popular opinion was always anti-French. Charles of Burgundy's response was to give Edward 50 000 florins and some ships.

On 14 March 1471, Edward landed at Ravenspur on the Yorkshire coast. Initially he found little support, but at least Henry Percy, hostile to the Nevilles, remained neutral and did not hinder him. Edward now displayed his undisputed qualities of boldness and energy. He claimed to be only concerned with recovering his Duchy and built up a following from the vast estates of his close ally Lord Hastings in the Midlands. He was joined by his unreliable brother, the Duke of Clarence, who had gained little from Warwick and the Lancastrians.

Edward marched straight to London. If he gained control of London, it would be hard to dislodge him and it is significant that the citizens, who consistently seemed to have favoured Edward over Henry, admitted him without a struggle. On Easter Sunday (14 April) Edward's forces joined battle with Warwick's at Barnet. In a confused encounter in fog Warwick and Montagu were killed. The power of the Nevilles was broken.

Meanwhile, a Lancastrian army landed at Weymouth and, hearing of Warwick's defeat, began to march to Wales where the Lancastrians had a strong following. Edward IV again showed his decisiveness as a military leader and marched rapidly west. At Tewkesbury on 4 May the

Re-adeption the legal restoration of the king to his throne.

TIMELINE

1464		Edward IV married Elizabeth Woodville
1467		Alliance with Burgundy; collapse of Warwick's negotiations with Louis XI of France
1469	July	Edgecote – Lancastrian/Neville victory
1470	March	'Lose-Cote' Field – Yorkist victory
	October	Re-adeption of Henry VI
1471	April	Barnet – Yorkist victory
1471	May	Tewkesbury – Yorkist victory
		Restoration of Edward IV

Lancastrians were cut off and crushed, and Henry VI's son, Prince Edward, the real hope of the Lancastrian dynasty, was killed. On Edward IV's return to London Henry VI disappeared, almost certainly murdered in the Tower.

Edward's recovery of the throne owed something to good luck, but he must be given great credit for seizing the initiative and taking well-calculated risks. Although there was some sporadic activity by Lancastrians over the next two years, there was now no really convincing Lancastrian claimant to the throne. Henry Tudor, who became the most active Lancastrian leader, had only a remote claim, and there seemed no reason why the Yorkist line should not establish itself permanently.

KEY ISSUE

Why was the 'Re-adeption' of Henry VI a failure?

7 ↪ THE RULE OF EDWARD IV 1471–83

Edward IV was still a young and vigorous man in 1471. He quickly adopted a conciliatory policy towards his former opponents. There were only 13 Acts of Attainder confiscating great estates, six of which applied to the estates of dead men. Twenty-three earlier attainders were reversed. Able men, who had served the Lancastrian cause, entered Edward's service. A good example was John Morton. He had followed Margaret of Anjou into exile, but by 1478 was both Master of the Rolls (a leading judge) and Bishop of Ely; he later became one of Henry VII's most trusted servants. Special favour was given to Edward's younger brother, Richard of Gloucester. He succeeded Warwick as Great Chamberlain of England (controller of state occasions) and in 1471 was given Warwick's confiscated estates in the North. Richard's marriage to Warwick's daughter, Ann Neville, confirmed him as the King's representative in the North and the inheritor of Warwick's great influence.

Edward's government of the country in these years has been closely scrutinised by historians. Many of his actions have been seen as anticipating the so-called '**new monarchy**' to follow in the reign of Henry VII so that continuity of aims, methods, and personnel between the two men is now often stressed. It is perhaps hardly surprising that two men with similar problems adopted similar policies. It is also clear that no grand strategy lay behind Edward's methods of government. He had no conscious political philosophy, but simply a desire to govern more efficiently.

New monarchy the term coined by historians to suggest that Edward IV (and later Henry VII) used innovative administrative and financial methods to govern the country

A Wales

Although the government of England was relatively centralised compared to that of many European countries, effective government of the more remote regions remained difficult. (This is dealt with in depth in Chapter 11 ‘The Frontier Regions.’) The whole of Wales had been conquered by the English only relatively recently and its administration was particularly confused. The remote north and west had been divided into shires, run by Crown appointed **Justices of the Peace** as in England, but the border between Wales and England was still ruled by the Marcher Lords. ‘March’ simply means border and in this traditionally violent region, all powers of law and administration had been delegated to the Marcher Lords and the King’s authority was only nominal.

Edward IV was himself a great Marcher Lord and in 1471 he created the Council in the Marches primarily to administer his own estates. But it was also necessary to combat the lawlessness of an area where no single authority responsible for law and order existed. In 1473, it was decided that the King’s eldest son, the Prince of Wales, should live in Ludlow in the heart of the Marches and his Council became the centre of royal authority. (Although only a child, it was hoped he would become the focus of local loyalties.) In 1476, the Prince of Wales was given (in name at least) extensive legal powers in Wales and the Marches by what was known as a General **Commission of Oyer and Terminer**. In 1477 he was technically given control of the Earldom of March and in 1479 of the Earldom of Pembroke. Edward’s policy, however, was no more than a series of improvisations. He was not prepared to abolish the Marcher lordships and create new shires with Crown appointed Justices of the Peace, as eventually happened in the reign of Henry VIII. The Prince’s household was run by a Woodville, Anthony, Earl Rivers, which created suspicion amongst many other great aristocrats. On the other hand, a serious attempt had been made to co-ordinate and improve the administration of a notably violent region.

B The North

Northern England presented special problems to any monarch at this time. There was a continued threat from Scotland and traditionally the local aristocrats had been given the task of organising the defence of the border. Many of the gentry felt a stronger loyalty to local magnates, such as the Nevilles and Percies, than to the King. Any great aristocrat in the North kept large retinues of retainers, virtually private armies.

Edward’s policy in the North was made no change to the system of rule and was arguably short-sighted. First of all, Henry Percy was restored to the Earldom of Northumberland in 1470. The Percies had a great following and he effectively became the King’s Lieutenant in Northumberland and an influential figure in Yorkshire.

Even more important was the role given to the King’s younger brother, Richard of Gloucester. All the confiscated estates, offices, and influence of the Earl of Warwick passed into his hands. The wardenship

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Justices of the Peace the local, unpaid agents of the Crown. Usually gentry, they sat as magistrates and supervised administration at the shire level

Commission of Oyer and Terminer literally to hear (oyer) and determine (terminer), a commission granted judicial powers

KEY ISSUE

What were the strengths and weaknesses of Edward IV's government of Wales and the North?

of the West March on the border of Scotland, for example, was to be hereditary in his family. Effectively, Edward was not extending royal power, but creating an over-mighty subject and concentrating a considerable amount of power in the hands of Richard of Gloucester. Richard had his own private council and a vast following inherited from the Nevilles. It was this regional influence that enabled him to seize power on Edward's death. It is also likely that the favouritism shown to Richard was one factor in the continued disaffection of Edward's other brother, the Duke of Clarence, whose plotting finally led to his execution (as tradition has it, drowned in a barrel of Malmsey wine) in 1478.

C Administration and law and order

Edward's government was intensely personal. He aimed to improve efficiency not through a visionary programme of reform, but by improving the vigour and quality of the government's personnel.

One important example of this was the growing number of letters and warrants issued under the signet, which was the seal carried by the King's secretary. This meant that there was an increasing amount of administration carried out directly by the King and his personal servants, bypassing established government officials. In doing this Edward IV was not making any substantial reform to government; but his closer personal control ensured government operated more effectively, more rapidly and more responsively to his wishes.

The King's Council retained its importance and its functions changed little. There is no doubt that many of Edward's personal servants were capable and effective, but he did lack a strong personal following in the provinces, such as that built up by Richard of Gloucester in the North, and there was always suspicion and jealousy of the Woodvilles. Edward made no consistent effort to restrain the power of the aristocracy. He still relied on the support of great families in the shires, such as the Stanleys in Lancashire and Cheshire. His failure to restrain aristocratic power can be contrasted unfavourably with the far more assertive Henry VII. If the country was not as lawless as in the reign of Henry VI, this simply reflected Edward's more powerful personality. No legal checks were placed on the aristocracy and their followings of retainers. In particular, nothing was done to control **livery**, or **maintenance**. These practices are often seen as examples of excessive noble power used irresponsibly in the provinces.

There is a shortage of good primary source material for this period to illustrate the unchecked power of the aristocracy. However, the 'Paston Letters' are a series of documents written by members of an important gentry family in East Anglia. They are amongst the earliest surviving family letters in English and give an unrivalled insight into the problems and preoccupations of a gentry family of this period, which persisted from the Wars of the Roses into Edward IV's reign.

The Pastons became involved in a complicated legal dispute over property which brought them into conflict with the Duke of Suffolk, who was one of the most powerful men in East Anglia. In 1465, he sent

Livery the badge or clothing showing allegiance by retainers to a particular nobleman. Often provoked the equivalent of gang warfare.

Maintenance the intimidation of a jury by supporters of a powerful man involved in the case

KEY ISSUE

In what ways was the aristocracy a threat to law and order?

a force of armed men against their property. Margaret Paston reported the incident in a letter a few days later.

1465, 27 October.

1 I was at Hellesdon upon Thursday last past and saw the place there,
and in good faith there will be no creature think how foul and hor-
ribly it is arrayed but if they saw it. There cometh much people daily
to wonder thereupon, both of Norwich and of other places, and
5 they speak shamefully thereof ...

The Duke [of Suffolk]'s men ransacked the church and bare away all
the good that was left there, both of ours and of the tenants, and
left not so much but that they stood on the high altar and ran-
sacked the images, and took away such as they might find, and put
10 away the parson out of the church till they had done, and ransacked
every man's house in the town five or six times ... If it might be, I
would some men of worship might be sent from the King to see
how it is, both there and at the lodge, ere than any snows come,
that they may make report of the truth ...

15 And at the reverence of God, speed your matters now, for it is too
horrible a cost and trouble that we now have daily, and must have
till it be otherwise; and your men dare not go about to gather up
your livelihood, and we keep here daily more than three hundred
persons for salvation of us and the place ...

20 It is thought here that if my Lord of Norfolk would take upon him
for you, and that he may have a commission for to inquire of such
riots and robberies as hath be done to you and others in this country,
then all the country will await upon him and serve your intent, for
the people love and dread him more than any lord except the King
25 and my Lord of Warwick.



1. When Margaret Paston uses the term 'country' (line 23), what does she mean?
2. Why do you think that the Duke of Suffolk was able to organise such extensive acts of violence?
3. To whom did the Pastons look for assistance? What is the significance of this?
4. The letter makes direct reference to the power of the Earl of Warwick. With whom is his power compared and to whom was it passed on?
5. Why do you think that the 'Paston Letters' are so valued by historians of the fifteenth century?

D Parliament and finance

Because disputes between monarchs and Parliament eventually came to assume such significance in English history, it is easy to misunderstand the role of Parliament. There is no evidence that Parliament either increased or decreased in importance in the reign of Edward IV. Parliament met six times in 23 years for a total of 84½ weeks. Its major task was to carry out the King's business. For example, a Parliament was summoned in 1478 to secure the attainder of Clarence, declaring him a traitor and confiscating his estates. Fifty-four parliamentary statutes were passed in Edward's reign, mostly concerned with economic matters. In 1463, he was granted tannage and poundage (customs revenues) for life. Apart from this he was expected to 'live of his own',

that is, make do with the revenues of his estates and only ask for further taxes if war threatened.

The kings of England possessed limited resources compared with their continental rivals. Edward IV was the first king for 200 years to die solvent, which was an impressive achievement, although owing much to favourable circumstances as well as to good judgment. Inheritance and confiscation brought him much larger estates than those of Henry VI; but in addition Edward exercised closer control to put the royal finances on a sounder footing.

Henry VI had cut deep into his own revenues by making huge gifts of royal lands he could ill afford, and this irresponsible patronage had been a major cause of his unpopularity. A trade recession worsened matters in the middle of the century and greatly reduced customs revenues. Henry VI's annual revenues fell to £24 000 compared with £90 000 in the reign of Henry IV, 50 years before. Edward IV boosted revenue by a series of practical measures. Better foreign relations created an improved climate for trade, and customs revenues increased from an average of £25 000 at the start of his reign to £34 000 at the close. After the Treaty of Picquigny with France in 1475, a valuable pension (meaning an annual payment) of 50 000 gold crowns was agreed by the French King. A commercial treaty with Burgundy in 1478, which smoothed relations with England's most important trading partner, was only one of many successful trading agreements with foreign powers.

Another important source of revenue was the royal estates. In addition Edward's own Yorkist estates were extensive. The further confiscation of estates through Acts of Attainder added the lands of two dukes, five earls, one viscount and six barons. Edward also made money from the profits of wardships. **Wardship** gave the king the revenues of great estates when the heir was a child. Early in Edward's reign, this included the lands of the Duchy of Buckingham and the Earldom of Shrewsbury.

The most significant development in financial policy lay in the use of the King's **Chamber** rather than the **Exchequer** in the administration of the royal estates. The Exchequer traditionally ran the finances of the government, but its methods had become inefficient and cumbersome. The Chamber was the main state room at Court and housed the Lord Chamberlain's department within the Royal Household. Edward adopted a system that had been used on the Yorkist estates. Receivers (rent collectors) and surveyors (to establish what rents were due) were appointed and made directly responsible to the King's Chamber. This meant that money now went directly to the King and not through an inefficient bureaucracy.

Again matters were improved by a more direct and personal approach, which anticipated methods adopted by the Tudors. By 1475 Edward was solvent and did not need financial help from Parliament.

However, there were limits to his achievement. Not all the administrative improvements were effective; on royal estates, such as the Duchy of Lancaster, it proved particularly difficult to implement new ideas. He can also be criticised for distributing rather than keeping forfeited estates, thus letting future royal revenues go to others. Henry VII was a

Wardship A ward was an heiress to an estate. Wardship was where the king, or someone else granted the wardship, was entrusted with the task of protecting the heiress – and had the opportunity exploit her estates

Chamber this was the King's living quarters, where he dined and received visitors. Increasingly it became the centre of government business

Exchequer the government office with the formal responsibility for handling the king's finances. The name comes from the chequered board on which money was counted

far more efficient and single-minded administrator. In his last year royal revenues exceeded £104 000 compared with £65 000 under Edward.

Nonetheless Edward's achievement was outstanding in comparison with what had gone before. He had attained solvency after decades of royal debts mounting up, and annual royal revenues at £65 000 far exceeded the £25 000 under Henry VI. Finally, although Henry VII in turn was to surpass Edward in management of the royal finances, he saw the sense in his methods and was to adopt many of them himself.

KEY ISSUE

What lay behind Edward IV's financial success?

E Foreign policy

There was an intimate connection between foreign policy and financial stability throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. No monarch in any country was able to finance a war without borrowing vast sums and acquiring huge debts. One of the chief reasons for Edward's solvency was his avoidance of major foreign wars. However, luck and chance seem to have played a greater part in this than planning and foresight.

Edward was born at Rouen in Normandy, and his father played a major role in the wars with France. He remained attached to the idea of military success in France. Throughout the fifteenth century France increased in power. Its population and resources greatly exceeded England's, and Louis XI of France was a formidable ruler. Traditionally England had allied with Burgundy and Brittany against France, while Louis harboured territorial ambitions against both these states.

In 1472, Edward negotiated the Treaty of Châteaugiron with Brittany and promised to invade France, but the Bretons were defeated before any English invasion could take place. Despite the traditional popularity of war with France, Parliament was notably unenthusiastic about financing the war and in many ways Edward had a lucky escape.

This did not prevent further diplomatic and military planning. The Treaty of London (25 July 1474) united England and Burgundy in a plan to repeat Henry V's destruction of the French monarchy; Brittany then joined the alliance, and even Scotland – so often a useful ally for France – was neutralised. Parliament provided substantial financial support, and an army of over 11 000 was raised. This would be the largest force ever sent from England to France. By July 1475 Edward was established in Calais.

The seriousness of Edward's invasion plans has been questioned. He may simply have been trying to intimidate the French. Again, he was possibly saved by the lack of commitment of his allies. Charles the Bold of Burgundy had territorial ambitions to the east of his duchy and was reluctant to invade France. Edward's army lacked the experience of previous expeditions and was unlikely to have won great victories.

When the French offered a truce it was quickly accepted. This led later in 1475 to the Treaty of Picquigny. In many ways this was very favourable to Edward; it gave him 75 000 crowns to be followed by an annual pension of 50 000 crowns and freedom of trade with France. In return there was to be a seven-year truce and Louis' son was to marry

TIMELINE

1472	Treaty of Châteaugiron with Brittany
1474	Treaty of London with Burgundy, later also Brittany and Scotland
1475	Treaty of Picquigny with France
1482	Invasion of Scotland Burgundy and France made peace – Edward lost his pension

KEY ISSUE

Was Edward IV just lucky that his foreign policy was not a disaster?

Edward's daughter. This French pension ensured that Edward no longer needed substantial grants from Parliament and contributed significantly to his solvency.

On the other hand it does seem that Edward had actively been seeking war and was only saved by good fortune. The death in battle of Charles the Bold at Nancy in 1477 enabled Louis XI to capture territory in Artois and Picardy in northern France. This directly threatened the vital English base of Calais and English trade with the Netherlands. Edward decided not to intervene, and it can be argued that Louis' combination of cunning diplomacy and bribery had completely neutralised England. It was felt that Edward now cared too much for money and a life of ease and luxury.

In his last years Edward further limited his freedom of action on the continent by his decision to invade Scotland. There had been a series of Scottish raids possibly encouraged by the French, to which Edward responded by sending an army to Edinburgh in 1482. Apart from the recovery of Berwick, little was gained. Meanwhile at Arras in 1482, Burgundy and France made peace. One result of this was that Louis stopped paying Edward his annual pension. In addition, French possession of Artois was confirmed and the threat to Calais made real. The marriage alliance with France, which had been agreed in the Treaty of Picquigny in 1475, never took place. Things did not in fact turn out as badly as it seemed they might; Louis died in 1483 and Burgundy had not collapsed completely. Also, Edward had not squandered lives and money on trying to renew the glory days of Henry V, which might well have been futile. On the other hand, there is no sign of coherence or effectiveness in Edward's foreign policy.

F *The end of the reign*

Edward IV died on 25 August 1483 at the age of 41. The cause of his death was probably a stroke, and an increasingly self-indulgent private life may have contributed to this. In many ways he can be regarded as a capable ruler. In his youth he had proved daring and decisive, and his audacious recovery of the throne in 1471 after the 're-adeption' of Henry VI was a remarkable personal achievement.

Much has been made of his financial success, but his personal extravagance, particularly in his later years, may have begun to threaten that. On the other hand, despite his generally unimpressive conduct of foreign policy, he did understand the importance of developing overseas trade.

There was an attractive side to his character. He was the first English king to possess a library, and Court circles encouraged the Caxton printing press. His physical presence and youthful dynamism enhanced the prestige of the monarchy. But he must be blamed for the consequences of his marriage and the succession crisis that followed his death. One major task for any king was to ensure a peaceful succession. The unpopularity of the Woodvilles and Edward's own lack of support amongst the aristocracy as a whole ensured that this would not happen.

8 ↪ THE REIGN OF RICHARD III

The period between Edward's death and the Battle of Bosworth Field (August 1485) exemplifies the political instability of fifteenth-century England. Edward's brother, Richard of Gloucester, was able to seize the throne from his young nephew, Edward V, and declare himself King Richard III, only to be defeated in battle by Henry Tudor, a remote and virtually unconsidered claimant to the throne.

RICHARD III (1452–85)

Thou elvish marked, abortive and rooting hog! ... ,
 Thou slander of thy heavy mother's womb!
 Thou loathed issue of thy father's loins!
 Thou rag of honour! ...

(William Shakespeare, *Richard III* Act 1, Scene III)

The reputation of certain English kings is so notorious that they are familiar even to those with no serious interest in history. One such figure is Richard III. His image as the evil hunchback who murdered his nephews, seized the throne and was then killed at Bosworth Field in 1485, is secure in our national mythology. Richard's notoriety seems strange. Many kings have been accused of murder and died violent deaths, but they are not so widely remembered.

It is not in fact difficult to establish why such controversy surrounds Richard III. First of all, William Shakespeare drew an unforgettable portrait of him as a tormented hunchback, which may not bear much resemblance to his looks or deeds, but is familiar to countless people who have never read a serious history book. The above quotation illustrates the venom constantly directed at Richard III by Shakespeare. In turn his sources were Tudor propagandists, such as Sir Thomas More, who portrayed Richard as the archetype of tyranny in order to promote in contrast the virtues of the Tudor dynasty.

Before he became king, however, Richard's reputation was of a loyal, pious, chivalric and courageous nobleman, who enjoyed especial popularity in the North of England. He was Edward IV's youngest brother who had accompanied him back to England from the Netherlands in 1461 at the age of 9. He was later the Duke of Gloucester, and was well rewarded for his support by Edward IV. He married the Earl of Warwick's daughter, Ann, and, following Warwick's fall, took control of the vast Neville estates in the north of England, residing in Warwick's castle at Middleham in north Yorkshire. Edward had made Richard the effective governor of the whole of the North. Richard could offer much patronage and draw on a reservoir of experienced fighting men. Edward had created an exceptionally 'over-mighty' subject with a strong regional base.

PROFILE



PICTURE 3
 Richard III, anon.

See pages 17–18

After 1478, Richard rarely came to London, and he established his military reputation in the campaign against Scotland. On his brother's untimely death in 1483, at the age of 41, Richard assumed the title of 'Protector', and moved swiftly to seize the person of Edward V, his elder nephew, from the hands of his mother's family, the Woodvilles. Richard then displayed ruthless determination in eliminating his opponents – Hastings, Rivers and Grey were executed in rapid succession – declared his nephews illegitimate, and seized the Crown for himself. The disappearance of his nephews, the 'Princes in the Tower', immediately aroused suspicions as to their fate, and Richard has to appear as the one with the strongest motive to do away with them. His failure to produce the children and the behaviour of their mother reinforce the impression of his guilt, despite the best efforts of the Richard III Society over the years to exonerate him. The Duke of Buckingham who rebelled against him certainly believed that Richard had disposed of the princes, while Richard's frenetic promotion of his northern affinity further aggravated magnate opinion in the south. That, and the failure of his old rivals in the North, the Percies and the Stanleys, to support him, led to his come-uppance at Bosworth Field in August 1485. Thus ended the reign of the man whom the historian Charles Ross has called 'the most vilified of all English kings'.

It is not difficult to explain why Richard III was able to seize the throne. Edward V was still a child and, as Prince of Wales, had lived in Ludlow on the Welsh border under the protection of his Woodville relation, Earl Rivers. The unpopularity of the Woodvilles cannot be overstated. They were regarded as ambitious upstarts and would clearly dominate the young King. Virtually all the great aristocrats disliked them and even Edward IV's most loyal supporter, Lord Hastings, had a grievance against them.

Richard's seizure of Edward V on 30 April and appointment as Protector on 4 May should not be seen as unpopular moves. It is not certain that he initially intended to declare himself King, but it is worth remembering that Edward IV had overthrown his predecessor and was responsible for the deaths of Henry VI and his own brother, the Duke of Clarence. Politics in fifteenth-century England was cruel and violent.

The executions of Lord Hastings (13 June) and Earl Rivers (25 June) suggest that by this time Richard was undoubtedly aiming for the throne. He soon declared that the marriage of Edward IV to Elizabeth Woodville had been invalid so that Edward V was therefore illegitimate and could not rightly be king. Having deposed his nephew, Richard's own coronation followed on 6 July. He could count on fervent support in the North and the passivity of many of the great nobility, who had learned to avoid political commitment after 30 years of instability. It was not Richard's seizure of the throne that shocked contemporaries, but the disappearance of his two nephews, the Princes in the Tower.

Dominic Mancini was a distinguished Italian scholar who spent some time in England in the early 1480s, probably working for the French. His account of the background to the usurpation of the throne by Richard III is an attempt by an intelligent outsider to make sense of these complex events.

KEY ISSUE

What made Richard of Gloucester's usurpation of the throne so easy?

1 By reason of his marriage some of the nobility had renewed hostilities against Edward, and revived hope amongst King Henry's party of regaining the crown, but after their defeat and the complete overthrow likewise of King Henry [VI] and his faction, Edward's power in the kingdom was re-affirmed. The queen then remembered the insults to her family and the calumnies with which she was reproached, namely that according to established usage she was not the legitimate wife of the king. Thus she concluded that her offspring by the king would never come to the throne, unless the Duke of Clarence were removed; and of this she easily persuaded the king ...

5 Accordingly whether the charge was fabricated, or a real plot revealed, the Duke of Clarence was accused of conspiring the king's death by means of spells and magicians. When this charge had been considered before a court, he was condemned and put to death. The mode of execution preferred in this case was, that he should die by being plunged into a jar of sweet wine. At that time Richard of Gloucester was so overcome by grief for his brother, that he could not dissimulate so well, but that he was overheard to say that he would one day avenge his brother's death. Thenceforth he came very rarely to Court. He kept himself within his own lands and set out to acquire the loyalty of his people through favours and justice. The good reputation of his private life and public activities powerfully attracted the esteem of strangers. Such was his renown in warfare, that, whenever a difficult and dangerous policy had to be undertaken,

15 it would be entrusted to his discretion and his generalship. By these arts Richard acquired the favour of the people, and avoided the jealousy of the queen, from whom he lived far separated.



1. Why might Elizabeth Woodville not have been regarded as Edward's legitimate wife (lines 7–8)?
2. What does this passage suggest about Edward IV's character and personality?
3. How convincing is the explanation of Richard's behaviour? (lines 16–27)
4. What are Mancini's weaknesses as a source for this period?

For all his crimes, Richard was an energetic and capable ruler, but his position was never secure. In late 1483, rebellion broke out in southern England. Its ostensible leader, the Duke of Buckingham, proved ineffectual and was executed, but the antagonism towards Richard in southern England was made plain. The appointment of northerners, such as Sir Richard Ratcliffe, to positions in the South was bitterly resented. English society was intensely parochial and outsiders were always unpopular.

Despite lavish distribution of office and land along with tours of the country, Richard was not able to broaden his political base. The deaths of his son and his wife were further blows. A handful of great men could dramatically shift the political balance. In particular, even in the North he could not rely on the Percies in Yorkshire and Northumberland

or the Stanleys in Lancashire and Cheshire. The Percies were traditional rivals of the Nevilles, and Thomas, Lord Stanley, was married to Margaret Beaufort, Henry Tudor's mother.

There was a surprising continuity of personnel in government. Of Richard's 54 Councillors, 24 had served Edward IV and nine were to serve Henry VII. The one innovation of Richard's reign was forced upon him. He had had his own council in the North, but on his assumption of the throne, a separate Council of the North was created as a branch of the Royal Council in 1484. This met four times each year in York and was to last until 1641. Richard did not choose a local grandee as its head, but his nephew, John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, who was an outsider.

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Richard also needed to neutralise the threat of Henry Tudor, who, at Rennes Cathedral in Brittany on Christmas Day in 1483, pledged to marry Edward IV's daughter, Elizabeth of York. The rise of the Tudor dynasty is one of the more unlikely events of the fifteenth century. The family were originally minor Welsh gentry at a time when to be Welsh was to be considered a foreigner. Henry's grandfather, Owen Tudor, married Katherine, Henry V's widow. One of their sons, Edmund, became Earl of Richmond and married Lady Margaret Beaufort. She was descended from Edward III's son, John of Gaunt, although her line was one of dubious legitimacy. Henry Tudor was their son and inherited his claim to the throne from his mother.

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The Tudors became important Lancastrians mainly because Henry VI had few close relatives. Henry's uncle, Jasper, Earl of Pembroke, was amongst the most tenacious and loyal Lancastrians. Edmund Tudor died in 1456 and Henry was born in early 1457. Jasper acted as Henry's guide and protector. For most of the next 20 years, Jasper and Henry were landless exiles, whose estates had been confiscated by Edward IV. Jasper intrigued actively in Wales, where the Tudor name was an advantage.

It would have been impossible for these exiles to have recovered the throne without foreign help. Throughout the 1470s, they depended on the protection of Duke Francis of Brittany. After the execution of Buckingham in 1483, Henry was the only claimant to the throne on the Lancastrian side who had royal blood, and he did have support in England. The Woodville family saw the marriage of Henry with Elizabeth of York (daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville) as their only means of recovering influence. A final link was Henry's mother, Margaret Beaufort. Her second husband Thomas, Lord Stanley, was probably aware that a conspiracy was being hatched. After his pledge to marry Elizabeth of York, Henry could present himself as the unifier of Lancaster and York.

The Duke of Brittany abandoned Henry in 1484 and he was forced to flee to France. France was in some disarray after the death of its king, Louis XI. Charles VIII was only 13 years old and his court was divided. But the French were aware that an invasion of England would preoccupy Richard III and prevent England intervening if there was an opportunity to seize Brittany.

French money enabled Henry to raise 4000 troops, only 400 of whom were English. On 7 August 1485, they landed at Milford Haven in the west of Wales.

As is often the case with decisive battles, it is by no means clear why Richard was defeated. His northern following largely supported him and, while it is true that many great aristocrats did not fight, it may simply be that they did not have time to get to Bosworth. The turning point at Bosworth was Richard's own death. It seems that he recklessly charged Henry and was killed as a result. Almost as important was the desertion of the Stanleys, whose influence in the North-west was vast and whose family links with Henry have been explained. The Percies also did not fight. This may have been because of the cramped battlefield, but might also suggest an element of disloyalty.

Richard's death robbed the country of an effective but cruel monarch. There were plots and pretenders to come, but the fortunes of the House of York were never to recover.

KEY ISSUE

Why did Richard III lose his throne?

9 ⇨ CONCLUSION: THE WARS OF THE ROSES

No-one would now suggest that the Wars of the Roses were marked by overwhelming violence and disorder. Revisionist historians have rightly drawn attention to the disappearance of town walls, the growing aristocratic practice of building houses rather than castles, the prosperity of the peasantry, and the outstanding quality of the churches of this period.

However, the degree of civil strife is not now seen as negligible. JR Lander estimated that there had been only 13 weeks of fighting in 32 years, but more recently AJ Pollard raised the figure to nearly two years (while conceding that continental wars were far more destructive).

Memories of that scale of conflict accounts for the very real fears, throughout the Tudor years, that if the new dynasty collapsed, England would once again face instability and civil war. No-one could foresee in 1485 that the Tudor dynasty would last more than a century, if only at times precariously, and would transform England, Wales and (more in failure than success) Ireland.

KEY ISSUE

Which was the greater cause of instability: 'over-mighty subjects' or 'under-mighty kings'?

10 ⇨ BIBLIOGRAPHY

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(*Recommended. **Highly recommended.)

11 STRUCTURED AND ESSAY QUESTIONS

A *Structured questions*

1. (a) How did the opposition to Henry VI turn into armed conflict?
(b) Why did it take so long to bring the Wars of the Roses to an end?
2. (a) How had Richard of Gloucester built up such a position of power in England that he was eventually able to seize the throne for himself?
(b) Does Richard III deserve his reputation as a tyrant?

B *Essay questions*

1. Is 'the Wars of the Roses' an appropriate term for the years 1455–71?
2. Account for the deposition of Henry VI in 1461.
3. How successfully did Edward IV re-invigorate royal authority during his reign?
4. 'His only real achievement was solvency.' Discuss this view of Edward IV.
5. Why was Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, so important?
6. Why did Richard III take the throne in 1483, and why did he lose it in 1485?

Advice – answering structured questions

Before beginning an answer to any question, read it several times and make sure you are clear what specifically it requires. In the first part of a structured question, there will usually be a particular emphasis on factual knowledge. However, you will not get much credit for simply writing down everything you know about the topic. You must make sure that what you write is *relevant* to the question and *well-*

organised rather than a blow by blow account. The later sections of a structured question are likely to require more *explanation* and *analysis*, where you need to avoid just telling the story and use your knowledge as evidence to back up your argument.

Example question:

- (a) How had Richard of Gloucester built up such a position of power in England that he was eventually able to seize the throne for himself?

This requires you to show your knowledge of Richard's career before he became king. The knowledge has to be relevant – showing how Richard built up his power base – and you must exclude irrelevant, incidental detail. Your answer needs to be well organised – divide Richard's career into stages – such as his take-over of the Earl of Warwick's estates, his presidency of the Council of the North, his becoming Protector – and avoid a year by year approach.

A bad start to your answer would be: 'Richard was born in 1452 ...'

A better start would be: 'Richard's first step towards becoming an "over-mighty subject" was when through marriage he acquired the vast land-holdings of the Earl of Warwick in the north of England ...'

- (b) Does Richard deserve his reputation as a tyrant?

This is the part of the question which requires more explanation and analysis. The question is not asking you just to tell the story of Richard's acts of cruelty. To pass a judgment on any historical character, you have to be sure you understand the terms being used and that you see both sides of the argument.

First think about what a tyrant is. It is a ruler who does not himself obey the law and who threatens the life and property of innocent subjects. In what ways did Richard III break the law or threaten innocent subjects?

To show both sides of the argument, write about any ways in which Richard brought benefits to his subjects as well as ways he may have harmed them.

Finally, consider where Richard's reputation comes from. How far is it just Tudor propaganda?

By breaking down the question in this way, you also have a clear *structure* for your answer.

