

John Dudley,
Duke of Northumberland:
Victim of Faction

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When Edward VI died in 1553, England was left without a ruler for the second time in a decade. His death, coupled with the inconsistent succession policies of Henry VIII, opened the door to confusion and political intrigue. Although the attempted political coup following Edward VI's death was a large conspiracy, John Dudley, a Privy Councillor, is perceived as the leader. His actions are often misconstrued as those of an ambitious individual, but his actions were not much different than those of his peers. For years, historians have unfairly portrayed him as evil, uncaring and self-centered; however Dudley's ultimate disgrace resulted not only from his own actions, but also from the betrayal of his fellow conspirators.

Before Henry VIII died, he left provisions for the establishment of a council to oversee the English government. After listing a number of men, including Edward Seymour, "Th'erle of Hertford great Chambrelain of Englande," Henry's will continued:

We will to be o'r executours and counsaillours of the priue Counsaill ut' our said sonne prince Eduuarde in all matters concerning both his private affayres and publicq' affayres of the Realme Willing and charging them and every of them as they must and shall aunswer at the day of Judgement truely and fully to see this my Last Will p'formed in all things wt' asmoch spede and diligence as may be and that noon of them presume to medle wt' any of our treas'r or to do any thing appoincted by our sayd will alone onles the moost part of the hole nombre of their coexecutours doo consent and by writting agree to the same

¹Great Britain, "Proceedings against Lady Jane Grey, and others, for Treason: I Mary, A.D. 1553," A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and other Crimes and Misdemeanors from the Earliest Period to the Year 1783, Ed. T. B. Howell, Vol. 1 (London: T. C. Hansard, 1816) 748-49.

Although no man in particular was given preference, John Dudley and Edward Seymour came to the forefront upon the decline of the Howards. "Before learning of Henry's death, the former Imperial ambassador [Eustace] Chapuys . . . observed that Hertford [Seymour] and Lisle [Dudley] would have the management of affairs, because, apart from the king's affection for them, and other reasons, there are no other nobles of a fit age and ability for the task."²

Although Seymour may have been fit for rule, his implementation of Henry VIII's will was inconsistent with its spirit. "In fact, the Seymourian Protectorate, as it was instituted, was a direct contradiction of Henry's will."³ With his new found power, Seymour awarded himself the title Duke of Somerset and gave the Viscount Lisle, John Dudley, the title Earl of Warwick, an action which upset many people, including Princess Mary. In a letter to the Privy Council written about 1551, she wrote:

It is no small greyf to me to perceyve that they whom the Kyngs Ma.^{te} my father (whose soule God pardon) made in thys worlde of nothyng in respecte of that they be comme to nowe, and at hys last ende put in truste to se hys Wyll performed, wherunto they were all sworne upon a boke: it gryeveth me I say, for the love I beare to them, to se both howe they breake his Wyll, and what usurped power they take upon theym, in making (as they call it) lawes both clean contrarye to hys procedyngs and Wyll, and also ageynst the coustome of all crystendome, and (in my conscyence) ageynst the lawe of God and hys

²Barret L. Beer, Northumberland: The Political Career of John Dudley, Earl of Warwick and Duke of Northumberland (Kent, Ohio: Kent State Press, 1973) 41.

³Daniel Patrick Brown, The Protectorate and the Northumberland Conspiracy: Political Intrigue in the Reign of Edward VI (Ventura, California: Golden West Historical Publications, 1981) 10.

Chyrche, whiche passeth all the reste.⁴

This letter reflects the turmoil and controversy which filled Edward Seymour's rule. Although well-versed in state affairs, he ruled ineffectively and autocratically, slowly alienating his fellow councilors who had chosen him to be Protectorate after a heated debate within Council:

We therefore, the archbishop and others whose names be hereunto subscribed, by our whole consent, concord, and agreement, upon mature consideration of the tenderness and proximity of blood between our sovereign lord that now is, and the said Earl of Hertford, by virtue of the authority given unto us by the said will and testament of our said late sovereign lord and master for the doing of any act or acts that may tend to the honor and surety of our sovereign lord that now is, or for the advancement of his affairs, have given unto him the chief place among us, and also the name and title of the Protector of all the realm and dominions of the king's majesty, and governor of his most royal person, with the advice and consent of the rest of the executors, in such manner, order and form as in the will of our late sovereign lord is appointed and prescribed, which the said Earl hath promised to perform accordingly.⁵

Despite this faith demonstrated by the council, Seymour desired complete control of England's affairs and his incompetence led to his ultimate destruction.

Adding to Seymour's difficulties was his brother, Thomas Seymour. After marrying the Queen Dowager Catherine Parr (a fact

⁴John Tudor, "The Princess Mary to . . . , one of the King's Council," 1551. Letter CLXIX, Original Letters Illustrative of English History, Ed. Henry Ellis, I series, Vol. II (London: Harding, Triphook, and Lepard, 1824) 161-162.

⁵James Anthony Froude, History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth, Vol. V (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1875) 19.

which offended Somerset according to Edward VI⁶), Thomas Seymour aspired to even greater heights than those attained by his brother. Attempting to gain control of the monarchy by a variety of plans, he managed to obtain the wardship of Jane Grey, fifth in line for the crown. With this pawn in his control, he attempted to arrange a marriage between her and Edward VI. Although this plan failed, Thomas Seymour was granted a place in the Council. While in this position, he conspired to overthrow his brother, the Protector. This action caused Somerset to commit him to the Tower and eventually execute him. Unfortunately for Somerset, his refusal to allow his brother a fair trial further exposed his inadequacies as a ruler.

By the year 1549, a coalition opposing Somerset began to form among some members of the Council. Among the men in this group was the Earl of Warwick, John Dudley. His decision to take action against his former ally may have been caused by the attempt made upon his own life by Catholic conspirators.⁷ Nevertheless, he and a number of other men, including Wriothesley (Earl of Southampton), the Earl of Arundel, Sir Edward Peckham (Wriothesley's brother-in-law), and Sir Richard Southwell collectively petitioned the king in 1549:

If the Duke of Somerset would at any tyme have hard our advises, if he would have hard reason, and knowledged himself a subject, our meanings was to have quietly

⁶W. K. Jordan, The Chronicle and Political Papers of King Edward VI. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966) 6.

⁷John Guy, Tudor England (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 212.

composed with him for redresse of all things without any disturbance of the realm; but knowing afterwards that the said Duke goeth about to reyse great forces and numbers of men, to sprede abrode slaunderous and untrue reaports of us moche contrary to our honors and reputations, we wer forced for the meting therwith, against our wills t'assemble, lyke as it greveth us to see what daunger and perill may ensue to th'ole Realme thorough division amongs ourselves, we have lykewise thought good to signifie unto you that if the said Duke will, as becometh a good subject absent himself from his Majestie, be contented to be ordred according to Justice and reason, and disperse that force which is levied by him, we will gladly comen with you touching the suertie of his Majestie's person, and order of all other things, wherin we nothing doubt, whatsoever hath byn otherwise untruely reaported, you shall fynde us bothe conformable and redy to do as becommeth good subjects and true counsellors; nothing doubting to fynd the like conformitie also on your behalfe.⁸

When Warwick was sent North to help put down Kett's Rebellion, the opportunity to remove successfully Somerset improved. After Warwick subdued the rebels and demanded "no more than that the defeated rebels be good plowmen and harrow their own lands,"⁹ he was left in control of the only standing army in England enabling him to dictate the desires of the coalition.

When Warwick returned to London as victor, he also returned to a groundswell of support. In early October 1551, Somerset, realizing the opposition he was facing, took the king to Hampton Court and set up court without the Privy Council. In the weeks which followed, the two groups corresponded in hopes of reconciling

⁸R. Rye, et al, "Divers Lords . . . from the Protectorship," 1549, CLXXII, Original Letters Illustrative of English History, Ed. Henry Ellis, I series, Vol. II (London: Harding, Triphook, and Lepard, 1824) 167-168.

⁹Beer, Northumberland: The Political Career of John Dudley 84.

the government; yet, as time passed, Somerset's support dwindled, he was removed from Windsor, and he was inevitably committed to the Tower.

Dudley, the apparent leader because of his military successes in the North, is often perceived as the man who plotted and spearheaded the plot against Somerset. This interpretation has enabled historians to blame Dudley for all of England's political problems which thereafter developed. In point of reference, however, the Dudley faction collectively moved against Somerset; Dudley and Somerset's deteriorating personal relations were a recent development. A letter written by Somerset to Warwick on October 8 states:

My Lord, I cannot persuade myself that there is any ill conceived in your heart as of yourself against me; for that the same seemeth impossible that where there hath been from your youth and mine so great a friendship and amity betwixt us, as never for my part to no man was greater, now so suddenly there should be hatred; and that without just cause, whatsoever rumours and bruits, or persuasion of others have moved you to conceive; in the sight and judgment of almighty God, I protest and affirm this unto you, I never meant worse to you than to myself; wherefore my lord, for God's sake, for friendship, for the love that hath ever been betwixt us or that hereafter may be, persuade yourself with truth, and let this time declare to me and the world your just honor and perseverance in friendship, the which God be my witness, who seeth all hearts, was never diminished, nor ever shall be whilst I live¹⁰

Despite this past friendship, Dudley and associates took control of the Council and pondered Somerset's fate.

With Somerset safely committed to the Tower, the Privy Council

¹⁰Rees, Northumberland: The Political Career of John Dudley 90.

accused Somerset of various counts of dictatorial actions, abuses of the treasury, conspiracies with the lower class "rebels," and traitorous offenses against the Council.¹¹ Somerset, in response, submitted two letters to the Council admitting his guilt and asking for forgiveness. He was subsequently released from the Tower on February 6, 1552. Upon release, his mobility was severely limited, but after behaving commendably, he was readmitted to the Council.

Within the Council, Somerset was not content to let Warwick run the country and attempted to distract Warwick from governmental affairs. By wisely refusing to deal with Somerset outside of the governmental ranks, Warwick kept the country from being torn in two by a potentially devastating political war.

In desperation Somerset formulated a plot to kill Dudley and other leaders during a dinner; however, Sir Thomas Palmer exposed the plot, and Dudley's faction charged Somerset with treason. During the court proceedings, Palmer retold the tale of Somerset's plans to kill Dudley. The validity of this confession has been debated, and hopefully Dale Hoak's forthcoming book will make clarifications; yet, documentation is in existence which refers to its validity. For instance, Edward VI writes about this plan in his chronicle in an entry dated October 7, 1551:

Whereupon in my Lord's garden he [Sir Thomas Palmer] declared a conspiracy. How at St. George's Day last, my

¹¹Great Britain, "Proceedings in Parliament against Edward, Lord of Somerset, Lord Protector, for Misdemeanours and High Treason: 3 Edward VI, A. D. 1550," A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and other Crimes and Misdemeanors from the Earliest Period to the Year 1783, Ed. T. B. Howell, Vol. 1 (London: T. C. Hansard, 1816) 509-512.

Lord Somerset . . . went to raise the people, and the Lord Grey before, to know who were his friends. Afterward a device was made to call the Earl of Warwick to a banquet with the Marquis of Northampton and divers other[s] and to cut off their heads. Also, if he found a bare company about them by the way, to set upon them.¹²

The validity of Palmer's testimony is debatable because of the inferences which can be made. One of the most questionable situations involves Sir Berteville. This man was imprisoned after being disclosed as the assassin Somerset hired. Edward VI refers to him on December 3, 1551, "The Duke [Somerset] told certain Lords that were on the Tower that he had hired Berteville to kill them, which thing Berteville, examined on, confessed, and so did Hammond, that he knew of it."¹³ Strangely, this confession was never used in the trial. In fact, the Council later released Berteville, paid off some of his debts, and provided him with living quarters.¹⁴

Despite the questionable validity of Palmer's disclosure, it was the motivating force behind Somerset's conviction for felony (he was acquitted of the charges of high treason) and eventual beheading on January 22, 1552. Unpopular among his peers, Somerset still retained great favor with the people. After the verdict was read, he was lead from the chamber with the axe turned against him, which lead the people outside to believe that Somerset had been

¹²Jordan, The Chronicle and Political Papers of King Edward VI 97.

¹³Jordan, The Chronicle and Political Papers of King Edward VI 100.

¹⁴Jordan, The Chronicle and Political Papers of King Edward VI 100.

acquitted. "The people, knowing not the matter, shouted half a dozen times so loud that from the hall door it was heard at Charing Cross plainly, and rumors went that he was quit of all."¹⁵ This man's popularity among the citizenry helped sway opinion against the man commonly believed to be responsible for his deposition. Thus, John Dudley took control of a vacillating, hostile, and tortured country.

During the 1550's, England was plagued by problems which first emerged during Henry VIII's reign; yet, Dudley, fighting popular hostilities, admirably combatted these difficulties. Barrett Beer summarized Dudley's political accomplishments in his article "Northumberland: The Myth of the Wicked Duke and the Historical John Dudley":

The Northumberland regime concluded a realistic treaty with France and maintained law and order after the rebellions of 1549. Protestant leaders such as John Hooper praised Northumberland's support of religious reform, and generations of Puritans fondly remember the reign of Edward as an era when a godly king encouraged right-minded clergy to purge the Church of superstition. Joan Simon has recently emphasized the educational reforms of the period and argued that compared with Edward's reign 'that of Elizabeth falls into place as a predominately conservative age.' After the rebellions, common-sense required social policies that would not alienate the gentry. Nevertheless the Northumberland government permitted Parliament to repeal the savage Vagrancy Act of 1547, a measure permitting enslavement. Parliament also passed agrarian statutes in 1550 and 1552 that maintained tillage and helped homeless cottagers find accommodation in the countryside. The legislation was 'hardly forceful enough' according to Joan Thirsk, but it at least made a show of defending the poor against the powerful.' Perhaps the most significant achievement of the government was the restoration of the

¹⁵Jordan, The Chronicle and Political Papers of King Edward VI 99-100.

coinage,¹⁶ a necessary but unpopular measure of financial reform.

Unfortunately, these many accomplishments are overshadowed by the disgrace which later befell Dudley, a man who seemingly appeared from nowhere to attempt to save England from self-destruction.

John Dudley was probably born in 1504, the son of Edmund Dudley, Henry VII's minister convicted of embezzlement under Henry VIII and beheaded. After his father's execution, the family lost all of their wealth. In order to retain their social position, Dudley's mother married Arthur Plantagenet, a bastard son of the Yorkist King Edward IV. When he grew older, Dudley was placed in the wardship of Sir Edward Guildford, a situation which allowed the young boy to be reared in knightly fashion. Although Philip Lindsay claims in his book, The Queenmaker, that Edmund Dudley's ignoble death was not disgraceful, but rather an event about which to brag,¹⁷ the attempt to defend the family name is evident in many of Dudley's later actions and made possible by Guildford's ability to reintroduce Dudley to the stability and prestige which was brutally destroyed in his early childhood.

Following his father's lead, Dudley became a lawyer. Obsessed with success and determined to recover the extensive Dudley fortune, he was able to wrest control of Dudley Castle from his cousin, John de Sutton, Lord Dudley. Though his actions were not

¹⁶Barret L. Beer, "Northumberland: The Myth of the Wicked Duke and the Historical John Dudley," Albion 11 (1979): 13.

¹⁷Philip Lindsay, The Queenmaker (London: Williams and Norgate, Ltd., 1951) 27.

always the most scrupulous, Dudley's property disputes paralleled those of other members within his class and can not be considered unusual. John Dudley's greatest opportunities, however, resulted from his military prowess. "The most important achievement of Dudley's early career was to build for himself a military reputation that endured untarnished until the debacle of 1553."¹⁸ His military successes during the Duke of Suffolk's French campaigns enabled him to receive a knighthood in 1523. Receiving knighthood for similar feats was Edward Seymour, a man who would become one of Dudley's close associates; in fact, these two men would conspire together to deprive Plantagenet of about 60 pounds annual income.¹⁹ By 1542, Dudley was again elevated and made Viscount Lisle, redeeming the family name and giving it new social importance; Edmund Dudley had never even been knighted.

Eventually appointed Lord High Admiral, Dudley entered the Privy Council on April 23, 1543 and was elected to the Order of Garter by a unanimous vote.²⁰ Thus, Dudley appears to have had few enemies and, in fact, was believed to be quite humble and modest. In his correspondences from the Borders, he "declared himself most 'unmeet and unworthy,' but pledged to do his utmost to serve the King."²¹ This modesty, however, did not mean that Dudley was devoid

¹⁸Beer, Northumberland: The Political Career of John Dudley 9.

¹⁹Beer, Northumberland: The Political Career of John Dudley 8.

²⁰Beer, Northumberland: The Political Career of John Dudley 19.

²¹Beer, Northumberland: The Political Career of John Dudley 17.

of a violent temper; he was suspended from Parliament in 1546 for striking Gardiner in the Privy Council.²²

Dudley's primary responsibilities during his early political career involved military and diplomatic duties. This political experience later benefited him when he participated in the parliaments of Edward VI's reign. Dudley, fighting off a recurring illness, was not an active or influential participant in the parliaments of 1547-48. After this absence, however, his participation increased greatly, culminating in his becoming Duke of Northumberland and controlling the Protectorate.

As the essential ruler under Edward VI, Northumberland "acquired a reputation for harshness, but in fact there was no sharp reversal of the government's social policies and enclosure was still officially frowned upon."²³ He did have total control of the government; "the difference was that he managed the bureaucracy on the pretence that Edward had assumed full sovereignty whereas Somerset had asserted the right to near-sovereignty as Protector."²⁴ As ruler of England, Northumberland managed to make some important accomplishments. For instance, he enabled a country which was suffering from steep inflation to undergo a financial recovery. Ironically, Northumberland's extreme actions to cut expenditures led to the dissolving of his own gendarmes, a move which

²²Guy 197.

²³Roger Lockyer, Tudor and Stuart Britain, 1471-1714, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1985) 95.

²⁴Guy 215.

contributed to this losing control of the country.

When dealing with religious matters, John Dudley supported Protestantism. Yet despite all of his efforts, Northumberland was not a deeply committed man. He chose his religion to fit the situation:

Warwick stood 'neither on the one side nor on the other' in religion; his *credo* was obedience to the supreme head's will. He apparently accepted the idea of Mary's regency if she would support Somerset's overthrow - he was thus prepared to dissemble in religion until Edward's minority ended - but, when she refused to implicate herself, he turned to Cranmer,²⁵ whose influence over Edward gave him power at Court.

With Mary's opposition, Northumberland realized that his power would last only as long as Edward VI was ruler.

Edward VI, only nine years old at the beginning of his reign, was well-educated. Deeply influenced by the Protestantism of his stepmother Catherine Parr, Edward VI was never given the opportunity to grow close to his sisters; they rarely saw one another. Thus, the governmental decisions made during his life were influenced by the men surrounding him. Ironically, the death of Somerset, his uncle with whom many believed him to be close, did not seem to bother the boy; his journal contains only a brief reference to his death on January 22, 1552: "The Duke of Somerset had his head cut off upon Tower Hill between eight and nine o'clock in the morning."²⁶ After this death, Northumberland replaced the

²⁵Guy 212.

²⁶Jordan, The Chronicle and Political Papers of King Edward VI 107.

Protector's position of importance in the boy's life and encouraged Edward VI to attend Privy Council meetings. Near the end of his reign, this experience enabled Edward VI to begin asserting his own opinion about political matters.

Although Edward VI showed promise of becoming a great ruler, many Privy Councillors realized that this sickly boy would never reach the age of majority and began worrying about Mary's succession to the throne. Although Henry VIII had declared her second in line for ascension, Edward VI did not want his Catholic sister to gain control of England; thus, the boy drew up a device which would effectively keep Mary and Elizabeth from the throne.

In the past, the accepted belief was the Northumberland influenced the boy into this action; contemporary historians, such as G. R. Elton and W. K. Jordan, are no longer as accepting of this interpretation. They suggest that Edward may have forced Northumberland into compliance.²⁷ Formerly, historians asserted that Northumberland's attempted takeover was the culmination of a long-planned scheme. After the fall of Somerset, Northumberland was rumored to have attempted a marriage between his youngest son, Guildford, and Margaret Clifford, granddaughter of Henry VIII's second son, Mary, and seventh in line for the crown, in order to gain control of the throne.²⁸ The truth behind these allegations is

²⁷G. R. Elton, Reform and Reformation: England 1509-1558 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977) 371.

²⁸G. T. Bindoff, "A Kingdom at Stake, 1553," History Today, III (1953): 344.

questionable; however, the practice of bettering a family's position through marriage was not uncommon and can not be used as concrete evidence of a conspiracy. Ultimately, Northumberland married his son to Lady Jane Grey, also the granddaughter of Henry VIII's sister, on May 21, 1553, a match which appeared equally beneficial for both families: Guildford was the son of one of the most powerful men in England and Jane, the daughter of the Duke of Suffolk, had royal blood in her veins.

Lady Jane Grey "is unusual in that artists and imaginative writers have played such a significant part in her reconstruction, or one might say more accurately, her apotheosis."²⁹ She is one of the most misunderstood characters in English history since little proof exists to give historians an accurate picture of her. The existing evidence suggest that Guildford and Jane did not enjoy one another's company. Despite the mutual dislike between the two, they would play a huge part in the ambitious plans of John Dudley and his contemporaries; according to a letter from John Bannister to Jehan Scheyfue, "just one week after his son's marriage to Jane Grey, Northumberland sought and received the unanimous verdict of the King's doctors that Edward could not live beyond the autumn."³⁰

The knowledge of Edward VI's impending death forced Northumberland to act quickly. Although Edward VI only desired to exclude Mary from the succession, the justification for her removal

²⁹Frank Prochaska, "The Many Faces of Lady Jane Grey," History Today, 35(November 1985): 35.

³⁰Bindoff 647.

could most easily be supported if Elizabeth was also eliminated. In order to effectively nullify the Succession Act of 1544, which declared the succession order to be Edward, Mary, and Elizabeth respectively, Edward VI referred to the earlier legislation which lawfully divorced Henry VII from the princess's mother by stating:

As is aforesaid to the said Lady Mary and Lady Elizabeth being illegitimate and not lawfully begotten
Whereby as well the said Lady Mary as also the said Lady Elizabeth to all intents and purposes are and be clearly disabled to ask, claim, or challenge the said imperial crown . . . as heir or heirs or us to any other person or persons whosoever.³¹

The first draft of the device excluded all women rulers, declaring that only male rulers could succeed; yet, the document was changed to read "the Lady Jane and her Heir's male."³² Edward's initiation of this change was made, and the words, "and her," had a drastic impact upon the next few months.

Edward VI's death, July 6, enabled Northumberland and colleagues to put their plan into action. Unfortunately, they hesitated too long before acting. Although Edward VI's death was effectively hidden from the public, Mary was informed of the death and the impending actions by a messenger. The identity of the man who sent the messenger is greatly debated; however, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, a favorite of Edward VI, claims the credit in his biography:

Mourning, from Greenwich I didd strayt departe
To London, to an house which bore our name.

³¹Mortimer Levine, Tudor Dynastic Problems: 1460-1571 (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1973) 167.

³²Bindoff 642 and Levine 168.

My brotheren guessed by my heavie hearte
 The King was dead, and I confess'd the same:
 The hushing of his death I didd unfolde,
 Their meaninge to proclaime queene Jane I tolde.

And, though I lik'd not the religion
 Which all her life queene Marye hadd profest,
 Yett in my mind that wicked motion
 Right heires for to displace I did detest.
 Causeless to proffer any injurie,
 I meant it not, but sought for remedie.

Wherefore from four of us the newes was sent,
 How that her brother hee was dead and gone;
 In post her goldsmith then from London went,
 By whome the message was dispatcht anon.
 Shee asked, 'If wee knewe it certainlie?'
 Whoe said, 'Sir Nicholas knew it verilie.'

The author bred the errand's greate mistrust;
 Shee fear'd a traine to leade her to a trapp.
 Shee saide, 'If Robert [Sir Robert Throckmorton] had beene
 there shee durst
 Have gag'd her life, and hazarded the happ.'
 Her letters made, shee knewe not what to doe:
 Shee sent them oute, butt nott subscrib'd thereto.³³

After reception of this message, Mary immediately fled north to Kenninghall in Norfolk and gathered forces at Framlingham Castle. Thus, when Northumberland sent his son to her Hertfordshire home the night of Edward VI's death, she was gone. Despite Mary's claim to the throne in a letter to Jane's councillors on July 9, 1553³⁴; Jane was proclaimed queen in London the next day. Two days later, Mary was proclaimed queen at Framlingham.

³³John Gough Nichols, Esq., ed, The Chronicle of Queen Jane and of Two Years of Queen Mary, and Especially of the Rebellion of Sir Thomas Wyatt, Camden Society #48 (London: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1864): 2.

³⁴Robert Tittler and Susan Battley, "The Local Community and the Crown in 1553: the Accession of Mary Tudor Revisited," Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, 57 (1984): 131.

The proclamation of Queen Jane, although viewed by some as treasonous, disclosed many of the fears and concerns prevalent in sixteenth-century English society. The justification dated back to Henry VIII's will: "Whoever reads the latter part of the life of Henry The Eighth, will soon be convinced, that he left the succession of the crown so disputable, that it could only be owing to the hand of Providence, that the nation had not, for ever after, been distracted with contrary claims."³⁵ By allowing divorce's legalization and ignoring the Stuart claimants who descended from his sister Margaret, Henry VIII confused the dynastic issue beyond simple reconciliation.

Queen Jane's contemporaries also feared the intrusion of foreigners and Catholicism onto their court:

If the said Lady Mary, or Lady Elizabeth, should hereafter have, and enjoy the said imperial crown of this realm, and should then happen to marry a stranger, born out of this realm, that then the same stranger, having the government and imperial crown in his hands, would adhere and practise, not only to bring this noble free realm into the tyranny and servitude of the bishop of Rome, but also to have the laws and customs of his or their own native country or countries to be practised, and put in use within this realm, rather than the laws, statutes, and customs here of long time used.³⁶

These fears are common throughout English history; they reappear time and again. Consequently, this document reflects the

³⁵Great Britain, "The Instrument by which Queen Jane was proclaimed Queen of England, & c. setting forth the Reasons of her Claim, and her Right to the Crown," The Somers' Collection of Tracts, Ed. Walter Scott, Esq., Vol. 1 (London: T. Cadella and W. Davies, 1839) 50.

³⁶Great Britain, "The Instrument by which Queen Jane was proclaimed Queen of England" 54.

collective fears of the nobles, and not the Machiavellian desires of one man. Northumberland may have been the center of this contrivance, but he did not stand alone.

In order to capture the fleeing Mary, the Duke gathered an army for her apprehension. He wanted Henry Grey, Jane's father, to captain the army, but in accordance with Jane's wishes, he captained the army himself. Northumberland's sense of uneasiness among his compatriots was reflected when he spoke to them all before leaving London:

My lordes, I and theis other noble personages, and the hole army, that nowe go furthe, aswell for the behalfe of you and yours as for the establishing of the quenes highnes, shall not onely aduenter our bodyes and liues amongst the bludy strokes and cruell assaltes of our aduersaryes in the open felde, but also we do leave the conservacion of our selues, children, and famellies at home here with you, as altogether comytted to your truths and fydellyties, whom if we thought you wolde through malice, conspiracie, or discentyon leave us your frendes in the breers and betray us, we coulde aswell sondery waies foresee and provide for our owne sauegardes as any of you by betraying us can do for youres. But now upon the onely truste and faythefullnes of your honnours, wherof we thincke ourselves moste assured, we do hassarde and jubarde our liues, which trust and promise yf ye shall violate, hoping therby of life and promotyon . . . I have not spoken to you on this sorte upon any distrust I have of your truthes, of the which allwaies I have ever hitherto conceaved a trusty confidence; but I have put you in remembrance therof, what chaunce of variaunce soever might growe emongest you in myne absence; and this I praye you, wishe me no worse good speede in this journey then ye wolde have to yourselves.³⁷

Unfortunately for Dudley, when he left London his base of power toppled.

With John Dudley gone from the city, the men lost their

³⁷Nichols 6-7.

courage and fell prey to their doubts and worries. As he moved northward, the news of Mary's growing strength and support must have reached and surprised him. Although much of the nobility was concerned with religious and personal issues rather than dynastic, the masses were not. Also, many people did not believe that Mary would attempt to eradicate Protestantism from the land; rather, they believed she would rule with toleration. Thus, her strength continued to grow, and on July 20, Northumberland quietly surrendered in Cambridge and proclaimed Mary queen. By August 3, when Mary triumphantly returned to the city, Dudley was in the Tower.

Northumberland's debacle proved to be a catastrophe for the high-ranking nobles. Attempting to save their own reputations and lives, Northumberland became the scapegoat. By no means innocent, he was neither the sole conspirator. "The myth of the wicked duke was reinforced by Northumberland's former associates who heaped abuse on him to protect themselves."³⁸ This allegiance change is most apparent in a letter to Mary from the Council which had formerly denounced her as a bastard:

Our bounden duties most humbly remembred to your excellent Majestie, it may lyk the same to understande thatt wee your most humble faythfull and obedient subjectes, having allways (God wee take to wytnes) remainyd your Highnes true and humble subjectes in our hartes ever sythens the death of our late Souveraigne lorde and master your Highnes brother, whom God pardon; and seeing hitherto no possibilitie to utter our determination herein, without greatt destruction and bludshedde bothe of our selves and others till this tyme, have this day proclaymed in your Citey of London, your

³⁸Beer, "Northumberland: The Myth of the Wicked Duke" 2.

Majestie to bee our true naturall Soueraigne liege Ladie, and Queen, most humbly beseching you Majestie to pardon and remitt our former infirmites, and most graciously to accept our meaninges, which have byn ever to serve your Highnes truely, and so shall remayn with all our powers, and forces to th'effusion of our bludd³⁹

Because Dudley became the scapegoat, extracting the truth about his character and rule is very difficult.

As ruler, Mary had little choice but to execute John Dudley. Attempting to save his own life, he declared his loyalty to Catholicism. This futile attempt encouraged hatred from Protestants and Catholics alike. This hatred also influences the way in which Northumberland has been interpreted and related in historical and narrative studies. Despite the theatrics, Northumberland was executed on August 22, 1553, almost 43 years to the day of his father's execution. Five short months later, Lady Jane and Guildford followed Northumberland to their deaths.

Thus, when studying this time period, historians must consider the personal motives not only of Dudley, but also those of his contemporaries. The nobility of the fifteenth century depended upon the graces of the monarch for power and money and acted in accordance with the monarch's desires. Because Edward VI and Mary differed so greatly about religious issues, the nobility realized that their popularity with the two monarchs would be inversely proportionate. In order to be a good subject under Edward, a

³⁹Lords of Council, "The Lords of the Council to Queen Mary, announcing their Proclamation of her Title," 1553, Letter CXLVIII, Original Letters Illustrative of English History, Ed. Sir Henry Ellis, I series, Vol. II (London: Harding, Triphook, and Lepard, 1824) 243.

person had to espouse the fundamentals of Protestantism; however, under Mary, this opinion would be treasonous. After realizing the two options faced by the nobility, continued graces under Protestantism or persecution under Catholicism, the historian should not be surprised that factionalism thrived, and the madcap scheme of 1553 came to be. Dudley, by holding together this faction as long as he did, proved his adeptness as leader; unfortunately, his faction lacked a second leader of equal aptitude to command when he left to retrieve Mary, and the group fell apart. Dudley's fault was not his lack of leadership abilities, if so this plan would never have begun; his problem was that he was a competent organizer, which enabled the scheme to transpire.

Current approaches to the Mid-Tudor period stress the importance of the standing institutions (i.e. the Council) and ideology (i.e. religious beliefs) while rarely attempting to relate the two. By creating distinctions between the Council and subjects or Protestants and Catholics, historians establish a prejudice which did not exist. Yet, when researching this period, the crossing of institutional or ideological lines for a common purpose can be observed. Thus, John Dudley's leadership did not develop solely through institutional or ideological means, rather his role was encouraged by the constantly changing factions which existed throughout the upper echelon. Normally, these factions were small and unobtrusive; however, with the proper leader and balance, a faction could become a powerful political machine. Consequently, John Dudley's personality, like that of Henry VII, enabled him to

coagulate a volatile group of men into an organized political body; unfortunately for him, he was not able to sustain the balance which Henry VII achieved.

Eustace Chapuys once commented that the English were "so changeable and inconsistent that they vary, I will not say from year to year, but every moment."⁴⁰ Never was this observation so true as the year 1553. England began the year contentedly with a Protestant monarch and ended under the holds of a Catholic. By approaching the Mid-Tudor period from a factional point of view, which incorporates both the institutional and ideological approaches commonly used, these changes can be attributed to the instability of these groups. Without the proper chemistry, these volatile groups lack the structure which prohibits their options, beliefs, and plans from fluctuating. Thus, John Dudley can not be blamed solely for the attempted political coup, but neither can he be exonerated. He was the stabilizing influence upon his faction, and in his absence the carefully constructed balance was destroyed. Likewise, Edward Seymour led a faction; however, his faction never achieved the balance which would have enabled him the freedom to exercise his desire. Ironically, Northumberland's final destination was to be next to Somerset in the Royal Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula in the Tower of London; together they lie between Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard, fellow victims of English factionalism.

⁴⁰Beer, Northumberland: The Political Career of John Dudley 41-42.

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