

# PLOTS & REVOLTS AT HOME

1569-1588





# SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM'S FAME



- Walsingham became Elizabeth's Secretary of State in 1573
- He created a spy network both in England and abroad and played a crucial role in uncovering the plots against Elizabeth
- He had spies in every county and major town turning ordinary people to spy on their neighbours for money
- By 1580, he had agents in 12 towns in France, 9 in Germany, 4 in Spain, 3 in Italy
- He mastered writing in code (ciphering)
- He also used captured Catholic priests to inform
- He didn't use torture where possible believing it would make people sympathetic to the "criminal"

Describe the key features of Walsingham's spy network

4marks





### Intercepting coded letters and messages

The plotters developed increasingly sophisticated ways of communicating; some of Mary's letters were smuggled out in the heels of her ladies' shoes. Elizabeth's government kept on top of this, often by placing informers in suspects' households. Walsingham employed a man skilled at re-sealing letters so the plotters did not know they had been intercepted, and a leading code breaker who deciphered Mary's letters.



### Searches and registers

Town councils were authorised to search foreigners' houses. The owners of taverns and inns had to report any foreigners staying with them. Customs officials also stopped and questioned travellers from overseas and could search them for papers, including messages and letters.

### Using informers in England

The Lord Lieutenants of each county and the bishops officially reported any threats to Walsingham and everyone was encouraged to report suspicions of dangers to the Queen.

### Employing a network of spies and agents

Agents with codenames were based overseas in major towns and cities, including France, Italy and Spain. Some were double agents, taking parts in plots against Elizabeth and sending information to Walsingham. Spies were deployed to root out information as events arose.

Francis Walsingham started his long career in government as an MP, and then worked for Sir William Cecil from 1568. He took over Cecil's framework of agents and reorganised it into an effective spy network. Walsingham was a ruthless and driven man, a workaholic in today's terms, who ran his spy network on top of his business as Secretary of State.

### Interrogation and torture

Captured priests, such as Edmund Campion, and plotters like Francis Throckmorton, were tortured on the rack to extract information about their intentions and other threats to Elizabeth. Then they were executed as a warning.

### Acts of Parliament

Walsingham was influential in Parliament, which passed Acts throughout the 1570s and 1580s, increasing penalties against Catholics, including the execution of priests. The 1584 Bond of Association pledged that in the event of Elizabeth's life being threatened, Mary, Queen of Scots was to be executed.

### Capturing Catholic priests and recusants

After the Pope excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570, her government believed Elizabeth's life was in danger from Catholic fanatics. From 1574, the Pope started sending missionary priests to England. Walsingham's spies were particularly effective at seizing priests on the streets of London, with one Jesuit complaining: 'the spies so many and diligent as every hour almost we heard of some (priests) taken'.



**Describe the key features of Walsingham's spy network 4marks**

One feature of Walsingham's spy network was...

A second feature of Walsingham's spy network was...



- **Fill in your info box on the following plots.**

Name & Date:

Aims:

The plan:

Key people:

Key events:

Foreign support?:



# PLOT 2: RIDOLFI PLOT 1571

- Roberto Ridolfi was a spy for the pope, living in England
- **AIMS:**
  - Murder Elizabeth I
  - Launch a Spanish invasion
  - Put Mary Queen of Scots on the throne of England
  - Again, marry Duke of Norfolk to Mary
- Ridolfi left England to meet with the pope, Philip II and Alva with a letter from Norfolk saying he would lead the rebellion if Philip would support it. Philip agreed to send 10,000 men!
- Cecil & Walsingham uncovered the coded plot and proved that Norfolk was guilty again of treason
- Parliament was called in 1572, it demanded that Norfolk and Mary be executed, Elizabeth signed Norfolk's death warrant, but again refused to sign Mary's.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Elizabeth R".

# Assess the danger of the Ridolfi Plot on your sheet...

Were the leaders effective, powerful and dynamic?		Did they have a clear and realistic plan?		Was there a lot of support from the English people?		Was there strong foreign support?		Did the Queen make any mistakes in dealing with it	
Not a real threat	Possible / slight	Significant Threat		Not a real threat	Possible / slight	Significant Threat		Not a real threat	Possible / slight





# HOW SIGNIFICANT WAS RIDOLFI PLOT?

- Coming so soon after the 1570 Papal Bull excommunicating Elizabeth, it reinforced the threat posed to Elizabeth from all Catholic sides
- It also reminded Elizabeth of the threat from Spain, as well as adding to the tension already building with the persecution of the Protestants in the Netherlands.
- It led to Elizabeth trying to improve relations with France as a buffer to Spain's threat.
- Pressure was put on Elizabeth to be harsher to Catholics in England, but a French massacre of Protestants in 1572 led to fear of a similar Catholic attack in England

What is the danger level of the Ridolfi Plot? 1-5

Explain (in your books) your reasoning for the level you have given





# POPE GREGORY XIII

The pope smuggled priests into England from 1574 to try and strengthen the Catholic resistance to Protestantism.

They stayed with Noble Catholic families. This was dangerous and Elizabeth began keeping these Nobles under surveillance



**Government agents, under Walsingham (Elizabeth's spymaster) began raiding Catholic homes, any priests discovered risked being hanged, drawn and quartered. Priests hid in 'Priest holes' well hidden in these homes.**

## Source B

A raid on a Catholic house in Northamptonshire, described by a Catholic priest, John Gerard, who was staying there. He managed to hide in the priest hole without being caught.

*There they were, straining and shouting to get through and search the house, yet they halted in an unlocked room just long enough to allow us to reach the hiding-place and shut ourselves safely in. Then they... burst into the lady's apartment while others raged round the remaining rooms.*



'Priest hole' in Oxburgh Hall





## HOW DID ELIZABETH RESPOND TO RISING DANGERS...

- In 1581, Parliament passed **2** laws against Catholics...
  - **Recusants would now be fined £20 – bankrupting most families**
  - **Attempting to convert people to Catholicism was now treason**

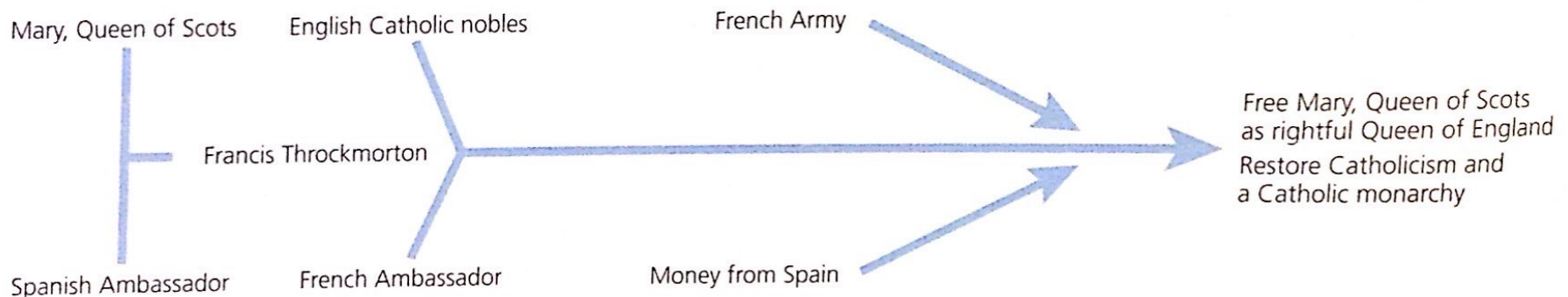
What do these laws, added to the priest raids, suggest about Elizabeth's state of mind? Or do you think these responses were still quite weak?



# PLOT 3: THROCKMORTON PLOT 1583

- Francis Throckmorton, a young Englishman planned for
  - The French Duke of Guise, Mary's cousin, to invade England
  - Overthrow Elizabeth
  - Restore Catholicism
- Philip II would provide financial support
- The Pope also knew about the plot, and approved!
- Walsingham again, uncovered the plot, finding papers in Throckmorton's house. Mary's involvement was never proven
- Throckmorton was tortured and executed in 1584

The plotters and their aims



- **Fill in your info box on the following plots.**

Name & Date:

Aims:

The plan:

Key people:

Key events:

Foreign support?:





# HOW SIGNIFICANT WAS THROCKMORTON?



- Again, it emphasised the threat from abroad
- Dutch leader William of Orange was executed, adding to Elizabeth's fears
- It also showed the potential threat if France & Spain joined forces
- Throckmorton's papers included a list of Catholic sympathisers suggesting that the government's fears of a 'threat within' was true and real
- Life became very hard for Catholics, they were treated with great suspicion. Many fled, 11,000 were imprisoned in the Tower, or kept under house arrest
- Concrete evidence against Mary was now priority
- Another law passed in Parliament in 1585 said
  - Helping or sheltering Catholic priests would be punishable with death

What is the danger level of the Throckmorton Plot (1-5)

Explain (in your books) your reasoning for the level you have given





# PLOT 4: BABINGTON PLOT 1586

- Anthony Babington was an English Catholic with links to France
- **The plot:**
  - Murder Elizabeth I
  - Encouraged English Catholics to rebel
  - Again, Duke of Guise would invade with 60,000 troops putting Mary on the throne
  - Philip II & The Pope supported this plot
- Babington wrote to Mary about the plot, but she was very closely watched by 1586, her letters were intercepted by Walsingham's team from the beer barrels they were hidden in, and the codes had been cracked.
- Walsingham arrested 6 Catholics including Babington, who were all executed
- This time, Mary was tried by the Privy Council as there had been too many plots in her name!



Assess the danger of the Throckmorton Plot on your sheet...

Were the leaders effective, powerful and dynamic?	Did they have a clear and realistic plan?	Was there a lot of support from the English people?	Was there strong foreign support?	Did the Queen make any mistakes in dealing with it
---	---	---	-----------------------------------	--

Not a real threat	Possible / slight	Significant Threat	

Not a real threat	Possible / slight	Significant Threat	

Not a real threat	Possible / slight	Significant Threat	

Not a real threat	Possible / slight	Significant Threat	

Not a real threat	Possible / slight	Significant Threat	



# HOW SIGNIFICANT WAS BABINGTON?

- This was especially significant as by 1585, relations between England and Spain had totally broken down and the English were supporting the Protestants in The Netherlands, as a result, Spain's support of it really could lead to success
- England was fully at war with Spain
- Elizabeth's government were now determined to crush Catholicism
- 300 recusants were arrested in North London alone, 31 priests were executed
- Mary would be executed as a result of this plot and thus, the end of a Catholic monarch replacing Elizabeth
- Last straw perhaps in leading to the Spanish Armada

What is the danger level of the Babington (1-5)

Explain (in your books) your reasoning for the level you have given



- **Fill in your info box on the following plots.**

Name & Date:

Aims:

The plan:

Key people:

Key events:

Foreign support?:



Assess the danger of the Throckmorton Plot on your sheet...

Were the leaders effective, powerful and dynamic?	Did they have a clear and realistic plan?	Was there a lot of support from the English people?	Was there strong foreign support?	Did the Queen make any mistakes in dealing with it
---	---	---	-----------------------------------	--

Not a real threat	Possible / slight	Significant Threat	

Not a real threat	Possible / slight	Significant Threat	

Not a real threat	Possible / slight	Significant Threat	

Not a real threat	Possible / slight	Significant Threat	

Not a real threat	Possible / slight	Significant Threat	





# EXAM QUESTION

## Exam-style question, section B

Describe **two** features of the plots against Elizabeth I in the years 1571–86.

**4 marks**

## Exam tip

This question is worth only 4 out of a possible 32 marks. Although 4 marks can make a difference to your overall result, you should only spend about 4–6 minutes on it. This means you must be very clear and concise.





# MARY'S JOURNEY: SUMMARY

Mary was executed at Fotheringhay.

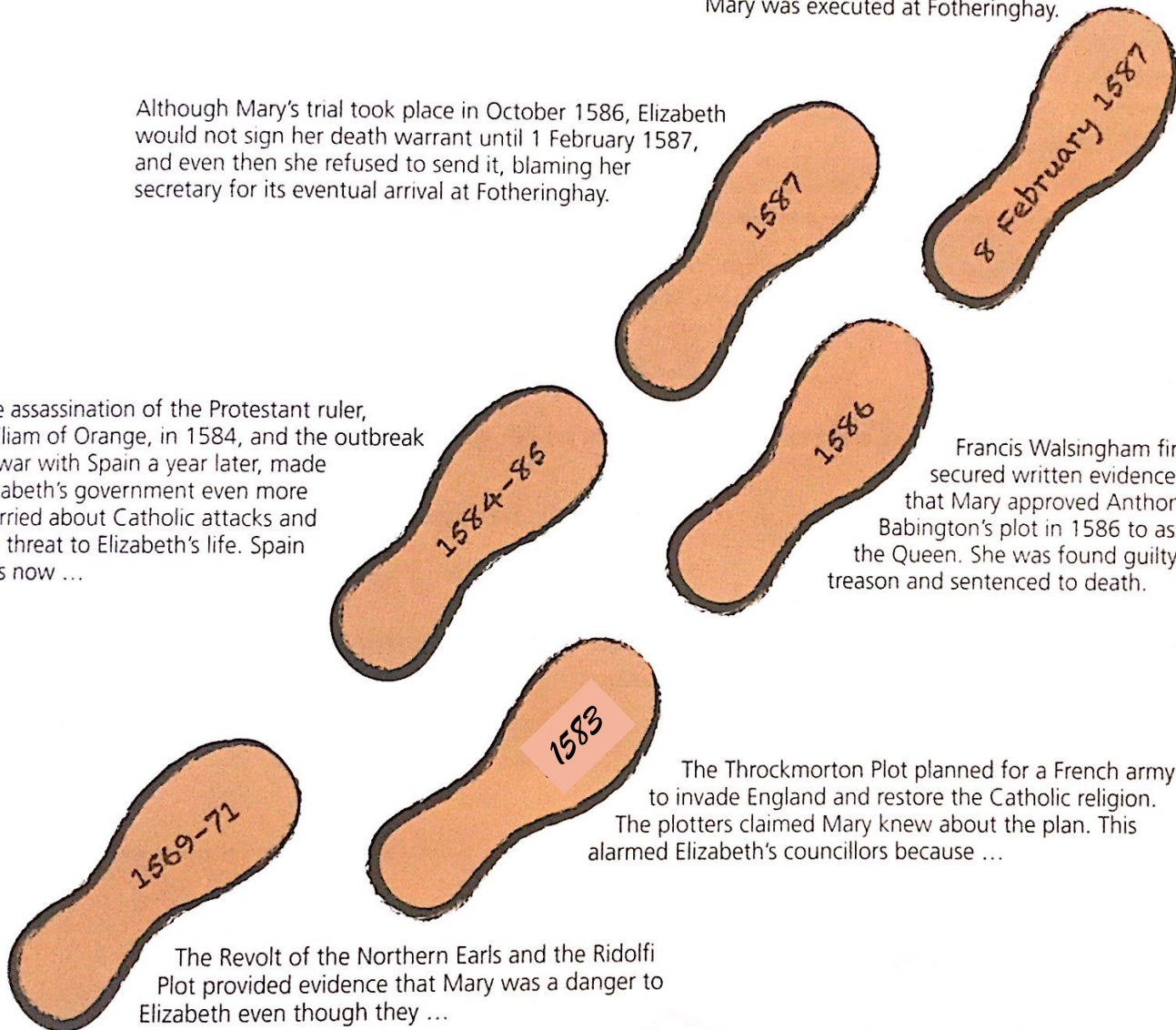
Although Mary's trial took place in October 1586, Elizabeth would not sign her death warrant until 1 February 1587, and even then she refused to send it, blaming her secretary for its eventual arrival at Fotheringhay.

The assassination of the Protestant ruler, William of Orange, in 1584, and the outbreak of war with Spain a year later, made Elizabeth's government even more worried about Catholic attacks and the threat to Elizabeth's life. Spain was now ...

Francis Walsingham finally secured written evidence showing that Mary approved Anthony Babington's plot in 1586 to assassinate the Queen. She was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death.

The Throckmorton Plot planned for a French army to invade England and restore the Catholic religion. The plotters claimed Mary knew about the plan. This alarmed Elizabeth's councillors because ...

The Revolt of the Northern Earls and the Ridolfi Plot provided evidence that Mary was a danger to Elizabeth even though they ...





# MARY'S EXECUTION

So why execute her now, after 20 years of plots and threats?

- A law passed in Parliament in 1585 (**The act for the preservation of the Queen's safety**) said in the event of Elizabeth's assassination, Mary was to be barred from the throne, therefore making it pointless killing Elizabeth! But also anyone involved in trying, would be executed Very clever! 😊
- Nothing could happen to Mary until her role had been investigated and a trial had found her guilty

## Source C

Painted c1613. The execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, at Fotheringhay Castle on 8 February 1587.



- Walsingham's evidence was enough and she was found guilty under the above act.
- Elizabeth **FINALLY** signed the death warrant in February 1587
- It was also clear that Philip II was planning a major attack on England, so it was important to get rid of the prize for that invasion

Plots & rebellion video



# HOW SIGNIFICANT WAS MARY'S EXECUTION?

- The execution removed the target and prize of any future plot
- Philip II had been planning to invade England since 1585, the execution of a Catholic queen gave him one final reason to remove Elizabeth
- Mary left her claim to the English throne to Philip II on her death
- Mary would be executed as a result of this plot and thus, the end of a Catholic monarch replacing Elizabeth
- Last straw perhaps in leading to the Spanish Armada

Homework: Essay question

Explain how significant the threats Elizabeth I faced between 1569-88 were.





## Summary

- The Revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569 was a serious rebellion focused on overthrowing Elizabeth I and restoring Catholicism.
- Elizabeth I's excommunication in 1570 put English Catholics in a difficult position between loyalty to their political leader, Elizabeth I, or their spiritual leader, the pope.
- Plots against Elizabeth were encouraged by Spain and the pope.
- Three other plots aiming to replace Elizabeth I with Mary, Queen of Scots, were Ridolfi (1571); Throckmorton (1583); and Babington (1586).
- Mary, Queen of Scots, was executed in 1587 after the Babington Plot.
- Plots against Elizabeth failed because Sir Francis Walsingham had an extensive network of spies and informers.
- Catholic priests were smuggled into England to support English Catholics.

## Checkpoint

### Strengthen

- S1** Give two pieces of evidence of each of the following factors in the Revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569.
- a** Political factors      **b** Religious factors
- S2** Give one important outcome for each of the plots against Elizabeth I: the Revolt of the Northern Earls; the Ridolfi, Throckmorton and Babington plots.
- S3** Give three reasons why Sir Francis Walsingham's spy network was so effective.

### Challenge

- C1** Give three reasons why the Revolt of the Northern Earls in 1569 was such a major threat to Elizabeth I.
- C2** Compare the threats to Elizabeth I from 1571–86. Which was the most serious and why?
- C3** Explain why Mary, Queen of Scots, was executed in 1587 and not earlier.

If you are not confident about any of these questions, your teacher can give you some hints.

