**How did Edward consolidate royal power 1471-83?**

What lessons did Edward learn from the readeption of Henry VI?

Pendrill P.49: “Deposition had concentrated the king’s mind. The government of the kingdom had to be taken seriously because Edward did not wish to go into exile again.”

1. Edward learnt that he had failed in the first years of his reign to engage the loyalty of his subjects. He had survived but it had been touch and go. Only in financial matters had Edward achieved a modest success. Otherwise his commercial treaty with Burgundy had offended powerful commercial interests. In spite of the labour of his personal judicial tours he had failed to reduce disorder to a level which people regarded as tolerable.
2. He could not allow Henry VI to continue to live providing an alternative option for king. While there were two kings in England Edward’s position was always under threat.
3. He had to take measures to constrain the overweening pride and power of some of his nobles. When his brother, Duke of Clarence again caused trouble he had him executed (drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine).
4. Made sure of remote parts of the country, sent his youngest brother who had been a loyal and able ally – out to govern the north. Richard Duke of Gloucester had gone into exile with him.
5. He realized how important it was to improve **royal finances still further**, and for this he took certain measures (see below).
6. He took measures against those foreign trouble makers France and Scotland.

Why was Edward IV’s second reign so much less troubled than his first reign?

1. First and foremost, the Lancastrian opposition was now virtually wiped out, apart from Henry Tudor, whose claim was ridiculously weak. Henry VI was murdered in the Tower and this meant there was no longer an anointed alternative to Edward. Henry’s son had been killed at Tewkesbury.
2. Overmighty subjects constrained. Warwick had been killed at Barnet and his lands had been awarded by Edward to that other tricky nobleman Clarence. This was deemed to be a good method of ensuring Clarence’s future loyalty. In fact Clarence would continue to be a problem but he would not take up arms against his brother again, and having once shown such rank disloyalty, Edward kept a close eye on him so when he got out of order again, he got executed promptly. He’d always been a bit inept and had only achieved anything when egged on by the superior talents of Warwick.
3. Edward used members of his family that he could trust to control large areas of his kingdom in his name. In the north of England he established his youngest brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester who had gone into exile with him and had proved himself not only loyal, but a distinguished soldier doing a good job at Tewkesbury. The Midlands were initially controlled by Clarence but when he proved unreliable the king’s Chamberlain, William Lord Hastings organised a territorial base with the plan that the king’s second son would rule there. He set up his eldest son as the principal power in the Welsh Marches based at Ludlow under the control of his uncle, Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers. The south-west was under the direction of the King’s stepsons, (his wife Elizabeth Woodville had been a widow with two sons when he married her) and in particular the older, Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset. He could depend on these people’s loyalty, but all this nepotism did have the unfortunate effect of annoying other landowners, but most of the nobles had had quite enough of fighting and instability and there is no evidence of any further aristocratic opposition to Edward’s rule.
4. He succeeded in increasing the Crown’s income through various financial measures:
5. Appointed commissioners to inspect the collection of revenues which then increased dramatically.
6. Encouraged trade. Personally active as an importer and exporter of wood, tin and cloth,, granted a special licence to John de Salvo and Antonio Spinola to introduce new methods of dying, and made trade treaties with the Hanseatic League in Germany, (1373-4) France (1475) and Burgundy (1478).
7. Feudal rights such as wardship which Edward worked hard to increase.
8. Also took the revenue from bishoprics if they lay vacant.
9. Took the money from fines imposed by courts of law.
10. Parliament could grant him a subsidy if there was a special reason like a war, and they did this with a claim that it would support a war, but in fact made a treaty with France (having raised substantial funds) and then also got France to pay a pension.
11. He introduced the use of the King’s Chamber instead of the slow Exchequer and Henry VII would later realize this was a good idea and use it too.
12. The king built up England’s navy to a force of fifteen or sixteen warships.
13. The threat of foreign intervention was neutralised.
14. France: Louis XI was an effective and strong ruler (unfortunately for England) and he had provided shelter and succour for Lancastrian exiles. He had backed and supplied the invasions by Warwick and then by Margaret of Anjou. He needed to settle his kingdom before he launched an attack on France but he absolutely needed to neutralise the threat, so in 1475 he set out against them. Before then he helped others suffering from their threatening neighbour, such as Brittany and Burgundy. In 1472 he sent 1000 archers to Brittany to help them withstand invasion from France. When it materialised he sent another 2,000 archers and Brittany signed an alliance with Edward but only while they were afraid. In November 1472 they managed to make an alliance with France. He’d again persuaded them to support him when he launched his campaign in 1475, but in fact they were afraid of bringing down French wrath on their heads and did not in fact support his campaign, so instead of fighting England sued for peace. Louis XI did not want to get involved in a war with England and so signed the **Treaty of Picquigny** and gave Edward a pension. A betrothal was fixed between Edward’s daughter and the French dauphin. A seven year truce was declared and both countries’ merchants were exempted from taxes and tolls imposed by the other. A triumph for Edward. But only shortlived. The good relations would be wrecked by England’s involvement in the French-Burgundian conflict that erupted in 1477. By the time Edward died he had lost the French pension and the alliances upon which the successful outcome of his continental policy depended. (Pickering p.51)
15. Scotland: The Scots had traditionally allied with the French against the English, but keen to safeguard his northern border Edward offered his daughter Cecily (aged 4) to James’s son (not quite 6 months).

In 1480 there were rumours that the truce was breaking and the Scots were coming over the border into England to plunder and destroy. Edward decided to send his navy up to bombard the Scottish coast. In 1482 Edward signed an alliance with James III’s treacherous younger brother, Duke of Albany. Leaving the campaign to his younger brother, Richard Edward withdrew to London and Richard invaded Scotland, taking Berwick with scarcely a shot fired. He soon entered Edinburgh. James III had advanced to meet the English but his army broke up in discontent and recriminations and the king was made a captive by his leading lords who disliked his lowborn favourites. To avoid battle many of the Scots took to the hills.

Unfortunately for Gloucester Albany had now made up with his brother so there was no prospect of installing a pro-English regime, and he could not draw the Scots into battle, so rather than attempt to occupy Scotland he retreated, but kept Berwick.

1. Denmark and Spain : An agreement was made with these two countries.

So Edward’s foreign policy was relatively successful. France had been invaded showing that England was a credible military power and Scotland had been humiliated. However, there are historians who say it was a failure

To what extent, if at all, did Edward IV strengthen the monarchy during the second reign?

Edward was well suited to deal with many of the problems of kingship in the 15th century. He was a vigorous governor involving himself in many of the problems of the day and even more impressively a very good military commander. He revived the fortunes of personal government partly because he was charming and impressive at 6 ft. 4 inches (men averaged about 5ft 6 at the time).

Was he an example of a new type of king? Was he an innovator? (Pickering p 57-60)

Where there was novelty in Edward’s government, it was not about new institutions. Edward did not invent new ways of governing but made the existing methods function more effectively.

“By 1471, the Wars of the Roses were at an end. “ To what extent do the events of the period 1471-83 back up this assertion?

How successful was Edward IV?

To evaluate the level of success there are five areas we should look at: (i) How secure was his international position? (ii) How prosperous and peaceful was the domestic economy? (iii) Had he established law and order? (iv) How strong was the monarchy? (v) How secure had he made his dynasty?

(i) How secure was Edward’s international position?

(Pickering p. 52-3) Edward had been restored to the throne at least in part because of the support of Burgundy. Drawn together by hating France. Edward certainly envisaged war with France as likely – inheriting the traditional ambition of English kings to wear the French crown. He was probably sufficiently realistic to know that full reconquest was out of the question, but he had a great military reputation and had achieved considerable success as a warrior so it was probably reasonable to assume that he might be able to gain back some of the land so ignominiously lost by Henry VI. At the very least he hoped to prevent Louis XI of France from lending further support to the Lancastrians and in this he had the full support of Parliament who raised the money for a great campaign.

Traditionally England allied with Burgundy and Brittany against France, while Louis harboured territorial ambitions against both these states.

In 1472 Edward negotiated the **Treaty of Chateaugiron** 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 iwth France, Parliament was notably unenthusiastic about financing the war and in many ways Edward had a lucky escape.

This did not prevent further diplomatic planning. The **Treaty of London** (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 Scotland was neutralised.

In 1475 he led 12,000 troops into France (the largest force ever sent from England against France). If his intention had been to intimidate France and obtain a guarantee that they would not interfere any more, plus the pension, then it has to be said that this campaign was enormously successful. A major war would have been very expensive. Edward obtained £15,000 immediately and a further annual pension of £10,000 reinforced by the betrothal of Edward’s daughter to the French dauphin. The English were then lavishly feted at Amiens and after they had departed Louis is said to have joked, “I chased the English out of France far more easily than my father did – he had to do so by force of arms, but I simply used meat pies and good wine”.

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 Low Countries but Edward decided not to intervene and it can be argued that Louis’ combination of cunning diplomacy and bribery neutralised England. It was felt that Edward now cared too much for money and a life of ease and luxury.

Despite continued tension between the two countries and the implicit support that Louis XI gave to the troublesome James III of Scotland, the truce ran its course and Edward continued to receive his valuable French pension until Burgundy and France made their own truce – the Treaty of Arras in December 1482.

1482 could be said to have been a tricky year for Edward. Scotland, encouraged by Louis had been raiding in the north and Richard, the Duke of Gloucester invaded and seized Edinburgh and captured the king. This and other minor victories, combined with the destruction of the Scottish fleet provoked English celebratory bonfires and cannons fired, but when the Duke of Albany withdrew his claim to the Scottish throne, there was no longer a reason to stay and Gloucester withdrew (keeping Berwick).

The Treaty of Arras was a bitter blow and it might have been prevented if Edward had concentrated on maintaining bad relations between France and Burgundy instead of being distracted by his campaign in Scotland. Some historians claim that he was here outmanoeuvred by Louis XI and that it was lucky for Edward that Louis died in 1483 and that Burgundy had not collapsed completely as Calais was threatened.

However, it has to be aid that a more interventionist foreign policy would have placed a huge financial burden on the country and the payment of the French pension, the humiliation of James III and the acquisition of Berwick were modest successes.

(ii) How prosperous and peaceful was the domestic economy?

(Pickering 56 – 57) Edward IV was the first king of England in two hundred years to leave the crown solvent on his death and he had inherited a financial crisis. Henry VI’s irresponsible

However, he maintained a luxurious court, gave lavish gifts to favourites and family and maintained several royal castles. Conducting foreign campaigns was very expensive and Edward resorted to going around the kingdom cajoling nobles, mayors, alderman and rich widows into making large donations. These were then of course not needed as the campaign finished so quickly, and combining them with the pension he received from France, left Edward quite prosperous.

Also the handling of royal finances became more efficient, with the king himself at the centre of affairs. Many of the financial responsibilities of the heavily bureaucratised Westminster-based Exchequer were transferred to the Chamber; royal funds were now housed in the king’s personal apartments and he scrutinised spending.

He was not as astute as Henry VII. Inheritance, attainders and luck, helped, but it has to be said that “more direct and personal approach, anticipating methods adopted by the Tudors” were important in achieving this. He can be criticised for distributing rather than keeping forfeited estates and although the French pension was valuable it did cost him his freedom of action in foreign policy. Moreover, not all the administrative improvements were effective On royal estates, such as the Duchy of Lancaster it proved particularly difficult to implement new ideas. Henry VII was a far more efficient administrator, but, solvency was an impressive achievement considering the legacy he received from Henry VI. (David Grossel in Lotherington’s *The Tudor Years*)

1. Had he established law and order? (? Do this as a source question?)

C D Ross “The Reign of Edward IV” in S B Chrimes, C D Ross and RA Griffiths *15th century England 1399* – 1509.

The crux of the problem lay in the immunity of the powerful offender, especially those who had the king’s support. There was an inherent conflict between repeated demands for impartial justice and the king’s committed support of the great men to whom he had given rule of the shires. Bitter complaints against their excesses run through the reign. The Commons in 1467 were particularly outspoken linking a rising crime rate with the ‘heavy lordship’ of men standing with the king, against whom redress could not be obtained.... Edward was extraordinarily lavish in delegating local power and influence to his supporters. No man had ever enjoyed the power in South Wales wielded by Lord Herbert in the 1460s. The same is true of Richard of Gloucester in the north in the 1470’s. Professor Chrimes would have us believe that by 1483 “there was no over-mighty subject left in England,” but was not Gloucester (later Richard III) the mightiest of over-mighty subjects? And was not his great north-country connection, built up with royal encouragement, a major factor in enabling him to consolidate his hold on the throne? This was part of the price that Edward IV paid for effective political control during his lifetime.

Margaret Paston writing 27 October 1465

“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 horribly it is arrayed but if they saw it. There cometh much people to wonder thereupon, both of Norwich and of other places, and 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 ransacked the images, and took away such as they might find, and put 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...

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 ad the place...

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 and my lord of Warwick.

Questions

What does Margaret Paston mean by country? Why was the Duke of Suffolk able to organise such extensive acts of violence? To whom did the Pastons look for assistance and what significance is this? 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)

Source 3 David Groessel

The king’s council retained its important 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 (intimidating juries by aristocratic retainers).

(iv) How strong was the monarchy?

(v) How secure had he made his dynasty?

Obviously not very strong at all. He had allowed his youngest brother to become enormously powerful and he died when his oldest son was only 12.