

and England. Once they had defeated and killed Henry VII, the rebels could then free the real Earl of Warwick, or, if rumours of his mental incapacity proved true, they could always substitute the next best Yorkist claimant, John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln.

- The Simnel conspiracy was stronger than it looked because it did not aim to put the impostor on the throne of England. The Yorkists, after all, had two perfectly legitimate claimants whose right to the throne was much clearer than Henry VII's.
- The Simnel conspiracy was also very dangerous because it mirrored exactly Henry Tudor's successful rebellion just two years before. Both of these invasions relied mainly on foreign support, both marched unopposed for several hundred miles across the kingdom, and both forced the king to fight a battle.
- Hindsight – the knowledge that Henry won the battle and defeated the conspiracy – has also tended to blind us to the dangers it posed at the time. No one was in a better position to appreciate the seriousness of the situation than Henry Tudor.

The Northern rebellion of 1489

While nothing like as serious as the Simnel rebellion of 1487, the Northern rebellion of 1489 indicated again that the king's control of the kingdom was far from secure. It was a rebellion against Henry's heavy tax demands.

- The king wished to raise money to pay for men to defend Brittany from French aggression. This seems to have met with widespread opposition, especially in the north.
- Opposition was associated with some new methods the king used in order to increase the yield of his taxes.
- At the same time, the king seems to have acted insensitively in not allowing the north its usual **tax rebates**.

The rising came to a head when Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland was murdered in Topcliffe in Yorkshire. He was attempting to explain the need for the new taxes to a crowd of people when he was set upon by the angry mob and killed. Interestingly, his own retinue of men stood by as their master was lynched, perhaps indicating the depth

KEY TERM

Tax rebates Refers to a situation where the government decreases the amount of tax demanded, usually to win favour with angry taxpayers.

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of resentment felt by ordinary people over the high taxes being demanded.

Thereafter the rising became more serious as the rebels feared that the king would punish the whole region for the murder of his chief tax collector. The king probably felt little sympathy for Percy, who had turned up at Bosworth but refused to fight on either side. However, he was **Warden General** of the East and Middle Marches towards Scotland and his death, leaving an heir who was a minor, might mean trouble and conspiracies in the north. In fact, the rising was soon over.

- One leader, John à Chambré, was executed.
- Sir John Egremont escaped royal justice by fleeing to Margaret of Burgundy in Flanders, where he was welcomed and added to the list of those who might overthrow the king.

Although it was soon over, the Northern Rising of 1489 was another reason for Henry to feel insecure in a kingdom which he still did not really know or understand and which saw him as a foreign usurper.

The Warbeck rebellion, 1491–9

Warbeck and the princes

Having overcome a serious uprising from the Yorkists, Henry Tudor might have felt more secure. With Simnel safely in custody and Lincoln dead, the Yorkist cause was seemingly diminished. In fact, it was far from finished. Four years after Simnel, another young impostor, **Perkin Warbeck**, appeared, claiming to be Richard, Duke of York, the younger son of Edward IV. Immediately, the threat to Henry's position was serious. He was still seen as a Welsh usurper by many among the nobility and no one knew for sure what had happened to the princes in the Tower. If Warbeck turned out to be genuine, then, of course, his



Perkin Warbeck, enemy of Henry Tudor (French School, 16th century).

KEY TERM

Warden General A special post in the north of England that gave the holder the right to raise troops to oppose any sudden Scottish invasion or raid.

KEY PERSON

Perkin Warbeck (1474?–99) First appeared in the Low Countries and may have been a native of Flanders and the son of a tax collector. Many contemporaries claimed that he was very like the real Duke of York, which has prompted some historians to speculate that he might have been an illegitimate son of Edward IV, conceived when Edward was in exile in the Low Countries in 1470–1.

KEY THEME

The princes In 1483, it was widely assumed that both boys had been cruelly murdered by their uncle, Richard III; eight years later, there were many who wondered whether one or other of the boys might not have escaped from imprisonment in the Tower. The key problem for Henry VII was that he had no bodies (alive or dead) and therefore could not prove that Warbeck was an impostor.

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