

Keith Waddington

I H Smith

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**A Brief Comparative Analysis of
Tudor and Stuart Reigns**

It is certainly well established that "The Wars of the Roses" is something of a literary, philosophical and historiographical amalgamation; and yet there is something entirely English as well as entirely appropriate in this poetic and oxymoronic epigraph, suggesting as it does a state of conflict which is essentially alien to the perceived state of the nation: one which cultivates the flowers of civilisation and endeavours to uproot the weeds of discord. Although the notion of statehood was something entirely alien during the wars themselves, the term itself, coined by Scott during the Tudor period, was concomitant with the rising sense of state and national character. Though the term provides a somewhat false impression of contiguous aggregation, this is hardly to suggest that the turmoil was one invented by subsequent generations. It is perhaps difficult for modern minds to comprehend the relationship between subject and monarch during this period of national parturition, though it is manifest--to some extent--even to this day when light hearted Yuletide pantomimes are preceded by recorded renditions of the

National Anthem, during which families one and all arise in honour of the non present yet still somehow ever present monarch. It is within this context of personal reverence--extending from the loftiest armigerous strata to those of lowly birth with barely a cloth coat in which to place their arms--that Henry VII took the crown. It is also within the context of the prolonged and divisive "War of the Roses" that the cheers of relief filled the silence of final peace.

The Tudor reign then began with what might be described as a universal sigh of relief; and with the houses of York and Lancaster united by the marriage with Elizabeth of York, there was indeed much reason for optimism. And yet we must not ignore the tenuous state of the situation: although Henry VII's ascension brought an end to strife and uncertainty, it was by no means certain that the solution would withstand the continuous problem: struggle between Aristocracy and Crown in this feudal and fragmented nation.

At the political level, we might assert with some confidence that Henry VII provided the most pragmatic and successful government of any Tudor monarch. His careful avoidance of war, his auspicious management of landlords more powerful than himself, his innovative (and much abhorred) bonds of good behaviour levied against feudal manorial despots, ensuring not only a certain subjugation but also coin for the Royal coffers, the frugality of court management, all together allowed Henry's reign to solidify the Tudor position, maintaining, for the first and only

time, a healthy surplus of funds, and, above all else, providing a unquestionable sense of stability in the nation.

The Stuart Period, alternately, sprang not from disorder and disquiet and provided no collective sigh of relief. Rather, it was the issue of the most glorious Tudor reign, and whether or not history itself supports this eulogy, artistic propaganda of the period certainly inscribed it as such. But the Tudor wave was about to crest, and it was an increasingly complex and problematic society which met the arrival of James I. The Stuart period then did not possess the psychological advantage that accompanied that of the Tudor.

Also closely connected with this theme, James I's ascension, rather than providing unification in England--as was the case with Henry VII, provided a concrete unification between England and Scotland. Although this union occurred previous, James' journey southward consolidated that joining. Although this proved fortuitous for the growth of Great Britain, with no small degree of irony the local effect in England was antipodal. Simply speaking, James was seen by many--and rightly so when we consider the historical record--as being a foreigner taking the English throne.

We should also bear in mind the ever consequential religious question. Although Scotland was to become more Calvinist and, to generalise, more Protestant than England, Scotland initially was lethargic and half-hearted in casting aside Catholicism and, with the usual long memory of the

English--manifest even to this day in the purblind maintenance of obtuse tradition--was seen not only as a still foreign land, as it had so long been, but one whose faith was somewhat suspect. James I and Charles I seemed to support this notion in the worst possible ways: first of all demonstrating not only a tolerance of Papalism which bordered on encouragement, but also with a willy-nilly foreign policy that seemed to invite Spanish devils into the holy land of England.

The complexities of social dynamics are indeed clearly manifest in this religious question, for the diplomatic manoeuvres towards Spain were seen not only as problematic in the religious context--though this certainly was a vital factor, offering what appeared to be a repetition of Mary I's stratagem--but also an affront to the nation's very sense of self and statehood: Spain, of course, was not merely an emblem of Papalism; a symbol of inhumanity, evinced in the activities of the Inquisition; but, above all else, the commercial as well as philosophical antagonist, providing a psychological symbol of England's "Chosen" status: the defeat of the Armada composed not only the nature of the defeated, but more importantly the nature of the victors. As long as Spain remained the quintessential Nemesis, that brief yet brilliant glory, like that of Agincourt, might live on. It might certainly be argued that diplomatic conduct towards Spain--the most puissant European realm of the period--was not only acceptable, but politically astute;

and indeed revisionist historiography follows such rational. Unfortunately, for all the above reasons, a deep seated distrust and hatred for the Spaniard was firmly entrenched in the English character.

Much has been made also of the additional complications inherent in the growth of Puritanism. This was without doubt a precarious issue, though certainly Tudor monarchs had answered the antithetical question of Catholicism with no small degree of success, and the course of seventeenth century events in this respects seems to speak more of ineffectual monarchical government, rather than the convoluted and strident nature of the question itself.

The religious, political and social problems of the time, it seems, were not sufficient to produce the state of revolution which soon ran plague-like throughout the nation. The Tudor period reveals similar or at least equally vigorous problems which were all effectively met. It seems clear that popular and Parliamentary support was not a particular feature of the Stuart government. Some reasons for this have already been outlined, though we have so far avoided what was perhaps the most important: propaganda and public relations. It was in this area that the Tudors reigned supreme. Henry VII presented proclamations composed in English rather than Latin; employed the first Royal Printer; made frequent Royal tours; all of which demonstrate the desire to cultivate a good public image and the ability so to do. This was continued--to a lesser degree--with the

popular portraitures of Henry VIII. It was, of course, during Elizabeth's reign that the Royal image and national character were joined in marriage. This union took place in literature, with Shakespeare playing no minor role, and resulted not only in a strong sense of Englishness--and so uniqueness--but also replaced the defunct Virgin Mary with the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth. "The Wars of the Roses"--as a term--is indeed emblematic of this: by reproducing pre-Tudor history as a period of conflict and deprivation, a certain myth making took place. This was achieved also, and most brilliantly, by Shakespeare in his history plays. The positive side of this myth-making is to be found in such works as Spencer's *Faerie Queen*, which provides an allegorical portrait of Elizabeth indeed as a perfect and Virgin Queen worthy of national worship.

With little popular support, with no propaganda machine available, with ever increasing social unrest and in an ever more complex world, it seems hardly surprising that the Stuart's--foreigners from that distant and barbarous north--were unable to uphold unity. Indeed, early Stuart government seems greatly reminiscent of King Lear's insane and yet pathetic entreaty that the turmoil of the universe should stop, that the storm should calm.