

Tudor Practice Source Paper

“The Lord Protector, the Duke of Somerset, fell from power because of his abuse of his position to increase his own wealth and power”

Use these four sources in their historical context to assess how far they support that view

[30]

Source 1: First Letter from William Paget to Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset

However it cometh to pass, I cannot tell, but of late your Grace is grown in great choleric [angry] fashion, whensoever you are contraried in that which you have conceived in your head. A king which shall give men occasion of discouragement to say their opinions frankly receiveth thereby great hurt and peril to his realm. But a subject in great authority, as your Grace is, using such fashion, is like to fall into great danger and peril of his own person, beside that to the commonweal [well-being of the state].

William Paget (Secretary and Privy Council Member), Letter to Edward Seymour, May 1549

Source 2: a letter from Francis Bourgoyne

The whole Council decided that they would no longer endure the excessive arrogance of the Duke of Somerset, which made it quite clear that if he were released from imprisonment, he would raise rebellions which would endanger the whole kingdom. Everyone knew he was the cause of his brother's death, and not long afterwards there followed those disturbances, which turned him from being the Lord Protector of the kingdom into a miserable prisoner.

Francis Bourgoyne, in a letter to the Protestant theologian, John Calvin, 22nd January 1552

Tudor Practice Source Paper

Source 3: A contemporary relates the early stages of the successful plot against Somerset in October 1549

After these revolts were crushed, many of the lords and councillors secretly plotted to overthrow the Lord Protector. Each lord and councillor went through London armed, and had servants armed, and had servants likewise armed. They assembled at the house of the Earl of Warwick. They then published a proclamation against him containing the following charges.

First that through his malicious and evil government, the Lord Protector had caused all the recent unrest in the country. Second, he was ambitious and sought his own glory. Third, that he had ignored the advice of the councillors. Fourth, that he told untruths about the council to the King.

Entry from Richard Grafton's chronicle, 1549

Source 4: Sitting as a court, parliament discusses charges against Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, former Lord Protector to King Edward VI. It was commonly believed that the evidence was a forgery.

Northumberland feared Somerset as the only person who might take away his control of the King. The Duke planned to charge Somerset with treason for assembling men to kill him. The Lords debated but would not find Somerset guilty of any charge except 'conspiring to imprison Northumberland'. Several lords thought it unfit that Northumberland should himself give his verdict because the actions were against him, but it was agreed that a peer of the realm could not be challenged. After great debate, they all acquitted Somerset of treason, but a majority found him guilty of felony [a crime sufficiently serious to be punishable by death] and condemned him to death.

Parliamentary record of charges made against the Duke of Somerset, January 1552