Catholic Plots

Revolt of the Northern Earls (1569 - 70)

* The Catholic Earls in the North of England were unhappy because of they were losing power. Land and resources were being taken from the North and given to Protestants in the South.
* In 1569, the Duke of Norfolk decided to marry Mary, making her Elizabeth’s heir. This plan was supported by Catholic nobles, including the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland.
* The plan was uncovered, and in a desperate attempt, the plotters attempted to overflow Elizabeth to escape punishment. In November 1569, they captured Durham, and held a Catholic mass in the cathedral. They continued further South, likely heading for Derbyshire, where Mary was imprisoned.
* However, before they could reach Mary, a large royal army assembling in the South caused their troops to desert, and the Earls to flee to Scotland. Elizabeth executed the Earl of Northumberland, and 400 rebels.
* This plot was the most serious to challenge Elizabeth during her reign, as it showed the danger of Mary, as a figurehead for Catholic rebellions. The news of the rebellion created widespread fears among English Protestants, with many people fearing harsh persecutions, as during “Bloody” Mary’s reign.

The Ridolfi Plot (1571)

* Roberto Di Ridolfi was an Italian banker who had been in the Revolt of the Northern Earls. He used his Catholic connections in Europe to develop a plot to overthrow Elizabeth.
* Elizabeth would be assassinated, and Mary would marry Norfolk, making her Queen. At the same time, Spain and the Pope would send troops for a Spanish invasion.
* The plot failed after Elizabeth’s allies gave her the names of the plotters, and intercepted letters sent by Mary, which mentioned her and Norfolk. Mary was not punished, but here restrictions were tightened, and Norfolk was executed.

Throckmorton Plot (1583)

* This plot also included assassinating Elizabeth and replacing her with Mary, however this time there would be an invasion lead by French troops and financed by Spain.
* This plot was discovered by Francis Walsingham (Elizabeth’s spymaster). Throckmorton was placed under surveillance for several months and was found to be carrying messages between Mary and Catholic plotters in Europe.
* In response to this plot, Elizabeth’s advisors made the Bond of Association, which was signed by English nobles and gentry. This meant that they must execute anyone who tries to overthrow the queen.

Babington Plot (1586)

* The Babington plot also planned for the removal of Elizabeth and invasion by foreign forces, this time joint French and Spanish forces.
* Anthony Babington was one of the key planners. He sent information to Mary from her supporters in Europe and relayed her replies.
* Francis Walsingham (Elizabeth’s Spymaster) was following each stage of the plot through his network of double agents. He waited for Mary to sign a letter approving Elizabeth’s assassination.
* In August 1586, Walsingham had enough evidence. Babington and the other plotters were arrested and charged with treason and executed.