

Sir Francis Walsingham: Courtier in an Age of Terror

Derek Wilson



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During the brief reign of the Queen Mary, Walsingham was a Protestant exile in Italy. Returning home when Elizabeth assumed the throne, from 1570 he became a diplomat to the arch-pragmatist Queen. He was often troubled by her inconsistent policy decisions and for allowing the exile in England of Mary Queen of Scots. His triumph came in 1587 when Mary was at last beheaded after the cunning defeat of the Babington plot. A powerful, if enigmatic figure, loathed by his adversaries and deeply admired by friends and allies, Walsingham became the master co-ordinator of a feared pan-European spy network. His spies underpinned his organisation of national resistance to the Spanish Armada, but devotion and duty to Elizabeth was costly and Walsingham died two years later in penury.

Historian and storyteller Derek Wilson delves deeply into the life of a fascinating and highly influential figure, bringing us tales of deceit, betrayal and loyalty along the way; popular history of the highest calibre.

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