CHAPTER 4

# *Trade, piracy, war, 1437–1474*

Henry Vorrath remained in England until the end of July 1437, several weeks after the departure of his fellow ambassadors. On his way home he was imprisoned in the bishopric of Münster as a hostage for the debts of some Prussian merchants. Efforts to secure his release were protracted and not until March 1438 did he reach Danzig, where he received a cool reception. In April, after hearing his own account of his mission, the Prussian diet decided to defer ratification of the treaty, despite its acceptance by the Hanse diet the previous August. In the interim Prussian subjects were allowed to trade with England. At the next diet in mid-May Vorrath appealed to the Grand Master for protection against his fellow citizens, who accused him of having exceeded his powers. They also urged that Prussia should disavow the treaty, being spurred on by demands of newly returned English merchants. For the most part the latter were merely asking for things which they had formerly enjoyed, though not without opposition from Danzig. Nevertheless, in the past the Grand Master and the Prussian diet had often supported English claims. Unfortunately, the merchants also raised the thorny question of taxation. They objected to paying the Danzig *Pfahlgeld*, on the grounds that it had been instituted only thirty-six or thirty-seven years previously. They appear to have been ignorant of the origin of *Pfundzoll*, levied by the Teutonic Order, but nevertheless claimed exemption. Their objection was based on the fact that it was the exact equivalent of the English poundage duty, from which the Hanseatics had just been released, despite having paid it for much of the previous ninety years. Danzig met the English demands by dissecting the Vorrath treaty word by word, complaining about its vagueness, which might cause great difficulties for Prussia, and anticipating that the English would soon invoke it in support of the right to trade in Livonia and Poland. It is clear that Danzig was

concerned not merely to prevent any extension of English privileges; it was resolutely opposed to the reintroduction of former practices, such as retail trade in Prussia itself. Only four towns were represented at the May diet and three of these, Thorn, Elbing and Königsberg, were ready to confirm the treaty. However, because of the vociferous opposition of Danzig the Grand Master again deferred a decision.[1]

In December 1439 English merchants complained to the Danzig city council about its refusal to allow their liberties, but they were informed that they should have no more rights than any other aliens.[2] This, of course, led to a clamour in England about the failure to implement the treaty of 1437. The forum was the parliament of 1439–40, which enacted a number of laws directly harmful to alien merchants.[3] The Hanse, because of its franchises, was exempt from the new regulations and taxes, but naturally the English merchants were unhappy that this should continue if they were denied reciprocity. When parliament reassembled at Reading in January 1440, Thomas Ecsame of Newark presented a petition to this effect. Consequently, in February the king wrote to the Hanse and the Grand Master complaining about Prussia's failure to ratify the treaty and setting out a list of grievances.[4] Dissatisfaction was expressed about the Grand Master's taxation of ships and merchandise and about taxation and general harassment by the Danzig city authorities. But outside the confines of Prussia, specific complaints at this stage referred only to injuries allegedly inflicted in the Pomeranian towns of Stettin and Köslin. This letter was probably entrusted to Dr John Norton, who about this time was sent on an embassy to Denmark, Poland and Prussia, but few details survive of his mission.

The general situation in the Baltic was steadily deteriorating as a result of war between a section of the Hanse and Holland-Zeeland. The Dutch began hostilities in April 1438 after the breakdown of talks to renew an earlier truce. Officially, they declared that their enemies were only the duchy of Holstein and the towns of Hamburg, Lübeck, Rostock, Wismar, Stralsund and Lüneberg, but other towns, including Cologne, were soon complaining about interference with their trade. In the north the Dutch not only took a heavy toll of Hanse ships coming out of the Elbe and Weser but also sent fleets to the approaches of the Baltic. At the very start of the war they were reported as having 104 warships there, including 45 equipped with

[1] *HR*, II (ii), nos. 187, 189, 193, 214, 220–2.
[2] *Ibid.*, no. 318.
[3] *Rot. Parl.*, 5, pp. 24–5.
[4] *HUB*, VII, no. 527. *Foedera*, V (i), p. 72.

forecastles. In April 1438 the Prussian diet, ignoring Lübeck's warning of Dutch intentions, authorised voyages to the Low Countries, including Holland-Zeeland. It was probably lulled into a sense of security by Dutch offers to respect Prussian neutrality, but these were not honoured and 22 or 23 Prussian vessels returning from the Bay were seized in the early stages of the war. After these losses, but also because of a blockade of the Sound by the other combatants, the Prussian authorities banned sailings to the west by their own subjects, though they did so reluctantly and perhaps at first not very effectively. The Prussians laid the blame for the stoppage of trade as much upon the Wendish towns as upon the Dutch, and the result was disunity within the Hanse. This is apparent in the proceedings of a diet at Lübeck in March 1441, though the Prussian envoys reported home that the Wendish towns were now inclined to make peace. The Prussians then went on to Kampen for talks with the Dutch, where they were able to arrange for a peace conference to be held in Copenhagen later that summer. Writing from Kampen on 14 April they advised their countrymen to send a trading fleet through the Sound, since most of the Dutch ships were about to sail to the Bay and they would therefore have little strength in the North Sea for the next seven or eight weeks. Back in Lübeck on 1 May they reveal their distrust of the Wendish towns in a report telling of fleets fitting out in Lübeck and Wismar, ostensibly to fight the Dutch in the Bay but really to buy salt and wine there to pre-empt the depleted east-Baltic markets. The Prussians acted quickly on the news and by 6 May the Grand Master was writing to the King of Denmark notifying him of a big Prussian fleet ready to leave Danzig and requesting free passage through the Sound. The Prussians' reward for their efforts, besides the resumption of trade, was the promise of a financial indemnity from the Dutch at the Copenhagen peace conference in September 1441.[5]

Despite the prolonged stoppage of native trade with the west the Danzig authorities were far less tolerant of the English than they had been during the Danish war twelve years before. The English later claimed that in this period their assembly hall was closed down, they were dispossessed of their houses and forced to live and trade in cellars, forbidden to retail cloth and salt or to conduct any trade with non-burgesses, while all cloth taken beyond the city was burdened

[5] *HR*, II (ii), nos. 184–5, 202–3, 214, 451–2, 458, 465, 471, 494.

with extra taxes.[6] It was further said that the authorities arrested goods to the value of £5,000 as collective security for debts and alleged acts of piracy. Charges of duplicity were also laid; in 1440 the city council first announced that the English might export anything but certain specified goods, but later prevented them from shipping anything but wheat and rye. Presumably, they allowed grain to leave either because of a glut or because they feared to antagonise the Order, which was a major producer. In addition to harassment in Prussia the English had to run the gauntlet of the Sound. In contrast to the earlier Danish war the Hanse did not countenance direct attacks on English vessels, because it feared for its privileges in England. However, in 1440 ships entering and leaving the Sound were pressed into the service of the Wendish towns and Christopher of Bavaria, allies in a rebellion against Christopher's uncle, King Eric of Denmark, who showed overmuch favour to the Dutch. A number of English grain ships returning from Prussia were not even allowed to discharge their cargoes before being put to use as troop carriers.[7] It was later claimed that, because of an extra twelve weeks at sea and misconduct by the soldiers, the grain was so deteriorated as to be unfit for sale even in Flanders, Bordeaux or Lisbon, which apparently were all less fastidious markets than England.

In November 1441 the English merchants again complained to the king's council and received a sympathetic hearing. It was decided to send an embassy to the Hanse and Prussia, and all English towns known to trade with those parts were instructed to provide details of their losses by the time that parliament assembled in January. The commons then proposed that the Hanse should have until Martinmas to make amends and that meanwhile their franchises should be suspended, except in the case of the merchants of Cologne. The crown agreed to demand redress and the confirmation of the 1437 treaty by Prussia, upon pain of forfeiture of the franchises after Martinmas, but declined to suspend them in the interim.[8] There is no evidence that the proposed embassy was ever dispatched, but the complaints were taken to Prussia and Lübeck that summer by the secretary of the Steelyard, which was seriously concerned about the threat and wanted all the towns to be fully appraised of the situation. This intervention had little effect on the

[6] The most detailed of several lists recording English complaints about losses in the Sound and treatment in Prussia at this time is *HR*, II (ii), no. 644.

[7] *Ibid.*, nos. 390–4. [8] *POPC*, 5, pp. 167, 170–1, 177–8. *Rot. Parl.*, 5, pp. 64–5.

Prussians. Meanwhile, on 11 June 1442 the Danzig city council had summoned Nicholas Hassham of York and six other merchants of Hull, Lynn and London to be examined about the complaints made in parliament. This group, doubtless under pressure, disavowed the agitation in England, saying that they and their fellows had no claims against their host city, the admission being attested by a public notary. In September Danzig disingenuously sent a copy of the disavowal to England, as evidence that there was no case to answer. It laid counter-charges that the English merchants in Prussia were at odds with one another and levied taxes upon themselves without the sanction of the local authorities. Naturally, little credence was given to this and after Martinmas Hanseatic goods in England were briefly arrested and the customs collectors ordered to levy tunnage and poundage as well as customs. By February 1443 the storm had blown over and the king's council, while renewing its demand for compensation for the merchants, restored the Hanse's immunity from tunnage and poundage. Paradoxically, during 1442 whilst Danzig resisted most of the English claims it joined with other Prussian towns in support of their opposition to the Order's levy of *Pfundzoll* or poundage.[9] It did so because its own citizens also had to pay this charge and because of English and Dutch threats of a trade boycott. Soon afterwards the Order bought off the opposition of its own subjects by agreeing to share the proceeds of the tax with the towns.

A period of three years in which there is virtually no record of the dispute between the English merchants and the Hanseatics serves only to highlight the crisis which developed early in 1446. It has also led to the formulation of the theory that this crisis had its origins solely in English domestic politics.[10] It has been suggested that the new attack on the Hanse was a sop thrown by the faction of the Duke of Suffolk, which dominated the king's council, to the mercantile interest in parliament, in order to prevent it from rallying to the support of the Duke of Gloucester. Whatever the truth in this theory, it must not be forgotten that earlier the government had been totally preoccupied by military disasters in France, while the absence of parliament during two of the three years meant that the merchants lacked a convenient forum for their agitation. This was no new crisis, but simply a resumption of that which had been staved off by the action of the king's council in February 1443. When the time was

[9] *HR*, II (ii), nos. 638, 642, 644, 655, 658, 682–3; (iii), no. 5; (vii), no. 471.
[10] Postan, 'England and the Hanse', pp. 126–7.

ripe the merchants induced the commons to re-present the bill of 1442 which sought to suspend the Hanse franchises, though on this occasion no exception was proposed in favour of the merchants of Cologne.[11] This move may have been made in the fourth and last of the sessions of the parliament of 1445–6, since the king's response was given on 7 February 1446. He agreed to a renewal of the ultimatum that, unless the demands of the English merchants were satisfied, the Hanseatic franchises would be terminated; ample time was allowed for a settlement, since the dead-line was Michaelmas 1447. The length of the fuse may explain the remarkable coolness with which the London Steelyard faced this threat. Instead of immediately demanding that the present Grand Master should confirm the Vorrath treaty, it observed that he was under no legal obligation to do so, since it had been made in the time of his predecessor. Indeed, concern was expressed lest Englishmen acquire too easily rights in Prussia which equated with those which the Hanse had obtained at great cost in England. What it had in mind particularly was the English failure to maintain payments of the financial indemnity promised in the Vorrath treaty. Finally, the Steelyard suggested that the English ultimatum should be countered by a similar one, though expiring at an earlier date, directed against English merchants in Prussia and the Hanse towns. This advice was taken to Prussia in the summer of 1446 by the secretary of the Steelyard. Given that Cologne merchants were prominent in the Steelyard, the official attitude of this community contrasts sharply with that of the city of Cologne, which in the same period wrote to the Grand Master urging him to come to an accommodation with England.[12] All parties were, however, in favour of the Prussians talking with the English and in April 1447 the former prepared instructions for an embassy to England. The envoys reached London in July, but in August reported that they were unable to find anyone to negotiate with, as the king and the great lords were all away.[13] A letter written the same day by Steelyard merchants refers to plans to evacuate their goods from England, since writs of distraint had already been issued and would be served the moment that the Hanse privileges were suspended at Michaelmas.[14] These reports have given rise to

[11] PRO, C49/26/10. Printed in Jenks, *England, die Hanse und Preussen*, pp. 28–30.
[12] *HR*, II (iii), nos. 265–7; (vii), no. 485. [13] *HR*, II (iii), no. 294; (vii), no. 486.
[14] *HR*, II (iii), nos. 286–7, 295. A writ of distraint against Cologne merchants in Colchester had actually been enforced as early as March 1447 by Henry Spicer of Derby. This was an exceptional case, effected through the favour of the Duke of Buckingham.

the belief that the English had no real wish for a peaceful settlement, and were deliberately delaying talks so that the intended confiscations should be provided with a shred of respectability. Another Steelyard letter, written much later, alleges that English merchants had maliciously told their government that the Prussian envoys had incited the King of Denmark to seize English ships in the Sound.[15] Whatever the true attitude of some Englishmen, the main reason for the failure of the negotiations may be gathered from a letter sent by Henry VI to the Grand Master in December 1447.[16] The Prussian delegation simply was not empowered to confirm the Vorrath treaty, which by now was a *sine qua non* of the preservation of Hanseatic liberties in England. This was not merely the result of the opposition of Danzig, for the envoys' instructions show that the attitude of the Teutonic Order was an equally great stumbling block. The Grand Master was quite unwilling to accept any interpretation of the treaty which would prevent him from imposing taxes on English merchants. Since the envoys could only repeat arguments that had been advanced many times in the past there simply was no basis for negotiations.

When the English ultimatum expired the Hanseatic privileges were suspended, though an undertaking was given that they would be restored as soon as Prussia confirmed the treaty. This meant that all Hanse merchants ought to have paid full alien customs and subsidies. Despite threats which it had made only a few months earlier the Hanse did not impose counter-sanctions. This policy of restraint paid dividends, for since the beginning of 1447 England had been faced with a Burgundian ban on imports of its cloth, which soon encouraged the government to reconsider its position *vis-à-vis* the Hanse and to take the initiative in settling the dispute. In February 1448 proclamation was made of an intended embassy to Denmark (to discuss Iceland trade and the Bergen staple) and to the Hanse and Prussia. All who had suffered at the hands of these powers were invited to send details to the Chancery. Commissions were made out for Sir Robert Shottesbrook, Sir John Bek and Dr Richard Caunton on 24 July, but they did not reach Bremen until late October and arranged to have talks with the Hanse and Prussia at Lübeck on 1 March 1449, after conducting their business in Denmark. In the event the Englishmen appear to have postponed their visit to Copenhagen and waited at Lübeck for the negotiations

[15] *HR*, II (iii), no. 464.

[16] *Ibid.*, no. 479.

with the Hanse, which began about the middle of March.[17] The chief obstacle to a successful conclusion of these talks was the very limited powers of the Prussian delegation, which again lacked authority to confirm the Vorrath treaty. Its instructions left no room for misunderstanding as there had been twelve years previously. The English must recognise that, although Prussia would show them 'friendship and accord', these words should not be taken as meaning 'privileges and freedom'. The Prussians were aware that the conference might not reach agreement, and their envoys were instructed that any future talks must be held no further away than Flanders; on no account should they take place in England. In the event it was decided that another conference should be convened in Deventer at midsummer 1451, for which the English demanded the presence of a Prussian delegation equipped with plenary powers bearing the great seal of the Teutonic Order. The Hanse gained the promise that in the interim Hanseatic privileges in England should be reinstated. It also frustrated an English attempt to divide it by excluding Prussia from enjoyment of the franchises, should it continue to withhold ratification of the Vorrath treaty. Lübeck argued that the Hanse's constitution did not allow any of its members to be denied privileges which belonged to the organisation as a whole. It also refused to supply the English envoys with the names of those towns which had declined invitations to attend the present conference.[18] This ploy has been interpreted as part of an English plan either to define membership of the Hanse or alternatively to punish those who hadn't bothered to come, by denying them the use of the franchises.[19]

On 5 April 1449, that is before the end of the Lübeck conference, the English parliament renewed the grant of tunnage and poundage for five years and made it clear that the Hanse merchants were to be charged. In July, a second session of the same parliament imposed a heavy poll tax on alien merchants and again refused to concede Hanseatic immunity.[20] But it was not this which blighted the prospect of better Anglo-Hanseatic relations. Rather, it was the seizure of a great fleet as it passed by the Isle of Wight on 23 May 1449, homeward bound from the Bay. Out of a total haul of 110 to 130 ships, nearly half were Hanseatics, including sixteen belonging to Lübeck and fourteen which were later described as Danzig's

[17] *HR*, II (iii), nos. 460, 463, 465–7, 470, 480, 484. [18] *Ibid.*, nos. 488, 503–5.
[19] W. Stein, 'Die Hanse und England beim Ausgang des hundertjährigen Krieges', *HG*, 26 (1921), 33–5. [20] *Rot. Parl.*, 5, pp. 142–4.

biggest and best hulks.[21] Burgundian ships, crews and cargoes were immediately released, and soon afterwards those of Kampen, a member of the Hanse. The cargoes of the other ships were sold, and the vessels and the crews were pressed into English service. The seizure of the Bay fleet was one of the two most disastrous and ill-considered episodes in the entire history of Anglo-Hanseatic relations, and it is necessary to give some thought to its cause as well as to its consequences. The coup was carried out by Robert Winnington, better known in German sources as Robert de Cane, who a few weeks previously had made an indenture for keeping the seas against the king's enemies and pirates. Since he appears to have received no financial assistance from the crown he was unlikely to have been too scrupulous in his identification of such people. Professor Postan hinted strongly at prior complicity by certain influential members of the king's council, who had naval interests and were also associated with Winnington. This charge has rightly been discounted by C. F. Richmond, who also more generally rejected Postan's view that throughout the 1440s the naval enterprises of these men had been more criminal than otherwise.[22] There is little doubt that the attack on the Bay fleet was unpremeditated and largely fortuitous. It may even have resulted, as Winnington claimed, from simple anger at the refusal of the foreigners to strike their sails in view of the king's arms. It is true that immediately afterwards Winnington sent news of the feat to Thomas Daniell, one of the councillors in question. But his letter is that of a man surprised at his own success, possibly even overwhelmed by the enormity of what he had done and in need of counsel and assistance at the highest level. Thomas Daniell and his colleagues may be cleared of the charge of having planned the attack on the Bay fleet but there can be no doubt about their complicity in the events which followed. There is no direct evidence about the disposal of the Hanseatic cargoes, but years later the Steelyard alleged that the ships were brought up the Thames and salt warehoused even in the king's palace.[23] There is no reason to disbelieve contemporary stories that much of the proceeds found its way into the pockets of the councillors. This was the obstacle which confronted the Germans in

[21] For a description which quotes from many contemporary sources see Stein, 'Die Hanse und England', 48–53.

[22] Postan, *England and the Hanse*, p. 128. C. F. Richmond, 'Royal Administration and the Keeping of the Seas, 1422–85' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1963), pp. 192–204.

[23] *HR*, II (v), no. 263.

their attempts to recover their losses. It is, of course, hardly credible that the men who realised the impossibility of holding on to the captured Burgundian ships believed that they could keep the property of the Hanse without inflicting great damage on the national interest. One may only conclude, therefore, that for the moment national interest was to be sacrificed to the private profit of members of the government and their friends.

The first Englishmen to feel the repercussions of the new policy, or rather the lack of policy, were those who had ventured their property or persons to the Hanse towns. By 18 July 1449 all the Englishmen in Prussia had been arrested; after an initial decision to deport them the authorities decided to hold them as hostages. In August the members of the London Steelyard awaited with trepidation a meeting of the king's council scheduled for 11 September.[24] They felt sure that their own goods would then be seized in retaliation for events in Prussia and Lübeck. Much to their surprise the expected blow did not fall. Professor Postan saw this as evidence that the politicians were surfeited with the spoils of the Bay fleet and had decided to abandon the mercantile interest which they had previously wooed.[25] The truth of the matter is that councillors could not profit from confiscation of goods in the Steelyard, for these would be held in favour of English merchants who had suffered losses abroad. Moreover, the currently desperate situation in English-occupied Normandy meant that it would have been the height of folly to imperil the flow of Baltic naval and military stores. Instead, the council decided to follow the path of diplomacy; on 23 September a commission was issued to Lord Dudley and Thomas Kent, clerk of the council, to treat with Prussia and the Hanse. As a gesture of goodwill the Hanse customs concessions were restored, though on a provisional basis. The new conference was held in Bruges, where Hanseatic envoys were holding talks with the Flemings. On 2 November 1449 the parties signed a provisional agreement that a conference should be held at Utrecht in the following June to settle all outstanding differences. The Hanseatic representatives were unable to accept an English proposal for an immediate release of prisoners, and in any event these seem to have been held only by their side, unless one includes any German sailors still pressed in the English fleet. However, it was thought that if the

[24] *Ibid.*, nos. 436, 557, 559.

[25] Postan, *England and the Hanse*, p. 129.

English government, the Hanse and Prussia accepted the provisional agreement then a truce could be instituted and trade resumed under safe conduct until Martinmas 1450. The Hanse delegates in Flanders were under pressure to accept this compromise, particularly from Cologne. The archbishop of that city received an English pension, while its merchants were not prepared to put their trade in jeopardy. It was made clear that if the Hanse could not negotiate a peace with England then Cologne, which as yet had suffered few losses, would seek to make its own settlement. When the English mission returned home in mid-November, the government ratified the agreement and in December formally reinstated the Hanseatic privileges, but excluded the merchants of Lübeck and Prussia. The latter were offered a safe-conduct to trade without privileges, but this would have been very risky. Englishmen were already seizing ships in retaliation for recent losses; in November, for example, two Danzig hulks were captured while returning home from Lisbon. The compromise arrived at in the autumn of 1449 was due largely to Cologne, whose merchants had most to gain by it, but their willingness to countenance the exception of Prussia and Lübeck weakened the unity of the Hanse.[26]

While the English government accepted the proposal for a meeting at Utrecht, it wanted the date advanced to March 1450, and sent this request to the Grand Master on 20 November. The latter at first agreed (27 January 1450), but a few days later (5 February) wrote again saying that the Prussians would not after all be able to negotiate before June. In fact, on 22 December, before either of the Prussian letters had even been dispatched, the English government asked for yet another change of plan. In place of the general conference with the Hanse, or as a preparation, it suggested talks with Lübeck and Prussia. Both agreed and in February Lübeck issued a safe-conduct for English envoys, valid until midsummer 1450.[27] It is not clear whether the original intention was for the talks with Lübeck and Prussia to be held jointly or separately. However, both seem to have been under the impression that there would be joint talks, and when Lübeck discovered that this was not the case it drew back. History had taught the Hanse to be suspicious of negotiations conducted separately by the Prussians and in the present instance Lübeck had everything to lose by allowing them to

[26] *HR*, II (iii), nos. 561, 563, 567, 570. *Foedera*, V (ii), p. 14.
[27] *Ibid.*, nos. 572–4, 584–5, 611.

go ahead on their own. This was the result of the very unequal bargaining strength of the two cities *vis à vis* England. Lübeck had suffered greatly in the Bay seizure, her losses later being estimated at £19,000 sterling.[28] But since the city was off the beaten track of English trade it had been able to arrest very little property in retaliation. In contrast, Prussia in August 1451 claimed to have lost goods worth 53,776 Prussian marks in the Bay fleet (apart from earlier losses), but admitted to having arrested English goods worth 41,527 marks.[29] Given the natural tendency to exaggerate losses and minimise seizures, it is likely that the score was more or less even. This put Prussia in a strong position to bargain. The English government was not deterred by this, since it was anxious to reach an accommodation. This was because of the intrinsic importance of trade with Prussia and also because a settlement here would enable it to take a hard line against Lübeck's claims. So strongly felt was the need for peace with Prussia that allegedly Kent was told that if he failed to accomplish it his head would be forfeit.[30]

Because of its weaker bargaining position it was imperative for Lübeck to maintain the support of the other towns. It proposed to do this by holding a diet at Bremen in midsummer, where a common policy could be worked out before any talks were held with England. The invitation to the Grand Master to send representatives also asked him to delay talks with the English envoys, should they arrive in Prussia before the conclusion of the Bremen diet. The Prussians declined the invitation and condemned a suggestion that the Hanse should join Burgundy in banning the import of English cloth.[31] They had no wish to find their hands tied by the Hanse, which might be persuaded to introduce trade sanctions or even to wage an all-out war against England. The Prussian fears were well founded, since the Bremen diet, while not coming to a final decision, arranged to meet again at Lübeck on 21 September, when one of the motions was to consider a complete ban on trade with England and on English goods. Safe-conducts issued by Prussia in April 1450 covered not merely official English envoys, but also other merchants and the crews and cargoes of two ships. The combination of diplomacy and trade reduced the cost of the expedition, since merchants were

[28] Claim advanced in October 1461 (25,600 marks of Lübeck). *HR*, II (v), no. 169. In 1465 the figure was given as 125,000 Rhine florins. *HUB*, 9, no. 196.
[29] *HUB*, 8, no. 84.
[30] *HR*, II (iii), no. 669.
[31] *HR*, II (v), nos. 604, 607–8, 614.

willing to pay generously to send goods to Prussia 'in the diplomatic bag'. As well as Englishmen, merchants of Danzig, Cologne and Herzogenbosch ventured cloth. The principal English negotiators were Dr Thomas Kent, John Stocker, merchant of London, and Henry Birmingham, merchant of Lynn, but Thomas Crouch and John Gosselyn of London and William Cateryk of York also had official roles. Even before the expedition sailed, the safe-conduct issued by Lübeck had expired, which made it doubly unfortunate that the ship carrying some of the envoys was captured in the approaches to the Baltic by Lübeck *Bergenfahrer*; the second ship escaped and arrived safely in Danzig. The captors sent the prisoners to Lübeck, but took the cargo to Bergen, where it was confiscated by officials of the Danish crown. Eventually, some was restored to its owners but most was sent to the western Hanse towns to be sold. The following year the Grand Master warned potential buyers not to bring any of the cloth to Prussia, since he would be obliged to restore it to its true owners.[32]

While the capture of the English envoys was fortuitous, their delivery was too much of a temptation to Lübeck, which declined to release them on the grounds that its safe-conduct had long since expired. This action somewhat ruffled the prevailing desire for peace in England. On 1 September the king sent word to the diet about to assemble at Lübeck that he was as anxious as ever for a settlement, but four days later writs were issued for the arrest of Hanseatic goods. The city of Cologne protested at this action, which it did not expect after so many years of labouring in the king's interest. However, much of the property had been released even before receipt of the next communication from the diet dated 16 October, which reached London on 7 November. By the latter date Hans Winter and other merchants resident in England had recovered their goods and had already sent them off to Zeeland. A week later Winter reported that the Hanse merchants had been confirmed in their exemption from tunnage and poundage, except for those of Lübeck, Rostock, Wismar, Stralsund, Hamburg and Danzig. The government welcomed the diet's offer of another conference and agreed to meet Hanse delegates at Utrecht a fortnight after Easter 1451. Lübeck had to be satisfied with a secret resolution that, if the English refused to attend, or if the meeting proved fruitless, then the Hanse

[32] *HR*, II (iii), nos. 594, 596–7. *HUB*, 8, no. 14. *Foedera*, V (ii), p. 26.

would institute a partial trade boycott after Martinmas 1451. Since the diet had been very well attended Lübeck could reasonably claim that the decision had the authority of the entire Hanse. Even Prussia was represented and, having tried and failed to secure the release of the imprisoned envoys, it had little choice but to participate in general negotiations.[33]

Much now depended on the outcome of the Utrecht meeting, but compared with advance preparations for the Hague conference of 1407 the current English preparations were feeble. Instead of carefully concerting all claims for damages the government seems merely to have proclaimed, as late as March 1451, that complainants must go to Utrecht either in person or in proxy to put their cases before the conference. Lübeck still refused to free the envoys unconditionally, but on 17 March it released John Stocker on parole so that he might attend the Utrecht conference. He was sworn to return if the outcome was unsuccessful. Kent, the more important figure, swore to remain as surety for Stocker, but he afterwards fled the city in obscure circumstances. Both Kent and Stocker were included in the commission sealed on 4 May for the English delegation, which was headed by Robert Botill, Prior of the Order of St John. Henry Birmingham and Dr William Witham were also in the party. On the Hanse side those most dedicated to obtaining a peaceful end to the present crisis were Cologne and Prussia. On 25 February the Steelyard wrote to Cologne urging it to send a delegate to the conference who should be thoroughly committed to peace. It reminded the city that the Hanseatic privileges in England had been won originally by the men of Cologne ('dat unse vorvadere uns met groter swarheit in dessem riike gheworven hebben') and they had no wish to lose them because of the intransigence of the north Germans. Prussia was also for peace, but remained unwilling to yield an inch on the question of English privileges. To this end it tried to probe the strength of their case. On 11 January 1451 the Grand Master wrote to Lübeck saying that he had heard that among the papers of the captured envoys were some which purported to prove the English claim to an ancient grant of privileges in Prussia. While knowing full well that these could not be authentic, he asked that the documents, or copies of them, be sent to him. Lübeck preferred to keep the Prussians in suspense. The Prussian towns briefed their delegates at

[33] *CPR*, 1446–54, p. 430. *HR*, II (iii), nos. 642, 651, 659, 666, 669–70, 701. *HUB*, 8, no. 1.

a provincial diet in April. They had full power to negotiate about any damage committed by either side, both before and since the seizure of the Bay fleet. They were forbidden to discuss the matter of privileges and were to state formally that the English should enjoy nothing more than the traditional rights afforded to all aliens visiting Prussia. Should the latter raise old charges, such as their being driven from their houses into cellars, they were simply to say that all these points had been answered in earlier negotiations. Additionally, the envoys were equipped with a set of secret instructions. They were to try to secure the formal release of the English envoys; if the conference could not reach a complete settlement of differences the Prussians were to work for a twenty-year truce on the basis of the *status quo*; if all else failed they could make a separate agreement with England that trade between the two countries should continue under safe-conducts for three or four years, provided that England respected Prussian neutrality in its struggle with France.[34]

The Utrecht conference was dogged by bad luck even before it began. The Prussian delegates were captured and for a while imprisoned in Mecklenburg, while those of Cologne had to wait a week before the arrival of any others and were prevented from leaving only by the entreaties of some English merchants in the town. When the two sides first came together on 28 May the Lübeck delegates refused to attend because of the presence of Thomas Kent, so the city was represented by Frank Keddeken, the Flemish lawyer who had assisted Vorrath in 1437. Only when it became clear that the English delegation was not quorate without Kent did the Lübeckers reluctantly join the discussions. The English then dropped another bombshell by refusing to continue until Kent and Stocker were formally released from imprisonment and their goods and papers restored. This Lübeck refused to do, despite pressure from Cologne, Prussia and elsewhere. An attempt to persuade the English to discuss the question of damages without the participation of Lübeck also failed. The only thing salvaged from the Utrecht talks was a provisional agreement made on 12 June to hold another meeting on 24 April 1452. If this was confirmed then trade might continue during a truce until Michaelmas 1452. Both sides already laid down certain preconditions for a final settlement. The English insisted that

[34] *CCR*, 1447–54, p. 267. *HR*, II (iii), nos. 687, 691, 694–5, 697, 702, 708.

there could be no peace treaty without the freeing of all prisoners held by Lübeck and Prussia, whether physically detained there, already released on parole, or freed in return for financial sureties. They also demanded the return of at least half the goods arrested in Prussia. A Lübeck and Prussian precondition was the release of any people and all property detained in England. Before the next conference the good offices of the Steelyard were to be enlisted to weigh the losses and confiscations on either side, and wherever possible to effect an amicable conclusion between individual merchants. The English delegation also asked the Germans to urge Lübeck to temper its harshness to the remaining prisoners, now said to be held in chains, and Prussia to make available part of the confiscated property to sustain destitute merchants still under arrest in that land.[35]

According to Stein, the Utrecht conference of 1451 was deliberately sabotaged by the English, who did not wish to pay compensation or restore the Hanse franchises.[36] From their point of view the postponement of a settlement was a successful outcome. They achieved this with the connivance of Cologne and Prussia, who sold out Lübeck and damaged the unity of the Hanse. Prussia was satisfied that trade should continue without its having to make concessions. Cologne was not unhappy that the northern and eastern wings of the Hanse were unreconciled with England, since this maximised the value of its own trade. For Stein, only Lübeck emerged from the episode with honour, since it was the one party to resist the blackmailing tactics devised to secure the release of Thomas Kent. This analysis is weakened by the fact that it disregards a number of important considerations. There was an apparently widespread and genuine desire for peace in England, much of the Hanse already had *de facto* enjoyment of its franchises, and an attempt to settle the question of damages should start within a few weeks. The tacit abandonment for the time being of the English demand for reciprocity of privileges was itself an important concession. Stein rightly emphasised that the Utrecht agreement marked the beginning of a period of increasing isolation of Lübeck from the rest of the Hanse, but it should be added that this was largely of its own making. The English government informed the Steelyard of its acceptance of the agreement as early as 22 July 1451, while the Prussian diet voted to accept it on 6 August. Lübeck did

[35] *HUB*, 8, nos. 40, 47. *HR*, II (iii), nos. 709–12.
[36] Stein, 'Die Hanse und England', 90.

not make known its decision until September, after the deadline agreed at Utrecht. It then announced that it would not participate in another conference unless it received prior satisfaction for its losses in the Bay fleet and unless Kent and Stocker returned to captivity. This was tantamount to an outright rejection of the recent agreement and led to a flurry of correspondence in other sections of the Hanse. On 24 September Cologne wrote to Henry VI regretting Lübeck's reluctance to endorse the Utrecht decision and emphasising its own wish for peace. On 28 October the Grand Master wrote to the king saying that he would honour the agreement so long as the latter maintained his safe-conduct for Prussian merchants. He also wrote to Cologne and Hamburg expressing the hope that, despite the absence of Lübeck, all the other parties would reconvene at Utrecht. Coincidentally, the Steelyard wrote to Cologne on the same day in a similar vein. The foreboding of the Steelyard, Prussia and Cologne that England would use Lübeck's decision as an excuse to renounce the Utrecht agreement was unfounded. No move was made against the ships and merchants of Prussia, Cologne, Hamburg, Bremen and other towns which, expecting ratification, had returned to England in considerable numbers in the autumn. Trade continued throughout the winter and all Hanse towns save Lübeck were allowed the franchises. In November 1451 Danzig advised all Prussian and Livonian ships then in the west to form convoys for mutual protection. However, it was not from England alone, or even primarily, that trouble was expected. The fear was that Lübeck would persuade Denmark to close the Sound to all ships carrying English goods and thus imperil the homeward voyages of Prussian vessels.[37]

Pressure continued to be put on Lübeck to take part in the Utrecht conference. In November a diet of the Zuider Zee towns demanded that she should either agree to attend or else convene a Hanse diet in Nijmegen or Deventer by February 1452 at the latest. In fact a diet was held in February, but at Lübeck where it was very poorly attended, and relations with England were scarcely considered. These stonewalling tactics had the desired effect of sabotaging the Utrecht conference. England had conceded that it should go ahead without Lübeck, provided that Prussia and Cologne could guarantee the presence of enough towns to make it worth while. In mid-April 1452 the Grand Master announced that he

[37] *HUB*, 8, no. 100. *HR*, II (v), nos. 5, 14, 17–18, 20, 34, 42; (vii), no. 526.

would not send a representative, since the condition could not be satisfied. However, he promised to carry on working for a settlement and requested an extension of the truce until Michaelmas 1453. In June, Henry VI agreed to this, provided that he was given a new date for the conference by the coming Michaelmas, and provided also that any Hanse towns which wished to be included in the truce sent their own safe-conducts for English merchants.[38]

Lübeck was able to prevent the conference from taking place in 1452 because a majority of the Hanse was not yet ready to act on the political front without its acknowledged leader. But it could no longer galvanise the membership into supporting trade sanctions or military action against England and, as predicted, turned instead to Denmark. The long-standing dispute between England and Denmark about Iceland trade had been provisionally resolved in 1449, but the Danes had not ratified the treaty and declined to extend the truce when it expired in 1451. Denmark then closed the Sound to English ships, though English merchants continued to export cloth in Prussian vessels. At first the Danes turned a blind eye to this, but in April 1452 they stopped ships in the Sound and confiscated English-owned goods. The King of Denmark informed the Grand Master that the same treatment would be meted out to any vessel which tried to pass through the Belt. This action coincided exactly with the decision of Lübeck to stop the overland passage from Hamburg to the Baltic, by outlawing all English-made cloth from its territory. Lübeck did not stop there, for in May it sent to sea two ships under the command of Bartholomew Voet, the famous privateer of the 1420s. Unfortunately, he was no more discriminating now than then and, under the pretext of searching for cloth, robbed many innocent vessels. When this elicited not merely protests from other Hanse towns and the Dutch but also threats of retaliation, the privateers had quickly to be recalled. The ban on English-made cloth remained, but began to be circumvented by movement from Hamburg to the Baltic port of Neustadt in the duchy of Holstein.[39]

Throughout the summer of 1452 many components of the Hanse laboured in the interests of a settlement. The Steelyard reported that the peace party was still strong in England and the king's council was especially friendly towards Cologne. The Zuider Zee towns informed Lübeck that they had no intention of breaking off trade, and again demanded a general diet. Cologne told the king that every

[38] *HR*, II (iv), nos. 41, 55–6, 79, 102.
[39] *HUB*, 8, nos. 122–3, 128, 159, 261. *HR*, II (iv), nos. 24, 69–71, 80–81.

town except Lübeck was eager for the conference, though even she might be won over, and it would go ahead without her if necessary. Early in September, however, the Grand Master regretfully conceded that it would be impossible to fix a firm date in time to meet the Michaelmas deadline. He was optimistic that agreement could be reached by Purification (2 February 1453) and hoped that England would therefore confirm the renewal of the truce until that date. This proposal did not reach the king until 18 October, while his acceptance of the new timetable, sent on 8 November, reached Marienburg on Christmas Day. By this last date Cologne, Hamburg and the Zuider Zee towns had accepted a Prussian invitation to confer with England at Utrecht on 23 April 1453. Unfortunately, three days later Lübeck pulled off a master stroke by convening a general diet at Lübeck on 22 April to discuss the Netherlands staple. Since this matter was equally as important as relations with England, Prussia saw no alternative but to request yet another postponement of the Utrecht conference and an extension of the truce until Michaelmas 1453. In return it promised to send representatives to the diet, who would press the assembled towns to make a resolution about England and also try to persuade Lübeck to lift its own boycott on English cloth. The English government received the set-back with apparent good grace in March, promised to continue its safe-conduct as long as Englishmen were protected in return and endorsed the plan for Prussian participation in the diet. The Steelyard wrote to Danzig advising that all towns represented at the diet be reminded to submit their claims for damages against England. So far only Prussia and Kampen had done so and it was to be feared that, when the conference finally met, the English might refuse to consider any claims which had not been notified in advance.[40]

When the Hanse diet finally met at Lübeck at the end of May there was a strong Prussian presence, made up of a personal representative of the Grand Master and others from Danzig and Elbing to speak for the towns. Nevertheless, the English business hardly figured on the agenda and general attendance was so poor that it was necessary to arrange for a further session to be held at Bremen in October to continue discussions about the Netherlands staple. Danzig wrote to Cologne, Hamburg, Brunswick, Nijmegen and Bremen urging them all to send representatives to the next

[40] *HUB*, 8, no. 180. *HR*, II (iv), nos. 87, 122, 133, 135, 150, 154.

session, armed with powers to commit the diet to a conference with England. It pointed out that when the truce expired at Michaelmas Hanseatic trade would once more be in jeopardy. With this in mind the Grand Master wrote to Henry VI asking that he extend the truce for three years in favour of Prussia. The city of Danzig apparently thought such a move impolitic and forbade the Steelyard to deliver the letter to the king, but suggested that it make a similar request on behalf of all members of the Hanse who were not at enmity with England. The consequence was that on 28 August 1453 the truce was extended until Michaelmas 1456, in favour of all towns except Lübeck. When the Steelyard sent a sealed copy of the safe-conduct to Danzig, it pointed out that at the end of the first session of the current parliament (28 March 1453) the commons had made the king a life-time grant of tunnage and poundage, to commence when the present grant expired on 3 April 1454. The terms of the grant included the ending of Hanse immunity. This decision was doubtless influenced by the fact that denizen cloth exports were intended to be made liable to poundage for the first time since 1436, though in the event denizen liability was cancelled before the new grant took effect. The Steelyard officials hoped that the king would use his dispensing power in their favour, but proposed not to ask for this until parliament was dissolved. The dissolution came at Easter 1454, and in the following June, with retrospection to 3 April, the king freed all Hansards, except those of Lübeck, from paying tunnage and poundage for three years and also exempted them from the current alien poll tax.[41]

The Hanse diet which was to have been held in Bremen in October 1453 was postponed until December and transferred to Lübeck; attendance was again sparse and business largely confined to the Netherlands. However, Lübeck finally agreed to confer with England, either in Lübeck itself or in Hamburg, and suggested the following May as the date. Stein saw this as a corollary to growing unrest in Prussia, which promoted self-confidence in Lübeck and encouraged the city once more to assert its leadership of the Hanse.[42] The proposed conference did not take place, because the outbreak of civil war prevented the attendance of the Prussians, without whom there could be no final settlement. At this point the towns of Prussia renounced their allegiance to the Order and accepted the suzerainty of the King of Poland, in the expectation of a greater measure of

[41] *Rot. Parl.*, 5, pp. 228, 230. *HR*, II (iv), nos. 168, 170, 177, 236. *HUB*, 8, nos. 196, 285.
[42] Stein, 'Die Hanse und England', 116.

independence. They then became anxious that England might exclude them from the current truce, since the safe-conduct recently sent to Prussia referred to merchants within the dominion of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order. Their fears were unfounded; as early as 25 April 1454 the Steelyard obtained a new version of the safe-conduct and sent it to Danzig. In return Englishmen trading with Prussia were issued with safe-conducts for up to twelve years – a clear sign of the desire for peace. Further movement towards a settlement came during a Hanse diet held at Lübeck in July 1454. The city used this occasion to lift its ban on English-made cloth. This brought no immediate benefit to English merchants, but the clothiers gained indirectly from the breathing space provided for Hanse exporters. In the conflict between the Prussian towns and the Teutonic Order the King of Denmark had supported the Knights and this had put voyages through the Sound at risk. Now Prussian merchants could send cloth via Hamburg and Lübeck. More importantly, the diet proposed that an Anglo-Hanseatic peace conference should be held at Lübeck or Hamburg in September. Both the shortness of the notice and the preferred venues suggest that the diet was probing English intentions, rather than seriously expecting the meeting to take place. The reply, delayed until 5 December, pointed out that Lübeck was 'manifeste inimicorum nostrorum sede', while Hamburg was equally unacceptable. Instead, the Hanse was invited to send envoys to England.[43] There was virtually no prospect of this invitation being taken up, not the least of the problems being that of determining who was qualified to speak for Prussia. It appears, therefore, that the door was firmly closed against negotiations – a view supported by the fact that neither side suggested another time and place. This does not mean that England or even any section of the Hanse was seeking to fan the embers of the conflict. There was no guarantee that a definitive peace would emerge from any meeting. It might, like earlier conferences, fail to settle the huge financial claims advanced by each side; in that event trade sanctions or even war might be renewed. Obviously, those with the greatest vested interest in a full-scale conference dedicated to the settlement of financial claims were merchants who had been ruined by the seizure of the Bay fleet or subsequent reprisals. Any who had since mended their fortunes, as well as a new generation of merchants, were more concerned with the preservation of existing

[43] *HUB*, 8, no. 354. *HR*, II (iv), nos. 235, 263, 304.

trade. For the fact was that with the passing of time trade had begun to recover and with the exception of Lübeck the Hanse was enjoying its franchises on a *de facto* basis. What was needed for a further improvement of trade was not a set-piece conference of doubtful value, but a prolongation of the existing truce. The English government was agreeable to this and, although it did not formally make the first move, it privately made its thoughts known to the other side. The go-between was Henry Grevenstein, clerk of the Steelyard, who in December 1454 carried the invitation for Hanseatic envoys to come to England. When this was turned down, Grevenstein journeyed through the Hanse towns, searching for a peace formula. The first to commit itself, in June 1455, was Danzig, although this was probably because it was the furthest point in Grevenstein's travels. From then on he was returning to England enlisting support as he came. Danzig suggested a truce of eight to ten years during which time the Hanse should enjoy its franchises, while the King of Poland would grant a safe-conduct to English merchants. Hamburg accepted this at the end of July, while a similar proposal from Cologne was dated 9 September. At the end of October England sent word that it was prepared to agree to a long truce, but only after Lübeck formally freed the envoys captured in 1450. When this was done, in January 1456, the last remaining obstacle to a *rapprochement* was removed and in February the government proclaimed an eight-year truce with the whole of the Hanse including Lübeck. During this period all the towns were to be free from tunnage and poundage.[44]

Lübeck's act of statesmanship might, given time, have solved many problems. The longer the truce could be maintained the less likely was either side to take unilateral action to redress old wrongs. In the interim some claims might be settled privately in the law courts and eventually any which were left would cease to be a serious issue, though they would undoubtedly be regarded as a bargaining counter for a very long time. Some gains were reaped from the truce by the Hanse merchants almost immediately, for without it they must surely have suffered the same fate as Italians during the anti-alien riots of 1456–7. There is, however, no record of any attempt to turn the London mob against the Germans at this time. Unfortunately, the period of tranquillity which was needed to restore good

[44] *HR*, II (iv), nos. 355, 362, 364–5, 399–400, 450–1. *Foedera*, V (ii), p. 66.

Anglo-Hanseatic relations was soon sabotaged by yet another outrageous action perpetrated by the English side. The blow was struck on 29 July 1458 when the Calais fleet seized eighteen ships of Lübeck, on the grounds that they had refused to salute the English flag. Bearing in mind that Calais had been held by the Earl of Warwick as a Yorkist stronghold since 1456, Lübeck may have expected greater sympathy than it eventually received from the Lancastrian government. The latter's attitude resulted partly from indifference, since Warwick's treatment of aliens was among the least of the government's charges against him, and partly from the sheer impossibility of disciplining him. A commission of enquiry was set up as early as 31 July and in October Warwick came to London to give evidence. On 9 November the earl narrowly escaped with his life from a brawl in Westminster Hall; whereupon he beat a hasty retreat to Calais. In February 1459 the government informed Lübeck that its sailors had only themselves to blame for their misfortune, though it promised to obtain the release of prisoners. Warwick's own letter to the city, sent in April, was in similar vein. Because of this lack of concern, and despite Danzig's plea that nothing should be done to break the truce, in March 1460 Lübeck ships seized a Guernsey vessel. The owners then requested letters of marque against Lübeck, Danzig and Hamburg, alleging that sailors of the latter two towns had participated in the attack.[45]

Despite the seizure of the Lübeck ships and minor injuries allegedly inflicted on other merchants, including some from Danzig and Cologne, the eight years truce held until the deposition of Henry VI.[46] This threw everything into the melting pot. Edward IV took possession of the realm on 3 March 1461 and a few weeks later the Steelyard sent word to Lübeck that steps must be taken to renew the truce and obtain a confirmation of the franchises.[47] This was easier said than done, for vested interests soon began to speak out against the Hanse. Because of his constitutional position there was no question of Edward alienating potential English allies by an early confirmation of the Hanse franchises. Instead, he decided that they should be allowed on a *de facto* basis until 2 February 1462.[48] He also demanded to know the names of all towns which claimed to enjoy

[45] *HR*, II (iv), nos. 666, 670. *HUB*, 8, nos. 769, 780, 963, 965. *Foedera*, V (ii), p. 82. P. M. Kendall, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (London, 1957), p. 50.
[46] *HUB*, 8, nos. 946, 972. [47] HR, II (v), no. 117.
[48] This step was probably taken on 9 July 1461. *HR*, II (v), nos. 147, 263. *HUB*, 8, no. 1067.

them, together with the names of their temporal overlords. These towns were to give an undertaking that they would urge their lords to behave amicably towards Edward. The king's own subjects were told that he would deal with the question of the franchises when parliament met in November. This gave both sides several months to organise campaigns for and against confirmation. The English had somehow or other to reconcile several interests which were not totally compatible. In the first place, the Baltic merchants revived their clamour for reciprocity in Prussia and, according to a Hanse source, still demanded access to Poland and Russia. If their own demands were conceded this group would not support any movement for the total abolition of the Hanse franchises. On the other hand the latter was the ambition of most English overseas merchants without a stake in the Baltic. Among these the most important group was the fellowship of Merchant Adventurers, who frequented the Brabant fairs. But the Hanse was represented as a rival to all Englishmen who traded with Holland, Zeeland, Brabant, Flanders, Hainault, the Bay and 'other countries adjoining'. All of these interests were referred to in a petition addressed to 'the right worshipful and descrete commons' in the first parliament of Edward IV, which demanded that the Hanse franchises 'be utterly restreyned and putte in suspence' for the time being.[49] All were also mentioned in a letter sent on 16 July from the Steelyard, advising the Bruges *Kontor* of the gathering clouds in England.[50] This letter described the hostility of the city of London, which had revived its complaint that the exercise of the Hanse franchises was a derogation of its own liberties. The current campaign had begun even before the deposition of Henry VI and, amongst other grievances, the city had resurrected its ancient claim about Bishopgate. It was probably in a vain attempt to buy off opposition in this quarter that in February 1461 the Steelyard gave a freewill offering of £20 to a tax quota of

[49] PRO, C49/52/8(2). Printed in Jenks, *England, die Hanse und Preussen*, appendix 1, pp. 1–4. Jenks dates the document as 'late 1440s or early 1450s'. My reasons for disagreeing with this date are as follows. It refers back to the parliament of 1442, but identifies it by *anno Domini* instead of the regnal year. While Henry VI still reigned this form would have bordered on *lèse-majesté*. The first parliament of Edward IV condemned all three Lancastrian kings as usurpers and its records referred to years of their 'pretended reigns'. Such language might have been considered over bold in a petition drawn up by mere merchants (and the political situation was still fluid), but the drafters would no doubt be aware of the Yorkist feelings. Dating by *anno Domini* was neutral and avoided the question of the legitimacy of Henry VI's reign. The date 1461 is therefore suggested.

[50] *HR*, II (v), no. 147.

Dowgate ward. Shortly before parliament assembled the city delegated men to concert the campaign against the Hanse and voted funds for their expenses.[51]

At this critical time the Hanse was again divided about tactics. Danzig and Cologne pressed Lübeck to disregard the latest attack on its trade in order to participate in talks about the franchises. This Lübeck refused to do so long as its losses of 1449 were unsatisfied. Hamburg urged the futility of trying to get a definitive settlement as long as civil war continued in Prussia and argued that until that ended the Hanse should look for nothing more than an extension of the truce and continued *de facto* enjoyment of the franchises. Cologne asked that if the king could not yet confirm the franchises he should guarantee them until at least Michaelmas 1462, since the February deadline afforded insufficient security. In fact, on 22 December, immediately after parliament was prorogued, Edward extended the guarantee until Christmas 1462. The Steelyard claimed credit for this, but said that it had been achieved only with great difficulty and the distribution of bribes amounting to 1,300 nobles. It predicted that in the face of parliamentary opposition no further extension would be granted.[52]

The Steelyard now began to lobby support for a full-scale embassy to be sent to England after a Hanse diet. This plan was endorsed by the Zuider Zee towns meeting at Wesel in March 1462. Hamburg again held out hopes of nothing more ambitious than a three-year extension of the truce. Lübeck, of course, was resolutely opposed. In July the clerk of the Steelyard came to a diet at Lübeck, bringing with him documents setting out current grievances of his members and a history of relations over the past few years. It was hoped that these would form the basis of a case to be put by ambassadors, but the diet could not be persuaded to lend its authority. Time was now running out so the Steelyard had once more to appeal to the Zuider Zee towns, which reluctantly agreed to conduct negotiations by themselves. The envoys provided by Cologne and Nijmegen did not arrive in England until December, and the Steelyard later complained that failure to reach agreement before the franchises expired at Christmas cost its members very dearly. In fact, because of the stiff opposition of English merchants agreement was not reached until March 1463. The government now agreed to a *de facto*

[51] *Letter Book* L, p. 76. *HUB*, 8, nos. 1003–4. *HR*, II (v), nos. 146, 263.
[52] *HR*, II (v), nos. 166–70, 175, 179, 263. *HUB*, 8, no. 1110.

extension of privileges until midsummer 1465 in favour of the citizens of any towns which behaved reasonably towards Englishmen. A further condition was that the Zuider Zee towns should continue to lobby for a full-scale conference to settle all outstanding differences between England and the Hanse and between England and Denmark.[53] While the franchises were continued a campaign was mounted to see that they were limited to *bona fide* Hanseatic merchants. The king's legal officers seem to have scrutinised the ancient charters and revived the idea that only members of the London Gildhall were entitled to enjoy the franchises. Membership was attested by a certificate issued by the 'aldermannus et communes mercatores regni Allemannie habentes domum in civitate London que Guyldehalla Theutoniconum vulgariter nuncupator in eadem civitate nunc existentes'.[54]

The demands of the western Hanse towns for a conference were now supported by Danzig, and in August 1463 Lübeck agreed to take part in talks with England at midsummer in the following year, either at Lübeck or Hamburg. Cologne tried unsuccessfully to get the venue changed to one of the Zuider Zee towns, on the grounds that the English would refuse to come to either of the two places suggested. In fact, Cologne's concern may have been chiefly for the safety of its own delegates. The city was in dispute with the King of Denmark, who in February 1463 rejected a request for safe-conducts for Cologne envoys to attend a northern conference. In the event Edward IV agreed to negotiate at Hamburg and, as early as March 1464, commissions were made out for a strong team, consisting of Richard Caunton, archdeacon of Salisbury, Henry Sharp, doctor of laws and king's protonotary, and seven merchants, none of whom were Londoners. A few weeks later, the two leaders and two of the merchants were also commissioned to treat with the kings of Denmark and Poland. The English party crossed to the continent in good time, but while waiting at Bruges for letters of safe-conduct it was notified that plague had broken out at Hamburg. The sincerity of the desire for a comprehensive peace treaty is suggested by the envoys' offer to go to Hamburg as arranged or to an alternative place. However, this was not to be, for the Hanseatics called off the meeting and suggested that they should try again the following year. Plague was not the only reason for the cancellation, as Cologne later explained. The Prussians could not take part because they were too

[53] *HR*, II (v), nos. 212, 218, 220, 254, 263, 282–5. *HUB*, 8, nos. 1234, 1236. *Foedera*, V (ii), p. 113.

[54] See below pp. 378–80.

much involved in peace discussions between the King of Poland and the Teutonic Order, while the King of Denmark was away campaigning in Sweden.[55]

Because of economic problems in other quarters, including a new cloth boycott imposed by Burgundy in October 1464, England remained keen on a settlement with the Hanse and in January 1465 floated the idea of a meeting in the following June, either at Utrecht or in some other place no further from England. If this offer was accepted then the Hanse privileges would be renewed for a further two years in favour of all towns which gave their own safe-conduct to English merchants. In April safe-conducts were issued by the King of Poland, Danzig and Stralsund, despite Danzig's contention that they were not really necessary since a state of friendship existed between the two sides. It was agreed that the venue for the conference should be Hamburg, and this time it did take place, although because of two postponements asked for by the English it was delayed until the middle of September. Amongst other problems the Count of Oldenburg declined to issue safe-conducts for the envoys of England and Cologne to pass through his territory *en route* from Utrecht to Hamburg. The conference got off to a poor start, partly because of language difficulties but more importantly because it soon appeared that the English delegates were not empowered to offer compensation for old injuries. Lübeck and its allies saw little point in continuing and it was only the persistence of Cologne and the representatives of the London Steelyard, with some support from Danzig and Hamburg, which kept things going until a compromise was reached. The memoranda of each side's understanding of the compromise are substantially in agreement, though they contain significant differences of detail. The offer subsequently made by the English government differed yet again. The Hanse version began with the statement that the English ambassadors and the merchants of the Steelyard would endeavour to persuade the king to agree to a resumption of talks at Whitsun 1467 in any Hanse town. Each side was to send envoys armed with plenipotentiary powers to discuss and settle all outstanding claims for damages. The king was to inform the Hanse of his acceptance by Whitsun 1466. If he accepted, then the current truce, which was due to expire at Martinmas (11 November), should be extended for one, two, three or five years. If the king would not agree to the proposed conference then the current truce should

[55] *HUB*, 9, no. 119. *HR*, II (v), nos. 352, 354, 538–41, 564, 566, 570, 583. *Foedera*, V (ii), pp. 122–3.

be extended for one year and a new five-year truce should commence at midsummer 1466. Throughout this period the Hanse should enjoy their franchises in England and neither side was to use force to recoup outstanding damages. The English version began with the suggestion of a five-year truce from midsummer 1466, during which time both sides should enjoy their accustomed rights and liberties and refrain from pursuing old grievances. England was to be notified of all towns which were members of the Hanse and no others were to be allowed the franchises. Then came the proposal for a conference at Whitsun 1467, though this was to be held in any Hanse town or Utrecht as the king might choose. Even if he was not prepared to talk, the five-year truce should operate.[56]

The English government took until March 1466 to make a formal offer of a five-year truce (to midsummer 1471), though this was qualified by a proviso that the franchises would be suspended at the end of the first two years if the Hanse had not by then sent envoys to a peace conference in England. Lübeck refused to participate, on the grounds that it had been agreed that negotiations should be conducted in a Hanse town. In March 1467 the Steelyard reported to Hamburg that the king's council was impatient about the lack of response to the invitation and recommended that a decision should be made quickly. The secretary of the Steelyard spent much of that summer travelling around the northern and eastern towns trying to win them over, but in November Lübeck and its allies were still refusing to negotiate in England. As early as May 1467 the city of Cologne had suggested itself as a venue for the conference, in the hope that this would be acceptable to Edward IV, but when the proposal was formally put to him in December he turned it down. Nevertheless, in March 1468 Edward extended the privileges until midsummer 1469, provided that the Hanse sent envoys to England within that time. Once again the secretary of the Steelyard began his weary circuit of the towns in an attempt to get them to accept the English conditions. However, his efforts were frustrated by the beginning of the most serious dispute in the entire history of Anglo-Hanseatic relations.[57]

The outbreak of war between England and the Hanse is commonly seen as a consequence of the Anglo-Burgundian commercial treaty of November 1467. It is argued that England could not afford to be at odds with two of the leading trading powers of Europe at the same

[56] *HR*, II (v), nos. 645–8, 652, 654, 674, 676, 685, 712–14. *Foedera*, V (ii), pp. 130–1.
[57] *HUB*, 9, nos. 310, 350, 387, 415, 433–4. *HR*, II (v), nos. 469–70; (vi), nos. 49, 55.

time, but that having made peace with Burgundy it could take a stronger line with the Hanse. There may be some truth in this for, though it must not be supposed that the new accord with Burgundy in itself caused England to seek a confrontation with the Hanse, it may well have encouraged her to persist with a course of action in which she was manifestly in the wrong. In October 1465 the English envoys sent to Hamburg had made a peace treaty with Denmark, in which *inter alia* Edward IV undertook to prevent his subjects from going to Iceland. At first, neither he nor the King of Denmark tried to enforce this, since both profited by selling licences of exemption. But, after the murder of the governor of Iceland by Englishmen in 1467, the King of Denmark changed tack and in June 1468 seized seven English ships in the Sound. He may have thought that this action would go unchallenged, since he immediately issued a statement saying that he had arrested some Lynn ships to answer for atrocities committed by men of that town, but that all other English vessels could continue to use the Sound. In fact only two of the ships belonged to Lynn and the English were not disposed to treat the matter lightly, as they soon showed. Little could be done to recover the losses directly, since hardly any Danes ventured goods to England. Therefore, revenge was taken against the Hanse, on the pretext that they were implicated in the incident. It was alleged that Germans sailing from England shortly before their rivals had given notice of their coming, while some Hanse vessels actually took part in the outrage. German historians have tended to discount these claims, on the grounds that the only Hanseatics then in Danish service were ships of Danzig, which were away in Swedish waters. However, it is all but indisputable that some Danzig ships were involved in the attack, while a few English witnesses even swore to the presence of Lübeck and Stralsund ships, though their complicity can probably be ruled out. Of course, aggression by Danzig ships sailing under Danish colours in no way justified the subsequent action taken in England. Reprisals were not altogether unexpected and, long before the news reached England, the Danzig authorities were writing to the Steelyard absolving the city of responsibility. It disclaimed its citizens already in Danish service and cautioned all others to stay out of the conflict.[58]

The ordeal of the Hanse merchants began on 23 July 1468 when officials of the Steelyard were notified that on the following day they

[58] *HUB*, 9, 468, 471. *HR*, II (vi), no. 95. *Foedera*, V (ii), pp. 134–5.

must defend themselves before king and council against charges of complicity in the attack in the Sound. The Chancellor brushed aside their privileges and demanded sureties of £20,000 (the alleged total of English losses) as an alternative to the arrest of the merchants and their property. Since no Englishmen were willing to provide sureties the council at first accepted personal recognisances, but soon reversed that decision. On 28 July orders were given that all Hanseatics and their property be arrested and placed in safe custody until 6 October, when the council would consider the matter again. The following day all the residents of the Steelyard were imprisoned in the Ludgate counter. The next day again all those born in Cologne were released, on the grounds that their city was itself in conflict with Denmark. However, they had to promise not to leave the country and at first their property remained under arrest. The other merchants were held in detention for three weeks, until they were blackmailed into lending the king £1,000; so that they could raise the money, goods to the value of 2,000 marks were restored to them. The loan was to be repaid at Michaelmas 1469, either to the merchants themselves, should they be found innocent of complicity, or to their English accusers in part satisfaction of losses. In the event the verdict of the king's council on 21 November 1468 went against the Hanse, which was ordered to pay £20,000 compensation. Only the Cologne merchants were relieved of any contribution to this payment. On 5 December 1468 the Hanseatics were again committed to prison for non-payment of the damages awarded against them, and there they remained until the following April. Punitive measures were also taken against Hanse merchants who arrived in England after the original arrest, or sent merchandise or ships there before news of the disaster had been widely circulated. Two Prussian ships arriving at London, two at Lynn, two at Hull and one at Newcastle were confiscated and the crews detained, in some cases throughout the winter, as was one Lübeck ship at Lynn. By the spring the futility of keeping the Hansards in confinement must have been obvious. Moreover, Edward ran the risk of losing the sympathy of his Burgundian ally if he persisted on the present course. The first appeals on behalf of the merchants had come from the Emperor, German princes and urban authorities, while the King of Denmark had also acknowledged that they had no share in his guilt. In October 1468 the Bruges *Kontor* decided that it was then inopportune to ask the Duke of Burgundy to intercede, but on 2 February 1469

the duke appealed for clemency for the prisoners. A few days later the *vier leden* of Flanders wrote to the king in much stronger terms, protesting that his illegal and unjust behaviour was a threat to the entire world of trade ('reipublice communis mercature'). Such criticism stung the English government into drawing up a 'justification' of its sentence upon the Hanseatics, copies of which were sent to Flanders and other interested parties at the end of March. About the same time the prisoners were released after agreeing that 4,000 nobles should be raised from their goods, which by then had been valued at £3,550.[59] It was proposed to restore the residue and allow them to trade freely until 31 August, provided that the Hanse agreed to negotiate in the interim. In May the Hanseatic privileges, which were due to expire at midsummer, were extended until that date. This was done mainly for the benefit of the Cologners, though the usual *douceurs* and fees to government officials were met out of Steelyard funds.[60]

When it comes to allocating responsibility for the events described above, historians have tended to maintain that the king was unduly influenced by Warwick and his brother, the Earl of Northumberland, who was part owner of one of the ships seized by the Danes. Mercantile and popular hostility to the Hanseatics was also involved. There was some looting of their goods, while an envoy sent by the Emperor to plead for clemency was assaulted in London. On the other hand, William Caxton, governor of the English Merchant Adventurers in the Low Countries, wrote to the government condemning the actions taken against their rivals. A petition, allegedly emanating from Gloucestershire cloth workers, was submitted in their favour and claimed that sales had fallen because of the absence of Hanse buyers. The latter testimonial was not unsolicited and the Steelyard had to dip into its coffers to get support for it. By then, however, the Steelyard community had been virtually destroyed by the actions of the Cologners, who must share much of the responsibility for the fate of their erstwhile colleagues. On previous occasions Cologne merchants had ignored collective decisions and continued to trade in England in times of dispute, but never with such disregard for the consequences as now. As we have already seen, the Cologne merchants were not detained with the

[59] Or £5,550 in another source. *HUB*, 9, no. 569; *HR*, II (vi), no. 185.

[60] *HUB*, 9, nos. 467, 478–82, 501–7, 509, 511, 515, 524, 527–8, 530, 549, 554, 569–70, 577, 582. *HR*, II (vi), nos. 111, 165, 185.

others and were allowed access to their chambers in the Steelyard. In October 1468 they received instructions from home that they were not to lend money to merchants of other towns nor to act as sureties for them. Cologne now made a calculated decision that its trade with England was more important than good relations with the rest of the Hanse and must be preserved at all costs. No longer was it to be jeopardised by quarrels which were seen as the concern only of the northern and eastern towns. All the relevant arguments were incorporated in a remarkable memorandum drawn up towards the end of 1468, when Cologne decided not to attend a Hanse diet summoned for the following April. Having decided to distance themselves from their fellows, the Cologners sought to convince the English of their sincerity. From the summer of 1469 their leader, Gerard von Wesel, refused to accept any letters addressed to the alderman and community of German merchants in England, and insisted that natives of the city should trade in their own name and only with their own goods. In December Cologne ordered its merchants to form its own council, to have its own chamber to which no outsiders were to be admitted, and repeated the ban on lending money to, or standing surety for, other Germans. The purpose of all this was to persuade the English government to reissue the Hanseatic franchises in favour of the Cologne merchants and no others. They hoped to achieve that end with the assistance of friends in high places. Among these were Dr William Hattecliffe, the king's secretary, Richard Langport, clerk to the council, the Bishop of Rochester, Keeper of the Privy Seal, and Avery Cornburgh, another member of the council. Despite such friends the king was reluctant to comply with Cologne's repeated requests for a grant of privileges in perpetuity. However, when the last general grant of the franchises expired at the end of August 1469 they were renewed in favour of the Cologners alone until Easter 1470 or 1471. In December 1470 the newly restored Henry VI made a grant for five years, with effect from 10 October past. Edward IV later returned to a policy of annual renewal, the first grant after his recovery of the throne, made in July 1471, being retrospective to the previous Easter. Cologne's determination to go its own way was unshaken by an ultimatum given in a Hanse diet in August 1470 that the city might be expelled from the organisation if it did not adhere to collective decisions by the following February. Although England was the biggest thorn in the relations between the two groups it was by no means the only one. Even before the present crisis Cologne had been in trouble,

because of the reluctance of its merchants to pay scot to the *Kontor* of Bruges, on the grounds that most of their business was now conducted in Brabant and Zeeland rather than Flanders.[61]

England's first offer, to discuss the present dispute with envoys of the Hanse, was considered by a diet which met at Lübeck on 23 April 1469. This agreed to talks, but ruled that none of its members should trade with England after midsummer, on pain of forfeiting their Hanse privileges. The meeting was to take place at Bruges and the Hanse case was entrusted to the *Kontor* merchants of that town, the clerk of the London Steelyard and a 'notable doctor', who was to advise them on points of law. The cathedral provost of Lübeck was appointed as the legal expert and his first task, which he completed by 14 May, was to draft a refutation of the 'vindication' of the English council. This answered point by point the arguments of the English, most importantly contradicting their claims about the nature and constitution of the Hanse. It was not a corporate entity like a college or society, but was made up of individual towns each subject to different overlords. The purpose of this was to establish that the Hanse was not collectively responsible for the actions of any of its members. The instructions given to the envoys said that if the Duke of Burgundy, who had offered to mediate, proposed a truce then they might accept, provided that the merchants in England were compensated and released from all financial obligations, or at the very least had all their goods restored. If this was agreed then the envoys could promise a further conference in a safe town. If the English refused then the Hanse would impose a ban not only on English cloth, but also any and all cloth made anywhere using English wool. This would, of course, harm the Burgundians and thus make the duke less disposed to favour England. For the English the negotiations, which began at Bruges in the middle of June 1469, were handled by a strong team which had been sent there to deal with Anglo-Burgundian problems. That the talks, which lasted four weeks, ultimately ran into the sand was due in large measure to the successful rebellion of the Earl of Warwick in July. This development not only inhibited the diplomats, but also cooled the enthusiasm of the Duke of Burgundy to mediate. With his enemy, Warwick, in command in England the Duke was far less concerned to help the country out of its impasse with the Hanse.[62]

[61] *HUB*, 9, nos. 482, 525, 537, 540, 549, 603, 779; 10, nos. 40, 93, 195. *HR*, II (vi), nos. 114, 223, 225–6, 356, 511–12. *CPR*, 1467–77, pp. 307, 387. *Foedera*, V (ii), p. 183.

[62] *HUB*, 9, nos. 584–5, 588. *HR*, II (vi), nos. 184–5, 221. *Foedera*, V (ii), pp. 170–1.

The failure of the Bruges talks made English vessels a target for Hanseatic privateers, who commenced operations in the autumn of 1469. Without even waiting for the decision of a diet the Bruges *Kontor* engaged the services of two Danzig vessels to attack English ships. The attitude of the towns varied. Lübeck, despite its past record, was reluctant to go into a privateering war without the sanction of a diet. Danzig was the most belligerent. In December 1469 it announced that it would not attend a diet which was being organised, since money so saved could be better spent in equipping privateers. In January, Hamburg urged Danzig to reconsider, admitting that it too had already licensed privateers, but maintaining that this was not incompatible with participation in a diet. Danzig merely reaffirmed its earlier stand. At first the Duke of Burgundy tolerated the privateers, but in January 1470, after Edward IV had temporarily re-established his personal authority in England, he forbade them to operate from his territory and ordered his subjects not to serve in their ships. When the Hanse diet met in May 1470 some of the assembled delegates discussed the future with confidence. Reval's representative urged that the arming of the Hanse made it sought after by all parties caught up in the current unrest in western Europe, and such statements were not altogether without foundation. In April 1470 and again in May the Duke of Burgundy unsuccessfully tried to bring England and the Hanse back to the conference table, with himself as mediator. On 1 May, Queen Margaret of Anjou, writing from the Duchy of Bar, invited the Hanse to ally with her against the usurper, the Earl of March, as Edward IV was referred to. France, too, was anxious to settle its own differences with the Hanse and offered the use of its ports to the privateers. All these proposals were put to the diet, but because of a very sparse attendance they were deferred for further consideration in August. At the later date the diet again declined to commit itself to either side – a wise decision in the light of the rapidly changing political and diplomatic climate. This diet did, however, rule that after next Martinmas (11 November) no merchandise of English origin was to be imported into any Hanse territory. The King of Poland and the German princes were asked to support the ban and the former signified his consent before the end of the year.[63]

The Hanseatic privateers had letters of marque to attack English

[63] *HUB*, 9, nos. 691–2. *HR*, II (vi), nos. 283, 285, 289, 313, 315, 317, 321–5, 331, 361.

and French shipping, but inevitably neutrals also incurred losses. This brought a protest from the Duke of Burgundy to the diet of August 1470. The delegates promised to prevent any more privateers from being licensed before 2 February 1471, but refused to recall those already at sea. Attacks on neutrals did not cease and caused great disquiet in the Bruges *Kontor*, which was held responsible. In October it demanded that privateers should not be allowed to sell goods in places under Hanse control without producing evidence that they had been taken from an enemy.[64] During the summer of 1470 the privateers, said to number sixteen to eighteen, had a fairly free hand in the North Sea, partly because from June to September many of the ships of England and Burgundy were blockading the fleet of the Earl of Warwick in the Norman ports of La Hogue, Honfleur and Harfleur. Burgundy was involved in this task as a result of piratical activity by Warwick as he fled from England in April after the failure of his rebellion. Denied access to Calais, he fell upon a large Burgundian fleet which was passing through the straits and carried many of them off to France, where he joined forces with Margaret of Anjou and agreed to attempt the restoration of Henry VI. Early in September the Anglo-Burgundian fleet was scattered by storms and Warwick seized his chance to sneak across to England. On 2 October a vanquished Edward IV sailed from Lynn and, to add to his misfortune, was almost captured by Hanseatic privateers, who pursued him all the way to Holland. The Duke of Burgundy was at first lukewarm in his welcome to Edward, but he lost his inhibition when France declared war on him in December 1470, ostensibly on account of his seizure of French-owned merchandise in Antwerp. That action was itself taken in retaliation for the refuge given by France to the Earl of Warwick with the spoils of his attack on the Burgundian ships. The duke now opened his ports to the Hanseatic privateers and invited the Hanse to join him against France and Lancastrian England. No formal alliance was made, but Hanseatic ships, mostly of Danzig, formed part of the fleet which carried Edward IV from Flushing to England on 11 March 1471.[65] Although the Germans were paid cash for this service they were, allegedly, also promised the restoration of Hanseatic privileges in England. If any such promise was given then it was not kept, since

[64] *HR*, II (vi), nos. 352, 362, 371.

[65] Continental chronicles variously number the Hanse contribution of ships from seven to eighteen. *HR*, II (vi), p. 399, note 1. *HUB*, 10, p. 2, note.

for the moment Edward preferred still to confine his favours to the Cologne merchants. The Duke of Burgundy once more offered to mediate, but in December his services were politely refused by the Wendish towns, which informed him that there could be no more talks until Edward intimated his willingness to restore the franchises and pay compensation.[66]

In the light of the king's refusal to honour an obligation believed to have been incurred, the Hanse kept up the privateering war, and for the time being the Duke of Burgundy tolerated their use of his ports as bases. In November 1471, however, the duke again closed the ports against them and forbade his subjects either to buy their booty or to sell them supplies. In February 1472 Hanseatic strength was increased when for the first time Lübeck agreed to licence four privateers. In March Cologne was notified that the war was to be intensified and that its merchants would trade with England at their own risk. It answered speciously that its citizens were remaining there only to prevent German trade from falling into other hands during these troubled times.[67] The privateers kept up their attacks throughout 1472, but the tide was beginning to turn against them. The letters of the Danzig captain, Bernt Paws, are most instructive. He left his home port on 19 August 1471, but after arriving in the Low Countries spent only nine weeks at sea, between 20 October and 10 August 1472, when he returned to the Elbe. Paws complained continuously about bad weather, poor port facilities, shortages of supplies and difficult relations with the Bruges *Kontor*. Worst of all was the problem of keeping crews up to strength, because the Duke of Burgundy had forbidden his subjects to serve with the privateers. In June Paws proposed to send to Hamburg for replacements. This shortage of manpower came at a very awkward moment, since France and England were fitting out substantial forces, both to deal with the privateers and to confront one another. On 14 or 15 June elements of the French fleet fought with six Hanse ships near Nieupoort and drove them back into the Wielingen. At the end of that month Paws reported that the French now had command of the sea, but the English soon forced them back into their bases and then themselves turned against the privateers. On 19 July they fell upon the Lübeck ships as they lay at anchor in the Wielingen, with most of their men ashore; some were captured, others were burned. The

[66] *HR*, II (vi), no. 486.

[67] *HR*, II (vi), nos. 444, 506–7, 515, 517.

opposition was further reduced when Bremen ships were wrecked on the Dutch coast.[68]

Tactically it was necessary to clear the seas of the privateers, but strategically it was essential to make peace with the Hanse, so that Edward could concentrate upon war with France, plans for which were being made with Burgundy and Brittany. Moreover, there were those among the English merchants who counselled peace. A team of negotiators commissioned in March 1472 to deal with Anglo-Burgundian matters was also authorised to approach the Hanse, and in May William Rosse, victualler of Calais, and John Berton, merchant of the Staple, had exploratory talks with members of the Bruges *Kontor*. On 21 May they wrote to Lübeck suggesting a peace conference at Utrecht. When this was put to a diet of the Wendish towns in July they refused to negotiate at Utrecht, but offered talks at Hamburg in May 1473. This invitation did not reach England until December 1472 because William Rosse, to whom it had been sent, fell ill at Calais. New commissions were issued and Rosse, William Hattecliffe, the king's secretary, and John Chelley, merchant of the Staple, went to Bruges for more talks with the *Kontor*. The English refused to go to Hamburg, but again offered to confer at Utrecht in July. This time the offer was accepted without preconditions by Lübeck, which had been given executive power to arrange the conference. The suggestion of an immediate truce was not taken up and the war continued, although at a lower pitch. Lübeck had lost interest since its losses of the previous summer; Danzig had withdrawn its ships, except for a great carvel which the city had sold to a syndicate of merchants and was now privately operated; this left mainly Hamburg ships at sea. When the final arrangements for the conference were put into an indenture at Bruges in April 1473 it was agreed that there should be a truce from 25 June to 1 October. A proclamation to this effect was published in England on 21 May.[69]

As already remarked, peace with the Hanse was a necessary condition of a successful war against France. Instructions given to the English team at each stage of the Utrecht negotiations show that the king was willing to make important concessions to gain this end. The matter became even more pressing after the Hanse made its own

[68] *HR*, II (vi), nos. 522–59. W. Stein, *Die Hanse und England. Ein hansisch-englischer Seekrieg in 15. Jahrhundert* (Hansische Pfingstblätter, 1, Leipzig, 1905).

[69] *HR*, II (vi), nos. 547–8, 593, 596, 608, 638, 644–5, 651. *Foedera*, VI (i), pp. 14, 25, 30–1.

peace with France in August 1473. However, buying off the Hanse was only part of an overall strategy, which involved making peace with other enemies and concluding alliances with the enemies of France.[70] In the former category were the truces signed in the spring of 1473 with Scotland and Denmark. In the latter was the treaty of Chateaugiron, which in September 1472 temporarily secured Brittany. Burgundy was more difficult to pin down and no formal alliance had been made by May 1473, when the English envoys were ready to begin their journey to Utrecht. Three commissions were issued: one for dealings with the Duke of Burgundy about a political alliance, one for talks with his subjects about commercial disputes and one for the Hanseatic business. Membership of the three groups was not identical, but there was some overlap, the presence of William Hattecliffe, and John Russell, Deputy Keeper of the Privy Seal, being necessary for any quorum. It is clear that they were intended to bear the brunt of the work and in fact few other commissioners attended any of the meetings. Hattecliffe and Russell left Westminster on 28 May and arrived in Bruges on 3 June, but for one reason and another were unable to negotiate about either of the Burgundian matters. They reached Utrecht on 30 June, but had to wait until the middle of July for the arrival of the Hanseatic team, which had been delayed by contrary winds.[71]

The chief concern of the English government, as shown by the instructions supplied to its ambassadors, was that the king's honour should not be impugned by an admission that the 'verdict' of 1468 was in any way illegal or unjust. 'The kinges said ambassiatores shalle for his honour defende and justifie the same processe... and they shalle in noo wise applie to any retrait or revocacion to be made of that jugement.'[72] However, this was merely a matter of saving face, for as long as Edward kept the shadow he was prepared to surrender the substance. The envoys were told that, if necessary, they could promise *ex gratia* compensation to those whose property had been seized in 1468. This was to be paid out of future customs on Hanseatic goods and spread over as long a period as could be negotiated. The envoys were forbidden to entertain any other claims, whether ancient or new. This suggests that English losses in the recent war were not so great as to outweigh their gains in that conflict plus their net advantage in ancient incidents, such as the seizure of the Bay ships. Nevertheless, a claim for losses dating back

[70] For a general discussion see C. Ross, *Edward IV* (London, 1974), pp. 205–14.
[71] *HUB*, 10, nos. 236, 241.
[72] *HR*, II (vii), no. 22.

to 1449 was the first matter raised by the Hanse team after the examination of credentials. This led to an acrimonious discussion about which side was responsible for the recent war, until the Hanse suggested that more progress might be made if each side submitted its offers. The English began the bidding by offering to restore the franchises, without at this stage attaching conditions. The Hanse sought to minimise the value of this and returned to the question of financial compensation. After further debate the Englishmen hinted that they might make an offer, but advised the Hanse to bear in mind that the money would have to come out of the king's own pocket, since the 'great ones' who had profited from the attacks on the Germans, that is the Earl of Warwick and the like, were either dead or impoverished. After deliberation the Hanse assessed their losses at £200,000 sterling, but said that they would be satisfied with £25,000 plus the title to the London and Boston Steelyards and a house in Lynn, later named as the 'Checkers'. The following day they made a new condition – that henceforth the Cologne merchants should be denied the franchises.

The English envoys claimed that they were unable to agree a specific sum of money, to the grant of the properties or the denial of the franchises to the Cologners, and also that they would have to communicate with the king. At this point the Hanse reduced its demand to £20,000, while the English revealed for the first time that it would be necessary to have some reassurance about English trade and asked what form this might take. Thus, rather late in the day, they got round to the provision in their instructions that confirmation of the Hanse franchises would depend on acceptance of the principle of reciprocity. On this critical point the English report of the negotiations states,

> After a little deliberacion they gave us good aunswer, that they should be entreated as they have been wonte to be in tymes passed. We thoght this a generall aunswer and desired in especiall that they might be tretid according to that was concluded in that behalf in a diete holden at London the yere 1436, whereof we said we wold bring hem a true copie on the morne.[73]

The corresponding passage in a German report reads, 'Se in ere Stede mochten komen, dar ere kopenschup hanteren, gelik aloe se von alders covoren plegen to donde.'[74]

[73] *HUB*, 10, no. 241.

[74] *HR*, II (vii), no. 34.

It was decided that, since the king had to be consulted on the few matters discussed so far, he might as well be made aware of the rest of the Hanseatic demands. The Hanse delegates spent the next three days writing these in a book, which made up a lengthy catalogue of minor vexations to which they had been subjected in London and elsewhere in England, as well as a complaint about the quality of English cloth. Afterwards, they allowed the Englishmen to make certain corrections in statements relating to the offers already made to them. The English envoys passed the time copying the clauses of the treaties of 1409 and 1437 touching upon English rights in Prussia. However, they did not stop there. They demanded a clear statement of where, and from whom, aggrieved Englishmen could obtain justice within Hanseatic territories; they asked for a list of all towns belonging to the Hanse; they wanted English merchants to be admitted to the international hall in Danzig; they demanded that the King of Poland should confirm any treaty on behalf of the former subjects of the Teutonic Order; finally and most controversially, they demanded that Englishmen be allowed to trade in Livonia, as they were alleged to have done in former times.[75] These points were put to the Germans and the following day the English 'wer answered of our peticions for our merchauntes to our plesir'.[76] Rightly or wrongly, then, they felt that they had been promised reciprocity.

On 29 July the conference was adjourned until 1 September and Bluemantle herald was dispatched to the king with the German book and advice from his own envoys. Both sides spent the interim in dealing with other matters in the Netherlands and came together again on 3 September. Bluemantle joined the English envoys at Bruges on 24 August, but they sent him off to the Duke of Burgundy and afterwards pretended that he had not returned from England until 4 September. The reply he brought was not to the liking of the Germans, and the conference would have ended there and then, were it not for their fear of going home empty-handed. The king refused to give a positive answer to any of the points on which he had been consulted. This may have been because he wanted to talk personally with his ambassadors, though the reason given was that he needed to debate the matter in parliament, which was to meet in October. After a great deal of discussion the Hanse agreed to prorogue the conference until 15 January 1474 and to extend the

[75] *Ibid.*, no. 36.

[76] *HUB*, 10, no. 241, p. 154.

truce until 1 March. The last meeting of the two sides was on 18 September, when they exchanged sealed copies of 'a boke in Latyn of articles', which was in effect a draft of the treaty they were striving for.[77]

The next step in the proceedings as far as England was concerned was an act of parliament, which set aside 'any sentence, jugement, marque or reprisal' given by king and council against Hanse merchants before 19 September 1473, and nullified 'al manner promesses, obligacions, suertees, setting of borowes and all other bondes' made by the merchants by reason of any such sentence. This, in effect, reversed the 'verdict' of 1468, despite the earlier concern about the king's honour. Next, the merchants were given an indemnity for any act of war against Englishmen between 21 November 1468 and 19 September 1473. Parliament then reinstated the Hanse franchises, taking care, however, to tack on the principle of reciprocity:

> The kynges subjectes shalle mowe as oft as them like repare and resorte unto the londe of Pruse and other places of the hanze frely and suerly entre the same, there abyde and departe from thense at their plesure to bye and selle withe alle manner persones as frely and largely as any tyme hertofore they have wonte to do, withe enjoiynge alle and everyche their libertees and fre custumes, which they have used and enjoyed any tyme passed; and that no prises exaccions nor prestacions shal be sette uppone their persones or goodes, otherwise thenne have be sette uppone theym any tyme afore this 100 yere now last past or above, whereunto the said marchauntes of the hanze by their oratours have assentid and agreed.[78]

On 20 December the Chancellor was ordered to set the great seal on instructions given by the council to the ambassadors, and signed personally by the king.[79] These took the form of a commentary on the Latin book, that is the draft treaty. Some of the articles were allowed to stand unaltered, but in others they were to strive for amendments. In the last resort they were to back down, so that stubbornness should not destroy the peace:

> In all which poyntis the kingis oratours shall by the best discretion they can, enduce thaym of the hanze to hold thaym content with the provisions and answers given above ... peraventur the willfulnesse of the Esterlingis at this

[77] *HR*, II (vii), no. 44.
[78] *Rot. Parl.*, 6, pp. 65–9.
[79] *HR*, II (vii), no. 107.

next diete shal be suche, that they wol have agreed unto thaym thair own provisions in the foresaide poyntis all or parte of thaym or utterly breke, the kingis said oratours rather than so to breke shal finally under as covert terms as they can shewe them condescendable and condescended to that in the said poyntis, withoute whiche the other partie can not or wol not be enduced agre.

This willingness to surrender everything has conditioned historians into accepting that the treaty of Utrecht was a diplomatic disaster for England. This is untrue and does less than justice to the men who negotiated the treaty, for they did not give everything away.

The gravest charge against the diplomats of 1474 is that they abandoned the principle of reciprocity, which had been the main plank of English policy towards the Hanse for a hundred years. They also stand accused of surrendering the fruits of the 1437 treaty. Even if the latter charge were true it would not amount to much, for, as we have seen, the fruits of 1437 were illusory. The English had been totally unable to enforce their treaty rights in Prussia during the intervening period. Yet the diplomats now surrendered only a small part of the English claim and that the most difficult part to defend. To substantiate this statement it is necessary to make a close comparison of certain clauses in the draft treaty, the December instructions to the ambassadors and the final treaty. If possible, the ambassadors were to obtain slight amendments to make the clauses more favourable to the English merchants: 'Touching to the 4 article, the 5, 6 and 7 the kingis said oratours shalle passe in thaym aftir the contente of the same, onlesse they can enduce and bringe the oratours of the hanse to a more ample and more beneficial graunte of agrement for the kingis subgettis.' Now even in their draft form these articles, derived from the 1437 treaty, represented a success for the English diplomats. More accurately, perhaps, they were a demonstration of the shortsightedness of the Hanse team, which was too concerned with its own claims to see the full implication of allowing these articles to be inserted. The implication was not lost on the city of Danzig which, during the adjournment of the conference, protested strongly that they must be deleted. They were not deleted; in fact the English ambassadors actually obtained some of the amendments which the council required. The Hanseatic representatives, according to their own report, only accepted the retention of the articles which were obnoxious to the Prussians in order to save the treaty. Moreover, the Englishmen allegedly promised that,

whatever the wording used, the articles should be understood to carry the meaning usually put upon them by Prussia.[80] Since the English report of this part of the conference has not survived, that claim cannot be checked. In any event, whatever the English delegates agreed to verbally was not binding. In years to come English lawyers would argue that the treaty meant what it said, and what it said was that England reserved its claim to reciprocal trading rights.

The articles in question, and their amendments, are as follows:

Article 4. Omnes et singuli mercatores et alii subditi et ligei domini regis Anglie pro tempore existentis, cuiuscumque status fuerint, poterunt et possunt tociens quociens eis libuerit et placuerit salvo et secure terram Prucie et alia loca hanze intrare ibidem morari et conversari, exire et redire, emere et vendere cum quibuscumque personis ita et eo modo ac adeo libere, sicut hactenus ante hec tempore emere et vendere, intrare et exire potuerunt et consueverunt, solutis custumis et deveriis de mercandisis suis debitis et consuetis.

The envoys were urged to secure the replacement of '*hactenus*' by '*unquam*', which they did.

Article 5. Omnes et singuli mercatores et alii subditi et ligei domini regis Anglie hujusmodi in terra Prucie et aliis locis hanze omnibus et singulis illis libertatibus et liberis consuetudinibus uti plene debeant et gaudere, quibus unquam aliquo tempore rationabiliter usi sunt et gavisi, nulleque prise exactiones nove seu prestaciones alique super eorum personas vel bona imponentur aliter vel alio modo quam ante 10 20 30 40 50 ymmo et centum annos et ultra imposite sunt vel fuerunt.

Here the numbers 10–50 were to be deleted, leaving only centum; this was not done. The word 'rationabiliter' was to be removed or, failing this, the same qualification was to be inserted into article 6, which guaranteed the Hanse privileges in England. The latter was done.

One may only speculate whether any significance was attached to the reversal of the order of these two clauses as compared to the 1437 treaty. Possibly it was intended to demonstrate more clearly English acceptance of the fact that they must pay all existing, lawful taxes. However, taking the act of parliament and the treaty of Utrecht

[80] *Ibid.*, nos. 66, 131–3, 138, 231.

together it is clear that they persisted in their claim to immunity from any new taxation and also that they ought to enjoy any rights which had ever been exercised by them in the Hanse towns or Prussia.

Turning to the other articles of the draft treaty which the king's council thought might be improved upon, we find first the hope that the cash indemnity might be reduced. In the last hours of the earlier sessions it had been brought down to £15,000; after the adjournment it was reduced to £10,000, although the Hanse insisted upon a further £484, which they claimed should have been contributed by the Cologne merchants to the £1,000 'lent' to the crown in 1468. The Englishmen failed to see the logic of this, since the £10,000 was supposed to cover all losses including that loan, but they agreed to pay it. The properties were conceded with hardly a murmur, although for an undisclosed reason the council successfully demanded that the name 'Checkers' should not be used to describe the house at Lynn. This leaves only the demand for the exclusion of the Cologne men from the franchises. The council was genuinely loath to abandon them, but rather than lose the treaty was prepared to do so, provided that it was done in a way which spared the king's honour. The compromise adopted was the deletion from the main treaty of the reference to the exclusion of the Cologners. In its place was a general provision that any town expelled from the Hanse would be denied use of the privileges until it was readmitted. The Hanse delegates then declared that Cologne had been expelled, and a subsidiary treaty provided, *inter alia*, that its merchants would be excluded from the franchises after 1 August 1474.

The conference was resumed at Utrecht on 1 February 1474, and after hard bargaining the final treaty, the most important points of which have been noted above, was signed on 28 February. The subsidiary treaty, signed the same day, provided that the two sides should exchange ratified copies at Bruges on 1 August 1474. Edward IV ratified the treaty and again confirmed the Hanse franchises on 20 July. The city of Lübeck and representatives of the Hanse assembled there ratified the treaty and separately confirmed the English rights in the towns and in Prussia on 1 May. At least sixteen individual towns ratified the treaty by 1 August and another eight by the end of that month. Danzig did not ratify it until May 1476 and even then insisted that English merchants were to enjoy no special privileges in Prussia. Other towns took much longer to signify

their acceptance, yet this did not prevent the exchange of ratifications in September 1475, rather more than twelve months later than originally provided for.[81]

Using cloth exports as indicators of trends in trade, the three decades which separate the Vorrath treaty from the beginning of the war between England and the Hanse may be divided into one of prosperity and two of largely unrelieved stagnation (table 12). Even so, during the latter two, Hanse exports were as high as, or higher than, they had been in the early years of the century and, as a proportion of all England's cloth exports, were greater than they had ever been before. In the late 1430s, slump gave way to boom with extreme rapidity, particularly in the case of the Hanse merchants. The underlying causes were changes in political and fiscal conditions. It will be recalled that the twelve months preceding the arrival of the Vorrath embassy (1435–6) had been disastrous for both denizen and Hanse merchants, with totals of 10,929 and 2,353 cloths respectively. In 1436–7 denizens dispatched 16,437 cloths and Hanseatics 12,120. The latter figure is even more remarkable when it is remembered that the Hanse ambassadors themselves tried to prevent their merchants from exporting until they had concluded the treaty in March 1437, while as late as June Vorrath was complaining that English customs officials were wilfully obstructing the dispatch of Hanse-owned cloth to Prussia. The Hansards must have made a tremendous effort that summer to beat their rivals to whatever markets were open. But, if Englishmen were slow off the mark, they shared fully in the coming decade's record-breaking trade. Fortunately for them their cloth was no longer burdened with poundage, though the rest of their trade was subject to this subsidy after a brief respite from November 1436 to April 1437. All Hanse trade, of course, was spared poundage in consequence of the Vorrath treaty.

For both denizen and Hanse cloth exports consideration has to be given to political relations between England and Burgundy. The duke did not formally lift his latest ban on English cloth until the autumn of 1439 (save for the traditional exclusion from the county of Flanders), but it had long since become an ineffective weapon, as may be seen from the enormous increase in exports in the previous two to three years. Denizen exports to the Low Countries were helped by negotiations with Holland-Zeeland, which began in May

[81] *Ibid.*, nos. 142, 144, 146, 152, 307. *Foedera*, VI (i), pp. 36–9.

Table 12. *England's cloth exports, 1435–74*

| | Overall Total | | Denizen | | | Hanse | | | Alien | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Change | Total | Share | Change | Total | Share | Change | Total | Share | Change |
| 1435–6 | 25,298 | | 10,929 | 43% | | 2,353 | 9% | | 12,016 | 48% | |
| 1436–7 | 39,973 | +58% | 16,437 | 41% | +50% | 12,120 | 30% | +415% | 11,416 | 29% | −5% |
| 1437–47 | 56,026 | +40% | 28,683 | 51% | +75% | 11,435 | 20% | −6% | 15,908 | 20% | +39% |
| 1447–57 | 37,874 | −32% | 20,848 | 55% | −27% | 7,920 | 21% | −31% | 9,106 | 24% | −43% |
| 1457–68 | 33,647 | −11% | 17,667 | 52% | −15% | 9,001 | 24% | +14% | 6,979 | 21% | −23% |
| 1468–74 | 33,338 | +8% | 22,000 | 61% | +25% | 2,928 | 8% | −67% | 11,400 | 31% | +63% |

1438, but even before this the Dutch had given little material or moral support to their ruler and continued to trade with England.[82] It is likely that, long before the formal ending of the ban, both Englishmen and Hansards had reverted to former practices and were clandestinely selling cloth in the duke's lands, or in the case of the latter passing through them on the way to Germany. Far from harming the English cloth industry and export trade the dispute with Burgundy probably did a great deal of good, since it meant that the Low Countries were almost totally deprived of English wool for several years.[83] Most clothing towns were not now so dependent upon this as in former times, but some still valued it and the loss resulted in a fall in cloth production, which was compounded by civil unrest in Flanders and a universal dearth of food. A shortfall in any market formerly supplied with Burgundian cloth, not excluding even the duke's own lands, provided a potentially open door for English cloth.

Denizen and Hansards were active in the Low Countries, but each also looked to the Baltic. Here, markets had recently been deprived of Flemish cloth as well as English (as a result of the massacre at Sluys) and were ripe for exploitation by the summer of 1437. Until the outbreak of war between Holland-Zeeland and the Wendish towns in April 1438, the general situation was peaceful. In 1436–7 Hanse exports from Boston, Lynn and Hull were 1,043, 972 and 803 – 2,818 in total and 23 per cent of all Hanse cloth exports from England.[84] Subsequently performances at the three ports diverged. At Boston trade remained fairly stable, averaging 905 cloths per annum in 1437–42 and 1,018 in 1442–7. On the other hand, alien general merchandise averaged only £1,105 and £1,992 in these two periods, which means that imports by the Hanse can barely have sufficed to pay for their exports, the former surplus having been virtually eliminated. At Lynn, cloth exports fell to an average of 260 in 1437–42, but then recovered to 370 in 1442–7. In historic terms this was a respectable performance. At Hull the trend was unrelievedly downward, with averages of 193 and 48 in these quinquenniums. The three ports together handled just over 12 per cent of all Hanse cloth exports in 1437–47, though this does not mean that only a like proportion was taken to the Baltic. London

[82] Munro, *Wool, Cloth and Gold*, pp. 114–16. [83] Lloyd, *Wool Trade*, pp. 262–5.
[84] Figures adjusted to twelve months. The accounts for Boston and Lynn extend to 11 November and the actual figures are 1,176 and 1,089.

and Ipswich, which accounted for virtually all the remaining Hanse cloth, also exported to the Baltic and may have dispatched as much as, or more than, the northern ports. The war between Holland-Zeeland and the Wendish towns provided a temporary stimulus to trade between London and the Baltic; Prussian ships and merchants, defying their diet's prohibition of trade with the west, flocked to England's capital. There was an increase in the import of Baltic goods and many were re-exported by Dutch merchants, since they were now in short supply in the Low Countries. This led to Baltic merchants increasing their exports of cloth.[85] It is impossible to ascertain exactly how much Hanse cloth went from London and Ipswich to the Baltic, but if the amount ever equalled or exceeded that going to the Low Countries or western Germany such a situation was probably short-lived.

Before leaving the topic of Hanse trade in the years 1437–47 a few words may be said about the rise in importance of Sandwich, or more correctly its sub-port of Dover. In the late fourteenth century Hanse trade in the Sandwich complex was negligible, and though a regular import trade was established in the early years of the fifteenth century it was relatively modest, and cloth exports remained insignificant. Cloth exports of other aliens flourished from 1412 to 1431, but then fell to a low level in all but two of the following nine years. But as cloth exports declined there was a sharp rise in all alien imports (including the Hanse component). The number of cloths customed at Sandwich bears no relationship to those actually shipped at the Kent ports, since it was common practice both among other aliens and Hanse merchants to send them down the Thames in barges and then transfer them to larger vessels. To deter smuggling it was obligatory to pay duty before the cloth left London. Conversely, imports had to be declared as soon as they were unloaded at Sandwich or Dover, even though most were intended for the London market. They were then brought to the capital by road or Thames lighters, either to avoid congestion at the city wharfs or to guard against mishaps to large ships in the river. Sandwich and Dover thus functioned as outports for London. The total value of

[85] The conclusions of J. L. Bolton, 'Alien Merchants in England in the Reign of Henry VI, *1422–61*' (B.Litt. thesis, Oxford, 1971), appendix, tables 2–3, show that cloth exports from London in 1437–9 by 'Baltic' merchants more or less balanced those by 'Cologners'. But Jenks, *England, die Hanse und Preussen*, tables LI–LII, represents the great majority of exports as still going to the Low Countries.

alien trade (including Hanse) subject to the 3d petty custom in this complex was at record levels from the late 1430s to Michaelmas 1449. An already swollen trade, which averaged £8,554 in 1433–7, reached £12,856, £13,276 and £20,075 in the next three years, and still averaged £12,690 from 1440 to 1449. In 1439–40 Hanse imports totalled £3,579, most of them brought to Dover in ships registered at that port or at Calais.[86] Goods of Baltic origin were in a minority, even when those coming direct from that region are added to the furs brought in from the Low Countries by Cologne merchants. The most important product was fustian from south Germany, which accounted for 46 per cent of imports. Since the amount of Hanse cloth customed at Sandwich (as opposed to that from London transshipped there) was exceptionally high (146) in 1439–40, the level of imports may also have been somewhat exceptional. To maintain a perspective it may be mentioned that this year Italian imports were 439 per cent greater than those of the Hansards. Subsequently, Hanse trade in the Kent ports declined, but remained well above the level of the early fifteenth century, since the London community continued to use Dover as an outport.

In the immediate aftermath of the Vorrath treaty denizen exporters to the Baltic momentarily lost ground to those of the Hanse, since some of the former seem to have been slow off the mark. While Hanse merchants exported 803 cloths from Hull in 1436–7, compared with nil in the previous year, denizens managed only 887 to all markets, a scant improvement on the 828 of the year before. Lynn denizens did better with a total of 2,362 from Michaelmas 1436 to 26 October 1437, compared with 569 in the previous twelve months. Subsequently, denizens recovered the lead and unless there was a major shift in market orientation their total exports to the Baltic must have equalled or exceeded those of 1428–35. Lynn's average denizen export in the latter period was 1,745 against 896 in the former, Hull's 3,324 against 3,315, but Boston's was down to 328, compared with 526 between 1430 and 1435. Denizen exports from Ipswich must also be taken into consideration, since Essex and Suffolk cloth was popular in Prussia. These increased from an average of 1,653 (1428–35) to 2,188 (1437–47), but not all were going to the Baltic. London is, as ever, the joker in the pack, for though there is ample evidence about the presence of its merchants

[86] Bolton, 'Alien Merchants', appendix, table 5.

in the Baltic their trade cannot be quantified. When Englishmen were invited to submit claims for injuries done to them in the Baltic between 1438 and 1440, Yorkshiremen were most responsive and more than two dozen York and Hull ship-owners and merchants were mentioned by name. Others named were eight Londoners, four from Ipswich, three from Colchester, three from Southampton and one from Sandwich.[87] However, the detailed information comprehends only a small part of total current claims. In this decade of general prosperity there is little doubt that English merchants increased their exports to the Baltic, but whether their gain was commensurate to the overall rise in denizen exports is another matter.

In the late 1430s England's interest in the Baltic was not simply as a market for cloth. There was also a substantial, albeit temporary, rise in imports. A succession of three bad harvests beginning in 1437 rapidly led to famine conditions in much of western Europe and there was a great demand for eastern grain. Prussia and the Hanse sought to reap political advantage from the shortage by strictly regulating exports, particularly those which might go to the Low Countries. After the massacre of merchants at Sluys in 1436 the Hanse transferred its staple from Bruges to Antwerp and imposed a boycott on all trade with Flanders. The pressing need for grain was the chief reason why Flanders was finally forced in September 1438 to accept the Hanse terms for a return to Bruges – full restoration of their privileges and a financial indemnity. By then Holland-Zeeland was under interdict. On 22 June 1438, for example, Danzig town council required an oath from twenty-one ships' masters who were about to sail that they would take their Prussian and Livonian wares to England or Scotland and not sell them to the Dutch.[88] Doubtless these ships carried grain, since on 21 May the authorities had ruled that, because of favourable prospects for growing crops, wheat and meal, though not yet other grains, might be exported; rye and other grains were freed on 2 June. As early as December 1437 the king and the city of London had written to the Grand Master pleading for ten to twenty shiploads of corn, but the Steelyard covertly suggested that on this occasion they be allowed no more than six to eight shiploads. Following a second harvest failure, Henry VI wrote to the Grand Master on 28 November 1438 telling of a great dearth and again

[87] *HR*, II (ii), no. 646.

[88] *Ibid.*, nos. 233, 268–9.

requesting permission for his subjects to export grain. This was conceded and the king wrote on 28 February 1439 sending thanks for the favour, but requesting further facilities since prices were still very high in England. Corn exports from Prussia were again banned for a while in May 1439.[89] After the harvest of 1439 prices fell to a more reasonable level in England, although they remained high compared to those of good years. This meant that Englishmen were probably still interested in buying grain in Prussia, but they may have found themselves obliged to take up more than was prudent when the authorities suddenly put a ban upon the export of everything but grain.[90] This may or may not have been a ploy to get rid of a surplus, but there was still concern about the supply of goods to Holland-Zeeland, and as late as the summer of 1441 a ban was maintained on the export of anything which might assist the Dutch war effort. When English ships were commandeered in the Sound in 1440 no less than 1,100 lasts of grain, claimed to be worth £5,500, were said to have been ruined. The exceptionally large shipments from east to west, coupled with the prohibition against Prussian subjects trading through the Sound, put a premium on shipping space, and between 1438 and 1441 Englishmen bought many ships or shares in ships at Danzig, though in July 1440 they complained about efforts by the Danzig Council to stop this practice.[91]

The decade of prosperity in the cloth trade came to an end in 1447. In 1447–8 total exports were still 50,730 compared with 59,337 in the previous year, but this figure was reached only because of a still buoyant other alien trade (chiefly Italian); denizen trade was already well down, while Hanse trade had collapsed. The total of only 32,071 in 1448–9 was the result of abysmal trade in all three sectors. Other alien trade then recovered for three years, before falling away so badly that for many years it occupied third place behind the still depleted Hanse trade. There is no shortage of factors which contributed to the prolonged slump in cloth exports – political disputes with the Hanse and Burgundy, intensification of the war with France resulting in the loss of Normandy and Gascony, civil war in England. The problem is to evaluate the direct effect of each of these separate blows. First in time was a renewal of the ban upon English cloth in Burgundy, proclaimed in January 1447 and removed between April and June 1452.[92] Towards the end of the

[89] *Ibid.*, no. 305. *HUB*, 7, part 1, nos. 320, 404.
[90] *Ibid.*, no. 352.
[91] *Ibid.*, no. 693. *HR*, II (ii), no. 380.
[92] Munro, *Wool, Cloth and Gold*, p. 146.

ban the duke's officials advised him that it was ineffective and served only to deprive him of revenue from tolls. But this is not to say that it had done no damage at all to cloth exports. At London denizen exports fell from 7,827 cloths in ten months (29 September 1446 to 21 July 1447) to 4,413 during the following twelve months and 8,444 over the next twenty months (21 July 1448 to 10 March 1450). Any effect on Hanse exports would have been confined to the London and Colchester communities, whose combined exports fell from a five-year average (1442–7) of 10,842 to an average of around 6,000 between Michaelmas 1447 and May 1452. On the other hand this decline also reflects the loss of Hanse tax concessions[93] (Michaelmas 1447 to December 1449) and any consequences of the seizure of the Bay fleet (May 1449). After the removal of the Burgundian boycott in 1452, Hanse exports from London and Ipswich improved considerably and thereafter remained on a fairly even keel until late in 1464. London averaged 7,250 a year between May 1452 and December 1464, Ipswich 1,485 between Michaelmas 1452 and August 1464. The years 1456–7, 1459–60 and particularly 1462–3 saw well below average trade. But these were also very bad times for denizens, and in the third year there was a complete stoppage of Hanse trade from Michaelmas to March while the question of the franchises was being discussed. In October 1464 the Duke of Burgundy imposed yet another ban on the sale and transit of English cloth.[94] This put a total stop to the trade of the Merchant Adventurers, and London denizen exports were only 775 between 5 December 1464 and Michaelmas 1465. During the next two years, when the Adventurers obtained facilities at Utrecht, outside the authority of the duke, trade improved to 9,342 and 8,133, and finally climbed back to 16,594 in 1467–8 after the removal of the Burgundian ban in November 1467. Hanseatic exports also seem to have suffered and the merchants changed their pattern of trade, possibly because of a shortage of shipping in London. At Ipswich exports of 1,167 cloths from 31 August 1464 to Michaelmas 1465 indicate a normal trade, but London with 2,850 from 5 December 1464 to Michaelmas 1465 was seriously down. In the following year (1465–6) London remained down to 3,816, though this was simply because traffic had been transferred to Ipswich (4,515), or more precisely Colchester. On 6 March 1466 a convoy of five ships took

[93] See above p. 178.

[94] Munro, *Wool, Cloth and Gold*, pp. 164–5.

1,625 cloths from the latter port, followed by another four ships with 1,693 on 1 July.[95] The combined export of London and Ipswich this year was not too much down on a normal year. In the next two years the balance of exports moved back to London with an average of 6,657 compared to 720 at Ipswich.

In the provinces, Anglo-Burgundian relations were less important than the current state of negotiations between England and the Hanse, and the level of taxation. At Hull there were no cloth exports between Michaelmas 1347 and the winter of 1451–2. At Boston only 506 cloths were shipped between 18 July 1447 and 21 November 1448, but then there was a recovery to 1,463 in the twelve months to 21 November 1449. Before the last date trade was paralysed by consequences of the seizure of the Bay fleet. Nor was that the only problem, since a few days before that episode some Hull merchants had secured the arrest at Boston of eighteen great packs of cloth belonging to *Bergenfahrer*.[96] Shortly after 21 November 1449 a few stragglers exported 100 cloths, but then there was nothing for more than four years. At Lynn the withdrawal of the tax concessions seems to have had less effect than the piracy of 1449, with 337 cloths exported between 29 September 1447 and 30 April 1449, but only 156 between the latter date and 10 July 1451. When hopes of a peaceful settlement to the Bay fleet dispute appeared on the horizon in the summer of 1451 some Hanse merchants made a hesitant return to Hull and Lynn, though Boston remained deserted by the Lübeckers. Shortly before Michaelmas 1451 Hanse merchants imported goods worth £109 at Hull and afterwards exported 53 cloths and probably £19 worth of other goods.[97] The following two years (1452–4) saw cloth exports of 396 and 352 at this port; particulars covering the period April to Michaelmas 1453 show four Danzig ships entering on 17 May with goods valued at £469 (80 per cent Prussian owned, 20 per cent English).[98] During the next year (1454–5) there were probably no Prussian ships at Hull, since Denmark closed the Sound to those towns in rebellion against the Teutonic Order; the 28 Hanse cloths exported this year were sent to the Low Countries in a Middelburg ship.[99] From October 1455 to 31 December 1458 cloth exports totalled a modest 606, while between the latter date and 11 April 1461 there were none, save 30 taken to

[95] PRO, E122/52/48–9. Britnell, *Colchester*, p. 174. [96] *HR*, II (iii), no. 531.
[97] *The Customs Accounts of Hull, 1453–1490*, ed. W. Childs (Yorks. Arch. Soc., 144, 1986), pp. 226, 228. [98] *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4. [99] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

the Low Countries in the summer of 1460.[100] From April 1461 Hanse cloth exports were again more regular and ran at an average annual rate of 188 to Michaelmas 1468. A rough calculation of the value of Hanse imports in this last period may be made from the enrolled customs accounts, which each year recorded the total value of Hanse trade potentially liable to poundage, though the duty was not exacted.[101] From Michaelmas 1462 to Michaelmas 1468 the totals amounted to £2,834 8s 6d (of which £1,026 16s 8d belongs to the first year and £1,124 18s 8d to the last). These figures include 1,207 cloths, which seem to have been valued uniformly at £1 each. The deduction of these leaves £1,627 for other exports plus imports, which in 1466–7 were divided in the ratio of 17:83. Applying this to the whole six-year period gives £1,350 for imports and £277 for other exports, indicating a slight excess for all exports over imports. If the surviving particulars are representative then Hanse trade at Hull was largely in the hands of Prussian merchants, who typically chartered two to four Danzig ships each year to bring bulky Baltic goods and took cloth away in the same vessels. Occasionally, one or two merchants exported in one of the few Hull ships still going to Prussia. The trade was based on a quick turn around and did not require a permanent Hanse presence in Hull or York.

At Lynn, Hanse trade from the early 1450s to 1468 may be divided into three periods. As at Hull there was a revival in the winter of 1451–2 and thereafter there seems to have been no complete stoppage, so that cloth exports averaged 195 a year from 10 July 1451 to Michaelmas 1459. Trade then turned down sharply, perhaps in consequence of the second Bay fleet seizure, resulting in an average export of 59 cloths from Michaelmas 1459 to 19 November 1464. After one exceptionally good year (1464–5 with 502 cloths) the trend was again downwards, so that the total was back to a mere 52 in 1467–8, though the average of these last four years was 212. In this final period a more detailed picture of trade can be reconstructed from well-preserved particulars. In 1464–5, eight ships brought in over £600 of northern and eastern wares and took away most of the short-cloths, plus a few Welsh friezes and some coverlets; two Hanse ships which did not enter goods also exported a little cloth.[102] In 1466–7 the corresponding import trade, worth £344, was carried in four ships, though one other merchant brought in £3

[100] *Ibid.*, pp. 24–5. [101] *Ibid.*, table 3, p. 230. [102] PRO, E122/97/4.

of train oil in a non-Hanse ship. The 145 short-cloths exported (130 in three of the previous ships) were valued at £193 6s 8d; other exports were £20 of frieze and £20 of malt.[103] The next year (1467–8) imports of Baltic goods were worth just under £300, though nine ships claimed a share in their freight; two of these vessels also carried similar goods worth £28 belonging to a denizen merchant. The 52 short-cloths exported (in three ships) were valued at £69 6s 8d; malt (£28) was again exported.[104] Although comparatively small, the Hanse trade at Lynn in the 1460s was clearly well established and engaged the interest of the same ships and merchants year after year, some ships coming two or three times each year. It was essentially an Anglo-Baltic trade, chiefly occupying Danzig and Hamburg ships, and some of it probably followed the Hamburg-Lübeck route. Among the merchants involved can be identified men from Hamburg, Danzig and Cologne, though it is impossible to establish the exact proportions of each.

At Boston there were no Hanse cloth exports from late 1449 until after 10 October 1454, when 138 were dispatched up to 10 October 1455. Lübeckers were not yet covered by the king's safe-conduct, but some merchants connected with that city may have resumed their business after it lifted its ban on English cloth in July 1454. In February 1456 Lübeck was brought within the truce, and in the current year (1455–6) Hanse cloth exports from Boston increased to 535. Over the next two years (1456–8) exports fell to a total of 193, but the alien petty custom figures, which generally provide a fair indication of the scale of *Bergenfahrer* imports, rose considerably and totalled £2,543. There is then a gap of fifteen months in the accounts, which conceals the effects of Warwick's seizure of the Lübeck fleet in July 1458, but by 1460 trade had picked up again. Between 15 December 1459 and 1 September 1460, 948 cloths were exported, though this comparatively high figure may simply be a backlog of trade, since thereafter it again fell back, averaging 491 a year in 1460–2, 365 in 1462–5 and 64 in 1465–8. Hanse trade in Boston never really recovered from the long dispute between England and Lübeck. What was left still depended chiefly on the traditional link with Bergen, but whether any of it remained in the hands of Lübeck merchants is questionable. Between 20 July 1463 and 3 May 1464 the only Hanse ship in Boston belonged to

[103] PRO, E122/97/8.

[104] PRO, E122/97/9.

Table 13. *The distribution of Hanse cloth exports, 1436–68*

| | Hull | Boston | Lynn | Ipswich | London | Others | Total | London and Ipswich as % of total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1436–7 | 803 | 1,043 | 972 | 3,569 | 5,558 | 102 | 12,047 | 76 |
| 1437–42 | 193 | 905 | 260 | 2,316 | 6,767 | 130 | 10,571 | 86 |
| 1442–7 | 48 | 1,018 | 370 | 3,098 | 7,744 | 67 | 12,345 | 88 |
| 1447–52 | 11 | 414 | 145 | 1,023 | 4,823 | 13 | 6,429 | 91 |
| 1452–7 | 241 | 151 | 136 | 1,576 | 7,527 | 61 | 9,692 | 94 |
| 1457–62 | 84 | 408 | 144 | 1,658 | 8,119 | 87 | 10,500 | 93 |
| 1462–8 | 201 | 154 | 158 | 1,446 | 5,498 | 196 | 7,653 | 91 |

Stralsund; it brought in Hanse goods, mostly stockfish and oil, worth £538, and took away 102 cloths; it also brought in stockfish worth £15 for four denizen merchants.[105] All of the 450 cloths which left between 25 February and Michaelmas 1465 went in two Bergen ships, save 15 which were entrusted to a Boston ship carrying no other cargo but probably bound for Norway or the Baltic.[106] Out of the total of 193 cloths dispatched between Michaelmas 1465 and 20 December 1468, 128 went in two Danzig ships and 65 in two Boston ships going to the Baltic; Hanse imports from Bergen totalled £970 and engaged only one ship each year (one Kampen, one Danzig and one Boston); in the same period one Danzig ship brought in £50 of Baltic goods.[107] After the initial arrests of the merchants in the summer of 1468 a few Prussian ships unwittingly imported goods to various ports, but until the end of the war Hanse trade was restricted to Cologne merchants, who operated exclusively at London, apart from a few cloths shipped at Ipswich.

During the 'great depression' Hanseatic cloth exports were at their lowest in the late 1440s and early 1450s. Thereafter they made a steady recovery for the better part of a decade, until they were affected by uncertainty about the renewal of the franchises and the reimposition of the Burgundian ban on English cloth. Having said that, it must be stressed that the recovery was due entirely to the performance of the London Steelyard (table 13). Elsewhere trade remained in the doldrums. Lübeck merchants were either unable or unwilling to rebuild their former business at Boston, while trade at

[105] PRO, E122/10/4. [106] PRO, E122/10/5. [107] PRO, E122/10/7–9.

Table 14. *Denizen cloth exports at four east-coast ports, 1436–67*

| | Hull | Boston | Lynn | Ipswich | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1436–7 | 887 | 352 | 2,108 | 2,020 | 5,367 |
| 1437–42 | 3,399 | 316 | 1,668 | 2,366 | 7,749 |
| 1442–7 | 3,248 | 340 | 1,813 | 2,011 | 7,412 |
| 1447–52 | 2,312 | 340 | 762 | 1,246 | 4,660 |
| 1452–7 | 2,184 | 171 | 497 | 480 | 3,332 |
| 1457–62 | 1,455 | 101 | 353 | 467 | 2,376 |
| 1462–7 | 745 | 200 | 286 | 196 | 1,427 |

Hull and Lynn, mainly Prussian, simply stagnated. What happened at Ipswich/Colchester is something of a mystery. Throughout the depression Ipswich exports were far in excess of the combined trade of the other provincial ports, but were only half of their former level. The remaining exports probably went to the same market as those leaving London, since Colchester was an adjunct of the Steelyard. This suggests the possibility, to put it no stronger, that the substantial tranche of 'missing' exports represents a trade with the Baltic which had now dried up. It is unlikely that much of the current export from London and Ipswich went to the Baltic, at least not directly. This trade was aimed chiefly at Brabant and Zeeland, where some of it competed with that of the Merchant Adventurers. The Dutch provinces were now the main market for English cloth exporters, so an intensification of rivalry between the two groups was inevitable.

The enfeebled state of Hanseatic trade between England and the Baltic in the 1450s and 1460s did not mean that Englishmen's trade flourished. Indeed, the opposite is true. A rough, though reasonably reliable, proof of this is provided by an examination of denizen cloth exports at the four east-coast ports which have been identified as the main centres of English trade with the Baltic (table 14). By 1462–7 their combined exports averaged only 1,427 a year compared with 7,412 in 1442–7, a drop of 81 per cent. In comparison, the combined exports of the ports from Southampton to Bristol, which suffered from the loss of England's possessions in France, fell by about 55 per cent. London, with its Netherlands trade, saw a fall of only 10 per cent in denizen exports in these two periods, despite the fact that the second coincides with a Burgundian boycott. It might be argued that east-coast merchants suffered because they failed to establish a

stake in the Netherlands trade, but that their Baltic trade provided a life-line, taking all their current cloth exports. This is not true, but even if every piece of cloth they exported had gone to the Baltic it would have been far less than in former times. One obvious factor in the declining fortunes of the Englishmen was the erosion of the position which they had established and then held precariously in Prussia during the previous three-quarters of a century. Lynn suffered a sharp drop in trade even before the attack on the Bay fleet in 1449. Cloth exports had totalled 2,129 in 1446–7, but reached only 694 between Michaelmas 1447 and 30 April 1449, and 235 between the latter date and the following Michaelmas, before recovering to 1,188 in 1449–50. Perhaps Lynn's merchants had problems of their own, since trade in the other ports appears to have been normal until 1449. At that point repercussions of the attack upon the Bay fleet inflicted grave damage on trade. The Prussians took immediate action against English merchants and goods already in their country, but having obtained security for satisfaction of their losses were ready to give letters of safe-conduct to any bold enough to mount new ventures. Nor is there any evidence that they imposed more stringent conditions upon trade in these years. They had already squashed English pretensions in this direction and had little need to be more harsh. Consequently, Englishmen faced greater danger in the approaches to the Baltic, where their ships were menaced by privateers of Lübeck and Denmark. The threat from the former was lessened after the city was brought within the Anglo-Hanse truce in 1456, but there was no settlement with Denmark until 1465. At first English merchants sought to overcome the problem by shipping in Prussian vessels. In February 1452 denizen cloth was sent from Lynn by this means, while five merchants (including a woman) imported goods worth £94 10s in four Danzig ships which came to Hull in May 1453.[108] When Denmark began to stop and search Prussian ships for English-owned goods, and again when the King of Denmark sided with the Teutonic Order against its rebellious subjects, English merchants could either trade via Hamburg-Lübeck or risk sending their own ships to the Baltic. The latter course was probably adopted only when it was possible to obtain very specific guarantees of safety. In May 1457, for instance, the Danzig authorities issued a safe-conduct valid until Michaelmas

[108] *HUB*, 8, nos. 122–3. Childs, *Accounts of Hull*, pp. 3–7.

1458 in favour of two Hull ships and one of Lynn, and ten merchants.[109] In April 1465 they answered a request for safe-conduct with the observation that this was not really necessary, since a state of peace prevailed between England and Poland. Nevertheless the city sent its own safe-conduct and promised to get one from the King of Poland.[110]

A glimpse of English trade at this time may be gained from the reconstruction of a voyage of three Hull ships which probably went to the Baltic in 1464.[111] The first departed on 2 October with a cargo of lead worth £56 13s 4d, 366 denizen cloths and 62½ Prussian-owned cloths. The other two left on 16 November with 286 denizen cloths and £66 13s 4d worth of lead. Despite the absence of any Hanse exports there is little doubt that these were bound for the same destination as the first ship. Forty English merchants shared in the venture, the largest consignment of cloth being 73 pieces, though this was exceeded in value by one of 64 cloths and £37 worth of lead. The first ship to leave returned to Hull on 3 March and the others on 23 February and 2 April. None of them came direct from the Baltic, for as well as goods which originated there all carried other things which could only have been bought in the Low Countries, including Rhenish wine, sweet wine, soap, eastern fruits and spices and much more besides. In fact, although the values of the two sorts of goods cannot be precisely disentangled, it is clear that in every ship the total value of the Baltic goods was much less than that of the other sort. In view of the long absences the implication is that the ships made a triangular voyage, first going northwards and eastwards and then to the Low Countries, where they may have disposed of some of the goods acquired in the north and obtained new cargoes. The same merchant capital financed each leg of the voyage. This is borne out by the fact that of the forty original exporters twenty-eight were among those with goods in the ships when they returned; two brought goods home from the Low Countries in other ships, while the other ten brought nothing from there within the period of account (Michaelmas 1464 to Michaelmas 1465). The last fact is not significant, since there were many merchants importing in the three home-coming ships whose names were not in the outward manifests, and some of these bore the same surnames as some of the 'missing' exporters. Even without the

[109] *HUB*, 8, no. 574.
[110] *HR*, II (v), nos. 647–8.
[111] PRO, E122/62/5, 7. Childs, *Accounts of Hull*, pp. 65–96.

coincidence of surnames there is a strong possibility of business connections between at least some of those exporting only and those importing only in these ships. Of the forty exporters only one, and one other denizen, imported goods in three Danzig ships which came to Hull in May and September 1465, and these were worth only £4. This suggests that Yorkshiremen, and no doubt other Englishmen also, had abandoned the practice of permanently maintaining representatives in Prussia. Caution prescribed a rapid turnover of capital, which meant exporting cloth, disposing of it quickly and repatriating the proceeds in the same ship or ships. Factors travelling with the ships took the place of the former residents. This parallels the practice of the Danzig merchants trading with Hull in this period and the two communities probably regarded each other very warily.

In the 1450s and 1460s the hostility of Denmark was a major obstacle to English trade with the Baltic, but the peace treaty signed in October 1465 offered hopes for the future. Cloth export figures show that at first the merchants were cautious. A staged return is also visible in the customs particulars of Boston, where hitherto denizen trade with the Baltic had been more modest than at any of the other English ports best placed to exploit it. Boston's new interest was probably roused by the desertion of the town by Lübeck merchants and, more positively, by contacts with Danzig merchants who began to take their place. As already mentioned, in December 1463 four denizens imported stockfish from Norway in a Stralsund ship, while the next surviving particular shows a Boston ship going either to Norway or the Baltic in July 1465.[112] On 27 March 1466 Henry Wiske, William Sibsey, Richard Curson and Henry Bukholt shipped 26 cloths, 100 lambskins and 2 tables of alabaster in a Danzig ship in a company with four Hanse cloth exporters.[113] No Boston ship went to the Baltic in the next twelve months, but on 27 April 1467 Wiske and Curson dispatched 41 cloths in William Wakeleyn's Boston ship, which also carried cloth belonging to a Danzig merchant, whose company they had enjoyed the previous year. There can be little doubt that this was an exploratory voyage to Danzig. The same source shows Thomas Hayward bringing his ship the *Gabriel* in from Norway with Hanse-owned staple goods in January 1468.[114] At Lynn no denizens imported or exported in any of the numerous Hanse ships which visited the port between 19

[112] PRO, E122/10/4, 5. [113] PRO, E122/10/7. [114] PRO, E122/10/8.

November 1464 and 19 November 1465.[115] But moving on to the period 2 November 1466 to 2 November 1467, one may safely conclude that, when Richard Outlawe sailed on 4 October 1467 with 80 cloths and £19 of worsteds, coverlets and candles belonging to three denizens, this was another exploratory voyage to Prussia.[116]

The success of the ventures in 1467 probably encouraged English merchants to revive their fellowship, which seems to have lapsed in recent years, and make a concerted effort to recover their lost market. It is difficult otherwise to account for the enterprises mounted simultaneously in the following year in Boston, Lynn, Hull and London, and possibly in other ports. Fourteen days before the attack by the Danes on English ships in 1468, two other vessels were allowed to pass peacefully through the Sound. These were probably the two Newcastle ships which, with one of Bristol, were already in Danzig at the time of the attack.[117] It was probably arranged that the main fleet of seven ships should rendezvous before entering the Baltic, but as they arrived at the Sound between 5 and 8 June they were seized by the Danes. Other details of the expedition may be pieced together from depositions[118] submitted to the enquiry held after the disaster and from customs particulars of Lynn and Boston.[119] At Lynn twenty-one merchants ventured a total of 911 cloths, 17 tuns of wine and a few worsteds, coverlets and Suffolk cheeses. This was all the denizen cloth exported from Lynn between 2 November 1467 and 2 November 1468 and half as much again as the total dispatched during the previous $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. Most of the cloth and the wine was put aboard the *James*, skippered and one-quarter owned by Richard Outlawe. Outlawe also had a half share in the *Mary*, which was a balinger, a small type of vessel which had room for only 49 cloths. This left 130 cloths, which after paying custom at Lynn had to be taken over to Boston to be put aboard one of the ships loading there. The Lynn ships sailed on 2 May, followed on 6 May by three ships contributed by Boston. These were the *Gabriel*, now commanded by William Wakeleyn, the *George* under Thomas Hayward and the *Christopher* under Robert Watson. None of these skippers had a share in the ownership of the ships. At Boston eighteen adventurers put together 345 cloths (apart from those brought from Lynn) and a little lead, wine and worsteds.

[115] PRO, E122/97/4.
[116] PRO, E122/97/8.
[117] *HUB*, 9, nos. 519, 524.
[118] *HUB*, 9, nos. 478, 519–20.
[119] PRO, E122/10/9; 97/9.

Additionally, the Boston ships carried 56 cloths belonging to five Hanse merchants. Depositions submitted to the later enquiry record that five Hanse merchants (one of them a Lübecker) travelled in the *Gabriel*, three of whom can be identified as owners of cloth and two having different names. The Lynn customs particular makes no mention of Hanse cloth in either of its ships, but much later Hans Barenbroek of the Steelyard claimed to have shipped cloth with Richard Outlawe from Lynn as well as in the *George*, a London-owned ship which sailed from the capital. Barenbroek demanded that the English should compensate him for his cloth, even though it had been seized by the King of Denmark. The London venture was financed by eleven merchants whose leader, George Heryott, and possibly some of the others, went in person to Prussia. The last of the ships was the *Valentine* of Newcastle, partly owned by the Earl of Northumberland. The thirty York merchants who chartered her claimed that their losses amounted to over £5,000. While this may have been an exaggeration it cannot be doubted that they had ventured a great deal, probably the greater part of Hull's denizen cloth exports in 1467–8, which at 1,449 pieces were more than three times the total of the previous two years. Given the preparations which must have gone into the expedition and the hopes pinned on it, it is small wonder that the English merchants suspected that the Danes had been urged into the attack by Hanseatic merchants wishing to eliminate competition in Prussia. Whether there were any real grounds for suspicion is a different matter. The magnitude of the disaster meant that the plan to revive trade in Prussia received a severe set-back. In addition many English merchants faced the prospect of ruin or great hardship. Sheer frustration at their inability to hit back at the Danes must have caused them to institute legal proceedings against the Hanseatics. The escalation into all-out war was the fault of politicians and they, rather than English merchants, must bear the blame for this episode in Anglo-Hanse relations.