CHAPTER 3

Jockeying for advantage, 1400–1437

In the fifteenth century the defence of the Hanseatic franchises became more important than ever, in the light of increasingly stringent parliamentary legislation directed against alien merchants. Although not continuously enforced, this posed an ever-present threat to individuals and groups who disregarded the letter of the law, and was particularly dangerous during recurring periods of active anti-alien sentiment. The 1303 customs duties were still levied, but the reciprocal privileges conferred by Edward I's *Carta Mercatoria* were virtually forgotten. Only by constantly citing the usage of their own liberties granted before and since that date could the Hanse merchants hope to gain exemption from general legislation. Even then their appeals were not always successful. The threat to aliens was not immediately apparent at the accession of Henry IV, since his first parliament (October 1399) actually confirmed their right to sell victuals by retail as well as in gross. Thereafter, parliaments were almost uniformly hostile. Those of 1401 and 1402 re-enacted the bullion and employment acts and requested the king to enforce them more strictly. The employment act now required aliens to expend the whole of the proceeds from the sale of imports upon English goods, instead of merely half as before. Later parliaments of Henry IV and his heirs enlarged the acts, not merely to ensure obedience but to trammel aliens in other directions. In 1404 alien importers were required to provide surety that they would sell their wares within three months of arrival, they were forbidden to trade with other strangers and had to register with a host who would supervise their activities. In 1406 there was a slight relaxation, when it was enacted that aliens and other non-citizens might trade freely with one another in London and sell there by retail as well as in gross. But in June 1407 the king suspended this statute until parliament should give it more mature consideration,

and in the meantime the city's franchise prohibited such trade. When parliament assembled in October it confirmed the king's action and annulled the offending statute. In 1411 the period of grace allowed to sell imports was reduced from three months to forty days. The extremity of these regulations came in 1425 when aliens were ordered to find a host before selling any goods or, at most, within fifteen days; within forty days they had not only to have sold their imports, but also to have bought their quota of English goods, on pain of forfeiture.[1]

Fortunately for the Hanse its franchises were confirmed by Henry IV before the hostility of parliament was manifested and before an outbreak of severe violence between England and a number of Hanse towns. This was done on 24 October 1399, in return for the modest fine of 25 marks, but contingent not only upon the principle of reciprocity for the king's subjects in all parts of Almain, but also upon two more specific conditions. All members of the Hanse were to be authenticated by sealed letters from their home towns and no strangers were to be admitted to the fellowship. Secondly, the Prussian and Wendish towns were to send envoys before midsummer next to answer outstanding claims for damages submitted by English merchants. This was the result of a petition presented to Richard II before his deposition, reminding him that some three years earlier he had informed the Germans that, unless his subjects had been given satisfaction by 8 September 1399, they would be issued with letters of marque, authorising them to take direct action to recover their losses. The conditions attached to the confirmation of the franchises were explained to the English merchant community on 6 December 1399. But, although the Hanse failed to send envoys, Henry took no steps either to cancel its charter or to issue letters of marque, save in one instance, and that as early as Easter 1400. On the contrary, both before and after midsummer many Chancery writs ordered the release of German ships arrested in English ports. These had not been halted in anticipation of the promised action against the Hanse, but simply as part of a general arrest of shipping during a state of emergency.[2]

The violence alluded to above, which soon amounted almost to a state of war, did not flow from earlier events nor from a current increase in commercial rivalry between the two communities.

[1] *Stats.*, 2, p. 118. *Rot. Parl.*, 3, pp. 468, 502, 542–3, 598, 612, 661; 4, p. 276. *CCR*, 1405–9, p. 210.

[2] *CPR*, 1399–1401, pp. 57, 140. *CCR*, 1399–1402, pp. 73, 85. *HUB*, 5, nos. 384, 386, 391.

Englishmen started the attacks, which were directed not so much against Hanse ships and merchants trading with England, but against Hanse trade in other areas. To some extent the attacks may be represented as simply part and parcel of an apparently general lawlessness at sea which marred the early years of the fifteenth century. Traditionally, the blame for this was laid at the door of pirates and privateers, whose activities defied their own governments as much as they damaged the international trading community.[3] A revisionist study, based chiefly upon the fortunes and misfortunes of English, French, Flemish and Castilian vessels in the English Channel, has advanced an alternative interpretation, suggesting that the predators were mostly subject to government control and the attacks a matter of policy.[4] This view finds limited support from a survey of Hanseatic losses in this period. Some servants of the English state condoned, encouraged or even participated in the attacks, but, throughout, the judiciary listened to the complaints of the victims, instituted enquiries and ordered the arrest into safe custody, and sometimes the restitution, of the spoils. Taken as a whole the episode cannot safely be written off as a government-sponsored attack on the Hanse.

The catalogue of Hanseatic naval losses in the fifteenth century begins at Easter 1400, when John Brandon of Lynn seized a ship at Boston, but this was legally sanctioned by an English court. More questionable is an incident in the following June, when sailors under the command of the Earl of Northumberland allegedly threw the captain and twelve crewmen overboard and took another ship and its cargo of grain into Hartlepool. It is significant that both these ships belonged to Stralsund, with which there had been a long-running dispute and which had itself confiscated English goods. Then there was a respite until 1402, a fact somewhat remarkable in the light of privateering licences being issued to east-coast merchant-shipowners, authorising them to attack Scottish and Frisian ships and keep the spoils for themselves. At this date all Frisians were treated as pirates, since the *Vitalienbrüder*, recently expelled from the Baltic, had established their base in that lordless country. At the end of May 1400 licences were renewed for John Brandon and other

[3] J. H. Wylie, *History of England under Henry the Fourth*, I (London, 1884), pp. 379–99. C. L. Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise in Fifteenth Century England* (Oxford, 1925), pp. 78–105. S. P. Pistono, 'Henry IV and the English Privateers', *EHR*, 99 (1975), 322–30.

[4] C. J. Ford, 'Piracy or Policy: The Crisis in the Channel, 1400–1403', *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.*, Series 5, 29 (1979), 63–77.

Lynn merchants to continue marauding with four ships already at sea and to press two more to reinforce the squadron. In June John Tuttebury and William Terry of Hull and John Leget of Whitby obtained licences for four or six ships, while in August William Jonesson of Newcastle was commissioned to press sailors for his own two privateers and lodesmen for the king's great ship, the *Trinity*.[5] The lull between 1400 and 1402 was not devoid of incident, for Lynn men got possession of a ship belonging to the Teutonic Knights, which they claimed had earlier been seized by Scottish sailors. The Englishmen declined to restore the vessel to its rightful owners, since the admiral's court awarded it to them as a legitimate spoil of war. This quickly led to reprisals against Lynn merchants in Prussia. In December 1401 Henry IV gave a warning to the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, in the form of a request to ban his subjects from trading with the Scots. Not until June did the Grand Master reply, in language nearly identical with that used by the Flemings in answer to a similar request made by Edward II almost a century before.[6] The suggestion was declined, on the grounds that Prussians claimed the right to trade freely with all Christian people. By then the first of a wave of attacks had already been made against Prussian and other Hanseatic ships, for after their warning the English felt free to stop anyone suspected of trading with the Scots. However, the attacks began only after Scots land and naval forces had renewed their own assaults. The first seizure was probably that of two Bremen ships by Jonesson's Newcastle privateers on 15 and 16 April, while on 8 May Tuttebury and Terry's Hull men captured an Elbing ship and about the same time robbed, but did not detain, a Lübeck ship. Most of the damage inflicted on the Hanseatics in 1402 was done by an official fleet under the command of the admiral, Lord Grey of Codnore, mustered in May to intercept a Franco-Scottish fleet assisting the Scottish invasion of the north of England. About midsummer Grey's men attacked two Bremen and a Danzig ship in a Scottish port, burning two and capturing the third. On other occasions they robbed, without detaining, three Prussian and one Stralsund ship. In December a Norfolk master in the king's fleet forced a Hamburg ship to put into Holy Island to be searched for Scottish goods, but the latter was wrecked while entering harbour. The catalogue of losses in the North Sea is completed with the sinking of a Danzig ship by Hartlepool fishermen and the robbery of

[5] *CPR*, 1399–1401, pp. 291, 351–2; 1401–5, p. 55.

[6] *HR*, I (v), nos. 91–2.

a Kampen ship in which Lübeck had an interest. In southern waters Hanseatics were less troubled, but two Prussian ships were robbed by licensed privateers, making a total of four ships captured, four destroyed and eight robbed in 1402.

The next year, Hanseatic ships may have steered clear of Scottish waters for, while northern privateers captured four ships and burned a fifth, two of these were probably near the Dutch coast; a sixth was taken near Norway. The reduction of losses in the north was more than offset by those off the French and Flemish coasts, where the intensity of warfare greatly increased. About Easter ships operating from Calais seized three of the Prussian Bay fleet near Ostend, while John Hauley of Dartmouth took a fourth. During the rest of the year Calais men captured three more ships, a Winchelsea fleet took two ships and Prussian-owned goods freighted in a Flemish ship, a Bayonne master accounted for two or three ships, while two privateers financed by London and Dover interests seized a Prussian vessel making for Southampton. This brings total losses for 1403 to nineteen or twenty ships captured and one destroyed. In 1404 attacks upon Hanseatics continued and total losses recorded in that year were sixteen ships captured and six robbed, while German-owned merchandise was taken from two Dutch ships. One ship was seized near Ostend and taken into Calais, but on the whole the action seems to have moved back to the north. In ten cases where the aggressors were named, Newcastle privateers were responsible for five attacks, East Anglian for four and Hull for one. Failure to identify attackers does not necessarily make accounts less reliable, for they were not certainly identified in the most-documented incident of all. This was an assault against three Riga ships, the worst outrage for loss of both life and property. After sailing from Riga packed with Russian wares they touched upon some of the Wendish towns, before continuing their voyage to Bruges. One, at least, left Wismar about midsummer and was said to have been captured on 13 July and brought to Hull; the exact fate of the others is not recorded. The total of fifty-eight or fifty-nine attacks described above as having taken place between 1402 and 1404 is a minimum and should probably be increased by at least a further five incidents, which are not precisely datable but which certainly fall into this general period.[7]

The Hanse towns and the Bruges *Kontor* protested repeatedly

[7] This summary of losses is based on documents submitted to the Hague conference, cited in succeeding notes. It does not include any losses by Rostock and Wismar.

about attacks on their shipping, but at first were reluctant to mount reprisals. In Prussia the Knights reacted quickly to the loss of their own ship by arresting goods belonging to Lynn merchants, claiming that the ship had been seized directly by Englishmen and not taken from the Scots. Restrictions imposed by the Prussian diet upon Englishmen in July 1402 are probably too early to have been made in response to the naval attacks, which were just beginning, and must therefore be regarded as a belated and partial implementation of the threat of expulsion made in 1398. Those married to Englishwomen were to leave the country with their families by the new year. Any married to Prussian women and unmarried men were allowed to remain, though the latter group might no longer lodge with the former and had to find native hosts. All were forbidden to trade beyond the confines of a port of arrival. According to later English complaints, which there is no reason to disbelieve, the restrictions soon went beyond this, at least in Danzig.[8] They were allowed to expose cloth for sale on only three days a week, and might not trade in public places nor in partnership with Prussians. As a final act of indignity and spite, Englishmen were denied entry to the common hall where merchants of all nationalities met; any Prussian who took an Englishman there was fined six barrels of beer. It was alleged that all of these restrictions applied only to Englishmen. This may well have been true, though it was largely the result of the present crisis in Anglo-Prussian relations. The Prussian internal traders were suspicious of all aliens, particularly the Dutch, whom they feared just as much as the English. From the summer of 1402 there was a general deterioration and, by the following spring, arrests were threatened against the property of Dutch and Flemish merchants, as well as that of Englishmen.

The expulsion of the married men deprived the English community of many of its leaders, but a fair number of younger men remained to carry on their business. Their property became increasingly subject to arrest until June 1403, when Henry IV took the initiative and sent an invitation for ambassadors to come to discuss current difficulties. The Prussian diet responded with alacrity by freeing English-owned goods of Prussian origin and allowing them to be exported in English ships or in three alien ships. In return, English merchants still in Prussia gave security for payment

[8] *HR*, I (v), nos. 90, 93, 101. *Hanseakten*, no. 322.

of compensation for recent injuries inflicted by their countrymen and also twenty hostages for the personal safety of the ambassadors. Nevertheless, it was prudently decided that Prussians should not send any more goods to England until the envoys returned. The delegation arrived in July, bearing claims totalling 19,119½ nobles (£6,373 sterling). After negotiations with the Chancellor and the Treasurer the terms of a settlement were accepted by the whole of the king's council in the first week of October. It was agreed in principle that ships and merchandise should be restored by each side and compensation paid for any destroyed or consumed; there were to be further talks about the men who had been slain or drowned. Since the current Welsh revolt prevented further progress, a truce was proclaimed until Easter (30 March) 1404. In the interim Englishmen could return to Prussia to settle their affairs and Prussians come to England; all could bring home goods already in their possession, but no new trade was to be initiated.[9]

During the spring and summer of 1404 further negotiations took place in London. Master John Kington, acting on the English side, reported to the king's council on 19 April, but no action was taken because of preoccupation with domestic and French affairs. Because of the lack of progress the Prussians forbade their ships to come to England after the truce expired at Easter; the ban was reaffirmed by the diet at the beginning of June and any captain who disobeyed was to forfeit his burgess rights. Furthermore, no Prussian was to import English cloth acquired since Easter nor export to England pitch, tar, ashes and bowstaves. Once again the English made the first move to restore trade with a letter dated 5 June, suggesting that the truce be renewed until Easter 1405. The next day the king authorised his subjects trading in northern and eastern Europe to elect a governor, apparently the first official act of recognition in the new reign. It is more than likely that John Broun of Lynn, who was entrusted to take the royal letter to Prussia, had already been nominated governor. However, on 16 July the Grand Master wrote to the king refusing his request to renew the truce, and shortly afterwards all Englishmen without burgess rights in Prussia were ordered to leave the country by Michaelmas. In August the English Chancery proclaimed that any merchants who traded with Prussia before the dispute was settled did so at their own risk. The Prussians were encouraged by a hardening of attitude on the part of the rest of the Hanse, which until

[9] *HUB*, 5, nos. 590–2. *HR*, I (v), nos. 130–2, 134–5. *Hanseakten*, no. 317. *POPC*, I, p. 218. *Letters of Henry the Fourth*, I, pp. 162–6. *Foedera*, IV (i), p. 57.

now had refused even to accept a ban on the import of English cloth. At the end of May 1404 Stralsund arrested English merchandise in retaliation for the attacks on shipping. The following October a meeting at Marienburg, attended by representatives of the Wendish towns, decided to hold a special diet at Lübeck on 2 February 1405 to coordinate sanctions. It was agreed that in the meantime the Hanse should try to enlist the support of the towns and princes of the Low Countries for a general boycott of trade with England. However, it found little support in this quarter. The Flemings were anxious about the supply of English wool, while Holland was more inclined to side with England than with the Hanse, because of its own dispute with Prussia. Consequently, when the special diet finally assembled at Lübeck on 12 March 1405 the Hanseatic towns of the Low Countries were not represented. The diet banned the import of English cloth and the export of virtually all Baltic wares; the merchants of the Low Countries were ordered to fall into line or suffer the consequences.[10]

The English government was not complacent about the threat of a trade stoppage, since it involved badly needed naval stores. As early as August 1404 Henry IV wrote to the Doge of Venice asking him to supply 80,000 lb of cables and cords and 60,000 lb of hawsers for certain great ships then being fitted out.[11] However, the Hanse's efforts to deny such goods to England were ineffective. In September 1405 the Bruges *Kontor* reported that large supplies of Baltic wares had been brought to Dordrecht and Amsterdam and that there was no shortage, either in Holland or England. Moreover, cloth continued to be smuggled into Hanseatic territories, much of it bought from English merchants in Skania. Already in August 1405, while maintaining the prohibition of exports to England and the import of English cloth, Prussia relaxed its general ban on exports through the Sound, alleging that the diet's decision was disregarded by other members of the Hanse. This unilateral action caused the Bruges *Kontor* to protest that disunity would weaken the Hanse and bring it into contempt. It blamed the Prussians for the recent supply of goods to the west, denying that they had been brought via the Elbe ports or shipped through the Sound by non-Prussians.[12]

The English attempt to improve relations with the Hanse began in the parliament which met at Coventry in October 1404. The

[10] *HUB*, 5, nos. 614, 617, 620–1. *HR*, I (v), nos. 198, 202–3, 209, 221, 225–9. *POPC*, I, p. 223. *CPR*, 1401–5, p. 394. *CCR*, 1402–5, p. 382. *Foedera*, IV (i), p. 67.

[11] *Letters of Henry the Fourth*, I, pp. 283–4.

[12] *HR*, I (v), nos. 262, 274–5, 302.

commission was given to Sir William Sturmy, speaker of the commons, William Brampton, a London merchant, and Master John Kington. Sturmy and Kington were experienced diplomats, who had already worked together on several embassies to the continent, while Kington had been responsible for the negotiations with Prussia the year before. Their first task was to coordinate the claims of the English merchants, and they did not leave until the end of May 1405. As well as Sturmy, Kington and William Brampton, the party included James Brampton and John Palleys, a Rhineland knight in English service, chosen because of his fluency in low German. The delegation reached its destination on 8 August but, after preliminary exchanges, discussions were adjourned until Michaelmas so that the Prussians could consult the Livonians and the other Hanse towns. As a result the Grand Master declined to make a separate peace, but on 8 October a provisional treaty was agreed, to take effect after England had come to terms with the rest of the Hanse. This provided for the full restoration of trade, with Englishmen being allowed to deal in Prussia as freely as they had ever done in the past. But they were to obey any lawful regulations made by the Grand Master for his own subjects and aliens, in particular that which provided that fractional cloths should have lists at each end. A conference was arranged for 1 May 1406 at Dordrecht in Holland to try the claims for damages made by the Prussians in 1403 and those which had been submitted since that date. Any claimants who could not attend the conference were allowed until 1 May 1407 to put their cases to the Chancellor in England. From Prussia William Brampton returned direct to England, but the rest of the party went to Dordrecht where it had talks with representatives of Lübeck, Bremen, Hamburg, Stralsund and Greifswald, reaching a conclusion on 15 December. These towns agreed to take part in the conference scheduled for the following May and, pending its outcome, all trade sanctions were suspended until 1 May 1407.[13]

The ambassadors did not return to London until 17 February 1406, a fortnight before parliament met. Sturmy was not a member on this occasion, probably because of the timing of the elections, but at an early stage the Chancellor reported to the lords on the outcome of the mission. Proclamation was made of the truce with the Hanse,

[13] *Hanseakten*, no. 308. *HUB*, 5, nos. 687, 697. *HR*, 1 (v), nos. 261, 290. *Letters of Henry the Fourth*, 2, pp. 80–2. *Calendar of Signet Letters of Henry IV and Henry V*, ed. J. L. Kirby (London, 1978), pp. 78, 84. *Foedera*, IV (i), pp. 80–1.

English merchants and sailors were invited to submit claims for their losses and commissioners were appointed to examine Hanse claims already received. As early as 10 March 1406 the English found it necessary to ask for a postponement of the Dordrecht conference until 1 August. They pleaded the recent late return of the envoys, but they were also hindered by the fact that on his way home William Brampton had been shipwrecked; he escaped with his life but lost some of his papers. Later the Hanseatic negotiators sarcastically remarked that everything favourable to the English case had been salvaged and only documents prejudicial to it lost.[14]

Towards the end of June the English asked for a further delay until 1 March 1407. The German delegates refused, came to Dordrecht at the beginning of August and sent word that they would wait there until the end of the month. Later they extended the deadline until 1 November but, when the English party still failed to arrive, they waited until the end of that month before giving up and going home. These delays allowed time for the intrusion of new factors, which prejudiced a successful outcome to the negotiations. In April 1406, for example, the Bruges *Kontor* complained that England had not reinstated the merchants in their liberties as the ambassadors had promised. In September 1406 an English fleet seized five ships *en route* to Spain, three of them actually belonging to the Teutonic Order; fortunately these were quickly restored after the Prussian delegates waiting at Dordrecht came to England to register a protest. Worst of all was the threat posed by the intervention of the Duke of Burgundy. As early as June 1405 he had offered to ally with the Hanse, provided that it took up arms against England; at the beginning of 1407 he renewed this offer. In February the Grand Master wrote to the Duke saying that the international status of the Order required it to be neutral in disputes between other powers, but the response to a later approach did not give such a definite refusal. This did not mean that the Hanse was seriously considering the offer, for it had nothing to gain and everything to lose from open war with England. However, it was not averse to using the threat of a Burgundian alliance to put pressure on England. The Germans gained from this prevarication, when in May 1407 the Duke of Burgundy ordered his officials in West Flanders and Picardy not to molest their ships and merchants. The repeated postponements of

[14] *HR*, 1 (v), nos. 312, 460. *Rot. Parl.*, 3, pp. 568, 574.

the conference by the English simply meant that they were not ready; they had no wish to put it off indefinitely, since this might lead to the renewal of trade sanctions when the truce expired in May 1407. One indication of their desire for a settlement is the small olive branch offered to the Hanse in the matter of poundage subsidy. In June 1406, when parliament decided that aliens should pay an increment of 1s in the pound, the Hanseatics were given exemption. Altruism was supported by logic, since the case for refusing to exempt Germans from the regular tunnage and poundage was based solely on the fact that natives were required to pay. The Venetians were also granted exemption from the increment as a special privilege, while it was abolished prematurely for all aliens. Early in 1407 Sturmy and Kington were ready to negotiate; they wrote to the other participants apologising for their failure to turn up in November and suggested that the conference be convened as soon as possible. About the same time they crossed over to Middelburg in Holland to await the arrival of the Hanse delegates. Now it was the Englishmen who were kept waiting. One cause of delay may have been slowness of communications; for example, the letter sent to Prussia on 14 February did not reach Marienburg until 11 April. Some of the towns were so slow in replying that Sturmy was moved to write to the Bruges *Kontor* asking whether they knew of any reason for this. Further delay was caused by the fact that no member of the Hanse could commit itself to a conference before the meeting of the diet, which was scheduled for Ascension (5 May) at Lübeck. One thing which might have caused a hold-up, but didn't, was the death of Conrad de Ullingen, Grand Master of the Teutonic Order; his deputy undertook that Prussia would not use this as an excuse to denounce the provisional treaty of 1405.[15]

The diet authorised the conference to meet on 1 August 1407 at Dordrecht but, because of disturbances in that town, it actually began at the Hague on 28 August. The terms of reference were simple, being confined to questions of compensation. Claims had either to be settled now or firm arrangements made to deal with any that could not be resolved immediately; agreement also had to be reached about terms of payment for any compensation awarded. Much depended upon a successful conclusion, since the Hanse threatened to renew trade sanctions if a settlement was not made.

[15] *Hanseakten*, nos. 309–14. *HUB*, 5, nos. 743, 783. *HR*, I (v), nos. 256, 313, 343, 349, 364, 374, 380–2. *Rot. Parl.*, 3, pp. 578, 598. *Foedera*, IV (i), pp. 104, 108–9, 118–19.

The conference and its aftermath was a diplomatic triumph for the English; despite the recent display of unity by the Hanse, they now succeeded in dividing it. This they did by the simple expedient of dealing with the Prussian and Livonian claims separately from the rest. The former were considered first and a substantial measure of agreement was reached within five weeks. Only then, on 6 October, did they proceed to the claims of the other towns and very little was agreed before the conference broke up, apparently on 15 October. Despite this, and despite the ultimate failure to honour the settlement made with Prussia, trade sanctions were not renewed. The total amount of damages claimed by the Prussians was 25,934½ nobles (£8,645 sterling), made up of the claims submitted in 1403, 1405 and later additions. These did not relate solely to attacks on the high seas, for among them were wrongs allegedly committed in England, including, for example, a case of money forfeited to the crown for an offence against the bullion law. The English envoys accepted as legitimate and outstanding claims involving a total of 8,957 nobles. Of the rest some appear to have been rejected, but many had to be passed over because the facts were still too obscure. In these cases claimants were allowed until Easter 1409 to continue their actions in the English Chancery. A couple of cases, which depended upon the question of whether Prussians had actively assisted the Scots in time of war, were referred to the arbitration of Sigismund, King of the Romans. Total English claims against Prussia amounted to 4,535 nobles (£1,512 sterling), of which 766 nobles were found to be proven and outstanding. Livonian claims for property totalled £8,027 12s 7d, and they also demanded provision for the souls of the men who had been slain. The only matter in dispute in this case was the value set upon the stolen goods; it was decided to refer it to the merchant community of Bruges, who were asked to provide details of prices current there on the date of the attack on the ships.[16]

The English envoys returned home in time to report to the parliament meeting at Gloucester, which dispersed on 2 December 1407. The principal Prussian negotiator, Arnd von Dassel, came to England after that date and learned that those in parliament who had been most opposed to the Hanse were the members for Newcastle. This is no doubt explained by the fact that Newcastle men appear to have been those most involved in the attack on the

[16] *Hanseakten*, no. 316. *HR*, I (v), no. 397.

Livonian ships. On 26 December, von Dassel reported to Danzig that he had not yet reached agreement with Kington about the amount of the Livonian compensation, but the king had promised to come to London after Christmas to expedite matters. The work was completed by 26 March 1408 when Henry IV confirmed that within three years of Easter (15 April) he would pay 8,957 nobles to the Prussians and 22,096 nobles to the Livonians in three equal instalments, provided that his own subjects were paid 766 nobles in the first year; he also promised to endow prayers for the souls of the Livonian dead. The obligation seems to have been absolute, since there is no suggestion that it was dependent on the king's recovering the money from those involved in the attacks. The amount and terms of compensation agreed upon so far were not accepted by the Prussian towns until August 1408; shortly after that von Dassel returned to England to follow the progress of outstanding claims, but without plenipotentiary powers. This omission proved to be something of a stumbling block, as he informed his principals in January 1409. He also reported continuing harassment of Prussian merchants. In the past year Hull had forbidden them to sell goods from their ships, insisting that these must first be unloaded and warehoused. Because the king had not intervened, London was now doing the same. More encouraging was von Dassel's intelligence about the shortage of corn in western Europe, which resulted from a combination of a poor harvest and a Prussian ban on grain export of several months' standing. In his first letter he noted that England had had to impose its own ban on export. A few days later he reported that all the corn was lost in the north of England, and he thought that because of this a group of Lynn merchants who had come to London to talk with him would have to accept his claims.[17]

In March 1409 Henry IV wrote to the Grand Master asking him to send envoys fully empowered to settle outstanding disagreements about compensation and also to negotiate a perpetual treaty of friendship; he hoped that, meanwhile, von Dassel might stay in England so that the present talks could continue. In April an assembly of the Prussian towns agreed to send envoys, but these did not leave until high summer. They were instructed to demand the first instalment of the compensation and to settle dates for payment of the rest; they were also to ask for 4,200 nobles for prayers for the

[17] *HR*, I (v), nos. 484, 547–8. *HUB*, 5, nos. 830, 847. *William Ashbourne's Book*, ed. D. M. Owen (Norfolk Record Soc., 48, 1981), p. 85.

souls of twenty-eight merchants and ships' captains lost with the Livonian ships; provision for the souls of ordinary seamen was left to the king's conscience. The ambassadors were received by Henry IV on 15 August and afterwards had talks with the council. On 31 August they reported that the king had promised to pay one sixth of the agreed damages at Martinmas (11 November), one sixth at Purification (2 February) 1410 and the rest at Purification 1411 and 1412; they would wait for the first payment and, if instructed to, for the second. They were told to wait until February but no longer, and to take delivery of both the Prussian and Livonian money. On 10 October 1409 Henry IV made formal recognisances to pay at the dates given above, subject to the proviso that payments be made by exchange, not in coin or bullion save for reasonable expenses. The Prussians agreed to begin discussing a treaty of friendship as soon as they received the first instalment. The English negotiators appointed on 14 November to act with John Kington were Richard Merlawe and William Askham, mayor and alderman of London. By 4 December they had finished their work and a provisional treaty had been made. Part of it consisted of an indenture about payment of damages in cases left over from the Hague conference and haggled about for the last two years. It was agreed that nine sums totalling 3,421 nobles should be levied from English merchants and shipowners and handed over to the Prussians by Purification 1411, together with a further 114 nobles if the claim could be proved by 1 April 1410. Additionally, it was provided that the heir of Henry, Lord Percy, after attaining his majority and being invested with his estates, should pay 838 nobles to the proctor of Marienburg for corn taken by Percy for the garrison at Berwick. In return for this settlement and the sums already promised by the king, the Prussians were debarred from distraining English property for anything done before the date of the treaty. Each side undertook to secure payment of compensation in the event of future crimes, but if nothing was done within six months of a complaint then the aggrieved party might make a distraint.[18]

Turning from the settlement of outstanding damages to the substantive clauses of the treaty, which dealt with the future conduct of trade, there is no doubt that the English got the better bargain, even though the rights of each side were described in identical words.

[18] *HR*, I (v), nos. 578–9, 581, 620, 624. *HUB*, 5, no. 480. *Foedera* IV (i), pp. 159–60, 163–4.

The Prussians were accorded no rights beyond those which were already claimed by the Hanse as a whole by virtue of their ancient charters. Their only gain lay in the fact that henceforth the present treaty, rather than former grants, could be cited as the warrant for enjoyment of trading privileges, and, while the treaty held, the Prussians ought to exercise their rights, even if the other Hanse towns lost theirs by a cancellation of the charters. On the other hand, the English gained rights which they could not legally claim on the basis of the 1388 treaty. In the first place the former treaty recognised only 'liege merchants of England', whereas the present comprehended 'all and each the lieges and subjects of the kingdom of England, and the lands and lordships of that kingdom, of whatsoever status or condition'. The former treaty recognised the rights of Englishmen to trade freely in Prussia 'with all manner of persons', but the present made it clear that they might deal directly with 'Prussians and others, of whatsoever nation or rite', thereby embracing aliens, including Poles and Orthodox Russians. Moreover, the treaty could even be interpreted as giving Englishmen the right to use Prussia as a base from which to trade with those peoples in their own countries. In 1388 they had side-stepped any renewed attempt to restrict them to trading at a single port of the Prussians' own choosing by establishing the right to come to any port and thence proceed to any place within the country, but nothing had been said about entering or leaving Prussia by land routes. Now Englishmen might come and go with merchandise 'by land and by sea', thus giving access to Poland and Russia. Finally, bearing in mind the expulsions of Englishmen from Prussia in 1402 and 1404, the negotiators of the new treaty could not avoid the question of the rights of settlers. A form of words was adopted which was probably intended to convey a general right of settlement, but was so ambiguous that it provided little basis for defining particular rights to be enjoyed by English settlers in Prussia. It was to be the cause of endless disputes in years to come.

The Anglo-Prussian treaty of 1409 was strongly opposed by all the northern towns of the Hanse. Some of the reasons for their opposition are found in correspondence of the Bruges *Kontor*.[19] This group of merchants was not a disinterested party, since it exported Flemish cloth to the eastern Baltic in direct competition with English

[19] *HR*, I (v), nos. 659, 674.

merchants. Nevertheless, there is no reason not to accept their account of the negotiations which had taken place in England. In January 1410 they wrote to the Livonian towns reporting that the English were demanding the right to trade in their country; when the Prussian negotiators refused this, on the grounds that Englishmen had never traded in Livonia, they were told that in that case Livonians should not trade in England. The Bruges *Kontor* advised that, rather than submit to blackmail, the Hanse as a whole should renounce its privileges in England and refuse to admit the English to Prussia on any terms. It claimed that they must gain the upper hand since England needed Baltic goods more than the Germans needed English cloth. In February the *Kontor* wrote in similar terms to the Prussian diet, complaining about English designs on Livonia.

Despite the hostility of the rest of the Hanse, indeed despite the hostility of some of his own subjects, the Grand Master ratified the treaty with England. The main reason was the political and military pressure currently exerted against the Teutonic Order by external forces. From the 1340s to the 1380s relations between the Order and the kingdom of Poland had been reasonably stable; thereafter, the *modus vivendi* was threatened by the acceptance of Christianity by the pagan Lithuanians and the union forged between the grand duchy of Lithuania and Poland. At first, the Knights actually made gains from the allies, taking the duchy of Dobrzyń from Poland in 1392 and holding it until 1405, and acquiring Samogitia from the Lithuanians in 1398. A revolt of the Samogitians in 1401 was suppressed by 1405, but in 1409 they revolted again. Although the Lithuanians had accepted Catholic rather than Orthodox Christianity, the Order found it expedient to claim that it was still conducting a crusade against the heathen and sought the aid of western knights. The ship that brought this appeal to England also carried a herald of the King of Poland, bearing his complaints about the Knights. Since Henry IV was himself a Knight of the Teutonic Order, the Poles received little sympathy in this quarter. In January 1410 Dietrich von Logendorf, the Order's representative in England, reported that Henry had promised that if he could make peace with France he would go in person to Prussia, but meanwhile he would not prevent any of his subjects from going there.[20] Von Logendorf suggested that to secure the sympathy of England the Grand Master

[20] *Ibid.*, nos. 639–40.

should allow a few shiploads of corn to be brought to London; because of a second poor harvest and a continued ban on exports from Prussia there was acute dearth in western Europe; in England in 1409–10 prices were double the level of those two years earlier.

Despite a degree of mutual need, ratification of the Anglo-Prussian treaty was a long-drawn-out business, Prussia acceding on 24 December 1410 and England on 24 May 1411. Delay was caused firstly by Henry IV's late delivery of the second instalment of the indemnity and then by Prussian military disaster. When no money was forthcoming in February 1410 the envoys refused to wait any longer, so it was agreed that payment should be made at Bruges on 18 May; it was eventually handed over there several weeks after the new date. Then, on 15 July, the Teutonic Knights were defeated by a Polish-Lithuanian army at Tannenberg. This almost resulted in the annihilation of the Order in Prussia, for the Slavs swept all before them, meeting little resistance until they were held before Marienburg by Henry von Plauen. For this successful defence of the capital, von Plauen was shortly afterwards appointed Grand Master. After Prussia ratified the treaty Henry IV rapidly lost interest in paying any more of the indemnity. He defaulted on the instalment due in February 1411, saying that reports of the death at Tannenberg of Ulrich von Juningen, the Grand Master, and the destruction of the Order, made him afraid that the money might fall into the wrong hands. Two thousand nobles were handed over in 1412, but after that nothing. For several years the Prussians vainly sent envoys to collect the balance; then they stopped wasting time and money on the business, although the claim was not relinquished.[21]

The money actually handed over to the Prussians was a small price to pay for dividing the Hanse, which is what it did. In 1405 Prussia had made a provisional treaty, which it undertook not to ratify until the other members made peace with England. The 1409 treaty was made without reference to them and ratified despite the opposition of the northern towns and regardless of the fact they had not yet made peace. This success was not due entirely to English diplomacy, for the Wendish towns were distracted and divided by social discontent in this period. In particular, popular agitation against the ruling elite in Lübeck between 1403 and 1408 resulted in the exile of a majority of the governing body in the latter year, at a

[21] *Ibid.*, nos. 634, 637; (vi), nos. 23, 60, 62, 114–16, 193–5. *HUB*, 5, nos. 981, 1004; 6, no. 74. *CCR*, 1405–9, pp. 357, 366; 1409–13, pp. 265, 283.

crucial stage in the dealings with England. The non-Prussian towns which were represented at the Hague conference came away almost empty-handed. They went claiming 32,016 nobles;[22] English counterclaims totalled 1,662 nobles against Hamburg and Greifswald and a large, indeterminable sum against Stralsund, which was said to exceed that town's own claim of 7,416 nobles. Additionally England claimed 32,407 nobles against Rostock and Wismar, chiefly for losses during the 1390s. As already mentioned, consideration of these claims was deferred until those of Prussia had been dealt with, and very little time can have been spent on them before the conference broke up. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the English accepted claims totalling only 1,372 nobles, in addition to £231 about which terms had been agreed before the conference met. On the other hand, as the ambassadors pointed out with reference to the claims of Stralsund, many cases were very complex and the facts difficult to establish – a few of them dating back as far as the 1380s. As in the case of Prussia, claims not settled at the Hague could be pursued for a limited period in the English Chancery. Some towns sent representatives to England after the conference, but only Hamburg formally accepted the offer made by the Sturmy team, and in October 1409 the king made a recognisance to pay it 417 nobles.[23] In the normal order of things the non-Prussian towns might have called for a renewal of trade sanctions against England when the Hanse diet met at Lübeck in May 1408. Unfortunately, no records have survived from this assembly, which coincided with the climax of the city's internal troubles. This misfortune resulted in a general paralysis of will, for Lübeck was effectively the head of the League and no other town could adequately fill its place. Consequently, while sanctions were not renewed relations with England remained tense for many years. In April 1412 the diet protested about disregard of its franchises, once again singling out Southampton as particularly offending in the matter of local tolls; it was ordered that no member should trade there after the following Christmas. This diet also complained about renewed English attacks on shipping, which can be confirmed from other sources.[24]

[22] Details survive of claims by Hamburg, Bremen, Stralsund, Lübeck, Greifswald and Kampen totalling 25,135 nobles. The higher figure of 32,016 probably includes those of Rostock and Wismar, which have not survived. England's claims against Rostock and Wismar (unpublished) are in B. L. Cotton, Nero B IX, fos. 57–62. Details of some English claims against Stralsund are in *Literae Cantuarienses*, ed. J. B. Sheppard (London, 1887–9), 3, pp. 79–85.

[23] *Hanseakten*, no. 362. *Foedera*, IV (i), p. 160.

[24] *HUB*, 5, no. 1047. *HR*, I (vi), no. 66. *Rot. Parl.*, 4, pp. 12, 36.

After the death of Henry IV his son confirmed the Hanseatic charters in November 1413, for a fine of forty marks.[25] However, there was no formal attempt to improve relations between England and the Hanse until the meeting of the council of Constance in 1417. The English delegation was authorised not merely to discuss the business of the church, but also to negotiate with various powers, including the Hanse, on secular matters.[26] The talks took place under the chairmanship of Sigismund, King of the Romans, who entertained grandiose diplomatic ambitions encompassing much of Europe; the previous year he had visited England and concluded a treaty of perpetual friendship. Sigismund's mediation was unsuccessful and relations between England and the Hanse became significantly worse. One action which had unfortunate consequences was the pressing of Hanseatic ships to assist in Henry V's invasion of Normandy. Some ships were arrested at sea and, in order to free them for royal service, their cargoes were forcibly sold in England. Even if the proceeds were handed over immediately to the owner's representatives, such high-handed action might cause great inconvenience; for example, shortly before the Constance meeting ten ships carrying salt from the Bay were seized and treated in this fashion. Furthermore, while payment was promised, at the rate of 3s 4d per ton per month for the ship and 3s 4d per month for a seaman's wage, this was often long delayed. In 1434 the Prussians were still claiming payment of £7,300 for twenty-four ships pressed for the attack on Harfleur, including compensation for five which had been destroyed.[27]

In the aftermath of the Constance negotiations the German community in London was alarmed by the erosion of its privileges. For example, the city sheriffs began to levy tolls on a wide range of goods. When the merchants complained to the mayor in February 1418 it was claimed that these payments ought to be made by all aliens in aid of the city farm. The mayor ruled in favour of the Hanse but the sheriffs continued to demand the tolls, so that the merchants were forced to appeal to parliament and the king's council. The council was reluctant to come to a decision, particularly after the death of Henry V, when the matter was postponed indefinitely. An interim judgement provided that the merchants should not pay the tolls for the time being, but without prejudice to any rights of the

[25] *HUB*, 5, no. 1114. *Foedera*, IV (ii), p. 56.
[26] For the background see L. R. Loomis, *The Council of Constance* (London, 1962).
[27] *HR*, I (vi), no. 451; II (i), no. 385.

sheriffs. Another dispute, which began in 1419 and dragged on for years, was the refusal of the city to re-appoint an English alderman for the Steelyard. The principal function of this official was to assist in the adjudication of mercantile cases between Hansards and Englishmen, but since this involved the withdrawal of cases from the city's own courts the appointment was a matter of great resentment. The increasing vexation of the German merchants in England came at a time when the Wendish towns were beginning to re-establish their unity. While English pressure may itself have contributed to this revival, more important was the restoration of the patriciate in Lübeck in 1416, which was accomplished with remarkably little bloodshed. The formation of a Wendish league did not necessarily mean that it would meet force with force, but in 1417 English merchants returning from Prussia were arrested at Greifswald and imprisoned until they provided sureties that they would return to captivity at Martinmas 1418, unless certain conditions had been satisfied in the meantime. An intervention by the diet which met at Lübeck in June 1418 succeeded only in getting an extension of the time limit until the following Easter.[28]

At the same time as relations with the Wendish towns were deteriorating, English fortunes suffered a set-back in Prussia, which was still isolated from the rest of the Hanse. Hitherto, Henry IV's failure to pay the whole of the indemnity does not seem to have done much harm to his subjects in this region. Admittedly, they did not gain access to Livonia, but in Prussia itself they did well. While Henry von Plauen remained Grand Master the Englishmen probably enjoyed greater freedom than ever before. This may have been a matter of policy, for during the recent war the chief Prussian towns had recognised the suzerainty of the King of Poland and, when the Order re-asserted its authority, von Plauen, after an initial reconciliation, was determined to humble them. In Danzig he removed restrictions which the city had recently imposed on English merchants in defiance of the treaty. There is no independent support for the later English claim that von Plauen gave official recognition to their fellowship, but they had a wide measure of *de facto* freedom. This may have included the right to discipline members with stocks and other means of confinement in their assembly house, though criminal jurisdiction was reserved to the Grand Master. In October 1413, however, Henry von Plauen was deposed by a faction within

[28] *HUB*, 6, nos. 144, 332–4, 337, 374, 474–5, 479, 482. *HR*, 1 (vi), nos. 581–2. *Rot. Parl.*, 4, p. 192. *CCR*, 1422–9, pp. 49, 53, 140, 192.

the Order. The hand of his successor, Michael Küchmeister, weighed less heavily on Danzig and this allowed the authorities to pursue more independent policies. One of their first actions was to outlaw the English fellowship; its factory was closed and the members ordered to live with Prussian hosts. Retribution may not have gone much beyond this, with trade continuing relatively unimpeded until the 1420s. The merchants ignored hosting regulations and rented property, both for living in and for trade. Moreover, despite the closing of the factory, they continued to have, or soon revived, some form of association, since in 1422 one of their number was identified as their alderman. Nevertheless, they registered complaints in England, and in 1419 the king sent Sir Walter Pole and Dr William Clynt to demand that his subjects should enjoy the same privileges as Prussians did in England. The Grand Master disingenuously replied that Prussia had no privileges beyond those shared with all the towns of the Hanse. Though true, this answer overlooked the fact that privileges had been guaranteed to Prussians independently of the Hanse, subject, of course, to the principle of reciprocity. The Grand Master also denied that any wrongs had recently been done to Englishmen, but he promised to safeguard whatever rights they customarily enjoyed.[29]

The Prussians frequently complained to Henry V about interference with their own ships, but there is no record of official reprisals until the *Bartholomew* of Hull was confiscated in July 1420 to pay for losses incurred some two years before. That earlier incident involved the seizure of merchandise from a ship trading with Scotland, which, after the invasion of France by Henry V, had broken its truce with England. The Prussians condemned this as illegal, since no warning had been given about trading with the Scots. In 1422 a second Hull ship, the *George*, was confiscated, but this was overshadowed by general restrictions now imposed on English merchants in Danzig, including those resident there, who at this time are said to have numbered fifty-five. Danzig had for some time been drawing closer to the Wendish league and this probably explains why it acted independently of the other Prussian towns, which had not moved so far in that direction. In March 1422 it was proposed in the Prussian diet that none except burgesses of a Hanseatic town should venture to trade beyond a port of entry, but this was not confirmed, since it was supported only by Danzig.

[29] *HR*, I (vii), no. 87. *HUB*, 6, no. 238.

Danzig therefore imposed its own restrictions on Englishmen. Hosting regulations were re-affirmed; they were ordered to trade only on market days; they might purchase certain goods, such as bowstaves and wainscot, only from burgesses. Finally, in July 1422 a poll tax was introduced requiring Englishmen to pay six Prussian marks (16s 8d sterling) immediately, and the same amount at three-monthly intervals if they stayed so long. When they resisted, their alderman and twelve merchants were imprisoned until they submitted.[30]

The death of Henry V in August 1422 came at an inopportune moment for the Hanse, since it meant that confirmation of its charters had to be considered in the middle of the row about English trade in Prussia. The Steelyard sought confirmation when parliament met in November. Its petition has not survived, though there is one asking for a verdict against the sheriffs of London in the matter of the tolls. Nor has the counter-petition of the English merchants survived, although its contents are known from a translation supplied by the Steelyard merchants for the Hanse in January 1423. The latter dwelt largely on events in Prussia (as seen through English eyes) since the deposition of Henry von Plauen, and said nothing about conflicts elsewhere except for the imprisonment of English merchants in Greifswald in 1417. In January 1423 the Steelyard complained about the vigorous campaign which had been mounted both in parliament and in the country against the renewal of its charters. This is borne out by the records of Lynn, where native merchants raised £20 to help finance the cost of the agitation; no doubt other towns acted similarly. Because of the outcry the government deferred confirmation and instead, on 23 April 1423, took all Hanseatic merchants into its protection for one year. Concern about the fate of the franchises was exacerbated by the matter of tunnage and poundage. After the battle of Agincourt, Henry V had been granted this subsidy for life; in November 1422 it was renewed retrospectively to 1 September, but for the first time it was decided that only aliens should pay. Naturally, the Hanse refused to pay, since previous English attempts to justify the charge had revolved around the fact that denizens also paid; only after some of its members had been imprisoned for contumacy did the Steelyard agree to give security for payment while they prosecuted their claim

[30] *HUB*, 6, nos. 288, 371. *HR*, 1 (vii), nos. 461, 510, 592; (viii), no. 452.

to immunity. On 3 July 1423 all the king's justices gave an opinion that Hanseatics were liable to the subsidy as aliens, not as denizens, but a few days later the council allowed yet another respite until parliament met in October. When the time came the council ruled against the merchants, who were then required to pay. English merchants again used this occasion to petition about recent mistreatment in Prussia.[31]

The temporary imprisonment of the Hanseatics provided a rallying cry for the Hanse and, when its diet met at Lübeck in July 1423, it proposed that in retaliation English merchants should be imprisoned and their goods arrested in all member towns. However, from correspondence it is clear that with the exception of Stralsund English trade was largely restricted to Prussia. In August the Prussian diet reported that after consultation with the Grand Master it had been unanimously decided that such drastic action was inadvisable. The following April the Steelyard again complained to the diet that steps must be taken to prevent the utter destruction of its liberties in England. When the Prussian diet met in August 1424 Danzig tried to gain support for the restrictions which it had long advocated against Englishmen; they should be confined to ports of entry; they must submit to hosting regulations; resident Englishmen should not act as hosts; they should not observe a fellowship. These proposals were rejected by the diet, but Danzig again tried to impose them unilaterally, ruling also that any burgess who rented property to an Englishman should forfeit his own rights. Such limitations were clearly in breach of the rights guaranteed to Englishmen by the 1409 treaty. In November 1424, following complaints by English merchants, the Grand Master ordered that in time for the next meeting of the diet each town should prepare a written report on its attitude towards English trade. This attempt to redefine Prussian policy was complicated by the revival of demands for payment of the financial indemnity promised in the 1409 treaty, and also by the Grand Master's insistence that any new laws should apply equally to all aliens and should not discriminate solely against Englishmen. It was not only the Prussians who were trying to revise rules about aliens at this time; when the Hanse diet met at Lübeck in June 1426 it, too, discussed the question of English and Dutch merchants residing in Hanseatic towns, but was unable to reach agreement.[32]

[31] *HR*, 1 (vii), nos. 592–4, 611, 671. *HUB*, 6, nos. 504, 528. *Rot. Parl.*, 4, p. 192. *POPC*, 3, pp. 110–11, 117.

[32] *HR*, 1 (vii), nos. 607, 611, 623, 671, 708, 746; (viii), no. 50.

As late as August 1425 the merchants of the London Steelyard were in despair about their status. Writing to Hanse envoys currently visiting Flanders they referred to the expense they had incurred in vain attempts to get their charters confirmed, and complained that the government turned a deaf ear to all representations made on their behalf by the Grand Master, by territorial princes and by the towns. They requested the envoys to come to England to intercede for them and offered to bear the cost. This invitation was not taken up, but already the heat was going out of the situation, since in that same month of August tunnage and poundage began again to be taken from denizens, which made it unrealistic for the Hanse men to press their claim to immunity from the charge. Moreover, in government circles sentiment was already changing in favour of the Hanse. During the recent session of parliament (June–July 1425) the royal council had ordered the city of London to fill the vacant office of English alderman to the Steelyard. In February 1426 the merchants complained that nothing had been done, and submitted three names to the council, asking it to nominate one of them as alderman; the first, William Crowemere, was chosen. The city refused at first to administer the oath of office and not until February 1427, after a further order from the crown, did it confirm the Steelyard's right to have such an alderman. On the same occasion a compromise was reached about the equally long-disputed matter of the sheriffs' tolls. The sheriffs relinquished all their claim, except for a toll of 4d on each cloth exported; on their part the merchants were to continue their ancient contribution of 40s to the city farm, and as a gesture of goodwill agreed to give the city every February two barrels of herring, one barrel of sturgeon and one hundredweight of wax, the total value reckoned to be £5 6s 8d. Whether these developments represented a change of policy on the part of the city or simply submission to the will of the government is not clear.[33]

Prospects of a further improvement in Anglo-Hanseatic relations in 1427 suffered a set-back because of the outbreak of war between some of the towns and Denmark. This had its origins in an ancient dispute between the Danish crown and the German counts of Holstein about sovereignty of the duchy of Schleswig. In July 1426 hostilities broke out between these two and in September the towns also took up arms, motivated chiefly by the fact that Denmark had

[33] *HR*, I (vii), no. 805. *HUB*, 6, nos. 611–13, 651, 658. *Rot. Parl.*, 4, p. 303. *Foedera*, IV (iv), p. 119.

recently imposed a toll on all ships passing through the Sound. Despite Denmark's provocative action the Hanse was far from united; in fact, the war was supported at first only by Hamburg (a Holstein town), Lübeck, Lüneberg, Wismar, Rostock and Stralsund; later the Saxon towns joined them. When they imposed a blockade on the Sound the Prussian and Zuider Zee towns of the Hanse refused to acknowledge it. In March 1427 the Bruges *Kontor* agreed that its members would not ship goods through the Sound, but reported that Holland-Zeeland and the Zuider Zee towns were preparing to break the blockade. It also passed on reports from London about the possibility of an Anglo-Danish alliance. The war between Denmark and the Hanse was in no way beneficial to England, and this thought was probably not altogether absent from the mind of Cardinal Beaufort when he offered to mediate between the belligerents. However, his letters also express concern that the strife would distract attention away from the international crusade against the Hussites, which he was directing in the summer of 1427. If the English had to choose sides there could be no doubt that they would align with the Danes, since to pursue their trade with Prussia they had to run the Hanseatic blockade of the Sound; obviously, this could be done more easily with Danish assistance. On 30 May 1427 the council decided that English ships might take service with Denmark, provided that they did not attack any vessels friendly to their own king. Another naval group which both Danes and Hanseatics were anxious to recruit was an international force of privateers, latter-day *Vitalienbrüder*; their allegiance was long in the balance, but in the end they chose the Hanse. Before this they had been in English service and spent part of the winter of 1426–7 sheltering in west-country harbours until ordered to leave. In the spring they were reported to have sailed to the Elbe.[34]

Because of the competition of Dutch merchants the Bruges *Kontor* decided that it could no longer afford to obey the order not to send goods through the Sound. Notifying Lübeck of this decision on 5 July 1427 it reported that an eighty-strong fleet carrying Bay salt had already sailed from the Zwin. Unfortunately, six days later a Hanseatic naval force was defeated off Copenhagen. This left the Danes in command of the Sound and enabled them to capture the entire Bay fleet when it arrived there. Some English vessels were already in Danish service and later the Hanse complained that the

[34] *HUB*, 6, nos. 661, 694. *HR*, 1 (viii), nos. 266, 336. *POPC*, 3, p. 270.

intervention cost them 200 men killed, 600 captured and goods lost to the value of 100,000 nobles. About the same time the Prussians also decided that their economic needs required them to break the blockade, and on 10 July 1427 Danzig wrote to the Duke of Burgundy that a fleet should be ready to leave within a week. Because of possible attacks by both Germans and Danes, all ships, alien as well as Prussian, were to travel in convoy and be escorted through the Sound by six heavily armed warships. News of the capture of the Bay fleet caused a change of plan; on 1 August it was decided that alien ships could sail at their own risk, but any Prussian merchants who had goods aboard them, or shares in the vessels themselves, must sell their interests. Prussian ships of less than sixty lasts burden were permitted to sail along the coast to Lübeck, but larger vessels had to stay in port. Shortly afterwards it was decided to delay all sailings until 15 August, to see if there were any better news; if there were not, then the arrangements described above were to stand.[35]

In 1428 Lübeck and its allies were still determined to keep the Sound closed and to this end were anxious to have advance intelligence of western plans. This was supplied by the *Kontore* of Bruges and London, most of the English news coming via Flanders. This was not done without risk, for the Londoners were in constant fear that their letters might be intercepted. In February Bruges reported that eight ships, which had been fitting out in Boston, had been held back as a result of news from the Baltic. On 17 March, however, London informed Bruges that fourteen of England's biggest ships were being equipped to force the Sound. A month later it was reported that this fleet, now increased in number to seventeen, would sail on 1 May for Marstrand (an island at the mouth of the Kattegat). When all ships were assembled there, a balinger was to be sent to scout in the Sound. In April, after the failure of peace talks, the Germans invested Copenhagen and on the penultimate day of that month reported the capture of two English ships attempting to enter the Baltic.[36]

In 1428 the Prussians again held back their own fleet while they sent envoys to Lübeck and Denmark to ask for free passage through the Sound. Western ships were free to depart at their own risk, but to avoid antagonising the Hanse it was ruled that western merchants should not freight goods in Prussian ships. When this decision was

[35] *HUB*, 6, no. 679. *HR*, 1 (viii), nos. 218, 237.
[36] *HUB*, 6, nos. 712, 722, 728. *HR*, 1 (viii), nos. 418, 422–4.

communicated to the Duke of Burgundy he asked that the Grand Master should either take the former's subjects into his protection or help them sell their property in Prussia. At one stage it was hoped that the Prussian fleet would depart on 25 July, but it had still not sailed by the middle of September and ships were forbidden to travel even through coastal waters to Lübeck. The Hanse eventually notified Prussia that its ships might trade with other Hanseatic towns, provided that their captains swore an oath not to go to any of the Scandinavian kingdoms and carried a certificate to this effect. No ship would be received without a certificate, but any privateer who attacked a certified ship would be outlawed. Prussian merchants might buy goods in Hanseatic towns, provided that they agreed not to sell them to any enemies. Finally, any Prussian ships which wished to pass through the Sound must come to the Wismar deep or the Trave estuary; only then would the Hanse decide whether they might proceed or, instead, have to discharge their cargoes, which would then have to be sent overland to Hamburg. This last condition was unacceptable to the Prussian diet, which forbade its ships to risk the voyage; it also prevented its merchants from consigning goods to western ships going through the Sound. The Hanse had asked the Prussians to detain the latter, but on 16 October Danzig notified Lübeck that the Dutch and English fleets had already sailed. In December the Prussians finally received a safe-conduct from the King of Denmark, provided that they did not carry goods belonging to any town at war with him; the diet then decided that its ships might risk the voyage through the Sound.[37]

The refusal of the Hanse to open the Sound meant that the Prussians extended a warmer welcome to those English and Dutch merchants who successfully ran the blockade. The Prussians looked eagerly not only for cloth but also for Bay salt, in the absence of which they had to buy the more expensive Lüneberg product. Both English and Dutch also imported herrings, since the Prussians were cut off from Skania. This dependence may have contributed to the improvement of the status of English merchants in Prussia during the course of 1428. As early as March German merchants in London made representations to Prussia on behalf of their rivals, possibly in return for the relaxation of pressure upon them by the city authorities. But since their own countrymen were very much in a minority in the London community the Prussians probably attached

[37] *HR*, I (viii), nos. 453, 455, 507, 508a, 546.

little weight to this appeal. When the Prussian diet met in May the Englishmen sought permission to set up at Dibau an establishment along the lines of the London Steelyard; the proposal was not rejected out of hand, though in the event it was not allowed. The English fellowship still enjoyed a *de facto* existence, since a delegation going from Danzig to Lübeck in June, to work for the opening of the Sound and the release of English personnel and property, was sent by the 'aldermannos societatis mercatorum pronunc in Prussia existenses'. In England on the 20th of that same month the merchants received confirmation from the crown of their right to elect a governor, probably as a prelude to a renewed attempt to gain official recognition in Prussia. This time they were successful and in December 1428 the Grand Master officially confirmed their right to elect an alderman, although at the same time he ruled that Englishmen visiting Danzig should enjoy neither more nor fewer liberties than other non-burgesses.[38]

The following year relations between England and Prussia again began to deteriorate. This was probably due, at least in part, to the fact that having made concessions the Prussians expected to gain something in return, only to find their hopes dashed. Their demands were centred on the financial provisions of the treaty of 1409 and in March 1429 a delegation empowered to negotiate on behalf of the Prussian and Livonian claimants began talks with the king's council, which continued intermittently until May 1430. After consulting parliament the government decided that the king was not legally bound to settle his grandfather's debt, but offered to consider paying *ex gratia* a 'reasonable' sum each year out of the customs duties paid by Prussian merchants in England. This offer was communicated to the Prussians but nothing came of it. About the same time the Treasurer of Marienburg began to clamour for the 838 nobles owed to him by the Earl of Northumberland, whose inheritance had been restored in 1416. In 1429 thirty-six English ships were arrested in Danzig in an attempt to enforce payment of this sum, while the following year Hull merchandise was distrained there for the same reason. In May 1433 the officials of the English society in Prussia were given a quittance for the Percy debt, but they continued to protest about the manner in which payment had been enforced. In the same period distraints were made on behalf of other claimants,

[38] *HUB*, 6, no. 723. *HR*, 1 (viii), nos. 433, 451–3, 546.

including some who had allegedly been awarded damages by the English Chancellor in the aftermath of the Hague conference, but who had so far not been paid.[39]

The English merchants complained bitterly about the renewed harassment in Prussia, but there their treatment was at least cloaked in a semblance of legality. The situation was otherwise in the Sound where force was the order of the day. The same is true of Norway, where the Danish–Hanseatic war prompted one of the periodic returns of English merchants. After their expulsion in the early 1370s there appears to be no evidence of Englishmen visiting Bergen for almost two decades. A royal licence enrolled on 30 June 1389 ordered the port officers of Lynn to release from general arrest two Lynn vessels, belonging to John Waryn and James Hubyn, for a voyage to Norway. They were to give sureties not to go to Scotland and to return immediately for the king's service. A special supplementary account of this voyage, duty of £7 16s 10¼d paid for exports and imports worth £152 16s 6d, is found with the enrolled poundage account for Exchequer year 13 (1389–90).[40] If this was a pioneering voyage it was clearly encouraging, since between 1 April and 30 November 1390 Lynn merchants imported stockfish worth £1,094 in one Lynn and three Hanse ships; between the latter date and Michaelmas 1390 they imported £739 of stockfish in one Lynn and one Danzig ship.[41] These were probably the last voyages made by Englishmen to Bergen for several years, since Lynn merchants later complained that 'circa 14 Richard II' (1391–2) they were set upon in that town by Hanseatics, who destroyed their houses and merchandise to the value of 3,000 marks and written securities for debts owing to them of more than £1,000. The accession of Henry IV, whose daughter was married to the King of Denmark and Norway, emboldened Lynn men to return to Norway in 1400, but at first they were again threatened by the Hanseatics. Their claim of discrimination was denied by the governor of Bergen, who was ordered to investigate, and the fact that the Englishmen later claimed damages only for loss of trade, not for robbery and assault, suggests that the clash was not as serious as the previous one. Nevertheless, the Lynn men complained to Henry IV and in March 1402 a number of Boston *Bergenfahrer* were summoned before the

[39] *HUB*, 6, nos. 779, 860, 934, 942, 959. *HR*, 1 (viii), nos. 586–90, 666–8, 778; II (i), nos. 168–70. *POPC*, 4, pp. 45–6.
[40] *CCR*, 1389–92, p. 7. PRO, E 356/5, m.28d.
[41] PRO, E122/93/31; 94/12.

king's council and ordered to provide security in the sum of 1,400 marks that Englishmen would not be molested in Bergen.[42] The recognisance was not made, but Lynn men resumed their trade and in October 1402 imported £345 of stockfish in two Hanse ships.[43] The next major incident in this chain of events was in 1406, when a large number of Norfolk fishermen casting their nets off southern Norway were attacked and killed by a superior Hanseatic force, probably from Hamburg. Consequently, in February 1407 the *Bergenfahrer* again appeared before the king himself and gave security of 2,000 marks to appear at a later date; this was remitted in May after they had convinced the council that they and their fellows had had no hand in the crime.[44]

Not content with trading between England and Norway, Lynn merchants upset their rivals even more by attempting to intrude into trade between Norway and Germany. In February 1409 they engaged a ship of Bremen, a town with which they were friendly, to sail firstly from Lynn to Bergen, thence to Wismar and back to Bergen laden with beer. The skipper was prevented from going from Bergen to Wismar and when he returned to Lynn those who had engaged him claimed damages from the *Bergenfahrer* for loss of profits. In 1411 the Lynn men secured the arrest of *Bergenfahrer* in Boston, but suffered a similar fate themselves in Bergen. It is not clear which side made the first move on this occasion, but the Germans, despite a bond of 2,000 marks put up by English associates, were detained from March to September. Two years later *Bergenfahrer* were again arrested at Boston, but this time allegedly at the behest of Boston merchants, who claimed attacks on themselves and their property in Bergen and the slaying there of one of their number and a Lynn merchant.[45] It is probably necessary to be somewhat sceptical about the degree of support given to this action by the authorities and leading merchants of Boston, since it resulted in a three-year boycott of the town by the *Bergenfahrer*, which must have done considerable harm to the economy.[46] The protracted negotiations for a settlement, through the mediation of the King of Denmark, were blamed upon a combination of bad weather and the

[42] *Letters of Henry the Fourth*, 1, p. 46. *CPR*, 1408–13, pp. 383–5.
[43] N. S. B. Gras, *The Early English Customs System* (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), p. 556.
[44] *HUB*, 6, nos. 756, 779.
[45] *CCR*, 1409–13, pp. 152–3, 321; 1413–19, p. 12. *CPR*, 1408–13, pp. 308, 321, 383–5, 400.
[46] See below, p. 161.

duplicity of the Hanseatics in fixing a timetable which they knew their rivals could not observe.[47] Despite the impasse at Boston, trade between England and Norway, both in the hands of Englishmen and Germans, never came entirely to a halt and by 1417 was more or less back to normal. In April 1417 the King of Denmark summoned English and Hanse representatives and enquired whether they were able yet to settle their differences amicably, or whether they would rather that he imposed a settlement on them. The Englishmen opted for the latter, but since the king did not have time to deal with it at the moment he said that he would give his decision one year hence.[48]

The difficulties in the way of trading with Bergen in the second decade of the fifteenth century caused English merchants and fishermen to direct their attention to Iceland. The first recorded voyage was in 1412 and a rapid build-up followed, a formal prohibition of traffic in 1415, following a protest by the Danish king, having no effect.[49] But when Denmark again attempted to stop the trade in 1426 a majority of the merchant community of Lynn overruled its Iceland section and banned the voyages. This was done in deference to their Bergen trade, the prospects of which seemed bright because of impending war between Denmark and the Wendish towns of the Hanse. Despite the insecurity of the times, Englishmen probably increased their stake in Norway's trade for a half-dozen years or more. Bergen was plundered three times in 1428 and 1429 by privateers sailing under Hanseatic colours, but good luck, or possibly the fact that immediately before that these same robbers had been in English service and perhaps hoped to be so again one day, may have saved the Englishmen from serious damage. At any rate no claims for English losses in these early attacks feature in the comprehensive catalogue submitted to Hanse envoys in 1436. However, claims were submitted for £20,000 for nine English ships seized in Bergen in 1430 and £720 for losses in 1432.[50] On the same occasion the Hanse representatives put in claims amounting to 8,030 nobles for an English attack on Danzig ships in Bergen in 1432 and for 10,000 marks in Lübeck currency for an attack there in 1434. They also asserted that the King of Denmark had instigated the actions against English merchants in

[47] *William Ashbourne's Book*, pp. 88, 90, 93–4.
[48] *CPR*, 1413–16, p. 320, *CCR*, 1413–19, p. 316, *HR*, I (vi), no. 385.
[49] For the Iceland trade see Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, pp. 98–142.
[50] *HR*, II (i), no. 385.

retaliation for depredations allegedly carried out in Iceland by their fellow countrymen. It is undoubtedly true that after Lynn merchants agreed not to visit Iceland in 1426 sailors from other ports such as Hull and Bristol continued to go there. Moreover, the King of Denmark was annoyed because some of the Englishmen who did come to Norway for stockfish were tempted to seek it at source in the northern fishing villages, rather than at the Bergen staple. All these matters were taken up by two English embassies to Denmark in 1431 and 1432. The second resulted in a treaty in which England agreed to forbid its subjects to seek fish in any Danish territory save Bergen.

Despite the generally improved situation of Hanse merchants in England in the late 1420s some Englishmen succeeded in obtaining writs to distrain Hamburg merchants in compensation for their own losses. In March 1430 the government put a stop to this, ordering that all Hanseatics should be treated as the 'king's true friends'. In October it went even further and for the first time in the reign formally confirmed the Hanseatic franchises. This official goodwill was jeopardised in the following March when parliament renewed the tunnage and poundage subsidy. The alien rate of poundage was increased from 1s to 1s 6d and the tunnage on sweet wines was doubled. Denizens did not pay the increment, and to make matters worse their cloth exports were now accorded exemption from the basic poundage. After protests, the king's council on 5 May 1431 respited Hanse payments of the increment for the time being, but required the merchants to find £400 security to pay it if their liability should be established. The Steelyard also protested to the Hanse and the Grand Master and the latter then imprisoned the English alderman and five merchants until they promised to intervene to prevent the increment being levied on Hansards. To ensure their cooperation they were compelled to give personal bonds of £400, the same amount as the security taken so far in England. When parliament next met in May 1432 it was in no mood to agree that the Hanse should be spared the increment and instead suggested that those who had been forced to give bonds in Prussia should be allowed to bring counter-actions in the courts of the city of London. This advice was rejected and the Hanse were eventually excused payment. The crown did, however, at first accept a petition calling for the arrest of goods of Lübeck, Hamburg, Wismar and Rostock to answer for the seizure of a Boston ship in the Sound in March 1431. In August 1432 the writ, issued only the previous month, was

cancelled on the grounds that it might jeopardise the embassy which was about to be sent to Denmark and the Hanse.[51]

Part of the purpose of the latest mission was to discuss English losses in the Baltic war. The envoys reached some sort of agreement with Denmark but none was made with the Hanse, and relations continued to be tense throughout 1433 and into 1434. Englishmen complained about increasing restrictions on their trade in Prussia, including the ban on renting property. Because of the accommodation problem they again demanded (unsuccessfully) the right to have a factory similar to the London Steelyard. In January 1434 the Prussian diet reaffirmed the earlier decision of the Grand Master that the English should enjoy no more rights than other aliens. Relations with the Wendish towns were no better and so loud was the clamour in England for reprisals that in December 1433 the crown had to issue a safe-conduct of one year's duration, reminding all officials, both public and private, that Hanse merchants enjoyed immunity from local tolls and from arrest for all debts save personal ones. A letter of the Steelyard reveals that the safe-conduct, though couched in general terms, was designed specifically to protect the goods of Lübeck, Hamburg, Rostock and Wismar from mass arrests. A few months later the Exchequer itself exacerbated the situation in an attempt to increase the yield of import duties. Hitherto duty had been based on the cost of goods in the country of origin; now, officials were instructed to charge duty on current market prices in England, which would have been considerably higher. The Steelyard ordered its members to stop trading and complained to the Hanse diet, which was to meet in June 1434. On 16 June, even before the diet's reaction can have been known in England, the king's council, the Treasurer alone dissenting, reversed the ruling of the Exchequer and restored the former method of assessing merchandise.[52]

The diet of 1434 was particularly well attended, since it was required to consider several matters of great consequence to the Hanse as a whole. Commercial relations with Spain, Flanders and Holland-Zeeland were no less critical than those with England, while a five-year truce with Denmark, made in September 1431 on terms very favourable to the Hanse, had been badly kept and by now had broken down almost entirely. It was decided, therefore, to send

[51] *CCR*, 1429–35, pp. 55, 145–6, 155–6. *CPR*, 1429–36, p. 220. *Rot. Parl.*, 4, pp. 369, 403. *POPC*, 4, p. 86. *HUB*, 6, nos. 888, 991–2, 1005, 1037, 1046. *HR*, II (i), no. 147.

[52] *POPC*, 4, pp. 239–42. *HR*, II (i), nos. 169, 241, 319–20. *HUB*, 6, no. 1009.

an embassy to deal directly with each of the powers named above, with the exception of Spain. As a sign of its concern the diet made an ordinance banning the import of English cloth. This decision was probably made easier by the fact that for some time the Duke of Burgundy had been trying to organise a boycott in all his own territories, and wanted the Hansards to suspend their right of transit. The diet also agreed that, if England did not reply favourably to the demands of the envoys, then it would be coerced by a total trade boycott. It was imperative that the Hanse be united at this time; above all, this meant keeping the Prussians in line. To this end, four delegates from the other towns were sent to Danzig to help the Prussians attending the diet explain their plans. From Danzig they were immediately summoned to Marienburg, since the Grand Master had recently repeated his prohibition of any assembly which was not convened by himself. On 4 July they informed him of the demands which were to be made of each of the states to be visited, including an eleven-point programme for England. He promised to back any coercive measures which the towns might introduce, and on 9 July letters were drawn up signifying that the envoys enjoyed the support of the Teutonic Order. Additionally, on 29 July the Grand Master wrote to Henry VI in his own name, complaining about the continued failure to pay the arrears of the 1409 indemnity and the lack of respect for the Hanse franchises in England. He said that at the insistence of his own subjects he had given English merchants six months notice to leave Prussia, unless the Germans were given satisfaction. Copies of his letter were sent to the authorities of London and Lynn, with the suggestion that they should combine with York to put pressure on the government to concede the Hanseatic claims.[53]

Because of military involvement with Poland, the Grand Master did not exercise his right to separate representation in the present negotiations as he had often done in the past. Instead, he agreed that Henry Vorrath and Nicholas Wrecht, respectively burgomaster and secretary of Danzig, who had represented Prussia at the Lübeck diet, should speak for all Prussian interests in the two embassies, one going to western Europe and the other to Denmark. Vorrath arrived in Bruges on 27 September 1434 with Henry Hoyer of Hamburg and John Klingenberg of Lübeck; they were joined a few days later by

[53] *HR*, II (i), nos. 321, 354–7, 359–62.

Everard Hardefust of Cologne. The participation of Cologne in the diet and the ensuing negotiations is a measure of the gravity of the crisis in Hanseatic affairs, but the loyal involvement of this city was short-lived. The delegation remained in Bruges dealing with relations with Flanders until 11 October, when it left for England. The envoys arrived in London on 22 October and on the last day of the month were formally received by a majority of the king's council. During the next few days they submitted a list of complaints, which was referred to a committee of four knights. Their grievances numbered eight: (1) the levy of tunnage and poundage; (2) the collection of a poll tax from travellers entering and leaving English territory at Dover and Calais; (3) prolonged delays in obtaining justice; (4) denial of the right to mixed juries, especially in courts of admiralty; (5) denial of immunity from distraint for debts and trespasses of third parties; (6) delay in payment of goods purveyed for the crown; (7) exaction of local tolls at Southampton and Newcastle; (8) denial of the right to sell wine by retail in London. No protest was registered against wool staple regulations, even though this matter had earlier been discussed with the Grand Master. This undoubtedly reflects the fact that the Hansards now had no direct interest in the export of wool and did not want to be seen as a mouthpiece of Burgundy, which was currently striving hard to overthrow the Calais staple.[54]

At midday on 6 November the envoys were abruptly summoned to the presence of the Chancellor, who informed them that the negotiations must be prorogued, since the council was about to leave London because of an outbreak of plague and would not return till a fortnight after Christmas. Protesting that they could not remain in England that long, they arranged for four merchants of the Steelyard to receive any reply that the council might eventually make. To supplement the general complaints already delivered they now submitted a list of claims for damages. This consisted partly of specific, individual claims, some dating back as far as 1411, and partly of more tendentious demands, such as repayment of more than £100,000 alleged to have been paid in poundage over the previous thirty years and 100,000 nobles for damage caused by English assistance to the Danes in 1427. The envoys were still in London on 17 November, but were back in Bruges by 18 December,

[54] *HR*, II (i), nos. 324, 383–4, 392. *HUB*, 7, part 1, no. 39.

after being delayed three weeks at Dover by bad weather. Vorrath immediately sent to Danzig a pessimistic account of the mission. Although the English had given them 'many sweet words', he did not expect much good to result; even while they had been there four Hanseatic ships had been seized. This forecast proved to be correct. When the king's council returned to London in January 1435 it was waited upon by English merchants, who complained about their expulsion from Prussia and demanded that the Hanseatic franchises should not be confirmed without new guarantees for English trade in the Baltic. They also asked that any German financial claims which might be substantiated should be set against the claims of Englishmen. These points were accepted by the council, but since the Steelyard had no authority to consider them the council offered to send a delegation to confer with the envoys, who were still in the Low Countries. Both the Hanse and the Grand Master agreed to this, but the latter warned Vorrath that in no circumstances was he to concede any extension of English privileges; such matters could be discussed only in Prussia. Nor should Vorrath agree that the financial demands of each side be set against one another, since the Prussians had harmed no one. Early in April the German envoys wrote to England that they would wait in Bruges until the end of Easter week (24 April), but advised that they were not fully empowered to negotiate and could only transmit suggestions to the Hanse and Prussia.[55]

The two sides met for the first time in the Carmelite church at Bruges on 5 May. The Hanse team was now reduced to Vorrath and Hoyer, since the other two envoys had recently been withdrawn on grounds of cost. The officially accredited English team consisted of the Lynn merchant, Thomas Borowe, and two lawyers. This was smaller than another commission appointed at the same time to treat with the Flemings; the latter consisted of the same two lawyers and five merchants of the staple. (A number of royal officials at Calais were formally members of both commissions.) Despite advance notification of the limited scope of the talks, the English insisted on submitting their own demands. Because of this the Hanse envoys felt it necessary to make a formal protest that they lacked powers to negotiate, and on 11 May they had this drawn up by a public notary. There the talks would probably have broken down

[55] *Rot. Parl.*, 4, p. 493, *HR*, II (i), nos. 385, 407, 421–2, 433, 436.

altogether, had it not been for the mediation of the German alderman of the London Steelyard, who was present in an advisory capacity. As a result of his intervention an indenture was made on 14 May, which provided that the two sides should meet again at Bruges on 13 January 1436. To maintain pressure the Hanseatic envoys wanted all trade to be halted by mutual agreement until the results of the next conference were known. They were already aware that the Grand Master had forbidden his own subjects to trade with England. This suggestion was not welcomed by the English nor by the Steelyard, but as a compromise it was agreed that trade should continue until Whitsun, and that Germans would then be allowed two months to remove themselves and their property from England. In a letter sent to Lübeck and Prussia on 17 May the envoys recommended that the Hanse should break off trade; this proposal was accepted. Officials of the Steelyard subsequently withdrew to Bruges, but some merchants remained in London and elsewhere in England.[56]

When the time drew near for the next meeting it was opposed by English merchants, who urged that it would be a waste of money to send a delegation to Flanders unless parliament first formally revoked the Hanseatic franchises. This advice was rejected by the council, and on 16 December 1435 the same team as before was commissioned to treat with the Hanse envoys. They immediately crossed over to Calais to await the arrival of the Germans. On 18 February they wrote to the Bruges *Kontor* complaining that they had already been kept waiting five weeks beyond the appointed date, but that they would wait two weeks longer. On 12 March the *Kontor* reported to Lübeck that two of the commissioners had returned to England, leaving the third in Calais, where the whole team would reassemble when it was informed that the Germans had arrived. The Hanseatic delegation did not receive its final instructions until after the Englishmen had left Calais. Although the Hanse had fully half a year's notice of the impending conference it was totally unprepared. Lübeck had tried to convene a special diet to discuss the English demands, but was unable to do so. The major obstacles were tension between the Prussian towns and the Teutonic Order and war between the Order and Poland. The Grand Master distrusted Vorrath, whom he already accused of having exceeded his powers.

[56] *HR*, II (i), nos. 429–32, 435, 437. *HUB*, 7, part 1, no. 40.

He was unwilling that he should again speak alone for Prussia, but on the other hand he could ill afford to divert any of his best advisers from the eastern to the western theatres of diplomacy. At the end of January the Prussians were still debating whom to send. Eventually, it was decided that Vorrath should be accompanied by John Sobbe, canon of Thorn, and Hildebrand Tannenberg, the Grand Master's secretary. On 14 February the Grand Master wrote to Henry VI apologising for the failure of his envoys to appear in January, but expressing the hope that the conference might now begin at Bruges on Palm Sunday (8 April). If this venue was not possible then the Prussians were empowered to treat elsewhere, for all Europe was aware that, since the failure of the Congress of Arras, war between England and Burgundy was inevitable, and this would close all Burgundian lands to Englishmen.[57]

The Prussian envoys went first to Lübeck, remaining there until at least 20 March, and arrived at Bruges on 3 April together with John Klingenberg and Henry Hoyer. By now it was impossible for the English team to go to Flanders, so Henry VI wrote to the Germans (22 April) inviting them to come either to Calais or to England. Before he received this letter Vorrath had informed Danzig (29 April) that he had given up all hope of getting to Calais. He reported that he was optimistic about renewing the truce with Holland-Zeeland, but advised that no ships should come to Flanders, since conditions were too dangerous and the Duke of Burgundy was pressing Hanseatic vessels into his own service. The Hanse envoys answered Henry on 31 May, regretting that they were unable to reach either Calais or England and that they must go home for consultation; they requested that in the meantime the king extend his protection to German merchants. In writing to Danzig on the previous day Vorrath advised that they should withdraw to Lübeck and then try to cross to England from one of the Elbe ports. This last letter crossed with one dispatched from Danzig on 25 May, urging that the envoys should use every effort to make peace with England, so that if the Hanse was unable to trade with Flanders then the other door would be open again. On 5 June the envoys were in Ghent, where they received news of the massacre of more than eighty German merchants in Sluys. For greater security they immediately moved to Antwerp and shortly afterwards returned to Lübeck. On

[57] *HR*, II (i), nos. 503–6, 508, 523–4, 537. *Rot. Parl.*, 4, p. 493.

24 June 1436 Vorrath informed Danzig that the diet wished to send the delegation to England, and that he awaited instructions on this point. Because of the preoccupation of the Grand Master with Poland these were not drawn up until 30 July, when he and Danzig agreed on the main points to be observed. Vorrath was to be sure to obtain the arrears of the 1409 indemnity and he was not to promise any extension of English privileges; it was again stressed that the latter point could be negotiated only in Prussia. Vorrath's credentials, dated 1 September, made it clear that despite earlier misgivings the Grand Master's powers devolved on him personally, the Order's representatives having been recalled, and he alone was qualified to speak for Prussia. This was very different from the agreement of July 1434, in which the Grand Master had promised to abide by the decisions of the Hanse as a whole. When this became known to the other envoys as they were preparing to sail, Lübeck's representative wrote home pointing out that if Vorrath adhered to his instructions it might not be possible to make peace and asking what they should do in that event. No record of an answer has been discovered, but the prescience of the query has probably influenced historians' interpretation of subsequent events.[58]

The envoys met at Hamburg in mid-September 1436 and sailed from there about a month later, arriving at Orwell on 25 October. Letters of safe-conduct were made out two days later and commissions drafted for English negotiators on 6 November. The latter were the Bishop of Norwich, the Lords Tiptoft and Cromwell, the clerk of the privy seal, two lawyers and Henry Frowicke, alderman of London. Although only the last-named can be regarded as directly representing the trading community, it may be assumed that other merchants were regularly consulted throughout the subsequent negotiations. All the English commissioners save Cromwell were parties to the eventual treaty. Few details survive about the talks themselves, though much is known about efforts made by the envoys to put a stop to trade conducted by German merchants who had remained in England throughout the period of the official boycott and others who were presently visiting the country. The ambassadors were not without a vested interest, since they were themselves expected to engage in private trade to help cover their expenses. They brought so many goods that they overloaded the first

[58] *HR*, II (i), nos. 541, 561–2, 566–8, 595–6; (ii), nos. 16–18, 53.

ship they chartered and had to hire a second to carry the excess. But this apart, Henry Vorrath in particular firmly believed that the mission would not achieve its objective if the Hanseatics resumed their business before England set its seal upon a treaty. The Hanse had periodically renewed the trade ban imposed in 1434 and it remained in force even though negotiations had begun. But it was impossible to stop all trade. In April 1436 Danzig wrote to Vorrath that hardly had he left the city than the Grand Master, in return for a promised consideration of 3,000 Rhineguilders, had given permission for six English ships to come to Prussia to trade. In the light of this development the city authorities despaired of being able to maintain the boycott. Writing from Bruges at the end of May, Vorrath reported that the Dutch, although subjects of the Duke of Burgundy, were very friendly towards England, and that English merchants were planning to engage six Zeeland ships to come to Prussia to buy goods. In August, Henry VI notified the Grand Master that he would not molest any German merchants who came to England and asked him to protect the four ships coming with his letter. The leader of this expedition was Nicholas Hassham, alderman of the English merchants, and his licence from the crown refers to a current scarcity of bowstaves and wainscot in England. But it was not merely Englishmen who were anxious that trade should continue. When the Hanseatic delegation finally arrived in England it claimed that many German merchants were actively breaking the sanctions. Among them, allegedly, were Prussians, men from the Zuider Zee towns and the Lübeck *Bergenfahrer*, who not only kept up their trade between England and Norway but also exported cloth to Germany. The most serious sanctions breakers were the men of Cologne, who continued to export cloth and refused to pay fines imposed on them by the Hanse officials at Bruges. On 10 December 1436 the Bruges *Kontor* wrote to England warning the envoys that the Archbishop of Cologne was sending his own embassy to negotiate on behalf of his subjects. The letter did not reach its destination until 10 March 1437, by which time the Cologne delegation, led by John von Coesfeld, had arrived and probably left again, but without accomplishing anything. Wherever the Hanse's own emissaries found merchants importing or exporting they ordered them to attend a diet at Lübeck on 1 May 1437 to answer for their disobedience. Lübeck seems to have regarded the envoys as over zealous in this matter, for on 17 February it advised that it would be

time enough to consider how to deal with sanctions breakers after the mission had achieved its purpose.[59]

A progress report sent to Danzig by Vorrath in December, and another sent by the delegation as a whole to Bruges on 9 January 1437, expressed the hope that when parliament assembled (on 21 January) the negotiations would be concluded quickly. Vorrath's letter mentioned that the English had submitted claims for damages amounting to more than £200,000 sterling. It is impossible to doubt that there was a large element of bluff in this, and that much of the figure was simply a counter to set against German financial claims. More than half of the total was made up of taxes allegedly paid in Prussia over a period of many years. Despite subsequent developments it is difficult to believe that at this stage English merchants can realistically have hoped to gain complete immunity from taxation, let alone recover earlier payments. With the exception of a poll tax levied in 1422 there is no record of any earlier resistance to payment of local taxes. As regards the present claims it is certain that one side, or both, lied in the evidence they submitted. It was alleged that £40,000 had been paid to the city of Danzig in the form of a quayage tax known as *Pfahlgeld*. From the German statement that the tax was equal to only 6d sterling on 100 nobles worth of merchandise, it would follow that Englishmen had handled goods worth more than £50,000,000 in the period of less than forty years during which the tax had been levied – a quite impossible figure. On the other hand the notion of any *ad valorem* duty levied at a rate of less than one tenth of one per cent is suspect. Whatever the degree of bluff, the financial claims of each side proved impossible to settle. On 12 March 1437 Vorrath was able to report that agreement had been reached on everything but this matter. The only solution was to set aside most of the claims and they were not even mentioned in the treaty which was drafted within a few more days. Provision was made only for payment of arrears of the indemnity which Henry IV had agreed to pay to Prussia in 1409. An indenture recording the draft treaty was drawn up on 22 March 1437, though it was not confirmed by the application of the privy seal until 7 June. In the meantime none of the concessions made to the Hanse were implemented. Vorrath was in no doubt as to where the blame lay. Writing to Danzig on 18 June, he said that the work would have been completed three months

[59] *HR*, II (i), nos. 563, 568, 577; (ii), nos. 20–1, 27, 37, 52, 64, 89. *HUB*, 7, part 1, no. 174. *Foedera*, V (i), p. 35.

since, but for bribes given by English merchants to the Treasurer and Chancellor. Their purpose was not to sink the treaty altogether, but simply to delay it while they prepared their own cloth for export. They now had eight ships nearly ready to sail, while the Germans, to whom the envoys had finally given permission to export, were still hindered by customs officials, who refused to hand over cockets. The Englishmen hoped thereby to get to Prussia first and capture the market for cloth. Vorrath could not prevent this, but he urged Danzig to minimise the damage by delaying their return voyage.[60]

Because of its importance in the history of Anglo-Hanseatic relations in the fifteenth century, the treaty merits careful consideration. The accepted opinion is that it was a great victory for the English, but that the settlement was made possible only because Vorrath exceeded his powers. Professor Postan, for example, wrote that 'Vorrath's position was very difficult, almost tragic. He knew that the negotiations could not succeed as long as he adhered to the Danzig instructions, and the failure of the negotiations might mean the break up of the Hanse... After a great deal of hesitation he was forced to break his undertaking to his own town and negotiate about the position of the English in Danzig.'[61] This echoes the opinion of German historians, some of whom hailed Vorrath as a great Hanseatic statesman, able to set aside his regional loyalty for the greater good. The verdict seems to be based largely upon the speculations of the non-Prussian envoys before they sailed from Hamburg and the recriminations against Vorrath when he returned to Danzig. There appears to be no evidence that he actually experienced the alleged crisis of conscience and, when faced with his accusers, his defence was not that he had made concessions to save the treaty, but rather that he had not exceeded his powers and had not in any way extended the liberties enjoyed by Englishmen in Prussia. These assertions were supported by those who had negotiated with him in England. Letters to this effect were sent by the London Steelyard and Frank Keddeken, a Flemish lawyer who had served as Vorrath's adviser and interpreter, since he himself spoke neither English nor Latin.[62] Rather less positive, but just as suggestive, is a letter sent to Lübeck as early as April 1437.[63] This

[60] *HR*, II (ii), nos. 29, 65, 67, 70, 76, 84–5.

[61] M. M. Postan, 'The Economic and Political Relations of England and the German Hanse from 1400 to 1475', pp. 118–19, in E. Power and M. M. Postan, *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933), pp. 91–153.

[62] *HR*, II (ii), nos. 224, 226.

[63] *Ibid.*, no. 78.

résumé of the recent treaty said that English merchants had been guaranteed any and all liberties enjoyed within the previous hundred years, but made no reference to immunity from taxation, which was to become the most critical issue in Prussia. It is difficult to see how they could have overlooked such a crucial matter, since any immunity would have applied not merely in Prussia but in all Hanse towns. Nevertheless, the treaty does seem to have guaranteed English merchants immunity from new taxation which might be introduced at some future date and also makes statements, albeit ambiguous and possibly even self-contradictory, about existing taxation. How can these facts be reconciled? Vorrath and his supporters may or may not have been truthful in their claims that they had not wilfully made concessions to the English. They may genuinely have believed that the treaty could not be interpreted in such a way as to support an English claim to greater liberties. Alternatively, they may have felt obliged to assert this, even if it had become as obvious to themselves as it was to others that poor drafting of the treaty on their part opened the way for such an interpretation. This last suggestion implies a charge of carelessness, which is not easy to substantiate, particularly since the negotiators included several lawyers who, unlike the laymen, were not illiterate in Latin, the language of the treaty. There remains the possibility of collusion, which might even account for the ambiguity of some clauses. If the Hanse ambassadors had knowingly exceeded Vorrath's powers they might have instructed their lawyers deliberately to adopt an ambiguous form of words to cloud that fact, and the tenor of which might even be disputed if need arose.

Professor Postan saw the treaty as 'defining and safeguarding the English position in the Hanseatic regions more exactly and fully than any formulas had done in the past'.[64] In fact the statements about rights of trade are rather less explicit than those contained in the treaty of 1409, though the English position was protected by the proviso that they should use and enjoy whatever liberties and free customs they had used and enjoyed at any time in the past. They may have felt some qualms about the qualification of previous usage by the word 'reasonably' (*racionabiliter*) but this was balanced by qualifying the former usage of the Hanseatic franchises in England with the same adverb. Postan also accepted that Englishmen 'were to be free of all taxes imposed in the course of the last hundred years

[64] Postan, *England and the Hanse*, p. 119.

and more' (and in the future). The use of the words 'and more' causes some difficulty, since taken literally they could denote infinity, though it can hardly be supposed that the Englishmen believed that they had won immunity from all taxation, no matter how ancient and legitimate. What they were seeking to establish was immunity from novel taxes, though in their eyes 'novel' meant any taxes first imposed within the previous hundred years or so. A word or phrase meaning 'and less' or 'within' would be more appropriate, though it is likely that the English did not wish to be tied to a precise period and may have chosen 'and more' (*et ultra*) for that reason. Comment must also be made about the phraseology used to describe the 'novel taxes' against which Englishmen were apparently to be protected. The actual words were 'prise exacciones nove seu prestaciones', i.e. prises (compulsory purchases, often on terms disadvantageous to the seller), new exactions and prests (forced loans of money). The words themselves are quite inappropriate to describe the taxes actually being levied on Englishmen in Prussia at that time. The intentions of those who framed the treaty could have been made more clear by using Latinised forms of the German names for the taxes in question. The latter course may have been rejected by the Englishmen as too limiting in the safeguards it provided, though conversely the Hanseatics may have regarded such a step as being too explicitly a major concession. Instead, the negotiators in their search for a general formula turned to Edward I's *Carta Mercatoria* of 1303. The last clause of that charter promised that in return for the new customs then granted by alien merchants 'nulla exactio prisa vel prestacio aut aliquod aliud onus' should be imposed on the persons of the merchants or their merchandise and chattels. The choice of the words from Edward I's charter was no accident. It betokened the principle of reciprocity which must have governed the bargaining about taxation during the forging of the present treaty. What the Hanseatics gained in return for their concession will be seen shortly. But first it must be asked whether the treaty incontrovertibly gave Englishmen immunity from novel taxation, meaning any which had been imposed within the previous hundred years or so, as well as in the future. The first clause of the treaty appears to say this, but we are then faced with the problem of the second clause, which appears to say something different. After describing Englishmen's trading rights in Hanseatic regions, it states they must pay 'custumis et deveriis de mercandisis suis debitis et

consuetis'. The words 'customs and dues from merchandise', although still not precisely descriptive of the mercantile taxes paid by Englishmen in Prussia, are nearer to the mark than the words used in the previous clause. But the chief problem is caused by the insertion of the words 'due and accustomed'. Common sense would suggest that any tax which had been paid regularly without formal objection would fall into this category and, as already mentioned, there is no record that before this the English had ever objected to the payment of any Hanse tax save the Danzig poll tax of 1422. Only by rejecting the obvious meaning of 'due and accustomed' and limiting it to taxes initiated more than a hundred years before (and no doubt levied continuously in the interim) can the second clause be prevented from contradicting the first. There is, however, one further obstacle to the English claim to immunity from taxes. The final clause of the 1437 treaty stated that nothing contained within it should prejudice any existing treaties between England and Prussia or the Hanse towns. This includes the Anglo-Prussian treaty of 1409, in which both sides had undertaken to pay existing customs. One can only conclude that whatever its true intention the statement of English liability to taxes in the Hanse regions was by no means unambiguous.

If the Hanseatic envoys did indeed knowingly concede immunity from 'new taxes' to Englishmen in 1437 then it can only have been done in return for their own immunity from tunnage and poundage in England, in other words an acknowledgement of reciprocity. The Hanse merchants had unsuccessfully opposed payment of tunnage and poundage since its inception in 1347. At first their resistance to this duty was complicated by the dispute about their liability to the cloth custom of 1347 and by the fact that they paid both custom and subsidy on their exports of wool, apparently without protest. However, once the dispute about cloth had been settled in their favour and they no longer invested in the wool trade then they were effectively paying only the customs of 1303, by now hereditary revenue of the crown, and the subsidy of tunnage and poundage, periodically voted by parliament. This made it easier for them to argue that by the terms of the *Carta Mercatoria* and their own charter of 1317 they ought not to pay any taxes instituted after 1303. Since the promise contained in the *Carta Mercatoria* was totally disregarded in the case of all other aliens it is hardly surprising that the English were unwilling to concede that it was still valid for the Hanse. Now,

however, they gave way, conceded immunity from tunnage and poundage, but invoked the principle of reciprocity. If the Hanse were not to pay taxes instituted after 1303 then nor should their own merchants. It would, of course, have been clearer if the date 1303 had been inserted as a *terminus a quo* instead of the vague talk about '100 years and more', but, as we have seen, clarity was not a strong point of this treaty.

There can be no doubt that the Hanse negotiators were promised immunity from tunnage and poundage, but when their merchants resumed exports in the summer of 1437 the customs officials demanded this tax, until the Chancellor gave a ruling that the exemption should be allowed. The cautiousness of the customs officials was not totally unjustified, since the treaty nowhere spelled out the words 'tunnage and poundage' ('tonagium et pondagium'). Instead, the wording of the *Carta Mercatoria* was modified by the substitution of 'or any subsidies' for 'any other charge' ('Nulleque prise prestaciones nove aut aliqua subsidia') at the point where the Hanse immunity from new financial burdens was confirmed (clause 3). Since tunnage and poundage was technically a subsidy, the Hanse liability was implicitly revoked. Yet at the risk of splitting too many hairs it must be pointed out that the addition of a single word in the next clause (4) may have jeopardised the Hanse immunity from tunnage and poundage, just as clause 2 cast doubt on the meaning of clause 1 in the case of the Englishmen. *Mutatis mutandis* clause 4 largely follows clause 2, but whereas the latter refers to Englishmen paying lawful 'custumis et deveriis' the former has the Hanse paying 'custumis et aliis deveriis'. 'Custumis et deveriis' might possibly be construed as a tautology, but the inclusion of the word 'other' may be said to rule out a tautological sense. This means that it might be possible to argue that the Hanse were bound to pay not merely customs as they claimed, but some 'other' due, i.e. tunnage and poundage. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that there is no evidence that the English ever made this claim, even when the Prussians refused to ratify the treaty.

Summarising the remainder of the 1437 treaty we find that, despite acceptance of the fact that Henry VI was not legally bound to pay his grandfather's debt, had agreed to do so *ex gratia*. He promised to pay 500 marks immediately, 500 marks before Easter 1438 and thereafter £500 a year until the debt was extinguished. These terms were probably at least as generous as the English were

prepared to concede during negotiations held in 1430, so Vorrath cannot be said to have given anything away on this point. Henry VI paid the first 1,000 marks as promised, and it was not Vorrath's fault that later payments were not forthcoming; nor, for that matter, did the blame lie with the crown, since Prussia failed to ratify the treaty. Contrary to statements by some historians the Hanseatics were not required to renounce claims for recent damage; they were not mentioned at all in the treaty itself. This meant that complainants could exercise their normal rights to sue in English courts, as Englishmen could in German courts. The chances of getting redress may have been slight, but at least they were not debarred by the treaty. In general, chances of obtaining justice in England may have been improved by a clause in the present treaty which provided that henceforth the admiral's court should have no jurisdiction over Hanseatic merchants. This had been a grievance for many years. It was also conceded that cases about breach of contract should be tried outside the county where the contract had been made, and if the Hanse merchants so requested it would be conducted by two royal justices. A further concession provided that any local or royal officials, including those of the customs, arresting or molesting any Hanse merchants or sailors against the terms of their charters would be ordered by the Chancellor to desist from such action immediately on pain of answering for their defiance in Chancery. Finally, in an attempt to prevent future incidents at sea, the English promised to enforce a statute of Edward III, which required ships' captains to find sureties not to molest friendly or neutral vessels; a similar provision was to be made by the Hanse to deter attacks on English ships. Where did the balance of advantage lie in this treaty? It is, surely, very difficult to conclude that England gained more than the Hanse. Henry VI promised to pay arrears of the 1409 indemnity and actually paid some. He relinquished a not insignificant income from tunnage and poundage, while the amount of comparable advantage which was expected to be gained by his own subjects is not known. The Hanseatic privileges in England were confirmed and they made certain legal gains. English rights in Hanseatic territories were confirmed but, except for the dubious matter of taxation, were not increased. For the first time the principle of reciprocity was acknowledged by the Hanse as a whole, but since the English were concerned chiefly about trade in Prussia and the eastern Baltic this was not a significant advance. All in all this was hardly the great

victory of English diplomacy and determination which it is generally claimed to have been.

Before examining the consequences of the 1437 treaty it is necessary to retrace our steps to study fluctuations in Anglo-Hanseatic trade from the accession of Henry IV to the later date. It will be seen that for the Hansards there were more downs than ups. The fortunes of Englishmen who invested in this sector are less clear, but there is no evidence of any advance and some indications to the contrary. This state of affairs did not result solely from the vicissitudes of Anglo-Hanse political relations; more general factors also intervened. During the first two or three years of the new reign, cloth exports, which had fallen back during the late 1390s, appear to have made a strong recovery. It would be dangerous to read too much into this, since the alien petty custom receipts do not confirm any general boom in trade and no tunnage and poundage accounts are available until May 1403. What is certain is that from about 1402 all branches of English trade fell into a deep and protracted depression. From 1403 to August 1422 the value of trade subject to poundage subsidy was around 27 per cent lower than in the 1390s, while the receipts of the alien petty custom fell by about 30 per cent.[65] Separate figures for the exports of cloth and wool and the imports of wine confirm the picture of a general slump. The brunt of a decline in imports was borne by aliens and their share may have fallen below that of Englishmen, though the margin one way or the other was not large. There is little question now of aliens having an export deficit, but one should hesitate before going further and claiming that this was the result of the tightening of the employment act. After the death of Henry V (1422) frequent alterations and exemptions in the scope of poundage duty make it more difficult to use this source as an aid to determining the size of denizen trade. Nevertheless, J. L. Bolton has provided decennial figures from 1420 to 1460 dividing overall values of trade into denizen, Hanse and other alien sectors.[66] These suggest that all three groups had an excess of exports over imports in every decade, except for denizens' trade in 1431–42.

[65] Derived from the tables in Power and Postan, *English Trade in the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 330–60.

[66] J. L. Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy, 1150–1500* (London, 1980), table 9:2, p. 307. It should be noted that Bolton's division of general imports into denizen, Hanse and alien was based upon each group's share of cloth exports; there is no independent record. Denizen import figures given there are substantially higher than the combined trade of Hanse and aliens, because wine imports are included.

Early in the fifteenth century the enrolment of cloth export duties becomes more complete and provides more details than before. On the other hand, far fewer customs particulars have survived than for the previous period. Cloth made up more than 90 per cent of all Hanse exports, so enrolled cloth figures provide a satisfactory record of this side of their trade. The extent to which they reliably reflect trends in total trade, i.e. including imports, is more debatable. If exports and imports were in balance, or an imbalance one way or the other was constant, there would be little problem. But this was not the case. In the late fourteenth century Hanse merchants enjoyed an import surplus. This was gradually reduced and finally replaced by an export surplus. But whichever side the surplus was on, it was not so large that in this period cloth exports cannot provide a guide to overall trade. Import levels were not yet widely separated from those of exports, as they were to become in the sixteenth century.

Using the totals of cloth exported as indicators, the first three and a half decades of the fifteenth century may be divided into five unequal periods (table 8).[67] An examination of the performance of any one of the three exporting groups, denizens, Hansards and other aliens, might suggest different divisions of time, but obviously their fortunes can only be compared with one another by observing a uniform time-scale. The first three years of Henry IV's reign (1399–1402) saw exports as high as any yet attained, with an average of around 42,300 cloths per annum. Denizens exported 22,800 (54 per cent of the total), Hanseatics 7,400 (17 per cent) and other aliens 12,100 (29 per cent). Prosperity gave way to a twenty-year slump (1402–22), during which total exports fell to an average of 29,200. This was caused not by a failure in supply but by a drop in demand from export merchants, for this was a period of chronic insecurity in overseas trade, brought on by piracy and warfare. The middle years of Henry IV's reign were plagued not only by the Anglo-Hanseatic dispute described earlier, but by quarrels with France and Flanders, which also alienated other trading partners such as Castile. Successive truces made from 1407 onwards were not

[67] For the sake of convenience in this and the next two chapters all national annual totals and periodic averages of cloth exports are derived from Bridbury, *Medieval English Clothmaking*, appendix F, pp. 118–22. The figures given there were those calculated by Carus-Wilson and Coleman to draw the graphs in *England's Export Trade*. To produce those figures it was necessary to readjust (on a time basis) many of the actual numbers given in the customs accounts and to make estimates for gaps. Because of the number of gaps in the early fifteenth century I have rounded totals to the nearest 100 from 1399 to 1422. Thereafter gaps are (with a few exceptions) less of a problem. Figures for individual ports are taken directly from, or based on, *England's Export Trade*.

Table 8. *England's cloth exports, 1399–1436*

	Overall total		Denizen			Hanse			Alien		
		Change	Total	Share	Change	Total	Share	Change	Total	Share	Change
1399–1402	42,300		22,800	54%		7,400	17%		12,100	29%	
1402–22	29,200	−31%	13,900	48%	−39%	5,900	20%	−20%	9,400	32%	−22%
1422–5	45,803	+57%	24,843	54%	+79%	6,949	15%	+18%	14,011	31%	+49%
1425–8	37,561	−18%	17,480	47%	−30%	5,778	15%	−17%	14,303	38%	+2%
1428–35	41,354	+10%	25,228	61%	+44%	4,214	10%	−24%	11,913	29%	−17%
1435–6	25,298	−39%	10,929	43%	−57%	2,353	9%	−44%	12,016	48%	+1%

scrupulously observed. Moreover, while relations with Flanders were patched up the break seems to have put an end to a promising development which had taken place around the turn of the century. This had been the temporary suspension of the ban against the sale of English cloth in Flanders, which had been in force since 1359. Henry V's renewal of the war with France in 1415 led to further disruption, again estranging the Castilians and also the Genoese, the most important of the Italians currently trading in England. During the slump the denizen group of exporters fared most badly, their average of 13,900 short-cloths being a mere 61 per cent of the former trade and only 48 per cent of the new total. They were, however, spared the wild fluctuations which marked the fortunes of other aliens and reduced the average of this group to 9,400, 78 per cent of its earlier figure. Relatively, Hanseatics did best with trade, holding up to 80 per cent of the former level, 5,900, and also spared too severe annual fluctuations. The prolonged slump gave way to a three-year boom (1422–5) with an annual average total of 45,803 cloths, an increase of 57 per cent on the previous figure. During these years other aliens increased their trade by 49 per cent to 14,011, though their exports had actually increased enormously during the last year of the previous period. The timing indicates that in this sector the settlement of the dispute with the Genoese in 1421 was a more critical factor than the Anglo-Burgundian treaty of 1419 and the more peaceful conditions which ensued from Henry V's victory in northern France. For denizens, whose trade increased by 79 per cent to an average of 24,843, the king's death on 31 August 1422 was a decisive event. After the battle of Agincourt, parliament had voted tunnage and poundage for the term of his life, but for the first three years of the new reign denizens were exempted from the periodic grants made to his successor. This gave them an edge in any markets where they were in direct competition with Hanseatics and other aliens. During these three years Hanseatic merchants increased their cloth exports by 18 per cent to an average of 6,949. This group may have derived relatively less benefit than the others from the return to peace and was more susceptible to denizen competition. Italians, exporting to a market closed to Englishmen, suffered least from the last factor.

Boom gave way to a three-year recession (1425–8), though with an overall average of 37,561 cloths a year (down 18 per cent) the general situation was nowhere near as bad as in the prolonged

slump. During this period other aliens actually increased their trade by 2 per cent to 14,303. Denizen exports declined by 30 per cent, though at 17,480 remained well above slump level. Once again the question of taxation has to be taken into account in judging this performance. During the first of these years (August 1425 to November 1426) denizen trade was subject to tunnage and poundage. Thereafter cloth exports were again spared, but imports were charged, except briefly from November 1427 to April 1428. Taxation of returns affected total profitability and may have had some depressing effect on the level of cloth exports, even when the latter were not directly burdened with poundage. During these years Hanseatic exports declined by 17 per cent and at 5,778 were slightly below the level of the long slump. The short recession gave way to a further boom (1428–35) in which exports increased by 10 per cent to 41,354, lower than in 1422–5 but back to within 2 per cent of the 1399–1402 total. Denizens increased their trade by 44 per cent to 25,228 (61 per cent of the overall total), their best performance yet and 11 per cent up on the beginning of the century. It is noticeable that the only two fiscal years (1429–30 and 1434–5) in which exports fell way below the current average coincided with periods when denizen cloth was temporarily subjected to poundage (December 1429 to January 1431 and from November 1434 onwards).[68] The first boycott of English cloth in the Low Countries in this period was simply shrugged off. Other alien trade averaged 11,913 (29 per cent of the total), a decrease of 17 per cent on the previous level, though less than 2 per cent down on that of 1399–1402; moreover, the losses were concentrated in two years in the middle of the period, when alien rates of tunnage and poundage were temporarily increased by 50 per cent. Hanseatic trade was down to 4,214 (10 per cent of the total), a drop of 24 per cent from the previous figure and no less than 43 per cent down on that of the beginning of the century. It should be noted, however, that there was a distinct improvement during the last two years of this period.

The early fifteenth century can hardly have been classed as a prosperous time by Hanseatic merchants trading with England. Their cloth exports declined steadily and their share of the trade was sadly depleted. A dismal picture is relieved only slightly by a temporary rise in market share during the long slump (1402–22); other aliens increased their share by a similar proportion and the

[68] The apparent sensitivity of cloth exports to changes in tax rates (which were never very high) suggests that they had a low rate of profit.

effect was due entirely to the very bad performance of denizens. It must be remembered, of course, that the period began with a relationship little short of war between England and much of the Hanse and thereafter the political situation remained very uneasy. The bare totals of cloth exports conceal the fact that significant changes were taking place in the composition of Hanseatic trade with England. In summary, northern merchants were giving way to west Germans, particularly Cologners, while Baltic goods began to be replaced by imports from other parts of Europe, including south Germany. The evidence is provided by a review of the trade of individual ports (table 9). Boston experienced the beginning of the decline of its *Bergenfahrer* trade, long drawn out and subject to periods of recovery, but ultimately doomed. Betwen 1391 and 1402 Hanse cloths exports here had averaged 2,312 per annum, while alien merchandise subject to petty custom, composed overwhelmingly of Bergen imports, averaged £6,054 a year. From 1402 to 1413 the cloth export was down by more than one third to 1,472, though the merchandise figure fell only to £4,955 and is shown by surviving particulars to have been concentrated even more than previously in the hands of Hanse merchants.[69] The next three years (1413–16) saw the absence of the *Bergenfahrer* from Boston, though not from England, because of the quarrel about English trade in Norway. Hanse cloth exports in the port fell to an average of only 152 a year and all alien merchandise to £505. When the *Bergenfahrer* returned to Boston cloth exports climbed to 1,795 (1416–26), though alien merchandise recovered to only £4,081. Despite the absence of particulars from this period the last figures suggest that the comfortable import surplus which can be shown to have existed before 1413 was substantially reduced, though not necessarily eliminated altogether.

At Hull Hanse cloth exports averaged 366 a year between 1391 and 1402 (581 in 1399–1402). Trade remained fairly buoyant throughout the ensuing slump, with exports averaging 408 a year down to 1420 (but excluding 1413–16). The performance of 1413–16 can only be explained by assuming that Hull attracted much of the Hanse trade which had temporarily deserted Boston. In these years Hanse cloth exports averaged 1,221 and all alien merchandise £3,787, compared with averages of 310 and £1,916 in the

[69] After 1399 all the figures for alien merchandise paying the petty custom are taken from Power and Postan, *English Trade in the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 330–60. Before 1399 I used my own transcripts of the enrolled accounts.

Table 9. *Fluctuations in Hanse trade in selected ports, 1391–1435*

	Boston			Hull			Yarmouth
	Hanse cloth	All alien merchandise (£)		Hanse cloth	All alien merchandise (£)		Hanse cloth
1391–1402	2,312	6,054	1391–1402	366	1,672	1399–1403	729
1402–13	1,472	4,955	1402–13	385	1,510	1407–13	752
1413–16	152	505	1413–16	1,221	3,787	1413–14	35
1416–26	1,795	4,081	1416–20	470	1,826	1414–15	642
			1420–35	58	779	1415–35	36

immediately previous three years. In July 1420 the Prussians confiscated a Hull ship and two years later another. Fear of reprisals probably deterred many Prussians from visiting Hull thereafter and explains the abrupt decline in Hanse trade. Hanse cloth exports averaged only 58 a year between 1420 and 1435 and all alien merchandise £779 compared with 470 cloths and £1,826 over the previous four years. Another port which suffered a sudden loss of almost all its Hanse trade was Yarmouth, which until this blow fell was weathering the slump quite well. Here Hanse cloth exports averaged 729 a year from 1399 to November 1403 and 747 from Michaelmas 1407 to Michaelmas 1415, but excluding 1413–14 when the recorded total was only 35. From Michaelmas 1415 to 1435 cloth exports averaged only 36 a year; there was also a marked decline in the petty custom paid on general merchandise, but since this contained a large element of other alien trade the fall is not so spectacular. What happened in Yarmouth was the calculated withdrawal of the Hamburg merchants, hitherto the mainstay of Hanse trade. The loss was so much regretted by the town that as early as April 1416 the present customs officials wrote to Hamburg asking the merchants to return and promising that the cause of their fears had been removed.[70] Wisely, the merchants did not return, for in 1414, if not in other years, they had succumbed to a corrupt customs official and allowed their cloth exports to be underrecorded in return for a bribe. This man had been exposed and an investigation was going on into the extent of his crimes.[71] Even if the Hamburg merchants were the victims of an extortioner rather than willing smugglers they had been guilty of a criminal offence. If they had continued to come to England they would undoubtedly have been punished when the matter was finally dealt with in the king's Exchequer.

At Lynn no figures for Hanse cloth exports are available until 1406. Thereafter, the overall level of trade is little different from that of the late fourteenth century. Until 1428 exports averaged 162 a year, but fell well below that figure in 1408–11, 1415–16, 1421–2 and 1424–5. Three ports had a very minor or irregular trade in cloth between 1399 and 1435. Newcastle saw some in most years, but had an overall average of only 15; Sandwich had nil in twenty-five years

[70] Lappenberg, *Urkundliche Geschichte*, 2, no. 62.

[71] Full details are given in S. Jenks, *England, die Hanse und Preussen: Handel und Diplomatie, 1377–1461* (Habilitationsschrift, Free University of Berlin, 1985), pp. 382–4.

Table 10. *Hanse cloth exports at London, relative to all England, 1399–1436*

	All England	London	
1399–1402	7,400	3,430	46%
1402–22	5,900	3,000	51%
1422–5	6,949	3,978	57%
1425–8	5,778	4,189	73%
1428–35	4,214	3,171	75%
1435–6	2,353	1,905	81%

and an average of 8 in the remaining twelve years; Southampton had nil in nineteen years and an average of 22 over eighteen years. This leaves only London and Ipswich to be considered. The fifteenth century saw the continued growth in London's share of Hanse exports, which had been briefly interrupted in the late 1390s (table 10). Once only was there another serious setback. Between 1414 and 1417 London exports averaged only 1,734 cloths compared with 2,716 over the previous three years. This was against the trend elsewhere, so that in these years London handled only 38 per cent of all Hanse exports against 51 per cent over the whole of the 1402–22 period. In reality the trade of the London Steelyard was not quite as depressed as the above figures suggest, since in these years its members probably diverted some of their exports to Ipswich. Hanse cloth exports in the latter port averaged 235 cloths a year between October 1399 and January 1404 and 250 a year between February 1407 and Michaelmas 1414. They then surged to 737, 1,090 and 677 during the next three years. The port did not revert to being a backwater after 1417; between then and 1435 Hanse exports averaged 638 a year. It was clearly establishing itself as an outpost of the London Steelyard. It was explained in the previous chapter that, although the nature of the enrolled customs accounts make it necessary to credit all trade to Ipswich, the real centre of Hanse activity was the member port of Colchester. By the 1430s, and possibly earlier, Cologne merchants had acquired property and settled in the town. In 1431 the London Steelyard made a statute that its members should only purchase Colchester cloth which conformed with assise measurements. This may have been no more than a recognition of a change that had already taken place, since

the town had largely given up the manufacture of non-assise cloths some years previously.[72]

The influence which political and military factors exercised on Hanse trade, though ever present, was probably strongest during the depression of the late 1420s and early 1430s. In the nadir of 1430–2 total cloth exports fell to 3,070 and then 2,387. This resulted from the effects of the Hanseatic-Danish war which began in July 1426, a ban on English-made cloth in the Low Countries and the threat of increased taxation in England, though these were not equally important. The first affected most seriously the *Bergenfahrer* at Boston. From 1419 to 1425 their cloth exports flourished as they had not done since the beginning of the century, with an average of 2,011 cloths per annum. The outbreak of the war may already be slightly reflected in the figure of 1,463 in 1425–6 and certainly is in that of 1,051 in 1426–7. Then came the Hanse military defeats in the autumn of 1427 and trade came to an abrupt halt, with cloth exports at Boston averaging only eighteen a year from 1427 to 1433. The much smaller trade at Lynn was buoyant at first, still averaging 146 in 1425–8, but then fell to an average of 60 in the years 1428–33. For the possible effects of the Low Countries cloth ban one must look at Hanse exports from London, though at the same time it is necessary to point out that the first ban had little effect on denizen exports here, which were at record levels.[73] As early as 1359 Flanders had imposed a permanent ban on the entry of English-made cloth, though later that year it conceded that Hanseatic merchants might carry it through the county, provided that it was not unpacked there. Initially this privilege was useful both to Baltic merchants shipping from Bruges and those going to the Rhineland. Before the end of the fourteenth century the merchants of Cologne and Dortmund were beginning to send cloth to Antwerp in Brabant, where they had colonies. In time the northern route became more important than that through Bruges. The attraction of the former was that it combined transit facilities to west and south Germany with fairs at Antwerp and Bergen op Zoom, which permitted the sale of English cloth. Early in the fifteenth century Hanse merchants were competing with Englishmen in these markets. Gradually, the clothing towns of Holland-Zeeland and Brabant came to resent the competition of English cloth and the idea took hold of excluding it,

[72] *HUB*, 6, no. 905. Britnell, *Colchester*, pp. 164–5.

[73] There is no way for apportioning denizen exports between different markets.

as the Flemings did. In July 1428 English cloth, both in transit and brought for sale, was banned from Holland-Zeeland, and a month later a similar measure was taken in Brabant.[74] The Holland-Zeeland ban lapsed early in 1430, but, despite the threats of Cologne merchants to boycott the Antwerp fairs, that in Brabant was not repealed until March 1431. London Hanse exports, which stood at 5,071 cloths in 1427–8, declined to 3,757, 3,650 and 2,138 in the next three years and finally to 2,030 in 1431–2. How much, if any, of this decline was due to the Burgundian ban is problematical; some may have resulted from the Danish war. The abnormally low figures of the last two years may owe something to confusion about Hanse liability to the current surcharge on the alien rate of poundage. A strong recovery in London exports in 1432–3 raised the Hanse national total to 3,671, while a partial recovery at Boston and Lynn and strong trade at Ipswich resulted in totals of 5,310 and 5,872 in the next two years (table 11). The last figure shows that the boycott of English cloth ordered by the Hanseatic diet in June 1434 and the simultaneous reimposition of the ban throughout the Burgundian Low Countries for a long time had no effect on Hanse cloth exports. The following year (1435–6) total Hanse exports fell to 2,353, of which 1,905 passed through London. At the same time the denizen cloth trade was in a parlous way. The reintroduction of poundage duty, Hanseatic and Burgundian boycotts, the ending of the Anglo-Burgundian alliance and the prospect of war between the two powers acted together to reduce denizen cloth exports to 20,559 in 1434–5 and 10,929 in 1435–6. Only the other alien sector of the trade, overwhelmingly Italian, prospered; the alien poundage surcharge had been removed and a relative scarcity of buyers may have brought down the price of cloth. Even so, the exports total of all three interest groups at 25,298 cloths was among the four lowest recorded for any twelve-month period so far in the fifteenth century.

Trends in the export of cloth to Hanseatic parts by Englishmen in the early fifteenth century are not easily established, since total denizen exports can be divided into market sectors only very crudely. The best hope of finding clues is to concentrate on those ports, Lynn and Boston, where denizen cloth exports in the late fourteenth century were directed overwhelmingly to the Baltic. At Lynn denizen cloth exports averaged 1,338 a year from 1394 to 1399

[74] Munro, *Wool, Cloth and Gold*, pp. 68–9.

Table 11. *A comparison of cloth exports at selected ports, 1425–36*

	Hull		Boston		Lynn		London		
Mich.–Mich.	Hanse	Denizen	Hanse	Denizen	Hanse	Denizen	Hanse	Denizen	Alien
1425–6	13	3,005	1,463	606	179	1,908[f]	3,505	4,223	11,602
1426–7	4	2,242	1,051	585	116	538[g]	3,992	3,849	7,260
1427–8	0	2,986	0	831	143	2,012	5,071	3,635	8,353
1428–9	66	6,505[a]	3	1,686[b]	0	1,002	3,757	6,195	7,382
1429–30	122	3,122	17	1,650[c]	95	1,006	3,650	6,973	10,530
1430–1	1	2,935	0	384[d]	59	624	2,138	10,530	5,067
1431–2	13	3,077	41	697	71	430	2,030	13,334	953
1432–3	90	3,535	47	394	79	559	3,141	12,719	498
1433–4	60	2,891	521	507	182	1,775	3,271	9,890	4,520
1434–5	38	1,140	593	651	89	874	4,209	8,699	4,347
1435–6	0	828	3	96[e]	27	569	1,905	2,084	4,555

[a] To 28 Oct. 1429.
[b] To 1 Nov. 1429.
[c] 1 Nov. 1429–1 Nov. 1430.
[d] To 20 Oct. 1431.
[e] To 10 Oct. 1436.
[f] From 30 July 1425
[g] From 20 Oct. 1426.

and, after a gap in the record, 1,497 from 1406 to 1422. This is a buoyant performance when measured against national figures and suggests that Lynn's concentration on the Prussian market was paying dividends. The rise of 29 per cent to 1,933 in the following three years (1422–5) is not as great as the national trend, but this is explicable by the fact that the latter includes a large element of simple recovery from slump conditions. The decline of 29 per cent from the new level to 1,380 in 1425–8 is almost exactly in line with the national trend, but the average disguises massive fluctuations. From the beginning of August 1425 to mid-October 1426 the figure was 1,908, falling after the outbreak of the Hanseatic-Danish war to 538 in the next year, but then recovering to 2,012. The last figure may be regarded as postponed trade and, taking the two war years together, Lynn gained nothing from the discomfiture of the Hanseatics. Finally, when denizen exports at a national level experienced a boom from 1428 to 1435 Lynn's trade languished with an average of only 896. The first two years were poor, the next three and the last disastrous, and only 1433–4 saw what would formerly have been regarded as normal trade, with an export of 1,775 cloths. The poor performance was probably due to the harassment of English merchants in Prussia; it is the good trade of 1433–4 which is difficult to explain.

At Boston, which had averaged 817 denizen cloth exports a year from 1391 to 1402, trade fell to 327 a year in 1402–13. Even if every scrap of this cloth now went to the Baltic, there was a huge fall in the amount going there. During the absence of the *Bergenfahrer* from Boston in 1413–16 denizen exports increased slightly, though hardly significantly, to 360 a year, but then fell to 294 for the remainder of the general slump. A possible explanation for Boston's poor performance relative to that of Lynn may be that the Bostonians, who in the late fourteenth century had still dispatched cloth to the western Baltic, had not cultivated the Prussian market so assiduously as their neighbours. The penalty for this was a loss of markets when relations with the western towns were disturbed, as they were in the early fifteenth century. During the next two periods the denizen cloth trade at Boston was relatively flourishing with averages of 693 in 1422–5 and 674 in 1425–8, though this may have been due to new enterprises in regions other than the Baltic, possibly the Low Countries. In 1428–30 exports soared to 1,686 and 1,650, but while much of this went to the Baltic the credit does not necessarily belong

to Boston's own citizens. Correspondence of the Steelyard indicates that Boston was chosen as the port from which to launch English attempts to run the blockade of the Sound and it is likely that many who did not normally ship from this port did so in these years. This concentration was not sustained, but denizen exports remained relatively buoyant, at least by the port's own recent standards, with an average of 526 from 1430 to 1435.

The significance of Baltic markets in the denizen cloth trade of Hull in the early fifteenth century is not easily determined. Exports which averaged 3,004 a year from 1391 to 1402, were already declining in the last four years of that period and slumped to an average of only 1,530 in 1402–22. Hull's exporters were not dependent on the Baltic and there is little reason to suppose that this market sector fared better than any other; indeed it may have suffered more than some others. Hull's ability at this time to challenge Bristol as the second largest importer of wine strongly suggests that there may have been a large export of Yorkshire cloth to south-west Europe. During the boom of 1422–5 Hull's denizen exports, averaging 2,834, slightly bettered the national trend, while in the recession of 1425–8 they held up far better, falling only to 2,744. It would be rash to credit much of this achievement to Baltic exports, since the seizure of Hull ships in Prussia, which was probably responsible for the withdrawal of Hanseatic trade from Hull, must surely have made Yorkshiremen cautious of venturing to that country. However, there is evidence of some trade from the mid-1420s, and the Hanseatic-Danish war may have encouraged bolder spirits to decide that the possibility of enhanced profits was worth a risk. Hull's denizen exports from 1428 to 1435 averaged 3,315 with one exceptionally good year, 6,505 in 1428–9, coinciding with the first of Boston's exceptional years. It may be significant that, while Lynn's exports languished, Yorkshiremen appear to have taken over the leadership of the English merchants in Prussia. Nicholas Hassham of York is named as governor in 1432 and remained in that post at least until the breakdown of trade in 1435.

For other English ports and some inland towns there is evidence of a Baltic trade in the fifteenth century, but no method of quantifying it even roughly. Coventry merchants exported cloth to Prussia in the 1430s, but since they used the port of Boston their contribution has already been taken into account. In 1431 three Bristol merchants complained about the arrest of the *Anna* of Bristol,

as she was about to sail from Danzig for her home port with their goods and those of other English merchants. Colchester merchants still frequented Prussia in the 1430s. Southampton merchants were sufficiently well established in the English community at Danzig for one of their number to have been included in the delegation sent with plenipotentiary powers from there to Lübeck in 1428.[75] The most aggravating gap in our knowledge concerns the contribution which London may have made to denizen trade with the Baltic in this period. Londoners appear among named leaders of the Englishmen in Prussia and, although their cloth was probably but a small part of total denizen exports from the capital, it could have made a not insubstantial contribution to overall English exports to the Baltic. On the other hand such exports would have to have risen above the level of the late fourteenth century to compensate for the decline in other quarters. This condition cannot be taken for granted and on balance it seems most unlikely that the total of all denizen exports to the Baltic in the early fifteenth century exceeded, indeed may not have been even as high as, those of the late fourteenth century. At certain times Englishmen temporarily improved the general conditions in which their trade was conducted in Prussia, but this did not necessarily lead to much of an increase in cloth exports to that country. Moreover, any gain in the east could conceivably have been more than offset by contraction of sales in the western Baltic.

While the total of English cloth taken to the Baltic by Hanseatic merchants and denizens either stagnated or declined in the early fifteenth century the position as regards imports from that region may have been even worse. The suggestion must be advanced cautiously, since quantitative proof cannot be supplied and after the death of Henry IV even illustrative material in the form of particular customs accounts is sparse. Earlier, the principal return of denizen merchants was Skania herrings; now the cool reception of Englishmen in the west-Baltic towns may have led to a decline in this traffic. Another contributory factor was the rise of the Dutch herring industry, based on an increase in fishing in the North Sea and an improved curing technology. England could now supply its needs from this quarter, while at certain times both English and Dutch merchants found it profitable to export herrings to Prussia. Hanseatic

[75] *HUB*, 6, nos. 875, 942, 1037. *HR*, 1 (viii), no. 451.

imports from the Baltic may also have been prejudiced by a change in fashion. Previously, squirrel skins, the wearing of which extended to relatively humble social groups, had been one of the most important of all Hanse imports. The squirrel did not disappear overnight but in the fifteenth century it gradually went out of fashion, while the inelastic demand for the more expensive furs worn by the rich resulted in a decline in the fur trade.[76] There is no evidence that any other Baltic goods fell out of demand and it would have been strange had they done so, for they were for the most part everyday necessities. It was for this reason that the anonymous author of the *Libelle of Englyshe Polycye* (written around 1437) looked kindly upon 'Highe Duchmene of Prise and Esterlynges', in contrast to his disdain for Italians, many of whose wares he considered to be superfluous trifles. The German wares listed in the *Libelle* were precisely those found in the fourteenth-century customs particulars. Another reason for preferring Hansards to Italians was that the latter beggared England with their financial practices, while the former enriched it by importing silver.[77]

> Also Pruse men maken here aventure
> Of plate of sylvere, of wegges gode and sure
> In grete plente, whiche they bringe and bye
> Oute of the londes of Béalme and Hungrye;
> Whiche is encrese ful grete unto thys londe.

Denizen merchants trading with the Baltic may have continued to make most or all of their returns in wares rather than silver, but given the stagnation of exports there was little or no scope for any increase in imports. In the late fourteenth century the Baltic had been the principal growth area of English trade, but this was no longer true. After 1409 Englishmen were on the defensive in Prussia. For a long time to come the question of reciprocity in the Baltic continued to dominate Anglo-Hanseatic relations, but with the benefit of hindsight we are aware that the seeds of another dispute were being scattered elsewhere. The future of English trade lay in the provinces of Zeeland and Brabant. Englishmen were beginning to see this region as a growth area for cloth exports and in its fairs they found returns not only in local products but in goods from southern Germany, central Europe and the Mediterranean. But at the same

[76] Veale, *Fur Trade*, pp. 134–6.
[77] G. Warner (ed.), *The Libelle of Englysche Polycye* (Oxford, 1926), pp. 15–17.

time some Hanseatics, particularly those of Cologne, recognised the profits to be made in this trade and began to infiltrate it. The Englishmen were already organising themselves into groups of adventurers, which were eventually to coalesce as the Company of Merchant Adventurers. When this happened latent rivalry became open and in the long run the Merchant Adventurers proved to be a more deadly threat to Hanseatic interests than the English Baltic traders ever were.