

CHAPTER 6

The loss of the Hanse franchises, 1551–1611

The dispute between the Merchant Adventurers and the Hanse merchants revolved generally around exports of cloth and in particular around the role of Antwerp as a cloth mart and a source of imports. For the first few years of Edward VI's reign the Hansards successfully defended their stake in the trade. When their rivals persuaded the government to lift the restriction on the export of unfinished cloth, on the grounds that inflation had rendered it inoperable, the Hanse merchants were granted the same favour. In the summer of 1548 they were threatened with a withdrawal of this concession and the Steelyard ordered a ban on the export of all cloth to Zeeland and Brabant. Danzig protested that this action had not been sanctioned by the towns, to which the officials replied that it was designed to rouse English clothiers to support their rights.¹ The mere threat of a boycott seems to have been remarkably effective, since Hanse cloth exports in 1547–8 were the highest ever yet recorded. There was no more talk of discrimination and Hanse cloth exports continued their upward progress. In April 1550 came the first hint of the fact that Antwerp could not soak up an unlimited amount of English cloth. A group of clothiers complained that the Merchant Adventurers had abated prices, so that they were unable to dispose of their products without the loss of 20s on each piece. Summoned before the Privy Council the Adventurers decided that attack was the surest defence; foremost among their arguments was the claim that a big increase in the number of unskilled workers had resulted in overproduction and a decline in standards. They also said that since they presently held unsold stocks at Antwerp they could buy no more until these had been sold. After this the Antwerp market must have experienced a recovery, for in November 1551 the Adventurers were reported to be remarkably flushed with cash in

¹ *DI*, nos. 2118, 2151.

that city.² But at this very time their leaders were again plotting to exclude the Hansards from the cloth export trade. Their opportunity lay in the fact that the English government was currently facing a grave financial crisis and, as a partial solution, looked to Sir Thomas Gresham to refund its external debt. In the short term Gresham's activities were likely to be harmful to the Merchant Adventurers, so to buy them off the government was willing to support an attack on the Hanse.³

The weakest point in the Hanse defence lay in the activities of a group of merchants, chiefly though no exclusively from Cologne, who had virtually abjured their home towns to settle permanently in Antwerp. They nevertheless continued to claim the use of Hanse franchises both in Antwerp and London. Because of their close connections with other Antwerp residents these men were peculiarly tempted not only to trade with their own goods but to colour those of Dutch and Italian merchants operating from that city.⁴ These 'renegades', who now contributed nothing towards the economy or charges of their home towns, were hardly less resented by loyal Hanse merchants than by Englishmen. On the other hand, it was difficult to control them and the most radical solution, which would have been to denounce them to the English government, was not an option since this would have endangered the whole organisation. This could be done, however, by the Merchant Adventurers, for the most certain way to provoke the crown into action was to convince it of the loss of revenue caused by colouring. As it turned out, the scandal of colouring was brought into the open in July 1551 by the death of Andreas Mohr, who was not one of the Antwerp exiles, but resided in the London Steelyard as factor for a Danzig firm. His papers showed that with the knowledge of his principals he had engaged in large-scale colouring of non-Hanse goods. This led firstly to the arrest of his firm's goods and then in November to a number of prosecutions in the court of the mayor of London alleging fraudulent customs practices.⁵

The Merchant Adventurers seized the opportunity presented by this exposure to mount a wholesale attack on the Hanse franchises. At the beginning of 1551 the Hansards had been routinely licensed

² APC, 3, pp. 19–20. G. D. Ramsay, *The City of London in International Politics at the Accession of Elizabeth Tudor* (Manchester, 1975), p. 62.

³ Ramsay, *City of London*, pp. 51–3.

⁴ KI, 1, nos. 605, 611–25.

⁵ KI, 1, nos. 636, 646, DI, nos. 2357, 2387, K. Friedland, 'Der Plan des Dr. Heinrich Suderman zur Wiederstellung der Hanse', *Jahrbuch des Kölnischen Geschichtsverein*, 31–2 (1956–7), 193–4, 199–203.

to export cloth and to import Gascon wine until the following Christmas. During the course of the year Lübeck advised the removal of the Steelyard archives and treasury to Germany, though this seems to have been chiefly because of English domestic unrest, and no steps were taken to carry it through. When the time came for the licence to be renewed the Merchant Adventurers were ready to act. On 7 December a stop was put upon Hanse cloth exports and a few days later the Privy Council began to consider the case against them. On 29 December the Steelyard was given a copy of the charges and told to prepare a defence.⁶ The case made by the Adventurers was that (1) all privileges claimed by the Steelyard were invalid in English law, since the merchants did not possess a sufficient corporation to exercise them; (2) none of their charters named particular individuals or towns so that there was no way of knowing who ought to enjoy the pretended privileges; (3) as a result the Steelyard admitted whomsoever it pleased, at a cost to the king's revenue of £17,000 a year; (4) even were the privileges valid the beneficiaries ought not to colour strangers' goods, as they allegedly did; (5) for 100 years after the grant of the pretended privileges the Hansards had been content to trade between their own ports and England, but now, despite a recognisance made in the reign of Henry VII, they meddled with the trade of the Low Countries; (6) the Hanse charters had been forfeited in the reign of Edward IV and renewed only upon condition that Englishmen should enjoy reciprocal rights, which were still denied.⁷

After the Hansards had delivered their defence a small committee headed by the Solicitor General was appointed to scrutinise it. The Privy Council discussed the matter on 9 February 1552, but deferred judgement until the 24th of that month. The decision then went against the Steelyard, the justification being precisely the case prepared by the Merchant Adventurers and described above. The franchises were suspended until such time as the merchants could produce proof that they ought to enjoy them; until then they were to trade on the same footing as all other aliens. Two ambassadors of the Wendish towns arrived in London three days before the verdict of the Privy Council was delivered and remained until July trying to get it reversed, but they gained only two concessions. These were that 2,857 cloths and 36 pieces of lead bought before the suspension might pay the old rates of duty if exported before 1 November, and

⁶ *APC*, 3, pp. 86, 441, 453, *KI*, 1, nos. 610, 630, 734.

⁷ PRO, SP10/14/10-11. BL, Add. MS 48019 fos. 125d-126d.

that until midsummer 1553 imports native to Hanseatic regions should be taxed only at traditional rates. The door was not closed upon further talks provided that they took place in England, and to this end the Hanse was invited to send a full-scale embassy.⁸

Immediately after its franchises were suspended the Steelyard demanded that all Hanse merchants should abstain from buying English cloth, either in England or in Antwerp. They also wanted all towns to take steps to prevent Hanse products from reaching England, whether at the hands of their own citizens, Englishmen or third parties, such as the Dutch. This boycott was confirmed, though not without vigorous debate, in a diet at Lübeck in November 1552. The crisis laid bare the conflicting interests of the member towns. Months before, and again at the diet, Cologne objected to the prohibition upon buying English cloth at Antwerp. It argued that this would simply result in Flemings and Brabanters buying more cloth and taking over the trade with upper Germany. Cologne supported the ban on exporting to England, since its merchants now had little stake in this trade. On the other hand the east-Baltic towns opposed the ban on exports to England, as did Hamburg, though Lübeck sided with Cologne on this matter.⁹ Such dissension gives credence to a later English claim (February 1555) that the blockade, though maintained for nineteen months, was largely ineffective. It was alleged that during this time English merchants increased their own exports of cloth, to the profit of themselves and the crown. There had been no shortage of northern wares in London and, while the prices of a few increased, those of a greater number were substantially reduced. Furthermore, the London–Antwerp exchange rate moved from 18s to 24s and the Merchant Adventurers imported specie to the value of £80,000 sterling. By February 1555 the boycott was at an end, but the prices of most northern wares were higher than they had ever been, the exchange rate had fallen again to 21s and was likely to go lower, while the Adventurers were no longer importing specie but repatriating their assets in the form of wares.¹⁰ This propaganda was intended to persuade the government that the country had nothing to fear from a renewal of the Hanseatic blockade, and no great reliance may be placed on the implied process of cause and effect.

⁸ *APC*, 3, pp. 460, 475, 487–9; 4, pp. 42–3, 92–3, 98. *CPR*, 1550–3, p. 346. *DI*, nos. 2387, 2398. *KI*, 1, nos. 647–9, 678–9, 687, 690–1, 693–6, 700, 705.

⁹ *DI*, nos. 2414, 2416, 2423–4, 2428. *KI*, 1, no. 644, docs. 9 (p. 351), 10 (p. 353); nos. 666–8.

¹⁰ PRO, SP11/5 (v). BL, Add. MS 48019, fo. 23.

The diet of November 1552 decided in principle to accept the invitation to send an embassy to London, but left the details to be settled in another diet to be held in the following May. This next assembly confirmed the decision and towards the end of June 1553 a large delegation gathered at Antwerp in readiness for the crossing to England. Their plans were disrupted by the death of the king on 6 July and uncertainty about the succession. In the event the bulk of the embassy waited at Bruges while four of their number went as an advance party to London, arriving there in time to witness the triumphant entry of Queen Mary on 3 August. According to their report they found a friend in Lord Paget, Keeper of the Privy Seal. On 27 August all the Hanse envoys were received by the queen and this was followed by talks with the Privy Council, which proceeded relatively smoothly.¹¹ By 24 October agreement was reached to reverse the judgement of Edward VI and on 1 November the queen confirmed the ancient charters.¹² The government took the precaution of reserving its position on several points, notably that Englishmen should enjoy reciprocity, particularly in Prussia, and that there must be some limitation of the export of unfinished cloth to the Low Countries. But for the time being the Hanse had defeated the claim that privileged imports should come only from their own regions. Most of the embassy now returned home, but three of its number remained until February 1554 negotiating about matters still in contention and supervising the reform of the Steelyard. By the middle of January a compromise had been reached about the export of unfinished cloth, and the queen again confirmed the franchises and freed the Hanse from the tunnage and poundage granted by parliament a few months before. The merchants were allowed to export unfinished cloth for a period of three years, but none was to be sold in Antwerp for the next three months.¹³ The merchants of north-west Germany, particularly those of Hamburg, were increasingly exporting white cloth for finishing in their own towns and were unwilling to risk a total ban on exports just to preserve the Rhinelanders' right to sell at Antwerp. Accordingly, they demanded that the latter should honour the agreement made with England. In July 1554 at a Hanse diet Cologne claimed that pressure being put on the exiles settled in Antwerp was already leading to a fall in sales there. The diet decreed that similar steps should be taken by other

¹¹ *DI*, doc. 9 (pp. 846–55). *KI*, 1, nos. 841–62.

¹² BL, Add. MS 48019, fos. 117–117d. *KI*, 1, nos. 856–8.

¹³ *CPR*, 1553–4, pp. 58–9. *KI*, 1, nos. 892–3, 905.

towns of the Rhineland circle. At the end of the year, however, it was necessary to renew the pressure in the face of continued complaints by the English about the revival of Hanse trade.¹⁴ In a submission to the Privy Council the Adventurers put the total number of cloths exported at Hanse rates between 21 January and Christmas 1554 at 34,450, of which 11,200 were sold in the prohibited areas of Zeeland and Antwerp.¹⁵ The Adventurers claimed that many of the latter were still coloured on behalf of Dutch merchants. Nor was just cloth involved in the trade revival; in December the Steelyard itself admitted that more ships from Bremen, Hamburg and Danzig had imported salt and other French goods into England than for a long time past.¹⁶

One of the main reasons for the success of the Hanse ambassadors in the autumn and winter of 1553–4 was the fact that Sir Thomas Gresham and the Merchant Adventurers had temporarily fallen out of favour, because of their association with the Duke of Northumberland, who had unsuccessfully tried to put Lady Jane Gray on the throne. However, Gresham's star soon began to rise again as he persuaded the new regime of the continued value of his financial expertise. On Christmas Eve the Steelyard reported that London merchants now stood high in the government's favour and it was feared that they would soon secure the downfall of the Hanse.¹⁷ The fatal blow was struck on 26 February 1555, when the Adventurers submitted to the Privy Council an 'information to explain the confusion of their good order in the Low Countries and to reform the abuses of the Hanse'.¹⁸ In general terms they reiterated old complaints about the unfair advantage gained by the Hansards from lower rates of custom and about the indefinite membership of the organisation, which led to defrauding of the queen's Exchequer. In particular they alleged that Hanse sales of cloth in Antwerp had upset the market and caused prices to fall; further, by maintaining permanent sales outlets in that city the Hansards discouraged buyers from visiting the Cold Mart at Barrow, where the Adventurers were then trying to reactivate their own staple. It was proposed that the Hansards be bound not to sell English goods in the Low Countries nor in any adjacent place, unless it was a member town of the Hanse. If they claimed the right of transit then they should be made to pass through the town where the Adventurers fixed their staple, so that the latter could supervise them. However, the Adventurers were now

¹⁴ *KI*, 1, nos. 1046, 1057, doc. 16 (p. 378).

¹⁶ *DI*, no. 2826.

¹⁵ BL, Add. MS 48019, fo. 124.

¹⁸ PRO, SP11/5 (v).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 2830.

not concerned merely to obtain a monopoly of sales within the Low Countries; they feared for the very survival of their staple. They complained that workers were being seduced to migrate from Antwerp to Hanse towns to promote the finishing of English cloth in those places, thereby diminishing trade at the staple. It was claimed that Hamburg and Lübeck had the advantage of being nearer than Antwerp to the marts of Leipzig and Frankfurt, where much finished cloth was sold. The Adventurers' solution was that the Hansards be forbidden to export any but finished cloth.

On 19 March 1555 the Privy Council issued new regulations for the conduct of Hanse trade, which included closer scrutiny by customs officials and the providing of recognisances to prevent fraud. More seriously, quotas were to be applied for the next twelve months pending another full-scale conference between England and the Hanse. During this time Hansards were not to sell any cloth in the Spanish Netherlands, and not more than one in four of all other exports should be unfinished; not more than one quarter of all imports ought to be from non-Hanseatic regions. These measures failed to satisfy the Adventurers, who were determined to cripple Hanse trade and throughout the summer encouraged the London authorities to defy Privy Council orders to release Hanse-owned cloth which had been arrested earlier and to allow Hansards to trade in Blackwell Hall.¹⁹

A Hanse diet considered the new crisis at Lübeck in July 1555. As ever, a compromise between conflicting interests had to be found. Danzig was not much concerned about the question of unfinished cloth, but was adamantly opposed to the payment of higher customs duties and demanded the expulsion of any merchant who did so. It did not favour a formal ban on Hanse vessels trading from Spain and France to England, but hoped that shippers would exercise voluntary restraint. Cologne, the member most badly affected, had given very careful consideration to its position, and a memorandum drawn up by Dr Heinrich Suderman, its leading diplomat, had examined the consequences of four possible courses of action, ranging from simply accepting the new restrictions to waging open war on English trade. Not surprisingly, extreme action was ruled out; instead, the city recommended that a small delegation be sent to England, which would be cheaper and more effective than a full-scale embassy. Its chief bargaining counter was to be the threat of a boycott of all

¹⁹ *APC*, 5, pp. 115–16, 161, 165. *DI*, no. 2876. *KI*, 1, docs. 19–21 (pp. 385–9).

English cloth, which the Hanse would endeavour to sustain throughout the empire, not merely in its member towns. It was hoped that the marriage of Queen Mary to Philip, a prince of the Empire and sovereign ruler of much of the Low Countries, could be exploited. In the event, the Cologne plan was adopted. The diet banned Hanse exports from France and Spain to England, and advised Cologne to reduce its cloth exports for a while, but immediate retaliation in any form was ruled out. Dr Suderman and Dr Herman Plönnies of Lübeck were appointed to go to England, but not until the autumn, when the situation might have improved. They arrived in London on 14 December.²⁰

Suderman and Plönnies were formally received by the queen on 26 December, but despite their impatience the English would not get down to detailed discussions until the Christmas festivities were over. Between that time and their final audience with the queen on 19 April 1556 they had many sessions with members of the Privy Council and officials and merchants of London.²¹ The latter talks were particularly acrimonious and the Hansards were blamed for many English bankruptcies during the previous four years. The fruits of the negotiations were little enough. The quota of unfinished cloth was increased from one in four to one in three, but the ban on sales in the Low Countries remained, as did the quota of one quarter for non-Hanseatic imports. Since the Londoners would not give an inch, it fell to the Privy Council to order them to ease their pressure on the Hansards. Although they were not yet readmitted to Blackwell Hall they might buy cloth from country clothiers in houses near the Steelyard, and the city was not to interfere; they were allowed to pack their own cloth, but subject to the scrutiny of the official packer, to whom they were to pay slightly increased fees. The mayor was to stop exacting a prise of imported salt and was not to fix the prices of corn, fish and other victuals imported by Hansards. Cloth presently under arrest was to be restored and any which had been sold paid for; a major legal suit then in process was to be suspended for the time being. All these concessions were for one year only and were conditional upon a full-scale embassy coming to England within that time to settle matters once and for all.

The concession that the Hansards might pass cloth through the Low Countries provided that they did not sell it there was soon negated. In June 1556 the Adventurers decided not to ship any cloth

²⁰ *DI*, no. 2870. *KI*, 1, docs. 24–6 (pp. 391–8).

²¹ *SPF*, 1553–8, pp. 216, 220. *APC*, 5, pp. 252–7. *KI*, 1, doc. 28 (pp. 400–18).

to their staple until the following November and persuaded the government to ban alien exports in the same period. While this may have been intended to apply only to cloth going to and through the Low Countries, the customs officials ruled otherwise and the Steelyard soon reported that all trade was stopped, save that cloth already in its possession might be shipped to Hamburg, Bremen and Kampen. When trade was resumed in the autumn it was demanded that Hanse merchants exporting to the Low Countries should execute a bond not to sell cloth in Antwerp. This they refused to do and accordingly were given licence only to export some 600–700 cloths already in their possession. The Privy Council's insistence that the agreement of March 1556 should be strictly observed led to a further stoppage of trade at the end of the twelve months, on the grounds that the Hanse embassy had not arrived within the allotted time. The only concession was that the merchants might export coloured cloths already in their possession up to the number of 2,000.²²

The arrival of Hanse delegates in May 1557 was a diplomatic fiasco. In place of the full-scale embassy which the English demanded there came only Dr Suderman and Dr Herman Focke of Lübeck. Worse still, their credentials were addressed only to King Philip of Spain and England and the outraged Privy Council refused to acknowledge them. Instead, the councillors held a series of stormy meetings with members of the Steelyard, at one of which, Lord Paget, formerly described as a friend of the Hanse, castigated as 'unfriendly, unnatural, unchristian, Turkish, tartar and barbaric' the action of Danzig in currently refusing to ship corn to England. So fraught was the climate that the secretary of the Steelyard sent forty-two of their ancient charters to Antwerp for safe keeping by the Bruges *Kontor*. When the failure of the embassy was reported to a diet convened in September 1557, it prepared a comprehensive plan for a total boycott of English cloth and the withholding of all commodities controlled by members of the Hanse. This was not to be put into effect until there had been one more attempt at a peaceful solution. The queen responded on 6 October by reiterating that the privileges of the Hanse must necessarily be limited by the laws and interests of her own country, but nevertheless she proposed that another embassy be sent to discuss the matter. This reply was

²² *APC*, 5, p. 295; 6, pp. 33–4, 73. *KI*, 1, no. 1236.

regarded as unsatisfactory, so that Cologne and some other towns regarded the trade sanctions as automatically coming into effect. But as early as 20 November the former was complaining that the boycott of cloth was being disregarded, particularly by Hamburg.²³

The merchants who remained in the London Steelyard disapproved of the boycott and urged acceptance of the invitation to send another embassy. In February 1558, alarmed by reports reaching England that the Hanse was conspiring with Denmark and France to make an offensive alliance against England and Spain, they renewed this demand. Accordingly, a five-man delegation, again led by Dr Suderman, arrived in London on 26 April. Much of their time was taken up in negotiating the release of large numbers of Hanse ships which had been, and still were being, arrested at sea and forced into English ports. Most of these were engaged in the Bay salt trade. The first concern of the English was to deny their military use to France, though they also sought to press some of them into their own service and demanded guarantees for the safety of English ships and goods allegedly arrested in Hanse ports. Apart from securing the release of most of the ships the embassy was quite fruitless, though discussions continued fitfully until the end of August. Throughout this period both the Merchant Adventurers and merchants trading to Prussia bombarded the Privy Council with evidence against the Hanse. When the envoys departed the queen wrote to the Hanse blaming the failure of their mission upon their lack of powers. During the time they were in England the export duty on cloth, which until now had remained at the level first set in 1347, was increased to 6s 8d for denizens and 14s 6d for all aliens, including Hansards. This was yet one more obstacle in the way of a settlement, particularly since Englishmen, as it appeared to Suderman, were inclined to accept the increase.²⁴

By this time the Hanse merchants were finding it difficult to sustain the trade sanctions. In September 1558 Danzig complained that strangers were reaping the benefit and intimated that it wished to allow its own merchants to sell stocks of English-made cloth currently stockpiled there. When a Hanse diet met the following month it relaxed the restrictions by permitting its members to buy English wares in the Low Countries and to sell Hanse goods there for

²³ *KI*, 1, nos. 1396, 1438, 1469, 1474, 1483, 1488, docs. 35 (pp. 430–3), 38–9 (pp. 439–45).

²⁴ *APC*, 6, pp. 315, 340–2, 378–9, 387. *SPF*, 1552–8, pp. 365–86. *KI*, 1, nos. 1491, 1551, 1592, 1616. *DI*, doc. 15 (pp. 860–6).

export to England, though they were still forbidden to deal directly with Englishmen and the latter were not allowed to trade in Hanse towns. Communications passed between the towns about the desirability of sending another embassy to England and about the powers to be afforded to envoys, but these were interrupted by the death of Queen Mary in November. In a letter congratulating the new queen upon her accession, the Hanse requested the restoration of its privileges and awaited the reaction. Not until July 1559 did Elizabeth deign to reply. She thanked the Hansards for their good wishes, but complained about their treatment of her subjects. There could be no question of restoring the privileges in their entirety, but she was willing to discuss the matter if an embassy came to England.²⁵

Throughout these months the Hanse maintained its prohibition upon direct trade with England, but as a goodwill gesture the queen's agent in Danzig was allowed to export a quantity of naval stores. The English, however, had not been idle. Elizabeth appealed to the King of Poland to extend his protection to her subjects and continued to explore the possibility of setting up an English staple for Baltic trade in the duchy of Holstein. In the last months of Mary's reign a cargo of cloth had been sent to Holstein in the custody of William Earl, factor of Sir William Garrard, alderman and merchant of London. Initial reaction was unfavourable, for the duke put forward several conditions which Earl thought his countrymen were unlikely to accept. However, in April 1559 Armigill Wade, a former clerk of the Privy Council, was sent as an official envoy with very precise instructions. With the help of Earl he was to investigate the suitability of the ports of Holstein for the conduct of Anglo-Baltic trade; he was to determine the extent of Hanseatic privileges in Holstein and Scandinavia and to find out if the duke would cooperate in an attempt to get them abolished; he was to enquire about the duke's religion and, if he was of Protestant persuasion, he should intimate the queen's sympathy; finally, he was to negotiate for the queen a large loan of silver, which was believed to be available in Holstein at a low rate of interest. Nothing came from this second overture to Holstein except a modest loan.²⁶

In August 1559 a sparsely attended Hanseatic diet finally agreed that an embassy should be sent to England and that meanwhile another request should be made for the resumption of trade on the

²⁵ *SPF*, 1558–9, pp. 354–5. *KI*, 1, nos. 1624, 1680, 1711, doc. 41 (p. 452).

²⁶ *SPF*, 1558–9, pp. 12–13, 42–3, 203, 217–18. Ramsay, *City of London*, pp. 225, 227–8.

basis of the ancient rates of duty. As early as 23 August the queen ordered that a licence be issued for the Steelyard to export 456 cloths already in their possession, but an official reply was not sent to the diet until 31 December. It said that no promises could be given about future customs rates, but if agreement could not be reached at the forthcoming conference, for which 1 April was proposed as the starting date, the queen would herself determine the rates according to justice and reason. In the early part of 1560 the bargaining strength of the Hanse was not inconsiderable, since England could not then afford to be too intransigent. The country was engaged in a massive armaments programme to counter the threat of French interference in Scotland. When the Regent of the Netherlands banned the export of arms to England at the end of January 1560 they had to be shipped from Hamburg. The Hanse ports were also needed for the embarkation of German mercenaries. Finally, negotiations were going on for a large loan from Count Volrad von Mansfeld, whose family controlled the chief Thuringian copper and silver mines, and he was insistent that it should be guaranteed by the Steelyard.²⁷ The last consideration was perhaps the least important, since there could hardly be any question of such a guarantee unless the queen capitulated entirely to the Hanse demands, which was unthinkable.

The Hanse delegates, again led by Dr Suderman, arrived in London at the end of April 1560 and were briefly received by the queen on 5 May. They were disconcerted by the coolness of their reception, particularly on the part of Secretary Cecil. After a formal session on 21 May, talks languished until well into June, for the English government was preoccupied with the crisis in Scotland. The illnesses of the Lord Treasurer, the Marquess of Winchester, and Suderman further contributed to the delay. Even then the energies of the delegates could not be devoted exclusively to the principle of the Hanseatic franchises, since they were continually urged by the Steelyard to raise immediate problems relating to Hanseatic ships which had put into English ports and fallen foul of customs officials and city authorities in London. One of the chief obstacles to the renewal of privileges was the continued opposition of the Merchant Adventurers, who were consulted by the Privy Council at every turn. The Hanse envoys were dismayed to hear a rumour that the Adventurers had offered the queen a loan of

²⁷ PRO, SP 12/6/23. SPF, 1559–60, pp. 258, 455, 476; 1560–1, pp. 10, 18, 20, 189. *KI*, 1, nos. 1726, 1730–1, 1775.

£40,000 if she would send them away empty-handed. At the beginning of July the Hansards made it clear that, while they might be prepared to pay higher rates of duty, they would not accept any limitation upon their freedom of trade, save for the obvious exception that they should not trade with the queen's enemies. In the middle of that month the Privy Council handed over a document entitled '*moderatio in commercio inclitae societatis Hansae*', which contained a statement of the principles upon which the Hansards would be allowed to trade. It began by pointing out that any privileges should be enjoyed only by genuine members of the German Hanse and the Gildhall of Germans in London, so there must be a firm definition as to who these might be. Any privileges were applicable only to direct trade between England and the Hanse regions and in commodities native to each. The ancient customs advantage over denizens was abolished, but there might be parity with denizens in direct trade. There was to be freedom of trade in all places in England, but saving the liberties of any which could prove a right to exclude Hansards. All the foregoing was dependent on the principle of reciprocity.²⁸

After considering the English '*moderatio*' the envoys submitted an alternative plan which was designed to protect their trade in non-Hanseatic goods, but which, they said, would augment the queen's revenue by many thousands of pounds. If this plan was not immediately acceptable it was to be referred to an arbitrator, and the names of the Emperor and Philip of Spain were suggested. The Englishmen were not to be turned at this stage of the game and simply refused to consider the proposal, on the grounds that the queen was absent from London and the Council was too busy with other matters. The next day (31 July) the envoys under protest handed over a list of sixty-six towns which were presently members of the Hanse and of thirteen former members which were eligible for readmission. Even at a first sight of this document the English negotiators raised objections to the inclusion of the towns of Livonia. In the same session the Germans requested clarification of what precisely was meant by customs parity with denizens and sought an assurance that they would enjoy the fullest measure of free trade within the city of London. The last point was regarded as being of the utmost importance, yet it was a guarantee which the Privy

²⁸ *KI*, 1, docs. 45 (pp. 463–4), 47 (pp. 465–7), 56 (pp. 475–86).

Councillors were either unable or unwilling to provide. After a few more days of hard bargaining the English submitted their final offers (5 August) in the form of a draft treaty, which they demanded should be ratified by the Hanse within six months. The treaty proposed that the Hansards should pay the same rates of duty as denizens upon cloth and all other products exported directly to their member towns and upon native products imported from thence. No sort of cloth was to be re-exported from those places to Antwerp or anywhere else in Flanders, Brabant, Holland and Zeeland, nor any kerseys to Italy. All trade between England and non-Hanse ports was subject to alien rates of duty, save for rebates of 1d in the pound on the value of imports and 1s on exports. The relative positions were to be maintained in the event of future increases in customs rates. The only Hanseatic privilege specifically confirmed was the right to pack their own cloth. Other than this, it was merely said that the liberties should be as they were before the present treaty. This would have exposed the merchants to renewed harassment in London. As always, the position of the Hanse in England was conditional upon recognition of the principle of reciprocity.²⁹

The day after being presented with the treaty the Hanse envoys produced their own much lengthier draft.³⁰ They agreed to pay the actual rates of duty now proposed, but the form of words used in the draft would have protected the Hansards from any future increase in either denizen or alien rates. More importantly, they proposed that the ban on the sale of cloth in the Low Countries should be a voluntary measure limited to two years, during which time the authorities of that region should themselves rule whether it was lawful for England to impose such a ban upon its rivals. They also included firm guarantees as to the freedom of trade in London and wanted the time allowed for the Hanse to confirm the treaty extended to eight months. The English dismissed this draft, insisting that the Hansards must either accept or reject their version as it stood; furthermore, they reduced the time allowed for ratification to a mere two months. Not unnaturally, the envoys protested that the last requirement was an impossibility and requested that they be allowed until 1 July 1561 without prejudice to the offer. The latter date was finally conceded and, after a few more meetings with the Steelyard and English officials to arrange a *modus vivendi* until July,

²⁹ *Ibid.*, docs. 48–9 (pp. 467–8), 51 (pp. 469–70).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, doc. 52 (pp. 470–3).

the envoys left London on 19 August. As a result of last-minute negotiations it was agreed that Hanseatic trade should continue on the basis of the draft English treaty, but cloth exports were allowed only under licence, in an attempt to ensure that the restrictions were observed.

Failing a full diet of the Hanse the attitude of its members to the English terms had to be determined in provincial diets and by written communications passing between the chief towns. On 15 May 1561 a letter was sent to Elizabeth saying that the treaty could not be ratified. The queen's reply, sent on 7 July, indicated that even so trade might continue on the terms she had dictated. Despite a renewed clamour from her own subjects, Elizabeth could not afford to adopt a more severe line at this time, since she was still dependent upon Hanse ports for the supply of munitions. They were continually pressing for assurances that she would not send weapons to Muscovy for use in its war against Livonia and would have needed little provocation to cut off the supply entirely. The Hanse found it difficult to accept the loss of its ancient privileges and entertained the vain hope that force might succeed where diplomacy had failed. Because of England's isolation in the early 1560s it was thought that another power might be joined in a common cause against her. One candidate was France, since Elizabeth was not reconciled to the loss of Calais and to achieve her ends was inclined to give aid and comfort to the French Huguenots. When a Hanse diet was convened in the summer of 1562 consideration was given to abandoning the London Steelyard in favour of a *Kontor* at Rouen, and at the same time banning English merchants from Hanseatic regions. Heinrich Suderman, the acknowledged expert on Anglo-Hanseatic relations, consistently favoured an understanding with the Low Countries. The strength of his argument lay in the fact that England's cloth trade was still almost entirely dependent on Antwerp, yet its future in that place was far from assured. Contemporary attitudes towards the conduct of the trade meant that if Antwerp was closed to the English merchants then they would have to find another staple; the only alternative was one of the German ports.³¹

England's relations with the government of the Low Countries began to deteriorate soon after Elizabeth's accession. Among the causes were her refusal to marry Philip of Spain, her acceptance of Protestant refugees and a belief that she was plotting with

³¹ *Ibid.*, nos. 1970, 1984, 2009, docs. 64 (pp. 500–2), 67 (pp. 517–18), 70 (p. 258). *SPF*, 1564–5, pp. 543–4.

malcontented local nobles. This did not itself affect relations between the Merchant Adventurers and the Lords of Antwerp (the governing body of the city), for the latter frequently chafed at control from Brussels. There was some loss of local sympathy in 1562–3 when English privateers, licensed to attack French ships, inflicted serious losses on neutral trade. But when the blow came it was struck by the Brussels government, which in November 1563 banned the import of English wool and cloth into any port in the Countries until the following February. This was represented as a quarantine measure to prevent the introduction of the plague then raging in London. The real reason was the belief that pressure applied at this time, when England was still threatened by France, would force the queen to be more accommodating to the interests of Spain and its Netherlands dependency.³²

When the Merchant Adventurers found themselves excluded from the Netherlands they prevailed upon the government to ban all exports of cloth, so that their rivals might not enjoy an advantage. No exception was made in favour of those who exported to places outside the Netherlands, so this move hit the north Germans as well as Cologners and others who traded in Antwerp or merely used Netherlands ports in transit. On 17 March 1564 Hamburg city council wrote to Elizabeth complaining about the damage to their economy and requesting an exemption in favour of their citizens. They also proposed that the Adventurers should transfer their staple to Hamburg, where they would be accorded equal trading rights with burghers. Richard Ehrenberg, the authority on Anglo-Hamburg relations in this period, expressed astonishment at the offer, which was to be taken up three years later. He held that it disregarded the basic Hanseatic tenet that aliens should not trade in member towns on equal terms with burghers. However, this view disregards the fact that since 1437 the Hanse as a whole, with the notable exception of Prussia, had in principle accepted that Englishmen should enjoy reciprocal rights. Admittedly, the Hanse's good faith was seldom put to the test, since until the mid-sixteenth century Englishmen had little direct interest in any Hanse towns except those of the eastern Baltic. In reply to Hamburg's offer Elizabeth said that it was up to the Adventurers to determine for themselves where they fixed the staple, since this was not a matter of public policy. The city was encouraged by this answer, but the die

³² For a full discussion of this episode, Ramsay, *City of London*, pp. 179–210.

had already been cast. The Adventurers had decided to set up a staple elsewhere, and this was certainly not done without the closest consultation with the government. In January 1564 the Privy Council had drawn up a series of questions to be answered by the Adventurers, which amongst others asked how they might respond to a prolonged exclusion from the Low Countries. It emerged that the only places considered to be practical alternatives to Antwerp for a cloth staple were Hamburg and the port of Emden in East Friesland. When the Brussels government extended the ban on English wool and cloth until Easter 1564, negotiations were begun with the ruler of East Friesland about the setting up of a staple. These proceeded rapidly and smoothly, with the result that a cloth fleet of forty to fifty ships sailed to Emden in May 1564. To ensure the success of the venture the government on 23 March proclaimed a ban on all imports from the Netherlands, the intention being that all wares normally bought at Antwerp would be admitted to England only if they first passed through Emden.³³

Although Emden was not a Hanse town Hamburg merchants began to buy from the Adventurers at the new staple and the number of cloths finished in Hamburg quickly doubled. This development, like the earlier invitation to the Adventurers to come to Hamburg, did nothing to endear that city to fellow members of the Hanse. Heinrich Suderman, even before he received confirmation of the invitation, had warned of the dangers which would flow from a separate agreement between England and Hamburg. This would prejudice the bargaining power of the Hanse, and additionally any town which received the staple must incur the enmity of the Netherlands. In May the merchants remaining in the Steelyard complained about Hamburg's attitude, which they saw as undermining their efforts to get Elizabeth to remove the ban on their own trade. Shortly before, they had a limited success in gaining permission to export the residue (about 800) of the 5,000 unfinished cloths specified in the last licence issued to them before the ban on exports, provided that they did not sell these east of Emden. The interpretation of the safeguard gave rise to a dispute between the Adventurers and Cologne merchants, with each trying to persuade

³³ PRO, SP 12/15/67; 33/26. SPF, 1564–5, pp. 58, 105, 158, 316. R. Ehrenburg, *Hamburg und England im Zeitalter der Königin Elisabeth* (Jena, 1896), pp. 76, 79, 310–12. For a full discussion of the first English cloth staple at Emden, B. Hagedorn, *Ostfrieslands Handel und Schiffahrt im 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1910), 1, pp. 170–202. Ramsay, *City of London*, pp. 252–83; G. D. Ramsay (ed.), *The Politics of a Tudor Merchant Adventurer: A Letter to the Earls of East Friesland* (Manchester, 1979).

the ruler of Emden that its version was correct. The former claimed that the Hanse cloth should not be shipped to Emden, which meant that the Cologne men would have to pass it through Hamburg. The latter asserted that there was no impediment to their using Emden, provided that they did not send cloth into the Netherlands, only to Germany. The Englishmen's purpose was to delay the arrival of the Steelyard cloth so that it could not compete with the stocks they held in Emden. To the same end they sought to delay the packing of Hanse cloth before export. On 24 June, ten days after the official opening of the new mart, Thomas Aldersey, deputy governor of the company, complained to Cecil from Emden that 'certain Easterlings' there were trying to persuade potential customers to hold back by promising that within six weeks they would be able to sell English cloth more cheaply than current prices. This charge is confirmed by one of Heinrich Suderman's letters, dated sixteen days earlier, which tells of his own efforts to prevent not only Hamburgers but his fellow Cologners and others from buying from Englishmen in Emden. The Adventurers' concern was not simply about Hansards selling cloth in Emden, for they were rapidly becoming aware that they would themselves have to find a market beyond that port. The need arose from the fact that the Brussels government had forbidden the import of cloth from the new staple into the Netherlands and also banned all exports to Emden, so denying Englishmen cargoes for the return leg of their enterprise. In the absence of buyers at Emden some Adventurers decided to take their stock to the great autumn mart at Frankfurt on Main, but since much of it was white cloth they needed to have it finished and dyed on the way. Cologne was an obvious choice for the work and on 18 July Suderman wrote that 800–900 English-owned cloths were imminently expected there.³⁴

Suderman's animosity towards England did not stop at attempting to blight the prospects of its staple at Emden. At the beginning of August he attended a diet of the Hanse towns of the Rhineland third and reminded them that they had suffered more than any other section of the Hanse from the loss of privileges in England. He urged that a firm alliance with the Netherlands must lead to their restoration. Shortly afterwards a rumour reached England that this provincial diet had agreed to a six-year ban on the import of English cloth unless the privileges were restored and would recommend this to an impending diet of the whole Hanse. Another rumour was that

³⁴ PRO, SP 12/34/5. SPF, 1564–5, pp. 125, 138, 164. *KI*, 1. nos. 2323, 2329, 2334, 2346, 2355, 2364, 2385.

the Cologne authorities were hostile to the activities of Englishmen at the Frankfurt fair and had imposed a tax of one thaler (about 5s sterling) on all English-owned cloth finished in their city. The rumours came at an inopportune time for the London Steelyard, which had just succeeded in negotiating that each year for the next four years its members might export a total of 5,000 unfinished cloths. They were dissatisfied with the quota, but it was better than nothing and they did not want it jeopardised straight away. At the behest of the Privy Council the Steelyard wrote to Cologne seeking assurances that Englishmen would not be taxed on cloth brought to the city, and demanding that a Hanse delegation should come to England to discuss the perennial complaint that Hanse merchants should not enjoy privileges which were denied to Englishmen in their parts. Cologne replied immediately that the rumour resulted from a misunderstanding, for although the question of a tax had been considered it had not been imposed and there was no intention of doing so.³⁵

At the Hanse diet in September 1564 there was much advice against taking hasty measures against England. The Steelyard wrote that an alliance with the Netherlands would lead to its own undoing, while the city of Cologne opposed this before an embassy went to England to seek a peaceful solution to differences. The diet decided against an embassy, but drafted a strongly worded letter to the queen complaining about continued harassment of Steelyard merchants by the city of London. It also drew up instructions for Heinrich Suderman to negotiate with the Netherlands for an alliance against England. Suderman pursued this task with enthusiasm but he was too late, for the English government had already arranged to hold peace talks with the Dutch. The queen was now willing to settle on terms which were acceptable to Brussels in the previous spring, and the latter had no need for Hanse assistance. The Hanse was thus reduced to the role of a suppliant begging the regent to raise its grievances, but without mentioning the name of Suderman who was now regarded with deep suspicion in England.³⁶

At the beginning of 1565 the Merchant Adventurers gave up their Emden enterprise and the main axis of trade was restored to Antwerp, even though formal peace talks had yet to begin. A conference was initiated that summer but never brought to a

³⁵ *APC*, 7, p. 147. *SPF*, 1564–5, pp. 191, 197. *KI*, 1, nos. 2402, 2404, 2418, doc. 72 (p. 532). PRO, SP12/34/57.

³⁶ *KI*, 1, nos. 2421–3, 2433, doc. 74 (p. 540).

conclusion, and the return to Antwerp was short-lived. As the religious and civil tumult spread throughout the Netherlands in 1565 and 1566 all foreign merchants increasingly felt themselves threatened and began to consider alternative bases for their business. In September 1566 Sir Thomas Gresham recommended that the Adventurers should seek a new staple, so that they would not become caught up in the war. Shortly afterwards, George Gilpin, secretary of the company, made a brief journey to Hamburg to spy out the land, and in January 1567 the alderman of the Steelyard informed Heinrich Suderman that the Adventurers had decided to move their staple to that city. There can be no doubt that this step was taken in closest consultation with the government. The move may already have been decided in principle, but it was not until April, following greater pressure upon Protestants in the Low Countries, that the council of the Adventurers in Antwerp gave formal powers to a three-man delegation to negotiate the setting up of a staple in Hamburg. This returned to Antwerp, its mission successful, on 29 July.³⁷

While the English envoys were in Hamburg, a Hanse diet met in Lübeck. Cologne proposed that they should recognise the impossibility of recovering their lost privileges at present and should temporise, while not abandoning hope of success in the future. This was more or less the policy adopted, though it is noteworthy that from this time the Hanse sought to involve the authority of the Empire more than in the past. This may have been in recognition of the fact that English merchants were beginning to venture into the interior of Germany and were becoming susceptible to pressure in quarters where hitherto they had been relatively immune. The diet itself took no action about Hamburg's dealings with the Merchant Adventurers, but on 9 June Heinrich Suderman, in his role as Hanse syndic, made a notarial protest in the presence of members of the city council of Lübeck. He also sent George Laffarts, secretary of the Antwerp *Kontor*, to Hamburg, where he repeated the protest before the city fathers. Lübeck supported this step and, affecting the part of a friendly neighbour, advised Hamburg to act cautiously. Hamburg councillors reacted vigorously to the interference, asserting that an agreement with the Adventurers would benefit all the Hanse, but that in any event theirs was a free city which had the right to adopt any policy which suited its inhabitants. Regarding the latter point,

³⁷ Ehrenburg, *Hamburg*, p. 82. *KI*, 1, no. 2986.

on 28 June Morris Zimmerman, alderman of the London Steelyard, wrote to Suderman that Hamburg city council did not have the support of that community for its present actions. This reflects the opposition of the Hamburg *Englandfahrer*, who on 5 June petitioned against the reception of the Adventurers. Ehrenberg believes that the town as a whole was behind the council, for in the mid-1560s the civic coffers were virtually empty and the arrival of the staple was seen as part of a more prosperous future.³⁸

Despite all protests, on 19 July a formal agreement of no fewer than fifty-six points was signed between Hamburg and the Merchant Adventurers, which was to regulate English trade in the city for the next ten years.³⁹ Ehrenberg regarded the terms as exceptionally favourable to the Englishmen, a fact which he ascribed to the weak bargaining power of the city. The English claimed to possess even greater privileges in Antwerp and Emden, but the Hamburg council were unaware of how precarious their position was in Antwerp and how bad trade had been in Emden. Foremost in the agreement was the recognition by the city of the authority of the Merchant Adventurers Company, thus enabling its officials to discipline its members. A court was to be established for this purpose, though the city had jurisdiction in criminal matters. Civil cases between Adventurers and burghers or other outsiders were to be heard by the city, unless the latter elected to accept the verdict of the English court; the city was to provide adequate buildings for these purposes. Additionally, if the Adventurers gave three weeks' warning of the arrival of a cloth fleet the council would ensure that they were provided with good warehouses at a fair rent. Other assistance included the use of a crane, free of charge. The company could introduce up to six alien warehousemen, but if more were required they must be engaged locally. It had strictly to observe local staple regulations, which meant that all loading and unloading had to be done in the city and nowhere else on the Elbe, and there were restrictions on the trade in certain goods, such as grain and munitions. Otherwise freedom of trade was limited only by certain measures to protect local interests. The Adventurers might act as their own brokers and could buy and sell with outsiders as well as with burghers. They were forbidden to retail cloth in the city, except between themselves. Imported kerseys could be dyed locally in any fashion for their own use, but any other cloth finished in Hamburg

³⁸ *KI*, 1, nos. 3097–8, 3122, 3124–5, 3129, 3136–7, docs. 89–90 (pp. 589–93). Ehrenburg, *Hamburg*, pp. 85–6.

³⁹ Ehrenburg, *Hamburg*, pp. 312–26.

on behalf of the Adventurers must be done in a fashion which fitted it for sale in Frankfurt, Leipzig or upper Germany. Cloth so prepared must not be sold by them to non-burghers within the city, but taken to its ultimate destination. Undressed cloths, or all those finished in England, could be disposed of without such restrictions. At the start of the negotiations the authorities had hoped to persuade the Adventurers to pay an import duty of 3s on each cloth, compared with 1s paid by burghers. This was refused, on the grounds that it was higher than the duty levied in Antwerp. In the final outcome it was agreed that the Adventurers should pay the same as natives on all imports and exports.

Despite the advantageous terms negotiated with Hamburg the Adventurers saw them primarily as an insurance measure and were inclined to persist with their Antwerp trade for as long as possible. As late as 28 February 1568 governor Marsh wrote to Hamburg that it was intended to send only a small part of their cloth to the city that year. This was immediately followed by a deterioration in the security of Englishmen in Antwerp, and in April it was reported that twelve shiploads of cloth would be going to Hamburg. In the event, that summer the Adventurers sent only four ships of their own and took space in one Hamburg-owned ship. On 29 December 1568, following Elizabeth's seizure of the Duke of Alva's treasure ships, all Englishmen who remained in Antwerp were placed under house arrest and there could be no question of sending any more cloth to the city. On 19 January 1569 the Adventurers informed the Privy Council that they had a large stock ready for export, which must go to either Hamburg or Emden. They asked for measures such as had been implemented when the staple was last removed from Antwerp, namely a total ban on exports to the Netherlands and a ban on the import by aliens of any goods, save from the place which the Adventurers should designate as their staple. As late as 1 March they complained that a strict ban had not yet been proclaimed, merely a warning to denizens to forbear, which left aliens trading with impunity.⁴⁰

Hamburg was chosen by the Adventurers in preference to Emden, and on 20 February the French ambassador reported that a fleet was on the point of leaving London. The sailing was delayed until late April, but was swollen from the fifteen ships mentioned in the ambassador's first dispatch to twenty-eight, including three chartered

⁴⁰ PRO, SP12/49/9, 12, 14, 30, 56. Ehrenburg, *Hamburg*, p. 102.

by the Steelyard and two by Italian merchants. It was protected by seven warships supplied by the queen to thwart the Duke of Alva, who was reported to have alerted forty-five vessels in Zeeland to watch out for the Englishmen. In the event, Alva was unwilling to mount the attack without a direct order from King Philip and the entire cargo, worth up to a half-a-million crowns, was brought safely to Hamburg by 27 May. In September 1569 a second fleet of twenty-five to thirty merchantmen and two warships went to Hamburg, with 30,000–40,000 cloths of better quality than the previous consignment, and estimated to be worth at least £200,000. In spring 1570 there was a third convoy of fifty ships and five escorts. There is no evidence of another fleet in 1570, but one was sent early in 1571. The practical as well as the moral support of the queen for these ventures was assured on a number of counts. Apart from the obvious fact that trade routes had to be kept open so that customs receipts did not suffer, the government arranged to borrow some of the receipts of cloth sales in Hamburg. The money was used to underwrite a Protestant alliance being organised in an attempt to counter the military successes of the Duke of Alva in the Low Countries. Elizabeth received £40,000 from the proceeds of the first voyage in 1569, but the fact that much cloth was 'sold' to recipients of the subsidies suggests that many of them may have received payment in kind.⁴¹

The willingness of individual members of the Merchant Adventurers company to continue support for the Hamburg venture obviously depended on two factors – the warmth of the reception which they or their agents received in the city and the degree of commercial success. On the first score the observance of their religious practice was the most important consideration. Ehrenberg admits that the clauses dealing with freedom of worship were the least satisfactory part of the Anglo-Hamburg treaty. He justified this from the city's standpoint by the need to protect its established Lutheran Church from more radical forms of Protestantism. Worship became a major issue as early as March 1570 when Sir Richard Clough, leader of the Englishmen in the city, died and the local clergy tried to prevent his countrymen from burying him with their own rites. From that time until the end of their sojourn in the city English correspondence is full of bitter complaints about religious intolerance. More than once it was said that the Adventurers should

⁴¹ Ehrenberg, *Hamburg*, pp. 105–13.

move to Emden, where they would be free to observe their own faith, though it was conceded that for trade purposes this place was less well situated than Hamburg.⁴²

It is more difficult to judge the commercial success of the enterprise. In July 1571 an Adventurer claimed that wool and cloth sold at Hamburg for 10–15 per cent less than the usual Antwerp prices, while some goods bought for return to England cost 30 per cent more. Ehrenburg gives figures from the Hamburg archives which shed some light on the volume of trade. Appendix 4a shows that the amount of English cloth finished in the city in the twelve months following the shipment of 1568 increased by about one-third, but in the year after the first consignment of 1569 it more than doubled. This early peak was succeeded by a two- or three-year decline, but then there was a steady recovery during the remainder of the English sojourn. The remarkably swift response to the increase in cloth imports does not necessarily mean that there had been a vast unused finishing capacity in Hamburg before this, though there may have been some. The increase was due in large part to an influx of cloth workers from the Low Countries, attracted by the prospect of employment and the hope of religious freedom. Ehrenberg estimated that during the first four years or so the Adventurers contributed an average of at least 18,000 cloths to the total taken up by local industry and also sold averages of around 34,000 cloths and 21,000 kerseys to strangers. He mistakenly believed that the Steelyard export licence was increased from 5,000 to 15,000 per annum in 1568; it was increased to 8,000 in June 1570. But he also made the point that, after first increasing, the cloth trade of the Hamburg *Englandfahrer* dwindled, since finishers could buy more cheaply from the Adventurers.⁴³

While the expansion of the finishing industry in Hamburg made a welcome contribution to English exports it could not take up all the cloth which had formerly been sold in Antwerp. The Adventurers had therefore to explore more distant markets, for which Hamburg was simply the continental port of entry. Some of those who shipped in the first fleet of 1569 intended to take their cloth to Italy and some may have continued to do so throughout the period of the Hamburg staple.⁴⁴ In 1576–7 non-Hanse aliens, which means overwhelmingly Italians, sent 17,017 kerseys and a few hundred other cloths to

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁴³ *SPD, Addenda*, 1566–79, p. 356. Ehrenburg, *Hamburg*, pp. 112, 118, 327–8. PRO, SP12/71/25.

⁴⁴ *SPF*, 1569–71, p. 80.

Hamburg,⁴⁵ while Italians and four or five Englishmen had cloth ready to pass the same way early in 1579. In the long run, of course, the routing of cloth overland through such a northerly port was not a viable proposition and, once the sea-passage to the Mediterranean became safe, trade was transferred to it. But other Englishmen besides those bound for Italy ventured beyond Hamburg. We have already seen that during the period at Emden some Adventurers took their own cloth to Frankfurt fair. Some continued to do so after the return to Antwerp and the need was even greater after the settlement at Hamburg. However, some went much further, for the Bavarian city of Nüremburg, which was developing a cloth finishing industry of its own, opened its gates to them. The Nüremburgers had formerly bought cloth at Antwerp and were prepared to seek it at Hamburg, but they also offered concessions to Englishmen who settled in their city. This opportunity was soon disavowed by the Adventurers Company. It was official policy not to sell cloth outside the designated mart, for it was believed to be more profitable to make the foreigner come for it than take it to him. In the words of John Wheeler, a later secretary of the company, 'A commodity sought for at the Mart Towns is more esteemed by the seeker thereof there, than if it were brought home and offered to him to sell at his own doors, and the merchant's proverb is "That there is twenty in the hundred difference between Will you buy? and Will you sell?"'.⁴⁶ Despite the company's disapproval some Adventurers settled at Nüremburg and may have been joined by interlopers. Theirs seems to have been a precarious business, for in 1579 they complained that their purchases in Nüremburg were many times the value of the cloth they sold there. This may lend some credence to Wheeler's defence of the company's policy.

The amount of unfinished cloth sent forward from Hamburg seems to have peaked about 1571 or 1572 and then declined considerably. Unfortunately the records do not distinguish between exports still in the possession of the Adventurers and those bought in the city by strangers.⁴⁷ Several factors contributed to the decline of inland trade. First, there was a widespread failure of harvests in 1571, which actually led to requests to Elizabeth to permit English

⁴⁵ PRO, SP12/119/47, printed in Ehrenburg, *Hamburg*, pp. 330–1, but incorrectly dated as 1577–8. Other copies are PRO, SP12/127/88 and BL, Add. MS 48009, fos. 1079–85. See below p. 359. ⁴⁶ J. Wheeler, *A Treatise of Commerce* (London, 1601), p. 51.

⁴⁷ See appendix 4b.

corn to be exported to Hamburg and Emden. The dearth resulted in severe hunger, if not famine, in Germany and the Low Countries in 1572. More important in the longer term was the diversion by the Adventurers of some of their trade back to Emden and Antwerp. English interlopers had continued to bring cloth to Emden after the withdrawal of the staple in 1565 and in the early 1570s there was a marked increase in trade there. This was because there was still a considerable demand for English cloth in the Netherlands despite an official ban on its import. In June 1571, when the Dutch sea beggars blockaded the river Ems, there were thirteen English vessels in the port. During 1571 over seventy came there, including two or three sent officially by the Adventurers Company. During the next two years the company sent another five ships.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the interlopers had paid local customs duties, so the Counts of East Friesland and the town council now demanded that the Adventurers did the same. This led to a protracted dispute, since the Englishmen insisted that they should still enjoy the privileges negotiated in 1564. It also encouraged the return to Antwerp, which became possible with the gradual improvement in relations between England and Spain from early in 1572; the following year trade with the Netherlands was officially reinstated. Some Adventurers now returned to Antwerp, but there was little prospect of restoring lost glories. All the sea approaches to the city were dominated by the sea beggars, who did not observe the rights of neutrals and acted as a general deterrent to trade. The return to Antwerp was limited and short-lived, for in November 1576 the Adventurers again left the city after it was plundered by mutinous Spanish troops.

The latest collapse of the Antwerp mart meant that the Adventurers must again depend more heavily upon Hamburg. Unfortunately, that city was coming under increasing pressure not to renew the company's privileges, which were soon due to expire. This pressure must be traced back to 1572, when on 1 May Heinrich Suderman wrote to the London Steelyard requesting it to send a delegation to a full Hanse diet, the first for five years, which was soon to assemble at Lübeck. In his reply Morris Zimmerman, the alderman, said that he believed that the queen herself was willing to restore the Hanse privileges, but that she was opposed by certain of the Privy Council, urged on as always by the city of London. A

⁴⁸ Hagedorn, *Ostfrieslands Handel*, 1, pp. 200–2.

memorandum drawn up by the Steelyard for consideration by the diet focussed attention on restrictions upon its trade in London.⁴⁹ Coming at that time, such complaints must be received cautiously. The city had certainly not given up its formal opposition to Hanse claims to privileges, but during much of the time when the Adventurers had a staple in Hamburg there were few prosecutions. This relative complacency resulted no doubt from the counsel of London cloth exporters, as well as pressure from the government. The memorandum also complained about recent acts of parliament, particularly the statute of 1567 which required each cloth exporter to take one fully dressed piece for every nine unfinished pieces. This made no allowance for the fact that while there was a limited overseas market for cloth dressed in England by no means every merchant had access to it. Objection was also made to the renewal in 1571 of fifteenth-century statutes requiring certain aliens, including Hansards, to import bowstaves; for most of them that trade was now obsolete. Finally, the Steelyard complained about Hamburg's reception of the Merchant Adventurers. It claimed that even the treaty of Utrecht guaranteed Englishmen only such rights as they enjoyed prior to 1474, but Hamburg had gone beyond this and granted them privileges which they had never enjoyed before.

The address of the Steelyard, supported by Heinrich Suderman, ensured that Hamburg's actions came under scrutiny in the diet – this, despite the fact that at a preliminary meeting of Wendish towns in February 1572 Hamburg, by threatening to boycott the diet, had extracted from her neighbours a promise that they would not criticise her on this account. In the July diet the Hamburg representative defended his town by pointing out that its reception of the Adventurers was in no way responsible for the loss of Hanseatic privileges. On the contrary, it had enabled the Steelyard to obtain an increase in its quota of unfinished cloth, while Hamburg had been able to intercede with the English government about piracies committed recently against other Hanse towns. Furthermore, Hamburg challenged the Steelyard's interpretation of the treaty of Utrecht; its intention was not simply to confirm rights enjoyed by Englishmen before 1474, but to make them as free in Hanse towns as Hansards were in England. Ironically, this was the very proposition which Englishmen had been advancing since the

⁴⁹ *KI*, 2, no. 104, docs. 3 (p. 341), 5 (pp. 348–52).

fourteenth century. In the face of this spirited defence the diet did not attempt to impose sanctions on Hamburg, though it did lecture the city on the folly of its ways. It claimed that if Hamburg had not provided the Adventurers with a refuge, their exclusion from the Netherlands and a strategic dependence on Baltic trade would already have forced the English government to restore the privileges.⁵⁰

Before dispersing, the diet wrote separate letters to Queen Elizabeth and Lord Burghley requesting confirmation of ancient privileges and exemption from recent legislation. In reply Burghley said that any confirmation must expressly include all the points of the draft treaty of 1560, which the Hanse had so far refused to accept. In regard to particular complaints, the Privy Council prevaricated about cloth exports and salt imports, but said that it would be satisfied if the Hanse complied with the spirit of the legislation about bowstaves, rather than obeyed the letter of the law. Despite this negative response the renewal of contact between the diet and the English government seems to have encouraged new initiatives. In January 1573 the Earl of Leicester notified the Steelyard that if it made the queen an interest-free loan of £40,000 she would confirm the privileges in full. The few merchants who remained there were very much in favour of this and discussions went on for several months. There was, of course, no way in which such a loan could be raised without the support of the towns, and the opposition of Cologne and Lübeck eventually killed the idea. The prospect of a German loan was revived towards the end of 1575, when one Roland Fox offered the queen his services to raise £100,000 in the Rhineland. This led to direct negotiations between the government and the city of Cologne, which ended abortively in August 1576. But the English were reluctant to take no for an answer and as late as February 1577 Walsingham was still pressing the Steelyard on this matter. Given the mood of the times it is somewhat surprising that there appears to have been little contact between the English government and a Hanseatic delegation which was in London between September and December 1574. This was made up of Heinrich Suderman and two representatives each of Cologne, Lübeck and Hamburg. It originated in a resolution in the diet of 1572 to investigate the finances of the London Steelyard, but was not

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2, docs. 12–13 (pp. 364–9).

put in hand until now. Presumably, the delegation's activities were largely restricted to the diet's original intention, though it had a few talks with English officials about various matters, such as the tax on salt.⁵¹

Towards the end of 1575 there was an increase in hostility towards the activities of Steelyard merchants in London, possibly prompted by the coming assembly of parliament. As well as involving the queen's loan, which has been discussed above, it may have been intended as a warning of what would happen if the English privileges in Hamburg were not renewed. In April 1576 Morris Zimmerman wrote to Heinrich Suderman saying that English merchants were making threats about what they would do if they were excluded from that city. He also said that, if turned out, they would try to gain entry to Stade or Bremen, preferably the former. If the harassment was intended as a warning to Hamburg it was unwise and counter-productive. In 1572 and 1575 the city had defied its allies but in the diet of August 1576 it could not ignore arguments that it would be intolerable to renew its agreement with England while Hansards were being oppressed in London. It therefore gave an undertaking not to do so without consulting its Wendish neighbours. On 19 July 1577, the tenth anniversary of the Anglo-Hamburg treaty, the council formally proclaimed that it had now expired. Under its terms Englishmen had a full year to remain peaceably in the city, and pains were taken to point out that during this time the treaty might be renegotiated. The cordial note of the proclamation so alarmed the Steelyard that it wrote to Suderman warning him of the possibility of secret dealings between Hamburg and England, and advising that the former be reminded of the promise given to the diet the previous year. The Adventurers were hopeful of a renewal, encouraged perhaps by the opinion of their own lawyers that there was no justification for Hamburg's denunciation of the treaty.⁵²

The English government itself took the initiative in seeking the renewal of the treaty. The queen's letter, dated 8 October 1577, was taken to Hamburg by Dr Palley, who was to negotiate with Christopher Hoddeson, who had been in the city since 23 September. Hoddeson had been sent over in charge of £20,000 sterling, mostly

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2, nos. 203, 207, 272, 278, 282, 297, 302, 311, 323, 504–6, 511, 563, docs. 18–19 (pp. 399–400), 32–6 (pp. 411–17), 40–1 (pp. 428–30), 52 (pp. 460–1), 56–7 (pp. 468–70). *SPF*, 1572–4, p. 199.

⁵² *KI*, 2, nos. 802, 1179, docs. 64 (p. 478), 75 (pp. 492–3). *SPF*, 1577–8, p. 426.

in the form of silver and gold bullion. The queen seems to have had no immediate use for the money in that place, but wanted to establish a contingency fund on the continent. Before he left England Hoddeson had proposed that it be lent to the Merchant Adventurers at 6 per cent interest and two months' call, or if the government did not favour this then it might be deposited in one of the chief cities of north-west Germany. In the event the money became an embarrassment, since no city would take it even at 5 per cent, while the Adventurers wanted no more than £15,000 Flemish and a deal was complicated by the problem of exchange rates. A memorandum drawn up in England for Lord Burghley therefore advised that the bulk of the fund be repatriated, leaving £5,000 in the hands of Hoddeson to finance his mission.⁵³

Much to his disgust Hoddeson found himself chosen by the Adventurers as their deputy governor and treasurer in Hamburg, and because he could not disclose the true reason for his presence he was unable to refuse the post. He and Palley presented the queen's request to the city council on 5 January 1578 and received an answer ten days later. The council said that because of its promise to the diet it could not make an immediate decision. It merely undertook to decide the matter before the expiry of the year's grace on 19 July. This displeased the English, both because of the consultation with other towns and because nothing would be settled by February, which was the month when the Adventurers usually sent a fleet to Hamburg. Hoddeson suspected that the delay was deliberately designed to secure one or other of two ends; either the Adventurers would hold back their fleet, leaving the Steelyard merchants to corner the market, or they would ship cloth, patronising Hamburg to the bitter end, and then finding themselves burdened with tolls after July. He therefore recommended that neither Adventurers nor any other merchants should be allowed to export cloth to Hamburg until the treaty was renewed; pressure should also be put on the Steelyard to intercede with the Hanse.⁵⁴

Despite Hamburg's protestation that it must consult its neighbours it was in no hurry to do so. On 14 January 1578 Zimmerman wrote to Suderman that he knew nothing of what was going on, since both Hamburg and the English were very secretive. Elizabeth again wrote to Hamburg on 28 February demanding a renewal of

⁵³ *KI*, 2, doc. 70 (p. 487). *SPF*, 1577–8, pp. 426–40.

⁵⁴ *SPF*, 1577–8, pp. 458–60.

privileges without delay or diminution. Negotiations were still continuing and by 16 March it had been agreed in principle that the Steelyard quota of unfinished cloth should be increased by 3,000 or 4,000, but the queen would not sign the necessary warrant until Hamburg had renewed its treaty with the Adventurers. Hamburg did not reply to the queen's letter and the matter hung fire until the assembly of a Wendish diet in June, but the city remained under heavy pressure from all sections of the Hanse. The representatives at the diet were probably misled by an unjustifiably confident report by George Liseman, secretary of the Steelyard. He said that English merchants were now so hard pressed that they had virtually nowhere to sell their cloth but the Empire. It was therefore a very favourable time to demand the restoration of their ancient privileges, or at least the greater part of them, for without this the redress of particular grievances was useless. Four days later (9 June) the Hamburg representative announced that the city would expel the Adventurers if its allies insisted, which they did. The same day the diet wrote to the queen that her subjects did not need special privileges in Hamburg, for if she would only confirm the treaty of Utrecht they could trade freely in all Hanse towns. On 14 June Hamburg council itself wrote to Elizabeth, still not categorically refusing to renew the treaty, but making that step conditional upon greater freedom for Hanseatic merchants in England. Finally, on 20 June in Hamburg the council formally announced to the Adventurers that their privileges would be absolutely terminated on 28 November next. The following day it turned down a plea to extend the time limit until 12 March 1579, but stated that between November and March the Adventurers might dispose of any goods remaining to them upon the same conditions as other aliens.⁵⁵

When news of Hamburg's final decision reached London the Adventurers went immediately to the Privy Council and in turn Steelyard officials were summoned to provide an explanation. They were advised that the Adventurers were demanding not merely the renewal of the Hamburg agreement, but also full implementation of their ancient claim to reciprocity in all Hanse territories, as expressed in clause four of the treaty of Utrecht; if the claim was not met the Hansards would be deprived of such privileges as they continued to enjoy in England. Because of fear of reprisals there was no question of an immediate clamp down on Hanse trade, but the government

⁵⁵ *KI*, 2, nos. 1221, docs. 74 (pp. 491–2), 77 (p. 494), 85 (p. 505), 81 (pp. 498–9), 87–8 (pp. 509–10). *SPF*, 1578–9, p. 22. BL, Lansdowne 25/74.

was urged not to allow any increase in their cloth exports beyond the recent level, in order to prevent the accumulation of a stockpile which would allow them to defy the Adventurers, at least for a little while. In August 1578 a warrant was issued for the export of 2,000 cloths, but a warning was given that no more would be released until the matter of the Englishmen in Hamburg was settled. Hanseatic letters of this period were not optimistic of a favourable outcome and indicate that even the Earl of Leicester, who among the queen's intimates was the most well disposed towards them, held out hopes of nothing better than a settlement based on the 1560 compromise. On 15 October the queen wrote formally to the Hanse saying that its privileges in England would be ended unless those of the Adventurers were restored in Hamburg. This was interpreted by Steelyard officials as meaning that their situation was about to become worse than at any time since 1557–8. Despite their gloom, which prompted them to consider exporting their ceremonial silver to a safer place, they engaged in serious and protracted talks with members of the government; hopes of a settlement waxed and waned. At the beginning of November 1578 Morris Zimmerman reported a speech of Leicester, in which he portrayed the queen as Hercules and again said that there could be no question of restoring to the Hanse the privileges of the treaty of Utrecht, but at most confirming the draft treaty of 1560. A week later Zimmerman wrote that talks with Leicester and Secretary Walsingham were going well and, were it not for the constant agitation of the Merchant Adventurers, might soon be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. On 6 December, however, he claimed that Walsingham was the chief mouthpiece in the Council of the Adventurers. Rumours that Leicester might be willing to concede the 1560 compromise, even if Hamburg did not renew its charter to the Adventurers, spurred the latter to more direct action. By 2 December they had persuaded the city of London to exclude Steelyard merchants from Blackwell Hall and to suspend all other privileges, thus reducing them to the status of aliens at the very time when it was seeking to re-introduce hosting laws and other obsolete customs. The government was not prepared to tolerate such blatant interference and city officials were summoned to the Privy Council to account for their behaviour. On 9 December the Privy Council published a decree, allowing the Steelyard merchants until 25 March 1579 to demonstrate that Englishmen enjoyed the same privileges in Hamburg and other Hanse towns as they themselves claimed in London and elsewhere in England;

failing this they would be treated like all other aliens. Since the burden of proof lay upon the Hansards they were in a difficult position. However, at the end of that month they succeeded with great difficulty in getting the London edict suspended on the grounds that it prejudiced the queen's decree of 9 December.⁵⁶

During this period the Merchant Adventurers constantly complained about their treatment in Hamburg, particularly about attempts to dispose of real estate which they had acquired there. Even so, the government would not press the Hanse too hard. In December 1578 Zimmerman reported that the queen expected a delegation and she would welcome this, even though she was not prepared to issue an invitation herself. In January the Steelyard merchants were promised a licence for a further 3,000 cloths. Nevertheless, not until 17 February 1579 did Lübeck draft a reply to the queen's letter of the previous October and this did not reach its destination until 20 March, just five days before the expiry of the ultimatum of 9 December. It merely said that the English demands would be discussed in a diet which was due to meet on 25 July.⁵⁷

Once the 25 March deadline had passed the Adventurers pressed for the immediate implementation of the December decree, but the Privy Council delayed until 7 April, when it announced that the sanctions would be suspended until after the meeting of the diet. If that body did not give satisfaction the decree would then be enforced. Pressure upon the Germans was increased by the decision that merchants might continue to trade upon payment of the rates of duty charged since 1560, but must also give bonds for the payment of full alien rates, which would be forfeit if the diet decided against the Englishmen. Additionally, the mayor of London was authorised to begin proceedings against Hanse merchants who traded with non-citizens, provided that no final decision was taken in any case without the permission of the Privy Council. In response to the Adventurers' plea for a total ban on trade with all ports between Emden and the river Skawe, the council's response was decidedly lukewarm. During the late winter and spring exports had been halted while Burghley collected information about the general level

⁵⁶ *SPF*, 1578–9, pp. 112–14. *APC*, 10, pp. 300–2, 419. *KI*, 2, nos. 1333, 1341, 1346, 1356, 1360, 1364, 1371, docs. 89–92 (pp. 511–17), 94 (pp. 518–19), 97 (p. 522), 99–100 (pp. 526–9), 102 (pp. 532–3). PRO, SP12/127/15.

⁵⁷ *KI*, 2, nos. 1378, 1398, doc. 103 (pp. 533–5). *SPF*, 1578–9, pp. 382, 494. *Calendar of Salisbury MSS*, 2, p. 232.

of trade with Hamburg over the last two years and about goods which denizen and alien merchants now had ready to ship there. This done, the Privy Council decided that denizens who were not free of the Merchant Adventurers or the new Spanish Company might export cloth and any other non-prohibited goods currently in their possession to whatsoever port they chose, including Hamburg. When present stocks were spent they must obey an injunction to avoid all ports between Emden and the Skawe. Alien merchants other than Netherlanders (primarily Italians) were permitted to ship current stocks to Hamburg, provided that they did not sell in that city but passed on to upper Germany or Italy. Afterwards, they too were to observe the injunction. Some four or five Englishmen who sought permission to send a small quantity of kerseys in their company were allowed to do so. Any Netherlanders who were accustomed to ship cloth via Hamburg were allowed to continue without limit of time, but only in the usual quantities and without colouring for other aliens or Englishmen. Finally, Hamburg merchants were also allowed to ship their usual quantities, for sale only in their own city.⁵⁸

During the run up to the Hanseatic diet the advice of Steelyard officials, as well as that of Heinrich Suderman, was to take a firm stand, either by banning trade with England and trying to exclude cloth from the Empire or, alternatively, burdening denizen-owned cloth with import duties equal to the higher export rates which now faced Hanse merchants. The fact that there were now only four merchants resident at the Steelyard seems to have decided them to throw caution to the wind. They prepared a number of detailed memoranda for consideration by the diet.⁵⁹ These claimed that in recent years Hanse trade had been completely undermined, not only because Englishmen could sell cloth in Germany more cheaply than the Steelyard merchants, but also because the former could now get return goods, such as linen, on more favourable terms. It was alleged that even English shipping costs now matched those of the Hanse and this posed a threat to the latter's fleet. The situation was not thought to be irreversible, since England's economy depended upon cloth exports, for which Germany and eastern Europe were the principle markets; nor could England survive without imports from

⁵⁸ PRO, SP12/130/33. *SPF*, 1578–9, pp. 468–9, 481–2, 496. *KI*, 2, doc. 106 (pp. 539–41). *Calendar of Salisbury MSS*, 2, pp. 232–3, 238.

⁵⁹ *KI*, 2, docs. 107–14 (pp. 540–53).

Hanse regions. To keep Englishmen in their place it was necessary not only to confirm their exclusion from Hamburg, but also to deny them access to any other German mart. The latter point had reference not only to the danger that the Englishmen might obtain a refuge in another Elbe port, such as Stade, as an alternative to Hamburg, but also to the more imminent possibility that they might obtain a staple for their Baltic trade in the Prussian port of Elbing.

The critical Hanse diet began on 22 June 1579 and continued until late August, but the refusal to accept the latest English demands had been taken and a formal address to the queen had been drafted by 8 July. It was decided that Danzig and Cologne should provide envoys to go to England with Heinrich Suderman, the Hanse syndic. In the event Suderman did not make the journey, so the main burden of the negotiations fell upon George Liseman, secretary of the Steelyard. The queen's reply to the Hanse letter, drawn up on 8 September, intimated that despite its intransigence she would not yet enforce the decision of the previous April, so that there might be time for reconsideration. On 13 September the Hanse envoys met the Privy Council to receive answers to three questions which they had submitted in advance. The alleged purpose of the meeting was to ensure that the envoys fully understood the English position and did not misrepresent it to the diet. But the answers given to them were far from unambiguous. In reply to the query as to whether Hanse merchants should enjoy customs equality with Englishmen, it was said that they must pay the rates recently levied on them; in answer to the request for cloth-export licences, it was said that they would have a sufficiency of licences, provided that they gave security to observe any current regulations concerning sales; the answer to a question about freedom of trade within England was that it remained as in former times. When the envoys demanded that their merchants should be released from any securities given in consequence of the April decree this was refused, and finally they were told that all the English concessions were dependent upon the restoration of the former privileges in Hamburg.⁶⁰

In November 1579 George Liseman went again to Germany in an attempt to persuade the towns to adopt retaliatory measures against English trade. Since the government would not issue export licences

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, docs. 115 (pp. 573–8), 121–2 (pp. 597–9). *APC*, 11, p. 262.

unless the merchants gave security to pay alien duties, the Steelyard wanted a similar step to be taken in Hanse towns. It also advocated a blockade of Narva and a ban on Englishmen's trade in Danzig, Elbing and Königsberg. Failing a full diet of the Hanse Liseman managed to arrange a conference between the Hamburg city council and representatives of Lübeck and Bremen. This began on 22 December but found difficulty in reaching agreement. Hamburg wanted to proceed cautiously, while Liseman urged immediate retaliation; Hamburg was willing to send another embassy to England, but Lübeck was against this. Finally, on 30 December the conference decided that if the English government continued to exact security for payment of alien customs then a similar security, amounting to $\frac{7}{4}$ per cent of the value of their goods, should be taken from English merchants in Hanse towns. For the moment this decision was not to be implemented, but it was hinted at in a letter to Elizabeth dated 29 December, which reached its destination in mid-February.⁶¹

Meanwhile, the Steelyard had reopened talks with the Privy Council and was reconsidering its official policy of refusing to give security for the payment of alien customs. This was because some merchants, particularly those of Cologne, wanted to comply in order to obtain export licences, but were refusing to pay scot to the *Kontor* if they eventually had to pay alien rates. In February 1580 Lübeck complained to Cologne that because of this the English had gained the impression that the city and its third were not wholeheartedly with the Hanse. One factor which weakened Zimmerman's opposition to bonds was an initial optimism that they would not be forfeit, since he believed that ultimately the government would decline to treat the Hansards as aliens. As late as 24 January 1580 he was relying on verbal assurances that no decision had yet been taken. He was profoundly shocked to be told that day that the matter had been decided against the Hanse. Even as late as 6 February the Privy Council declined to commit this to writing. On 21 February Zimmerman was told that the Hamburg letter of 29 December made no difference to the decision, but only a fortnight later was he given written notification of this for transmission to the Hanse. He believed that the procrastination was designed to allow the Merchant Adventurers time to re-establish a staple at Emden

⁶¹ *KI*, 2, nos. 1466, 1660, 1671–2, 1696, 1700, docs. 126 (pp. 610–16), 129 (pp. 618–620). Ehrenburg, *Hamburg*, p. 154.

and the Eastland merchants theirs at Elbing. Only when these parties felt assured of their ends did the government let the final blow fall upon the Steelyard. Inevitably, Zimmerman smelt corruption; on 10 January he had reported that the Adventurers had given rich new year's gifts to the Privy Council and that his side ought to do the same.⁶²

Even though the government seemed to have made up its mind to treat the Hansards as aliens, the decision was at first only partly implemented. On 19 March 1580 the Steelyard secretary went before a public notary in London and swore that a Cologne merchant had been prevented from exporting cloth unless he paid the full alien duty in ready money. Three days later word was sent to Lübeck that bonds were no longer acceptable for cloth presented for export, but Thomas Smith, farmer of the London import duties, had promised that he would not yet levy alien rates on imports. It was urged that the time had now come to retaliate. In fact, preliminary steps were already being taken. On 13 March Lübeck, having received news of the Privy Council's verbal decision of 21 February, wrote to Cologne urging it to take security from English-owned goods. On 24 March the latter city instructed hosts to certify the authorities about all Englishmen and their goods, though money was not yet demanded. Only in June did the chief western towns, including Hamburg, begin to levy money at the rate of $7\frac{3}{4}$ per cent on English-owned goods, which would be refunded if and when Hanse merchants were repaid in England. The Steelyard had wanted a rate of 20 per cent. When the Privy Council heard of the charge in September it immediately ordered that an additional tax of $7\frac{3}{4}$ per cent be imposed upon all Hanse imports and exports. Although not unexpected, this move nevertheless led to second thoughts in some of the Hanse towns, particularly when coupled with protests within Germany against their own action. One complaint came from the Augsburg firm which handled the entire production of the Hungarian copper mines, selling much of it to Englishmen at Hamburg. The firm solicited the Emperor to write to Hamburg asking it to review the discriminatory tax. More effective was the direct action of English merchants who began to avoid the town in favour of smaller ports on the Elbe. As if to emphasise the choice open to Hamburg Elizabeth wrote a friendly letter and the Merchant Adventurers sent an envoy requesting renewal of their

⁶² *KI*, 2, nos. 1702, 1707, 1713–17, 1719, 1730–1, 1734, docs. 132 (p. 623), 136 (p. 627). *APC*, 11, p. 406.

privileges. Interested townsfolk pressed the city fathers to do this. Hamburg's dilemma was apparent when in November 1580 its representative walked out of a conference held at Lüneberg to prepare a case for submission by the Hanse to a forthcoming imperial diet. Those who remained decided that in every Hanse town all persons handling merchandise, even that only in transit, must swear that no Englishmen had any financial interest in it. Failure to do so would result in the imposition of a $7\frac{3}{4}$ per cent tax, even if this had already been charged in another town. Moreover this was no longer to be treated merely as security, but as a non-refundable levy to finance the campaign against England.⁶³

Unfortunately for the Hanse the days had long passed when it could unilaterally attempt to determine the fate of English merchants and English manufactures in central and eastern Europe. Commercially, it had to take account of the interests of powerful cities in southern Germany which had prospered in the sixteenth century; constitutionally, it relied upon the cooperation of the imperial authorities in Germany, and of the King of Poland for help to control the Prussian towns. The first priority was to seek an imperial ban on the Merchant Adventurers' staple in Emden. After their expulsion from Hamburg the Adventurers had removed their court to Antwerp, where it remained until 1582, when it was transferred to Middelburg. But as early as January 1580 Morris Zimmerman claimed that only one third of the membership traded at Antwerp. The remainder resorted chiefly to Emden, where their numbers built up rapidly after August 1579, when company representatives gained provisional assent of the two counts of East Friesland to the restoration of their former privileges. Only one thing disappointed them – the levying of taxes on their trade between Emden and inland towns. This stemmed from the fact that the first Adventurers to return, like the interlopers who were there before them, used Emden merely as a port of entry and exit for the continent. This was unproductive from the counts' point of view. Comital tolls were not levied on trade to and from England and if Englishmen did not halt at Emden there was less incentive for interior merchants to come to the town. The latter would have paid tolls as they came and went, so in their absence Englishmen were required to make up the deficit from their trade into Germany.⁶⁴

⁶³ PRO, SP 12/136/67. *APC*, 12, p. 206. *KI*, 2, nos. 1754, 1757, docs. 139 (p. 632), 143–4 (pp. 639–42). *SPF*, 1579–80, pp. 475; Addenda, 1553–83, p. 559. Ehrenburg, *Hamburg*, pp. 155–8.

⁶⁴ *KI*, 2, no. 1713. *SPF*, 1579–80, p. 147; Jan.–June 1583, p. 528.

Hagedorn contends that the English privileges were renewed despite the initial hostility of Edzard, the elder and more powerful of the two counts.⁶⁵ In fact, this hostility, suggested by a letter he sent to Queen Elizabeth in December 1579, was more apparent than real.⁶⁶ He began by complaining about the ingratitude displayed by the Adventurers in their untimely withdrawal from his town in 1565, and no doubt his resentment on this score was real enough. But the remainder of the letter reflected the official policy of the Merchant Adventurers, who may themselves have prompted Edzard to write in this vein. He complained that Italians and other aliens were still free to export cloth to Hamburg and other ports in the Low Countries, and also imported from these places. Furthermore, both interlopers, that is Englishmen not free of the Merchant Adventurers Company, and stragglers, freemen who disregarded the injunction to confine their business to the official mart, bought and sold at Hamburg and elsewhere in Germany. Edzard's claim that such activities were as harmful to the company as to himself were echoed by governor Christopher Hoddeson, in a letter sent to Burghley in March 1580 from Emden, whither he had gone to formalise the new agreement with the counts.⁶⁷ Hoddeson complained that he had bargained with a Brunswick merchant for £2,000 of saltpetre to be delivered at Emden, but the latter broke the contract because of the great demand for gunpowder by Englishmen still at Hamburg. Prices were soaring from 'no other cause than the greediness of our own merchants, as the thing itself will more effectually declare, if this disordered running to Hamburg do not stay itself, or be shortly stayed by your means'. In the same letter Hoddeson reported that Edzard's animosity towards England stemmed chiefly from resentment of the fact that his younger brother was in receipt of a pension from the queen, while he had nothing. Later correspondence shows that what he really wanted was a token of Elizabeth's esteem and that a grant of the garter might win him over just as effectively.⁶⁸ Despite Edzard's misgivings that England was still trying to recover privileges in Hamburg, he agreed that the company might remain at Emden for six years.

As early as January 1580 Lübeck drew up a memorandum which was to form the basis of the Hanse case against the Merchant Adventurers for the remainder of the sixteenth century. It alleged that the company was a monopoly, injurious to the Empire, and as

⁶⁵ Hagedorn, *Ostfrieslands Handel*, 2, p. 30.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 188–90.

⁶⁶ SPF, 1579–80, pp. 102–4.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 197–200, 213–14, 270.

such should be outlawed on the basis of an imperial law of 1548. As a first step it called for the expulsion of the Adventurers from Emden. Repeatedly over the next few years most of the constitutional components of the Empire expressed sympathy with the Hanse. But without the active support of the Emperor Rudolf, which was not forthcoming, nothing could be done to harm its rivals. The Emperor first wrote to the Counts of East Friesland calling upon them to expel the Adventurers in June 1580, but they refuted the charges against the Englishmen and allowed them to remain. Following further complaints the Emperor again ordered the counts not to harbour the Adventurers and made representations to the queen. But in February 1581 he announced that he was powerless to impose fiscal sanctions on English trade or to ban the import of cloth; such steps could be taken only by an imperial diet, after receipt of conclusive proof that the Adventurers operated a monopoly. In March he decreed that the penal tax of $\frac{7}{4}$ per cent must cease. Since the Hanse was still lobbying for support it had no choice but to obey. Many towns were secretly glad of a face-saving excuse to lift the tax, which was tending to destroy their own trade as south-German merchants diverted traffic from traditional routes to avoid places like Lüneberg which imposed it. Some towns had already followed Hamburg's example and abolished it. All this was reported gleefully by Hoddesdon, who concluded that the tax had done little harm to English trade.⁶⁹

In July 1581 the remnants of the Steelyard community, feeling themselves to be utterly abandoned by the Hanse towns, approached the Privy Council and suggested that the privileged status which they had enjoyed until March 1580 should be reinstated in exchange for the return of the Merchant Adventurers to Hamburg on the terms prevailing until 1578. They also asked that the new tax of $\frac{7}{4}$ per cent should be ended, since it was no longer being levied in Germany. Under questioning they admitted that they had no authority from the Hanse to make the first offer and that they had only hearsay knowledge of the suspension of the tax. In October, therefore, the Privy Council pronounced that they could take no action on either matter, pending some formal statement by a Hanse diet which was shortly to meet in Lübeck. On 4 November the diet revoked the $\frac{7}{4}$ per cent tax, but its statement about the Hamburg residency was regarded as so unsatisfactory that the Privy Council, under pressure from both the Adventurers and the Eastland

⁶⁹ SPF, 1579–80, pp. 364–7; Jan. 1581–Apr. 1582, pp. 196–8; Jan–June 1583, pp. 586–7. *KI*, 2, nos. 1710, 1781, 1796, 1799–1800, 1853, 1862.

Company, declined for the moment to remove its own tax. Finally, at the end of January 1582 the Council agreed to suspend the tax for four months, to allow time for the Hanse to clarify their attitude towards English merchants. Writs sent to customs collectors ordered them not to collect the tax until further notice; there is no evidence that it was reimposed, despite the fact that no reply came within the allotted time.⁷⁰

Notwithstanding the Steelyard's conviction that it had been abandoned, the Hanse submitted its case against the Adventurers to the imperial diet which met at Augsburg in the summer of 1582. The outcome was disappointing, despite the fact that all chambers approved a decree which outlawed the Merchant Adventurers from the Empire, on the grounds that they constituted a monopoly. When the diet dispersed the Emperor refused to publish the decree, contenting himself with more representations to Queen Elizabeth and the Counts of East Friesland. Contemporaries believed, and most German historians have accepted, that the frustration of the diet's decision was due to bribery of the imperial Chancellor. On the other hand, J. R. Marcus believes that Emperor Rudolf was simply unwilling to provoke a clash between himself and the queen.⁷¹ The English success, whether due to bribery or sound argument, owed much to the energies of George Gilpin, secretary of the Merchant Adventurers, who had been sent to the diet to present their case. Fortunately, he managed to avoid the fate of Daniel Rogers, an ambassador dispatched to the Emperor in 1580, who had been captured and imprisoned by the Spaniards.⁷²

Throughout 1583 the Emperor ignored complaints from princes and provincial estates all over Germany that he had not published the imperial ban on the Adventurers. Finally, in June 1584 following an appeal from the Electors, he felt compelled to justify his position and formally stated that the time was inopportune, since a ban would harm the Empire as a whole. He urged that the Hanse should accept an invitation given by Elizabeth more than a year before to send a delegation to England to discuss their differences. This move was timed to coincide with a diet of the Wendish towns at Lübeck.

⁷⁰ APC, 13, pp. 226–7, 317–18, 323. PRO, SP12/149/59; 150/32–4; 152/16–17. *KI*, 2, docs. 154 (pp. 684–8), 162 (pp. 700–1), 164 (pp. 708–12).

⁷¹ J. R. Marcus, *Die handelspolitischen Beziehungen zwischen England und Deutschland in den Jahren 1576–1585* (Berlin, 1925), p. 61.

⁷² SPF, Jan. 1581–Apr. 1581, pp. 490–1, 596–7, 635; Jan.–June 1583, pp. 305–10, 621–41.

When it was decided to convene a diet of the whole Hanse in September, Hamburg announced its support for the proposed embassy, since there appeared to be no way that England could be forced into submission. Lübeck was hostile, but agreed that Hamburg should privately arrange for Steelyard merchants to have exploratory talks with the Privy Council. These duly took place and the merchants again proposed that their franchises should be restored in return for a revival of the English residence at Hamburg. They wanted the queen to send an embassy to the coming diet, with full powers to negotiate this. The Privy Council replied that once the Adventurers were reinstated at Hamburg then the Hanse privileges would be restored, to the extent that they had been enjoyed during the present reign. But the queen's representative would not go to the Hanse; it was incumbent upon them to send a mission to England. The Steelyard was prepared to support this, as was Hamburg, but the formal proposition was opposed by Heinrich Suderman in a typically voluminous historical memorandum which he submitted to the diet when it belatedly met in November 1584. The official reason for the refusal to negotiate in England was that the Emperor and the Kings of Poland and Spain were all interested parties, but none of them would be willing to send an ambassador there. Utrecht, Antwerp or Bruges were put forward as alternative venues. Nevertheless, the diet did agree that George Liseman and Dr John Schulte should go to England for further exploratory talks. They were to report back to the towns of Lübeck, Hamburg, Bremen and Lüneberg, which together were empowered to act executively on this matter.⁷³

Liseman and Schulte were in London from June to November 1585, but to no avail. The mission was handicapped by Liseman's distrust of Schulte, for he believed that the latter was concerned only to secure the return of the Adventurers to Hamburg, his own city, and was prepared to sacrifice the wider interests of the Hanse to this end. But personal discord was not the main reason for the failure of the talks; this stemmed from the fact that the envoys were not empowered to meet the minimum English demand, which was a firm guarantee of the restoration of the Hamburg residency. As a result of the talks of the previous autumn it had been assumed that ambassadors would be authorised to negotiate on this matter, and

⁷³ *SPF*, July 1583–July 1584, pp. 513–14, 517; Aug. 1584–Aug. 1585, p. 140. *KI*, 2, nos. 2199, 2201, 2208, 2215–16, docs. 182–5 (pp. 762–74).

there was great disappointment that this was not the case. Burghley was not at all reassured by Schulte's private promise that the residence would be restored as soon as England reinstated the Hanse privileges. The chief obstacle to a settlement was that neither side was prepared to make the first move, though the position was complicated by the patently untrue claims of each that the other already enjoyed freedom of trade. It cannot be said that the Englishmen were not serious in their will to settle, since the Privy Council took the precaution of obtaining the queen's signature to a document promising to reduce Hanse customs duties to the level prevailing before December 1578. This may in itself have been no mean achievement given the scene which took place when the envoys had their first audience with the queen on 5 July. She was angry because letters brought with them from the Emperor were written in German, which she could not read, and she mocked Schulte throughout a formal speech which he made in Latin, a language in which she was fluent.⁷⁴

Soon after their return to Germany Liseman wrote to Heinrich Suderman warning of the duplicity of Schulte and Hamburg, saying that they were still conspiring to secure the return of the English residency. A letter sent by Schulte on 6 March 1586 to Burghley and Walsingham proves that this suspicion was wholly justified. He admitted that since the breakdown of the recent negotiations he regarded it as his duty to look after the interests of his own town, which required the return of the Merchant Adventurers. One of his last actions in England was covertly to arrange with Sir John Saltonstall, governor of the company, for the dispatch of a representative to Hamburg to discuss the matter with the city. This envoy, John Roberts, was now about to return to England bearing Schulte's letter, outlining proposals for the residency and a formal invitation from the senate of Hamburg to the queen to send an ambassador empowered to make a treaty. Schulte's own letter shows that he was very apprehensive about the reception which might be given to these overtures. He feared that the English would resent the absence of detail. Much remained to be settled in future talks in Hamburg and this conflicted with the principle of negotiating only in England. In so far as they went the proposals were not as advantageous to the Adventurers as the privileges enjoyed during the earlier sojourn in the city. Schulte anticipated rejection, but

⁷⁴ *SPF*, Aug. 1584–Aug. 1585, pp. 659, 666, 669–70, 673, 677, 679–80, 687–8, 695–8; Sept. 1585–May 1586, pp. 12–13, 17–20, 71–4, 138–9, 145. *KI*, 2, docs. 197–224 (pp. 809–73).

urged that, even if the Adventurers would not commit themselves to ten years, they should try 'for a year or two' to see whether they could trade in the city on these terms 'without loss'. He strongly dissociated himself and his city from letters sent to the queen by the other three towns which had been empowered by the Hanse diet to act executively:

The tenor of these letters was not confirmed by us, nor were they written by our consent or at our request. So that I leave your lordships to judge how far the men of Hamburg should be bound by them. I think myself that you ought not to be deterred by them from your plan, for affairs are no longer in that condition that we think it necessary to require the consent of other states.

All things considered, it is not surprising that Schulte requested 'these letters to be kept carefully, lest they come into the hands of those who are not favourable to this business and have it in their power to harm me'. He said that his opponents boasted that by bribery they could obtain information from any English official.⁷⁵

As Schulte feared, Hamburg's proposals were ill-received by the Privy Council and, at first, by the Merchant Adventurers. This, rather than an imperial mandate to Hamburg forbidding it to negotiate further with England, was the obstacle to progress throughout the summer of 1586. But Hamburg was still anxious to woo back the Adventurers and in August renewed its invitation in more seductive terms. It was emphasised that what was needed from England was simply a promise of partial restitution of the Hanse privileges, and though this had to be sincere it did not need to be the most 'solemn kind' of state guarantee. Moreover, a member of the Merchant Adventurers Company could serve as envoy, rather than a fully accredited state ambassador. The pledge was also renewed that Hamburg would not be dictated to by the rest of the Hanse. This softening of tone coincided with increasing difficulties in the only markets officially open to the Merchant Adventurers and led the latter to ask their government to permit the reopening of negotiations. The agreement between the Adventurers and the rulers of Emden had expired early in 1586 and was reluctantly renewed for one year. The staple brought little benefit to the counts and their subjects, who were also unhappy about England's attitude towards their own trade with the neighbouring Spanish-occupied provinces of the north-eastern Netherlands. The Dutch rebels

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, doc. 222 (pp. 853–5). *SPF*, Sept. 1585–May 1586, pp. 420–5, 431.

mounted a strong blockade of the river Ems to prevent supplies reaching the Spaniards, and the Earl of Leicester did nothing to restrain them when he assumed command of operations in the Low Countries. Indeed, Leicester, convinced that Emden actively favoured Spain, tried to persuade the Merchant Adventurers to abandon that town and direct all their cloth to Holland and Zeeland. This they would not do, since the occupation of Nijmegen by the Spaniards in 1585 barred the way between those provinces and Germany. Moreover, they feared that too close a proximity to Leicester would make them an easy target for forced loans.⁷⁶

With the Spanish market now closed to English cloth the Privy Council foresaw a trade recession if the Adventurers left Emden, and countermanded Leicester's request to the company. Nevertheless, by the autumn of 1586 the merchants were holding back from purchases in England and this led the clothiers to complain to the Privy Council. The outcome was that at Christmas the Adventurers agreed that, despite unsold stocks, the company would borrow money at its corporate charge to buy up cloth lying unsold at Blackwell Hall at the end of each week, provided that clothiers did not bring more than the usual amounts nor attempt to increase prices. Failing this, members of the Staple company would be allowed to buy any cloth unsold after noon on Fridays and export it to any place overseas, notwithstanding the Adventurers' monopoly. If the intervention of the staplers did not take up all the slack then unenfranchised Englishmen would be allowed to participate, and even aliens. For a time the Adventurers honoured the agreement, but in the spring they complained of overstocking at Emden and Middelburg and the government was compelled to throw open the trade to all and sundry. On 16 May 1587 the alderman of the Steelyard was informed by Walsingham that as an act of special grace his members might buy cloth at Blackwell Hall and export it at denizen rates, though it was emphasised that this was in anticipation of Englishmen obtaining freedom of trade in Hamburg and other Hanse towns. As well as providing relief for the clothiers the gesture was intended to smooth the path for the Adventurers, who had finally been authorised to send a delegation to Hamburg to resume negotiations about the residency.⁷⁷

The English party, led by governor Richard Saltonstall and Dr Giles Fletcher, reached Hamburg on 3 June 1587 with six ships

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 385, 479–81, 502; June 1586–June 1588, pp. 68–76, 102–3.

⁷⁷ APC, 14, pp. 273–5. *KI*, 2, doc. 235 (pp. 893–4).

laden with cloth. The first matter to be determined was the toll to be levied on the present shipment. The Englishmen charged the senate with duplicity, in first having agreed to a rate and then the very next day increasing it, on the grounds that they could not otherwise obtain the support of the townsmen. Subsequent negotiations about the future of the residency were equally bitter and were finally broken off by the Englishmen on 22 August, when it became clear that the senate was unwilling to grant more than a temporary agreement for the Adventurers to trade in Hamburg until Easter 1588. The many letters sent home and surviving memoranda share the blame widely for the failure of the talks. First, the Englishmen castigated the alderman of the Steelyard who had written to Hamburg pointing out that the current crisis in the cloth industry weakened their bargaining power. The Steelyard also complained about recent new imposts on trade, particularly a patent which gave Sir Walter Raleigh a charge on overlengths of exported cloth. English Staplers and interlopers were also accused of undermining their fellow countrymen by advertising the current suspension of the Adventurers' monopoly. One of the reasons why the Hamburg senate's offer was rejected was that it would have allowed all Englishmen to trade in the city. But most malign influence was attributed to Dr Westendorp of Groningen, who had come to Hamburg as an envoy of the Duke of Parma, governor of the Spanish Netherlands, and continuously inflamed the senate against England. The Englishmen dismissed the claim that before granting a permanent residence the city would have to consult Spain, the German princes and other Hanse towns, since its invitation to negotiate had explicitly said that no consideration would be given to the wishes of third parties. But now a territorial dispute with Denmark disinclined Hamburg to alienate its allies.⁷⁸

At an early stage in the dispute about tolls the English commissioners sent three Adventurers to Stade, a small town on the western side of the Elbe estuary, a few miles downstream from Hamburg. This place had been considered as a possible staple during several earlier crises. The town authorities offered much lower tolls than Hamburg, both on the present shipment and future consignments, but demanded that the English should break off all negotiations with Hamburg. At first the latter were not prepared to do this, but on 22 August, immediately after receiving the senate's

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, doc. 238 (p. 899), *SPF*, June 1586–June 1588, pp. 313–15, 320–1, 348–9, 352, 365–6, 393, 397–405, 408, 429, 456–60.

latest offer, they decamped to Stade, without even lodging a formal notification that the talks were at an end. The senate then repented of its earlier stubbornness and sent messengers to Stade, entreating the Englishmen to return and reopen negotiations. There was no longer any talk of obtaining the consent of the Hanse or any other party, and the Adventurers were offered terms which were claimed to be substantially the same as those of 1567. One glaring omission was a firm guarantee of freedom of worship. Because of the opposition of the city churches the senate was unable to embody this principle in a formal treaty, though it offered to provide a secret guarantee. Religion seems to have presented no problems at Stade. Unimpressed by Hamburg's renewed offers, at the end of September the Adventurers signed an agreement to establish a staple at Stade for a term of ten years.

Having failed to prevent the accord between the Adventurers and Stade the Hamburg senate now worked to destroy it. Pressure upon Stade to expel the Adventurers was exerted via the town's overlord, the cathedral chapter of the archdiocese of Bremen. A more direct threat was the stationing of warships at the mouth of the Elbe in an effort to exact a toll known as tun and beacon money. Isolated English vessels were made to take their cargoes to Hamburg, but no attempt was made against large fleets. For a time there was hope of persuading the English government to force the Adventurers to cancel their agreement and accept Hamburg's terms. In response the Adventurers named three conditions for going to Hamburg, two of which were virtually unattainable. These were privileges as favourable as they now enjoyed in Stade, the agreement of Stade itself to surrender the staple and the endorsement of a Hamburg residency by the Hanse. The fact that it was now the Englishmen who were making the last demand suggests that they had given up any serious consideration of returning to Hamburg. In May 1588 the Privy Council decided in favour of the Adventurers, writing to Hamburg that it had but itself to blame for losing the staple, which could only be recovered when the three conditions were satisfied. At the same time the privileged cloth exports enjoyed by Steelyard merchants for the past year were terminated. They were informed that they might no longer export at denizen rates, except for any cloths already in their possession and provided that these were taken to Stade and sold there. Hamburg was still not ready to concede defeat. Between July and September 1588 its secretary, Sebastian

a Bergen, tried vainly to persuade the Privy Council to reverse its decision. One sticking point was the continued failure to allow freedom of worship. Equally important was the question of trade between the Hanse and Spain. Not only were Hamburg's merchants deeply involved but Hamburg ships were now the main carriers of trade originating in other Hanse towns. A prerequisite of the return of the residency was the suppression of the trade in grain and munitions, and acceptance of an English right of search. The Privy Council was particularly concerned about large stores of iron ordnance, which were believed to be going from England itself to Hamburg and thence to Spain.⁷⁹

In the summer of 1588 the Archbishop and Chapter of Bremen tried to settle the dispute between Hamburg and Stade, suggesting various forms of compromise. But with the failure of mediation the church sided with Stade and, when the Emperor ordered the latter to expel the Englishmen in January 1589, it requested that the publication of the decree be suspended until a meeting of the imperial estates. In June William Milward, an envoy of the queen who had arrived in Germany the previous April, reported that after consulting the Electors the Emperor had agreed to this. A new appeal to the Emperor from a Hanse diet in September 1591 met with no response. With the support of its overlord and inactivity on the part of the Emperor, Stade simply ignored pleas, warnings and threats about its English guests which poured in from many quarters, including Lübeck, Denmark, the King of Spain and the Duke of Parma. For several years the Merchant Adventurers were in little danger of losing their new base of operation. Their main worries related to English interlopers who continued to trade at Hamburg, and in providing protection for their own cloth convoys. The latter was a serious problem, since there was a constant fear that Hanse ships with letters of marque might attack the fleets. In 1591, when the queen was offered £200 to provide escorts or 'wasters', she contemptuously refused it as too little. Yet the company was compelled to provide escorts, which were inspected by royal navy controllers and if they were deemed insufficient the fleet was not allowed to sail.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 611–12, 646–7; July–Dec. 1588, pp. 1, 226–8, 360; Jan.–July 1589, p. 240. *APC*, pp. 77–87, 229, 238. *KI*, 2, nos. 2496, 2501, 2503, 2516, 2543–4, doc. 253 (p. 922).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, nos. 2608–9. *SPF*, June 1586–June 1588, p. 645; Jan.–July 1589, pp. 51–2, 197–8, 241–2, 280, 331. *APC*, 21, pp. 58–9.

The Hanse diet which met between June and August 1591 made vague noises about the English staples at Stade and Elbing, but they were rather low down in an order of priorities. Some towns saw little point in expelling the Adventurers from Stade merely to see them return to Hamburg. At first Lübeck had warned Stade against harbouring the Englishmen, but a little later William Milward reported that Lübeck preferred this arrangement to a staple at Hamburg, which was already considered too rich and proud a neighbour. For others in the late 1580s and early 1590s the 'English question' meant the payment of compensation for losses incurred in their trade with Spain. As early as November 1585 England had given formal notice that she would intercept any ships believed to be carrying corn or munitions to Spain. The chief effect of this warning was to divert Hanse voyages to Spain around Scotland and Ireland. Following the defeat of the Armada the issue became more important than ever, since the English believed that Baltic ships and ship-building material would go to re-equip the Spanish navy, and grain was still accounted a strategic good. On 18 May 1589 the Privy Council issued orders to Sir John Norris and Sir Francis Drake, currently leading an expedition to Portugal, to stop the Baltic corn fleet then making for Iberia. Early in June sixty Hanse merchantmen sailed into the arms of the Englishmen at Cascaes in Portugal and were promptly dispatched to England. Shortly afterwards the Earl of Cumberland seized another eleven Hanse ships. From late July and for many months to come the Privy Council sent out a plethora of orders and counter-orders about these spoils. At first it was decided that all goods classed as contraband should be confiscated, but other wares and the ships themselves were to be released. On hearing rumours that the Hanse was to summon a special diet to concert a plan for revenge the Council ordered that all but the smallest ships should be detained until after that event. Most of the ships were released gradually during the course of 1590, and the diet, which eventually met in 1591, was then given a stern warning not to interfere. In November 1589 and February 1590 Steelyard officials were again warned of the consequences of trading with Spain and in January 1592 the Privy Council published a more exact definition of goods which were accounted contraband. England continued to intercept Hanse ships to search for such wares, but there were no more mass seizures until the end of 1596. The object now was not to deny material to Spain, but to obtain corn to prevent famine in

England and to victual troops in Ireland. This policy persisted throughout 1597 and 1598 and was directed against Dutch as well as Hanse ships, for Amsterdam had become the great entrepôt for the Baltic grain trade and the good burghers had no qualms about supplying their Spanish enemy.⁸¹

The complaint about the staple at Stade was revived by the Hanse when the imperial diet met in 1594. Elizabeth's envoy, Christopher Parkin, persuaded the representatives not to vote for a ban upon Englishmen, but they called upon the Emperor to intercede with the queen for the restoration of Hanse privileges in England. This he did not do until July 1595, but the request was denied. In November 1596 the Hanse renewed its application to the Emperor, which this time met with a very different response. In March 1597 the Imperial Council advised the expulsion of the Adventurers and a mandate to this effect was drafted in August. It alleged that the Company of Merchant Adventurers constituted a monopoly, which harmed the Empire by raising the price of cloth. All subjects were forbidden to deal with members of the company, who were allowed three months from the date of publication of the edict in any town to remove themselves and their property. Proclamations began to be made from the end of September, and in Stade itself on 28 October 1597. The Englishmen attempted to have the edict recalled, and dispatched envoys to friendly German princes and to the Emperor. At first they were optimistic of success and consequently retaliation against German merchants still operating in England proceeded at a leisurely pace. In January 1598 a formal prohibition was made against the latter, except for any subjects of the King of Poland who could demonstrate that they were no longer associated with the Hanse nor privy to the imperial action. The Lord Mayor of London was instructed to take possession of the Steelyard, but execution of the order was repeatedly postponed until July, when the few merchants who remained there were given several days grace to remove their possessions.⁸²

When it became clear that an early removal of the imperial ban was not to be expected a split developed in the ranks of the Merchant

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 17, pp. 192, 447–50; 18, pp. 68, 110–13, 159–60, 203, 207, 216–17; 19, pp. 48, 63, 185; 22, pp. 183–4, 191–2; 26, pp. 281, 319–20, 391–6, 441, 466; 28, p. 8; 29, pp. 332–3, 369. *SPF*, Aug. 1589–June 1590, p. 397. *KI*, 2, no. 2658, doc. 265 (pp. 948–51).

⁸² *APC*, 28, pp. 175, 238, 257–9, 333–4, 375–6, 413, 447–8, 465, 509–10. *Ehrenburg, Hamburg*, pp. 193–6.

Adventurers. Many continued to trade at Stade and publicly declared themselves to be interlopers, hoping thereby to escape the consequences of the ban on the grounds that they were not part of a monopoly. They were encouraged in this by the Stade authorities and abetted by the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Richard Saltonstall, who, although a former governor of the company, issued them with certificates which identified them as interlopers. Officially, the company abjured Stade and, declining invitations from Groningen and Emden, declared that its only staple was to be held at Middelburg, where the court had been since 1582. It prevailed upon the government to ban exports to the rivers Elbe and Ems and to require bonds from all exporters, save those in the Eastland and Mediterranean trades, to deliver cloth only to Middelburg. The order was soon amended, not only to make it clear that France and Muscovy lay outside the company's monopoly, but also to allow merchants to take 'reasonable quantities' of cloths, bays and kerseys to Amsterdam and other places in Holland and Zeeland, as they were said to be accustomed to do. The opposition drew up memorials pointing out the alleged disadvantages of Middelburg compared with the Elbe ports. Merchants were said to be deterred from coming out of Germany to the former town, both because of fear of neighbouring Spanish garrisons and a long land journey burdened by tolls. Additionally, big English ships which had voyaged to the Elbe could not negotiate the Zeeland shallows, which left exports to small vessels which returned home in ballast. It was not only dissident members of the company and traditional interlopers who opposed attempts to funnel trade through Middelburg. There were also complaints from clothiers and the Masters of Trinity House, on the grounds that such regulations restricted the vent of cloth and impinged upon the freedom of navigation. In November 1598 the Privy Council, while denying any intention of limiting the traditional privileges of the Adventurers' company, declared that it had no wish to interfere with the legitimate rights of other parties. It therefore withdrew its recent proclamation that bonds should be given to export only to Middelburg. This was an implicit recognition of the fact that interlopers would continue to trade on the Elbe. The move did not immediately reconcile the company with its dissident members, but in the event it was the former which had to compromise to prevent mass defection to the ranks of out-and-out interlopers. From the autumn of 1598

Englishmen again traded at Stade, Hamburg and Bremen without hindrance from local authorities. Lübeck continued to insist that the imperial ban was directed at all English-owned cloth, but the other towns and south-German merchants maintained that interlopers were not part of a monopoly and therefore did not come under the ban. Those who did not simply ignore the edict easily obtained certificates of exemption from the Emperor himself. Thus in July 1599 dissident Adventurers claimed that during the previous twelve months they had sent eighteen ships to Stade, with an average of 2,000 cloths apiece. This situation so threatened the fabric of the company that it had to retreat from its insistence upon a sole staple at Middelburg. At first it sanctioned alternative trade only at Emden, where many members dealt from the autumn of 1598 to the spring of 1601. However, while trade at Stade was virtually toll free, Emden tolls on cloth and goods bought for return to England were double the rates which had been charged there in the 1580s. This made merchants receptive to a formal invitation to return to Stade, which was given by the town council in February 1601 and quickly accepted by the company and the crown. Thereafter, exports to Emden gradually declined and in the next year none at all went there. As early as June 1601 the company was officially loading six ships for Stade, and in order that the market should not be spoiled the Privy Council ordered the stay of three interloper ships which were about to sail there. At the same time instructions were given to punish merchants who had taken cloth to Hamburg in defiance of a recent proclamation that Emden and Stade were to be the only ports open for trade with Germany.⁸³

Although the Merchant Adventurers Company was directly involved in the return to Stade and Emden it was necessary to give the impression that it was not operating a monopoly. This it did by not holding a court in either place and by various other subterfuges, such as exposing cloth for sale every day instead of only on appointed days. The kernel of the monopoly – regulation of supply – remained, but outward conformity to superficial imperial requirements ensured that Englishmen were unmolested at Stade. In 1607, in return for a renewed assurance that no monopoly existed nor was intended, the company even persuaded the Emperor to allow it to reopen its residency and make regulations for the conduct of its members. This

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 199–203. *APC*, 29, pp. 24–5, 112, 299, 302–3; 31, pp. 440, 451. PRO, SP12/175/93; 265–71.

provoked the Hanse into pressing once more for the enforcement of the imperial ban. Paradoxically, this reflex and futile response reopened the question of where the staple should be located and resulted ultimately in its return to Hamburg, with privileges basically the same as those given in 1567. Stade bid desperately to retain it, but offers were received from Hamburg, Bremen and Emden, as well as from the King of Denmark on behalf of the town of Krempe. The prize finally went to Hamburg, with the Adventurers returning there for the last time in 1611.⁸⁴ In 1688 the company's charter was revoked by act of parliament and it lost its legal monopoly, but the membership reorganised as the Hamburg Company and continued to trade in the city until expelled by Napoleon in 1809.

The merchants who throughout this book have been described as Hanseatics gave up active trade in England long before the Adventurers disappeared from Germany, but by a strange quirk their descendants retained a tenuous link with the past for almost half a century longer than the latter group. Since the Hanseatics appear on the pages of history long before the Merchant Adventurers there is a measure of poetic justice about this. The last chance for the Hanseatics to re-establish themselves in England came after the return of the Adventurers to Stade in 1601. In the autumn of 1602 an embassy, headed nominally by Ralph, Lord Eure, went to Germany for talks with representatives of the King of Denmark. It also made contact with Ehrenfried von Minckwitz, an imperial agent who was examining claims that the Adventurers had given up their monopolistic practices. In March 1603 there was a conference in Bremen between the English envoys, Minckwitz and representatives of the Hanse towns. Talks went on for several weeks but were ended by the death of Queen Elizabeth. They were officially resumed in July 1604, when the last full-scale Hanseatic embassy ever to visit England presented its credentials to James I. The Hanse offered to give up its opposition to an English staple in Germany in return for a favoured status for its members in England. It no longer demanded the restoration of the medieval franchises, which had given it an advantage over Englishmen. Nevertheless, the equality of status which it requested was rather more extensive than Elizabeth had been prepared to allow between 1560 and 1578. During that

⁸⁴ Ehrenburg, *Hamburg*, pp. 210, 227.

period Hanseatics had paid denizen rates of duty only on goods originating in, or exported to, such places as Englishmen recognised as legitimate 'Hanseatic regions'. Now it was demanded that this definition should embrace all European imports except those from France, Spain and Italy. This would have allowed Hanseatics to pay denizen rates on the produce of southern Germany and central Europe. Such goods made up a large part of the stock in trade of the Merchant Adventurers, so the proposal was not acceptable to this group. Equally unacceptable were other demands, such as full freedom of trade in England, including access to Blackwell Hall, and a guaranteed export quota of 30,000 cloths.⁸⁵ The Hanse delegation departed empty-handed at the end of September 1604, but in 1606 the few merchants remaining in London received a consolation prize – the return of the Steelyard, which had been in the hands of the crown since 1598. Six merchants had quarters there in 1610, when it was temporarily sealed up by the Lord Mayor of London because of threats alleged to have been made against Englishmen in Hamburg and Lübeck. Five were still resident in 1620, but in 1632 they were reported to be long gone. The medieval buildings were destroyed during the great fire of London, but the complex was rebuilt and until 1853 the title remained vested in the towns of Lübeck, Hamburg and Bremen as trustees of the now defunct Hanse. The property was then sold and shortly afterwards the site disappeared under Cannon Street railway station, ironically at the very time when German historians were beginning to be conscious of the lost glories of the medieval Hanse.⁸⁶

Analysis of the political relations between the Hanseatic merchants and the last three Tudor monarchs has shown that the medieval franchises were not destroyed with a single blow, but whittled away gradually. The fiscal advantage over denizens came to an end at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign and in 1579 the merchants were reduced to the status of aliens. Freedom of trade, which above all implied the right to export cloth without restraint, was lost earlier. It survived for no more than twelve months after the departure of the embassy which sought to make good the damage done in the reign of Edward VI. Hanse cloth exports were resumed on 24 January

⁸⁵ For a full discussion see R. Grassby, 'Die letzten Verhandlungen zwischen England und der Hanse, 1603–4', *HG*, 76 (1958), 73–120.

⁸⁶ P. Norman, 'Notes on the Later History of the Steelyard in London', *Archæologia*, 61 (1909), 389–426.

1554 and by the following Michaelmas had reached 27,903.⁸⁷ The Merchant Adventurers, who had access to the customs records, put the total dispatched between that January and Christmas at 35,450,⁸⁸ which more or less agrees with the figure of 36,000 from January to November used by Heinrich Suderman for certain calculations he made about Hanse trade at that time.⁸⁹ This year was not only the last in which there was virtually free trade in cloth, but also the last in which the Hanse merchants were able to export anything like the volume which they had grown accustomed to handling in recent years. As a result of the January agreement the Hanse were allowed to ship an unlimited amount of unfinished cloths up to the value of £6 each for a period of three years, subject only to an informal understanding that for the first three months they should not sell any cloth in Antwerp.⁹⁰ The prices above which it was illegal to export unfinished broadcloth were last altered by statute in 1542, when they were raised to £4 for white cloths and £3 for coloureds. Inflation soon made these figures unrealistic, but as an alternative to further statutory action the ceiling was raised by use of the monarch's dispensing power. The distinction between white and coloured cloths was abandoned, but £6 (in the case of short-cloths) became and remained the conventional figure.

The Merchant Adventurers alleged that 11,200 cloths out of the total given above were consigned to Antwerp and Arnemuiden. They did not actually claim that any had been sent during the forbidden period and they could not legitimately complain about sales at Antwerp later in the year, despite the fact that many exports were clearly timed to catch the Bammas mart. Instead they sought to show arithmetically that the Hansards must have coloured cloth for other aliens, thereby depriving the crown of the higher rate of duty which it should have received from the latter. The 'proofs' consisted of the 'facts' that most Hanse cloth exporters did not import anything in their own names, the total value of their cloth exports exceeded imports by £154,366 3s 4d (actually £150,348 13s 4d) and during the recent Hanse trade boycott many Dutch merchants had exported cloth, but few did so now. Therefore Hansards must be colouring cloth for Netherlanders. The argument that because Hanse merchants did not import wares they could have no cash of their own to buy cloth is so absurd that it is difficult to see whom it was meant to persuade. Members of the Privy Council, for whom the memorial

⁸⁷ PRO, E122/87/4.

⁸⁸ BL, Add. MS 48019, fo. 124.

⁸⁹ Friedland, 'Heinrich Suderman', p. 231.

⁹⁰ CPR, 1553-4, p. 58.

was drawn up, must have known that a large part of the cloth trade was financed with bills of exchange. The only merit of this document is that it confirms that the Hanse still had a very large import deficit. This probably approached, though it did not reach, the figure given by the Adventurers, who made no allowance for non-cloth exports and, more importantly, used official values of imported goods, which were less than true values. Whether or not the Hanse merchants observed the letter of the agreement with the Privy Council it was less than wise of them to have sold almost one third of their entire export for the year in the Low Countries. They were well aware of the resentment this caused among Englishmen and also that it was the official policy of the Hanse to disengage from this market. Much of the cloth sold in Antwerp belonged to men who had established a domicile in that city. Six of these (three originating from Cologne, one from Danzig, one from Nijmegen and one unlocated) have been identified as exporting a total of 4,648 cloths (17 per cent) between January and Michaelmas.⁹¹ Other merchants were probably less guilty, but not necessarily blameless; merchants did not send cloth only to their own towns. Apart from the above-mentioned proportion, the January–Michaelmas trade was handled by merchants of Cologne (20 per cent), Hamburg (20 per cent), Danzig (17 per cent), Bremen (7 per cent) and unidentified (20 per cent).

The stagnation of Hanse exports which resulted from the renewed attack of the Merchant Adventurers in 1555 became a complete stoppage after the increase in duty in 1558. In August 1559 Queen Elizabeth wrote to the Marquess of Winchester authorising the export of 456 cloths which had lain in the merchants' hands unshipped for a long time, because they could not pay the new duty without the consent of the 'head and governors of their company the other side of the sea'.⁹² They were required, however, to provide security to pay by the end of the following January, whatever level of custom should have been determined upon. Despite the fact that no agreement was reached they were then allowed to continue shipping on payment of only the old rate of 1s plus bonds for the residue. Between Michaelmas 1559 and 15 September 1560 over 6,000 cloths were shipped in this way; only on the latter date did immediate payment of a full 6s 8d duty begin.⁹³ In September 1560 strict conditions were laid down for future trade. The merchants were forbidden to sell any cloth exported at the denizen rate of duty

⁹¹ Friedland, 'Hamburger Englandfahrer', appendix.

⁹² PRO, SP12/6/23.

⁹³ PRO, 356/28.

in Brabant, Flanders, Holland or Zeeland, even if it had first been dispatched to a Hanse town; nor were they to sell kerseys in Italy. There was no limit to the total amount of cloth they might export to their own ports, but the quota of undressed cloths was fixed at 5,000, worth up to £6 each. No guarantee was given of a perpetual quota. On 10 October 1560 Winchester wrote to Cecil passing on the thanks of the Steelyard for the licence for undressed cloth, but pointing out that they presently had some 2,000 such cloths worth more than £6, which they wished to get away before winter, while the promise of export at denizen rates held good. In February 1561 the queen informed Winchester that despite the complaints of the Merchant Adventurers the Steelyard might export 600 undressed cloths, provided they gave security not to sell them in the Low Countries. This appears to have been additional to the initial quota for 5,000 and the Steelyard may have obtained yet more licences, since they exported around 12,000 undressed cloths in 1560–1. The generous treatment of the Hanse merchants at this time was possibly due in large measure to the advocacy of the Marquess of Winchester. In April, he wrote to Cecil recommending them in very glowing terms; ‘the alderman and merchants of the stillyard be verie honest and conformable, and do good service daily to the quene and the realme in bringing in of corne and other comodities and therefore I wish the continuance of the quenes majesties favour toward them – they be the best and most conformable straunge merchants that contynue in the realme’. For several years at least Winchester continued to protect the Hansards from interference by the Merchant Adventurers.⁹⁴

At this time the Merchant Adventurers were still benefiting from the liberal cloth policy inherited from the reign of Mary. Then they were allowed to export unlimited numbers of white short-cloths up to the price of £6 each. Quotas were set for long-cloths above the value of £6, but they were sufficiently high not to cause problems. There is no evidence that merchants had to pay directly for licences and one may assume that freedom of export was allowed in return for the general financial help given by the company to the crown. In April 1559 the Adventurers received a patent to export during the queen’s pleasure an unlimited number of short-cloths up to £6 each and 6,000 long-cloths above that price. In August 1560 they received

⁹⁴ *CPR*, 1558–60, p. 420. PRO, SP12/14/6; 16/15, 58.

a licence for a further 8,000 long-cloths.⁹⁵ Despite the Merchant Adventurers' own freedom of trade the renaissance of Hanse cloth exports after Michaelmas 1560 provoked them into a renewal of the witch-hunt against their rivals. Figures produced by the Adventurers give the total Hanse export between Michaelmas 1560 and Christmas 1561 as 20,926 short-cloths, of which almost 63 per cent was white broadcloth, 37 per cent coloured and dressed broadcloth and the negligible balance kerseys and dozens.⁹⁶ The Adventurers alleged that between 6 February and 1 November 1561 Hanse merchants had shipped to Antwerp a total of 1,617 cloths. This was not itself illegal, though from the earlier of those dates security had to be provided against breaking bulk in the city. As evidence that a misdemeanour had been committed the Adventurers gave the names of five Hanse merchants who had paid Antwerp import duty on a total of 607 cloths, 117 kerseys and 30 cottons. But none of these five was recorded as owning any part of the 1,617 cloths legally entered in the queen's export rolls, so they would not have provided bonds which could now be declared forfeit. The Adventurers therefore suggested that the value of the 607 cloths and other pieces should be forfeited on the grounds that they had not been exported in the names of the true owners, as English law required. They further maintained that in the space of a year certain burgesses of Antwerp, whose names were also missing from the queen's rolls, had imported 2,621 cloths, 6,721 kerseys, 3,216 cottons and 2,231 dozens; therefore, like numbers must have been coloured for them by Hanse merchants. The injustice of this claim should have been apparent from the Adventurers' own memorandum, which gave the total non-broadcloth exports of the Hanse to all ports, including their own, as a mere 148 kerseys, 447 dozens and 82 pieces of checked cottons. It was therefore impossible for them to have exported or re-exported large numbers of such cloths to Antwerp.

In 1561–2 Secretary Cecil probably exercised much greater control over the issue of licences to the Hansards. On 21 January 1562 Winchester wrote to him, passing on the thanks of the Steelyard for a recent licence for 400 cloths worth less than £6 each and requesting a new licence for 6,000 cloths, which would satisfy their needs only until Easter. For the whole year they required a licence for 10,000 to 12,000 cloths and Winchester suggested the

⁹⁵ *CPR*, 1558–60, pp. 110–11, 491.

⁹⁶ PRO, SP12/20/43.

immediate issue of a warrant for 12,000. In fact it is highly probable that no new warrant was issued before July at the earliest, though the total Hanse export of all kinds of cloth amounted to just over 10,000 in the fiscal year 1561–2. The delay was associated with an entirely new plan which was being hammered out to regulate the export of unfinished cloth. When published this was found to have sacrificed even the interest of the Merchant Adventurers to the private profit of the queen's favourite, Robert, Lord Dudley. In July 1562 Dudley received a series of patents which empowered him to sell a virtually unlimited number of licences to export unfinished cloth for the next six years. It was already agreed in principle that a free licence for 30,000 cloths should be reserved for the Merchant Adventurers, but this was not enrolled before January 1563. The licence was valid for only a year and restricted to cloths worth £6 or less. In November 1563 negotiations were under way for a renewal on the same terms, but just then all exports were banned because of the dispute with Brussels. In July 1564 the Adventurers were given a free licence at the queen's pleasure, that is until recall, of 25,000 cloths per annum up to £6 and a further 5,000 above that price. This quota, which was allowed throughout the reign of Elizabeth and beyond, did not suffice for their needs and they had therefore to buy additional licences from Dudley and a succession of courtiers and government officials who acquired grants similar to his.⁹⁷

Like the Merchant Adventurers the merchants of the Steelyard now received a free licence to export undressed cloth, but in their case limited to 5,000. The first operational date is not known, but by May 1563 the merchants were petitioning for an additional licence. A draft of a warrant directed to the Lord Treasurer authorised them to export 5,000 a year, subject to the proviso that all exported since 1 October last should count as part of this year's quota. In the event, the warrant, given under the queen's signet, was not issued until 7 July. It permitted the export of 5,000 cloths in the twelve months beginning 3 July just past, but any in excess of 5,000 exported since 3 July 1562 (the commencement of Dudley's monopoly) were to count as part of this year's quota, so that the total in two years should not exceed 10,000.⁹⁸ Unlike the free licence of the Adventurers that of the Steelyard was not issued in perpetuity and, though it was renewed each year, the difference between the two caused practical problems. In July 1566 Adam Wachendorf wrote to Suderman

⁹⁷ *CPR*, 1560–3, pp. 244–5, 621; 1563–6, p. 180. PRO, SP12/21/24; 31/9, 11, 14.

⁹⁸ PRO, SP12/28/21–2; 29/20.

saying that he was having great difficulty in getting hold of the royal warrant because of the queen's constant travelling.⁹⁹ A more serious difficulty arose after parliament passed a bill promoted by the cloth-workers' company the following year. This required exporters to take one dressed cloth for every nine undressed. An exception was allowed in the case of undressed cloth exported on existing licences, which meant that of the Merchant Adventurers Company and probably Dudley's licence, though the latter was near its termination. Cloth exported on the Steelyard licence was not recognised as exempt, despite the fact that the only difference between it and the Adventurers' licence was that the former had to be warranted afresh each year. Some Hanse merchants exported finished cloth and the total was quite considerable, but not all wished to do so, so it was necessary to petition to be relieved of the requirement. A draft exists of a letter showing that it was intended to allow this request, but it is not known whether the intention was executed.¹⁰⁰

In June 1570 the Hanse free licence for unfinished cloth was increased to 8,000 and thereafter was renewed each year at this figure until the Adventurers were expelled from Hamburg in 1578. Both before and after 1570 total exports generally exceeded the permitted quota. The difference between the two figures included dressed cloths and certain types of unfinished cloth which could legally be exported without a licence. Nevertheless, the question arises as to whether the merchants were able to supplement their collective licence by purchasing additional licences. The answer is that they were unable to do so before 1568, since the Merchant Adventurers bought Dudley's grant from him, perhaps with the very purpose of ensuring that he did not sell licences to Hansards. After 1568 the licensing system became more complex and it is difficult to get a clear picture of how the Merchant Adventurers, let alone the Steelyard, acquired licences in excess of their free quota. In 1570 a grant to Sir Henry Neville pioneered a new type of licence, which as a result of a loophole presented a marvellous opportunity to milk the queen's Exchequer. This was greedily emulated by Cecil and Walsingham, but since the full potential of the grants was only realised if they were passed on to other aliens it is unlikely that any of these licences were bought either by denizens or Hansards. In April 1577 Walsingham received a new grant of 30,000 cloths, much less damaging to the crown, since the queen was to receive full

⁹⁹ *KI*, 1, no. 2640.

¹⁰⁰ PRO, SP12/48, 71; 77/67.

customs. This time it was a practical proposition to sell licences to Hansards, and Walsingham probably did so in the first year of operation. Early in 1578, however, the Steelyard pressed for an increase in their free licence as part of a deal to secure the extension of the Adventurers' residence in Hamburg. In March Thomas Wilson, the queen's private secretary, wrote to Burghley that she was 'content' that the Steelyard should have 3,000 to 4,000 above their usual number and 'Mr Secretary (Walsingham) hath willingly yielded – preferring public before his own private commoditie.'¹⁰¹ A warrant for an additional 3,000 was actually drawn up, but not released because the Adventurers were expelled from Hamburg. The latter development not only prevented the Steelyard from obtaining an increase in its licence but virtually destroyed its existing trade. Separate figures for Hanse cloth exports are not available after 1578, but it is clear that the totals of those taxed at alien rates allow room for the inclusion of few Hanse cloths, or none at all.¹⁰²

In 1564 the Exchequer introduced a new type of customs record – the port book. It was not long before the petty customer of London exports (who dealt with the cloth trade in that port) began to disregard the careful instructions issued for keeping the books, and the second surviving example (1571) is deeply flawed.¹⁰³ On the other hand, the first (Easter–Michaelmas 1565) was kept meticulously and allows a detailed breakdown to be made of Hanse cloth exports in that period – the last time this can be done.¹⁰⁴ Exports totalled 7,620 (out of 10,156 for the whole year 1564–5), customed in the names of twenty-seven merchants. Thirteen were Hamburgers, but they shipped only 22·4 per cent of the total, compared with 47·3 per cent credited to four Lübeckers; four Cologners had 17·2 per cent, three Danzigers 12·2 per cent, while the remainder (less than 1 per cent) belonged to one merchant from Osnabrück, one from Suell and one whose town was not given. The origins of the merchants provides little guidance to the destinations of the cloth. Almost one fifth of the total went in seven English ships, said to be going to Danzig. Little more than one sixth of these cargoes was in the names of Danzig merchants, the rest being in the names of Lübeckers. Danzig was almost certainly receiving more cloth than this, since both the Danzig and Lübeck merchants also shipped an even greater amount of cloth to Hamburg and Amsterdam. Either of these groups may have sold that cloth in north-west Germany, but

¹⁰¹ *CPR*, 1569–72, pp. 6, 407; 1572–5, p. 281; 1577–8, p. 345. BL, Lansdowne 25/74.

¹⁰² See appendix 3.

¹⁰³ PRO, E190/5/1.

¹⁰⁴ PRO, E190/2/1.

it is just as likely to have gone overland to a west-Baltic port for transhipment to the east. In 1565 Denmark severely curtailed traffic through the Sound because of war with Sweden, and Hanseatic voyages, not merely to England but to all western ports, were almost at a standstill. To complicate matters still further the amount of cloth intended for sale in Hamburg cannot be deduced from that shipped there directly, either by the city's own merchants or by all the Hansards. Some cloth simply passed through the city, but on the other hand it also received some via Amsterdam, and to a lesser extent Flushing and perhaps Antwerp. This resulted from a relative scarcity of ships passing between Hamburg and London, while Amsterdam–London sailings (and vice-versa) were second only to those between Antwerp and London. Since there was heavy traffic between Hamburg and Amsterdam it was a simple matter to trade via the Dutch port.

Danzig, Hamburg and Amsterdam between them received 80 per cent of Hanse cloth exported in this period and redistributed it in north-west Germany, Denmark, north-east Germany and Poland. These regions did not constitute a homogeneous market and there was a varying demand for different types of cloth. Overall the 1565 exports consisted of Suffolks and Gloucesters (37 per cent of each), Wiltshires (19 per cent) and the remainder made up chiefly of Hampshire kerseys and Devonshire dozens, with a mere handful of other broadcloths – Coxalls, Berkshires, Worcesters and Kents. Only Suffolks and Gloucesters went direct to Danzig, in a proportion of 4:1, while Danzig merchants shipping via other ports handled only these cloths, with a bias of more than 3:1 in favour of Suffolks. Lübeckers shipping elsewhere than to Danzig handled Suffolks, Gloucesters, Wiltshires and Hampshire kerseys in proportions of 40:40:12:8. Hamburgers took Gloucesters 52 per cent, Wiltshires 33 per cent, Suffolks 8 per cent and the balance in a mixture of other regions.

In this second half of 1564–5 only 18 per cent of Hanse cloth exports were sent to Antwerp and it is likely that few, if any, were sold in the city. This was not solely the result of the English government's control over exports. In the late 1550s the Hanse had terminated the privileges of the merchants who had until then defied its orders to relinquish their citizen rights in Antwerp. Now, as many as eight northerners and the Osnabrück merchant sent small consignments of cloth to Antwerp, but 88 per cent of that going there belonged to four merchants of Cologne and was probably destined

for their home city. This may also have been true of the small amount of cloth which the latter sent to Hamburg and Flushing. Apart from a few Devon dozens and a token amount of Berkshire broadcloth the Cologners bought only Gloucesters and Wiltshires, in about equal amounts. In the light of all that has been written about the system of licences it may come as some surprise that only 23 per cent of all Hanse cloth exported in this period required licences. These were carefully recorded in the port book. Most of the rest were described as either 'worked' or 'coarse', the latter presumably indicating unfinished cloths which were not sufficiently valuable to need a licence. Wiltshire cloths were the most difficult to export without a licence and 74 per cent were supplied with them. In contrast only 21 per cent of Gloucesters and none of the Suffolks (both twice as numerous as Wiltshires) had licences. Since Wiltshires were relatively more important to the Cologners than to their colleagues they required a disproportionate share of the licences, taking 42 per cent of them even though they handled only 17 per cent of all the cloth. Subsequently, the growth of the Hamburg finishing industry created a greater demand for licences and no doubt they were distributed differently.

The decline of Antwerp in the scheme of Hanse trade with England is confirmed by the London import port book of 1567–8, the last year of normal trade in the now doomed commercial capital of the Low Countries.¹⁰⁵ Total imports at Hanse rates were valued at £10,136 plus 1,381½ awms of Rhine wine, of which £1,177 of the goods (11·6 per cent) and 10½ awms of wine were aboard ships coming from Antwerp. (Additionally there were two cargoes of French wine owned by Hanse merchants.) One Cologne merchant imported steel from Antwerp worth £576, another madder and onion seed worth £55, while the rest was owned by ten Hamburg, Lübeck and Danzig merchants, the bulk of whose imports came more directly from north Germany and the Baltic. All were 'genuine' Hanseatic goods, but one should not attach too much significance to the duty changes of 1560 in thus restricting trade. English complaints about Hanse competition in the import of 'neutral' goods from Antwerp before that date had been greatly exaggerated. Moreover, as early as 1552 Cologne was complacent about the prospect of a ban on the export of Hanse goods to England, since its citizens even then had little to lose. In 1567–8 the

¹⁰⁵ PRO, E190/4/2. Calendared in B. Dietz (ed.), *The Port and Trade of Elizabethan London* (London Rec. Soc., 8, 1972).

situation was no better. Apart from the Antwerp trade and a single consignment from Amsterdam, Cologne's exports to England all went via Dordrecht, but consisted only of 1,344 awms of wine and £537 of merchandise, principally bowstaves, Cologne hemp and steel. These were handled by the above-mentioned two merchants plus three others. Given the decay of traditional exports to England, such as Cologne thread, steel and weapons, wine offered the best prospects to those who still wanted to bring in goods to finance purchases of cloth. In 1575 it was reported that the German vintage promised to be the best since 1540 and merchants were urged to increase their imports, more particularly since French wine was now subject to heavy taxes.¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, although the overall import of wine increased during the reign of Elizabeth, English palates did not much appreciate Rhine wine and it did not make much impact upon the market.

Some part of the decline in the share of Cologne merchants in England's trade in the mid-sixteenth century and later can be blamed on domestic factors. Nevertheless, they could with some justice complain that they suffered more than other Hansards from the cloth-licence system and the customs changes of 1560. As we have seen, the Baltic cloth trade did not depend upon licences, while Hanse trade in this region continued to enjoy customs parity with that of denizens. This did not prevent Englishmen from engrossing much of the trade, even before their rivals lost parity in 1578. As early as 1565 the ships leaving London for Danzig carried almost as much denizen cloth as Hanseatic (1,352 against 1,561). In 1567–8 denizen Eastland merchants imported into London alone £8,156 of merchandise from Danzig and Königsberg, another £729 of Baltic goods from thence or Amsterdam, and £2,018 from Narva. Another group of Englishmen, beginning to explore the possibilities of Hamburg as an alternative to Antwerp, imported goods to the value of £659. Few of the latter were Eastland goods and included some decidedly non-Hanseatic wares, such as spices. In contrast Hanseatic merchants imported only £730 of merchandise from Danzig and Königsberg and a total of £7,691 from Hamburg, Amsterdam and three other Dutch ports fed by Hamburg. The latter total included some Baltic goods, but commodities from northern Germany, such as linens, were predominant. As far as Eastland proper was concerned Englishmen had left their rivals out of sight.

¹⁰⁶ *KI*, 2, no. 678.

For reasons which are not altogether clear, 1568 became something of a landmark in denizen trade with the Baltic. When the idea of an incorporated Eastland company began to be discussed in 1578, certain parties proposed (unsuccessfully) that membership should be restricted to those who had traded there in 1568 or earlier. It may simply be that ten years seemed an appropriate qualifying period. On the other hand, in 1568 events in Prussia had caused English merchants to cling together for security and it is possible that an informal organisation, predecessor of the Eastland company, dates from that time. The affair had its origins in a legal dispute going back to 1511, suspended in 1536 when Thomas Martens returned from Danzig to England. In 1562 his son, William, revived the claim and in 1568 was able to obtain the legal distraint of Danzig property in England. Inevitably, this led to retaliation and on 26 July, eight Newcastle ships were under arrest at Danzig. A value of £8,100 was set upon six, including the goods in them chartered by Newcastle merchants, while two chartered by merchants of Lynn and London were worth £810, plus goods of undetermined value. By 9 September at least sixteen ships were under arrest. The Privy Council requested advice from Dr Daniel Lewes, which was delivered on 25 September. He observed that the London merchants involved were somewhat protected by the fact that their losses consisted of goods bought on credit, to be paid for later by English wares. Unfortunately, the Newcastle men had expended ready money on returns, allegedly over £8,000. The only way to help the latter was for the Privy Council to intervene and order the release of Danzig's ships and goods in England. This would be unfair to Martens, who had a good case, so Lewes suggested that if the Council did proceed in this manner it should order the English merchants to reimburse his legal costs to the present date, which would be no great burden to them.¹⁰⁷

The buoyancy of trade in the 1560s demonstrates that the rediscovery of the Baltic by English shippers and merchants in the reign of Henry VIII was an achievement not subsequently destroyed by occasional periods of war in that region and renewed disputes with the Hanse. There is a hiatus in the Sound registers from 1548 to 1556, but in 1557 fifty-seven English ships were recorded as entering the Baltic and fifty-six coming westwards (table 19). In the

¹⁰⁷ PRO, SP12/47/2, 26, 46, 63, 81; 90/21.

latter year ships were delayed for many weeks at Danzig in retaliation for restrictions on Hanse exports, and by the autumn the Germans had ordered a boycott on trade with England. In 1558 no English ships passed through the Sound. Prussian support for the boycott soon waned and, although there are no Sound records for 1559, correspondence proves that a few English ships returned to Danzig.¹⁰⁸ In 1560 nine ships were recorded in the Sound, all visiting Danzig. In December of that year a group of English merchants obtained a royal licence to trade with the east country in foreign bottoms without incurring alien customs as prescribed by the navigation act of 1559.¹⁰⁹ Their suit alleged that they had always used strangers' ships, since English owners disliked the long, tedious voyage to the Baltic. Another reason put forward was that Eastland wares were 'very pestringe and grosse' and must be carried in 'great hulkes', of which England had but few. In fact, wares which supplied the main returns from Eastland had in the national interest been specifically exempted from the provisions of the navigation act. It may be supposed, therefore, that the 1560 licence was given so that for the present the merchants might export cloth in foreign ships without paying alien rates on it.

Elizabeth's first settlement of the Hanse problem led to an immediate increase in the number of English ships going to the Baltic. The average of movements recorded in the Sound between 1562 and 1569 was fifty-six eastwards and fifty-four westwards, but the respective figures are sixty-five and sixty-two without the years 1564–5. In these two years Denmark was restricting traffic because of its war with Sweden, and the average was then only thirty ships a year. From 1574 to 1603 the overall average of English ships recorded is ninety-four, though this comes down to seventy-six with the omission of the highly exceptional years 1578, 79, 86, 87, 95, 97 and 98. The latter resulted chiefly from unusually high grain imports. In these three decades there were no years, save that of the Spanish Armada, when the number fell way below the average. From 1562 the number of English ships visiting the Baltic each year was more than sufficient to carry the entire volume of denizen exports to that region and from 1565, at least, most undoubtedly went this way, even though the act discriminating against the use of foreign bottoms lapsed in January 1567. In 1565 English ships

¹⁰⁸ Sharpe, 'Thomas Sexton', pp. 110–11.

¹⁰⁹ *CPR*, 1560–3, pp. 8–9.

Table 19. *English ships recorded in the Sound tables, 1497–1603*

Year	Both ways	Year	Eastward	Westward	Year	Eastward	Westward
1497	0	1557	57	56	1583	83	81
1503	21	1558	0	0	1584	89	91
1528	57	1560	9	9	1585	63	66
1536	69	1562	51	52	1586	197	196
1537	102	1563	71	73	1587	254	259
1538	50	1564	33	33	1588	41	41
1539	25	1565	29	24	1589	78	79
1540	65	1566	87	77	1590	64	63
1541	42	1567	51	53	1591	70	72
1542	71	1568	53	45	1592	63	61
1543	1	1569	76	72	1593	82	82
1544	1	1574	72	74	1594	86	91
1545	1	1575	81	79	1595	124	123
1546	13	1576	97	102	1596	72	73
1547	28	1577	83	80	1597	149	150
1548 ^a	0	1578	152	154	1598	111	110
		1579	105	103	1599	78	74
		1580	56	57	1600	85	77
		1581	74	73	1601	93	100
		1582	96	93	1602	68	70
					1603	67	64

^a To 9 March only.

carried the entire stock of Hanse cloth sent directly to Danzig and though this probably resulted from war conditions the situation was not necessarily unique. The Sound registers show some other years in which alien vessels declared no English cloth, as well as many in which the amount was negligible.¹¹⁰ A very different pattern of ship-chartering existed in the import trade. English merchants engaged foreign ships for a considerable part of their returns, to say nothing of the imports of aliens. In 1567–8 thirty ships were recorded in the port book as coming to London from Danzig, while the true number may have been as high as thirty-three. Fifteen of these vessels were English, five Danzig, two Hamburg, two Antwerp and six/nine Dutch. Two Königsberg ships came from that port. Only English ships (six) came from Narva. A similar dependence on foreign ships throughout the reign of Elizabeth is suggested by the Sound registers.¹¹¹ In the absence of many surviving English port books the registers also provide the only evidence about fluctuations in the volume and values of imports and exports through the Sound over long periods. The published tables have come in for considerable criticism, but Zins has made a valiant attempt to utilise them quantitatively and there is no need to repeat his performance.

English merchants regularly complained about attempts by the King of Denmark to increase arbitrarily the customs levied in the Sound, but they made comparatively little use of the alternative route to the Baltic (Hamburg/Lübeck). This is understandable, for the other way was not free from tolls, handling charges were higher and shipping less freely available. The removal of the Merchant Adventurers' staple to Hamburg led to an increase in the amount of traffic between there and England and encouraged some diversion of the Baltic trade. There is no indication of the volume, except in 1576–7 which may have been very untypical, since it more or less coincides with a drastic slump in the amount of English cloth recorded in the Sound (calendar year 1577).¹¹² The information is contained in a brief prepared by the Merchant Adventurers after they had been expelled from Hamburg and were trying to persuade the government to prohibit all trade with that port.¹¹³ *Inter alia* it gives the exports of non-Adventurers from London to Hamburg. These consisted of woollen cloths equivalent to around 3,400 short-

¹¹⁰ H. Zins, *England and the Baltic in the Elizabethan Era* (Manchester, 1972), table 7.3 (p. 169).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, tables 6.5, 6.6 (pp. 146–7).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, table 7.3 (p. 169).

¹¹³ PRO, SP12/119/47; 127/88. BL, Add. MS fos. 1079–85.

cloths, other textiles, including bays, cottons and worsteds, and some non-textiles. For the moment it suited the purposes of the Adventurers to ignore the fact that some of these goods may have been sold in Hamburg by interlopers, and they alleged that all of the woollens and most of the other goods were simply in transit to Eastland. They urged that there was no reason for such traffic to continue and that the English navy would benefit if all goods went through the Sound. They also claimed that it was a falsehood for Eastland merchants to pretend that by coming to Hamburg they avoided the attention of the King of Denmark, since they passed through his dominions on leaving the city. The Eastland merchants were not ready to abandon Hamburg simply because the Adventurers had been driven out. In April 1580, shortly after their incorporation, they petitioned the Privy Council that the port was necessary to a trade which they had built up with Spain and the Levant. Rather vaguely they claimed that they bought 'wax and other commodities in Lübeck, Lüneburg and places thereabouts', which they exported through Hamburg. Despite the opposition of the Adventurers the Council agreed that, if the Eastlanders gave a bond of £4,000 not to bring anything to England, they might send up to four ships a year from Hamburg to Spain or the Levant.¹¹⁴

The 1580 agreement allowed the Eastland Company to continue to ship cloth from England to Hamburg, provided that none was unpacked or sold there. However, it is unlikely that much use was now made of this route to the Baltic. Since the withdrawal of Englishmen's privileges the toll levied upon them passing cloth through Hamburg had allegedly been increased fivefold. Moreover, since the end of 1577 they had become *personae non gratae* in Lübeck. This was the result of injudicious attempts to export from thence to Narva, possibly to avoid the attention of the English Russia Company. John Chapell of London paid £1,200 for copper at Hamburg, only to have it confiscated when he came to ship it at Lübeck.¹¹⁵ Narva had fallen to the Muscovites in 1558 and despite the protests of Hanseatic and Scandinavian powers Englishmen began to visit the port, probably in 1563 when the first ship was recorded as returning from there. Trade peaked in 1566 when no fewer than forty-two out of seventy-seven English ships sailing westward through the Sound came from Narva. In these years the

¹¹⁴ APC, 11, pp. 439–41.

¹¹⁵ SPF, 1578–9, pp. 494–5. PRO, SP12/149/4–5.

trade was in the hands of private merchants but was opposed by the Russia Company, which in the mid-1550s had instituted a trade with Muscovy via the North Cape, the White Sea and Archangel. The Russia Company regarded the new Narva trade as a breach of its monopoly. At the end of 1566 the company, having failed to stamp it out, obtained a parliamentary decision that Narva was included in its monopoly.¹¹⁶ After that the trade declined, even though the company sent ships there and interlopers were not entirely frightened away. In 1574 thirteen English ships came from Narva, but none during the next three years. The attempt to revive the trade in 1577 failed. Four ships came from there in 1578, but in succeeding years a number which had made the voyage were seized by Swedes as they returned. In 1581 Russia lost the town and for the remainder of the sixteenth century only one English vessel is recorded as coming from Narva.

The frustrated attempt to revive trade with Narva coincided with a more significant change in the pattern of English activity in the Baltic. Until now interest was concentrated on Danzig, as it had been during the middle ages. In 1577 this city revolted against its Polish suzerain and trade came to a virtual standstill. Only six English ships were recorded as coming from there, compared with ninety-five in the previous year. The immediate gainer was Königsberg, from which sixty departures were recorded that year, whereas formerly there had been hardly any. Königsberg managed to retain some of this business, but in the long run the chief beneficiary of the turn of events was Elbing, which earlier had even less appeal to Englishmen than Königsberg. Elbing made its first overtures in 1578, but after the incorporation of England's Baltic Merchants as the Eastland Company in August 1579 negotiations began in earnest for the establishment in the town of a staple for cloth.¹¹⁷ Prospects for the staple were for some time in doubt. As well as the vigorous opposition of Danzig and the Hanse, and the lukewarmness of many Englishmen, the company feared that a staple could not succeed as long as aliens were free to export cloth to wherever they wished in the Baltic.¹¹⁸ In fact the abolition of Hanseatic customs parity with Englishmen had already eliminated the opposition. The cloth staple was successfully established, but

¹¹⁶ T. S. Willan, *The Early History of the Russia Company* (Manchester, 1956), pp. 67–77.

¹¹⁷ The early history of the Eastland Company is found most conveniently in Zins, *England and the Baltic*, pp. 54–133.

¹¹⁸ PRO, SP12/146/51.

Elbing did not gain a complete monopoly of returns to England. Its location and port facilities were not of the best and some merchants preferred to buy Polish goods elsewhere. From 1582 Elbing was recorded as the departure point for most home-coming English ships, but each year a fair sprinkling left Danzig and Königsberg. If it were possible to take account of the repatriation of English-owned goods in foreign vessels then the continuing role of the alternative ports would be seen to be greater. Danzig remained the outlet for Polish grain and in years of dearth in western Europe it was the destination of the additional English ships which sped to the Baltic. However, it was Elbing which provided Englishmen with the privileges which they had sought, and been denied, for a century and a half. They enjoyed these until the town was ruined by Swedish invasions during the Thirty Years War. From Elbing the Englishmen no doubt contemplated with satisfaction the discomfiture of their old Hanse rivals, but there still remained the Dutch. That is another story, however.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ For Eastland trade in the seventeenth century see R. W. K. Hinton, *The Eastland Trade and the Common Weal in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge 1959). J. K. Fedorowicz, *England's Baltic Trade in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1980). B. E. Supple, *Commercial Crisis and Change in England, 1600–1642* (Cambridge, 1964).