

**HENRY VIII AND THE BALTIC: AN ANALYSIS OF  
ANGLO-HANSEATIC RELATIONS FROM 1509 TO 1547**

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FROM 1509 TO 1547

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An Abstract  
Presented to  
the Graduate Council of  
Austin Peay State University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Arnim Ingo Gerstenmeier  
April 1970

## ABSTRACT

Although the reign of Henry VIII has been subjected to a number of intensive indagations, no study has ever been undertaken to analyze Henry's relations with the Hanseatic League. After a preliminary examination of available source material, the author has come to the conclusion that adequate primary sources exist for such an analysis.

By 1509, the Hanseatic League possessed a large number of commercial privileges accumulated since the twelfth century. Several times during the reign of Henry VIII, these privileges came under attack. But they remained in force at the king's death.

Hanseatic naval power was made available to the English king on several occasions during his thirty-eight-year reign. The friendly disposition of the League's fleet became essential after 1533 when Henry's foreign policy became anti-Catholic as well as anti-French. To follow such a dangerous policy successfully, it was first necessary to secure the assistance of the Hanse.

Henry VIII's foreign policy vis-a-vis his two most powerful rivals--France and the Empire--was critically affected by his relations with the Hanseatic League. War with either of these powers might have been disastrous if the

League had supported Henry's enemies. The Hanse towns remained on friendly terms with England throughout the greater part of Henry's reign. Although a number of commercial disputes arose between them, the Hanseatic League supported England in its continental wars. Its aid prevented Henry's enemies from securing a preponderance of naval power. Henry needed the Hanseatic League. He was willing to go to great lengths in peacetime in order to secure its assistance in war.



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April 1970

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Arnim Ingo Gerstenmeier entitled "Henry VIII and the Baltic: An Analysis of Anglo-Hanseatic Relations From 1509 to 1547." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts, with a major in History.

Wendell S. Morris  
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We have read this thesis and  
recommend its acceptance:

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Henry II "took the merchants of Cologne under his special protection" in 1157. From this date to the reign of Edward VI, north German commercial cities had extensive economic and political ties with the English state. As early as the thirteenth century, privileges granted to Cologne in 1157 had been extended to a large number of German cities; these cities eventually merged into a powerful trading bloc which dominated the Baltic and the North Atlantic until the sixteenth century. This bloc was the Hanseatic League.<sup>1</sup>

Hanse merchants, due to their economic and naval strength, were able to obtain extensive trading privileges from English kings. In 1303, Edward I granted the merchants of the Hanseatic League substantial reductions in customs duties. These reductions were made at the expense of English merchants who were expected to pay the full amount. The duty on dyed cloth, for instance, was 24 d. for merchants of the Hanse and 28 d. for English merchants.<sup>2</sup> These privileges which the Crown granted to the Easterlings (as the Hanseatic merchants came to be called), were never fully acceptable to English commercial interests; nevertheless, the Hansards



continued to enjoy their rights until the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

The Hanse carried on a large volume of trade with England during the fifteenth century. Hansards imported metals and wines, and by the latter part of the century, were in control of nearly one fifth of England's cloth export.<sup>4</sup> This trade was carried on through the London Steelyard (Stahlhof) which served as the English headquarters for the Hanseatic League after 1320. By 1475, the Steelyard was given to the League as a permanent trading center and it became a virtual fortress.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of the monopoly enjoyed in the Baltic by the Hanse towns during the reign of Edward IV, English merchants sought to enter the territory of the Hanseatic League. These merchants were not permitted to trade in the Baltic. The Hanse towns detained a number of Englishmen, together with their vessels and goods. By 1447, Edward had reciprocated by suspending all Hanseatic rights in England. Hanse goods were seized and a number of Easterlings were arrested.

Yet England's first attempt to break the monopoly of the Hanse was destined to ultimate failure. Reasons for this failure lay not only in the struggle with the Hanse, but in disturbances on the continent which brought the English cloth trade to a near halt. In any case, the overwhelming power of the Hanse, combined with disruption within his kingdom, forced Edward IV to acquiesce to the treaty of Utrecht

in 1474. This trade agreement forced England to make additional concessions to the Hanseatic cities who refused to recognize the right of English merchants to trade with Hanse-controlled towns.<sup>6</sup>

After the treaty of Utrecht, the Hanseatic League continued to monopolize the Baltic trade.<sup>7</sup> Although Henry IV obtained a grant for partial trade with Danzig in 1491, this monopoly was not effectively challenged until the sixteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

Prior to the reign of Henry VIII, English relations with the Hanseatic League were more economic than political. The period of the 100 Years' War and the internal Wars of the Roses left English kings few opportunities to treat on a diplomatic level with this predominantly Baltic power. In the reign of Edward IV, as we have seen, there was the first real attempt made by the English to deal with the Hanse on an equal footing. It failed miserably.

Henry VII was the first English sovereign to follow a vigorous and highly successful commercial policy. Through his dealings with the Netherlands and with the organization of the Merchant Adventurers during his reign (1497), he was able to curb the Hanse's control over the English cloth export. However, the Hanse's predominance in the Baltic remained unchallenged.<sup>9</sup>

During the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547), a number of important changes took place in Anglo-Hanseatic relations which now took on a political more than a commercial



character. This is not to say that commerce was not carried out between these two powers. What did occur was a transformation in the internal structure of the English monarchy which, when coupled with a coincident shift in the Baltic balance of naval and commercial power, caused Anglo-Hanseatic relations to take on a predominantly political tone.

## Chapter 2

### CARDINAL WOLSEY: THE EARLY YEARS

The earlier years of Henry's reign saw few changes in commercial and political relations between England and the Hanseatic League. Royal "recognizance" was given to the merchants of the Steelyard in 1509.<sup>10</sup> In 1510 there were some forty-seven merchants and sailors of the Hanse in England.<sup>11</sup> They dealt in a wide variety of commercial activities, trading everything from victuals to arms and ordnance. It is quite evident that Henry VIII was not willing to quarrel with the merchants of the "Guildehalla Teutonicorum," for in addition to providing numerous vital services, "the Hanse community in London was rich and law-abiding, and could be unconstitutionally taxed without making effective protest." One unfortunate German merchant was forced to contribute £1,000 to the royal coffers.<sup>12</sup> In spite of such periodic 'milkings,' relations between Henry and the League were, on the whole, quite good and remained so until 1511.

The session of Parliament which sat in 1511 enacted a number of laws concerning the manufacture and export of cloth. By an Act of that Parliament, the export of unfinished cloth was forbidden.<sup>13</sup> The Easterlings considered these acts an



infraction upon their commercial privileges and were unwilling to yield to them. They complained the English were not abiding by the letter of the treaty of Utrecht which, they claimed, gave them the right to import all goods to England at low duties. Parliamentary statutes permitted the Easterlings to import merchandise only from their own cities at these privileged rates.<sup>14</sup>

While Parliament was making these changes in the commercial privileges of the Hanseatic League in 1511, a war broke out between Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and the duke of Holstein who was allied with the Hanse. During this war, an English ship "fell into the hands" of the Hanseatic city of Stralsund. The senate of the city realized the incident could do great harm to their relations with the English. They feared this might provoke Henry into entering the war against the Hanse. They ordered the ship returned to its owners and declared the willingness of the council to make restitution. A letter to this effect was hurriedly dispatched to London. Nevertheless, the ship's master, upon his return to England, obtained the arrest of a number of German merchants in London, among them several Stralsund men.<sup>15</sup> The Stralsunders had been among the first to protest against Parliament's trade restrictions, and many of them were jailed as a result of their activities. Several of those who were arrested during this crisis remained imprisoned for over a year.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the arrests, two Steelyarders,

Theodoric Schuttenbecker and Ludolf Butinck were forced "by oath, under penalty of £500, to give security that no merchant of Lübeck, Rostock, Stralsund, or Wismar residing at the court called Staleshof [sic] should leave England or export goods" until compensation had been made for the English ship. When word of this reached Stralsund, the senate dispatched George Sibutus to England to treat with Henry for a just settlement of the matter. Sibutus spoke with the king at Woodstock and "on bended knees presented . . . letters to him, beseeching a favorable answer." But Henry instructed the envoy to go to Cardinal Wolsey, his minister, who was fully informed on the matter. Upon reading the letters which Sibutus had presented to the king, several of which had been sent by the duke of Guelders who had offered to intercede in the Hanse's behalf, Wolsey stated bluntly that "your reverence has presented to us the letters of an unknown prince," and added that neither he nor the king wished to "have anything to do with him."<sup>17</sup> This obviously false excuse was perhaps motivated by hostility of the English merchants toward protestantism. In any case, the Hanseatic envoy, curtly rebuffed, returned to Stralsund to report his failure to the senate. The German merchants who had been arrested remained in prison and English relations with the Hanse continued to be tense.

By 1514, relations with the Hanseatic League had grown quite bad. In response to the English commercial policy undertaken by Parliament in 1511, the towns of the

Hanse set up their own restrictions on the English merchants who enjoyed limited trading rights in Hanse towns. These merchants took their protests to the king. The Hanse, they claimed, took away their "liberty of going where they please." A new toll of 105 d. each had been set on English merchants entering the territory of the Hanse and a toll of 1 d. on every 100 d. was set on all goods sent from Hanse towns to countries other than England. English merchants were not permitted to buy "arms and other sorts of merchandise" and the penalty for false declaration was increased three-fold for Englishmen. In addition to these restrictions on the export of goods, numerous tolls were set on English ships sailing to Hanseatic ports. English ships which were driven by weather into the ports of Holland, Zealand, Flanders and lower Germany were forced to pay a "Swige Toll." Each town had its own set of tolls and duties and it was not uncommon for a merchant to lose a good percentage of his profit because of them. English merchants who resided in Hanseatic towns were forced to hire German labor, and had to pay a tax of 20 d. a year.<sup>18</sup>

In response to these grievances, Henry sent a delegation to Bruges in 1514. Headed by Sir Thomas More and Cuthbert Tunstall, this commission was sent to negotiate an acceptable solution to the problem of commercial disputes. The delegates met with representatives of the Hanse but failed to come to any mutually acceptable arrangement. The situation continued to deteriorate.<sup>19</sup>



By 1517, general hatred for foreigners and grievances against the Hanse were manifested in a series of anti-foreign riots. The Steelyard in London was attacked during one of these incidents and only its high walls and the intervention of royal troops from the Tower of London prevented buildings from being torn apart by an angry mob. The riots continued for several days, and restrictions were placed on foreigners to protect them from the ill-tempered Londoners. Several Steelyard merchants were jailed on false charges; also, the payment of debts owed to the Hanse, totalling some £400,000 was ordered halted by Cardinal Wolsey who was decidedly anti-German in his attitude.<sup>20</sup>

Cardinal Wolsey appointed a second commission to go to Bruges and secure a compromise which would be acceptable to both parties. The four men that were chosen to undertake this mission were William Knight, John Husee, Sir Thomas More and John Hewster, the governor of the Merchants Adventurers. They were instructed to "settle the disputes between the company of England and the Teutonic Hanse." The delegation arrived at Bruges on the 5th of September, since the diet of the League was preparing to meet there shortly. Upon their arrival, the Englishmen were greeted warmly by the Hanseatic delegates who "saluted them in the name of fellowship, bringing them wine." However, the meeting of the diet was delayed pending the arrival of the representatives of Cologne. The delegates of Lübeck and Hamburg were already there, however, and a preliminary meeting was arranged between them



and the English envoys. They had now become six in number, having been joined by William Sampson and John Wiltshire. The delegates assembled at the White Friars in Bruges on the 8th of September.<sup>21</sup>

The English commissioners came to this preliminary meeting armed with an extensive array of books and bills of complaint which they presented to the representatives of the Hanse. They spoke of "great complaints of depredations upon the English." Exhibiting estimates of great sums of money extorted from English merchants, the envoys asked redress. In spite of these accusations, the atmosphere of this first meeting remained quite cordial. The English representatives informed the Hanseatic delegates of the king's benevolent disposition concerning the matter, and offered them ample time in which to consider the complaints. The delegates of Lübeck and Hamburg told the Englishmen of the "good mind and service the whole fellowship owed the king," and requested a delay, for the representatives from Cologne had been detained and would not arrive until the 10th or 11th.<sup>22</sup>

On September 14, the English representatives returned to the diet of the Hanse and requested that the League "set forth in writing the number and names of the towns that made up the body of the Hanse at the first grant of their privileges." The members of the diet stated that this had never been done before, but agreed to do their best to obtain the information. The question of league membership was one thing which the Hansards wanted to avoid; this question was basic

to the entire problem of Hanse trading privileges. The Hanse had argued that its privileges were very old and could not legally be revoked. More and his colleagues, in requesting the names of the league members, wished to establish the fact that the Hanse had grown larger since the original privileges were granted; on these grounds they called for reconsideration of the status of the Hanse in regards to its commercial rights in England. The representatives of the Hanseatic League wanted the old privileges retained; they stalled the proceedings, calling for additional time. Furthermore, they "claimed to have bought their privileges in England with their money and blood," and were determined to maintain them. The diet ended before any decision could be reached in regards to grievances of English merchants, and the list of League members was never produced. The question of privileges remained unresolved.<sup>23</sup>

While the diet was assembled at Bruges, the situation in the Baltic was becoming critical; Christian II, the newly-elected king of Denmark, had invaded Sweden in 1517 and had himself crowned king of that country in 1520. Christian had been allied with the Hanseatic towns during his struggle to secure the Danish throne, but his accession to the throne of Sweden posed a new threat to Hanseatic supremacy in the Baltic.<sup>24</sup> Realizing that the Hanse was becoming a threat to its own security, Denmark had on several occasions sought the aid of England, and although none was forthcoming, relations between Henry and the king of Denmark were cordial.<sup>25</sup> Trade

agreements were discussed as early as 1514 when Christian II requested that "Danish merchants . . . be admitted to trade in London, especially with cloth, as freely and fully as the Germans."<sup>26</sup> The Hanseatic League was highly critical of these proceedings and sought to curb the power of the same king whom they had assisted in his successful bid to succeed John of Denmark in 1514.

By 1522, the Hanseatic League was at war with Denmark. The League concluded an alliance with Gustavus Vasa who opposed Christian II in Sweden, and in 1523, he drove Danish forces out of Sweden and was himself proclaimed king.<sup>27</sup> Christian II again sought the assistance of Henry, but as before, none was given. However, Cardinal Wolsey, eager to see the power of the Hanse curbed, suggested to Charles V that he bring the power of the Empire to bear on Lübeck and the Hanseatic towns in order to put an end to their aggression in Denmark. In December of 1524, the Cardinal sent a letter to the diet of the Hanse, requesting that Lübeck "help the King of Denmark, and leave the duke of Holstein" whom the Hanse now supported as legal heir to the throne of Denmark.<sup>28</sup> These requests had little effect, either on the Emperor or on the Hanse; aside from these suggestions, England remained essentially neutral.

The political situation grew more complex when France, eager to find potential allies against Henry and the Empire, set out to secure the friendship of Denmark by placing trade restrictions upon the Hanse in France. Hanse merchants were



forbidden to "deal in wheat, salt 'ollrons,' harness and weapons of war."<sup>29</sup> Seeking the recovery of goods seized by the French, Perpoynte Devaunter, a merchant of the Hanse, was sent to France in 1522 with letters from the merchants of the Steelyard; restitution was promised, but restrictions remained in effect despite repeated protests by merchants of the Hanse.<sup>30</sup> Aside from these restrictions against the Hanse, Francis I did not directly support Denmark in its effort to defeat Sweden and the Hanseatic League; his position in Europe, between a hostile Empire and a potentially hostile England, did not permit such a rash enterprise.

England, like France, did not actively support either faction in this Baltic power struggle. However, Cardinal Wolsey did take advantage of the fact that the Hanse was committed to a war with Denmark. In April, 1523, the sale of woolens to aliens was restricted and a law was passed to forbid the sale of white cloth to aliens "under certain conditions."<sup>31</sup> Relations between England and Denmark remained good. In 1524, Wolsey negotiated with Christian for the purchase of a Danish warship (which later proved to be a rotten hulk). Also in that same year Dr. Henry Standish and Sir John Baker, representing Henry VIII, were sent to the diet of the Hanse at Hamburg to secure "the restitution of the king of Denmark," Christian II. This monarch was at that time in exile abroad enlisting support for return to power.

Baker and Standish informed the representatives of the Hanse that England wished to see the "restoration of the



king of Denmark," and added that if this was not soon accomplished, Henry was willing to take action against them. Wolsey had for the first time taken a positive stand against the Hanse. Frederick, duke of Holstein, newly-elected king of Denmark, and a Hanse ally, was informed of Wolsey's new position. He thereupon wrote to Henry, informing him that in exchange for English assistance, he would "support him [Henry] with his power." This feeble offer failed to elicit English support.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, Wolsey was considering sending Christian II some 5,000 men and even contemplated a year's loan to help the Danish king recover his kingdom.<sup>33</sup>

The dispute between Christian II and the Hanseatic League seemed to be drawing to an end in 1536. Christian had been forced to flee Denmark in 1523 and his uncle, Frederick, the duke of Holstein, was proclaimed king of Denmark. In 1524, Frederick was proclaimed king of Norway as well. But Charles V now openly sided with Christian II and called for the Danish estates to reelect their king. He also published an imperial ban against Lübeck and the other Hanseatic cities which had assisted in the effort to dethrone the legal Danish king. In October, Cardinal Wolsey, who was proceeding against the London Easterlings on charges of heresy, wrote to Lübeck, Hamburg and Bremen, warning them "not to resist the king of Denmark further."<sup>34</sup>

Relations between England and the Hanse were desperate by this time. Politically, Henry was now actively supporting Christian II, who was in Holland enlisting mercenaries for an

attack on Norway, in his war with the League. Commercial disputes continued and during the early months of 1526, Cardinal Wolsey proceeded to jail several Hanse merchants on charges of heresy. A number of Easterlings were tried because they were found to possess books written by Martin Luther and a few Danzig merchants were accused of Lutheranism. All of them claimed they were innocent; they were later released, but only after the payment of fines. The heresy trials did little to improve the situation.<sup>35</sup>

Claiming that they had been given the right, by the treaty of Nystadt (1521) to choose the king, whose throne was elective, the Hanse refused to recognize Christian II, who was still in exile. Backed by the Teutonic Knights, the Swedes and a good part of northern Germany, the League supported the duke of Holstein, Frederick, as king of Denmark. In 1527, Christian's position had not improved. The duke of Holstein sought the aid of Francis I, offering him the use of his fleet in war, and requesting that he persuade the Scots to abstain from helping Christian II.<sup>36</sup>

In February of 1528, Charles V sent an envoy, De Montfort, to London "to practice with the merchants of the Steelyard and turn them to the Emperor's side."<sup>37</sup> But this, like Frederick's attempt to secure the support of France, proved fruitless. The antagonists remained essentially the same. England, not wishing to become openly involved in the matter, remained aloof.

During 1531-2, Norway, which in 1524 had proclaimed

Frederick of Holstein king, was invaded by Christian II. But by 1533, the combined force of Norway, Sweden and the Hanse had smashed the Danish effort in Norway and Christian II was captured and imprisoned.<sup>38</sup> Frederick, the duke of Holstein, became the de facto king of Denmark; and Denmark, although now at peace, almost immediately became a threat to Hanseatic supremacy in the Baltic. Frederick was not content to play the role of a Hanseatic puppet; he was determined to follow his own economic and political policies, not those of Lübeck and the Hanseatic League. No sooner had he assumed the throne of Denmark than he made an alliance with Gutavus Vasa of Sweden who also sought to limit the power of the Hanse.<sup>39</sup>

The position of the Hanse again became precarious; Sweden and Denmark were determined to follow an anti-Hanse policy in the Baltic. France remained loyal to the imprisoned king Christian II and the Emperor, together with his Dutch subjects, was as hostile as ever. England alone remained uncommitted in this new Baltic power balance. An attempt had to be made by the Hanse to enlist the aid of this potential ally.



## Chapter 3

### THE DANISH SCHEME

A combination of forces had been at work in England since 1526 which by 1529 created conditions highly conducive to an alliance with the Hanse. Henry VIII had allied himself with Spain, and the two countries were at war with France in 1511. England was able to defeat Francis I in 1512-13. After 1526, however, England's military position had grown increasingly bad. The earlier successes against France were not repeated in 1526.

More important, Henry's marriage with Catherine of Aragon had not provided a male heir. By 1527, the king was determined to secure a new wife. Wolsey, the pro-Catholic and anti-German Cardinal, had been the driving force behind English foreign policy for two decades. But even he was not able to obtain an annulment of the king's marriage with Catherine. By 1529, he was removed from power on a charge of violating the statute of praemunire and died soon after.

Since Pope Clement VII was under the influence of Catherine of Aragon's nephew, Charles V, Henry was unable to secure an annulment of his marriage to her. To make the annulment easier the king had Parliament pass a bill removing the English Church from the pope's grasp and placing himself



at its head. This not only enabled him to secure a new wife, but also gave him the opportunity to tap the wealth of the Church.<sup>40</sup>

The Teutonic Hanse moved first in its attempt to secure an alliance. Frederick I died early in 1533. In May, Lübeck suggested the possibility of a combined invasion of Denmark, pointing out "the ease with which the crown of Denmark might be attained."<sup>41</sup>

Jürgen Wullenwever was an Anabaptist who had been in control in Lübeck since a democratic revolution in the city government placed him in power. He hoped, while the Danish throne was vacant, to build up Lübeck's power. This would enable the Hanse to determine the next king of Denmark, since the estates of Jutland had not yet assembled to choose the new king.<sup>42</sup>

Henry did not reply at once to Wullenwever's proposal. He warned the Hanse that Denmark and Holland were preparing to attack Lübeck and subjugate the city. Holland, allied with Christian II, was arming against Lübeck. By July, 1533, a large fleet prepared to sail against the Hanse towns. By this time, Henry seriously contemplated an alliance with the League. His council discussed the matter in August. It was decided that ambassadors would be sent to the "steddes of the Haunse [sic] Tutonyk" to make the arrangements for an alliance.<sup>43</sup> Before the envoys for this mission could be assembled, an event occurred in the English Channel which greatly affected Henry's relations with the Hanseatic League.

This event was the capture of three ships in the English Channel at the Downs, off Dover, on August 12, 1533. The captured vessels were an Imperial galley, a Biscayan ship, and a Flemish vessel. They were taken by a Hanseatic fleet of seven ships. The next day, by royal permission, the German fleet landed at Rye to take on supplies and refit for the homeward voyage. The Easterlings were instructed to sail at the next favorable wind.<sup>44</sup>

While the Hanseatic fleet was at Rye taking on supplies, a fleet of fifteen Dutch merchantmen sailed into the harbor to take refuge from a storm. Intent on destroying the Dutch ships, the Hanse fleet sought permission from the city government of Rye to land cannon with which to engage the Dutch vessels. The commander of the Hanse fleet, Marcus Meyer, came ashore to request such permission. It was denied and he was taken into custody by Sir Edmund Guildford, the Warden of the Cinque Ports and detained in Dover Castle on a charge of piracy.<sup>45</sup>

Learning of his arrest, the Hanse fleet immediately put out to sea. In London, the king ordered the merchants of the Steelyard to make ready several ships to insure that the Hanse fleet was out of English waters. He forced the Easterlings to sail after the fleet, threatening them with the confiscation of all their English possessions if the three vessels which the Lübeckers had seized were not returned.<sup>46</sup>

Although the three ships were not returned, the king did not carry out his threat to confiscate the Easterlings'

goods; this threat was made primarily for the benefit of the Imperial ambassador, Chapuys, who passed on the information to Charles V. Henry was considering an alliance with Lübeck and its Hanseatic allies, and he obviously wanted his true intentions to remain secret.

Marcus (or Marx) Meyer, the captain of Lübeck, was brought to London soon after his detention at Dover. He offered to obtain the return of the three ships if the English would permit him to return to Lübeck on parole. The king and council would not accept his offer. Instead, they dispatched a merchant of the Steelyard to go to Lübeck with the king's demands for the return of the seized vessels.<sup>47</sup> In the meantime, Marcus Meyer was well treated in London. Either through eloquent persuasion or by tempting him with a new intrigue in the Baltic, Meyer won the favor of the English king.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, there are no records of the conversations between the two during Meyer's stay in England. From subsequent events, however, it must be assumed that some offer of alliance was made by the captain. It is equally as clear that the Lübeck senate was not aware of the dealings between Henry and Meyer. When the Easterling envoy returned from Lübeck in October, he carried word that the senate "had no doubt but that he Meyer was not present when that bold crime was committed."<sup>49</sup> In December, a second envoy arrived with Lübeck's assurance that "everything taken from the English, Spaniards, and any others but the Dutch would be restored."<sup>50</sup> Obviously, the Hanse was not aware of the fact



that plans for an alliance were in the making in London.

During his stay in England, Captain Meyer was treated as an honored guest, not as a pirate. The king's secretary, Thomas Cromwell, honored him several times by banquets. Meyer was also made a Knight of the Rose by the king, who gave him a chain valued at some 500 ducats. Henry further gave Meyer an annuity of 250 crowns and treated him with "great familiarity" while he stayed in London. Chapuys viewed these proceedings with skepticism. He thought that Henry was dealing with the German "either because he has offered to send him men and ships, or because he Henry is very anxious the Lübeckers should not make a treaty with the Hollanders."<sup>51</sup> It is true that Henry's position vis-a-vis the Empire was greatly strengthened by Holland's quarrel with the Hanseatic League. This kept Charles V busy with a war in Europe. Furthermore, by going along with the League's desire to gain an ally, he could play the Hanse off against both Denmark and the Empire, who had made an agreement with each other. Thus he could improve England's diplomatic bargaining power.<sup>52</sup>

By January of 1534, Meyer had returned to Lübeck with plans for an alliance between Denmark, Lübeck, and England against the pope. Jürgen Wullenwever immediately dispatched an envoy to the diet of the Hanse which was assembled at Hamburg to discuss the Dutch question. This envoy was sent to make sure that no settlement between Holland and Lübeck took place. A second envoy was dispatched to London.



Wullenwever wanted to know if Henry would "venture to lay out such money as demanded by Lübeck for the enterprise to win and subdue the realm of Denmark." Lübeck required enough money to wage war against Denmark, but promised to "repay the double of said money to the King's Highness within the first year." If Henry refused the adventure, the envoy was authorized to inform him that Christopher, the count of Oldenburg, would become "tributary to the King's Majesty" if he would change his mind. Furthermore, Meyer had persuaded Wullenwever to make Denmark tributary to Henry if he did not choose to take the crown himself, in which case the count of Oldenburg would be put up as a candidate to the Danish throne. However, Henry demanded more assurance. He informed Meyer that he was well aware of the fact that the enemies of Lübeck were out to get the throne for themselves, adding that he now must be "assured that he could rely on keeping it when gained."<sup>53</sup>

Henry was unwilling to commit himself to a rash policy of aggression in the Baltic. Instead, he sent Sir Thomas Legh, William Paget and Dr. Barnes to Lübeck, Poland, Denmark, and Prussia to keep the way open for a future alliance. This mission was also secret. Chapuys informed Charles V that the purpose of the envoys was to prepare the way for a commercial conference and treaty.<sup>54</sup>

Needless to say, the Imperial ambassador was incorrect in his report to his king; Legh and Barnes were instructed to arrange for a conference to be held in London in June. The

envoys were empowered to offer the Hanse a loan of 20,000 gold angels with which to carry on the war against the duke of Holstein in Denmark. In response to Henry's new alliance scheme, a commission from the Hanse was sent to London in June.<sup>55</sup>

The Hanse delegation was instructed to make the necessary arrangements for an offensive alliance against the pope and was empowered to discuss the long-standing problem of trade disputes.<sup>56</sup> The Hanse delegation arrived at London in six ships, three from Hamburg and three from Lübeck. It was apparent from the beginning that the two cities, though they were members of the same confederacy, viewed the situation quite differently.<sup>57</sup> The Lübeckers were eager for an all-out war against Denmark; their servants were clad in red livery with bands of yellow and white satin. The motto on their sleeves read, "Si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos?" The representatives of Hamburg were eager to provide for a peaceful settlement; their servants were dressed in black and displayed the pious legend, "Da pacem, Domine in diebus nostris."<sup>58</sup>

Heading the Lübeck delegation was Dr. Adam von Pack (Pacaeus); the Hamburg delegates were led by Dr. Aepinus, who arrived after the main body of delegates. The ambassadors of the Hanse were received on St. John's Day at Hampton Court where they delivered their letters to Dr. Taylor, the Master of the Rolls. Dr. Taylor thanked the envoys for their letters, informing them that the king "considered the

fatigues of their journey would defer hearing their charge till Sunday following."<sup>59</sup>

The Hanseatic ambassadors of Lübeck and Hamburg were not agreed as to the ultimate objective of the English conferences. The envoys of Hamburg did not wish the war with Denmark to continue; Denmark controlled the Dutch trade, therefore, Hamburg sided with the duke of Holstein against Lübeck.<sup>60</sup> There was also disagreement over Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn. Dr. Aepinus, the chief of the Hamburg delegation, expressed the view that Henry's marriage with Catherine of Aragon was a valid one. He and his fellow Hamburgers were accused of trying to incite sedition and spreading false doctrine; needless to say, Aepinus and his fellow ambassadors incurred the king's indignation for their views on his marriage,<sup>61</sup> but this seemed to be the end the doctor had in mind. By alienating Henry, Aepinus hoped to eliminate the possibility of an alliance and therefore leave Lübeck isolated. This, he hoped, would insure a peaceful settlement.

The final agreements were made for the treaty between England and the Hanse July 2, 1534. Containing some fifteen articles, the secret treaty called for "free and mutual intercourse" between the two parties. Lübeck was bound to support Henry's second marriage to Anne Boleyn and a loan of 20,000 gulden was promised to Wullenwever to support Lübeck in its effort to remove the duke of Holstein from the Danish throne.<sup>62</sup> On Sunday, the 28th of July, Dr. Pack delivered a



two hour Latin oration during which he, according to Chapuys, "reviled horrible the authority of the pope, and praised inestimably this king for many things, especially for his great learning and enlightenment from God." This enlightenment, Pack added, would enable Henry to arrive at the truth "as to the authority of the pope and about his marriage." Dr. Pack expressed the opinion that Henry should not leave the matter of his marriage unavenged, that the king should not forget the "great injury the pope had done him in that matter." Chapuys was of the opinion that the oration was staged by the king. "There is no doubt," he maintained, "that when the king requested the Lübeckers to send hither ambassadors, he also furnished them with the matter of this oration." In any case, Dr. Pack was given ample rewards for a job well done.<sup>63</sup>

While the negotiations for the treaty with the Hanse were under way in London, events in Denmark were moving very quickly. On July 4, Christian, the young duke of Holstein (Frederick's son) was chosen king by the estates of Jutland as Christian III. This fact was not known in England at the time the treaty was being concluded. Dr. Barnes, the English envoy in Denmark, recommended that Henry form an alliance with Christian III. Barnes had been in Lübeck in February and was in Denmark at the time of Christian's election. He explained to Henry that Christian III was a Protestant and an enemy of Charles V. Barnes also pointed out that Christian had great influence among the princes of

Germany, to many of whom he was related. Such influence, he told Henry, would be very helpful in the future, especially in dealings with the Emperor. Christian was also in control of the western Baltic. Denmark was able to manipulate the Netherland trade and Christian's friendship was necessary if England wished to import naval stores from Holland.<sup>64</sup>

These were all good arguments, but Henry did not follow the advice of Dr. Barnes. He supported Ldbeck and the deposed king, Christian II, who was still a prisoner at Sonderborg. A party to reinstate the deposed monarch was headed by the count of Oldenburg who led an army to Zealand in June, 1534. By July Copenhagen had been captured. Scania too fell into the hands of the party which supported Christian II; its count, Christopher, swore fealty to old king Christian and many other provinces of Denmark followed suit. Things were going well for Wullenwever and his allies.<sup>65</sup>

In the meanwhile Henry VIII was having second thoughts about his alliance with the Hanse towns. The envoys of the League were still in London during August of 1534, waiting for the loan with which to carry on the war against Christian III. Chapuys noted that they were "weary of being kept here so long." Had it not been for the loan, they would have left long before; Henry had not yet agreed to the terms of the treaty. He refused to honor his agreement concerning the loan and stalled by offering the money only on condition that the Easterlings of the Steelyard "made it their own debt."<sup>66</sup> This is not what the Hanse wanted, but Henry did not alter his

position. Was he thinking about the advice which Dr. Barnes had given him earlier? Perhaps this caused him to have second thoughts about entering a league against Christian III.

During the summer of 1534, the Hanse and its allies were in full control of the situation. In November, Henry sent Christopher Morres to Lübeck to assist that city in its war effort; Morres was an expert gunner, engineer and naval commander and it was felt that his experience would be of great assistance to the Hanse. Richard Cavendish, the king's envoy, was also in Lübeck in November; he was negotiating for the purchase of ships and horses. The two toured northern Germany and visited Copenhagen, which was controlled by the count of Oldenburg. Morres returned to England in November with "100 fellows, gunners and captains," apparently to train them in England.<sup>67</sup> The loan, however, was not yet paid; Wullenwever requested the money for it was urgently needed. The loan was finally made in the winter of 1534-5, and the sum of £40,000 was delivered into the hands of Lübeck and its allies.<sup>68</sup>

This loan did not come soon enough to prevent Christian III from laying siege to Lübeck and blockading the city by sea. Cut off from all outside assistance, Wullenwever was forced to come to terms; he agreed to allow Christian to assume the Danish throne. However, Lübeck and its allies were given the right, by a curious article in the treaty, "to aid count Oldenburg and the Danish towns in procuring the liberation of Christian II., without, however,



landing themselves at Sonderborg or violating the territory of Holstein." This stipulation gave Lübeck and its allies the right to liberate Christian II by ransom or to intervene in Denmark. The treaty signed, Christian withdrew to Denmark to deal with the count of Oldenburg who still had control of Copenhagen as well as a number of other Danish cities.<sup>69</sup>

Gustavus Vasa, the king of Sweden who owed his crown to Lübeck, invaded Scania (Southern Sweden) on behalf of Christian III early in 1535; by the end of January, the entire region was in his possession. Marcus Meyer, the Captain of Lübeck, was captured during this campaign and was imprisoned in Warberg Castle on the western coast of Scania. The nobility of the region were forced to renounce their loyalty to Christian II and count Christopher and to swear allegiance to Christian III. Victorious in Scania, Christian III sent an envoy, Peter Suavenius, to England informing Henry of the defeat of the Hanse. Suavenius also told Henry that his friend, Marcus Meyer, had been killed. Henry refused (and rightfully so) to believe that Meyer had been killed. He refused to believe in the defeat of Lübeck. Suavenius failed to secure the king's recognition of Christian III as the lawful ruler of Denmark. Henry expressed the belief that since Christian was not the true king of Denmark, he might himself one day accept the crown, if fairly elected. Suavenius replied that Christian III had been fairly elected by the estates of the realm, adding that his king wanted only Henry's friendship.<sup>70</sup> He offered the English king terms by

which Christian III would submit the matter to arbitration. The Danish envoy told Henry that his king "should be allowed to hold Denmark and Norway in accordance with the letters given to King Frederick," and should be given the Danish crown "without any derogation from the rights of the king." Suavenius informed Henry that if Lübeck and its allies submitted to arbitration, the Hanse would be awarded the full enjoyment of its privileges in Denmark and in Norway. Claims against Lübeck for damages in Denmark would be submitted to Henry for settlement.<sup>71</sup>

If Henry was prepared to support Christian III against the Hanse, Suavenius was empowered to promise him that all economic privileges formerly belonging to the Hanseatic League would be transferred to the English. Henry was also promised the island of Bornholm in the Baltic and the Orkneys in the North Sea. Christian even went so far as to suggest a marriage between his son John and Henry's daughter, Mary. Suavenius offered to send England 8,000 troops with which to defend the country.

These were not the only proposals Henry received during the early months of 1535. Albert, the count of Mecklenburg and ally of Christian II and Lübeck, also sought the king's assistance. Supported by Dr. Pack and Dr. Cavendish, he requested aid from Henry and offered to form a league between Lübeck, England and Mecklenburg. Henry did not agree to any of these proposals, though they must have been quite tempting. He did, however, agree to assist his friend,

Marcus Meyer, who in March, 1535, had managed to kill his guard and make himself master of Warberg Castle.

Meyer requested aid from the English king, offering him not only his castle in Scania, but also the cities of Copenhagen, Helsingör, Elbowe, Landskrona and Malmö. Wullenwever, unaware of Meyer's offer, also sought Henry's assistance and dispatched an envoy to England with proposals for a new alliance. Lübeck once more offered to defend Henry's second marriage against the Emperor and the pope. In addition to this moral support, Lübeck promised to send Henry twelve ships and 10,000 men "with no limitation against whom they are to be used." For the third time, Wullenwever offered Henry the crown of Denmark.

Henry did not reply immediately to these new and tempting proposals, but stalled the proceedings. Suavenius noted that "everything was done with delay and ambiguity." No agreement had been made as late as June. Suavenius, who was still in London trying to secure an alliance with England, reminded the king that Christian III was awaiting an answer to his generous proposals. Still Henry did not make a definite decision. He made Suavenius wait six weeks for word about whether he would help Lübeck or stay neutral.<sup>72</sup>

Unable to obtain a definite answer from Henry VIII, Christian III decided in February, 1535, to approach the king of Scotland for assistance. Reminding him of the "long alliance between Scotland, Denmark and France," Christian requested James V to send him twelve ships under the command



of Albert Bartuen and Albert Fagow. Denmark, he informed the king of Scotland, "is strong enough on land, but is inferior at sea," the Danish fleet having been seized "by fraud."

When asked by James why Scotland should aid Denmark, Christian responded that "surely he would not wish to see an Englishman king of Denmark."<sup>73</sup> James V undoubtedly took these offers of alliance seriously. But he either could not, or would not, assist Christian III on a scale which in any way affected the Baltic power balance.

While negotiations for various alliances were taking place, Henry organized a mission which would sail to Warberg Castle to assist Sir Marcus Meyer. Once again, Christopher Morres, the gunnery and naval captain, was chosen to lead the expedition. He was to carry some 100 soldiers, together with cannon and money, in two ships, to Warberg Castle which was being threatened by the armies of Gustavus Vasa. One of the king's best suits of armor was to be taken as a gift for Sir Marcus. This present was never delivered.

In September, 1535, the city of Warberg was captured and the castle was besieged by the allies of Christian III. The expedition from England was cancelled. The king and Privy Council were "greatly astonished" at the unfortunate turn of events. The English diplomats, Dr. Bonner and Richard Cavendish, had been with Meyer at Warberg, negotiating for a new alliance. They were taken into custody by the forces of Christian III who were besieging Warberg Castle. Bonner and Cavendish were given safe conduct to return to

England, provided they would not give further aid to Lübeck.<sup>74</sup>

The situation was an extremely grave one for the Hanseatic League. In July, Christian inflicted a heavy defeat on the forces of Lübeck at the naval battle of Fñnen. The Hanse lost ten warships to the enemy. Two generals were killed.

By now, Henry VIII had come to an agreement with Denmark, recognizing Christian III as the legitimate sovereign. To offset this new alignment of powers, Jürgen Wullenwever incited a full-scale peasant uprising in Denmark which was directed against the nobles who had elected the duke of Holstein king in 1534. Henry was "grieved that the Lübeckers had excited insurrection in Denmark" and when questioned on the matter by Suavenius, Cromwell disavowed any knowledge of an alliance with Lübeck. Henry was forced to take a position of neutrality. Lübeck was being defeated, his friend Marcus Meyer was besieged at Warberg Castle and Jürgen Wullenwever had earned a reputation as a revolutionary. Once again, Henry waited to see what would happen before he committed himself any further.<sup>75</sup>

Lübeck was in desperate need of assistance. By August, her armies and navy alike had been pounded unmercifully by Christian III and his allies. The Hanseatic League itself was breaking apart under the pressure of the Danish war. Dr. Barnes, who was in Lübeck to negotiate with Wullenwever, informed Cromwell that the "Duke of Holstein has

daily victories against the people of Lübeck." In a letter dispatched to London in August, he informed Cromwell that "the cities are separating." Wullenwever had been thrown out of power by a revolt and there was "great tumult" in Lübeck; the king of Denmark was laying siege to Copenhagen. These reports were all verified by diplomatic reports from Lüneburg. Danzig, Hamburg and several other League cities were pleased to see Lübeck humiliated and reduced in power; that city was a powerful rival, and one which they preferred a good deal weaker and less hostile to their commercial interests.<sup>76</sup>

While besieging Copenhagen, Christian III seized the English ship Maudly, which was on its way from Danzig to England. The ship's ordnance, stores and victuals were confiscated for use in the attack on the city, the defense of which was being managed by the count of Oldenburg. Several other English ships soon met the same fate; Chapuys informed Charles V that in September, between twelve and fourteen ships were seized at Copenhagen. The seamen were detained for over seven weeks. After three weeks, they were forced to purchase passports but once payment for these passports had been made, the Englishmen were told they could not return to England.

The seizure of these ships was, alleged the Hanse, "in consequence of the piracy of the Lübeckers." Were these actions an attempt to force Henry VIII to assist in the war on Lübeck?

King Henry was ignorant of this matter until after



the expedition to relieve Meyer had already been called off. When he learned about the detention of the English seamen and the confiscation of their goods and ordnance, Henry was outraged. Nevertheless, he realized that Christian III and Gustavus Vasa were now too strong for him to make a rash move in retaliation. Instead of mounting an expensive expedition to force Christian III to release the English ships and seamen, Henry took revenge on the London Steelyard. Frustrated, he used the Easterlings as his whipping boys. He ordered their ships and goods seized, informing them that their property would not be returned until his own ships were released by the king of Denmark.

After a few weeks, he released all but the goods belonging to the men of Danzig; Danzig was in league with Christian III and by pressuring them he hoped to force the Danzigers to persuade Christian to release the English vessels. After several weeks of deliberation, Christian informed Henry that he regretted the whole incident. The ships, he claimed, had been seized in his absence and without his knowledge or approval. He assured Henry that all but three of the ships would be returned immediately; three vessels were to be retained for use against his enemies in Lübeck. He blamed them for all the trouble. In the meantime, Christian sent Suavenius to France to ask Francis I for assistance against Lübeck. Suavenius was instructed by his king to make use of the French king's fear of the Emperor as a lever to obtain military assistance.

At the close of the year 1535, the future was very bleak for Henry's Baltic schemes. Unfortunately, things would get worse before they got better.<sup>77</sup>

Henry made a grave error in judgment when, in 1533, he decided to back the Hanse against Christian III. As early as July of that year he had been warned against such a move by his envoy, Dr. Barnes, who instead advised an alliance with the Danish king. He pointed out that Christian was a Protestant king and that he feared Charles V; Barnes believed that Christian would be a much more suitable ally than Lübeck and its allies.<sup>78</sup> Henry refused to listen to such suggestions; it is quite likely that he coveted the Danish crown for himself. It is more likely that he overestimated the power and solidarity of the Hanseatic League. The League would make an indispensable ally in case of a war with Charles V; he obviously believed that Lübeck and its allies were a combination which Denmark could not defeat.

In the final analysis of the king's motives, it must not be forgotten that the Hanse fleet was a very important factor in Henry's diplomatic planning; England's fleet was much too small to defend the island against an invasion by Charles V, and even Francis I posed a naval threat to England. Henry felt that he needed the assistance of the Hanse fleet to defend his kingdom.

Bishop Fox, who later served as the king's ambassador to Denmark, believed that Henry had two primary motives for supporting Lübeck against Denmark, "the one carnal, because

they were old allies,--the other spiritual, because they professed the truth of the Gospel and desire help."<sup>79</sup>

Regardless of his motives, Henry's main objective in making the offensive alliance with the Hanse was to "raise a thorn in the emperor's side and get some assistance against the pope." To do this, he chose to ally himself not with Christian's Protestantism, "but with men whose principles the German Protestants detested and he himself denounced and repressed at home."<sup>80</sup> Henry chose to make an alliance with Jürgen Wullenwever, the Anabaptist, who had assumed power in Lübeck at the head of a democratic revolution and who fomented a peasant revolt in Denmark in 1535!<sup>81</sup> Most German Protestant princes took alarm at his unorthodox political and religious activities and many of his former allies were forced, out of fear for their own positions, to give aid to Christian III.<sup>82</sup>

Henry was shocked to hear about the peasant rebellion but although he made overtures to Denmark when it appeared that Lübeck and its allies were near defeat, he continued to side with the Hanse. He was unable to grasp the true nature of the situation and failed to realize that unless he intervened with active military and naval support, the cause of Lübeck and its allies was hopeless; but Henry "was still living in a fool's paradise" in September, 1535.<sup>83</sup> He planned to aid Marcus Meyer by sending him one hundred men and two ships when ten times that number would have failed to stave off defeat.



Jürgen Wullenwever was removed from power by a coup in September, 1535. His plans for creating a "federation of Protestant municipalities by which he hoped to dominate Denmark and Norway" smashed, he was placed in confinement and racked into submission. He was later hanged as a heretic. The loan of £40,000 which Henry had paid out to Lübeck was repaid by 1543; in the final analysis, Henry VIII had lost very little in his bid to control the course of events in Denmark. Henry succeeded in protecting England, but in the end, his Baltic schemes, whatever they were, came to nothing.<sup>84</sup>

After September, 1535, Henry seemed to favor Christian III in his Baltic policy; at the same time, however, there is evidence to show that his hopes to assist Marcus Meyer (who was still besieged in Warberg Castle) and Jürgen Wullenwever were not dead. More will be said about this point later. But the fact remains that Henry was in no position actively to support his unfortunate allies. The domestic situation in England was critical in August and September. There was a large wool surplus and an extremely high rate of unemployment. Inflation continued to hamper the economy at an unprecedented rate.<sup>85</sup> These circumstances, and the hopelessness of Lübeck's position forced him to cut off aid to his former allies. That is not to say that he abandoned them completely; Henry obviously felt some moral responsibility to Wullenwever and Meyer. As will be shown in greater detail below, he actively opposed the persecution

of his ill-fated friends as criminals and heretics. Yet the fact remains that his rhetoric did not save either of them from the executioner's rope.

## Chapter 4

### HENRY AND THE NEW BALTIC BALANCE

Early in 1536, Henry VIII decided to accept Suavenius' proposal on behalf of Christian III that Henry arbitrate between the Hanse and the new king of Denmark. He sent bishop Fox to meet with the Danish king and his chief ambassador, Suavenius, at Smalcald. Suavenius informed Fox that if the king of England would now agree to help Christian, his sovereign would "in general council help him in return against the bishop of Rome."<sup>87</sup> Christian would also agree to enlist the support of the king of Sweden and the dukes of Holstein in the issue of religion. Such support is exactly what Henry was looking for; upon learning of Christian's offer of support, he immediately dispatched Bonner and Cavendish to return to Denmark and make the preliminary arrangements for the agreement. They were also instructed to secure the release of thirteen English ships which had been in Christian's hands since September of the previous year.<sup>88</sup>

Christian agreed to the release of ten of the ships but persisted in his demand to retain the other three; he agreed to pay for these. He also agreed to submit the dispute with Lübeck to arbitration, and requested a loan of



£100,000. He was aware of the fact that Henry had supplied Lübeck with a similar loan and requested a like sum with which to carry on his wars. In exchange for this loan, Christian promised Henry "aid by water and land" as repayment and offered him the small island of Farraay in the Orkneys.<sup>89</sup> This was quite a change from his previous offer of all the Orkneys.

In a conversation with Cavendish, Christian expressed his fear that Lübeck might seek to obtain the assistance of Charles V. He added that the Emperor was a wolf "who would as gladly bite an English sheep as a Danish ox." The Emperor, he maintained, was using Lübeck to gain a foothold in Denmark. By playing on Henry's fear of imperial domination, Christian wished to gain concessions from the English king; this plan of action was as unsuccessful with Henry as it had been with Francis I in February of 1535.<sup>90</sup>

In discussing the king's divorce and remarriage, king Christian told Cavendish that he had been told that Anne Boleyn "was a husbandman's daughter, and of no nobility." This statement, which Henry read in February, did little to improve relations between the two sovereigns; nevertheless, it was arranged that Suavenius would come to England and make the final arrangements for a treaty of mutual assistance.

Since the summer of 1535, a strong desire for peace existed among the leaders of the Hanseatic League; the war was going badly and, as pointed out earlier, many Hanse towns were opposed to the war against Denmark. The Hanse leaders

assembled at Lübeck in August to attempt a solution to the Danish problem, but no decision was made at that time. In January, 1536, Dr. Bonner and Richard Cavendish sent instructions to Dr. Adam Pack (who had been in Henry's employ since March, 1535), informing him that Henry favored a peaceful settlement of the dispute between Lübeck and Christian III.

A diet was assembled at Hamburg to settle the matter. The elector of Saxony, the Landgrave of Hesse, and the cities of Bremen, Hamburg, Lüneburg, Magdeburg, Brunswick and Hildesheim were prepared to act as mediators. The states who were favorable to Lübeck's position included the cities of Rostock, Wismar, Sonden, Copenhagen and Elbowe. A compromise peace was concluded; the settlement placed Christian, the duke of Holstein, on the Danish throne. The delegates also agreed that "damages suffered by both parties are to be borne." While Lübeck agreed to these stipulations, the delegates from Copenhagen and Elbowe left the diet hall; they and the representatives of Albert, the count of Oldenburg, and Christopher, the deposed count of Scania, refused to agree to such a settlement. They stated bluntly that they had been given the power only to negotiate for the release of Christian II, and to examine the rights of both parties. They were not empowered to make peace.

When the "hold-outs" refused to negotiate, Lübeck was given the task "to persuade Albert, prince and count of Oldenburg, either by words or money, to make peace and leave Denmark." The count of Oldenburg still held Copenhagen and a

few other Danish towns including Elbowe; he was given forty days to come to an agreement with Christian, and make peace. Bonner and Cavendish, the English observers at the diet, remarked that this was highly unlikely.

The arbitrators finally agreed to give Lübeck compensation for its forfeiture of the right to determine the Danish king; Lübeck was awarded the island of Bornholm (which Christian had offered Henry) for 100 years and 15,000 gold pieces. In addition, the treaty which that city had concluded with Christian III in 1535 was declared void. Hostilities between Lübeck and Christian III were brought to an end, but, the count of Oldenburg still held out in Copenhagen. Only force would make him give it up.<sup>91</sup>

After the conclusion of the diet, Christian sent an envoy to England to conclude the arrangements for an alliance with Henry; the envoy again warned Henry that Charles V and the Burgundians "wished to have an interest in Denmark." He told the English king that the Emperor did not want the Danish war stopped until the duke of Holstein (Christian III) was thoroughly defeated. Charles V continued to support Christian II and sought to obtain his release. Christian III maintained that this was only a pretext to seize the Baltic kingdoms, "whence he can injure all his neighbours and principally overcome Germany."<sup>92</sup>

In spite of these repeated warnings, Henry did not agree to an alliance with Denmark; he procrastinated again and stalled for time. Christian III was coming to the end of



his patience. Determined to pressure Henry into agreeing to a treaty of mutual support, he informed the English king that the thirteen English ships which had been seized in 1535 had been impressed "in accordance with old custom, to serve in the present war" against the supporters of Christian II. On these grounds, he now refused to release any of the vessels, but promised Henry full compensation at the conclusion of the war.

Instead of taking the logical course of an alliance with Denmark, Henry again made overtures to Lübeck. He wrote to Christopher, the archbishop of Bremen, requesting that he be lenient with Jürgen Wullenwever who had been imprisoned in Rodenburg Castle since August of 1535 when a coup forced him to flee Lübeck. The letter which the archbishop received was more in the form of a demand than a request; Christopher called the King's letter "a bitter and menacing accusation" against himself and his friends.

The archbishop told Henry that Wullenwever was a "seditious person who had violently usurped the government of the town of Lübeck, imprisoned the old rulers, robbed the church, and promoted the Lutheran heresy." He had also "raised war in Denmark and Holstein at the Emperor's prejudice," and attempted to establish Anabaptism in Lübeck and in other north German cities. Archbishop Christopher informed Henry that Wullenwever had led an unpopular attack on the monasteries in 1533 which, when coupled with the disastrous war with Christian III, forced him to flee to Bremen in

August when a coup threw him out of government. The archbishop promised Henry only that Wullenwever would receive a just and impartial trial.

This promise was of little value. Wullenwever was charged with heresy and with being in league with Charles V. Christian III sought his death on these charges. Cavendish and Bonner defended Wullenwever's actions; they told Christian that "it is easy to find a stick to beat a dog," and added somewhat sarcastically that "debtors willingly seek their creditors' lives." The latter remark was levelled directly at Christian who owed his throne to Wullenwever who had originally supported him against Christian II. Bonner argued that Wullenwever had done his best to keep Charles out of Germany and urged Christian to intervene in his behalf "for the sake of the Gospel cause" so that "all may unite against the insatiable and pernicious beast of Rome."

But Christian did not intervene; Wullenwever confessed to all the charges under torture, and was found guilty of treason and heresy. He died on the scaffold, another martyr sacrificed to the ambition and parsimony of the English king.<sup>93</sup>

Marcus Meyer had been a bit more fortunate than Jürgen Wullenwever; he was able to hold Warberg Castle but had been under siege since the summer of 1535. In January of 1536 he sent a messenger to England requesting artillery, two ships and 500 men.<sup>94</sup>

Henry considered these requests but refrained from

sending any help; instead, Meyer was encouraged "not to waver in his fidelity to the king of England, or change his purpose for any words or promises." Henry informed his friend that if he would "stand this siege bravely for a short period of time, he will gain numberless advantages." Bonner wrote to him telling him that there were many in Denmark who "would rather die than acknowledge the duke of Holstein as king of Denmark." This was all very encouraging to Meyer, but a few hundred men would have been much more appreciated than mere words.<sup>95</sup>

These dealings with Meyer and the support which he lent Wullenwever during his trial in Bremen led Chapuys to believe that Henry was "not content with the appointment made by the Lübeckers with the duke of Holstein." He believed that Henry might try to set up another king in Christian's place; Thomas Cromwell, who had called the Lübeckers "false villains and canaille" had also said that "there was another king alive with daughters, who might pretend to the kingdom." It is not clear whether this remark described Henry VIII or Christian II, both of whom had daughters; in either case, this statement was meant as a direct threat to Christian III. By threatening to oppose Christian III, Henry was simply trying to press for the release of the English ships which remained in the hands of the Danes.<sup>96</sup>

By April, Meyer's position was becoming precarious; he had been under siege since the summer of 1535, a total of ten months. No assistance had been received from England.



Sir Marcus informed Henry in April that there was a possibility of liberating Christian II from imprisonment and warned the English king that the Dutch were dealing with Christian III; the Hollanders, he said, "would like to have a finger in the pie." He repeated his request for assistance.

This time, a total of 20 ships was requested. If he received them before the Hollanders arrived, he could take Copenhagen, Malmö and Elbowe (Ellenbogen) which had been under siege by Christian for sixteen months.

In the event that Henry did not see fit to send the men and ships, Meyer offered to serve him in England. Sir Marcus was desperate now; the ring was beginning to tighten and the end was clearly in sight. Meyer was afraid for his life.<sup>97</sup>

Sir Marcus was forced to surrender in May; Henry had sent him nothing but empty promises but these had not prevented Christian from seizing the castle by storm.<sup>98</sup> By June, Meyer was placed on trial; he confessed that "he had come from Lübeck . . . secretly decreed war with Wullebewer sic " and that he had requested two ships and 500 men from Henry VIII to use against the king of Denmark. These and other confessions, though made under torture, were enough to secure Meyer's conviction as a traitor; he too was executed.<sup>99</sup>

With Meyer dead, it seemed that Henry's last hope to alter the course of events in the Baltic was gone. Lübeck and its allies were beaten, and the combination of Denmark and Sweden together with their Dutch and German allies

presented a formidable array of power. Henry was forced to accept this new balance of power which he, through his inaction, had helped to create. Before he could come to an agreement with either Francis I or the Empire, it became necessary for him to deal with Christian III.

Christian III was growing extremely powerful. By January of 1536, he had some 12,000 troops prepared to drive out the count of Oldenburg whose forces were besieged at Copenhagen; Oldenburg had only 6,000 men under his command. Bonner and Cavendish who, together with Bernard à Mela, were in Denmark as envoys of the English king, warned Henry that a definite possibility existed that Imperial forces might be sent to Denmark to assist the count of Oldenburg and Christian II. Bonner recommended that Henry send them money with which to bribe these Imperial troops. Their neutrality would insure Christian's victory over Oldenburg and his "hold-outs." No records exist to show that this money was ever sent; as it turned out, the money was not needed. Charles V did not send his armies into Denmark. Nevertheless, Christian III continued to warn Henry of Imperial intervention; in February, Suavenius told the English king that 80,000 Imperial troops were assembled at Bremen, waiting to be transported to Copenhagen to lift the siege. He charged that Oldenburg was dealing with Charles V and warned Bonner and Cavendish of the dangers which could arise from Imperial intervention in Denmark. It is clear that the story about the presence of Imperial troops in Bremen was merely a fabrication; Suavenius,

by warning Henry about the Imperial 'bogey man,' sought to draw England into a working alliance with Denmark. The loan of £100,000 which Christian requested from England had never been made, and although he had a sizeable armed force at his disposal, Christian still felt the need for additional aid to recapture Copenhagen. Oldenburg was in communication with the new government of Lübeck and in February, 1536, he requested aid against the Danes; by now he too was beginning to feel the pinch which a siege can cause. This aid was not forthcoming; Lübeck was in no position to interfere.<sup>100</sup>

By July, 1536, Henry had concluded a defensive alliance with Christian III. The Danish king was in complete control of his kingdom and, as Bernard à Mela reported in a dispatch from Lübeck, everything was calm in the kingdom, the king enjoying the "favor" of his people. However the Lübeckers had not given up hope for a league with England; in August one of their representatives arrived in London to discuss an alliance against the Emperor. Cromwell and the Privy Council listened to his proposals and later asked the citizens of London "what assistance they would give if the King should make war on the Emperor." The answer must have been less than favorable, because no alliance was concluded with the Hanse at this time.<sup>101</sup>



## Chapter 5

### THE SEARCH FOR ALLIES

When analyzing the events of 1536, it is difficult to gauge Henry VIII's true intentions. By making the alliance with Christian III, he seemed to have given up his desire to assist Lübeck. Yet his representatives--Bonner, Cavendish, à Mela, and Dr. Adam Pack--continued to discuss proposals for an alliance with the Hanse. These envoys, who had been acting as mediators in the Danish question, were using their neutral status as a front to hide their true intent; they were helping Lübeck.<sup>102</sup> In addition to diplomatic dealings, a great deal of trade was carried out between England and the Hanse towns, especially in naval stores and ordnance; Henry was not willing to give up this vital source of supply.<sup>103</sup>

In March, Dr. Pack was arrested in Gravelines in Flanders on charges of heresy; it was alleged that several "small books of Martin Luther and his adherents" were found in his possession. Pack had been on his way to meet one of Henry's envoys, who was returning from Lübeck. Henry was unaware of the fact that the arrest had been made under Imperial authority; he was eager to keep the matter as quiet as possible while negotiations for Pack's release were going

on. The English king had grown quite fond of the doctor and was afraid that he would be turned over to Charles V. John Aepinus of Hamburg shared Henry's fears; he informed Cromwell on several occasions that Pack was in severe danger of being executed as a heretic and urgently requested that his release be secured as soon as possible. Henry failed to save his friend; Pack was charged with heresy and conspiracy. Meyer's June confessions had incriminated Pack, and although these confessions (made under torture) were of dubious value, the doctor was found guilty of all the charges.<sup>104</sup> In December, 1536, he was drawn and quartered.<sup>105</sup> Henry did nothing to prevent this; he did, however, provide Pack's widow and children a small pension.<sup>106</sup> Pack was the last of Henry's German friends; the king had used them to further his own interests, and all of them died a horrible death.

Pack's death did not put an end to Henry's intrigues in the Baltic; he was, however, forced to tighten his alliance with Christian III. In November, Henry discovered that the Scottish king, James V, was preparing to send an embassy to Denmark. This ruler sought to conclude a treaty against England. When Henry was informed that James was planning to send this embassy to Denmark, he warned him not to make such a rash move; because of these pressures, the embassy was never sent. Henry was, nevertheless, forced to reconsider his position. An alliance between Scotland and Denmark was not an appealing prospect.<sup>107</sup>

The Hanseatic League still did not rule out the

possibility of an alliance with England. Henry was aware that the Easterlings were considering a new league with England, and he did nothing to remove the optimistic feeling of the Hanse that an anti-papal league might be organized. In July, 1537, Lübeck still owed Henry £3,333 and he sought to secure the balance of his loan. To do this, he had to remain on friendly terms with the Easterlings who carried on a bustling and vital trade with England.<sup>108</sup> In March, 1538, Henry decided that an alliance with the Hanse and other north German princes would be in his best interest. He proposed to send a messenger-at-arms, Dercius, to the consuls and senators of Lübeck to make the preliminary arrangements. Dercius was still in England in April, when the "Confederati et Protestantes, Rex, principes et status Imperii in causa religionis" (the Evangelic League) assembled at Brunswick to decide on strategy to resist Charles V and the pope. This league included Denmark, Saxony, Mecklenburg, Brandenburg, Brunswick, Pomerania, Anhalt, Nassau and Württemberg as well as a number of powerful Imperial cities; these included Hamburg, Lübeck, Bremen, as well as Strassburg, Augsburg, Ulm, Nürnberg, Halle, and Magdeburg. All were assembled at Brunswick to map strategy.<sup>109</sup>

The Protestants at the Brunswick diet discussed a number of important issues; among topics of consideration were the threat posed by the Turks and the danger of Imperial intervention sanctioned by the pope. Christian III was especially outspoken in his determination to resist Imperial



pressure; Henry informed the Danish king of his admiration for him, and added that he was "glad especially to see God's cause so preferred by kings and princes who are God's supreme ministers on earth." King Henry took the opportunity to inform Christian of his attempts to get back his money from Lübeck; he did not want Christian to suspect him of trying to conclude a secret alliance with the Hanse.

Dr. Legh was sent to Lübeck in May to negotiate the return of the balance of Henry's loan; he was also sent to sound out Lübeck's true views on religion. The doctor traveled to Lübeck and other Hanse cities to see if they were united in their religious stand against the pope. While Dr. Legh was in Lübeck in May, Charles V withdrew his support from Christian II and set up Frederick, the count of the Palatinate, as pretender to the throne of Denmark. The Protestant princes, pressured by this threatening gesture, were forced to take action; on 31 May, the ambassadors of Saxony, Luneburg, Hesse, Denmark and the Hanse were on their way to London to conclude an alliance.<sup>110</sup>

Earlier in 1538, in February, Henry had dispatched Christopher Mont, a German in his service, to meet with the princes at the diet of Brunswick to explain England's position vis-à-vis the Emperor. The German Protestants and Christian III all expressed the desire to conclude an alliance against the pope and invited England to join them. Now that Charles V seemed to be taking positive action to remove Christian from his throne, all the Protestant princes felt threatened. Their

ambassadors arrived in London early in June; they proposed "to make a defensive alliance only, in case they are attacked for refusing obedience to the Pope." Henry listened to their offers, but did not agree to any specific terms; instead, he bought time by proposing that Francis I be asked to join the league.<sup>111</sup>

Henry needed the friendship of the German Protestants; he could not carry out his religious policies "without some prospect of external aid in case of a possible coalition of princes" against him led by Charles V and the pope. He cultivated the friendship of the Evangelic League for this reason. Yet Henry was afraid of a direct confrontation with Charles V. The Emperor was not actually threatening England's security and Henry did not want to provoke his powerful rival. It was one thing to secure allies to defend against a possible Imperial invasion; it was quite another thing to be drawn into a war with Charles V over a struggle for the possession of the Danish crown. Henry was afraid that an alliance with the Evangelic League would incur Charles V's wrath and draw him into an unwanted life-or-death war with the Empire. This is one commitment which Henry could not afford to make without a good deal of consideration. Henry was not one to rush into an alliance; he stalled for time.<sup>112</sup>

While Henry was waiting to see what course of action Charles V would take against Christian III, he continued to make overtures to the representatives of the Evangelic League who were in England until October. While in England, the

German ambassadors conferred with English bishops on matters of theology. After this conference ended in August they dallied for two months hoping for a commitment from the English king. As usual, they were unable to obtain anything but vague promises from Henry. He continued to bide his time. The English king did assure them of his high regard for Lutheranism. Aside from this they received nothing.<sup>113</sup>

Determined to retain the friendship of the Evangelic League, Henry sent an embassy to Wismar in March, 1539, to discuss the possibility of an alliance. The embassy was headed by Dr. Barnes, who had favored an alliance with Christian III in 1534. He informed the Germans that Henry counted them "not among the least intimate of his friends." Barnes added that "friends ought to inform each other of their affairs."

While Barnes was in Wismar trying to determine what course of action the Hanse and its allies were preparing to take, Bernard à Mela was sent to Saxony to hire some 1500 mercenaries; among these troops were 200 gunners and 1000 "hackbushes" (infantry) who would be shipped to England to guard against a possible invasion. Christopher Mont and Dr. Barnes (who was sent to Hamburg later in March) continued to keep Henry informed about the plans being formulated by the Evangelic League and the Hanse.<sup>114</sup>

Early in May, Henry entered into renewed secret negotiations with Lübeck. That city later in the month dispatched an embassy to London. Henry was preparing for a



war with Charles V. England once again found itself in need of Hanseatic naval strength. Since England was receiving most of its gunpowder and ordnance from the Hanse, the League was an indispensable source of naval stores. In order to keep this source of supply and to obtain the support of the Hanseatic fleet, Dr. Barnes was sent to Hamburg in June.

Barnes had been in Denmark throughout May informing Christian of Henry's desire for an alliance; he remained in Hamburg for a time and returned to Denmark. Barnes spent the month of July flitting between Denmark and Germany trying to secure an alliance between England and the Protestant League. None of these negotiations bore fruit; Henry's procrastination throughout the fall months was having a telling effect.<sup>115</sup> The Evangelic League was beginning to doubt the English king's intent; his stand against English Protestants did little to improve their opinion of him. To offset this mistrust, Henry stepped up negotiations for mercenaries.<sup>116</sup>

## Chapter 6

### THE ROCHEPOT AFFAIR

During the closing months of 1539, a seemingly unimportant event which had occurred in the summer of 1537 threatened to undermine Henry's program to prepare England for a threatened war with the Empire. A truce had been concluded between England and France in July, 1536, and Henry wished to keep Francis I as friendly to England as possible.

Charles V was at the same time wooing the French king away from Henry. This prospect of an alliance between two powerful Catholic rulers was a nightmare to the English king. This nightmare came closer to reality in 1538 when an entente was arranged between the two countries. Henry, to keep from becoming isolated, had to retain the friendship of France. This became increasingly difficult between 1538 and 1539 as a result of the so-called Rochepôt affair, which took place in the English Channel, off the coast of Holland, in August, 1537.<sup>117</sup>

On the fourth of August, 1537, three Hanseatic ships were on their way from England to Hagen in the Netherlands. They consisted of two galleons belonging to the London Steel-yard and a merchantman from Hamburg. Met by three French

ships under the command of Pierre de Baycourt, and owned by François de Montmorency, lord of Rochepôt, they were attacked without provocation. The two Steelyard ships hove to and fled north in the direction of Scotland as soon as the French fired on them. The Hamburg ship, George, under the command of Hans Luben, received the brunt of the French attack; de Baycourt ordered his men to board the George and Luben's men, outnumbered by some eight to one, were quickly subdued. Two Hanse seamen lost their lives during the fray; several were wounded.

The next day, on the fifth of August, Luben and five of his crew, including all the wounded, were set adrift in a fishing boat. The George was manned by a French skeleton crew and three Hamburg men. The four ships left Luben and his wounded and sailed off in the direction of Scotland, presumably in search of more shipping. Before the shores of Scotland were reached, the French fleet ran into a severe storm which caused the George to become separated from the main body of ships. Before her crew could locate de Baycourt and his small fleet, two English ships, sailing out of Newcastle, came upon the George, and forced her to put in at Whitby. The duke of Norfolk, who was the Lord Lieutenant of the North, was informed that English ships had forced a 'prize' into Whitby. He reprimanded the two English captains and gave orders that the George was to be returned to French hands.<sup>113</sup>

In the meantime, Captain de Baycourt had landed in



England. He requested Norfolk to secure the return of what he termed his "lawful prize." This was not done. Representatives of the Hanse from the Steelyard in London had interceded with Cromwell; de Baycourt was jailed (for six months, as it turned out), and Cromwell gave orders that the German ship was to remain in English hands "till it was tried whether the Frenchmen had any right" to the George.<sup>119</sup>

Such occurrences were not uncommon in the sixteenth century; Monsieur de la Rochepôt, the owner of the French ships which had captured the George, had made himself rich from the plunder gleaned from the seas by his private fleet. His ships had been plundering the Baltic since 1535. When he learned that his latest prize had been snatched away, he became furious. He requested his king, Francis I, to intercede in his behalf to secure the return of the George and her cargo.<sup>120</sup>

But things were not to work out quite so simply; no settlement of Rochepôt's claim had been reached by June, 1539, when Cromwell finally arranged for a conference on the matter. On July 23, 1539, French representatives and Hanseatic envoys, together with legal counsel, met with an English panel of inquiry. This panel included Dr. Layton, Oliver Leight, Hugh Ryetand and several other lesser-known men of law. It was their task to hear testimony from the two parties to the affair, and, after due consideration of the facts, determine the jurisdiction under which the case would be tried.<sup>121</sup>

The French claimed that the George was a fair prize.

The ship had been taken in the Channel, off the coast of Holland, in waters over which the king of England had no jurisdiction. Furthermore, they were in possession of the Hanse ship when it was forced, by English vessels, to sail into English waters. The French representatives argued that on these grounds, the case should be tried in France. The representatives of the Hanse did not agree; they pointed out that "Hamburg men are as citizens of England" by a statute of Edward II; this right had been confirmed by Henry VIII. They argued that the French had in essence attacked an English vessel.

The board of inquiry was in agreement with this line of reasoning; Dr. Layton and his colleagues added that the case had to be tried in England because no king had the right to judge another king's subjects. "By law," he informed the Frenchmen, "kings and princes are emperors within their own dominions." And the Channel was king Henry's dominion. The case would be tried in England by the Admiralty. Francis attempted to reverse this decision, but to no avail. Henry was determined that this was a matter of honor. The French king finally agreed.<sup>122</sup>

Francis had been confident that the case would be decided in Rochepôt's favor. His ambassador, Marillac, had assured him that Norfolk's testimony would turn the tide.

As it turned out, his assurances were a bit too optimistic. The Hanse had a reasonable argument; the French claimed that their ships had "made towards them the Hanse



ships to know who they were, and fired a shot as a salute." Luben's ship, according to French testimony, "returned fire with some sixteen shots." One version of the French account of this incident had it that Luben's ship attacked the French vessels!

Cromwell was a bit skeptical about French testimony; he remarked to Bonner that it seemed to him incredible "that a Hamburg merchant ship wherein there were but nine or ten men should invade two ships and a brigantine of war, in one of which there were fifty men and the other eighty." The Hanse denied that any salute was given by the French; the Easterlings were quick to point out that their ships had been attacked by Rochepôt's raiders before and added that it was high time something was done about it.

The French were outraged. They told the court that the George carried a cargo of metal out of which guns might be made; this cargo was consigned to merchants in Zealand and Antwerp and was therefore classified as "forbidden merchandise." This cargo, they continued, did not belong to the Hanse anyway. They even tried to insinuate that Luben was not under the Hanse's jurisdiction!

The duke of Norfolk also testified in their behalf. He verified French testimony that the George had been forced to sail into English waters and that two Newcastle ships were to blame for this. This testimony did the French no good.

The Hanse obviously had the stronger case. Insisting that men of the Hanse were "as Englishmen," the Easterlings



argued that de Baycourt had no right to attack them. They were not at war with France; a truce had been concluded in 1536. In addition to this, they cited the maritime law which stipulated that "goods taken in lawful war if brought into a neutral country revert to their original owner." The court agreed with this opinion. It also agreed that the fact that the George had been taken outside England's jurisdiction did not make the vessel a lawful prize; the Hamburg men enjoyed the rights of Englishmen. The ship would be returned to the Hanse.<sup>123</sup>

Francis and Rochepôt were furious with this decision. They charged that Cromwell had "appropriated a great portion of the prize in question;" this charge Cromwell denied. The French king requested a reversal of the court's decision. As late as September, Marillac was in London trying to secure a reversal. Henry replied to these requests by informing Francis that "all men of law at London approve the reply formerly given." He refused to alter the Admiralty's decision.<sup>124</sup>

The Rochepôt affair strained Anglo-French relations at a time when Francis and the Emperor seemed to be on very good terms. Henry wanted to retain the French king's friendship; however, the friendship of the Hanse was also a very important factor in Henry's planning. A fear of invasion by Charles V swept England from August, 1538 through the end of 1539, and the Hanseatic fleet was an indispensable power factor for the defense of the island. England needed naval protection. The entente between France and the Empire was considered by

many Englishmen as a preliminary step towards an invasion.

In reality, Charles V was preoccupied with the Turks in Hungary who posed a far greater threat to his empire than the English heretics.<sup>125</sup>

## Chapter 7

### TRADE DISPUTES

By 1540, the threat of invasion had subsided. Now Henry was following a policy of "close adherence to the Emperor, partly because it was universally held to be the safest course for England to pursue, and partly because it gave Henry a free hand for the development of his imperialist designs on Scotland."<sup>126</sup>

Relations with the Evangelic League were not good during 1540; negotiations for an alliance were at a standstill in 1539. Christian had refused to return the English ships.

More important than this, the enactment of the Act of Six Articles by Parliament substantiated the Evangelic League's earlier fears that Henry was not honest in his attempts to negotiate an alliance. Dr. Barnes was recalled to London, and negotiations were finally called off.<sup>127</sup>

Relations with the Hanse also suffered. As the fears of invasion subsided, the need for the Hanseatic fleet diminished. English complaints against the League were once again aired by merchants who carried their grievances to the Privy Council.

The greatest number of complaints were lodged against the city of Danzig. English merchants claimed that "the



people of Danzig endeavor to prevent the English [from] buying wares in their town from foreign merchants."

These complaints were also filed with the Hanse council at Lübeck. The councillors dispatched a letter to Henry in July; they pointed out that it had been "the ancient custom since the founding of the city" for Danzigers to deny merchants (other than Hanse merchants) the right to purchase foreign goods in their city. The Easterlings added, however, that "if the English can prove any privilege it will be allowed them." The Hanse council did agree to "urge those of Dantzic [sic] to remove the prohibition." But aside from this, nothing concrete was done to improve the situation.<sup>128</sup>

In spite of the recurrence of disputes over trading rights, commerce between England and the Hanse cities flourished in 1540. Danzig continued to be an important supplier of timber and masts which were vital to England's shipbuilding industry. Other Hanse towns provided England with gunpowder, saltpeter and naval stores.<sup>129</sup>

Anglo-Hanseatic relations did not improve in 1541. By September, the Easterlings were afraid that Henry would revoke their privileges. They debated whether or not they should leave the country. But their privileges were not revoked; instead, English cities began to retaliate by setting up higher duties on the Hanse in England. These new duties were reflected in a long list of complaints which was drawn up by the Hanse towns in Lübeck. The Easterlings claimed that "privileges which the King's ancestors granted to the Teutonic

Hanse (Anse) are violated, to the injury of their traders and the threatened ruin of their college in London."<sup>130</sup> The Hanse, because of a suit made by the Fullers and Shearmen of London, was forbidden "to lade or carie oute of the Realme of Englande any clothes rowhe and unshorne undre pain of losse of the same."<sup>131</sup> Hanse merchants were required to purchase a special license in order to carry goods into England.

The Easterlings pointed out a statute of Edward II which provided "that no man should be arrested for another man's offence, but now they [Easterlings] are required to restore for losses sustained by English subjects" within the territories of northern Germany. The Hanse claimed that the League had no responsibility for such losses.<sup>132</sup>

English coastal towns placed high duties on the Easterlings. The treaty of Utrecht provided that they should pay no more than 3 d. on the pound on imported goods; yet English cities charged much higher rates. Hull was charging as much as 5 s. on the pound and Lynn and Britorne 4 s. on the pound. Ships from Hamburg and Bremen were singled out by the English; they were forced to pay a new harbor fee called the "King's price."

The Steelyarders also had complaints; they charged that the mayor of London "sometimes interrupts the freedom they have to lay their goods in any inn with the master's consent." There were other grievances; according to the treaty of traffic, Easterlings were to pay only one custom duty upon their arrival in England. In reality, they were being forced



to pay a new custom called "the custom of the place" at many port cities including Yarmouth, Southampton and Newcastle. These grievances are striking in their similarity to the complaints voiced by English merchants in 1514 (pages 6 and 7).<sup>133</sup>

In spite of these grievances, the Hanseatic League continued to enjoy considerable trade privileges in England. In July, 1541, the Privy Council issued an ordinance which prohibited "the lading of goods in England in any but English ships or those of 'la Hanse Thyoise.'" This ordinance was made into a statute in 1542 when Parliament enacted the "Act for the maintenance of the Navy." This statute, "though not expressly inhibiting strangers to lade in strange bottoms, implied such an inhibition." The Hanse, "having privileges granted by the King's ancestors to lade in their own bottoms," were exempted from this act. In fact, foreigners were forced to ship to and from England in English or Hanseatic ships (if available), or they had to pay extremely high aliens' duties. This statute was beneficial to the Hanse as well as to England.

The Hanse was also exempted from an ordinance issued in February, 1541, which prohibited the export of wood and foodstuffs. Although Easterlings were being required to pay higher duties than before, they still retained numerous special privileges and were exempt from a majority of English trade restrictions.<sup>134</sup>

On January 30, 1542, a group of disgruntled English



merchants levelled new charges at the Hanse; they claimed that the city of Danzig had taken their goods. The merchants informed the Privy Council of these charges and demanded that the city government of Danzig be made to repay their losses.

On February 18, several merchants from the Steelyard were summoned to appear before the Privy Council to answer these charges. The Steelyarders informed the Council that the complaints were not true, and added that even if they were true, the Steelyard could do nothing about it. They told Henry's councillors that none of their number were from Danzig and asked to be excused.

The Council informed the Easterlings that since they were "of the same body," they would be required to "write effectually in this behalf and make a direct answer" to the Council as soon as Danzig agreed to make restitution.<sup>135</sup> The Council claimed that since both the Steelyarders and the men of Danzig were members of the Hanse, the Steelyarders had "corporate responsibility" for the actions of their fellow Hansards. They were forced to write to the city government of Danzig and request that it repay the English merchants for their goods; in the event they refused to make good the loss, the Steelyard would have to do so.<sup>136</sup>

In March, the English Fishmongers Adventurers exhibited complaints against Hamburg and Bremen over English fishing rights in the North Sea.<sup>137</sup> It became clear that these disputes could only be settled at a conference of the affected parties.

In May, 1542 Henry and Charles V were discussing terms for a new alliance treaty. At this time the Imperial ambassador, Chapuys, was instructed by the Emperor to draw the Hanse towns away from Henry and thus weaken the English king's bargaining position.

Henry was made aware of this proposed attempt to undermine his position. He quickly called on the council of the Hanse to send him an envoy so that arrangements could be made for a conference to discuss trade grievances.

The envoy, Johann Rudelius, a doctor of laws and syndic of Lübeck, arrived in England in June. On the tenth of June he met with the Privy Council. After a series of discussions, the Council and Rudelius decided that Lübeck would repay at least half the remainder of Henry's loan by December. Arrangements were also made for a trade conference which was to be held at Antwerp on the second of November (All Saints' Day).<sup>138</sup>

In the summer of 1542, Francis concluded a treaty with Sweden, Denmark and Prussia. This was an offensive-defensive alliance. Francis was confident that Scotland, Saxony and several Hanse towns would join the alliance.

Seeking to win Henry over to this anti-Imperial alliance, he sent his ambassador, Claude de L'Aubespine, to England to discuss the matter with the English king. De L'Aubespine was instructed to keep Scotland's role in the alliance a strict secret. Henry refused to join the alliance. He claimed that Sweden was too weak, and Prussia too far away

to lend him any assistance in the event a war took place. He added that he really did not want war anyway; the Easterlings, he said, "were merchants who could very well do without war." He agreed to look over the articles of the pact once it was sent to him; until then, England remained uncommitted. In any case Henry was negotiating an alliance with Charles V, who would prove to be a much more potent ally than Francis I.

But Francis did not wait for Henry to change his mind. By the end of July, four French armies had invaded the Emperor's dominions. Luxembourg, as well as a good part of the Low Countries, was overrun.

This caused the trade conference at Antwerp to be postponed. In September, the council of the Hanse at Lübeck sent Henry a letter. "The Hanse cities," the letter read, "were prepared to send delegates "to Antwerp in October." The council complained, however, that "these unexpected wars at Antwerp and in Lower Germany rendered the place dangerous as well for them as for Henry's Councillors." The Hanse begged "to be excused until the war is ended." There was very little Henry could do but inform the Hanse that a conference would be arranged at a later date. Rudelius, the chancellor from Lübeck, was given a "reward" of £231 and sent back to Germany.<sup>139</sup>

The refusal of the Hanseatic League to hold the conference agreed to in London June 10 shows the weakness of its position. English grievances were quite legitimate. The



Hanse was afraid that a discussion of these grievances would lead to a modification of its long-standing privileges. This is one thing which the Easterlings had at all costs to avoid, if they wanted their one-sided trading rights to remain in effect. The talks were again postponed; the Hanse had once more evaded the issue. Henry was making preparations for a war in Scotland; for this he would need the assistance of the Hanse fleet. The grievances were temporarily overlooked.<sup>140</sup>

## Chapter 8

### SCOTLAND: THE FINAL STRUGGLE

Henry's designs on Scotland were endangered by Francis I's alliance with Sweden and Denmark. In January, 1543, James V sent Christian III no less than 50,000 crowns in exchange for military assistance. Henry knew of this transaction. He therefore had good reason to suspect that Denmark would intervene in his war with Scotland.

In February, he sent an envoy named William Watson to Denmark via the Low Countries. His mission was to see exactly what preparations, if any, were being made by Christian III for a war of intervention in Scotland. Watson's spy mission would also take him to several Hanse towns where similar observations were to be made. Watson was instructed by Henry to "feel the Duke's Christian's intent and spy the preparations."

Watson was arrested before he got to Denmark. He was taken into custody in Utrecht and jailed as a suspicious person, in March, 1543. Henry asked Chapuys to intercede with the queen of Hungary, who was ruling the Low Countries in the name of her brother, Charles V, for his release.

While negotiations for Watson's release were under way, Henry sent several letters to different cities of the

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Hanse, requesting information about Denmark's military and naval preparations. He also wanted to know if, as Francis I had boasted in 1542, any Hanse towns were in league with France and Scotland.

The city of Lübeck informed Henry that the rumors he had heard were untrue. The Hanse, the council assured him, "will never do or think anything to the prejudice of him or his kingdom."<sup>141</sup> These assurances were, as can be expected, completely worthless. In September, 1542, several Danzig ships had been sent to Scotland to aid in the defense of that country.<sup>142</sup>

The Hanse fought on both sides in Henry's war with Scotland. When the peace was finally concluded in July, 1543, the League agreed to put an end to its intervention in Scotland's affairs. The treaty, however, did not put an end to Henry's fear that Christian III would invade Scotland, which, since the war, had no king.

In June, William Watson finally arrived at Hamburg. He warned Henry that the king of Sweden was preparing to attack English and Hanseatic shipping in the Baltic, and informed him that the Danish situation was quite warlike. Christian III had detained some sixty Hanse ships as well as a small English vessel. It was obvious that large-scale naval preparations were under way. Over 500 Hanseatic seamen from the captured vessels were pressed into service with the Danish navy. Some 100 pieces of ordnance were removed from these ships and placed aboard twenty heavily armed Danish



warships which sailed for Helsingør on the 22nd of June. Here they were joined by twelve Swedish warships. It was clear that Christian was preparing for war. Unfortunately, Watson was not able to inform his king of the destination of this fleet.

Christian's intentions were unknown to Henry, but he suspected the worst. Watson had been instructed to question the Danish king to determine if he was still allied with France, and if so, against whom. But Watson never got to Copenhagen; he was therefore forced to rely largely upon rumors for the information which Henry received in his dispatches.

It was the common feeling in Lübeck (which hated Christian III) that Christian's ships, together with those of Sweden, had taken on some 10,000 "lance knyghttes" (landsknechts); the Lübeckers believed that this armada was bound for Scotland to make the duke of Holstein, Christian's brother, the king of Scotland. This seemed to be a logical deduction; the king of Scotland was dead, and Christian had an alliance with France which was at war with Henry. Henry's fears that Christian was about to strike were deepened when he received word that France had supplied Christian with 30,000 French crowns with which to carry out his expedition.<sup>143</sup>

The war with Scotland was officially ended at Greenwich on the first of July, but Henry learned quickly that the Scots were far from beaten. In March, Francis had boasted that "the duke of Holstein would send a great army to

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Scotland." No army had arrived by September, but this fact did not allay Henry's fears. Hamburg assured him that Denmark was not preparing to invade Scotland. The Hamburg senate informed Henry that Christian was simply preparing to defend his country against an attack by the Emperor, the truce between the two kingdoms having run out. Unknown to Henry, this information was very close to the truth.

In September, Henry sent George Everat to Denmark. He substantiated the earlier rumor that France had provided Christian with 30,000 crowns, but was not able to inform Henry about Christian's war plans. These plans were finally uncovered later that month when Denmark and Sweden attacked Holland. Christian took the opportunity to assure Henry that his country wanted only friendship with England.

This was certainly a relief to the English king. It was clear now that Denmark and France had made an alliance against the Empire; the attack on Holland served both partners. It kept Charles V occupied with another front, and it gave Denmark the opportunity to weaken an important commercial rival, Holland. This left Henry free to devote his full attention to his designs on Scotland while his enemies were preoccupied on the Continent.<sup>144</sup>

During the winter of 1543-44, Henry was making preparations for a war on two fronts. Scotland, supported by France, had repudiated Henry's peace treaty and marriage compact of July 1 and a union between Mary, the daughter of the deceased king James V, and a French prince was under



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negotiation.<sup>145</sup> The union of the crowns of Scotland and France under a French king was totally unacceptable to Henry who now prepared to make that union impossible by fighting France and conquering Scotland. To wage such a war, Henry once again sought the assistance of the Hanseatic fleet.

In March, 1544, Henry sent Christopher Mont to Germany to report on Charles V's activities. Mont reported that the Emperor was demanding aid from his imperial cities for the war with France and Denmark. Mont informed Henry that both Charles and Francis were totally committed to the war. This left Henry free to act.

Henry launched his expedition against Scotland in April, 1544. The expedition, numbering some 12,000 men, was under the command of the earl of Hertford. The Hanse supplied a large number of ships for this campaign and these vessels served honorably against Scot and Frenchman alike. Over twenty Hanse ships of war from Lübeck, Danzig, Hamburg and Bremen appear on the ships' rolls of the Admiralty for the year 1544. A number of these ships were lost during the war, and quite a few Hanse seamen were killed. Some Hanse ships even served Henry without pay. Among the many Easterling ships that fought in the war with Scotland was the Hamburg ship George, which Henry had kept out of French hands in 1540.

In addition to providing ships of war and seamen, the Hanse continued to fulfill its vital role as supplier of grain and war materials. Between February and August, 1544, the Hanse shipped over 100 lasts (20 tons) of saltpeter to



England. However, the Hanse also supplied the Scots who received most of their gunpowder and war material from Hamburg. The Easterlings were always quick to see the chance for a profit, and more likely than not took advantage of a situation.<sup>146</sup>

Henry's last war with Scotland was destined to continue long after the aging king's death. By the end of 1544, the situation was so bad that he was forced to seek additional military and naval aid from his German allies. Henry lacked sufficient forces to conquer the Scots who persisted on fighting to the last. The problem was compounded by the fact that Henry was not as wealthy as he had been during his earlier wars. An offer, made in October by several Hamburg men, to serve the English king on the seas, at their own expense, was greeted with enthusiasm by Henry, who found himself running short of ready money.

In November, Henry sent William Watson and John Dymock to Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck. They were instructed to hire as many 'landsknechts' as they could and have them shipped to England at the earliest possible moment. This was to be done using Hanse ships; it proved impossible. The situation in Germany had altered greatly since the war began. Christian III had been forced to make peace with the Empire, and Charles was putting a great deal of pressure on the Hanse to keep it in line.<sup>147</sup>

John Dymock was sent into the countryside of northern Germany to hire mercenaries. In July, 1545, he had made a

single arrangement for troops. The Bastard of Guelders had agreed to ship some 3,000 troops to England. These soldiers never reached their destination; Dymock was unable to secure ships to transport them. He went to Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck but was not able to hire a single vessel. The three towns "sit as neuter," he reported to Henry in August. Forbidden by the Emperor to send any German troops to foreign monarchs, the Hanse towns had apparently obeyed.

Bremen excused herself by informing Dymock that it could not provide any more ships for Henry's fleet because her vessels were ill-equipped and poorly manned. Hamburg not only refused to send more ships, but demanded that the Hamburg ships then serving with the English fleet be returned as soon as possible. The Hamburg senate did promise Henry that no ship over 200 lasts would be permitted to sail to France without a promise from the French king that the ship would not be used against England. This promise, poor compensation at best, was of little value.<sup>148</sup>

The Hanse towns were being put under pressure by the Emperor who wanted to make sure that Henry did not receive any military assistance. After the Council of Trent began its deliberations in 1545, this pressure was increased. A final attempt was made by Henry to enter a Baltic alliance. In March, Henry sent two envoys, Bucler and Monte, to treat with Denmark and the Hanseatic League for an offensive-defensive alliance.

Christian proposed a marriage between his brother,

the duke of Holstein, and either Mary or Elizabeth, but refused to send any troops to England. He maintained that these soldiers were needed for the defense of Denmark. Henry requested some 12,000 troops, but his envoys were unable to obtain them.

Christian was willing enough to make an alliance with the Hanse, but an alliance with England was out of the question if Henry demanded 12,000 troops. In the end, this alliance scheme, like all the others, came to nothing. The north German states were wary of Henry who had betrayed them many times before. England would have to go it alone.<sup>149</sup>

The last months of Henry's reign were uneventful as far as England's relations with the Hanse were concerned. The wars with France and Scotland left Henry little time to deal with matters of trade, and internal affairs took precedence over foreign relations. The Hanse continued to enjoy its many privileges until they were finally abolished in 1552 during the reign of Edward VI.



## Chapter 9

### SUMMARY

Anglo-Hanseatic relations between 1509 and 1547 did not always follow a distinct and definite course. However, it is possible to arrive at a number of conclusions as to the governing factors behind Henry's relations with the German Hanse.

Throughout the whole relationship of the Hanseatic League with England, there runs the thread of religion and Henry's marital problems. Time and again, the Hanse took advantage of the imperial hostility to Anne Boleyn and Charles V's defense of his aunt Catherine of Aragon, Henry's first wife. Reference was also made to a general council which should deal with the pope. The cities of the Hanse knew on what strings they should play in order to appeal to the English king.

He, on his part, rarely committed himself strongly to anyone in terms of military aid or money. Too crafty to be made a catspaw, he nevertheless guessed wrong in supporting Lübeck. He paid for this by seeing his allies executed--Dr. Pack, Wullenwever and Meyer. This was the fate of those entangled in the affairs of great princes--particularly when the princes declined to help in a serious way.

During the early years of his reign, the king's chancellor, Cardinal Wolsey, was in complete control of English foreign and domestic policy.<sup>150</sup> Relations with the Hanse during this period were hardly cordial. The Cardinal took the opportunity on several occasions to curb the power of the League in England. He nevertheless failed to gain concessions for English merchants who traded in Hanse territory. In spite of Wolsey's hostility, the Hanse's privileges continued to be enjoyed in practically undiminished form. A few restrictions were placed on the trade in cloth and Hanse merchants complained bitterly, but little changed during the early years of the period under study. English merchants remained under heavy restrictions in Hanse territory, and the Hanseatic traders demanded that they be permitted to enjoy the privileges granted to them in 1474.

By 1529, Cardinal Wolsey was removed from power; Henry was in complete control of English foreign and commercial policy. The course he followed in his dealings with the Hanse differed greatly from the policy which Cardinal Wolsey had followed. Henry was not able to retain the friendship of Charles V. The annulment of his marriage with Catherine of Aragon in 1533 and his new religious policy forced him to seek out new allies who would help England resist Imperial aggression. Henry sought the aid of numerous north German Protestant princes who would support his marriage to Anne Boleyn, and who would back him in his new religious policy. Furthermore, he felt that by supporting these Lutheran princes

he could in some way "precipitate civil strife in the Empire," and thus weaken his greatest enemy.<sup>151</sup>

Friendship with the Hanseatic League was necessary if Henry wished to follow both an anti-French and an anti-Catholic policy. In addition to supporting him in his marriage to Anne Boleyn, and in his religious policy, the Hanse could and did assist in the defense of England. This was a most vital consideration in 1533. The English fleet was too small to resist the naval power of Charles V. England needed the Hanseatic fleet to defend its shores. This consideration had been a major determinant of English foreign policy since 1509; relations between the League and Henry depended upon European politics. In early 1511, England was at peace, and did not need the Hanse, so the Easterlings of the Steelyard were restricted. As danger threatened, however, England sought friendship with the Hanse due to its strength in men and ships.<sup>152</sup>

During the French wars the navies of England and France were roughly equal in size and strength. England had to come to terms with the Hanseatic League, the navy of which could easily tip the scales of power in favor of either adversary. Henry, to retain the friendship of the Hanse during his wars with France, gave numerous concessions to the Easterlings.<sup>153</sup>

Henry's relations with the Hanseatic League between 1533 and 1536 were complicated by his dealings with Marcus Meyer and Jürgen Wullenwever of Lübeck. In spite of



repeated warnings from Dr. Barnes, Henry decided upon an alliance with Lübeck against Christian III and his allies. The Hanse was split during this Baltic power struggle. Danzig and Hamburg often sided with Denmark, and by 1535, Lübeck had been decisively defeated. It is clear that Henry's alliance with Lübeck was not a logical one; it is equally as clear that the English king was motivated by a desire to obtain the crown of Denmark, as well as his hostility to the pope. Lübeck was politically loyal on both issues.

The crown offered him by Meyer in 1533 never materialized. This could hardly have been a great disappointment as Henry never really took any positive steps to secure this prize. He nevertheless did assist Lübeck with that end in mind. The scheme was a failure, however, and by 1536, Henry was forced to come to terms with Christian III, who was in control of the approaches to the Baltic Sea. These approaches were vital to the Anglo-Hanseatic trade in timber and munitions, and to naval reinforcements for England from the Hanse.

Henry's Baltic ventures were only a side show when compared to his relations with France and the Empire, yet Anglo-Hanseatic relations were not insignificant. The Hanseatic League provided Henry with naval assistance on several occasions and trade with the Easterlings was extensive, especially in naval stores and ordnance. Henry could not afford to commit himself in the Baltic. As long as the

Hanse did not assist either France or the Empire with its naval power, he could cope with these two adversaries. This was the objective of Henry's Baltic policy and he achieved it. If England had not been able to secure the friendship of the Hanseatic League, the history of Henry's reign might have been drastically changed, especially if Charles V had decided to invade England after 1533.

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