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# *The Hanseatic League in Historical Interpretation*



GORDON SCOTT HARRISON \*

**D**URING the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, northern European commerce was dominated by an association of lower German city-states that constituted one of the most impressive political organizations of the medieval and modern worlds. The Hanseatic League, or Hanse, has a rich historical tradition in northern Germany that lives to the present day. As important members of the medieval League, Bremen, Hamburg and Lübeck continue to be known officially as Hanseatic cities.

Inside Germany the Hanse has been an object of intense scholarly study. With the exception of some Scandinavian attention to it, the Hanse has been virtually ignored by the academic community outside of Germany. This international neglect of Hanseatic history is doubly unfortunate, for it means not only that an important, fascinating and imperfectly understood institution is deprived of scholarly study, but that German scholarship has not benefited from intellectual cross-fertilization with foreign research. Indeed, Hanseatic scholarship in Germany appears to have suffered from a certain intellectual parochialism. When viewed from afar, the outlines of German research on the League reveal a peculiar congruence with the contours of German national political life. This paper is intended to provide some historiographical perspective on a century of Hanseatic studies in Germany.

The beginnings of energetic and systematic Hanseatic research may be said to date from the founding of the Hanseatic Historical Society in May 1870.<sup>1</sup> A political interpretation of the League

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<sup>1</sup> The occasion of the founding of the Hanseatic Historical Society was the 500th anniversary of the Peace of Stralsund, to which the historical societies of Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck had been invited by the town of Stralsund. Prior to this time Hanseatic research had been carried out chiefly by Johann Martin Lappenberg and Rheinhold Pauli. See David K. Bjork, "The Peace of Stralsund," *Speculum*, VII (1932), and Dietrich Schäfer, "50 Jahre Hansischer Geschichtsverein," *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, XLVI (1920-21).

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held sway over the first two generations of scholars after commencement of the Society. The political exterior of the League was viewed to the exclusion of all deeper economic and social aspects of it by the early historians. This narrow preoccupation was reflected in the major works of the period. Highest priority was placed on publication of the records of the Hanse diets (*Hanseeressesse*) and the various privileges, charters, treaties and agreements, correspondence and other documents of the major cities of the League (*Hansisches Urkundenbuch*).<sup>2</sup> While publication of these materials was a natural first concern of the Society, their significance in understanding the Hanse was deceptively overemphasized. It was never questioned that these documents, which highlighted internal and external political and legal relationships, provided a complete and comprehensive picture of the League. Self-confidence on this point was such that Dietrich Schäfer, a prominent historian of this early period of Hanseatic research, could suggest to an assembly of the Hanseatic Historical Society in 1908 that with completion of the publication of the diet proceedings and other assorted records the work of the Society would come to an end. "If the Hanseatic Historical Society continues to put emphasis on the word 'Hanseatic,' it will soon approach the end of its activity. It is going to have to make an adjustment in the not too distant future."<sup>3</sup>

A treatise which epitomizes the outlook prevalent among the first two generations of serious Hanseatic historians is Ernst Daenell's massive two volume compendium, *Die Blütezeit der deutschen Hanse*.<sup>4</sup> Daenell treated the formative period of the League — the last half of the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth — in a brief 56 pages, and dealt exclusively with the League's external relations, constitutional development and political disintegration in the remaining 1011 pages.

This predominantly political interpretation of the Hanse reveals certain intellectual presuppositions of turn-of-the-century German historical scholarship. It also reveals an undisguised proclivity to relate Hanseatic history to political questions of timely concern to national German society. German historians looked for and found in Hanseatic history lessons pertinent to the political problems of their time — namely the conduct of a vigorous German foreign policy and the solidification of the recently unified German government. In the writings of this early period, the

<sup>2</sup> A detailed description of these works is to be found in Carl Brinkmann, "The Hanseatic League," *Journal of Economic and Business History*, II (1930).

<sup>3</sup> Dietrich Schäfer, "Die Aufgaben der deutschen Seegeschichte," *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, XXXVI (1909), 87.

<sup>4</sup> Ernst Daenell, *Die Blütezeit der deutschen Hanse* (2 vols.; Berlin, 1905, 1906).

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Hanse was portrayed as an aggressive and forceful arbiter in northern power politics, and it was conceived less as a voluntary association of city-states than as a firm alliance of German peoples. It is generally acknowledged that there was no mere coincidence in the almost simultaneous founding of the Hanseatic Historical Society and the second German Reich.<sup>5</sup> When Dietrich Schäfer wrote that “the development of the Hanse was not directly furthered by the Emperor, but this development was inconceivable without him,”<sup>6</sup> he meant that a strong “national” German identification, emanating from common ties to the medieval Reich, was the cohesive bond in the Hanseatic union.

The first president of the Hanseatic Historical Society, Wilhelm Mantel, characterized the inspiration of the Society in these inauspicious terms: “Hanseatic history should not be used to pave the way for narrow concerns, but it should be turned to the rich treasure of municipal history . . . and the utilization which it offers for the present and for the promising future of Germany.”<sup>7</sup>

Originally the publications of the Hanseatic Historical Society tended to reinforce in a general way the legitimacy of an active German foreign policy and pointed to precedents of German political cooperation. But they soon came to have a more specific focus. The single-minded determination of the second Kaiser to make Imperial Germany a first-rate naval power evoked a strong response from historians of the Hanseatic period — the only period of German history in which precedent was to be found for teutonic mastery of the seas. In 1908 Dietrich Schäfer introduced a new series of medieval German studies with a phrase — “Wesen und Inhalt der Hanse ist ihre Vertretung Deutschlands zur See” — that bore a signal resemblance to another phrase of the day — “Deutschland zur See.” When Schäfer proposed to the Society that there was nothing more to know about the Hanse and that new fields of Hanseatic research should be found, he had in mind the study and glorification of German maritime history: “That a great people cannot maintain itself in the world without respect on the seas has become in the last decade a common German conviction. Dispute exists only over the dimension and form, ways and means. . . . It is our task, indeed our responsibility,

<sup>5</sup> Fritz Rörig, “Stand und Aufgaben der hansischen Geschichtsforschung,” *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, LXIX (1950), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Dietrich Schäfer, *Die deutsche Hanse* (3d ed.; Leipzig, 1925), 31, (first edition 1903). See also Heinrich Reincke, *Kaiser Karl IV. und die deutsche Hanse*, *Pfingsblätter des Hansischen Geschichtsvereins* (Lübeck, 1931).

<sup>7</sup> Wilhelm Mantel, “Der hansische Geschichtsverein,” *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, I (1871), 4.

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that this recognition be expanded upon. For the highest objective for us historians is to identify and understand the conditions of life for the present generation.”<sup>8</sup>

Thus was an interest in Hanseatic maritime and commercial history kindled shortly after the turn of the twentieth century. Walter Stein's and Walter Vogel's monumental studies of northern German medieval commerce were particularly indicative of this new interest,<sup>9</sup> as was initiation by Schäfer of the historical research series mentioned above.<sup>10</sup> Surprisingly, these new studies of Hanseatic commerce did not thrust to the fore an alternate economic interpretation of the city league: by fostering an image of the Hanse as a major maritime power, they did little damage to the prevalent political interpretation of the League itself.

In 1928 a new-comer to medieval German history, Fritz Rörig, published a book of essays, *Hansische Beiträge zur deutschen Wirtschafts-geschichte*,<sup>11</sup> that established its author as a leading historian of the Hanseatic League. By the time of his death in 1952, Rörig was the undisputed dean of Hanseatic scholars in Germany. From his chair of medieval history at Leipzig, Kiel and then Berlin, Rörig dominated Hanseatic research for two decades, shaping the historical perceptions of the northern German city league for both Nazi and post-Nazi Germany.

Rörig's career was begun with studies which gave him insight into the character and temper of northern medieval cities. Like the great Belgian medievalist Henri Pirenne, who attributed the growth of cities to the commercial revolution of the eleventh century and emphasized municipal innovations in the social, legal and political fields, Rörig saw the northern European commercial town as a new, vigorous and highly creative social form. In the medieval burgher he perceived a creature dissimilar from anything Europe had known to that point in its history. These concepts are expressed most succinctly in his now classic book, *Die europäische Stadt im Mittelalter*,<sup>12</sup> which shows that Rörig was

<sup>8</sup> Schäfer, "Die Aufgaben der deutschen Seegeschichte," 11-12.

<sup>9</sup> Walter Stein, *Handels- und Verkehrsgeschichte der deutschen Kaiserzeit* (Berlin, 1922); Walter Vogel, *Geschichte der deutschen Seeschifffahrt* (Berlin, 1915).

<sup>10</sup> *Abhandlungen zur Verkehrs- und Seegeschichte*. These were mainly doctoral dissertations of Schäfer's students. The best known is Rudolf Häpke, *Brügges Entwicklung zum mittelalterlichen Weltmarkt* (Berlin, 1908).

<sup>11</sup> Fritz Rörig, *Hansische Beiträge zur deutschen Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (Breslau, 1928).

<sup>12</sup> Fritz Rörig, *Die europäische Stadt im Mittelalter*, Luise Rörig, ed. (Göttingen, 1955). This book is often referred to as *Die europäische Stadt und' die Kultur des Bürgertums im Mittelalter*, from earlier editions. A somewhat clumsy translation has been published under the title *The Medieval Town* by the University of California Press, 1967, with an annotated bibliography by D. J. A. Matthew.

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interested in the medieval town as a distinct cultural and economic phenomenon, and its denizens as a new element and moving force in European social history. Since Rörig worked extensively with the early history of Lübeck, the leading Hanseatic town, it was perhaps inevitable that he would fit these insights to the Hanseatic League as a whole. As he did so, he was left with an interpretation of its history that also stressed the seminal importance of economic and social forces.

For the non-German reader, the outlines of Rörig's new interpretation can be seen in his essay on the Hanse in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1932).<sup>13</sup> According to this interpretation, long-distance trading supplied the impetus to Hanseatic unification by creating, directly or indirectly, a harmony of material interests among Hanseatic towns, a common set of social, cultural, political and legal values, and a system of active, close kinship ties throughout the northern commercial network. Rörig's concern with the inner dynamics of Hanseatic development led him to re-evaluate the standard chronology of the League. Older histories, such as Daenell's, treated the century after the Hanseatic defeat of Danish King Valdemar Attertag (Peace of Stralsund, 1370) as the heyday or "Blütezeit" of Hanseatic power. Rörig, on the other hand, came to view the century of expansion prior to 1370 as the real golden age of the League, and the century following it as a period of stagnation and decline. Rörig's penetration of the political surface of the League also led him to dismiss the significance of the Hanse's structural and constitutional features. Indeed, the increasing formalization of Hanseatic institutions after 1370 was taken as a sign of inner weakness, not strength. In general, Rörig's 1932 article reveals a revision of Hanseatic history that paralleled the contemporary revision of northern European municipal history — that is, strictly political, legal and constitutional explanatory concepts were rejected in favor of economic and sociological ones.

But the careful reader of Rörig's article will detect the elements of what could become an exaggerated ethnocentric interpretation of the League. ("During this century Germans of all tribes and callings began to migrate across the Elbe-Saale line, the previous eastern limit of German civilizations, and to take up their abode, usually with the consent of the Slav rulers, in the sparsely settled Slav territory beyond, where they cleared the forests and broke the heavy soil which had defied the primitive agricultural implements of the Slavs.") Alas, during the National Socialist interlude an interpretation of the Hanse emerged from

<sup>13</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1932), VII, 261-67.

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Rörig's research that had a pointed national bias. The political slogan of Dietrich Schäfer's day had been "Deutschland zur See." The slogan of Rörig's was "Drang nach Osten." If Rörig's post-1933 publications did not have the explicit purpose of legitimizing contemporary interest in areas to the east and north of Germany, they had that undeniable effect by seeming to establish an unassailable historical claim to German hegemony in Scandinavia and the Baltic.

Whereas Rörig's earlier writings had suggested that the socio-economic forces at work in northern Europe cut across ethnic and linguistic frontiers, they now focused on the uniquely German origin and effect of these forces. What was once a fascination with the medieval city and medieval merchant became a fascination with the medieval *German* city and medieval *German* merchant. His writings reveled in the striking accomplishments of the German trader, or "daring entrepreneur" ("wagende Unternehmer"), who peacefully but resolutely made his way in areas beyond the pale of civilization, clashing inevitably with power-hungry Scandinavian monarchs. These writings also marveled at the beauty and efficiency of the German municipality, and the swiftness of its eastward expansion. In this regard, Rörig traced a deliberateness and symmetry in the urban colonization process that distorted by exaggeration the facts of the process and imputed to the Germans a national superiority in the areas of economic, political and legal organization.<sup>14</sup>

Rörig attributed a civilizing mission to the pioneering German traders that has incensed Scandinavian historians.<sup>15</sup> He sought to establish the thorough Germanization of Scandinavian and southern Baltic trading centers during the Hanseatic period. A social elite of German merchants was shown to be the decisive

<sup>14</sup> In fact, this deliberateness appears early in Rörig's work. See his study of the origin of Lübeck in *Hansische Beiträge zur deutschen Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, and a work of one of his students, Paul Kallmerten, *Lübische Bündnispolitik (1227-1307)*, dissertation, Kiel, 1932. Contrast H. Reincke, "Ueber Städtegründung, Betrachtungen und Phantasien," *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, LXXV (1957); Hans Planitz, *Die deutsche Stadt im Mittelalter* (Graz-Cologne, 1954); Edith Ennen, *Frühgeschichte der europäischen Stadt* (Bonn, 1953).

<sup>15</sup> See "Deutsch-nordische Kulturbeziehungen im Wandel europäischer Geschichte," *Jomsburg*, IV (1940); *Hanse, Ostseeraum und Skandinavien; Völker und Meere* (Leipzig, 1944); "Wesen und Leistung der Hanse," *Die nordische Welt. Geschichte, Wesen und Bedeutung der nordischen Völker*, Hans Friedrich Blunck, ed. (Berlin, 1937). One Scandinavian scholar who has taken umbrage at Rörig's work is Axel Christensen, "Scandinavia and the Advance of the Hanseatics," *The Scandinavian Economic Review*, VI (1956).

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element in virtually all the major cities ringing the Baltic.<sup>16</sup> And studies were undertaken by Rörig's students to show that German-dominated municipalities in Slavic regions retained a pure German character by means of deliberately discriminatory policies.<sup>17</sup>

Not surprisingly, Rörig trotted out Dietrich Schäfer's theory of the critical role played by the first Reich in Hanseatic development and, with his own elaboration and embellishments, made it a central feature of his post-1933 interpretation of the Hanse. According to Rörig, the Reich united Germans everywhere in a powerful spiritual bond, and the political unity of the Hanse towns was traceable to the all-German unity inspired by the Reich.<sup>18</sup> This theory became conspicuously ancillary in Rörig's post-war writings. A clear misrepresentation of the social significance of the Holy Roman Empire, this somewhat strained and overworked notion did not survive Rörig.

A war-time edition of Rörig's writings, including some from the pre-Nazi period, featured those pieces which emphasized martial aspects of the League's external relations, were the least tempered in their enthusiasm for the social, cultural and commercial accomplishments of the Hanseatic traders at home and abroad, and generally exuded patriotic excess.<sup>19</sup> The ultimate expression of Rörig's interpretation was not published by Rörig himself, but by Ernst Hering, whose egregious history of the Hanse merely made explicit implications inherent in Rörig's work.<sup>20</sup>

The direction of Hanseatic research took a sharp turn after Germany's defeat in 1945. This development was not wholly unpredictable, given the radically new constellation of political forces impinging on post-war Germany and the distortions of Hanseatic research during the previous decade. Post-war Germany was struggling to prove itself a peaceful and cooperative segment of European society, and again the research of Hanseatic historians began to coincide with larger national purposes. Rörig himself was in the forefront of the movement to put Hanseatic research on a new footing: "Heraus aus der Isolierung," he wrote in 1950,

<sup>16</sup> See for example, "Die Entstehung der Hanse und der Ostseeraum," most readily available in a collection of Rörig's essays, *Wirtschaftskräfte im Mittelalter*, Paul Kaegbein, ed. (Cologne, 1959).

<sup>17</sup> Olof Ahlers, *Die Bevölkerungspolitik der Städte des wendischen Quartiers der Hanse gegenüber Slaven*, dissertation, Berlin, 1939; Paul Johansen, "Deutsche und Undeutsche im mittelalterlichen Reval," *Volksforschung*, III (1939).

<sup>18</sup> See Fritz Rörig, "Reichssymbolik auf Gotland," *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, LIV (1940). A second edition of Dietrich Schäfer's *Die deutsche Hanse*, which contained the early formulation of the Reich theory, was issued in 1943.

<sup>19</sup> Fritz Rörig, *Vom Werden und Wesen der Hanse* (Leipzig, 1943).

<sup>20</sup> Ernest Hering, *Die deutsche Hanse* (Leipzig, 1943).



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formulating a motto for the Hanseatic Historical Society that was a subtle reminder to his colleagues that histories with national biases are obstacles in the path of European reconciliation. ". . . an attempt at pure understanding should not stand alone," he wrote. "Hanseatic history as a concern of scientific research is not a thing in and of itself. Rather it should be a part of all German and European history."<sup>21</sup>

The contemporary state of Hanseatic research has been reviewed, somewhat uncritically, in several places.<sup>22</sup> As general surveys of current directions of research and as catalogues of unanswered questions about Hanseatic city growth, alliance formation and commercial activity, these articles are of undisputed significance. But without exception they fail to appraise critically the broad interpretive trends in Hanseatic historical research. These articles describe, with some disingenuity, how Rörig's work set the cornerstone of modern historical inquiry. According to them, the prime characteristics of Rörig's interpretation of the Hanse are its socio-economic orientation and its international or European outlook. The latter stem from the fact that Rörig no longer considered the Hanse a phenomenon peculiar to German history. In terms of its commercial function as well as the forces of its origin and development, the Hanse had to be envisaged as an integral part of the social and economic history of all of Europe.

These recent accounts of Rörig's scholarship represent a distinctly post-war assessment of that scholarship. Ahasver von Brandt, who acceded to the position of senior Hanseatic scholar on Rörig's death in 1952, has built selectively on Rörig's research, setting the tone for what might be called the "European" interpretation of the Hanse now holding the field in Germany. von Brandt has insisted that the origin of the Hanse was trade in its peaceful and prosaic forms, that membership in the League was a strictly voluntary proposition, that "national" political loyalties had not yet developed in Hanseatic times, and that the interests of the Hanse towns were economic in nature so that

<sup>21</sup> Rörig, "Stand und Aufgaben der hansischen Geschichtsforschung," 2.

<sup>22</sup> Klaus Friedland, "Probleme der Hanseforschung im letzten Jahrzehnt," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, XIV (1963); Ernst Pitz, "Hansische Geschichtsforschung, 1945-1960," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, XLVIII (1961); Rörig, "Stand und Aufgaben der hansischen Geschichtsforschung"; Ahasver von Brandt, "Grenzen und Möglichkeiten einer hansischen Gesamtgeschichte," *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, LXXII (1954); by the same author, "Recent Trends in Research in Hanseatic History," *History*, XLI (1956); Paul Johansen, "Umriss und Aufgaben der hansischen Siedlungsgeschichte und Kartographie," *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, LXXVII (1955).

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the League cannot be considered an arbiter in national power politics.<sup>23</sup>

Implicit in the current "European" interpretation of the Hanse is the suggestion that the League was a forerunner of contemporary European economic and political integration. An American enthusiast for the League, William L. Winter, who studied with the Scandinavian scholar Waldemar Westergaard at UCLA, has unconvincingly argued that the Hanse was a progenitor of the European Coal and Steel Community.<sup>24</sup> The cooperative pursuit of common economic interests by the lower German trading towns did lead to a degree of harmony in their political lives, but in a fundamental sense no conceptual kinship exists between the Hanse and post-World War II efforts toward European unification.

Contrary to much popular opinion, the Hanse cities themselves were not economically integrated. That is, the political integration of the League did not take place within the framework of either a free trade area, customs union, common market or economic union among the members.<sup>25</sup> Hanseatic traders were middle-men between the food and raw material producing areas of Scandinavia and the Baltic on the one hand, and the more densely populated, manufacturing centers of Western Europe on the other hand. They were typically long-distance traders ("Fernhändler") trafficking between markets widely separated in northern Europe, and wholesale dealers ("Grosshändler") shipping and distributing large quantities of goods. Cabotage, or "Nahhandel," was not altogether absent, but in contrast to "Fernhandel" it was of decidedly secondary importance. Aside from Lüneburg salt, which was in demand throughout northern Europe because of its accessibility and high quality, beer appears to have been the only major commodity produced by the Hanse towns and moved between them. And in the sale of this item local protectionism,

<sup>23</sup> For example, von Brandt has written: "The relationship of the Hanse towns to the Union of the Nordic Kingdoms [from 1397] is to be understood in [economic] terms: in fact, this is especially true of this relationship. Here we must contradict nationalistically colored historical interpretations, and state that there was in fact no natural political opposition between the Hanseatic League and the Nordic Union, in the sense of a struggle for national political power between German and Nordic. The Hanse towns did not think and act on a 'German' basis, but rather as towns, i.e. economically." Ahasver von Brandt, *Die Hanse und die nordischen Mächte im Mittelalter*, Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (Cologne, 1962), 32-33.

<sup>24</sup> William L. Winter, "The Hanse and the European Community of Coal and Steel," *American Journal of Economics*, XVI (1957).

<sup>25</sup> These terms are used according to definitions offered in Bela Belassa, "Toward a Theory of Economic Integration," *Kyklos*, XIV (1961).

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not free trade, was the rule.<sup>26</sup> The Hanse was an association of city-states explicable mainly in economic terms, yet paradoxically the set of economic interests common to the members were not *inter se*. The cities acted in concert to protect special privileges in a trading system external to themselves.

If modern economic patterns analogous to those of the Hanse are to be found, one must look to the western experience of colonialism and economic imperialism. Carl Brinkmann notes the essentially "colonial character" of Hanseatic commerce in his English language survey article.<sup>27</sup> Despite certain dissimilarities, he writes, ". . . the system of Hanseatic factories in northern Europe presents a marked likeness to the Dutch and English trading settlements in the Middle and Far East." Apart from Bruges, the trading settlements of the League (known as "factories" in English, or "Kontore" in German) were situated in primary producing countries which possessed no merchant marine, no native trading class, and strictly limited capital resources. For the most part these factories were trading outposts on the colonial model, enjoying extraterritorial protection and subjecting the commercial policy of the "host" country to alien influence. Modern German historians have dealt with this discomfiting analogy in two ways. Some have chosen to misrepresent the known facts of the Hanseatic commercial system: ". . . the Hanse expanded the power of the Reich to northern and eastern Europe and maintained it for centuries. It became the teacher of the English and Dutch, who in modern times were to spread over the whole world. But while the armed might of these two nations followed quickly on the heels of their merchants in order to gain colonial treasures, the Germans remained self-sufficient: they pioneered, settled, traded and raised their arms against law-breakers and disturbers of the peace — but they did not conquer."<sup>28</sup> Others have proffered the standard apology for colony and empire: to the ruthless exclusion of competitors and monopolistic practices such as price dictation "are opposed great accomplishments, such as the regular importing and exporting of goods, the extending of credit, and the general enriching of foreign culture."<sup>29</sup>

Current Hanseatic research in East Germany provides an interesting contrast to West German trends. East German studies have been largely preoccupied with the inner social development

<sup>26</sup> See Günther Bens, *Der deutsche Warenfernhandel im Mittelalter*, dissertation, Breslau, 1926; and Karl Pagel, *Die Hanse* (4th ed.; Braunschweig, 1965), 227.

<sup>27</sup> Brinkmann, "The Hanseatic League," 587.

<sup>28</sup> Hubertus Prinz zu Löwenstein, *Deutsche Geschichte* (Berlin, 1962), 171-72.

<sup>29</sup> Ludwig Beutin, "Das Wesen der Hanse," *Gesammelte Schriften zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte*, Herman Kellenbenz, ed. (Cologne, 1963), 6.

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of individual Hanseatic towns. Beginning in the fourteenth century, the towns were marked by increasingly rigid social stratification and finally by violent revolutionary conflict that broke neatly along class lines. Control of municipal government had always been entrusted to the wealthy merchant and business elements of the Hanseatic towns. While early in the life of these towns the commercial aristocracy ("Handelsadel") was fluid and its vigor maintained by the continual admission of new members, it later tended toward exclusiveness: membership became hereditary and power concentrated in the hands of a wealthy dynastic class. A former social harmony of the Hanse towns was everywhere eroded by the solidification of the commercial patriciate, and municipal revolutions were the consequence.<sup>30</sup> Schildhauer and other East German historians have worked to discredit the notion that these urban revolutions were random and directionless outbursts by the politically and economically downtrodden proletariat. Arguing along Marxian lines, they have demonstrated that in several towns the revolts were led by an urban bourgeois against the patrician families in convenient and unstable alliance with the proletariat.<sup>31</sup>

A historiographical survey of the Hanseatic League provides a lucid illustration of how influences presumably alien to the scholar's sphere can be rudely assertive. The founding of the Hanseatic Historical Society was coterminous with the founding of the second German Empire, and interests of the latter shaped to a significant degree those of the former. Hanseatic research

<sup>30</sup> Almost every Hanse city experienced some kind of outbreak after the beginning of the fourteenth century. Onerous taxation and the burdens of war were usually the immediate cause of revolt. The danger of urban unrest was apparently perceived by the Saxon cities as early as 1313, for a declaration of solidarity against it was included in an inter-city alliance of that year. An outbreak struck Magdeburg in 1330 and Helmstedt in 1340. Bremen was in the clutches of general disruption from 1365 to 1366; Cologne from 1370 to 1371. Braunschweig met with trouble in 1374, Hamburg and Stralsund in 1376, Göttingen in 1382, Reval in 1386, Anklam in 1386 and again a year later, and Stralsund for a second time in 1391. A major revolt swept Lübeck in 1408. Revolution also typified the northern commercial towns during the Reformation in Germany.

<sup>31</sup> Johannes Schildhauer, *Soziale, politische und religiöse Auseinandersetzungen in den Hansestädten Stralsund, Rostock und Wismar im ersten Drittel des 16. Jahrhunderts*, *Abhandlungen zur Handels- und Sozialgeschichte* (Weimar, 1959); Karl Czok, "Zum Braunschweiger Aufstand 1374-1386," and Eva Gutz, "Zu den Stralsunder Bürgerkämpfen am Ende des 14. Jahrhunderts," in *Hansische Studien*, Heinrich Sproemberg, ed., *Forschungen zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte*, Bd. 8 (Berlin, 1961). Historians of the Marxist persuasion throughout Eastern Europe have made a great deal of the class conflict of the northern trading towns. See, for example, *Walki Ustrojowe W Gdańsku I Toruniu Oraz W Niektórych Miastach Hanzeatycznych W XV W* (Internal Political Struggles in Danzig, Torun and other Hanseatic Towns in the Fifteenth Century), (Gdańsk, 1960).

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highlighted the League's maritime history during the period of Imperial Germany's quest for naval supremacy in the years prior to the outbreak of World War I. During the Nazi period research detailed Hanseatic occupation of the Baltic "Ostraum." Since the end of World War II, it has conveyed a distinct "European" flavor of the Hanseatic League. And in East Germany, historical research has converged on the internal class conflicts of Hanseatic towns during the years of the League's decline.

### ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SOURCES ON HANSEATIC HISTORY

A selected bibliography of relatively recent American research related to Hanseatic history, including unpublished papers and doctoral dissertations, has been compiled by William L. Winter, "Hansische Geschichtsforschung und Geschichtslehre in den USA," *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, LXXVII (1954). Two early books dealing with the Hanse, Helen Zimmern, *The Hansa Towns* (New York, 1895), and E. G. Nash, *The Hansa* (London, 1929), are devoid of scholastic value. Fritz Rörig's *The Medieval Town* discusses the Hanse in the context of municipal and commercial development in western Europe. It is perhaps the most useful publication for the non-German reader. Rörig's 1932 survey article in the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* is useful as a first introduction to the subject. (The 1968 edition of the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* dropped the Hanse as the topic of a separate article.) A comprehensive survey article on the Hanse that draws on contemporary German and Scandinavian research is by the British economic historian A. B. Hibbert in the 1968 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Valuable references to the Hanse and trading activities of Hanseatic towns are found in volumes II and III of the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*. Volume VII of the *Cambridge Medieval History* contains an article, "The Hansa," by A. Weiner that represents the older, pre-Rörig interpretation of the League. The two most useful and informative journal articles on the Hanse, replete with bibliographical data, are Carl Brinkmann, "The Hanseatic League," *Journal of Economic and Business History*, II (1930), and Ahasver von Brandt, "Recent Trends in Research on Hanseatic History," *History*, XLI (1956). The following articles deal with selected aspects of Hanseatic history, but together provide a general overview of the League: Ernst Daenell, "The Policy of the German Hanseatic League Respecting the Mercantile Marine," *American Historical Review*, XV (1909); Axel Christensen, "Scandinavia and the Advance of the Han-

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