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*An economic aspect of the collapse of the Anglo-Burgundian alliance, 1428-1442*¹

THE duke of Burgundy's *volte-face* by the Treaty of Arras (1435), which shattered his alliance with England, has rightly been considered one of the most decisive events of fifteenth-century European history. The consequences of that treaty fostered a more clearly separate and national development of England, the Low Countries, and France: it helped to doom the English to defeat in the Hundred Years' War and to the almost total loss of their French territories, which had engaged their energies for so long; it encouraged a virtually independent Burgundy to concentrate its growing power in the Low Countries; and thus it freed the French to develop a more unified, viable national monarchy. Not surprisingly, many historians have closely examined the military and political circumstances that encouraged Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy to desert the English at Arras and make his peace with Charles VII of France.² But no one has yet devoted as much attention to the economic conflicts between England and Burgundy, which also helped to undermine their fourteen-year-old alliance.

Economic discord resulted in part from Burgundy's territorial expansion in the Low Countries, an area long commercially vital to England. Already possessing Flanders, the richest of the principalities, Duke Philip the Good in the 1420s acquired the neighbouring counties of Namur, Holland, Zealand, Hainault, and finally the duchy of Brabant-Limburg. In uniting these lands under his rule, Philip the Good had to face a growing problem of conflicting economic interests in their commercial ties with England. The urban draperies, the most important industry in the Burgundian Lowlands, were then experiencing a crisis from their almost total dependence upon English wools, which were Europe's finest. Because of the industry's 'inelastic' demand, the wool export trade had become

1. I wish to thank Professor Harvey Dyck (University of Toronto) and Professor Peter Krosby (S.U.N.Y. at Albany) for their generous assistance and advice in the revision of this article.

2. Paul Bonenfant, *Philippe le Bon* (Brussels, 1944), pp. 33-70; J. G. Dickinson, *The Congress of Arras, 1435: a Study in Medieval Diplomacy* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 163 ff.; E. F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century, 1399-1485* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 260-4; C. A. J. Armstrong, 'La double monarchie France-Angleterre et la maison de Bourgogne, 1420-1435: le déclin d'une alliance', *Annales de Bourgogne*, xxxvii (1965), 81-112; Marie-Rose Thielemans, *Bourgogne et Angleterre: relations politiques et économiques entre les Pays-Bas Bourguignons et l'Angleterre, 1435-1467* (Brussels, 1966), pp. 49-61.

burdened with increasingly heavy taxes, which furnished the English crown with its major source of revenue.¹ By the late fourteenth century, the wool customs had risen to about 35 per cent *ad valorem* and so raised the production costs of the Lowlands' cloth industry that its sales dropped sharply in the depressed European markets of this period.² Moreover, the Lowlands' draperies suffered further losses of long-held markets to England's rapidly expanding cloth industry; for English cloth enjoyed a significant advantage in being produced from the same fine wools tax-free, while bearing only a minimal 2 per cent export duty. Worst of all, many towns and mercantile groups in the Lowlands welcomed this growing flood of English woollens.

This ruinous English competition in the cloth trade was a problem not easily resolved. To be sure, the powerful Flemish drapery towns of Ypres, Ghent and Bruges had succeeded in having English cloth permanently banned from their county by the mid-fourteenth century.³ But denying this cloth the great emporium of Bruges served only to divert the growing English cloth trade to various Dutch and Brabantine ports, chiefly Middelburg and later Antwerp. By the late 1420s, the Dutch and Brabantine drapery towns had become so concerned about the volume of English cloth imports that they demanded for themselves the same protection as the Flemish had long enjoyed.⁴ In July 1428, Philip the Good granted the Dutch leaders' demands in an ordinance prohibiting English cloth imports into Holland and Zealand⁵; the next month, his cousin Duke Philip of St. Pol imposed a similar ban for Brabant.⁶ This protectionist policy soon, however, encountered bitter opposition: the non-drapery towns of Middelburg and Antwerp and also the large Dutch mercantile marine found English cloth essential for their commerce. Antwerp and various Dutch towns, moreover, were then building an important industry in dyeing and finishing English 'white' cloths for re-export to Germany, the Baltic lands and central Europe; and, finally, the powerful Cologne Hanse had invested

1. Eileen Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History* (London, 1941), pp. 77-90.

2. Hans Van Werveke, 'De Omvang van de Ieperse Lakenproductie in de veertiende eeuw', *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Akademie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren, en Schone Kunsten*, ix: 2 (1947), 20-25; R. S. Lopez and H. A. Miskimin, 'The Economic Depression of the Renaissance', *Econ. Hist. Rev.* 2nd series, xiv (1962), 408-26.

3. J. H. Munro, 'Bruges and the Abortive Staple in English Cloth', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, xlv (1966), 1145-6.

4. Total English cloth exports had risen from an annual average of 28,800 cloths in 1415-19 to one of 41,500 cloths in 1425-9 (estimated from E. Carus-Wilson, *England's Export Trade, 1275-1547* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 91-93). During 1427, Dutch and Brabantine town delegates met at Malines, Haarlem, and Leyden to discuss a ban on English cloth imports. N. W. Posthumus (ed.), *Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis van de Leidsche Textielnijverheid, 1333-1795*, i (The Hague, 1910), 116-18, no. 102.

5. Frans van Mieris (ed.), *Groot Charterboek der Graaven van Holland en van Zeeland*, iv (Leyden, 1756), 923-4.

6. E. Van Even (ed.), *Inventaire des chartes et autres documents appartenant aux archives de la ville de Louvain, 1125-1793* (Louvain, 1873), p. 125, no. 174.

heavily in exporting English cloth from London to the Antwerp Fairs.¹ The combination of a threatened Hanse boycott of these fairs and the pressures of English and Dutch cloth merchants soon forced the removal of the Brabantine ban.² At the same time, the defiance of Middelburg and other Dutch towns rendered the Holland-Zealand ban ineffectual.³

While there is no evidence that Philip the Good himself had seriously sought to impose a protectionist policy upon the Lowlands, he ought to have drawn two important conclusions from the fate of these cloth bans. First, the Dutch and Brabantine drapery towns did not possess the economic and political dominance of their Flemish counterparts, who faced no serious local resistance in maintaining their cloth ban. Second, Philip's rule of the Burgundian Lowlands was far from being strong and centralized, because most of the principalities were too recently acquired and all had enjoyed a long tradition of municipal independence – and internal bickering. Nevertheless, Philip would again employ general cloth bans in an economic war with England.

Even before the 1428 cloth ban quarrel had been settled, a more explosive conflict with England had erupted over the vital wool trade. In 1429, the English parliament enacted for three years a series of laws known as the Calais Staple Partition and Bullion Ordinances, which were designed to make the wool staple the crown's chief bullion-supplier. The Stapler merchants, virtually the sole wool-sellers to the Lowlands, were required: to 'putte to more encrease and avauntage' the prices of wool; to sell only for ready cash 'in hand', permitting no credit; and, most important, to deliver one-third of the wool price in bullion to the Calais mint. The statute also required pledges from the Staplers to take all the coined money directly into England.⁴

Similar bullionist measures had been imposed on the wool trade in the later fourteenth century and all had failed dismally through opposition from the Staplers themselves, who found that foreign resistance to the bullion exactions seriously injured their sales.⁵ To

1. N. J. M. Kerling, *Commercial Relations of Holland and Zealand with England* (Leyden, 1954), pp. 72–86; Hermann Van der Wee, *Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy*, ii (The Hague, 1963), 10–25; Thielemans, pp. 331–3.

2. The ban was officially repealed in Mar. 1431, but was allowed to lapse before that. See K. Koppman (ed.), *Die Recesse und Andere Akten der Hansestage von 1236 bis 1430*, viii (Leipzig, 1897), 365–6, no. 558; E. R. Daenell, *Die Blütezeit der Deutschen Hanse*, i (Berlin, 1905), 389; C[alendar of] P[atent] R[olls], 1429–1436, p. 26.

3. H. J. Smit (ed.), *Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis van den Handel met Engeland, Schotland, en Ireland, 1150–1485*, i (The Hague, 1928), 625–7, no. 1012; 635, no. 1024.

4. Rot[uli] Parl[iamentorum], iv. 359–61, nos. 60–66; S[tatutes of the] R[ealm], ii. 253–6 (8 Hen. VI, c. 17–20). Approximately one-third of the price in bullion: £6 for a wool-sarpler worth £18 to £20; £5 for a sarpler worth £16. The pledges required that no merchant 'n'appretera derere à nulle marchaunt nulle maniere de money par luy rescueu'.

5. Similar laws were enacted in 1340, 1364, 1379, 1391, and 1397. See J. H. Munro, 'Wool, Cloth, and Gold: Bullionism in Anglo-Burgundian Commercial Relations,

obtain better results this time, the King's Council enlisted the support of a small group of wealthy Staplers by agreeing not to sell any further wool-export licences and by giving this group control of the Staple government and wool trade. The chief mechanism for granting these monopoly powers was the Partition Ordinance, which required merchants to make 'true and even partition' of all receipts, not according to their individual sales but to the amount of wool each had brought to the Staple. As this measure worked in practice, it forced out of business those lesser merchants who depended upon a rapid turnover of small stocks: first, they received proportionately less for their sales in the initial partition of receipts than did merchants with large stocks; second, they lacked sufficient working-capital to maintain their trade over the long period of the several successive 'partitions' required to produce the last of their receipts. Consequently, the few surviving large merchants – later estimated to be twenty or thirty in number – were able to monopolize the trade, fix prices and enforce the bullion laws.¹

While this bullionist scheme may seem foolish, it should be understood in the context of current concepts and fiscal problems. Almost all then accepted as an article of faith the notion that a country's commercial prosperity and wealth depended strictly upon its supply of gold and silver. More directly responsible for the Calais ordinances, however, was the current crisis in the French war, in which the English for the first time suffered both major military defeats and serious treasury deficits.² Worst of all, the Crown badly needed ready cash to pay the wages and ensure the loyalty of the recently-enlarged Calais garrison.³ This garrison had long been a costly burden, but its preservation was vital in maintaining the important Staple trade and in keeping open the gateway to France.

The Calais ordinances were probably also a retaliatory measure of the Crown against the monetary policies of Philip the Good, who was as ardent a bullionist as the English. Since November 1425, he had been financing his wars in Holland and France by heavily debasing his coinage, especially gold.⁴ That he thereby succeeded in

1384-1478' (unpub. doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1965; Ann Arbor microfilm), pp. 66-93).

1. For a fuller analysis of the partition system, see Eileen Power, 'The Wool Trade in the Fifteenth Century', Power and Postan (eds.), *Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1933), pp. 87-90. A detailed contemporary Dutch description may be found in Smit, *Bronnen*, ii. 697-9, nos. 1126-8.

2. Jacob, p. 255; Anthony Steele, *Receipt of the Exchequer, 1377-1485* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 430-1.

3. Since July 1426, parliament had assigned one-third of the wool customs for Calais; the same 1429 parliament granted a special subsidy of £6,667 for the enlargement of the Calais garrison. *Rot. Parl.* iv. 340-1, no. 24; and P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], C76/112, m. 24. The Crown's resort to 'tallies' or promissory notes for wages seems to justify its concern.

4. See Munro, pp. 108-15, 342-7. In November 1425, Duke Philip began striking at the mints of Dordrecht and then of Namur inferior gold coins (17 carats) that were

attracting large amounts of bullion to his mints and in increasing his mint seignorage profits more than proportionately is clear from Tables I and II. Although the source of this bullion cannot be determined, the success of Philip's mints might explain why the English coinage output fared so badly between 1425 and 1429: it then suffered a drop of 45 per cent, while the (real) value of Burgundian coinage increased more than fivefold. Particularly striking is the catastrophic fall in English gold minting and the correspondingly impressive surge in Burgundian gold coinage.¹ In view of these circumstances, the Crown undoubtedly believed itself justified in demanding from its Burgundian ally the bullion 'robbed' from England at this critical time.² But in any event, the King's Council could not have responded by debasing English coinage because of a long tradition of domestic hostility to any alterations of the coinage. Since the 1350s, when parliament had forbidden debasement without its consent,³ the Crown had been forced to adopt the alternative method of extracting required bullion from the export trade; to resort once more to this policy seemed the Council's only recourse. But the Council needed more than just gold to meet the ever more serious French challenge after 1429 – it needed the Burgundians.

Opposition to the Calais ordinances, implemented in February 1430, united the duke and his drapery towns as no previous issue had. Philip the Good understandably felt threatened by this assault upon his mints, his seignorage revenues, and the 'wealth' of his

debased 37 per cent from the standard set in his monetary ordinance of June 1418; then in June 1428 and again in Jan. 1429, he reduced the gold content of the coins by a total of $1\frac{1}{2}$ carats, for a further debasement of 6.25 per cent. Between July 1426 and June 1429, Philip also debased his silver coinage (at Namur) by 26 per cent. Throughout this time, England's coinage remained unaltered; and the most significant feature of Philip's debasements is that he altered the Burgundian mint-ratio to make it progressively more favourable to gold than England's. Thus, before the Burgundian debasements, the Burgundian and English mint-ratios were, respectively, 10:16:1 and 10:73:1, so that the English ratio 'favoured' gold. By 1429, the ratio of the Namur mint, where most of the Burgundian gold coinage of this period was struck, was 12:01:1 – considerably more favourable to gold than the English ratio. So was the Flemish mint-ratio (Ghent), then 11:16:1.

1. Philip may have chosen to attract gold, by debasing it, because gold coinage was traditionally the more accepted medium of the two in financing international transactions, such as warfare. But gold coinage was the more acceptable because it was generally less likely to be debased than was silver. See Marc Bloch, 'Le problème de l'or au moyen âge', *Annales d'Histoire Economique et Sociale*, xix (1933), 1–34.

2. It is also quite possible that the bullion laws were designed in part to prevent the passing of Philip's debased gold coins, especially those minted at Ghent in imitation of the English noble. Parliament in 1429 had complained that foreign merchants were demanding payment in gold nobles alone, which they exported and had 'forged into oyer coynges, so that yai wyne in ye aloy of ech noble xx d'. (*Rot. Parl.* iv. 360–1). In 1428–9, the Ghent mint had coined 4,460 gold *marcs de Troyes* into imitation nobles. See Table I and n. 1, p. 237.

3. Edward III's drastic debasements of the late 1340s and the consequent inflation had provoked the parliamentary ban of 1352. See the 'Statute of Purveyors', 25 Ed. iii, stat. 5 c. 13, in *J.R.* i. 322; also, Albert Feavearyear, *The Pound Sterling* (rev. ed., Oxford, 1953), pp. 18–20, 31–32.

TABLE I

Combined value of gold and silver minting and of mint seignorages, in pounds sterling, for England and the Burgundian Lowlands, 1420-1440

Michaelmas Years	ENGLISH MINTS London and Calais		BURGUNDIAN MINTS Ghent, Namur, Dordrecht, Louvain, and Brussels		Total value of seign. in £ <i>gros</i> Flemish
	Total value of coinage in £ st.	Total seign. in £ st.	Total value of coinage in £ st.*	Total seign. in £ st.*	
1419-20	£45,533	£473	£62,944	£925	£965
1420-1	67,865	708	60,681	890	928
1421-2	110,930	1,155	77,490	1,126	1,173
1422-3	182,196	1,889	54,991	817	850
1423-4	179,671	1,832	53,785	800	831
1424-5	102,580	1,012	30,057	427	457
1425-6	67,196	649	69,039	1,924	2,383
1426-7	59,244	571	69,484	2,915	3,809
1427-8	58,335	552	24,235	648	815
1428-9	57,398	519	157,175	2,937	3,582
1429-30	60,261	540	123,135	1,223	1,523
1430-1	65,292	580	94,042	1,218	1,620
1431-2	57,898	506	114,197	3,162	4,641
1432-3	50,462	438	58,075	3,521	5,252
1433-4	38,553	344	121,494	779	879
1434-5	27,160	241	132,127	897	1,018
1435-6	17,495	157	124,493	815	928
1436-7	6,478	66	61,587	444	502
1437-8	7,467	74	32,210	216	327
1438-9	13,342	127	24,843	157	177
1439-40	7,869	78	7,367	59	66

Sources:

Calais Mint: Public Record Office, (L.T.R.) E 364/49, 61-63, 65-66, 69, 72; (K.R.) E 101/192-93; and C.P.R. 1422-1429, pp. 337-8, 520; C.P.R. 1429-1436, pp. 256-7, 259.

London Mint: Sir John Craig, *The Mint: a History of the London Mint* (Cambridge, 1953), appendix II; and G. C. Brooke, E. Stokes, 'Tables of Bullion Coined, 1337-1550', *Numismatic Chronicle*, ix (1929), 27-69.

Ghent Mint: Archives Générales du Royaume, Acquits de Lille, liasses 936-7.

Namur Mint: A.G.R., Chambre de Comptes, no. 18,203; Acquits de Lille, liasse 1933.

Louvain Mint: A.G.R., C.C., nos. 18,065-068.

Brussels Mint: A.G.R., C.C., nos. 17,986-989.

Dordrecht Mint: accounts printed in P.O. Van der Chijs, *De Munten der Voormalige Graafschappen Holland en Zeeland* (Haarlem, 1858), pp. 373-7, 399, 402, 404, 413, 429.

* The Burgundian statistics for estimated values in pounds sterling English were calculated by multiplying the *marcs de Troyes* of the mint outputs and the seignorages by the following: £11.6582 sterling per *marc* for gold and £1.087 sterling per *marc* for silver. Since the value of English gold and silver coinage was constant in pounds sterling from 1411 to 1464, these statistics provide a valid comparison between English and Burgundian mintings in this period. The final column provides the actual seignorage receipts in pounds *gros* of Flanders, as recorded in the mintmasters' reports to Duke Philip the Good.

lands, at a time when he himself was actively seeking bullion. The gravity of this threat was emphasized in 1430 and 1431 when, as Table II shows, his mint output fell sharply. For his cloth-making subjects and drapery merchants of Flanders, Brabant and Holland,

TABLE II

The coinage of pure gold and silver marcs de Troyes in the mints of England and the Burgundian Lowlands 1420-1440

Michaelmas Years	ENGLISH MINTS London and Calais*		BURGUNDIAN MINTS Ghent, Namur, Dordrecht, Louvain, and Brussels	
	Gold <i>Marcs</i> de Troyes	Silver <i>Marcs</i> de Troyes	Gold <i>Marcs</i> de Troyes	Silver <i>Marcs</i> de Troyes
1419-20	3,715.3	2,042.3	—	57,905.9
1420-1	5,631.2	2,039.5	42.1	55,372.3
1421-2	9,118.7	4,254.4	368.3	67,338.0
1422-3	14,664.8	10,335.6	14.4	50,434.8
1423-4	13,254.7	23,135.5	160.0	47,764.1
1424-5	6,216.9	27,693.7	571.4	21,522.9
1425-6	3,534.2	23,913.8	4,585.0	14,338.3
1426-7	3,048.1	21,811.3	5,797.3	1,746.4
1427-8	2,609.4	25,679.4	1,489.2	6,323.2
1428-9	1,605.2	35,586.7	6,061.4	79,585.8
1429-30	1,513.0	39,210.1	4,533.1	64,661.8
1430-1	1,413.0	44,910.8	6,964.4	11,821.1
1431-2	934.1	43,217.2	9,616.7	1,917.7
1432-3	700.2	38,912.5	4,969.7	125.9
1433-4	907.1	25,738.2	4,285.6	66,096.2
1434-5	575.7	18,812.1	6,804.6	48,571.7
1435-6	575.7	9,547.9	6,939.5	40,101.8
1436-7	485.3	754.4	3,007.5	24,401.7
1437-8	450.4	2,038.6	1,236.1	16,374.3
1438-9	640.9	5,401.5	934.7	12,829.4
1439-40	490.1	1,983.4	371.8	2,790.1

Sources: See Table I, for the mint accounts of Ghent, Namur, Dordrecht, Louvain, Brussels, London, and Calais.

* The English mint outputs, as recorded in Tower Pounds, were converted into *marcs de Troyes* at a ratio of 1.429 *marcs* to the Tower Pound. The *marc de Troyes* weighed 244.753 grams, or roughly 8 ounces.

the Calais ordinances meant disaster. Their wool was already so expensive that further price increases might leave the market fully to the English cloth trade. But even more serious was the ordinances' disruption of the credit-financing system upon which the wool trade, cloth manufacturing and marketing so vitally depended.¹ Most

1. For an analysis of the credit system and its significance in the wool trade, see M. Postan, 'Credit in Medieval Trade', *Economic History Review*, 1st ser., i (1928), 240-4, and Power, 'Wool Trade', pp. 65-66. In general, the buyer paid one-third 'down' in cash and arranged credit for the remainder in two 'bills' over a year. For a contemporary description of the importance of credit in the wool trade, see L. Gilliodts-van Severen and M. E. Scott (eds.), *Le Cotton Manuscrit Galba* (Brussels, 1896), no. 135, pp. 310-11, in which a Stapler memorandum states that 'les leins ne purront estre delivrez à nulle value sans estre *apprestex*'.

drapers lacked sufficient working-capital to make the whole payment in cash at the time of purchase and they would have found it prohibitive to borrow the necessary funds, if available. Meeting the bullion requirement itself would also have been expensive: in evading the traditional ban on bullion exports – soon to be rigidly enforced – in bidding up the market price of metals and in paying the Calais mintage fees.¹ Thus the traditionally independent drapery towns looked to Duke Philip for leadership in ending these injurious ordinances.

Initially, the Burgundians relied on negotiations with the English to settle their grievances. In December 1430 Philip sent his first Flemish mission to Calais, where it held several inconclusive meetings with the Staplers and Henry Cardinal Beaufort, the probable author of the decrees.² Six months later, in June 1431, Philip's councillors convoked a formal conference of the Flemish towns and the Staplers at Bruges. The duke's officials apparently hoped that this meeting would resolve the problem of wool purchases 'without being required to furnish gold and silver bullion', but the English were obdurate.³ They also refused the representations of a subsequent Flemish delegation to Calais, sent to protest against the damages inflicted upon their drapery industry.⁴

Rebuffed, Duke Philip then appealed to the estates of his realms to devise 'remedies against these prejudicial ordinances'.⁵ On 14 September 1431, an historic assembly met at Antwerp, the first 'Estates-General' or parliament of the Burgundian Lowlands, with deputies from Flanders, Holland, Zealand and Brabant, under the direction of Philip and his councillors.⁶ During October and November Philip summoned two further such Estates-General at Malines and Brussels. They apparently explored the possibility of a general retaliatory ban on English cloth, a proposal further discussed by the Flemish towns in December.⁷ This flurry of anti-Calais activity then ceased and was not resumed for another eighteen months.

1. The bullion requirement would prove costly if ingots were supplied and the demand raised the price of the metal above the official price; or, if coins were supplied as bullion for reminting at Calais, thus necessitating a double mintage-fee.

2. A[rchives] G[énérales du] R[oyaume de Belgique], C[hambre des] C[omptes], no. 32,485 (Bruges account), fo. 57. Subsequent meetings with Cardinal Beaufort, to May 1431, are noted in N. H. Nicolas (ed.), *P[roceedings and Ordinances of the] P[riory] C[ouncil of England]*, iv (London, 1837), 18.

3. A.G.R., C.C., no. 42,549 (Franc de Bruges account), fo. 28^v: 'omme weghen te vindene daer bi dat men Inghelsche wulle zoude moghen ghectrighen zonder billoen van goude of van zelve daer over te moeten leverne . . .'

4. A.G.R., C.C., no. 32,485 (Bruges), fo. 63^v.

5. A.G.R., C.C., no. 42,549 (Franc de Bruges), fo. 45^v.

6. A.G.R., C.C., *ubi supra*; other texts in Joseph Cuvelier (ed.), *Actes des Etats Généraux des anciens Pays-Bas, 1427-1477* (Brussels, 1948), pp. 8-11. A prior assembly of May 1427 involved only Flanders and Hainault on the governance of the latter county.

7. *Ibid.*, and A.G.R., C.C., no. 32,486 (Bruges), fo. 57^v, 58, 58^v.

The possible reasons for Philip's delay in directly retaliating against the Calais ordinances are worth examining, if only to understand the full dimensions of the problems he faced. First, in view of later developments, the proposal to ban English cloth probably encountered strong opposition, especially since the 1428 cloth bans

TABLE III

Wool and coinage at Calais: English woolsacks shipped to Calais, and the output of the Calais mint 1420-1440

Michaelmas Years	Woolsacks shipped to Calais	THE CALAIS MINT		Total value of coinage in £ st.
		Silver <i>marcs</i> coined	Gold <i>marcs</i> coined	
1419-20	11,384	—	—	—
1420-1	11,832	—	—	—
1421-2	13,402	1,323.4	656.9	£9,098
1422-3	14,476	6,513.3	3,372.6	46,398
1423-4	15,913	19,314.1	1,962.5	43,874
1424-5	11,195	25,469.3	1,262.3	42,402
1425-6	12,247	21,514.6	702.3	31,575
1426-7	16,083	19,655.0	389.2	25,903
1427-8	15,351	24,074.1	191.2	28,398
1428-9	11,398	32,923.5	148.1	37,516
1429-30	7,066	36,584.6	164.6	41,687
1430-1	10,433	42,321.2	173.2	48,023
1431-2	10,540	41,193.3	—	44,778
1432-3	8,663	37,724.0	—	41,007
1433-4	838	24,951.7	—	27,123
1434-5	12,923	18,199.5	—	19,783
1435-6	2,531	8,936.2	—	10,119
1436-7	66	—	—	—
1437-8	156	—	—	—
1438-9	505	537.7	—	584
1439-40	17,731	—	—	—

Sources: E. Carus-Wilson and O. Coleman, *England's Export Trade, 1275-1547* (Oxford, 1963), calculated from tables in pp. 57-65.

P.R.O. (L.T.R.), E 364/59, 61-63, 65-66, 69, 72; (K.R.) E 101/192-93; C.P.R. 1422-1429, pp. 337-8, 520; C.P.R. 1429-1436, pp. 256-7, 259.

had just recently been lifted. Second, one might argue that the Calais ordinances were impossible to enforce fully for long,¹ and thus that the Burgundians no longer considered the Staple issue to be as critical as it had first appeared. Table III suggests, however, that these ordinances were probably effective in acquiring bullion for the Calais mint – and also in damaging the wool trade: for the years 1430-3, following the enactment of the laws, the annual average of the Calais mint output was 42 per cent *above* that of 1426-9, while the annual average of wool shipments to Calais was 32 per cent *below* the 1426-9 average. Moreover, for the corresponding periods, the annual average number of drapers renting stalls in the Ypres

1. Eileen Power ('Wool Trade', pp. 84, 86-87) doubts that the regulations were rigidly enforced and notes several instances of evasion of the Calais ordinances.

Lakenhalle fell from 215 to 166, a sizeable drop that probably reflects the inability of smaller Flemish drapers to survive the costs of the Staple ordinances.¹ Nevertheless, Duke Philip still needed the English to maintain his French conquests and for him the bullion problem was apparently not yet serious enough to rupture the alliance. For, as Tables I and II demonstrate, his Burgundian mints were prospering once more: further and more drastic debasements had increased the mint output 20 per cent in 1432, with the greatest amount of gold yet coined – more than ten times the English gold coinage output. This was also the largest amount of gold that Philip's mints would ever strike.

In the following year, 1433, both the Staple and monetary issues forced a decision upon the Burgundians. First, the Partition and Bullion laws, which were supposed to lapse that year, were instead re-enacted in July for an indefinite term. At the same time, parliament strengthened the Staplers' monopoly powers to ensure better enforcement of the payment laws.² Undoubtedly the mounting costs of the Calais garrison, and then a bloody mutiny in April over unpaid wages, had stiffened the Council's determination to maintain the bullion policy.³ Second, this extension of the Calais ordinances was singularly inopportune for Duke Philip, because by mid-summer, at a time of rising military expenditures, his debasements were no longer attracting much bullion to his mints.⁴ Most likely, the excessive degree of debasement and consequent inflation had caused a ruinous distrust of his coinage. Philip's only solution for reviving his mints was a strengthening and deflation of the coinage, a step which would also be necessary to protect his revenues against inflation.⁵ Moreover, he apparently decided that a more orderly coinage should be imposed upon the monetary chaos of his recently-acquired territories. The resulting monetary reform of October 1433 provided the Burgundian Lowlands with its first common coinage and one that was virtually pure in gold and silver. By this reform, Philip had considerably deflated the value of his new coinage and subsequently promised to maintain its stability for at least twenty

1. A.G.R., C.C., no. 38,651–7 (Ypres accounts).

2. *Rot. Parl.* iv. 454, no. 63; and *J.R.* ii. 287.

3. *Rot. Parl.* iv. 473, no. 20; and P.R.O. C76/115, m. 10: 'certes dissensiones et discordie inter locumtenentem . . . et soldarios eiusdem ville'. In Dec. 1432, the Council had urgently requested funds for the Calais garrison, 'for asmuche the Kyng considereth well the greette povertee and indigence that the souldours have long sufferede . . .' Nicolas, *P.P.C.* iv. 139. On the April revolt, see J. H. Ramsay, *Lancaster and York*, i (Oxford, 1892), 449–50.

4. See Tables II and III. From 1429 to mid-1433, Philip debased gold by a further 21 per cent and silver by 15 per cent. By mid-1433, only the Namur mint was in operation and most of its coinage had been struck by 30 May (A.G.R., C.C., nos. 18,202–03). On Philip's financial problems at this time, see Bonenfant, pp. 58–59.

5. For an explanation of the economics of strengthening or *renforcement* of the coinage, see Marc Bloch, *Esquisse d'une histoire monétaire de l'Europe* (Paris, 1954), pp. 63 ff.

years.¹ This monetary reform, however, presented a problem. Obviously it would be easier to attract bullion to the mints by debasing coinage than by strengthening it – despite forced recoinages, minimal seignorage fees, and the inducement of stable values. Philip the Good therefore set about ensuring that no bullion should leave his lands, especially for Calais.²

Simultaneously, Philip renewed his attack on the Calais ordinances by requesting general consent to a retaliatory ban on English cloth. His councillors met first with Flemish and Brabantine delegates, then with leaders of the Holland-Zealand towns. But, with strong objections to the ban from all except the Flemish, ‘no conclusion was reached’.³ The fact that between October 1433 and May 1434 Philip had to convoke no less than seven further conferences and sessions of the Estates-General on the proposed ban demonstrates how determined and strong was the opposition of the Dutch and Brabantine cloth-importing interests.⁴

Meanwhile, in co-operation with the duke, the Flemish drapery towns embarked on diplomatic negotiations abroad. In late 1433, a Flemish mission headed by Philip’s personal envoy met with the King’s Council at Westminster ‘to beseech for annulment or some moderation of the ordinances imposed on the wool trade at Calais’.⁵ The protracted discussions, from December to March, only proved the futility of such diplomacy and the duke’s need for more positive action. More promising were Flemish negotiations with the Hanseatic League, then the largest dealers in both English and Flemish cloth. The Flemish secured the full support of the Hanse *kontor* at Bruges and, in late October, both sent letters to the Hanse Diet at Lübeck to solicit its aid. They explained that Hanse merchants now had to pay far higher prices for Flemish cloth because of the English Staple ordinances, ‘which they further stiffen from year to year, so that wool can only be obtained at great and heavy cost’.⁶ The *kontor* mayor maintained, furthermore, that ‘by the costliness

1. The gold coinage was strengthened by 28 per cent and the silver by 23 per cent. Complete ordinance in L. Deschamps de Pas, ‘Essai sur l’histoire monétaire des comtes de Flandre’, *Revue Numismatique*, 2nd ser. vi (1881), 471–2. For the rest of the Burgundian Lowlands, see H. E. Van Gelder and M. Hoc, *Les monnaies des Pays-Bas Bourguignons* (Amsterdam, 1960), pp. 9–11.

2. In Nov. 1435, Duke Philip strictly enforced a ban on bullion exports. Deschamps de Pas, ‘Histoire monétaire’, *Revue Numismatique*, 2nd ser. vii (1882), 117. On the problem of obtaining sufficient bullion for the mints, see A.G.R., C.C., no. 32,488 (Bruges account), fo. 65.

3. R. Van Marle (ed.), *Le comté de Holland sous Philippe le Bon* (The Hague, 1908), no. 7, pp. viii–ix; and Smit, *Bronnen*, i. 654, no. 1054.

4. Between 29 Oct. and 15 Nov. 1433, meetings were held at Ghent, Antwerp, Malines, Lier, and Brussels ‘van den Inghelschen lakene te verdrivene ute ons gheduchts heeren lande’ (A.G.R., C.C., no. 42,552, fo. 28; no. 32,488, fo. 64v). Between 14 Jan. and 15 May 1434, further meetings were held at Ghent (twice) and Bruges (A.G.R., C.C., no. 32,488, fo. 67v, 69, 83; no. 42,452, fo. 22, 31v; Cuvelier, pp. 12–16).

5. A.G.R., C.C., no. 32,488, fo. 64, 65 (Bruges); no. 42,552, fo. 29 (Franc de Bruges).

6. G. von der Ropp (ed.), *Hanserecesse 1431–1476*, i (Leipzig, 1876), 131–4, no. 191.

of wool more than half the drapery industry has perished'. They then announced – prematurely – the agreement of the duke and the Estates of Flanders, Brabant, Holland-Zealand, and Hainault to ban all English cloth 'as a remedy so that the English might be pressured into revoking these unreasonable ordinances and selling wool as they used to do'. Finally, the *kontor* mayor argued that if the proposed ban proved successful 'we might again purchase more [Flemish] cloth at better prices', and thus that the League should co-operate in the ban by temporarily forgoing its commercial privileges in the Low Countries.¹

Although the Hanseatic League might normally have objected to such restrictions on its commerce, its own current conflict with England over the Baltic trade assisted the Burgundian cause.² Thus in February 1434 the League Diet at Elbing made no objections to the temporary loss of trading privileges involved in the proposed cloth ban.³ The Anglo-Hanseatic dispute subsequently became so inflamed that on 5 June the League Diet at Lübeck imposed its own ban on the English cloth trade.⁴ At that time, Philip had just prorogued a session of the Estates-General at Bruges, which had made no definite resolution on banning English cloth.⁵ But, with the League's closure of England's alternative market, he now rushed to force through his own long-sought ban.

On 15 June Philip's councillors met at Ghent to obtain formal consent for the ban from the Flemish, Brabantine, and Hollander delegates. Only the Zealanders, dominated by the shipping towns, refused by their pointed absence.⁶ Nevertheless, the decree that Philip signed on 19 June 1434 affected all the Burgundian Lowlands and all foreign merchants trading there. The long text leaves no doubt about Philip's motives and should end the common argument that this ban (and succeeding ones) was only 'protectionist'.⁷ The introduction, to be sure, maintains that the large increase in English cloth imports had injured and 'seriously diminished' the drapery industries in the Low Countries. Yet the real culprits are clearly

1. G. von der Ropp (ed.), *Hanserecesse 1431-1476*, i. 135-6, no. 192.

2. See Michael Postan, 'Economic and Political Relations of England with the Hanse, 1400-1475', *Studies in English Trade*, pp. 116-22.

3. *Hanserecesse*, i. 173, no. 268.

4. *Ibid.* i. 202, no. 321.

5. Cuvelier, pp. 15-16; H. Vander Linden (ed.), *Itineraire de Philippe le Bon* (Brussels, 1940), pp. 121-2.

6. A.G.R., C.C., no. 32,488 (Bruges), fo. 71^v; Smit, *Bronnen*, i. 661-2.

7. See Henri Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, ii (Brussels, 1908), 417-18; Hans Van Werveke, 'The Low Countries', in M. Postan (ed.), *Cambridge Economic History*, iii (Cambridge, 1962), 325-6; Van der Wee, ii. 45-49; J. A. Van Houtte, 'La genèse du grand marché international d'Anvers à la fin du moyen âge', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, xix (1940), 109-14; Kerling, pp. 76-78. But, see also Georg Schanz, *Englische Handelspolitik gegen Ende des Mittelalters*, i (Leipzig, 1881), 442-3; Power, 'Wool Trade', p. 84; and Thielemans, pp. 60-61, who link the 1434 cloth ban to the Staple question, yet stress only the protectionist aspect, from the increased costs of wool.

identified as the Staplers who had 'greatly raised their wool prices, and fixed them at excessive levels'. With some exaggeration, the text then maintains that the Staplers 'furthermore will sell wool only for gold and silver bullion and will not accept current coin, so that all the bullion of our lands is being taken to England, leaving our lands hardly any and thereby causing them great damage and injuries'.¹ The bullionist emphasis of the decree, however, does not render the protectionist issue irrelevant. One cannot dismiss the role of the drapery towns in advocating this ban, since the increased wool costs resulting from the Calais ordinances did place them at a serious competitive disadvantage. At the same time, the standard interpretation of the duke's role in the cloth ban – that he merely acceded to the drapers' demand for protection – is misleading. One must also recognize the vital importance of the duke's own bullionist concern about the Calais payment laws. It is quite clear that Philip himself supervised most of the diplomatic missions and the sessions of the Estates, and that he personally sought the cloth ban as a retaliatory measure for forcing revocation of the English laws.

The Burgundian ban did not, however, hurt England enough to achieve this aim. Thus, while English *denizen* cloth exports fell 22 per cent in the Michaelmas year 1434–5, exports by alien merchants increased, so that the total decline was only 9 per cent.² The Hanse were obviously not adhering to their own ban, as the English customs accounts show. Moreover, in open defiance of Philip's ban, the Cologne Hanse were shipping English cloth through the Lowlands, and Zealanders were marketing it in Middelburg.³ Similarly, as Table III shows, an apparent boycott of Calais wool during 1434 was also a failure; for, despite the harshness of the payment regulations, the Flemish, Dutch and Brabantine drapers could not long forgo English wool. Thus the chief result of the Staple conflict and cloth ban was to create new tensions between England and Burgundy, and further the disintegration of their alliance.

The precise date when Philip the Good resolved to desert the alliance is not certain. He had not done so in 1431 by his truce with Charles VII, forced upon him after several defeats in France – defeats he attributed to the English failure to send him the promised funds and troops.⁴ Nor had he sought to withdraw from the war when the

1. Charles Piot (ed.), *Inventaire des chartes de la ville de Léau* (Brussels, 1879), no. 8, pp. 26–28 (full text): '... en willen sy die selven wolte onsen ondersaten niet vercoepen, ten sy by billoen van goude of van silvere, sonder te willen ontfangen gancbair munte, dair by dat alle 't billoen van onsen voirc. landen ... getogen word in 't voirs. ryke van Engelant'. For Hanse complaints about Philip's rigorously-enforced ban on bullion exports, see *Hanserecesse*, i. 233, no. 357 (July 1434); see also n. 2, p. 235.

2. Estimated from tables in Carus-Wilson, *Export Trade*, pp. 93–94.

3. *Ibid.*, and K. Höhlbaum (ed.), *Hansisches Urkundenbuch*, vii (Leipzig, 1907), 48–52, nos. 95, 96, and 103.

4. Joseph Stevenson (ed.), *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France During the Reign of Henry VI*, ii (London, 1864), 196.

victorious King Charles resumed his attacks in 1433. Apparently, the crucial decision came only in mid-1434, when the Calais bullion problem, then clearly requiring retaliation, sufficiently demonstrated to Philip the 'perfidy' of his English ally. At the same time, the restoration of the pro-Burgundian count of Richemont in Charles' government made a separate peace with the French king seem propitious.¹ Some months later, in January 1435, Philip met with the count of Richemont and French ambassadors at Nevers to negotiate the basic terms of the subsequent peace treaty.² After concluding the negotiations on 6 February, they invited English and papal representatives to attend a general peace conference at Arras in the late summer.

Although the English were apparently unaware of Duke Philip's decision for a separate peace with the French, the King's Council was sufficiently alarmed by the Nevers conference to authorize, for the first time, negotiations for the 'modification and moderation' of the Calais ordinances. The Council's instructions to its ambassadorial mission admitted that the Burgundians had found these laws 'highly prejudicial, excessive, and oppressive' and had 'on many occasions begged for the complete repeal or modification of the ordinances, to permit an increase in trade'.³ But the negotiations of this English mission in February and also of a subsequent mission in July were failures.⁴ The July mission was headed by England's staunchest advocate of the bullionist policy, Cardinal Beaufort; evidently his proposals for moderation of the laws were unacceptable to Duke Philip and his Flemish ambassadors. Nor were the prospects for a general peace any more promising. English ambassadors, again headed by Cardinal Beaufort, did attend the Congress of Arras in August. But they refused to consider the rigid French terms and angrily quit the conference on 6 September. The rest was anticlimax. On 21 September Duke Philip and King Charles signed the Treaty of Arras, rightly described by Miss Dickinson as 'a triumph for Burgundy, a disaster for England, and a humiliation for France'.⁵ Philip kept most of his conquests and obtained from Charles the Somme towns, exemption from homage and military obligations – virtual recognition of independence, and promises of aid should the English attack 'because of this present agreement'.

1. Bonenfant, p. 59. Known to the French as the 'comte de Richemont', he was Arthur, earl of Richmond, brother of the duke of Brittany and brother-in-law of Duke Philip the Good. He had originally served the English but deserted to Charles VII in 1424, serving him as Constable until 1427. E. Perroy, *Hundred Years War* (trans. Douglas, London, 1959), pp. 268–70, 273–4, 292–5.

2. Dickinson, *Congress of Arras*, pp. 163–5.

3. P.R.O., C76/117, m. 7; Thomas Rymer (ed.), *Foedera*, x. 605–6. The ambassadors included Richard Bokeland, treasurer of Calais, and Hamo Sutton, the Staple Mayor.

4. P.R.O., C76/117, m. 3; *Foedera*, x. 619–20.

5. Dickinson, p. 197; see also, pp. 160–98; Bonenfant, pp. 58–65 and Thielemans, pp. 66–72.

The English reaction to this Burgundian desertion, which made defeat in the Anglo-French war almost inevitable, was predictable. Immediately the faction-riven Council united in rebuffing Philip's peace overtures. It publicly berated him as a traitorous villain and so roused the London mobs that they massacred numerous Flemish merchants.¹ As the new military commander, the duke of Gloucester went to Calais to prepare an invasion of Flanders and to direct piracy attacks along the Flemish coast. Shortly after, in December, the King's Council sent letters of 'friendship' to the Holland-Zealand towns in a heavy-handed and unsuccessful attempt to win them away from Philip's cause.² The Dutch turned these letters over to Philip, who, roused to fury and swayed by his Francophile councillors, responded in February with a virtual declaration of war against England.³ The Burgundian war-council then made plans for laying siege to Calais.

The decision to attack Calais proved to be rash, but seemed logical at the time. Seizure of Calais would remove a serious threat to Philip's southern flank and might cripple, if not destroy, the English supply-line to France. Moreover, the duke evidently hoped that gaining control of the Staple would finally force the English to abolish the hated Calais ordinances, which parliament had pointedly re-affirmed the previous October, following '*le jour d'Arras*'.⁴ Thus in March, when Philip and his councillors assembled at Ghent to enlist Flemish support for the war, they bitterly assailed the Staple's pricing system and bullion regulations, 'for they threaten to deprive the duke's lands of all money and livelihood'.⁵ Undeniably, their long harangues were successful in gaining the duke Flemish funds and troops.⁶ But Philip received no such aid from the Dutch and Brabantines, who were not enthusiastic about his war and opposed the general ban on English trade that he had issued in May.⁷ Only the Flemish participated, and they paid a heavy price.

The July siege of Calais produced the most ignominious defeat of Philip's reign. His fleet and French auxiliaries failed to arrive on

1. Thielemans, pp. 66-67.

2. Gilliodts-van Severen, *Cotton Manuscript Galba*, no. 177, p. 429.

3. Thielemans, p. 79; Bonenfant, pp. 64-67. For Henry VI's reply, protesting his desire for peace, see *Cotton Manuscript Galba*, no. 178, p. 431.

4. 14 Hen. VI, c. 2 and 5 in *J.R.* ii. 289-91; and *Rot. Parl.* iv. 490, no. 19.

5. The speeches are recorded in both L. Douet-D'arcq (ed.), *Chronique d'Enguerran De Monstrelet*, v (Paris, 1861), 212; and F. Morand (ed.), *Chronique de Jean Le Fevre de St. Remy*, ii (Paris, 1876), 378. According to the latter, the Sovereign Bailiff of Flanders stated that '*la laine d'Angleterre est mise si hault que les marchans n'y peuvent prouffiter, et que, plus estre, il fault payer ung tiers de buillon, et baillier deux phelippes [Burgundian gold coin] pour ung noble; par lesquelles institutions et ordonnances, la monnoie de nostre tres redoubté seigneur seroit en voye de aller à néant et sons pays estre sans gaignage*'.

6. J. J. De Smedt (ed.), 'Kronyk van Jan van Dixmude', in *Corpus Chronicorum Flandriae*, iii (Brussels, 1856), 45-46; A.G.R., C.C., no. 32,490 (Bruges), fo. 45, 46^v.

7. Smit, *Bronnen*, ii. 672, 678-80, nos. 1084, 1095-6.

time; worse, the badly-organized Flemish militias could not defend themselves against English forays from Calais; they mutinied and fled. Gloucester pursued them and laid waste to south-west Flanders, while his fleet ravaged the coast unopposed up to Bruges.¹ Though Philip had lost the war in less than a week, he refused to recognize reality, and let the hostilities, in the form of piracy, drag on for almost three years. Nor was he willing to recognize the damage inflicted upon the Burgundian economy²; for the war had caused the most serious interruption in the history of the English wool trade, a mere 66 sacks being shipped to Calais in 1436-7.³ That year the Flemish drapery towns suffered mass unemployment and famine, which provoked several insurrections. But in vain did the Flemish town councils beg the duke for a truce.⁴

Dutch opposition to Duke Philip was even stronger and more exasperating. Encouraged by the King's Council, the Holland-Zealand towns continued their English trade⁵; and, in August 1436, when the duke's officials tried to confiscate English cloth found in Middelburg, the citizenry murdered them.⁶ Philip's anger mounted. In March 1437, his *stadhouder* convoked an assembly of the Holland-Zealand towns and harshly condemned them for giving the duke virtually no aid in the war and for trading with England, despite the repeated bans. The Dutch replied by pleading poverty from war-damages to their commerce, especially to their cloth industry.⁷ In reality, the Dutch leaders were then preparing to fight not their English friends but their Hanseatic competitors in the Baltic trade, and a year later they unilaterally deserted Philip to make war upon the Hanse.⁸ In these circumstances, Philip had no alternative but to permit the Dutch, in May 1438, to begin negotiations with the English on a peace and trade treaty.⁹

By that time, Duke Philip had received from the foreign merchant community in Bruges an ultimatum to make peace with England. The foreign merchants, having suffered commercial losses by the

1. Thielemans, pp. 80-107.

2. *Ibid.* pp. 11-14, for a discussion of a memorandum, presented by the councillor Hugues de Lannoy, which analysed Flanders' current economic plight and recommended peace with England.

3. See Table III. The war almost immediately shut down the Calais mint. P.R.O. (L.T.R.), E364/72, m. 49. Also, cloth exports by the London Merchants Adventurers fell from 8,700 pieces in 1434-5 to only 2,084 pieces in 1435-6. Carus-Wilson, *Export Trade*, p. 94.

4. Bruges had already revolted in 1436, following the Calais débâcle. See *Chronique de Monstrelet*, v. 321-3.

5. Smit, *Bronnen*, ii. 678, 680, nos. 1092-3, 1097; *Foedera*, x. 654-5.

6. Smit, *Bronnen*, ii. 674-5, 677, nos. 1089, 1095; Kerling, p. 76.

7. Van Marle, no. 9, pp. x-xiv. See also Smit, *Bronnen*, ii. 686, no. 1110, on the Dutch complaints.

8. Van Marle, nos. 13-14, pp. xxv-xxxiii (20 Apr. 1438). See also T. J. Jansma, 'Philippe le Bon et le guerre hollando-wende', *Revue du Nord*, xlii (1960), 5-18.

9. Smit, *Bronnen*, ii. 691, 694, nos. 1118, 1125; Nicolas, *P.P.C.* v. 95.

war, bluntly warned the duke that they would otherwise quit Flanders and boycott its trade.¹ Following urgent appeals for peace from the Flemish and Brabantine towns, Philip finally agreed to negotiations in June.² In the King's Council, however, hatred of the 'so-called duke of Burgundy' was so intense that not until November did the peace faction (under, ironically, Cardinal Beaufort) prevail. Even so, the Council would agree to treat only with Philip's wife, the Duchess Isabella.³ A long series of Anglo-Burgundian treaty conferences began the next month. Fairly quickly, both sides agreed upon a military truce, but negotiations over reparations and the commercial disputes proved difficult. Again the English rejected all requests for moderation of the Staple ordinances and retorted with the demand that Philip remove his rigid prohibition on the shipping of foreign bullion through the Lowlands.⁴ Finally, on 29 September 1439, Duchess Isabella and delegates from Flanders, Brabant and Malines agreed to sign a peace and commercial treaty with England.⁵

The English had clearly won, for the Flemish had to pay heavy reparations and the treaty nowhere refers to the Calais ordinances and bullion problems. Philip the Good was also forced to admit the failure of his retaliatory cloth ban and permit the legal resumption of the English cloth trade in its former Burgundian markets. To be sure, he subsequently re-affirmed the century-old Flemish prohibition on English cloth,⁶ but the English had not contested this Flemish ban for years; Philip made no mention of a ban for the rest of the Low Countries, and the treaty itself specified restoration of 'free trade'. As a result of trade restoration, both wool and cloth exports jumped significantly after 1439; and, while the average of wool exports never again approached the pre-1430 level, English cloth exports during the early 1440s reached their highest volume thus far.⁷ Meanwhile the Dutch, who had been conducting separate negotiations with the English since mid-1438, were stubbornly

1. L. Gilliodts-van Severen (ed.), *Inventaire des Archives de la Ville de Bruges*, v (Bruges, 1877), 199; *Cotton Manuscript Galba*, 440.

2. A.G.R., C.C., no. 32,491 (Bruges), fo. 102 (Mar. 1438), fo. 105^v (June 1438). For a different view, see Thielemans, pp. 116-18.

3. Smit, *Bronnen*, ii, 710-11, nos. 1142-44; P.R.O., C76/121, m. 17; Gilliodts-van Severen, *Cotton Manuscript Galba*, pp. 440-1. The English ambassadors, headed by Cardinal Beaufort, also included the Staple Mayor, John Reynewell.

4. In Mar. and Apr. 1439. See F. Priem (ed.), *Précis analytique des documents des archives de la Flandre-Occidentale à Bruges: Comptes du Franc*, ii (Bruges, 1844), 53; and Gilliodts-van Severen, *Cotton Manuscript Galba*, pp. 440-1. For the negotiations in general, see Thielemans, pp. 119-30.

5. Gilliodts-van Severen, *Cotton Manuscript Galba*, pp. 445-6; *Foedera*, x, 791-3. Full text in Emile Varenbergh, *Histoire des relations diplomatiques entre le comté de Flandre et l'Angleterre au moyen âge* (Brussels, 1874), no. 7, pp. 579-95. The treaty, to last until 1 Nov. 1447, was subsequently renewed many times.

6. On 1 Dec. 1439. Text in Gilliodts-van Severen, *Archives de Bruges*, v, 189-90, no. 1015. See also n. 3, p. 226.

7. Average annual cloth exports in 1440-4 were 57,000 pieces. Carus-Wilson, *Export Trade*, from tables pp. 60-61, 94-96.

resisting reparations-claims for alleged piracy and did not sign a similar commercial treaty until April 1445.¹ The lack of a formal treaty, however, did not prevent them from partaking fully in the English cloth trade boom after 1439.

Between the enactment of the Calais ordinances and the signing of the Anglo-Burgundian treaty there had passed a full decade of mutual disaster. It seems incredible that the bullionist conflict, after having disrupted the vital commerce of two interdependent countries and contributed to the collapse of their alliance, should still be unresolved. While there are many possible explanations for both English and Burgundian bullionism – the traditional concepts of wealth, the seignorage profits from minting, the urgent needs for ready cash in financing warfare – the results hardly appear to have justified maintaining these monetary policies so tenaciously. Indeed both English and Burgundian merchants had fully informed the King's Council that its Calais ordinances were costing England considerably more revenue than could ever be gained in bullion exactions from the wool trade. It was the growing strength of mercantile opposition that finally, though only temporarily, checked the English bullion laws. A Commons petition of 1437 provided the first major domestic attack by charging that the 'streitnes of an Ordenance as touching receipt of Billion' had discouraged Dutch trade with the Staple. The Crown, however, rejected the plea to let merchants 'receyve alle maner payement' for the 'redyer utterance' of wool.² The following May, Dutch ambassadors, trying vainly to convince the King's Council of the folly of its Calais ordinances, presented a detailed, vivid contrast between the current Staple operations and those under the former 'free' system of credit-payments and much lower, competitive pricing. Noting that Calais wool purchases had fallen by more than one-half, the Dutch concluded sarcastically: 'We think that the King of England must be extremely disturbed to know that merchants no longer respect the Staple . . . whereby the King is losing his customs revenues.'³

The combined domestic and foreign resistance did not prove sufficient to thwart the Crown's bullionist policy until 1442, three years after the Anglo-Burgundian treaty. In February, an angry group of small wool-merchants, 'enforcid to leve their merchaundises of Woll be cause they may not be rulers of their owen goodes', succeeded in having parliament repeal the Partition Ordinance.

1. Smit, *Bronnen*, ii. 832–8, nos. 1295–6. See Thielemans, pp. 143–5.

2. *Rot. Parl.* iv. 508–9, no. 37.

3. Smit, *Bronnen*, ii. 697–9, nos. 1126–8. The Dutch demanded that the Staple commerce be as 'vry' as it was in the past, 'na ouder custumen . . . te betalen mit reden gelde'; wool then cost 'den derden of den vierden penninc min' than at present; merchants used to pay no more than £10 a sarpler, 'ende 't ander *up lange dage*'. The Dutch also wanted resolution of the problems 'van den belliene ende payement, dair die voirnoemde coopluide menichwerff gemoeyt hebben geweest'.

While they now convinced the Crown that the partition system was partly responsible for the serious decline in customs, 'as it apperith sufficiently of record in your Eschequier', their attack on the bullion law itself was not so successful. The only concession that parliament would grant was deletion of the requirement for the 'whole payment in ready money' at the time of sale, thus implicitly permitting credit on two-thirds of the wool price.¹ Nevertheless, the statute repealing the Partition Ordinance was itself sufficient to undermine the rest of the Crown's bullionist policy, for the new law permitted freer elections for the Staple government. Shortly after, the lesser wool-merchants overthrew the monopolist faction which had alone supported the payment laws. In October, the new Staple mayor shocked the Council by refusing to grant the king a badly-needed loan unless the bullion law was fully annulled. Cardinal Beaufort again stubbornly refused, saying that if the Burgundians 'coude feel that the Kyng for this his necessitee sholde thus dispense with th'estatut of bringing in of bullion, he shulde never hereafter by constreint make hem bringe in any bullion'. The Staple mayor sharply retorted that 'it is impossible, it can not be done to bringe in the iide part in bullione', because the duke of Burgundy had rigorously prevented compliance by searching merchants for gold on the way to Calais. Finally, he pointed out to the Council that 'there is nothing wherof monnoie sholde grow for the said necessitees but by shipping of wolles' and now threatened to embargo wool exports unless the 'estatut be dispensed with'.² Henry VI and his Council had no choice but to agree, yet the king gave his consent 'only for this tyme' and begged the Staplers to bring in 'as moche bullyone as ye shall mowe godely get'.³

Thus Philip the Good appeared to have won after all. But Philip, despite his stringent ban on bullion exports, was not as responsible for this victory as was the inherent vulnerability of the English bullion laws themselves. Enforcement of the laws had depended upon the support of the leading Staplers, who had demanded in return the Partition Ordinance, and this monopoly-privilege so antagonized the other merchants that they ultimately overthrew the whole system. Most of these merchants saw that the bullion requirements were injurious to their trade and would produce strong resistance abroad. That domestic English opposition counted most is

1. *Rot. Parl.* v. 64, no. 38; and *S.R.* ii. 324-5 (20 Hen. VI, c. 12). In attacking the bullion regulations, the petitioner argued that the 'seide streite rule hath caused Merchantz Estraungers to labour unto their Lordes of their partie, to make so grevous and streite serch uppon Bullion comyng unto your Mynt at Caley, so that men of divers Countries in conveyeng of Bullion hath bene gretely hyndered aswell in their persones as in their goodes, so that the seide Mynt is fallen into grete decay'. See also Table III.

2. *Nicolas, P.P.C.* v. 216-19.

3. *Ibid.* p. 222 (letter of Henry VI, 18 Oct. 1442).

clear, if only because Philip proved unable to unite his lands in retaliation. The Burgundian victory of 1442, it should be added, was short-lived. Henry VI had never promised surrender in the Crown's bullionist policy. Eventually the 'partitionists' of the Staple regained control and re-imposed the old ordinances, again provoking Burgundian bans on English cloth in 1447-52 and once more in 1464-7.¹ Not until parliament finally and fully repealed the Calais ordinances in 1473 did the issues of wool, cloth, and gold cease to dominate Anglo-Burgundian relations.

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1. Both Michael Postan in 'Credit in Medieval Trade' (p. 242) and Eileen Power in 'Wool Trade' (p. 89) stated that the Staple ordinances were inoperative after 1442. The texts cited in the two previous notes suggest that this view is mistaken. I intend to publish evidence on the continuation of this bullionist conflict to the 1470s.