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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Sam A. Mustafa entitled "The German Discovery of America: Commerce and Diplomacy in Two Emerging Nations, 1776-1835." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in History.

Arthur G. Haas

Arthur G. Haas, Major Professor

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Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

The German Discovery of America

Commerce and Diplomacy In Two Emerging Nations, 1776-1835

A Dissertation
Presented for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The University of Tennesee, Knoxville

Sam A. Mustafa
May 1999

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In memory of my grandfather, Donald W. Mitchell, Ph.D.

Professor of History.

Because what follows is pure innocence.
I owe you much, and like a wilful youth,
That which I owe is lost....

The Merchant of Venice, I, i

Acknowledgments

It is customary, I suppose, to conclude a page of acknowledgments by thanking one's family, as if they were reserved a special "last place." I want to mention them first and foremost. My parents Husain and Nancy Mustafa were instrumental in coaxing me back into graduate school in 1995, and an inheritance from my late grandfather Donald W. Mitchell was crucial in helping me afford getting started. These three people were or are all college professors, a line of work which has become something of an inadvertent tradition in my family. I am honored to join their ranks.

I am grateful to my friends Joe Edgell and Sarah Londerée in Washington, who provided a roof over my head and relaxing companionship after my many trips to the Library of Congress and the National Archives.

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I am proud to say that I was the final doctoral student of Professor Arthur Gustav Haas, at the University of Tennessee. He was not always an easy man to please, and a

couple of years passed before he was fully convinced that I was willing and able to do what I said I would do. A word of praise from him meant a very great deal to me. Now he retires from a lifetime of scholarship and teaching, passing the last baton to my hand. *Vielen Dank, mein Doktorvater.*

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Trans-Atlantic Summer Academy in Bonn, due in large part to the good offices of my friend and colleague Dr. C. Jeff Mellor, in the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages at the University of Tennessee. The German Historical Institute in Washington, DC provided me with a two-month scholarship in the winter of 1998, which enabled me to conduct my final research in American archives.

For reasons of familiarity, and because of the varying older usages in English, German, and French, I have used the modern-day English spellings of Bremen, Hamburg, Cologne, Munich, Nuremberg, Hanover, Brunswick, and Vienna. The Danish port of Tönning was usually called "Tönningen" by Germans, although I have opted for the modern German spelling. In other questions of transliteration I have attempted to employ either the contemporary usage, as shown by the correspondence of the actors themselves, or the best English rendering. When spelling or usage is questionable (such as a ship-captain rendered as "Altman" in one document and "Altmann" in another) I have simply tried to make the best guess. When quoting 18th-century English-speakers, I have left intact their usage of capitalization, although it is incorrect by 20th-century standards. A number of Germans, after emigrating to America or even while working there, adopted anglicized names. Thus, umlauts were dropped, spellings changed, Karl became Charles, Heinrich became Henry, and so forth. In some cases, they reverted to the original spellings when writing in German. I have, however, attempted to use the anglicized versions of these names consistently, if the actors themselves used them at all. Unless otherwise noted in the text, all translations from French or German are mine. Naturally, I am fully responsible for any errors of translation or fact.

Readers may notice that the male gender predominates in pronoun and general usage in this text. This is not a result of any particular "statement" on my part, nor even a

desire to simplify usage. It is because the vast majority of historical characters which appear in this work are male. In any case where such a categorical statement can not be made, I have employed gender-neutral language. The people whose activities and records inform this text (18th-19th century politicians, merchants, diplomats, publishers, etc) were almost all men.

I am grateful for the generous permission of the *Staats- und Universitätsbibliotheken* in Bremen and Hamburg and the Lewis Walpole Library of Yale University, to use photocopied archival materials. The documents from the National Archives in Washington, DC (College Park) are public domain, and used with tacit permission. Professor Haas provided me with lovely color plates from a 1930s Austrian grade-school atlas, which I have copied with his permission.

Finally I must offer thanks to my German "home" in 1997: the city of Bremen, where the sun sets very late in the summertime, drawing the day closed only by 10:30 or 11:00 PM. In that last hour of light, whispering streetcars appear and vanish, and often a stealthily quiet rain murmurs its way down into the patient old cobblestones, washing off another layer of human footfalls which have been accumulating for a millennium. In an old city, long grown wise to the comings and goings of people, there are perhaps more quiet spirits than we can comfortably contemplate. I suspect they slip in through the breezy open windows after dark and invest themselves in the smiles and greetings of the Bremers each morning. It is not Europe's, nor even Germany's most beautiful city, but it is quite possibly the friendliest. Its doors are still open to the world, and it celebrates a daily love of living that this American found very much like home.

Abstract

The early German-American relationship does not lend itself easily to traditional diplomatic history. American scholarship has neglected the subject entirely, perhaps because the most important actors not only were not Americans, but were operating far beneath the official channels of statesmanship. Hanseatic merchants opened the doors to the German-American relationship, and kept those doors open for fifty years until diplomats finally caught up to them. With the subtlety of bees cross-pollinating distant flowers, these men made German-American ties an economic *fait accompli* long before national governments saw the need to codify the relationship in treaties and endow it with well-staffed embassies.

An emerging liberal bourgeoisie in the seaports of North Germany and the young United States established economic and social connections which drew their two societies together, despite a long period of revolution and warfare. The result was a cultural linkage far more important than the paper agreements of statesmen and leaders, because it led to the movement of goods, ideas about free-trade and capitalism, and ultimately millions of immigrants. This work draws together the historical records of diplomats, merchants, statesmen, magistrates, immigrants, and literati in both Germany and the United States, to illustrate the ways in which Germans and Americans "discovered" each other in a time of great political upheavals, and what came of these discoveries.

Although American and German statesmen made occasional overtures in each other's direction, and although the United States signed three treaties with Prussia, these proved to be little more than pleasantries. The economic connections established between the American seaports and the Hanse cemented German-American relations during the first half-century of American independence. The efforts of many small, independent entrepreneurs combined to develop into social, cultural, and ultimately political connections by the time of the great German emigrations of the mid-19th century.

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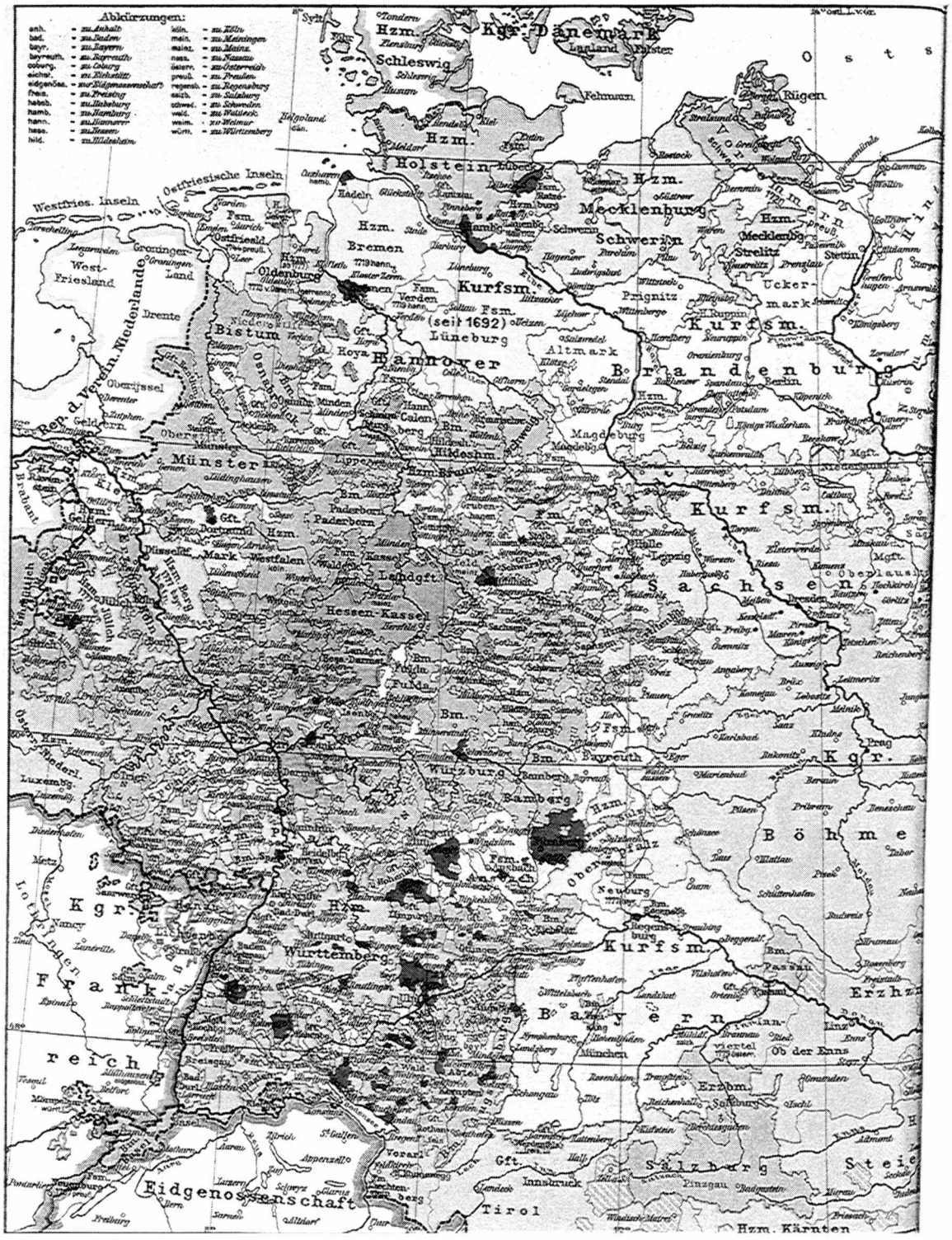
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* All color plates have been copied from the private collection of Arthur G. Haas, and used with permission.

Abbreviations Used in the Footnotes

AHR	*American Historical Review*
APS	Archives of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA
BJ	*Bremisches Jahrbuch*
GuG	*Geschichte und Gesellschaft*
GYBH	*German Yearbook of Business History*
HG	*Hansische Geschichtsblätter*
JEEH	*Journal of European Economic History*
MAHS	Archives of the Massachusettes Historical Society, Boston, MA
MDHS	Archives of the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, MD
NAW-B	"Consular Dispatches from Bremen." Records of the US State Dept., Record Group T184, Reels 1-2. National Archives, Washington, DC
NAW-E	"Dispatches from Consuls in Elberfeld, Rostock, and Lübeck." Records of the US State Dept., Record Group T566, Reel 1. (This reel also includes dispatches from Emden, 1804-06).
NAW-G	"Despatches From United States Ministers To The German States And Germany." Records of the US State Dept., Record Group 59, M44, Reel 2. National Archives, Washington DC
NAW-H	"Consular Dispatches from Hamburg." Records of the US State Dept., Record Group T211, Reels 1-2. National Archives, Washington, DC
NAW-NP	"Notes From the Prussian Legation in the United States to the Department of State." Records of the US State Dept., Record Group M58, Reels 1. National Archives, Washington, DC
NAW-T	"Consular Dispatches from Trieste." Records of the US State Dept., Record Group T242, Reel 1. National Archives, Washington, DC
NYHS	Archives of the New York Historical Society, New York, NY
PCORE	*Proceedings of the Consortium on Revolutionary Europe*
PHG	*Pfingstblätter des Hansischen Geschichtsvereins*
PHS	Archives of the Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA
RHMC	*Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*
SAB	Staatsarchiv Bremen
SAH	Staatsarchiv Hamburg
SuUB	Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen *
SuUH	Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg *
VSW	*Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*
ZHG	*Zeitschrift des Vereins für hamburgishe Geschichte*

* Used to denote the special archival holdings in the "Bremensia" and "Hamburgensia" collections, respectively.



Central Europe in the Late 18th Century

Introduction

This study examines the first half-century of German-American relations: the period between the independence of the United States and the onset of the great German migrations to America. In 1785, the United States concluded its first treaty with a German state. The year 1835 is not merely convenient as the 50-year marker of the relationship. In that year the United States opened its embassy in the Prussian capital, Berlin, thus establishing the first full-time, normalized diplomatic relations with a German state. Equally important, the previous year (1834) marked the triumph of the Prussian *Zollverein* (customs union) across nearly all of Germany, signaling the arrival of a new era of German economic activity, the end of the free-trade that had characterized nearly all of the German-American commercial relationship, and the beginnings of Prussian hegemony in Central Europe.

When speaking of "Germany" a century before such a country existed, I generally adhere to Jakob Grimm's definition: *wo die deutsche Sprache gesprochen wird.* [1] From Austria to Brandenburg, and from Silesia to the Saarland, connections with the trans-oceanic world were dependent upon a handful of northern seaports. Connections with North America were more limited still. In this period they were restricted to the two largest of the old Hanseatic ports: Hamburg, and more frequently, Bremen. Bremen and Hamburg played a central role in the development of US-German relations. They provided the major — albeit not the only — connections. For this reason, the activities of the Hanseatic merchants and their American counterparts constitute the most important source-material upon which this investigation draws.

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[1] Grimm is perhaps the most famous, but not the first to offer that definition. Half a century earlier, Ernst Moritz Arndt's poem, "Wo ist das deutschen Vaterland?" gave the following criteria: *"Where'er resounds the German tongue / Where'er its hymns to God are sung."*

Pulling together the records of German and American businessmen, immigrants, intellectuals, social and religious leaders, diplomats, magistrates, and politicians, we arrive at a picture of international relations that is not so much a chronology, but rather a mosaic: a many-layered portrait of how two cultures developed a successful relationship. Hanseatic interest in North America was not new; it dated to the earliest days of the English colonies, and was manifested by occasional smuggling and German lusting after the riches of the New World. This whetted the appetites of Hanse merchants for *Kolonialwaren* (colonial goods) such as tobacco, sugar, coffee, rice, and other items that would later comprise the majority of American exports to Germany. In addition, this long colonial "warm-up" to German-American relations included a substantial cultural and intellectual component. Germans and Americans began to correspond and exchange ideas during the American colonial period, setting the stage for a later expansion of cross-cultural scholarly activity.

The initial impetus for the all-important economic relationship was German, emanating primarily from Bremen and Hamburg. After independence, Americans were free to reciprocate that interest, and a vast network of connections graadually developed. In its investigation of these connections, this study will prove three things.

First, American independence occurred at the same time that a new world-trade system was emerging. The new network of global markets included, but was no longer limited to, the mercantilist European imperial systems. A new "Merchant Culture" was developing in the world's major port cities, particularly in the Atlantic harbors of western Europe and North America. The US and the Hanse were participants in this larger system, but they also shared a number of unique characteristics that made their respective "merchant cultures" remarkably compatible. These commonalities included attitudes about religion, republicanism, bourgeois capitalism, and especially the relationship

between business and politics. The Hanse and the American port cities proved to be an extremely good "match," providing the first conduit for important connections between Americans and Germans.

Second, a thriving German-American economic relationship developed even while official diplomacy between the United States and the larger German states accomplished very little. Because virtually all US-German trade passed through the Hanse, Prussian-American treaties of "Amity and Commerce" proved to be little more than formalities, and Austrian-American negotiations produced nothing at all. These negotiations did, however, demonstrate that without an economic relationship (and the resulting pull upon social and cultural factors), diplomacy is only skin-deep.

Third, the period of reconstruction and recovery after the Napoleonic wars substantially changed the economic and political conditions of Central Europe. These changes, particularly the growing power and influence of Prussia in German affairs, altered the nature of the US-German relationship. Germans slowly abandoned the free-trading ideology of the Hanseatic cities, in favor of more protectionist policies. As the Prussians became more interested in intra-German trade, they also became interested in more meaningful economic relations with the United States. As a result, by the 1830s, the US-German relationship had shifted from a largely unregulated but thriving free-trade with the Hanse, to a more formal integrated diplomatic/commercial relationship between Washington and Berlin.

Because early German-American affairs were primarily commercial in nature, this subject offers an intriguing opportunity to investigate how commerce related to diplomacy among nations that were slowly establishing productive relationships. There is already a large body of scholarship which explores the commerce and diplomacy of the period 1776-1835, but it has focused overwhelmingly upon *conflict,* particularly among

the major powers, and how that conflict affected commerce. Many sophisticated analyses exist, for example, on the impact of the Continental System or the Embargo Acts, exploring the economic distress of Germany caught between France and Britain, or America's clumsy maneuvers between the major belligerents. Relatively little, by contrast, has been written on the commerce of this period as a force for bringing nations into closer cooperation.

This study is arranged both topically and chronologically, with the first four chapters exploring the political and socio-cultural atmosphere of commerce and diplomacy in North Germany and the early United States. What were the mechanics of 18th century commerce, particularly as they related to Germans and Americans? Who were the businessmen who initiated this commerce, and what was their role in the larger spheres of politics, international relations, and the spreading of culture? Can we indeed speak of a "merchant culture" that characterized the Hanseatic and American harbors, and which provided a kind of capitalist *lingua franca,* enabling money, people, and ideas to pass easily between the two emerging nations? Finally, what were the basic assumptions of diplomacy for Germans and Americans in the period 1776-1835, and how did commerce and diplomacy intertwine between the two cultures, especially in the port cities?

The second half of this study comprises four chapters which proceed roughly chronologically from the American Revolution through the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic period, until the onset of Prussian economic domination in Germany. Chapter Five examines the intense interest in the Hanseatic cities in developing an American trade during the 1790s. The leaders of Bremen and Hamburg encouraged merchants to explore new American connections, and eagerly sought new American imports. A decade of increasing activity resulted in a booming new German-American

trade and a gradual recognition by the American government of its significance. Chapter Six presents the contrast of the "official" channels of American and German diplomacy, emanating usually from Berlin, Vienna, and Paris. Despite frequent flickers of interest from prominent Germans and Americans, these initiatives generally fell far short of expectations on both sides, either due to incompatibility with young America's lofty expectations for an ideologically-based foreign policy, or from German lack of interest in any relationship which was not immediately commercially viable.

Chapter Seven addresses the US-German relationship within the context of economic warfare, as the conflicts of the French Revolution and Napoleon spilled across Germany and ultimately across the Atlantic. Here the American consuls serving in Bremen and Hamburg provide a fascinating link of information transmitted between two societies who — although ultimately on opposite sides in the war — attempted to maintain their commercial ties despite the difficulties of blockades and counter-blockades. Chapter Eight examines the restored US-German relationship after the wars, as both the US and the Hanse began to push more vigorously for unrestricted trade. Prussian-American interests began finally to develop in this period while Prussia was also extending her economic dominance over Germany. This study concludes with the establishment of formal, full-time Prussian-American diplomatic relations, and with the victory of the Prussian *Zollverein* across most of Germany.

It is often useful to explain what an historical work is *not,* as well as what it is. This is particularly true of works such as this one, which do not fit neatly into established categories of scholarship, such as "social history," "diplomatic history," or "economic history." By borrowing and sampling liberally from all these (and several other) fields, I have been dependent upon the work of many fine scholars. It has been my goal to synthesize the separate findings of historians in many areas, and to uncover the human

record of people who stood at the junctures of social, diplomatic, commercial, and intellectual activity.

First, this is not a history of German emigration to America, either in the Colonial period or in the 19th century.[2] Certainly the presence of Germans in the Americas was a factor in the development of German-American relations, and I shall address this topic in several ways. The causes, process, and effects of immigration have been admirably covered by a number of scholars, however, and this study concerns itself with connections that had more to do with relatively small numbers of businessmen than with the thousands (and ultimately, millions) of immigrants from Germany.

Second, this is not an economic history, although the works of economic historians have helped to inform my theses. Rather than focusing upon a quantitative analysis of money and trade-goods, which has been at least partially done by a handful of historians already, I chose to use larger economic trends as the parameters for my analyses of socio-cultural and political connections. How did economic factors motivate individuals? To what extent did these individuals create relationships which in turn changed economic conditions? How did the changing economic situations impact societies and states? I bow to the experts in economic history, and have kept my focus on people first, and economics second.

Finally, this is not an intellectual history, or a study of the transmission of ideas between societies, because to attempt such a work would require a far broader view than the socio-economic-political lens I have generally employed. Nonetheless, no investigation of relationships between societies would be complete without due attention to literary output and the works of scholars and thinkers, particularly when these ideas

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[2] Americans are often (and justly) criticized for using the term "America" to refer to the United States, although that is how Bremers did and still do refer to the US. In Hamburg, where the perspective was somewhat different, "Amerika" generally meant Spanish or Portuguese-speaking lands in the south, and the United States was specifically called, "Die vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika."

did tend to cross oceans and national borders quite efficiently. This work addresses ideological, scholarly, and literary "connections" between Germans and Americans to the extent that such transmissions inspired people to make further connections, usually in business or politics.

It is interesting to note that, in the early years of the republic, Americans frequently referred to their country as "America," in the singular, but wrote of the "United States" in the plural, as Jefferson had done in the Declaration of Independence. Even after the adoption of the Constitution, Americans did not appear fully convinced that their sprawling collection of seaboard states was a centralized, unified body. This is perhaps the most interesting of their several similarities to the Germans.

In both America and Central Europe, the first decades of the 19th century set the stage for diverse groupings of states to move toward constructing powerful, unified nations. And although the paths taken to such unity ultimately produced vastly different nations, in the first fifty years after the American revolt from Britain, both Germany and the United States were awkward confederations of people culturally unified only by language and ethnicity, and tenuously at that. In both cases, large parts of the "country" were the littoral of rival governments.[3] The American Constitution was a much stronger bond than that of the Holy Roman Empire or the German Confederation, but in neither America nor Germany could be found a people who were in agreement on economic, political, or social systems. For all the superior political superstructure enjoyed by Americans after 1789, the differences between a Georgia plantation owner and a Rhode Island tea merchant were certainly as profound as those between a Bavarian farmer and a Bremen tobacco trader. And despite the vicissitudes of wars and blockades that damaged

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[3] Florida and much of the West was held by Spain until 1819, while the Mississippi's delta and her headwaters remained French until 1803. Similarly, many Germans on the Baltic coast were subjects of the kings of Denmark or Sweden, while other Germans were ruled by Britain or France.

the merchant classes in both America and Germany, the two peoples were the sleeping economic giants of the era, soon to grow into their new-found strength, and to upset calibrations of the balance of power in the western world.

In addition to being developing, emerging powers in varying states of organization and unity, both the small German states and the United States in this era remained uncertain of their positions and roles *vis-à-vis* the great powers. While many excellent historical works have explored the relationships of Germany or the United States to the major European states, very little has been written on the relationship of Germany and the United States to each other. In the history of foreign affairs, the German-American relationship is one of the great unexplored "others" of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

In the first half-century after American independence, the German relationship with the United States unfolded on two levels. The one which was far less successful, the official maneuvering and correspondence of statesmen in various capitals, has received most of what little attention historians have paid this subject. The other, the entrepreneurship of individual merchants and entrepreneurs, was less glamorous and frequently ignored by heads of state, but it was the foundation-block of a solid and profitable German-American relationship that lasted until the First World War.

The relative lack of attention given by historians to this invisible diplomacy of merchants is perhaps understandable within the context of diplomatic history, which as one of the oldest branches of the historical profession, remains somewhat more beholden to "traditional" approaches than more recent fields of historical inquiry. In the past, studies of diplomatic history were often elitist both in their scope of inquiry and their assignment of agency to a few famous men. The concentration on the roles of major powers and their leading diplomats is reminiscent of one of Metternich's famous quips,

that "foreign affairs is not for the plebs." Nor is this perspective limited to historical writing of a previous century; no less an authority than Henry Kissinger has shown his preference for "Great Man" style interpretations of diplomatic trends and events. On the opening page of *Diplomacy* (1994) he speaks of "France under Richelieu.... Metternich's Austria... [and] Bismarck's Germany." Scholarship in the last fifty years has also shown the limits of attempts to investigate the nuts and bolts of foreign relations by studying the activities of more humble diplomatic personages than the few great statesmen. At its worst, as Paul Schroeder has recently written, this kind of diplomatic history can be criticized as "a record of what one clerk said to another clerk."[4]

It is thus not surprising that diplomatic history has all but neglected the early period of German-American relations. There were precious few great nations and "great men" involved. Moreover, when well-known historical personalities did enter the picture, their presence was often ephemeral or ineffectual, and they quickly withdrew. We see in Thomas Jefferson's flirtations with Austria, in John Quincy Adams' brief stay in Berlin, in Frederick the Great's hesitant outreach to the United States in the last few years of his life, indeed in virtually every example of German-American contact in the first half-century after US independence, the actions of prominent statesmen were half-hearted and/or hamstrung by preoccupations with other diplomatic relationships they considered far more important. Nonetheless, in most secondary sources which touch in some way upon the early German-American relationship, it is the circumscribed world of the great leaders and diplomats which receives the greatest attention.

The activities of high-ranking statesmen remain significant to this investigation insofar as they reflect the atmosphere in which their governments saw the relationship of

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[4] See his essay, "Does the History of International Politics Go Anywhere?" in: David Wetzel and Theodore Hamerow, eds. *International politics and German history: the past informs the present* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997), 17.

two peoples and several states. The work of the lowest-level diplomats, however, was frequently far more crucial. Men who served as consuls in German and American harbors were usually members of the merchant classes whose trade they encouraged and helped to administer. These consuls had one foot planted in commerce and the other in foreign affairs. Their records provide the historian with an incomparable perspective on the linkage of commerce and diplomacy in the emerging German and American economies. The consuls and their businessmen colleagues were a fundamental synapse of the German-American relationship.

American scholarship has neglected this story entirely, perhaps because the most important actors not only were not Americans, but were operating far beneath the official channels of statesmanship. Hanseatic merchants opened the doors to the German-American relationship, and kept those doors open for fifty years until diplomats finally caught up to them. With the subtlety of bees cross-pollinating distant flowers, these men made German-American ties an economic *fait accompli* long before national governments saw the need to codify the relationship in treaties and endow it with well-staffed embassies.

It is therefore necessary to fashion a new synthesis, drawing from social, economic, political, and diplomatic interpretations, which will comprehensively address the origins of German-American ties and the history of this first half-century of German-American dialogue and commerce. This work draws together the historical records in both Germany and the United States, to illustrate the ways in which Germans and Americans "discovered" each other in a time of great political upheavals, and what came of these discoveries.

Notes on Sources

The earliest phase of US-German relations — the half-century between American independence and the Prussian *Zollverein* — has up to now produced very little scholarship, particularly from American historians. There are simply no works at all in the English language which draw together the evidence that shows a long-standing network of political discourse and economic connections between Americans and Germans since the earliest days of American independence. German historians have made important contributions in this area, but their works are frequently quite narrow in focus. Despite a century of historical work — mostly German — on several related topics, there has been no effort to pull all the strands together to tell the story of how Germans and Americans first began talking and trading with each other, and how that relationship evolved.

This investigation is an attempt at such a synthesis. In German scholarship today there is budding interest in what is generally called "Atlantic Studies" or "Atlantic History," although in the United States these terms more often have referred to works on Caribbean, African, or South American topics. Thus far in the United States, "North Atlantic History" remains largely unwritten, a gray area between the traditions of American and European

History.[1] This is particularly true of writing on the first half-century of American independence. It is time to harness the resources of both fields in ways which illuminate the interdependence of American and European cultures and economies.

Any study of the Hanseatic cities in this era can benefit greatly from a number of surveys of the histories of Bremen and Hamburg. For the former, there is the Döll Verlag, a publisher which produces a bi-annual list of new titles in some way related to Bremen. These have included city histories by Georg Bessell and Dieter Hagermann.[2] Another comprehensive history of Bremen is the recent four-volume work by Herbert Schwarzwälder.[3] A valuable general history of Hamburg is the two-volume work by Hans-Dieter Loose and Werner Jochmann.[4] Ernst Baasch and Percy Ernst Schramm have contributed a number of important works on Hamburg.[5] Richard Ehrenberg and, more

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1 North Atlantic history may yet prove to be a growth industry. We are just now seeing some important work in the field. An acclaimed new book by David Hancock examines the role of 18th century London merchants in broadening the mercantile horizons of the English-speaking world. With his broad investigations of the relationships between trade, society, politics, and public policy, Hancock's work is a pioneer of the same kind of historical inquiry which moves this dissertation. [David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).] Another new book on trans-Atlantic commerce is due to appear this year, in which my friend Daniel Rabuzzi contributes an article exploring the initiatives of American merchants opening new trade connections in the Indies, Holland, and North Germany. [Daniel A. Rabuzzi, "Cutting Out the Middleman? American Trade in Northern Europe, 1783-1815." (In: Olaf Uwe Janzen, ed., *Merchant Organization and Maritime Trade in the North Atlantic, 1660-1815* (St. John's Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1998)), 175-197.]

2 Georg Otto Adolf Bessell, *Bremen: die Geschichte einer deutschen Stadt* (Bremen: Döll, 1955), Dieter Hagermann, ed., *Bremen 1200 Jahre Mission* (Bremen: Döll, 1988).

3 Herbert Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen,* 4 Vols. (Bremen: Temmen, 1995).

4 Hans-Dieter Loose and Werner Jochmann, eds., *Hamburg: Geschichte der Stadt und ihrer Bewohner* 2 Vols. (Hamburg: Hoffman & Campe, 1986).

5 In particular, see: Ernst Baasch, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte von Hamburgs Handel und Schiffahrt im 17., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Gräfe & Sillem, 1910), and Percy Ernst Schramm,

recently, Eduard Rosenbaum and A.J. Sherman have written fascinating studies of Hamburg merchant houses, and the milieu and conditions in which they operated.[6]

The annual collections of the *Bremisches Jahrbuch* and the *Zeitschrift des Vereins für hamburgische Geschichte* were particularly useful sources for German scholarship on the Hanseatic cities during the period of the French Revolution and Napoleon, as well as more general work on Hanseatic trade. Wilhelm von Bippen wrote a number of articles on the city of Bremen and its most influential citizens during the period of increasing French domination. His work on Bremen's French-controlled Chamber of Commerce is particularly enlightening.[7] The prolific Hermann Kellenbenz also contributed several times to the *Bremisches Jahrbuch,* including a fascinating study of the role of Hanseatic consuls overseas.[8] Directly related to this study are the works of Walter Kresse and Moritz Lindeman, both of whom wrote on the relationship of the German ports to the United States.[9]

A number of historians have written on the subject of the small European states under the Continental System. There are far too many studies in this field to attempt a

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Hamburg, Deutschland und die Welt: Leistung und Grenzen hanseatischen Burgertums in der Zeit zwischen Napoleon I und Bismarck, ein Kapitel deutscher Geschichte (Hamburg: Hoffman & Campe, 1952).

6 See: Richard Ehrenberg, *Das Haus Parish in Hamburg* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1905), and Eduard Rosenbaum & A.J. Sherman, *M.M. Warburg & Co., 1798-1938: Merchant Bankers of Hamburg* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979).

7 Wilhelm von Bippen, "Das französiche Handelsgericht und die französiche Handelskammer in Bremen 1811-1813." *Bremisches Jahrbuch* 23 (1911): 161-171.

8 Hermann Kellenbenz, "Zur Frage der konsularisch-diplomatischen Verbindungen und der Handelsverträge der Hansestädte mit überseeischen Staaten im 19. Jahrhundert." *Bremisches Jahrbuch* 49 (1964): 219-224.

9 Walter Kresse, "Die Auswirkungen der Handelsverträge der Hansestädte mit amerikanischen Staaten auf die Hamburger Schiffahrt." *Zeitschrift des Vereins für hamburgische Geschichte* 60 (1974): 139-

comprehensive overview here, but a few classic and modern works were particularly useful. Nearly a century ago, Georges Servières wrote *L'allemagne français sous Napoléon,* a masterpiece of political and diplomatic history.[10] A few months before the First World War, Max Schäfer completed his dissertation at the University of Leipzig: "Bremen und die Kontinentalsperre," one of the first detailed studies of German commerce during the Napoleonic blockades.[11] Among older works, Eli Hecksher's *The Continental System: An Economic Interpretation* is still indispensable.[12] Frank Melvin's *Napoleon's Navigation System* is a very concise and compact little book which admirably explains the legal protocols and the paperwork of the Continental System, as well as giving insight into the implementation (or lack thereof, in many cases) of the system by French administrators.[13] There are many editions of the *Memoires* of Fauvelet de Bourrienne, Napoleon's duplicitous Minister Resident in Hamburg. The memoirs are unfortunately an aggrandizing, heavily biased, and inaccurate work; a tragedy for historians since its author was in a position to give a superb first-hand account of the French administration of the Hanseatic cities.[14]

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146. Moritz Lindemann, "Zur Geschichte der älteren Handelsbeziehungen Bremens mit den Ver. Staaten von Nordamerika." *Bremisches Jahrbuch* 10 (1878): 124-146.

10 Georges Servières, *L'allemagne français sous Napoléon* (Paris: Perrin, 1904).

11 Max Schäfer, "Bremen und die Kontinentalsperre" (Ph.D. diss, University of Leipzig, 1914). An earlier work, Walther Vogel's *Die Hansestädte und die Kontinentalsperre,* published at Leipzig in 1913, is more of a popular treatment, and relies entirely on secondary sources.

12 Eli F. Hecksher, *The Continental System: An Economic Interpretation,* (London: Clarendon Press, 1922).

13 Frank Edgar Melvin, *Napoleon's Navigation System: A Study of Trade Control During the Continental Blockade* (New York: Appleton, 1919).

14 Bourrienne's record of events is so notoriously wrong that a two-volume "correction" exists. See: Boulay de la Meurthe, ed. *Bourrienne et ses erreurs* (Paris, 1830).

Modern research on the Continental System has produced an impressive array of scholarship from French, German, and American historians in journals and yearbooks such as *Francia* and the *Proceedings of the Consortium on Revolutionary Europe.* Michel Bruguière, Roger Dufraisse, Jean Mistler, Karin Newman, Reinhard Patemann, and Jean Vidalenc have all made important contributions to our understanding of the economies of the north-German cities during the period 1789-1815.[15]

There is, somewhat surprisingly, not much written on the social composition of the Hanseatic cities, and how their mercantile cultures differed from those of the German interior. A few works which do exist on this topic, however, are quite detailed. Steven Daniel Uhalde's dissertation "Citizen and World Citizen: Civic Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism in 18th Century Hamburg" provides a very insightful view of the Hamburg merchant class from their social activities to their political inclinations.[16] And although she intended to write a book about the Poor Relief in 18th-century Hamburg, Mary Lindemann's *Patriots and Paupers* is also a good snapshot of a society at work.[17] Hans-Erich Bödecker's study of the class divisions and neighborhoods of northern Germany also deserves mention, as does the work of Andreas Schulz on the Bremen

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15 Michel Bruguière, "Remarques sur les rapports financiers entre la France et l'Allemagne du Nord: Hambourg." *Francia* I (1973): 467-481. Roger Dufraisse, "La crise économique de 1810-1812 en pays annexé." *Francia* VI (1978): 407-440. Jean Mistler, "Hambourg sous l'occupation française." *Francia* I (1973): 451-466. Karin Newman, "Hamburg in the European Economy, 1660-1750." *Journal of European Economic History* 14 (Jan-Apr 1985): 57-93. Reinhard Patemann, "Die Beziehungen Bremens zu Frankreich bis zum Ende der Französichen Herrschaft 1813." *Francia* I (1973): 482-507. Jean Vidalenc, "Les départements hanséatiques et l'administrations napoléonienne." *Francia* I (1973): 414-450.

16 Steven Daniel Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen: Civic Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism in 18th Century Hamburg." (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1984).

17 Mary Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

bourgeoisie.[18] Finally, the works of Percy Ernst Schramm, which almost deserve a bibliographic essay in their own right, have also touched upon this subject of the socio-economic composition of the Hanseatic cities, and how their citizens viewed themselves and the world.[19]

Economic historians have naturally done important work on many of the issues which concern this study. On the border between economic and social history, Carl William Hasek provided an interesting insight into the "philosophy" of capitalism in Germany with his dissertation "The Introduction of Adam Smith's Doctrines Into Germany."[20] Two classic interpretations of the impact of the Napoleonic Wars on European trade and commerce can be found in J.H. Clapham's *The Economic Development of France and Germany 1815-1914* and François Crouzet's 1964 article, "Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe, 1789-1815."[21] Hermann Wätjen also wrote a number of studies of transatlantic commerce, which have shed light on the evolution of trade as North and then South America became independent of their colonial masters in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.[22] More recent works by Martin Kutz

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[18] Hans-Erich Bödecker, "Marchands et Habitat: Le Nord-Ouest de l'Allemagne vers 1800." *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 41(4) (1994): 571-600. Andreas Schulz, "Tage des Wohllebens, wie sie noch nie gewesen: das bremer Bürgertum in der Umbruchzeit 1789-1818." *Historische Zeitschrift* Beiheft 14 (1991): 19-63.

[19] In particular, see: Percy Ernst Schramm, "Die deutschen Überseekaufleute im Rahmen der Sozialgeschichte." *Bremisches Jahrbuch* 49 (1964): 31-54.

[20] Carl William Hasek, "The Introduction of Adam Smith's Doctrines Into Germany." (Ph.D. diss., Columbia U., NY 1925).

[21] J.H. Clapham *The Economic Development of France and Germany 1815-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968). François Crouzet, "Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe 1792-1815." *Journal of Economic History* XXIV (1964): 567-590.

[22] In paticular, see: Hermann Wätjen, *Aus Der Frühzeit Des Nordatlantikverkehrs* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1932).

and Michel Morineau demonstrate the growing importance of global trade in the 18th and 19th centuries.[23] Curtis Nettles' classic study of the development of the American economy during this period is also a fine starting-point for any investigation of this topic.[24]

There has been interesting work on very specific aspects of trade during this period of history. A recent dissertation by Karin Müller deals with Bremen's role as the distributor of cotton throughout Germany.[25] Some years earlier, Mary A. Hess at the Catholic University in Washington produced a valuable study of the effect of American tobacco exports on Central European economies.[26] Cotton and tobacco were among the most important goods Americans shipped to Germany, and these works have helped to answer some questions about the early US-German trade relationship.

Other dissertations and publications of the Catholic University have proven somewhat less satisfactory, although they deserve mention here because of their attention to this historical topic. In the 1940s the subject of early US-German relations seemed to intrigue a number of graduate students at the Catholic University, and several major

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[23] Martin Kutz, "Die Entwicklung des Aussenhandels Mitteleuropas zwischen Französicher Revolution und Wiener Kongress." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 6 (no 4, 1980): 538-558. Michel Morineau, "Y avait-il une économie mondiale avant le XIXe siècle?" *Francia* XVII/2 (1991): 207-212.

[24] Curtis P. Nettles, *The Emergence of a National Economy, 1775-1815* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

[25] Karin Müller, "Die Freie Hansestadt Bremen — Zentrum des Baumwollhandels in Mitteleuropa" (Diplomkaufmannsdissertation, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Nürnberg, 1985).

[26] Sister Mary A. Hess, *American Tobacco and Central European Policy.* (Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 1948).

research projects were undertaken there.[27] Marie McGowan wrote on the relationship of Hamburg to the United States in the period following the Napoleonic Wars, Margaret O'Dwyer on early US-Austrian relations, and Mary O'Connell on early US-Prussian relations.[28] These works are somewhat limited in the breadth of their research, perhaps because of the impossibility of traveling to Germany to conduct research during the Second World War. They do, however, represent a unique attention to this topic in American historiography.[29]

Although not the main focus of this study, the foreign policy and diplomatic interests of the early American republic are certainly germane to any investigation of US-German relations. The literature on this subject is voluminous, almost overwhelming. A small sampling will have to suffice here. Daniel Lang's *Foreign Policy in the Early Republic* provides an interesting view within the context of the Jefferson-Hamilton rivalry as well as the development of international law as a concept.[30] A number of larger

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27 It is unclear under whose direction these theses and dissertations were written; none of the printed copies I have examined include a list of committee members or even acknowledgement to a thesis director.

28 Sister Marie O.P. McGowan, "Relations Between Hamburg and the United States, 1815-1848" (Master's Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1945). Sister Margaret O'Dwyer, "Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Austria." (Master's Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1943), Sister Mary Margaret O'Connell, "The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Prussia." (Master's Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1944).

29 On her first page, O'Connell writes that US-Prussian relations "were, in general, merely the logical result of American estrangement from Great Britain in the early days of the young nation, and later, of rapidly expanding commercial interests in both the United States and Prussia." Both of these points are easily refuted. The supposed American "estrangement" from Great Britain nonetheless provided both nations with massive trade revenues, Britain being America's primary trade partner for a half-century after independence, rivalled finally by the Germans in the mid-19th century. Second, US-Prussian commerce was quite small, and remained so for fifty years until Secretary of State J.Q. Adams *very deliberately* sent a number of fact-finding missions to Prussia to explore ways to improve it. Within a half-decade of that policy, trade picked up rapidly.

30 Daniel G. Lang, *Foreign Policy in the Early Republic* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985).

surveys also provide useful insight on early American foreign policy goals and practices, such as Max Silberschmidt's *The United States and Europe,* Walter McDougall's *Promised Land: Crusader State,* Paul Varg's *United States Foreign Policy 1820-1860,* Henry Wriston's *Executive Agents in American Foreign Relations,* and John Crowley's *The Privileges of Independence.* [31]

The massive literary output of the American "Founding Fathers" has likewise been compiled in a number of useful bound editions, although the complete papers of these men — particularly Franklin — usually remain accesible only by perusal of archival holdings.[32] Nonetheless, a few works deserve mention. Francis Wharton's compilation of *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence* remains indispensable, even a century after its publication.[33] Foremost among the second generation of American statesmen and vital to the development of the US-German relationship, the long and prolific career of John Quincy Adams was meticulously researched and the writings compiled by his son Charles Francis Adams.[34] Worthington Ford edited a further seven-volume compilation of Adams' correspondence in 1914, and Allan Nevins

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31 Max Silberschmidt, *The United States and Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1997), Paul A. Varg, *United States Foreign Relations 1820-1860* (Michigan State University Press, 1979), Henry M. Wriston *Executive Agents in American Foreign Relations* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1967), John E. Crowley, *The Privileges of Independence: Neomercantilism and the American Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

32 A portion of Franklin's papers are held by the University of Pennsylvania, and the Archives of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia holds much of his correspondence.

33 Francis Wharton, ed., *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence,* 6 Vols, (Washington: Gov't Printing Office, 1889).

34 Charles Francis, Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams,* 11 Vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1874).

produced a condensed single volume in 1928.[35]

Not surprisingly, German historians have done some of the most detailed work on economic developments in the Hanseatic cities, and the role played by American commerce. More than a century ago, Ernst Baasch wrote his study of trade between Hamburg and the United States.[36] Baasch was the first historian to document the budding German interest in American "Kolonialwaren" even before American independence, and the various attempts to circumvent the British mercantile system. The most recent study of Hamburg's American trade was undertaken in the 1970s in a dissertation by Heinrich Ernst Köppen, whose knowledge of Danish allowed him to research the previously undisclosed smuggling routes through the Danish port of Tönningen — a vital lifeline for Hamburg during the Continental System.[37] Although Köppen did not make any attempt to address social or political considerations, his work has provided a fresh perspective on Germany during the Napoleonic era, as well as a massive compilation of figures for the trade-goods which entered Hamburg from North and South America.

Bremen's relations with the United States have also been addressed by a few German scholars, beginning in 1953 when Ludwig Beutin published *Bremen und Amerika,* the first attempt at a comprehensive economic history of US-Bremen trade.[38]

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35 Worthington C. Ford, ed., *The Writings of John Quincy Adams,* 7 Vols, (New York: MacMillan, 1914), Allan, Nevins, ed., *The Diary of John Quincy Adams,* (New York: Longmans, 1928).

36 Ernst Baasch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Handelsbeziehungen Zwischen Hamburg und Amerika* (Hamburg: L. Friedrichsen, 1892).

37 Heinrich Ernst Köppen, "Die Handelsbeziehungen Hamburgs zu den Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts" (Dissertationsarbeit, Universität Köln, 1973).

38 Ludwig Beutin, *Bremen und Amerika: Zur Geschichte der Wirtschaft und der Beziehungen Deutschlands zu den Vereinigten Staaten* (Bremen: Schünemann, 1953).

This is an exhaustive study which included a number of political insights, but almost entirely focused upon the mid-to-late 19th century. Of Beutin's 340 pages, only the first thirty address the period before 1830. Franz-Josef Pitsch has contributed the most recent economic history of US-Bremen relations, and as Köppen did for Hamburg, Pitsch accomplished an impressive catalogue of annual trade figures and the number of ships which dropped anchors at various ports.[39] He was less successful as an interpreter of political events, particularly for the early period, and his work suffers from a number of errors regarding American history, the most glaring when he refers to Benjamin Franklin as "the future President" of the United States.[40] Nonetheless, Pitsch's accounting of the year-by-year tonnages of rice, cotton, tobacco, etc., arriving in Bremen's harbor is an invaluable historical asset.

The German merchants who opened trade with America were literate men, and the large number of trade-oriented newspapers and magazines they read give us a great deal of insight into German impressions of America, and of America's role in the German merchant's view of the world. Holger Böning and Emmy Moepps at the University of Bremen have compiled a massive three-volume annotated index of all surviving periodicals from Hamburg in the years 1600-1815.[41] These are kept, mostly on microfilm, in the library at the University of Bremen. The collections in Hamburg

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[39] Franz Josef Pitsch, *Die wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen Bremens zu den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Bremen: Selbstverlag des Staatsarchivs, 1974). (Pitsch studied under the prolific Hermann Kellenbenz at the University of Cologne in the early 1970s.)

[40] The reference to Franklin is on page 18.

[41] Holger Böning & Emmy Moepps, eds. *Deutsche Presse Hamburg* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996).

themselves are actually much less complete, owing to the devastating fire of 1842 and the annihilation of the air raids a century later. Dr. Böning very graciously loaned me his personal copy of the index, which allows one to find the newspapers and trade journals published for the Hanseatic merchant class. Dr. Moepps has also published a fascinating study of German reactions to the news of the American revolution, and the ways in which German interest in America translated into political action and literature sympathetic to the revolutionary cause, and thus, to America itself.[42]

The most important historical documents considered by this study are, of course, archival records kept in the United States and Germany. The National Archives in Washington is the primary source for official records and correspondence of the US State Department.[43] The Archive of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia has preserved the papers of Benjamin Franklin, as well as the records of important merchants like Stephen Girard. The Historical Societies of Pennsylvania and Maryland are the repositories for a number of important mercantile documents, as well as commercial records for Philadelphia and Baltimore, the two most important American harbors for early US-German trade. There, and in archives in New York and Boston, one finds the papers for most of the prominent American merchant firms of this era, as well as evidence of the impact of German merchants living in the American ports.

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[42] Emmy Moepps, *Vorboten der Freiheit: Das Ringen um die Unabhängigkeit der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika im Spiegel der deutschen Presse* (Bremen: Universität Bremen, 1976).

[43] The National Archives in Washington (NARA) holds the collections of the US State Department, as well as other documents important to this study. National Archives branches in Philadelphia and Boston have a few related materials, such as indexes to passenger lists for ships arriving in the United States, usually after 1800. Naturalization records are also usually kept in the branches, as well as court, tax, and fiscal records.

The Staatsarchiv Bremen holds the correspondence of the Bremer consulates in the United States, as well as the Senate acts regarding trade, and the papers of a number of important merchant families. The special manuscript collections of the University of Bremen are a gold mine of old records, including legal proceedings, summaries of mercantile activities, and the aforementioned periodicals from the 18th and 19th centuries. The collections of the Staatsarchiv Hamburg are somewhat more limited regarding official correspondence, but very rich in family and business papers. The "Hamburgensia" collections at the University of Hamburg have also preserved a number of very old family histories and some interesting historical mementos from prominent German-American émigrés.

The preceding list can naturally reflect only a fraction of the printed sources which informed this study. I am indebted to a number of people for their kind assistance and advice, and am grateful for the work of more than a century of scholarship before me.

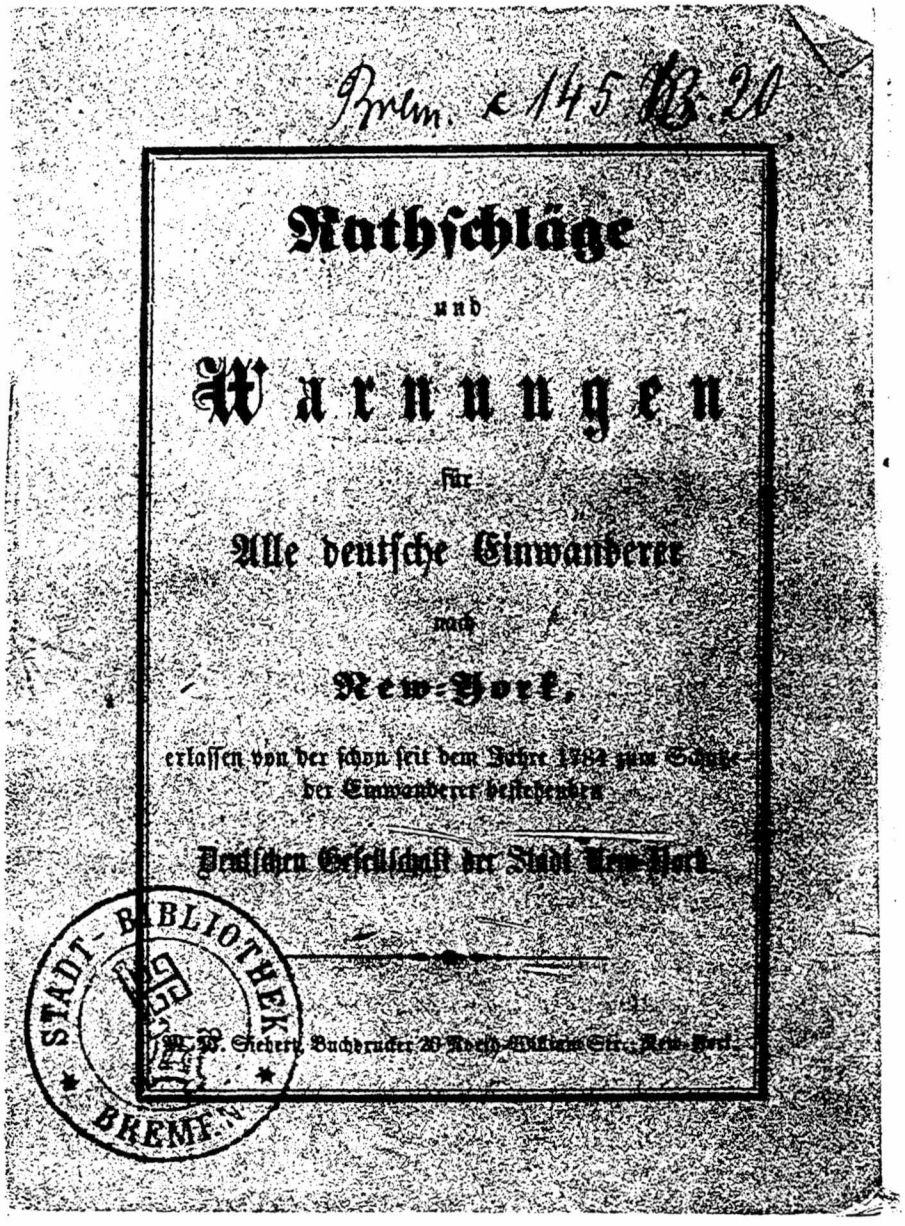
Sam A. Mustafa
Knoxville, TN
May, 1999

Chapter One

Germans and Americans

Americans and Europeans have yet to acquire a common history....

Max Silberschmidt



"Advice and Warnings." A Pamphlet Distributed to German Immigrants Bound for New York.

Source: Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen (manuscript collection). Used with permission.



The German North Sea Coast:
Bremen, Hamburg, and the smaller Atlantic ports.

"Just A Meaningless Council House..."

The Hanseatic League *(die Hanse, der Hansebund)* emerged in the 13th century as a loose confederation of North Atlantic ports, primarily German and theoretically under the aegis of the Holy Roman Emperor. The ships of the League dominated the trade between Germany, the countries on the Baltic Sea, and Western Europe. The Hanse developed a monopoly on the Baltic trade because many West-European sailors feared the journey through the Skaggerak, around Jutland, and because the Hanse often blockaded the Baltic to enforce its supremacy. A large part of the Baltic trade had to first pass Lübeck or Hamburg before proceeding on to the North Sea and other markets. After an early challenge from Bremen, Lübeck became the leader of the League in its second century and for two centuries thereafter. The Hanse stretched far into Germany's interior; Hanseatic cogs rarely drew more than six feet at the waterline, thus enabling cities like Cologne — 216 miles upstream on the Rhine — to be seagoing ports and effective members of the League.[1]

The Hanse was certainly not always harmonious. Disputes arose, especially between the largest cities. Bremen — originally the most promising and bustling of all — often found itself in conflict with its closest two rivals, Hamburg and Lübeck. However, the Black Death, which decimated all European harbors in the 14th century, nearly wiped out the entire population of Bremen, and generally forced the League into

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[1] Edwin J. Clapp, *The Port of Hamburg* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911), 36.

closer cooperation to ensure economic survival. United and victorious in a war against the Danes in the 1360s, the Hanse slowly became more politically unified, as well.[2]

After the 14th century, England and the Netherlands (including Flanders) became the most important commercial centers of northern Europe. Their finished products such as fine cloths were often traded for the foodstuffs and raw materials coming out of the less-developed East. French wine, English and Flemish textiles, and German knives were exchanged for the wax, furs, ores, and herring of Scandinavia and the Baltic states. Again, the Hanse utterly dominated this commerce.

The rise of English and Dutch naval power ultimately broke the Hanseatic monopoly. The cities of the Hanse could not challenge a powerful national fleet which was determined to further its own maritime interests. By the 16th century, the circumnavigation of Africa and the exploitation of the New World had fundamentally altered the balance of European seagoing commerce, shifting in a direction where the Hanse was at a geographical disadvantage. Only the largest few of the Hanseatic cities retained any significant ocean-going commerce by 1600, and the advantage had definitely shifted from the Baltic-facing ports like Lübeck, Danzig, and Stettin, to Atlantic-facing Hamburg and Bremen. Even with access to the North Sea, the Hanse was usually shut out of the jealously-guarded colonial trade. Edwin Clapp wrote that "Hamburg had to be satisfied with such crumbs as fell from the richly laden tables of the merchants of Lisbon, Cadiz, Amsterdam, and London."[3]

The 1648 Peace of Westphalia worsened the situation by institutionalizing the scattered political geography of Germany, creating hundreds of tiny principalities, each

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2 Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der Freien Hansestadt Bremen* Vol 1, 70-76.

3 Clapp, *The Port of Hamburg*, 18.

with its own tolls, customs laws, and exchanges. The plethora of tolls made it virtually impossible to achieve anything but local trade, and thus robbed Bremen and Hamburg of the massive potential markets of the German interior. By the end of the 17th century, the Hanseatic League seemed to many to be a dead letter, cut off from the most lucrative commercial lines and unable to resist blackmail or coercion from the battlefleets of western Europe. "In 1670 the tattered German empire had no ships, [and] Hamburg had two convoys which escorted her merchantmen to meet the returning colonial fleets."[4]

Nonetheless, the largest of the Hanseatic cities survived the League's fall from prominence with their merchant cultures and economies relatively intact. Hamburg emerged from the 17th century the dominant member of what remained of the Hanse. Certainly it was the largest city in northern Germany, with a population over 100,000 by the mid-1700s: narrowly surpassed in size among German cities only by Berlin and Vienna.[5] Hamburg had long eclipsed the second-largest Hanseatic city, Bremen, whose wealth had stagnated and whose population slightly declined throughout much of the early 18th century, until it was slightly less than half the size of its rival on the Elbe.[6] Lübeck, a distant third, was by this time only half the size of Bremen, and virtually shut out of the Atlantic.

Although the Hanse had no overseas colonies and was no longer the driving force in European commerce, their merchants still plied most of the world's trade routes, even if, as Bremen's Senator Johann Smidt said, "the geographical situation of Germany

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4 Ibid.

5 Hans-Erich Bödecker, "Marchands et Habitat: Le Nord-Ouest de l'Allemagne vers 1800" *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 41(4) (1994): 577.

6 Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der Freien Hansestadt Bremen* Vol 1, 456-458.

allows it only a narrow portion of the world trade."[7] Hanseatic companies operated from Bremen, Hamburg, and even from Holland, doing business in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. A Lübeck shipper opened a direct trade with Beijing and a Rostock company established direct German links with Java and New Guinea. But there was nothing — nothing legal or admitted, at any rate — in the way of connections with English North America before 1783.[8]

Germans were keenly aware that they were shut out of the mercantile clubs run by England, France, Spain, and others. There was a sense that the bizarre and antiquated political organization of the Germans was to blame for having let the riches of the world slip from their grasp. In 1768 Justus Moser lamented that "Germany has her harbors, just like other empires, and can trade easily with the best of them, but as long as the Imperial constitution remains, it will never develop into a great trading nation.... Had things run differently, then the Reichstag in Regensburg wouldn't be just a meaningless council house, and a united body would take things in hand... and the Ganges would obey the orders of statesmen in Hamburg, not Lord Clive."[9]

"A Commercial Republic of Thirteen States"

The Hanse had long passed the zenith of its wealth and power by the time English colonists in North America became interested in seagoing trade. The colonies were

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7 Smidt would later be the city's most successful and celebrated *Bürgermeister* (mayor). The quote is from 1806. See: Percy Ernst Schramm, *Deutschland und Übersee. Der dt. Handel mit den anderen Kontinenten* (Braunschweig: Westermann, 1950), 51.

8 Ibid., 38-41.

9 Ibid., 42.

initially settled by chartered companies or proprietorships, all of which provided the impetus for colonization which probably would not have occurred otherwise (the risks being too great for individuals to make such journeys on their own), yet none of which returned a profit for their investors. As the chartered companies fell away, and as the ability of the colonies to produce exportable goods slowly grew, the traffic between England and her colonies was taken up by a new class of independent merchants. As early as 1619, the Virginia Company allowed individual persons to trade with the colony.[10]

English victory over the Dutch in the 1660s allowed the British to enforce their Navigation Acts, shutting all other nations out of the North American markets. Still, the role of the independent merchant thrived in North America, even if the only allowable circuits were to England and her other colonies. The independent carrier who owned his own ship(s) and made his own arrangements became the primary means of transport to and from the colonies.[11] Some merchants had connections with specific markets; they might search for cotton, for instance, to sell at a specific cotton auction with which they had experience and had done prior business. Many others were willing to consider any cargo, and were prepared to be quite diverse, taking tobacco to England, crossing to Africa to get slaves, taking them to the Indies to trade for sugar, bringing that sugar back to the colonies, etc. Over time some of these carriers developed into companies which owned warehouses in specific home-ports such as Baltimore, Philadelphia, or Boston, and which charged freight and handled the shipments for other merchants. Later still, in

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[10] Emory R. Johnson, et al. *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States* Vol. I (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1922), 176.

[11] Ibid., 178.

the second half of the 18th century, a relatively new class emerged: men who were essentially brokers, and who didn't own their own ships, but merely took care of the arrangements to get merchant A's goods onto carrier B's vessel, to be taken to auction C and sold.

The American port cities came to be socially and financially dominated by entrepreneurs and their colleagues; men like Robert Morris, John Hancock, Elias Derby, and Stephen Girard, who moved in the highest circles and were politically concerned with the ramifications of trade policy. Around these merchants developed whole cadres of other related businesses: insurors, stevedores and freight-handlers, internal carriers (those who would arrange overland or canal transport from the ports to the inland parts of the colonies), auctioneers, sailors, not to mention the vast array of people involved in the shipbuilding trades. Well before the revolution, the American port cities had become a new kind of English Hanse: linguistically and politically united but loosely organized, and utterly committed to the business of trade. A French representative to the Continental Congress in 1779 emphasized these characteristics, commenting that France regarded the new United States as "a commercial republic of thirteen states."[12] Alexander Hamilton, who probably understood the American economy better than any of his contemporaries, echoed this description in many of his essays in *The Federalist.* [13]

Britain's mercantile system was certainly not airtight, and a considerable amount of cheating occurred. It is unclear how many goods slipped out of American harbors, bound for ports other than those of the British empire. Since these transactions left

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[12] Lang, *Foreign Policy in the Early Republic,* 72.

[13] Consider Federalist #6: "Commercial republics, like ours, will never be disposed to waste themselves in ruinous contentions with each other." Or his discussions of trade in Federalists #10 and #11.

virtually nothing behind in the way of paperwork, historians have not been able to do much more than make educated guesses on this subject. It is clear, however, that Germans were very interested in what they called *Kolonialwaren* (colonial goods), and that direct German-American commerce did occur in defiance of the Navigation Acts. Hamburg frequently saw "American, English, Irish, and West Indian ships... carrying the dry goods, wines, brandies, and other commodities of Europe without stopping at England as the law required."[14]

Smuggling to and from the New World had been an unspoken English tradition even before the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and it seems unlikely that the English colonists would have been averse to practicing it.[15] Danish officals collected tolls on "American" vessels as early as 1741. By 1776, fifteen ships had passed through the Skaggerak, all crewed by Americans, all trading directly with Baltic ports without first going to England.[16]

Yankee smugglers notwithstanding, Germans took most of the initiative in illicit commerce with Germany. This was in fact primarily the response of the Hanseatic merchants who wanted to edge into the colonial markets any way they could. Not all of it was "cheating." In the 1730s, a few German firms in Bremen and Hamburg negotiated an arrangement with the British government to ship rice directly from the Carolinas. By

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14 John H. Frederick, *The Development of American Commerce* (New York: Appleton, 1932), 27. (Frederick does not cite any figures or sources for this claim, although it has been repeated enough in works by German historians — admittedly with equal vagueness — that one suspects it contains a certain degree of verity.)

15 Johnson, et al. *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States* Vol. I, 51. ("The colonists were Englishmen who, from time immemorial, had been accustomed to smuggling as a regular practice.")

16 William J. Frederickson, American Shipping in the Trade with Northern Europe, 1783-1860" *Scandinavian Economic History Review* Vol. IV, No.2 (1956): 109.

the 1750s, seven or eight ships called in Bremen each year, loaded with American rice taken directly from the colonies.[17]

German interest in *Amerika* dates from the early days of German Catholic missionaries in South America and Mexico. America fascinated Germans as a wild, untamed land. German merchants often traded directly with the English, Spanish, and Portuguese colonies despite mercantilist regulations to the contrary. Records of this commerce are spotty at best, but it is near-certain that it did happen, and Hamburg seems to have been the main "guilty party." This illegal trade between Germany and the Americas, part smuggling and part colonial corruption, may have constituted as few as two or three ships per year, but as early as 1590, eleven vessels called in Hamburg direct from the New World.[18]

Another interesting "back door" which Germans used to enter the otherwise restricted North American markets involved the German immigrants to the colonies in the late 17th and most of the 18th centuries. German-Americans arranged — via a network of trusted brokers and middlemen in the old country — to publish recruitment pamphlets and advertisements to encourage more German settlement, particularly in Pennsylvania. These networks also served as small-scale smuggling arrangements, as the German immigrants carried goods on behalf of the German brokers and German-American recruiters. "Thus the particular dangers of trade between Continental Europe and the British colonies directly shaped transatlantic commercial channels and required a high

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17 Ernst Baasch, *Bremen und Amerika* (Bremen: Carl Schünemann, 1953), 15.

18 Ernst Baasch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Handelsbeziehungen zwischen Hamburg und Amerika* (Hamburg: L. Friedrichsen, 1892), 6-30.

degree of reciprocity and trust for success."[19] Products from Germany found their way to the dry-goods stores and market-stalls of German-American merchants in Philadelphia, and later, Baltimore, without first passing through British hands.

The phlegmatic Lord Sheffield, writing after the Revolution, remarked that cheating had been more common than the British government wanted to admit at the time: "Notwithstanding our custom-house officers, New England, New York, and Philadelphia carried on an almost open foreign trade with Holland, Hamburgh, France, etc., bringing home East-India goods, sail cloth, Russian and German linens, wine, etc."[20]

Hinterland

It is difficult to assess whether German and American merchants had any direct contact in the pre-revolutionary period. Certainly both were aware of, and interested in each other, although opportunities for contact were minimal. A few historians have argued that Chesapeake Bay-area tobacco planters had warm connections with Hanseatic merchants based in London in the 1740s and 1750s; a few transatlantic marriages apparently occurred between their families.[21]

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19 Rosalind J. Beiler, "From the Rhine to the Delaware Valley: The Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Trading Channels of Caspar Wistar" In: Hartmuth Lehman, Hermann Wellenreuther, and Renate Wilson, eds. *In Search of Peace and Prosperity: New Settlements in Eighteenth-Century Europe and America* (Philadelphia: Penn State University Press, forthcoming). Used with permission of the author; the quote is from page 3 of her manuscript.

20 Ibid., 35

21 Rabuzzi ("Cutting Out the Middlemen," 180), argues that some planters' daughters married into Hanseatic merchant families in this way. See also Jacob Price, "One Family's Empire: The Russell-Lee-Clerk Connection in Maryland, Britain, and India, 1707-1857," *Maryland Historical Magazine,* LXXII, No. 2 (1977): 179.

Newspapers and journals in Bremen and Hamburg frequently featured stories on the English colonies in North America. For over a century prior to 1776, the people of Hamburg (arguably Germany's most literate city, with over 160 journals in circulation in the late 1700s — one for every 650 citizens) read essays and stories about American geography, demography, and economics. Magazines published travelogues of visits to America, or reports from Germans who had settled there. *The English Magazine,* which published until its editor's death in 1779, was a good example. It was an English-language bi-weekly printing articles such as, "Historical and Geographical Account of the Colony of Virginia."[22] The Hanseatic bourgeoisie kept an eye on the forbidden bounty of the Americas, and they were worldly and literate enough to do so in a sophisticated manner that transcended the basic desire for profit.

Many Americans, particularly in the Middle Colonies, had extensive contact with Germans. Maryland and Pennsylvania both had large German communities long before the Revolution. The first organized group of German settlers came in November 1683 aboard the ship *Concord.* Thirteen families, led by Franz Daniel Pastorius, had heeded William Penn's invitation, and had come to lead a "quiet, godly, and honest life."[23] Not all the early immigrants were satisfied living in Pennsylvania, which they called *hinterland,* (literally, "back-country") and many soon settled closer to the coast in Maryland. These first arrivals from Germany were almost all farmers, and were generally very poor. Many were sold (advertised for sale very much like slaves) as

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22 SuUB: Zeitschriften und Journale. (file #489)

23 Dieter Cunz, *The Maryland Germans: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 11.

indentured servants. The largest single group, although by no means a majority, were Bohemians.[24]

Germans began coming to the area around Baltimore in the 1740s, directly from Germany, and from existing German-American communities in Pennsylvania. In Baltimore, where they rapidly became the largest non-English ethnic group, the Germans established various societies and charities for their poorer countrymen. Unscrupulous agents in Bremen and Hamburg frequently signed ignorant people into harsh contracts, which bound them for years as indentured servants in the New World and required trans-generational payment of debts. The German societies in Baltimore in the mid-1700s were usually benevolent organizations to assist unfortunates such as these immigrants. These societies were usually led by clergymen from Prussia or Switzerland.[25] Germans could also be found south of Maryland, although in smaller numbers. A group of Austrians came to Georgia in the 1730s, and other Germans came to Virginia and the Carolinas, although the Mid-Atlantic colonies remained the center of German immigration in early America.[26]

In the colonial period, very few Germans came from the Hanseatic cities to settle in America. Bremen and Hamburg were the ports of transit for Germans emigrating to America, but actual Bremers and Hamburgers were rare in the colonies.[27] The Hanseatic merchants represented a very different group, and didn't really have much in common

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24 Ibid., 18-29.

25 Klaus G. Wust, *Pioneers in Service: The German Society of Maryland 1783-1958* (Baltimore: The German Society of Maryland, 1958), 3-9.

26 See: George Fenwick Jones, "The Salzburger Mills: Georgia's First Successful Enterprise" *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 23 (1988): 105-117.

27 A notable exception was the Bremer merchant Friedrich Amelung, who was a director of one of the German charitable societies in Baltimore, and whose case was significant enough that it warrants detailed investigation later in this study.

with the pious salt-of-the-earth Germans who had been in America for several generations.[28] The Germans who came to America during the colonial period shared little more than language with the Hanse, and even that connection was tenuous since the immigrants were frequently illiterate and spoke dialects which were very different from standard "literary" German.[29] The immigrants were largely religious outcasts who were very poor, and wanted nothing to do with the world, much less with world commerce. One German historian has written that,

> ...they built their own churches, kept their native language... and did their own handiwork together.... In some cases they were so closed-off that the German language stood completely apart from the English.[30]

Ideologically, these people were often quite removed from the Anglo-American concepts of "liberty" and "property" that were emerging in the nascent capitalist society of coastal North America. Unlike the urban Americans or the Hanseatic Germans, the majority of German-Americans placed religion before "Reason," during the Enlightenment. Most would not necessarily agree with Jefferson that the "self-evident" rights to liberty and the pursuit of happiness meant the right to entrepreneurship. While Hanseatic Germans would support a revolution for capitalist liberties, the majority of

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28 Cunz, *The Maryland Germans,* 159.

29 Schramm, *Deutschland und Übersee,* 42-50. (By the end of the 17th century the North German *Plattdeutsch* dialect was rarely heard in Bremen and Hamburg , particularly among educated people.)

30 Ibid., 44.

German-American immigrants still sought the "quiet, godly, and honest life" of hard work and obedience to church and laws.[31]

Benjamin Franklin and other Pennsylvania statesmen frequently commented on the need for interpreters in order to reach these people who certainly weren't inclined to learn English. Nonetheless, Franklin published the first German-American book: a hymnal compiled in 1730. Two years later he printed the *Philadelphische Zeitung,* the first German-language newspaper in America.[32] Other German-American journals soon flourished, especially in the Mid-Atlantic colonies. Franklin's newspaper had employed anglicized script. As soon as German-Americans began to publish their own papers, using Gothic script, Franklin's paper went out of business. His uncharitable comment about the "Palatinate Boors" came in 1756: *after* the German-Americans had demonstrated their economic and political loyalty to their own kind.[33]

Although Franklin's relationship with the Germans varied depending upon their support for or opposition to his political projects, he nonetheless remained the only prominent "Founding Father" with an extensive knowledge of the German language, culture, and religious idiosyncrasies. On a tour of Germany in 1766, he visited the University of Göttingen, where he lectured and was inducted as an honorary member of the Scientific Society. He met and had discussions with such notables as August Ludwig

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31 For an extensive analysis of German-American interpretations of the American revolutionary ideals, see: A.G. Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty, and Property* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). For this section, see pages 309-311.

32 Henry A. Pochman, *German Culture in America: Philosophical and Literary Influence, 1600-1900* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957), 44.

33 Susan M. Johnson, "Pennsylvania's Social History and Pennsylvania German Studies: A Look at the Eighteenth Century" *Yearbook of German-American Studies* Vol. 32 (1998): 55. For more on Franklin's mixed feelings about Germans and German-Americans, see also: Paul Douglas Newman, "The Fries Rebellion of 1799: Pennsylvania Germans, the Federalist Party, and American Political Culture" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Kentucky, 1996): 14-43.

Schlözer and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, and received enthusiastic invitations from several German nobles, one of whom excitedly asked Franklin to erect lightning rods on his estate.[34] From that point forward, Franklin faithfully imported the scholarly production and literature of Göttingen into the United States. Not until John Quincy Adams at the turn of the 19th century would another American statesman of such stature gain so intimate a knowledge of the German language and people.

Smugglers and immigrants were not the only means by which Germans and Americans came into contact during the colonial and revolutionary periods. Literate Germans showed a powerful thirst for information about America, and later, the United States. Writings by Germans about America constituted another important factor in setting the stage for the development of German-American relations.

Colonial Fantasies? [35]

Germans began reading about America shortly after Columbus' voyages, but for several decades they did so only from Spanish or Portuguese documents, usually translated first to Latin, and then sometimes into German. The translations of the four volumes of Americus Vespuccius' journals were widely printed all over Germany and apparently extremely popular, in both Latin and German versions. The oldest surviving German writings about America date from the mid-16th century, in the *Neue Zeitungen,* precursors of modern newspapers, which circulated at fairs throughout Central Europe.

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[34] Joseph G. Rosengarten, ed., "Franklin in Germany: a paper read before the Pennsylvania-German Society at the twelfth annual meeting held at Norristown, October 3, 1902." PHS: Vg18.v.13.

[35] This is also the title of the new book by Susanne Zantop, winner of the 1998 Book Prize from the German Studies Association.

The *Indianische Historia* by Nicolaus Federmann in 1557 was one of the first of these. The stories in the *Zeitungen* were often wildly speculative and intended for lay readers who wanted to hear adventurous tales of heathen savages and cities of gold. It is unclear when Germans began to differentiate between North and South America as distinct and unique regions; "Amerika" in these early works could as often mean Brazil as Canada. Generally, however, German writing about the New World was based upon rumor or second-hand information. Very few Germans had actually laid eyes upon the western hemisphere.[36]

In the 16th and 17th centuries the tone of German writing about America began to become more scholarly and serious, although certainly the popular stories continued to flourish. The growth and development of the German printing and publishing industries in this period contributed to the wide array of materials available. Educated Germans began to read about the demography of the native Americans, the flora and fauna of the New World, the staggering scale of the natural geography of the Americas, and other topics. Simultaneous with the progress of the Protestant Reformation, interest in America also began to take on a religious hue. Thus by the mid-17th century, three distinct strains had developed in German writing about America: scientific, popular (including tracts written to encourage emigration), and missionary. There was naturally some overlap in these areas, even into the "Enlightened" 18th century. S.J. Baumgarten concluded his 1752 *Algemeine Geschichte der Länder und Völker von Amerika* (General History of the

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[36] Eugene Edgar Doll, ed. *American History as Interpreted by German Historians from 1770 to 1815* (Philadelphia: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 1948), 423-424.

Lands and People of America) with a prayer that the book would inspire Christian work in the new World.[37]

The most important development in the earliest German-American relationship was of course the emigration of Germans first to Pennsylvania, and then to other colonies. This at last provided readers in Central Europe with first-hand accounts of the New World in their own language. Further, it established the German language (and an admittedly small and selective segment of German culture) in North America, which resulted in local publications among the immigrants themselves. Penn commissioned German translations of English-language works about Pennsylvania to encourage settlement, and Franz-Daniel Pastorius wrote several glowing essays about opportunities for Germans in the New colony.

Despite these efforts, by the mid-18th century the Germans were very far behind the English and French in American studies, and generally dependent upon them. German publishers often translated or reprinted works by foreign authors, and German scholars were heavily reliant upon the primary findings of other Europeans in the New World. The American Revolution created a groundswell of new interest among German writers, fueling the imaginations of popular writers, scientific observers, and philosophers.

The Revolution was in many ways the capstone for the various America mythologies which had been under construction in Europe since the discovery of the New World. Europeans fantasized about the finally-found Atlantis, the paradise on earth uncorrupted by civilized man. They transplanted these myths to America when they

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[37] Ibid., 425-429.

settled it, ironically sowing the seeds of the ultimate revolt which broke America away from European efforts to control it.[38] The European adulation for all things American could be so fawning, particularly outside of Great Britain once the Revolution was underway, that it transcended the better sense of monarchs who would oppose and punish examples of "American" behavior in their own subjects. Certainly the "enlightened" rulers in St. Petersburg, Potsdam, and Vienna wanted nothing to do with republicanism, even as they occasionally offered moral support for the American cause. The much less enlightened (and much less careful) Marie Antoinette affectionately addressed Franklin as *"notre cher Républicain."* [39] This sentiment reached into the heart of Germany; the Elector of Saxony was as smitten as any of them, persuaded by Goethe to invest in American enterprises.[40]

Liberal Germans perceived American society — even before the Revolution — as a near-utopia of openness, opportunity, and quick assimilation for new arrivals. The conflicts building up to the Revolution, and particularly the later Constitutional debates, stimulated even more interest in America. Subsequent discussions about these events helped to frame concepts like "liberty," "freedom," and "property" in the lexicon of enlightened Germans. Subsequent political debates among Germans were fueled by the activities of German-language publications emanating from America. A *"Bürgerhandbuch"* for German-Americans, explaining the Pennsylvania system of

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38 An interesting discussion of these ideas can be found in: Silberschmidt, *The United States and Europe,* 10-12.

39 Ibid., 17.

40 Ibid., 26.

government, sold more copies in Germany than it did in Pennsylvania.[41] Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* was translated and published in Philadelphia (only a few weeks after its first English publication) as *Gesunde Vernunft.* It immediately sold out its first printing, and went through several reprints with a Berlin publisher, as did the translated text of the Declaration of Independence.[42]

A Thinker's Paradise

The intellectual freedom promised by the American republic was no doubt its most attractive feature for Goethe and others of the German literati. The Germans, arguably the most intellectually productive people in Europe, with the most diverse publishing industry on the continent, were nonetheless frequently stifled by oppressive government and archaic political structures. The contrast between Germany and America would become even more dramatic after the repressive Carlsbad Decrees, and a second generation of German thinkers would add to the growing collection of effusive praise for liberated, republican America.

Alexander von Humboldt, a regular correspondent with Franklin, Jefferson, and other members of the American Philosophical Society, reportedly made a number of suggestions to Frederick William III on the reform of the Prussian government, based upon what he had learned from his American friends. Goethe hinted a number of times that he was considering emigrating to America, a nation:

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41 Willi Paul Adams, "Amerikanische Verfassungdiskussion in deutscher Sprache: Politische Begriffe in Texten der deutschamerikanischen Aufklärung, 1761-88." *Yearbook of German-American Studies.* Vol. 32 (1998): 3-4.

42 Ibid., 7-10.

Not bothered by strife while living your life
Not torn internally by futile memory[43]

The intellectual and literary component of the German-American relationship was particularly significant because the late 18th century witnessed a substantial change in the daily reading habits of most Germans. First, there was an increase in literacy throughout Germany in general, partially as a result of the Enlightenment and German curiosity about it, but also simply because of the ascent of a growing middle class which wanted to read more. Second, the German press itself changed in this period. There was a great growth in the publication of newspapers and journals, and a marked improvement in their quality.[44] The technology of printing was refined and improved in the second half of the 18th century, so that smaller, clearer letters could be used, and thus more information could be placed on a single, smaller page. As a result, newspapers, something the average businessman could take in hand during his walk to his office, became more cost-efficient for publishers and more affordable for readers. The subject matter broadened considerably, to include news and commentary, political, social, cultural, and economic developments — often all collected in a single journal, not for a scholar or Göttingen graduate, but for the average reader.

The diversity of the Hamburg press in this period certainly reveals these trends. Hamburgers were voracious readers, devouring journals on gardening, politics, economics, women's fashions, child-rearing, wine, music, art, humor, travel and travel stories, Bible studies, theater, history, poetry, health, and a host of other topics.

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43 Erich Schmidt, ed. *Goethes Werke in sechs Bänden* (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, n.d.), Vol. 1, 254.
44 Moepps, *Vorboten der Freiheit,* 3.

Magazines showing interest in foreign politics and culture were among the most common. There was even a journal featuring nothing but the news from Poland. A stunning number of publications were active at the same time. In the 1780s, for example, when the city's population stood around 100,000, there were nearly 160 journals in circulation, or one for every 650 people. Considering how these were passed around and shared at coffee houses, men's clubs, ladies' societies, and so forth, it seems likely that a Hamburger could read a different journal every day. Women were every bit as active readers as men, with a substantial proportion of these journals being directed toward women or girls. Those for young women and girls, interestingly, were often in French.[45] This indicates that the Hanseatic bourgeoisie was prosperous enough to educate girls — something often seen as a luxury — and cosmopolitan enough that multiple foreign-language publications could find a readership.[46]

It is clear from the scale and diversity of these publications, that the average literate German could not distance him- or herself from geopolitical and economic events around the world, because these events appeared on the coffee tables each morning. The mounting troubles in America in the 1770s showed precisely how attuned Germans were, not only to the mythology of America, but to the actual happenings there. In their journals, Germans read about the acts of the Continental Congress and the debates in Parliament.[47] In journals like the *Amerikanische Magazin,* they read biographical sketches of the important figures in the emerging American government.[48] Terms like

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45 SuUB: Zeitschriften und Journale. (These journals have been meticulously indexed and preserved by the Manuscripts department of the University of Bremen.)

46 For more on this phenomenon in Hamburg in the 1780-90s, see: Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen," 300-301.

47 Moepps, *Verboten der Freiheit,* 3.

48 SuUB: Zeitschriften und Journale, file #717.

"Kampf gegen Tyranney und Despotismus" and "Ausbruch der Freiheit" became daily grist in the German political dialogue.[49]

The discussions and editorials hadn't yet taken the tone of self-examination that would characterize the period of the French Revolution and Napoleon, when Germans would explore the notions of "ideal" forms of states and try to apply the lessons of the Enlightenment to their own experience.[50] At this earlier stage Germans were discovering both America and the notions of the Americans, and merely celebrating them as fascinating and new. Nonetheless, as Emmy Moepps has written, "Among all other discussions and contemporary historical questions [in the 1770s] the American problem stood out above all in political significance." The tone of the German press was one of "overwhelming sympathy for the claims of the American colonists, and a desire to hear of their political fate."[51] Decades later, Carl Schurz wrote in his memoirs that, as a boy growing up in the German village of Liblar, he remembered his father and uncle speaking endlessly about "that young republic where the people were free, without kings, without counts...." The people of Schurz's village had eagerly read any news they could find about America.[52]

If the average German reader was interested in and supportive of America, the German intelligentsia expressed a fascination with the subject that could at times seem almost obsessive. In many cases, the American cause was the darling of enlightened Germans, who saw it as the application of rationality and humanity to the real political

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49 Moepps, *Verboten der Freiheit,* 3.

50 Unlike newspapers of our day, where editorials are generally relegated to back pages, the editorials of the Hanseatic journals and newspapers were almost always on Page One. Thus, each issue opened with an opinion on some topic of current events.

51 Moepps, *Verboten der Freiheit,* 8-9.

52 Richard B. Morris, *The Emerging Nation and the American Revolution* (New York, 1970), 111

sphere.[53] Even three decades after the Revolution, the aura had not dissipated. Rotteck and Weeker's *Staatslexicon* devoted almost as many columns to Benjamin Franklin as it did to Joseph II and Napoleon combined.[54] One American historian has written:

> It is difficult for us today to reconcile the stereotype of Germany under Hitler with any other Germany, in which principles derived from the American Revolutionary tradition and constitutional experience could have exerted a significant force. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that over an extended period of time liberal intellectuals in Germany sought to reconstruct the German states after a more progressive, if not revolutionary, pattern.[55]

In 1777-78 the Hamburg historian Christopher Daniel Ebeling published his *Amerikanische Bibliothek,* followed by the *Amerikanische Magazin,* the first German periodical devoted entirely to the new United States. In the latter appeared German translations of American legal and constitutional documents, as well as the miscellania of life in the US, news, and what we would today call "local-interest stories." Ebeling, the chief librarian of Hamburg, was the first German scholar whose career and reputation rested entirely upon his work on America. He was, essentially, the first German Americanist.

Ebeling matriculated at Göttingen and settled in Hamburg, where he did most of his writing, and made almost all of his contacts with Americans, the majority of whom were merchants. He never visited the New World, although he befriended virtually every American he could find, and corresponded with literally dozens of prominent Americans in the United States. His friendship with Samuel Williams, the US consul in Hamburg, led to his contact with Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, who obtained for Ebeling a

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53 Ibid., 110.
54 Ibid., 112.
55 Ibid., 109.

tremendous amount of material for his research: records of the US government, legal proceedings, transcripts of the debates on the Constitution, surveys and geophysical data, a copy of the first census, and many other things.[56] During his life, Ebeling collected over 35,000 volumes about America. At his death in 1817, his estate was handled by the American firm of Edward Everett and Augustus Thorndike, who obliged Ebeling's wish to send his entire library to America, whence it ultimately came to Harvard College.[57]

Because Ebeling was an avid collector of Americana, he befriended as many German and American merchants as he could, always pressing them for information on the United States and arranging to transfer items to Hamburg for his use. He effectively straddled both cultures, friendly with Hamburg's Senators, as well as with many scholarly Americans in the Massachusetts and New York historical societies (he was a member of both institutions.)[58] Ebeling never completed his *magnus opus,* a massive multi-volume "Description and History of America" *(Erdbeschreibung und Geschichte von Amerika).* He had finished seven volumes, his research having worked its way a little more than halfway down the American coast, when he died in 1817. Even incomplete, it remained the most important work on the US until the German-trained George Bancroft wrote his *History of the United States* two generations later.

Ebeling's affection for the United States showed throughout his work. Despite many public pleas to the contrary, he was flagrantly partisan toward America, admitting in a letter to the American Philosophical Society that, "I am partial to your country, whose felicity I admire, but not prejudiced. I see here and there the infirmities of young

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56 Pochmann, *German Culture in America,* 50-51.

57 Ibid.

58 Georg Heinrich Sieveking, scion of one of Hamburg's most prominent Senatorial families, was Ebeling's student when he taught at the *Handelsakademie.*

age, but more the strength of an Hercules in the cradle...."[59] It is interesting to note that a number of German intellectuals gave grudging support to the revolutionary cause because they recognized that it made economic sense as a logical and desirable development of capitalism. This was the position of Wilhelm Taube (although he rued the destruction of the English mercantile empire that he so admired), as well as his student and successor at Göttingen, Matthias Sprengel, who lectured throughout 1778-79 on the inevitability of American independence and the "achievements of an energetic and inspired people."[60] Another enthusiastic supporter was Johann Jakob Moser, who published a three-volume description of the new American republic, completed in 1785. Moser, a legal scholar, was fascinated by the new prospects of a working commercial republic, and his work featured lengthy excerpts from American legal and administrative documents; everything from the Declaration of Independence to tax and currency legislation.[61]

Many Germans, however, simply did not understand the bases of the American system, were wary (particularly after the French Revolution) of a state which rejected religion, and had no experience with a federal union not bound up by a commitment to protect a religious status quo. Much information from America came to Germany filtered through religious figures, who naturally emphasized these considerations. They worried that deism, indeed even atheism was taking over from good old-fashioned German-style Protestantism.[62]

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59 APS: C.D. Ebeling to the American Philosophical Society, 14 October, 1793.

60 Doll, *American History as Interpreted by German Historians,* 460-462.

61 Ibid., 465-466.

62 A. Gregg Roeber, "Through A Glass, Darkly: Changing German Ideas of American Freedom, 1776-1806" (In: David E. Barclay and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt, eds., *Transatlantic Images and Perceptions: Germany and America Since 1776* (Washington: German Historical Institute, 1997)), 21.

Other German intellectuals disapproved of various aspects of American political life and culture, even if the volume of their writing on the subject indicates that they were fascinated by it. Enlightened or not, a large portion of Germans were highly skeptical of republicanism. Wilhelm Ludwig Wekhrlin, writing in Bavaria, decried the American abandonment of monarchy as an affront to European civilization.[63] Friedrich Schlegel also expressed misgivings about the American experiment. In his later years, even Heinrich Heine cooled considerably toward America, which is all the more interesting because he had once written of it in such heroic terms:

> Even if all of Europe should turn into one single dungeon, there still would exist one hole to make one's escape: America. And — thank God — the hole is even bigger than the dungeon.[64]

Dietrich von Bülow, younger brother of the Prussian field marshal who distinguished himself in the Napoleonic Wars, was a contemporary and opponent of Ebeling, and probably the most outspoken anti-American voice of the era. He had traveled for two years in North America, primarily in New England, and his sarcastic and witty essays exposed the intolerance of American Puritanism. Bülow made a number of trenchant observations, but his tone was so caustic and derogatory (his openly-avowed purpose was to *dis-* courage German emigration to the US) that instead of his work being a sober appraisal of the flaws of the United States, it acquired note as a defense of monarchy and the old European order. Nonetheless, though his audience remained small,

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63 Doll, *American History as Interpreted by German Historians,* 442-445.

64 Oskar Walzel, ed. *Heinrich Heine: Sämtliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1910-20), Vol. 4, 303.

Bülow was one of the few writers to point out that America was not in fact strewn with gold and virtue.[65]

The position of August Ludwig Schlözer was particularly conflicted. Schlözer, a Hanoverian, remained loyal to his British masters throughout the American Revolution, authoring a number of essays that criticized the Americans. He had gained his teaching position at Göttingen only by a commission from the Royal Hanoverian Society, and thus owed his livelihood to the British crown.[66] Nonetheless, after the Revolution, Schlözer translated the US Constitution and Bill of Rights into German, in a 1791 volume that could hardly be described as critical.[67]

A New Beginning

The emerging American republic fascinated educated Germans, regardless of their positions on the ideological questions involved. Nonetheless, it would be incorrect to assert that the primary interest of most Germans in America was ideological. The German intelligentsia, to be sure, was absorbed in the ideological implications of the United States, but it is clear that the prime allure of America for the German working classes was economic opportunity. Indeed, much of the romanticism that common Germans attached to America stemmed from the promise America offered to make a fresh start for one's family in a new world. Germans with family in America followed the progress of their émigré relatives with great interest. In the New World, wrote a man

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65 Doll, *American History as Interpreted by German Historians,* 495-498.
66 Moepps, *Verboten der Freiheit,* 11.
67 Roeber, "Through A Glass, Darkly," 30.

in Baltimore to his cousin in Flammersfeld, one could live "as well as a count or prince can in all of Germany."[68]

Similarly, while the ideological novelties of the new United States helped lay groundwork for a German-American relationship, the primary tone of the emerging relationship would be economic. In the Hanse, the German businessmen were worldly, well-educated, and interested in the philosophical questions posed by a new republic across the ocean. The content of the journals they read shows this clearly. But first and foremost, these men focused upon the new business opportunities made possible by American independence. This group, which belonged neither to the working classes nor the intelligentsia *per se,* played the most important role in opening German-American relations.

German-American contacts prior to the Revolution existed primarily in the realm of smugglers, religious groups, and literary pursuits. German immigrants to America, even those who had settled in port cities like Baltimore and Philadelphia, were rarely involved in trans-oceanic trade. American and German merchants, while sharing an interest in broader commercial opportunities, had minimal chances of turning this interest into meaningful relations as long as the mercantile system remained in place. German readers in the worldly port-cities of the Hanse followed events in North America, but could do little more than observe from a distance. Intrigued by the philosophical and political issues at stake in America, they nonetheless kept their eyes open for economic opportunities which might arise from the changing situation.

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[68] Ibid., 25.

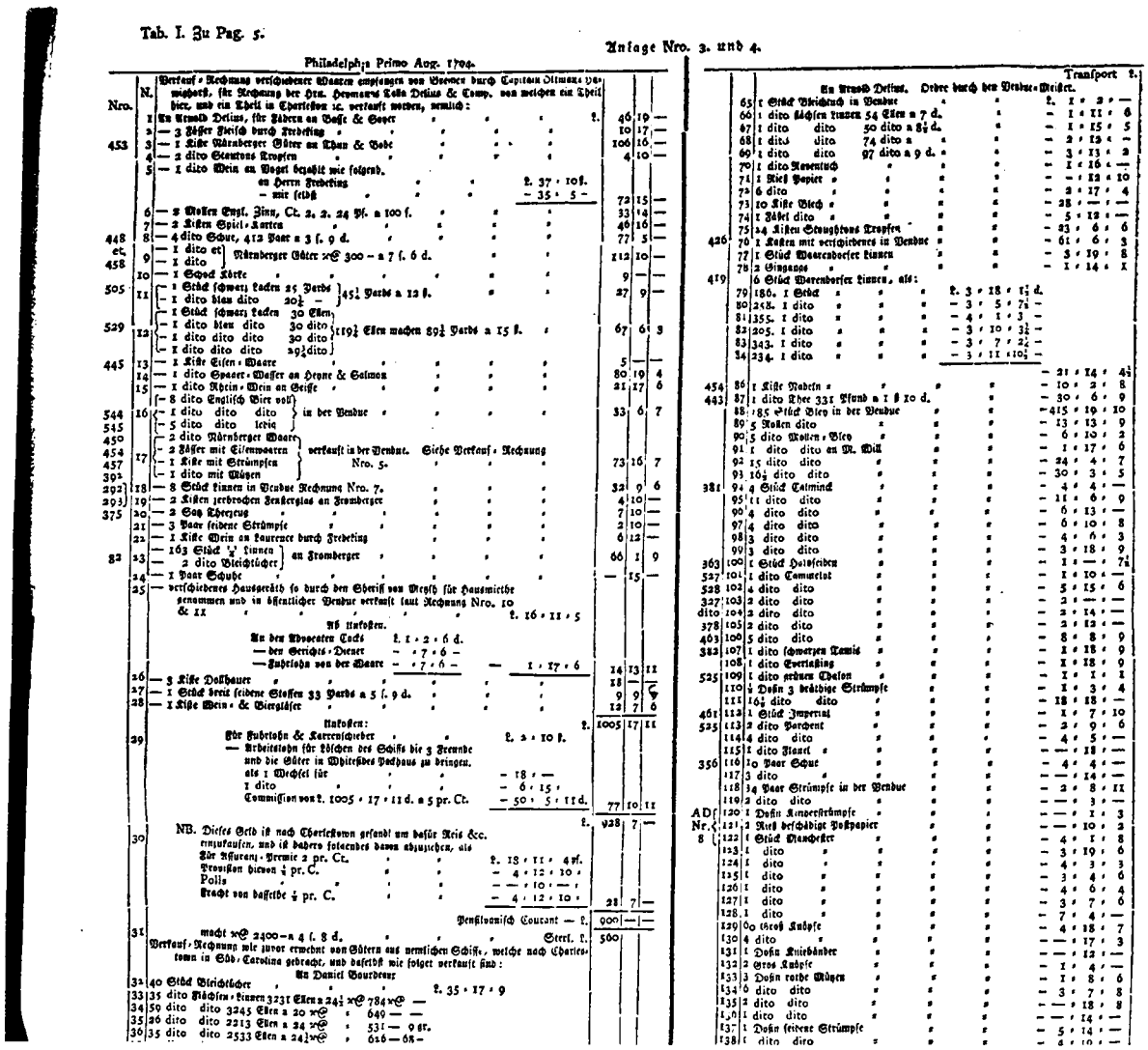
In many ways, American independence could not have come at a better time for the Hanse, whose long decline throughout the 17th and 18th centuries threatened to make them little more than an apostrophe in world trade. The American break from Britain's mercantile system opened cracks which businessmen in the Hanse were determined to exploit. When the United States became independent, the merchants of the Hanse were quick to seek direct trade relations. The diplomats and bureaucrats on both sides of the Atlantic slowly followed suit. But the primary character of the early German-American relationship would be economic; textured and informed by intellectuals, but driven by merchants.

Chapter Two

Commerce in the Late "Age of Reason"

Le commerce forme une corporation unie par le plus fort de tous les liens, l'intérêt commun, et les correspondances commerciales offrent souvent une source abondante de renseignements précieux.

Bourrienne, French Minister Resident in Hamburg, to Napoleon, 1805



Tab. I. Zu Pag. 5.

Anlage Nro. 3. und 4.

Philadelphia Primo Aug. 1794.

Ship's register (accounts) for the merchant vessel *Die Drey Freunde;* evidence at the trial of Arnold Delius.

Source: Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen (manuscript collection). Used with permission.

The Sad Tale of Arnold Delius: Early Misadventures in German-American Relations.

The German merchants who wanted to open trade connections with the United States faced a number of obstacles. The star-crossed career of Arnold Delius illustrates this perfectly. Delius was an enterprising fellow with a talent for maneuvering around setbacks, but by the late 1780s things were going from bad to worse at an alarming rate.

The middle-aged businessman was the second son of a huge Westphalian family. His father Christian Adolf had sired twenty children by five wives. Of this immense tribe, several had become merchants, and like his older brother Friedrich, Arnold Delius settled in the Hanseatic seaport of Bremen at the end of the 1770s.[1] At some point in the first year of the following decade, he became fixated on a grandiose plan which would lead to his ruin. Delius was going to outfit a ship to sail to the United States — in the midst of the Revolutionary War — to open trade between America and Germany.

Arnold Delius was not a subtle man, but he was incredibly persistent. From 1780, it is clear that he spent more than two years trying to sell his idea to anyone who would listen.[2] It was a slightly audacious scheme, and the old port city of Bremen had certainly seen more prosperous days, when such risks might be taken. Significantly, Bremen was politically and socially dominated by old, wealthy merchant families, and there was a tendency to distrust newcomers like Delius, who did not move in the right circles. Lacking

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1 *Stammbaum der Familie Delius,* SAB.

2 *Kurze Darstellung der Schicksale die den Kaufmann, Herrn Arnold Delius, als Folgen seiner nordamerikanischen Handlungs-Unternehmungen betroffen haben.* 1795. SuUB: Bre.438.dela 634a.

in bloodline connections, Delius compensated with activity and an apparent gift for persuasion. By 1782 he had found an investor for his enterprise.

The firm of Heymann and Talla, which had been dabbling in the Greenland trade for several years, decided that Delius' promise of rich rewards in the New World justified the risk involved in sailing to a port which had never received a German vessel.[3] The deal, however, was shaky from the outset. Old Hermann Heymann was ill and no longer in control of the day-to-day operation of his firm. His wife and two sons were in dispute with the firm's director, Heinrich Talla, over control of the firm's assets. It was with Talla that Delius signed his contract on 25 February 1783, for use of the ship *Die Drey Freunde,* under Captain Altmann.[4] Despite the potential legal problems looming over the venture, fortune seemed to smile on Delius and Talla; peace at last came to North America in early 1783, and thus the journey would not traverse a war zone.

In early February 1783, Arnold Delius wrote to Benjamin Franklin, who was serving as the American minister in Paris:

> I am established in this city [Bremen] near 20 years and carry on business for my own proper account particularly in the Linnen [sic] Trade and other manufactures and merchandises.
>
> For many years past I have wished to get in direct connexions with the 13 united States of America in order to establish a mutual trade equally beneficial to both parties. About 2 years ago I had the pleasure to get acquainted at Amsterdam with Mr. Nathan Blodger of Boston, who encouraged my plan....[5]

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3 For more on Bremen's and Hamburg's involvement in the Greenland trade, see: Ernst Baasch, ed. *Quellen zur Geschichte von Hamburgs Handel und Schiffahrt im 17., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Gräfe & Sillem, 1910), 1-30.

4 Unnamed Collection, SuUB: Bre.438 dela 641.

5 Arnold Delius to Benjamin Franklin, 7 February 1783. APS: *Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (XXVII, 91).

Delius emphasized that he had done a great deal of business for Prussian customers, and that he wanted to try his luck with the American market. He had obtained a ship and permission to fly Prussian colors. His lengthy note to Franklin, in an ornate and flowery style, was essentially a request for a letter of recommendation from the American statesman. Delius proposed to go to Franklin's city of Philadelphia, "as supercargo with the aforesaid ship, which is called the Three Friends and commanded by Captain Havinghorst."[6] The discrepancy of the ship captain's name is but one of the many mysteries of Delius' story. The records of his various transactions often contradict what he told others, or what others later claimed he told them. The reason Delius desired to use Prussian colors (rather than the flag of Bremen) is also unclear, although once in America he made the most of his ship's "nationality."

Ten days later, Heinrich Talla also wrote to Franklin on behalf of his firm and the venture with Delius. His letter was considerably more blunt, unabashedly asking Franklin to make the business endeavor more smooth and profitable. The firm had originally planned to send a ship first to St. Thomas, to sell part of the cargo, and then to attempt to reach America. "But now," Talla wrote, "the declaration of independency and the preliminaries of peace being signed... we are determined to send it now direct to Nord America [sic]"[7]

An independent America, Talla argued, could become a major trade partner for the German ports. American products, particularly tobacco and rice, were in high demand and

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6 Ibid.

7 Herman Heyman's Sons [sic] to B. Franklin, 17 February, 1783. APS: *Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (XXVII, 123).

always sold well, even after the traditional markup imposed by the British. A newly sovereign America promised a fabulous opportunity to cut the British colonial masters out of the equation entirely and to make a tremendous profit. Talla predicted that although the response "might at first be somewhat cool," within a few years he was certain of a thriving commerce.[8] His prediction turned out to be exactly correct. So, too, was the prediction of Delius, who concluded his letter to Franklin with the words: "as we are for want of acquaintances and connexions in that part of the world [we are] afraid, that great difficulties may arise or some obstructions may be put in our way."[9]

Arnold Delius was a man who could stretch the truth dangerously in his efforts to get others to sign on to his schemes. Years after the voyage of *Die Drey Freunde,* Talla and others recalled that Delius had emphasized he needed to be given liberty to choose the cargo for the ship because he alone could determine precisely what would and wouldn't sell in America, and that only he "knew how to get the highest price."[10] Delius based this assertion on his claim that he had already traveled in North America as a young man, and was supposedly familiar with American ports and merchants.[11] But Delius made no mention of any previous American visit in his letter to Franklin, nor did he apparently, upon arrival in America, make contact with any old acquaintances. The Delius family papers and the port of Bremen's passenger logs provide no evidence of an American visit

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8 Ibid.

9 Arnold Delius to Benjamin Franklin, 7 February 1783. APS: *Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (XXVII, 91).

10 Unnamed Collection, SuUB: Bre.438 dela 641. [The quote is from the 1790 trial of Arnold Delius, the records of which are in this collection.)

11 Herbert Schwarwälder, in his brief summary of the earliest Bremers in America, claims that Delius had visited Boston in 1780, trying to drum up support for German-American business ventures. There is no citation. See: Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der Freien Hansestadt Bremen* Vol 1, 491-492.

in his youth.[12] His claim is also dubious in light of the cargo he ultimately chose for *Die Drey Freunde:* a vast hodgepodge of over twenty different wares, including items as diverse as lead, beer, linens, cured ham, and clocks.[13] It seems clear that Delius wanted to test the American market to see what would sell, and that plain optimism was a significant component of his plans.

Eighteenth-century merchant ships were occasionally loaded with a wide variety of goods, but the normal practice was to carry two or three main cargoes. Sometimes these were supplemented by smaller amounts of miscellany. Six carpets and four cases of rum, for example, might be shipped on a vessel whose primary cargoes were gunpowder and coffee. The large cargoes were usually subdivided, so that a ship laden with cotton might have a register which listed a dozen or more "cargoes" of cotton, each a certain number of bales.[14] The lading of a ship was an arrangement almost always transacted by an agent for the firm which owned the vessel. Large and wealthy shipping firms sometimes owned numerous warehouses, and sold directly from their stocks of goods. Smaller-scale operations like that of Arnold Delius were true brokerages, middlemen who arranged transit of the goods between the sellers and the buyers.

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12 The *Register der Abzugsgelder, 1618-1810* is a list of all persons who emigrated from Bremen in this period: families, destinations, and property. Delius' name does not appear on it until 1783. See SAB: 2-R.2.B.3. Franz-Josef Pitsch, however, repeats Delius' claim that he had traveled to America at the age of 17, to scout out markets for his family's linen business. See: Pitsch, *Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen,* 13.

13 Unnamed Collection, SuUB: Bre.438 dela 641.

14 "Bills of Lading" for American vessels which sailed to Germany during this period are well preserved by the Maryland Historical Society. Baltimore was the most important port for American goods exported to Germany, and along with Philadelphia, was one of the most common destinations for German ships bound for the US.

Delius loaded *Die Drey Freunde* with 97,655 reichsthaler worth of goods, and had promised only that he would return with a profit.[15] This was not an ideal arrangement for a shipper, but not an unheard-of situation in an era when the slow and irregular postal services made purchases-in-advance relatively rare and difficult to negotiate. Certainly merchants preferred to specify what cargoes would be delivered, in agreed-upon amounts, either for a fixed price to a specific buyer, or with prior knowledge that the goods would be auctioned in a particular market. But such arrangements were limited to the few regular, established trade routes of the day, served by packets which called at the same ports two or three times a year. Since there was no precedent for US-German trade, the deal with Delius thus represented a considerable leap of faith on the part of Heymann and Talla. On the contract, Delius wrote only "goods" to describe what the ship would carry, although he later inventoried it extensively for his own records. In a final mystery which again calls into question Delius' veracity, the contract specified that the ship's destination was to be Philadelphia, yet Heymann and Talla and Captain Altmann later testified that Delius had told everyone he intended to sail for the Carolinas.[16]

A few days out of the mouth of the Weser, a storm in the North Sea nearly wrecked the ship, and damaged a portion of her cargo. Captain Altmann put into Amsterdam for repairs. Delayed but undeterred, Delius and his ship set sail a few weeks later. But either through incompetence or simple lack of experience in trans-Atlantic journeys, the ship became lost in mid-ocean. What should have been a 60-day voyage stretched into 80, and

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[15] M. Schmidtmayer, "Arnold Delius: Die Geschichte eines Pechvogels." *Bremische Nachrichten* 21 February, 1929.

[16] Unnamed Collection, SuUB: Bre.438 dela 641.

Die Drey Freunde, with food and drinking water nearly exhausted, finally managed to find the Delaware Bay, whence she put into Philadelphia.[17]

Delius declared that Philadelphia would be just as good as the Carolinas, particularly in light of the large German-American population in Benjamin Franklin's city.[18] He began circulating through the German communities, attempting to charm his way into business connections. He apparently implied to a number of people that he spoke on behalf of the Prussian government (hence his Prussian-flagged ship), and that his arrival signaled impending Prussian recognition of the United States. In the excitement of the first few months of American independence, Delius was evidently taken quite seriously by a large number of Americans and German-Americans.[19]

His cargo, however, was in considerably worse shape than he had previously thought. The storm and the extra three weeks at sea had ruined a substantial portion of it. Delius found himself unable to sell more than a fraction of the original cargo, so he embarked on a tour of the United States, trying to raise money for various US-German business schemes. He did succeed in making friends virtually everywhere, owing perhaps to a natural charm with which he obtained letters of introduction from eminences in the new American government.[20] His connections would later prove useful in obtaining a large tract of land in North Carolina for his brother Everhard.[21]

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17 Schmidtmayer, "Arnold Delius."

18 Ibid.

19 For a contemporary American impression of Delius, see: W. Deakins to W. Adcock, 6 May 1785. NAW-B.

20 In addition to Franklin's letter of reference, Delius obtained the good offices of other American VIPs, most notably George Washington. In addition to letters in his consular file in the NAW-B, see also: Pitsch, *Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen,* 18.

21 The deed and title, and a map of the land are still on file in the Staatsarchiv Bremen, "Bremensia" collection.

It is unclear whether all his activity made Delius a wealthy man. His enemies later claimed that Delius made a fortune from swindling gullible German-Americans, and that this money remained safely out of sight in America. It is likely, however, that Delius made very little. He was a gambler and, judging from the records left behind by others, quite a talker: apparently not the type to hide or save anything. He finally put together a cargo worth approximately 15,000 reichsthalers, and sent *Die Drey Freunde* back to Bremen with this ridiculously light load; less than one-fifth what Heymann and Talla were expecting.[22] Delius stayed in America, trying to make more money in a land where family connections were not as important or restrictive as in the Hanse.

His next plan was to assemble funds for a smaller ship to carry sugar from Haiti. Delius obtained the money from the German-American community in Baltimore, whom he enticed with the vision of being middlemen on a lucrative Haiti-Baltimore-Bremen sugar trade.[23] But this ship was seized by the French governor of Haiti for failure to comply with various regulations, not having correct ship's papers, or (most likely) for failure to pay port duties on the cargo. Ship captains in this era frequently tried to conceal their more valuable cargoes, or forged papers which showed them carrying a different (cheaper and less taxable) cargo. This may well have been the fate of Delius' ship in Haiti; the French *douanes* were notoriously thorough inspectors.[24]

One must admire Delius' tenacity, for in early 1785 he somehow obtained still more money and hired a third ship, the *Carolina* out of Baltimore. With this vessel, he intended

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22 Unnamed Collection, SuUB: Bre.438 dela 641.

23 Schmidtmayer, "Arnold Delius."

24 On the reputation of the French customs officials, see the papers of F.J. Wichelshausen as US consul in Bremen, NAW-B. In a number of letters Wichelshausen laments that the French have a reputation for painfully thorough, heavy-handed, and often larcenous "inspections."

to ship tobacco from Baltimore to Bremen. This was by far his most sound venture, and the deal might have saved him. American tobacco would soon be in high demand in Germany, and would make a number of people in Bremen very wealthy in the next decade. But Delius, who sailed with the *Carolina* for Germany, traveled with his usual luck. Not far from Portugal, a ferocious storm nearly wrecked the ship. Half the *Carolina's* crew perished, and the dismasted and leaking vessel was kept afloat only by dumping all her cargo overboard. Her compass gone, her sails in rags, the *Carolina* drifted for several days as the men ate the last of the rations which had not been lost in the storm. Delius and the other survivors came very close to perishing before they were rescued by a British naval brig which brought them to England.[25]

Delius returned to Bremen a few months later, no doubt with some trepidation. Heymann and Talla, outraged by their losses on *Die Drey Freunde,* had thoroughly smeared Delius' name throughout the city's interwoven merchant community. The atmosphere was so virulent that Delius' wife reportedly made a scene at the office of Heymann and Talla, where she told them what she thought of their treatment of her absent husband.[26] The lady's umbrage notwithstanding, Heymann and Talla demanded restitution. They sued Delius almost as soon as he returned, in late 1786.[27] In March 1788, Arnold Delius declared bankruptcy.

As soon as the affair went public, Delius became something of a *cause célèbre* for those who had always felt excluded from the wealthy cliques who ran the city. Delius' lawyer argued that his client faced an impossible legal position: an outsider could not hope

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25 *Kurze Darstellung...*

26 *Berichtung der Rechts-Angelegenheiten des Kaufmanns Arnold Delius.* 1797. SuUB: Bre.438 dela 644a.

27 *Aktenauszüge Arnold Delius.* 1797. SuUB: Bre.438 dela 635a, 18-25.

to obtain justice when all the magistrates were related by blood or by marriage to all the senators, who were related to all the consuls, who were related to all the owners of the shipping firms, and so on.[28] Pamphlets circulated in his defense, one by a Professor Roennberg, entitled, "Here Another Martyr to the Truth, or The Story of Expulsion From the Syndicate."[29] Another, anonymously authored, argued at great length that Delius was a visionary man who had simply met with incredible bad luck, and that all of his so-called misdeeds actually added up to only 555 reichsthaler, rather than the 41,000 Heymann and Talla demanded.[30] The anonymous author might have been Delius himself, or more likely his brother Friedrich, who was an elegant writer, and who would later pen a similarly elaborate defense of himself when his own business was sued in 1800.[31]

Regardless of the groundswell of eloquent defenses, it was clear that Delius, at the very least, had taken some remarkable liberties with other people's money. Heymann and Talla claimed that Delius had chosen to stay in America getting rich after he had swindled them.[32] There is no evidence to suggest that he did. After standing trial in Bremen, he did not return to the United States to live off any misbegotten fortune, nor did he apparently ever return to the business world. His subsequent brief tenure as an American consul was a complete failure. It seems that Arnold Delius truly had gone belly-up.

Furthermore, Delius had made enemies of some very powerful men. Old Hermann Heymann had been a Senator, one of Bremen's elected representatives and city administrators. Heymann's son and chief heir was married to the *Bürgermeister's*

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28 Ibid.

29 *Annalen der leidenen Menschheit IIItes Heft.* Altona, 1797. SuUB: Bre.438 dela 643, part IV.

30 *Kurze Darstellung...*

31 See: *Statement of a Case Decided by Arbitration Between Andrew Thorndike of Beverly and Friedrich Delius of Bremen Concerning the Ship Sally, 1800.* SuUB: Brem.b.1137 Nr.7.

32 Schmidtmayer, "Arnold Delius."

daughter.[33] The *Bürgermeister* (mayor) appointed most of the magistrates. Not surprisingly, the court ruled against Delius. On 13 September 1790, the judgment was handed down that Delius owed Heymann and Talla 18,478 reichsthaler. The court wrote a three-page decision, in which it charged Delius with fraud and misrepresentation. Even though he had been deliberately vague about what was being shipped, and what would be returned, "if he, with this cargo entrusted to him, had given his word in good conscience and to the best of his knowledge, it was as good as a written oath."[34]

Adding insult to injury, the University of Göttingen, where Delius had matriculated, revoked his degree shortly after the court decision. Hermann Heymann had died the previous year, endowing a large sum to the university under the direction of his widow. She stipulated that Göttingen would not get a *pfennig* until Delius was stricken from the books.[35]

After a brief and unsuccessful tenure as the American consul in Bremen, Arnold Delius faded into obscurity. By that time, however, US-Hanseatic commerce was thriving. At the beginning of the 1780s, Delius had been the first German to attempt to open trade with the United States. By the end of the decade, 51 Bremer merchants had some kind of commercial intercourse with North America.[36] The dream of Arnold Delius — a thriving commerce between America and Germany — would soon come to pass, even though it had foundered so badly on its maiden voyage.

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33 Delius to Timothy Pickering, 26 November, 1796, NAW-B. (This letter is Delius' recounting of the events of the case, seven years later.)

34 Unnamed Collection, SuUB: Bre.438 dela 641.

35 Ibid.

36 Pitsch, *Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen,* 19.

The Wealth of the "Tramps"

Samuel Johnson's dictionary defined a "merchant" as a man "who trafficks to remote countries." By implication, then, the livelihood of an 18th century merchant was tied to the sea. In the late Enlightenment, the word "commerce" rarely meant simple retailing and wholesaling, but rather importing and exporting, almost always from foreign lands.[37] The German word, *Handel,* is perhaps more evocative of the sense of "trade" as an activity carried out across oceans.

For Europeans, the 18th century brought tremendous change in commercial practices. Markets grew, both at home and in the colonies (which were themselves growing rapidly).[38] In his 1751 work, "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind," Benjamin Franklin noted the vast expansion of commercial activity in the American colonies and Europe, coupled with the growth of both population and personal wealth that fueled it. Franklin's observations came at a time when Britain was enjoying a profound increase in the value of her exported manufactures, to the point that, by 1760, they accounted for 35% of gross industrial output.[39] By the end of the century, Britain still led the European nations in exports, but virtually all of North and West Europe's harbors had become populated by the emerging merchant class which had facilitated and encouraged these trends.

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37 A superb analysis, includuing semantic considerations, can be found in: Jacob M. Price, "What Did Merchants Do?" *Journal of Economic History,* 49 (1989).

38 Consider the population of the North American colonies by the time of the American Revolution (@2.5 million); *ten times* greater than their population in 1700, only three generations earlier.

39 Hancock, *Citizens of the World,* 28-29.

In the late 18th century, goods and passengers traveled on two kinds of merchant vessels. Packets, also called "traders," ran regularly between two or more ports, sometimes serving a triangular or four-pointed circuit like the vessels which sailed from England to Africa, thence to the West Indies, to the American colonies, and finally back to England. In the age of sail, these regular routes were less common than the transient or "tramp" voyages, which were made by ships picking up cargoes wherever they could. Vessels plying this kind of trade made two or three trips per year, depending upon opportunities for cargo, as well as upon distance, weather, and experience sailing to a particular port. Crossing the North Atlantic in winter was an arduous task for even the most experienced 18th century crews, so ship captains generally tried to be elsewhere (Africa or the Caribbean, for instance) from October to March.[40]

"Tramp" voyages were riskier enterprises than running packets, but they could prove stupendously profitable. Although many account books survive from American and German merchants of this period, it is often difficult to determine precisely what kinds of profits were made on each shipment, since a bill of purchase might be written on one continent, using one currency, six months before a subsequent bill of sale appears, on another continent, using another currency, possibly for only a portion of the same cargo. The merchants' letterbooks are often the only records of the completed transactions. Friedrich Jacob Wichelshausen, US Consul in Bremen in 1798, wrote that 30-40% profits (previously considered to be excellent) had become the norm for American shipments to the Hanse.[41] Some interesting business accounts, however, give us an even brighter picture of the kind of money that could be made.

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[40] Hidy, *Isaac Hicks,* 35.

[41] Wichelshausen to Pickering, 19 July 1798. NAW-B.

The Perkins Brothers of Boston recorded the results of several shipments to France and to Hamburg, often citing 200% profits after all expenses had been paid.[42] The Baltimore merchant Robert Oliver wrote to a German colleague that he had realized nearly 200% profit on purchases of German metalwares (primarily silver and pewter) from a pair of shipments to Hamburg in 1799, even after paying the American agent in Hamburg who had brokered the deals.[43] In 1798 the Clifford Brothers of Philadelphia cleared a $15,000 *profit* on a shipment of sugar to Hamburg that had cost them less than $10,000.[44] The amounts paid to brokers, freight-handlers, and other middlemen who demanded a small percentage of the total sales (usually 1-3%), indicate that it was occasionally possible for a shipper in America to realize as much as *four hundred percent* profit for a shipment of tobacco to Bremen, if weather, government inspectors, and the local economy all cooperated.

Certainly merchants kept an eye on all these factors as best possible, given the limitations of communication in the era. One biographer of Richard Derby has argued that the larger merchants often had no idea how much they had made on any particular transaction.[45] A number of surviving records, however, show that merchants were often keenly aware of prevailing prices in the world's major markets, well-informed on political

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42 Carl Seaburg and Stanley Patterson, *Merchant Prince of Boston: Colonel T.H. Perkins, 1764-1854* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 106-107.

43 Robert Oliver to Mallhüsen & Sillem of Hamburg, 29 January, 1799. MDHS: Oliver Record Books. Ms 626.1

44 Charles Buck to Thomas and John Clifford, 26 October 1798. PHS: Clifford-Pemberton Collection, Vol. 11.

45 James Duncan Phillips, "The Life and Times of Richard Derby, Merchant of Salem" *Essex Institute Historical Collections* LXV (1929), 277.

events that might impact business, and very quick to fire off a letter of complaint or even withhold the transfer of funds if they felt anyone was charging them unfairly.[46]

Information on the state of the market was apparently considered public domain knowledge, and shared among merchants with a readiness that makes it easy to forget that these men were all competitors. The surviving correspondence of merchant firms is full of information on prices, access to credit and transport, the reliability of certain brokers, the supply and demand at various locations, etc. The acerbic Baltimore merchant Thomas Rutland, who did a large trade in tobacco with both Germany and Britain, paid close attention to details of this nature. In 1786, when he was first investigating the possibility of expanding his operations to Germany, Rutland commissioned a clerk to research all the major tobacco buyers in Bremen and Hamburg and to investigate "the differences between the merchants [in Germany and America] and continental scales of depreciation and exchange."[47] Robert Oliver, interested in expanding his business to include German textiles, wrote to the firm of Hermann Heymann Sons with an analysis of the markets and the financial considerations: "German and Silesia Linens are generally in demand and sell to advantage, but our credits on these articles are long, say 8 Months."[48]

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[46] Examples abound. The ongoing correspondence of Frederick Konig in Baltimore with D.F. Kalkmann in Bremen, for instance, over the price of tobacco in Germany. (MDHS: Ms 522). Or, Ambrose Clarke to Friedrich Amelung, 24 April, 1807, on the plausibility of re-opening a coffee and sugar trade from New York to Bremen, given the political situation. (MDHS: Ms 1754).

[47] Thomas Rutland to John Hale, 6 December, 1786. MDHS: Thomas Rutland Letterbook. Ms 1726. ("Acerbic" is perhaps charitable. Judging from the harsh tone of most of his letters, Rutland must have been something of a terror to his contemporaries. To all business associates, he wrote in the imperative, never thanking, always giving orders. To his son, his tone varied from accusing to contemptful. Even to the mayor of Annapolis, who sent him a ham as a birthday gift, Rutland replied with a single line of thanks, and then a paragraph of complaints about recent difficulties in obtaining the paperwork for shipping Virginia tobacco.)

[48] Robert Oliver to Hermann Heymann Sons, 17 December, 1799. MDHS: Ms626.1.

Local merchant houses and tramp merchantmen had a mutually-dependent relationship. The merchant brokers served as liaisons between the ship-handlers looking for cargoes and the producers and sellers looking to have their goods taken abroad. In order for the merchants to keep up a lively business, they had to be willing to be diverse in their dealings, and they needed to be exceptionally well-informed on a number of economic and political factors, both local and foreign. As long as merchants were successful, the tramps would keep coming back to that port, looking for new cargoes. As long as the tramps called regularly, merchants could do a brisk business with a wide array of customers and goods.

If the routes proved successful, they sometimes evolved into regular lines or packets. In the case of American trade with Germany, where everything started from scratch, American merchants first had to establish a line of credit with a trusted Bremen, Hamburg, or Amsterdam house. A firm was trusted if its reputation — spread by word of mouth among captains and other merchants — was solid. The "firm" as we would understand it was only then gestating; 18th-century merchant firms were somewhat looser arrangements. They formed multiple partnerships — what we would call "networks," really — in order to diversify and to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible.[49] They combined business relationships with political and marital relationships in a way we would consider odd or unethical, but which served to insulate them from the whims and shocks of an unruly and emerging market.

The European merchant acted as an agent for the American shipper, deducting his fees, sending the balance of the profits back to the American house, and keeping a certain

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[49] For more on this, see: Hancock, *Citizens of the World,* 13-15.

amount as an account for further transactions. The Philadelphia merchants Thomas and John Clifford began shipping sugar to Germany in the late 1790s. Their German agent (Charles Buck, who would later become a successful German-American merchant himself) handled the sales in Hamburg, and arranged cargoes of German linens and glassware for the return voyage. The Cliffords' ship *Philadelphia* thus essentially became a packet (although she was never referred to as such), running the Philadelphia-Hamburg circuit.[50]

Shippers almost always paid for insurance on their cargoes.[51] This naturally shaved another few percentage points off any profit, in addition to the money paid to the ship's crew, the tolls and other paperwork at the local consulate, the (usually London-based) bank that was handling the exchange of currency, and the commissions of any agents contracted to sell the goods in a distant harbor. After the French Revolution, insurance premiums naturally began to increase, as the traditional dangers of spoilage, piracy, and storms were exacerbated by the additonal exigencies of war, privateering, and seizure on the high seas. By the late 1790s, insurance rates for American vessels had tripled from their mid-1780s levels.[52] Nonetheless, prior to Napoleon, there was still plenty of money to be made. The sugar brought to Hamburg on the *Philadelphia,* Buck wrote the Clifford brothers, "affords you a very handsome benefit, and we hope that you will favor us in Short time with more Consignments."[53]

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50 Buck to T&J Clifford, 21 May 1798. Clifford-Pemberton collection. PHS.

51 Or cursed the day they didn't. In a typically merciless letter to a partner in a shipment of Virginia tobacco that was lost at sea in a gale, Thomas Rutland wrote "I am extreamly [sic] sorry on your account, but for myself, I was fortunate to order insurance." (Rutland to Capt. Wood, 18 November 1785. MDHS: Ms 1726). The Bremen merchant Friedrich Amelung was ruined when an uninsured shipment of sugar was seized by a British warship in 1804.

52 Ibid. See also the consular file of F.J. Wichelshausen in Bremen, NAW-B.

53 Buck to T&J Clifford, 27 July, 1798. Clifford-Pemberton collection. PHS.

Smaller merchant firms rented or hired vessels for each cargo. The wealthier merchant houses owned their own ships and could send them anywhere they pleased. In many cases these houses had begun during Colonial times, when early American merchants frequently sailed with their vessels to oversee all aspects of operations. This was particularly true of the New England businessmen, and stood in marked contrast with most of the Hanseatic firms. Stephen Girard, T.H. Perkins, and Richard Derby all had extensive sailing careers before the size of their enterprises grew to the point where it was no longer possible for them to be incommunicado for months at sea. Later, after American independence and after acquiring larger numbers of ships, these same men stayed in their counting-houses near the docks and ran their businesses from behind their desks. Toward the end of their careers, some of them owned veritable fleets of merchantmen. Girard had dozens, Derby had over sixty, and William Gray of Salem purchased a staggering 160 vessels between 1785 and 1825.[54]

The arrival of steam travel in the mid-19th century made packets more common, and encouraged the development of regular shipping lines.[55] This spelled the beginning of the end for independent merchants, as most of the world's ports were by that time open to each other's commerce, and regular, predictable lanes could be established.[56] There was no longer a need for adventurous businessmen like Arnold Delius, who would contract with an independent merchant ship to take the risks involved in sailing to a completely new market.

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54 John G. Hutchins, *The American Maritime Industries and Public Policy, 1789-1914: An Economic History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), 240.

55 "Ein Dampfschiff verband Bremen mit Nordamerika" *Weser Kurier* (14 June 1997): p 49.

56 Albion, *The Rise of New York Port*, 416.

In their heyday, however, the independent merchants came to dominate the American harbors, as they had done in the Hanse for centuries. Emory Johnson writes:

> ...each trade district had its "merchant princes," who owned large fleets of ships in which they carried occasional cargoes for others, but which they utilized chiefly in their own trading enterprises. The names of Winthrop, Endicott, Derby, Peabody, Gray, Abraham Pech, and Stephen Girard became famous as merchant-shippers. There were also merchants whose trading sphere was less extensive, but who nevertheless had sufficient capital to own and operate one or more vessels. Some, too, were owned by producers, notably the tobacco planters of Virginia; and in some cases trading vessels were jointly owned and operated by several merchants or producers, who realized they could not well conduct an over-sea trade unless they operated a vessel in connection with their mercantile business.[57]

Merchant Princes and their Domains

In both America and the Hanse, prominent merchants were invariably well-connected socially and politically. In New England particularly, businessmen were often active in politics. Examples abound: William Molineux of Boston, Peter Grotjan of Philadelphia, Isaac Sears and John Lamb of New York. Thomas Fitzsimmons was a merchant, a banker, and sat on the board of directors of the Insurance Company of North America. He was also a congressman from Philadelphia who drafted the excise tax bill. Thirteen of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence were merchants, second in number only to lawyer/jurists.[58]

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[57] Johnson, *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States,* Vol. 2, 117.

[58] Anna Rochester, *American Capitalism 1607-1800* (New York: Free Press, 1949), 77.

The economic, social, and political linkage of the merchant class was a relatively recent development in America, but a long-standing tradition in the Hanse.[59] For centuries, the most successful merchant houses had provided the largest part of the social and political leadership of Bremen and Hamburg. Johannes Lange, who founded the first tobacco importing firm in Bremen in 1642, was an alderman, later a Senator, and his family produced a number of other civil servants over the next two centuries.[60] The Oelrichs family, originally from East Prussia, entered the independent shipping business shortly after American independence, specializing in *Kolonialwaren.* They rose to become one of Bremen's most prominent and influential families, who in the course of three generations produced a Senator, a General-Consul, and an alderman.[61] The merchant dynasty founded by the Kulenkampff brothers in 1806, which operated the biggest tobacco import house in Bremen, contributed two Senators, several consuls, and a number of prominent attorneys and judges.[62]

The example of another Bremen family, the Wichelshausens, is instructive. Even though they had moved from the Rhineland relatively recently — in 1702 — the Wichelshausens were a perfect example of the kind of family which dominated the Hanseatic cities for centuries.[63] In the two generations prior to the French Revolution, they

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59 Opinions differ among historians as to when the merchant classes became a political force in the American seaports. Gary Nash's comprehensive analysis of the northern harbors (*The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986)) argues that the period roughly 1730-60 witnessed the ascent of the "mercantile elite" (p. 167) to dominate the politics of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.

60 Robert Bargman, ed. *Bremen: die Tabakstadt Deutschlands* (Bremen: Franz Leuwer, 1939), 41.

61 SAB: "Die graue Mappen:" Oelrichs.

62 The brothers were Peter Andreas and Caspar Gottlieb. See: Hermann Kellenbenz, "Der Bremer Kaufmann: Versuch einer sozialgeschichtlichen Deutung" *Bremisches Jahrbuch* 51 (1969), 39-40. See also: Bargman, *Bremen: die Tabakstadt Deutschlands,* 44. Finally, the SAB: "Die graue Mappen:" Kulenkampff.

63 Pitsch, *Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen* , 20. The Kulenkampffs also were relatively recent arrivals, having lived in Bremen only since the late 1600s.

had produced a Bürgermeister, two Senators, and two noted magistrates. In addition, the family boasted some of Bremen's best-known private persons, including three physicians, a writer, and several prominent merchants.[64] Friedrich Jacob Wichelshausen served as the US consul to Bremen for 33 years. His brother Hieronymus Daniel moved to Baltimore, where he became a successful merchant, a prominent leader in the German-American community (serving on the boards of most of the German-American associations), and ultimately Bremen's consul in that city.[65]

Although wealthy merchants in most proto-capitalist societies were often prominent citizens, the US and especially the Hanse provided them with unparalleled opportunities to dominate their society and state. Bremen and Hamburg were governed by Senates, which comprised representatives from the most wealthy and powerful merchant families. After 1712, in fact, a minimum of one of Hamburg's four mayor's positions and half of the twenty-four Senators' seats were reserved exclusively for merchants.[66] The franchise was limited to a moneyed elite, which ensured that the Senate was re-elected, generation after generation, as the representatives of the merchant class. It was customary for men to ascend into the positions held by their fathers, moving up from the position of consul to Senator, for example, assuming that the family and its business had not suffered any untoward developments such as scandals or financial reverses.

In addition to the deliberative bodies that ran the cities, church leaders and the self-organized guilds which dated from the middle ages were both influential forces that often

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64 The death-notices of the Wichelshausen family read like a Who's Who of Bremen in the *Neuer Nekrolog der Deutschen* (Altona, 1856), 124-128.

65 In addition to his consular file in the SAB, see the MDHS: Ms1846, in which H.D. Wichelshausen is one of a dozen Baltimore notables who raises money to outfit the "Baltimore Horse Artillery."

66 Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen," 50.

influenced policy. Some of the most powerful figures in the entire hierarchy were the city "aldermen." A Hanseatic alderman *(Ältermann)* was not the same as his English or American counterpart. He was an elected leader and spokesman for a merchant guild; neither a government nor a religious figure, but a liaison between the merchants, the church, and the state.[67] A businessman himself with direct influence in every sphere of the city's social and economic life, an alderman in Bremen or Hamburg was significantly more powerful than even a Sam Adams or a Richard Derby, whose political influence was more subtle and diffused.

The political/economic arrangement of the Hanse was thus the reverse of that in most German states, where the merchant class was decidedly subservient to the nobility, church, and even the scholarly and professional elites. Indeed, it more closely resembled the situation developing in young America, where budding capitalism had created a patrician class of well-educated merchants who were interested in worldwide trade and local politics. Business and politics meshed in more than one family in both the Hanse and the American seaboard, the cousins John and Samuel Adams being the most notable example in the New World, although the business-political connections could also be found in a single man. Stephen Girard, at the height of his mercantile powers, also served in various positions in the Philadelphia city government.[68]

Prominent politicians and businesspeople moved in the same circles, whether at home or abroad. In the 1790s, John Adams instructed his son John Quincy to seek out the most prominent American businessmen when traveling to London and Hamburg. T.H. Perkins of Boston, a wealthy merchant allied by marriage to the Quincys, stayed as the

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[67] Dr. Thomas Elsmann, interview by the author (written): University of Bremen, 10 June, 1997.

[68] He ran for a number of other offices, but was defeated. See: Wildes, *Lonely Midas,* 153-157.

guest of James Monroe in Paris in 1793, along with the merchant and newspaper magnate John Russell, whose wife Lydia, in turn, also came from a prominent merchant family with political connections in Virginia (hence the link to the Monroes).[69] The most fascinating example is that of Peter Grotjan, a Hamburg merchant transplanted to Philadelphia. Grotjan was an ambitious 21-year-old merchant when "a prominent German" introduced him to George Washington at an outdoor concert.[70] Grotjan became both a wealthy businessman and an active player in Democratic politics, funding a number of political clubs and campaigns, including those of Jefferson and Jackson. Interestingly, he was also "intimately acquainted" (in his words) with Aaron Burr; the two men shared a lover for several years, yet remained close friends.[71]

By any definition these people constituted a recognizable class: intermarried, socially distinct, religiously and politically connected. The three sons of the wealthy Salem merchant Richard Derby, for example, all married young women whose fathers were either merchants or sea captains. Two of Derby's three daughters likewise married shipowners; only his daughter Martha wed outside the immediate sphere of commerce, marrying a local physician.[72] The elder Derby, after passing the reins of his business to his oldest son, became involved in politics, first for the king's government, and then after 1775, against it. Peter Grotjan's family in Hamburg provides another example. At fifteen Peter was

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69 Seaburg and Patterson, *Merchant Prince of Boston*, 109-110. See also: MAHS: papers of Lydia Smith Russell. Her husband John owned the *Boston Gazette.*

70 In his (handwritten) memoirs, Grotjan never specifies who made the introduction.

71 Peter A. Grotjan Memoirs (unpublished, no page numbers). PHS. The woman was one Maria Clements. The three seemed to have had a strange triangular friendship, even after the sexual aspect of the relationship passed. In later years, when Clements came upon hard times, both Grotjan and Burr gave financial assistance to her, and Grotjan helped find a job for her young son (who was not, apparently, either Burr's or Grotjan's child.)

72 Phillips, "The Life and Times of Richard Derby," 276-277.

apprenticed to his uncle's merchant house. In addition to becoming a merchant himself, Grotjan's brother and sister both married into merchant families.[73]

In both America and the Hanse, marriage and family alliances often marked the influence of a particular merchant house. These alliances gradually spread out all over the world, including the United States, in a sense being the 18th-century equivalent of multinational corporations, with branches of the family firm in all the major ports where the merchant houses transacted business.[74] The trend towards this internationalization had been underway since the early 1600s, when the English, Dutch, and to a lesser extent the French, all established chartered companies to manage trade in outposts and colonies, such as the East India Company, whose "outposts of progress" brought increasing profits home to London. Independent merchant firms began employing these tactics somewhat later, in the 18th century, when families settled younger sons or brothers in distant lands to manage their firm's affairs and protect their interests in the new markets.

One expects this of the British, Dutch, or French, since they controlled globe-girdling empires and traded on every continent. Indeed, their merchants were to be found in most of the world's emporia by the time of the American Revolution. It is perhaps more surprising to find the Hanseatic Germans also entering the global marketplace. They did so relatively tentatively at first, but when the formerly sealed-off European empires began to crack, the Germans, too, extended their merchant houses across the world with an alacrity that reflected their long wait and envy of their competitors.

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73 Peter Grotjan Memoirs (no page numbers). PHS.

74 Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen," 19-20 and 42-45.

A Global Economy

By the end of the 18th century, Bremen and Hamburg had returned to their old prominence as world-class ports. Anywhere from 600-1,700 ships might drop anchor in either harbor each year. Even in a bad year this was nearly double what the Hanse had seen in the mid-1700s. The Hanse's own merchant fleets increased, as firms expanded and added vessels. Bremen's fleet grew nearly 70% in the period between the Declaration of Independence and the Napoleonic Wars; Hamburg's nearly doubled.[75]

The American merchants witnessed an even more dramatic expansion of international commerce. In 1789, the United States had roughly 127,000 tons of merchant shipping involved in foreign trade. By 1800 this had increased to over 680,000 tons: a nearly 450% percent increase in the American merchant fleet in a mere eleven years.[76] Profits soared, along with volume carried:

Total Value of the Exports of the United States, 1790-99[77]

Year	*'000s of Dollars*
1790	20,205
1791	17,571
1792	21,918
1793	26,012
1794	29,464
1795	47,856
1796	67,064
1797	51,295
1798	61,327
1799	78,666

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75 Schäfer, *Bremen und die Kontinentalsperre,* 53-55.

76 And it kept increasing. By 1807, the US merchant fleet carried over one million tons to and from foreign countries. See Nettles, *Emergence of a National Economy,* 399.

77 Seybert, *Statistical Annals,* 132-134. See also Nettles, *Emergence of a National Economy,* 396-397.

The 18th century saw the development of true "International Houses:" family firms which sought to spread themselves as broadly across the mercantile world as possible, not only to maximize opportunities for profit, but also to diversify as a hedge against the damage caused by local or even major European wars and blockades. Later, during the Napoleonic Wars, many moved their operations completely, to avoid the blockades and to keep communications open with branches in the Americas and the West Indies.[78] As merchants became increasingly active in global trade in the last quarter of the 18th century, the geographical diversification of their firms naturally proceeded apace with their heightened interest in geo-political affairs and international relations. Trans-national, even trans-continental business interests required a successful merchant house to keep a finger on the pulse of world affairs.

One example of this trend was the development of "merchant bankers," firms which branched into finance as a means of controlling both trade and its supporting financial institutions. By the end of the 18th century, a number of these firms were more bankers than merchants, specializing in international finance, money exchange, and the underwriting of insurance and loans for governments and multi-national merchant houses. Johann Baring, born in Bremen in 1697, is one of the most famous examples. His father's family had produced a long line of prominent Lutheran churchmen, and his mother's family were wealthy merchants. Johann thus inherited access to two of the Hanse's most important power-structures. Nonetheless, he emigrated to England in 1717, and by the late

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[78] The phrase "International House" is from: S.D. Chapman, "The International House: The Continental Contribution to British Shipping 1800-1860," *Journal of European Economic History* 6 (Spring 1977), 11-12. Other writers, including Hancock and Rabuzzi, have also emphasized these trends.

1720s "John Baring" was recognized as Exeter's leading importer of German products, as well as a seller of English goods throughout North Germany.

At his death in 1748, John Baring's sons inherited the third-largest fortune in Exeter, from which an international banking empire grew. Charles, the middle son, carried on his father's firm in Devon. John II, trained in business in Germany and Geneva, returned to begin a new firm. A third son, Francis, started his own business in London by using his share of the inheritance to buy out an insolvent merchant house. Francis and John soon merged to form what became popularly known as "Baring Brothers." The House of Baring was a true merchant-banking firm, using its capital to invest in all the sources of its revenues. Francis or his brothers owned interest in virtually every foreign firm with which they did business, from Philadelphia to Hamburg to Cairo, and a half-dozen places in-between.[79] Later, after the American Revolution, Francis sent his son Alexander first to Hamburg to apprentice with an allied merchant house, then to Philadelphia to manage the family's connections with American trading firms. The family's power by this point is evidenced by the ease with which Alexander purchased a million acres of land in New York and Maine, and loaned General Henry Knox $50,000, all while merely *en route* to Philadelphia and his real assignment. Typical of his role as a member of an expanding international merchant family, Alexander married Anne Louisa Bingham, daughter of the wealthiest businessman in Pennsylvania, cementing the family alliances their fathers had started with business deals ten years earlier.[80]

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[79] Ralph W. Hidy, *The House of Baring in American Trade and Finance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), 4-17. ("Baring Brothers" became the official name of the firm in 1806.)

[80] Ibid., 28-29.

A few early American merchant families settled branches in Germany, but until the mid-19th century, most American firms were more interested in expansion on the western hemisphere, particularly after the independence of most of Latin America in 1811.[81] Robert Ferguson's firm had an ideal arrangement. One son, Robert Jr., remained in New York, managing the offices and the books, while another son, John, was roving Europe and the Indies, scouting new markets and making connections (particularly in Bremen and Hamburg in the 1790s) the family needed to keep the business growing.[82]

An early interest in the Pacific had also developed shortly after American independence. T.H. Perkins sent his nephew to Canton in 1803 to open a branch of the family business; a few Americans were already there. The famous German-American John Jacob Astor, who had first made his wealth in domestic industry and trade, then in transatlantic commerce (primarily with Britain and Holland) also spread his enterprise far eastward in 1817, establishing a branch in Canton.[83]

The Hanseatic merchant families — especially those in Bremen — were quick to expand into the United States. With the liberation of the Americas and the growing interest in direct commerce with the widening world, the Hanseatic firms became true socio-political interlocutors between old and new markets and states. Germans from Bremen and Hamburg settled in the port cities of the United States, Ibero-America, and Asia, reporting back on local economic and political developments. Foremost among these new world-traders were German families like the Heinekens from Bremen, and the Huths, Frühlings, and Goschens, from Hamburg. When American independence opened a vast new area to

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81 Mira Wilkins, *The Emergence of Multinational Enterprise: American Business Abroad from the Colonial Era to 1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 17-22.

82 See the Robert Ferguson Papers (R. Ferguson Sr. and Jr., in different collections) in the NYHS.

83 Ibid., 7.

potential economic development, the Hanseatic merchant houses dispatched men to the New World to set up shop. Even within this well-informed class, there was a naîve belief among the young Germans that "gold lay in the streets." Traveling to America became known as "the pass" *(die Parole),* a much-sought-after assignment for a young man from a merchant family.[84]

A number of German firms expanded to America in this period. In 1799, at the age of 23, Frederick W. Brune emigrated from Bremen to Baltimore, where he founded the merchant firm of Von Kapff & Brune. (His partner was a Prussian émigré who had also come to Baltimore via Bremen.) Brune's success encouraged him to begin his own firm, which he ultimately expanded under his sons, sending one to New York and another to Philadelphia, while he maintained an affiliated office in Bremen. Long before its founder retired, F.W. Brune & Sons was a major shipper of American foodstuffs to Germany, and an importer of German goods in the United States.[85]

The Hamburg merchant Peter Adolf Grotjan emigrated to the United States in 1796 to set up a US-German trading house. Starting in Philadelphia, shipping to friends and contacts in Hamburg, Grotjan quickly branched outward, expanding his firm to include offices in New York, Baltimore, Alexandria (Virginia), the West Indies and, of course, Hamburg. In 1812 he began publishing *Grotjan's Philadelphia Public Sale Report,* a well-respected weekly newspaper that printed current prices on major commodities, credit information, and news for merchants around the world.[86]

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84 Hermann Wätjen, *Aus Der Frühzeit Des Nordatlantikverkehrs* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1932), 5.

85 Brune Family Papers, MDHS: Ms 1921.1.

86 *Peter A. Grotjan Memoirs* (unpublished). PHS. Grotjan's newspaper is also preserved in several volumes by the PHS.

Dozens of other Hanseatic families were represented in the American harbors. A branch of the Meier family of Bremen became prominent in New York, ultimately serving as consuls there and in New Orleans. The Heineken family, which had provided Bremen with some of its most prominent citizens, including a popular and famous Bürgermeister, was also represented in Baltimore, along with the Voghts of Hamburg and the Willmanns of Bremen. The firm of Mayer & Brantz had offices in both Boston and Baltimore, and specialized in European imports — the Mayers having come from Hamburg, Brantz from Berlin. One of their most prominent and problematic customers was Thomas Jefferson, who ordered a large number of books from them, and apparently rarely paid his bills on time.[87] The oldest son of the Lengerke family of Bremen also settled in Boston. There were many others.[88]

Interest in breaking into new markets brought the German *Kaufmänner* to America from the 1780s on. With branches planted in both the Old World of Hanseatic family politics, and in the New World of the unfolding American economy, the Hanseatic merchant families of Bremen and Hamburg quickly developed the first important social and economic links between the German and American people. This developed into political and diplomatic linkage within a single generation.

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87 MAHS: Mayer & Brantz papers. See also: MDHS: Charles F. Mayer Papers, Ms 1574. The Mayers were actually from Ulm, had settled in Altona and opened a business in neighboring Hamburg. One generation later they expanded to the New World.

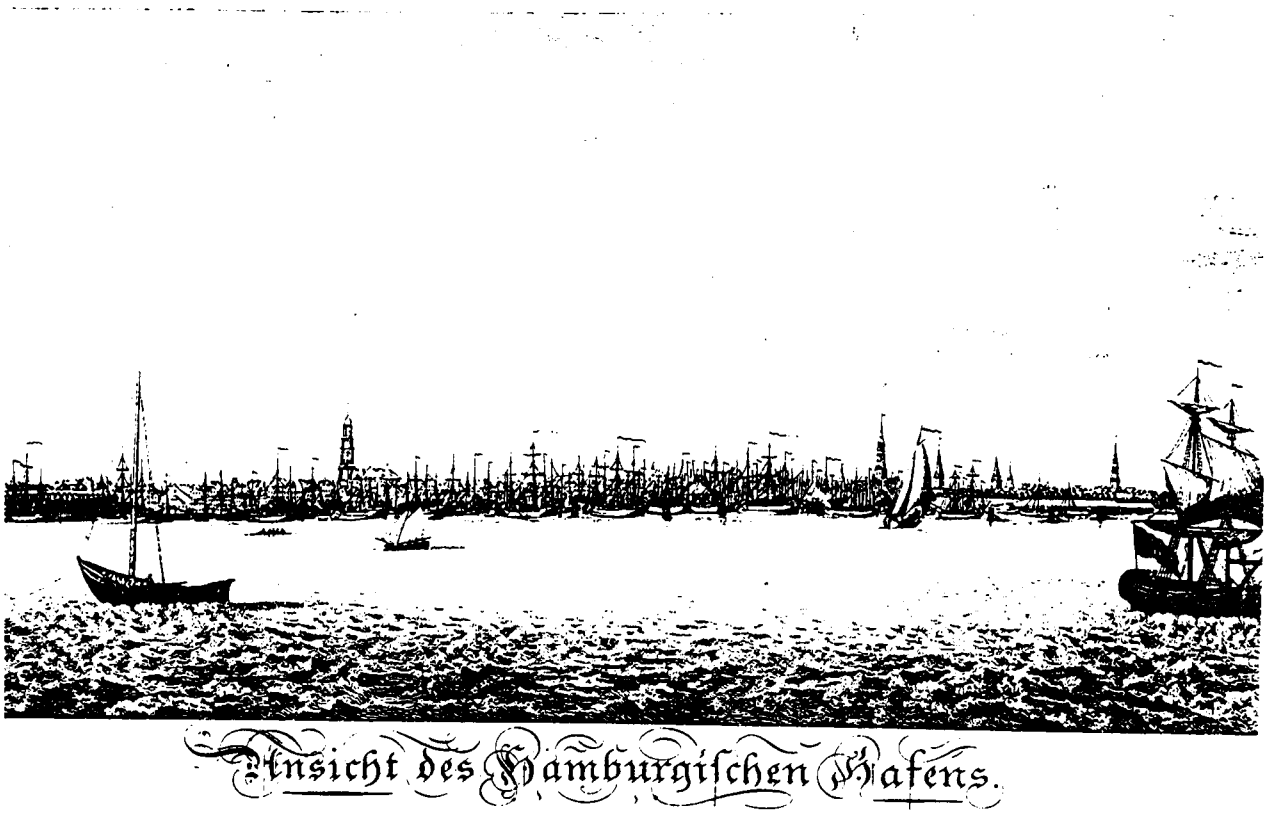
88 For persons emigrating and dates of departure from Bremen, see: SAB: *Register der Abzugsgelder, 1618-1810.* 2-R.2.B.3. See also the family papers in the SAB, filed by family name in "Die Graue Mappen." For activities upon arrival in the United States, American archives are usually more useful, particularly the MDHS for activities of German merchants in Baltimore. Family papers of Georg von Lengerke (son of the Bremen immigrant) are in the MAHS.

Chapter Three

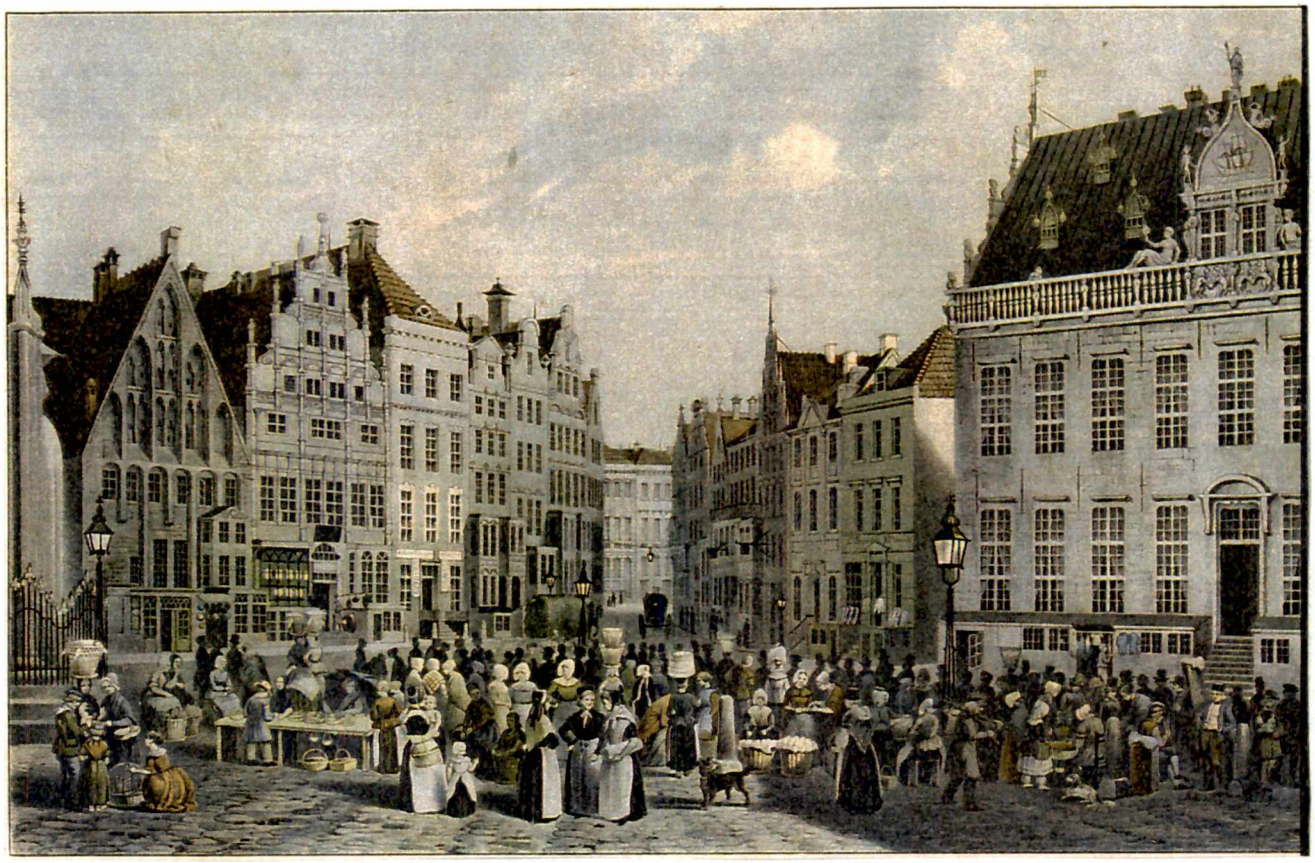
Merchant Culture in Germany and the United States

Happy is the man who has reached the harbor
and left the sea and storm behind
and now sits warm and peaceful in the good Ratskeller of Bremen.

Heinrich Heine, "Im Hafen"



Hamburg's harbor, seen from the West bank of the Elbe, circa 1780.
Source: Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg (manuscript collection). Used with permission.



The Central Marketplace of Bremen, circa 1840.

A Merchant Century?

When Thomas Mann completed *Buddenbrooks* in 1900, the minutely imagined chronicle of life among the 19th century Hanseatic merchant class was so uncomfortably realistic that its publication caused a social earthquake in Mann's hometown of Lübeck. The twenty-five-year-old author depicted a mercantile elite that was often shallow, relatively unappreciative of high culture, obsessed with reputation and status, grasping and frequently deceitful yet constantly mouthing Christian platitudes. Mann painted the rest of Germany in broad strokes. Prussians were stoic and slightly dim, honest but easily duped. Rhinelanders were awkward provincials with bad tempers and no social graces. The Bavarians were a lovable collection of absurdities: perpetually inebriated, slothful, unambitious, inarticulate, yet playful and warm-hearted. Throughout the novel, Mann leaves little doubt that the Hanseatic merchant families considered themselves a breed apart from all other Germans. By virtue of their money, accumulated through two generations of buying and selling, the Buddenbrooks and their rival families moved through society like minor royalty, trailed by a fleet of servants and sycophants, convinced that their worldly calling was divinely sanctioned and superior to all others.

By the time Mann wrote his startling debut novel, independent merchants (like the fictional firm of Johann Buddenbrook & Sons) were all but gone, replaced by broadly-based international trading lines like the North German Lloyd and the Hamburg-Amerika. But little more than a century earlier, at the time of the American Revolution, they had been

at the zenith of their powers. Between the liberation of the Americas and the onset of European industrialization, the independent merchants dominated the trade of the western world. The men who ran these families and firms, both in Germany and the United States, belonged to an energetic and emergent new class that was establishing commercial linkages across the globe. Crucially for the future of German-American relations, these worldly entrepreneurs held positions of power in both the Hanse and the American port cities.

As the Enlightenment gave way to what was indisputably the West's "bourgeois century," the role of the independent merchant took on new significance.[1] This era witnessed the last period of "bureaucratic absolutism," which was replaced by a rapidly-spreading capitalist revolution, a liberation of what would become the "investing class."[2] Independent merchants, usually operating in the major seaports, stood in the front ranks of these "liberated" capitalists in both Germany and North America.

In both societies, the merchants themselves represented only small percentages of the total populations. Bremen in 1796 had only 156 registered independent merchants and 60 major commercial houses. These men and their families accounted for slightly fewer than 2,000 people, or under 5% of the city's roughly 40,000 inhabitants. They owned the most expensive homes, virtually all in the Altstadt, the oldest, most central district of Bremen, closest to the major religious and government structures. In Lübeck, with a total population of approximately 25,000, roughly the same percentage were members of this economic elite. Hamburg, which had over 100,000 inhabitants in 1800, had a slightly

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1 The term is Percy Ernst Schramm's, from: *Hamburg, Deutschland und die Welt: Leistung und Grenzen hanseatischen Burgertums in der Zeit zwischen Napoleon I und Bismack, ein Kapitel deutscher Geschichte* (Hamburg: Hoffman & Campe, 1952), 10.

2 Elisabeth Fehrenbach, "Der Einfluß des napoleonischen Frankreich auf das Rechts- und Verwaltungssystem Deutschlands." In: Armgard von Reden-Dohna, ed. *Deutschland und Italien im Zeitalter Napoleons.* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979), 23-40.

larger merchant class of over 8,000 people, who lived primarily in the St. Nicolai and St. Katherine neighborhoods. In no case did this group exceed 10% of the total populace of any Hanseatic city.[3]

Although the merchant classes themselves were small, the number of citizens either directly employed by the merchant elites or connected in some material way to their enterprises was very high. In 1790, nearly half of Bremen's population was employed in work related in some way to either shipbuilding or international trade.[4] Since industry in these cities was small and limited to a few fields, it is logical to conclude that a majority of working men were normally involved in one or another facet of commercial activity, and that a good number of the working women were employed by these wealthy families as domestic help.

The Hanse usually "spoke for" German commerce in the wider world, since Germans imported and exported largely through Hanseatic harbors. In the 1790s, Bremen and Hamburg alone accounted for more than half of all imports to German-speaking lands from non-German states.[5] Apart from the Hanse, the rest of Germany's merchants were inward-looking. Saxony, for example, had a healthy trade in the 1780s and 1790s, and the Leipzig Fair attracted merchants from across northern and eastern Europe. Such German markets, however, dealt predominantly with other German-speaking states, and most of what Saxony did receive from the trans-oceanic world came via Hamburg.[6] The Hanse

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3 Bödecker, "Marchands et Habitat," 577-579.

4 Andreas Schluz, "Das Bremer Bürgertum in der Umbruchzeit" *Historische Zeitschrift* Beiheft 14 (1991): 23.

5 Percy Ernst Schramm, "Die deutschen Überseekaufleute im Rahmen der Sozialgeschichte" *Bremisches Jahrbuch* 49 (1964): 35. (It is admittedly somewhat futile to speak of "German commerce" in this era; there was no such thing, rather a number of competing states.)

6 William E. Lingelbach, "Saxon-American Relations, 1778-1828" AHR XVII (April 1912): 517.

were thus uniquely suited among all the German states to serve as interlocutors between Germany and the United States. In many ways the Hanseatic business class had more in common with its counterpart on the American seaboard than with most regions of Germany.

Merchant Society in the German and American Harbors

Whether or not we accept the portrait drawn by Thomas Mann, it is clear that we can speak of some sort of "merchant culture" extant in the seaports of both Germany and the US. "Merchant Culture" was by no means unique to the Hanse and the young United States; many historians have written on the emergence of merchants in the seaports of the western world and its trade outposts in this period. It was rare, however, to find a society like the Hanse, where the merchants so utterly controlled the activities of the state, or even one like the young US, where the merchants had such a substantial amount of direct political power. Even in (relatively) democratic Great Britain, where the merchant class was as healthy and active as in these places, direct access to power remained largely beyond their grasp until the ascent of liberalism in the middle of the 19th century.[7]

Certainly the common ground shared by German and American merchants served as a catalyst for German-American relations as a whole. Although they would have been attracted to the new and expanding markets of North America in any event, the Hanseatic

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[7] One could make a case for Holland being a "merchant society," as well, although the Dutch political system (and indeed, Dutch sovereignty) did not demonstrate nearly as much stability and continuity as that of the US and the Hanse in the period 1785-1835.

merchants were additionally drawn to the very *idea* of the American "commercial republic" (as the French representative to Congress had described the US in 1779.) A trans-national collegiality existed among these men of business. German and American merchants spoke a mutual second language: liberal capitalism.

In addition to the political and economic similarities between the merchant classes of North Germany and the American seaboard, a great many socio-cultural similarities existed as well. The two peoples were religiously compatible. In both the Hanse and the United States the population was overwhelmingly Protestant. Much of English North America, of course, began as Protestant religious sanctuaries. Many of the cities of the Hanse were Protestant, but Bremen and Hamburg were particularly influenced by the large number of Huguenots fleeing France in the 1600s. These people flooded into the North German ports; virtually the entire Huguenot community of La Rochelle re-settled in Bremen.[8] But despite being staunchly Protestant, by the late 18th century both America and the Hanse were exceptionally tolerant of religious minorities in their midst. A general mistrust of Catholics admittedly existed in both societies, although both they and the Jews were allowed to participate actively in the economy, albeit not in the clubs and the social lives of the elite.[9] The English writer Thomas Cooper, describing the new United States to prospective immigrants, listed matters of conscience as the most important of the many reasons to relocate to America. "You would seek in America in the first place," he wrote,

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8 Reinhard Pateman, "Die Beziehungen Bremens zu Frankreich bis zum Ende der Französichen Herrschaft 1813." *Francia* I (1973): 482-507.

9 Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen," 27-28. It should be noted that Uhalde disputes the view of Rörig, Chapman, and others, who have held that North Germany was the center of anti-Semitism in the country, particularly after the Congress of Vienna. Uhalde writes: "Occupation, residence, and religious practice were severely restricted. Nevertheless, they too [the Jews] were now part of the scene." (47)

"an asylum from civil persecution and religious intolerance... and where you might be permitted to enjoy a perfect freedom of speech as well as of sentiment.[10]

Hamburg's Jews comprised around 5% of the city's total population in the period 1770-1820. Since 1612 they had enjoyed a protection agreement *(Schutzvertrag)* with the Senate, renewed *pro forma* every year. Although they had a Jewish Quarter, it was not a ghetto, and they were not legally required to live there and nowhere else. The Jews were overwhelmingly employed in banking, trade, and money-changing — the most important businesses to their community, although their firms were usually small-to-medium sized, and didn't really compete with the big trading houses. The successful merchant banking firm of M.M. Warburg, for instance, made only 13,000 - 15,000 marks banco per year, or less than one-tenth what the Hamburg magnate John Parish earned in the same period.[11]

The principle of tolerance was most dramatically evident in the way the Hanse eschewed the conservative German paranoia about Freemasons and similar semi-secret organizations. Indeed, in both the Hanse and the United States, many of the most prominent public figures were quite open about their Masonic ties, and their homes and gravestones are adorned with the symbols of their orders. In young America, where accommodation for oppressed adherents of minority groups and faiths was something of a tradition, this is not surprising.[12] But when contrasted with the occasional persecution of Masons in other regions of Germany, the Hanseatic attitude is quite striking.

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10 Thomas Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America* (London: J. Johnson, 1794), 3.

11 Rosenbaum and Sherman, *M.M. Warburg and Company,* 17-21.

12 Two of many examples are Copp's Hill cemetery in Boston and Hollywood cemetery in Richmond, Virginia, where Protestants rest in close proximity to Jews, Catholics, and a variety of Masons (and in Boston, a few African-Americans.)

Freemasonry, an English import, entered Germany by way of Hamburg in the early 18th century. Its intellectualism appealed to a large number of prominent "enlightened" men in science, business, and letters, including such weighty names as Goethe, Lessing, Kant, Herder, Fichte, and Klopstock. The subsequent growth of the Illuminati, however, sparked a popular mistrust and then an official persecution of the lodges. The Brothers' commitment to placing their members in positions of power earned them the fear and repression of many German rulers. Bavaria banned the lodges in 1785. The Duke of Württemberg imprisoned Johann Jacob Moser, his country's most outspoken Mason. Other rulers and religious leaders censored the scholarly projects of known Masons, or banished them from their territories. By the end of the century, conservatives generally attributed every societal disruption to a masonic conspiracy.

In 1798-99, conservative passions and paranoias threatened a witch-hunt of Masons in both Germany and New England. The prominent American scholar William Bentley, friend of Jefferson and an open defender of Masons, collaborated with his friend Christopher Daniel Ebeling, the equally prominent Hamburg scholar and Americanist, on a literary counterattack in both countries. Ebeling, city librarian of Hamburg and former head of the Academy of Trade *(Handelsakademie),* wrote frankly of his membership in both the Illuminati and the Masonic Lodge. He pointed out that his friends in both institutions included the city's best-known and most respected men of letters and affairs.[13] American defenders of Freemasonry were just as eloquent and just as prominent in society.

Concurrent with Protestant ethics, both the Hanse and young America were relatively conservative in dress and drink. In neither society did the wealthy indulge in

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[13] Pochmann, *German Culture in America,* 54.

splendors on the scale of French or Italian balls and fêtes.[14] This was particularly true of the New Englanders, and of the equally sober and parsimonious German-Americans in the mid-Atlantic.[15] A German observer in Philadelphia who had also lived in France commented on the rather spartan entertainments to be found even among the wealthiest of merchant society.[16] Thomas Cooper remarked in 1794 that a wealthy European man would actually have trouble spending his money in America, because "there are not such variety of amusements, nor as expensive amusements, nor does an expensive style of living procure so much respect."[17]

Though Bremers cherished their several fine old breweries, coffee was the primary social beverage of the Hamburgers, consumed in numerous coffee-houses where wealthy men read their foreign-language newspapers and discussed politics and business.[18] Although plenty of imported (mostly French) wine passed through the harbors in Bremen and Hamburg, it appears that almost all of it was sold to other regions of Germany. Hamburg especially was a remarkably "dry" city where many teetotalling American puritans would have felt quite comfortable with Caspar Voght's cautionary platitudes about "drunken idleness" and "the miseries of drinking."[19]

In both the Hanse and the American port cities, the merchant elites who dominated public affairs were the *hautes citoyens* in republics which officially disdained nobility. Recent research has shown that in Germany at this time, in areas of great mercantile

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[14] Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen," 27-28 and: Rolf Engelsing, *Bremen, England, und die USA im 19. Jahrhundert* Bundes-Firmenregister (no place or date), 5.

[15] For the origins of this trend during Colonial times, see: Nash, *The Urban Crucible,* 84-85.

[16] Lingelbach, "Saxon-American Relations," 530. ("il n'y a ici ni promenade, ni spectacle, l'on ne peut se voir qu'à table, et ce sont des séances de 4 à 5 heures.")

[17] Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America,* 1794.

[18] Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen," 29.

[19] See: Voght, "A Letter to some friends of the Poor in Great Britain," NYHS.

activity, the nobility was either weak or altogether non-existent. Instead, the "high bourgeoisie" filled the role of "nobility."[20] Hanseatic society was dominated first by merchants — a great many of whom, like Arnold Delius, had studied law as young men — plus a few early industrialists and a few Protestant clergy.[21]

As in America, Hanseatic society was led by businessmen and lawyers who claimed to love and defend democracy and republicanism. In reality, of course, both societies' franchises and electoral systems were carefully restricted to allow only members of the existing elite to ascend to power.[22] The American merchant elite supported the city incorporation movement of the 1780s and 1790s because it helped to place political power more firmly in their own hands. By 1800, Boston was the only major American city *not* incorporated, primarily because its relatively small size and slow growth allowed for the survival of the more democratic "town meetings." The Federalists — particularly Hamilton — openly distrusted "democracy" as one short step from the abyss of mob-rule, and thus sought to narrow the definition of "liberty" in order to preserve the sanity and self-discipline of the republican system. Ironically, German-Americans (many of whom were first- or second-generation transplants from authoritarian states) were in the vanguard of those who resented and rebelled against the exclusive and "monarchist" impulses of the Federalists in the 1790s.[23]

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20 Jefferey Diefendorf, *Businessmen & Politics in the Rhineland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 43. (Rheinisch elites seem to have been more divided along scholarly, juridical/political, and mercantile lines than in the Hanse, where all three blurred together.)

21 Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers,* 10.

22 The structure of the American electoral college, and the fact that only Representatives were to be popularly elected, serve as reminders that early American democracy was every bit as exclusive as the elections to the Senates of the Hanse.

23 For a comprehensive analysis of the role of German-Americans in anti-Federalism, see: Paul Douglas Newman, "The Fries Rebellion of 1799: Pennsylvania Germans, the Federalist Party, and American Political Culture" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Kentucky, 1996): 4-20.

Thus the Hanseatic and American republics were *de jure* republics, but *de facto* oligarchies administered by a jurisprudent merchant "nobility." While working-class Germans (and many Americans) were initially enthusiastic and supportive of the democratic ideals of the French Revolution, the wealthy bourgeois leaders of the Hanse (and the Federalists in America) were immediately skeptical. Revolution, after all, is usually bad for business.[24]

American democracy, even in its earliest and most restrictive forms, did not exhibit the kind of class-structures that characterized the Hanse. There were no places in the US Senate reserved for "Notables," who could only be elected by a certain class of people, determined by ownership of significant amounts of property. Nonetheless, it is clear that both societies had constructed republics in which the money-making and money-managing elites controlled virtually all policy initiatives, unless their hands were forced by the occasional popular rebellion.

However tentative and qualified their commitments to democracy, both societies were nonetheless wholly devoted to capitalism.[25] A mid-18th-century German visitor to Hamburg commented that:

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[24] Walther Vogel has written: "The men at the highest ranks of the small Hanseatic republics were far too sober politicians to allow themselves to become carried away [by]... careless writings." See: Walther Vogel, "Die Hansestädte und die Kontinentalsperre." (Blatt IX, 1913). In: the *Pfingstblätter des Hansischen Geschichtsvereins,* an annual published in Leipzig by the Verlag von Duncker & Humbolt.

[25] Commerce, of course, is not the same thing as "capitalism," although these merchants frequently embraced the emergent ideas of capitalism because they reinforced and gave rational sanction to a mercantile lifestyle.

> The importance of business in Hamburg and the variety of things connected with it are so great that one could profitably spend an entire year here and learn something new each day. There are few European seaports which Hamburg's ships do not enter, and there is no seafaring people in this part of the world which does not traffic with Hamburg. Its superb location has made the city the emporium of all Germany.... The Elbe and the canals...are almost blanketed over with ships. The assembly on the Stock Exchange is one of the largest [in Europe] and the place teems with negotiants. In a word, one finds here a perpetual motion of all nations and peoples caught up in the business of money-making.[26]

A similar scene awaited visitors to the major American seaports. Congressman Samuel Mitchell noted that his New York constituents were "bred to commerce. They are devoted to navigation; barter and sale are their delight. The spirit of business warms them."[27] America may have been broadly rural and agrarian, but a sizable proportion of Americans were either capitalists or capitalists in the making. The period 1790-1820 witnessed an explosion in the size of the merchant class, the development of the first factories, and a change from household economies to inter-regional and international markets spreading from the rapidly growing urban centers. The development of North America after the Revolution involved the growth of both a market economy *and* a market society. By 1820, the United States — particularly the coastal regions — had a distinctively bourgeois culture.[28]

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[26] Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers,* 3.

[27] Steven Watts, *The Republic Reborn: War and the Making of Liberal America, 1790-1820* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 69. ("In other words, the development of America after the Revolution involved the consolidation of a market economy *and* a market society.... By 1820 a distinctly bourgeois culture had crystallized in the young republic.")

[28] Ibid., 9.

As in the Hanse, the American port cities were centered upon the commercial action at the waterfront. Boston's main trading-place in Faneuil Hall stands only one block downhill from the old State House. In Philadelphia the merchants and their ships plied their trade three blocks east of the building that housed the Continental Congress. Similarly, prior to the construction of the modern industrial-age dockyard downstream, Bremen's *Rathskeller,* centrally located on the little island of the Altstadt, was no more than four blocks in any direction from the merchant ships at anchor in the Weser. These cities were admittedly small; at roughly 40,000 inhabitants each, Philadelphia and Bremen were "medium-sized" ports for the era, Hamburg and New York were larger, Boston and Lübeck smaller.[29] But in every sense, these were societies where business and politics — capitalism and republicanism — were inextricably bound together.

"Two Souls at the Same Time"

Several late-Enlightenment exponents of republicanism such as Thomas Paine and Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès predicted a liberation of creative business impulses if the bourgeoisie were allowed the dominant say in national affairs.[30] In the Hanseatic cities and in young America, we find not only a belief that republicanism brings out the best in capitalism, but also the obverse: the belief that the egalitarian impulses of republicanism

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29 In 1790, Philadelphia was the dominant American city, in population, wealth, and political prestige. By 1810, New York had grown to nearly 100,000 inhabitants, almost double the population of Philadelphia in the same year, and triple that of Baltimore and Boston. Its commerce and political clout had grown accordingly. (See census data, reprinted in Adam Seybert, *Statistical Annals* (Philadelphia: 1818), 47.)

30 The Abbé Sieyès, in *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat?* went so far to suggest that a government based on the propertied and producing classes was the only way for a nation to save its "soul."

were indeed a *function* of capitalism, a demonstration of business at its best. The greatest virtue of capitalism, according to an anonymous author of a 1790 editorial in Hamburg's *Kaufmännisch-politische Zeitung,* was that more people have more opportunities and basic civil rights than had ever been possible under an aristocracy.[31] The editor of the popular journal *Hamburg und Altona* concurred in 1802, writing that, as a result of Hamburg's special societal arrangements, not the least of which was commitment to free trade, "We have no nobility, no patricians, no slaves, indeed not once even subjects. All real Hamburgers know and have only a single rank, the rank of citizen."[32] These claims were exaggerated, of course, but it is nonetheless striking to observe that the leadership of the Hanse reassured themselves of the superiority of their form of government with the same kinds of democratic mythos employed in the United States.

The wealthy merchant was expected to be philanthropic and liberal, although privately: in spheres outside his work. "Humanity and liberal, enlightened spirit follow the true merchant only to the door of his warehouse," wrote Johann Arnold Minder of his colleagues in Hamburg: "Not seldom one can also find those respectable men who possess two souls at the same time: one for the profession and one for society — and in the Hanseatic cities more frequently than in others."[33] Hamburg "employed" *Ehrenämter* — unpaid civil servants inevitably drawn from the rich — who performed much of the city's administrative tasks part-time, for the honor of the title. The inspector of shipping, for instance, might have been a wealthy man serving as a volunteer.[34]

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31 SuUB: Zeitschriften und Journale. (file #516)
32 Quoted in: Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen," 49.
33 Ibid., 29.
34 Ibid., 47-51.

Hanseatic government was heavily paternalistic and familial.[35] The aldermen and government leaders were active in efforts to improve the public welfare, such as the building of poor houses and the dispensing of food and clothing to the destitute. Many of the leading citizens of Hamburg were members of the "Patriotic Society," formed in 1765 by Johann Ulrich Pauli. "Patriotism," in this North German bourgeois sense, was less a political concept than it was a social impulse inspired by the French Enlightenment: a sense of doing good for the community.[36]

Caspar Voght was a leader in the movement among Hamburg's business elites to set up a centralized administration to care for the poor. His arguments were remarkably enlightened for his era, refuting the conventional wisdom that poor morals caused poverty, and that the poor were poor because they lacked the Christian virtues of honesty, sobriety, and diligence. "We generally blame them for it," Voght wrote, "as if these qualities [dishonesty, bad judgment, waste, etc.] were not so very common in the higher classes, and as if corruption did not always spread from the higher to the lower orders."[37] Voght paid for a "Poor Census" in 1788, as well as donating thousands of suits of new clothing to the needy.[38] As in Hamburg, the wealthy merchant families of Bremen funded many philanthropic public works such as parks and gardens, and the scenic, tree-lined canal just beyond *Am Wall,* built in 1787.[39]

The American counterparts of these men were often equally generous with their wealth; Stephen Girard's name still graces the buildings of more than a dozen public

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35 Mary Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers,* calls it a government of "fathers and uncles."
36 Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers,* 5.
37 Voght, "A Letter to some friends of the Poor in Britain," 5. NYHS.
38 Ibid., 38-39.
39 Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen,* Vol. 1, 504.

institutions he founded through charitable donations and endowments. Ultimately Girard willed less than 4% of his net worth to his family. The rest of his massive estate went to charity.[40] The wealthy Boston merchant T.H. Perkins regularly used his masonic connections to raise funds for local charities. Perkins donated his own mansion, and several thousand dollars, to founding an asylum for the blind.[41] Unlike later "liberals" in Britain and elsewhere, these men generally were not *laissez-faire* about the social problems around them.

American society was, and in some respects still is, the ultimate example of social mobility. Robert Oliver, head of a multi-million-dollar Baltimore merchant house, began virtually penniless as a 26-year-old Irish immigrant.[42] Stephen Girard, born "Étienne Girard," arrived in Philadelphia from France as a young sailor. Peter Grotjan, another Philadelphia trade magnate, was the son of a Hamburg bureaucrat. Starting with a small warehouse he inherited from his uncle, he turned 20 on the ship to America, and by 22 had founded his own firm in the New World.[43] Richard Derby was a second-generation American, his middle-class grandfather having brought the family from England at the turn of the century. Millionaires John Jacob Astor and David Parish both came from Germany, although the latter arrived already quite wealthy. Once the Revolution began, many of the states used enticing legislation to encourage a change of citizenship for men such as these. Maryland, for instance, passed a "Naturalization Act" in 1779, encouraging all foreigners to become citizens by giving them two years' exemption from taxation.[44] While Germany

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40 APS: Stephen Girard Papers, microfilm, Reels 262-263.
41 Seaburg and Paterson, *Merchant Prince of Boston,* 378-381.
42 Bruchey, *Robert Oliver,* 52.
43 Peter Grotjan Memoirs (unpublished, no page numbers). PHS.
44 Stuart Weems Bruchey, *Robert Oliver, Merchant of Baltimore, 1783-1819* (Baltimore, MD, 1956), 33.

generally inclined toward the traditional European sense of class and nationality as a fairly iron-cast distinction for an individual or family, the Hanse — particularly Hamburg — demonstrated a social flexibility much more like the New World than the Old. Mary Lindemann has written:

> To a large extent, it would appear that the path taken by Hamburg into the modern world diverged from that followed by the rest of Germany. ...Hamburg was freer, richer, and happier than the other German cities or territories. In the eighteenth century, Hamburg's *Bürger* considered themselves a breed apart. They lived in a city owing no allegiance to a higher authority (except a tenuous one to the Holy Roman Empire). The city ruled itself and, according to one observer, "citizens govern citizens." There was no legally defined patriciate. Hamburg's elite proved quite receptive to newcomers.[45]

We have already encountered families like the Wichelshausens and Kulenkampffs, who ascended to the highest circles of Bremen's society within two or three generations of their arrival in the city. Cases from Hamburg are even more remarkable. Young Caspar Voght, according to family legend, arrived in the city in 1722 with less than three marks in his pockets, and spent a decade as an apprentice at a merchant firm. The firm then sent him to manage its new branch in Lisbon, where his success was such that, upon his return, he married the daughter of his employer and established his own business. In 1765 he was elected to the Senate.[46] Many of Hamburg's Senators in the 18th century had very humble origins; fathers or grandfathers who had arrived as common laborers and sent their sons to law school or apprenticed them in merchant firms.

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[45] Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers,* 9.

[46] SAH: 621-1 Familie Voght. (This story is confirmed by Uhalde and Schramm).

In both societies, mobility worked in both directions. A family or firm might fall even more quickly than it had risen, going from riches to rags in the space of a single failed business transaction or unfavorable court decision. Such was the fate of the unlucky Arnold Delius, who became a pariah in Bremen after his trial. The suicide of David Parish, son of John Parish and manager of the largest portion of the latter's massive Hamburg-based merchant empire, serves as a grim reminder of the lack of a safety net in this early capitalist society. The Parish name was one of the strongest among businessmen in both the New World and the Old; the family was wealthy enough to underwrite a third of the United States' $16 million loan in 1813.[47] With all of his fortune and a large part of his father's, David Parish invested in a new banking house in Vienna in the 1820s. The bank's office was magnificently appointed; home to one of the greatest collections of art in a city known for great collections of art. Parish and his partners had the blessing of Prince Metternich, under whose auspices they underwrote a loan for the Austrian government. Nonetheless, in the financial crisis of 1825, bad debts proved unrecoverable, Metternich withdrew his support, and the firm declared bankruptcy at the end of the year. Parish, rather than facing his father and Hamburg society in the wake of the catastrophe, leapt into the Danube and to his death.[48]

Both the Hanse and the American ports were the urbanized, ocean-going fringes of nations whose interiors were deep, relatively provincial and out-of-the-way, and generally far less interested in commercial activity than their seafaring cousins. Nonetheless, the port cities depended upon the interior country, where most of the buyers of their imports lived.

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[47] The other two investors were Stephen Girard and John Jacob Astor. It is interesting to note that they, and Parish, were all immigrants; none had been born in the New World.

[48] Philip G. Walters and Raymond Walters, Jr., "The American Career of David Parish" *Journal of Economic History* IV (1944): 165.

Relations between the two zones were sometimes fractious, owing to a cultural gulf which caused mistrust and resentment. In 1784, George Washington (who was a coastal planter, and thus not a member of either camp) advised his merchant-legislator colleagues to make attempts to cultivate better relations between the ports and the hinterland. "The western settlers," he said, "stand as it were upon a pivot.... smooth the road, and make easy the way for them, and see what an influx of articles will be poured upon us; how amazingly our exports will be increased by them, and how amply we will be compensated for any trouble and expense we may encounter to effect it."[49] A decade later, an Irish visitor in Baltimore wrote that, "The size of all towns in America... has hitherto been proportionate to their trade, and particularly to that carried on with the back settlements."[50]

Germany's interior differed as profoundly from her ports as did America's. The area surrounding the Hanseatic cities, however — as far south as Kassel — had a number of things in common with the port cities, including an enlarged bourgeoisie much more numerous and developed than in other parts of Germany, even by 1800. This had been the case for over two centuries, almost entirely because of the mercantile economy of the Hanseatic ports, which attracted businessmen from other parts of Germany. Farming existed in the German lowlands around the Hanse, and small industry was present, as in all areas of Germany, but the North was notable for its dominant merchant class and the resulting concentration around the few major seaports. The area was fairly urbanized by contemporary German standards; some 25% of the population lived in towns or cities in

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[49] James Weston Livingood *The Philadelphia-Baltimore Trade Rivalry 1780-1860* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1947), 8.

[50] Isaac Weld, 1797, quoted in: Bruchey, *Robert Oliver,* 30.

1800 — a much higher percentage than in the rest of Germany. Just as in the early United States, the most prominent men of affairs could be found in the port cities.[51]

A list of German merchants published in 1798 attests to the dominance of the Bourgeoisie in what one historian calls the "Greater Hanse" area: "it constitutes, if you will, the Who's Who of the German bourgeoisie."[52] The multi-faceted and multi-national nature of their businesses meant that the merchant firms were linked to virtually all the other bourgeois occupations, if not involved in them in some way directly. Many firms performed all the services of market-scouting, contact, transportation, storage, wholesaling, and retailing. Inevitably for merchants who enjoyed success in one kind of commerce, temptations arose to branch out into new markets and new commodities.[53]

Merchants and a Widening World

Proximity to the sea — the highway of world commerce — created a worldly and cosmopolitan bourgeoisie in the Hanse and the American ports. Incoming ships meant constant contact with other nations and their citizens and wares. Ferdinand Beneke, moving from Bremen to Hamburg in 1796, remarked on the latter's "Venetian splendour," and its massive and chaotic multinational waterfront.[54] John Quincy Adams, who as scion

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51 The first Federal census counted slightly less than ten percent of the American population living in towns or cities.

52 Bödecker, "Marchands et Habitat," 573-575. ("Il dresse une liste précise des grands négociants et manufacturiers pour chaque ville, et constitue, si l'on veut, le Who's Who de la bourgeoisie de l'Allemagne.")

53 John G. Hutchins, *The American Maritime Industries and Public Policy, 1789-1914: An Economic History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), 241.

54 Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen," 22-23.

of a prominent Boston family was certainly no stranger to either wealth or busy harbors, wrote of the impressive size and sophistication of Hamburg when he visited for the first time in 1797. John Parish (the Scottish merchant turned Hamburg entrepreneur turned American consul turned British double-agent) entertained Adams for a week at the luxurious homes and salons of his many business friends from Britain and a half-dozen European countries.[55]

In these salons, which were essentially coffeehouses, Adams would have found other men of his class and educational level from a variety of nations, reading newspapers and magazines from all over Europe. As the 18th century ended, Stephen Daniel Uhalde argues, a new generation of "cultural patricians" was emerging in Hamburg: more worldly, extravagant, educated, and enlightened than their fathers.[56] In clubs like "Harmonie," which by 1800 had over 500 members, these gentlemen drank coffee and tea, played cards, exchanged foreign books and journals, and entertained visiting foreign persons of note like the young John Quincy Adams. The Harmonie soon spread to other German cities, first in the Hanse, then elsewhere.[57] The fictitious Senator Thomas Buddenbrook in Mann's novel was a member of the Lübeck chapter of the Harmonie, which Mann described as "a gentleman's reading club" in which all the prominent merchants gathered to smoke their pipes, exchanging journals, gossip, and *bons mots.* [58]

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55 C.F. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams,* Vol. I, 201. Parish's astonishing career is thoroughly investigated in: Richard Ehrenberg, *Das Haus Parish in Hamburg* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1905.) Parish's secret role as a British agent, however, was not discovered until the 1950s, by cross-indexing references from Karl Sieveking's diary, encoded British consular reports, and mysterious omissions in the British *Bullion Report* of 1810.

56 Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen," 60-64.

57 By the 20th century, most chapters of "Harmonie" in German cities were little more than music-appreciation societies. See: Martin Kirschstein, *Die Harmonie* (Hamburg: Hermann Kampen, 1913.)

58 Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks* Translated by John E. Woods (New York: Vintage, 1994), 312.

America had its share of coffee-houses too, also frequented by the business-political classes. Charles Buck, a transplanted Hamburg merchant who would later serve as Hamburg's consul to the US, remarked happily that Philadelphia's coffee-houses made him feel at home. On a visit to New York, Buck "found the city much engaged in business," but still found the time to make the rounds of the various coffee-houses, stopping in to give his regards to fellow merchants, and to gather useful information or gossip. There were so many Hanseatic merchants in New York by 1800 that Buck found gentlemen's clubs in which English was rarely heard; one tavern frequented by them was called "The City of Hamburg." When Buck returned to Hamburg after years in America, he went straight to a coffee-house to catch up on the news.[59]

Other clubs for gentlemen were dedicated to more scholarly or philosophical interests, and had names like "The Museum Club" or "Ressource." [sic][60] In Bremen, the well-known historian (later Bürgermeister) Dr. Liborius Diderich von Post was a scholar from a mercantile family which had interest and family members in the United States. He was a founding member of a society for the study of new ideas in science and the humanities. He and the other men of this group corresponded frequently with Benjamin Franklin regarding the latter's experiments with electricity and lightning.[61] In the well-read circles of the coffeehouses, people often perused journals like *Bruchstücke von Gedanken und Geschichte,* which for its motto tackled the rather ambitious questions: *"Woher bin ich? Wer bin ich? Warum und wozu bin ich? und wohin soll ich?"* Its enlightened

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59 Charles N. Buck Diary (no page numbers). PHS.

60 An interesting analysis of the social dynamics of these gentlemen's clubs can be found in: Thorsten Maentel, "Zwischen weltbürgerlicher Aufklärung und stadtbürgerlicher Emanzipation," in Dieter Hein and Andreas Schulz, eds., *Bürgerkultur im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1996), 140-154.

61 Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen,* Vol. I, 509.

assault on "old thinking" attempted to offer a perspective, "for every man, for every business, and for the whole world."[62]

As John Quincy Adams discovered, Hamburg was a hub for traveling men of affairs, where nationality was less important than class. Thomas Aston Coffin, an exiled American Tory, arrived there in the summer of 1784, on his way from London to Brunswick. He spoke no German, and had apparently arrived at the height of the business cycle when all the major inns and hotels were full. Coffin proceeded to a gentleman's club, where he met a German merchant who was fluent in English and happy to assist him in finding both lodging for the night and travel arrangements on to Brunswick. The next morning Coffin met a second merchant "who was so kind to take me with him on his journey."[63]

Cosmopolitanism and fascination with foreign ideas — particularly new and controversial ones — were hallmarks of most of America's "founding fathers" and many of their mercantile colleagues. (Consider the way Franklin cultivated scholarly European friends and devoured the latest European scientific journals, or the excitement and care with which Jefferson planned his sight-seeing tour of the Rhineland.)[64] Stephen Girard was fascinated by European systems of education, and collected pamphlets in German and French on the subject.[65] He also prided himself on his expertise in European-styles of horticulture, planting with his own hand several impressive vineyards and orchards, and

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62 SuUB: Zeitschriften und Journale (file #510)

63 Thomas Aston Coffin to Francis Coffin, 7 June, 1784. MAHS: Coffin. Hamburgh, Germany — 6 letters, 1784.

64 For a fascinating perspective on Jefferson as the archetypical American ingenue in Europe, see: George G. Shackleford, *Thomas Jefferson's Travels in Europe, 1784-1789* (Johns Hopkins, 1995.)

65 APS: Stephen Girard papers. Microfilm. Reels 435-436 and 474 contain several of these pamphlets as well as Girard's notes on European education models he was considering for what would become Girard College.

writing articles on tree surgery. He did his best to import European plants and husbandry techniques to the New World; one of his biographers credits Girard with introducing the artichoke to America.[66] Like John Quincy Adams, Girard learned German on a business/pleasure trip. While Adams spent his off-duty time away from Berlin touring Silesia and Saxony, Girard preferred the mercantile aura of Hamburg, where he made several business contacts and collected some German literature. Clearly, this Philadelphia businessman felt quite at home in the largest Hanseatic port. He returned in 1798 and visited his friend Johann Berenberg Gosseler, a sugar merchant.[67]

Divergence: Differences Between the US and the Hanse

Despite the remarkable similarities between the Hanseatic bourgeois elite and their American counterparts, there were important differences between these two societies. First, like most Europeans, the Hanseatic Germans abhorred slavery. Although John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and other prominent Americans north of the Potomac belonged to emancipation societies, Germans frequently felt that the majority of the American leadership tried to finesse the issue of the "peculiar institution."[68] Second, the Hanseatic cities were part of the Holy Roman Empire — such as it was by this point — and were thus beholden

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66 Wildes, *Lonely Midas,* 205.

67 It is unclear to what degree Girard actually had any "friends." He was, according to all witnesses, a profoundly lonely and solitary man, unusual among the members of his class in that he loathed and avoided society. The notes on the trip to see Gosseler, however, indicate that the visit was social as well as professional. APS: Stephen Girard papers. Microfilm. Reel 63. (The ship on which Girard sailed on this trip, the *Sally,* was involved two years later in a legal dispute with a Bremer merchant named Friedrich Delius — older brother of Arnold.)

68 Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen," 109.

to Imperial politics. The Emperor's decision to blockade all French commerce during the wars of the French revolution hurt Bremen a great deal, since the city had maintained a large and profitable wine trade with Brest, Bordeaux, and La Rochelle for hundreds of years.[69] While the American port cities would be similarly constrained by the Embargo Acts, the Hanseatic cities were extremely vulnerable: nestled into a crowded European political map where economic policies could result in the arrival of vengeful armies within a matter of weeks. This was indeed to be the fate of the Hanse in the twenty years following the onset of the French Revolution, a fate which most of America's ports were spared (although Baltimore came perilously close in 1814).

Although we have noted the intellectual interests and activities of the merchant elites, it is significant that none of the Hanseatic cities were ever great "university towns." German universities tended to emerge in the court-cities, often under the patronage of the nobility, and not usually in the mercantile centers. Hamburg, despite its generous library and thriving publishing houses, had no university for most of the 19th century. Bremen, in fact, had none until late in the 20th century. The Hanseatic bourgeoisie who did matriculate (often with the *Doktorat* in law), did so out-of-town, frequently at Göttingen. The situation was not as clear-cut with regard to the American port cities. Harvard was an afternoon's walk from Boston harbor. William and Mary was a day's ride from either Richmond or Norfolk. New York and Philadelphia would ultimately sprout several colleges and universities, although New Orleans, Charleston, and Baltimore were generally not considered "college towns."

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[69] Hans Wiedeman, *Die Aussenpolitik Bremens im Zeitalter der Französichen Revolution 1794-1803* (Bremen: C. Schünemann, 1960), 24.

Finally, a profound difference existed between the economies of the Hanse and those of cities like Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, with regard to manufacturing. From the outset, the American harbors were industrial as well as commercial centers. American manufacturing was modest, by any measure, in its first half-century, primarily because of the difficulty of competing against British manufactures. Thomas Cooper, visiting from England in the 1790s, predicted that, "While America and England are at peace, there will be little or no temptation to set up manufactures in the former country. The prices of labour are too high; the master has not the same kind of command over his men...."[70]

Nonetheless, America's harbors were workplaces for more than just commercial activities. Baltimore's largest workshops and first factories were all clustered near the waterfront, as were Boston's. Richmond's port on the James River was only four blocks downstream from her tobacco-rolling plants; equidistant from the state capital Jefferson had designed on the hill which overlooked both. Shipbuilding was still a major industry in all the American ports, particularly so in the North, because American timber was still plentiful, unlike the heavily deforested regions around Bremen and Hamburg.[71] Only in New York did the commercial significantly outweigh the industrial, but there again they were present in close proximity.

The Hanse, by contrast, were devoted overwhelmingly to commerce by the late 18th century. Hamburg's economy was not self-sustaining, and its growth was totally dependent upon the frequently capricious winds of commerce. The Hanse were trading societies with very little domestic production, and thus dependent on other lands for

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70 Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America,* 1.

71 Hutchins, *The American Maritime Industries and Public Policy,* 74.

resources, markets, and thus, prosperity.[72] Calico printing and sugar refining had been the major industries in Hamburg since the early 1600s, but the former had declined as the city's economy became almost wholly based upon trade and its various support services. Sugar refining remained Hamburg's only real domestic industry, since even shipbuilding was no longer done in the city, which had been completely deforested since the 17th century.[73] In the mid-to-late 18th century, Hamburg somewhat belatedly entered the tobacco importing business with great enthusiasm, although it would never catch up to Bremen in that field. In both cities, however, the majority of cigarette-rolling and cigar-making shops were located in the surrounding countryside, rather than in the city proper. In the case of Hamburg, this usually meant Danish territory, so Hamburg's citizens bought their smokes only after the tobacco had traveled from America to Hamburg, to a Danish town, and back again to Hamburg as a finished product.[74]

By the time of the American Revolution, the economies of Bremen and especially Hamburg were only slightly involved in manufacturing, and had become almost entirely dependent upon trade. An increasing number of men (and, apparently, a substantial number of working women) were drawn to the cities to perform day-work for the bourgeoisie as domestic servants, porters, etc. Caspar Voght estimated in 1788 that there were about 15,000 "female servants" working in Hamburg, almost entirely in the homes and businesses of the wealthy.[75] The economy and livelihood of the Hanse — from top to bottom — were thus entirely balanced upon the continued success of trade. The Hanse were profoundly vulnerable to the whims of powerful neighboring states, who could with

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72 Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen," 5.
73 Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers,* 44.
74 Ibid., 39-40.
75 Voght, "A Letter to some friends of the Poor in Great Britain," 11. NYHS.

little effort or inconvenience upset this carefully-balanced prosperity. Small wonder that the merchants of Bremen and Hamburg reacted with glee at the prospect of an independent America. For once, they could establish a commercial relationship with a people who had absolutely no territorial ambitions in Europe.

Convergence: The Juncture of Two Societies

Although most of the early American politicians could be counted upon to wax poetic on ideological points (and some, like Patrick Henry and Thomas Paine, could approach hysteria), America's merchants had supported the Revolution largely for more fundamental and practical reasons of economics. The Salem shipping magnate Richard Derby provides a typical example. Frustrated at his inability to expand his rum and molasses exports, feeling cheated by uscrupulous British agents in the Bahamas and the West Indies, Derby was by 1776 an open supporter of rebellion. He turned his fortune to the aid of the revolutionary cause, smuggling guns, powder, and other supplies for the rebels, and hoarding them in his warehouses. Derby was a "patriot" because the British restricted his business ambitions.[76]

Had ideology been the foremost concern of the American merchants, more of them would probably have heeded the urgings of Jefferson and Madison to abandon their dealings with Britain and to shift American commerce in the direction of France, Holland, Spain, and other "friends" in Europe. That no such shift occurred after 1783 indicates the

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[76] Phillips, "The Life and Times of Richard Derby," 280-289.

relative lack of enthusiasm among American businessmen for any kind of ideology that would impinge upon their pocketbooks.[77] The American bourgeoisie was above all *practical.*

The primacy of profit was the hallmark of the merchant culture which the Americans shared with their counterparts in the Hanse. Some historians have made a case for the Hanseatic cities being culturally and ideologically detached from the rest of Germany, which varied wildly from ultra-conservative feudalism to woolly-headed philosophical flights of fancy. The Hanse were focused entirely upon the "ideology" of money-making. Once French society began to disintegrate into chaos in the 1790s, the perceived dangers of ideological loyalties became even more pronounced, and the Hanse clung more staunchly than ever to the sensible capitalist examples of Britain and the United States. The Hanse, Rolf Engelsing writes, "are not idealists, but rather materialists. They are realistic and industrious... none of these German dreamers."[78]

Bremen was somewhat less attached to the Anglo-American model than was Hamburg, where more than one pamphleteer had described the city as merely "one of the suburbs [*Vorstädte*] of London."[79] Napoleon would later weigh in with his own damning agreement on the matter: *"Hambourg? Ne me parlez pas de cette ville anglaise!"* [80] Nonetheless, the Bremer merchants shared with their American counterparts a general

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77 Abundant statistics are available which chart the almost unbroken dominance of British commerce in the United States after 1783. John H. Frederick's *The Development of American Commerce* remains useful, as is the statistical information to be found in Robert G. Albion's *The Rise of New York Port* (New York: Scribner, 1939.)

78 ("Sie sind keine Idealisten, sondern Materialisten. Sie sind realistisch und tatkräftig... keine deutsche Phantasten.") Rolf Engelsing, *Bremen, England, und die USA im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bundes-Firmenregister: no place or date), 5.

79 Ibid., 6.

80 Cited in Clapp, *The Port of Hamburg,* 20.

skepticism for any ideology that had no practical economic applications. One German historian concluded:

> Herein lies the key to Bremen's politics. Only within the context of trade can one understand it. The striving for neutrality, the search for backing from the great powers which was to have guaranteed its position... shows Bremen's guiding principle. Neither nationalism, nor cosmopolitanism, nor even religion, but rather a purely practical point of view motivated the thinking of Bremen's civic leaders.[81]

In his last years, the eloquent and prolific Adam Duckwitz, one of Bremen's most famous statesmen and a vehement defender of free trade, looked back at his sprawling business and political career all over Germany and Europe, and concluded that while he had lived among Americans and Englishmen, "I was in my own element."[82]

Thus we find that, by time of American independence, the Hanseatic merchant families were ideally poised to serve as the intermediaries between the German and American people and economies. They shared a host of social, political, and cultural traits, and above all a mutual thirst for free trade. Via their common merchant culture, German and American businessmen began to establish the first ties between their nations. They were often well aware of this cultural heritage that gave them a commercial *lingua franca.* A 1783 letter from a group of Hamburg Senators to Benjamin Franklin emphasizes the many things which Hanseatic and American society have in common, concluding with a "hope and wish that a solid foundation can be laid for the strong basis of friendship and community between the citizens of our republics."[83]

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81 Hans Wiedemann, *Die Aussenpolitik Bremens im Zeitalter der Französichen Revolution 1794-1803* (Bremen: C. Schünemann, 1960), 27-28.

82 Engelsing, *Bremen, England, und die USA im 19. Jahrhundert,* 8.

83 Baasch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Handelsbeziehungen zwischen Hamburg und Amerika,* 56-57. *("Mit tiefgefühlter Freude mache ich diese Mittheilung und hoffe und wünsche, dass ein solider Grund möge gelegt werden für die feste Gründung der Freundschaft und Gemeinschaft zwischen den Bürgern unserer Republiken.")*

To this day, remnants of the mercantile heritage linger on both sides of the Atlantic. We find it in the statue of Sam Adams gesturing out over the entranceway to the preserved 18th-century Quincy Market in Boston. It is inescapable in the upper-middle class suburbs of northern Bremen, where virtually every major street carries the name of an 18th-19th century merchant firm: Kulenkampffallee, H.H. Meier Allee, Crüsemannallee, Gröningstraße.[84] In a dozen other places in America and the Hanse, the old merchant culture remains at the intersection of the very different roads on which German and American history has traveled.

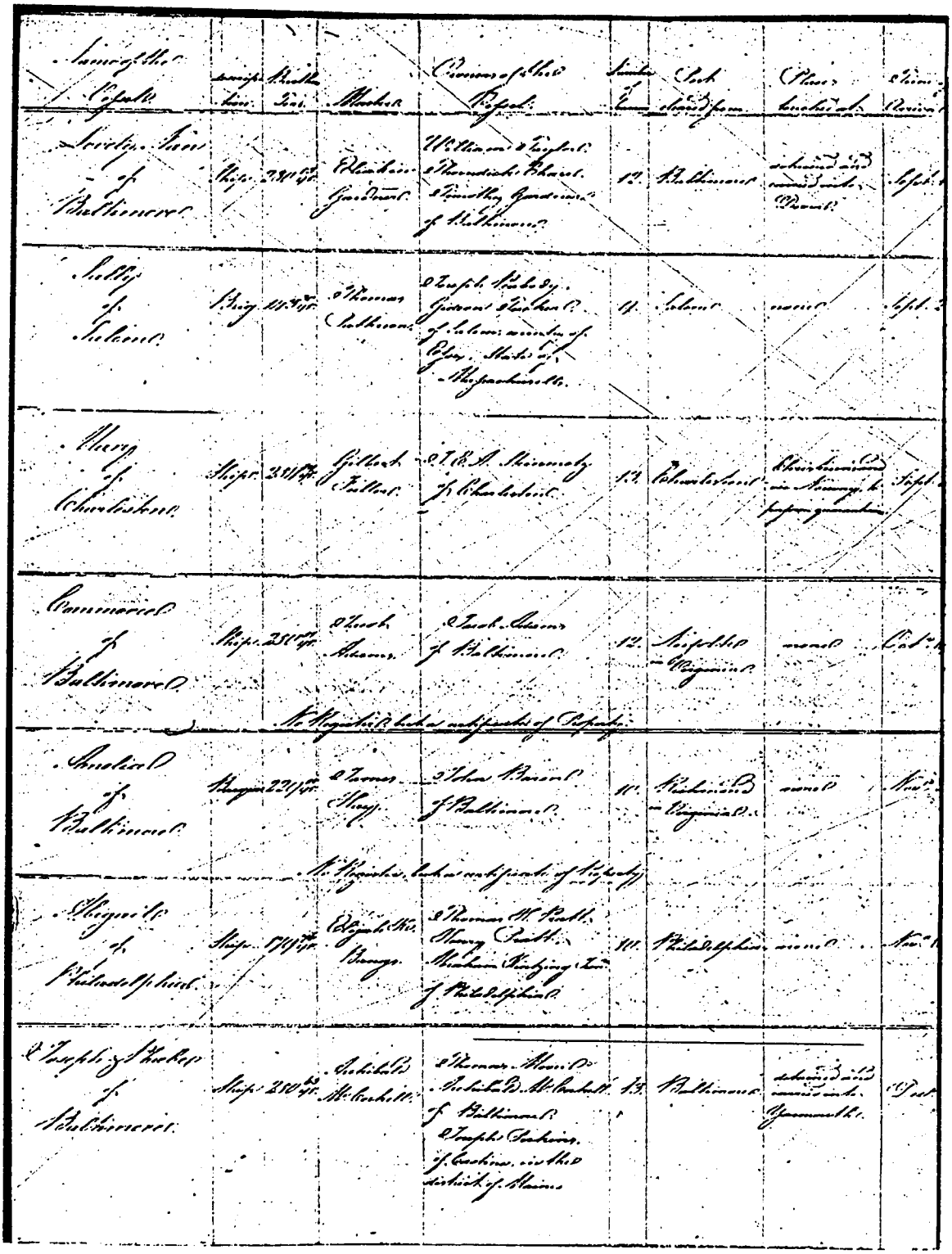
[84] Most of these are in quite affluent areas. For example, Kulenkampffallee (named for the most prominent tobacco-importers of the 19th century) and Crüsemannallee (named for the first director of the Lloyd) are spacious tree-lined boulevards in Bremen's upper-class neighborhood of Neu Schwachausen.

Chapter Four

Consuls, Trade, and the Emergence of Modern Diplomacy

A diplomat is an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country.

Attributed to Sir Henry Wotton, James I's emissary to Venice.



A portion of Friedrich Jacob Wichelshausen's Semi-Annual Report (Second half of 1805) from the American Consulate in Bremen.
Source: National Archives, Washington, DC. Used with permission.

The Awkward Childhood of Modern Diplomacy

When it occurred to him that the American Minister Resident in Spain had been silent for some time, President Thomas Jefferson wrote a note to his friend and Secretary of State James Madison: "We have heard nothing from our ambassador in Spain for two years. If we do not hear from him this year, let us write him a letter."[1] One cannot help but smile, in an age of overnight shuttle diplomacy, at the thought that international relations could ever have moved at so leisurely a pace. Even for its practitioners at the time, 18th-century diplomacy could proceed with maddening languor. "I suffer from ennui," the young John Quincy Adams, on his first diplomatic assignment in England, complained to his brother Thomas. In the time wasted on all the parties he was expected to attend, Adams claimed, he could have translated dozens of books; he had already used the long stretches of inactivity since his arrival in Europe to teach himself "respectable French."[2]

Diplomacy was gradually evolving in the late 18th century, becoming more professional and predictable, more dependent upon bureaucrats and ministries and less answerable to the whims and intrigues of a few powerful individuals. Before the Napoleonic period brought increasing standardization of ministerial postings, fixed portfolios, and a clarification of diplomatic duties and ranks, European diplomacy was carried out by men given special or limited assignments, bearing temporary titles which often did little to explain their missions. Certainly there was no agreement on terminology or rank among countries, but even within a single nation, there was often no formal distinction between an "Envoy," a

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1 Quoted in: Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time* Vol. 4, *Jefferson the President* (Boston: Scribner, 1972), 43.

2 John Quincy Adams to Thomas Adams, 26 April, 1795. APS: Sol Feinstone Collection.

"Diplomat," and a "Diplomatic Representative," or a "Consul" and a "Consular Agent."[3] The word "ambassador" was used loosely, and could mean virtually any representative sent abroad. It was not yet a formal, standardized designation, and did not carry the modern meaning of a full-time appointee of a government, filling an extant post in a foreign capital.[4] Rather, nations sent a "Minister Plenipotentiary" as their highest-ranking representative to treat in foreign courts, and such a man's powers were temporary, often limited to the particular diplomatic task at hand. A "Minister Resident" was a similar posting, although intended for a longer period of time, perhaps the closest 18th century equivalent to a full-time ambassador. Major powers with long-standing relations did maintain officials in each other's capitals (although these men were frequently without portfolio.) But a new nation like the United States, or small polities like most of the German states, usually could not afford such full-time representation.

The lines were extremely vague between officially-sanctioned diplomatic initiatives and the incidental diplomacy of well-connected others.[5] The Hamburg Senate sent Johann Abraham de Boor to Philadelphia in 1783 with a message to the American Congress; an attempt to encourage trade and to cement further diplomatic connections. Before De Boor and his message arrived in America, however, wealthy businessmen like David Parish were using their mercantile connections to open their own private "diplomacy" for trade. Simultaneously, a few Hamburg Senators (one of whom was de Boor's employer, the enterprising Caspar

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3 For a thorough explanation of how the early US applied these terms, see Chester L. Jones' *The Consular Service of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1906.)

4 The evolution of the term is interesting. By the time Madison is writing *Federalist* #42, it is still necessary to define what an "ambassador" is, but his definition makes it clear that such a man would be the highest-ranking representative of his country abroad.

5 The United States clarified this situation with the passage of the Logan Act in 1798, although the Hanse made no such reforms. One could argue, however, that this dilemma still exists. Armand Hammer's private philanthropy and talks with Soviet leaders, Jesse Jackson's personal trip to release an American hostage in Syria, and of course Oliver North's secret arrangements between Israelis and Nicaraguan rebels all indicate that "private diplomacy" was still alive and well at the end of the 20th century.

Voght) wrote to Benjamin Franklin in Paris, listing reasons why the Hamburgers wanted a trade agreement with the US: "a free, unrestricted trade between free states."[6] Meanwhile, yet another private person had approached the highest-ranking American VIP he could find in Europe. Unknown to De Boor, the Hamburg lawyer Johann Ulrich Pauli had been in contact with John Adams in Amsterdam since 1782, completely on his own initiative, inviting Adams to come to Hamburg to work out the details of a trade agreement.[7] Adams deftly replied that he would prefer governments to treat with Congress, but failing that, he would be willing to act as the conduit of Hamburg-Philadelphia negotiations:

> In answer to your inquiries, sir, I have only to say, that at present, I have no powers from the United States of America to treat with the Hanseatic cities; but their situation is such, that there will be infallibly a considerable trade between them and America; and therefore I know of no objection against the congress entering into negotiations with them.
>
> If any gentleman authorized by them should have any proposals to make, I will transmit them with pleasure to congress for their consideration, only desiring that they may be either in the English or French languages, as the German is unknown to me and to most of the members of congress.[8]

The American channels of communication with Prussia were more redundant and convoluted still than those with Hamburg. At various points during the 1770s and 1780s, a number of prominent Americans were negotiating with Prussian officials simultaneously, generally with insignificant results. From the onset of the Revolution, William Carmichael, Silas Deane, Arthur and William Lee, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin

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6 Baasch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Handelsbeziehungen zwischen Hamburg und Amerika,* 56-57.

7 Ibid., 54.

8 Hamburgische Landesbank, Girozentrale, *The First Exchange of Diplomatic Notes between the Congress of the United States of America and the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg in 1783* (Hamburg: 1976), 3.

met with Prussian officials in Berlin, Paris, Amsterdam, and London. Seven years of initiatives, meetings, and correspondence finally resulted in a very modest treaty of Amity and Commerce in 1785, which both sides promptly ignored.[9]

Both the Americans and the Prussians were to blame for the redundancy of effort and the irrelevance of the final outcome. Although it sent various and unsuccessful "missions" to Berlin, the United States had no Minister Resident there until the late 1790s, yet was generally overrepresented in Paris, where all the above-mentioned people lived and worked at one time or another. American diplomats in the French capital had conflicting portfolios and frequently no chain of command or clear-cut boundaries of authority.[10] Even later, when John Quincy Adams was en route to Berlin as Minister Plenipotentiary, Gouverneur Morris was simultaneously visiting on his own account, meeting with Count Haugwitz and proposing an alliance — far beyond the scope of the official American posture toward Prussia.[11]

For their part, the Prussians maintained three ministries with overlapping diplomatic powers, the intricacies of which baffled John Quincy Adams, even after he had met and spoken in some detail with most of the highest-ranking men in the Prussian government.[12] Simultaneously, Prussian representatives at different levels in London and Paris frequently opened communications with Americans, then presented Frederick the Great with proposals for diplomatic actions which he ignored, refused, modified, or delayed. Baron von Goerne, for

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9 The negotiations, the treaty, and the subsequent behavior of the two states will be examined in detail in Chapter Six.

10 Johnson, *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States,* Vol 2., 267.

11 Henry M. Adams, *Prussian-American Relations, 1775-1871* (Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1960), 26.

12 With a dying king and three overlapping ministries, Prussian foreign policy was a mess. Adams kept a rotating series of meetings with Count Finckenstein, Count Haugwitz, and Baron (later Count) Alvensleben. (C.F. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams,* Vol. 1, 205-210. See also: Henry M. Adams, *Prussian-American Relations, 1775-1871*, 26-27.)

instance, the Prussian Minister of Finance, dining in 1779 with the American writer and businessman Peter Hasenclever, spoke enthusiastically of proposals for trade agreements with the United States. Hasenclever was skeptical, noting in a letter to Benjamin Franklin that the Prussian king would probably not support the project, or that it would simply be another good idea lost in the bureaucracy in Berlin.[13] There was a significant lack of lateral communication between Prussia's ministers-resident, consuls, and leading statesmen in Berlin, not to mention the King, who often kept his agendas hidden.

A Man on the Scene

In such a confusing atmosphere, it is perhaps not surprising that the most productive diplomatic work was done not by the highest official representatives of states, but by the lowliest. In the absence of clear-cut or useful statecraft between Germans and Americans, diplomatic relations nonetheless developed steadily at the more mundane and practical level of the consuls. In the 18th century, a nation generally assigned "consuls" or their equivalents as the lowest-ranking diplomats to posts in foreign cities where that nation's citizens and merchants were likely to be found. The presence of these representatives signified basic diplomatic linkage between one country and another, if not for purposes of statecraft, then at least for the fundamental communication needed to co-exist and to trade peacefully.

States had varying expectations of their consuls, and consuls had varying interpretations of their duties, but it is clear that at least four tasks were required of most consuls in the 18th century. Most importantly, they were to expedite and encourage trade

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[13] Peter Hasenclever to Benjamin Franklin, 24 April, 1779. APS: Papers of Benjamin Franklin.

between their home nation and the host nation. Second, consuls were expected to collect the customs fees and revenues of their home nation, and to settle accounts between their home nation and the fees and duties of the host nation. Additionally, they were to protect the persons and property of their home nation and its citizens abroad, by intervention in legal proceedings, if necessary. Similarly, consuls were expected to act as intermediaries, settling disputes between fellow citizens abroad and local persons, as well as disputes between their countrymen. An American consul in Hamburg, for example, could be called upon to mediate in a dispute between an American sailor and a ship's master.

An unwritten expectation of many countries (which is now openly regarded as a responsibility of consuls) was that the man assigned as consul to a place would study the locale, its markets, politics and important persons, economic trends, etc., and report on all these things to the Foreign Ministry or Secretary of State of the home nation, thus keeping the government informed of current events in foreign lands. The correspondence of consuls in the 18th and 19th centuries is often full of this kind of low-level spying and reporting.[14] The early United States, which prided itself on creating an "open" government that kept no secrets from its friends or its citizens, demonstrated an amusing hypocrisy in this regard. A consul was openly expected to snoop and spy "in a land in which he is a stranger.... where information may be concealed from him," and to report his findings to his superiors. This was justified because other nations had not yet adopted the policies of the United States, "where nothing is concealed."[15] Thus, a US consul was expected to be a spy for a nation which abhorred secrecy.

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[14] Johnson, *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States,* Vol 2., 266-268.

[15] David Bailie Warden, *On the Origin, Nature, Progress, and Influence of Consular Establishments.* MAHS. (A pamphlet published in 1813, calling for a reform of the US Consular Service.)

In the American consular service, as with other countries, definitions and expectations of the consuls' duties evolved over time. A few generalizations can be made about the late 18th and early 19th centuries, however, with regard to terminology. A "Consular Agent" was a man appointed by a consul to serve in a nearby town within the consul's district, checking on the status of commerce there. An American consul in Trieste, for example, might appoint a Consular Agent in Pola. The agents usually had no official powers of their government (and in the case of the young United States, were frequently not even American nationals), and were often little more than go-betweens and commercial spies. A "Consul General," however, was usually the highest-ranking consul in a specific foreign country, who might be the only officially recognized interlocutor between the two governments, and who might have theoretical authority over several consular districts.[16]

Even within the American consular service, there was not a uniform understanding of the differences between various grades of officials. When John Parish received his commission to serve the United States as Vice-Consul in Hamburg, he initially turned it down because the title struck him as inherently inferior. "It has long been my wish to be named your Consul here," he wrote to Thomas Jefferson, but an American official serving only as a Vice-Consul would be at a disadvantage since the representatives of other states in Hamburg would carry a higher rank. The distinction must have been unclear to Jefferson, because Parish felt it necessary to explain: "The [Hamburg] Senate receives credentials only from Consuls."[17] Parish was a millionaire businessman, well-acquainted with the merchants and consuls of the other nations, and his ego apparently could not withstand a

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[16] Julius I. Puente, *The Foreign Consul* (Chicago: Burdette Smith, 1926), 80-105.
[17] Parish to Jefferson, 21 December, 1790, NAW-H.

title which implied juniority to his colleagues. In Hamburg, he wrote, the Vice-Consuls (if they existed at all) were merely assistants to the consuls and were "considered as subordinate characters and generally young men of no importance."[18] Still, in the tradition of the Hamburg *Ehrenämter,* Parish agreed to do the requisite work *pro bono* while waiting for his promotion: "That the Publick however may not suffer in the intermediate time, I shall take upon myself the functions of the office... I shall consider it an Honour to act in that Capacity without fee or reward."[19]

National governments which are at peace normally grant the privilege of trade to their merchants and to the merchants of other countries, even if these privileges are not codified in specific treaties or observed by consuls. States may engage in commerce without the benefit of treaties, but it is rare to find any substantial trade which does not attract the attention of governments who could benefit by taxing or otherwise regulating it. Commerce touches so many fields that it is seldom left entirely to international courtesy. Patents and copyrights need to be protected, tariffs need to collected, postal conventions need to be observed, and governments generally desire to be able to assure their own merchants and manufacturers that they have provided an atmosphere in which trade will be favorable to them, or at least a fair and level playing field where foreigners will not enjoy undue advantages.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a typical treaty of "amity and commerce," such as the ones signed between the US and Prussia, included a clause providing for *reciprocal freedom of commerce and navigation.* A given treaty usually placed various limitations on this concept, or specified certain circumstances under which it might be

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

modified, but the clause generally granted complete freedom to the merchants of each country to trade with each other as they saw fit. The 1786 American treaty with Prussia provides an example:

> The subjects of his majesty the king of Prussia, may frequent all the coasts and countries of the United States of America, and reside and trade there in all forms of produce, manufactures and merchandise; and shall pay within the said United States no other or greater duties, charges or fees whatsoever than the most favored nations are or shall be obliged to pay; and they shall enjoy all the rights, privileges and exemptions in navigation and commerce, which the most favoured nation does or shall enjoy; submitting themselves, nevertheless to the laws and usages there established, and to which are submitted the citizens of the United States, and the citizens and subjects of the most favored nations.[20]

Many of the trade agreements of this period held a "most favored nation" (MFN) clause, which obliged the signatories to grant each other all benefits they granted to the most favored nations with which they traded. The United States in the late 18th and early 19th centuries showed a remarkable finesse in stretching the terms of this concept to suit various situations. American "cheating" on MFN-status frequently drew complaints from European nations, particularly Britain.[21] The American unreliability on this issue was partly the legacy of a promise Benjamin Franklin had made to Vergennes, the French foreign minister, in 1784, to the effect that the United States would never grant any nation

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[20] From Act II of the treaty. The complete text is available on the Library of Congress website (http://www.loc.gov), as well as in: James B. Scott, *The Treaties of 1785, 1799, and 1828 Between the United States and Prussia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1918).

[21] Johnson, *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States* Vol. 2, 137.

more favorable trading terms than those granted to France. France would remain, Franklin vowed, America's *most* favored nation.[22]

A crucial issue in the commercial negotiations of the late 18th and early 19th century was the issue of *reciprocity:* that ships of nation A entering the harbors of nation B would pay precisely the same port duties for the same cargoes as the ships of nation B pay in their own harbors. Further, the concept of reciprocity — at least as it applied to the US-German trade discussions after the Napoleonic Wars — was often extended to the issue of nationality: i.e., that import or export duties on cargoes would be the same, regardless of the nationality of the vessel carrying that cargo. Supporters of reciprocity who lobbied the US Congress for such treaties (and the representatives of the Hanse and Prussia in Washington after 1815) frequently called this arrangement, "free goods on free ships."

Diplomacy was in transition in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, particularly with regard to its relationship to commerce. Usages and practices were rarely clear-cut. The United States had commercial treaties with states with which it had no consuls or commerce (Prussia), yet consuls and commerce with states with which it had no treaties (the Hanse). Hamburg dispatched an official mission to the US Congress to open trade, then did virtually nothing to encourage that trade. Bremen meanwhile made little or no effort at official overtures, yet developed a thriving commerce with North America in relatively short order. Only after fourteen years of growing commercial connections with the United States did Bremen make a half-hearted and abortive effort to establish a consulate.

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[22] MAHS: Franklin to Vergennes, 3 September, 1784. (In US Dept. of State, Diplomatic Correspondence, 1783-1789.)

Charles Henry Willmanns, a Bremer merchant in Baltimore, obtained the support of a few of Bremen's Senators, and in 1797 attempted to convince the city to fund the first consulate in the United States. Willmanns apparently began referring to himself as Bremen's consul even before hearing back from the Senate on whether or not he could have the job. As early as 1791, he was signing business transactions as "consul." In a legal dispute in which Willmanns was sued for failure to pay a debt to a British merchant, the prosecuting attorney apparently thought that Willmanns represented Bremen.[23] But neither Bremen's nor the US government pursued the consulate position, and the lack of official enthusiasm on both sides convinced Willmanns to give up, even though the tobacco trade from Baltimore to Bremen was very successful and growing rapidly.[24] Prussia, in the same span of time, had signed two commercial treaties with the United States and hosted America's only Minister Plenipotentiary to a German court, yet US-Prussian commerce was virtually non-existant.

Clearly it is difficult to prove any positive relationship between diplomacy and trade in German-American affairs, at least at the official level. It is, however, possible to trace a growing interest in trade between Germans and Americans. Successful diplomacy would ultimately follow in the wake of the commercial relationship, albeit rather slowly. Understanding the effective links between foreign relations and trade requires an understanding of the role of consuls. These were the men who had one foot planted in commerce and the other in diplomacy and official statecraft. Even though German-

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[23] Alexander Hadden to Robert Gilmor, 9 July 1791. MDHS: Vertical File, under "Hadden." (Hadden, a British merchant, asserted that Willmanns owed him £97.)

[24] The correspondence between Willmanns in Baltimore and Senator Oelrichs in Bremen can be found in: SAB, *Hanseatische diplomatische Agenten, Konsuln, usw. bei den Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika und Korrespondenz mit denselben:* 2-B.13.b.2 Baltimore 1797-1868.

American relations would have continued to develop fruitfully via the successful economic and cultural links between the Hanseatic and American merchants, the presence of the consuls ensured that the development would ultimately expand along political and diplomatic lines.

American Consuls and the World

It would have been much easier, the young diplomat thought ruefully, if the government had never switched missions on him at the last minute, and had let him continue on his way to sunny Portugal, where he was to have taken up residence as the American consul. Instead, John Quincy Adams found himself slogging along the sand and mud ruts of northern Germany, trying to make his way to Berlin one "miserable little village" at a time. "We must count upon being two hours to every German mile," he wrote in his diary after one exhausting day on the so-called road between Hamburg and Magdeburg. A day in which he managed to travel eight miles was "rather better" than average: "The whole road seems to be one bank of sand."[25]

This new assignment was an honor for such a youthful and relatively inexperienced diplomat. The younger Adams' career as a consul had been unremarkable. Although George Washington wrote the letter promoting him, it was rumored that Adams' father the President-elect had pulled strings in the Senate to get the funding approved (despite both father's and son's strident protests against appearances of nepotism). The United States had never sent a Minister Plenipotentiary to a German court before. John Quincy Adams,

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[25] C.F. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams,* Vol. 1, 200-203.

his thirtieth birthday barely three months behind him, represented the full authority of the United States government to negotiate a treaty with one of the foremost powers of Europe.

At last he reached the gates of Berlin, where he was confronted by "a dapper lieutenant" who interrogated him with increasing hostility and disbelief. The man was convinced that Adams was lying; he had never heard of any such thing as 'The United States of America,' and was beginning to feel that this annoying visitor should be incarcerated for some kind of as-yet-undetermined subterfuge. One of the soldiers saved the day. Ah yes, he said, he had heard of the United States. It was a new country, wasn't it? It was somewhere overseas?[26]

In the 1780s and 1790s, the United States suffered under two serious diplomatic disadvantages: a general skepticism and lack of recognition from the established powers, and a shortage of qualified diplomats to rectify the situation. People who possessed the experience of dealing with the established courts of Europe were often not American citizens, or were for some other reason considered politically unreliable.[27] American citizens, even if well-educated and politically well-connected, often lacked experience. As early as 1777, Robert Morris wrote to Franklin in Paris, despairing that Americans' lack of language skills rendered them "useless" as foreign envoys.[28] Many people of John Quincy Adams' generation, who would later become accomplished statesmen and representatives

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26 Ibid., and: O'Connell, *Establishment of Diplomatic Relations,* 5.

27 During his long tenure as Jefferson's Secretary of State, James Madison complained regularly of this problem. His correspondence with the President regarding his difficulties in filling posts is well documented in a number of Madison biographies. See Irving Brant's many works, in particular *James Madison, Secretary of State, 1801-1809* (Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1953), 136-151.

28 Robert Morris to Franklin, 25 March, 1777. APS: *Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (V, 122).

of their country, were yet too young.[29] The attempted solution, a subdivision of the State Department into separate professional and non-professional branches, served to complicate matters further.

The early Department of State comprised two "services," with different missions and qualifications for their employees. As the professional branch, members of the Diplomatic Service were to be drawn only from American citizens. Their work was primarily desk-bound in Philadelphia and later, Washington. In the earliest days of the Department of State, this branch rarely mustered more than a half-dozen people, although by the beginning of the 19th century, it had expanded.

The Consular Service, envisioned as the non-professional branch, filled a broader and more vaguely-defined mission. Its members included a substantial number of foreign nationals like John Parish, although American citizens were, theoretically, preferred.[30] These lower-level diplomats were appointed at the whim of the President, and very few structural arrangements existed to regulate their qualifications or activities. The appointments themselves were vague in scope, supposedly "for a single term of unknown duration," although 70 percent of the early appointees served multiple terms, primarily because of the paucity of qualified personnel. It is unclear whether the length of terms differed for appointments in various places (whether a person appointed to Britain, for example, served a "term" different in length from a person appointed to France). Of the

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[29] For commentary on J.Q. Adams and the younger generation of American diplomats, Samuel Bemis' classic biography is still a useful reference: Samuel F. Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Knopf, 1949), 80-88.

[30] Jones, *The Consular Service of the United States,* 10-11.

men who served as US consuls to German cities in the first five decades of US history, no patterns of this nature can be deduced from the length of time they served.[31]

An American diplomatic post in a foreign city usually comprised only two to four people. In addition to the appointed diplomat (a consul or a higher-ranking official), the post generally employed a clerk, at least one Chief of the Mission (basically a groundskeeper), and often a well-to-do young American present at his own expense, acting as an "attaché," or apprentice to the diplomat. When John Parish established the first American consulate in Hamburg in 1793, he appointed only two assistants, one American and one German, both young businessmen.[32] Financial arrangements varied widely from post to post, although during the first fifty years of the United States, it was rare for a US Consul to receive a salary, and then only if he was an American citizen.

With the exception of the well-staffed embassies in London and Paris, early American diplomacy was relatively informal and *ad hoc.* During the period 1790-1830, around ten percent of the people in one branch of the State Department also served in the other at some point in their careers, despite the supposed distinction between qualifications for the services.[33] Furthermore, the words "diplomat" and "diplomatic representative" were used indiscriminately in official language, often making it unclear what level of authority a particular actor might have carried.[34] In the case of American relations with

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31 Ibid., 12 and 22-68. See also: F.J. Wichelshausen to James Madison, 10 May, 1806 NAW-B, where the consul petitions for a second "term."

32 John Parish to [?] (No addressee, but probably Timothy Pickering), 20 July, 1793. NAW-H. The two men were John Gabe and Claus Sonntag.

33 Jones, *The Consular Service of the United States*, 12.

34 For J.Q. Adams on this problem during his own diplomatic career, see: Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy*, 70-88. See also Charles Francis Adams' one-volume synthesis of his father's diaries: *The Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1874.)

Germany, virtually all the diplomatic work was done by consuls or consular agents. With the brief exception of John Quincy Adams, who served as Minister Plenipotentiary to Prussia from 1797 to 1800, the United States sent no high-ranking diplomats or representatives to Germany for half a century.

Misunderstandings occurred which seem unimaginable to people raised on late-20th-century communication technologies. Men in one diplomatic post could be woefully ignorant of the activities or even the identities of their countrymen in nearby posts. In the late 1790s, for example, Rufus King, the American Minister Plenipotentiary in London, carried out a fair amount of correspondence with the man *he* thought was serving as the US consul in Bremen: Friedrich Delius. This was the brother of Arnold Delius, the actual US consul, who was in the midst of his final legal travails with the Bremen Senate. The fact that Friedrich Delius (with no official duties whatsoever) wrote on behalf of the US consulate and never bothered to mention to King that he was simply filling-in for his brother is almost as astonishing as the fact that the highest-ranking US diplomat in America's most important diplomatic posting never knew any better, and never thought to ask.[35]

The replacement of one consul with another commonly caused problems, as letters of appointment tended to reach the appointee long before letters of termination reached the man who was still serving. Sometimes letters simply never arrived, and an American consul was stunned to meet the man sent to replace him. This was the case when William Riggins replaced John Lamson in Trieste in 1802. It was also the case in Hamburg in 1796, when John Parish was angered and hurt to find himself face-to-face with Samuel

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[35] See: Letters from American Consuls... to Rufus King, NYHS.

Williams, his successor. Parish wrote to the State Department and to Rufus King in London, demanding to know the reason his services were no longer required. The State Department wanted an American citizen for the job, although they were loath to put it in so many words. When Parish demanded to know if that was the reason, King dithered: "It is not within my proper department to go into that explanation on this Subject."[36] Several months of chaos and embarrassment ensued, with the wealthy and powerful Parish feeling slighted, and venting his displeasure.

This incident reminds us that in the Hanseatic cities, the location of America's only consulates in Germany, the men who represented the United States frequently were not Americans. There were simply not enough experienced Americans available to staff even the modest number of consulates established by the early US government. The US consular service thus relied on foreigners, particularly in those "second-tier" locations such as Germany. The appointment of a non-citizen to a consular post was generally seen as an inferior arrangement, and over time all the US consulates were filled by Americans.[37] Nonetheless, some (like Wichelshausen in Bremen) served until well into the 19th century.

Although formally established by an act of Congress on 14 April, 1792, the US consular service really began in 1776, when Congress appointed Silas Deane as political and commercial agent for Europe, and Thomas Morris as commercial agent, both to be based in Paris.[38] A decade later, in his report to Congress from the Office for Foreign Affairs on 13 October, 1785, John Jay recommended the establishment of several

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[36] Rufus King to John Parish, 28 December 1796. Rufus King correspondence, NHYS.

[37] Jones, *The Consular Service of the United States*, 12-14. See also: Delius to Pickering, 26 November, 1796, NAW-B. And F.J. Wichelshausen to Robert Smith, February 28, 1811, NAW-B.

[38] Johnson, *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States* Vol. 2, 267.

consulates, but advised against the expense of placing them in areas where commerce was yet untested:

> Whether the present commerce of the United States, with the northern powers, with Germany and the easterly shores, and the islands of the Mediterranean, calls for Consuls immediately; your Secretary cannot determine with certainty, he rather thinks they may at present be dispensed with.[39]

Jay's was not the only voice on the matter, however. A number of Americans, as we have seen, were interested in the possibility of opening a commercial relationship with the German states. As early as 1779, John Adams had written to Jay (who was then President of the Continental Congress), suggesting consulates in the Hanse:

> The rest of Germany, excepting Hamburg and Bremen, have no means of opening a direct commerce with us. With the latter we have no connection at present; in the former all the maritime commerce of lower Germany is transacted. Here we shall soon have occasion to establish an agent or consul.[40]

With the new government in place, the Congress passed an act on 1 July 1790, allocating $40,000 for President Washington to establish a consular service. Jefferson, as Secretary of State, had the greatest say regarding where the United States' first trade representatives would serve, although most of the appointments were foregone conclusions; Britain, France, Spain, the Netherlands — these were the obvious places for representation for the early American republic. Ultimately, Washington appointed fifteen

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[39] Congressional Papers, Library of Congress website (http://www.loc.gov): Office for Foreign Affairs, 13 October, 1785.

[40] Hamburgische Landesbank, *The First Exchange of Diplomatic Notes,* 3.

consuls and six vice-consuls, almost all in his second term.[41] Arnold Delius in Bremen and John Parish in Hamburg were part of this initial establishment.

In 1792, Congress decided that American consuls would not receive a salary, but would be compensated from the fees which they collected, as well as from the profits of their own businesses, which they were allowed to maintain on the side. (The exceptions were those unfortunates who were sent to the Barbary States; they received $3000, "as no one," Jefferson conceded, "would accept the position otherwise.")[42] The intention of the 1792 decision was to save money, to avoid situations where men competed for the jobs purely for the pay, and to avoid corruption. It is unclear how thoroughly the practice was enforced, particularly in the early years of the consular service. A letter from Joseph Pitcairn, appointed the US consul in Hamburg in 1798, indicates that Pitcairn expected "the standard compensation" of $2500 upon receiving his credentials from the US government.[43]

The result of the policy, of course, was virtually the opposite of the intent. Corruption was a constant problem in the consular service, as men were far from the eyes of their superiors, and granted powers to collect fees on behalf of their governments, while simultaneously competing in business with the men whose affairs they administered. Any act authorized under the seal of the consulate, for instance, cost two dollars. The paperwork verifying delivery of a cargo in a port cost another dollar, plus twenty-five cents if the consul was required to give a written oath on the matter. There were many other fees

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41 Johnson, *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States* Vol. 2, 271.

42 Ibid., 272.

43 Pitcairn to Pickering, 7 February, 1798. NAW-H. (It is unclear, also, whether Pitcairn received this money, and if so, whether it was an annual salary, or a one-time commission.)

and charges, all to be paid to the US Treasury, but frequently altered, with a portion going directly into the consul's pockets.[44]

By the time of the Napoleonic Wars, calls for a reform of the US Consular Service were appearing in print. The most contentious issue was the dual role of consuls as officers of the country and as businessmen for themselves. "To be useful to his country," David Bailie Warden wrote in 1813, "a consul must have no commercial entanglements."[45] Nonetheless, as late as 1824, the American government was clinging to the illusion that the system worked as planned. John Quincy Adams conceded that some American consuls had acquired a reputation for duplicity, but insisted that regular salaries were not the answer.[46] Rumors of malfeasance abounded, but the US government didn't establish an investigatory commission until 1830. It concluded that the lack of regular income had turned American consuls into fraudulent book-cookers and extortionists.[47]

Other problems arose from the confusing division of American foreign policy into Diplomatic and Consular services. Consuls were, in effect, low-level diplomats and representatives of their countries, yet David Bailie Warden observed in 1813 that "the consular service is rarely linked directly to the diplomatic, so that consuls and diplomats remain largely ignorant of each others' efforts."[48] Worse, consuls had no way to ascend through the diplomatic ranks, meaning that their only avenue of success lay in their private

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44 David Bailie Warden, *On the Origin, Nature, Progress, and Influence of Consular Establishments.* MAHS.

45 Ibid.

46 John Quincy Adams to James Monroe, 12 July 1816. In: Ford, ed., *Writings of John Quincy Adams* Vol. 6.

47 Johnson, *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States* Vol. 2, 274.

48 David Bailie Warden, *On the Origin, Nature, Progress, and Influence of Consular Establishments.* MAHS.

business transactions. They were thus more beholden to their own businesses than to their country, which didn't reward or protect them very much, if at all.

The practice of most nations was to offer a small stipend to a foreign consul, in addition to various perks of office, such as a free residence. Again, frugality and idealism resulted in a different system in the young United States. The US, which didn't officially pay its own consuls, saw no reason to pay anyone else's. The people sent to the United States were aware that they had to have a supplementary income. This only reinforced the tendency of already wealthy merchants (who didn't need an additional salary) to seek out positions for their own personal gain. The cronyism and nepotism which characterized the family politics of the Hanseatic cities were imported into America by the German *Kaufmänner* who would become the Hanseatic consuls to the United States. In general, the early Hanseatic consulates in America were as corrupt as their American counterparts, and rife with favoritism. Virtually every Hanseatic consul in the US was the son of an important merchant in Bremen or Hamburg.[49]

Unlike those of other countries, American consuls did *not* enjoy the right of extraterritoriality; they were subject to the laws of the land in which the consulate was located. The Hamburg Senate, in the same letter in which it recognized John Parish as Consul, warned that, "the notwithstanding aforesaid quality, he will continue [to be a] citizen of our city, pay all lawful duties and taxes, and not occasion any grievances."[50] In Germany, following the example of England, local officials generally refused to recognize the authority of US consuls, even as notary publics, seeing them "to be simple commercial

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[49] Pitsch, *Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen,* 81.

[50] The Senate of Hamburg to John Parish, exact date unknown, NAW-H, reel 1.

agents with no representative character whatsoever."[51] In essence, an American vessel entered a German harbor at its own risk: if the local authorities decided to impound it or seize its cargo, the consul was not empowered to protect it. (By the time of the Napoleonic Wars, this was the fate of an ever-increasing number of American vessels.) Only in France and Russia, and later in Portugal, were American consuls recognized as fully-authorized agents of the US government.[52] Obviously, American consuls could still make efforts on behalf of their countrymen abroad, but they spoke largely as private individuals, not as the transplanted "voice" of a nation.

Interestingly, although US consuls did not have the right of extraterritoriality abroad, they were apparently no more vulnerable than foreign consuls in the United States, where legal protections were also thin. This was exemplified by a notorious case in 1815, when the Russian consul in Philadelphia was accused of raping a 12-year-old girl. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced in the United States, and lost on appeal to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. The Russian government, in contact with Secretary of State Monroe, made no attempt to use any form of diplomatic privilege to extricate the consul prior to his sentencing.[53]

By 1800, the United States had six standing foreign legations (early embassies, staffed with multiple diplomats), seventy consuls and commercial agents abroad, and ten consular agencies (Vice-Consuls or some other consular representative not given the title "Consul" or "Commercial Agent.") By 1810 this had grown to six, eighty-eight, and fifteen, respectively. Additionally, the US maintained "Special Diplomatic Agents," who

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51 Jones, *The Consular Service of the United States*, 87-88.
52 Ibid.
53 Puente, *The Foreign Consul,* 125.

never filled a specific post, and who — like consuls — were appointed without the approval of the Senate. This last category comprised about 20% of US diplomats at this time. Of this growing number, the men dispatched to the German states comprise only a very small portion.[54] Aside from those in Bremen and Hamburg, Frederick William Lutze served in Stettin (at that time, a Swedish harbor) from 1798-1816, William Riggin served in Trieste from 1802-1815, William Clarke served briefly in Emden from 1803-06, and John Quincy Adams served as Minister Plenipotentiary in Berlin from 1797-1801.[55] Until the 1840s, when the United States began to negotiate treaties with the majority of the German states, the consulates in the two largest Hanseatic cities served as the only full-time link between diplomacy and trade for the two peoples.

The New Arrivals: Legitimacy and the U.S. Consuls

The United States, as something of an upstart in a world dominated by Europe, had great difficulty for many years getting its diplomats taken seriously. This continuously grieved John Adams, who admitted that the Americans were unable to afford the proper wardrobes to make a good impression in most courts, and were unversed in the proper etiquette in any event. Americans, he said, looked like simple country folk, which was tolerable (indeed, even novel) when one possessed the wit and sagacity of a Benjamin Franklin, but was otherwise a handicap. "There is a certain appearance in proportion to rank," Adams wrote to John Jay, "which the Courts of Europe make a serious point of

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[54] Jones, *The Consular Service of the United States*, 8-28.

[55] The first US consul in Trieste was John Lamson of Charleston, appointed in 1800. He was ill for a long time, and apparently did little work before he was replaced by Riggin in 1802. See: Pickering to Lamson, 21 January 1800, NAW-T.

exacting from every body who is presented to them. I need not say to you, Sir, because you know it perfectly, that American Ministers have never yet been able to make this appearance at any Court; they are now less able to do it than ever."[56]

The Hamburg Senate took three years to recognize John Parish as having any authority to represent the American government. The fact that Parish was not an American citizen possibly inclined Hamburg's leadership to take this "American" position less seriously than the United States desired.[57] In 1793 the Hamburg Senate finally accepted his credentials, "received with every mark of distinction," and issued him a certificate recognizing his authority as the representative of the United States.[58] The success of a consul's job depended upon such recognition. The consul's own relationship with important members of the local government was also crucial, as the unhappy Arnold Delius learned in Bremen. Delius' case provides an interesting example of how consuls were heavily beholden to local politics.

While in the United States, Delius had obtained letters of recommendation from a number of highly-placed Americans. His connections with American businessmen and politicians made him the obvious candidate for the position of US consul in Bremen. There was yet no Constitution, and thus no State Department, when Delius began campaigning for the position of consul with his usual gusto.[59] In 1785, William Deakins, a South

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56 John Adams to John Jay, 13 May, 1785. MAHS: (In: US Dept. of State, Diplomatic Correspondence, 1783-1789.)

57 The assumption is mine; Parish's correspondence is not clear on the reasons. Certainly he was acquainted with most of the Senators. It appears that Hamburg's leadership differed on this point from Bremen's: the Bremen Senate preferred a Bremer citizen for the job of US Consul, while Hamburg, after Parish, consistently had Americans for the job.

58 Parish to Jefferson, 19 July, 1793, NAW-H.

59 The Articles of Confederation provided (Article VI) for a common American foreign policy, which was "carried out," if it deserves to be called that, by a Committee appointed by Congress.

Carolina businessman who had met Delius in Georgetown the previous year, wrote to William Adcock on Delius' behalf. Adcock was Justice of the Peace for Philadelphia and the man who administered the oath of office for diplomatic representatives of the United States.[60] "I am told we have no American council [sic] in Bremen," Deakins wrote to Adcock. "No doubt such an appointment should take place."[61] Deakins went on to praise Delius as the ideal choice for the job, in tones which convey the degree to which Delius had worked his charm on his American friends: "He [Delius] has formidable influence in his own country."[62]

Delius' "influence" in Bremen, as we have seen, was non-existent. While the onset of the Constitutional Convention delayed diplomatic appointments, Delius made his near-fatal return voyage aboard the *Carolina.* He was, of course, returning to face the charges of fraud brought by Heymann and Talla. Upon his return to Bremen, Delius tried to conceal his fate from his American colleagues, and to hang on to his position as consul. After his conviction in 1790, his situation within Bremen's political-merchant community became hopeless. He apparently tried to salvage his situation by obtaining American citizenship, which he did at some point between 1786 and 1793 — the exact date is unclear.[63] Wanting to avoid the Bremen Senate, where his name was worthless, Delius presented his credentials as US consul to the nearby Duke of Oldenburg instead. This only further enraged the Senators.[64] Delius explained that he had done this simply because most

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60 Adcock's certification of Delius as Consul in is the consular file, NAW-B, dated 10 October, 1785.

61 Deakins to Adcock, 6 May, 1785. NAW-B.

62 Pitsch, *Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen* , 18 and 58.

63 He was not a citizen at the time Deakins was writing, but a letter from Delius' nephew in Georgetown in 1794 indicates that he had by that time been an American citizen for at least a year. See: NAW-B, Friedrich Delius to Edmund Randolph, 13 June, 1794.

64 Pitsch, *Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen* , 19.

ships which sailed up the Weser stopped at any of "several commercial and landing places" along the banks, which were in Oldenburg's territory. But Delius' zeal had apparently gotten him into trouble again. He had placed an advertisement in a local paper to encourage people to do business with the American vessels at these little landings on the river. Nonplused by the audacity of advertising in Bremen for people to do business *outside* the city in a neighboring state, Delius was outraged when a Bremen magistrate "suffered my advertisement to be pull'd off and forbid...."[65]

Delius proved completely ineffective in his new role, and indeed was a liability to American commerce in Bremen. As consul, he was charged with protecting the rights of American shippers, and facilitating the sale of American goods arriving in Bremen, as well as acting as a liaison for commerce in the opposite direction: merchants in Bremen who wished to use US-flagged vessels to transport their goods to America. Consuls frequently received the complaints and petitions of merchants and ship captains who felt that local authorities had mistreated them or their cargoes. In several instances, US consuls testified in the local courts on behalf of American merchants involved in disputes.[66] But Delius' relationship with the local authorities was so poisoned that he was unable to accomplish any of his duties. He couldn't even convince the commercial agents in Bremen to accept the legitimacy of American ships' papers. A vessel was required to carry a "Certificate of Origin," emanating from the last harbor in which it transacted business, assuring that it had cleared all fines and passed all inspections, and that its national flag was legitimate.

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65 Delius to Pickering, 26 November, 1796, NAW-B.

66 See Wichelshausen to Marshall, 7 October, 1800, where the consul is trying to negotiate the release of an American accused of counterfeiting ship's papers. (NAW-B) See also Wichelshausen to Madison, 5 March, 1805, where the consul is trying to lift a 44-day quarantine period unfairly placed on American ships, due to a Yellow Fever epidemic which has broken out in northern Germany, and which has been blamed on American sailors. (NAW-B)

Recognition of these certificates as valid protected a ship from excessive (and often spurious) local taxes, and guaranteed that the cargo would not be seized, nor the crew molested. Delius wrote of "infrauds which have taken place against the US in consequence of the careless examination... of goods said to be shipped from the U. States."[67] When Delius complained about unfair charges and procedures applied to American ships, he encountered a "great silence the Bremen magistrate has observed."[68]

In his letters to the US State Department, Delius made several excuses for his poor performance. He claimed that the local "magistrates would not acknowledge me as consul, on account of their not having yet acknowledged the independence of the United States."[69] He claimed that his American citizenship was the reason that the Bremers would not accept him:

> It has always appeared to me... that the magistrates of Bremen would find it immediately against their wish and Interest, that a Citizen of the U.St. should be appointed as Consul for this Port; and I have no doubt that they as well as some few merchants who have made it their study to defraud the U. States... will do every thing in their power to dispossess me, or anyone who may be appointed as Consul for this port, unless it might happen that the office was given to one of their own relations....[70]

In 1796 Delius learned that the Bremen Senate had written to Timothy Pickering, the American Secretary of State, asking that Delius be removed from the position of US Consul. Delius wrote a plaintive letter to Pickering, appealing to him as "an oppressed citizen of the United States," and explaining that his enemies' wishes had more to do with political vendettas than with business practice:

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67 Delius to Pickering, 25 September, 1794. NAW-B.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Delius to Pickering, 26 November, 1796, NAW-B.

> The great Secrecy the Bremen Magistrate has observed... together with the manner they have treated me for those 7 years past in an illegal law Suit with a relation of theirs gives me the greatest fear that groundless charges have been brought forward in their Letter, in order to deprive me of an appointment which I had already flattered myself would protect me from further oppressions. Besides this I have great reason to expect that they have a design to get this appointment changed to one of their relations or a person who is more immediately depending on them.[71]

By the time Delius wrote, however, Secretary of State Pickering had already received and acted upon the request of the Bremen Senate. At their suggestion, Pickering appointed Friedrich Jacob Wichelshausen to replace Delius, on 19 February, 1797. Wichelshausen served in that position for thirty-six years, an astonishing length of time in an era when the average diplomatic posting was approximately five. As we have seen, the Wichelshausen family was certainly a part of Bremen's ruling elite. In that sense, Delius' complaint had been correct; the Senate wanted to replace him with one of their own. In all fairness, although Wichelshausen got his position through a kind of conspiracy, he was certainly a better, harder-working, and much more effective consul. Delius' consular file contains a great deal of remonstration, but very little in the way of useful work or reporting. From Wichelshausen's first letter on 19 February, 1797, however, it is clear that he understood and applied himself to the mechanics of his job, reporting on both commerce and politics with great accuracy and insight. Fluent in English, French, Danish, and Spanish, this skillful Bremen merchant, for the next three decades, served as the eyes and ears for the United States in a tumultuous period of German history.

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[71] Ibid.

"Undertakings With North America."

Even though their merchants were quick to react to American independence, the Hanseatic cities were slow to appoint consuls to the United States. The lukewarm response of Bremen's leaders to the proposal of Charles Henry Willmanns in Baltimore, as we have seen, was one example of the lack of official interest in establishing diplomatic posts in the new United States. In other American cities, the Hanseatic merchants were less enthusiastic, and their governments in Germany were not inclined to offer support for the founding of consular posts.

Hamburg's Senate was the first Hanseatic government to contact the United States. it did so tentatively, through the visit of Johann Abraham de Boor in the spring of 1783. De Boor, as we have seen, carried a message to Congress from Hamburg's leadership. It was an official greeting, and an invitation to open trade. The Hamburg Senate intended to fall short of an official recognition of the US, although one passage certainly could be interpreted that way:

> ...by the preliminary articles of peace, concluded lately between the high belligerent powers, the illustrious United States of North America have been acknowledged free, sovereign, and independent....[72]

The letter de Boor carried, however, was intended as an advertisement and enticement:

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[72] Hamburgische Landesbank, Girozentrale *The First Exchange of Diplomatic Notes between the Congress of the United States of America and the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg in 1783.* (Hamburg: 1976), 5-6.

> In order to show that such mutual commerce with the merchant houses of this place may undoubtedly be of common benefit, your high mightinesses will be pleased to give us leave to mark out some advantages of this trading city. Here reigns a free, unrestrained republican commerce, charged with but few duties.[73]

Elias Boudinot, President of the Continental Congress, wrote the American reply on 1 November 1783. It is a wonderful example of the miserly and pragmatic nature of the early American government that this note (and probably many others like it) was written on paper which clearly bears the watermark of King George III. Boudinot made it clear that he understood there was no official recognition of the US, and no offers of anything firm:

> Congress did not delay to take this honorable tender of the affection and esteem of the worthy Burghmasters [sic] and Senate, under their immediate consideration, and I am now honored by the commands of Congress to make known to the respectable Representatives of this great and imperial City, in terms expressive of the most sincere regard, the high satisfaction with which the United States in Congress assembled recived [sic] the Annunciation of their friendship and attachement [sic] and their affectionate congratualtions on the establissement [sic] of the liberty and Independence of the United States of America.[74]

In 1785, leading merchants from Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck met to discuss the possibility of sending a single joint Hanseatic representative to the United States to encourage trade. The traditionally fractious nature of the Hanse apparently showed itself in these discussions. The talks broke down when the representatives of Hamburg and Lübeck decided that their ardor for the project was not nearly so great as that of the

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73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.

Bremers. In Hamburg later that year, Johann Georg Busch wrote a widely-circulated pamphlet entitled, "Important Considerations on the Now-So-Popular Emerging Trade Undertakings with North America." Busch expressed the sentiment of a number of Hamburg merchants, who felt that the enthusiasm of the Bremers for the new United States was excessive and overly optimistic, with regard to commercial potential.[75] The Hanse would not again attempt to speak to the US with one voice until 1827.

Hamburg experimented with a "Generalkonsulat" in Philadelphia in 1794. This was a loose arrangement, nominally headed by John Ross, whose father Colin had lived in Hamburg for several years. It is unclear whether the Generalkonsulat ever did much to encourage US-Hamburg trade; certainly it had no authority to regulate or represent it. The US government never recognized Ross as a representative of Hamburg, nor his successor the German merchant Ludwig Krumbhaar, after Ross died in 1800. David Parish was approached at some point in 1815 by a Hamburg Senator, and asked if he would be interested in reviving the institution, but he had much larger affairs of his own to administer.[76]

After 1815, Hamburg also began to take more seriously the question of consulates in the United States. The first consular appointment was considered a replacement for the Generalkonsulat in Philadelphia. Charles Buck was in Philadelphia when the Senate of his native Hamburg tapped him to serve as its Consul-General in 1816. The post opened the next year, with Buck responsible for representing Hamburg not only in Philadelphia, but also in all American harbors. Buck must have conveyed to his superiors some sense of the distances involved in traveling in the New World, because Hamburg, over the course of the

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75 Baasch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Handelsbeziehungen zwischen Hamburg und Amerika,* 59.
76 Ibid., 69.

next decade, appointed consuls in several more American harbors, relieving Buck of his responsibilities to administer trade everywhere from New Orleans to Boston.[77]

After the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Bremen led the Hanse in slowly opening a handful of consulates in the United States. In New York, the merchant Caspar Meier, who had been active in the city since 1796, waited until 1815 to petition the Bremen Senate to create a consulate. Even though Meier's brother, a Bremen Senator, obtained the funds and official sanction for the project, Meier did not open a consulate until 1822, and even then it was little more than an additional office in his firm.[78] After some hesitation, Johann Diedrich Bechtel gave up his lucrative business partnership in New Orleans to become Bremen's consul in New Orleans in 1817.[79] In the wake of Willmanns' failed endeavor in Baltimore, it was not until 1818 that Hieronymus Daniel Wichelshausen (younger brother of Friedrich Jacob, the US Consul in Bremen), obtained sanction to open Bremen's first consulate in that city. To convince Bremen's leadership to establish the post, H.D. Wichelshausen apparently used dire (and largely false) warnings of impending Prussian trade deals with the US which would place the Hanse at a disadvantage.[80]

Hermann Friedrich Lengerke, the second generation of his family in the US, wrote to the Bremen Senate in 1822, suggesting a consulate in Philadelphia, where he had his

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77 Köppen, "Die Handelsbeziehungen Hamburgs," 290-292. Also: Wätjen, *Aus Der Fruuhzeit Des Nordatlantikverkehrs,* 7-9.

78 Proclamation of the Bremen Senate, 12 January, 1815, SAB: 2-B.13.b.3. (It is possible that the paperwork from 1815 to 1822 has simply been lost, although — to the best of my knowledge — there is no evidence of it in either New York or Bremen.) See also: Pitsch, *Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen,* 82.

79 Declaration of the Bremen Senate, 26 September, 1817 SAB: 2-B.13.b.4. (Pitsch (page 82) claims that one Friedrich Frey was the first occupant of this post, from 1817-1841, although the Senate proclamation clearly gives the job to Bechtel.)

80 H.D. Wichelshausen to Bremen Senate (Gröning). SAB: 2-B.13.b.2. (The date of this letter is unclear. It is 4 October, 1818, but an earlier date of 17 June, 1818 has been scratched out.)

import/export business.[81] Four years later, the Senate finally gave him the nod. In an odd twist, he was appointed *both* Consul and Consular Agent, with a mission not only to act as consul in Philadelphia, but also to take advantage of his proximity to Washington to lobby the US government, when needed (*"die Nähe der Hauptstadt Washingtons ausnützen"*).[82] Thus, after four decades of Hanseatic merchants in Philadelphia, Bremen's government finally began to think in terms of the political and diplomatic ramifications of trade. It was not until 1831 that the city of Bremen even began to keep records of their commerce with the United States.[83]

Overall, the Hanse — particularly Bremen — were quite open to trading with American merchants, but relatively unenthusiastic and disorganized with regard to establishing official diplomatic links with the United States. The situation was essentially the opposite on the other side of the North Atlantic. While American merchants were relatively slow to develop an interest in German trade, the American government perceived that establishing consulates in the Hanseatic cities would be useful to encourage and develop that trade. American consuls in the Hanseatic cities thus provided the primary linkage between diplomacy and commerce in the first three decades of the German-American relationship.

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81 Extract of the Protocols of the Bremen Senate, 18 September, 1822, SAB: 2-B.13.b.5. (Pitsch calls him "Hermann Heinrich," but the documents clearly show, "Hermann Friedrich.")

82 Extract of the Protocols of the Bremen Senate, 13 September, 1826, SAB: 2-B.13.b.5.

83 The "Hauptakte über den Handels- und Schifffahrtsvertrag" are in the SAB: Handelspolitische Beziehungen zu den USA 2-B.13.c.1.b.

Intersection: Commerce and Diplomacy Meet

The US-German relationship began in a period when formal diplomatic structures were changing. Additionally, both Americans and Germans were still working out the forms of their governments for decades after the American Revolution (in some senses, both have yet to cease doing so). As a result, German-American diplomacy was very confused and ineffectual for the first half century of American independence. It was characterized largely by tentative and unrealized projects, or by official pleasantries which made very little impact at the level of economic and social connections, such as the 1785 Treaty of Amity and Commerce between the US and Prussia.

The exception to this pattern is found at the lowest official levels, where diplomacy intersected with trade. The consuls were often diplomatic barometers of what was fundamentally a commercial relationship between the two peoples. They served as agents of commerce, transmitters of information, and conduits of diplomacy.

Having examined the structure and historical framework of the American and German consuls (those people at both ends of the relationship), we must turn to the relationship itself. How did commerce and diplomacy intersect in earliest German-American affairs? How did merchants and diplomats establish a budding transatlantic relationship in the period prior to the Napoleonic Wars?

Chapter Five

Doing Business: The Invisible Diplomacy of Merchants, 1776-1800

Shipping is our oldest industry; it is also one of our most complex.... It is, so far as the United States is concerned, an instrument of national policy, maintained at large cost to serve the needs of commerce and defense.

United States Maritime Commission Report, 1910.



Seal of the US Consulate in Hamburg, 1804.
Source: National Archives, Washington, DC. (Used with permission.)

"The Sunrise of a Glorious Period"

From colonial times through the Napoleonic Wars, German interest in America was much stronger than American interest in Germany. Not all Germans spoke as glowingly of the new United States as Christopher Daniel Ebeling, who wrote to Joel Barlow in 1795 about "our dear, beloved America."[1] Some, like Dietrich von Bülow and Wilhelm Ludwig Wekhrlin, were decidedly critical of the United States and its aspirations. But irrespective of authorial tone, in both popular and serious works, the American colonies, and then the emerging republic, figured prominently in German letters. In North Germany, where access to the New World meant much more than it did anywhere else in the country, the fascination with America was most pronounced. Göttingen scholars contributed articles on America to publications such as the *Bremisches Magazin der Wissenschaften Künste und Tugend,* and the very widely read *Hanoverisches Magazin.* Ebeling also wrote for the latter, contributing an interesting essay in 1765 on the likelihood that the American colonies would one day break free from their colonial masters and grow to dominate world trade.[2]

While the citizens of the Hanseatic cities were as interested as other Germans in the scholaly and philosophical writings about America, the Hanse had an additional and much more concrete stake in the new United States. Since the days of smuggling and other illicit German trade with the American colonies, the interest of the Hanseatic cities in America was overwhelmingly commercial. The independence of the United States was a portentous

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1 Eugene Edgar Doll, ed., *American History as Interpreted by German Historians From 1770 to 1815* (Philadelphia: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 1948), 477.

2 The article, "Fragen welche erst nach einigen Jahrhunderten können aufgelöst werden" was first printed in Hamburg's *Patriotischer Zuschauer,* issue #251. See Doll, *American History as Interpreted by German Historians,* 437.

event in Bremen and Hamburg; the first opportunity for German merchants to trade directly with a "colonial" market.[3] It was, declared Senator C.A. Heineken of Bremen, "the sunrise of a glorious period" for trade.[4]

In their excitement over the prospect of breaking into a long-forbidden colonial market at last, the merchants of the Hanse tended to overestimate the economic gains to be had.[5] The 18th century had seen a slow but steady decline in the Hanse's fortunes, as they were increasingly squeezed out of several carrying routes by larger fleets. The number of ships carrying Hanseatic flags declined steadily throughout the century.[6] The "sunrise" which so cheered C.A. Heineken promised a reversal of this trend. Between 1778 and 1801, Hamburg's merchants placed so many orders for new ships that the city's fleet grew by over 70%.[7] More than one observer commented upon the revival of the lively salon life, the increased consumption of luxury goods (American tobacco among them), and upward surges in investments and in the markets.[8] Hamburg and Bremen both showed the telltale signs of a recovery of confidence in their economies.

We have seen that skeptics in Hamburg like Johann Georg Busch called for a slower, more gradual and rational approach to dealing with America. When it became clear that investment in American trade would have to be a patient affair, nurturing growing markets over time, perhaps even absorbing some losses in the early stages, many Hamburg

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3 Even after the independence of the United States, many German shippers (particularly in Hamburg) continued to refer to American products as *"Kolonialwaren."* See: Schramm, "Die deutschen Überseekaufleute im Rahmen der Sozialgeschichte," 36.

4 Pitsch, *Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen,* 11.

5 For more on this, see: Schramm, "Die deutschen Überseekaufleute," 36.

6 Schramm, *Deutschland und Übersee,* 47.

7 Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen," 296.

8 Ibid., 295-301. There are many examples in various correspondence. An interesting case in the SAH is: 621-1, Records of August Nicolas Besemüller (sugar importer).

merchants did in fact shy away.[9] Hamburg's hesitation stood in contrast, however, to the effusion of excitement demonstrated by the Bremers, whose merchant families were dispatching their relatives to America in steadily increasing numbers during the 1780s and 1790s. Hamburg instead began to concentrate on the West Indies, Asia, and South America, while Bremen pursued the American tobacco and cotton markets.

The initial euphoria in the Hanse also cooled somewhat when their merchants realized that the new United States was, in 1783, not quite ready to be a stable trading partner with anyone. The virtual absence of a central American government, the staggering debts and economic displacement of the Revolution, the lack of a unified currency, much less a single, rational set of tariffs — all these factors frustrated the first Germans who tried to do business with the United States. When peace came in 1783, the inflation of the war years ended, and the lower prices encouraged a brief period of glut: overstocked warehouses and goods which couldn't be sold, or could only be sold at a loss.[10] The unlucky Arnold Delius arrived at precisely this moment, to find that his cargo brought less than a fourth the price he had anticipated. Moreover, the American economy (more accurately, *economies)* had not recovered from the war, and demand was stunted. The recession which followed the peace lifted only after the establishment of the US Constitution.

Nonetheless, the United States had as great a potential as a trade partner as Heineken and others imagined. In 1784 the English writer Richard Champion calculated that even after the losses in the war, the American states possessed 1,220 merchant ships.

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9 Uhalde, "Citizen and World Citizen," 43.

10 Johnson, *History of the Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States* Vol. 1, 127.

Furthermore, America had plenty of budding capitalists.[11] The unresolved question for the Hanse and others was *whose* trading partner the United States would become. The answer, it seemed, was: Britain's.

There is some irony in the fact that Jefferson and Madison made such strenuous efforts to steer American commerce away from Britain and toward places on the continent which had been friendlier to the United States. Jefferson, as did most anti-Federalists, supposedly favored a free trade of liberated merchants, untouched by the state, contrary to the experience of Europe, where "trade has been confined by exclusive charters, pretty much like an aristocracy in government...."[12] John Adams, who opposed Jefferson on many other matters, agreed with him wholeheartedly on this. Writing to John Jay after the signing of the first treaty with Prussia, Adams suggested the formation of consulates in the ports on the Baltic: "Consuls would explore new channels of commerce and new markets for our produce, as well as other sources of supply for us, that we may become less dependent upon England."[13]

These efforts at re-direction largely failed. In 1790, nearly two-thirds of American foreign trade was with Britain, even with the latter reluctant to sign a treaty that would give any advantages to US shippers.[14] With exceptions for the worst periods of warfare in the French revolutionary and Napoleonic era, this overwhelming dominance of the British in early American commerce declined slowly. Indeed, throughout most of the 19th century,

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[11] Ibid., 181.

[12] MAHS: *Boston Independent Chronicle,* 20 December, 1787. Joseph J. Ellis has re-opened the debate on whether or not it is fair to label Jefferson an "anti-Federalist," as many of Jefferson's contemporaries did. See: Joseph Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 102-105.

[13] MAHS: Adams to John Jay, 2 September, 1785. (In US Dept. of State, Diplomatic Correspondence, 1783-1789.)

[14] Johnson, *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States* Vol. 2, 4-7.

Britain retained the position as the top trading partner for the United States. Only in the 1840s did the German states surpass the British as the prime buyers of certain US exports, such as raw tobacco.[15] Even then, however, British commerce continued to dominate the overall American trade with Europe:

Sales of American Leaf Tobacco to Germany[16] and Britain, 1825-1845

Year	Hogsheads of Tobacco exported to **Germany**	Hogsheads of Tobacco exported to **Britain**	Total US exports to **Germany**	Total US exports to **Britain**
1825	17,858	32,112	$9 million	$37 million
1830	24,551	28,923	$8 million	$20 million
1835	23,530	34,088	$5 million	$32 million
1840	29,758	26,255	$5 million	$58 million
1845	51,344	36,111	$8 million	$45 million

It is likely that, prior to the massive German emigrations of the 1840s, there simply weren't enough personal connections to make Americans believe that the German states and people were politically, culturally, or economically important in the day-to-day affairs of the United States. England, by comparison, had profound advantages in access to American society, the first of which, of course, was language. The history of commercial relations — of American goods shipping to British markets — was an established bond that

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[15] Even in these categories, however, Britain's position remained strong. The table above, for example, counts only raw leaf tobacco exports. The US also exported processed tobacco and tobacco products to Europe, and Britain consistently purchased more of these than did Germany. See: Hess, *American Tobacco and Central European Policy,* 58 and 171.

[16] The figures for "Germany" include commerce via all German and Austrian ports. This may be lower than the actual amount of American tobacco that entered Germany, since some of it did so via Dutch ports. Sources for this table are: Hess, *American Tobacco and Central European Policy,* 171-173, and: Historical Statistics of the United States. Foreign Commerce (Series U 187-352). Washington DC: 1970.

gave Britain another decisive edge in commanding American buyers and sellers. Germans had no such traditions; to break into the American market, they had to start from scratch. The coming of international war in the mid-to-late 1790s, however, gave US-German commerce a dramatic boost, and both American and German merchants were quick to develop connections.

Commerce Begins

We have observed that the Colonial period witnessed a not-inconsiderable amount of smuggling between Germany and America. The interested parties in America seem to have been primarily in the southern colonies. In the 1750s and 1760s, rice and cotton from the Carolinas found its way to Hamburg in increasing quantities, often without the blessing of the British authorities. There is evidence to suggest that the ships plying this trade then returned to America with German linens. The British government was not entirely ignorant of the traffic. It must have suspected the connections because in 1775 the British Minister Resident in Hamburg delivered a hotly-worded threat to the Hamburg Senate, to the effect that London would be carefully watching to ensure that no arms or war supplies reached America from Hamburg's shippers.[17]

After the Revolution, the brief period of the American Confederation was very confused, politically and economically. The lack of a unified currency caused wild speculations and unstable prices. On the other hand, the early United States gave very advantageous tariff terms to American-owned vessels carrying foreign goods, which

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[17] Ibid., 30-37.

greatly encouraged the early development of a large merchant marine. Americans did not seem to need much encouragement in any event, since they were a seagoing people as a rule, and since the sheer size of the US meant that coastal trade was the only way to handle intra-American commerce. Shipping simply *had* to develop in the United States.[18]

The first German-American business contacts in the period of the Confederation were tentative and small. Johann Abraham de Boor, who carried the greetings of the Hamburg Senate to a newly-independent America in 1783, was also on assignment from Caspar Voght to meet American merchants and investigate the tobacco market. De Boor met with a handful of prominent Baltimore merchants, all of whom would later become involved in US-German commerce.[19] Voght later claimed to be the first direct German importer of American tobacco.[20]

The ratification of the US Constitution stimulated trade, if for no other reason than the fact that it had finally established a truly American economy with a single currency and administration. The Constitution also empowered the United States government to negotiate with foreign countries on trade matters, and to enforce treaties and conventions of commerce. By the same token, it allowed Congress to protect and support American commerce through legislation. Finally, it vastly improved the banking and credit situation of the United States. This was a particularly crucial factor in US-German relations, because the Constitution thus allowed Americans to trade reliably with countries other than England, where commercial relations had long been established.

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[18] This is the theory advanced by John H. Frederick in *The Development of American Commerce,* 45-47.

[19] Voght himself corresponded with two of them: Tench Tilghman and John Smith, the latter becoming very interested in Baltimore-Hamburg trade in the 1790s. (MDHS: Tench Tilghman Papers (Ms. 1445), and Smith Letterbooks, Ms 1152.)

[20] Schramm, *Deutschland und Übersee,* 48.

Even prior to the Constitution, however, some American merchants in the port cities began to show interest in German commerce. Unlike many of their German counterparts in Bremen, who wanted to develop American trade as their primary business, most of these Americans considered German trade as a useful adjunct to their existing commerce with Britain, Holland, France, or other places. Access to German linens, for instance, enabled men like Stephen Girard or Isaac Hicks to have a more stable supply, if problems arose in their normal supplies of British linens. In many cases, the interest in Germany grew gradually, as the merchants' experience with the markets increased. Girard began with a few shipments of Virginia and Maryland tobacco to Hamburg in the early 1790s. By the end of that decade he was running two ships regularly between Philadelphia and Hamburg, bringing back various finished goods and luxury items such as: brushes, candles, linens, glass and glass products such as mirrors and lamps, and fine clothing such as lace, gloves, ribbons, tablecloths, hats, and napkins.[21] From the commerce, Girard's interest in Germany grew with his increased experience. He learned the German language, even keeping some of his account-books in German, and he made visits to Hamburg to see for himself how this growing trade could be developed.[22]

Isaac Hicks, a brilliant and eccentric New York Quaker businessman, became interested in German commerce in the 1790s, after he had expanded his food-importing and wholesaling business to include "dry goods" from various parts of Europe. Hicks' first deal with a German firm was in 1794, a shipment of American foodstuffs to the Hamburg firm of Caspar Voght.[23] From that point, he quickly became more involved in the Baltic

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21 APS: Stephen Girard papers. Microfilm reel #166.

22 Ibid., reels #63 and #167.

23 Robert A. Davison, *Isaac Hicks: New York Merchant and Quaker, 1767-1820* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964). 44-45.

trade, buying southern produce such as rice, cotton, and tobacco, and selling it to Germans, Swedes, and Russians, often unloading it first in Hamburg. In New York, Hicks became a wholesaler of imported German linens.[24] By 1800, he was writing that he preferred Hamburg over all other European ports, because the Hamburgers were ideologically neutral, and uninvolved in the shifting political winds in Europe. They, like Hicks himself, just wanted to do business.[25]

In Baltimore, which had the second-highest concentration of Germans of any American port city, Robert Oliver became interested in German trade in the late 1790s. Oliver had extensive connections with transplanted Germans, and he began to investigate opening his own trade route to the Hanse in 1798. He began with a few shipments of cotton to Bremen, arranged with the firm of H. Heymann Sons — the same firm (minus the former director Heinrich Talla) which had been involved in the Arnold Delius case. The linens his ships brought back sold so well and so quickly that Oliver was excitedly writing H. Heymann Sons a few months later: "One cargo of German linens was formerly a large supply for a year's consumption, and we have now a demand for more than fifty cargoes."[26]

Simultaneously, Oliver began shipping coffee to Hamburg. Here his connections were somewhat more complicated. He dealt with the German firm of Mallhüsen & Sillem, as well as with an American agent in Hamburg, Walter Roe. His credit was handled by yet a third firm.[27] The arrangements soon proved too complex. It is significant, however, that Oliver apparently regarded his growing Hamburg trade as important enough that he

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[24] Ibid., 98-99.
[25] Ibid., 117.
[26] Robert Oliver to H. Heymann Sons, 21 January, 1800. MDHS: Oliver Record Books (Ms626.1)
[27] Robert Oliver to Walter Roe, 9 December, 1799. MDHS: Oliver Record Books (Ms626.1)

dispatched his brother Thomas to set up a branch of the family business there in late 1799.[28] "We have been contemplating [the] change for some time," Oliver wrote to Mallhüsen & Sillem, who had become his supplier of German pewter, tableware, and other fine metal products.

One problem Oliver encountered in his early dealings with German merchants was a lack of arrangements for handling credit between German and American firms. The long and uncertain journeys of this period made merchants dependent upon flexible accounts in various ports, as well as upon lenders who could handle currency exchanges between different countries. Oliver complained to F.J. Wichelshausen, the American consul in Bremen, that he wanted to do more business with Germany, but there were extremely long delays in the extension of credit and the transfer of funds; he had waited eight months for payment on a shipment of cotton.[29] Oliver was likely not alone with these problems, and it must have been one reason why American merchants were somewhat slower to develop German trade than their German counterparts were to begin American trade. It was certainly the reason that Andrew Cock, a successful New York merchant, gave up on German-American trade after only a few deals. Cock had sold American whale oil to Caspar Voght's firm in Hamburg in 1794, and had bought a few shipments of German linens. But by 1798 he had concluded that the hassles outweighed the profits. He wrote to Voght in 1798, asking to close out his account. Distance, problems of exhange, and his unfamiliarity with the marketplace had convinced Cock to stick with his usual trade partners in London and Amsterdam.[30]

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28 Bruchey, *Robert Oliver,* 196-197.

29 Robert Oliver to "J.F. Wickelhausen," 1 September, 1800. MDHS: Oliver Record Books (Ms626.1) The misspelling is Oliver's.

30 Andrew Cock to Caspar Voght, 8 May 1798. Papers of Andrew Cock & Son, NYHS.

While Hanseatic (especially Bremer) families dispatched members to the United States to set up shop for a new commerce, and while a few American firms began to pick up the first interest in German trade, there was also a handful of non-German merchants in the Hanse who were enthusiastic about developing the new opportunities for German-American business. Foremost among them was certainly John Parish in Hamburg. In 1776, Parish formed a partnership with the Hamburg firm of Klefeker & Paschen to establish a packet line that would carry *Kolonialwaren* from the Indies directly back to Germany. Parish's connections with Americans doubtless created suspicion among British agents in the city. His ship, the *Jamaica Packet,* was seized in harbor before she could even finish fitting out, on the pretext that "it belonged to the rebellion" against the Crown.[31] This incident only served to stiffen Parish's resolve to circumvent the British and to become involved in the Americas. From that point forward, he began to cultivate relationships with virtually all the Americans who came to Hamburg, and many of the prominent Americans traveling elsewhere in Europe. His involvement in American-German trade following the Revolution culminated in his appointment as the first US Consul in Hamburg.[32]

Finally, a few young Americans came to Hamburg after the Revolution, to "learn the business." John Murray Forbes emigrated from the US to Hamburg, where, with the assistance of John Parish, he opened an import business and ultimately served as the US consul, the same position Parish had held. We have seen the example of Thomas Oliver, emigrating to help establish his family firm in Hamburg. Stephen Girard, T.H. Perkins,

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[31] Baasch, *Hamburg und Amerika,* 38.

[32] The wily Parish played a double game, ultimately serving as a British spy and agent during the Napoleonic period, even after that country was at war with the United States.

Isaac Hicks, and many others sent apprentices of this sort to study and learn the German markets. This occurred while the counterparts of these apprentices — the younger sons of the Bremen and Hamburg firms — were in the American harbors learning that end of the business.[33]

An indication of the increasing American presence in the Hanse can be found in a petition circulated in January 1796. Twenty-six American merchants in Hamburg asked John Parish to lobby the Hamburg Senate on behalf of the Marquis de Lafayette, recently imprisoned after having fled France for Germany.[34] The Hamburg Senate obviously could do little more than petition the Holy Roman Emperor; the request of the Americans was simply an emotional appeal on behalf of their hero. But the list of signatories shows a diverse merchant community from all the major port cities of the United States. Men representing firms in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Charleston, Baltimore, Savannah, and Salem signed the document — a veritable parliament of America's harbors, each with its traders stationed in Hamburg. The result of this economic/cultural exchange was a younger generation of German and American businessmen who would establish reputation and credit, and know each others' markets much better than their fathers and older brothers had, and who would be prepared to open commerce on a larger scale. This pattern certainly helps to explain why German-American commerce accelerated dramatically roughly twenty years — one generation — after the American Revolution. When war

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33 Wätjen, *Aus Der Frühzeit Des Nordatlantikverkehrs,* 4.

34 Petition of United States Merchants of Hamburgh to the Senate of Hamburgh, 10 January, 1793. NAW-H. The US government then granted Lafayette a $2150 stipend, which was administered by Samuel Williams, Parish's successor as US consul in Hamburg. See: Samuel Williams to Rufus King, 8 November 1797. Letters from American Consuls to Rufus King, NYHS.

came, and gave the neutral American and Hanseatic shippers the opportunity to open new markets, these younger men were well-prepared.

Germans, Americans, and German-Americans

Although most German immigrants to America were not interested in international commerce, the presence of increasing numbers of Germans did create certain useful connections for merchants in America who wanted to expand US-German trade. This was especially true for the Hanseatic businessmen who came after the Revolution to set up branches of their family firms. In many cases, these merchant-immigrants established themselves with the existing German communities, particularly around Baltimore and Philadelphia. Hieronymus Daniel Wichelshausen, for instance (brother of Friedrich Jacob, the US consul in Bremen), became a leading citizen in Baltimore's German-American community, active in public and charitable works.[35] George Caspar Schroeppel, who emigrated to New York in the 1790s, established himself as a merchant, and by the end of the decade was providing legal and financial assistance to German-American indentured servants in the area. In 1804 Schroeppel bought a large tract of land on Manhattan (he owned a substantial portion of what is today Greenwich Village), where he set up his factory and retail store, employing a number of other German-Americans.[36]

Charles Buck, the Hamburg merchant (and later consul) in Philadelphia, also hired young German-Americans as his clerks and domestics.[37] Frederick Konig, a Bremer

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35 MDHS: File on Wichelshausen, H.D. (no file number)
36 Papers on G.C. Schroeppel in the G.M. Phelps collection, Box 1, Folder: "Schroeppel." NYHS.
37 Diary of Charles N. Buck (no page numbers). PHS.

transplanted to Baltimore, established his business on Howard Street near the docks, an "Importer of German and Fancy Goods." The emphasis on "German" products was deliberately aimed at Baltimore's substantial German-American community. There, and in Philadelphia, most businesses were bilingual; Thomas Cooper observed that every building had the name of its firm, and all its basic information, "written in the German character and language, as well as in the English."[38]

Frederick Konig, like many other Hanseatic merchants living in the US, hired young German-Americans to work for him, apprenticing these men and boys, bringing them up in the firm, as Hanseatic businesses did "back home." Frederick Beuhring, a German-American working as Konig's assistant, was particularly grateful to his employer. The young man was in love with a girl from a prominent family, and her parents only agreed to their marriage after Konig wrote a lengthy letter praising his young assistant and recommending him as a suitable husband. Konig apparently paid for part of the wedding reception, as well.[39]

Philip Sadtler, another Bremer merchant who emigrated to Baltimore, was one of the early investors in the Baltimore & Reisters-Town Turnpike. This was a project of great interest to many German businessmen in the United States, because the development of canals and turnpikes would open far easier commercial access to the many thousands of Germans living in the Pennsylvania and Maryland hinterland. Although he visited Bremen several times after 1800, Sadtler clearly considered Baltimore his home. When war came in 1812 he enlisted in an all-German militia regiment called the "Baltimore Jägers."[40] Other

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38 Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America,* 59.

39 F. Buehring to F. Konig (no date, but included with letters from 1821). MDHS: Frederick Konig papers (Ms522).

40 MDHS: Philip Sadtler papers (Ms1701)

Germans, like H.D. Wichelshausen, contributed money to help clothe and equip the volunteers.[41]

The correspondence of the German merchants in America shows a great depth of interlocking business and social relationships. It might be an exaggeration to call them a "community," if by that term one means a socially-distinct group living in a relatively well-defined location, preserving a specific culture. The German merchants (unlike other, poorer German immigrants in the hinterland) often anglicized their names and lived fairly dispersed among the Anglo-Americans, whose language they spoke fluently, and with whom they frequently socialized and did business. The young men also frequently married non-German women, as did Charles Buck in 1803 and Peter Grotjan in 1810. Nonetheless, the Hanseatic businessmen in the New World were mostly familiar with each other, and often did their best to establish the kind of networks that existed in the Hanse. Buck, for example, was one of the many German-Americans who supported Friedrich Amelung's "New Bremen" glassworks near Baltimore. Many of Amelung's loans (and outright gifts) came from sympathetic German-Americans like Buck. Even nearly two decades later, when the unlucky Amelung went bankrupt a *second* time on an uninsured coffee shipment captured by the British in 1804, Buck paid all the travel expenses of Amelung and his family as they returned to Germany.[42] Peter Grotjan, who arrived in America just after his 20th birthday, was not as green and unprepared as his age would suggest. He had already been apprenticed in business for five years in the Hanse, had

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41 MDHS: File on Wichelshausen, H.D. (no file number)

42 Diary of Charles N. Buck (no page numbers). PHS.

corresponded with Germans in America, and arrived in Philadelphia with his connections already strong among German-Americans.[43]

These men also did business with their American colleagues, of course, but it is clear that they were aware of their "Germanness" as well. They kept in touch with Germany, for both personal and commercial reasons. Konig's lifelong relationship with the Bremen firm of D.F. Kalkmann proved very profitable on both sides of the Atlantic; Konig shipped American cotton and tobacco to Germany, while Kalkmann shipped German luxury items to the US.[44] Charles Mayer, a Hamburg merchant transplanted to Baltimore, kept many important business connections in the Hanse. He ran one of the earliest regular shipping lines between Baltimore and Bremen.[45] Mayer was an important philanthropist on both sides of the Atlantic, although he also had a reputation for snatching up firms that were inches from bankruptcy, and absorbing them into his expanding empire.[46] He stayed current on scholarly happenings in Germany, and in 1791 when Freiherr von Bibra published a book about Germans around the world, Mayer contributed the chapter on Baltimore.[47]

The German merchants transplanted to American port cities frequently maintained their sense of Germanness, and kept up solid relations with the other German immigrants in their communities. They nonetheless identified strongly with the United States; strongly

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43 Peter Grotjan Memoirs (no page numbers). PHS.

44 MDHS: Frederick Konig papers (Ms522). (From Kalkmann, Konig bought toys, musical instruments, tableware, toiletries, etc., selling them in Baltimore from his warehouse.)

45 Unfortunately, the records of this are either badly damaged or lost. The ship's name was *Lavater,* she flew either the Dutch or Danish flag, yet was home-ported in Baltimore. The first voyage was in 1787, and Charles Mayer's brother Christian filled out the paperwork for this transaction in Dutch. Although *Lavater* apparently sailed to Germany several times, there are no further surviving records in the MDHS showing cargo or passengers.

46 C. Mayer to Vander Wish, 14 August, 1790. MDHS: Charles F. Mayer papers (Ms1574).

47 Mayer is listed in one document as a supporter of the "Berlin Academy." He also subscribed to a scholarly journal published in Fulda. Again, records are damaged and in several places unclear.

enough in many cases to risk their lives for their new country in wartime. Moreover, they were obviously happy with the American capitalist system which had given them opportunities unavailable in the Old World. These Hanseatic businessmen were an important connection between the two societies.

J.F. Amelung and the Fate of "New Bremen"

The experience of Johann Friedrich Amelung was a unique case of German-American entrepreneurial effort in this period, and deserves special consideration. Amelung was born in Bremen, but moved to Bohemia to study glass-blowing under a master craftsman. He returned to Bremen during the last years of the American Revolution, and apparently became caught up in the enthusiasm for America that was sweeping the city as peace neared and new business seemed promising. In Bremen, Amelung met an American merchant named Benjamin Crockett, who told him of the large and growing German community in Baltimore and its environs, and the plentiful opportunities for new businesses. Amelung also believed his timing to be propitious because the Germans were beginning to overtake the Venetians as the traditional leaders in fine glasswares. German glass products were selling well in Europe, and Amelung decided that they would sell even better in America.[48]

Amelung cannot be faulted for lack of preparation. He publicized in Bremen and Baltimore that he would be hiring craftsmen for a new business. He wrote to and obtained letters of introduction from Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, as well as several of

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[48] Cunz, *The Maryland Germans,* 162-165.

Bremen's leading businessmen and politicians. He organized a consortium of German investors who loaned him over £10,000.[49] He contacted prominent German-Americans in Baltimore, asking for references with American firms and bankers. Finally, in June 1784, Amelung took his family, 68 trained workers and their families, two teachers for the children, and a number of other laborers, and sailed for America. They arrived in Baltimore in August.

Before his departure from Germany, Amelung had lobbied the State of Maryland for a grant of land, which he obtained after some delay — almost exactly a year after he arrived. It was an impressively large plot of 1,905 acres near Baltimore, which he named "New Bremen."[50] Amelung designed an entirely German, self-contained little community of 135 people, and he managed both the town and the "New Bremen Glass Works," the factory he built in the center.

Amelung's ambitions misfired early. Glass-blowers and glass-sellers in Germany had no desire to see a competing industry established in America, certainly not one staffed by their own countrymen. Amelung found that merchants in Hamburg and Bremen, as well as German Hanseatic transplants in America, gave him the cold shoulder. Simultaneously, he found that Americans, while they admired the quality of his work, were unable to afford or simply had no need for it. "Old Frederick glass," Elias Boudinot wrote, referring to Amelung's products, was "superior to any ever produced in America."[51] But

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[49] This figure is unclear. Beutin says £10,000 (*Bremen und Amerika,* 17), Cunz says over £25,000 (*The Maryland Germans,* 164). The "Amelung Documents" in the MDHS deal only with his subsequent financial relationships with American investors, and thus shed no light on this. I was unable to verify the records of the transaction in the Bremen Staatsarchiv.

[50] The deed is dated 12 August, 1785. MDHS: Amelung Documents (Ms2242)

[51] Cunz, *The Maryland Germans,* 166.

Amelung's fancy glass wasn't selling. And a fire in early 1790 damaged his factory and forced him to make expensive repairs.[52]

By the spring of 1790, Amelung had overspent his original credit by £7,000, and his German lenders would extend no more. He was having trouble meeting his payroll. Undaunted, he tried to carry out his business entirely with Americans. He went deeper into debt with two new American partners, Edward Harris and Gabriel Hood.[53] He was convinced that a domestic market existed for high-grade German-style crystal, fine mirrors, stained-glass, and other refined products. He advertised in the southern states, hoping to attract new buyers. Finally, he lobbied Congress, calling upon as many of his American friends as possible, to appeal for a loan from the US government. If Congress would help him pay off his German and American creditors, Amelung promised, he would open a veritable empire of glassworks across the mid-Atlantic and southern states, increasing the white populations of these areas with German immigrants, protecting against "invasions from Indians," and, most importantly, enabling the government to raise tariffs on imported glass, which "would increase the revenue of the United States."[54] Amelung must have had a fair number of important American friends, because Congress considered his request for three days. Ultimately, they voted against the loan, a decision which sealed the fate of the New Bremen Glass Works.

Amelung limped along for another few years, his equity worsening and his employees drifting off. By 1794 he was desperately scheming to float two mortgages on his factory. He had already used his land for collateral, yet unscrupulously used it again to

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52 Amelung to Congress, 26 May, 1790. MDHS: Amelung Documents (Ms2242)
53 MDHS: Amelung Chancery Case papers (Ms2227)
54 MDHS: Amelung Documents (Ms2242)

"secure" another loan from several investors in Philadelphia. In 1795, when he finally declared bankruptcy, a host of angry creditors converged on New Bremen, wrangling over the spoils. Amelung's trail of convoluted mortgages kept him and his lenders and partners in court until 1803.[55]

Although it was an unqualified failure as an enterprise, the New Bremen Glass Works represents an interesting development in German-American relations. It was the first instance of an attempt to transplant a German industry to the New World. Its failure showed that the American market was interested in but not yet ready or able to buy fine German glass products in sufficient numbers to support a major industrial operation. Certainly it was a hard dose of reality for Amelung and his German investors who, like many Bremers, seemed to think that no business could fail in America. And, as many Europeans still do to this day, Amelung had not considered the massive distances between major cities in America. He had failed to factor adequately for the expense and time required to transfer goods from one part of the United States to another.[56]

After Amelung finally closed his doors, the various skilled craftsmen he had employed moved on to other parts of the United States. Many of them became successful glass-makers in their own right, operating on a much smaller scale, and concentrating on mundane, useful items like window panes, small mirrors, and bottles.[57] This shows that, had Amelung's ambitions been more flexible and less grandiose, he too might have enjoyed success producing the basic glasswares needed by most of the American people. The luckless Amelung tried his hand in other German-American business ventures. In 1807 he became embroiled in a legal

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55 MDHS: Amelung Chancery Case papers (Ms2227)
56 MDHS: Amelung Documents (Ms2242)
57 Cunz, *The Maryland Germans,* 167.

dispute with Frederick Brune. Amelung had arranged to ship a cargo of American sugar and coffee to Bremen, but for some reason he was unable to agree with his shippers on terms or prices. The goods had to be sold at auction in Baltimore instead, where they lost money. Konig was involved in the auction, apparently picking up these goods on the cheap, and Amelung became convinced that Konig had deliberately cheated him. Amelung was warned by an American merchant and friend not to make an enemy of the powerful Konig, and the affair appears to have died there, as did Amelung's business career.[58]

Amelung's failure as business-founder indicated that the immediate future of German-American commercial relations would not be based upon either immigrant labor or expanding industry — although both of those would come in time. The first phase of the German-American relationship would instead be based upon trade and commerce, centered in the harbors of port cities, carried out by merchants on both sides of the Atlantic.

"Days of Luxury..."

In Bremen there were "days of luxury, like never before."[59] In Hamburg, property values soared and wealthy extravagance was everywhere in evidence. For the Hanse, the last decades of the 18th century promised a sunrise as glorious as anything C.A. Heineken or others had predicted. Hanseatic ships appeared for the first time in the harbors of

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[58] Ambrose Clarke to F. Amelung, 24 April, 1807. MDHS: Ambrose Clarke papers (Ms 1754) (A description of the affair with Amelung and Konig can be found in "Box 7.")

[59] Schulz, "Das Bremer Bürgertum in der Umbruchszeit," 19.

America, China, the East Indies, and Africa.[60] After three centuries of declining influence and importance, Bremen and Hamburg had returned as major forces in world trade.

In the last three decades of the 18th century, Hamburg's population grew by 43%, as young men came from the surrounding towns to the prospering port city to work, then brought their families and settled down.[61] In Bremen, the last half of the 18th century saw a more modest 12% growth in population, but during the same period the net worth of Bremen's citizens had *doubled* — almost all of that increase within the last twenty years of the century.[62] The 1780s and 1790s were, as Mary Lindemann has written, "a period of almost unexampled prosperity" in the Hanse.[63]

At the center of this new boom in trade stood the growing relationship with the emergent United States of America. This was particularly the case with Bremen, which fervently embraced American commerce. The new relationship with America introduced Germans to a product which they quickly began to crave: inexpensive, high-quality American tobacco.[64] Additionally, much to the delight of the US consulate, American cotton became a real competitor against the British cotton which had dominated Bremen's markets up to that time.[65] American domestic produce like tobacco, cotton, and rice, and "American" re-exported goods like sugar and coffee made astonishing progress in Bremen's merchant houses. Fifteen years after Arnold Delius' first voyage, US commerce was Bremen's second most important business, closing quickly on the city's trade with

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60 Hans Wiedemann, *Die Aussenpolitik Bremens im Zeitalter der Französichen Revolution 1794-1803* (Bremen: C. Schünemann, 1960), 18-20.

61 Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers,* 3-5.

62 Schäfer, *Bremen und die Kontinentalsperre,* 10.

63 Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers,* 8.

64 Wiedemann, *Die Aussenpolitik,* 20.

65 F.J. Wichelshausen to Pickering, 12 July 1798. NAW-B. Wichelshausen doesn't specify whether he refers to raw cotton or cloth; likely the latter.

Britain.[66] Had it continued at that rate, and had there been no wars, US trade would have outstripped Britain in a few years to become Bremen's single most important commerce. By 1800, Bremen's merchants bought virtually all their tobacco and cotton from the United States.[67]

Hamburg, although it remained interested in the North American trade, directed most of its attention to more southerly places. Hamburg merchants became particularly involved with the West Indies, and in Central and South America. These areas kept the Hamburg merchants well-supplied with the raw sugar for the city's 400 sugar refineries. By the 1790s, Hamburg was importing 80 million *Pfund* (a German pound weighed a little more than an English pound) of raw sugar each year, primarily from the Indies, but also from the US. Hamburg then exported the refined product, or sold it up-river in Germany.[68] A large proportion of this trade was apparently in open defiance of Spain's crumbling mercantile empire. Germany's largest port did a thriving smuggling trade in the Americas: a gray-market arrangement where Hamburgers stationed in these regions bribed the local Spanish officials or simply ignored the paperwork. Hamburg's investment of men and material in these regions was so significant that when most of the Americas revolted against Spain, one German agent wrote home gleefully: "Hamburg has colonies at last!"[69]

Despite the interest in Hispano-America, Hamburg's commerce with North America also increased substantially during the 1790s. The industrious Caspar Voght was the first Hamburg merchant to import directly from the US. His transactions with New York,

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66 Schäfer, *Bremen und die Kontinentalsperre,* 8-9.
67 Ibid., 8-9.
68 Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers,* 40-42.
69 Clapp, *The Port of Hamburg,* 18-19.

Philadelphia, and Baltimore merchants, as we have seen, involved American foodstuffs and tobacco, although his dealings with other places in the Americas were larger and apparently more profitable.[70] Justus Ruperti was another prominent Hamburg businessman whose primary interests lay in Mexico and other Central and South American locations, but who also began to do business with North American firms in the 1790s. He ultimately came to know a number of American businessmen, and traveled in the United States, expanding his dealings there.[71]

By 1793, the American flag was a regular sight in the Elbe. John Parish wrote to the American Secretary of State that "the very high freight given to the American Flag has a drawn a number of your shipping to this Port.... In the course of a month about 70 Sail of American Ships have been loaded here."[72] Despite the spreading shockwaves of the French Revolution and the maritime conflicts it was causing, the US and the Hanse were enjoying their neutral status. Indeed, the disruptions of war were increasingly a boon to US and Hanseatic shippers when the conflicts immobilized the shipping of competitors like the Dutch. "The Trade of this City [Hamburg] with the United States continues to increase," Parish wrote a month later. "A Number of Ships have been lately dispatched, and I hear of little or no interruptions by the Powers of War."[73]

Charles Buck later claimed that, as a young man in Hamburg in the 1790s, he and others of his generation were excited by the prospects offered by the new, volatile world situation: a free America, a revolutionary France, commerce seeking all kinds of new markets and opportunities. Buck's background was typical for a Hamburg merchant: his

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70 Schramm, Hamburg, *Deutschland und die Welt,* 25-31.
71 Ibid., 76-83.
72 Parish to Pickering, 20 September, 1793. NAW-H.
73 Parish to Pickering, 25 October, 1793. NAW-H.

father was a lawyer who "had romantic notions about America," and Charles (Karl) was apprenticed in his teens to a successful merchant house run by his uncle. With a loan from a Jewish banker, Buck and a friend started their own firm in 1797. "My mind was bent upon the American trade," he wrote, "and I went right and left, among all the American captains, and all others interested in this trade."[74]

Buck made a number of friends among the Americans visiting Hamburg in the 1790s, many of whom came from Philadelphia or Baltimore, and either knew many Germans, or were themselves German-Americans. Soon Buck's, like many other Hamburg firms, was doing a profitable business on the Philadelphia-Hamburg circuit, exporting German linens and importing American sugar and cotton.[75]

Bremen and Hamburg traded substantially with each other, of course, and thus Hamburg got a number of North American products without actually sending ships to or establishing firms in the United States.[76] Bremen soon specialized primarily in North American products like tobacco and cotton, while Hamburg emphasized Central and South American ones like sugar and coffee. Hamburg obtained much of its raw tobacco, for instance, from Bremen, and then re-sold it to the rolling plants outside the city.[77] By way of such exchanges, both cities were plentifully stocked in all these commodities in the 1780s and 1790s.

While Hamburgers may not have expressed as great a commercial interest in the United States as did the Bremers, their cultural, ideological, and social fascination with

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74 Diary of Charles N. Buck (no page numbers). PHS.

75 Ibid. Buck's first deal with America, actually, was cut with a young French émigré, not a German, although Buck's German-American contacts were extensive.

76 Schäfer, *Bremen und die Kontinentalsperre,* 9.

77 Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers,* 39-40.

America continued unabated. Hamburg was, after all, the home of Christopher Daniel Ebeling, Germany's most prolific and respected Americanist. Hanseatic interest in Hispano-America was strictly commercial, particularly in Hamburg, whose economy was more closely linked to the products from those areas. But in the Hanse, interest in the United States remained both broad and deep, reaching not only into pocketbooks and accounting tables, but into the debates, social clubs, and political fantasies of the intelligentsia and common folk alike.

Hanseatic trade with the United States was virtually the only US-German commerce in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Very few vessels which arrived in American ports from Germany came from anywhere other than Bremen or Hamburg. When Charles Buck visited Baltimore in the spring of 1799, he went to the waterfront and immediately counted twenty-four German ships in the harbor on that day — all from Bremen and Hamburg. The warehouses, he noted, were full of German linens. Buck, who wanted to ship a cargo of coffee to his native Hamburg, inquired with six different ship captains, but found each vessel already fully loaded, and preparing to sail to the Hanseatic ports.[78]

Ships outbound to German harbors from the United States rarely sailed to ports other than the two largest of the old Hanseatic harbors. In 1800, for instance, customs records for the port of Baltimore show 17 ships arriving from Bremen, 11 from Hamburg, and one from Emden. Outbound to Germany that year were 28 to Bremen, ten to Hamburg, and two to Emden. German trade in 1800 accounted for 11% of Baltimore's arrivals and 15% of her departures. In customs records for American ports at this time, one can sometimes find the odd ship from Stettin or Danzig. In 1799, as in many other

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[78] Diary Charles N. Buck (no page numbers). PHS.

years, Baltimore's US-German commerce was carried out entirely via Bremen and Hamburg. This scene was replayed in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. The Hanse were unquestionably the conduit for US-German commerce.[79]

One example of this burgeoning trade from Baltimore to the Hanse is the firm of John Smith, which had made a considerable profit selling American foodstuffs to France, returning with French wine to sell in America. Smith began considering alternate and less dangerous markets by 1794. British blockades and French privateers drove Smith to consider a port he had never before entertained: Bremen.[80] So many other Baltimore shippers became interested in this new commerce (largely tobacco), that by 1799, half (36 out of 72) of all American vessels which entered Bremen sailed from Baltimore.[81]

The Circuits of Trade

The US-Hanseatic commerce was not always a direct line between Germany and America. American shippers frequently obtained cargoes like sugar and coffee from the Indies, and re-shipped them to Europe from US harbors. "American" coffee often found its way to Hamburg in this fashion. German shippers sometimes plied a similar three-pointed circuit with other European ports. A vessel might sail from Hamburg to Baltimore with one cargo, then leave for Amsterdam with a different one.[82] Generally, more vessels were outbound to Germany from US harbors than vice-versa, indicating firstly that

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79 All figures for Baltimore are from the MDHS: Baltimore Customs Records (Ms 2301), microfilm.

80 John Smith to P. Strachan, 13 January, 1798. MDHS: Smith Letterbooks (Ms 1152).

81 Beutin, *Bremen und Amerika,* 18.

82 Most customs records after 1800 show "Port Whither" and "Port Whence" for ships' logs. Prior to 1800, records are often less clear on this.

American exports were raw materials — larger and bulkier than finished goods, and secondly that American merchants were running a successful resale market for various *Kolonialwaren* that Germans wanted.

American ships often unloaded cargoes from the United States in Hamburg, then loaded cargoes for a third destination in Europe or the Indies. As the US-German commerce of the 1790s expanded and became more sophisticated, this was increasingly the case. John Parish reported in October 1793 that, of the ten American-flagged ships at anchor in Hamburg, only four were soon to be outbound for the US. Most of the others were preparing to sail for European harbors.[83] Earlier that summer, some seventy American merchant ships had come and gone, Parish noted, most loaded with wheat and corn for Cadiz or Lisbon.[84]

What were the goods traded between Americans and Germans at this time? Since the colonial period, Hanseatic merchants had shown an interest in the products of the American South: rice, cotton, and tobacco. In 1730 the English began allowing limited quantities of rice to be exported directly from the Carolinas to Germany. A few German firms took advantage of this small back-door in the mercantile system; in the 1750s, for instance, five to ten Bremer ships each year carried Carolina rice directly back to Germany, with the blessing of the British authorities.[85] Later, tobacco, and then cotton, became the primary exports of an independent American South. Although cotton became the South's largest export to most of the world after 1815, tobacco remained particularly prominent in

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83 Parish to Pickering, 25 October, 1793. NAW-H. (Two were bound for New York, one for Boston, one for Philadelphia, two for Lisbon, one for Cadiz, one for Ostend, and the remaining two were undecided.)

84 Ibid.

85 Beutin, *Bremen und Amerika,* 15.

the US-German commercial relationship (though Germans certainly bought plenty of American cotton.)[86]

In a letter to John Adams in 1784, the Prussian Baron Thulemeier had proposed importing four commodities from the United States: "Virginia tobacco, Rice, Indigo, Whale Oil."[87] Of the last of these, there is virtually no evidence of trade in subsequent years. Indigo was traded with Bremen and Hamburg, although in small quantities. Tobacco and rice, of course, would be major components of US-German trade. Additionally, American coffee, sugar, spirits, and various other foodstuffs arrived in Bremen and Hamburg from the United States.

Bremen and Hamburg definitely had different preferences for American goods. Hamburg's imports of coffee from the US, for instance, dwarfed Bremen's. The latter imported roughly 3.6 million pounds of American coffee in 1799.[88] Hamburg, by contrast, received a staggering 14.8 million pounds in 1797.[89] Bremen was by far the larger importer of American tobacco, taking in 3-4 times as much as Hamburg: nearly 12,000 hogsheads of tobacco leaf in 1799, compared to 3,183 for Hamburg in 1797.[90] Both of the Hanseatic ports imported significant quantities of cotton, rice, and sugar from the US. For a brief span in the 1790s Bremen imported more American sugar than did

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86 With regard to cotton in general, see: Johnson, *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States* Vol. 2, 22-23. Precise year-by-year records of Bremen's imports of these commodities after 1815 are preserved in the *Wareneinfuhr* papers: SuUB, Brem.c.1655. (These little folders — one for each year after 1820 — are much easier to use than the limited *Wareneinfuhrlisten* preserved by the SAB: 2-Ss.2.a.4) See also: Pitsch, *Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen,* for his tabulated appendices on rice, cotton, tobacco, and other imports.

87 Thulemeier to John Adams (at the Hague), 25 March, 1784. MAHS: US Dept. of State, Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, 1783-1789. (E178)

88 SAB: Ss.2.a.4.i.2.b

89 SAH: *Verzeichnis der in Jahr 1797 an Hamburg gebrachten Waren.* (no catalog #)

90 SAB: Ss.2.a.4.i.2.b and SAH: *Verzeichnis der in Jahr 1797 an Hamburg gebrachten Waren.* (no catalog #)

Hamburg, although after the Napoleonic Wars, this trade passed gradually to Hamburg. Both cities naturally dabbled in various smaller cargoes, and thus goods as diverse as rum, sassafras, rhubarb, rubber, turpentine, and a host of others reached Germany from America.[91]

Traveling in the opposite direction, German goods reached the United States from Bremen and Hamburg. From the outset, many Germans and Americans were convinced that German textiles would be successful in the United States. Fine cloths and finished clothing figured prominently in all the early US-Prussian negotiations. They were also the primary trade goods which the Hamburg Senate proposed (in the letter carried to Congress by J.A. de Boor) for a US-German trade: "German cloths of every quality and color.... Cotton stuffs of every kind, manufactured in Germany...."[92]

As early as 1779, Peter Hasenclever predicted that there would be a market in America for German linens, which would in turn encourage more Americans to sell to Germany: "there is no doubt this business will come to perfection," he wrote to Benjamin Franklin. "As soon as peace is established, we shall do some great affairs."[93] Hanseatic merchants also regarded the United States as an excellent new market for German textiles. Arnold Delius was one of the Bremer merchants who had built his business primarily in the linen trade, and was eager to get a toehold on what he imagined would be a virtually limitless new market. Within a few years of American independence, a wide variety of

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91 Ibid.

92 "From the City of Hamburg to Congress, 29 March 1783," in: MAHS: US Dept. of State, Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, 1783-1789. (E178)

93 Peter Hasenclever to Benjamin Franklin, 24 April 1779. APS: *Papers of Benjamin Franklin.*

German textiles and clothing were being shipped to the United States: men's and women's outfits, stockings, hats, handkerchiefs, and household items like tablecloths and curtains.[94]

In addition to textiles, Germans exported metal products to America. German tableware, knives, and cutlery, famous since the Middle Ages, often sold well in American cities. Robert Oliver imported a large amount of German pewter in 1799-1800, shipped to Baltimore from Hamburg.[95] Oliver's friend and fellow merchant John Smith became interested in a tobacco/linen trade between Baltimore and Bremen in the early 1790s. By 1798, Smith was also importing tableware from Hamburg, running two ships per year regularly to the Hanse.[96]

German exports to the US were frequently quite diverse, often consisting of luxury items like cologne, brandies, or toiletries, or products of craftsmen, such as cuckoo clocks, expensive childrens' toys, or fine silver-framed mirrors. In 1799 the Clifford Brothers of Philadelphia sent another cargo of sugar to Hamburg, and gave Charles Buck, their agent, a kind of shopping-list of the German goods they wanted to import on the return voyage. The list was four pages long, and included such varied items as shoe-horns, butcher's knives, forks, coffee mills, padlocks, brass fixtures, hairbrushes, playing cards, sewing needles, snuff boxes, stained bottles, and so on. Generally, in the first decades after the Revolution, the United States exported large quantities of a few bulky items, while imports

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94 In some cases, the names of these articles are fairly mystefying. The difference between a batch of "Common Durants" and a batch of "Fancy Durants," for instance, seems only to be in the varieties of colors available. Clothing seems often to have been organized for shipping by its color, rather than by its type.

95 Robert Oliver to Mallhüsen & Sillem of Hamburg, 29 January, 1799. MDHS: Oliver Record Books (Ms 626.1)

96 John Smith to P. Strachan, 13 May, 1799. MDHS: Smith Letterbooks (Ms 1152). (It appears that Robert Oliver picqued Smith's interest in German trade; until that time, Smith's business was largely with France.)

"consisted of small quantities of a large number of items."[97] Certainly all kinds of German manufactures and crafts found their way to America after the 1780s but, owing to the nature of most of these products, they were primarily purchased and consumed by the more affluent, larger northern cities.

The American South produced the things Germans wanted, but the German goods which arrived in the US were sold almost entirely in the North and Mid-Atlantic states, where the marketplaces were larger and more affluent, the merchant class more prominent, and where a substantial number of German-Americans existed. Virginia tobacco, Georgia cotton, and Carolina rice frequently enriched the merchants and shippers of Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts, who then enjoyed the reciprocal trade from Germany. The port of Charleston, South Carolina carried on an interesting commerce with Bremen for many years: unique because it was virtually one-way. American vessels sailing from Charleston frequently dropped anchor in the Weser, unloading tobacco, cotton, and other southern goods. From 1788-92, Charleston was the most active American port for US exports to Germany, exceeding even Baltimore.[98] But very few ships sailing from Germany returned the favor. With the exception of an unusually busy year in 1816, Charleston was rarely the destination for German exports to America. That fact, and the relatively small German community in the city, resulted in Charleston being relatively late to open German consulates. Hamburg's Senate recommended a consular post in the city in 1802, but the outbreak of war came before a candidate could be chosen or a consulate established. The plan was apparently forgotten or disregarded after the war.[99]

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97 Frederick, *The Development of American Commerce,* 37.

98 SAB: 2-Ss.2.a.4.i.2. (Angabebücher der auf der Weser für Bremen ankommenden Schiffe und Ladungen.)

99 Hess, *American Tobacco and Central European Policy,* 45-54.

The Bremen Senate finally appointed Ludwig Fraymann in 1823, although they apparently dithered on establishing and paying him. Fraymann assumed the title of consul only after a second decree from the Senate in 1827, and the consulate apparently opened only after the US-Hanseatic trade treaty of 1828.[100]

"A Very Favorable Price..."

While Europe began to slide toward war with revolutionary France, the 1790s were boom years for the blossoming US-German commercial relationship. The worsening situation between France and her neighbors initially proved to be a windfall for American and Hanseatic shippers, who remained conspicuously neutral, and eager to take over any commerce abandoned or interrupted by the belligerents. The French conquest of the Netherlands in the 1794 campaign also forced American shippers to look for new *entrepots* into North-Central Europe. The result was a virtual explosion of US-German trade, the German end of which was handled almost exclusively by the Hanse. (See table, following page).

[100] Declaration of the Bremen Senate, 10 September 1823. Also: "Extract of Senate Protocol," 18 July, 1827. Both are in SAB: 2-B.13.b.6 (Charleston 1823-1868).

Increase in American Exports to Bremen and Hamburg (combined)

(Sources, *Statistical Annals* and *Wareneinfuhrliste,* SAB & SAH)[101]

	1790	% of total exported[1]	1799	% of total exported[1]
Tobacco[2]	4,403	**5%**	14,575	**17%**
Cotton	<100,000 lbs	n/a	2.6 million lbs	**13%**
Rice	10,966 tierces	**15%**	34,261 tierces	**44%**
Sugar	<300,000 lbs	n/a	40.9 million lbs	n/a
Coffee	42,895 lbs	n/a	21 million lbs	n/a

1) This column shows what percentage of total US exports of this commodity went to the Hanse. Information is incomplete for certain commodites and certain years.
2) Raw leaf tobacco, unprocessed, counted by hogsheads of roughly 1,000 pounds each. There were always smaller amounts of different kinds of tobacco, as well, and these also increased.

Although some sugar (both brown and white) originated in the American South, the majority of sugar and almost all the coffee exported from the United States came originally from the Indies or Hispano-America.[102] During the late 1790s, both coffee and sugar were tremendously profitable. Hamburgers, according to Charles Buck in 1798, simply could not get enough "American" coffee. Buck frequently urged his American shippers to send

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[101] Sources conflict on certain commodities. In the case of coffee, where the *Wareneinfuhrlisten* show slightly higher figures than some American sources, I used the lower figures in Pitkin's *Statistical View of Commerce of the United States of America,* 148. The original source materials for Pitkin and others (such as Tench Coxe) were later published as the *American State Papers,* Class 4, "Commerce and Navigation" by the US government in 1832-34. Douglass C. North found a number of errors in the earlier sources, so the higher German figures for 1790 may indeed be correct. They are: 52,480 pounds of coffee in 1790, and 21,408,000 pounds in 1799. See also: Seybert, *Statistical Annals,* 84.

[102] Gallatin estimated in 1810 that the United States manufactured approximately five million pounds of sugar, worth approximately $1 million. Four-fifths of it was exported. (See: US Treasury Department, *Report from the Secretary of the Treasury on the Subject of American Manufactures* (Boston: 1810), 8.)

him shipments of coffee, which he guaranteed he could sell "at a very favorable price."[103] Baltimore and Philadelphia were the hubs for a substantial sugar and coffee trade in the last years of the century: brought raw into American harbors from the tropics, then repackaged and resold to the Hanse, primarily Hamburg. The enterprising Clifford Brothers ran packets from both Philadelphia and Baltimore, sending sugar and coffee to Hamburg, turning a handsome profit.[104] One of their ships ran a triangular circuit from the Indies, to Philadelphia, to Hamburg, and back to the Indies to pick up more raw sugar.[105]

The cotton trade was a significant link between Germany and America. Cotton from the American South arrived in Bremen and Hamburg in ever-increasing quantities after US independence. In the 1790s, the United States was the biggest known source of cotton in the world, and the Hanse were important customers.[106] Cotton mills were yet very new in the United States, and thus Americans exported the raw cotton, and imported finished cloth.[107]

Bremen imported slightly more American cotton than did Hamburg in this period, although Bremen would ultimately shoot far ahead, becoming the cotton-importing center of Germany by the 1830s, and indeed the largest importer of cotton in the world by 1845.[108] When one considers the importance of cotton for the 19th-century American

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[103] Buck to T&J Clifford, 11 September 1798. Clifford-Pemberton correspondence. PHS.

[104] The Cliffords, prior to the Hamburg crash of 1799, sent a number of shipments to Hamburg, all of which sold quickly and for a substantial profit. See: Buck to T&J Clifford, 18 May, 1799. Clifford-Pemberton correspondence. PHS.

[105] Buck to T&J Clifford, 7 June, 1798. Clifford-Pemberton correspondence. PHS.

[106] Karin Müller, "Die Freie Hansestadt Bremen — Zentrum des Baumwollhandels in Mitteleuropa" (Diplomkaufmannsdissertation, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Nürnberg, 1985), 4-5. China was an equally large source of cotton, but distance made the US Europe's preferred source. Egypt, the Levant, and the Ukraine were all distant competitors.

[107] US Treasury Department, *Report from the Secretary of the Treasury on the Subject of American Manufactures* (Boston: 1810), 9-14.

[108] SAB: Ss.2.a.4.i.2.b and SAH: *Verzeichnis der im Jahr 1797 an Hamburg gebrachten Waren.* (no catalog #). For statistics on the 1840s, see: Pitsch, *Wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen,* 244.

economy, and Bremen's devotion to that product, the American connection becomes very clear, and demonstrates how increasing US-German trade contributed to economic prosperity in both nations. In the first half of the 19th century, ninety percent of Bremen's cotton came from the United States.[109]

Prior to the Napoleonic Wars, American cotton generally sailed for Germany from New York and New Orleans. Philadelphia and Charleston also did a smaller-scale cotton trade. This business was transacted in American funds — one of the earliest uses of US currency for international trade. The US Dollar became the currency of the international cotton trade, and the markets of Bremen transacted cotton sales in dollars.[110] From the warehouses of the Bremen *Kaufmänner,* the cotton was sold to the rest of Germany. Saxony and Brunswick together purchased nearly 60% of the cotton Bremen took in. The other German states bought the rest.[111]

The Bremer merchants meanwhile obtained the products of the German textile industries, and shipped them back to America. The cotton trade came full circle, returning to America as finished German cloth. The US was not Bremen's only major consumer of textiles, of course. After the Napoleonic Wars, Spanish America imported as much German cloth as North America did.[112] Nor were the Hanse, obviously, the sole destination for American cotton in this period. Nonetheless, by the 1790s, the US-German cotton trade was large, profitable, and growing.

Although the cotton trade was important, the trade in American tobacco was undeniably the most profitable and monetarily significant aspect of the early US-German

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[109] Müller, "Die Freie Hansestadt Bremen," 30.
[110] Ibid., 27.
[111] Ibid., 31.
[112] Ibid., 24.

relationship. While the price of cotton dropped steadily from its 1799 high of $42 per bale (falling ultimately to $11 per bale in 1830), the price of an equivalent mass of leaf tobacco hovered between $100 and $200 in the 1790s.[113] After the wars, a hogshead of tobacco averaged $60-80, a more modest figure, but still unquestionably a lucrative trade.[114] No matter what happened to the prices of all other American commodities, Charles Buck wrote from Hamburg in 1798, tobacco would "always sell to advantage."[115]

Tobacco was the American South's earliest major export. Even after the diversification to rice, sugar, cotton, and a few other cash crops, tobacco was still a prime money-maker for southern planters. The total exports of Virginia and Maryland in 1700 amounted to £600,000, or roughly £6 per capita.[116] (The South has only seen this kind of commercial success in the last decades of the 20th century; even as late as 1900, adjusting for inflation, the per capita value of southern exports was roughly one-third that amount.)[117] In the late colonial period, tobacco dwarfed the value of other American exports. In 1770, it accounted for 52% of the value of total exports to Great Britain, and nearly a third the value of all goods which left North America that year, including shipments to other British colonies and Ireland.[118] Processed and re-shipped, it enriched the British yet again; four-fifths of the American tobacco that reached Britain was re-sold abroad.[119]

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113 Siegfried Fellmann, "Seehandel und Seeschiffahrt Bremens 1813-1830." (Examensarbeit für das Fach Geschichte, Universität Hamburg, 1966), 28.

114 Hess, *American Tobacco and Central European Policy,* 58.

115 Buck to T&J Clifford, 7 June 1798. Clifford-Pemberton correspondence. PHS.

116 Johnson, *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce,* Vol. 2, 80. (Johnson does not say whether he is counting women and slaves in his "per capita" figures.)

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid., 118. (Tobacco represented £905,000 of the £1,752,000 sold to Britain that year.)

119 Ibid., 124.

After the Revolution, the British began to seek other sources of tobacco, and American merchants sought new markets. They found eager new buyers in Germany, particularly in Bremen. Tobacco had been in high demand in Germany since the mid-17th century. The Germans had tried, with some success, to grow their own; Prussia in particular grew a sizable crop during the 1770s, despite the climate of North Germany, which was generally unsuited to tobacco. This had been done primarily out of a desire to stop sending so much money to Britain, but the American tobacco the British sold was clearly superior and more popular in Germany, despite its higher price.[120]

The early American leaders were well aware of the value of tobacco, and tended to overestimate its usefulness as a foreign-policy tool. John Adams frequently referred to tobacco as the "lure" by which the new United States might obtain important economic, and then diplomatic connections with the powers of Europe. Although Adams had the foresight to appreciate the economic underpinnings of diplomacy in an emerging capitalist age, he and other founding fathers held an exaggerated estimate of America's commercial clout. At Adams' suggestion, the US emissaries to Vienna, Madrid, Berlin, and Tuscany in the 1770s were instructed to emphasize the value of American tobacco. Jefferson concurred, writing to the Austrian Netherlands on his own initiative, again suggesting the value of tobacco as a benefit to any nation which would enter into friendly relations with the United States.[121] With the exception of France, these earliest American initiatives were met with cold shoulders; tobacco was hardly a sufficient "lure."

The Hanse, however, adopted a completely different attitude. Because they were not major powers, the United States did not approach them in its search for friends within

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[120] Hess, *American Tobacco and Central European Policy,* 23-29.
[121] Ibid., 44-48.

Europe's political schema. But because the Hanse were guided solely by the principle of commerce, they were instantly warm to opportunities arising from a trade in American tobacco. Tobacco was ideal for the merchants of the Hanse because it had a higher value in proportion to its mass than did other commodities. Freight charges, which could be severe, were usually based upon weight and bulk.[122] Tobacco thus brought a maximum of profit with a minimum of taxation. The bottom-line conscious entrepreneurs of the Hanse, who cared little for re-making the political geography of Europe, were unafraid to jump wholeheartedly into the tobacco business with the United States.

The German-American commercial relationship did not benefit both nations equally. Between 1795 and 1801 — the height of commerce between them — the value of American exports to the Hanse substantially outweighed the value of German exports to the United States: America enjoyed a total $52 million trade surplus in those six years. In 1795, for instance, the US imported $1.6 million of goods from the Hanse, but it exported just under $8 million to them. In 1798, with the markets growing rapidly, the US imported $3.7 million from the Hanse, but exported $14.5 million. The imbalance remained substantial until the Napoleonic Wars.[123]

Both German and American businessmen were present at either end of the trade-circuit, so the merchants themselves profited immensely as brokers of these transactions, regardless of which country's goods were more valuable. Indeed, it is likely that the high profitability of American exports encouraged Hanseatic businessmen to come to the American harbors to set up their firms, so that they could keep these revenues "in the family." By the end of the 1790s, these revenues had become very substantial. American trade with Germany became the only realistic alternative for either Americans or Germans as much of Europe's commerce was increasingly blocked and riven by warfare.

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[122] Frederick, *The Development of American Commerce,* 9.
[123] Seybert, *Statistical Annals,* 260-274.

American Exports to European States, 1790-1800[124]

TO:	Prussia	Hanse	Gr. Britain[1]	France[1]	Spain[1]	Portugal[1]
1790	-	$478,050	**$9.2 mil**	**$4.7 mil**	$1.9 mil	$1.3 mil
1791	-	$426,269	**$8 mil**	**$4.3 mil**	$1.3 mil	$1 mil
1792	-	$116,071	**$8.2 mil**	**$5.7 mil**	$1.8 mil	$1 mil
1793	-	$1.8 mil	**$8.4 mil**	**$7 mil**	$2.2 mil	$1 mil
1794	-	$4 mil	**$7.2 mil**	**$5 mil**	$3.7 mil	$1 mil
1795	-	**$9.7 mil**	$9.2 mil	**$12.6 mil**	$4.7 mil	$764,285
1796	-	$9.5 mil	**$23.2 mil**	**$11.6 mil**	$3.6 mil	$559,448
1797	-	**$9.6 mil**	$9.2 mil	**$12.4 mil**	$6.6 mil	$474,014
1798	-	**$14.6 mil**	**$17 mil**	$6.9 mil	$8.7 mil	$729,089
1799	$617,046	$17.2 mil	**$26 mil**	$2.8 mil	**$17.4 mil**	$857,731
1800	$24,884	$8 mil	**$27.2 mil**	$5.1 mil	**$15.7 mil**	$1.3 mil

The two highest totals in each year are in **bold** type. Prussia is included merely for comparison. Exports to other countries such as Sweden, Russia, Denmark, etc, were generally lower than these, and frequently negligible.

1) Including colonies. Colonial trade often accounted for as much as 40% of the British totals, and up to 75% of the Spanish totals. Figures are unfortunately not available every year, broken down by exact destinations, but the Hanse would certainly outrank Britain, France, and Spain in a number of cases. Re-consider 1798, for example, *excluding* American exports to European colonies:

Hanse:	**$14.6 million**
England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland:	$11.8 million
European France:	$6.8 million
European Spain:	$2.3 million
European Portugal:	$286,781

[124] Total domestic exports and re-exported "foreign" goods, compiled in Seybert, *Statistical Annals,* 132-141. (These "years" are actually October through September. Thus, "1792" includes three months of 1791, etc.)

The Consuls Arrive

The growing prosperity of US-German trade soon occasioned the appointment of American consuls in Bremen and Hamburg. Commerce had developed to the point that the US government wanted to nurture and monitor it. With the initial commitment of money and personnel to establish consulates, the United States in the 1790s took the first small steps toward an integrated diplomatic-economic relationship with Germany.

The first American consuls in the Hanse were not Americans, but were more frequently well-connected local merchants who had dealings with the United States, or with Americans abroad. Scottish-born Hamburger John Parish is perhaps the most interesting example: a man so wealthy by 1793 that his appointment as consul could not have been more than a very small feather in his cap.[125] Parish had made his fortune in an amazingly short amount of time, and in 1791 he retired from the day-to-day management of his firm, turning it over to his sons. He kept a controlling interest in a great many projects, of course, and he retained an extremely active social/business agenda, which included a number of prominent Americans. Parish had befriended Gouverneur Morris in Paris in 1789, and in 1794 invited him to stay at the Parish estate near Altona.[126] A few years later, John Quincy Adams would receive the same treatment as he passed through Hamburg en route to Berlin.

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[125] When he went into semi-retirement in 1791, Parish's personal capital was just under 1.5 million marks banco, and his firm did approximately 8.5 million marks in business the first year he served as consul. He was one of the wealthiest men in the city. (See: Richard Ehrenberg, *Das Haus Parish in Hamburg* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1905), 39-41 and 96.)

[126] Ibid., 45. (Morris' stay apparently lengthened because he was smitten with the lovely Countess Flahaut, also a Parish house-guest.)

After Parish, the men who served as US Consul in Hamburg were all Americans, and all more experienced diplomats. Samuel Williams, who served from late 1796 through early 1798, had been a US consul in London.[127] Williams also had business connections with American businessmen in Bremen and with the US consul there, F.J. Wichelshausen. His successor Joseph Pitcairn had served in consular posts in France.[128] John Murray Forbes, who took the post in 1801, was an experienced lawyer and consul, and a friend of John Quincy Adams.[129]

While the US consulate in Hamburg experienced a relatively rapid turnover in personnel, its counterpart in Bremen was occupied by a single man for thirty-three years. Following the brief and ill-starred tenure of Arnold Delius, Friedrich Jacob Wichelshausen administered American trade in Bremen from 1797 to 1830. Fluent in four languages, an expert in the city's familial-political arrangements, Wichelshausen was also well-connected to many American shippers. It is unclear where he obtained his comprehensive knowledge of the American political system, but his correspondence with Americans — particularly with James Madison during the latter's tenure as Secretary of State — shows that Wichelshausen was a keen observer of both European and American affairs, and that he clearly understood the workings of the federal bureaucracy.[130] It is interesting to note also that, in his correspondence with Americans, Wichelshausen frequently used the first-person-plural when referring to the United States or things American: *"Our* commerce has

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127 Williams returned to London after his tenure in Hamburg. See: Williams to Pickering, 25 October, 1796. NAW-H.

128 Williams to Pickering, 7 February, 1798. NAW-H.

129 The two had been classmates at Harvard, and regular correspondents thereafter.

130 His letter to Madison on 10 May 1806 is very interesting. Here, the consul is applying for a second term in his position. For two pages he lists his dealings with Americans, most of whom he calls his "personal friends." NAW-B.

suffered..." or, "*we* may soon be compelled to consider..." and so forth, consistently, for three decades.[131]

The German-American relationship was born in a period of steadily escalating violence and chaos in world affairs. Almost immediately the American consuls stepped into this difficult arena, even though Bremen and Hamburg were for several years still relatively remote from actual warfare. At sea, however, neutral ships were increasingly at risk. The Barbary corsairs preyed upon American shipping; John Parish wrote that twelve American ships which had left Hamburg had fallen victim to these "Algerian Pirates" in 1793.[132] French privateers and Royal Naval warships increasingly descended upon American vessels in and around the Channel. The men who served as US consuls in various places kept each other informed of these developments, passing along the names of missing vessels and men, or sharing information on the fates of their countrymen. The US consul in Lisbon, for instance, forwarded such a list in 1794 to the consul in Stockholm, who in turn forwarded it to Hamburg. Each consul added information and passed it on.[133]

In spite of these mounting difficulties, US-German commerce continued to thrive. In early 1797 Samuel Williams arrived in Hamburg from London, to replace John Parish as the new American consul. He was an experienced merchant who had done a great deal of business with the Baring family, and who was chosen partly because of his connections with the Hamburg branch of this international financier.[134] Williams was immediately

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131 An interesting series of letters is: Wichelshausen to Madison, 7 February, 14 February, and 7 March, 1804. (All: NAW-B). Here, the consul is ranting in frustration that the Bremen Senate has slighted the United States on several formalities. None of these have immediate commercial impact; they are all points of pride for Wichelshausen.

132 Parish to Pickering, 18 February, 1794. NAW-H.

133 Parish to Pickering, 22 March, 1794. NAW-H.

134 Williams to [?] Baring [in Hamburg], 4 April, 1797. (During his tenure as consul, Williams apparently used the Baring Bros. for all currency exchange and credit involving the US Consulate.)

impressed with the burgeoning American trade there: "Hamburgh continues to be the great emporium of our commerce," he wrote to Timothy Pickering, shortly after establishing himself at his new post.[135] "The trade of this city continues as extensive as ever," Williams wrote that July, "and the imports from American meet a ready and advantageous Fate as in any other part of Europe."[136] In Bremen, F.J. Wichelshausen concurred. "Commerce has never been so flourishing," he wrote, observing that twenty-five German-flagged vessels alone had arrived from the United States in the last six months, in addition to the large number of American ships.[137]

By 1799, business with the United States was so good that some Bremers talked about opening a "Trade Bank" *(Handelsbank)* to further encourage US-German business, and to keep the profits from credit and money-exchange in Bremen, rather than relying upon outside third-parties. The fact that they admitted the need for this reveals more than just a booming commerce. The flow of trade was essentially unregulated. Capitalism was entering an awkward adolescence in this period; it was expanding beyond national borders, filtering through multi-national firms, dependent upon money-exchange and long-distance credit, and yet all of these arrangements were relatively unsecured. For all of its impressive growth, the German-American economic relationship was extremely vulnerable, and increasingly sailing into very troubled waters.

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[135] Williams to Pickering, 31 January, 1797. NAW-H.
[136] Williams to Pickering, 28 July, 1797. NAW-H.
[137] Wichelshausen to Pickering, 12 July 1798. NAW-B.

The Bubble Bursts

In the final year of the century, at the height of unparalleled prosperity, Hamburg's economy collapsed. Speculators, lenders, merchants, shippers, and insurers — more or less in that order — fell upon each other like dominoes in the late summer and autumn of 1799. By October over eighty of the largest firms had toppled into bankruptcy, causing reciprocal bank failures from Vienna to London. The next month, the bottom dropped out completely; by the end of November, 152 Hamburg firms had closed their doors.[138] Bremen escaped the worst of the damage, although the collapse of many investments hurt the smaller city, and Bremen's lenders and insurers were strained, trying to deal with unrecoverable debts and gigantic losses. The city government was forced to bail out several tottering firms rather than risk losing them.[139]

The disaster had long and broadly-planted roots. Success itself was naturally the primary cause. The 1790s had been boom years, so prosperous that a number of poorly-capitalized businesses had been set-up, eager to take advantage of the dazzling economic situation. These firms were heavily indebted at their outset, completely dependent upon a continuing economic upswing in order not only to prosper, but simply to survive.[140] They resembled the firm of Bendix Grünlich, from Mann's *Buddenbrooks:* based upon little more than ambition, flexible ethics, and a great deal of borrowed money. Still, when these shaky firms collapsed, they took a fair number of older, more reliable ones with them. In Bremen, F.J. Wichelshausen mourned the misfortune which befell not only the "foolish

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[138] Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers,* 177.
[139] F.J. Wichelshausen to T. Pickering, 25 November, 1799. NAW-B.
[140] Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers,* 177-180.

and extravagant businessmen," but also many of his trusted colleagues and friends, well-established merchants "who did not merit such a fate."[141]

A decade of steadily increasing business had encouraged merchants to buy on credit, knowing they could unload their goods at a profit later. As the boom market continued, prices became increasingly fickle, and merchants began to stockpile goods in larger quantities, waiting for the right moment to strike a coup by making a sudden, massive sale. The result, however, was that supply was outpacing demand in virtually every important commodity, though this fact was kept hidden from most merchants because the supplies were hovering just outside the markets — waiting in warehouses around Hamburg.[142] Money became relatively scarce, and thus spending decreased, warehouses remained glutted, and incoming ships could not be unloaded.[143]

Finally, a particularly tough winter in 1798-99 helped precipitate the crisis. The Elbe was frozen for five straight months, preventing ships from entering or leaving Hamburg. Charles Buck began to worry in February 1799 that the winter would have abnormal economic repercussions. He wrote to the Clifford Brothers in Philadelphia, cautioning them not to send their normal shipment of sugar until the market was more certain: "This Situation occasions a general Stagnation in Trade," he wrote, adding that any arrivals would have to sail for Cuxhaven, and might not be able to unload even there.[144] The hard winter proved to be a catastrophe, as perishable goods rotted on the docks, unable

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[141] F.J. Wichelshausen to T. Pickering, 25 November, 1799. NAW-B.
[142] Wätjen, *Aus Der Frühzeit Des Nordatlantikverkehrs,* 1-6.
[143] F.J. Wichelshausen to T. Pickering, 25 November, 1799. NAW-B.
[144] Buck to T&J Clifford, 5 February 1799. Clifford-Pemberton collection, PHS.

to be sold or even moved, since all the warehouses were glutted.[145] By the time the ice thawed, creditors were in free-fall.

Historians do not agree on the impact of the Hamburg crash of 1799. Some argue that it represented the end of an era: a disastrous blow struck at free-trading in Central Europe in general, "so hard that it made the French Revolution seem to the Hanse traders like a brief smudge."[146] Others consider it to have been merely a sharp market correction; supply had outpaced demand and thus prices fell. While many people lost money, this argument runs, the smart, solid investors and firms were able to weather the storm. It was the get-rich-quick Bendix Grünlichs types who went bankrupt, dragging some less-solid financiers with them.[147] Hamburg might have recovered very quickly in a better geo-political climate. Indeed, many of the older firms which had withstood the crash might have enjoyed tremendous opportunities in the following year, picking up the pieces with significantly reduced competition.[148] Obviously, the coming Napoleonic storm moots all of these arguments, since the wars of the French Empire would deliver blows to German commerce the likes of which had not been seen since the devastation of the Thirty Years' War.

The 1799 crash took a disastrous toll on US shipping to Hamburg. Joseph Pitcairn, the US Consul in Hamburg in 1800, wrote that arrivals to the port had fallen drastically within a few months: "The commerce of America does not amount this year [1800] to one half of last — either in the Number of Ships or in the quantity of Goods."[149]

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[145] Köppen, "Die Handelsbeziehungen Hamburgs zu den Vereinigten Staaten," 112-113.
[146] Schramm, *Deutschland und Übersee,* 49.
[147] Wätjen, *Aus Der Fruuhzeit Des Nordatlantikverkehrs,* 8-18.
[148] Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers,* 177-180.
[149] Ibid.

The firms involved suffered accordingly. The Clifford Brothers' ship *Diana,* sailing before Buck had warned his clients to wait, arrived in the late summer of 1799 to find that prices on the sugar she carried had collapsed. Buck wrote grimly to the Cliffords that he would sell whatever he could, then freeze their account and try to keep as much cash as possible.[150] Two weeks later, though, Buck was despairing that he had sold only about 10% of the *Diana's* sugar, and that at a loss.[151] The Cliffords, apparently unconvinced that the situation was beyond Buck's control, dropped him as their agent. Buck himself decided to leave for America shortly thereafter. The Cliffords did not attempt to re-enter the Hamburg market for two years.

By the late 1790s, Hamburg's merchants had become accustomed to seeing about 100 American ships in the Elbe per year. In 1800, only 45 dropped anchor in the harbor to trade.[152] Bremen's trade also suffered from the aftershocks of the Hamburg crash, although by early 1800 F.J. Wichelshausen was writing that "commerce begins gradually to recover from its languishing state."[153]

Focused upon the economic ills of their fallen mercantile prosperity, observers in the Hanse paid scant attention to an ominous political development across the Rhine. On 10 November 1799, General Napoleon Bonaparte carried out his *coup d'état* in Paris, becoming Consul for Life; the military dictator of France. For many Germans, Napoleon was still the avenging angel of the Revolution: the new Prometheus who would inspire Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony. But for most people in the Hanse, absorbed as they were with the darkening commercial situation, Bonaparte's coup signified little. The story only

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150 Buck to T&J Clifford, 28 September 1799. Clifford-Pemberton collection, PHS.
151 Buck to T&J Clifford, 11 October, 1799. Clifford-Pemberton collection, PHS.
152 Pitcairn to Pickering, 3 November, 1800. NAW-H.
153 Wichelshausen to Pickering, 13 January, 1800. NAW-B.

began to appear in newspapers two to three weeks later, and faded quickly thereafter. Wichelshausen dismissed it as merely another convulsion in the endless metamorphoses of France. "Of Bonaparte," he wrote to Timothy Pickering at the end of November, "nothing decisive can be stated."[154]

Commerce Without Diplomacy?

In the 1790s, while the attention of governments was increasingly directed toward the disturbances of revolutionary France, the merchants of America and the Hanse developed a thriving trade. Starting with no connections whatsoever in the mid 1780s, within fifteen years Germany had become young America's second most important foreign market for a number of valuable exports. The United States, in turn, became Germany's primary supplier of key goods such as tobacco and cotton. In 1799, over a hundred American ships entered Hamburg, and over 70 entered Bremen.[155] It was the high water mark of US-Hanseatic trade for a generation to come.

The American and Hanseatic governments seemed almost not to notice. With the exception of the two American consulates (which, in Hamburg's case, was irregularly manned), neither side devoted much attention to managing the diplomatic considerations of the blossoming economic and cultural links that were developing. It is interesting to speculate how a US-German diplomatic relationship might have developed, had the Napoleonic wars not come. What was essentially a World War virtually ended commerce

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[154] Wichelshausen to Pickering, 25 November, 1799. NAW=B.

[155] Siegfried Fellmann, "Seehandel und Seeschiffahrt Bremens 1813-1830" (Examensarbeit für das Fach Geschichte, Universität Hamburg, 1966), 8-13.

between Europe and the Americas for several years, and hobbled it sufficiently that it would take decades before trade reached the levels it had enjoyed during the 1790s.

It is even more interesting to consider why two obviously mercantile cultures, where business and politics intersected so intimately, proved unwilling or unable to follow economic ties with more coherent political and diplomatic linkage. Why were there no trade treaties between the United States and the Hanse? Why was full-time American diplomatic representation in Germany limited to two small consulates, and Hanseatic representation in America non-existent?

The Hanse were constrained after 1789 by their vulnerable position on a crowded and fracturing European political map. As we shall see, their attentions were increasingly drawn to the immediate threat posed by France and its conflicts with other powers. The United States was a convenient trade partner, favored by many Hanseatic merchants, but American relations were rarely a consideration for the men who ran the affairs of Bremen and Hamburg. They concentrated instead upon Europe.

Why did Americans, then, not take the initiative to develop a more comprehensive political/diplomatic relationship with a people who were obviously becoming major trade partners? The answer lies in the young republic's conception of its role in a Eurocentric world, and the ambitions and desires of American leaders to be taken seriously by serious powers. The United States concentrated its diplomatic efforts on the capitals of the major European nations. In Germany, this meant Berlin and Vienna, where the US continued to spend money and effort for very few tangible benefits. From the revolutionary period through the ascent of Napoleon, American diplomatic overtures to Germany were characterized by a search for treaties with Prussia and, to a lesser extent, Austria, neither of

which had more than a minuscule economic relationship to the United States. The early American government thus overlooked the very real and successful commercial relationship with the Hanse, while pursuing a paper relationship with Berlin and Vienna.

Chapter Six

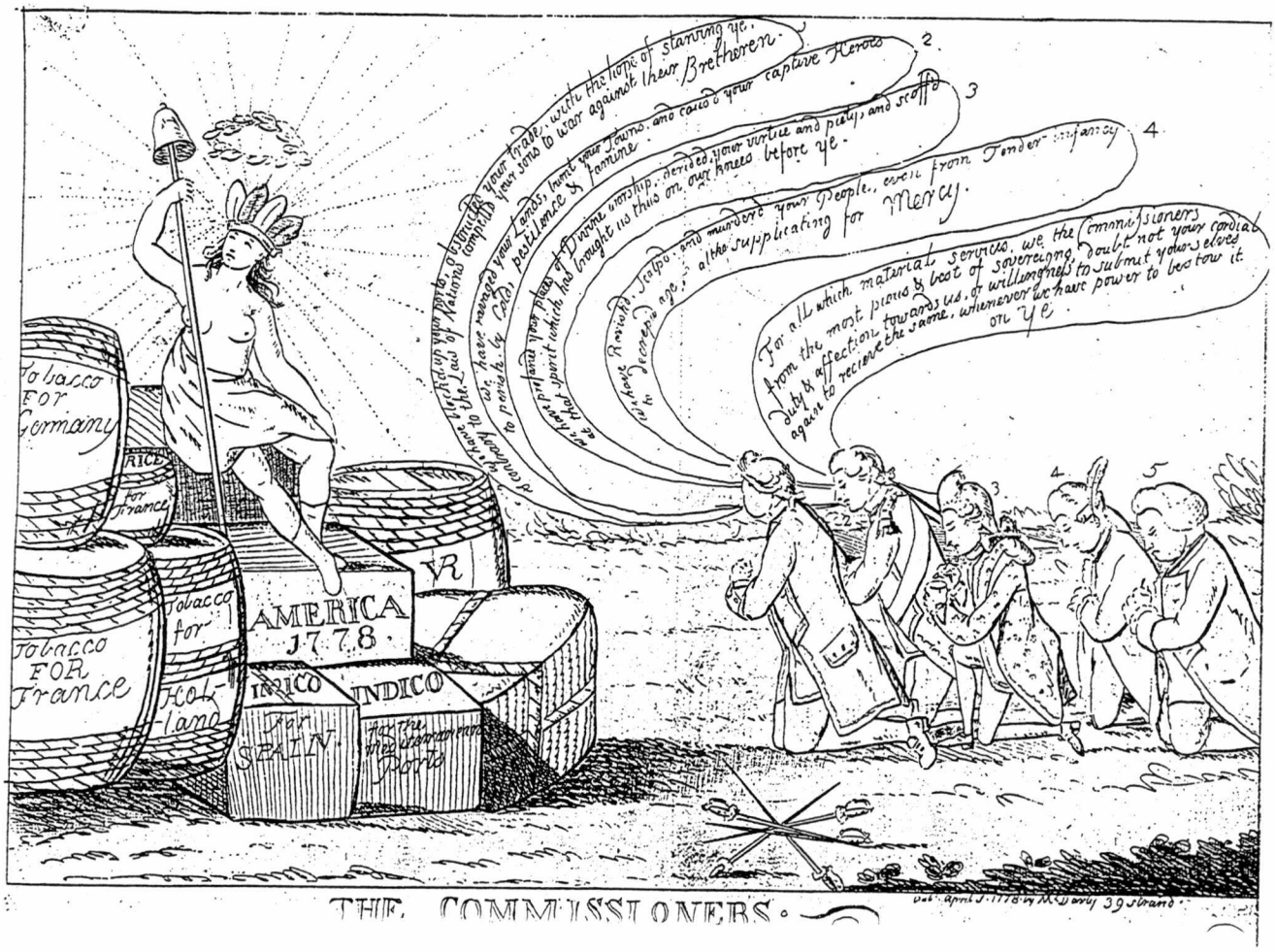
Ideology and High Hopes: the German Powers and the US, 1776-1800

America has already formed treaties with no less than six foreign nations, and all of them, except Prussia, are maritime....

John Jay, in *Federalist* #3

This so-called independence of the American states will not amount to much.

Frederick The Great of Prussia to Baron Thulemeier, 26 May 1783.



"The Commissioners," by Matthew Darly.
Courtesy of the Print Collection, Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. Used with permission.

Crusader State: Ideology in Early American Diplomacy

"We have it in our power," Thomas Paine declared in 1776, "to begin the world over again."[1]

The United States came into existence at a time when commerce and statecraft were undergoing gradual but profound change. Politics was evolving at an ever faster and more dramatic rate. Many of the "Founding Fathers" liked to think that republican America's emergence was not simply a sign of the changing times, but an actual causal agent in that change. Walter A. McDougall has recently described the US as a "Crusader State" with a moral mission that, in the nation's early years, was based upon a sense of exceptionalism: "It is axiomatic that the colonial rebels who founded the United States believed that their country was destined to be different and presumably better than others on earth."[2] Certainly Jefferson and Madison allowed this identification with a moral mission to influence their policies and predispositions toward France after 1789, when it seemed that republicanism was carrying the day in one of the world's great powers. Hamilton, writing in *The Federalist* #6, was one of the few of his generation to sound a caution to those who had become carried away with the promise of the American ideal:

> Have we not already seen enough of the fallacy and extravagance of those idle theories which have amused us with promises of an exemption from the imperfections, weaknesses, and evils incident to society in every shape? Is it not time to awake from the deceitful dream of a golden age, and to adopt as a practical maxim for the direction of our

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1 From *Common Sense,* quoted in: Bernard Bailyn, ed., *Pamphlets of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), Vol 1, 84.

2 McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State,* 16.

> political conduct that we, as well as the other inhabitants of the globe, are yet remote from the happy empire of perfect wisdom and perfect virtue?[3]

Even the skeptical Hamilton, however, concurred that the American example was unique in history, and that the new United States had more to learn from Europe's mistakes than from its successes. This was certainly the attitude of the founders toward Germany. Prominent Americans in the first years after independence cited the German Empire as a prime example of how *not* to administer laws and commerce. Madison, in *The Federalist* #19, and Hamilton in *The Federalist* #22 warned Americans of the need to form a stronger union, so as to avoid the kind of chaos found in Germany. Again in *The Federalist* #42, Madison emphasized the "mischiefs" of corruption and negligence typified by the Holy Roman Empire. At bottom was a concern for trade and prosperity, which Hamilton connected to the need for streamlined internal commerce and clear external policy. "The commerce of the German empire is in continual trammels," he wrote, "from the multiplicity of the duties which the several princes and states exact upon the merchandises passing through their territories."[4] With a possible exception made for the character of Frederick the Great, Germany clearly did not impress young America's leading political thinkers.

The American leadership was divided on where the new republic would fit in the diplomatic circles of a world dominated by Europe. From the outset, ideological and economic concerns clashed.[5] The result of these clashes was that American diplomacy

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3 Federalist #6 in: Wright, ed., *The Federalist,* 112-113.

4 The Federalist papers, in: Benjamin F. Wright, ed. *The Federalist* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1996).

5 One could argue that this has been the recurring theme of America's foreign-policy debates from 1776 to the present day: to what extent should idealism be allowed to compromise economic necessities, and vice versa. Certainly the American *angst* at dealing with China provides a telling example at the time of this writing.

unfolded on two levels simultaneously. On one hand, the United States developed commercial relationships with other nations, often completely unrelated to ideology. The Hanse, as we have seen, were a perfect example. On the other hand, America developed diplomatic relationships which were based almost entirely upon ideology, and often had little to do with commerce. This was the case with the larger German powers, particularly Prussia.

The origins of this second tendency in early American diplomacy can be traced to 1775, when Adams led a movement suggesting that the United States should base its foreign policy upon moral and ethical issues suitable to the uncompromising new ideals of a republic. Gone would be the caprice and intrigues of despots and scheming ministers; in their place would be an open, honest, and equitable policy for all nations and all American citizens to see. The United States would make no secret arrangements and play no favorites.

The result of this movement within the Continental Congress was increasing support for a "Model Treaty:" a fair and open one-size-fits-all treaty of friendship that the United States could apply to its relations with any state, making only minor adjustments to suit special considerations of geography or language.[6] The idea was immediately popular with other American leaders. A committee appointed by Congress in 1775 to establish trade policy, consisting of Franklin, Jay, Silas Deane, and Richard Henry Lee, endorsed the Model Treaty. The committee's report, penned by Franklin, called for opening all American harbors "to the ships of every State in Europe that admit our commerce and protect it." In the report, Franklin called on Congress to declare "That we will to the

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[6] Melvin Small, *Democracy and Diplomacy: The Impact of Domestic Politics on US Foreign Policy, 1789-1994* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4-7.

utmost of our Power, maintain and support this Freedom of Commerce... any reconciliation between us and Britain notwithstanding."[7]

But even as early as 1777 it became clear that these had been naîve hopes. The way to gain profitable friendships with other nations was to give them special considerations. The French were quick to point out that an American trade open to the world could not be particularly valuable to France, since the French share would not be significant. Although Vergennes, the French minister, did not openly ask for special conditions, his implication was not lost on many American leaders. Jefferson, perhaps the most committed francophile in Congress, apparently had no great difficulty with a treaty that openly promised commercial advantages to France in return for the latter's support.[8] John Adams was more skeptical, preferring "nothing but commerce, a mere marine treaty."[9] Deane, who originally shared Adams' position, by 1776 had seen the writing on the wall:

> ...it is likely a great part of our commerce will naturally fall to the share of France, especially if she favor us in this application, as that will be a means of gaining and securing the friendship of the colonies.[10]

Franklin, of course, had been playing both sides of the game all along: drafting a noble republican "Model Treaty" for all nations, but specifically hoping that it would charm the French into a real military alliance.[11] When Congress adopted the Model Treaty in

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7 Vernon G. Setser, *The Commercial Reciprocity Policy of the United States 1774-1829* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937), 7-8.

8 An interesting survey of early American diplomatic francophilia among the founders is Lawrence Kaplan's *Jefferson and France: An Essay on Politic and Political Ideas* (New Haven: Yale, 1967). More recently, by the same author: *Entangling Alliances With None* (Kent: KSU Press, 1987)

9 Ibid., 12.

10 Wharton, *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence* Vol 2, 128, 138.

11 McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State,* 24.

September 1776, it did so in a hail of enthusiasm for the brave new world of republican diplomacy it had created on paper.

The founders' proclivities for high-minded ideology in their dealings with other nations had a direct effect upon the US-German relationship. The early United States government would incline toward more symbolic relationships with larger powers like Prussia and Austria, while giving scant attention to commercial relationships with small states like the Hanse. This was not simply a trend of the revolutionary years. Madison set the tone for the 1780s and 1790s in *The Federalist* #42, specifying that the United States would need ambassadors, "the highest grade only of public ministers," to make treaties and to carry on foreign policy. Consuls, he wrote, were merely, "expedient," and were clearly "the inferior grades of public ministers."[12] They could not represent the United States, even to make trade agreements. The American republic needed big men with big ideas.

Obviously, the growing American trade with the Hanse stands as an example of how commercial relationships between nations can slip though the cracks in the more symbolic structures of diplomacy and statecraft. That relationship developed relatively free of government interference or assistance from either side. Aside from official niceties, the more ideologically-based attempts at US-German relations during the same period were largely fruitless.

The problem most often encountered by American diplomats dealing with Prussia and Austria was the lack of a tangible commercial "match" between the US and these countries which would encourage real, meaningful relationships. The Americans were enthusiastic and given to ideological explanations for their motives, but did not really have

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[12] Federalist #42 in: Wright, ed., *The Federalist,* 302-303.

much to offer these land-based powers who had little experience with capitalism. The German statesmen and leaders, meanwhile, tended to be relatively unenthusiastic about ideology (frequently afraid of the kind of republicanism the Americans were spouting), and only mildly interested in commercial possibilities. As a result, from the 1770s through the Napoleonic period, American and German statesmen were largely talking past each other.

Had American emissaries demonstrated to Prussian and Austrian *businessmen* that a profitable trade could be established, and then taken steps on both sides of the ocean to nurture that commerce, US-German relations might have evolved very differently. Diplomatic initiatives might have resulted in flowering commercial exchanges. It is tantalizing to consider whether America would have exported liberal free-trade and republicanism to Germany's two great powers, had it successfully penetrated Prussian and Austrian markets. Because neither of the German states possessed a sizable merchant marine, the initiative would have had to have come from America, and if the relationship proved profitable, Berlin and Vienna would have probably followed the American lead deepening and broadening the commercial intercourse with diplomatic policy.

But this was not the outcome of the Prussian and Austrian contacts with the United States. Instead, the German powers and the United States failed to find an economic common ground. Virtually a photo-negative of the American relationship with the Hanse, the German Powers and the United States developed a limited dialogue based around a few significant statesmen, a few treaties, and a near-total absence of commerce.

Prussia and the American Revolution: The First Courtship

The first news of the armed rebellion in the American colonies apparently reached Frederick the Great via Baron von Maltzan, his Minister Resident in London. The Prussian king seemed amused by the difficulties of his erstwhile British allies. The more that Britain was bogged down in America, "the less it can meddle in the affairs of the other powers, and that is always a great point gained."[13] Frederick was, however, decidedly unimpressed with the Americans. For several years he remained convinced that neither side could win the war, and that even if the British were forced to concede defeat, the Americans were incapable of true independence, and would remain tied to the mother country in some way.

As the war expanded, Frederick's thinking seemed to evolve slightly. He evinced a modicum of sympathy for the colonists who were, after all, fighting for many of the Enlightenment liberties he himself espoused (although many of these liberties were categorically denied to Prussian subjects.)[14] He called the British treatment of the Americans "the first step toward despotism," and the response of the New Englanders "Bostonian heroism."[15] He denied German mercenaries the right to cross Prussian soil en route to British service — more an indication of his displeasure with the German princes than of any stance on the American rebellion.[16]

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[13] Quoted in: Adams, *Prussian-American Relations,* 4-5.

[14] Ibid., 5-12.

[15] Haworth, "Frederick the Great and the American Revolution," 462.

[16] Ibid., 461. Frederick was disgusted with the British monetary influence in Germany: "I cannot be won over with money as so many other German princes have been."

American statesmen, who were by then wandering Europe in increasing numbers, were often capable of a naîve optimism that approached ebullience. Many already idolized the Prussian king for his public support of Enlightenment thinkers. Frederick had long been a popular figure in America, especially in the heavily German mid-Atlantic colonies, as evidenced by the number of taverns (and a few small towns) across Pennsylvania and Maryland called "The King of Prussia." Franklin's 1773 playlet "The Edict of the King of Prussia," a satire in praise of good government, was reprinted several times in England and America, and added to the reputation of the soldier-philosopher-king.[17]

Americans chose to interpret Frederick's very modest gestures as nascent Prussian support for the American cause. Silas Deane, the US commercial agent in Paris from 1776, had made some promising contacts with Prussians in Paris, with regard to possible supplies of weapons for the American rebels. Deane wrote the Congress, reminding them to "by no means forget Prussia.... It is of importance to have someone empowered to treat with the King."[18] His letter appears to be the earliest American diplomatic correspondence on the subject of opening relations with a German state. Deane observed that Prussia's small tobacco crops had had a disastrous harvest in 1776, and that the time might be propitious for a proposal to sell American tobacco. Further, he noted, Frederick had recently (in 1744) acquired East Frisia, and thus the harbor town of Emden. The Prussians wanted to develop this port, their only outlet to the open sea, and the Americans would be

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[17] Joseph G. Rosengarten, ed., "Frederick the Great and the United States: a paper read before the Pennsylvania-German Society at the fourteenth annual meeting held at Germantown, October 25, 1904." PHS: Vg18.v.15.

[18] Adams, *Prussian-American Relations,* 7.

quite willing to help.[19] If nothing else developed, Deane and others thought, Emden would still be a useful haven for American privateers to sell their (usually British) prizes.

For several years, Prussian and American diplomats went through the motions of proposing various trade arrangements that never materialized. One reason for their failures was the clash of the very different motivations and goals of the two sides. For the Americans, trade agreements would serve as a "lure" (to use John Adams' phrase) to draw the United States into closer diplomatic cooperation with established European powers. This concept of American trade as an irresistible temptation for European statesmen was popular throughout the revolutionary and confederation periods. In a celebrated 1778 cartoon called "The Commissioners," the Massachusetts artist Matthew Darly depicted five powdered, wigged dandies — the monarchies of Europe — on their knees before the bare-breasted Indian maiden representing America. The reason for their supplication was a huge stack of crates and barrels upon which the maiden sat, proud and aloof and turning her gaze away from the offensive sight of the Old World at her feet. The crates and barrels were labeled with captions such as: "Indigo for the Mediterranean Ports," and "For Spain." At the very top of the stack, a huge cask read, "Tobacco for Germany."

Trade, in the eyes of American diplomats, was primarily the means to a political end. For the Prussians, however, who had no desire to antagonize Britain or to commit themselves to some shaky and distant new republic, trade agreements would serve purely economic needs, expanding the market for Silesian linens, for instance, or providing Prussia with cheap foodstuffs and tobacco. Trade would only proceed if the political winds permitted. Thus the earliest Prussian-American dialogue was carried out at cross-

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[19] Setser, *The Commercial Reciprocity Policy of the United States*, 29.

purposes, in a fairly disorganized and unproductive manner characterized by gestures which ultimately amounted to little.

The week after Silas Deane wrote Congress, William Carmichael left Paris, traveling first to Amsterdam, and then on to Berlin. He had had a secret meeting with a Prussian official in Paris (probably Thulemeier), who had encouraged him to approach the Prussian government more directly.[20] Although he was essentially undercover, posing as a private merchant, he became the first US diplomat to visit a German state. It is unclear with whom exactly Carmichael met in Berlin and Potsdam, or what was discussed. He carried a proposal to sell American tobacco, rice, and indigo to Prussian merchants. His "secret" mission was closely observed by British agents and by Sir Hugh Elliot, the British Minister Resident in Berlin, so it is unlikely that he accomplished much.[21] He left for Spain without any agreements committed to paper.

There were already a few Americans in Berlin, and apparently some of them were merchants. According to Franklin's friend Peter Hasenclever, most of these men were sympathetic, if not devoted, to the Revolutionary cause, but did not appear willing or able to launch the kind of independent mercantile ventures which would characterize the US relationship with the Hanse. One of them, a Maryland businessman named Alderman had come to Berlin in 1774 or 1775, but had never made any proposals to ship anything between the two countries. Another American named Layne had "made some proposals, but they were of such a nature that they could not be executed, and gentlemen become suspected when they are ignorant of the affairs which they propose."[22] The war certainly

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[20] Ibid., 24.

[21] Adams, *Prussian-American Relations,* 8-9.

[22] P. Hasenclever to Benjamin Franklin, 24 April 1779. APS: Papers of Benjamin Franklin.

deterred both these men and the Prussians, who, according to Hasenclever, were neither a commercial nor a maritime people, and "ignorant of such undertakings and of sea affairs."[23]

Crucially, Carmichael had arrived without an invitation — a ploy which American statesmen habitually used during the Revolution, and which Franklin correctly protested as being considered bad manners in the courts of Europe.[24] It was a strategy born of some desperation, as the United States was not recognized by any state in the world. The arrival of an American diplomat might force a dialogue of some kind, which (even if it produced little more than talk) would mean that a European court acknowledged the US as a sovereign state carrying out her own diplomacy.[25]

American and Prussian diplomatic initiatives during the Revolution were largely stillborn. Frederick the Great seemed surprised by the continual application of the Americans for his attention and assistance, and equally puzzled by the enthusiasm for American relations exhibited by some of his statesmen. When Maltzan wrote to him suggesting a trade arrangement with the Americans, the king replied, "Without a navy, how do you expect me to protect such a commerce or make it respected?" Frederick instructed all his ministers to politely refuse any American advances "by a civil answer."[26] Nonetheless, at least three of them disobeyed him, and continued to pass notes to prominent Americans in Europe. Maltzan contacted Adams and Deane, Thulemeier contacted Adams in the Hague, and Franklin and Jefferson in Paris, and Goerne contacted

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23 Ibid.
24 Adams, *Prussian-American Relations,* 10.
25 Ibid., 9-10.
26 Howarth, "Frederick the Great and the American Revolution," 463.

Franklin and William or Arthur Lee, as well as passing proposals along via American sympathizers like Hasenclever.[27]

The Prussian Minister of State, Count Schulenburg, apparently with Frederick's authorization, corresponded with William Lee for several years, on the subject of most-favored nation trading status for American and Prussian ships.[28] In 1779, Schulenburg quietly informed the United States Congress that American vessels would be welcomed in the little Prussian harbor at Emden — Prussia's only egress to the North Sea — but that Prussia would offer them no protection against British warships. Ultimately, as the Revolution sputtered to a close in the 1780s, the Prussians extended most-favored nation trading status to US ships in any Prussian harbor.[29]

Considering that he was the one Founding Father with extensive experience dealing with Germans, it is interesting to note that Benjamin Franklin was the most skeptical of all the American leaders with regard to the outreach to Prussia. Throughout the Revolution, Franklin was unenthusiastic about prospects for US-Prussian relations. In 1778 he had recommended to Congress that the United States should concentrate all its energies on France, and that the mounting expenses of commissioners in the courts of Spain, Tuscany, Austria, and Prussia were extraneous outlays for what could only be marginal gains.[30] Franklin had been annoyed by Congress' decision to ignore his advice about Prussia and his warnings about etiquette, and to send yet another uninvited mission to Berlin in 1777.[31] This was the mission of Arthur Lee, which ended in embarrassment and disgrace.

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27 See: Wharton, ed., *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence,* I: 445, and: Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity Policy*, 75.

28 Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity Policy,* 29-30.

29 Ibid., 29-30.

30 Franklin to the Continental Congress, 7 May 1778. APS: Papers of Benjamin Franklin (XLIV, 22)

31 Wharton, ed., *Diplomatic Correspondence,* I: 524.

Lee arrived in Berlin on 4 June, 1777, and immediately sent a note to Count Schulenburg, describing the many possibilities for Prussian-American trade. A week later, Schulenburg agreed to meet with him, and a series of talks ensued, in which the American diplomat proposed naîvely rosy scenarios for a thriving US-Prussian commerce, and the Prussian statesman politely hedged and delayed, all the while reporting back to Frederick, who scoffed at most of the American proposals.[32] The king was surprised and annoyed by the persistence of the Americans, who seemed unable to accept "No" for an answer. He was frankly amused, however, by the event of 26 June, when Sir Hugh Elliot, the British Minister Resident in Berlin, had Lee's dispatch case stolen from his hotel room while the American diplomat was at dinner. When Elliot confessed his malfeasance to Frederick a few days later, the king essentially slapped his wrists: reprimanding him, but dismissing the matter thereafter.[33] Arthur Lee withdrew from Berlin after his various protests — including a request for an audience with Frederick — fell upon deaf ears.

Congress sent still another uninvited mission to both Berlin and Vienna the next year. This was Lee's brother William, who was not received in either capital. Frederick was becoming annoyed by the stream of uninvited American emissaries. When Schulenburg wrote, asking how he should deal with the latest one, Frederick scribbled in the margin of Schulenburg's letter: *mit Complimenten abweisen* ("dismiss with compliments"), a terse reply in a language the king rarely used with his statesmen.[34]

Following the American victory at Saratoga, Schulenburg began to send cheerful and congratulatory notes to Americans in Europe, particularly to Arthur Lee and Franklin.

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32 Adams, *Prussian-American Relations,* 18-19.

33 Lee's account of the incident, written to Benjamin Franklin, is preserved by the APS as: "Account of the Robbery of the Papers of Arthur Lee." APS: 973.3/Ac2.

34 Howarth, "Frederick the Great and the American Revolution," 468.

Some of these apparently originated in Potsdam with the king, others with Schulenburg himself. Some even hinted at Prussian recognition of the United States, if France would take the lead.[35] But a flare-up with Joseph II of Austria over the Bavarian succession drew Frederick's attention away from the Americas. Although Schulenburg and other ministers continued their flirtations with Americans, particularly in Paris, the king's mind focused upon Germany. Frederick, ever-flexible — even at that age — to the point of Macchiavellian coldness, instructed Schulenburg to ignore the Americans and to approach Britain on the subject of employing Hanoverian troops in his upcoming campaign against Austria![36]

In the long and relatively unproductive series of communiqués between the Prussian and American governments during the Revolution, Frederick normally maintained both an aloofness and a desire to keep all his options open. The Americans, already excitable and desperate for support, cannot entirely be blamed for exuberance over flickers of Prussian support; the king sent mixed signals. But one marginal aside Frederick made to Schulenburg is particularly fascinating for its insight and candor. During the "War" of the Bavarian Succession, Schulenburg wrote the king once more on the subject of an American commercial treaty; the Americans had been entreating yet again, and Schulenburg was asking for an appropriate response. Frederick, his attentions focused elsewhere, scribbled a quick note on the Minister of State's letter, to the effect that the Americans should simply forget the whole thing: there was no real business between Prussia and the US, and the Americans should concentrate on commercial, maritime

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35 In particular: Schulenburg to A. Lee, 18 December, 1777.

36 Howarth, "Frederick the Great and the American Revolution," 471.

states.[37] This was the conclusion Franklin had reached, at more or less the same time. The senior American minister wrote to Congress in 1778, once again arguing that courting Prussia was a waste of time, effort, and precious money.[38] Shortly thereafter, Franklin began corresponding with Dutch and Hanseatic merchants on the subject of American-German trade.

The First Treaty of Amity and Commerce with Prussia

By the early 1780s Britain was clearly losing the war: ringed by enemies, defeated on land and sea in the Americas, and facing thinly-veiled hostility even from non-aligned states like those in the "League of Armed Neutrality." Prussia had joined this Franco-Russian inspired group in 1780, as had the Hanse and most of the Baltic states. The League's forming language, interestingly enough, contained many principles which must have cheered observant Americans, as they bore a strong resemblance to the Model Treaty project of 1776, particularly with regard to respect for free, neutral shipping.

As American fortunes waxed, Prussia's position did not measurably change. Frederick continued to maintain a studious neutrality, hoping that his small merchant marine might benefit while the massive navies of Britain and France pillaged each other's shipping across the seas.[39] Prussian ministers continued their flirtations with Americans, presenting both Franklin and Adams with lists of potential trade goods and suggestions for treaty negotiations. Both of the senior American ministers had come to realize that a US-Prussian relationship would be more symbolic than lucrative, and that the real pathway to

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37 Ibid.

38 Franklin to the Continental Congress, 7 May 1778. APS: Papers of Benjamin Franklin (XLIV, 22)

39 Wharton, ed., *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence,* I: 445.

German markets lay through the Hanse. Adams wrote in 1779 that Bremen and Hamburg were the only real entrepots into Germany, and that in the latter, "all the commerce of lower Germany is transacted."[40]

Symbolism, however, remained important to the revolutionary Americans, and Prussian recognition was still a coveted prize whose value was supposedly enhanced by the prospect of opening trade. Thus negotiations for a US-Prussian treaty began as the Revolution entered its anticlimactic final year in 1782. Frederick remained as skeptical as ever of American prospects for survival as an independent nation. In October 1782 he wrote to the new British envoy in Berlin, Sir John Stepney:

> The American Union could not long subsist under its present form. The great extent of country would alone be a sufficient obstacle, since a republican government had never been known to exist for any length of time where the territory was not limited and concentered [sic]. It would not be more absurd to propose the establishment of a democracy to govern the whole country from Brest to Riga.[41]

The ideal of the Model Treaty was alive and well in 1784 when Prussia and a newly-independent America began the negotiations that would lead to the Treaty of Amity and Commerce the following year. The process began via what had become the usual channels: correspondence and meetings between American and Prussian ministers assigned to other duties, usually in France. Baron von Thulemeier approached John Adams at the Hague in 1784, and simultaneously corresponded with Franklin in Paris. To the latter, the Prussian minister submitted another list of potential trade goods, essentially

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40 Baasch, *Hamburg und Amerika,* 43.

41 Frederick to Stepney, 22 October 1782. In: Wharton, ed., *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence,* I: 446.

American tobacco for Silesian linens.[42] Baron Goltz, Prussian Minister Resident in Paris, had presented a similar list to Franklin shortly after the signing of the final peace between Britain and the United States.

The Prussian overtures touched off correspondence between the three highest-ranking Americans in Europe at the time: Franklin, Adams, and Jefferson, all of whom began to receive similar Prussian proposals. It is unlikely that Frederick himself was responsible for this courting; he had approved Thulemeier's initiatives, but he had not suggested them. The initiative for the US-Prussian treaty was largely Prussian. The American ministers rarely corresponded on the matter, and generally only reacted to Prussian proposals. The joint report of the American commissioners in in the Hague (Adams, Franklin, and Jefferson) in November 1784 included only one brief paragraph about a Prussian treaty; less attention than was given to affairs with Denmark, Genoa, and a host of others.[43]

The Prussian ministers appeared to be acting on their own, hoping to present their king with an attractive *fait accompli* that would require only his assent.[44] The Americans, however, all seemed to be receiving the same message: tobacco for linens.[45] The Prussian correspondence clearly shows that the Prussian rationale for a commercial treaty was, simply, commerce. They wanted to introduce Prussian goods "which till now... have gone

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42 Wharton, ed., *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence,* I: 446.

43 Report of the American Commissioners in the Hague, 11 November 1784. US Dept. of State, Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, 1783-1789. MAHS: E178.

44 Adams, *Prussian-American Relations,* 22-23.

45 Hess, *American Tobacco and Central European Policy,* 44. (The Prussians did, of course, suggest other trade items, but none figured as prominently as tobacco.)

through the hands of the English, and have consequently increased their price on entry into America."[46]

John Adams received several communications from Baron Thulemeier, but did little more than forward them to Congress, in one case with an attached note that he didn't see any problems with the Prussian proposal.[47] Franklin in particular seemed underwhelmed by the whole project. In a letter to John Jay two months after he signed the treaty, Franklin only mentioned the accord offhandedly, after having discussed four other matters in great detail. He explained to Jay that he was preparing to leave Europe, but that Baron Thulemeier had arrived with all the paperwork ready, so he signed the treaty and sent the Prussian on his way.[48]

Predictably, for Americans the most important issues were not the specific goods to be traded, but the political and ideological points to be scored. Although the American commissioners were unexcited by the treaty project, George Washington and others spoke glowingly of a new era of peace that would be brought about by fair, open treaties between nations. The future President specifically pointed to the opportunity to begin this new golden age on the right footing by sealing such a deal with Prussia.[49] Americans seemed more interested in the wording than the economics of the treaty. "Reciprocal freedom of commerce and navigation" and "free goods on free ships" were the operative concepts, and were relatively new ideas in international relations. But "Reciprocity," as it was

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46 The quote is Thulemeier's, to John Adams in a letter on 25 March, 1784. (US Dept. of State, Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, 1783-1789. MAHS: E178.)

47 Thulemeier to Adams, 25 March 1784. US Dept. of State, Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, 1783-1789. MAHS: E178.

48 Franklin to Jay, 19 September 1785. US Dept. of State, Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, 1783-1789. MAHS: E178.

49 O'Connell, "The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations," 2.

understood by diplomats in this era, was not the same as free trade, as it would be understood today. In fact, it more often meant a negotiated modulation of *unfree* trade, in the sense that two nations would make adjustments to their various tariffs and duties so as to benefit each other in various ways.[50]

A provision for the rights of neutrals to carry any cargo (even one emanating from the harbor of a belligerent in a war) free of molestation was in fact a new concept, attractive to both American and Prussian negotiators, whose nations lacked powerful navies to guard their merchant marines. Again, as with so many parts of the US-Prussian treaty, this clause was purely symbolic: without a navy, no neutral could reasonably expect to guard its commerce from depredations. Americans and Germans would learn this hard lesson within a decade. The Americans and Prussians agreed on a number of purely ideological points, such as freedom of religion, as well as more pragmatic matters like regulations for handling contraband, and the rights of vessels and property on the high seas.

The ten-year "Amity and Commerce" agreement which resulted from these negotiations was the first American treaty with a German state. Franklin, the most senior US representative abroad, signed first for America on 9 July 1785. The Congress ultimately ratified the treaty on 17 May 1786. Articles XXV and XXVI "granted the liberty" of establishing consulates in either country, and promised reciprocal free trade.[51] Only Prussia tried to establish consulates, and neither nation made an effort to renew the agreement before the ten-year term expired. Most importantly, neither party fully respected nor enforced the central tenets of the treaty; that Prussia and the US would grant each other

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[50] Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity Policy*, 2-9.

[51] James B. Scott, *The Treaties of 1785, 1799, and 1828 Between the United States and Prussia* (New York: Oxford, 1918), 48.

most-favored-nation status, and reduce discriminatory duties accordingly. Americans circumvented what they considered unfair Prussian tariffs by unloading and re-loading in Danish or Swedish ports.[52]

The Prussian government signed a ten-year treaty with the United States, yet sent no minister to America, and indeed took seven years even to designate a consul in the United States. The creation of Prussia's first consular post in America was primarily the idea of the venerable Count Finckenstein, Frederick the Great's trusted advisor and confidante, nearly eighty years old and still serving as the so-called "First Minister of State," six years after old Frederick's death. In January 1792 Finckenstein gave the commission of "Consul-General in Philadelphia" to Charles Paleska, a merchant with ties to both Hamburg and the United States.[53]

Count Finckenstein informed Paleska in April that as Consul-General, he was to oversee Prussian-American trade (in the event that any occurred), and to suggest further appointments (vice-consuls) to serve in all the major American ports.[54] Most of the leaders of the Prussian diplomatic establishment seemed to approve of this development. Count Haugwitz and Count Alvensleben both wrote to Paleska in the following year, the former also writing Thomas Jefferson (then Secretary of State), asking the US to recognize Paleska's authority to represent Prussia.[55] The lack of interest among American officials,

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52 See Wichelshausen to Pickering, 6 April 1797, and also 20 July 1797. NA-B.

53 Finckenstein to Paleska, 24 January 1792. PHS: Paleska collection.

54 Finckenstein to Paleska, 22 April 1792. PHS: Paleska collection.

55 Alvensleben was made *Graf* in 1801, but had been serving as *Geheime Staats- Kriegs- und Kabinettsminister* since 1791. Graf Haugwitz replaced Schulenburg as *Staats- und Kabinettsminister* in 1792. Again, the Prussian habit of creating overlapping portfolios with imprecise spheres of influence makes it difficult, if not impossible, to determine who "controlled" foreign policy.

however, is indicated by the fact that Haugwitz felt the need to remind Jefferson that Paleska's presence in the US was because of "the treaty of September 1785 to 1795."[56]

Whatever may have been the real intentions of the two sides and many personalities involved, the 1785 treaty was little more than a pleasantry between the United States and Prussia. All of the negotiations had taken place between diplomats who were assigned to other duties, and all meetings had occurred on French or Dutch soil. Further, under the Confederation, Congress had no power to force states to comply with mercantile treaties. It is unclear whether the Prussians knew this or not, but the treaty, even when ratified by Congress, had absolutely no binding force in the United States.[57] This remained a problem for a few years even after the adoption of the Constitution. Thus, although the United States signed several treaties in the 1780s and 1790s promising "reciprocal freedom of commerce and navigation" with various European countries, these stipulations were rarely observed uniformly by the American states.[58]

The American states may have behaved erratically, but the behavior of European governments was frequently worse. The Enlightenment had certainly failed to produce "enlightened" foreign or commercial policy, and the *modus operandi* of diplomats in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and St. Petersburg more frequently resembled a brutal *Realpolitik* than the reformed and humane ideals so inspiring to American leaders.[59] If Americans were initially naîve, they were at least quick studies. As early as 1783 the Congress was debating the best methods by which the United States could play the

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56 Haugwitz to Paleska (copy to Jefferson), 9 July 1793. PHS: Paleska collection.

57 Frederick, *The Development of American Commerce,* 48.

58 Ibid., 79.

59 For a comprehensive analysis of "un-enlightened" foreign policy during the Enlightenment, see: H.M. Scott, ed. *Enlightened Absolutism* (New York: MacMillan, 1990).

economic interests of one European state against another, thus securing the most favorable arrangements from each. Franklin, with his usual skill for covering all the bases, had vowed to Vergennes in 1784 that no Prussian treaty would ever equal the American "understanding" with France; France would always remain America's *most* favored nation in trade.[60] By the time of the US-Prussian treaty, only a few southerners, whose tobacco and cotton exports needed little tariff protection in most European harbors, still supported a truly free trade.[61]

In the final analysis, the US-Prussian treaty was a commercial treaty between two nations that shared virtually no commerce. Prussian linens continued to be exported via the better harbor and larger merchant fleet of Hamburg, and American cotton and tobacco reached Prussian buyers primarily through Bremen. Nonetheless, in the final year of the treaty term, Finckenstein and Alvensleben still wrote to Paleska about "the extension of Prussian trade with America."[62] After a decade, Prussian-American commerce had utterly failed to develop, and Paleska's task in Philadelphia — according to his superiors — was *"to develop"* trade, not to administer an extant trade.[63] The Prussians had put the proverbial cart before the horse, as Alvensleben himself admitted when he wrote in 1794 of "the need for a merchant marine sufficient to profit from such navigation." Prussia was unprepared, and America uninterested, and Paleska's consulate *sans commerce* was little more than an observation post. Ten years after the treaty, Paleska's instructions were still

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60 Franklin to Vergennes, 3 September 1784. US Dept. of State, Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, 1783-1789. MAHS: E178.

61 Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity Policy,* 54-55.

62 Alvensleben to Paleska, 8 May 1794. PHS: Paleska collection.

63 (Italics mine.)

merely to "research a simple commerce and exchange between us and the American merchants."[64]

The Americans had obtained their symbolic treaty with one of Europe's foremost powers and most famous Enlightened Despots, but the treaty did little to enhance US-German relations, particularly in comparison to the vigorous efforts of the Hanse merchants, who were cultivating American friends and business partners throughout the 1780s, and turning these relationships into impressive profits throughout the 1790s.

Frederick the Great died a year after the signing of the American treaty. Jefferson, Adams, and other American leaders mourned the passing of the "the Great Frederick," and hoped for a continuation of enlightened monarchy in North Germany. But Prussia's leadership, whatever their more enlightened intentions after the 1780s, was increasingly occupied by the disruptions of the French Revolution. Relations with a distant and relatively powerless America paled in importance compared to an erupting French republic bent on the destruction of monarchy in general. And the Prussian monarchy, no matter how enlightened, did little or nothing to spur the development of bourgeois capitalism that would have given impetus to any expansion of trade or commercial activity.

Thus the first US-Prussian treaty amounted to little. American politicians occupied themselves with constitutional matters, and American merchants who were interested in Germany found plentiful opportunities with the Hanse. Prussian statesmen who might have been interested in further developing American relations became obsessed with European security concerns, and Prussian businessmen were never given the opportunities to explore commercial relations with America. As Europe shuddered toward war, and

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[64] Ibid.

American merchantmen were increasingly plundered by British and French warships, the high hopes of the first American-German treaty seemed irrelevant.

John Quincy Adams and the Second US-Prussian Treaty

With their intellectual grounding in the great works of the Enlightenment, the American founders were inclined to think in terms of Natural Laws, and the issue of *rights* in relations between states. International law, in that era called "The Law of Nations," was developing at the same time the United States was emerging. The founders struggled with the new geopolitical arithmetic their ideologies created, trying to find an "ideal" foreign policy formula for a democracy that would conform to what they believed was the natural Law of Nations. The early American leadership sought treaties that would codify and protect rights between states, such as commercial agreements allowing free movement of goods and people, or the fluffier and less functional (but ubiquitous) treaties of friendship which did not compromise nations' rights to act in accordance with their consciences (as alliances might.)

The idea of a superior republican morality as a guiding principle in US foreign policy dates to the earliest days of the nation, and indeed is echoed in Washington's First Inaugural Address, with its proclamation of strict neutrality. At the root of this search for an ideal foreign policy was an optimism — perhaps unique to the Enlightenment — that all people could recognize and agree upon natural rights to amity and security, and that all people would find the preservation of these rights desirable.[65] Thus when Hamilton

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[65] For an interesting discourse on the subject of Natural Law in early American foreign policy, see: Lang, *Foreign Policy in the Early Republic,* 1-35.

suggested in 1793 that the United States should attempt to wriggle out of the sacrosanct alliance with France, he ignited a firestorm of debate on the nature of America's relations with France, with other nations, and on whether the United States was acting in accordance with its stated principles of neutrality and the Law of Nations.

Hamilton argued that the French government was no longer acting rationally, was not the same government with which the US had dealt, was apparently provisional in any event, and might drag America into a European war. Fairness and neutrality obliged the United States to take a few well-chosen steps backward. Jefferson and Madison countered that the US and France shared crucial ideological assumptions which no other European power held, and that the US should do anything it could to help the French redress the balance of power in Europe in favor of republicanism. In the last year of Washington's presidency, the Jay Treaty with Britain took effect, and the French began to retaliate against this Anglo-American *rapprochement* by seizing US ships at sea. Relations between the two countries hit rock-bottom as American and French warships fought duels on the high seas, each side withdrew diplomats, and privateers preyed upon each other's shipping. Thus, although the debate about France was unresolved as John Adams took office, the new president faced the unenviable prospect of open conflict with America's only real ally. A re-thinking of American foreign policy considerations was inevitable.

In addition to ameliorating the relationship with Britain, Adams sought to warm ties with other European powers, as potential counterweights to the loss of diplomatic and economic connections with France. While still president-elect, Adams discovered that the ten-year Amity and Commerce Treaty with Prussia had expired (it expired in 1795, but correspondence indicates that no one on either side seemed to notice this for at least a year).

In one of his last appointments, Washington changed the portfolio of Adams' eldest son. Twenty-nine-year-old John Quincy Adams was promoted from the consular service to Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States for Berlin.[66]

John Quincy Adams was, by his own account, astonished at the appointment. His career as a consul had been unspectacular, and he was growing tired of diplomacy and considering a return to New England to practice law.[67] He certainly had no preparation for dealing with the formidably complex rituals and etiquette of the court at Potsdam or Berlin. Despite the inevitable charges of nepotism, the Senate approved funding for a mission to Berlin by a vote of 19-9. In the late summer of 1797, Adams and his wife (and his younger brother Thomas, acting as his secretary) left for Hamburg, and after a week being entertained in high style by John Parish, set out on the long journey overland to the Prussian capital.

Although it seemed spontaneous, the American reprise with Prussia was not a surprising move. As the European political geography shifted with increasing violence and unpredictability, Americans sought the reassurance of friendly contacts with other powers. Even though most prominent Americans favored some degree or another of isolationism, they were also learned enough in statecraft by the 1790s to realize that the United States could never truly sever its European ties.[68] John Quincy Adams himself provides an excellent example of this dichotomy between the reflexive American impulse for "exceptionalism" and the more pragmatic need to be a player in world affairs. In later years, Adams could at times sound like a veritable klaxon for isolationism, yet he was a

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[66] He had been serving in the Hague as American "Minister," although he did not carry the actual or symbolic powers his father had when Adams Sr. served there a decade earlier.

[67] Bemis, *J.Q. Adams and the Foundations,* 87-88

[68] See: McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State,* Chapter One.

skilled diplomat who spent the majority of his career involved in foreign affairs, who encouraged trade agreements (particularly with German states), and who — according to most of his biographers — savored statesmanship as his favorite part of the presidency.[69]

As hostilities continued to broaden in Europe, some Americans began to question the Washingtonian principle of isolation. The American "commercial republic" needed trade partners; economic interests had driven the merchant-lawyer leaders of the United States into revolution, and now drove them to continue searching for European partners. Gouverneur Morris, friend of several prominent Germans (and occasional houseguest of John Parish in Hamburg), proposed an "Alliance of Neutrals," similar to the League of Armed Neutrality that had existed in the final days of the Revolutionary War. Morris visited Berlin on his own initiative in 1797, prior to Adams' arrival.[70] His meetings with Haugwitz were without result, although they raised concerns and started rumors among the regular diplomats assigned to the region.[71]

By most indications, the Americans held more enthusiasm for the new treaty project than did the Prussians. The initiative for the renewal, however, was not entirely American. In 1794 Finckenstein had written to Charles Paleska (who was still hanging on as the under-employed Prussian Consul-General in Philadelphia) that it was a good idea for Prussia to stay involved in American affairs, even if there was no trade. There might, after all, be a trade with the United States one day, the Count argued, and in that event, it would

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69 J.Q. Adams' initiatives for establishing new American consulates in Germany are addressed in Chapter Eight.

70 Adams, *Prussian-American Relations,* 26.

71 Samuel Williams to Rufus King, 29 December 1797. Letters from American Consuls to Rufus King, NYHS.

be useful to have the diplomatic niceties worked out in advance.[72] A month later, Alvensleben approved Paleska's first nominee for a Prussian vice-consul in an American port city: Johann Friedrich Neumann in Charleston.[73] Clearly, Prussian officials expected the treaty to be renewed, or at least extended in some form.

Prussian foreign policy had become increasingly muddled under Frederick the Great's successor, Frederick William II, and its execution increasingly stultified by bureaucratic sclerosis in Berlin, exacerbated by a weak monarch. Adams arrived during the king's final agonies. Frederick William II died on 16 November 1797, leaving the American Minister Plenipotentiary in an ambiguous position; his letters of introduction would have to be re-done. Although the new king was willing to receive Adams without proper credentials, the multiple layers of bureaucracy that comprised the Prussian foreign services required correct paperwork.[74] Thus, though his father had emphasized the need for alacrity in the Berlin mission (primarily because Congress "can ill afford it"), John Quincy Adams was forced to kill eight months in endless balls, parties, receptions, and audiences with every Prussian VIP he could find.[75]

Adams' verdict on Germany was mixed. He bemoaned the "miserable little villages" and the pathetic conditions of the roads. He fretted over security and wrote many of his dispatches in an alpha-numeric cypher, because he was worried about French and

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72 Finckenstein to Paleska, 8 May 1794. PHS: Paleska collection. (Finckenstein again reminded Paleska to push Prussian linens, and to try to convince American merchants to ship cotton to Prussia. His tone indicates that no such commerce yet existed.)

73 Alvensleben to Paleska, 22 May 1794. PHS: Paleska collection. (There is no evidence that Neumann ever actually established his office in Charleston.)

74 The State Department did not send the full credentials until 1799. They introduce Adams to the new king, "Frédéric Guillaume Trois." (This letter, and the Prussian acknowledgement, is preserved in the NAW-G.)

75 O'Connell, *The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations,* 4-5.

Prussian spies or informers.[76] He complained about the German obsession with titles, the endless formalities, and the duplicity and petty bureaucratism of the Prussian administration. Haugwitz, Frederick-William II's old chief advisor, in particular infuriated Adams as the perfect bureaucratic toady. "It is his universal practice to say Yes," Adams observed. "But I have learned by constant experience that there is not the smallest dependence to be placed upon what he says."[77]

Adams was, however, impressed by the German fascination for reading and learning, as evidenced by the presence of well-stocked and carefully-maintained libraries, even in the smallest, poorest towns.[78] He passed the time as productively as he could, learning German well enough to translate Wieland's play *Oberon.* He acquired a considerable library in German, including some first-printings of Immanuel Kant.[79] The next year, Friedrich von Gentz (later Metternich's close associate) sent Adams a copy of his essays on the American and French Revolutions. Adams' fluency was such that was able to return the favor by translating Gentz's popular *Origin and Principles of the American Revolution,* and securing its publication in Philadelphia.[80]

Adams became convinced that the Prussians were stalling for time, trying to find a way to appease the French (who now counted America on their ever-growing list of enemies.)[81] Prussia's position between Britain and France colored all their considerations; Haugwitz vacillated because he was trying to avoid antagonizing the French by appearing

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76 His dispatch of 29 November 1799 mentions a problem with French spies in the Prussian capital. Ironically, this letter is *not* in cypher! (See NAW-G).

77 C.F. Adams, ed. *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams,* Vol I, 223.

78 Ibid., Vol I, 201-202.

79 Pochman, *German Culture in America,* 518.

80 John Q. Adams to F. Gentz, 16 June, 1800. In: Ford, ed., *Writings of John Quincy Adams.*

81 O'Connell, *The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations,* 9-12.

to coddle the Americans. Simultaneously, he was trying to avoid antagonizing the British by agreeing to Adams' suggested "Freedom of the Seas" clause that would declare opposition to blockades (increasingly the favorite British tactic), or appear to favor "neutral" shipping over the British merchant marine.[82] The second "Treaty of Amity and Commerce" was very similar to the first, yet negotiations lasted for two years on such details as the procedure for privateers selling certain kinds of captured materials. Secretary of State Timothy Pickering thought the Prussians would see eye-to-eye with the Americans on most issues regarding privateers, since neither party had much of a navy, but again Haugwitz declined to antagonize the British with such a stance.[83]

One major thematic point on which the first and second treaties differed was the fundamental concept of free trade: "free goods on free ships," as it was called. Here, too, the initiative was American; Pickering instructed Adams to abandon free trade in favor of specific discriminating duties which could be worked out between the two countries.[84] The Prussians responded by indicating that they wanted the US to grant them the same privileges which it had granted to the Spanish, and that surely the American government considered Prussia as worthy a trade partner as Spain.[85] Pickering and the President would not consider this; the younger Adams was instructed to hold out for Prussian concessions, and not simply to give away "most favored nation" status. The high principles of the Model Treaty had at last fallen to the pragmatic considerations of a hostile and competitive world.

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82 Beemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations,* 95-96. (Ironically, Napoleon would later suggest exactly this provision, with regard to British blockades and neutral shipping, and the United States would agree to it, in the Convention of Montfortaine (1800)).

83 J.Q. Adams to Pickering, 15 July, 1799. NAW-G.

84 Adams, *Prussian-American Relations,* 28.

85 J.Q. Adams to Pickering, (date unclear — the letter is partially in cypher.) NAW-G.

John Quincy Adams signed the second Treaty of Amity and Commerce between the United States and Prussia on 11 July 1799 — his thirty-second birthday. Two weeks later, Pickering wrote him, suggesting that Adams might move on to St. Petersburg and explore a commercial treaty with Russia, while he was in Europe.[86] This letter did not reach him for several months, because Adams had long since decided he needed a vacation. He was restive and mentally exhausted, and his wife was increasingly ill. They decided to get away from Berlin for a few weeks. Once out of town, they resolved to make a real vacation of it, and planned a tour of Germany.

Despite his father's original instructions to leave as soon as the treaty was finished, John Quincy Adams spent several months on two tours of Central Europe, ranging as far East as Silesia and Bohemia, returning West into Saxony, and finally ending at Dresden in September 1800. Along the way he recorded, with his habitually sharp attention to detail, a number of observations about the German economy. He toured Silesian factories and looms, commenting on the high quality and low prices of the linens. To his friend William Vans Murray, he wrote that Silesia, "the name of which is scarcely known in our country.... is as a manufacturing province the only part of the Prussian dominions, the commerce of which is important to the United States, and might furnish us with linens and broadcloths upon more advantageous terms than we receive from England and Ireland."[87] But Prussia, he decided, had a tiny merchant marine, no major ports, and most importantly, no systems of banking or credit that would be big enough to provide the neccessary startup capital for major trading ventures.[88] Thus the American Minister

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86 Pickering to J.Q. Adams, 29 July 1799. NAW-G.

87 J.Q. Adams to William Vans Murray, 15 September, 1800. In: C.F. Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams,* Vol I, 245.

88 Adams, *Prussian-American Relations,* 29-30.

Plenipotentiary to Berlin — the man charged with making a trade treaty with Prussia — frankly admitted that the chances for a real US-Prussian commerce were every bit as slim in 1800 as they had been in 1785.

Although Adams had been sent to negotiate a trade treaty, it is clear from the correspondence that trade was never really much of an issue between the United States and Prussia, even while they were in the midst of working out a commercial agreement. The Prussians were motivated almost exclusively by geo-political concerns surrounding the Anglo-French conflict. The Americans were concerned with larger issues like blockades and privateers. In over 200 letters, Adams *never once* mentions a specific incident with an American crew, ship, cargo, transaction, or commercial case. He faithfully translates German newspapers and reports the news to America, but compared to the correspondence of the consuls in the Hanse, Adams seems to know nothing of any trade whatsoever.

It is remarkable that the United States government devoted its attention for a second time to a lengthy and expensive project for a trade treaty with a nation with which it had no trade, and virtually ignored the thriving relationship it had with the Hanse. At the same time that Adams was in Berlin negotiating the non-existent US-Prussian trade, the US consuls in Bremen and Hamburg were marking the phenomenal growth of German-American commerce. Charles Paleska, meanwhile, continued to appoint Prussian Vice-Consuls in the United States, enlisting his friend Johann Ernst Schultz in Baltimore.[89] Even in the midst of American attention for the second US-Prussian treaty, Paleska could not find any American merchants or statesmen who took his mission seriously. Pickering turned down Paleska's request for an interview, as did President Adams. After five years

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[89] I have assumed a friendship, as the two were on a first-name basis, signing their letters "Charles" and "Johann." See: Paleska to Schultz, 5 September 1799. PHS: Paleska collection.

as Consul-General in Philadelphia, the US government had still not officially recognized Paleska's authority to negotiate on behalf of Prussia, probably because there had never been any transactions that required official attention. Still, Paleska remained optimistic, writing that Schultz's appointment "appears to indicate to me that His Prussian Majesty wishes to extend the commercial connections with this country."[90]

If nothing else came of the Berlin mission, John Quincy Adams' opinions on Germany and the Germans improved markedly after he finally got away from the court intrigues in the capital. His affinity for the German language remained strong; he read several German newspapers and collected more books. He was impressed by the industriousness of German manufacturers, and their ability to turn out high-quality goods at low prices. These impressions remained with him; twenty years later, as Secretary of State, he would commission the first major American fact-finding mission to explore Germany's towns and cities, looking for places to set up new US consulates, and for ways to encourage more US-German trade. To the men he sent on these missions, he wrote with remarkable detail about locales and industries. Later still, as President, he would shepherd the first major US trade agreement with the Hanse, and set in motion the diplomatic initiatives that resulted in a full-time American embassy in Berlin.

In September 1800, ending his last sojourn at Dresden, he said it was "one of the most pleasant tours I have ever made."[91] By that time, however, the bill was past due for the Berlin mission. The entire project had cost the United States over $20,300, more than the combined expenses of the Bremen and Hamburg consulates for four years. And Adams had paid an additional $1,119.52 from his own pocket, for which he now requested

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90 Paleska to Schultz, 16 July 1799. PHS: Paleska collection.

91 Ibid., 30.

re-imbursal.[92] Although he was homesick, and although he must have known it was futile, he nonetheless suggested to several people that the United States should consider a more comprehensive diplomatic representation in Prussia and other parts of Germany. He avoided directly approaching his father on the matter, preferring oblique suggestions to his brother Thomas, for instance, that the United States should open a consulate in Silesia.[93]

John Adams' election defeat in 1800 sealed the fate of any extension of the Berlin legation. In March 1801, as he was preparing to return home, John Quincy Adams wrote to his mother that he wished the government would pay more attention to northern Europe, but especially to Germany:

> The use and advantage of having some public character in the north of Europe is, indeed, at this moment more immediate and nearer the surface of evidence, than it has been at any former period.... The north of Europe and the views, interests and relations of the several states it contains, are, indeed, becoming objects of no small concern to our commerce.[94]

John Adams shut down the Berlin legation and recalled his son, knowing that Jefferson would scrap most of Adams' diplomatic projects in any event as soon as he took office.[95] Thomas Jefferson, even before his inauguration, was searching for ways to trim the federal budget, and had appointed Albert Gallatin as his treasury secretary, giving the parsimonious Swiss banker instructions to cut departmental budgets by as much as half. Charles Paleska finally quit his position as Prussian Consul-General in 1800, complaining

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92 J.Q. Adams to Pickering, 1 July, 1800. NAW-G.
93 O'Connell, "The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations," 15.
94 J.Q. Adams to Abigail Adams, 10 March, 1801. In: C.F. Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams.*
95 Beemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations,* 110.

in a long letter of the futility of his mission.[96] But the United States, at not-inconsiderable expense, had signed another meaningless treaty with a German power, in this case with a state that would come very close to being wiped off the European map completely in the coming wars.

Philip Theriot and the Saxon Mission

In contrast to the Hanseatic cities, where governments did not appoint officials in the United States until decades after a thriving trade had already developed, Saxony's early interest in America is the story of an interested yet frustrated government trying to establish diplomatic relations *first,* in order then to develop trade. The Saxon experience dealing with America demonstrates again the relative pointlessness of diplomatic initiatives that are not backed by economic realities.

Saxons, like many other Germans, followed events in revolutionary America with keen interest. A number of Saxon merchants, particularly in Leipzig, where the "Leipzig Fairs" drew substantial foreign commerce, were interested in developing American commercial ties. John Adams wrote to Washington in 1779 that although Saxon trans-oceanic commerce had first to pass Hamburg, Leipzig was a fulcrum for central European trade: "most of the commerce between the east and the west of Europe passes through this place."[97]

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[96] The remains of this letter are incomplete and difficult to read. The recipient appears to have been Alvensleben. Even the date is obscured, although the year is clearly 1800. PHS: Paleska collection.

[97] Adams to Washington, 4 August 1779. In: Wharton, *Diplomatic Correspondence,* Vol. III, 285.

If Americans considered a Saxon trade at all, they appeared to be content to let their interest end on the Elbe at Hamburg, from where German merchants could resell American products to Saxony. The Saxons, however, took the initiative to establish a diplomatic relationship with the United States, specifically in the hope of then developing more direct American-Saxon commerce. (Presumably this would have reduced the Hamburgers to mere freight-carriers for deals transacted directly between Saxon and American businessmen.) Some American merchants were interested enough at least to consider the options. Charles Buck and a colleague (another Philadelphia German-American named Krumbhaar) contemplated some business with Leipzig, where Krumbhaar had friends and business connections. But the efforts required to make all the arrangements, they decided, were not justified; it was far easier to ship to Hamburg, where creditors and rates of exchange were well-known, and where the market was large enough to ensure a profitable and swift sale.[98]

Between 1778 and 1786, various Saxon officials wrote to a number of prominent Americans in Europe, including Franklin, John Adams, Jefferson, and William and/or Arthur Lee.[99] Franklin is apparently the only one who responded at all. In 1782 he wrote to Baron Schönfeld, the Saxon minister in Paris who had contacted him, suggesting a list of American exports that might interest Saxon merchants. The two men finally met in Paris the next year, and Franklin gave Schönfeld the names of two American importers: Richard Bache in Philadelphia and Samuel Williams in Boston. Franklin also agreed to help the

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98 Diary of Charles N. Buck (no page numbers). PHS.

99 It is unclear which of the Lee brothers was involved, since surviving Saxon correspondence apparently does not specify, and both Lees traveled in Germany at this time. See: Lingelbach, "Saxon-American Relations," 517-518.

Saxon government take out an advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser.* [100]

The Saxon government apparently believed that it had finally made the long-desired American connection, because shortly after the Franklin-Schönfeld meeting, they appointed Philip Theriot to represent Saxony in Philadelphia. It is unclear exactly what Theriot's job would be. Saxony had made no overtures for an American consulate, and if Theriot's later activities are any clue, then his task seems to have been simply to scout American markets. This Leipzig merchant had for many years established himself in Bordeaux, where he ran a succesful wine import/export business, primarily shipping between France and Saxony. Baron Schönfeld and several Saxon wine merchants had been instrumental in establishing Saxon consulates in Bordeaux and Nantes. One of Schönfeld's ideas was to try to use French harbors to import American goods, which would then be trans-shipped to Saxony, somehow avoiding the Hamburgers and their frequently exhorbitant portage fees.[101] Theriot was apparently a prominent supporter of this project.

After a harrowing and stormy journey that nearly cost him his life (after his wrecked ship drifted for several days, he was rescued by an American fishing boat), Theriot arrived in Philadelphia in early 1784. As was the case with the equally luckless Arnold Delius (also carrying a letter of recommendation from Benjamin Franklin), Theriot found nobody in America interested in his proposal for a US-Saxon import/export business. After four months in the United States, he wrote to his government:

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[100] Ibid., 518-521.
[101] Ibid., 520-524.

> My short sojourn here has revealed to me nothing whatsoever calculated to inspire the hope of success for the mission entrusted to me.... I am chagrined to see that conditions are so bad that my duty obliges me to declare to your Excellency there is very little prospect of realizing those lofty ideals of public welfare which your Highness believed might result from a closer union between Saxony and the United States.[102]

Like Delius, Theriot's timing was bad.[103] The American economy was depressed from the war, inflation affected basic materials like lumber and flour, mercantile enterprises were yet small and scattered, and the United States suffered under an absence of a central government and economic system. Theriot's analysis of this, however, was ill-informed. He concluded that Americans as a whole were far too frugal to be much interested in the fine products of Germany. An American, he wrote, "doesn't at all display luxury in clothing, in furniture, his table is frugal and everything indicates his thriftyness."[104] Had he lingered yet a few years and investigated more deeply, Theriot would have found a people who were ravenously consuming fine European products, as soon as their finances allowed.

Another of Theriot's observations, however, proved to be a very perceptive analysis of the future of US-German commerce. He commented that Saxony's position was hopeless in America for two reasons. First, American merchants were relatively inexperienced in dealing with Continental markets, having done business solely with Britain for so long. They could not be counted on to initiate trade with Germany, unless approached by German merchants they considered reliable partners. And second, as a

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[102] Ibid., 526.

[103] Nothing I have seen indicates that Delius and Theriot met, although it remains an intriguing possibility, as they traveled in many of the same circles, yet came to very different conclusions about German-American trade.

[104] Lingelbach, "Saxon-American Relations," 527.

result of this, German merchants from the Hanse were beginning to arrive in increasing numbers, setting up their firms, working out deals to supply Germany with American goods, and vice-versa. Bremen and Hamburg, Theriot noted, had the ships, the organizations, and the mercantile experience to completely dominate American trade with central Europe. Tellingly, Theriot never mentioned Prussia or Austria; all US-German trade, it seems, was bound for the Hanse.[105]

After he gave up on his business plans and his mission for the Saxon government, Theriot stayed in America for another six months, writing glowingly of American society, government, and justice. Saxon-American trade proved to be insignificant, and was carried almost exclusively by Hamburg. Saxon linens sometimes found their way to America via Hamburg or England. By 1797, some American leather and cotton could be found at the Leipzig Fair, having come there by way of the Hanse.[106] Saxony made one last overture to the United States on the eve of the Napoleonic Wars, offering in 1803 to establish a consulate, and requesting that the US send a consul to Leipzig. The wars made these plans moot, and the two countries did not exchange consuls until the mid 1820s.[107]

The Saxon experience dealing with the United States indicates several things about US-German relations. First, the American leadership was clearly unenthusiastic about dealing diplomatically with a small German state, even though the very same men the Saxons had approached were enthusiastically trying to win the friendship of Prussia and Austria. Second, the Hanseatic merchants clearly had a lock on German-American commerce, even at the early stage that Theriot observed. This left Saxony with no

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[105] Ibid., 528-529.
[106] Ibid., 531-532.
[107] Ibid., 533-534.

opportunities for either diplomatic or commercial connections. Finally, the establishment of trade representatives made sense only in the midst of a growing trade. Saxony could not hope to "grow" a commerce with the United States by signing papers first, just as Prussia failed to develop any trade with America in spite of plentiful diplomatic work.

The United States and Austria

Austrian interest in the United States was arguably the least serious of any large German state and ultimately the least fruitful. Austria had no overseas empire, and only a minuscule maritime presence, confined almost entirely to the Mediterranean. The young United States had no reason to interest itself in Central European affairs, and American statesmen tended to ignore the Habsburg monarchy in most geo-political calculations, at least until the Napoleonic Wars.[108] There was no American representative in Vienna until 1830.[109] Most important, there was virtually no US-Austrian commerce — even less than US-Prussian commerce — for several decades after American independence. Although there were a handful of Austrian immigrants in the United States, particularly in Georgia, they were involved in farming and cottage industries, not international commerce.[110]

Americans and Austrians certainly did not see eye to eye on a number of political matters. Joseph II, while still his mother's co-regent, had damned the American

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[108] The American consular files rarely make reference to the Austrian Empire outside the context of Napoleonic military campaigns.

[109] J.G. Schwartz arrived to establish the American consulate in Vienna in December 1830. See the NAW-V: Schwartz to Van Buren, 4 January, 1831.

[110] Jones, "The Salzburger Mills," 105-117.

Revolution as an "injustice against the highest power."[111] Austria was friendly with Britain, and increasingly a rival of France.[112] Joseph's reaction was a logical geo-political response, particularly after open French involvement in 1778, but was also conditioned by his instinctive umbrage against republicans and revolutionaries. American leaders reciprocated the sentiment a decade later by offering loud moral support to Austria's rebellious Belgian subjects.[113]

During the Revolution, American diplomats were — in the words of Frederick the Great — "knocking on every door." Most of them were homebased in sympathetic Paris, from whence they sortied to various European courts, seeking assistance for the American cause. The redoubtable Arthur Lee, fresh from his humiliation in Berlin, traveled to Vienna in 1778, where he was once again *persona non grata* in a German court. According to tradition, Kaunitz was handed Lee's papers of introduction, glanced over them, and quickly stuffed them into his desk.[114] The Austrian minister (and later Chancellor) was as annoyed and surprised at Lee's visit as the Prussians had been the previous year, and he wrote to the Austrian ambassador in Paris, Count de Mercy-Argenteau, asking what the Americans could possibly want from Vienna. Lee waited for over a month, finally requested an audience with Kaunitz, and was rebuffed. The Austrian statesmen could not find time to meet with him due to pressing "religious festivities."[115]

Maria-Theresa died in 1780, and Joseph II finally became sole ruler after the long apprenticeship under his mother. His position on the American colonists (and their French

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[111] Hanns Schlitter, *Die Beziehungen Österreichs zu Amerika* (Innsbruck: Verlag der Wagner'schen Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1885), 3.

[112] Actual Anglo-Austrian alliance had not existed since 1750, although the two would ally again in 1790.

[113] Ibid., ix.

[114] Ibid., 7-8.

[115] Ibid., 8.

patrons) continued to be harsh. Joseph heartily endorsed Catherine the Great's stinging rebuke of France in 1780, in which the Russian empress accused Louis XVI of keeping "the war blazing by the violent French attack.... bound in an alliance against justice and law."[116] Within a year, however, Austrian statesmen began to change their tones. Even before the Franco-American victory at Yorktown, Kaunitz broached the possibility — obliquely, through Mercy, and then through the French — that John Adams might be invited to Vienna. Adams' report to Congress on the matter, however, indicates that he did not expect to make the trip.[117] Nothing, indeed, came of this initiative, except perhaps the first subtle sea-change in Vienna regarding American relations.

It is significant that in all the early American correspondence with Austrian officials (up to 1806), the Americans referred to the Austrian monarch as "The Holy Roman Emperor" or, inaccurately, "The Emperor of Germany," but not also as "the King of Hungary and Bohemia."[118] Early American interest in the Habsburg domains appears to have ended somewhere short of Bohemia and north of the Tyrol, with Americans seeing the Emperor as the ruler of the myriad petty states of central Germany. These references are echoed by the writers of the *Federalist* papers, who refer several times to "the German Empire." This perception is illuminating because it shows how differently Americans saw the Empire from how the Habsburg rulers saw their own domains. The Emperor of the Reich, sitting in Vienna, generally did not consider the scattered principalities of Germany

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[116] Ibid., 19-20.

[117] John Adams to the Continental Congress, 12 August 1781. (In Wharton, ed., *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence.)*

[118] Consider the act of Congress in 1783, empowering American negotiators to deal with "The Emperor of Germany." (See: Franklin to the Continental Congress, 29 October 1783. APS: Papers of Benjamin Franklin (IX, 544).)

to be "his" territory. From the outset, then, any American interest in Austria would be based upon a profound political misconception.[119]

In the late 18th century, Austria controlled modern-day Belgium as the "Austrian Netherlands." It was hardly the plum of the Habsburg Empire; Kaunitz referred to the Belgians as "these insolent cheese merchants."[120] Administration of this far-flung and frequently disobedient province was problematic to Vienna, and the Emperor Joseph II seriously attempted to trade off the Austrian Netherlands for the more contiguous territory of Bavaria, or even to grant its independence in return for concessions from Prussia.[121]

Belgian seagoing trade had lain dormant for a century, ever since the failure of the Ostend Company during the reign of Joseph's grandfather. The Habsburgs, with no direct connections to the New World, appeared to lose interest in Atlantic trade, and instead cultivated an Adriatic commerce based at Trieste. By the 18th century, with the traditional Ottoman enemy receding, Austria's Adriatic trade was flowering nicely.[122] Meanwhile, Belgium's potentially excellent harbors were chronically underutilized as a result of Dutch interference in the Scheldt waterway, or treaty restrictions placed upon Antwerp and Ostend as a result of wars with France and/or Prussia. With Amsterdam and Rotterdam so close, and with the Dutch experience in and resources for trade, there were few reasons for shippers to utilize a Belgian port. Nonetheless, in the mid-1780s, Joseph II began a series of political initiatives designed to re-open the commerce of the Austrian Netherlands. The

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[119] For more on this American perception, see: Hanns Schlitter, *Die Berichte des Ersten Agenten Österreichs in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika* (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1891), 229.

[120] Blanning, *Joseph II, 142.*

[121] Ibid., 118-119, 132-139, and 201.

[122] Schlitter, *Die Beziehungen,* 41.

larger effort was ultimately a failure, but as a part of the Austrian government's program, Vienna made the first tentative overtures toward the new United States of America.

Joseph II, whose concern for centralization at times approached an obsession, took the unusual step of empowering the Austrian Netherlands to negotiate directly with the United States: to appoint their own emissaries and to make their own agreements without first having to pass word through Vienna.[123] It is possible, of course, that Joseph did not regard the project as important enough to merit his normal scrutiny, or that he did not suspect that any meaningful accomplishments would result. Indeed, the fact that Joseph contemplated swapping the Austrian Netherlands for Bavaria demonstrates how little he thought about seaborne commerce, as he was willing to let go of his only Atlantic harbors in order to gain a contiguous inland province.

In 1783, the Baron de Beelen-Bertholff accepted the position of Austrian ambassador to the United States, empowered to negotiate a commercial treaty for the Austrian Netherlands. He left for Philadelphia later that year. His mission would prove daunting. Thomas Jefferson was the only American statesmen who had given much thought to US-Austrian trade, and Congress had ignored his request to Congress to explore an Austrian treaty.[124] Adams and Franklin were both contacted by Austrian representatives in 1782 and 1783, but took no initiative to follow-up, beyond polite acknowledgements of the correspondence.[125] Kaunitz himself wrote to Franklin directly in 1783, rather than using intermediaries. He asked for a list of prominent American merchants, and recommended that Austria and the US exchange investigators *("les enquêteurs")* to

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[123] Hess, *American Tobacco and Central European Policy,* 47-48.

[124] Edmund C. Burnett, "Documents: American Commercial Conditions and Negotiations with Austria, 1783-1786." *American Historical Review* XVI (April 1911): 586.

[125] Ibid. Franklin was contacted by Mercy. It is unclear which Austrian representative wrote to Adams.

examine trade possibilities.[126] But Franklin, by 1783, was actively advising against any Austrian trade, because it would necessitate American shipping into the Mediterranean, where the dreaded Barbary pirates would prey upon it.[127] Jefferson later echoed this warning.

Beelen's mission was also hamstrung by the relative incompatibility of the two societies. Unlike America and the Hanse, where the government was essentially run by lawyers and businessmen, Austria's system rendered merchants beholden to the state. Austrian companies were often given their startup capital by the government, or their operations were so heavily regulated that they were all but government-operated, as was often the case in Prussia. In such a bridled atmosphere, if the Austrian government had no real interest in American commerce, Austrian companies could not be expected to feel otherwise. In 1782, when a merchant named Zollikofer applied to Vienna for a license to ship goods to the Americas (including the US), Kaunitz replied that such an effort would require "extraordinary assistance" from the government, and would hardly be justified. Joseph concurred, and Zollikofer's request was rejected.[128] Austria had no opportunities for adventurous merchant-entrepreneurs like Arnold Delius or Robert Oliver.

Austrian commerce was almost wholly land-bound and unprepared to launch a trans-Atlantic trade. There were, for instance, only five major shipping companies in the entire Austrian empire at the time of Maria-Theresa's death, only one of which (a merchant of Bohemian linens) showed any interest in shipping to America.[129] By contrast, the

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126 Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity Policy,* 57.
127 Franklin to the Continental Congress, 29 October 1783. APS: Papers of Benjamin Franklin (IX, 544).
128 Schlitter, *Die Beziehungen,* 44.
129 Ibid., 43.

United States, with one-sixth the population of the Habsburg empire, had nearly 400 independent shippers with over 2,000 ships by the end of the 1780s. Tellingly, Beelen's letter of instruction used the word *anknüpfen* ("latch-on" or "start-up") in reference to *American* shipping; he was to ask the Americans to take the initiative for establishing a US-Austrian commerce because Austrian shippers could hardly be expected to do so.[130]

There was a notable exception to the relatively comatose state of Austrian Atlantic shipping. At the same time that Beelen set out for Philadelphia, a British-born Trieste merchant named George Simpson wrote Joseph II about obtaining a license to take a ship to America to open trade. Simpson, probably anticipating a negative response, left without official sanction anyway. His ship *Le Capricieux* arrived in Philadelphia in November 1783. Its cargo of wines and spirits, various types of linens, and some raw copper ingots, sold poorly. Simpson had grossly overestimated American prices, and couldn't manage to break even selling his goods at cost. In 1794 he went to Baltimore, commissioned a second ship, and hired an American captain to take a load of Maryland tobacco to Trieste. Simpson himself sailed a month later with *Le Capricieux.* The tobacco sold well enough in Austria to cover his losses on his first journey, and Simpson returned yet again to America — three transatlantic voyages in fourteen months — where he then met with Beelen, and pressed him for progress on a US-Austrian trade agreement.[131]

By the time Simpson returned to Philadelphia on his third voyage, Beelen had been in the United States nearly two years, with very little to show for his troubles. He found that American shippers preferred Dutch harbors, where they had established connections, and that virtually no one seemed interested in sailing to the Austrian Netherlands instead,

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[130] Ibid., 59-60.
[131] Ibid., 103-108.

and certainly not to Trieste, the path to which passed directly through the prime hunting grounds of the Barbary pirates. Conversations with American congressmen convinced Beelen that the US government felt no need to legislate terms for a trade that did not exist, particularly in light of the United States' happy arrangements with the Dutch.[132]

As had been the case with Prussia, American and Austrian conceptions also clashed on the essential meaning of a treaty. Beelen arrived in Philadelphia with instructions to negotiate a commercial treaty with the United States, preferably involving the importation of American tobacco and the export of Hungarian wines, shipped first to Belgium.[133] The Austrians were uninterested in ideological considerations. The Americans, by contrast, had a much more political view of a potential US-Austrian relationship. In 1783, the United States had well-considered relationships only with Britain and France, and these of course were in simplistic black and white. Austria fell into the gray area of states which were not immediately important to American affairs, and the temptation was to apply a blanket ideological solution: The Model Treaty. Thus Americans were friendly in principle to an Austrian approach, but primarily for reasons which did nothing to benefit the Austrian Netherlands. Beelen hoped for a special arrangement that would lower tariffs on certain Austrian exports, and encourage American commerce in Belgium, probably at the expense of the Dutch. Congress, however, was willing to consider only the same document which had been offered to the Dutch, Danes, Portuguese, and Swedes, *mutatis mutandis,* for Austria.[134]

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[132] DeBeelen wrote to Kaunitz in January 1785: "Il n'est presque pas possible de se persuader que le Congrès établisse une règle aussi odieuse. Car dans ce cas les navires hollandois seroient les premiers exclus par le fait de l'importation dans les Colonies-Unies." See: Schlitter, *Die Beziehungen,* 82.

[133] Schlitter, *Die Beziehungen,* xi-xii.

[134] Burnett, "Documents," 579-583.

In the meantime, Austria lost its only prominent endorsement among American leaders. Jefferson had proven fairly optimistic about a US-Austrian accord, and unlike Adams and Franklin, had actually taken the initiative to correspond with Austrian leaders on the subject. From 1782 to 1784 he had written a few times to Kaunitz and Mercy, recommending more substantive negotiations for a trade treaty. But by late 1785, he had apparently changed his mind, persuaded perhaps by Adams. As the American confederation stumbled along without a central government, Jefferson concluded that it would be wise to establish a more firm economic and political union before negotiating with other nations. "In the present unsettled state of American commerce," he wrote to Adams in September 1785, Jefferson thought that the US should "avoid all further treaties, except with American powers."[135]

Although Beelen remained in the United States for two more years, the onset of the Constitutional Convention dashed any hopes he might have retained for a US-Austrian treaty. Further, the Belgian revolt at this time not only called into question the validity of an Austrian statesman negotiating for that province, but inflamed American sentiment against the "colonial" power Austria.[136] Beelen's reports to Belgium and to Vienna after 1786 indicated that he had simply run out of steam. He wrote a number of thoughtful essays on American fashion, manners, and speech. He speculated on the form the new American government would take, and he commiserated with Austrian merchants like Zollikofer and Simpson, whose efforts had been ignored by the Austrian and American

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[135] Jefferson to Adams, 24 September, 1785. (In Wharton, ed., *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence.)*

[136] Schlitter, *Die Beziehungen,* ix-xi.

governments alike.[137] In 1787, Beelen left the United States, never to return. A trade treaty was not ratified between the United States and Austria until 1831.

In 1800, the US State Department decided to authorize an American consulate in Trieste. Secretary of State Pickering appointed John Lamson of Charleston.[138] Lamson disembarked in Italy at the end of the year, promptly became very ill, and stayed in Florence for several months, recovering. He did not arrive at his post until December 1801. The city government of Trieste gave him a warm reception, but Lamson was disappointed to find that there was not a single representative of the Imperial government present at the opening ceremony for the consulate. The Triestans were hungry for news from America, and Lamson soon realized that this was because there were virtually no postal connections between the Adriatic and the United States. Letters to America had to travel a serpentine route across land and sea that took several months.[139]

At the beginning of 1802, Lamson had made an official seal for his consulate, but done little in the way of productive work on US-Austrian trade. Secretary of State James Madison sent him his official instructions in March, asking "to be informed of the channels in which our commerce flows." Lamson replied that he would do his best, but that Trieste was a corrupt and haphazard place where "no law exists authorizing the necessary information from those who have the management of the cargos." Money and paperwork had a tendency to flow in channels unregulated by governments; ship's papers were frequently forged, inspectors were notoriously susceptible to bribes, and as for customs

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137 Schlitter, *Die Berichte,* 616-617.
138 Lamson to Pickering, 21 January 1800. NAW-T.
139 Lamson to Madison, 29 December, 1801. NAW-T.

records, "...it will seldom be accurate, especially in a port like this, no duties being payable little attention is paid to entries...."[140]

Lamson dutifully read the Frankfurt and Vienna newspapers, and reported their contents to Madison. He tried to summarize the myriad rumors that filtered out of Vienna, regarding Napoleon's intentions, the Austrian government's next moves, and the status of the other German states. But the American consulate in Trieste was almost completely uninvolved in US-German commerce. Trieste was remote from the Imperial administration, and apparently relatively unwatched from Vienna. The American consulate was intended to be a barometer for the Mediterranean, keeping an eye on the Italians, the Turks, and especially the Barbary Pirates. The Mediterranean orientation of the mission was made clear in October 1802, when William Riggins arrived to take over the post, much to the astonishment of Lamson, who had not been told. Correspondence had apparently been lost or delayed in both directions, and (after a letter of protest to Madison), Lamson was obliged to give up his position.[141] Riggins, unlike Lamson, was fluent in Italian, and immediately began an extensive letter-writing campaign to other Italian cities along the Adriatic, asking to establish relationships with their administrations. The reports from the German newspapers ceased.

The failure of the United States and Austria to come to an agreement of some kind was not the result of disputes, or even any conscious decision by either state to drop the matter. Indeed, both governments seemed to care so little about the issue that there was nothing to drop. Crucially, there was no economic basis for any diplomatic relationship.

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[140] Lamson to Madison, 18 March 1802. NAW-T.

[141] "I cannot believe it was the intention of the President to take away my commission...." (Lamson to Madison, 6 October 1802. NAW-T.)

Even by 1830, when the two states were willing to consider a trade agreement, the total commerce with Austria amounted to a little more than one percent of America's exports, and a fraction of one percent of America's imports.[142]

In addition to the lack of a commercial basis for a US-Austrian relationship, the two societies were in many ways incompatible. The United States was a liberal, Protestant *"Kaufmannsstaat"* grounded in democratic principles. Austria was Catholic, authoritarian, indeed in many ways a feudal society. The American relationship with *ancien regime* France was admittedly as seemingly "incompatible" as any relationship with Austria, but Americans held a romantic fixation for the French, who had given them so much material assistance, and from whose land the great Enlightenment thinkers had come. There was no such bridge across the gulf which separated America from Austria.

Ideology, Diplomacy, and Trade: Some Conclusions

Alexander Hamilton believed that the first priority of the state was to assure its fiscal stability. Therefore, the supply of steady revenue from duties and tariffs must be assured. Great Britain, America's largest trading partner, was thus also the most logical source of revenue, since it was — for the time being, at least — the largest market for American products. Thomas Jefferson, who won the presidency in 1800, wanted instead to diversify. He and Madison worried about the prospect of monopolies, especially on transport (which might hurt agricultural producers), and the piling up of debts to a few elite

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[142] O'Dwyer, "The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations," 8.

merchant houses, as had happened during the Revolution. Encouraging direct trade with the Continent could help in both areas, and would serve political ends as well as economic ones.[143] Jefferson also frequently expressed his faith in yeoman farmers, and his desire for a big, agrarian country. He later justified the Louisiana Purchase on these grounds. He worried that a small nation might become dominated by the kind of financial elites who cavorted with Hamilton: a nation run by a bourgeois merchant-banking class.[144]

The United States was, of course, evolving into a nation of both farmers *and* merchant-bankers, and the continued success of the national economy hinged at their interdependence. Jefferson and Hamilton saw the balance from different perspectives, and stressed different considerations, but each must have sensed that coastal cities, dominated by the merchant classes, could not survive without the inland agrarian classes, and vice-versa. It is interesting, then, that so many prominent Americans in the early republic failed to appreciate the real nexus of American economic, socio-cultural, political, and diplomatic currents: trade. The American relationship with Germany in the period before the Napoleonic Wars centers upon this strange dysjunction; the American leadership (a combination of agrarian aristocrats and urban bourgeoisie) failed to make the connections between diplomatic relations and trade relations.

When dealing with Germany, the United States government focused primarily upon Prussia. This occurred first because of ideological considerations, resulting in the first treaty, and then because of geo-political considerations in the second treaty. There was no economic basis whatsoever to the US-Prussian relationship, despite occasional gestures to

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[143] These positions, of course, were hardly airtight. As southerners, both Jefferson and Madison were willing to support protective tariffs on primarily southern exports such as tobacco and rice.

[144] Small, *Democracy and Diplomacy,* 9.

the contrary. In fact, there was essentially no relationship. Ideology and idealism made very poor diplomatic strategies, and certainly proved insufficient to develop any lasting linkage between the two states. Without any exchange of money and goods, there was no exchange of people or ideas. The two societies had nothing to say to each other.

The German powers seemed to better understand the primacy of commerce as a prerequisite for a meaningful relationship; Prussia, Saxony, and Austria all applied to the United States in the hopes of developing some American trade. But none of these nations were capable of initiating trade themselves. All were bereft of merchant marines, large harbors, international banking arrangements, or even large (and liberated) merchant classes. They misunderstood the nature of bourgeois capitalism; their governments sought to coax the American government into trading with them. But the American government did not control American commerce, and could not legislate a successful trade into being. The treaties with Prussia prove that, even if they wanted to, the US government could not create a profitable commerce out of thin air. American merchants were indeed increasingly interested in German trade, but they were drawn to the portion of Germany which so closely resembled their own society: the free-trading capitalist republics of the Hanse. No diplomatic negotiations with other states could alter that.

As the 18th century closed, the United States and Germany were moving closer together at the juncture of the Hanseatic cities. That was where American and German goods changed hands, where virtually all the important transactions between the two peoples took place, where the businessmen of both societies met and formed friendships, and where the first tentative ties to meaningful diplomacy were being made at the lowest levels, by trade consuls. It remains a tantalizing "what if" to consider how US-German

relations might have developed had this relationship been allowed to thrive peacefully and uninterrupted. Would Americans and Germans have developed as close an economic and political symbiosis as Americans and Britons ultimately did? Would the bourgeois liberalism of the US and the Hanse have penetrated Germany by way of the marketplace, ultimately replacing the authoritarian economies (and policies) of most German states?

These questions are made moot by the arrival of a true World War. The conflicts of Napoleon increasingly became a war of economies, and thus were a war against trade. The period 1800-1815 represents a cæsura in the German-American relationship in which the Hanse were dealt a heavy blow, and the course of German political and national development entered a new and ominous phase.

Chapter Seven

Napoleon and the War on Commerce, 1800-1815

It is impossible that war among the primary powers of Europe should not, in an endless variety of shapes, materially affect the whole civilized world.

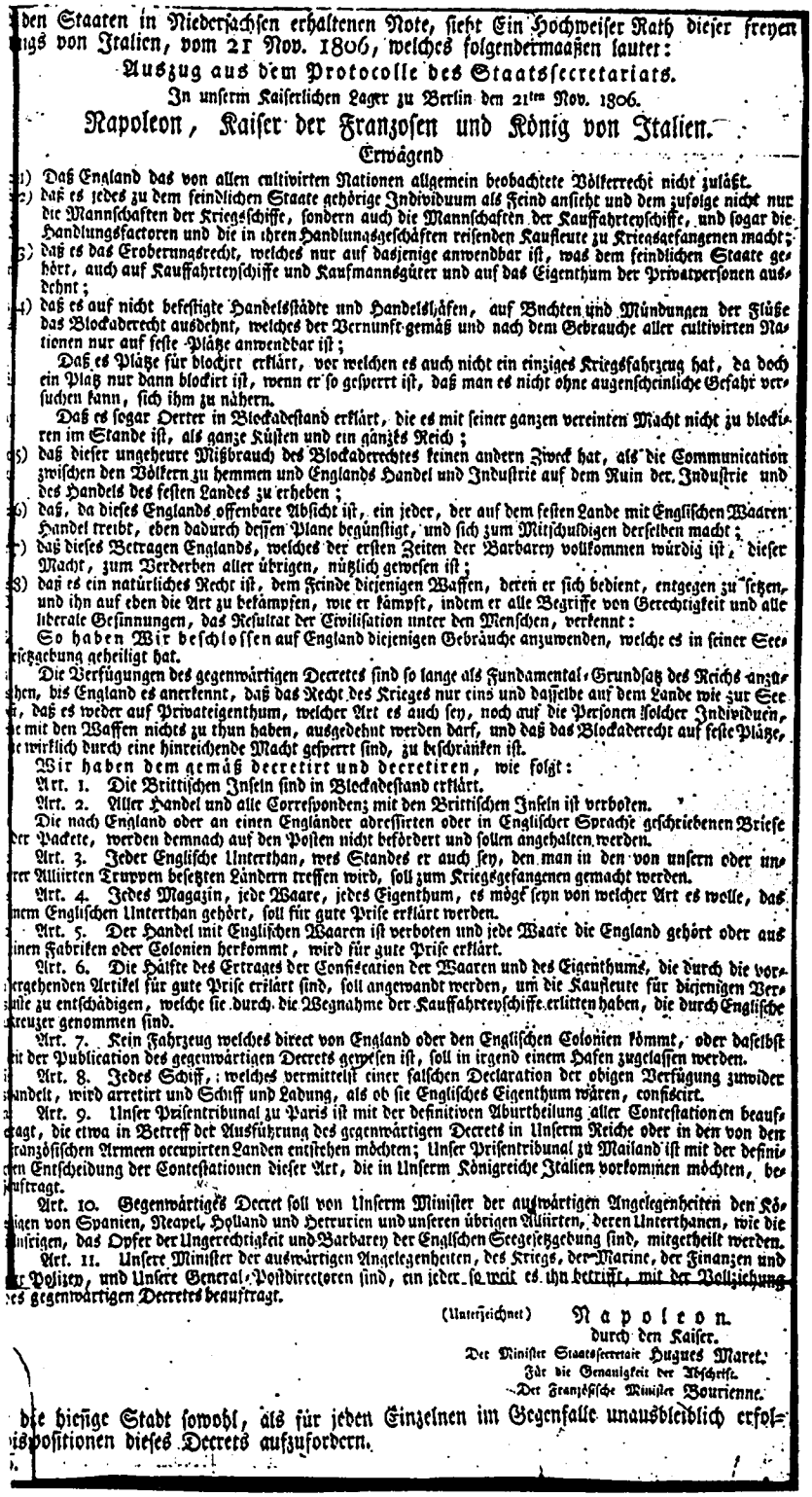
William Pinckney, in a petition to President Jefferson, January 1806

Je veux conquêrir la mer par la puissance de la terre.

Napoleon to his brother Louis, 3 December 1806

The wise man worries when the soldiers come.

Faust II, Act 4.



den Staaten in Niedersachsen erhaltenen Note, sieht Ein Hochweiser Rath dieser freyen
igs von Italien, vom 21 Nov. 1806, welches folgendermaaßen lautet:

Auszug aus dem Protocolle des Staatssecretariats.

In unserm Kaiserlichen Lager zu Berlin den 21ten Nov. 1806.

Napoleon, Kaiser der Franzosen und König von Italien.

Erwägend

1) Daß England das von allen cultivirten Nationen allgemein beobachtete Völkerrecht nicht zuläßt.
2) daß es jedes zu dem feindlichen Staate gehörige Individuum als Feind ansieht und dem zufolge nicht nur die Mannschaften der Kriegsschiffe, sondern auch die Mannschaften der Kauffahrteyschiffe, und sogar die Handlungsfactoren und die in ihren Handlungsgeschäften reisenden Kaufleute zu Kriegsgefangenen macht;
3) daß es das Eroberungsrecht, welches nur auf dasjenige anwendbar ist, was dem feindlichen Staate gehört, auch auf Kauffahrteyschiffe und Kaufmannsgüter und auf das Eigenthum der Privatpersonen ausdehnt;
4) daß es auf nicht befestigte Handelsstädte und Handelshäfen, auf Buchten und Mündungen der Flüße das Blockaderecht ausdehnt, welches der Vernunft gemäß und nach dem Gebrauche aller cultivirten Nationen nur auf feste Plätze anwendbar ist;

Daß es Plätze für blockirt erklärt, vor welchen es auch nicht ein einziges Kriegsfahrzeug hat, da doch ein Platz nur dann blockirt ist, wenn er so gesperrt ist, daß man es nicht ohne augenscheinliche Gefahr versuchen kann, sich ihm zu nähern.

Daß es sogar Oerter in Blockadestand erklärt, die es mit seiner ganzen vereinten Macht nicht zu blockiren im Stande ist, als ganze Küsten und ein ganzes Reich;
5) daß dieser ungeheure Mißbrauch des Blockaderechtes keinen andern Zweck hat, als die Communication zwischen den Völkern zu hemmen und Englands Handel und Industrie auf dem Ruin der Industrie und des Handels des festen Landes zu erheben;
6) daß, da dieses Englands offenbare Absicht ist, ein jeder, der auf dem festen Lande mit Englischen Waaren Handel treibt, eben dadurch dessen Plane begünstigt, und sich zum Mitschuldigen derselben macht;
7) daß dieses Betragen Englands, welches der ersten Zeiten der Barbarey vollkommen würdig ist, dieser Macht, zum Verderben aller übrigen, nützlich gewesen ist;
8) daß es ein natürliches Recht ist, dem Feinde diejenigen Waffen, deren er sich bedient, entgegen zu setzen, und ihn auf eben die Art zu bekämpfen, wie er kämpft, indem er alle Begriffe von Gerechtigkeit und alle liberale Gesinnungen, das Resultat der Civilisation unter den Menschen, verkennt:

So haben Wir beschlossen auf England diejenigen Gebräuche anzuwenden, welche es in seiner Seegesetzgebung geheiligt hat.

Die Verfügungen des gegenwärtigen Decretes sind so lange als Fundamental-Grundsatz des Reichs anzusehen, bis England es anerkennt, daß das Recht des Krieges nur eins und dasselbe auf dem Lande wie zur See ist, daß es weder auf Privateigenthum, welcher Art es auch sey, noch auf die Personen solcher Individuen, die mit den Waffen nichts zu thun haben, ausgedehnt werden darf, und daß das Blockaderecht auf feste Plätze, die wirklich durch eine hinreichende Macht gesperrt sind, zu beschränken ist.

Wir haben demgemäß decretirt und decretiren, wie folgt:

Art. 1. Die Brittischen Inseln sind in Blockadestand erklärt.

Art. 2. Aller Handel und alle Correspondenz mit den Brittischen Inseln ist verboten.

Die nach England oder an einen Engländer adressirten oder in Englischer Sprache geschriebenen Briefe der Packete, werden demnach auf den Posten nicht befördert und sollen angehalten werden.

Art. 3. Jeder Englische Unterthan, wes Standes er auch sey, den man in den von unsern oder unserer Alliirten Truppen besetzten Ländern treffen wird, soll zum Kriegsgefangenen gemacht werden.

Art. 4. Jedes Magazin, jede Waare, jedes Eigenthum, es mögt seyn von welcher Art es wolle, das einem Englischen Unterthan gehört, soll für gute Prise erklärt werden.

Art. 5. Der Handel mit Englischen Waaren ist verboten und jede Waare die England gehört oder aus seinen Fabriken oder Colonien herkommt, wird für gute Prise erklärt.

Art. 6. Die Hälfte des Ertrages der Confiscation der Waaren und des Eigenthums, die durch die vorhergehenden Artikel für gute Prise erklärt sind, soll angewandt werden, um die Kaufleute für diejenigen Verluste zu entschädigen, welche sie durch die Wegnahme der Kauffahrteyschiffe erlitten haben, die durch Englische Kreuzer genommen sind.

Art. 7. Kein Fahrzeug welches direct von England oder den Englischen Colonien kömmt, oder daselbst seit der Publication des gegenwärtigen Decrets gewesen ist, soll in irgend einem Hafen zugelassen werden.

Art. 8. Jedes Schiff, welches vermittelst einer falschen Declaration der obigen Verfügung zuwider handelt, wird arretirt und Schiff und Ladung, als ob sie Englisches Eigenthum wären, confiscirt.

Art. 9. Unser Prisentribunal zu Paris ist mit der definitiven Aburtheilung aller Contestationen beauftragt, die etwa in Betreff der Ausführung des gegenwärtigen Decrets in Unserm Reiche oder in den von den französischen Armeen occupirten Landen entstehen möchten; Unser Prisentribunal zu Mailand ist mit der definitiven Entscheidung der Contestationen dieser Art, die in Unserm Königreiche Italien vorkommen möchten, beauftragt.

Art. 10. Gegenwärtiges Decret soll von Unserm Minister der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten den Königen von Spanien, Neapel, Holland und Hetrurien und unseren übrigen Alliirten, deren Unterthanen, wie die unsrigen, das Opfer der Ungerechtigkeit und Barbarey der Englischen Seegesetzgebung sind, mitgetheilt werden.

Art. 11. Unsere Minister der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten, des Kriegs, der Marine, der Finanzen und der Polizey, und Unsere General-Postdirectoren sind, ein jeder, so weit es ihn betrifft, mit der Vollziehung des gegenwärtigen Decretes beauftragt.

(Unterzeichnet) Napoleon.

durch den Kaiser.

Der Minister Staatssecretair Hugues Maret.

Für die Genauigkeit der Abschrift.

Der Französische Minister Bourienne.

die hiesige Stadt sowohl, als für jeden Einzelnen im Gegenfalle unausbleiblich erfol-
ispositionen dieses Decrets aufzufordern.

Napoleon's Berlin Decrees, posted on the streets of Bremen.
Source: National Archives, Washington DC. (Used with permission.)



Napoleonic Europe, 1812.



Germany Under Napoleon.

War Comes to the Neutrals

On 7 July 1798, a young captain named Stephen Decatur took his sloop *Delaware* into action against a French ship that had been cruising the waters off New Jersey, preying upon American merchantmen. Decatur's capture of the *Croyable* turned an escalating war of words into actual bloodshed. A month later President Adams declared to Congress that "open hostilities have commenced between France and America."[1]

A few days before this action, the Hamburg Senate had passed a declaration it had been considering for months, and which it had been dreading, knowing it would be unpopular. With the increasing menace of ships being sunk, boarded and plundered, or wholly captured along with their crews, the Senate declared on 1 July 1798 that Hamburg-flagged ships must be commanded only by Hamburg citizens; the city could no longer attempt to defend anyone else.[2] After several years, the storms of the French revolutionary wars were finally reaching the neutral coasts of America and the Hanse.

Trouble had been brewing for some time, of course, although the United States and the Hanse had avoided most of it. American and Hanseatic merchants did not ignore the escalating geo-political tensions of the 1790s; they were, however, generally pleased to be reaping the benefits of neutrality. Part of the reason for the boom years of that decade had been the declining fortunes of competitors who were embroiled in conflict. War — limited,

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1 Adams to the Congress, 11 August 1798, as reported by *The Times* (of London.)

2 Baasch, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte,* 41-43. (The French protested that the law violated a trade treaty signed between France and Hamburg, and the Senate agreed to amend the ruling slightly, allowing anyone naturalized "three months before the outbreak of the current hostilities" to claim citizenship, for purposes of this restriction.)

of course, and fought somewhere else — could be good for business. But there were plenty of ominous signs for the future. While merchants spent the 1790s enjoying unparalleled prosperity and mercantile success, statesmen in America and the Hanse fretted over the inexorable approach of world war.

Enemies of the Republic

The French Republic managed to be simultaneously erratic and predictable: erratic, in that it seemed to thrash out wildly at various "enemies" in various ways; predictable, in that it was committed to expansion, to any actions that would damage monarchy in general, and to rivalry with Great Britain and all those who claimed her as a friend. As early as 1793, the French had passed a "Navigation Act," which noted the despised maritime supremacy of Britain, and which sought means of economic warfare against it. The act placed prohibitions on various British imports, gave special preference to the ships of neutral nations (increasingly, those few powers which were not at war with revolutionary France), and implemented a tariff system that evolved over the next three years into a complete moratorium on trade with Britain or her colonies. In one form or another, this would be the central French policy toward Britain for the next two decades, and the foundation-block of Napoleon's Continental System.[3] A commitment to economic warfare was the most consistent and predictable behavior pattern of the French Republic (and later, Empire), even if it was often carried out erratically. It is easy, in retrospect, to marvel at

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[3] Frank Edgar Melvin, *Napoleon's Navigation System: A Study of Trade Control During the Continental System* (New York: Appleton, 1919), 3-5.

how few neutral observers in the 1790s understood the implications of that, but economic warfare on the scale practiced during the Napoleonic Wars was a new phenomenon.

The Franco-British rivalry spilled out across Europe and the oceans in various ways, almost always injurious to commerce. The French first launched a campaign of paperwork with their 1793 Navigation Act. Vessels trading with France were required to carry a "Certificate of Origin" (something later adopted by a number of nations), issued by French consuls if possible, but otherwise by any *neutral* public officer. The forms certified the nationality of goods carried on a trading ship; i.e. certified that they did not come from Britain or her allies. The British responded by seizing neutral (frequently American) vessels bound for France, and forcing them to unload in British ports instead. The French then retaliated with much the same policy, but raised the ante by adding an overt endorsement of privateering. By 1796, French courts were meting out 20-year prison sentences to anyone convicted of engaging in commerce with the enemies of the Republic.[4]

Word of the French open-season for privateers spread quickly among American and Hanseatic shippers. With the Dutch increasingly vulnerable to blockades (or overt conquest), American and Hanseatic vessels were becoming the main neutral carriers in the Atlantic, and thus would be the prime targets of privateers. Friedrich Delius wrote to Rufus King (US Minister Plenipotentiary in London) in February 1797 to tell him that US mail to Central European cities — which had previously been routed through Amsterdam — was increasingly being forwarded via Bremen, "which I think the present

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[4] Albert J. Daeley, "The Continental System in France as Illustrated by American Trade" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1949), 3-8.

time make it necessary [sic] in order to be more certain of a safe conveyance."[5] By May of that year, fear of French privateers was widespread among the captains in Bremen's harbor. Insurance rates on American and Hanseatic vessels began to increase across the board even before the rumors were confirmed that the French had indeed issued Letters of Marque to prey upon neutral commerce.[6]

The United States, by the mid-1790s, had become Europe's most important neutral marketplace. This proved a boon to US-Hanseatic commerce, as we have seen, but became increasingly problematic with regard to Britain and France. After the US signed the Jay Treaty with Britain in 1794, the French declared the document a betrayal of the Franco-American alliance of 1778. In January 1798, as the two former allies slid towards war, the French made a declaration that would have wide-ranging impact on the nature of trade agreements for the next half-century. The Directory declared that the character of a ship (i.e., enemy, friendly, or neutral) was determined by the nationality of its cargo.[7] A Bremer ship carrying American tobacco was thus an "American" trader, and considered fair game. Although resented at the time, this criterion later enjoyed widespread usage among a number of nations, and certainly played a role in the nature of US-German trade negotiations after the wars.

The distinction of trade goods for purposes of "nationality" had a direct bearing on US-German commerce because the French had been contemplating something like a Continental System for a long time. As early as 1793, Reinhard (the French minister

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5 F. Delius to R. King, 3 February 1797. Letters from American consuls to Rufus King, NYHS. (Throughout his correspondence, King apparently thought that Friedrich Delius — not his brother Arnold — was the US consul in Bremen. See Chapter Four for more details on this.)

6 F. Delius to R. King, 1 May 1797. Letters from American consuls to Rufus King, NYHS.

7 Daeley, "The Continental System in France," 9-11.

resident in Hamburg, later emissary to the Hanse) wrote to his superiors in Paris that "it will be necessary to prevent the importation of English merchandise... to ruin England, which is successfully employing American vessels for its commerce."[8] Reinhard's observation was generally incorrect: far from being in cabal with the US merchant fleet, the British molested American commerce almost as regularly as did the French, even while negotiating the Jay Treaty. John Parish wrote in the spring of 1794 that the British continued to prey upon American shipping bound for Hamburg, "and several of our ships... are now detained in their Ports on the most frivolous pretexts."[9]

Reinhard, however, had made two important connections. First, he had correctly deduced that any economic war with Britain would harm the United States. Second, he had made his observations from the harbor at Hamburg, which he believed was little more than an outlet for the British empire. This perception would linger, and under Napoleon would become something of a vengeful obsession: Hamburg would be "that English town" that the French emperor wanted to humiliate and bring to heel. Consequently, it would become a test-bed for the Continental System.

Privateering was the most serious danger facing US-German commerce in the late 1790s. The Baltimore merchant John Smith complained of it as early as 1794, writing to a friend that there was no legal recourse in French courts: "privateers are liberated after condemnation, for the judge obstinately continues to condemn all American vessels going to or from a French port."[10] Smith had heard that one American ship had in fact been released, but only after "her rudder was knocked off."[11] Frederick Konig of Baltimore lost

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8 Servière, *l'Allemagne Français sous Napoleon,* 128.
9 Parish to Jefferson(?), 22 March 1794. NAW-H. The addresses of this letter are unclear.
10 John Smith to John Daniel, 18 December 1794. Smith Letterbooks. MDHS: Ms 1152.
11 John Smith to John William Perot, 18 December, 1794. Smith Letterbooks. MDHS: Ms 1152.

several ships even before the official declaration of privateering from France. His "French Spoilation Claims" to the US government were never settled.[12] His colleague and fellow German-American merchant Charles Mayer also lost a great deal to privateers in the period 1795-1806; like Konig, Mayer went to his grave with these cases still in court.[13] Robert Oliver lost two vessels headed for Bremen in 1799, and a third barely escaped after a skirmish with a French raider.[14]

The Clifford Brothers' ship *Adventure,* sailing from New York with a cargo of sugar for Hamburg, fell afoul of the French privateer *le Juste* in February 1799, and was taken as a prize to Brest. Charles Buck, the Clifford Brothers' agent in Hamburg, began a lengthy and tedious campaign of letters and complaints to French officials. He also asked the Cliffords to send a copy of the *Adventure's* ship's papers, since the French claimed that she had been taken without any papers, and was thus fair capture as a smuggler. (This was untrue — the Cliffords had a long and profitable legal trade with Hamburg, fully documented.)[15] Months later, Buck finally obtained the ship's release. Having exhausted all legal channels, he used the method which typified the French administration throughout this period: he bribed a number of French court officials, and forwarded the bill to the Cliffords.[16]

Friedrich Jacob Wichelshausen, the US consul in Bremen, wrote in early 1798 that "the French persist in their animosities toward America, as they still persist in capturing all

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12 Frederick Konig papers. MDHS: Ms 522.

13 Charles F. Mayer papers. MDHS: Ms 1574. (Konig and Mayer shared the same lobbyist, one James Caulsten, who represented a number of German-American merchants in cases before the US government. Caulsten died in 1847, without having resolved a single claim.)

14 R. Oliver to H. Heymann Sons, 8 April 1800. Oliver Record Books. MDHS: Ms 626.1

15 Buck to T&J Clifford, 19 February 1799. Clifford-Pemberton collection, PHS.

16 Buck to T&J Clifford, 20 July 1799. Clifford-Pemberton collection, PHS.

such vessels whose papers they can but find the least seeming fault with."[17] The American flag had become such a favorite target, Wichelshausen lamented, that even American shippers in Bremen "give the German vessels the preference."[18] The omnipresent threat of French privateers or British boarding caused insurance premiums on American ships sailing to the Hanse to skyrocket, reaching 15% by the spring of 1799 (the peacetime norm was 2-3%).[19]

Another serious problem developed as the French Revolutionary wars created blockades and counter-blockades in European harbors. Smugglers, privateers, and indeed pirates of all nationalities began using the American flag, since its neutrality theoretically exempted a vessel from most of the blockades of the belligerents. The French in particular used the American flag & ship's papers to evade British capture. This infuriated American shippers, who simultaneously had to endure French predations on US vessels in a number of ports.[20]

Predictably, port officials began to place restrictions on American-flagged vessels, and this made legitimate American commerce extremely difficult. During his brief tenure as US consul, Arnold Delius twice petitioned the Bürgermeister of Bremen to remove these added taxes, heavy-handed and larcenous "inspections," and docking restrictions, and was twice rebuffed.[21] Such was already the state of American shipping in Bremen when Delius tendered his resignation at the end of 1796.[22]

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17 Wichelshausen to Pickering, 16 January 1798. NAW-B.
18 Wichelshausen's Semi-Annual Report, 12 July 1798. NAW-B.
19 Buck to T&J Clifford, 26 April 1799. Clifford-Pemberton collection, PHS.
20 Papers from the Thomas Masters Collection, Box 1. NYHS.
21 Delius to Pickering, November 26, 1794, NAW-B.
22 Ibid.

During the early 19th century, getting American papers for one's ship was extremely easy. Baltimore in particular would issue temporary registration documents to any vessel which paid the appropriate fee, thus making it an "American" ship. This practice continued until 1867. There was, ironically, some truth in the French allegation that an American ship could conceivably be British, or any other nationality.[23] Nonetheless, the majority of those abusing the American flag did so by simple forgery. Samuel Williams in Hamburg wrote Rufus King, regarding the continuing problem of "unruly captains" forging American Ship's Papers. Other consuls, Williams said, have told him that the problem was not unique to Germany, and indeed was just as bad elsewhere.[24] Every smuggler, wrote F.J. Wichelshausen in Bremen in 1797, claimed to be an American, and had a ready supply of false cargo manifests and certificates of origin.[25]

The job of an American consul in the Hanse was both hectic and bittersweet in the late 1790s. On one hand, trade had never been better, both in volume and in profit. But the American flag was systematically plundered by Britain and France, and was not respected as valid by a number of officials because of the ubiquity of "American" smugglers. Samuel Williams had served as consul in Hamburg only for a little over a year, but by the autumn of 1797 he was asking Rufus King to pull strings to get him transferred to London. Hamburg, he wrote, was a chaotic mess, and getting worse.[26]

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[23] Baltimore Customs Records, Master Abstracts 1815-1911 (Ms 2323, microfilm).

[24] Samuel Williams to R. King, 3 January 1797. Letters from American consuls to Rufus King, NYHS.

[25] Wichelshausen to Pickering, 20 July 1797. NAW-B.

[26] Samuel Williams to R. King, 8 September 1797. Letters from American consuls to Rufus King, NYHS.

The Hanse and France

War in Europe could be politically confusing and financially damaging to Americans, but in the final analysis there was only so much harm that France or her enemies could do to the United States. Britain, of course, could use her massive fleet to strangle American commerce. But as the War of 1812 would later show, the British were even less successful bringing America to her knees than Napoleon would be in his quixotic campaign against Russia. The Hanse, however, were in a much more vulnerable position. Although they frequently protested their neutrality, the Hanseatic cities were part of the Holy Roman Empire, and thus technically allied to Austria because of their ties to the Emperor.

Bremen obtained the right to make its own foreign policy after 1648, but it was still heavily dependent upon larger German states and thus beholden to their policies. Since 1741, for instance, Hanover had, for a fee, provided Bremen's contingent in the Imperial army. But in July 1793 Hanover frightened the Bremen Senate by declaring that they would discontinue this arrangement, and that Bremen would have to provide troops to fight the French. The Bremers were thus "at war" with France whether they wanted to be or not. Hamburg was similarly empowered to make its own foreign policy, at least on paper, but since the Seven Years' War, the Prussians had increasingly dominated the city's geo-political decisions. In 1793, for example, Prussia forced Hamburg to expel its French diplomatic representatives.[27]

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[27] Wiedemann, *Die Aussenpolitik Bremens,* 20-23. (For a brief period, only one French consul was present.)

The Hanse found themselves in the hopeless position of trying to negotiate a road between Prussia, the Holy Roman Empire, and revolutionary France. The practical Bremers had done the political arithmetic by 1795; many could see that France was ascendant, that Prussia was uncertain, that the Empire was unsalvageable, and that wriggling out of Vienna's (albeit distant) orbit might be the only chance for survival. It was a dangerous concept, one Senator wrote, and "one didn't allow onesself to dare think too loudly about the possibility."[28] But by the end of 1795, memoranda passed among the Hanse cities, speculating that perhaps they should prepare themselves to become satellites of France. What that would mean, exactly, was far from clear. A number of Bremers, according to F.J. Wichelshausen, seemed to believe that France would form some kind of customs union, but that "Bremen, Hamburg, and the Free Imperial City of Frankfurt shall keep their political Ecsistance [sic] and be confirmed and maintained in their constitutional independence."[29]

The Peace of Basel (5 April 1795) declared the neutrality of northern Germany, and the restoration of free trade (Articles VI and VII). England, however, was not a party to this arrangement that placed her Hanoverian provinces in jeopardy, and thus Hanover's position was unclear.[30] On 18 April, a squadron of Hanoverian dragoons entered Bremen and demanded quarter, and the next day the rest of the regiment arrived, along with an infantry regiment. They occupied the city's towers and announced their intention to stay.[31] Hanover occupied Bremen through November 1795. It was a humiliating reminder of the

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28 Ibid., 34.

29 Wichelshausen to Pickering, 6 October 1798. NAW-B.

30 "Neutralizing" northern Germany was hardly a British objective, since the British considered a large portion of it their territory.

31 Wiedemann, *Die Aussenpolitik Bremens,* 37.

helplessness of the Hanseatic cities in the face of brute force. It also encouraged those Bremers who wanted to gravitate toward France, which had protested the Hanoverian move and proclaimed its role as protector of the city. The reason most often cited by those Bremers who supported allegiance to France was the fear that the Hanse would soon be gobbled up by Hanover, Prussia, or some other German state. There was even talk of Hamburg and Lübeck going to Denmark as part of a Franco-Prussian deal. [32] Ironically, it would be France, the supposed savior, who would ultimately swallow them.

At the Peace of Basel, Bremen made the leap: their representatives suggested that the Hanse abandon the Empire in favor of an arrangement with France. When Hamburg and Lübeck could not bring themselves to break with Vienna, Bremen's delegation backed down. Nonetheless, the plan remained an *idée fixée* in the Bremen Senate for some time. Senator Dr. Georg Gröning traveled to Hamburg in late 1796 again to plead Bremen's case. Again, the Hamburgers refused. A majority of the Hamburg Senate was convinced that France would never protect Hanseatic neutrality, and neither would the Empire, if the Hanse betrayed it.[33] Tragically, both arguments were correct: the Empire was doomed and incapable of protecting the Hanse, and yet there would be no protection if the Hanse abandoned it.

France's willingness to "help" hardly stemmed from political largesse, or even economic interest. Franco-Hanseatic commerce had never been very profitable for the French; with the exception of the Bordeaux wine trade, the Hanse usually made far more money from reselling French goods in Germany, and then returning German manufactures to France. True, Hamburg's ships had carried desperately needed food and supplies to

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[32] Servière, *l'Allemagne Français sous Napoleon,* 12-31.

[33] Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien hansestadt Bremen,* I: 517-521.

France during the famine of 1789. But the French generally did not feel a pressing need to preserve commercial links with the Hanseatic cities.[34] The Hanse thus employed the makeshift expedient of bribery to obtain French "protection," much in the manner of a small child buying-off the playground bully each day at school.

Hamburg began this dangerous practice in 1793 with a series of "gifts" to many of the leading political figures in republican France. The Senate collected the money from the major mercantile and banking families of the city, most of whom, of course, were in some way represented in the government. After the Peace of Basel, bribes from the Hanse found their way to Berlin as well as to Paris. The Hamburgers paid more than 300,000 *mark banco* to French notables in 1796 alone, in addition to sums sent to Prussian leaders. Bremen and Lübeck followed suit. A few years later, for instance, Josephine Bonaparte collected 55,000 marks, with the understanding that she would urge her husband to protect Hanseatic neutrality.[35] When faced with Napoleon's insatiable appetites, however, the perils of this system became evident. Shortly after his *coup d'état,* Napoleon received congratulatory letters from the mayors of Hamburg and Bremen. He replied in a tone which one witness described as "a lord commanding his door-man," and demanded a 4.2 million franc ransom from the city of Hamburg "to protect the Hanseatic cities" from, ostensibly, the menaces of Russia, Prussia, Denmark, Sweden, and the Holy Roman Empire.[36]

Fear of France was a new headache for the North Germans, who had already spent more than a century calibrating policies around fear of Austria and fear of Prussia. Most of

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[34] Servière, *l'Allemagne Français sous Napoleon,* 4-5.
[35] Rosenbaum and Sherman, *M.M. Warburg & Co.,* 5.
[36] Servière, *l'Allemagne Français sous Napoleon,* 40-45.

the small states of the North had, by the time of the French Revolution, decided that Prussia was a more logical security partner, yet most were still tied to Vienna via the Holy Roman Empire. The Peace of Basel was clearly just an armed truce between Prussia and France. Karl August von Hardenberg, the minister who had done most of the negotiating for the Prussians, had never consulted with or allowed input from the small German states — not even from Hanover, whose territory was most directly affected by the accord. A strong party in Berlin, rallying around Queen Luise, openly preferred war with France. Prussia, as a major power, could consider these options, whereas the small North German states had nothing else to clasp but a fragile peace, hoping against hope that Prussia and France would not come to blows.[37] After the mid-1790s, few in the Hanse could delude themselves to believe that either Prussia or France was acting out of anything other than pure self-interest, and that either would afford Hanseatic neutrality or commerce any protection.

Throughout the late 1790s, the Hanse managed to walk the tightrope between the warring powers. Bremen continued to try to fix its star to the French, to the distaste of Hamburg and Lübeck. A series of negotiations in 1796 and 1797 with Reinhard, the French emissary to the Hanse, resulted in a draft of a trade treaty, but the French National Assembly dropped the project in April 1797, after the preliminary Peace of Leoben.[38] The commercial needs of the Hanse factored heavily in all of their geo-political calculations. Hamburg's upper bourgeoisie was hostile to the high-handed tactics of the Prussians, to the mercantile policies of the British, and to the aims of the French revolutionaries, yet

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[37] Walter Trummel, *Der Norddeutsche Neutralitätsverband, 1795-1801* (Hildesheim: A. Lax, 1913), 22-31.

[38] Wiedemann, *Die Aussenpolitik Bremens,* 79.

trade interests (and the sympathies of the common folk) tended to favor the French.[39] Any warming to France in Hamburg, however, would be constrained by the nearby Prussians and the British presence in Hanover.

"There May be a Risque Now..."

In the last year of the 18th century, the armies of revolutionary France were again on the move. F.J. Wichelshausen, the American consul in Bremen, dismissed the new French offensive as unimportant to North Germany, and reported that most people expected the Austrians to win this round, anyway.[40] The Hanse cities had problems closer to home that year. On 10 November 1799, while the merchant leaders of the Hanse sorted through the remains of their financial empires in the wake of the Hamburg financial crash, Napoleon Bonaparte began the consolidation of power that would make him First Consul for Life, and five years later, Emperor of the French.

At first, the shape of the new century appeared to favor both the US and the Hanseatic cities. Napoleon did not make good on his threat to march on northern Germany if he did not receive massive bribes. Contented with his victories in the South, he appeared to drop the matter altogether. Indeed, Napoleon seemed comfortingly conciliatory in the summer of 1800, when he sanctioned a new eight-year trade treaty with the United States. France granted US ships the right to enter her harbors unmolested, even if they had been in English ports. Only the carrying of military cargo was prohibited. The two countries

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39 Servière, *l'Allemagne Français sous Napoleon,* 8-11.
40 Wichelshausen to Pickering, 3 May 1799. NAW-B.

agreed to establish a standard set of paperwork for merchant vessels, and the new French leadership promised to rein in privateers.[41]

In the Hanse, wedged between the competing interests of several European antagonists, cease-fires and truces could bring only temporary respites. As the year 1800 waned, new threats became apparent. France and the Holy Roman Empire had made peace, but Britain remained an antagonist. The formation in April 1800 of a new "League of Armed Neutrality" (Russia, leading Denmark, Sweden, and Prussia) caused yet another British embargo. Near Hamburg, British warships cruised at will, seizing French vessels.[42] In early 1801 the Danes (by now allied with France) occupied Hamburg and Lübeck, placing two of the three major Hanse cities directly in the line of fire, astride the British blockades. Field Marshal von Kleist's Prussians arrived in Bremen on 12 April 1801, a week after Nelson smashed the Danish fleet at Copenhagen. The Prussians essentially took over Bremen, as well as most of surrounding Hanover. They stayed three months; aside from taking the best houses and drinking most of the good wine, they caused "no incidents."[43] The most serious damage were the wounds to Bremen's hope of neutrality.

F.J. Wichelshausen noted that, although the Franco-American understanding was heartening, American neutrality, sovereignty, and even citizenship were just not taken seriously by the belligerents. Bremen, he lamented, had become home to a number of American frauds and even some fairly notorious criminals: smugglers, spies, and their

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41 Department of State Documents, *List of Treaties Submitted to the Senate 1789-1934* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1935), 62.

42 F.J. Wichelshausen to John Marshall, 25 August 1800. NAW-B.

43 F.J. Wichelshausen to John Marshall, 17 April 1801 and F.J. Wichelshausen to Madison, 13 July 1801. NAW-B.

accomplices. One "true swindler... had made his escape from Alexandria with his partner," and was now busily forging US ships' papers for shady customers in Bremen.[44] The "dignity and honor" of the United States continued to suffer, which made it that much easier to plunder and molest legitimate American shipping.[45]

In March 1802 France and England agreed to the Peace of Amiens, and Europe was becalmed for the first time in a decade. American merchants in Germany were stunned to find that peace was actually worse for business than war. British and French vessels began appearing in the Hanseatic harbors again in large numbers, and the sudden plenty sent prices tumbling. Jonathan Ogden was a New York merchant who was involved with a number of well-known Hamburg importers of *Kolonialwaren,* like Kruger & Orth, and the firm of J.B. Paschen. By 1802 Ogden was also shipping tobacco to the Kulenkampff Brothers in Bremen. Sugar prices plummeted when peace came, since the British could once again dump their West Indian products on the Hamburg market: "It may be said that the Export Trade in Sugar and Coffee from this Country [the US] is entirely at an end — our present supply not being greater than our Internal Consumption requires."[46]

Peace would be short-lived, and soon Ogden was back in business, concentrating more on coffee, and optimistic for a revived American trade with Hamburg.[47] By mid-1803, war had again shut down the formerly lucrative Dutch marketplaces. From New York, Robert Ferguson Jr. wrote to his brother John (who was the traveling scout for the family, more or less permanently moving around Europe) that the company was going to

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44 F.J. Wichelshausen to John Marshall, 7 October, 1800. NAW-B. (One assumes this is Alexandria, Virginia, and not Egypt, although Wichelshausen is not clear.)

45 Ibid.

46 Jonathan Ogden to Luis & Jenquel, 21 june 1802. Ogden Papers, NYHS.

47 Jonathan Ogden to Philip Hughes, 14 July 1803. Ogden Papers, NYHS.

ship 300 hogsheads of tobacco, and "We think it probable [to ship it] to Hamburgh or Bremen, as there may be a risque now that Holland will be blockaded."[48]

American shippers in the Hanse suffered when the British undercut their prices. The consequences were more severe in Hamburg, where peace brought in coffee and sugar from the British, Spanish, and Dutch colonies, than in Bremen, where American tobacco had few competitors.[49] The peace was a mixed blessing for Americans interested in German commerce. A relative absence of privateers and relaxing of restrictions came with a substantial drop in profits and a loss of market-share.

Before American or German merchants and statesmen had enough time to calculate the ramifications of peace, Britain and France returned to their by-then-normal state of open warfare. The competing systems of embargoes, blockades, and counter-blockades returned in force, and the Hanse once again feared for their autonomy. As soon as war resumed in May 1803, Napoleon ordered General Mortier to move his corps from Holland and to occupy the North German coast, in order to "take the duchy [sic] of Bremen, which is a dependency of Hanover," and to occupy the Elbe, to prevent English goods from arriving there.[50] General Walmoden, commanding the poorly-organized Imperial and Hanoverian troops, fell back after a few skirmishes, although he marshaled nearly twice the manpower of his French adversary.[51] Hanover capitulated on 3 June, Osnabrück on the 27th. The Hanse fell to the French "with no resistance."[52]

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48 Robert Ferguson Jr. to John Ferguson, 4 July 1803. Robert Ferguson Papers, NYHS.
49 F.J. Wichelshausen to Madison, 7 March 1802. NAW-B.
50 Napoleon to Mortier, 13 May, 1803. *Correspondance de Napoleon.*
51 Servière, *l'Allemagne Français sous Napoleon,* 52-53.
52 F.J. Wichelshausen to Madison, 12 June 1803. NAW-B.

Napoleon instructed Mortier to make respectful gestures to the Senates of Bremen and Hamburg, but he would not compromise on most administrative questions. The French occupation covered virtually all aspects of foreign relations and trade, not to mention demanding fees and services for the French garrison army, which assumed the "protection" of the Hanse. Proclamations appeared on the streets of Bremen, dated using the French revolutionary calendar, issuing direct orders to the people of the city to hand over all English agents to Mortier's headquarters "all the officers and all military personnel in the service of Great Britain, whom you find in this city."[53]

Mortier appointed a "Citoyen Buhl" as a kind of French Quisling in the Bremen Senate: "Vice-Commissaire des Relations" between Paris and Bremen. Buhl issued a proclamation of his own the day after his appointment, with a command to cease all correspondence in the English language.[54] To Hamburg, which the French considered more important economically, as well as a den of British spies and agents, Napoleon sent Fauvelet de Bourrienne, a man whose skills at duplicity and corruption became legendary.

Bourrienne's title in 1803 was simply "envoy" *(Gesandter)* but his mission was complex, and his personal ambition such that he would overstep even the sprawling latitude granted him by Napoleon. He was, first, to follow and report on the activities of French émigrés, and their pro-British machinations with the Hamburg Senate. The French arrested many of these people despite the efforts of Hamburg to confer Hamburger citizenship on them as protection. Second, Bourrienne was to place the Hamburg press under surveillance, and to force the Senate to punish or silence any persons writing insultingly,

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[53] F.J. Wichelshausen sent a copy of this proclamation with his report to Madison on 12 July 1803. NAW-B.

[54] Ibid.

critically, or seditiously against Napoleon.[55] Over the years, this campaign against anti-French sentiment would take on phenomenal dimensions as Napoleon struggled for the loyalty and obedience of the Germans. Within a few years, Bourrienne (by then, French "Minister Resident") was the most powerful and dangerous man in Hamburg.

The Hanse thus found themselves in the midst of a stalemate between Britain and France. The French soldiers and *douanes* set up posts along the Elbe and Weser, and enforced a blockade forbidding any transit of British territory. Since Bremen was completely surrounded by Hanover, which Mortier designated "British" territory (even though it was occupied by France), the Bremers were in a particularly tight squeeze. Meanwhile, the British patrolled the mouths of all the rivers. Between the two systems, not even fishing boats could get out without harassment, bribery, and a bewildering array of paperwork. Foreign newspapers, so beloved by the Hanseatic merchant class, began to vanish from the streets of Bremen and Hamburg.[56]

Blockades and the Emden Experiment

Napoleon seemed to forget his treaty with the United States as soon as war recommenced in 1803. French inspectors and privateers again descended upon the American vessels trading with the Hanse, accusing them of carrying the forbidden "British" goods. It is impossible to know if many French believed that the Americans were in fact in

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55 Servière, *l'Allemagne Français sous Napoleon,* 74-75. See also: Fernand Beaucour, "Comment Napoléon prit le controle du journal allemand de Hambourg en 1811" *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History* 20 (1993): 199-212. And: Daniel J. Moran, "Cotta and Napoleon: The French Pursuit of the Allgemeine Zeitung" *Central European History* 14 (March 1981): 91-109.

56 F.J. Wichelshausen to Madison, 18 July 1803. NAW-B.

the service of Britain to smuggle British goods onto the continent via Bremen and Hamburg. Certainly Napoleon himself thought so. He continued to believe as late as 1814 (with the US actively at war with Britain) that American ships were little more than adjuncts of the English merchant marine.[57] But it seems likely that most French participants in the plundering of US-German trade were motivated by easy money. French officials in the Hanse were notoriously corrupt and bribable, and French courts rarely punished privateers, even when it was clear that they had seized neutral vessels whose papers were in order. Between 1793 and 1806, the French captured a staggering total of 206 American vessels.[58]

In the Hanse, the years between Napoleon's *coup d'état* and the return of continent-wide war in 1805 comprise a bewildering array of marches and counter-marches, as some or all of the Hanseatic cities were occupied by a half-dozen armies, including at various times the British/Hanoverian, Prussian/Brunswick, Danish, and French. During this time, also, blockades and counter-blockades overlapped, with the Hanse caught between the British and French zones of influence. In February 1804, Bremen Senator Johann Vollmers successfully appealed to Bernadotte, the new French military governor, to have French batteries removed from the Weser, and to allow the free passage of ships on the river.[59] Nonetheless, British warships prowled the Weser's mouth near present-day Bremerhaven, making unmolested transit to Bremen virtually impossible.

While he held out hope that the blockades would soon be eased and Hanseatic neutrality respected, F.J. Wichelshausen began to search in 1803 for ways to get around

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57 On Napoleon's paranoia about this, see: Melvin, *Napoleon's Navigation System,* 60-63, and: Daeley, "The Continental System in France," 50.

58 Daeley, "The Continental System in France," 16-17.

59 Schwarzwälder, Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen, I: 551. (This may have involved substantial bribery. Bernadotte (former lawyer, future Marshall, later king of Sweden), was almost as notoriously corrupt as Bourrienne in Hamburg.)

the Franco-British choke-hold on commerce. That summer he wrote to Secretary of State James Madison that it might be possible to send American ships to Emden, Prussia's neglected little port near the Dutch border. Cargo unloaded there could then be shipped overland to Bremen, or by canal and riverine transport to other parts of Germany. Wichelshausen conceded that the harbor at Emden was very small and ill-equipped to handle significant commercial activity, but that the troubles involved might be worth the profits to be had by getting the Bremers' beloved American tobacco to them once again.[60]

Several people were considering the idea of using other ports as proxies for the Hanse. Some Hamburg Senators had been negotiating with both Emden and Stettin throughout 1803 on a profit-sharing plan that would enable goods to be landed in these harbors and then sent inland to the Hanse. Emden, the Hamburgers decided, was too small, and Stettin was too far away, not to mention being controlled by Sweden, which was allied with Napoleon at the time, and thus not neutral.[61] Madison had apparently been thinking along these lines for several months also, having received reports of American ships that were stuck in Emden, unable to reach Bremen and Hamburg. In October 1803 the US ship *Essex* slipped through the blockade and docked in Bremen.[62] Her captain told Wichelshausen of dozens of American merchantmen waiting in Emden, their cargoes slowly rotting in their holds. Wichelshausen passed the information on to Madison in the State Department.[63]

That autumn, Madison decided to establish an American consulate in Emden, the first ever in the nearly two decades since the first US-Prussian trade treaty. This was a

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60 Wichelshausen to Madison, 16 August 1803. NAW-B.
61 Baasch, *Hamburg und Amerika,* 83.
62 Not the frigate *USS Essex,* which would wreck havoc on British shipping during the war.
63 Wichelshausen to Madison, 10 Octoberr, 1803. NAW-B.

hasty experiment, inspired by the increasing difficulties in Bremen, rather than by any American outreach to Prussia. The American businessman William Clarke, who had experience in both Bremen and Hamburg, arrived at Emden in June 1804, only to find that the Prussian officials refused to accept the credentials of anyone other than the French.[64]

Clarke set up a makeshift American consulate. His mission was to explore the possibility of unloading American freights in Emden, for shipment thereafter to interior Germany, or to Bremen overland or by river barges. After the initial cold shoulder, the local Prussian magistrate relented, and agreed to give Clarke latitude to bring American vessels to Emden, and to ship their cargoes as he saw fit. But this new American consulate was truly an *ad-hoc* affair; Clarke had no staff and virtually no equipment. He lacked even a copy of the "complete sett [sic] of the laws of the United States."[65]

Only a handful of American ships came to Emden to trade. Bremen and Hamburg, even blockaded, remained the overwhelmingly favored harbors for US-German commerce.[66] Most American vessels sheltering in the harbor were waiting for the chance to leave for the larger marketplaces of the Hanse. In June 1804, when the British blockade of Bremen loosened considerably (it is not clear why), many American ships left Emden and risked the trip to Bremen, where most of them unloaded and sold their cargoes. Some of them went instead to the Jadebusen, the large inlet about 30 miles north-west of Bremen, to unload there.[67] Although Bremen was still technically blockaded, American goods returned to fill the warehouses there. A few months later, however, Bernadotte cracked

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64 William Clarke to James Madison, 28 June 1804. NAW-E.

65 Ibid.

66 Ships arriving in Baltimore from Germany, for instance, rarely came from Emden. Hanseatic shippers clearly would not give preference to a competing Prussian harbor, and Americans apparently did not, either. See: Baltimore Customs Records, 1790-1832 (microfilm, 2 reels) MDHS: Ms 2359.

67 Wichelshausen to Madison, 14 July 1804. NAW-B.

down. F.J. Wichelshausen was once again pondering the possibilities of Emden, while Bremen's harbor crawled with French soldiers. The French, he wrote, took as they pleased, regardless of the validity of neutral ships' papers. One American ship, having just arrived from Philadelphia with a cargo of coffee, sugar, and tea, was completely pillaged. Again, he wrote to Madison, "all commerce ceases."[68]

Little Emden, however, could not —particularly on short notice — take up the role the Hanse had played in German-American commerce. The nuisance of additional inland routes to reach a market, the absence of large warehouses and credit firms, and the lack of established mercantile connections made Emden an unattractive alternative to the large Hanse harbors. New York merchant Thomas Masters, who became interested in German trade only after the Hamburg crash in 1799, sent one ship to Emden in 1804. Masters had done business with Bremen since 1800, and Hamburg (he bought wine and liquors from Caspar Voght) since 1803. The cargo of his single Emden voyage is not clear, but it was only insured for a total of $515.50, so it is unlikely that Masters considered it a major enterprise.[69]

William Clarke must have been depressed to find that the illegal use of the American flag and ships' papers was as prevalent in Emden as in the Hanse. This caused the familiar practices of official discrimination against US shippers. When he wrote to complain of unfair duties, taxes, and inspections local officials placed on American merchantmen (real or otherwise), Clarke received polite denials from officials that anything was amiss, although one Hamburg magistrate confessed that practices were not uniform or consistently

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[68] Wichelshausen to Madison, 2 August 1804. NAW-B.

[69] Papers from the Thomas Masters Collection, Box 1. NYHS.

enforced.[70] A disappointed Clarke wrote to Madison in the fall of 1804 that "American" shipping was no longer the favored commerce of North Germans, and was in fact considered undependable and risky.[71] "The respectability of our flag," he concluded, had "diminished."[72]

On 8 April 1805, the British government announced a blockade from the Ems to the Weser, extending it to the Elbe on 16 May.[73] Before Clarke even knew about this, a British warship boarded an American merchantman en route to Emden, and press-ganged six American sailors. The unfortunate men were released in Denmark, but then drafted into the Danish navy. Clarke convinced the *Bürgermeiser* of Emden to assist him in his petition to the Danes, which gave the US consul new hope for cooperation with the Prussians on commercial and maritime matters.[74] But the British blockade made pointless the effort to establish Emden as an alternative to the Hanse. With full-scale war once again underway, and French armies crossing the Rhine into Germany, Clarke began packing in October 1805. He concluded that Emden "has not been found so convenient for the trade carried on between the United States and Hamburg and Bremen.... I am discouraged from forming a permanent establishment here."[75]

As if the US-German commercial situation were not bad enough, a yellow fever epidemic broke out in the Duchy of Oldenburg, immediately west of Bremen, in late 1804.

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70 Georg Wohrmann to William Clarke, (date unclear, 1804). NAW-E.

71 *Author's Note:* In a conversation about this period with a German historian, I mentioned the Germans' early enthusiasm for trade with the new American republic, and the subsequent disillusionment brought on by the impotence of the Americans in the face of an increasingly chaotic world situation. My colleague joked: "You Americans were the *Aeroflot* of the early 19th century!"

72 William Clarke to Madison, 18 September 1804. NAW-E.

73 Daeley, "The Continental System in France," 18.

74 Clarke to Madison, 22 April, 1805. NAW-E.

75 Clarke to Madison, 20 October 1805. NAW-E.

Because a similar epidemic was raging in Philadelphia, Germans blamed the outbreak on American sailors.[76] Hanseatic officials refused anchorage to American ships. Others which had arrived were quarantined, in some cases up to two months in the midst of winter as their food and water dwindled and their crews nearly froze to death.[77] By March, yellow fever was so widespread across Northern Germany that King Frederick William III of Prussia performed a funeral service for all the victims. F.J. Wichelshausen described an anti-American hysteria in Bremen that further damaged the already lame state of US-German commerce. The last quarantines on American vessels did not lift until October 1805, by which time fresh troubles were en route from the renewed warfare in Central Europe.[78]

Between April and August 1805 a new "Third Coalition" formed against France and its freshly-minted Emperor. In the Hanse, rumors of French defeat abounded, probably because the departure of French troops to join Napoleon's field army was misinterpreted as a French withdrawal from the German theatre.[79] Bremers speculated about Austrian victories, about the rumored death of Marshal Marmont and capture of Marshal Bernadotte. Most egregiously, they spoke of Prussia's certain commitment to the coalition against the French occupiers, who had long since used up any store of goodwill the Bremers might have held for them.[80]

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76 Wichelshausen to Madison, 2 December 1804. NAW-B. (Ships were supposed to present a "Bill of Health" in most ports, but this seems to have been very loosely enforced in the Hanse.)

77 Wichelshausen to Madison, 5 March, 1805. NAW-B.

78 Wichelshausen to Madison, 11 October, 1805. NAW-B.

79 Bernadotte, marching south from the Hanse, impudently crossed Prussian territory without permission, causing war-cries in Berlin, the loudest from Queen Luise.

80 Wichelshausen to Madison, 28 October 1805. NAW-B. ("Very little doubt is entertained of Prussia taking an active part in this war....")

Contrary to this wishful thinking, by late 1805 Napoleon was completing one of his most masterful campaigns, ending in complete French victory and total Allied defeat. After delivering a crushing blow at Austerlitz in December, Napoleon, victorious across Central and Southern Europe, forced the humiliating Treaty of Pressburg upon Austria the day after Christmas. British Prime Minister William Pitt died in January 1806, and a few weeks later, the Third Coalition collapsed. Christian von Haugwitz, traveling to meet Napoleon with a Prussian ultimatum and virtual declaration of war, was forced to amend his message considerably to a tame note of congratulations on all the French victories.

Napoleon's Advance Across Germany

The treaty of "friendship" that Napoleon essentially forced upon Prussia after the 1805 campaign was designed to neutralize any Prussian ambitions for enlargement in Germany, and to bring Berlin into Napoleon's orbit against the British. Napoleon re-made western Germany into a string of French satellites, bound up in a Confederation of the Rhine. Crucially, he offered Hanover to the Prussians — ceded it to them, really — by virtue of French occupation of the territory. Frederick William III dithered for several months, trying to find a way out of his new role as Napoleon's hapless sidekick, but signed the convention accepting Hanover on 15 February 1806. Finally, in July 1806, the Holy Roman Empire ceased to exist. Francis II had already assumed the title of "Francis I, Emperor of Austria." Truly, Germany was now in the orbit of Paris.

In the Hanse, a brief British intervention at Bremen from December 1805 through February 1806 took advantage of Napoleon's preoccupations in the south. Six thousand

British troops occupied the city and its environs, but withdrew rather than come into conflict with the French. No sooner had they left than a brigade of Prussians arrived, an adjunct of Prussia's occupation of Hanover. At the beginning of April, the new Prussian occupation showed its teeth: Count Schulenburg declared the Hanse barred from all British traffic.[81] Predictably, the British retaliated with their strongest blockade yet, seizing Prussian ships at sea. In the entire month of May 1806, only two American ships managed to evade the British and land their cargoes in the Weser. By the time F.J. Wichelshausen compiled his semi-annual report for the first half of 1806, US shipping to Bremen had declined by over two-thirds, even from the already stunted 1805 figures.[82]

Under pressure from his bellicose Queen, Frederick William III dismissed his chief advisor Haugwitz as too conciliatory, and replaced him in July with Hardenberg, an avowed Prussian nationalist. When word came that Napoleon had secretly offered Hanover to Britain as part of a peace deal, the Prussian government began inching toward a declaration of war. The result, in the autumn of 1806, was another spectacular Napoleonic victory. Prussia was utterly crushed in a brief and violent campaign that saw victorious French columns fanning out across North Germany in pursuit of the remnants of the Prussian army. Mortier's corps took Hamburg on 10 November. A French infantry regiment entered Bremen unopposed on the 20th.[83] Old Blücher shut himself up in Lübeck for his last stand against the French; he capitulated on 24 November, the last Hanse port to fall to Napoleon. The French threatened to abolish the Senates of Bremen and Hamburg, which sent some of the cities' leaders fleeing for their lives. As it turned out, Mortier's

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81 Wichelshausen to Madison, 2 April 1806. NAW-B.
82 Wichelshausen to Madison, 23 June 1806. NAW-B.
83 Wichelshausen to Madison, 25 November 1806. NAW-B.

men satisfied themselves with carrying off the city governments' seals, though even these were eventually returned.[84]

In Berlin, which he entered in triumph on 27 October, Napoleon amused himself and humiliated his enemies with a series of military parades down Unter den Linden. He was still engaged in a campaign against the fleeing remnants of the Prussian army, and was preparing for a winter engagement with Prussia's tardy Russian allies. But a month after his arrival, he fired the most important salvo of his career against his most bitter and determined enemies. On 21 November 1806, Napoleon issued his Berlin Decree. Deprived of his fleet at Trafalgar a year earlier, the French emperor had decided to carry on the economic warfare at sea by denying Britain commercial access to the European continent, which he very nearly controlled. The Continental System had begun.

The Continental System

With the benefits of hindsight, most historians consider the Continental System a futile project, the desperate lashing-out of a frustrated military genius who did not understand naval warfare or maritime commerce. Bourrienne, Napoleon's representative in Hamburg, claimed that few French administrators thought it made much sense. "It was ridiculous," he wrote, "to declare the British Isles in a state of blockade, while the English fleet was in fact blockading all the French ports."[85]

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[84] Wichelshausen to Madison, 1 December 1806. NAW-B.

[85] Excerpt from Bourrienne's 1829 memoirs, in: Jean Mistler, "Hambourg sous l'occupation française" *Francia* I (1973): 453. (Bourrienne, of course, took the Continental System seriously only insofar as it would profit him personally.)

In the Hanse, however, contemporary observers watched the beginnings of the Continental System with awe and anguish. Clearly, Hanseatic neutrality was at an end; the cities were now in the possession of the French, even if their direct annexation still lay four years in the future. In the first year of the new system, Bremen and Hamburg felt the new measures acutely.

Protection of free trade had always been the Hanse's *raison d'être,* not simply an issue within the general context of "neutrality." Despite various trade agreements with revolutionary France and the Holy Roman Empire, the Hanse could only be free and neutral by the grace of the warring powers; they could not defend themselves. When the Empire ceased to exist, and when Napoleon re-made Germany, the Hanse were left in a weird limbo. They were no longer members of a German Empire, they were not included in Napoleon's *Rheinbund,* and they were no longer under the theoretical protection of Prussia. They were hostages in Napoleonic Europe. Delegates from Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck had been meeting since the spring of 1806 to discuss what the Hanse might do to assert what little sovereignty they still had. The best they could manage was to declare their neutrality, yet again, a few weeks before the Berlin Decree.[86] Their neutrality, though, was irrelevant, and free trade had come to an end.

Napoleon sought not only economic control over the Hanse, but a powerful measure of psychological control as well. French censors cracked down on any journal or newspaper critical of the regime or uncritical of Britain. In addition to the flow of goods, the flow of information to and from England became a prime target of the Continental System. In Bremen and Hamburg, the French obliged the local authorities to turn over to

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[86] Festerling, *Bremens deutsche und hanseatische Politik,* 16-21.

them any persons found attempting to send or receive letters or packages from Britain.[87] Finally in 1810, after the annexation, the French administration issued a proclamation that, "Merchants may only write English correspondence with special permission...." The French had taken psychological warfare to a new level of bureaucratic absurdity: a person was required to obtain a license to write in the English language.[88]

Because the United States shared a common tongue with Napoleon's arch-enemies, Americans in the Hanse were under constant suspicion as British agents. The German-American merchant Charles Buck, who had returned to his native Hamburg, chose not to tell the French that he had obtained American citizenship. But after several years in the United States, English had become Buck's preferred language, and he was interrogated a number of times by French inspectors when he spoke it in public.[89] Philip Sadtler, a German merchant in Baltimore, tried to return to Bremen for a visit in February 1807, but found his ship (the *Cora,* an American schooner) impounded as soon as it approached Bremen. Sadtler had to file a written petition with the French, and with Bremen's customs officials, just to get himself and his three trunks and four boxes of books off the ship. Interrogated because his documents were written in English, Sadtler had to pay a number of bribes even to retain possession of his luggage. Shocked and disgusted (and probably spoiled on American liberty), he immediately began making plans to return to America, which he did shortly thereafter.[90]

Less than a month after the Berlin Decree, F.J. Wichelshausen noted in his semi-annual report that "letters in the English language are forbidden," and that Americans were

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87 Mistler, "Hambourg sous l'occupation française," 458.
88 Schäfer, *Bremen und die Kontinentalsperre,* 19.
89 Charles N. Buck Diary (no page numbers). PHS.
90 MDHS: Philip Sadtler papers (Ms 1701).

being harassed by the ubiquitous French *douanes*. Americans in Bremen, he wrote, were stopped in the streets and abused for "looking" like Englishmen. American merchants in the Hanse were either gone or in the process of leaving. A few tried to stick it out. The Nicholson family of Baltimore, with two sons in Bremen and a number of important commercial connections, finally gave up and left in the summer of 1810, one of the last major American firms to withdraw from business in the city.[91] Perhaps in jest, perhaps out of genuine fear, Wichelshausen began to sign his reports to Secretary of State Madison: "Frédéric Jacques Wichelhausen, Consul des États-Unis de l'Amerique."[92]

These were humiliating conditions for Germans and Americans alike, but they paled in comparison to the economic damage wrought on the Hanse during the same period. When the Berlin Decrees reached Bremen and Hamburg, French troops stationed in the area immediately moved to close the Weser and Elbe and to seize all English, Russian, Prussian, and Swedish ships. The French imposed a host of new taxes and penalties upon merchants, particularly for anybody who was trying to sell off "English Wares," which were so broadly categorized that they could have included goods from any number of countries, and certainly from the US (cotton, for instance.)[93]

American merchants in Hamburg watched opportunities vanish as the French squeezed the market for *Kolonialwaren* out of existence. John Proud, a New England merchant acting as an agent for a New York firm in Hamburg, was still optimistic as late as spring, 1810, but by that autumn he despaired that, "with respect to commerce I hope it is not entirely annihilated but you may consider it as dead for the present."[94] Leonard

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91 MDHS: Nicholson papers (Ms 2340.1)
92 Wichelshausen to Madison, 31 December 1806. NAW-B.
93 Protokoll des Collegium Seniorum vom 21. Nov, 1806. SAB: C 30 a.4. SAH.
94 Rabuzzi, "Cutting Out the Middleman," 175-176.

Matthews, agent for a Baltimore firm, wrote from Hamburg in early 1811 that no one could have expected such a total collapse of US-German commerce, and that, "I am heartily sick of Europe, and wish very much to go home."[95]

In Bremen, the French began to organize their administrative police and inspection units. The contingent in 1806 comprised 500 *douanes* and 100 armed gendarmes. Despite this battalion-sized force of customs inspectors, the number was increased several times during the war, and an additional company of 100 were stationed at a small fort *("magazin")* on the mouth of the Weser. The *douanes* had very broad authorities of search and seizure, and frequently raided merchant houses at will, hauling suspicious goods back to their *magazins.* [96]

By 1810, when the French annexed Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck (now: *Brême, Hambourg, and Loubeq)* as the new *"départements hanséatiques,"* legitimate seaborne commerce had all but collapsed. In the wake of this came the cessation of domestic industry, and thus the economic life of the Hanse. A French observer in Hamburg in 1811 wrote to Napoleon that the largest Hanse city had become a vast poorhouse: "Hambourg ne produit rien, ne fabrique rien."[97] In Bremen, F.J. Wichelshausen wrote, "The military occupation by the French has... nearly ruined [Bremen's] commerce and navigation. The wealth and prosperity of those in former times so happy is now entirely vanished." Loss of dockside jobs further meant that "many of the poor class of citizens will be reduced to beggars."[98] Unsympathetic to the plight of the Hanse *Bürger,* Napoleon assigned each of

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95 Ibid.
96 Schäfer, *Bremen und die Kontinentalsperre,* 22-23.
97 Mistler, "Hambourg sous l'occupation française," 466.
98 Wichelsbausen to Madison, 5 December 1807. NAW-B.

the cities a large "contribution" to be paid to the French treasury. Bremen's annual burden was a crushing 860,000 francs, Hamburg's over a million.[99]

The ruling class of the Hanse, whose prosperity was based upon commerce, found themselves largely unemployed during the French occupation. Napoleon permitted various commissions and a 24-man Administrative Council, but the power of these bodies to "advise" the French administration was absurdly circumscribed. In some cases, such as with Dr. Wilhelm Ernst Wichelshausen (brother of the US consul), the local administrators endlessly and futilely protested various French actions. Others, like former Mayor Daniel Klugkist, were more willing to serve as quislings, enforcing French decrees and turning over to the French authorities those who tried to cheat the Continental System.[100]

Cheating the System

F.J. Wichelshausen complained in 1808 that the Continental System had so tightly choked Bremen's commerce that "no vessel of whatsoever description can sail in or out of the Weser without undergoing the most scrutinous inspection of the French Douanes."[101] But already by that point, Napoleon's system was extensively perforated, and rife with cheating, corruption, and black marketeering. It seems unlikely that Wichelshausen was truly ignorant of this; he probably melodramatized his report to his superiors. A large

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[99] Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen,* Vol 2, 19.
[100] Ibid., 14-19.
[101] Wichelshausen to Madison, 3 September 1808. NAW-B.

body of evidence exists to show that, while commerce was extremely difficult, Bremen and especially Hamburg were definitely able to carry it on in a variety of creative ways.

Many Hamburg importers managed, during the early days of the Continental System, to obtain false certificates of origin for their goods. Through subterfuge or bribery, they would re-label British goods as Russian, Swedish, or Danish. Several men were caught in such activities, and collaborators in the Hamburg Senate usually turned these fraudulent importers over to Bourrienne. Fortunately, the French Minister was more interested in his personal profit than in carrying out Napoleon's dire sentences of imprisonment or execution for those who traded with the enemy. Bourrienne ran a scam of his own, blackmailing the importers and returning them to the streets. Napoleon learned of this practice much later — in June 1813 — by which time Bourrienne had made six million francs in the racket.[102]

The French Minister-Resident in Hamburg had a number of other sources of income. His agents extracted various fees from prominent citizens, a system not unlike mafia "protection money." Charles Buck was one of many who despised this extortion; the French threatened to possess his estate if he ceased his "donations." Buck held a special place in his heart for the chief French minister: "Monsieur Bourrienne... with great politeness plundered me until the last day I was in Hamburg."[103] But Buck understood the rules, and was wealthy enough to play. He cheated and smuggled, and when he grew tired of the game he managed to bribe his way out of Hamburg in 1810, just before the French annexation. He returned to Philadelphia and remained there for the rest of the wars.

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[102] Mistler, "Hambourg sous l'occupation française," 455-457.
[103] Ibid.

The French were generally more successful at preventing smuggling in and out of Bremen than they were with Hamburg. The larger Hanseatic port was closer to the sea, and — crucially — bordered neutral Denmark, which although nominally allied to France and participating in the Continental System, was not occupied by French forces and was decidedly unenthusiastic about wrecking its commerce on Napoleon's behalf. The British naturally did all in their power to encourage smuggling in the Hanse. Their most dramatic act was an amphibious landing at Helgoland on 5 September 1807, in which 600 British troops occupied the island, and an even larger crew of workers and customs officials set up a Chamber of Commerce purely for smuggling into Northern Europe. The island was protected by a British naval squadron, and within a year was apparently in full operation. Between August and November 1808 some 120 ships called there, many bound (with forged American papers) to Tönning, Husum, or Altona — then Danish ports which smuggled goods into Hamburg.[104]

Of the aforementioned, Tönning was the preferred port for American shippers trying to reach Hamburg without French interference. Americans discovered this modest Danish harbor in 1808, and began to unload there. With cooperation from the Danes, and increasingly from Americans and Germans who relocated there, goods then moved overland (usually by night) to Hamburg, sixty miles to the south.[105] At first, these kind of arrangements could amount to only a fraction of the original US-Hamburg commerce, but Tönning quickly grew into a fairly important loophole in the Continental System.

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[104] Schäfer, *Bremen und die Kontinentalsperre,* 32-33. (The first two of these cities lie in Schleswig, the last in Holstein. Altona is now part of the Hansestadt Hamburg. These three ports were "Danish" in as much as the Duke of Schleswig and Holstein happened also to be King of Denmark. Except for Altona and northern-most Schleswig, the former duchies, plus Lübeck, comprise the present-day Bundesland Schleswig-Holstein, with its capital at Kiel.)

[105] Köppen, "Die Handelsbeziehungen Hamburgs," 139-140.

News of this makeshift system soon reached John Murray Forbes, the American consul in Hamburg. In March 1809, Forbes made a secret trip to work out an arrangement with Danish representatives that would make Tönning a more regular conduit of US-Hamburg trade. By the end of that year, over 100 American ships had dropped anchor there, unloading goods that went primarily to Hamburg. Obviously, this was still a risky and expensive alternative to normal trade, but it shows the degree to which the Hamburg market demanded American goods; Hamburgers were willing to pay highly enough to keep this operation in existence for almost two years. The Danes also profited from the arrangement, and Danish consumption of American tobacco and cotton increased three-fold and nine-fold, respectively, during the period of Tönning's operation.[106]

The Baltimore merchant Ambrose Clarke, who had done business with a number of prominent Bremen firms, found it increasingly difficult to maintain his normal trade, shipping sugar and coffee to the Hanse and returning with German linens. By 1809, with his ships and their cargoes being seized, Clarke had all but given up when Peter Wichelshausen (another brother of Friedrich Jacob), wrote to him about the Tönning option. Clarke had already heard about it through the grapevine of American merchants, and was eager to try. In November his ship *Montezuma* slipped a load of Maryland tobacco into the Danish harbor. By 1810 Clarke was sending sugar and tobacco to Hamburg via Tönning, and even contracting with other American merchants to ship cargoes there on their behalf.[107]

The Tönning-Hamburg operations were often fairly adventurous. Charles Buck, who was as determined to cheat the French as the French were to cheat him, discovered

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[106] Ibid., 148-152.

[107] MDHS: Ambrose Clarke papers (Ms 1754)

Tönning in 1809, probably on a tip from Forbes.[108] Buck had been smuggling various things into and out of Hamburg since 1806, although by 1809 French control had become so tight that the Elbe was no longer an option for him. Buck began moving goods into Hamburg overland, often disguised in imaginative ways. One of his agents was caught smuggling a cargo of American molasses into Hamburg at night in coffins. Buck himself made a few attempts to shepherd cargoes out personally. In 1810 he tried to get a load of coffee into the city, and found that he could only do so by bribing every guard and official with whom he came into contact. "I became much disgusted with it," he complained, and gave up on US-Hanseatic trade for the duration of the war.

The journal of the 1809 journey of Benjamin Larcom is one of the best-preserved records of US-German trade during the Continental System. Larcom was an American trade agent, originally from Boston, but with extensive experience in Europe. In 1809 he agreed to serve as the agent for a large transaction between the New England firm of Israel Thorndike and the House of John Parish in Hamburg.[109] Thorndike's ship *Ann* carried $53,000 worth of coffee, cotton, and sugar from America to Hamburg, insured by the Baring Brothers. Parish had been frank about the state of the blockade: he gave the *Ann* roughly 50/50 odds of getting through, but promised a rich return if successful. Larcom had no intention of sailing straight for Hamburg. He and the *Ann* arrived at Tönning in late October.[110]

Larcom was very well-informed on a number of matters, but he probably did not know the full extent of Parish's secret arrangements. The elderly magnate was actually in

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[108] In his diary, Buck mentions "an American" who enlightens him about Tönning.
[109] The same Thorndike who sued Friedrich Delius (brother of Arnold) for fraud in 1800.
[110] Larcom to Baring Bros, 9 November 1809. Benjamin Larcom Letterbook, MAHS.

the employ of the British, to assist British smugglers and spies into and out of the Hanse, and to pass couriers between London, Hamburg, St. Petersburg, and Stockholm. Through secret deals (using false names) with the former British consul in Hamburg, Parish transferred goods, people, and money (even gold bouillon) from Hamburg to London as late as 1810.[111] His transaction with Larcom, while illicit, was relatively mundane by comparison.

Larcom left the *Ann* in Tönning and traveled to Hamburg to meet with Parish and other buyers. He was surprised to find that "the market is, at present, tolerably good," but he intended to spend as little time as possible in Hamburg, to unload his goods, and then to sail on to St. Petersburg.[112] Larcom found that Parish had not exaggerated the potential for profit, if trade goods could first reach the city. He expected to make more than a 20% profit on the goods ordered by Parish, even after the special expenses of the situation. Although the French were aware that goods were reaching Hamburg from a nearby Danish port, they apparently hadn't yet singled out Tönning, and Larcom was confident that transport would be relatively simple, excepting "the badness of the roads."[113]

By this point, in late 1809, the US consul in Hamburg, John Murray Forbes, was actively supporting the smuggling operations. Forbes apparently knew all the right people to bribe to ensure the smoothest transition from Tönning to Hamburg. A few days after Larcom's arrival, Forbes helped him smuggle the first portion of the *Ann's* cargo into the

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[111] Rosenbaum and Sherman, *M.M. Warburg & Co.*, 7-8. (Parish had been a British agent since 1797, while still US Consul. His involvement was only discovered in the 1950s, when a comparison of documents in Britain and Hamburg revealed that a mysterious "Mr. ——" on the British *Boullion Report* of 1810 was in fact Parish.)

[112] Larcom to A. Plummer, 9 November 1809. Benjamin Larcom Letterbook, MAHS.

[113] Larcom to I. Thorndike, 12 November 1809. Benjamin Larcom Letterbook, MAHS.

city via Altona.[114] Within two weeks, the *Ann* was nearly at ballast, her cargo scattered across sixty miles of North German coast in half a dozen hiding places. Most importantly, Larcom had safely collected most of the money.[115]

All throughout 1809 the French had pressured the Danish government to crack down on the increasingly obvious smuggling operations. In December 1809, under threat from Napoleon, King Frederick VI of Denmark relented. Sporadically, Danish authorities began to seize American ships in Danish harbors, accusing the vessels of being "British."[116] Larcom had sold all of the *Ann's* coffee and half of her sugar when Danish troops boarded and impounded the ship on December 4. Two other American vessels arrived at Tönning that week, and they, too, were taken by the Danes.[117]

John Murray Forbes left Hamburg for Copenhagen in late December to plead the case of the *Ann* and the other American ships. Larcom was convinced that his impounded cargo (150 crates of sugar and 27 bales of cotton) would never see its buyers, but John Parish (again, probably knowing more than he could say) assured him the Danes would relax as soon as the French attentions were turned elsewhere. True to Parish's prediction, Forbes met with success in Copenhagen, and the *Ann* was released at the end of January. Larcom immediately sold the remaining cargo.[118] He left in May, as soon as the ice cleared, with a load of linens and two small shipments of silver, all purchased from Parish. One month later, King Frederick VI decreed that Tönning and nearby Husum were closed,

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[114] Larcom to I. Thorndike, 16 November, 1809. Benjamin Larcom Letterbook, MAHS.
[115] Larcom to I. Thorndike, 30 November, 1809. Benjamin Larcom Letterbook, MAHS.
[116] Köppen, "Die Handelsbeziehungen Hamburgs," 162.
[117] Larcom to I. Thorndike, 4 December, 1809. Benjamin Larcom Letterbook, MAHS.
[118] Larcom to I. Thorndike, 25 January, 1809. Benjamin Larcom Letterbook, MAHS.

"to prevent smuggling in Helgoland." The American trade again began to dry up, and by the end of 1810, with French annexation of the Hanse, came to a near-total standstill.[119]

Napoleon and US-German Commerce

To understand the full impact of the Continental System on the German-American relationship, one must remember that in the late 1790s dozens of merchants houses on both shores transacted millions of dollars of business, and that an American ship dropped anchor in the Elbe or Weser, on average, every other day. American exports to Germany in 1799 had totaled over $18 million.[120] A year after the Berlin Decree, American arrivals were rare. A mere six US ships came to Bremen during 1807. The year 1808 was so dismal in both the major Hanse ports that the US consuls were lamenting the complete cessation of trade.[121] Total US exports to Germany in 1808 amounted to less than $700,000.[122] "This mournful catastrophe," F.J. Wichelshausen wrote in early 1809, "can in my opinion not continue much longer, as the ruin of the Hansa towns will soon follow."[123] By the time Napoleon directly annexed the Hanseatic cities to his empire in late 1810, their lives as seaports were all but destroyed.

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119 Köppen, "Die Handelsbeziehungen Hamburgs," 162-164.

120 Historical Statistics of the United States. (Washington, DC, 1975), Foreign Commerce (Series U 317-352).

121 McGowan, "Relations Between Hamburg and the United States," 6.

122 Historical Statistics of the United States. (Washington, DC, 1975), Foreign Commerce (Series U 317-352).

123 Wichelshausen to Madison, 6 February 1809. NAW-B.

Why did Napoleon single out the neutral American and Hanseatic commerce? The Berlin Decree, according to Decrés, the French Minister of Marine and Colonies, did not invalidate the Franco-American Treaty of 1800.[124] But Napoleon quickly became convinced that the British were carrying out their commerce via the neutral carriers of the US, Denmark, and the Hanse. In September 1807 Napoleon declared that the Danish and Portuguese flags (whose countries were now under French domination) no longer existed, while the flags of the Hanse were "completely in the service of England." America, he said, had "special consideration" in England, despite the frequent friction between them.[125] Thus in November 1807, Napoleon ordered that the Berlin decrees be enforced literally, with no exceptions made for the Americans or any others.[126]

The first Milan Decree of 23 November declared that any ship which touched England — regardless of the reason — was a French prize, and could be confiscated. Any ship which reached a French port was to be inspected and the captain and crew interrogated separately. The interrogations sometimes lasted for two or three days, and individual members of the crew were frequently offered a portion of the cargo as a reward if they would "confess" that the ship had been to England.[127] When England retaliated by declaring their blockade of all ports, Napoleon issued a second Milan decree (the more famous one, of 17 December), which re-iterated that any vessel which had touched England or English property in any way for any reason, had lost the protection of its flag, and was a French prize.

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[124] Daeley, *The Continental System in France,* 28.
[125] *Correpondance de Napoleon,* Vol. 16: 13134. (9 September, 1807).
[126] Daeley, *The Continental System in France,* 40-44.
[127] Ibid., 51-67.

Thus, the US was caught between these two mutually exclusive systems. It was almost impossible for an American ship to avoid being boarded by the British, and once it was boarded (having "touched" England), it was then subject to confiscation by the French. The question of American rights at sea proved to be one of President Jefferson's most intractable foreign policy problems. Faced with two warring superpowers, neither of whom respected American neutrality, the US first tried economic warfare of its own, with the Embargo and Non-Importation Acts of 1807. Again, American statesmen had overestimated American economic and geopolitical clout. Jefferson's feckless counter-embargo of Europe only served to rub salt in the wounds of already smarting American merchants. On 17 April 1808 Napoleon replied with the Bayonne decree, in which he said that any American vessel entering the ports of France, Holland, Italy, or the Hanse was actually coming from England, and should be detained. After all, the Emperor argued, if the US had an embargo, then how could American ships really be sailing from America? They must be coming from England instead. Napoleon had called Jefferson's bluff, while US exports fell from $108 million in 1807 to $22 million in 1808.[128]

As James Madison entered the White House in March 1809, the United States repealed the Embargo Acts, replacing them with the Non-Intercourse Act. American merchants could trade with any nation except Britain and France and their dependencies. Throughout 1809 and 1810 American and French representatives tried to reach an accord to replace the expiring 1800 agreements, which had proven so obviously worthless. Napoleon claimed to be open to negotiations, but in 1810 he invoked a new tax (the

[128] Ibid., 92.

"Trianon tariff") of almost 100% on cotton, pepper, brown sugar, and other important goods which the United States exported.[129]

Nonetheless, Napoleon offered in August 1810 to protect American shipping against French privateers, by supplying the Americans with special *permis américains.* In Hamburg, the French issued 37 "ordinary" permits, and 38 specifically for the importation of rice from South Carolina. Bremen, interestingly, received more: 43 ordinary, and 44 reserved for an unspecified "second category."[130] Napoleon had toyed with this sort of thing before. On 15 November 1808, for instance, his Director of *Douanes* in Hamburg announced that Danish vessels could obtain special entry permits which would be issued to the Danish consulate. Denmark was at the time at war with England, and France was thus a logical trading partner. Napoleon withdrew the privilege in October 1810, apparently thinking that neutral America was a better bet than the Danes, who were sliding toward the English.[131] The Americans, however, seemed to be sliding toward France. In 1810 Congress lifted restrictions against French ports, and President Madison essentially banned all American commerce with Great Britain.

Some historians have argued that Napoleon's real interest in experimenting with American shipping permits stemmed from his desire not to see the French and Dutch overseas colonies starved out by the British navy. This was, of course, a futile hope, since the British after Trafalgar had plentiful naval resources to spare for myriad blockades or occupations all over the world. Still, Napoleon's plan seems to have been to entice Americans into trading with French and Dutch colonies, ensuring the survival of centers of

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[129] Ibid., 136-137.
[130] Servière, *L'Allemagne Français Sous Napoleon,* 134-135.
[131] Ibid., 150-153.

production of goods needed in France, such as sugar, coffee, cotton, and quinine. Napoleon was occasionally quite creative along these lines, even encouraging American ships to sail under French colors, as in the case of the *Swallow* (sailing as *L'Hirondelle*), out of Baltimore.[132]

The British countered with a licensing system of their own. In 1802, the British government offered a few experimental licenses to those shippers who wanted to sail with cargoes for France. In other words, a British license theoretically enabled one to trade with enemies of the British empire, free of harassment from the Royal Navy. By 1810, when Napoleon's license system was well underway, the British had already outdone him, granting 18,356 licenses that year for those who wished to take the risk of defying the Continental System.[133] Nonetheless, the British continued to prey upon American merchantmen. Between 1802 and 1807 alone, they seized a total of 528 US ships.[134] In 1812 the British cabinet belatedly decided to lift the Orders in Council and cease preying upon US shipping, but it was too late; Madison had already asked for and obtained an American declaration of war.

Though he was willing to consider adjustments in his relationship with the Americans, Napoleon was generally ruthless in his treatment of the Hanse, who were completely at his mercy. In August 1808 he issued a proclamation sequestering the ships of the Hanse as "punishment" for their aid to England. The Hanse sent a representative to Paris to plead their case. After eight months of lobbying, they obtained permission to carry French goods. In the summer of 1809, the French offered the Hanse special permits, like

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[132] Melvin, *Napoleon's Navigation System,* 62-63.
[133] Seybert, *Statistical Annals,* 70.
[134] Ibid., 79.

those issued later to the Americans, permitting Hanseatic ships to carry French goods. In December 1809, the French finally declared that American ships could enter the Hanse, but (like the Hanseatic ships) only in the "service" of France.[135] Long before the actual annexation, then, Napoleon seemed to be considering using the Hanse as French ports, and forcing all neutral ships which used them to become French, on paper and in practice.

Naturally, German shippers tried to squirm out from beneath these restrictions as best they could. A number of Hamburg's vessels obtained goods from Russia or Sweden in 1809 and 1810 and tried to sell them to France, claiming that this was in keeping with the French directives. Abel, Hamburg's Minister in Paris, tried unsuccessfully to add American goods to the list of permissible "colonial" products. Some Hanseatic vessels did their best to play both sides of the blockades. In early 1810, Danish authorities seized the La Fortuna, a Hamburg-flagged ship. The Danish inspectors learned that the captain had both an English and a French license, and he had thrown the former overboard as soon as he left Plymouth.[136]

The Napoleonic Wars did not obliterate all German-American commerce. The New York firm of Jacob LeRoy had a number of arrangements with the Meyers (a Hamburg firm transplanted to New York), and did business with Hamburg, even from 1812-14. The amounts involved were admittedly smaller than in the 1790s: $1,000-2,000 transactions, rather than the $5,000-20,000 deals that LeRoy had transacted in peacetime. Still, from 1805-15, LeRoy was running one or two ships to Europe per year, a few of which went to Hamburg. His agent there was the ubiquitous John Parish.[137]

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[135] Ibid., 102-105.
[136] Ibid., 148-149.
[137] See letters and receipts in the LeRoy Collection, Box 3, folders 1 &2. NYHS.

Other merchants were able to ride out the various storms and the irregularities of war. By 1804, Peter Grotjan was wealthy enough that a loss of $36,000 (when three European firms holding his investments all went bankrupt) was only a bruise. He lost half his ready cash, but his business was still healthy. Nonetheless, Grotjan grew weary of the increasing risk and efforts required to keep up a US-German trade. He began to withdraw from it slowly, focusing instead on intra-American commerce. This shift was well underway by the time the Embargo Acts were passed, and Grotjan had apparently hedged his bets by compensating with domestic business ventures. Even the War of 1812, he wrote in his diary, "does not diminish my success."[138] In that year, Grotjan became a publisher, printing his weekly four-page newspaper, *Grotjan's Philadelphia Public Sale Report,* which provided merchants with current prices and sales figures for various commodities, as well as trade trends and important news items regarding commerce.

Citizens of the Empire

On Christmas Eve 1810, F.J. Wichelshausen found little to celebrate. Word had just reached Bremen of Napoleon's decision to annex the whole of Northern Germany into three new *départements hanséatiques.* Writing his semi-annual report to Secretary of State Robert Smith that day, Wichelshausen mused that it was just as well; things could not get any worse. Being a part of the French empire might mean that Bremers might actually get something from Paris besides heavy taxes and laws that forbade trade. The day had long passed, he conceded, when the Hanse had any neutrality to defend:

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[138] Peter A. Grotjan memoirs (no page numbers), PHS.

> I cannot help observing that for some years the Independency [sic] of the Hansa towns was more chimerical than real, and continually exposed to the impositions and vexations of the [warring] Powers.[139]

Two months later, the American consul had reason to regret even that modicum of optimism. Things could indeed get much worse. The dour and incorruptible Marshal Davout arrived to take over, with Napoleon's new Navigation Act in hand. The immediate result was a total communication blackout on waterborne correspondence. Letters had to first pass French inspectors and censors, and then would be passed on via the French postal system. Ships leaving the Hanse could sail only for three ports: Dunkirk, Nantes, or Bordeaux.[140] The French dissolved the Bremen Senate, although they did so without arresting any of its members, as many had feared. Bremen, according to Wichelshausen's awkward translation of the French, was now merely the "Department of the Mouth of the Weser."[141] It was not long before the French came to Wichelshausen's office with the inevitable order to cease his correspondence. Bremen was no longer a sovereign state, and thus had no need for an American consul. Bremen's commerce would be administered by French officials. Wichelshausen was out of a job.[142]

There was a certain absurdity in "making" these German towns French by re-drawing a map. Napoleon's creation of the new *départements hanséatiques* had more to do with his military and commercial needs than with any political logic. He was motivated

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139 Wichelshausen to R. Smith, 24 December, 1810. NAW-B.

140 Interestingly, there was a loophole, by which a ship could sail anywhere — even to England — and unload part or all of its cargo, but it must then proceed to one of these three French ports either empty or loaded with a cargo of timber, hemp, tar, masts, iron, or a few other naval stores. Thus, the French sought to make money off England while simultaneously rebuilding their fleet. (Melvin, *Napoleon's Navigation System,* 242.

141 Wichelshausen to R. Smith, 28 February 1811. NAW-B.

142 Wichelshausen to Monroe, 4 October 1812. NAW-B.

above all by wanting to solidify the Continental System, but by 1811 his grasp was badly slipping, with Spain in full revolt (with active British military participation there), and Russia increasingly flagrant about disobeying the Treaty of Tilsit. Napoleonic efficiency could sometimes be very impressive. Six weeks after the annexation, 22,000 bilingual copies of the *Code Napoléon* arrived in the Hanse. But this, too, was symbolic of the hard-heartedness of Napoleon's arbitrary measures. All the German barristers and legal clerks lost their jobs as the French arrived to administer the new legal system.[143]

Being citizens of the French empire meant that the Hanseatic Germans were now subject to conscription. By this relatively late stage of the wars, and particularly with Napoleon preparing his massive Russian invasion, the draft had become a plague. Desertion was a serious problem. Dutch, Spanish, and German troops stationed in Bremen and Hamburg frequently deserted, and even three officers of the French 128th infantry regiment (stationed just outside Bremen) were caught in the autumn of 1811 trying to desert by ship to Great Britain.[144] Napoleon managed to comb out Hamburg's prisons and poorhouses to flesh out the four new "French" infantry regiments he created from his new Hanseatic subjects. When their performance failed to meet the standards of the *Grande Armée,* Napoleon decided to give these German-speaking troops to the Westphalian army of his brother Jérôme. Even the Westphalians, however, chose not to take these regiments into Russia in 1812.[145] Poor attitudes and military incompetence thus saved many young Bremers and Hamburgers from the terrible fate of the Russian campaign.

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[143] Jean Vidalenc, "Les départements hanséatiques et l'administrations napoléonienne." *Francia* I (1973): 426-427.

[144] Ibid., 420.

[145] Ibid., 449.

Napoleon pondered the creation of a giant new "North German Canal," which would allow efficient barge transport from the Rhine to the Elbe. This was a widely-discussed project for many years, although it never materialized.[146] Indeed, the French occupation offered virtually no improvements in the economic condition of the Hanse. Bremen, in particular, was dependent upon a precarious overland route through the Duchy of Oldenburg, in order to obtain even the most basic supplies.[147] Trade went from dismal to non-existent. After the United States entered the war in 1812, Napoleon issued a new series of special licenses for American ships. These were for specific destinations, and of the 707 issued that year (to be used in the following year, 1813), 696 were for French ports. Hamburg and Bremen each received *one:* a single American ship would be allowed to call upon each port in 1813.[148]

Liberation

If Shakespeare could have written a play about Napoleon's career, the year 1813 would have been Act IV: a relentless, grinding series of reverses, punctuated by the occasional flash of old genius which buoyed hopes and inspired the doomed hero to struggle on toward his terrible end. Instead, it was Napoleon's countryman Victor Hugo, who passed poetic judgment on the nature of the Emperor's twilight: "Destiny and he were no longer of one mind."

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[146] At least not under French administration. Sixty years later, the Germans completed a canal nearly identical to the one the French had planned.

[147] Schäfer, *Bremen und die Kontinentalsperre,* 35.

[148] Melvin, *Napoleon's Navigation System,* 344.

In the Hanse, wartime privation, a rigorous military draft, Napoleonic censorship, and six years of French occupation had turned even the most dedicated francophiles into seething malcontents. After Mallet's abortive *coup d'état* in December 1812, Napoleon commissioned an investigation of the loyalty of each of his *départements.* The report from the Hanse was dismal. The best that could be said was that the North Germans were relatively obedient, while demonstrating "a certain nonchalance, which irritates the French administrators."[149]

As the news from Russia spread throughout Germany, and the scale of Napoleon's defeat became clear, indifference turned to open hostility against the occupation troops. In the summer of 1813, the besieged citizens of Hamburg jeered Marshal Davout's French garrison by turning the traditional French salute into an insult: "Vive l'empereur Alexandre!"[150] Napoleon's chief magistrate in Bremen had written at the end of March 1813 that "the spirit of the inhabitants is very bad."[151] By the autumn, the situation was nearly mutinous, and the Bremers took to their rooftops in October to hail Tettenborn's approaching Russians.[152] When the French evacuated and the troops of the Russo-German legion arrived to liberate Bremen, the townsfolk went wild: "The joy and enthusiasm of the people," F.J. Wichelshausen wrote, "is inexpressible." Three thousand young men joined the newly-created "Volunteer Legion," to serve the allied armies against Napoleon.[153]

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149 Vidalenc, "Les départements hanséatiques," 434. "Une certain nonchalance qui indignait les administrateurs français." (Also from this report: "Les habitants de ces provinces montrent en général une telle indifférence pour tous les évènements qui doivent influer sur la bonheur de la France.")

150 Ibid., 450.

151 Ibid., 441.

152 Wichelshausen to Monroe, 24 November 1813. NAW-B.

153 Ibid.

Ironically, the commander of the Allied "Army of the North," whose troops liberated Bremen, was Crown Prince Bernadotte of Sweden, the former Napoleonic marshal who had once occupied the area for the French. This time, the Bremers fêted Bernadotte and General Winzingerode, the ranking Russian commander. The city was illuminated, and the allied troops marched in a parade.[154] At a reception that evening, F.J. Wichelshausen encountered the Army of the North's British liaison officer, who angrily told him that the United States should expect no mercy, just as Napoleon would receive none. Then the American consul met Bernadotte, and talked, among other things, about America's role in the conflict.

Wichelshausen must have been as astonished as most of his countrymen when the US had joined the "wrong" side of the war in 1812.[155] Bernadotte, a man with a gift for picking the winning side, upbraided the American consul for the "cowardly and dishonest behaviour" of the United States. Wichelshausen was too loyal and too tactful to place his own thoughts in writing on this subject — at least in writing to his American superiors — but he faithfully reported the party and reception, and included a small caveat at the end of his letter. "I do not entirely subscribe to these sentiments," he said about Bernadotte's remarks, but added that it was important to mention "the opinion of a great man."[156]

Wichelshausen did have one moment of satisfaction that evening. He met with the former chief magistrates and several of Bremen's Senators, all of whom were looking forward to returning to their duties. Bremen, they told him, would soon be back in business, and Wichelshausen would once again have a job. With the happy prospect of a

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[154] Ibid.

[155] Wichelshausen to Monroe, 29 February, 1813. NAW-B. See also: Vidalenc, "Les départements hanséatiques," 434-441.

[156] Wichelshausen to Monroe, 24 November, 1813. NAW-B.

restored American trade, Wichelshausen congratulated the men on recovering "the ancient rights of this city."[157]

Hamburg's experience with liberation was not as pleasant as Bremen's. Early in the 1813 campaign Napoleon abandoned the city, desperate to scrape together enough of his scattered garrisons to form a new *Grande Armée.* As Germans increasingly began to rally around the allied cause, and particularly after the Prussians called out their Landwehr, the citizens of Hamburg rose in revolt in the spring of 1813. But the French returned in force, and the ill-prepared Hamburgers capitulated with virtually no resistance. A number of prominent citizens fled in terror of French reprisals, leaving the city leaderless. Marshal Davout arrived that summer at the head of an entire French infantry corps, and immediately began preparations to stand a siege. Davout's skill and grim determination kept Hamburg in French hands until Napoleon's abdication the following spring. Germany's largest harbor was a shell-shocked, half-starved skeleton of a city when peace finally came.[158]

Conclusions: Starting From Scratch?

More than one Napoleonic historian has pointed out that all aspects of the French Imperial system were in one way or another tied to Napoleon's military needs. The French emperor was probably wrong when he told his brother Louis that it was possible to conquer the sea through power on land. But it was certainly *not* possible for Napoleon to project power at sea, or even to harass his seagoing British enemies, without maintaining

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[157] Ibid.

[158] Festerling, *Bremens deutsche und hanseatische Politik,* 27.

his continental victories. After the catastrophic defeat in Russia, he began to modify the licensing system (and indeed, many aspects of the entire Continental System) in dozens of ways and in dozens of places, because of "the great needs of my finances under present circumstances."[159]

Modifications began even before the Russian defeat, and showed quite clearly the futility of the Continental System. One notorious example involves Bourrienne, who was, admittedly, one of the more ethically "flexible" bureaucrats of his day. He was, nonetheless, Napoleon's chief commercial administrator in the Hanseatic cities. In 1811, when Napoleon requisitioned a large supply of shoes from his new Hanseatic *départements,* it was clear to Bourrienne that the only way to fill the order was to allow illicit trade with England to obtain the leather. Bourrienne carried out this trade and kept it secret from Napoleon, but it speaks for the idiocy of the system that the Frenchman in charge of making sure the Hanse didn't trade with England was administering an English trade himself, and primarily because of the needs of the French Emperor![160]

Several historians have described the Continental System as little more than a huge network of scams; a porous klepto-bureaucracy where goods entered and left Europe everywhere because all the French officials were so corrupt and easy to bribe. One author has even claimed that, "Hamburg became the headquarters of an illicit trade which was so normal that the risk of breaking the French cordon was evaluated exactly and added to the price of goods."[161] Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the Continental System and the twenty-year period of French wars did considerable damage to the commerce of the

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159 Melvin, *Napoleon's Navigation System,* 341.

160 Bourrienne, *Memoires,* Vol 3, 2-14.

161 Rosenbaum and Sherman, M.M. Warburg & Co., 4. See also: François Crouzet, "Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe 1792-1815" *Journal of Economic History* XXIV (1964): 567-590.

western world, and thus, to the US-German relationship that had become so heavily linked to trade between American ports and the Hanse.

In the last years of the 18th century, the value of American commerce in the Hanse was second only to trade with Britain. It was, in fact, more profitable, because it was concentrated so heavily on items with very high resale values and prices-per-unit. Relatively few American vessels traded with the Hanse, compared to the numbers of British ships that appeared in the Weser and Elbe. But the value of American and American-resold goods like tobacco, coffee, and (to a lesser extent) sugar was extremely high, enabling merchants to make tremendous profits from US-German trade.

The Continental System crushed the free trade upon which the Hanse's prosperity depended. Nearly 1,800 ships docked in Bremen in 1805; less than 300 in 1812. In 1802 Bremen imported a total of 21,174 tons of foreign goods. In 1813, 111 tons were unloaded.[162] The final years of the Napoleonic era witnessed a near-total cessation of trade. All but the strongest and best-capitalized Hanseatic merchant firms failed; hundreds of liquidations occurred between 1790 and 1815.[163]

The twenty-year Anglo-French conflict, dislocated trade and set back all the related cross-cultural developments which often result from commerce. The flow of money, people, and ideas between countries ceased. Only illegitimate and irregular channels remained. This was a different kind of warfare from that which had gone before. France had enjoyed a tenfold increase in her colonial trade from 1716 to 1787, despite the half-dozen serious conflicts in which she had been embroiled during that period, most of them

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[162] Schäfer, *Bremen und die Kontinentalsperre,* 53-56.
[163] Schramm, "Die deutschen Überseekaufleute," 37.

against Britain.[164] The wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon presaged a new kind of global commercial conflict that would mark the 19th and especially the 20th centuries: the wars of economies.

Historians do not agree on the extent of the damage. Certainly the port cities were hurt. The collapse of their prime source of wealth — commerce — resulted in a collapse of ancillary industries like shipbuilding. Some writers see this as a permanent injury that delayed the industrial revolution in the coastal regions of the western world.[165] Certainly the damage of the wars was not limited to the coastal areas; the German economy in general was badly depressed after 1815.

German-American trade took some time to recover. The first American ship to arrive, unmolested by the French, in Bremen's harbor was the *Hannibal,* from New York, which dropped anchor in Bremen in August 1814.[166] F.J. Wichelshausen, happy to be writing his first consular report in five years, declared somewhat prematurely in January 1815 that "trade is entirely reestablished."[167] Although Hanseatic harbors were again open to American shipping, the prosperity of the 1790s was now a distant memory. The Germans and Americans would have to start almost from scratch.

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164 Crouzet, "Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change," 568-569.

165 This is Crouzet's position. He argues that the economic devastation of port regions resulted in a lack of capital investments, which made factory development impossible. The result was that the industrial revolution began in places like Manchester, Lille, the Ruhr, and Milano, not in Southampton, Brest, Copenhagen, or Venice. Hermann Wätjen concurs. See: *Aus Der Frühzeit Des Nordatlantikverkehrs,* 7-9.

166 Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen,* Vol 2, 54.

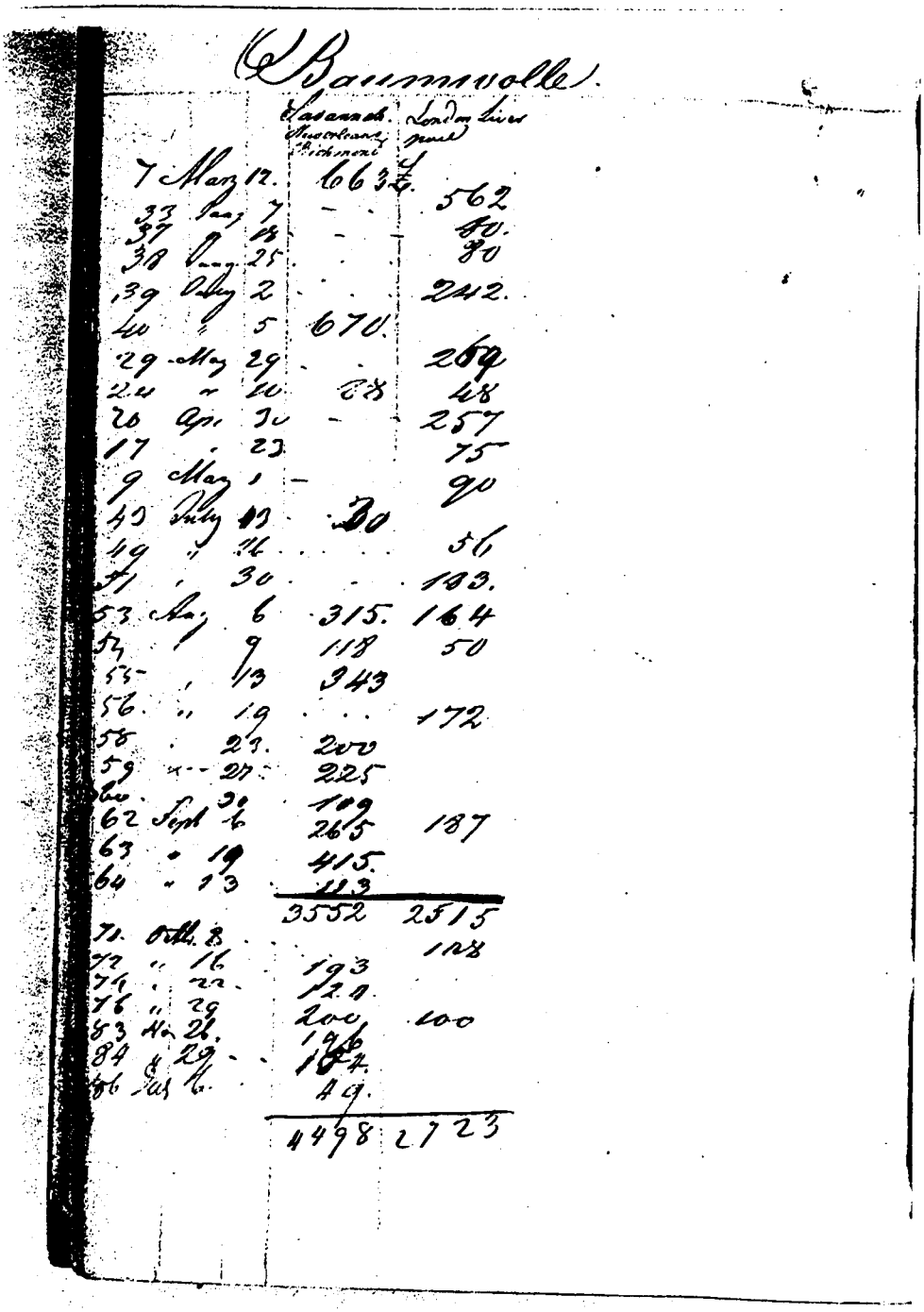
167 Wichelshausen to Monroe, 25 January 1815. NAW-B.

Chapter Eight

Issues of Free Trade and Recovery: 1815-1835

Why should we fetter commerce? Fetter not commerce, sir; let her be free as the air — she will range the whole creation, and return on the wings of the four winds of heaven to bless the land with plenty.

Patrick Henry to the Virginia Assembly, 1782



Year-end report from the Bremen Handelskammer, 1823.
(This section shows cotton imports from the USA and Britain. Note the higher totals for imported American cotton, on the left.)
Source: SuUB. (Used with permission.)



Western Europe after the Congress of Vienna, 1815.

The Restoration of Free Trade

In 1815, after twenty years as a battlefield for the wars of the French republic and empire, Germany was largely exhausted and impoverished. The Hanseatic cities, though they had not been as war-ravaged as some areas of Germany like the Rhineland, were wraiths of their former selves. Oceangoing shipping and intra-German transport were both devastated, and the capital needed to rebuild them was missing, largely absconded during the French occupation. Between 1789 and 1815 more than half of the established businesses in the Hanse went bankrupt or were liquidated. In some cases, their capital was absorbed by others, and thus the merchant circles grew ever smaller during the period of French dominance. Only the strong survived.[1]

Despite their weakened condition, the Hanse were still the only major international harbors for all of Germany, and restored free trade brought the merchant ships of the world back to Bremen and Hamburg. From the abysmally low 111 tons of goods imported in 1813 — the worst period of the Continental System — Bremen imported a total of 32,828 tons of goods in 1816, slightly more than she did in 1802, the last year of relative peace.[2] After the US and Britain ended their hostilities in 1815, American ships once again appeared in the Weser in increasing numbers. By 1816, American commerce had returned as one of Bremen's most important activities; only the British and Dutch sent more ships to Bremen that year than did the United States.[3]

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1 Schramm, "Die deutschen Überseekaufleute," 37.
2 Schäfer, *Bremen und die Kontinentalsperre,* 54.
3 Ibid.

It is a relatively easy task for historians to note the physical damage to a city like Hamburg, which needed substantial rebuilding after the long siege of 1813-14. It is much harder to assess the state of mind of such a city's inhabitants. Evidence suggests, however, that in the depressed economy of Germany in 1815, people were, in general, very skeptical about the future of commerce as a livelihood. New businesses were established relatively slowly. Growth, particularly in new enterprises, was much slower than during the 1780s and 1790s. Those citizens of the Hanse who were interested in American commerce frequently decided that moving to America was a better bet than the expense and years of effort required to establish or re-establish oneself in the old country.[4]

The first priority for the restored Hanseatic leadership — even before considerations of reconstruction — was to ensure that the Hanse didn't lose their sovereignty. Bremen's Senator (later *Bürgermeister)* Johann Smidt represented the Hanse at the Congress of Vienna: "plain, in black coat, [like] a German Franklin."[5] Smidt returned in 1815 with the good news that Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck had retained their independence. Thus the "League" was preserved, and the Hanse soon proved reasonably unified in their support of the new *Deutsche Bund.*[6]

The Hanseatic leadership hoped that the German Confederation would serve the interests of the small German states, if for no other reason than it would limit the arbitrary power of Prussia and Austria. Needless to say, this was at best a naîve hope, since Metternich fully intended to use the *Bund* to solidify Vienna's power and influence in

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4 Walter Struve, "German Merchants, German Artisans, and Texas During the 1830s and 1840s" *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 23 (1988): 94. (Struve notes that the cost of establishing a new business in Bremen in 1820 was actually greater than the cost of emigrating to America *and* establishing a new firm there.)

5 Festerling, *Bremens deutsche und hanseatische Politik,* 42.

6 Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen,* Vol. 2, 53.

Germany. Nonetheless, neither Bremen, Hamburg, nor Lübeck wanted a return to a completely independent Hanseatic League, since they feared that it would leave them out of touch with German political and economic developments. Some Bremer Senators contemplated a single, unified Hanseatic representation in the *Bund,* but the Hamburgers would not hear of any arrangement that limited their independence.[7]

The next goal was to restore the seagoing commerce that would return prosperity to the Hanseatic cities. Although foreign ships were returning to Bremen and Hamburg after peace, the situation was still grim. In addition to the loss of so many businesses and merchant firms, the Hanseatic merchant fleets themselves had been badly damaged by the war; more than half their ships were lost. In the two decades prior to the wars, Hamburg and Bremen each had between 200 and 300 ships under their respective flags. Hamburg, for example, flagged 280 ships in 1799. Both cities' fleets recovered slowly. By 1822, Hamburg's fleet had risen only to 88. During the same years, Bremen fell from 179, recovering only to 95.[8] Bremen averaged only 100 ships sailing under her flag until well into the 1820s.[9]

The Hanse were thus largely dependent upon foreign-flagged carriers for the decade following the Napoleonic Wars. This in turn meant that precious capital flowed out of the cities, into the nations whose shippers were being used. It also meant that the Hanse's surviving shippers were especially concerned with comparative tariffs abroad, because their reduced merchant fleets could only survive if rates remained competitive. This subject will be studied in detail momentarily.

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7 Festerling, *Bremens deutsche und hanseatische Politik,* 37-75.
8 Wätjen, *Aus der Frühzeit des Nordatlantikverkehrs,* 7.
9 Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen,* Vol. 2, 79.

The Hanse developed several strategies to restore commerce. Bremen in particular demonstrated uncharacteristic adventurousness under the leadership of Johann Smidt, whose political fortunes waxed after the wars, and who was the driving force behind Bremen's most ambitious project. From 1816 through 1830, Bremen laid out a city and deep-sea harbor at the mouth of the Weser, on the site of the old village of Bremerlehe. The Bremen Senate, at Smidt's urging, purchased the land from Hanover. Bremerhaven, which became fully operational in 1830, is a remarkably purposeful place, a city built entirely to service seagoing trade. It is also interesting for an American, accustomed to the narrow and serpentine streets of older German cities, to experience Bremerhaven's remarkably straight grid of broad boulevards: a "German Baltimore," as one historian has called it, recognizing the irony that Baltimore itself was a very "German" city for many years.[10] The territory passed into Bremen's ownership by a treaty with Hanover in January 1827, and Bremerhaven was officially declared a city in May, with Smidt ceremoniously raising Bremen's flag over the harbor. The American schooner *Draper* arrived at Bremerhaven on 13 September 1830, the first merchant ship to anchor there.[11]

Hanseatic prosperity, it must be remembered, depended not solely upon trade with the trans-oceanic world, but also upon the prosperity of the German heartland. If the latter was poor or depressed, then the Hanse had no markets for their wares. Bremen and Hamburg certainly took in far more than they consumed; unless they sold it, their warehouses would fill up, and prices would crash. Stunted demand was a major problem after 1815, as the German interior tried to recover from the ravages of war. The depressed economy also threatened the cooperation of the Hanse, since Bremen and Hamburg were

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[10] Dr. Thomas Elsmann, interview by the author (written): University of Bremen, 10 June, 1997.

[11] Beutin, *Bremen und Amerika,* 27-29.

rivals for the limited German marketplaces. This was a rivalry the larger city usually won, because most of the big Prussian and Saxon markets were accessible via the Elbe, rather than the Weser.[12] Thus, while Bremen built Bremerhaven to open new opportunities and overseas connections, Hamburg concentrated on a clarification and regulation of the absurdly complex toll system on the Elbe, where no less than 14 different tolls — in three different currencies — existed between Hamburg and Magdeburg.[13]

Finally, in order to restore commerce, the Hanse began seriously to pursue new trade relationships with several nations, including the establishment of consulates and lobbying for decreased tariffs on German goods abroad. Although the Hanse sometimes sent a single representative to speak on behalf of Bremen and Hamburg (and sometimes Lübeck), the two cities pursued different strategies. Hamburg branched out into the newly-independent markets of South America, hoping to restore the profitable coffee and sugar imports Germany had enjoyed in the 1780s and 1790s. Bremen, seeking cotton and tobacco, turned to the United States.

This trans-Atlantic outreach took two forms. First, the Hanse established a number of consulates in areas where they had always had interest in the goods, yet had never devoted much effort to diplomacy. Bremen, in fact, had only five consulates worldwide in the 1790s, yet established 60 in the first 25 years after the Napoleonic Wars.[14] We have already seen the example of Charles Buck, tapped by his native Hamburg to serve as Consul-General in Philadelphia in 1816. Bremen appointed Johann Bechtel as consul in New Orleans in 1817, H.D. Wichelshausen (brother of the consul) in Baltimore in 1818,

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[12] Robert H. Bremner, "The United States and Bremen," *American-German Review* XVI, Nr 6 (August, 1950): 27.

[13] Clapham, *The Economic Development of France and Germany,* 109.

[14] Kellenbenz, "Der Bremer Kaufmann," 39.

Caspar Meier in New York in 1822, and Hermann Lengerke in Philadelphia in 1826.[15] Other Hanseatic families already in the New World began to spread to the smaller, less prominent American harbors after 1815, particularly in the South. Hanseatic merchant firms settled in Richmond, Savannah, Charleston, and Galveston, and staffed Bremen's and Hamburg's consulates there in the 1830s and 1840s.[16]

Second, the Hanse finally began to consider the need for comprehensive trade treaties with several of their transatlantic commercial partners. In order to ensure that their share of world markets did not decline, even though their carrying capacity and capital assets were damaged, the Hanse sought to obtain more favorable duties for their ships in foreign ports. Bremen and Hamburg made this effort in a handful of different countries, but paid particular attention to the United States.

Courtship Rivalry: The Hanse and Prussia Approach the US

In 1815 the United States finally began to update and re-calculate its system of tariffs and discriminating duties. Faced with a sudden flood of British products released at last after the wars, the embryonic American industries were frantic to preserve themselves in the face of such difficult competition. Congress passed a new Tariff Act to establish prohibitive duties on the importation of articles which were also manufactured in the United States, as well as substantial duties on a long list of items which were manufactured in the

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15 Proclamation of the Bremen Senate, 12 January, 1815, SAB: 2-B.13.b.3. Declaration of the Bremen Senate, 26 September, 1817 SAB: 2-B.13.b.4. H.D. Wichelshausen to Bremen Senate (Gröning). SAB: 2-B.13.b.2. Extract of the Protocols of the Bremen Senate, 18 September, 1822, SAB: 2-B.13.b.5. Extract of the Protocols of the Bremen Senate, 13 September, 1826, SAB: 2-B.13.b.5.

16 Kellenbenz, "Der Bremer Kaufmann," 41-44.

US irregularly or in small quantities. Simultaneously, however, the US held out the plum of reduced tariffs to all nations that would reciprocate in kind. The United States would abolish any discriminating duties on the ships and goods of a country that would similarly abolish duties on American ships and products. This act, finally signed into law on 14 January 1817, included one important caveat which concerned the Hanse. It restricted "import trade to the *production* of the two countries."[17]

The Hanse, as we have seen, were not producers. They trans-shipped German goods from the German interior across the world, and their ships returned with the goods of the world, to re-sell them in Germany. Thus, it was impossible for the Hanse to benefit from this tariff reduction, because their vessels were not (by the American definition) carrying *their* goods. Similarly, the other German states stood to gain little, because they possessed virtually no merchant marines. The Prussians, for example, almost always exported their linens and other products on Hanseatic vessels.

When Charles Buck came out of retirement to serve Hamburg as consul in Philadelphia, he noted that German goods were rapidly losing their places in American markets to British products. Linens, the mainstay German export to America, were no longer as popular as they had been in the 1780s and 1790s, partly as a result of British competition, partly because of the increased quality of domestically-produced American cloth.[18] The Hamburg Senate charged Buck with the task of lobbying the American government to remove discriminating duties from the Hanse, making German goods competitive once again. Because Buck had been a US citizen for nearly a decade, a special act of Congress was required to allow him to serve. (A US citizen serving another state as

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17 [Italics added]. See: McGowan, "Relations Between Hamburg and the United States," 19.

18 Charles N. Buck memoirs (no page numbers), PHS.

a diplomat to the US could be construed as a violation of Article I, Section 9 of the Constitution.) Buck began appointing vice-consuls in a number of American port cities. His plan was to build upon the long-standing networks of Hanseatic entrepreneurs already in America to influence Congressmen and American bureaucrats.[19]

Buck realized, however, that the new American tariff law was not as clear-cut as its wording implied. Regardless of whether nations had abolished discriminating duties, American vessels still enjoyed a "ten percent discrimination." This was a leftover from a 1789 law which stipulated that American vessels received a 10% discount below the general tariff rates, regardless of the origin of the goods they carried.[20] The ten percent discrimination made it virtually impossible for Buck to accomplish one of the Hamburg Senate's goals, the restoration of Hamburg-flagged ships in the US-Hanseatic trade.

Adding to the Hanse's difficulties in the postwar American market, Prussia now decided to enter the fray. Even more cash-poor than the Hanse, and as economically hurt from the wars, the Prussians after 1815 sought to clinch a direct American trade relationship once and for all. In 1817, Berlin dispatched Friedrich Gruehm as Minister-Resident *and* Consul-General to the United States.[21]

Buck and other Hanseatic representatives must have grimaced at the warm reception Gruehm received in Washington. The *Daily National Intelligencer* sang Gruehm's praises, and welcomed him to the capital. The Prussian Minister's previous service as Minister to

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19 Ibid.

20 Johnson, *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce,* Vol. 2, 337.

21 O'Connell, "Establishment of Diplomatic Relations," 23. [J.Q. Adams and James Monroe objected to the dual title, and demanded that the Prussians specify whether Gruehm was one or the other: a minister-resident (with special diplomatic privileges, and exemptions from American laws), *or* a consul (with no such advantages, but with the right to transact business.) Prussia replied that Gruehm was their Minister-Resident.]

Great Britain had made him something of a humanitarian celebrity. He had been a prominent fund-raiser for charities for wounded veterans. Gruehm also had the good fortune to arrive only two months after the return of John Quincy Adams in August 1817. Adams, finally coming home after years in Europe, took the oath of office as James Monroe's Secretary of State on 22 September. Six weeks later, Gruehm was in the office of the new Secretary, the confirmed Germanophile who had once represented America in Berlin.[22]

Gruehm's arrival touched off a kind of courtship rivalry between the Hanse and Prussia, as each tried to obtain the most favorable trade terms from the United States. Prussia had the advantage of name-recognition, of the two previous treaties, and of a Minister-Resident within earshot of a famously pro-Prussian Secretary of State. The Hanse, with established consulates, decades of experience in American trade, and hundreds of merchants living in the United States, had the advantage of practical economics; Hanseatic commerce had long been significant to the US, whereas direct US-Prussian trade was still embryonic.[23]

Gruehm's mission was to encourage the development of US-Prussian trade by means of favorable legislation. Ultimately — and this is what worried the Hanse — he wanted to cut Bremen and Hamburg out of the picture. On 21 November 1817 Gruehm gave John Quincy Adams a draft proposal for a direct-trade arrangement between the United States and Prussia, which stipulated "perfect reciprocity" in trade, access to harbors, and tariffs. The Prussian Minister explained that Hamburg shippers routinely

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22 *The Memoirs of John Quincy Adams,* Vol. 4, 8.

23 Kellenbenz, "Zur Frage der konsularisch-diplomatischen Verbindungen und der Handelsverträge der Hansestädte mit überseeischen Staaten im 19. Jahrhundert" *Bremisches Jahrbuch* 49 (1964): 221-223.

marked up prices on Prussian goods before selling them to America, and that a new, direct US-Prussian trade would benefit Americans by providing German goods at lower prices.[24] If the Americans would grant Most Favored Nation status to Prussia and would encourage their ships to sail directly to Prussian harbors, Prussia would give them an unheard-of bargain on German goods.

Buck and the other Hanseatic representatives were not blind to the implications of Gruehm's proposals. They were aware that Gruehm's position had two crucial flaws. First, Prussia lacked a significant merchant marine. It could only develop US-Prussian trade by begging American shippers to make long detours through the Baltic to Stettin and Danzig, Prussia's only major commercial harbors. Second, Prussia did not speak for all of Germany. The amount of American tobacco or cotton that the Prussians could theoretically consume was only a fraction of the total German demand for these products and, unlike the Hanse, Prussia had no arrangements for distribution throughout the German interior. Buck thus recognized that the Hanse had a much stronger hand in negotiating a trade deal with America, because the Hanse represented a far larger marketplace, serviced by an established network of merchants with their own fleets.[25]

In March 1819, Congress passed a reciprocity act for direct US-Prussian commerce. On paper at least, Gruehm had received part of what he wanted. But no legislation existed to require American shippers to sail to specific ports. Within a year it was clear to the Prussians that the majority of their commerce still left Germany via the Hanseatic ports. Since there was yet no US-Hanseatic agreement, Prussian goods arriving on Hanseatic ships did not enjoy any tariff reductions. And without a merchant fleet to

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[24] Gruehm to J.Q. Adams, 21 November 1817. NAW-NP.
[25] Charles N. Buck memoirs (no page numbers), PHS.

encourage a direct trade with America, Prussia could do little to take advantage of this treaty, which Congress set to expire in less than three years.[26] Gruehm returned to Prussia to report to his superiors. He left again for America in 1822, but fell ill and died the next year, earning the dubious distinction of being the first foreign diplomat to die on American soil. John Quincy Adams arranged the funeral.

In essence, the Hanse had won their rivalry with the Prussians almost by default. But it was a hollow victory. The United States still charged high discriminatory duties against Hanseatic ships, and US-German commerce continued to slip as Great Britain returned with a vengeance to the markets of virtually every place on earth. American exports to Germany (which, as we have seen, were the substantially larger portion of US-German trade) averaged between $3-8 million per year during the period 1815-1820, usually just under American exports to France. During that same period, however, American exports to Britain soared as high as $30 million, and never fell below $20 million.[27] German trade was important, but not crucial to Americans during this period.

The Free Trade Debate Takes Shape in Germany

Britain's overwhelming commercial power was also felt on the European continent, as the Hanse struggled not to lose their market shares in Germany, faced with a flood of cheap British exports. In Bremen, F.J. Wichelshausen wrote in 1815 that he hoped to convince Germans that American cotton could be an even lower-priced alternative to British

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[26] O'Connell, "Establishment of Diplomatic Relations," 26-29.

[27] Historical Statistics of the United States. (Washington, DC, 1975), Foreign Commerce (Series U 317-352).

cotton (usually from India), but that if all else failed, America could still contend in the German markets on the strength of tobacco.[28] As the decade drew to a close, Wichelshausen and his counterpart in Hamburg, Edward Wyer, noted that American trade with Germany had taken heavy blows from British competition. Of the roughly 1,000 merchant ships that came to Hamburg in 1817, only 37 were American. Nearly 600 were British. The next year was similarly depressing.[29]

The most troubling development for the Hanse, however, was the growing commercial strength of Prussia. Even if the Prussians had not had captured a significant share of American commerce, they had nonetheless greatly expanded their economic influence in Germany. Since victory over Napoleon, Prussia — with varying success — had been carrying the mantle it first picked up in 1813: the liberator and protector of the Germans. Compensated for lost Polish territory with German lands at the Congress of Vienna, the Prussians became, in fact, more German than their kingdom had ever been, more connected to the ideas and interchanges of the other German peoples. And as other Germans became, in turn, more aware of their nationality, Prussia moved slowly (albeit often clumsily) to take advantage of the growing sense of German nationality.

Her advocates argued that Prussia had shown the way in 1813-15: only strong, well-organized nations could protect the people from foreign depredations. The days of small, independent German states were over, as painfully demonstrated by the Hanse's impotence in the face of French aggression. Moreover, Prussia was taking an increasingly aggressive stance toward the centuries-old commercial dominance enjoyed by the Hanseatic

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28 Wichelshausen to Monroe, 25 January 1815. NAW-B.

29 Wyer to J.Q. Adams, 6 June, 1818. NAW-H. [Wyer replaced John Murray Forbes, who was transferred to Denmark in 1811. From 1811-1816, the US had no consul in Hamburg.]

cities. Leading Prussian thinkers like Moser, Fichte, and Jahn had all called for some kind of monetary or commercial union of the German states, to prevent the continued profiteering of the Hanse, who hurt the development of German industry in the interior, they argued, by importing foreign (particularly English) goods.[30] Thus Prussia, which in 1785 and 1800 had signed treaties with the United States to uphold free trade, became the leading advocate of German protectionism after the Napoleonic Wars.

The Hanse resisted the Prussian initial customs union of 1818, seemingly misinterpreting its meaning. Thinking in broader terms of a trans-German free-trade zone, the Hanse failed to realize that Prussia had more localized and pragmatic interests at stake. The Prussians wanted to join the two non-contiguous parts of their state economically by forming a customs union with the German states which lay between heartland Prussia and the Rhenish provinces. By so doing, Berlin could effectively begin the merging of North Germany to its economic, and thus (at least in part) to its political administration. Hanseatic merchants soon realized that any trade with Germany's interior would inevitably have to pass through this customs union, and thus sooner or later, the Hanse would have to begin obeying Prussian rules.[31]

Within the German Confederation, Bremen and Hamburg became the champions of free trade, but found the current of German opinion moving against them. At the Vienna Conferences on German Economic Unification in 1819-20, representatives from Prussia and Bavaria charged Hamburg with "selfishness and with lack of interest in the whole of German economic life."[32] By the mid-1820s the case for free trade was in serious

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30 Arnold Price, *The Evolution of the Zollverein* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949), 10-22.
31 Festerling, *Bremens deutsche und hanseatische Politik,* 84-85.
32 Ibid., 61.

jeopardy, and German protectionists even praised Napoleon's commercial system, while they referred to the *Kaufmänner* of Bremen and Hamburg as "British Agents."[33]

Strained by the lingering disruptions of war, compromised by the domestic political and economic considerations of their respective nations, Germans and Americans nonetheless continued to trade with one another, and did in fact rebuild a prosperous commercial relationship. Once again, the juncture of the German-American relationship proved to be the trade between the American coastal harbors and the Hanseatic ports. This time, however, governments began to take notice.

The Shape and Size of Postwar US-Hanseatic Commerce

In May 1815, in an effort to encourage American trade, the Bremen Senate finally granted a concession that American consuls had been requesting for two decades. They reduced the ship's duties on American vessels, making them equal to the fees paid by their own ships.[34] Hamburg and Lübeck soon followed suit. Bremen had the healthiest American trade in the first few years after the Napoleonic Wars, since Hamburg was still damaged and recovering, and Lübeck had virtually given up on her meager attempts to attract American shipping.[35] Bremen pursued American commerce with much greater determination than the other German ports, partly because of the established tobacco and cotton importers in the city, and partly because Hamburg — the only real competitor in

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33 Ibid., 164.

34 This is not the same as tariffs; these fees (reduced to the standard 1% of the value of the cargo carried, were charged against the *ships* themselves.)

35 Hess, *American Tobacco and Central European Policy,* 63.

Germany — focused elsewhere. In 1818, Bremen's merchant fleet was, next to Great Britain's, the largest foreign tonnage engaged in American trade.[36]

Still, American consuls in the Hanse bemoaned the dominance of Britain, and the relatively small numbers of American vessels in their harbors. In February 1818, Edward Wyer noted that only five American ships had docked in Hamburg since the beginning of the new year. By June, at the height of the trading season, he had seen only nine more.[37] In Bremen, from 1816 through 1822, American arrivals averaged only six percent of the total number of ships docking in the Weser.[38]

Statistics on the numbers of vessels, however, are deceptive. They do not adequately address the dimensions of US-German trade in this period because they do not consider the *value* of the goods carried on those ships, and thus the importance of various commercial relationships to the parties on either side of the transactions. In 1816, for instance, out of 805 ships which docked in Bremen, only 49 were American. Britain accounted for 156, the Netherlands for 111, Hamburg for 109, Denmark for 82, France for 63, and Russia for 58. The United States was seventh out of Bremen's 20 trading partners that year, if one counts only the numbers of ships in port.[39] In the same year, however, tobacco was the most valuable import in Bremen, accounting for over 3.2 million thaler. Second was sugar, at just over three million, and third was coffee, at 2.44 million. All of these, as we have seen, were imports heavily shipped from the United States, either directly (as in the case of tobacco), or trans-shipped (as for sugar and coffee.) The most important French import, wine, was a distant fourth-place that year, at just over one million

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36 Bremner, "The United States and Bremen," 27.
37 Wyer to J.Q. Adams, 17 February 1818, and 6 June 1818. NAW-H.
38 *Wareneinfuhr* papers, 1816-1822 (SuUB: Brem.c.1655)
39 Fellmann, *Seehandel und Seeschiffahrt Bremens,* 13.

thaler (90% of Bremen's wine came from Bordeaux.) Thus we find that although the American trade may not have had the largest volume, it consisted of the most valuable commodities in Bremen's marketplace.[40]

As the 1820s opened, the number of American ships increased relatively slowly, but the value of American commerce continued to figure prominently in Bremen's trading economy. In 1822, for example, 1126 ships dropped anchor in the Weser, only 61 of which carried American flags. Yet again, the value of goods from America and the Americas was immense. Of Bremen's total 11.4 million thalers' worth of imports that year, the following are the top six grosses:[41]

Bremen's Top Imports, by Value, 1822

Product	Value in Thaler
Coffee	3,134,140
Tobacco	1,434,929
Sugar	1,151,883
Cotton	480,094
Wine	404,982
Rice	248,082

It should be noted that 1822 was an abnormally good year for coffee and a relatively slow year for tobacco. Throughout the early 1820s, the two were relatively equal, basically tied for first place as the city's most valuable imports. The US figures prominently in all of these top six imports except wine.[42] Some American coffee came directly from Alabama that year. Slightly more sugar was brought in from the Indies than from Louisiana. But the vast majority of tobacco, cotton, rice, and nearly half the sugar

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40 Ibid., 15-17.

41 SuUB: *Wareneinfuhr* papers, 1822. Brem.c.1655.

42 Thirty-three ships from Bordeaux brought the majority of this wine in 1822. (SuUB: *Wareneinfuhr* papers, 1822. Brem.c.1655)

imported by Bremen in 1822 came either directly from the United States, or was brought in by American vessels. American commerce accounted for just under three million thalers' worth of Bremen's imports that year, or 26% of her incoming trade, carried by only 5% of the vessels arriving in the harbor.[43] Clearly, American trade remained big business in Bremen, even if the volume of its shipping had decreased.

If all else failed, American-German commerce could fall back on the tobacco trade. The British could offer competition in cotton, and other places could supply rice, coffee, or sugar, but Germans craved American tobacco and would accept no substitutes. Even in a relatively slow year for American trade, such as 1825, Bremen still brought in a million thalers' worth of tobacco directly from the US.[44] The rising price of tobacco made it the backbone of the postwar US-German trade relationship. In 1815, a hogshead of tobacco usually sold for $60. By 1818, this had risen to a staggering $190 per hogshead. Although the price ultimately fell again in the next decade, it leveled off higher than it had begun, hovering around $70-80 per hogshead by 1825.[45] Germans, it seems, had decided that American tobacco was more a necessity than a luxury, and their consumption of it kept many Hanseatic and American shippers in business. Throughout the period 1800-1830, the Hanse were the second-largest buyers of American tobacco, after Britain. By 1842, Germany overall imported more American tobacco than any other nation, and the overwhelming majority of it entered via Bremen.[46]

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43 Ibid.

44 Moritz Lindeman, "Zur Geschichte der älteren Handelsbeziehungen Bremens mit den Ver. Staaten von Nordamerika" *Bremisches Jahrbuch* 10 (1878): 130.

45 Traditionally, a hogshead was around 1,000 pounds, although evidence suggests that it crept up slowly, becoming as much as 1,500 pounds by the mid-19th century.

46 Hess, *American Tobacco and Central European Policy,* 55-58.

The United States remained a seagoing mercantile society, even while her interior developed rapidly. International commerce continued to account for a huge portion of America's wealth. The American GNP hovered between $100 and $120 million in the first decade of the 1800s.[47] The value of her exports to foreign countries in the same period averaged around $70 million.[48] After the wars, although American domestic industries and consumption continued to grow, international commerce kept pace, equivalent to roughly two-thirds the value of the American economy. In the decade after the Napoleonic Wars, German-American commerce comprised between 5-15% of America's foreign trade.

The focal points of American trade began to shift away from the traditional mid-Atlantic harbors of Philadelphia and Baltimore after the wars. By 1818, Peter Grotjan noted "the rapid decline of the commercial importance of Philadelphia," as New York and New Orleans overtook the mid-Atlantic as America's prime trade harbors.[49] New York's population had been growing at a phenomenal rate since 1790 (nearly tripling between 1790 and 1810), and it was soon the largest city in the US. Its commercial lead over Philadelphia was secure by 1815, and by the 1830s, the value of New York's commerce dwarfed that of all other American cities. New Orleans became a leading cotton and sugar export center after 1815, and quickly surpassed Savannah and Charleston to become, by the mid-1820s, the South's largest and busiest harbor.

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47 Gallatin made the estimate in his *Report... on the Subject of American Manufactures* in 1810. (p26)

48 Historical Statistics of the United States, Foreign Commerce (Sections U 317-334.)

49 Peter A. Grotjan memoirs (no page numbers), PHS. (As a merchant, Grotjan was in semi-retirement from the 1820s on, dabbling in politics, always supporting the democrats. He made a few small business deals, although nothing as adventurous as in his young days. Primarily, he lived the good life, enjoyed his wealth and his family, and published his *Grotjan's Philadelphia Public Sale Report,* which he continued until 1827.)

Populations of the Major US Harbors, 1800-1830[50]
(in thousands)

	1800	1810	1820	1830
New York	60	96	123	202
Philadelphia	69	91	112	161
Baltimore	26	35	62	80
Boston	24	33	43	61
Charleston	20	24	24	30
New Orleans	-	17	27	46

Exports from the Major US Harbors, 1815-1835[51]
(value, in millions of dollars)

	1815	1820	1825	1830	1835
New York	10	13	35	19	30
Philadelphia	4	5	11	4	3
Baltimore	5	6	4	3	3
Boston	5	11	11	7	10
Charleston	6	8	11	7	11
New Orleans	5	7	12	15	36

New York was generally not a tobacco exporter, but did trade with the Hanse. Vessels arrived from the Hanse with linens, although New York's linen imports from Germany usually trailed far behind those from Britain. Interestingly, vessels sailing to the Hanse from New York tended to have more diverse cargoes than those from other American ports. The US consular reports in Bremen and Hamburg usually showed New York's ships loaded with a variety of goods, while those of other ports carried only one or two cargoes. (The schooner *Richmond,* for example, from the port of the same name, which carried only tobacco and cotton, or the *Fenilon,* from Boston, which carried only

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50 This information is available from a number of sources, usually derived from the various US censuses. For a convenient table, see: Albion, *The Rise of New York Port,* 419.

51 Albion, *The Rise of New York Port,* 390.

sugar.)[52] New York was a major trans-shipping hub for all of America's commerce with the wider world. Bremen and Hamburg were usually New York's third most common sources for both linens and finished clothing, after Britain and France. After the 1820s, New York shippers began importing a fair amount of wine and spirits from Hamburg (usually French or Spanish in origin.)[53]

"Free Goods on Free Ships"

The restoration of US-German trade in the decade after the Napoleonic Wars — though it was occasionally sluggish — convinced the leaders of the Hanse that the time had come to conclude a treaty with the United States. After thirty-five years of virtually unregulated business with America, the Bremers, who had the most direct interest in the US, convinced the Senates of Hamburg and Lübeck to pool their resources and to press for a single US-Hanseatic trade treaty. Charles Buck, representative of Hamburg, became the *de facto* Hanseatic spokesman in the United States in 1819.[54]

American officials were coming to the conclusion that discriminating duties on ships generally did not benefit the United States. American exports were bulky and required a lot of ships, whereas Europe's finished products were much more compact. Thus, ten American ships entering Bremen carrying tobacco would obviously pay more than one Bremer ship entering Baltimore with glasswares and linens, even if the duties

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52 These two examples are from F.J. Wichelshausen's semi-annual report of 30 June, 1829. (NAW-B). There are many other examples.

53 Ibid., 58-72.

54 Moritz Lindeman, "Zur Geschichte der älteren Handelsbeziehungen," 133-134.

were "equal" between the two states, because duties applied equally to ships.[55] John Quincy Adams was among the notable American politicians of the postwar period who wanted to lower ships' duties and tariffs on goods. He and Gallatin both supported a Senate bill which had been resurfacing since 1802, killed repeatedly by protectionists. Instead of trying to calibrate identical discriminating duties with two dozen different countries, the bill's supporters argued, why not try to establish something closer to free trade?

The Hanseatic representatives in America sought to encourage these sentiments among American leaders. Most supporters of the Reciprocity Bill (as it came to be known) were thinking in terms of trade with Great Britain. Adams, as we shall see from his subsequent actions, clearly had Germany in mind as well. Although the Hanse had been asking for reciprocity since 1815, and the Prussians since 1817, the Reciprocity Bill's first success came in 1818, when Congress applied it to commerce with the Netherlands. The trade relationship with the Dutch, however, soon deteriorated as both sides apparently "cheated" quite a bit, tampering with special fees and surcharges. The US-Dutch trade was in fact re-regulated a few years later. Despite this inauspicious beginning, the free-traders were carrying the day in the Congress.

Sensing the changing mood in the United States, the Hanseatic and Prussian representatives renewed their appeals for a new trade treaty. Congress took the first step on 3 March, 1819, granting reciprocity to Prussia, Hamburg, and Bremen, thus removing the discriminating fees on ships.[56] The Bremen Senate was so happy at the news of this act that it voted to award F.J. Wichelshausen (still serving as US consul) a gift of 100

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[55] Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity Policy,* 184.
[56] Ibid., 192-219.

bottles of Rhine wine.[57] It was a modest victory for the Germans, since the US still withheld Most Favored Nation status, meaning that German goods still faced substantial tariffs upon arrival in America. It was, however, the first indication that the US government took US-German commerce seriously enough to pass legislation encouraging it.

In May 1825, Prussia's new envoy arrived in Washington. Friedrich Niederstetter, successor to the late Friedrich Gruehm, presented his credentials to John Quincy Adams that June. Adams had been President for three months when he received the greetings of Frederick William III, transmitted by the new Prussian Minister. It must have been a nostalgic moment for the philosophical Adams, contemplating the first time he had met the Prussian king, when they were both much younger and new to their careers. If he felt such sentiment, he kept it to himself; the President's reply to Niederstetter was brief and formal, and the Prussian minister was instructed to meet with the new Secretary of State, Henry Clay.[58]

Niederstetter's mission was to obtain a meaningful free trade agreement with the United States: "Free Goods on Free Ships," as proponents of complete reciprocity had come to call such arrangements by the 1820s. A complete reciprocity agreement would be, essentially, the same as "Most Favored Nation" status; it would remove all tariffs and ships' duties for all goods traded between two nations, regardless of whose vessels were employed in the commerce. Congress took up the issue in 1826, not simply with regard to Prussia, but of reciprocity treaties in general. A bill for complete reciprocity between the

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57 Beutin, *Bremen und Amerika,* 24.

58 O'Connell, "The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations," 32.

US and Prussia failed to pass in the first session of Congress that year. Niederstetter was undeterred, and continued to lobby Adams, Clay, and several members of Congress.[59]

In Hamburg, John Cuthbert, the new American consul, did his best to act as a liaison between the State Department and the Hamburg Senate, pressing both to consider the kind of reciprocity treaty that Prussia was requesting from the United States.[60] Cuthbert's timing was good: the three Hanseatic cities were becoming more skilled at working together as a unit, negotiating trade arrangements with other nations. An 1825 treaty with Britain had considerably leveled the field in Germany, removing many of the special concessions granted to the British, and thus allowing the Hanse to attract more diverse shipping and to concentrate on expansion without having to worry as much about losing German markets.[61] The Hanse turned their attention toward two new projects. Hamburgers pushed for a trade treaty with Brazil, and the Bremers pushed for a renewed effort to clinch a comprehensive deal with the United States.

In both cases, the Hanse acted as a single political entity. They shared the dilemma of having still not recovered from the wars. In 1827, Hamburg Senator J.E.F. Westphalen said that the German economies had been depressed so long that people had forgotten what was possible: years like 1798, when Hamburg "had 279 ships carrying 23,206 cargoes." Even after steady improvement since the wars, the city in 1827 still had only 127 ships carrying 9,954 cargoes, and so treaties — along with diversification of markets and simplification of paperwork, Westphalen argued — were necessary to restore prosperity. Westphalen conceded that trade might never return to the levels of 1798, "which we can see

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59 Niederstetter to Clay, 23 March 1826. NAW-NP.
60 Cuthbert to Clay, 31 March, 1826. NAW-H.
61 Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen,* Vol. 2, 73.

were very extraordinary," but might at least resemble the days when "our flag was carried to the Red Sea, on the Ganges and into China, in the waters of Mexico and Peru, in North America, in the Dutch and French isles, and the Indies."[62]

Hamburg's outreach to Brazil initially left many Bremers cold. Bremen did not have the long-standing trade links in Hispano-America that the larger Hanseatic city had been nurturing for years. Nonetheless, when Hamburg's Senate voted overwhelmingly "to conclude a commercial treaty with the Emperor of the Brasils," the Bremen Senate agreed to send three representatives along with Hamburg's delegation. One of these was T.P. Kalkmann, heir to the merchant house of D.F. Kalkmann, which had established itself as a leading US-German trader, using a branch office in Baltimore.[63] Ultimately, Bremen agreed to follow Hamburg's lead in the case of Hanseatic-Brazilian relations; when the Hamburg delegation secured a treaty from the Brazilian government, the Bremen Senate approved it without delay.

The Hanse had been contemplating a refurbishing of their relationship with the US for some time. In 1824, *Bürgermeister* Bartels of Hamburg informed the Bremen Senate that, if Bremen was not going to fill the long-vacant consulates in the United States (most of which had been unoccupied since the wars), Hamburg would take the lead in selecting a new Hanseatic minister to the US. He wrote: "The political importance of every free state grows each year, and... the bond which trade and culture ties between established states, should soon outgrow the difficulties of relationships based upon [European] space."[64] Bartels saw the future as trans-Atlantic, not intra-Germanic, or even intra-European, and he

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62 Baasch, *Quellen zur Geschichte von Hamburgs Handel und Schiffahrt,* 66.
63 Friedrich J. Wichelshausen to Henry Clay, 12 June 1827. NAW-B.
64 Festerling, *Bremens Deutsche und Hanseatische Politik,* 95.

wanted the Hanse to adapt to the intersections of the American and European economies. In 1827 the Hanse dispatched Vincent Rumpff (the son-in-law of John Jacob Astor) to Washington — the first Minister Plenipotentiary from the Hanseatic League in the United States.[65] After decades of commerce consular activity, the Hanseatic and the US governments were finally negotiating at the highest levels.

Rumpff did not have long to wait. He met with Henry Clay in June 1827 and presented his credentials to President Adams shortly thereafter. Congress picked up the issue of a Hanseatic reciprocity treaty with an alacrity that must have chagrined Mr. Niederstetter. The Prussian Minister was still in communications with Henry Clay over minutiæ such as the definition of a "blockade," or the legal ramifications of privateering.[66] By contrast, the Hanseatic treaty — only three pages long (eleven articles) — sailed through the American bureaucracy. Clay and Adams approved it in November, and the Senate ratified it on 20 December, 1827. It seems likely that the work of the Prussian missions of Gruehm and Niederstetter had in fact paved the way for the Congress to accept the Hanseatic treaty so readily. The lobbying of the Prussians convinced the administration and the Senate of the need for regulating German trade. Because the vast majority of US-German trade occurred with the Hanse, Prussia's efforts, ironically, made it easy for the Hanse to obtain a comprehensive trade agreement with the United States.[67]

The United States and the Hanseatic Cities agreed to perfect reciprocity on "whatever kind of produce, manufacture, or merchandise, of any foreign country" either

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[65] Rumpff had served previously as Hamburg's Minister Resident in Paris. Bremen and Lübeck approved him as their representatives in June 1827.

[66] O'Connell, "The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations," 33-38.

[67] Beutin, *Bremen und Amerika,* 24.

wished to import or export.[68] They also agreed not to raise tariffs or duties against each other's vessels or products. Article IX established Most Favored Nation status for both sides; the US and the Hanse promised not to grant any other nations better terms than they granted each other.[69] The treaty was for twelve years' duration.

Niederstetter's negotiations with Henry Clay dragged on through the election year of 1828, in which John Quincy Adams suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of Andrew Jackson. Adams had approved the draft treaty by May 1828, but the Senate dawdled, and Niederstetter continued to add little formalities, such as a $2500 contribution by both governments as a gift for the various clerks involved in drafting and translating the documents.[70] Niederstetter was finally satisfied with the draft treaty by late 1828, but he understood that the change of administrations would require further negotiations. He was relieved to find that the new administration and the new session of the Senate approved the treaty without delay. The United States Senate ratified the new trade treaty with Prussia on 14 March, 1829.[71]

Unlike the US-Prussian treaties of 1785 and 1799, the new American agreements with German states in the 1820s and 1830s would become part of a meaningful diplomatic and commercial relationship that witnessed the recovery of German-American trade. The American relationship with other German states, however, remained embryonic for several more years.

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68 *Freundschafts-, Handels-, u. Schifffahrts-Vertrag zwischen den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika und den Hansestädten,* Artikel I.

69 Ibid.

70 Niederstetter to Clay, 27 June 1828. NAW-NP.

71 O'Connell, "The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations," 41.

American Trade with Germany Outside the Hanse

In 1824, the Hanoverian foreign minister wrote a letter to John Quincy Adams, requesting a reciprocity treaty with the United States. This request seems to have been lost on the American government. There was no direct US-Hanoverian commerce, in any event, as most of Hanover's seaborne trade passed through Bremen. In the wake of the final Prussian negotiations, the Hanoverians asked again, and in 1828 the Senate granted Hanover perfect reciprocity for their embryonic trade with America.[72]

Hanover's request was not without precedent. In 1822, several of the non-Hanseatic North German merchant houses had organized a league to combat the flood of British products that was threatening German manufacturers with ruin. In 1824 they expanded, joined by merchant firms as far south as Leipzig and Dresden. Their plan was to form several new joint companies that would cut out the British and Hanseatic middlemen in trans-oceanic trade. Particularly, these merchants wanted a direct commerce with the Americas. One of their organizations, the *"Elb-Amerikanische Compagnie,"* was located not on the Elbe, but in Leipzig, where it began to operate in 1825 as a direct exporter of Saxon goods to North America. The *Elb-Amerikanische* and other companies cooperated with their respective governments to press for the establishment of trade treaties with the United States, and the establishment of American consuls in Germany — outside the traditional locales of Prussia and the Hanse.[73]

Despite this concerted multi-state effort of both merchants and government authorities, the Hanseatic grasp on German-American commerce remained extremely firm.

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[72] Setser, *The Commercial Reciprocity Policy,* 222.
[73] Lingelbach, "Saxon-American Relations," 537-538.

The *Elb-Amerikanische* went bankrupt within two years, as did all of the other such companies, despite the fact that many enjoyed substantial subsidies from their governments. During the time it was in operation, however, the *Elb-Amerikanische* did accomplish one of its objectives. In 1826 the US State Department commissioned Heinrich Göhering as American consul at Leipzig. The Saxon government replied by establishing consulates in New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore over the next decade.[74]

As American-German diplomatic connections developed beyond their traditionally narrow boundaries, even the comatose American-Austrian relationship began to show a few signs of life. There was still virtually no trade involved. In 1830, the total American export trade was over $74 million, while US exports to Austria amounted to only $594,000 (a little less than 1%). American imports from Austria were practically non-existent: $132,000 out of $71 million in total imports that year.[75] Nonetheless, the US re-established its consulate in Trieste after the Napoleonic wars, and Austria sent Baron von Lederer to New York in 1825, to oversee the development of Austrian consulates in the United States.

American-Austrian trade never really blossomed in the first half of the 19th century. A few American shippers proposed to sell cotton to Austria in the 1830s, but the Austrians had been importing Egyptian cotton for so long that this project failed to excite much interest in Trieste. American tobacco did find its way into the Habsburg empire, but in nowhere near the quantities imported by Bremen or even Prussia. The Austrian government, in fact, often attempted to keep American tobacco *out* of the country because it competed against the state-run tobacco monopoly established in 1821. As late as 1836,

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74 Ibid.

75 O'Dwyer, "The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Austria," 8.

for instance, Austria imported only 158 hogsheads of raw leaf American tobacco, while Bremen and Hamburg's imports in the same year amounted to over 22,000 hogsheads plus nearly 11,500 pounds of manufactured tobacco products — second only to Britain's consumption.[76]

Some historians have argued that American relations with Austria were hopelessly soured from the outset by the vast socio-political gulf between the two nations, as well as by the American distaste for a reactionary (indeed, even feudal) Catholic state which suppressed liberal economics, ethnic aspirations, free speech, and the press.[77] It seems more likely that American businessmen simply saw few opportunities in a nation with such limited access to the sea, such a poor apparatus for supporting trans-oceanic trade, and such restricted marketplaces, riven with government-controlled monopolies. Austrian businessmen, for their part, rarely had the opportunities or the wherewithal to expand their activities overseas, and that state of affairs seems to have satisfied the Viennese government.

Lederer noted in 1825 that American and Austrian tariffs on each other's goods were so high that there was virtually no incentive to develop trade between the two nations. He asked Henry Clay if Washington would be interested in direct negotiations to resolve this issue. Lederer also requested that Vienna re-assign him to Washington, and empower him to negotiate on behalf of the Empire. In 1828, with Clay receptive to further discussions, Lederer received his promotion and came to the American capital.[78] He was,

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[76] Hess, *American Tobacco and European Policy,* 171 (Table 7).

[77] See O'Dwyer, "The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Austria," 12. And: Otto Stolberg-Wernigerode, *Germany and the United States of America During the Era of Bismarck* (Reading, 1937), 14.

[78] Lederer to Clay, 31 August 1828. National Archives, Washington DC: Notes From the Austrian Legation to the United States, Reel 1, microfilm.

however, too late to begin extensive talks with the Adams administration, which was outgoing in early 1829. Lederer drafted a proposed treaty, but Clay apparently dropped the project in favor of the much more complete (and, the Senate seemed to agree, more meaningful) Prussian treaty.[79]

Andrew Jackson, however, referred the dormant Austrian draft-treaty to Congress in 1829, and the Senate approved it in August. Almost immediately, the lack of serious attention paid to the treaty's preparation (and the lack of precedent for trade) resulted in a squabble between the two governments over tariffs on wine. The Austrians assumed they had obtained Most Favored Nation status from the United States, but the US considered the agreement to be a reciprocal reduction of certain tariffs under certain conditions, and blatantly offered better terms to other nations. The disagreements dragged on for four years, even after the US agreed to send John Schwarz to Vienna in 1830 to act as commercial liaison.[80] Only in 1835 did Vienna and Washington draft a mutually-acceptable treaty and establish embassies. By that time, Prussia had wrapped up German commerce in the *Zollverein,* changing the rules of trade in Central Europe.

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79 O'Dwyer, "The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Austria," 8-19, and: Setser, *The Commercial Reciprocity Policy,* 220-224.

80 Schwarz's consular files begin in 1830, preserved by the State Department as "Consular Dispatches from Vienna."

American Commerce in Germany Diversifies

American-German commerce did increase after the signing of the Hanseatic and Prussian treaties, although this can only partially be ascribed to the benefits of reciprocity. By the 1830s, most of the former belligerents had recovered from the wars, and trade increased in the Western world in general. In Baltimore, the shipper Ambrose Clarke, who had traded with Germany and other places since before the Napoleonic Wars, noticed that his business with the Hanse shot up after 1827. The following year, Clarke was doing enough business with Bremen and Hamburg that he commissioned two new ships specifically for the German trade, arguing to his customers that his packets were superior to the Bremen and Hamburg vessels that were increasingly calling in Baltimore's harbor.[81]

The number of American ships calling at Bremen in the first few years after the treaty increased slowly. In 1829, 60 American ships docked in the Weser, less than half the number of British-flagged vessels that arrived that year. American trade demonstrated a healthy diversity, however. Tobacco and cotton remained the major cargoes, followed by sugar and coffee, but ships coming from virtually every American harbor were represented at Bremen's docks: Boston, Charleston, New York, Philadelphia, Norfolk, Richmond, Baltimore, New Brunswick — the entire American seaboard was active in German commerce.[82]

Another reason for the increase in the 1830s is the interest of the American government in German trade in the 1820s, and projects which took a few years to bear fruit. Much of the initiative for this relatively new official attention to German commerce

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[81] Clarke to D'Arbelo, 25 March 1828. MDHS: Ambrose Clarke papers (Ms 1754).
[82] Wichelshausen's semi-annual report, 30 June, 1828. NAW-B.

came from James Monroe's Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams. Arguably the first Germanophile to head American foreign affairs, Adams' involvement in the development of US-German relations ran considerably deeper than merely listening to the rehearsed greetings of Prussian and Hanseatic statesmen in Washington.

In 1820, Adams requested a report on German internal commerce, with an eye toward the possibility of establishing new American consulates in the German interior. Doubtless he was still motivated by his memories of thriving German textile mills and the German hunger for American goods like cotton and tobacco. Adams, by that time having negotiated substantially with Gruehm, was also thinking in terms of expanding into hitherto-untouched Prussian markets. He decided to commission an American fact-finding mission that would focus on "the Prussian Province of the Rhine." Godfrey Booker, an American merchant with experience in Berlin, received the commission from Adams to scout out the Rhenish towns. Booker did so during the first half of 1821. He completed his report that summer and sent it back to Washington, where it arrived on 8 August.[83]

Booker concluded that the ideal location for an American consulate in western Prussia was the Ruhr-district town of Elberfeld.[84] Although it was smaller than many better-known places like Cologne or Aachen, Elberfeld had a well-developed textile industry and very good roads. The latter argument no doubt resonated with Adams, probably recalling his experiences on the miasmic Prussian roads in 1799-1801. Booker also emphasized that Elberfeld was conveniently situated in the midst of a region untouched by American commerce, and yet ripe for market penetration. The town of Elberfeld alone produced 40,000 quintals of white linen per year, all — thus far — from British cotton.

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[83] Booker's report, dated 8 August 1821, is included with the State Dept. files T-566: NAW-E.

[84] Elberfeld, which is today a suburb of Wuppertal, had in 1820 a population of only 13,500.

Further, the Rhinelanders were rarely able to get American tobacco until after it had been marked up substantially in Bremen and by other German middlemen. Tobacco was always in high demand, and the locals were accustomed to paying well for it.[85]

Booker finished his report by recommending an American consulate in Elberfeld, and then asking for the job himself. Adams gave it to him on 11 September. Booker proved to be an irregular correspondent and an unenthusiastic consul, which is unfortunate, considering the extent of his connections in Prussia. He had friends in Berlin and the Rhineland, as well as business connections in Washington and New York. He opened the American consulate on 1 January 1823, but was soon distracted by other projects. Throughout 1823 and 1824 Booker traveled vigorously throughout Germany, promoting American trade, speaking to meetings of German investors, dining with Prussian officials in Berlin and local mayors in various towns, visiting factories and trade commissions in several places.[86] In March 1824, after having done relatively little work as consul, Booker left for New York, where he planned to set up a US-Prussian exchange house, in conjunction with a partner from the Royal Society of Maritime Commerce in Berlin.[87]

Booker apparently felt that the mundane duties of a consul could be handled by his brother, who stayed behind in Elberfeld. Booker refused to appoint any vice-consuls, even though his brother seemed equally disinclined to administer the day-to-day affairs of the consulate.[88] The situation was aggravating to the local merchants, who had been enthusiastic about the new consulate, and eager to expand their business with America. In 1826, they wrote a letter of complaint to Friedrich Niederstetter in Washington.

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85 Booker's Report, 8 August, 1821. NAW-E.
86 Booker to Adams, 12 March 1824. NAW-E.
87 Ibid.
88 Booker to Adams, 18 January 1825. NAW-E.

Niederstetter also received a complaint the next year from W.P. Simons, an American merchant who had become, by default, the actual administrator of the consulate, and who was doing the work *pro bono,* rather than see the office close. Since Booker showed no inclination to return from his various pursuits in New York, Simons argued that he should be given Booker's title.[89] The resulting squabble between Simons and Booker was finally resolved, in Simons' favor, in 1830.

Adams' initiative resulted in the first American consulates on German soil since the establishment of the Bremen and Hamburg posts in the 1790s. But American commercial interest in Prussia grew very slowly. There was no official American representative in Berlin until the mid-1830s, more than a decade after Booker's mission. It seems likely that the consulate in Elberfeld would have remained unstaffed had the Prussian merchants not petitioned for a replacement for the absent Booker. And in 1829, when Niederstetter suggested an American consulate be established in Stettin to serve eastern Prussia and to compete with the British there, the Congress ignored his request. Niederstetter went home sick in 1830 and didn't return.[90] The US didn't request a replacement, and one wasn't sent until 1834.

The Balance of Forces in the German Trade Debates

While the 1820s and 1830s promised a restoration of US-German commerce, finally accompanied by diplomatic activity, the economic and political situation of Germany entered a period of profound change. Patriotic forces unleashed during the 1813-14 War of

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89 Niederstetter to Van Buren, 18 June, 1829. NAW-NP

90 Niederstetter to Van Buren, 30 March 1830. NAW-NP.

Liberation swelled on a number of occasions, and were manifest in a number of forms, frequently as appeals for trans-German unity and new, liberal political institutions. Conservative counterattacks sometimes succeeded in stifling or thwarting such movements, but sometimes abetted the creation of "subversive" organizations on university campuses or in guild-halls. Young veterans and the student *Burschenschaftler* demanded constitutions, and several German governments acquiesced: Bavaria and Baden granted constitutional monarchies in 1818, Württemberg in 1819.[91]

Metternich, staunch defender of the monarchic principle, led the conservative backlash within the German Confederation, which was largely successful at squashing liberal dissent until the French bourgeois revolution of 1830. By this point, another struggle for Germany's future — equally important to the struggle of ideologies — was nearly decided. This was the conflict between protectionists and free-traders, the former led by the Prussians and their ever-expanding customs unions, and the latter led by the Hanse. In 1818, as we have seen, Prussia began to solidify its economic dominance over northern Germany by means of extending its internal freight policies, its tariffs, and its tolls. It was for the Hanseatic cities a matter of economic life and death, because if they acquiesced and unified with the Prussian system, they would essentially give up their prerogatives as free ports.

Prussia held most of the cards in this game. Germany experienced a definite turn toward nationalism after 1813. Even in the liberal, cosmopolitan Hanse, prominent families like the Benekes and Sievekings, who had been early enthusiasts of the French

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[91] In many cases, these early German constitutions were quite limited in scope, or their more democratic principles were simply by-passed by conservative rulers.

revolution, considered themselves German nationalists by the 1820s.[92] Protectionists played to this trend by arguing that German businesses were being crushed beneath an onslaught of foreign (usually British) imports, and that Germany's economic independence could survive only with restrictive tariffs and a streamlined, unified economic system. Once again Hamburg was accused of being merely one of the *"Vorstädte"* of London — an agent of foreign economic exploitation.

The Holy Roman Empire had attempted a currency union in 1523, but it had never overcome the objections of the Hanse and other free cities who didn't want their wealth benefiting the Emperor. In the centuries that followed, many people had argued for some kind of monetary or at least customs union, and the Hanse had opposed them at every turn, usually led by Hamburg, which saw organized German protectionism as a death-blow to the free-trade upon which Hanseatic merchants depended.[93] By the mid-1820s, however, the Hanse were fighting a losing battle.

The most articulate exponent of German protectionism was Friedrich List, called by some *"Der Vater des Zollvereins."* Born in 1789, List came of age in the post-war era, when both America and the German states faced problems similar to those of many "developing" or "Third World" countries in the late 20th century. Germans in particular sensed that the German states had become economic backwaters, exploited by Britain's commercial empire. The preferred response then, as now, was protectionism to save their fledgling industries, and increased development of their national states in order to project influence (if not actual power) more readily and convincingly in defense of their interests. Governments in the early 19th century had an additional incentive to enact protectionist

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92 Festerling, *Bremens Deutsche und Hanseatische Politik,* 28.

93 Price, *The Evolution of the Zollverein,* 10-61.

legislation: tariffs were a main source (sometimes *the* main source) of tax revenues. Adjusting them had immediate budgetary ramifications as well as foreign policy considerations.[94]

In 1819, only two years after accepting a professorship at Tübingen, the 30-year-old List became secretary of the newly-formed *Deutscher Handels- und Gewerbsverein,* a society of merchants and manufacturers. He edited their journal, and was prominent in their lobbying efforts to get the German Confederation to drop all internal trade barriers, and to erect unified (and high) tariffs on foreign imports. List was only 32 when he became a member of the Württemberg parliament. His outspoken calls for German unity and political reforms cost him his job and ultimately landed him in prison as a subversive. He was set free in 1825, on the condition that he would emigrate to America, which he did gladly. Touring with the Marquis de Lafayette, one of his heroes, List met virtually every prominent American politician (including president John Quincy Adams), and a large number of businessmen.[95]

List lived in Pennsylvania, where he edited a German-language newspaper, and made friends among many protectionist American businessmen. By the late 1820s, he had in essence become a major *American* protectionist. He denounced the theories of Adam Smith as naive and even destructive, and wrote a number of important essays and articles in political economy. Andrew Jackson appointed him as American consul to Hamburg in 1830.[96] This was a particularly stupid assignment, considering that Hamburg was the center of free-trade anti-protectionism in Germany. Predictably, the Hamburgers refused to

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94 Andreas Etges, "Discovering and Promoting Economic Nationalism: Friedrich List in the United States" *Yearbook of German-American Studies* Vol. 32 (1998): 64.

95 Ibid., 65-66.

96 Hess, *American Tobacco and Central European Policy,* 74.

accept his credentials. List spent four years traveling Europe promoting railway construction projects, and finally became US consul in Leipzig in 1834. He was, during that time, Germany's most active voice in favor of the *Zollverein.*

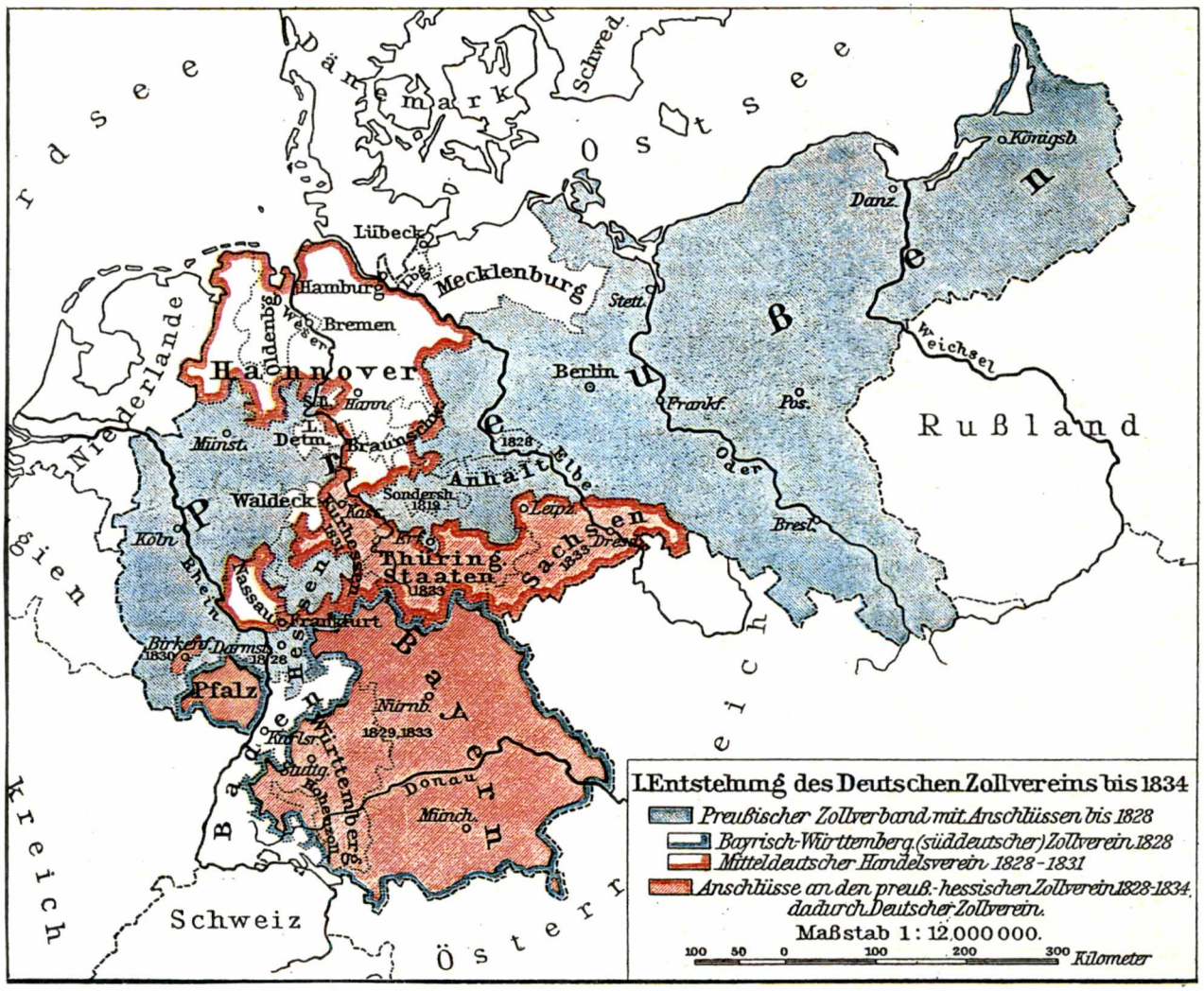
It is interesting to note that List's counterpart in the great German trade debates of the 1820s was also young, a worldly traveler, and a dedicated Americaphile. Adam Duckwitz was only 25 years old when the US-Hanseatic treaty was signed. The handsome and intelligent merchant from Bremen had already enjoyed some success as an importer of American furs and leather products in the mid-1820s. In 1831, at the age of 29, he became the youngest member of the Bremen Trade and Shipping Deputation. Duckwitz was a relentless pamphleteer, and probably the city's most outspoken free trade advocate. He was pro-American, pro-free trade, and anti-Prussian, and he saw the *Zollverein* as the end of the German free ports. His speaking tours were almost as peripatetic as List's, covering most of northern Germany, and visiting Britain and the US. In the 1840s, after the Prussian victory and the defeat of the free-traders, Duckwitz remained one of Germany's most outspoken advocates of German/American business links.[97]

In 1828, Prussia concluded a customs unification with Hesse-Darmstadt. Bavaria and Württemberg likewise joined in a customs union that year. Although protectionism was clearly carrying the day in Germany, there were still islands of resistance. At the Hambach festival in 1832, most speakers who touched upon the subject denounced Prussia and its *Zollverein* as a tactic for imposing despotic hegemony over all Germans.[98] The boisterous gathering at Hambach was, among other things, one of the last liberal rallies for free trade.

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97 Schwarzwälder, *Geschichte der freien Hansestadt Bremen,* Vol. 2, 146-147.

98 Price, *The Evolution of the Zollverein,* 178.



The Zollverein, 1834.

Bremen, led by *Bürgermeister* Smidt, made one final attempt in 1828 to stem the tide. On 21 May, sixteen small states, including Bremen, Hanover, and Brunswick, signed the Frankfurt Declaration, which led in September to the Central German Union. This was a loose economic alliance which attempted to protect most of the smaller German states from the existing customs unions by forming one of their own. Hamburg was conspicuously absent.[99] The Union was short-lived. Without any provisions for collective bargaining, it was unable to act as an economic unit. Its individual states were frequently wooed by Prussia. Thuringia was the first to defect, in 1833, joining the unified Prussian-Bavarian *Zollverein* the following year. The Central German Union collapsed. Prussia had won the first of what would be many victories in the unification of Germany. The Hanse was very late to join the *Zollverein* (Hamburg held out until German unification). The new German economic system solidified around Prussia just as most of Germany entered the Industrial Revolution. The business style of the free-trading Hanseatic cities had become an anachronism.

The *Zollverein* and the German-American Relationship

The establishment of the *Zollverein* changed the foreign commerce of the Hanse in a number of ways. Linked into the German economy, the Hanseatic cities were no longer independent free-traders acting completely on their own initiatives. Indeed, the very development of a German economy (rather than a number of small German economies) meant that the Hanse was no longer the master of Germany's import and exports, but rather

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[99] Ibid., 228.

separate elements acting within a larger system. Crucially for the Hanse cities, the rules and logic by which the system operated were not in their control.

After 1834, the relationship of trade to politics in the German states began to change. International trade became an issue of national policy, because Germany increasingly became a nation. Between 1834 and 1871, Prussia moved to solidify economic and political control. Decisions about commerce left the hands of independent merchant houses in Bremen and Hamburg and passed to the desks of bureaucrats and statesmen in Berlin. And with that change, the German-American relationship entered an entirely new phase.

One could, of course, argue that the progression from independent proto-capitalist merchants to national economic institutions was a logical development; was, in fact, evidence of the maturation of both the German nation and the German economy. Certainly the arrival of steam power numbered the days of the independent merchants houses in the Hanse and the American seaboard. Regulated steamship lines, managed by large (sometimes huge) companies would transport the ever-increasing flow of raw materials and finished products between the world's fields, mines, factories and markets. Industry demanded predictable and speedy movement of large cargoes. Railroads changed the rules of distribution inland, removing the middlemen, demanding fixed schedules and integration with shippers and producers.

The Stephen Girards, Caspar Voghts, and Charles Bucks of the world were obsolete by mid-century. The firms which survived — much as farmers have survived in late 20th-century post-industrial societies — became big, efficient, and vertically integrated. In the second half of the 19th century, the world was completely explored by Europeans,

either colonized or in the process of being exploited. The days of adventurous young merchant-captains were over; aggressive entrepreneurs sought their fortunes in new industries.

The Hanseatic cities continued to trade with the United States after 1834, of course, but that trade relationship was no longer the primary conduit for German-American relations or diplomacy. Bremen in particular remained heavily invested in the US, since Hamburg had largely turned its attention south to Hispano-America. The Hamburg Senate encouraged and financially supported the establishment of trading posts, and then consulates in South and Central America after the 1820s.[100] In a sense, this was simply a continuation of the trends begun in the 1790s, when Hamburg concentrated on coffee and sugar, and Bremen on cotton and tobacco. By the 1830s, Bremen's ships consistently outnumbered Hamburg's in North American harbors by more than 2-1.[101]

German-American commerce grew steadily throughout the mid-19th century, as both nations' industrial capacities and populations exploded. German-American investments were impressive even before the biggest waves of emigration. In 1845, of the 318 German firms established outside Europe, the largest number (137) were in the United States. These were overwhelmingly Bremers.[102] By the end of the century, the two largest steamship lines in the world were the Hamburg-Amerika and the North German Lloyd (based in Bremen), both specializing in US-German commerce.[103]

The Hanse naturally played a key role in the massive German emigrations that began in the 1840s. The vast majority of Germans bound for new homes in America left

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100 Schramm, *Deutschland und Übersee,* 50-55.
101 Wätjen, *Aus der Frühzeit des Nordatlantikverkehrs,* 10-16.
102 Schramm, *Deutschland und Übersee,* 55.
103 Clapp, *The Port of Hamburg,* 101.

their homelands via Bremen or Hamburg. Hanseatic trade barges on the Weser and Elbe often sailed upstream to deliver their cargoes, then returned downstream with boatloads of immigrants. German emigration to the United States was in fact a major "export business" for Hanseatic shippers for at least two decades in mid-century.

After the establishment of the *Zollverein,* German-American diplomatic relations solidified rapidly. The US established formal, full-time embassies in Berlin and Vienna in 1835. The United States commissioned consuls in a number of German cities: Frankfurt in 1829, Stettin and Stuttgart in 1830, Munich in 1833, Kassel in 1835, Dresden in 1837. Washington had concluded treaties with almost all the German states by the mid-1840s.[104] German-American relations had become formalized, bureaucratized, and indeed, even normal.

It had taken half a century to get there.

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[104] Baden was the last, in 1857.

Conclusions

A well-developed relationship runs deep and touches many dimensions of daily life and interaction. Connections at various levels take time to establish. The Hanseatic interest in America was not new in 1776; it went back to the days of smuggling and lusting after the major powers' colonial empires. The first traces of the German-American relationship thus pre-date even the first German immigrants to America in the 1680s. Economic factors would lie at the heart of the relationships developed between Germans and Americans. Commercial ties opened the doors to other kinds of connections between the two peoples.

Between 1776 and 1835, the German-American relationship developed because of three fundamental conditions. First, the Hanse and the American port cities possessed a shared "merchant culture" which drew them into close cooperation. Second, official diplomacy between the American government and the major German states proved to be irrelevant, and unconnected to economic realities. Finally, the transformation of Central Europe after 1815 linked commerce to diplomacy by replacing the free trade of individual entrepreneurs with state-controlled trade policy. These were the conditioning factors of the relationship.

1. Meeting at the "Club" of World Merchants

The timing of the Hanse and the Americans was fortuitous. They encountered each other as they emerged into the new global trade-system that had been developing since the European discoveries and conquests in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Americans were new entrants into the field of world commerce. One could argue that the American

economy was defined by that very system: independent and opposed to mercantilist restrictions, committed to free trade and capitalism. The Hanse cities entered the world marketplace to get a new lease on their commercial lives. They were excited by the new possibilities expanding everywhere, and they made the most of these possibilities to stage an impressive comeback for German traders, who had become marginalized in the previous three centuries. By the late 18th century, when the German and American traders first crossed paths, the world trading network had become quite broad and diverse, and offered opportunities for the kinds of businessmen who thrived in American and Hanseatic culture: independent merchants.

The emergence of "Merchant Culture" in this era represents a crucial development for the German-American relationship. By the late 18th century, merchant culture was fairly widespread around the globe, certainly extant in the major harbors of Europe and the Americas. The Americans and the Hanse Germans took part in these new economic-social networks, but the German-American relationship was more than simply a by-product of the worldwide phenomenon of merchant culture. The Hanse and the American port cities shared unique and important similarities. They displayed, for instance, remarkably similar views on the ideal forms of government, the relationship between business and public administration, philanthropy, and religious tolerance. Above all, they shared a tremendous enthusiasm for free trade and geo-political neutrality. The Hanse and the American port cities were a remarkably good "match," and this connection provided a conduit for relations that ran deep into the interiors of each country, carried by way of commerce.

While the conflicts of the French Revolution worsened in Europe, the US-Hanseatic relationship thrived. As the two major neutral carriers in the Western world,

their shippers became extremely successful, despite the rising troubles of blockades and privateers. In the US and the Hanse, this new relationship resulted in the transplanting of dozens of new merchant houses. Americans settled branches of their firms in Bremen and Hamburg, as the Hanse merchants had been doing in the US for several years already. As a result, the economic and cultural links became even more profound, as businessmen formed friendships, married women from prominent local families, and invested in the local economies where they worked. The economic relationship between the Americans and the Hanse Germans inevitably broadened to include factors not immediately related to economics. Neither party recognized it at the outset, but the establishment of a thriving commerce between the American ports and the Hanse was the umbilical cord for the development of US-German intellectual, cultural, and ultimately diplomatic relations.

The transmission of ideas was the most subtle benefit of this relationship, and certainly the most lasting. It is no surprise to learn that the scholarly and literary traffic between the two societies was relatively concurrent with the commercial activity between them.[1] After 1820, with the restoration of their commerce, American and Hanseatic shippers began once again to trade in books and periodicals. Within one generation, by the time that Noah Webster added German to his stable of languages and began researching German-English philological connections, German scholarly output was so great and its transmission to America so regular, that fluency in German became an absolute pre-requisite for American scholars, particularly historians. Yet even at the base of a purely scholarly relationship stood the commercial considerations. Someone, after all, had to buy and sell the books, and someone had to arrange their shipment.

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[1] For a comprehensive analysis of this, see: Pochmann, *German Culture in America,* 50-114.

2. Commerce Thrives While Diplomacy Stagnates

The official activities of statesmen and diplomats in this period counted for very little in the development of German-American ties. The American government and the governments of the major German states conducted a series of discussions about trade, the most serious of which resulted in the US-Prussian trade treaties of 1785 and 1800. These documents were fairly pointless. Without an economic relationship (and the resulting pull upon social and cultural factors) trade treaties were little more than pleasantries.

Another reason that the German-American relationship did not develop along the traditional lines of diplomacy and statecraft has to do with American ideological considerations. When the thirteen United States of America declared their independence, they embarked immediately upon a paradoxical relationship with Europe. On one hand, they wanted to be accepted and respected by the established European states; to be admitted into the "club" of western nations, and thus allowed to transact business with them. At the same time, however, Americans regarded themselves as a new breed of nation altogether, emerging from the Enlightenment, juxtaposed against the corrupted and decaying old regimes of Europe.

To satisfy the first need — to be accepted into the established western constellation of states — young America sought relationships with (and support from) the major powers of the continent. In Germany, that meant Prussia and Austria. But it is difficult to imagine how there could have been a meaningful meeting of minds between hereditary absolute monarchies and an upstart republic. Here the complications of the second impulse — the

sense of being morally different and superior to the old world — manifest themselves. American disdain for Europe's old order was frequently reciprocated, as evidenced by the treatment of American representatives in Vienna and Berlin. Even given the enlightened and étatist views of the regimes of Joseph II or Frederick the Great, there was bound to have been friction and suspicion between those men who represented an absolute monarch and the mere "citizens" of a republic. The American relationship with the major German states labored under these disadvantages from the outset.

No such gulf existed between the United States and the Hanse. When Americans won their independence and created a capitalist republic out of a large piece of the formerly closed British empire, Hanseatic leaders were ecstatic. In their official correspondence (such as that carried by de Boor from Hamburg in 1783), the representatives of the Hanse emphasized that they, too, were republicans, dedicated to the principles of capitalism, and eager to do business — with no strings attached to the ever-twisting game of European power-politics. Much to the joy of those Hanseatic businessmen who arrived in America to set up shop, Americans spoke the same "language" — bourgeois capitalism.

As we have seen, they were not the only people in the world who did so; international merchants were emerging throughout Europe and the lands Europeans dominated. In England, France, Holland, Scandinavia, and elsewhere we find "International Houses" developing in this period. But the role of this class in the establishment of the German-American relationship was crucial and has been neglected by historians. In the US-German dialogue in particular, where high-minded ideological goals and the movements of "great" statesmen amounted to very little, the activities of these

German and American entrepreneurs were very significant. "The true challenge of diplomacy," Madeleine Albright has recently written, "does not reside in the beauty of our goals. Foreign policy is practical, not aesthetic."[2] Certainly the German-American diplomatic relationship developed along pragmatic lines, connected by practical men of business who were generally unimpressed with ideology.

Time and again, in abortive attempts with the Prussians, Austrians, and Saxons, mere diplomatic initiatives failed to take root because they lacked any trans-cultural depth. Three US-Prussian trade treaties never produced substantial US-Prussian trade. But the slowly-nursed relationship with the Hanse kept the doors open between the two societies, trading goods, ideas, businesspeople, and ultimately serving as the conduit for millions of German immigrants to America.

3. Changing Directions in a New Europe

The aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars changed the economic and political conditions of Germany. World trade was stunted, and American and Hanseatic commercial activity was submerged beneath an onslaught of cheap British exports, released after the end of the Continental System. These difficulties competing against the British turned many Germans and Americans against free trade, in favor of protectionist policies. Nonetheless, US-German commerce did resume, and within a few years was again an important commercial link between the two nations. The Hanse and Prussia began

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[2] Madeleine K. Albright, "The Testing of American Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 77, No. 6 (1998): 59.

seriously to pursue a more active and meaningful diplomatic relationship with the US, as part of a larger plan to stimulate their American trade.

The Hanse argued for free trade in Germany, but found the tide of German opinion moving toward protectionism, the system championed by Prussia. The Prussians spent the decades after peace steadily strengthening their economic position in Germany, particularly by means of the *Zollverein.* Historians have emphasized the "Americanness" of the Prussian *Zollverein,* and the fact that List and other exponents of it were extensively versed in the American economic system. "The parallel between the American federal union and the Zollverein as a customs union," Richard Morris writes, "is one that German statesmen could not ignore."[3] Equally interesting (and less documented) is the fact that the Hanseatic resistance to the spread of the *Zollverein* came from men like Duckwitz and Smidt, who were themselves passionate Americaphiles, and who argued for free trade on the basis of the success of the Hanseatic relationship with America.

The first half of the 1830s marks the end of the early German-American relationship for two reasons. First, the Prussian *Zollverein* triumphed across nearly all of Germany, ending the era of the adventurous free-trading merchants, and the leadership of the Hanse in German commercial affairs. Second, the United States began establishing embassies in German capitals, thus inaugurating a new era of full-time, normalized diplomatic relations between the American government and the governments of the major German states.

After the 1840s, the nature of international commerce began to change radically. Independent merchant brokerages all but vanished in the face of the "maritime revolution"

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[3] Morris, *The Emerging Nation and the American Revolution,* 111. See also: Etges, "Discovering and Promoting Economic Nationalism: Friedrich List in the United States," 63-70.

brought about by steam power, massively expanding tonnages of ships, the establishment of regular trade lines, and government interference and subsidies for nationalistic reasons.[4] The Hanse remained the primary trade conduits of Germany, but they lost their independent character. Instead, they were integrated into the nationalist system of the *Zollverein,* where trade policy was increasingly decided inland, by bureaucrats in ministries, and not by individual merchants. The *Kaufmänner* of old were a dying breed in any event, driven out by the emergence of the big shipping lines, just as small-scale independent farmers would be largely replaced in mid-20th century America, and small-scale independent retailers are currently hunted to extinction by massive discount chains. In the case of the German-American relationship, however, they had already done their job admirably, and in the process had connected two distant cultures.

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[4] The quoted phrase is from Hutchins, *The American Maritime Industries,* 71.

Epilogue

Exactly half a century after Arnold Delius set in motion the events that would lead to the first attempts at German-American commerce, and ultimately to his ruin, another scandal made the headlines in Bremen. The unhappy Delius, who had tried and failed to set up US-German commerce in 1783, had been replaced as US consul in 1796 by Friedrich Jacob Wichelshausen. In 1832, after an astonishing 36 years serving as the American consul in Bremen, Wichelshausen requested yet another term of office. By this point, he was one of the few remaining American consular officials in Europe who was not an American citizen, and this factor may have been responsible for the surprising decision by Secretary of State Edward Livingston to refuse his request. Instead, the United States selected Nathaniel Pearce as the new consul in Bremen.

If Wichelshausen felt betrayed, he showed no sign of it in public, nor in his ever-gracious letters to his superiors in Washington. But when Nathaniel Pearce arrived in August 1832 to take up his position, the new American consul found himself arrested, incarcerated, and publicly humiliated by a proclamation of the Bremen Senate which refused to recognize his authority. Pearce's crime, Wichelshausen explained in a letter to the Secretary of State, was default of debt; he had owed large sums of money to Bremen merchants for years, and had used his American citizenship (and absence) to evade his creditors. Wichelshausen, who frequently waxed indignant about any injustices perpetrated against Americans in Bremen, was strangely cool in his letter describing the

ignominious fate of America's highest-ranking representative in the city. He assured Secretary Livingston that he would continue to manage the affairs of the consulate until this matter with Pearce was resolved.[1]

Evidence suggests that Wichelshausen had either marshalled his considerable influence in Bremen's mercantile and political networks, or he had encouraged others to take up his sword. An editorial appeared on 3 September in the *National Zeitung* (published in far-away Brunswick, yet circulated in Bremen) which described Pearce as a fraud, a criminal, and worst of all, the usurper of Wichelshausen's job. Among other things, the article accused Pearce of having falsified election results in favor of Andrew Jackson in the state of Virginia (Pearce was a New Englander, and claimed never to have even been to Virginia during the election campaign.)[2]

Pearce counterattacked with a jeremiad series of letters and self-published declarations, all to no avail. Wichelshausen continued to manage the US consulate through 1833, while Pearce struggled with the Bremen Senate and its notoriously obscure judicial processes. Pearce confessed to having gone bankrupt while doing business in Bremen several years earlier, but claimed he had filed all the appropriate paperwork, and that his case was closed.[3] Apparently stymied by the whole affair, the State Department agreed to the Bremen Senate's request to name another consul. Joshua Dodge of Boston got the job in early 1834. Wichelshausen stepped down, this time without incident.

Thus ended the long career of Friedrich Jacob Wichelshausen, the merchant who served as America's eyes and ears in the Hanseatic seaport of Bremen throughout a

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1 Wichelshausen to Livingston, 19 September 1832. NAW-B.

2 From a public bulletin printed by Pearce in September 1832 (no date), distributed to members of the Bremen Senate. NAW-B.

3 Pearce to Livingston, 13 March 1833. NAW-B.

tumultous period of European history. During his tenure as US consul, Wichelshausen was a first-hand witness to the birth, boom, decline, cessation, re-birth, and restoration of American-German commerce. His continued presence in his post, even during the abysmal period of the Continental System, symbolized the commitment of the United States to maintain the link with Germany via the Hanse. By the time he retired in 1834, German-American linkage had become comprehensive, with a dozen consulates in various cities, embassies being established in capitals, and a raft of formal trade treaties underway. But it all began with a single office in Bremen, and one in Hamburg.

*

Bremers are fond of pointing out that the earliest surviving record of the "discovery" of America comes not from the Vikings, but from the eleventh-century chronicle of Adam of Bremen.[4] I heard this dubious story several times, even from an elderly woman who sold me an ice cream bar at a kiosk near the lovely park at *Am Wall.* She recognized my American mannerisms immediately, she said, even though I had spoken to her in German. Curious, I asked where she had obtained such expertise in identifying Americans on sight. In her adolescence, she replied, she had watched the American soldiers and military engineers helping to rebuild parts of the city infrastructure after the war.

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[4] Robert H. Bremner, "The United States and Bremen" *American-German Review* XVI, No. 6 (August, 1950): 26.

"We're the most American city in Germany, you know," a professor at the University of Bremen told me. "We always have been. *There's* something for your history—" he nodded and smiled, poking fun at my research topic, "—tell us why the Bremers love America so much."

But I think they love America so much because in some respects, they're looking in the mirror when they gaze across the Atlantic. Like America, they have been a mercantile culture since their earliest days. A love of commerce, they say, has made them more worldly and accepting of strangers than most other regions of Germany. The ancient heraldry of Bremen centers upon a pair of crossed keys: the keys to the world. "Open doors to the world" has always been their motto and point of pride. They absorb foreign influences like a sponge, just as Americans do, without much concern for the aesthetic imbalances which might result. (As in America, we find in Bremen and Hamburg the often strange but happy mixture of diverse cultures: Arabic/Mexican restaurants, for instance, or Pakistani/Grunge/Disco music.) And so old things are less sacred here than in other parts of the continent. They like their Goethe set to Flamenco and/or Prince, as demonstrated by an outdoor version of *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* I witnessed, accompanied by a score from the rock album *Purple Rain.* The runaway movie hit in the summer of 1997 was *Romeo und Julia,* the new American adaptation of the play, set in a futuristic Los Angeles ghetto and filmed like a rock music video. Two hundred years before, French literature and English fashion had attracted the minds and bodies of the Hanse Germans. They have always been inquisitive, worldly, and experimental.

In 1945, only a few reminders of Bremen's proud Hanseatic wealth and stature remained amidst acres of blackened wreckage. Thankfully, much of the destruction had been unleashed against the city's northern industrial districts, which unlike Hamburg's, are somewhat distant from most of the residential neighborhoods. Losses of civilian life had not been as severe as in the larger Hanseatic port. Still, the *Altstadt* was hit several times, and black ash clung to the waist of the St. Petri Dom from the fires of blazing buildings all around. In photographs from 1945, the trees lining *Am Wall* are skeletal like cigarette charcoal waiting to collapse.

I asked the ice-cream vendor woman about it. She grimaced, shook her head, then leaned out of her kiosk to gesture at the tranquil park and the outline of the city on the other side.

"Alles vernichtet," she said. Everything was annihilated.

In the midst of destruction came the relief. American convoys brought food and drinking water. American engineers crawled over the wreckage of power plants and sewer systems with their German counterparts, trying to get the city's basic services back on-line. For four years, while the rest of North Germany was occupied by the British, Bremen was an "American" city. How many of those occupying soldiers were descendants of families which had left for the New World from this very same port a century before? Burned and broken, the city of Bremen struggled back to life with the help of recent enemies; once and future friends.

Once again they were partners in a great project.

Appendix:

American Consuls in the Hanse Ports to 1834

In Bremen:

1796-97	Arnold Delius
1797-1833	Friedrich Jacob Wichelshausen
1832-33	Nathaniel Pearce *
1834-	Joshua Dodge

In Hamburg:

1793-96	John Parish
1797-98	Samuel Williams
1798-1801	Joseph Pitcairn
1801-10	John Murray Forbes
	(period of vacancy)
1816-26	Edward Wyer
1826-	John Cuthbertson

In Emden:

1803-06	William Clarke

* Appointed, but never served.

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Vita

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