Rouen's Foreign Trade during the Era of the Religious Wars (1560-1600) *

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War is rarely a propitious time for international commerce. Campaigning disrupts overland trade. Cities are besieged and put to sack. Nations resort to embargoes against one another. But times of war can also be periods of exceptional opportunity. By forcing merchants to seek out new routes around troubled areas and by provoking important population migrations, major conflicts can permanently alter the economic geography of large regions and enable those cities which succeed in attracting the uprooted merchants to achieve new prosperity. Perhaps no wars in European history illustrate this better than the struggles provoked by the Revolt of the Netherlands in the second half of the sixteenth century. Between 1566 and 1589, the merchants and artisans of Flanders and Brabant, the most thriving regions of Northern Europe for centuries, were suddenly scattered by war and religious persecution throughout the towns of Holland, North Germany, and England. Antwerp, the continent's greatest entrepot, saw much of its trade and wealth permanently diverted

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to other harbours. New commercial stars arose, the most brilliant of them Amsterdam, the new Antwerp.

The seismic shifts altering Europe's economic geography during the great political and religious confrontations of the second half of the sixteenth century — the decline of Antwerp and the rise of Amsterdam; the penetration of the Dutch and English into the Mediterranean; the first signs of the decline of Spain and Italy; the general tilting of economic supremacy away from the south of Europe and towards its northwestern facade — these are all familiar to economic historians of the period. But what of France? Here is a country conspicuously absent from most discussions of the changing economic geography of the period and whose economic fate during these years is still imperfectly understood.[1] Did France's ports profit from the decline of Antwerp and the "rise of the Atlantic economies," or was the country too embroiled in its own religious wars to seize the opportunities of the day?

France's leading Atlantic seaport, Rouen, provides an excellent vantage point from which to investigate these problems. On the eve of the period Normandy's capital was the second largest port along the entire northwestern littoral of the continent from Hamburg to Brest and was well positioned to profit from Antwerp's difficulties. At the same time the city experienced France's own civil wars quite directly. Twice it was the object of major sieges, and a major provincial Saint Bartholomew's massacre occurred within its walls. Recent historians have offered sharply

[1] An example of the common neglect of France's position in the international economy is CARLO M. CIPOLLA, *Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy, 1000-1700* (New York, 1976), where the country barely appears once in 69 pages devoted to the period 1500–1700. Richard Gascon's long chapter, "La France du mouvement: les commerces et les villes" in FERNAND BRAUDEL and ERNEST LABROUSSE, eds. *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, I, pt. 1, *1450-1660* (Paris, 1977), 231–479, provides the best recent overview of French commerce and industry in these centuries. Even his treatment of the period of the Wars of Religion is brief and his perspective on the years resolutely Lyonnais.

diverging evaluations of the fate of the port's commerce during the second half of the sixteenth century. Jean Delumeau paints a pessimistic picture of a city ravaged by siege, massacre, and piracy,[2] while Pierre Jeannin assures us that Rouen was a robust metropolis which "had every reason to rejoice at the great conflict between Philip II and the Protestants, for as a neutral harbour it took on the allure of a leading international marketplace."[3] Each of these diagnoses, however, is based on very partial evidence, Delumeau's on statistics concerning alum imports from Tolfa complemented by a few comments from contemporaries, Jeannin's on research in Rouen's notarial records for only four years. A fuller examination of the city's trade, using a range of French, English, and Spanish source materials, suggests that its fate cannot be understood apart from the chronology of the civil wars in Normandy and of the stages of Antwerp's decline. Although initially plagued by civil war and piracy during the opening years of the religious wars, Rouen was able to profit from Antwerp's accelerating difficulties and enjoy a period of significant expansion in the 1570s and early 1580s, only to see the new trade it had attracted driven away by the catastrophic wars which accompanied the period of the Catholic League. The examination of the city's trade in this period enables us to trace this pattern in detail. It also offers a new perspective on the perennial problem of France's inability to produce a major international port of a stature comparable to that of an Antwerp, an Amsterdam, or a London.

I

On the eve of the period to be discussed here, Rouen was already a city with a long history as an international port, a vari-

[2] Jean Delumeau, *L'Alun de Rome, XV^e-XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1962), 260-1, a view the author repeats in "Le commerce extérieur français au XVII^e siècle," *XVII^e Siècle*, 70-71 (1966), 82.

[3] Pierre Jeannin, *Les marchands au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1969), 34 (translation mine).

ed and farflung trade, and a large and wealthy merchant community.[4] Standing midway between Paris and the mouth of the Seine at the farthest point upriver navigable by oceangoing ships, the city was a distribution centre for the entire Parisian Basin, receiving from inland such products for export as Burgundy and Orleans wine and Tours silk and sending back salt from Brouage or Portugal as far into the interior as the *greniers à sel* of Châlons-sur-Marne and Dijon. The city was also the hub of an industrial region that was in all probability sixteenth-century France's most highly developed. The 75,000 or so Rouennais themselves manufactured a wide variety of items known for their high quality — fine woollens, stockings, leather goods, small metal hardwares, combs, and playing cards — while the city's merchants and *merciers* served as the glue which held together a tightly integrated regional economy. The nearby villages of Déville and Notre-Dame-de-Bondeville housed an important paper industry, the textile towns of Elbeuf and Darnétal (the latter with no less than 8000 inhabitants around 1550) wove cloth, while linen, that most central of French exports, was produced in vast quantities throughout the adjacent Roumois and Lieuvin regions. Meanwhile, the numerous active ports of the lower Seine and the nearby Channel coast — Quillebeuf, Honfleur, Fécamp, and the recently founded Le Havre — were all essentially outports of Rouen at the same time that they pioneered navigation to the Grand Banks and Brazil.[5]

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[4] Rouen's later medieval trade forms the subject of the magisterial study by MICHEL MOLLAT, *Le commerce maritime normand à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1952).

[5] Ibid., Parts 2-3, provides the best introduction to the economy of Rouen and the surrounding region in the sixteenth century. Further information on the role of Rouen's merchants in organizing the regional economy may be found in the letters in the Archivo Simon Ruiz, Archivo Historico Provincial y Universitario de Valladolid (henceforward cited as Ruiz) and in innumerable acts of Rouen's notarial records or *tabellionage*. These show Rouen's merchants importing the raw materials for and exporting the finished products of the woollen and paper-making centres of the surrounding area; outfitting the ship-captains of Fécamp, Le Havre, Honfleur, St. Valery-en-Caux, and Quillebeuf with the goods, victuals, and insurance required for their voyages; and commis-

This varied economic activity fuelled five important currents of foreign trade.[6] Perhaps the most important was that linking Rouen to the Iberian peninsula. Castilian wool had been imported in significant quantities to supply Rouen's fine cloth industry ever since the later Middle Ages, and the small but wealthy colony of Spanish merchants which established itself in the city to exploit this trade soon added other imports: spices, olive oil, tropical fruits, leather, salt, wine, and alum. In return, Rouen sent back to Seville and the ports of the Cantabrian coast a wide variety of manufactured goods including hardware, playing cards, woollens, and, above all, linens.[7] The trade in this last commodity experienced particularly rapid growth in the sixteenth century as Spanish colonization opened up new markets in the New World, for " tela de Roan " was considered ideal for conditions in the Indies. So much linen came to be shipped to Seville and from there on to the Americas that Rouen's economy became intimately tied to the rhythms of the *carrera de Indias*. Merchants in the Norman capital breathed a sigh of relief when word arrived that another year's treasure fleet had anchored safely along

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sioning agents to buy raw linen at the markets of Le Neubourg and Beaumont-le-Roger and supervise its finishing and bleaching at Louviers or along the Risle valley before bringing it to Rouen for shipment overseas. Here I must mention the great debt of gratitude I owe Pierre Jeannin, who is the one man who has so far had the fortitude to tackle the forbiddingly large and difficult to read mass of notarial records surviving from the second half of the sixteenth century and who was kind enough to permit me to examine and cite from his notes.

[6] The focus of this article on Rouen's foreign trade is not meant to downplay the importance of internal trade. As is so often the case, the available documentation is simply much less instructive about domestic trade and I have thus been forced to exclude it from detailed consideration here.

[7] Further details on Rouen's trade with Spain may be found in MOLLAT, *op. cit*, pp. 225-37; HENRI LAPEYRE, *Une famille de marchands, les Ruiz: Contribution à l'étude du commerce entre la France et l'Espagne au temps de Philippe II* (Paris, 1955), *passim*; ALBERT GIRARD, *Le commerce français à Séville et Cadix au temps des Habsbourg* (Paris-Bordeaux, 1932), 350; MANUEL BASAS FERNANDEZ, " Los libros mercantiles de la compañia de Garcia y Miguel de Salamanca (Burgos, siglo XVI)," *Boletin de la Institucion Fernan Gonzalez*, 152 (1960), 227-41; A. CHAMBERLAND, ed. " Le commerce d'importation en France au milieu du XVI[e] siècle d'après un manuscrit de la Bibliothèque Nationale," *Revue de Géographie*, XXXII (1892), 290-95.

the banks of the Guadalquivir, while the New World bullion drawn in by the linen helped make Rouen's mint one of France's most active.[8] While the intensive trade with the Iberian peninsula had brought an important colony of Spanish merchants to Rouen and these men controlled much of this current of trade, it is a striking testimony to the strength of the native Norman merchant community that it was able to stand up to the Spaniards better than its counterparts elsewhere in northern Europe. In Antwerp, Wilfrid Brulez has estimated, Spanish and Portuguese merchants controlled 85 to 90 percent of the trade with the Iberian peninsula in the 1550s.[9] Although similar statistics cannot be calculated for Rouen, many native Rouennais merchants outfitted ships for the Iberian peninsula. One minor statistical indication can be provided: when four ships heading between Le Havre and Seville were captured by pirates in 1576-77, 15 of the merchants who subsequently filed claims for goods captured were native Rouennais and 12 were Spaniards or of Spanish ancestry.[10]

Linen exports were also fundamental in Rouen's trade with

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[8] Ruiz, caja 69, no. 310, Carlos de Saldania to Simon Ruiz, Oct. 15, 1581: "la llegada de las flotas en Sevilla, loado dios, ha dado mucho contento en general y ayudara mucho a los negocios de aquella placa." Rouen's merchants called their linen exports "les vrayes mines de l'or et argent en ce royaume" because of their role in attracting bullion. Archives Communales de Rouen (Hereafter A.C.R.), A 21, entry of May 10, 1601. On the comparative importance of Rouen's mint, see FRANK C. SPOONER, *The International Economy and Monetary Movements in France, 1493-1725* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), Atlas, 2, 229-32. In general, the particularly active mints in the sixteenth century were those near centres of the linen trade.

[9] BRULEZ, "De Handel" in *Antwerpen in de XVI^e Eeuw* (Genootschap voor Antwerpse Geschiedenis, 1975), 131.

[10] Archives Départementales de la Seine-Maritime (hereafter A.D.S.M.), E, tabellionage, contracts of Jan. 12, 13, 1576, July 3, 11, 1577. Further evidence of the relative strength of Rouen's native merchants vis à vis foreigners is provided by a tax levied on the merchant community in 1566. Foreign merchants paid just 8.7 percent of the levy. By contrast, the opulent, Italian-dominated foreign merchant colony in Lyon paid fully 28.5 percent of a tax levied on *all* that city's residents in 1571. A.D.S.M., C 216; RICHARD GASCON, *Grand commerce et vie urbaine au XVI^e siècle: Lyon et ses marchands (vers 1520-vers 1580)* (Paris-The Hague, 1971), 358. See also the remarks of LAPEYRE, *op. cit.*, 122-3.

England, the second major current of its commerce. The London port book of 1567-68 provides a precise view of the goods sent northward across the Channel from Rouen. Canvas was by far the most important commodity, accounting for 69 percent by value of all the goods declared. The remaining 31 percent was divided between paper (8 percent), hardwares (6 percent), combs and woolcards (3 percent), dried fruits (3 percent), playing cards (2 percent), dyestuffs (2 percent), and a variety of miscellaneous items including hourglasses, spectacles, and toothpicks.[11] English exports on the eve of the religious wars still consisted primarily of tin and lead. The cross-Channel trade was carried predominantly in English ships and was still controlled to a large degree by the merchants of the southwestern English ports near the mines of Devonshire and Cornwall: Poole, Totnes, Exeter, and Southampton.[12] That Rouen's exports to England were predominantly manufactured products and its imports raw materials suggests the relative underdevelopment of the English economy at the time. The same situation, it might be remarked, also prevailed in Rouen's commerce with Spain; not coincidentally, England and Spain were the two countries with which France enjoyed a positive balance of trade.[13] England's economy displayed one strength which Spain's lacked, however; its own vessels carried most of its trade, while French ships seem to have carried most of the goods exchanged with Spain.

Rouen's balance of trade was decidedly negative in the third major current of its trade, that with the Low Countries. Spices,

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[11] BRIAN DIETZ, ed. *The Port and Trade of Elizabethan London: Documents* (London Record Society, 1972).

[12] The best source for the study of imports from England is provided by the *congés* to be found in A.C.R., B 1 et seq. These are discussed at some length below. See also CHAMBERLAND, *op. cit.*, XXXI, 373-5; Public Record Office, London (henceforward P.R.O.) S.P. 12/255, no. 56.

[13] To quote Lord Burghley, "No country robbeth England so much as France." LAWRENCE STONE, "Elizabethan Overseas Trade," *Economic History Review*, 2 nd ser. II (1949), 40. See also PROSPER BOISSONNADE, "Le mouvement commercial entre la France et les Iles Brittaniques au XVI[e] siècle," *Revue Historique*, CXXXV (1920), 46.

sugar, soap, jewelry, tapestries, and cloth were among the valuable commodities imported from Antwerp, to which Rouen sent in return stockings.[14] Middelburg and Dordrecht received another important export from Rouen, the wines of Burgundy and the Orleanais, sending back herring, tar, and, in times of local scarcity, Baltic grain.[15] This current of Rouen's trade was largely dominated by the merchants of the Low Countries, although French ships continued to carry a sizeable percentage of the goods exchanged, as is shown by the many French vessels paying anchorage fees at Middelburg and Arnemuiden.[16] The Dutch were not yet absolute masters of the continental carrying trade in 1570.

A single commodity, alum, dominated the fourth current of Rouen's foreign trade, that with Italy. Alum was too bulky a mineral to be transported by land across the Alps, as was done with most wares exchanged between France and Italy. It was shipped by sea, and Rouen was the leading centre for its import and redistribution throughout France. Between 1572 and 1576, years for which exceptionally precise information is available, 84.6 percent of all alum imported into France entered at Rouen or Le Havre.[17] Norman ships handled a significant share of the traffic, exchanging Newfoundland cod for the alum at Civita-

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[14] Emile Coornaert, *Les Français et le commerce internationale à Anvers* (Paris, 1961), I, 218-19 and II, 98-122; Wilfrid Brulez, "The Balance of Trade of the Netherlands in the Middle of the 16th Century," *Acta Historiae Neerlandica*, IV (1970), 46.

[15] Jan Craeybeckx, *Un grand commerce d'importation: Les vins de France aux anciens Pays-Bas (XIIIe-XVIe siècle)* (Paris, 1958), 26-31, 77, 248; Z.W. Sneller and W.S. Unger, eds. *Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis van den Handel met Frankrijk* (The Hague, 1930), 528, 588-90, and *Supplement* (The Hague, 1942), 45-48.

[16] Sneller and Unger, eds. *op. cit.*, pp. 641, 644; Craeybeckx, *op. cit.*, ch. 5, esp. p. 248.

[17] A.S.D.M., Chartrier de Bolbec, Papiers Ygou, 16 J 185, a set of papers which includes the accounts of the farmers of the tax on alum for all France's ports, July 1572-June 1578. See also Delumeau, *L'Alun de Rome*, 244-5. On trade routes in general between Italy and France, see Chamberland, *op. cit.*, XXXIII, 222-5, 290-1; Gascon, *Grand commerce*, ch. 1; Wilfrid Brulez, "Les routes commerciales d'Angleterre en Italie au XVIe siècle," in *Studi in onore di Amintore Fanfani* (Milan, 1962), IV 123-84.

vecchia in a triangular trade, but the bulk of the profits continued to be made by a few wealthy Genoese entrepreneurs who still dominated the trade into the first decade of the religious wars. In 1572, the earliest date for which precise figures are available, Genoese merchants were responsible for 58 percent of the alum imported at Rouen, Rouennais merchants for 38 percent.[18]

If most of the vessels dropping anchor at Rouen came from ports such as Seville, Antwerp, or Southampton, occasional ships returned from more exotic lands. The Normans were France's pioneers in opening up trade relations with the recently discovered areas of Africa and the New World, and by midcentury commerce with Brazil, West Africa, and the Barbary Coast had become the fifth current of the city's overseas trade. Sugar, cotton, pepper, hides, and brazil wood were all regularly imported from these areas.[19] In the 1570s, no less than 26 ships left Le Havre and Honfleur each year for these destinations. A comparable number set sail for the Newfoundland Banks.[20]

II

Ascertaining the main currents of Rouen's foreign trade is relatively easy, for published sources and contracts in the city's notarial archives provide evidence aplenty about these matters. Finding solid evidence, quantitative evidence if possible, about

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[18] A.D.S.M., 16 J 185.

[19] MOLLAT, *op. cit.* pp. 249-62.

[20] Table II, p. 51 below notes the number of ships leaving from Le Havre alone for North Africa, the Atlantic isles, and Brazil between 1570 and 1610. To this can be added the voyages from Honfleur discovered by the Bréards. PHILIPPE BARREY, "Les Normands au Maroc au XVI[e] siècle," "Le Havre transatlantique de 1571 à 1610," and "Les relations maritimes du Havre avec les Iles de l'Océan Atlantique oriental de 1572 à 1610," all studies based on the notarial records of Le Havre in JULIAN HAYEM, ed. *Mémoires et documents pour servir à l'histoire du commerce et de l'industrie en France* (Paris, 1911-29), V, 1-44, 47-209, esp. p. 70; VI, 127-52; CHARLES and PAUL BRÉARD, eds. *Documents relatifs à la marine normande et à ses armements aux XVI[e] et XVII[e] siècles pour le Canada, l'Afrique, les Antilles, le Brésil, et les Indes* (Rouen, 1889), *passim* (extracts from the notarial records of Honfleur).

the ups and downs of the trade over time is far harder. The notarial records are of little help here since they include but a fraction of the commercial transactions carried out in the city.[21] Detailed customs records do not exist, nor have any account books or papers of a local merchant yet been found. A variety of widely scattered sources must be used to piece together the fate of the city's trade over the course of the religious wars, and since certain of these sources are unfamiliar ones, their nature and reliability must first be explained.

The most promising source for the study of Rouen's trade seems at first glance to be provided by the daily registers of the municipal government know as the *journaux des Echevins*. These registers contain numerous acts granting non-resident merchants permission to place in temporary storage goods brought into the city. Literally hundreds of these "*congés*" are recorded in the *journaux des Echevins*, and they note the name of the merchant, his country and usually city of origin, and the nature of his wares.[22] With such copious information, they hint of a panoramic overview of the city's trade. Unfortunately, close examination of the *congés* reveals that they are not as valuable a source as they first appear. According to the laws governing commerce in Rouen, all merchants who were not legal residents of the city had to put their wares up for sale as soon as they were

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[21] Many commercial transactions were carried out *sous seing privé* rather than notarized in Rouen, and the notarized contracts which do exist are generally mute about the quantities of goods and their price. On the problems of using French notarial archives, see MARCEL DELAFOSSE, "Les sources de l'étude quantitative du trafic maritime à Bordeaux et La Rochelle, principalement aux XVII[e] et XVIII[e] siècles," and the related discussion in Michel Mollat, ed. *Les sources de l'histoire maritime en Europe, du Moyen Age au XVIII[e] siècle* (Paris, 1962), 271-87.

[22] The *journaux des Echevins* form the series B of the A.C.R., with the period 1550-1600 covered by registers B 1-5. The records have previously been utilized by E. LE PARQUIER in his "Le commerce maritime de Rouen dans la seconde moitié du XVI[e] siècle" *Bulletin de la Société Libre d'Emulation du Commerce et de l'Industrie de la Seine-Inférieure*, 1926-27, 87-116. Its title notwithstanding,this article covers only the years 1555-68.

unloaded or else obtain one of these *congés*.[23] Since most Spanish, Italian, and Flemish merchants trading with the city used resident factors to handle their affairs, they were not bound by these regulations. Only Englishmen and a few merchants from other French cities thus appear regularly in the *journaux des Echevins*.

The *congés* remain valuable as a guide to trade with England, but some minor inconveniences further limit their utility. The precise port of origin of the merchant demanding the *congé* was noted only until 1570, making a study of the geography of Anglo-Rouennais trade impossible after that date. Between 1577 and 1580 even the merchant's nationality was omitted. One can tell by the names and commodities involved that trade with Britain did not cease in this period, but an accurate count of the number of English merchants requesting *congés* is obviously impossible. Then, after 1584, for reasons which are unclear, the source suddenly changes drastically; far fewer *congés* are recorded, and these are almost exclusively for cargoes of wine. The source thus becomes worthless for purposes of comparison with the preceding years, and for further information about trade with England one has to cross the Channel to consult the London port books of 1587-88, 1589, and 1601-2. Finally, it must be kept in mind that every English merchant arriving in Rouen naturally did not ask permission to place his merchandise in storage; many must have been quite willing to put their goods on sale at once. The number of *congés* granted per year is therefore but a fraction of the total number of English cargoes arriving in the city — and a changing fraction at that since fluctuating business conditions undoubtedly led more merchants to ask for *congés* when markets were glutted than when demand was great. Small annual variations in the number of permits granted are therefore not reliable indicators of changes in the actual pattern of trade. Only dramatic shifts can be trusted.

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[23] The regulations governing the *congés* can be determined from A.C.R. Chartrier, tiroir 5.

The second major source which sheds light on the fluctuations of Rouen's commerce in this period needs no lengthy introduction to economic historians, for its riches have already been mined by numerous researchers, most notably Henry Lapeyre. This is the famous collection of mercantile letters sent to the wealthy Spanish merchant-banker Simon Ruiz.[24] Ruiz did considerable business with Rouen, and between 1563 and 1595 he received over 500 letters from a variety of correspondents in the Norman capital. These permit us to look over the shoulder of several of the city's leading merchants as they buy and sell commodities, arrange for the transfer of money between Rouen and Medina del Campo, and report to Ruiz about the state of local markets. While these letters cannot provided precise quantitative measures of the volume of trade, they do indicate clearly the state of commerce with Spain at any give time. Worried discussions of the damage wrought by soldiers or privateers reveal periods when trade was disrupted, while increases in the volume of letters and in the variety of transactions discussed suggest periods of prosperity.

Several other documents complete the information about the city's trade. The London port books inform us about the volume of shipping arriving from Rouen in several scattered years. Previously unexploited accounts of the farmer of the French tax on alum between 1570 and 1583 provide exceptionally precise information about imports of that vital commodity for all too brief a period. A few surviving fragments of the accounts of import and export duties levied on wine and linen allow measurement of the volume of trade in these commodities in the midst of the period of the most prolonged fighting of the civil wars, that of the League. The studies of Philippe Barrey, based

[24] These letters are conserved in the Archivo Historico Provincial y Universitario de Valladolid. I consulted all of the letters sent from Rouen plus those from Antwerp published by V. Vazquez de Prada under the title *Lettres marchandes d'Anvers* (4 vols. Paris, 1961).

on the exceptionally complete *tabellionage* of Le Havre (which includes acts passed *sous seing privé*), chart the evolution of the trade with Africa and Brazil from 1570 through 1610. Finally, the complaints recorded in the *cahiers de doléances* of Normandy's provincial estates and records of court cases arising out of disputes over liability for goods captured by pirates at sea provide information about fluctuations in the intensity of privateering activity in nearby waters.[25]

III

These various sources show us that the conflicting forces affecting Rouen's trade from 1560 to 1600 made themselves felt from the very outset of the Wars of Religion in 1562. On the eve of the wars, trade had been thriving as rarely before. Peace had broken out, and the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, bringing an end to over half a century of conflict between Hapsburg and Valois, meant an end as well to the intermittent embargo imposed on commerce with the territories of Charles V and thus a period of rapid expansion in Rouen's Iberian trade.[26] This brief phase of expansion was brought to a sudden halt by the outbreak of the First Civil War in April 1562. Rouen was secured at the outset of the war by the sizeable Huguenot minority within its walls, and many of the leading Catholic merchants soon fled.[27] The surrounding region of Normandy rapidly became the theatre of serious fighting, and Rouen itself was besieged for a month before being taken and sacked by the combined royal and Catholic forces in October 1562. The end of the civil war in March 1563

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[25] All of these sources will be cited at the appropriate points in the text. For Barrey's studies, see note 20 above.

[26] Basas Fernandez, *op. cit.*, p. 231; Lapeyre, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

[27] A.D.S.M., B, Parlement, Arrêts, Août-Octobre 1562, arrêts of Oct. 3, 12, 17, 21; Novembre 1562-Mars 1563, arrêts of Jan. 11, Feb. 27, March 9, 17, 21, and 24, all cases involving merchants of Rouen who left the city during the period of Huguenot domination.

restored a measure of activity to the city's markets, for cargoes could now be sent safely overland to Antwerp and Nantes and then shipped from there. But navigation along the Seine remained a mere trickle, for the English controlled Le Havre, a prize received from the Huguenots by the Treaty of Hampton Court, and had turned that city into a pirates' nest.[28]

The combined effect of the civil war and the English presence in Le Havre was to reduce Rouen's trade sharply for two years. The earliest letters from Rouen in the Ruiz archives date from October 1563 and come from wealthy Spanish merchant Antoine de Quintanadueñas, who had earlier fled the city after the Protestant takeover. While he had returned and resumed his exports of linen by October 1563, he reported that few buyers were to be seen at the chief linen markets of the region and that business was down sharply.[29] The *congés* reveal the near cessation of all trade. Whereas forty to fifty of these permits were granted in a normal year prior to 1562, just four were issued in the twenty-three full months between May 1562 and March 1564, two to merchants from Brittany and one each to traders from Paris and nearby Duclair. Only when a military campaign ousted the English from Le Havre in the spring of 1564 did trade return to normal. The number of *congés* increased rapidly from April onward, while other of Simon Ruiz's correspondents returned to the city in that month and reported that business was picking up.[30]

No sooner did trade revert to normal than the first benefi-

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[28] According to Giovan Battista Guicciardini in Antwerp, the English at Le Havre seized close to seventy French vessels heading for Normandy. MARIO BATTISTINI, ed. *Lettere di Giovan Battista Guicciardini a Cosimo e Francesco de' Medici scritte dal Belgio dal 1559 al 1577* (Brussels-Rome, 1949), 225.

[29] Ruiz, caja 2, nos. 121, 123-25, Antoine de Quintanadueñas to Simon Ruiz, Oct. 9 and 31, Nov. 16 and 29, 1563. A.D.S.M., B. Parlement, Arrêts, Novembre 1562-Mars 1563, arrêt of Feb. 27, 1563, proves that Quintanadueñas left Rouen during the period of Huguenot domination.

[30] Ruiz, caja 2, no. 321, Paolo Lamberti to Simon Ruiz, April 30, 1564.

cial effects of the dispersion of Antwerp's trade began to make themselves felt. The stimulus was the dispute between the English and Spanish crowns over the extent of the trading privileges granted the English Merchant Adventurers at Antwerp, where they had had their staple for decades and to which they sent virtually all of the cloth that formed the heart of England's export trade. As a result of the dispute, the London-Antwerp connection was severed, and the company was forced to move its trade to the small and distant East Friesland port of Emden. Diplomatic pressures and changing commercial imperatives dislodged the staple four more times in the next two decades, buffeting it among Antwerp, Middelburg, Emden, and Hamburg. These frequent shifts weakened the monopoly exercised by the staple over London's export trade with the continent, for no other port could offer Antwerp's advantages of size and location, nor so great a variety of goods for sale. London's cloth exports ceased to pass exclusively through the town in which the staple was located and came instead to be dispersed among several ports.[31]

While historians have so far stressed the profit brought to the North German ports by the dispersion of English trade, the *congés* reveal that Rouen benefited handsomely as well. Figure I, which sets forth the number of these permits granted English merchants per year between 1550 and 1584, shows that imports from England jumped markedly from pre-civil-war levels following the resumption of trade in April 1564. Furthermore, as Figures II and III show, the pattern of Anglo-Rouennais trade changed completely. While in absolute terms there was no decline in the trade in tin and lead from the southwestern out-

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[31] For accounts of the movements of the staple and the consequences for English trade, see E.E. RICH, ed. *The Ordinance Book of the Merchants of the Staple* (Cambridge, 1937), ch. 4; T.S. WILLAN, *Studies in Elizabethan Foreign Trade* (Marchester, 1959), 50-2; BRULEZ, " Les routes commerciales d'Angleterre en Italie," 132, 172; RALPH DAVIS, *English Overseas Trade 1500-1700* (London, 1973), 15-18.

ports which had previously dominated English commerce with Rouen (the number of *congés* granted merchants from the southwestern ports actually increased slightly from pre-1562 levels [32]), this trade nonetheless came to be dwarfed in importance by the volume of exchanges with London. Merchants from the capital rose from twelve percent of the English merchants applying for *congés* between 1550 and 1562 to fifty-three percent between 1564 and 1570. These Londoners were primarily exporting the coarse, light kerseys which suddenly invaded the French market in large quantities in this period, becoming the single largest article of trade between England and Rouen.[33] A marked increase also occured in the traffic in such raw materials for Rouen's numerous industries as hides, tallow, flax, cinders (used in bleaching cloth), and animal horns (for enamel work). Approximately one ship in ten leaving London in the years after 1564 now headed for Rouen.[34]

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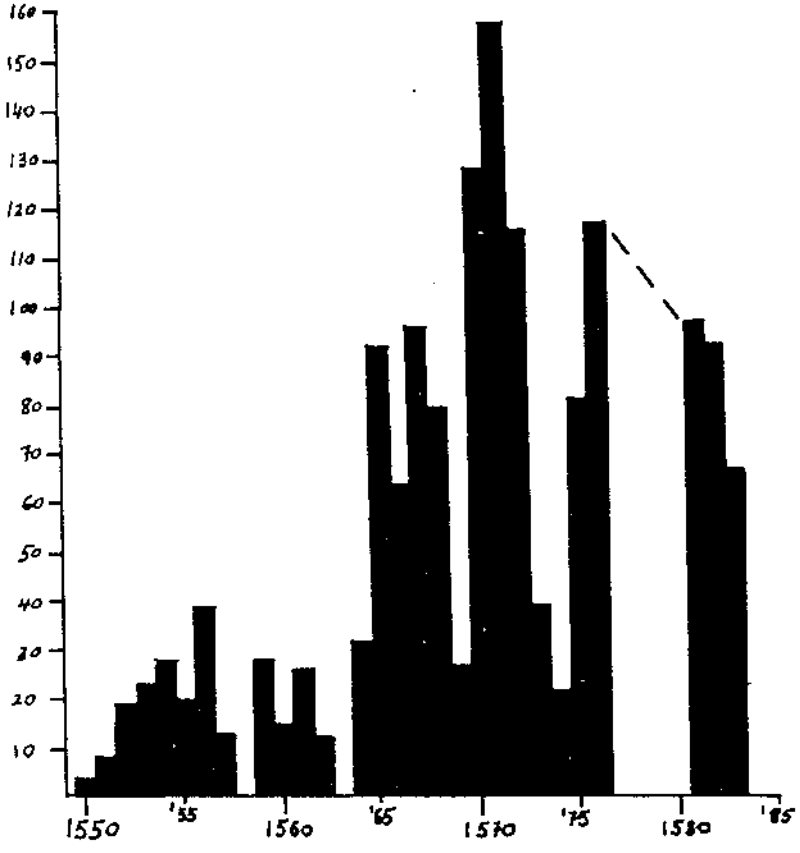
[32] Between 1550 and 1562, 10.4 *congés* per year were granted to merchants from the southwestern outports. Between 1564 and 1570, the figure was 13.4.

[33] GASCON, *Grand commerce*, 616-8 discusses this "offensive of English cloth."

[34] This can be deduced from several sources. According to a "Declaration of certain imposts raised upon the English Marchants tradinge Rouen" (P.R.O., S.P. 12/286, no. 40), roughly 36,000 pieces of English kerseys and other woollens entered the Norman capital each year in the mid-1570's. Since for tax purposes three kerseys were considered to equal one "shortcloth", this figure represents ten percent of total English cloth exports, which averaged 110,000 shortcloths each year from London and another 15,000 from the outports between 1574 and 1579. (DAVIS, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-3). The London port books edited by Dietz show that from Michaelmas 1567 to Michaelmas 1568, 51 ships returned to the Thames from Rouen laden with goods assessed at a value of £. 389,060. The 51 vessels represent 7.5 percent of all ships entering London harbour and place Rouen fourth in importance among all cities trading with London — behind Antwerp, which had regained for the moment the Merchant Adventurers' staple (118 ships), Amsterdam (91 ships), and Bordeaux (85 ships). Twenty years later, according to the 1587-88 port book (P.R.O., E 190/7/8), the number of vessels arriving from Rouen was smaller — 41 — but the city's share in London's import trade had nonetheless increased relative to all other cities. J.R. Jones, who has analyzed this volume of the port books on the basis of the number of entries concerning each port, finds Rouen third in importance behind the twin staple towns of Middelburg and Stade, accounting for fourteen percent of all entries. See his "Some Aspects of London Mercantile Activity during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth" in Norton Downs, ed. *Essays in Honor of Conyers Read* (Chicago, 1953), 189.

FIGURE I

ANGLO-FRENCH TRADE: THE EVIDENCE OF THE *CONGES*
Number of *Congés* Granted English Merchants Per Year

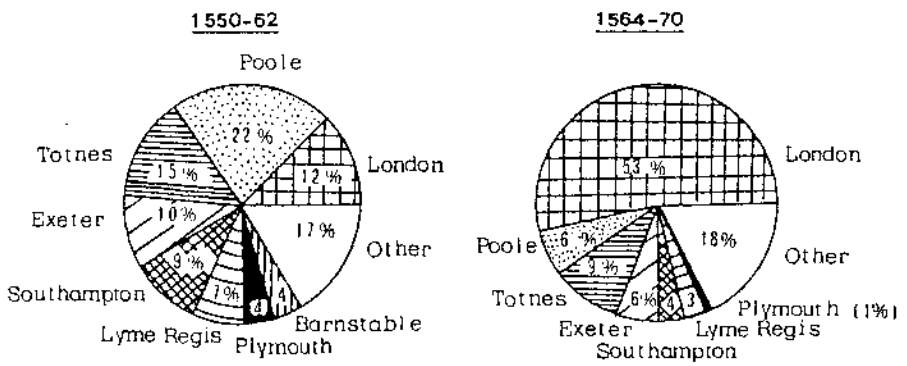


(The gap between 1576 and 1581 is due to the fact that the *congés* cease noting country of origin during these years; there was no cessation of trade. All other gaps reflect the complete cessation of trade between Rouen and England during periods of war.)

While Rouen thus captured a significant, if hardly preponderant, role in London's trade, it might have been able to profit yet farther had relations between the merchant communities of the two cities been better. The English trading in Rouen complained frequently of the capriciousness of the French port of-

FIGURE II

ANGLO-FRENCH TRADE: THE EVIDENCE OF THE *CONGES*
Port of Origin of English Merchants



(After 1570, the *congés* cease noting the precise port of origin.)

ficials, while the Rouennais doing business in London protested because they felt the English enjoyed far greater trading privileges in Rouen than the Normans did in England.[35] Religious differences probably exacerbated the hard feelings, and the events of the subsequent civil wars certainly did, for Rouen remained loyal to the crown for the rest of the period of the civil wars while the English allied themselves with the Huguenot rebels. English privateers helped the Huguenots prey on Rouen's shipping, and

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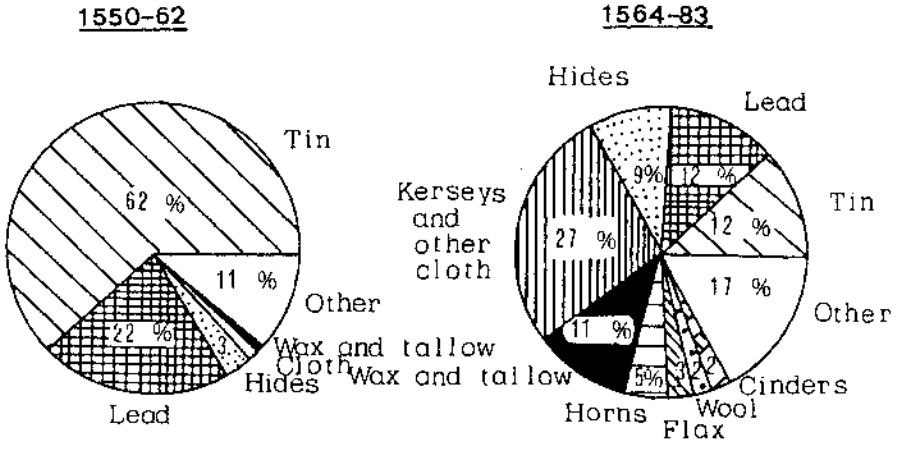
[35] *Correspondance diplomatique de Bertrand de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénélon, Ambassadeur de France en Angleterre de 1568 à 1575* (Paris-London, 1838-40), IV, 291: "Les merchantz de Londres se plaignent infinyement d'aulcunes visites, impositions, coustumes, et contrainctes, qu'on a de nouveau exigees sur eulx a Roan, et de ce qu'on va icelles executant a ce qu'ilz disent avec grand rigueur, et avec beaucoup d'arrogance et de violence contre leurs facteurs et contre leurs merchandises, de quoy tout ce royaume commance fort a se degouster du traffic de France, et avoir ung fort grand regret a celluy d'Envers.... Ceulx de Roan aussi se pleignent bien fort des gravesses qu'on leur faict pardeca." See also Ibid., IV, 378; A.C.R., A 19, fo. 432 v.

FIGURE III

ANGLO-FRENCH TRADE: THE EVIDENCE OF THE *CONGES*
Commodities Placed in Storage by English Merchants



(Based on a simple count of the number of times each product was mentioned as part of the cargo being put in storage. Precise information about quantities or value of the imported commodities is not given.)

the French retaliated twice by putting an embargo on trade with England and seizing all goods owned by English merchants in French harbours.[36] As a result of these episodes, many London merchants hesitated to trade with Rouen. When the wool trade of the Company of the Staple had to move from Bruges in 1569, Rouen was among the ports proposed as a substitute staple town; in fact, a provision establishing the monopoly at the Norman capital was even written into the Treaty of Blois of April 1572. The plan, however, never materialized. The English merchants argued vehemently against a move to Rouen, claiming that the French officials were unfair and that it was dangerous to establish the staple in a potentially hostile country where mer-

[36] These episodes are discussed more fully below, pp. 51, 52-53.

chants could become hostages in time of war. No concrete steps had been taken to put the appropriate sections of the treaty into effect when the Saint Bartholomew's Massacre put an abrupt end to any dreams of an Anglo-French rapprochement.[37] The episode points up clearly how France's intermittent religious wars, plus the permanent climate of confessional antagonism and political instability which they created, limited the extent to which its cities could profit from the changing commercial currents of the time. Another example of this is provided by the reaction of Rouen's authorities, solidly Catholic from 1563 onward, to the arrival of a number of Protestant artisans fleeing the industrial centers of the Southern Low Countries in the wake of the Duke of Alva's measures of repression of 1566. Although Protestantism was theoretically tolerated under the edict of pacification then in force, the Catholic majority in Rouen feared any reinforcement of the significant Huguenot community within the town. The refugees were viewed with suspicion by the city fathers from the time of their arrival and were expelled at the outbreak of the Second Civil War in 1567.[38] Thirty years later Henry IV would dangle substantial financial encouragement before the cloth workers of the Low Countries in a largely unsuccessful effort to get them to immigrate and bring with them their highly efficient manufacturing techniques.

Even if the climate created by France's own religious wars kept Rouen from benefiting from the developments of the 1560s as much as it might have, the increased trade with London visible from 1564 on was unquestionably a boon for the city. In much of France, Richard Gascon has argued, the large quantities of cheap English cloth flooding the market from the 1560s onward were detrimental to the local economy, for the cloth undersold native products and thus contributed significantly to the

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[37] Rich, ed. *op. cit.* pp. 65-7.

[38] A.C.R., A 19, entries of June 25 and Oct. 21, 1567.

crisis of the French woollen industry in these years.[39] But the numerous laments which Lyon's merchants directed to the crown about the disastrous effects wrought by the English kerseys on France's cloth industry had no echoes in Normandy. While Rouen was also an important cloth producing town, the light English cloths were best suited for warmer climes and thus did not compete for the same markets as the chief product of Rouen's woollen industry, the heavy, high-quality *draps de sceau*. Insofar as it is possible to determine the state of Rouen's cloth industry during this period, it does not seem to have been badly hurt by the competition.[40] And while the invasion of English cloth apparently wrought no serious harm on the city's woollen industry, it brought handsome profits to its cloth finishers and retailers. The English merchants responsible for exporting the kerseys generally carried them no further than Rouen, where they sold the cloth in its raw state to Norman *détailleurs de draps*. These then arranged for the cloth to be dyed and finished by the city's dyers before handling its shipment toward the warmer climes of the Mediter-

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[39] GASCON, *Grand commerce*, 613-8.

[40] The best evidence concerning the state of Rouen's cloth industry is provided by the number of *lettres de draperie* issued each year to new masters in the city's weavers' guild and recorded in the parish account books of the parishes of St. Maclou, St. Nicaise, and St. Vivien (A.D.S.M., G 6881-907, 7228-57, 7754-94). After a steady decline throughout the first six decades of the century which reflects the emigration of much of the city's cloth production to Darnétal and Elbeuf, the number of new masters received into the guild levelled off in the early decades of the Wars of Religion, suggesting that the decline was checked. Darnétal's cloth industry apparently fared rather worse in this period; the *bourg's* population fell by a third between 1550 and 1580. PHILIP BENEDICT, "Heurs et malheurs d'un gros bourg drapant: Note sur la population de Darnétal aux XVI[e] et XVII[e] siècle:," *Annales de Normandie*, XXVIII (1978), 199. The figures on English cloth exports to France via Rouen allow us to gauge with some precision the magnitude of the threat posed by English competition to France's native cloth industry and serve as a warning not to overestimate that threat. Markovitch puts the total output of the French woollen industry at 860,500 pieces in 1700, and production levels may have been nearly as high a century and a half earlier. The 36,000 pieces of English cloth thus could not have captured much more than five percent of the French market. TIHOMIR J. MARKOVITCH, *Les industries lainières de Colbert à la Revolution* (Geneva, 1976), 489; PIERRE DEYON, *Amiens capitale provinciale, étude sur la société urbaine au 17[e] siècle* (Paris-The Hague, 1967), 170-2.

ranean.[41] In addition to benefiting Rouen's dyers and cloth retailers, the growth of direct trade with London probably also allowed Normandy's linen producers to increase their share of the English market at the expense of their competitors in Flanders.

Of course, trade with England was only one current of the city's commerce. None of the other currents enjoyed as great a boom as that with England in this period, but on the whole they appear to have been at least as thriving as in the years prior to the outbreak of the civil wars. Imports of Roman alum seem to have declined somewhat from pre-war levels,[42] but trade with Spain quickly returned to an even keel and, given the vigorous growth of the *carrera de Indias* during these years, increased significantly in volume.[43] While we are less well informed about trade with the Low Countries, Emile Coornaert's research suggests that it remained near its peak levels of the century into the 1570s.[44]

The resumption of hostilities during the brief Second Civil War of 1567–68 did not interrupt this renewed activity. In his letters to Simon Ruiz, Antoine de Quintanaduenas continued to discuss purchases and sales throughout late 1567 and early 1568

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[41] No business transaction appears more frequently in the *tabellionage* around 1575 than contracts recording the sale of English cloth to Rouen *détailleurs de draps*. On the role of these men in arranging for the finishing of the cloth and expediting it toward Lyons and points south, see A.C.R., B 2, entry of June 28, 1572; GASCON, *Grand commerce*, 617.

[42] DELUMEAU, *L'alun de Rome*, 244-5. We shall see below, however, that these figures are incomplete and possibly misleading.

[43] HUGUETTE and PIERRE CHAUNU, *Séville et l'Atlantique (1504–1650)* (Paris, 1955-9), VIII, pt. 2, 474–84. The power of this growing trade to stimulate the activity of northwestern's Europe's leading linen centres is shown by the statistics available for several important linen markets in Flanders and Brittany. The number of pieces sold at Eekloo and Audenarde mounted steadily from 1560 through 1580, increasing overall by 140 per cent. Sales at Vitré doubled between 1570–5 and 1586. All three markets were closely linked to the export trade to Spain. ETIENNE SABBE, *Histoire de l'industrie linière en Belgique* (Brussels, 1945), 21; GIRARD, *op. cit.*, p. 344. Unfortunately no comparable figures are available for Rouen's linen exports.

[44] See especially the unpaginated graph detailing the number of French merchants appearing in Antwerp's records each years, *Les Français et Anvers*, v. 2, conclusion.

as though nothing unusual were occurring. When Catherine de Medici inquired early in 1568 about the impact of the renewed fighting on Rouen's trade, she was told that "all merchandise has circulated as freely as before in this city."[45] But shortly after the close of the Second Civil War came the beginning of the Third, and this struggle had serious repercussions on Normandy's trade. It was during this conflict that the Huguenots of la Rochelle first outfitted a large fleet of privateers to prey on the trade of their rival cities, supplementing this fleet by granting letters of marque to English ships.[46] Some forty English and Huguenot vessels were reportedly active in the Channel at the height of the civil war, and Quintanadueñas reported to Simon Ruiz in March 1569 that few ships could reach Normandy safely.[47] The involvement of English privateers in a French civil war prompted Charles IX to seize all English goods in French ports. Queen Elizabeth riposted in kind, and all trade between the two countries was stayed. The *congés* reveal that not a single English vessel arrived in Rouen between October 1568 and August 1569. Partially offsetting this fall in *congés* granted the English was an increase in those granted Breton merchants from ports such as St. Malo and Morlaix importing typically English wares such as tin and kerseys: clearly some smuggling was going on. The activity of the Bretons was hardly sufficient, however, to compensate for the cessation of legal trade with England. It was only when a mission of English merchants finally patched over the dispute with France in August 1569 that cross-Channel trade resumed on a large scale, and it was not until the end of the civil war in August 1570 that ships could sail to Spain without fear of corsairs.[48]

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[45] Ruiz, caja 8; Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris), MS Français 15547, fo. 188, Bauquemare to Catherine de Medici, July 30, 1568.

[46] Brian Dietz, "The Huguenot and English Corsairs during the Third Civil War in France, 1568 to 1570," *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, XIX (1952-8), 278-86.

[47] Ibid., p. 286; Ruiz, caja 10, no. 90, Quintanadueñas to Simon Ruiz, March 18, 1569.

[48] On the strains between France and England and their resolution, see *Calendar of*

After two years during which trade flowed freely once again, the Saint Bartholomew's Massacre of 1572 provoked further difficulties for the city's commerce. According to a special assembly of the city's parlement and its *conseillers-échevins* convened early in 1573, the Parisian massacre and its local sequel had done far more than simply scuttle plans to attract the Company of the Staple; it had provoked "the absence of the third part of the inhabitants, who fled with their goods, the diminution of the remaining residents' substance through pillage, (and) the cessation of traffic."[49] Remonstrances of this sort invariably contain a good measure of exaggeration, the better to convince the king to spare the city higher taxes, but it is clear that the massacre did lead to an important exodus of Protestants from the city, primarily toward England.[50] Among the refugees recorded as present in Rye in November 1572 were some twenty-five Rouennais merchants.[51] Of these, only six later reappear in the records of the Reformed Church of Rouen, suggesting that most stayed permanently in England.[52] In addition, the massacre also provoked a recrudescence of piracy. The Fourth Civil War followed on the heels of the violence, and during the course of this war English and Rochelais corsairs once again took to the seas in large numbers.[53] Once again their activity provoked a rupture of trade between England and Normandy. The provincial authorities seized all English cargoes in the province's harbours in

State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth (1863-1950), 1569/79; *Correspondance diplomatique de La Mothe-Fénélon*, I, 150-1, 163, 175, 191-2, 361 and II, 361. On the resumption of trade with Spain in 1570: LAPEYRE, *op. cit.*, p. 416.

[49] AMABLE FLOQUET, *Histoire du Parlement de Normandie* (Rouen, 1840-2), III, 138.

[50] See here, PHILIP BENEDICT, "Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Rouen: The Demographic Effects of the Religious Wars," *French Historical Studies* IX (1975), 230-1.

[51] This figure is drawn from the list of refugees at Rye published in W.J. HARDY, "Foreign Refugees at Rye," *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, II (1887-8), 573-4.

[52] Based on a search of the names recorded in the registers of baptisms of Rouen's Reformed Church for the periods 1576-85 and 1594-1603. A.D.S.M., series E.

[53] A.C.R., A 19, entry of July, 17 1573 lists twenty-six ships outfitted by Rouen's merchants seized by corsairs since the beginning of the year and taken to English ports.

August 1574.[54] As the *congés* show, trade with England slumped badly in both 1573 and 1574.[55]

Despite the benefits derived from the diversion of London's cloth trade from Antwerp, the first dozen years of the Wars of Religion were clearly hard ones for the merchant community in Rouen, for commerce was sharply curtailed in nearly one year out of every three as a result of the civil wars and their diplomatic repercussions. The picture was to brighten considerably over the next dozen years. Where trade with England had been interrupted three times between 1562 and 1574, no serious disruptions are revealed by the *congés* from 1575 through 1584, when they cease to provide reliable information about English trade.[56] To judge by the volume of complaints about the problem, privateering activity also declined significantly in intensity after 1574.[57] Meanwhile, the decline of Antwerp was accelerating, bringing further benefits to the Norman capital.

The loss of the Merchant Adventurers' staple in 1563 had only been a foretaste of the economic difficulties which were to overwhelm Antwerp as a result of the Revolt of the Netherlands. The blockade of the Scheldt by the Sea Beggars from 1572 on, the "Spanish Fury" of 1576, Antwerp's capture by William of Orange in 1577, its siege and recapture by the Duke of Parma in 1584-85 — all these dealt serious blows to its trade and provoked the emigration of many of its merchants and ar-artisans. The city's population tumbled from 90,000 to 42,000

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[54] *Correspondance diplomatique de La Mothe-Fénélon*, VI, 196-202.

[55] See Figure 1.

[56] See Figure 1. The gap between 1577 and 1580, it should be recalled, is due to deficiencies in the source material, not to any cessation of trade.

[57] Complaints about piracy appear in the *cahiers de doléances* of the provincial estates in both 1569 and 1570. Following a gap in the records, only one such complaint appears in the period 1579-85. CHARLES de ROBILLARD de BEAUREPAIRE, ed. *Cahiers des Etats de Normandie sous le règne de Charles IX* and *sous le règne de Henri III* (Société de l'Histoire de Normandie, 1888-91), *passim*. Further evidence of the declining seriousness of piracy after 1574 is provided by the decreasing frequency of references to ships seized by corsairs in the political and judicial records of the time.

in less than twenty years.[58] The resulting diaspora of Antwerp's merchants proved a major stimulus to the development of all those cities along Europe's northwestern coasts to which the great port's merchants emigrated, for they carried with them not only a great deal of capital, but also their mastery of the most sophisticated commercial and accounting techniques of the day.[59]

If less favoured than Amsterdam or Cologne, Rouen also profited from this diaspora. As early as February 1572, still on the eve of the Dutch Revolt when the Duke of Alva's demands for the " tenth penny " were agitating the country, Juan de Cuellar wrote Simon Ruiz from Antwerp:

> Here no merchandise is being sold or bought because of that tenth penny.... Innumerable individuals are now going to France, where matters are very convenient.... Things here are falling apart.[60]

The closure of the Scheldt later that same year forced those who had stayed in Antwerp to explore new routes for getting their goods in and out of the city. Commodities sent to Spain came to be regularly shipped via Dunkirk, Calais, or Rouen. In de Cuellar's subsequent letters are many references to convoys sent to and from Antwerp via Normandy.[61] The exodus of merchants

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[58] I draw my discussion of Antwerp's economy during its time of troubles from HERMAN VAN DER WEE, *The Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy* (The Hague, 1963), II, 227-82; J.A. VAN HOUTTE, " Déclin et survivance d'Anvers (1550-1700)," in *Studi in onore di Amintore Fanfani*, V, 705-15; VAZQUEZ DE PRADA, ed. *op. cit.* I, 28-33; and the chapters by Brulez and Van Roey in the recent *Antwerpen in de XVIe Eeuw*.

[59] WILFRID BRULEZ, " De diaspora der Antwerpse kooplui op het einde van de 16e eeuw," *Bijdragen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, XV (1960), 279-308. See also H.R. TREVOR-ROPER, *Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change* (London, 1967), pp. 16-17, and the studies cited there.

[60] VAZQUEZ DE PRADA, ed., *op. cit.* II, 80. The full Spanish original of this passage, which is almost impossible to render into English, reads " Aqui no se vende mercederia ninguna ni ay quien compre nada, a causa d'este dezeno dinero, que el Duque no quiere dexarlo de poner, aunque tratan de hazer acuerdos. Vase infinita gente a Franzia, que les viene muy a proposito esto, y lo de Ynglaterra y lo del Turco, que vienen las especerias y todo a su tierra. Y esto se deshaze."

[61] Ibid., II, 86, 167, 322.

from Brabant and Flanders then reached a first peak following the Spanish Fury and the capture of Antwerp by the rebel forces of the Prince of Orange. The members of the city's big colonies of Iberian and Italian merchants bulked largest in this wave of emigration, and they headed for Catholic soil. While Cologne proved their chief destination, Rouen's notarial records also divulge numerous references to Spanish-surnamed "merchants of Antwerp at present living in this city."[62] An increase in the number of letters of naturalization granted Spaniards in Rouen in this period suggests that many of these men settled more or less permanently in the Norman capital, and by 1585 the already considerable Castilian colony in Rouen had grown large enough to include eighty men able to bear arms.[63] A number of native Flemings also emigrated to Rouen and became naturalized Frenchmen.[64] In addition to prompting many merchants to emigrate, the fighting in Flanders and Brabant also provoked the collapse of the linen industry there. This was good news as far as Normandy's linen producers were concerned, for the Flemish were among the Normans' chief competitors for the markets of England and the Indies. Although many of the Flemish linen weavers moved north and reestablished their industry around Haarlem, the total production of the Low Counties never-

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[62] Ibid., I, 23; BRULEZ, "Diaspora der Antwerpse kooplui," 290-3. For references to the refugee merchants Pedro Sanchez, Fernando de Sevilla, Alonso de Palma, Francoys Ruis de Vergara, and Louis d'Aranda, see A.D.S.M., Tabellionage, contracts of Oct. 8, Nov. 28 and 30, 1577; Feb. 8 and May 7, 1578, all references I owe to the kindness of M. Pierre Jeannin.

[63] Some 22 Spaniards received letters of naturalization between 1581 and 1601, a record total for the century. IVAN CLOULAS, "Les Ibériques dans la société rouennaise des XVI[e] et XVII[e] siècles," *Revue des Sociétés Savantes de Haute Normandie*, 61 (1971), 14. For the strength of the Spanish community in 1585, see Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Français 3358, fo. 78.

[64] A.D.S.M., Tabellionage, contracts of March 28, 1576 and July 13, 1577, references to Nicolas Drumel of Bruges and Pierre Vandal of "Norselles" (9). A.S.D.M., B, Parlement, Arrêts, Juillet 1589-Février 1590, arrêt of Jan. 12, 1589, reference to "Jacques Steenwincquel, marchand natif d'Anvers naturalisé francoys."

theless seems to have fallen. The account books of Jan van Immersalle, an Antwerp merchant trading with Spain, show that he consequently turned to Normandy to provision himself with linen.[65]

All available signs suggest that the late 1570s and early 1580s formed a period of unusual prosperity in Rouen. The Ruiz letters indicate just what one could expect, namely a marked increase in trade with Spain; the number of letters arriving from Rouen grew significantly after 1575, at the same time that the range of business transactions discussed in them widened considerably. Spanish wool exports to French ports, of which Rouen was by far the most important, reached 12,000 sacks in 1579, approximately ten times the volume of the mid-1560s.[66] The accounts of the local receiver of the tax on alum also provide evidence of growing commercial prosperity in the later 1570s and early 1580s.[67] As Table I shows, the quantities of alum im-

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[65] On the crisis of the Flemish linen industry: ETIENNE SABBE, *De Belgische Vlasnijverheid*, I *De Zuidnederlandsche Vlasnijverheid tot het Verdrag van Utrecht (1713)* (Bruges, 1943), 303-8. On the response of the van Immersalle: WILFRID BRULEZ, *De Firma della Faille en de Internationale Handel van Vlaamse Firma's in de 16e Eeuw* (Brussels, 1959), 365-7. The purchases of the della Faille firm suggest the seriousness of the decline in linen production in the Low Countries. This leading merchant family, which carried on its trade from Antwerp throughout the Dutch Revolt, bought only 2175 pieces of linen between 1589 and 1593 (primarily from Haarlem and Harlingen) as opposed to 9383 pieces in 1574-8 (primarily from Courtrai and Hazebrouck). It might be thought that this decline was simply the result of problems encountered by merchants still in the southern Low Countries trying to buy the products of industries migrating to the rebellious northern provinces. The della Failles' purchases of says prove that this was not so, for they bought significantly larger quantities of these woollens from Haarlem and Leiden in 1589-94 than they had from the Flemish centers of production in 1574-8. Where production did not decline, it appears that Antwerp's merchants were able to turn quickly to the new northern centres of production to obtain the goods they needed. BRULEZ, *Della Faille*, 248, 252.

[66] HENRI LAPEYRE, "Les exportations de laine de Castille sous le règne de Philippe II" in *La lana come materia prima*. Istituto Internazione di Storia Economica "F. Datini" Prato. Atti della prima settimana di studio (18-24 aprile 1969) (Florence, 1974), 229-30, 236.

[67] A.S.D.M., Chartrier de Belbeuf, Papiers Ygou, 16 J 185 "Recette des droits des aluns arrivés à Rouen 1570-1583."

TABLE I

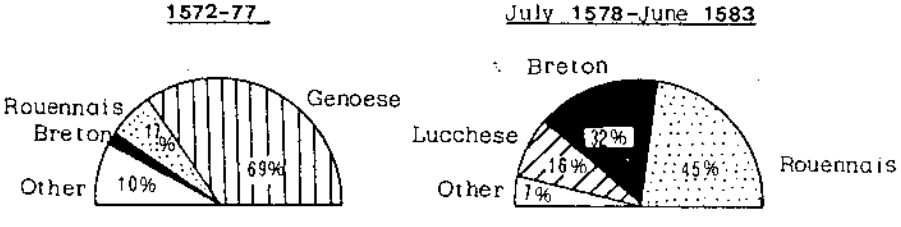
ALUM IMPORTS AT ROUEN, 1570-83

Date	Quantities
1570-73	7,930 quintals/year
1574-77	9,987 „ „
1578-June 1583	10,732 „ „

ported into the city increased steadily between 1570 and 1583.[68] Meanwhile, as Figure IV indicates, the domination that the Genoese had previously exerted over this current of trade was broken. By 1580 Norman and Breton merchants controlled 77 percent of the alum traffic.

FIGURE IV

MERCHANTS IMPORTING ALUM TO ROUEN



[68] Annual figures are provided in an Appendix. Comparison of these figures with Delumeau's statistics shows how incomplete his Tolfa figures are (unless, as seems unlikely at this date, Rouen imported most of its alum from Spain). The tax farmer's receipts show 130,685 quintals of alum arriving in Rouen between 1570 and June 1583; Delumeau's figures for all of France for the far longer period 1566-90 total just 121,011 *cantara*, a measure roughly 30 percent smaller than the French quintal. DELUMEAU, *L'alun de Rome*, 244-5.

The *tabellionage* of Le Havre does not indicate expansion in trade with the new worlds overseas, but it does show that adventuresome long-distance trading voyages remained at a high level throughout the 1570s and '80s.[69] (The initial peak of activity on the years 1571-5 was due primarily to an ambitious attempt spearheaded by an association of five leading Rouennais merchants to organize intensive trade links with the Barbary Coast.[70] This alone accounts for 53 of the voyages in the period 1571-5.) Finally, while the *congés* cannot provide absolutely precise information about the evolution of trade with England, they nevertheless suggest continued prosperity in this sector of the city's trade. If the peak number of permits of 1571 was never equalled in the years 1575-84, there were none of the serious interruptions of the trade which had occurred in the earlier years of the civil wars.

TABLE II

VOYAGES TO NORTH AFRICA, THE ATLANTIC ISLES, BRAZIL, AND "PERU" RECORDED IN THE *TABELLIONAGE* OF LE HAVRE, 1571-1610

Date	Voyages	Date	Voyages
1571-75	151	1591-95	25
1576-80	87	1596-1600	27
1581-85	134	1601-05	44
1586-90	78	1606-10	24

Furthermore, the signs of prosperity go beyond the apparent expansion of most of the traditional sectors of the city's trade. As often occurred in this era, the growth in commerce also begot

[69] BARREY, *ops. cit.*, V, 34-44, 68; VI, 129.

[70] CHARLES A. JULIEN, *Histoire de l'expansion et de la colonisation françaises*, I, *Les voyages de découverte et les premiers établissements* (Paris, 1948), 292, mentions this association briefly. The names of those involved reappear constantly in Barrey's list of voyages during these years, "Les Normands au Maroc", 34-44.

new industry. The ever-tightening links with Spain and England attracted a growing trade in silk from Tours. This in turn stimulated the local production of silk fabrics. The London port book of 1567-8 mentions almost no silk or silken cloth imported from Rouen; in 1576, the notarial records reveal that silk ranked behind only linen as the item most frequently purchased by the English merchants trading in Rouen.[71] Silk weaving was a minor occupation in the city in 1550; by 1581, a spokesman for the guild of the *tissotiers de soie* could claim that no less than 2,500 workers were engaged in turning raw silk brought from Tours into satins, taffetas, and damasks for the Spanish and English markets.[72]

Increasingly, Rouen was becoming an international crossroads. Goods heading from the Low Countries to Spain now frequently passed through the city, as did some of England's trade with the Mediterranean. But any dreams the city's merchants might have entertained about Rouen becoming, if not the new Antwerp, at least one of its leading replacements as a northern European entrepôt, were doomed to disappointment for two reasons. First, precisely around 1580 the English were invading the Mediterranean and beginning direct exchange of their cloth for Levantine silk in the ports of the Ottoman Empire.[73] Overland trade routes between England and the Mediterranean such as the one which seemed to be developing through Rouen were consequently fated for increasing disuse. Second, the Wars of Religion

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[71] DIETZ, ed. *Port and Trade, passim*; A.D.S.M., E, tabellionage, contracts of March 31, June 15, 16, 18, 1576; July 19, 1577; April 9, 1578. Of course, silk was the sort of valuable product it was most profitable to try to smuggle past the customs officials. The port books may understate the actual volume of silk imports at the earlier date.

[72] The small size of this trade in 1550 can be deduced from its relatively insignificant participation in the royal entry of that year. BENEDICT, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion* (Cambridge, 1981), 7. A.D.S.M., 5 E 589 reveals its importance and structure in 1581.

[73] RALPH DAVIS, "England and the Mediterranean, 1570-1670" in F.J. FISHER, ed. *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1961), 117-37.

had not yet struck their final blow. The crisis of the League was still to come.

Matters began to worsen for the city in 1585. In May of that year, Philip II was stung by the picador thrusts of Drake and his fellows in the Caribbean into ordering the seizure of all English ships in Spanish ports. Two months later, Henry III outlawed Protestantism in France under the pressure of the revived Catholic League. These two events prompted the English and Rochelais to resume their piracy off the French coasts with greater vigour than ever before. By the end of the year some 120 vessels were reportedly preying on French and Spanish shipping, and the Spanish merchant colony in Rouen feared that the entire trade with the Indies might be ruined by their activity.[74] A special assembly of Normandy's merchants convoked to meet the threat outfitted a fleet to combat the pirates, but it proved incapable of making the seas safer.[75] The French had to resort again to seizing all English ships in French ports and staying commerce with the British Isles. Traffic ground to a halt between the two countries from January through July 1587.[76]

Complaints about the " shameless " English attacks on Channel shipping formed just part of the litany of grievances filling the letters Simon Ruiz received from Rouen between 1585 and 1587. The many new customs duties which Henry III imposed in his desperate quest to pay for his latest wars against the Protestants, plus the tight money supply prevailing throughout France, also figured prominently. " They are levying new taxes every day on every thing here," Jos Cunet wrote Ruiz in October 1587.

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[74] Ruiz, caja 104, no. 114 and caja 112, no. 72, Francisco de Fontaneda and Juan Pasqual to Simon Ruiz, Dec. 9, 1585 and Feb. 10, 1586. Such fears were not totally groundless; English piracy did put a significant dent into Spanish trade. See KENNETH R. ANDREWS, *Elizabethan Privateering* (Cambridge, 1964), 224-6.

[75] A.C.R., Chartrier, tiroir 400 (2), De la Mailleraye to Echevins of Rouen, Jan. 23, 1586; Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Français 3310, fo. 38, Henry III to merchant community of Rouen, Jan. 24, 1586.

[76] *Cal. S.P. For.*, 1586-88, pp. 206, 329.

"If Flanders were even the least bit safe, I would send a large part of the merchandise I have in this house there."[77] Ruiz's factor in Antwerp advised him to cease importing Flemish linens via Rouen because of the new duties in Normandy; he suggested transporting the cloth to Spain via Nantes instead, despite the cost of carting it overland across the entire breadth of France.[78] Meanwhile, the monetary scarcity was incredible, other correspondents reported in 1586-7. A royal edict calling in all bad coins had depleted the supply of specie at the same time that heavy royal borrowing to pay for the wars was straining the money markets beyond their capacity.[79]

Mercantile letters commonly abound with complaints painting an exaggerated picture of economic difficulties. Some brief explorations Pierre Jeannin has made in the *tabellionage* for the year 1586 suggest that the gravity of the problems mentioned in the Ruiz letters should not be overestimated; *charte-parties* for voyages to Spain are even more plentiful than a decade previously.[80] Yet the complaints cannot be passed off entirely as chronic businessmen's griping. A minor movement of emigration involving both merchants and artisans developed in 1587, a clear sign of problems.[81] The year also witnessed one of the century's worst famines.[82] The slump in demand for manufactured goods

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[77] Ruiz, caja 122, No. 31, Jos Cunet to Simon Ruiz, Oct. 30, 1587.

[78] VAZQUEZ de PRADA, ed. *op. cit.* IV, 124, 130-1.

[79] Ruiz, caja 112, no. 75, Pedro de la Peña to Simon Ruiz, Dec. 13, 1586; caja 122, no. 21, Camilo Balbani to S.R., Oct. 2, 1587.

[80] One must beware of taking this as definitive proof that the volume of trade had expanded over the preceding decade. Still, it indicates considerable activity. I again thank M. Jeannin for communicating this information to me.

[81] For evidence of merchants moving from Rouen back to Antwerp in 1587, see VAZQUEZ de PRADA, ed. *op. cit.*, IV, 137. The provincial estates of 1586 heard complaints the new taxes on paper and paper products were so high that the city's playing-card makers were being driven to emigrate, and these complaints are confirmed by the *livre de raison* of one such artisan who did just that, moving to Middelburg. *Cahiers des Etats de Normandie sous Henri III*, II, 157; Bibliothèque Municipal de Rouen, MS Y 218, "Livre de raison des familles Le Cornu et Acart, 1586-1676", fo. 4.

[82] According to an English ship captain returning from Rouen, "They dye in evrie

which invariably accompanied periods of sky-rocketing grain prices provoked in turn a serious decline in industrial production.[83] Rouen thus undeniably experienced a concatenation of economic hardships. These may well have helped fuel the growing resentment against Henry III which finally exploded in the revolt of the League. And once that revolt came, a truly severe commercial crisis ensued.

The first dramatic blow of the revolt, the Parisian Day of the Barricades of May 1588, prompted a quick initial slump in trade in Rouen as merchants hesitated to make any major purchases in view of the suddenly volatile political situation.[84] Business began to return to normal when the king appeared to have reached a reconciliation with the League in August, but when his stunning assassination of the Duke of Guise at Blois in December demonstrated that reconciliation to have been only an empty gesture and provoked uprisings in cities throughout France, matters fell apart completely. Rouen was secured for the League early in February 1589, and fighting between royalists and *ligueurs* began almost at once. Within weeks, the major linen markets of Bernay and Beaumont-le-Roger had been captured by the royalists under the Duke of Montpensier. Large quantities of cloth belonging to Rouen's merchants were seized, and the regional network of production and exchange which fuelled so much of the city's export trade was severed. Quillebeuf and Honfleur, both ports near the mouth of the Seine, were also taken by royalist forces. Henceforward ships could only move up and down the river in armed convoys.[85] Upper Normandy

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streete and at evrie gate, morning and eveninge, by viii or xii in a place". P.R.O., S.P. 12/203, no. 12. See also BENEDICT, "Catholics and Huguenots", 219.

[83] Cloth manufacturing was reported to have virtually ceased throughout the region in 1587. H. SAINT-DENIS, *Histoire d'Elbeuf* (Elbeuf, 1894), II, 317.

[84] Ruiz, caja 129, nos. 59 and 61, Francisco de Fontaneda and Juan Pasqual to Simon Ruiz, May 26 and June 16, 1588.

[85] Ruiz, caja 136, no. 223, Francisco de Fontaneda and Juan Pasqual to S.R., Jan. 27, 1589; no. 214, Jos Cunet to S.R., June 18, 1589; VAZQUEZ DE PRADA, ed. *op. cit.* IV, 311-2.

became, in the words of one merchant, " so disturbed... and with the partisans of the Bearnais and of the Catholic Union so intermingled that there is no corner where anything is secure."[86]

As fighting filled the region, many merchants in Rouen became convinced that they would be better off transferring their operations elsewhere. Protestant Englishmen who happened to be in the city were particular targets of the new *ligueur* authorities. Many were imprisoned and forced to pay large ransoms for their release, so naturally they sought to leave town as quickly as possible. By May, virtually all had apparently escaped, for one English merchant still languishing in prison because he was unable to raise the money demanded by his captors moaned to the Privy Council that there was not a soul left in town from whom a man could borrow.[87] Merchants of other nationalities proved in scarcely less of a hurry to leave. Simon Ruiz's two chief factors had moved to Lille by June 1589, and in the course of the following year four more of his correspondents slipped out of town, leaving behind only the Lucchese merchant Pandolfo Cenami out of the seven people with whom Ruiz had been doing business in Rouen. Cenami was more a banker than a trader in commodities, and for the rest of the period of the League the few letters arriving in Medina del Campo from the Norman capital concerned only minor financial transactions.[88] The growth in the size of Rouen's foreign merchant colonies prompted by Antwerp's difficulties thus was rapidly reversed when Normandy too became a center of conflict.

For over five years royalists and *ligueurs* fought their battles in Upper Normandy. Rouen's trade never ceased completely during this period, except for the six months between November 1591 and April 1592 during which the city had to endure

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[86] Ruiz, caja 143, no. 100, Pedro de Alava to S.R., May 25, 1590.

[87] *Cal. S.P. For.*, 1589, pp. 153, 228.

[88] Vazquez de Prada, ed., *op. cit.*, IV, 350; Ruiz, cajas 143 ff.

its second major siege of the civil wars.[89] Nevertheless, several sources show that the volume of trade was a mere fraction — never more than forty percent — of what it was in more peaceful times. Only 36 ships set sail from Le Havre for North Africa or the New World in the years from 1589 through 1594, compared with 135 for a typical six-year span in the preceding decades.[90] A fragment of a London port book covering the period from June 10 to September 27, 1589, notes the arrival of just two ships from Rouen in this period, approximately a sixth the number that normally arrived in such a span.[91] Then there are several municipal accounts noting receipts from the *aides* on linen and wine, which the city authorities were forced to collect themselves since times were so bad that it proved impossible to farm them out to private individuals as typically had been done. One surviving set of accounts shows that 62,486 pieces of linen and canvas were exported from the city between January and March 1591, bringing 306 *livres* and 14 *sous* to the city treasury.[92] By comparison, the tax on linen had been farmed out for 3,600 *livres* in 1576. The 1591 totals thus represent about one-third the quantity of linen and canvas expected by the farmer to be exported in a normal three month span.[93] A similar calculation using the *aide* on wine of 1592 reveals that imports of that commodity amounted to only one-fifth the volume considered normal in the early 1580s by the tax farmers.[94] All the surviving evidence thus

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[89] This is clear from the records of the city's judicial and municipal authorities, which are dotted with petitions and comments showing that mercantile activity was continuing.

[90] Barrey, *ops. cit.*, V, 34–44, 68, VI, 129.

[91] P.R.O. E 190/8/4.

[92] A.C.R., Chartrier, tiroir 107.

[93] A.D.S.M., E. Tabellionage, contract of Oct. 20, 1576. Once again, I must thank M. Pierre Jeannin for communicating this information to me.

[94] A.D.S.M., C 2314 reveals that 16, 784 *muids* of wine entered Rouen in 1592, all of it during the second six months of the year after the siege of 1591–92 had been raised. The tax of five *sous* per *muid* of wine had earlier been farmed out for 20,006 *livres* per annum for the period 1580–85. (A.D.S.M., C 1272, fo. 35.) The tax farmers therefore expected at least 80,024 *muids* of wine to arrive in the city in a normal year.

agrees in pointing to a volume of trade only fifteen to thirty-five percent of normal. It seems likely that disruption on this scale was the rule for all five years during which the city was controlled by the Catholic League.

Rouen's profit from Antwerp's decline thus proved to be only transitory, for the five years of fighting during the period of the League nullified the gains of the later 1570s and early 1580s. When the city finally recognized Henry IV's authority in April 1594 and peace returned, few of the merchants who had migrated to the city in the later 1570s reappeared. A list of the merchants participating in the 1600 election of the city's *prieurs-consuls* (officials of the *juridiction consulaire*, a body which decided disputes between merchants) does not include the name of a single merchant who had come from Antwerp in the later 1570s.[95] The list contains just 510 names in all, as against 1172 merchants who had been assessed a tax in 1566 when the *juridiction consulaire* was first created, indicating that the city's overall merchant community had shrunk considerably.[96] The volume of trade was similarly affected. Rouen's commerce with the Barbary Coast and Brazil failed to recover from the crisis of the League, for while the French were engaged in their internal struggles, the Portuguese and Spanish had captured France's footholds on the Brazilian coast and the English had moved into the commanding position along the North African shores.[97] The damage done in other sectors was more quickly repaired, but still consi-

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[95] A.D.S.M., B, Juridiction Consulaire de Rouen, Rôle des habitants pour l'election des prieurs-consuls, 1600.

[96] The earlier assessment may be found in A.D.S.M., C 216.

[97] See above, Table II; JULIEN, *op. cit.*, 219-20. I infer that the increased English presence along the Barbary Coast was the reason for the declining traffic with that region from the fact that two of the last seven voyages prior to 1610 fell into the hands of English pirates operating along the coast. BARREY, "Les Normands au Maroc", 44. John McCusker has suggested to me an alternative explanation of the decline which may have been more important: the increasing quantities of Brazilian sugar arriving on European markets from the Portuguese plantations. Sugar was the chief product Norman merchants imported from North Africa.

derable. While trade with England resumed rapidly following Rouen's submission to Henry IV in 1594, as late as 1601-02 significantly fewer ships arrived in London from Rouen than had done so in either 1567-8 or 1587-8.[98] Trade with Spain did not resume at all until the Peace of Vervins was signed in 1598.[99]

Although the early seventeenth century remains a period of relative darkness insofar as our knowledge of Rouen's economy is concerned, it appears that over the next decades the city's commerce recovered much of its old animation. New arrivals from Spain and the Low Countries replenished the local colony of Iberian merchants, while trade with England and the Netherlands expanded anew.[100] But this was, quite literally, *old* animation. At a time when the Dutch, English, and North Germans were extending their trade into new areas, Rouen's commerce continued to move along familiar lines, built primarily around the export of linen to Spain and England and the import of wool, metals, and cloth in return. The great conflict between Protestant and Catholic that had engulfed Western Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century had brought Rouen alternating periods of prosperity and disruption. In the end the city's economic structures had changed very little.

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[98] LEWIS R. MILLER, "New Evidence on the Shipping and Imports of London, 1601-1602," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XLI (1927), 753-4. This list notes 33 ships totalling 991 tons arriving from Rouen. Comparable figures from 1567-68 and 1587-88 were 51 ships of approximately 1,948 tons in the former year, 41 ships of 1,792 tons in the latter. (Tonnage figures for 1567-68 are approximate because the port book omits them in five cases.)

[99] LAPEYRE, *Une famille de marchands*, 434-5.

[100] For indications of the state of Rouen's commerce in the early seventeenth century, see PIERRE DARDEL, "Le trafic maritime de Rouen aux XVII[e] et XVIII[e] siècles: Essai statistique," *Bull. Soc. Emul. Seine-Inférieure*, 1942-43, tables XVI and XVII; CLOULAS, *op. cit., passim*; and the same author's "Achat et importation de laines castillanes à Rouen par le marchand Alonce de Chalon (1602-22)," *Actes du V[e] Congrès des sociétés historiques et archéologiques de Haute-Normandie* (Rouen, 1973), 3-14. Also revealing is CECIL ROTH, "Les Marranes à Rouen, un chapitre ignoré de l'histoire des Juifs de France," *Revue des Etudes Juives*, LXXXVIII (1929), 113-55.

IV

When the seventeenth-century mercantilists initiated serious analysis of the French economy, one of their chief preoccupations was to understand why their country seemed unable to match the Dutch and English in the competition for foreign markets. The "*retard français*" has continued to haunt students of the early modern French economy ever since.[101] Why did western Europe's largest country, a country blessed with exceptional fertility and a considerable range of manufactures, never develop an international marketplace and financial centre to rival such successive hubs of the international economy as Antwerp, Amsterdam, or London? Of all French cities Rouen was probably best situated to become such a marketplace,[102] and the later sixteenth century represented its moment of greatest opportunity. The preceding examination of the city's commerce in this period suggests some comments on this problem, which may well be a *problème mal-posé*.

Several of the most common explanations of French "backwardness" seem clearly open to doubt. It is often argued that foreign merchants exercised too great a hold over many of the most lucrative sectors of France's trade, draining wealth from the nation.[103] The importance of the Italians in sixteenth-century Lyon and to, a lesser degree, of the Spaniards in Rouen and Nantes is indisputable, but when this is placed in an international context it becomes difficult to claim this as a cause of peculiarly French

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[101] In the recent *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, I, pt. 2, the problem forms one of the leitmotifs of Richard Gascon's chapter "La France du movement: Les commerces". This chapter is the essential starting point for the reflections which follow.

[102] I do not mean to convey the impression that I am overlooking Lyon, whose volume of trade may well have been greater in value than Rouen's in 1550. But Lyon's prosperity was built around a trade fated to decline, the overland commerce with Italy, and was located far from any Atlantic port. The shift in Europe's center of gravity away from the Mediterranean toward the Atlantic placed a limit on its chances of growth.

[103] This naturally formed a theme of many of the mercantilists, who were anxious to screen out foreign competition. Gascon stresses it, "La France du mouvement," 243–7, 304–10, 336–43.

problems. Mediterranean merchants played the same dominant role in the most lucrative sectors of Antwerp's trade for much of the century. In fact, Rouen's merchants resisted the penetration of Iberian and Italian competitors into their trade more successfully than did Antwerp's for much of the century. Furthermore, the presence of a large number of foreign merchants was frequently more a stimulus than a brake to a city's development in this period. Foreign merchants often pioneered new trade routes and took the initiative in developing new industries, industries which often catered to foreign tastes that local producers would not have known how to tap without the crucial intermediary role of the foreign merchants. The presence of large colonies of foreign merchants in northern European cities also proved the conduit through which the more advanced commercial techniques of the Mediterranean spread north and became more generally diffused over the course of the sixteenth century. When one considers the case of Antwerp, where foreigners originally dominated the trade on which the city's prosperity was built but where the local merchants gradually developed into formidable rivals, apprenticing themselves at the school of the Italians and Spaniards and mastering the techniques which accounted for the Mediterranean merchants' supremacy so thoroughly that they became northern Europe's leading capitalists, it seems hard to maintain that the dominating presence of foreigners necessarily condemned a city to economic backwardness.[104]

A second, even more often cited, explanation of France's

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[104] The role of Antwerp as a conduit for Mediterranean commercial techniques to spread northward and the gradual development of the city's native merchants to a position where they could rival the Italians are themes which Wilfrid Brulez stresses throughout much of his work, notably in *De firma della Faille* and "De diaspora der antwerpse kooplui". That the colonies of foreign merchants provided a similar stimulus to French commercial and industrial development is clear from MOLLAT, *op. cit.* p. 393; GASCON, "La France du mouvement," 339. If the stimulus they provided produced less dramatic effects in France, that is probably because the foreign merchants were less numerous and the intensity of trade significantly less.

backwardness stresses the strength of the noble ethos in the country. This, it is argued, led merchants to invest in land or offices and leave commerce for more prestigious callings as soon as they made their fortune. Long dynasties of great merchants could not be established.[105] Again, when set in comparative context, Rouen's history offers reason to question this argument. While many Rouennais merchants invested in land or offices in the sixteenth century, they did not all leave commerce as a result. Many continued actively in trade long after purchasing a *seigneurie* and beginning to affect a noble title.[106] The boundaries between social classes became less fluid in the seventeenth century and such behaviour became less common. Still, it is by no means clear that French mercantile families became more prone to abandon commerce than their counterparts elsewhere in Europe. While R.G. Lang has recently cast some doubt on the stock view of British social historians that English merchants also sought to leave trade as quickly as possible, what his article demonstrates most conclusively is that only 24 percent of the leading Jacobean London merchants were themselves sons of London traders.[107] Clearly generational continuity in trade did not characterize the English mercantile community. Even the

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[105] R.G. GRASSBY, "Social Status and Commercial Enterprise Under Louis XIV," *Econ. Hist. Rev.* 2nd ser. XIII (1960), 19-38, is a thorough discussion of seventeenth-century expressions of this view. Gascon accepts it as a fundamental cause of "le retard français", "La France du mouvement", 357-68.

[106] Among the most highly taxed merchants in Rouen in 1566, one finds Jean du Four, sieur de Saint-Aignan; Noel Boyvin, sieur de Trouville; Pierre Lefevre, sieur d'Esquetot, etc.; A.D.S.M., C 216. This pattern of merchants continuing in trade even after buying a *seigneurie* was common in many sixteenth-century French cities; see the examples cited in GEORGE HUPPERT, *Les Bourgeois Gentilshommes: An Essay on the Definition of Elites in Renaissance France* (Chicago, 1977), 29 ff.

[107] R.G. LANG, "Social Origins and Social Aspirations of Jacobean London Merchants," *Econ. Hist. Rev.* 2nd ser. XXVII (1974), 28–47. The author demonstrates convincingly that most leading merchants did not abandon trade and retire to country estates late in life, as is often asserted. But his contention that their social aspirations therefore remained firmly fixed on London life is made questionable by his failure to investigate the careers of their sons. In most European societies the ascent from commerce into the landed or official elite was a process which took two generations.

leading families of that archetypal bourgeois republic, Holland, went what appears the way of all merchants: their sons frequently studied law, entered the magistracy, and invested their money in land.[108] Until analysis of social mobility out of the mercantile classes has passed from the stage of accumulating anecdotes about individual families to systematic comparative study of rates of intergenerational mobility among traders in different European countries, no definitive statements can be made about whether the "treason of the bourgeoisie" was more marked in certain lands than in others. The present state of information suggests it was a ubiquitous feature of sixteenth and seventeenth century European society.

Rouen's failure to develop into a leading international port in this period clearly cannot be explained by the exceptional backwardness of its merchants or their haste to abandon commerce for land or ennobling office. A more successful approach to understanding this failure might be not to ask what factors explain French backwardness (as if all that was needed to build a trade to rival Antwerp's or Amsterdam's was to remove certain obstacles to growth), but to inquire why a few cities managed to rise to positions of exceptional prominence in the European economy. The "forwardness" of these few cities is the unusual phenomenon which requires explanation. What accounts for their success? Might Rouen have duplicated the rise of an Antwerp, an Amsterdam, or a London at any point in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries?

Antwerp's dramatic growth on the eve of the sixteenth century was a true economic miracle, in the sense that it was due to a combination of geography and fortunate diplomatic circumstances, not to any superior competitive position on the

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[108] Examples in J.L. PRICE, *Culture and Society in the Dutch Republic During the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1974), 75-6, 90-2. Some statistics may be found in PETER BURKE, *Venice and Amsterdam: A Study of Seventeenth-Century Elites* (London, 1974), 105-6, 113-4.

part of its merchants and artisans. When, first, the Merchant Adventurers settled on Antwerp as the best alternative to protectionist Bruges as the market for their cloth, then the Portuguese followed suit by choosing it as the northern sales point for their spices, the city suddenly became the focal point for two of the most important and rapidly growing new trade currents of the period. As other merchants were drawn to the city, advantages of scale developed that attracted yet more merchants, confident that the large number of potential buyers they would find for their wares in Antwerp outweighed any increased transportation costs that might be involved in taking them there. Local industries were also stimulated, and the native merchant community grew rapidly in size, wealth, and technical sophistication. These developments enabled the city to maintain a volume of commercial activity unmatched in northern Europe even when, in the middle decades of the sixteenth century, certain of the currents of trade that had originally been crucial to the city's growth began to dwindle in volume or move elsewhere — the Portuguese spice trade, the traffic in Central European metals, and finally the English cloth trade. The almost fortuitous intersection of several major new trade routes had touched off a process of development that transformed what had once been just a regional market into a leading commercial and industrial center able to prosper even when the original pillars of its growth were removed.[109]

It is conceivable that a similar process of development could have occurred in Rouen. The route through France from Rouen to Marseille via Lyon was recognized as a potential avenue between England and the Mediterranean which might rival the traditional routes through Antwerp and Hamburg.[110] In 1477

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[109] J.A. VAN HOUTTE, "La genèse du grand marché international d'Anvers à la fin du Moyen Age," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, XIX (1940), 87-126; VAN DER WEE, *op. cit., passim*; *Antwerpen in de XVI^e Eeuw*, 109-42.

[110] BRULEZ, "Les routes commerciales," 171.

Louis XI made a conscious effort to draw the trade centred on the Low Countries to Normandy by granting special privileges to two trade fairs at Rouen.[111] But the situation at the time clearly favoured Antwerp over Rouen in the competition to inherit the mantle of a declining Bruges as northern Europe's leading port. France's still-bitter rivalry with England, the long-standing Anglo-Burgundian trade connection, and Normandy's greater distance from the Central European mines which produced the chief commodities used by the Portuguese in their colonial trade, copper and silver, all militated against Rouen's capturing the crucial new trading currents of the period. The city could expand as the chief regional port of an area producing growing quantities of manufactured goods and commanding an extensive hinterland. It could not hope to become northern Europe's major entrepôt so long as Antwerp maintained these advantages. When in the latter half of the sixteenth century, the pattern of European alliances began to shift and Antwerp's preeminence came to be shaken under the pressure of religious rivalry, Rouen's competitive position improved. But we have seen the obstacles which kept it from becoming one of Antwerp's chief heirs: the French Wars of Religion created a climate of religious antagonism that limited the degree to which the city could share in the diaspora of Antwerp's merchants and Flanders' artisans, and the cataclysm of the League then wiped out what gains the city did make. Meanwhile, perhaps more importantly in the long run, the northern nations began to penetrate directly into the Mediterrean. The day was passing when a city could develop into a major trading centre simply as a place where Mediterranean merchants met northerners to exchange goods.

The seventeenth century was an age of direct competition for limited markets, and the new giants of this period achieved their predominance thanks to solid economic advantages; in Am-

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[111] MOLLAT, *op. cit.*, pp. 332-3.

sterdam's case, the enormous and highly efficient Dutch carrying trade, in London's the combination of an expanding industrial sector able to produce inexpensive goods with a growing colonial trade. Rouen simply could not compete with either city. Norman shipping was less efficient than the Dutch, condemning the Rouennais to stand by helplessly as the Dutch carved out an increasing share of France's coasting trade. The city's industries were similarly uncompetitive; English cloth badly undersold Rouennais.[112] Meanwhile, France's absorption in its internal problems had caused it to slip significantly behind the Dutch and English in the race for empire. Between 1550 and 1650, it lost the considerable head start it had once boasted over both in the area of overseas trade. The reasons why French shipping and industry could not compete with that of either Holland or England remain hidden among the still inadequately explored determinants of relative national price levels, wage rates, and speed to adopt new technology. Whatever the precise causes, the overall pattern is clear. In the sixteenth century, an age of windfall development when overseas exploration and rapid economic change could suddenly vault relatively modest ports into positions of economic prominence, Rouen missed the largest windfalls for reasons of politics, diplomacy, and geography. In the harsher world of the seventeenth century, it simply could not compete economically with its strongest rivals.

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[112] E. Gosselin, *Documents authentiques et inédits pour servir à l'histoire de la marine normande et du commerce rouennais pendant les XVI^e^ et XVII^e^ siècles* (Rouen, 1876), 138. On the relative cost and efficiency of French versus Dutch shipping, see Pierre Boissonnade, "La marine marchande, le port et les armateurs de La Rochelle à l'époque de Colbert (1662-1683)", *Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques: Bulletin de la Section de Géographie*, XXXVII (1922), 34–40.

APPENDIX

ALUM IMPORTS, 1570-83

The table below lists the annual quantities of alum imported at Rouen and illustrates the complementarity between Rouen's trade and that of Antwerp. Many of the years in which alum imports attained peaks in Rouen were years when Antwerp's trade was badly troubled, first by the blockade of the Scheldt (1572-3), then by the departure of most of the Spanish and Italian merchants (1577-8), and finally by the campaigns of Farnese and Anjou (1583-2). The figures on Antwerp's alum trade are from H. Soly, "De aluinhandel in de Nederlanden in de 16de eeuw," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, LII (1974), 849.

Year	Imports at Rouen	Comparable figures at Antwerp [1]
1570	5,534.74 quintals	2,301 lasts [2]
71	7,964.96 ,,	1,275 ,,
72	13,162.88 ,,	167 ,,
73	5,046.91 ,,	266 ,,
74	16,674.10 ,,	1,874 ,,
75	5,280.20 ,,	1,705 ,,
76	3,882.81 ,,	1,382 ,,
77	14,112.35 ,,	2,025 ,,
78	21,373.50 ,,	888 ,,
79	5,608.95 ,,	925 ,,
1580	4,537.50 ,,	864 ,,
81	2,329.75 ,,	3,005 ,,
82	11,567.00 ,,	88 ,,
83	13,609.65 [3] ,,	0 ,,

[1] The figures for Antwerp cover the period from Feb. 10 of the given year to Feb. 9 of the following year.

[2] I have been unable to determine the precise equivalence between lasts and quintals.

[3] For the first six months of the year alone.