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Wolf-Rüdiger Baumann

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European University Institute,  
Series B (History) 2

1990. 23 x 15.5 cm. XIV, 425 pages. Cloth. DM 176.00. Approx. £ 60.00  
ISBN 3 11 012582 X

Everyone has heard of the English naval victory over the Spanish Armada, which marked the start of the decline of Spanish and the rise of English world power. But not so many people know that most of the English ships that won the battles in the channel in 1588 were used in peacetime for exporting woollen cloth of the Merchants Adventurers Company to the Netherlands and Germany.

Everyone has heard of the Mayflower, the famous English ship that carried the first Pilgrim Fathers from Plymouth, England, to New England in 1620. But how many people know that the Mayflower regularly sailed to the German North Sea ports of Emden and Stade on contract to the Merchants Adventurers?

This important British trading company, erected by a 1564 charter from Queen Elizabeth into a "body politic", a sort of statutory corporation, with a monopoly on exporting English cloth, is the subject of this book.

The importance of woollen cloth for the English economy of the time cannot be rated highly enough. In 1565 81.60% of total exports were accounted for by it. It is hardly surprising that there was bitter fighting over this market among the great merchant "nations" of the time, and that

foreigners – particularly the German Hanseatic merchants – were a thorn in the flesh of the Adventurers. They endeavoured by every economic and political recourse to get rid of the competition. The outcome was that foreigners' share in this lucrative business fell to 5.14% in the years 1598–1600, whereas fifty years earlier the Hanseatic share alone had been around 21%.

The Merchants Adventurers managed not only to squeeze the Hanse out of their old, established rights in England, but to establish their company in Germany itself, in Emden and even the Hanseatic cities of Stade and Hamburg. As if that were not enough, the Adventurers became increasingly involved in internal trade, made direct contact with producers of goods and brought some manufactories, and later even guilds, for instance in Saxony, Silesia, Lausatia and Bohemia, under their control.

The work – based largely on hitherto untapped primary sources – centres round trade and commerce between England and Germany and English internal trade in Germany, especially in the second half of the 16th and the early 17th centuries. Much light is thrown on the influence of this trade on individual branches of industry and on the economic development of Germany as a whole.

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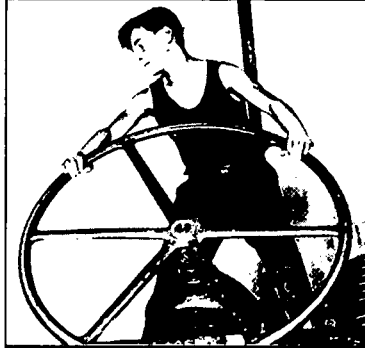
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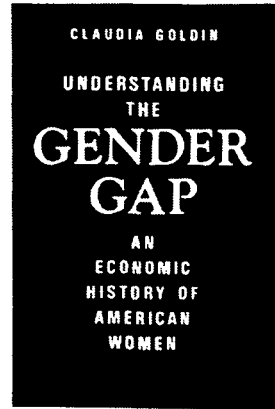
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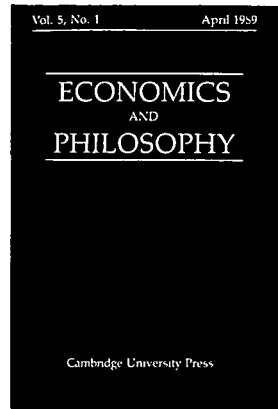
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