

FUR TRADE IN NEW YORK, 1609-1688

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PREFACE

The subject of this thesis is the study of the importance of the fur trade in the relationships that existed among the English, Dutch, and Iroquois Indian nations in the area of New York during the years from 1609 to 1688. It will attempt to show that control of this lucrative trade was the motive behind the colonial conflicts that raged in New York in that time period; likewise this trade was the goal that each sought to attain.

The year 1609 was chosen for the starting date since this was considered the first time that the Dutch were able to establish strong colonies in America. It was also an important date in history because this year saw the first conflict between a tribe of the powerful Iroquois confederacy and the French and their Indian allies. This conflict became the basis of an undying hatred of the French, turning the Iroquois to an alliance with any European nation that could supply them with arms against their enemies. In this case the Dutch traders benefited. A treaty signed between the Dutch and the Iroquois in 1609 became the foundation of the fur trade in the area of New Netherland and was passed on to their English successors in 1674. The nation that held this treaty would be in a position to dominate the trade.

The years up to 1674 saw a growing competition between Dutch and English traders that eventually led to open warfare in America and Europe. Each side, in its struggle for the northeastern section of North America, tried to win the allegiance of the natives. The loyalty of the tribes was often a matter of which nation offered the most in

rewards to the Indian warriors. The English finally were successful in aligning the Iroquois confederation on their side as allies and in defeating the Dutch in the war of 1664. Yet this victory was short lived when the Dutch regained control of their colony of New Netherland in 1674. But even during the conflicts both nations sought to keep the trade flowing from the tribes to the courts of Europe, for this was the source of wealth that Europe desired.

The years from 1674 to 1688 saw England again take the area of New Netherland and definitely rename it New York. This signaled the end of Dutch power in America and the end of their domination of the fur trade of the New World. These were the years of profit and growth for the English colonists in New York. They developed and regulated the trade that the Dutch had begun and willed to them in their treaties with the Iroquois Indians, who had by this time become important to the English as middlemen in the fur trade with the interior tribes of America.

The year of 1688 was selected for the concluding year of this study since it brought a period of conflict in the mother country and a temporary lessening of interest in the colonies. From 1688 to 1763 the struggle would be between the English and the French for the control of the entire North American continent; no longer would the objective be only the fur trade with the natives, which would now become of secondary importance to the tribes' political significance. Both nations had early realized that the one that controlled the fur trade would also control the land and the people. Thus the competition had become one for the people, with the land and the trade less important. The struggle would continue until one nation, becoming the total victor, had won control of the continent.

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INTRODUCTION

The struggle among European nations for the American continent began early in the history of the New World. Particularly in the forests and mountains of the northeast, great men and nations fought for a prize more valuable than mere riches--the prize of a world. It would be won not by military prowess alone, but also by strategy and diplomacy.

The goals of the mother countries in Europe often influenced the acts that were committed in America. The current economic philosophy of mercantilism can easily be seen in the conflict that occurred over the land of New York. The desire for the riches of the new world at little cost to Europe led to a struggle which meant that one nation had to triumph to the exclusion of all others. To this nation would go the prize.

Affected even more than the European colonies in this struggle were the innocent natives who inhabited the desired region. These natives, the American Indians, were frequently to be used as pawns against each other and against other European states. But it was not all one-sided; the red man often used the whites to secure his own aims and security. The goal of both races was the same in the northeast: the control of the land and its riches. The first step in this control was the domination of the fur trade.

CHAPTER I

1609-1643

THE DUTCH MONOPOLY OF THE INDIAN TRADE

By 1609 the decline of the first great exploring nation, Spain, left France, England and the Netherlands alone able to colonize and compete for control of the New World. The main scene of this struggle for the continent was in the area that we know today as New York. It was here that the Europeans first realized the value of the fur pelts that the natives came to trade for articles unseen by their eyes before this time. Unknown to the Indian, he and his trade would become the cause of wars in far off Europe and of conflicts closer to his home. The Europeans soon recognized that the nation which controlled the trade would also control the land area and its inhabitants. So the race began for dominance of the trade in New York. It was this trade that was the chain that bound all the contestants together, be they French, English, Dutch, or Iroquois.

For a short time Holland was able to capture the land, having a fleet stronger than her English ally. In 1609 residents of the Netherlands, after watching England's activities, were turning their attention to the colonization of America.¹ One man more than any other urged the interest of the Dutch in this venture. William Usselinx grasped the value of following England's policy by striking at Spain through the

¹John Fiske, Dutch and Quaker Colonies (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1899, renewed, 1903), I, 83.

resources of the New World which would not only handicap the traditional enemy but contribute to their own coffers. As early as 1592, he had urged the formation of a company strictly for trade in the west, an enterprise that would later become the West Indies Trade Company.² But in 1592 the Dutch were still too busy with Spain in Europe to become interested in trade in America, so that the plan was neglected until some years later, when a time of peace made it possible to compete for the treasures of the world.

It thus fell to individual merchants and businessmen to goad the government of the Netherlands into action. These merchants closely followed Hudson's voyages up and down the coast of America and his reports of the opportunities for trade. They sent ships to begin trading in the area, and, knowing the need for government support if their ventures were to succeed, they petitioned and finally secured the aid of the government in helping to establish the trade and early colonies in the area claimed by Hudson. The government's ordinance of March 27, 1614, read:

...we understand it would be honorable, serviceable and profitable to this Country, and for the promotion of its prosperity, as well as for the maintenance of seafaring people, that the good Inhabitants should be excited and encouraged to employ and occupy themselves in seeking out discovering Passages, Haven, countries, and places that have not before been discovered nor frequented; ...³

Thus began the government's first active encouragement of merchants in their trading ventures. The politicians wanted more wealth in the treasury in case a time came for conflict with any other of the contestants. The hunger for profit led to the government's granting state

²Ibid., 84-90.

³E. B. O'Callaghan (ed.), Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York (Albany: Weed, Parsons, and Company, 1855), I, 5. Hereinafter cited as NYCD.

monopolies to any merchant who sent ships to a new area, but only for a period of six voyages. Then free competition would reenter the plan and presumably increase the profits to the mother country even more.

The traders, eager for easy profits, quickly pushed their interest before the States General of the United Netherlands, seeking other concessions that would assist them in their trade. The first idea was to form some sort of trading company which would be aided by the government. In July of 1614, the traders proposed the "formation of a general company for the promotion of commerce, navigation and Interest of the Country, to carry on Trade on some Coasts of Africa and America...." The States General responded that they thought "the project being considered laudable and advantageous to the Country."⁴ This idea was finally realized on October 11, 1614, when there appeared at the Assembly of the States General "the Deputies of United Company of Merchants who have discovered and found New Netherland, situate in America between New France and Virginia, the sea coasts where of lie in the Latitude of forty to forty-five degrees."⁵

This was the first time that the name of New Netherland was ever used officially to refer to any area of North America. According to the 1614 Proclamation, these merchants should receive the monopoly of trade in the area; and in 1615 the Assembly stated "their High Mightinesses have granted...the Petitioners that they alone shall have the right to resort to, cause to be frequented, the aforesaid newly discovered countries, situate in America...for four voyages from the first of January XVIc" for three years.⁶

⁴Ibid., 6.

⁵Ibid., 10.

⁶Ibid.

The boundaries of the area thus opened consisted of the South River on the south, the 45th parallel on the north, Cape Cod on the east, and no limit on the west other than the point as far as a man could walk. The Hudson River would later become the boundary on the North.⁷ These borders would remain the limits of New Netherland so long as the Dutch controlled the area.

In 1618, the temporary monopoly of the trading company of New Netherland expired, and conditions seemed favorable for establishing a permanent trade company in the area. Various people seemed eager to colonize this part of the new world. In February of 1620, a group of religious dissenters petitioned the States General for the right to start a colony in the area of New Netherland.⁸ These people came not only from the United Netherlands, but also from England, and they requested the Dutch only to provide military defense in case of any trouble. They already had secured the permission of the English government to leave; but the Dutch government, after careful consideration of the matter, rejected their petition in April of 1620.⁹ The government's refusal apparently stemmed from the fact that a treaty with Spain was soon to expire; thus it was an inauspicious time to do anything that might drain off any of the nation's resources.

These same petitioners then applied for assistance to the London Company in England and secured their permission to sail to America under their auspices. The London Company provided the Mayflower, and the Pilgrims set out for Virginia, but during the voyage they were blown off

⁷Fiske, Dutch and Quaker Colonies, 90. The South River was another name for the Delaware.

⁸O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, I, 22-23.

⁹Ibid., 24.

course and landed instead in Massachusetts.¹⁰ Thus ended the first official attempt by the Dutch to settle in the new world, but the idea of Dutch settlers in this area was not completely abandoned.

On February 2, 1620, there came another petition for the establishment of a colony under the protection of the Dutch government in the area of New Netherland.¹¹ The interest of the traders and the desire for colonies finally bore fruit, and in 1621 the Assembly realized the need for control of the trade; since the expiration of the New Netherland Company in 1618 the trade had been handled only by individuals. The only government regulation lay in the requirement that each trader purchase a license from the States General to do business in the New World.¹² The Assembly granted a charter for the formation of the Dutch West India Company to trade and colonize in the area claimed by the Dutch in North America.¹³

This company was to have exclusive control; no person could trade in New Netherland or even go there without the company's consent. The charter of the company provided it with broad powers in the land under its control. The company was permitted to appoint all civil officials in the colonies to be formed. The company was to frame laws to be enforced in such colonies, and to see that they were properly administered and justice obtained in the company's trade areas. The company was also to erect forts in strategic locations in New Netherland for the purpose of defense and for the benefit of the natives, meaning access to the

¹⁰Fiske, Dutch and Quaker Colonies, 90.

¹¹O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, I, 22.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Fiske, Dutch and Quaker Colonies, 95, 98.

trading posts of the Dutch.¹⁴

The actual control of the Dutch West India Company was in the hands of five separate boards that represented equally the great commercial centers of the United Netherlands. Over all of the activities a general administrative council would dictate the policies of lesser officials in the company. This general council was known as the "college of the Nineteen, which was chosen from lower boards: eight members from Amsterdam, four from Zealand, two from Dordrecht, two from North Holland, two from Friesland and Groningen, and the last member a director at large who should act as spokesman for the Board before the States General and the Prince.¹⁵

These were the men who, with the consent of the States General, determined for Holland the trade policies and the methods of colonization in the new world. In 1623 the board approved the first actual group of settlers going to New Netherland; it was this group under the direction of Corneles Jacobsz, who built Fort Orange on the North River in 1624 and Fort Nassau on the South River in 1626.¹⁶ Also in 1626, the Assembly was informed of the purchase of "the Island of Manhattan from the Indians for the value of 60 guilders,"¹⁷ and the building of Fort Amsterdam on the island.¹⁸

These posts were built primarily to reach the natives for trading purposes. From Manhattan, for instance, trade spread into the

¹⁴Ibid., 98.

¹⁵Ibid., 99, 102-103.

¹⁶Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, I, 149.

¹⁷Ibid., 37.

¹⁸Ibid., 149.

surrounding countryside, and Peter Schagin reported exports from the colony of "7246 beaver skins, 178½ otter skins, 675 otter skins, 48 minck" and other small animal skins,¹⁹ the beginning of the future extremely profitable trade activities with the Iroquois.

These early merchants found willing purchasers for their goods; what were at first luxuries soon became necessities to the Indians, who grew to depend on that trade and could not live without the new goods.²⁰ To reach more customers, a pattern was quickly established; the Dutch trader would set up a central location or fort to which the Indian could bring his pelts. Thus the trader could rely on the Indians to do most of his work for him by bringing pelts. In time many of those simple posts grew into principal centers of population, such as Fort Orange, later called Albany; and the House of Good Hope later known as Hartford.²¹

This trade was given added assistance in 1627 when Charles I of England agreed to allow the Dutch free trade with England and all her dependencies around the world.²² Yet it so increased the prosperity of the Dutch in the mother country that not many people were eager to leave their homes. The few who did venture to the new world saw profitable returns on their investments in the fur trade until the late 1650's.

The traders realized that due to lack of population in New Netherland their safety and advancement of prosperity depended on cementing a solid peace and firm trade relations with the Indians. All post

¹⁹Ibid., 37.

²⁰George T. Hunt, The Wars of the Iroquois: A Study in Intertribal Trade Relations (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1940), 4.

²¹O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, I, 150.

²²Fiske, The Dutch and Quaker Colonies, I, 110.

commanders were given orders to encourage trade with the natives, particularly the Iroquois confederation, and to that end the Dutch signed several early trade agreements with the Iroquois.²³

Tradition has made Fort Nassau the site of a treaty between the Dutch and Iroquois leaders in 1618, which was the basis for trade between the two sides for many years. The treaty was allegedly a Dutch agreement to supply arms to the Iroquois in return for all the furs and pelts of the Indians. This treaty, or one similar, was in effect until 1763 between the Indians and the Dutch, and later the Iroquois and the English. It was never seriously violated by either side.²⁴

After 1625 the Dutch West India Company had a complete monopoly of all activities with the Indians, and the fur trade prospered. Essentially a trading people, the Dutch pushed their opportunities fully as energetically as the English to the south or the French to the north. Since trade was more important to the Dutch than land, there was little danger of angering the Indians and thus impairing the trade opportunities by a land acquisition policy.²⁵

The most important region for the fur trade with the Indians was around the great waterways and harbors of the northeast. Here, for many years, the traders did not even have to penetrate the interior of the continent to trade; rather they had merely to wait for the Indians to bring the pelts to them. With the depletion in the coastal areas of the better skins the traders began to move up the St. Lawrence and Hudson Rivers to the fur regions of the Great Lakes, and when these areas

²³O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, I, 149.

²⁴Fiske, Dutch and Quaker Colonies, 94.

²⁵O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, XII, 48-49; XIV, 4.

ceased to produce the pelts desired, the interest turned to the Mississippi and Ohio River areas. In these latter areas, the tribes that were of prime importance were the Ottawa and Hurons along the St. Lawrence and the Mohican and Mohawks along the Hudson. This area became the center of the active fur trade on the continent.²⁶

Relations between Europeans and the American Indian in the new world provide the key to success or failure in the trade. It has been suggested that "the relations into which the Europeans entered with the Aborigines were decided almost wholly by the alliances which they found to exist among the tribes on their arrival."²⁷ Likewise, it might also be said that actions of the various tribes were often decided by their associations with the Europeans. For the Dutch, the crucial step was to achieve a workable agreement with the Iroquois; and here a chance contact between the Iroquois and the great French explorer, Champlain, was central in shaping future events. The story of the French supplying arms to their Indian allies to attack the Mohawks is an old one:

Mr. Champlain desiring to give his Allies Proof of his love, and the Valour of the French Nation, put himself at the Head of a Body of Adirondacks, and passed with them into Corlars, which from this time the French have called by Mr. Champlain's Name.

The Adirondacks gave a great Shout and open'd to the Right and Left, to give room for Mr. Champlain and the French to advance: This upon which the French firing, the three Captains were killed:...the Adirondacks gave a terrible Shout, and attacked the Enemy, who received them bravely, but a second Volley from the French, put them into such Confusion (having never before seen fire Arms) that they immediately fled.²⁸

²⁶Hunt, The Wars of the Iroquois, 5.

²⁷George E. Ellis, cited in Hunt, 4.

²⁸Cadwallader Colden, The History of the Five Indian Nations Depending on the Province of New York in America (Great Seals Books: Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), 7.

Thus the victory of the French earned them the undying hatred of the Mohawks, one of the leading members of the Confederation, and of the other Iroquois tribes. The warriors of the Iroquois league soon learned that they too could acquire firearms by purchasing them from the Dutch in return for their pelts. After 1609 the Iroquois entered into a policy of alliance with any European power that opposed the French.²⁹

Before the Europeans came, the area of modern New England and New York was occupied by two great nations of Indians. These two divisions consisted of: the Six Nations and their allies, and, on the other hand, the Lenni Lenape, or the Delawares and their allies. The former were called the Iroquois or sometimes the Mingoes or among the Indians, the Maqua. They were joined to promote their own prosperity and maintain their independence and existence.

The Iroquois consisted of these tribes, in order of their importance: the Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Onondagas, the Cayugas, and the Senecas, and the last tribe, admitted many years after the first confederation was formed, the Tuscaroras. Their arch enemies, who were the allies of the French, were the Mahicanni, Mohicans or Mohegans, and the Naticokes, or Netigoes, which formed the Delaware nation. Of these tribes the latter occupied the country along the Chesapeake and the sea, while the Mohegans occupied the district between the Hudson and the ocean, including most of New England, and so were the first to be pushed back by the whites.

Each side in the conflict soon acquired its own set of Indian allies, the French adding the Algonquins, the Abenakis, the Montagnais, and the Micmacs. At one time or another all of these tribes faced the danger of destruction at the hands of the fierce Iroquois League and

²⁹Howard H. Peckham, The Colonial Wars, 1689-1762 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 18.

were forced to yield to the more powerful Indian nation. Surrender was the desired goal of the Confederation, in order to maintain their position as middlemen in the fur trade. It has been suggested, however, that the Iroquois hostility here stemmed not so much from the defeat in 1609 as from the fact that these tribes traded with the French, thus depriving the Iroquois of needed furs.³⁰ The Dutch encouraged this situation because it helped their trade, and later on the English would continue the same policy in their attempts to ruin the French trade.

To the Dutch the Indian trade was particularly important. New Netherland was a very small community producing little in the way of agricultural goods. The colonists had to have the Indian trade in order to exist during the early settlement. Later on the colonists were encouraged to substitute farming for the Indian trade as their goal because of the growth of a self-supporting colony. The colonists "came to know that the land was worth more than the beaver," but they also knew that the mother country desired the pelts far more than she did farm produce. Thus Britain fought the colonial wars from 1689 to 1812.³¹

Indeed, the mother country had reason to desire the potential wealth of the fur trade, an example of the mercantilism that existed in Europe during the seventeenth century. Statistics of the fur trade show that in 1624 New Netherland exported 4,700 skins, and by 1626 there was an increase of 7,250 beaver skins and 800 otter skins; although this increase brought the price and profit down about two-thirds, it was still pure profit for the mother country. In 1630 the number of skins taken

³⁰Ibid., 18-19.

³¹Charles McIlwain (ed.), An Abridgement of the Indian Affairs by Peter Wraxall (Harvard Historical Studies, vol. XXI; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915), xiii.

increased to 10,000 and in 1633 to at least 30,000.³² In 1637 this profit in furs led the Dutch to write to New England and offer their surplus goods to Plymouth in exchange for any pelts that the English colony might have.³³

This sudden rise in the amount of pelts indicated the importance of the Iroquois in controlling the Hudson River trading centers and channeling the furs to the Dutch. The skins were exchanged for guns, tobacco, and wampum to keep the Iroquois supreme over the other nations. In 1628 the Dutch did take their surplus to Plymouth, and while there they introduced the English to the value of wampum in trade with the Indians:

Wampum is the current Money among the Indians, it is made of the large Whelk Shell and shaped like long Beads. With this, put upon strings, they make these Belts, which they give in all their Treaties, as signs of Confirmation, with the other Party.³⁴

The Dutch had a monopoly on wampum. After this visit the English were in competition to control the area where the shells were obtained, in order to further the trade rivalry, but in spite of all efforts the Indians continued to trade with the Dutch.³⁵

The wealth that was available in the trade soon made itself felt within New Netherland as signs of competition among the Dutch appeared. The company had absolute control over the fur trade, to the exclusion of the settlers and the Patroons who had established the colonies. At length the Patroons began to complain about this exclusion of themselves and their colonists, arguing that the settlers ought not to have to pay the company for the right to trade on their own land and grumbling that

³²Ibid.

³³Wraxall, Abridgement, xxix.

³⁴Colden, The History of the Five Indian Nations, 23n.

³⁵O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, I, 87.

the Patroons now had to pay a tax of one guilder on each pelt from their colony.³⁶ The Patroons wanted some of the riches of the fur trade to offset their expenses in founding the colonies in New Netherland, which were not yet returning any profit. But the company, no more eager than the government to open up the lucrative trade to so many individuals, refused to discuss the matter. The Patroons countered with the argument that if they had to pay the tax for the furs trapped on their own land then they ought to be able to trap for furs outside of their limits for the same tax. They should then be allowed to sell wherever they wanted to and for whatever goods they wished without having to bring them to the Company's agent. They also demanded the right to send their traders into any areas where the company had no commissioners. Finally, the Patroons demanded that the settlers be allowed to secure wampum when they needed it rather than having to go through the company for it.³⁷ Thus if the protests were granted, the government and the company would be losing control of the trade and more of the profit would remain in the colony instead of returning to the mother country.

The Patroons also complained of the company's policy of entering a settlement and putting up signs which forbade any of the settlers of that town from trading. When the commissioners from the company came into the same area they did not secure the permission or even inform the Patroon of their presence; then the commissioners forced the inhabitants of the settlement to take an oath that they would not enter the trade of the Indians for maize, furs, or wampum.³⁸ This step prevented the Patroons from making any profit themselves.

³⁶Ibid., 87.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 88.

To solve these conflicts between the company and the Patroons the States General, in October of 1634, ruled that "the Patroons of New Netherland shall have the privilege of sailing and trading along the whole coast, from Florida into New Foundland, and to all the wild Islands of the West Indies."³⁹ Now the Patroons could openly have a voice in the handling of the trade in their own areas. Also included in these resolutions was an order that henceforth all the lands settled by the Dutch would be purchased outright from the Indians, who would receive full payment for it.⁴⁰ But this order ran into conflict with the English, who claimed that since no one Indian could sell what belonged to the entire tribe, the purchase of any land was invalid. With this reasoning England refused to recognize any of the Dutch land purchases and claims.⁴¹ This was the beginning of the future conflict for the land between the Dutch and the English, the desire for the fur trade being the basis for the dissention.

In September, 1637, William Kieft was appointed as the director of New Netherland with explicit orders to encourage the growth of the colony and its trade. In 1638 the Company's directors submitted a Report on Conditions in New Netherland. They reaffirmed their right to the land from "the colony of Virginia to Newfoundland," reporting control of the area through their two forts, Orange and Amsterdam, and one House, a house being a trading post, which was located near Hartford on the Connecticut River.⁴² In 1633 the Dutch had built a fort on the French River; within five years the English had moved into this area and built

³⁹Ibid., 98.

⁴⁰Ibid., 99.

⁴¹Ibid., 58.

⁴²Ibid., 107.

a settlement not too far from Fort Good Hope on the Connecticut River. To the Dutch demands that they depart, the English replied, with unanswerable logic, that they claimed possession by virtue of their greater strength and numbers in the area. The distressed Dutch settlers petitioned the States General for aid. The settlers admitted that the colony had been only a drain on the Netherlands thus far, but they insisted that they were on the brink of a profitable period, one which would be lost if the English were not removed.⁴³

The fear of the encroaching English made it necessary to encourage more settlers to come to New Netherland. The answer to the problem seemed to be to open the fur trade to all who wanted to participate. This suggestion was not received happily by the company or by the Patroons, who had just started making some profit from the trade. The opening of the trade would considerably weaken the control of the Patroon and the company over the entire area of New Netherland. But the government took the attitude that if more people could be encouraged to migrate to the New Netherland colony, its defense would be improved and the settlers could withstand the English.⁴⁴

In spite of the beaver trade the colony did not prosper as it was hoped until about 1639; in that year the fur trade that had been the monopoly of the West India company was opened to everyone. The main purpose behind this action was not to enlarge the fur trade, though this was a side result, but to encourage more colonists to come to New Netherland. The result was noted in a report to the States General, that "even new colonists came thither from the Fatherland, and the

⁴³Ibid., 114, 128.

⁴⁴Ibid., 153.

neighbouring English, both from Virginia and New England repaired to us,"⁴⁵ and helped to increase the population which was desired.

Although the opening of the Indian trade to all colonists brought more inhabitants to the colony and produced more profits from the trade, it also presented problems that were eventually harmful to the colony. The colonists' eagerness to share in the profits of the fur trade led to a dispersed settlement throughout New Netherland which meant a need for increased defenses. In addition there were complaints that the Indians were lured to the Dutch houses by bribes and then mistreated.⁴⁶ Because of this familiarity and their being treated unfairly by the new traders, the Indians grew to dislike the traders and to contemplate revenge upon them. Other problems arose because of the traders letting their cattle and other livestock roam free. The animals often entered the Indians' fields, trampling the corn and ruining the year's crops. All this did little to alleviate the growing bad feeling between the Indians and the traders of New Netherland.⁴⁷

Finally, the colonists and traders made an excessive profit from the buying and selling of skins. They purchased the pelts at a very low price and were able to sell them at a much higher price. All explanations of the law of supply and demand left the Indian feeling that he had been cheated at the hands of the traders. In addition the traders had sold the Mohawks guns and ammunition, but when the other tribes desired to buy guns from the same traders they were refused. This left these tribes with a feeling that they had been treated unequally and

⁴⁵Ibid., 150.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Fiske, Dutch and Quaker Colonies, 157; NYCD, I, 151.

were left at the mercy of the Mohawks.⁴⁸

The Mohawks were having their own troubles arising from the opening of the fur trade. The increased demand for the furs had led them to increase their trapping until there were little beaver left in their own country after 1640.⁴⁹ As Killlaen van Rensselaer wrote in 1640 to Wilhelm Kieft, the director of New Netherland:

I cannot get over my surprise as to the changes which are said to have occurred in the fur trade at Fort Orange...That my people spoiled the fur trade can not by any means be true; they may have outbid and brought about the high price of the skins; but such outbidding...causes a greater supply. Now, as far as I can see, the trouble is not with the price of the skins but with the quantity, which is a great paradox to me that I can not understand.⁵⁰

The lack of pelts was also being felt by the French and their allies, the Hurons, who were having to buy their pelts from other tribes to sell to the traders in Quebec.⁵¹

The trade had become as great a problem for the Iroquois as for the Dutch. As the indigenous furs in their areas disappeared, the League was forced to seek trade relations with the Canadian and the far western tribes, in order to maintain that vital trade. This begins the middle-man phase of the trade for the Confederacy. These conditions even caused dissention with the Confederacy itself. As one colonial observer noted, "the Mohawks, by reason of their location not far west of Albany, held a monopoly of the Dutch trade and imposed conditions upon the other four Iroquois nations desiring access to the Dutch" fur trade.⁵²

⁴⁸Ibid., 155.

⁴⁹Ibid., I, 271.

⁵⁰Van Rensselaer to Kieft, May 29, 1640; cited in Hunt, The Wars of the Iroquois, 34.

⁵¹Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.), The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents (New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959), VIII, 57.

⁵²O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, IX, 161; Thwaites, Jesuit Relations, XVIII, 233.

The control by the Iroquois of the trade was discussed by Governor Talon of French Canada, who wrote to the King: "it is well known that the Iroquois nations, especially the four upper ones, do not hunt any Beaver or Elk."⁵³ It was noted that the Iroquois had long exhausted the area of any beaver and were having a difficult time trapping any of the animals, but the Hurons seemed to have plenty of furs, a fact not missed by the Iroquois.

The Iroquois tried to secure the trade of the Hurons for the Dutch by peaceful means, by treaties with the Canadian tribes, to no avail. The Hurons were not going to let the furs slip through their fingers, and the Iroquois were not going to let the Hurons have free access to the Dutch at Fort Orange without going through them first. The only solution for the Iroquois was to eliminate the Hurons and their threat to the fur trade with the Dutch. Thus began the various wars of the Iroquois with the northern Indians, until the latter were completely destroyed and the trade was secured in Iroquois hands. But the demands of war brought criticisms from the Iroquois regarding the Dutch trade policies, especially about those applied at Fort Orange. The Mohawks complained that the Dutch were not very friendly at times; "the Dutch say, we are brothers, and joined by chains but this lasts only as long as we have beavers, and after that no attention is paid to us."⁵⁴ There was a definite lack of gunpowder now that the Mohawks needed it, and the Dutch even made them pay more to have their guns repaired, even though they had just purchased them. There were even complaints that the

⁵³Thwaites, Jesuit Relations, IX, 80.

⁵⁴Ibid., XIV, 356.

Indians were sometimes beaten or forced to buy their purchases at Fort Orange. The Mohawks insisted that the Dutch did not do as much for them as the French did for their Indian allies.⁵⁵

The most the Dutch would do was to agree to not interfere with the Iroquois war parties and thus allow the Indians to be free from worry about an attack from the rear. The Iroquois warriors were successful against their adversaries, and once again trade flowed from the camps of the Iroquois to Fort Orange. But even this period of tranquility did not last long, and in 1643 events occurred that would lead to a disastrous war in New Netherland that would seriously weaken the fur trade for the Dutch.

From 1609 to 1643 the Dutch traders were not seriously interfered with by competition from the other European nations. The area around New York was in the solid control of the Dutch, who relied on the fierce Iroquois Confederation to keep the trade flowing to Dutch trading posts.

The Iroquois now realized the importance of their position as middlemen in the competition for the furs and were only too eager to increase their own wealth and power at the expense of their ancient enemies, the Hurons. This alliance with the Dutch brought prosperity to the colony and even more riches to fill the coffers of the mother country. It was a prize well worth fighting for, thought the nations of Europe.

But this trade was becoming harder to control by late 1643, for the English were now turning their envious eyes on the profits flowing to Holland and desired the area of New Netherland for their own. Their claims to the area now could be prosecuted to the fullest extent. The English hoped to drive the Dutch from New Netherland by peaceful

⁵⁵Ibid., XIII, 109.

competition and luring their Indian allies to the sides of Mother England, but if peaceful means were not successful the next step would be to use force. The next chapter deals with the increasing competition between England and the Netherlands and the final struggle for the wealth of the Iroquois furs.

CHAPTER II

DUTCH CONTROL WEAKENS 1643-1664

The struggle for control of the fur trade was joined between England and Holland in the period between 1643 and 1664. The year 1643 saw England free for the first time actively to enter the race for the domination of the fur trade of New York, since prior to this time she had been more concerned with the establishment and growth of permanent settlements in America. But the wealth of furs going to Holland had not been totally ignored by England's traders, and now they were ready to push their claims to the wealth that could be had in the trade.

In 1642 the English renewed their claims to all the land area of New Netherland, claiming that purchases of land from the Indians were illegal since no one Indian had the right to sell the land of the tribe; thus all Dutch claims to the area of New York were void. The Dutch replied that possession was nine-tenths of the law, and they had the possession of New Netherland and were not going to yield to English claims.¹ By 1643 Director Kieft of New Netherland wrote the Assembly that Dutch and English relations were steadily deteriorating; in addition, relations with the Iroquois were poor. The Assembly was duly concerned with the situation and advised Kieft to solve the Iroquois problems first, return the flow of trade to normal, and deal with the English later.

The problems with the Iroquois concerned the murder of an old

¹O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, I, 131.

Dutchman, living alone in the wilderness, by an Iroquois Indian. The settlers were enraged and demanded the surrender of the guilty party for punishment. The Iroquois chiefs refused to hand over the murderer, and the colonists, encouraged in their acts by their governor, took matters into their own hands. The whites had come to fear the powerful Iroquois confederacy and their easy access to the whites' settlements in the area; feeling that something must be done to break the Iroquois power, the colonists desired to return them to the domination of the Dutch.² This rash action resulted in a costly war for the Dutch that did not end in their favor. The Iroquois finally agreed to peace on the condition that the Dutch remove their governor, who had incited the war, and these terms were agreed to by the Dutch.³

The States General met to discuss what steps could be taken to prevent future conflicts with the Iroquois, since these wars were harmful to the trade. The Assembly recommended that the Patroons should keep the trade in their own hands, allowing only their own colonists and free men living in the colony to enter the trade. The commission merchants were to be kept out of the area and the trade centers. It was also recommended that the trade in arms to the Indians be stopped at once, and those selling the arms be severely punished, by death if necessary. Thus indirectly the war helped to solve some of the problems between the Dutch and Iroquois by limiting the numbers of traders, prohibiting their freedom of roaming the Indian Territory, and forcing the Indians to buy and sell even if they had no desire to do so. The Mohawks were satisfied with these suggestions and once again turned to trade. Relations

²Ibid., 139-140.

³Ibid., 189.

improved between the two nations.

Meanwhile, the English were taking advantage of the problem between the Dutch and Iroquois to move into the area with their own traders. The Dutch complained that the English were taking the prime locations for posts and destroying the Dutch trade. The new governor, Petrus Stuyvesant,⁴ tried to improve the strained relations with the English, but to no avail. In 1650, Stuyvesant received an offer from the English at Hartford to meet and discuss the mutual problems and try to resolve their differences. This seemed a chance to prevent future conflict, and Stuyvesant went to Hartford hoping to solve the problem and work out a boundary between the two colonies.

The meeting began on September 17, 1650, at the General Court of New England, with representatives of England and the Netherlands duly appointed. The delegates from Hartford once again reaffirmed the English position of claims to all the area of New Netherland since Charles had granted this land to specific Lords for their service to the king, and the Dutch replied with claims to all the land from "Naranganset Bay to Hudson's River."⁵ Both nations felt the threat to their trading rights, and realized that if the competition was not eliminated little would soon be left to fight for, much less to control.

News of this meeting in Hartford reached London at the time that discussions were being held there to solve the problems of the two colonies of England and Holland. Yet England hesitated to resort to force to push the Dutch from New Netherland; while they hesitated the Dutch proposed a solution to the dilemma. The plan was peacefully to divide the disputed territory by treaty and thus stop future disputes between the

⁴Ibid., 175.

⁵O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, I, 128.

colonies. But England refused, realizing that if they agreed to this treaty they would be openly upholding any and all Dutch claims in America. Thus the treaty was not even discussed. London refused to approve what her representatives in Hartford had agreed to with Stuyvesant. England chose to ignore the whole problem, but it was not going to be so easy to ignore in the future.

The residents of New Netherland were not pleased with the boundary settlement either and complained to Holland that:

all the arbitrators were English and they pulled the wool over the director's eyes, for, according to our information from New Netherland, he hath ceded to the English as far as Greenwich inclusive, on the main, together with a portion of Long Island. 'Tis indeed true that this whole country was occupied by the English in part, but not the whole of it; the whole of it, then ought not to be theirs;...but... we should thus retain something, and also leave something to the English;...we shall be obliged to eat oats out of English hands. The country will, likewise, always be open, exposed, and common to neighbors.⁶

The proposed treaty had already been agreed to on the local level and was sent on to the mother countries for approval, but as already seen England was not going to agree to any border between the two colonies. The treaty of Hartford was never signed by a formal official representative of England, and once again the problem reverted to the local government officials to try and solve without the use of force and without English colonists agreeing to any binding treaties between the two nations.

The official reply from England to the request for a border from the Dutch stated that England believed that she was the first in the area; since she had more people in New Netherland than the Dutch there

⁶ O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, I, 458, 459.

was no need for a border.⁷ This was the only reply that the Dutch ever received to their request, and it was quite a shock that the English considered discussing the border as a "waste of time."⁸ The only result of the colonial meeting of Hartford was to open the border question to contention and harsh feelings between the two peoples.

By 1651, acting in temporary alliance, the two nations had defeated Spain in Europe, which meant they could turn their full attention to developing their colonies in the New World. England took advantage of the new situation in 1651 by passing the first Navigation Law. This act was aimed directly at Dutch shipping; the Dutch fleet had monopolized much of the carrying trade for Europe. England's first Navigation Law was an attempt to end this situation; now no English goods could be carried except in English ships and with English crews.⁹ At the same time the Dutch negotiated a treaty with the kingdom of Denmark that prevented English access to the Baltic naval stores which were essential to the English fleet; these acts led to harsh feeling on the part of both contestants.

In America in 1652 the English ignored all Dutch protests and requests concerning the boundary issue. On the local level the trade continued to be open and friendly between New Netherland and New England even if this was not the case in Europe. But relations would remain friendly only as long as both did not trespass on the other's land.

In Europe violence erupted in a short war that was finally ended in 1654. The delegates from the two nations met to negotiate the peace to the satisfaction of both parties. On December 4, 1654, the treaty was

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., 560.

⁹Fiske, Dutch and Quaker Colonies, I, 211, 218.

signed whereby England and the Netherlands agreed to peace, abstaining from war on the seas, solving the trouble between the colonies, and upholding the Hartford Convention by the device of each keeping what it had possessed, and finally establishing borders between the colonies.¹⁰

Now that the English were temporarily pacified, the Dutch were able to turn their attentions to other problems in their colony. During the years of trouble with England, Sweden had taken advantage of the situation to move into Dutch-claimed areas. In 1633 the Dutch had purchased an area called Schuylkil from the Indians, obtaining title for it in 1648.¹¹ The Swedes knew of this transaction, but they went ahead and planted a settlement in the same area. They erected a fort and even admitted it was there for the sole purpose of closing the river to Dutch traders.¹²

In May, 1654, the Swedes forcibly captured the Dutch Fort Casimier and turned all the inhabitants out with neither weapons nor property.¹³ In January, Stuyvesant recaptured the post.¹⁴ With this exploit and the destruction of the Swedish settlements on the South River, New Netherland was safe from the Swedes. The Swedes protested against the destruction of their fort and settlement, but since they no longer had the power to defeat the Dutch, their protests were ignored. Now only England remained as a serious threat to New Netherland.

However, in the late 1650's New Netherland suffered from the

¹⁰O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, I, 561, 562.

¹¹Ibid., 588.

¹²Ibid., 589.

¹³Ibid., 601.

¹⁴Ibid.

exhaustion of resources and was forced to request financial aid from the States General. In 1657 the States approved a grant of 10,000 guilders for promoting the colony; in October, 1657 the government sent 16,000 guilders, and in April, 1658, another 20,000 guilders. The colony that was planned to benefit the mother country was a financial drain, yet it was realized that the expeditions against the Swedes plus English encroachments had cost the loss of trade. Soon these conditions would be bettered by the return of peace.

In September, 1659, the Council in charge of the town of New Amsterdam asked that the West India Company take over the management of the colony. This request was due to the financial drain on the city and the small amount of profit that was being realized. The West India Company bought out the Amsterdam interest and became the sole owners of the colony.¹⁵ The first step that the company took was to renew their plea that England recognize the border as agreed to in the Hartford Convention of 1650. The States General in 1660 once again diplomatically requested the English to resolve the border dispute between the two colonies without resorting to violence. The English still refused to agree that the Dutch had sole proprietorship to the area just because they had purchased the land from the Indians; any sale thus concluded was not valid in English eyes.

In fact, the Dutch governor sent a message to the Governor of Maryland in a final attempt to establish English recognition of the Dutch title to the land. The message argued that the kingdom of England actually recognized Dutch claims to the land when the English king refused to allow Virginia and New England to join together in one state in the

¹⁵Ibid., II, 78.

same area as New Netherland.¹⁶ The question of land ownership was further complicated when the king gave Lord Baltimore a grant to be the sole owner of Maryland, which was actually part of New Netherland, since its border was on the South or Delaware River. The English were giving away Dutch land to Englishmen.

In 1660 Charles II went further in attempting to control the actions of the New England colonies and the trade by giving the Privy Council responsibility for all matters that pertained to the trade of English colonies. From the Council a smaller committee was formed called the Committee for Trade and Plantations, whose purpose was to report on all problems facing the empire to the Council, and from the Council to the King.¹⁷ From this date onwards, the government was kept fairly well informed on all matters that affected the colonies and Dutch trade activities in particular.

In 1661 English traders complained of a Dutch trading post in Virginia that was harmful to their interests because the Dutch were selling goods at a lower price, which was possible because they did not pay the Virginia trading taxes. These activities cut deeply into the profits of Virginia and the treasury of the mother country. England faced the choice of either completely controlling the trade with the natives or eventually losing title and trade rights in the whole of New England.

The English were protesting the actions of the Dutch while the Dutch in turn were protesting English actions. The West India Company wrote to the States General in November of 1660 that the granting of land

¹⁶Ibid., 80.

¹⁷O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, III, x, xiii, 33.

claimed by the Dutch to Lord Baltimore was based on fraud.¹⁸ The lands had been given in the belief that no one in the country had previously claimed them, while the Dutch had been there before 1609.¹⁹ The Company felt that this grant was a serious threat to the safety of New Netherland because now the English "outnumber our people there."²⁰

The seriousness of the threat was again related to the States General by a letter from the Company in 1662. They told of the English coming into areas claimed for years by the Dutch and still bearing the Dutch royal coat of arms which had been placed there as a sign of ownership. The English destroyed these tokens and even invaded areas under cultivation. They destroyed crops, drove off livestock, prevented planting, and in general harassed the Dutch settlers in the area. The company claimed that the only basis the English had was a grant from the king of England for all unclaimed lands, which included the area of New Netherland. The company asked the States General what to do, insisting that they had attempted to use reason rather than force, but that force might soon be necessary if the colony were to be saved. While the Dutch were still abiding by the Convention of 1650, the English appeared to be "moving onwards in their proceedings in order...to make themselves masters...of the whole province" and "to reduce all of New Netherlands under England."²¹

The English went so far as to send troops into the established

¹⁸Ibid., II, 132.

¹⁹Ibid., 132.

²⁰Ibid., 133.

²¹Ibid., 216.

Dutch towns, Oostdorp for one, forcing the citizens to withdraw their oath of loyalty to the Prince of Orange and offer loyalty to the king of England. They also carried out this aggression in Gravesend, Flushing, Heemskede and Rustdorp.²² All government officials were replaced by the English, and the towns were declared to be English property. In 1663 Stuyvesant went to Boston and met with representatives of all the New England colonies to discuss these problems. Of all the town officials, only those of Hartford seemed likely to be difficult in reaching an agreement. Hartford officials said they would have to have several days to decide the issues involved. In October the Hartford officials stated that they "knew of no New Netherland",²³ and they refused to recognize the Dutch colony and its government though it had existed close by them for forty years. Hartford insisted "that the place we [the Dutch] call New Netherland had been granted to them by his Royal Majesty,"²⁴ and the Dutch must surrender the land, since the English were the rightful owners of the land. The Director quickly conveyed this information to the States General, stating that the English wanted all of New Netherland and had begun to invade Dutch territory; without the aid of the mother country, New Netherland would be lost to the English at Hartford.²⁵

At the same time that this message went forth to the Hague, another message was being sent to the Council in London protesting against the actions of the Dutch. These protests stated that the Netherlands

²²Ibid., 217.

²³Ibid., 224.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

declared that they were the sole possessors of the territory known as New England or New Netherland and all areas surrounding and including Manhattan. The report concluded that these Dutch claims led to interference with the English trade and with full prosecution of the Navigation Acts in the English colonies. The colonists themselves were evading the Navigation Acts by trading with the Dutch, so the governor of Virginia threatened to "make them [the Dutch] acknowledge and submit to his Maie government or...expelle them."²⁶

The Council upheld the belief that the English had been in the area of New Netherland longer than the Dutch and that the area had been seized by force. They concluded that the offender must be removed by force if necessary. And thus in 1664 orders from the Council were sent to Colonel Richard Nicholls to "reduce the Dutch in or neare Long Island or any where within the limits of our owne dominions to an entire obedience to our government."²⁷ The Council agreed with the local sentiment that the Dutch were trying to ruin the fur trade and capture it for themselves and eventually to rid themselves of the threat imposed by the New England colonies.

The States General, however, did very little to assist their colony. Their government still hoped to resolve the issue by peaceful measures and passed a Resolution of January, 1664, to be sent to England. The resolution contained suggestions to end the dispute in the colonies. First the English should "ratify the border between the colonies; uphold the Hartford Convention of 1650 as ratified by the Dutch in 1654; and then that all towns that voluntarily remained under English control remained there under the threat of punishment, so the English colonists

²⁶Ibid., III, 46.

²⁷Ibid., 57.

were to withdraw from these towns and cease all acts of this nature."²⁸ Further to clarify the issue, the border agreement of 1650 was reviewed for the English as the Dutch had adopted it in 1656: that the border was to run from the east side of Greenwich Bay about four miles from Stamford, inland north for twenty miles, not going any closer than ten miles of North River. On the other side the border was by Long Island from the west side of Oyster Bay, a straight line south and finally with the east part of Long Island being English and the west being Dutch.²⁹ But the English refused to ratify this treaty because it would recognize the claims of the Dutch to some of the desired area; the English wanted it all. Accordingly, in April, 1664, the States General instructed the colonists to resist the English by force; the mother country would try to negotiate the issue, but the colony was to hold onto its land by itself as best it could.³⁰

The English meanwhile had instructed Colonel Nicholls to negotiate with all the Indian tribes that were friendly to the English and discover if the Dutch had secured any more treaties with these same Indians. If there were new treaties, the English representatives were to offer more to the tribes than the Dutch or the French had, and thus secure the friendship of the tribesmen. Furthermore, the Indians were to be assured that in the future any trouble between a white man from the English colonies and a member of any tribe that had a treaty with the English would be handled with complete justice, thus giving the red man

²⁸ Ibid., II, 227.

²⁹ Ibid., 228.

³⁰ Ibid., 235.

rights that he had not always been accorded.³¹ This promise was of some value when in 1664 the Indians around Narragansett Bay transferred their land to the English. Along with the transfer of land, the Indians requested recognition as subjects of the English and protection from their enemies. If this were not agreed to, the land and the trade would go to another nation. Since the colonists desired this land, they agreed to the requests of the tribe and signed a treaty granting their requests.³² This treaty had the additional benefit of increasing the number of Indians in the English alliance against the Dutch.

At the same time Charles II ordered all governors of New England to protect their colonies and not to let any neighbors seize land that rightfully belonged to the English, "as the Dutch have lately done."³³ All governors were to join together and assist each other "in recovering our right in those places now possessed by the Dutch and reducing them to an entire obedience and submission to our government."³⁴

Thus each side was determined to hold the lands and trade that they had claimed, and was equally determined to use force to accomplish their goals. The Directors of the West India Company wrote that "last May four ships sailed from Portsmouth with 300 soldiers to take possession of New Netherland or at least Long Island."³⁵ The Dutch now feared an actual invasion by the English. Little aid was forthcoming to the colony from the Hague; they were advised to protect themselves and not

³¹ NYCD, III, 153.

³² Ibid., 550.

³³ Ibid., II, 237.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 243.

to attempt to regain any lost territory from the English.³⁶ On September 5, 1664, the Directors wrote that the English had four frigates and over 600 soldiers waiting to invade New Netherland. The defenders had few supplies or armed force to repel the invaders and could expect little help from Holland. They wrote that the English commander had graciously extended a generous offer, that if they agreed to surrender their homes, families, and rights would be safe; but if they refused to surrender, all would be destroyed. To prevent the total destruction of all they owned, the Directors agreed to surrender.³⁷

The actual disruption of relations began with the seizure of Dutch trading vessels in Boston Harbor ordered by Colonel Nicholls, as prizes of war with rewards for their capture.³⁸ By September all the plans for the capture of New Amsterdam were complete and ready to be put into effect. Colonial Cartwright met with the leaders of local tribes, the Maques and Synicks, at Fort Albany to discuss the forthcoming attack on the Dutch. At Albany the Indians signed a treaty whereby they agreed that they would be able to get all their future goods from the English as they once had from the Dutch; also they were to bring all their problems to the English governor. In return the English had to promise not to help the enemies of these two tribes, and if the Maques or Synicks were attacked by any enemy, the English promised to protect them. Henceforth, the tribesmen agreed to bring all their furs to the English.³⁹ The potential drain on the Dutch wealth meant that this treaty

³⁶Ibid., 246.

³⁷Ibid., 248.

³⁸Ibid., III, 67.

³⁹NYCD, III, 67.

represented the financial ruin of New Netherland.

With the surrounding tribes seemingly neutral, it was now time for the English to use their military plans and remove the Dutch from the New World once and for all. In August, 1664, the English forces captured New Amsterdam. With the loss of the principal city actual control of the entire colony fell to England. Colonel Nicholls reported the great victory to the King and at the same time warned that it could easily turn into a major defeat unless the mother country continued her assistance to the troops in the area.

The news of the surrender did not reach Holland until October 25, 1664, when the Dutch learned of the fall of New Netherland into English hands. England had renamed New Amsterdam New York and had thus seized an area of great importance to the fur trade.⁴⁰ Dutch statesmen and particularly the traders and merchants wanted to recover the lost territory at once. But, unable to prove what had really happened in the New World, the States General hesitated to do anything hostile until England would admit to aggressive actions in America. Finally in November of 1664, the King of England publicly admitted that he had ordered the attacks on the Dutch colonies in Africa and America, and was making them part of the English empire.⁴¹

The Dutch had restrained themselves so that the world could see the justice of their side. But by December it was clear that the hostilities could not be solved by negotiations, whereupon the Hague ordered the Dutch fleet to attack the English whenever encountered and to harass

⁴⁰O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, II, 272.

⁴¹Ibid., 280.

them at as little expense to themselves as possible.⁴² This order began several years of armed conflict that was costly to both countries and would eventually end at the conference table in a stalemate over the issues.

The years up to 1664 had seen the almost total domination of the fur trade by the Dutch of New Netherland. The first serious setback to this control came in 1664 with the loss of New Netherland to English control. But the struggle over this rich fur bearing district of America was far from being over, for the Dutch had laid the foundations for a profitable trade that was just beginning to return their original investments. They were not going to lose control of this important area without an all-out effort against England. Just such an effort by the Dutch against the English for control of New York in the years 1664 to 1674, will be seen in the next chapter.

⁴²Ibid., 287.

CHAPTER III

ENGLISH VICTORY, 1664-1674

Before being pushed out of New Netherland, the Dutch had existed for almost seventy years in a vital area of America. Thus they had shaped the course of American history during a considerable time. The struggle of the Dutch for the furs influenced many events. A contemporary, William Wraxall, noted this fact when he observed that "trade and policy were inseparable, but the trade was the ultimate end of all policy."¹ The judgment of the activities of the Dutch has been that "the pivotal fact in early American history was the alliance between the Five Nations and the white men on the Hudson River, first the Dutch, afterwards, English."² The Dutch were not ready yet to yield to the English supremacy in North America in 1664, still having hopes of maintaining control of the fur trade.

The strong point in Dutch commercial policy was the establishment of one particular company to run the trade and thus cut down on the expenses of middlemen. But there were inherent weaknesses in this system, such as its including a feudal plan of colonization, whereas freedom of the individual would have meant more thriving economic conditions. The small number of colonists to manage the trade was a drawback against the numerical superiority of the English, although it was due to religious

¹Wraxall, Abridgment, xl, xlx.

²*Ibid.*, xxxix.

toleration and prosperity in Holland which made the venture into the wilderness unattractive to settlers. These weaknesses contributed to the ease of the English victory in 1664.

After the capture of New Netherland by the forces of the Duke of York the international scene became more tranquil. The King of England explained his attack on the Dutch on the grounds that they had been obstructing English trade and must be eliminated.³ This being done by the New England governors, conditions in the colonies once more settled down to the everyday matters of trade and business, so necessary for survival in New York.

In 1664, with the hope of encouraging the trade and conditions of the former Dutch subjects in New York, Peter Stuyvesant wrote several requests to the Duke of York. He stated that the beaver trade was the most important industry in the colony and that cheap Dutch goods had been responsible for the profits since the Indians preferred the Dutch products. Now that the Dutch no longer had these goods to offer the Indians, the latter might take their trade to the French, and the colony would lose this profit. The main threat was now the French in Canada, who had already encroached as close as a half day's journey from the Mohawks with goods once purchased from the Dutch and now promised to the English. Stuyvesant feared that this loss of trade would result in fewer products to lure passing ships into the harbors to trade; and if this happened then the town would slowly die. He proposed to make sure that this condition did not arise, that England allow the United Netherlands to send three or four ships a year to trade and maintain relations with New York.⁴ If this was not permitted, he wrote, the colony would cease to exist within a year. After considering the reasoning behind

³O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, III, 52, 237.

⁴Ibid., 165.

the requests, the Duke of York agreed to allow three ships a year to come from Holland to New York for trade purposes.

The Duke of York agreed so readily to these suggestions because he also received a letter from Colonel Nicholls, British commander of New York, stating the need for many more trading ships to come to New York. He mentioned that the Dutch had supplied almost all of New England with trade articles, not to mention essential food and clothing; without this trade support not only the Dutch but the English colonies would fail. In the present situation, according to Nicholls, the Dutch must be allowed to continue their trade in order to prevent severe conditions in the colonies during the winter. In addition, if the Dutch were refused permission to continue their trading, they might grow so dissatisfied under English rule that they would actively encourage the Dutch West India Company to attempt to recapture the colony.⁵ Basing his action on these two letters, the Duke of York agreed to allow the Dutch to continue trading in New York and block all French attempts to gain control of the fur trade.

In 1666 the French were trying to do just that, to control the trade, by launching an attack against England's powerful allies, the Mohawks. The Mohawks, encouraged by New York, had been successful in interfering with the French trade with Indians farther west. The governor of New France led 600 volunteers in what he styled a retaliatory mission to avenge some Frenchmen killed and robbed by the Mohawks in one of their raids against the western tribes.⁶ The Mohawks appealed to Colonel Nicholls for assistance, and he immediately requested the surrounding colonists to lend aid to the Indians. However, the colonists

⁵Ibid., 69-70.

⁶Ibid., 118.

refused because they feared an attack from surrounding tribes who were enemies of the Mohawks and friends of the French.

England hoped that they would be able to avoid all danger internationally in this situation by remaining neutral on the surface. Yet they suggested to Colonel Nicholls to consider "whether it may not be good to let the French and Mohawks try it out a while, and if the Dutch can be kept from supplying of them, their necessities, with the opposition of the Mohawks, will weaken them and put them into so bad a condition that they be farr easier dealt with by all."⁷ Whatever its ethics this was a logical desire, to weaken the strong Mohawk tribe and thus insure its reliance upon and subjugation to the English. The Mohawks, facing a costly and losing battle, sent out messengers to sue for a truce with the French in hopes of rebuilding their strength and position. The Mohawk commissioners were received with great friendliness in Quebec. The French authorities welcomed the conference, but for their own purposes; they wanted to lure the Indian leaders away from home while preparing a final attack to destroy the tribe at the same time as the meeting. The governor of New York, Winthrop, saw through this ruse and wrote England that "I had intelligence from both Captain Baker, commander of Fort Albany, and from divers chiefs Indians, that it was designed and endeavoured by the French to draw these people into a confederacy with them, upon pretense...that their intent was to make warre against the Mohaques [Mohawks]...."⁸

Information secured at that time indicated that the Dutch merchants were encouraging the French to attack the Mohawks and the English. Colonel Nicholls wrote to Mr. Arendt Van Curler, a leading Dutch

⁷Ibid., 121.

⁸Ibid., 137.

merchant, that he knew that the French and the Dutch were working together to stir up the Indians against the English, and predicted that when the French had accomplished that purpose they would then ignore the Dutch. According to Nicholls, the main reason that the French were interested in Dutch help was to assist in destroying the beaver trade at Albany.⁹ Once this was an accomplished fact, the Dutch would be of no more use to the French and would go the same way that it was planned for the English to go. Realizing their position between the two great nations, one is amazed that the Dutch were able to survive on the continent as long as they did.

The authorities in New York were greatly opposed to the Mohawks suing for peace with the French without their advice, and the commissioners at Albany were encouraged to go to Quebec with the Indians and assist in making the peace treaty. Their purpose was to make sure that the treaty would not be harmful to English interests, and at the same time to warn to Mohawks of the real reasons behind the French desire for peace. These reasons were presented to the Indians thus: "the truth of their designs is to ingross the whole of the beaver trade for they see plainly their attempts upon the Maques [Mohawks] will fail."¹⁰ The commissioners were successful and prevented the peace treaty and meeting between the Mohawks and the French, and in turn the Mohawks again became staunch English allies.

Now that the threat from the French had been turned aside, the only remaining task was to reaffirm old trade rights with the Indians. In 1667 the governor of New York signed a treaty with the Six Nations and

⁹Ibid., 147.

¹⁰Ibid., 146.

the Mahikander or the River Indians.¹¹ The Iroquois told the English that they wanted to live in peace with them, and in 1668 the former gave Colonel Nicholls two young boys as presents to indicate their desire for peaceful relations.¹²

The French at the same time also signed a peace treaty with the Six Nations,¹³ but the Iroquois would not agree to be under subjugation to any nation. The Iroquois were maintaining a middle road of neutrality that was of importance to the existence of their nation and of the fur trade. Now that the English and French had cemented their relations with the tribes, they were able to extend their commerce among the natives without threat of war.

Also in the year 1667 peace was settled among England, France, and the United Netherlands, in the Treaty of Breda. The most important issue for Holland was the official yielding of New Netherland to Colonel Nicholls as the representative of the Duke of York, as a result of the English victory in 1664.¹⁴ The Dutch were more willing to lose New Netherland than New Netherland was. But the Dutch merchants were not satisfied with these agreements and constantly urged forcible recapture of New Netherland. This pressure resulted in the third and last war between the English and Dutch which began in 1673 and ended in 1674. But before this situation actually took place conditions had to become favorable for seizure of the area in the New World.

In November of 1668 the English Board of Trade reported to the King

¹¹Colden, The History of the Five Indian Nations, 19.

¹²Ibid., 15.

¹³Ibid., 19.

¹⁴NYCD, II, 522.

on conditions in New York during that year. The main complaint in this report concerned the Duke's permission for three or four ships a year from Holland to come to New York to trade. The English merchants in the colony were said to be suffering from a loss of trade to the Dutch merchants because of this agreement, and a resulting decrease of customs duties to the mother country. The Board had investigated the conditions and complaints, and now advised the king that his obligation to the Dutch to permit these ships had been fulfilled in the first six months after the seizure of New Netherland. The Board ruled that since the colony was currently prospering, the reasons for allowing the ships were no longer present, and the free trading rights of the Dutch in the colony should be prohibited. It was agreed by the Board that unless the Dutch traders' activities ceased, the English trade of the colony would be ruined; demand for products from the home country would even be affected, for colony and mother were closely inter-related, and loss of colonial trade affected the factories in England and Ireland. Furthermore, since the Dutch were not allowing the English traders to compete for their colonial products, England was not bound to open her ports to Dutch competition. On this reasoning, the king renounced the Dutch right to enter New York and use their free trade privileges. From this date onwards, any nation that attempted to trade with New York had to have the consent of the mother country, and if they did not receive such permission the consequences would be severe.¹⁵ This law was strictly enforced despite protests from the Dutch in Holland and New York. It led to bitter feelings on the part of the Dutch merchants in New York and contributed to the demand for Dutch seizure of that colony.

¹⁵O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, III, 177.

While general conditions in the whole colony improved during the latter 1660's, the cities of New York and Albany remained the principal centers of population and trade. Both towns existed solely on trade with the Indians, England and the West Indies, and they shipped out primarily beaver and tobacco.¹⁶ The Dutch settlers in the colony, after the recent decree, were relied upon to improve the agricultural standards of the colony, while the English were involved with the fur trade. Yet the former Dutch colonists were not overly fond of their new masters and their lowly role in the business of the community; after all, they once had dominated the business and fur trade, so they constantly urged Holland to buy the colony back from the English. But nothing came of these hints to Holland.¹⁷

From 1664 to 1673 the English traders were active in their efforts to establish cordial relations with their neighbors, the Five Tribes, sending lavish gifts that were really bribes for the chiefs in return for valuable land and trade. The League still refused to allow forts to be built in their land, particularly one desired by the English at Niagara. The Indians realized that such a fort would be built upon the crossroads of the fur trade that was coming from the far nations and would make their position as middlemen in the trade very vulnerable to the English. The Iroquois needed these far western pelts for their own prosperity and would agree to nothing that would jeopardize their position and control of the fur trade.¹⁸

The English also relied heavily upon the activities of interpreters

¹⁶Ibid., 397.

¹⁷O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, I, 126.

¹⁸Ibid., 127.

in their policy making with the Indians. These men came, usually, from lower income Dutch families in Albany. Most of the interpreters were fur traders and served as messengers for the governor, besides reporting the desires and actions of the Indians to New York. Soon these men became almost an institution, were regarded as a regular part of the government of the colony, and were of valuable service to furthering the trade relations between the Iroquois and New York.¹⁹

In 1673 the colonial government, acting in fear of an impending Dutch attack upon New York, sent a report to the Board of Trade which related the activities of the Dutch in the area and held that they were interrupting the trade to England and diverting it to Holland. While these activities worried colonial officials, the colonists themselves were not too concerned, being closely tied to the Dutch socially as well as in matters of business. Too many Englishmen were busy making their own wealth to worry about losing New York. While the Board admitted that some action should be taken to protect the settlers, they did not act in time to prevent the recapture of New York by the Dutch.²⁰

One Robert Hodge gave his version of the recapture of New York as he stood on shore and watched the attack. He stated that on July 28, 1673, the Dutch sailed into the harbor with twelve ships of war and twelve prizes they had captured. The ships had to stop a short way in the harbor due to bad weather, and, while waiting for the weather to change, the Dutch on Long Island boarded the ships and told the commander of the condition of the English fort. Captain Manning of the English fort went aboard the Generall and wanted to know what the Dutch

¹⁹O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, III, 333-334, 776, 844; IV, 22-23, 43, 76.

²⁰Ibid., IV, 211.

desired. Their reply was that "they came to take the place, which they saide was their owne and thyr owne they would have."²¹ Captain Manning, asking for some time to get his fort ready, was told that he had a half-hour to decide, after which the Dutch would attack. After the half-hour passed, the Generall fired a broadside into the fort, with English guns answering by raking the ship. One Englishman was killed as he raised himself on the fort wall, waving his sword. The fort held out for four hours, as long as they had ammunition, and then lowered the flag. The sixty-eight men of the fort were placed as prisoners of war on the Dutch ships, and the Dutch proceeded to capture two more English ships. Before the Dutch ships sailed out of the harbor, the conquerors turned the town and fort over to newly elected Dutch officials.²²

While all this was happening the English governor and the rest of his garrison were in Esopus, a nearby village, where they had gone to renew treaties with neighboring Indians. The latter, having been stirred by the Dutch to the point of war, were calmed by this visit from the governor, and renewed their allegiance to the English. But this treaty had little effect, since by the time the Governor returned to the fort the English no longer controlled New York.²³ By the time the news of the recapture of New York reached England, the peace conferences between the Dutch and the English had been under way for some time.

News of the capture was joyfully received in Holland, where the States-General received a letter saying: "that his entire province of

²¹Collections of the New York Historical Society (New York: Presented by the Society, 1868), 183.

²²O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, III, 199-200.

²³Ibid., II, 544.

New Netherland, consisting of three cities and 30 villages, was to the great joy of its good inhabitants, on the 9th of August last, reduced again under the obedience of your High Mightiness and his Serene Highness, their lawful and Native Sovereigns from whose protection they were cut off about nine years ago in time of peace."²⁴ But this joy was not to be long lived for the colonists in New Netherland.

The loss of colonies in other areas of the world forced the Dutch, in December of 1673, to approach Charles II of England with an offer for peace. The Dutch agreed to accept the Treaty of Breda and to restore to each country the colonies that each had won during the war. The Dutch were sure that England would want the return of her colonies and New York, and the Netherland could suffer the cost of losing New Netherland but not any of her other colonies.

Charles II wrote to the States-General in March, 1674, citing the sixth article of the proposed agreement, which agreed to the return of all colonies to their prior owners for securing peace.²⁵ This was the agreement that the Dutch were hoping for, and on March 6, 1674, they agreed to the King's proposal, but only if the Dutch inhabitants would not be molested by the English and would be allowed to keep their lands, homes and all their possessions and the rights that they had possessed under the Dutch.²⁶ Charles II agreed to the request, and the resulting treaty of Cologne brought peace in Europe and the new world between the Dutch and the English.²⁷ Yet the treaty of Cologne did little more than

²⁴ NYCD, II, 506.

²⁵ O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, II, 545.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 533, 535.

restore areas taken during the war to their owners prior to the conflict.²⁸

Charles II wanted immediate possession of New Netherland. The Dutch were to turn the command of New Amsterdam or New York over to Sir Edmund Andros as early as possible.²⁹ Andros, by orders received in July, was to proceed to New York and officially receive it from the Dutch, and settle all problems arising from the transfer of government.³⁰

Shortly after Charles II reclaimed New York he officially granted it to his brother James, who was now Duke of York.³¹ Robert Livingston arrived in New York about the time of the transfer of government and recorded his impressions of the scene. He described conditions as chaotic. The colony was in confusion, all business was disrupted, and merchants of Massachusetts were attempting to gain control of the trade for their own colony. The situation brought an end to the direct trade that had existed between Albany merchants and those in Springfield. From this time onward, all trade goods, especially furs, were to go through New York City if they were to be shipped abroad. At New York each trader had to pay a tax or duty of three pence a fur, even if the furs were going to Boston.³² This new law broke the attempt of Massachusetts

²⁸Francis Whiting Halsey, The Old New York Frontier; Its Wars with Indians and Tories, Its Missionary Schools, and Titles, 1614-1800 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), 89.

²⁹NYCD, II, 544.

³⁰Ibid., III, 215.

³¹Lawrence Leder, Robert Livingston and the Politics of Colonial New York (Published for the Institute of Early American Culture and Society: Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 10.

³²O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, III, 217.

to seize the trade and gave New York control of the export of the furs from that area and the center of the fur trade.

This shift of trade through New York City made business more difficult for the merchants of Albany. The one factor that still made Albany important in the fur trade was her unique geographic location, which made her the center of trade with the Iroquois. As long as the Six Nations had anything to barter, Albany's nearness to the interior rivers and coastal harbors would make the city important in any matter that pertained to the fur trade, the Iroquois, and trade with Canada or Europe. And the trade and the Indians would be of importance until the English finally forced the withdrawal of the French in 1763.³³

In Albany, the most important people came to be the former Dutch citizens who traded with the Indians. These men cultivated the Indian trade, considering it their own, and resented the intrusion of anyone. Albany merchants tried to control this trade as long as possible to the exclusion of men from the New England towns.³⁴ Nevertheless, with the withdrawal of the Dutch as competitors in the area of New York, and with the Duke regaining sole management of this area for England, changes were bound to occur.

The Dutch had laid the basis of government and settlement, and more importantly, the foundation of trade that was passed along to England in 1674. Now England had the opportunity to develop her own system of trade in the area of New York. Yet Dutch influence can be seen in the English policies that evolved from 1674 to 1688. These changes and their effect on the fur trade will be discussed in the next chapter.

³³Leder, Robert Livingston, 12.

³⁴Arthur Buffinton, "The Policy of Albany and English Westward Expansion," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VIII (1922), 330.

CHAPTER IV

ENGLISH TRADE POLICIES, 1674-1688

After England assumed control of the New York colony from the Dutch, they gradually modified the trade policies that had existed for years and which had been established on a local level. The changes actually began in 1660 when the Council of Trade was established, as previously mentioned.¹ This trade council discussed all issues of Indian relations, boundary disputes between the colonies and foreign nations, and common defense for the colonies, and attempted to encourage the industries of the colonies.²

The chief policy, which changed little through the years, was one of maintaining all alliances and treaties with the League of the Six Nations and with the Indians of the southwest, or the interior tribes. These agreements were the basis of a defensive stand against the French in Canada and the Spanish in Florida. Included in this policy was a plan to set the tribes against each other so that, in their weakened state, the English could control them for their own purposes. Of course, the main objective during this period was to encourage the growth and profit of the fur trade with the natives.³

¹O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, III, xiii.

²Oliver M. Dickerson, American Colonial Government, 1696-1765 (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1962), 285.

³Ibid., 336.

A precedent the Council established was that of purchasing Indian friendship by giving presents to the agreeing tribes and individuals. The natives came to expect the gifts at all conferences, and the British government accepted the consequent expense as a responsibility that must be met. These gifts were presented to the Iroquois, for instance, when there was a threat of war, when a new governor had arrived and treaties had to be renewed, or on any other special occasion.

An important question discussed at the conferences where the gifts were distributed, was the establishment of English forts in the Iroquois land. These outposts were supported by the mother country from various funds and by donations from New York and the other colonies.⁴ The neighboring colonies, realizing that the New York border must be protected lest they also suffer during time of war, offered assistance to maintain the forts. This support from the colonies came only in cases of emergency, and the rest of the time New York alone had to pay the balance of the costs. To get as much money as she could from England, the colony frequently petitioned for assistance.

Whenever a colony needed money, soldiers, guns, or supplies, the Governor of that colony sent a request to the Council for the desired goods. After approving the request, the Council sent it to the Treasury to be filled. Then, if ships were available, the goods were sent to the colony. But if there were no ships available, the colony must wait on the pleasure of the mother country. This was a lengthy process that made it difficult for the colonies to receive supplies as quickly as they were needed by the settlers. Because of this situation, the colonists were often left to their own devices to solve their problems; England was

⁴O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, IV, 705-706.

simply too far away to be of use. Thus actual final control of trade matters, laws, and business decisions, despite the theory, often lay in the hands of the local government.

This system was probably the greatest inheritance from the Dutch to the English, having originally been set up under Governor Stuyvesant. This method allowed the governor to select local officials from a list of men considered qualified by the town officials. The governor had these men placed on the court of trade as magistrates, and they then controlled the trade policies of the colony. This way of selecting local officials was begun in 1665 by the Dutch and was very successful in administrating local problems.

The magistrates influenced the governor's decisions by supplying information obtained from local traders. However, the local government was more often interested in increasing the prosperity of their immediate area than in that of the entire colony or the empire. The governor was forced to follow the advice of local officials, however, because they had closer relations with the Indians than even his own officials and could thus control the tribes. As long as the governor and local officials were in harmony, the trade progressed with a degree of stability.

Albany became particularly important in 1675 because of the near extinction of the beaver in other areas of English North America. Government officials stated that "the one constant factor in Britain's policy was the policy of Albany."⁵ All of the coastal lands had long been trapped out, and the traders had been forced to journey far into the interior in search of the rich pelts. Now almost all of the

⁵Buffinton, "The Policy of Albany and the English Westward Expansion," 335.

available furs had to come from the land around the Great Lakes and the rivers that flowed into the Mississippi. Albany, as the closest post to the Lakes and the River, was the largest town in New York during the colonial period. Due to its size and close relations with the Iroquois, Albany soon became the center of the fur trade, and the opinions of the Albany magistrates regarding trade or Indian affairs were quite influential.⁶

The governor of New York in 1675 was Edmund Andros, who was fairly adroit at maintaining an equilibrium between the royal and local interests, mainly those of Albany, in the fur trade. Quickly he realized that anything that affected the Iroquois had to have the approval of the officials at Albany.⁷ But Andros did not want to be entirely excluded from control of the trade nor have it under the complete influence of the biased traders at Albany. To solve the problem, he established a board in 1675 to act as Indian Commissioners and keep him informed of the activities of the English and the Indians at Albany. All matters of importance between the two were to be negotiated by Andros. The establishment of this Board soon gave the governor more voice in the activities and control of the fur trade as well as more influence over the Five Tribes.⁸

One of the first men appointed to this Board was Robert Livingston, who in later years became well known for his trading policies and his handling of Indian relations throughout the colony. In 1675 Livingston proposed a separate charter for Albany. In this plan, he listed four

⁶Wraxall, Abridgment, xv.

⁷O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, III, 217-219, 223, 224.

⁸Leder, Robert Livingston, 15.

reasons for such a charter, most of which related to increasing the fur trade. The four reasons were: first, the town wanted the fur trade as a monopoly with no interference from outsiders; second, the town was to be recognized as a "body politique"; third, something had to be done to stop the Van Rensselaers from ruining the town's trade by their own activities; fourth, the licenses given out by the governor to all hunters must be stopped since they were ruining the town's finances by destroying the trade.⁹ The entire document demonstrated the importance of the fur trade to the financial existence of Albany and to the entire colony of New York, and thus the mother country. Livingston quickly came into a position of leadership in the colony and found many supporters of his ideas on regulating the fur trade.

In 1675 a general uprising of the Indians, known as King Philip's war, disturbed the fur trade. During the conflict Albany became a defensive barrier for New York and the other northern colonies against the Indian hordes. Andros managed to persuade the Iroquois to remain as faithful allies of the English and stay neutral. This agreement on the part of the Iroquois made them valuable as a buffer against any attempts by the French to invade New York during the war and also allowed the trade to continue with little interference at Albany.

The importance of the firm loyalty of the Iroquois league was seen in this conflict. The frontier of New York had to be defended, and the officials in London even went so far as to try to organize an inter-colonial action for this defense. This plan failed because of the jealousies among the New England and Southern colonies. The defense of all

⁹Ibid., 44.

the colonies then remained the alliance of the League against the French until the French were removed as a threat.¹⁰

Because New York did not face any serious threat during King Philip's War, thanks to the Iroquois, Andros limited his activity to trying to prevent any aid from going to Indians who were attacking other colonies. He began by forbidding the sale of powder and guns to the Indians.¹¹ After the end of the war the sale of arms resumed, with the Iroquois being favored in the trading.¹² Andros also attempted to consolidate the trade for the merchants of New York alone. All traders had to buy and sell their products at New York City, making sure that the duties on the goods were paid, and thus the proceeds of the markets stayed in New York.¹³

At the conclusion of the war, Andros sent a report on conditions in New York to the Council of Trade. In this report the feelings of the people of Boston and Massachusetts were blamed for the war, since these colonies hated and feared the French so that they did all in their power to break the French trade. The French, in time, encouraged the Indians to attack the English settlers with promises of French aid if they succeeded. If Boston had listened to Andros, the report went on, the war could have been prevented or at least would not have been so destructive. Governor Andros reported his offer to have the Iroquois fight against Philip and Boston's rejection of the offer. Andros said that he had

¹⁰Herbert L. Osgood, The American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), I, 62-64.

¹¹O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, III, 258.

¹²Ibid., III, 265, 266, 268.

¹³Ibid., III, 238.

then prevented the Iroquois from joining with Philip.

In spite of this assistance on the part of Andros and New York, Boston criticized Albany for supposedly selling Philip guns and supplies, which Andros said was a tale "of malice and Envy...for the government of Massachusetts loves no government that is not like their own,...and always encouraging an interloping trade" in New York because they feared the loss of their own trade.¹⁴ Andros' proof that the sale of guns was forbidden on threat of death did much to quiet Boston, but the Bostonians remained suspicious of Albany traders. Soon recriminations were forgotten as trade slowly returned to normal and with it prosperity.

As a result of Philip's defeat, the Five Nations were completely in control of the area around Albany. Now the Iroquois did not have to worry about the threat of other confederacies, and they could turn to consolidating their hold on the remaining small tribes. English guns, again being sold at Albany, helped the Iroquois quickly to conquer the surrounding tribes. The League again ruled the English colony and the fur trade.

Because of the sudden increase of the League's power, the colonists of Virginia and Maryland asked Andros to arrange a conference between the Iroquois and their own colonial representatives to discuss a mutual peace. In 1677 such a treaty was signed; but only the Mohawks firmly kept the peace. The other tribes continued to be influenced by the French and raided settlements in Virginia and Maryland.¹⁵ This situation caused relations between New York, which was not attacked, and the other colonies to deteriorate.

¹⁴Ibid., 242.

¹⁵Colden, The History of the Five Indian Nations, 20-21.

The citizens of Albany also renewed their requests to Andros that he give them a monopoly on the fur trade, in order to keep the Indians from moving into Canada in search of more goods. On August 22, 1678, Andros declared that the Indians of the Mohawks, Machican, and River Tribes could always keep their lands around Albany, and never fear of losing their way of life. August 23 saw the governor giving Albany complete control of the fur trade, although he stipulated that all goods going from Albany to Europe or any other colony must first be shipped through New York City.¹⁶ Despite the new monopoly, Albany merchants also had to submit their goods to the merchants in New York if they wanted them shipped and pay the tax the merchants asked. By this means the fur trade of Albany was encouraged, but not at a loss to the whole colony. The system would succeed only as long as the alliances with the Indians remained intact and the fur trade prospered.

Andros reported to the Board of Trade in 1678 that the furs from Albany were weighing "50,000 tons" yearly and that the duties paid on each fur shipped out of New York City was "one shilling and three pence on exported beaver and three percent on all imported goods."¹⁷ These figures showed the Board that the trade was improving and that relations with the Indian tribes were even better than in the past. The foundation of the system laid by the Dutch was just beginning to pay off.

The Iroquois tribes continued to molest Virginia and Maryland to such an extent that these colonies again requested a conference with the chiefs of the League. Andros immediately called a conference with Colonel William Kendall and Colonel Southly Littleton, and the chief sachems of the Iroquois. Colonel Kendall spoke first to the Oneida, telling them that they already had provoked the settlers enough to cause a war, and that it was only the intervention of Andros and his promise that the Indians wanted to live in peace that prevented such

¹⁶Leder, Robert Livingston, 16.

¹⁷O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, III, 260-261.

action. The Indians were to promise not to "offend or molest our People or Indians living amongst us."¹⁸ At this same conference Colonel Kendall introduced new laws of the colonies to the Indians. Whenever he came upon a "christian," the Indian was to stand still and put down his gun; if he did not, he would be looked upon as an enemy and killed.¹⁹ This procedure was to save Indian lives, since many settlers were roaming the woods and could not distinguish friendly Indians from enemies.

The Five Nations agreed to these terms, and on March 21, 1678, the Senecas renewed their peace with the English; on September 23 the Onodagas did the same, and on February 15 the Oneidas followed. They promised that they were England's faithful subjects and would "keep the chain" of peace.²⁰ In July of 1679 the Mohawks acknowledged themselves as subjects of the English.²¹ Thus did the Nations align themselves with England.

All the English wanted was the Indians' agreement not to attack the colonies, and if members of any nation signing the pact did so the guilty party should be turned over to the officials of the colony for punishment. All problems between the English and Indians were henceforth to be discussed by representatives before any violence was used.²² The English agreed to ratify their long standing agreement that the Indians would be able to present their case before the courts just like

¹⁸Colden, History of the Five Indian Nations, 28-29.

¹⁹Ibid., 29.

²⁰Wraxall, Abridgment, 8-9.

²¹Ibid., 9-10.

²²O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, III, 321.

any Christian.²³

Thus the efforts to win the alliance with the Iroquois continued into the 1680's. For this struggle, the English had more to offer than their only remaining competitor, the French. They had goods of better quality and lower prices, with the main item sold being the woolen duffels and outer garments made of better material than the French goods of luxury cloth. Also, the English rum was cheaper than the French brandy. Frontenac, as governor of New France, commented on this subject in 1681, noting that beaver skins were worth more at Albany than Montreal, as much as one-third or even one-half more. He claimed that the English were using the trade to intrigue among the Indians to the ruin of the French trade.²⁴ These factors in favor of the English were not overlooked by the Iroquois. In England, however, the Board of Trade began to wonder why, if this trade was so profitable, was the mother country not obtaining more revenue from the customs house at Albany. The result was an investigation of the affairs of the customs taker, a Mr. Dyre, who was giving the Dutch traders a rebate on the customs paid of 12 shillings instead of the required 15 shillings per skin. After this the Crown knew how valuable the trade was and kept a tight control on the customs collection.²⁵

In 1682 Maryland finally persuaded the Five Nations to sign a treaty whereby the Indians agreed not to attack that colony or join with any other nations who wanted to attack them; if such an offense were committed, the League was to deliver the culprit to the proprietor for

²³Ibid., III, 322-328.

²⁴Ibid., IX, 146, 370, 408-409.

²⁵Ibid., III, 305.

punishment.²⁶ If any problems arose, Jacob Young, who lived near the tribes, was to be informed, and he would call the colonial commissioner to solve the problem.²⁷ The Indians stated that the only reason that they had attacked Virginia and Maryland in the past was that they had been drunk; thus were sorry that they could not hand over the leaders of the raid, for the latter had died in the attack; but they would pay five hundred beaver skins in compensation for the losses of the raid.²⁸ The commissioner from Maryland, Henry Coursey, reminded the tribes to keep out of the lands claimed by Maryland and Virginia, or they would be attacked. He wanted to know just why the Iroquois attacked the peaceful Piscatoway Indians, who were allies of Maryland. The Indian chiefs replied that they would not come into the colony's areas any more and that the same Jacob Young had encouraged them to get rid of the competition of the other Indians.²⁹

Thus in 1682 peace seemed assured for the New England colonies for the time. That year was also important for another reason, for in 1682 Colonel Thomas Dongan was ordered to New York as governor of that colony.³⁰ Colonel Dongan's arrival heralded changes in colonial policies and the growth of the intersectional phase of the fur trade for England. Dongan saw the important relation between trade and Indian policies. In a letter he revealed his thoughts; the Indians had traded with the English for thirty years and were now bound to the English and must

²⁶Ibid., 321.

²⁷Ibid., 322-323.

²⁸Ibid., 324.

²⁹Ibid., 326.

³⁰Ibid., 328.

remain so, or else the English would lose the country, the beaver trade, and control over the Indians.³¹ This one man represented all that had merged as trading policies of England and Holland since 1674 in New York.

To Dongan the fur trade meant a way of winning a new empire for England. If the nation could have control of the Iroquois it would have a great advantage over the rival French. Governor Dongan realized the French threat to the English colonies and to the entire North American continent. They are, he wrote, "making a pretense as far as the Bay of Mexico."³² It was not merely the trade that the French sought in 1682, and to prevent French domination Dongan sought to strengthen even further the ties between the English and the Indians.

The governor called for a new meeting of the Five Nations as soon as possible. His manner so impressed the Iroquois that they requested him to put the Duke of York's arms upon their camps as a sign to the French that the Iroquois were allies of the English and under their protection.³³ Dongan concluded the conference with the advice to the tribes to "keep a good understanding among yourselves; if any difference should happen acquaint me with it, and I will compose it. Make no covenant or agreement with the French or any other nation, without my knowledge or approbation."³⁴ Then the Governor presented the Duke's arms to the Indians and declared them to be subjects of England from that time onwards.

In 1684, after this defensive alliance had been signed, the

³¹Ibid., 510-511, 430.

³²Ibid., 394-395.

³³Colden, History of the Five Indian Nations, 39.

³⁴Ibid., 40; Wraxall, Abridgment, lix, 10.

Onondaga and Cayuga sachems declared that they always wanted to be allies of the English and protected by them.³⁵ In return the English had secured the possession of the valuable Susquehannah River valley and the subjugation of these two tribes to English influence.

In 1685 Albany finally received the charter that they had so long desired. Dongan was able to appoint the mayor, recorder, clerk and sheriff, and gave the western fur trade to the traders of Albany. But all activities of these traders had to pass the approval of the governor. Thus the system of local interest, as set up by the Dutch, was recognized and stabilized by Dongan. Dongan felt that this document was one of the most important charters in the control of the Indian trade.³⁶ By the charter the Albany interests "enjoyed the privilege, pre-eminence and advantage of having within their walls the sole management of the trade with all the Indians...."³⁷ Thus the fur trade was now a monopoly of Albany, but the charter also said that this trade had always been valuable to the advancement of the town and the colony. The trade activities of Albany had saved the town and the colony from the ravages of war and had thus benefited both.

Albany quickly acted on the new charter. In 1686 the town passed rules punishing any infringement on the monopoly; all persons suspected of infringement were to be sworn to protect the trade.³⁸ In this way Albany was able to control the trade. But Dongan tried to broaden the

³⁵Francis W. Halsey, The Old New York Frontier 1614-1800 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), 89.

³⁶Wraxall, Abridgment, lviii.

³⁷Ibid., lx.

³⁸Ibid., lxi.

trade by granting special licenses to some private individuals "to hunt unmolested among the Indians in the province" and to direct the western trade to Albany.³⁹

At the same time that Dongan was consolidating trade with the Five Nations, the French were actively trying to destroy it by encouraging the Iroquois to continue attacking the Indians living in the areas of Virginia and Maryland.⁴⁰ The French knew that they could not persuade the Iroquois to attack New York, but they hoped that attacks on other colonies would disrupt relations between the League and New York. However, Dongan refused to let anything ruin the alliance with the Five Nations. When Virginia and Maryland again protested the attacks of the Iroquois, Dongan called another meeting in Albany. On July 30, 1684, Lord Howard Effingham, the governor of Virginia, met with the Iroquois. He told the Iroquois that they had quickly forgotten what they had promised Colonel Coursey, and now they were to pay for all the goods that were destroyed in the raids.⁴¹ Dongan persuaded Lord Howard to inquire of the Indians the reason for their attacks.

The Onodagas and Cayugas blamed their actions on their receiving in their villages French priests who persuaded them to attack the English in Virginia and Maryland. The Mohawks pointed out that the other tribes had received the priests and had not attacked the English. At this point Dongan suggested that the tribes not receive any more priests from Canada.⁴² Dongan was himself a Catholic and requested that England send

³⁹O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, IX, 197; Buffinton, "Policy of Albany," 345-346.

⁴⁰Colden, History of the Five Indian Nations, 31-32.

⁴¹Ibid., 33-34.

⁴²Ibid., 31.

more English priests to counter the influence of the priests from Canada. English priests were from this time on to try to bring villages of Catholic Indians under the sway of England instead of France.⁴³ Even Robert Livingston warned of the "secret intrigues of the Jesuits and the need to destroy their influence among the Five Nations."⁴⁴

The Iroquois replied that they had need of English protection against the French, or they would lose their land and the beaver trade.⁴⁵ The Indians feared that the French were preparing to attack them. In fact, Louis XIV had written to De La Barre, in Canada, saying "as it concerns the good of my service to diminish as much as possible the number of Iroquois, and as these savages are robust and stout, will, moreover serve with advantage in galleys."⁴⁶ De La Barre was then to attack the Indians and send the defeated to serve on the King's galleys for the rest of their lives. The French had seen the English trade prosper primarily because of Iroquois activities and now desired to eliminate the competition by destroying the League.

Unfortunately for the Iroquois, France and Great Britain were at peace at this time. Governor Dongan received orders to encourage the ties of the Indians to the English but to do nothing that would cause French complaint. Dongan was to use only open and friendly methods in securing the trade and the Indians for England.⁴⁷ This situation gave

⁴³Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.), The Jesuit Relations and Allies Documents (New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959), LXIV, 280.

⁴⁴Leder, Robert Livingston, 88.

⁴⁵Colden, History of the Five Indian Nations, 41; NYCD, III, 417.

⁴⁶E. B. O'Callaghan (ed.), Documentary History of the State of New York (Albany: Weed, Parsons, & Co., 1850), I, 73.

⁴⁷O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, III, 352.

the French an opportunity that they would not let pass. De La Barre reported that the Senecas had attacked the French traders and were holding some of these men prisoners in their camps. The only possible response to this act was to declare war.

De La Barre ordered the Jesuits to divide the Iroquois among themselves and cause confusion to hide the fact that the French were going to attack the tribes. Also, an order went out from Quebec to their Indian allies to join in attacking the Iroquois. But, strangely enough, De La Barre also sent messengers to advise Dongan of the attack.⁴⁸ The French advisors were greatly upset at this action by De La Barre and complained to Paris how ridiculous it was to warn their enemies. They knew that Dongan would relay the information to the Iroquois and assist them in planning their defenses, for England would do all it could to protect the Iroquois and ruin the French trade.⁴⁹

This fear of the French advisers was correct. Although at peace, Dongan called a council in August and advised the Iroquois in planning their defenses. To the Indian call for military help, Dongan replied that the Iroquois had brought the war on themselves, but that he would offer some free advice. First, they were not to sign any peace with the French without his consent. Second, they should appoint one or two of the wiser men of the tribe to be in charge of the entire war and to keep their decisions secret. Third, they were to make peace with all the other tribes and urge them to come to Albany to trade. They were also to make overtures to the Northern Indians. Fourth, they should not let any French priests come among them and should hide their corn and keep

⁴⁸O'Callaghan (ed.), Documentary History, I, 73.

⁴⁹Ibid., 81.

their warriors sober.⁵⁰

At the same time, Dongan replied to De La Barre's message, saying that the Five Nations were under the protection of the English government and that England would protect them.⁵¹ Dongan did not arm the Iroquois and thus remained essentially neutral. The precautions proved unnecessary when De La Barre and his expedition reached the camp of La Famine and found no supplies or support; they thereupon turned back to Canada.

Dongan reported to the Council that conditions had returned to normal and that trade was once again prospering. The French quarrel was the result of their desire for the trade and control over English subjects.⁵² In reply, the Board of Trade suggested the encouragement of the trade and prevention of others taking part in it; to accomplish this aim, Dongan should set up a local committee of trade, composed of well-known men of the colony, who would report directly to the Privy Council on all affairs of trade.⁵³ Now that the threat of war had eased, the demands of the government were to push the prosperous fur trade.

Governor Dongan reported that the trade was prospering due to the activities of the Iroquois, and that he allowed no one to interfere with them without his permission at Albany.⁵⁴ The main hold on these native bargainers was the presence of a good market which was Albany. But just to be sure that the Indians continued to come to Albany, its townsmen

⁵⁰Wraxall, Abridgment, 12-14.

⁵¹O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, III, 503.

⁵²Ibid., 363.

⁵³Ibid., 369, 374.

⁵⁴Ibid., 393.

wanted the government to build several forts along the trade routes.⁵⁵

Actually the need for these forts had come about because of a recent decline in the number of pelts brought into Albany in that year. In 1656 there were 40,000 skins a year, but in 1686 there were fewer than 10,000 pelts coming into Albany. One reason was the war between the Iroquois and the French, but also there were the rising costs of powder to sell in exchange for the beaver skins. In addition, the demand for skins had declined since beaver hats were going out of style. The colonists wrote to the King requesting that he wear a hat made of the beaver sent for that purpose and thus encourage other men to wear the same.⁵⁶ But even this request failed to give the needed surge to the trade. From this time onwards, the fur trade tended to be less an economic factor and more of a political issue in the capitals of the world.

The League of the Iroquois was now in the middle, between the English and French interests. In 1687 these interests came to clash when the French attacked those Indians under the protection of England. The governor was told to warn Canada to cease the invasion of English territory and attacks on English allies.⁵⁷ Dongan wrote to the Lord President of the Board of Trade, saying "I know their pretence will be, that our Indians have wronged them, but it is not soe, for the beaver trade is the sole end of their designs what ever colour they give to their actions which is only hindered by the Five Nations of Indians on this side of the Lake, who have submitted themselves and their lands to the king's

⁵⁵Ibid., 394.

⁵⁶Ibid., 775, 806; IV, 571-572, 789, 805, 920.

⁵⁷Ibid., III, 504.

subjection."⁵⁸ The threat was not to the Indians as it was to the fur trade.

The Five Nations told Dongan that they would not allow the French to seize their trade and land, but that the English must help them in fending off the French troops.⁵⁹ In 1688 Dongan secured a fifteen month cease-fire in order to try for a peace treaty. The Iroquois argued if the French would remove the forts they had built, return all they had stolen from the Indians, and especially return the Iroquois prisoners that had been sent to France to work in the galleys, they would accept the peace.⁶⁰ Shortly after Dongan obtained the cease-fire, he was removed from office and replaced by Colonel Edmund Andros, who was now made governor of the newly created Dominion of New England. In 1688 the province of New York was annexed to the Dominion.⁶¹

Dongan's administration was recognized as one of the most important in the colonial history of New York. He planned strategically to strengthen the fur trade and to prevent it from falling away to the French. He established the basis for forts at such important points along the fur trade routes as Lake Champlain, Niagara, and other posts close to Albany.⁶² For the first time, during his administration, English traders ventured far into the Seneca country and the interior in search for furs.⁶³ Dongan was the first to see the threat of the Jesuit

⁵⁸Ibid., 428-429.

⁵⁹Ibid., 535.

⁶⁰Ibid., 536.

⁶¹Ibid., 542.

⁶²Ibid., 477.

⁶³Ibid., IX, 318, 363.

priests in influencing the Iroquois and the overall threat of the French. Unfortunately for the English people, his successors were not to be as far sighted in their policies as he was.

The acts of Dongan simply continued the regulations and laws that had been used by the Dutch from 1609 to 1674 and had not been destroyed in the time between the English conquest and 1688. These laws were important in showing that the English received the Indian administration of their predecessors but also that they approved of or continued an Indian policy that made them subject to the suspicion of other English colonies and by 1688 even of her own New York colonists. The Dutch traders in New York assisted in the continuation of these trade policies, and the government was the greatest gainer by the policy.⁶⁴

The effect of the fur trade up to 1688 had been primarily that of an economic interest that was afterwards replaced as a means of securing the support of the League of Five Nations. The system of alliances that evolved through the treaties with the Iroquois was to be invaluable in assisting the English for the upcoming colonial battles with France for complete control of the North American continent. Remaining in the middleman's position throughout the struggle was the red man. How the Iroquois avoided a disaster and managed actually to maintain their independence and prosper is the subject of the concluding chapter of this study.

⁶⁴W. R. Starna, Abridgment, lx, lxi.

CHAPTER V

THE LEAGUE SURVIVES, 1674-1688

During the time that England and France tried to outmaneuver each other for control of the riches that were possible from the fur trade, they found what they supposed was a pawn in their game of conquest, the simple native of the land. The manipulation of this pawn was passed on to the English from the early owners of New York, the Dutch. The foundations, laid by the Dutch in controlling the fur trade, were based on their knowledge of the hatred of the Iroquois for the distrusted French in Canada. This knowledge was handed intact to the new owners, who found that the Indian continued to bring their pelts for exchange even during the change in government in New York. In fact the volume of trade in furs for guns actually increased. The Iroquois, while encouraging commerce, never ignored the danger that a peaceful co-existence with either the English or the French could bring about a total domination, threatening not only trade but their very existence. Thus the natives formed their own master plan; "they aspired only to hold the scale evenly balanced between the two nations, whose mutual jealousy made the Iroquois sought by both and insured their safety."¹

French traders saw the advantages of having the friendship of the Indians as a source of furs and of allies to torment the settlements in New England. The terror of the Indian raid reminded the English

¹Wraxal, Abridgment, xxxix.

colonists of the threat to them if the tribes ever fell under the control of the French.² Yet the first concern of the Frenchmen was the acquisition of pelts to ship to Europe. When the supply of skins close to French settlements soon dwindled, the trappers were forced to search further inland for the once abundant beaver. As the center of the trade moved in the search for the pelts, an alliance with the interior tribes became a matter of international rivalry which threatened to break the previous balance of power between England and France in the frontier of New England. Extension of the trade became a matter of politics, encouraged from London and Paris. One nation had to control the trade despite resulting hazards to the respective colonials.

By the late 1600's evidence was clear that French trading companies were burning thousands of valuable skins to prevent a glut on the market, and thus keep the prices high enough to lure the Indians in to trade. This situation seemed to show a trend toward the feeling that the supply of furs was no longer as important as the contact with the native traders.³

Trade in the English settlements became a cut-throat competition of province against province and town against town. Especially was this true of conditions in Albany, which had now become the center of the fur and Indian trade for the area of New England. The fewer furs that came to the English trade centers, the more fierce the competition became for them as the traders violently reacted to the loss of the trade to the French. It took little encouragement to urge the fierce Iroquois to renew raids upon all French traders who ventured into the interior;

²Ibid., xl.

³Ibid., xxvii.

moreover, parties of warriors joyously intercepted the pelts being carried by the inland tribes to Montreal. This plan soon brought the desired results, the pelts ceasing to fall into French hands and the Iroquois becoming the middlemen in the competition. Through the Iroquois' activities the English interests expanded. To these reasons was added the allurements of a better market, which made a favorable impression on the natives, so much so that "the best part of the furs of Canada went to the English...."⁴

Primary reason for English success in luring the Indians to their market instead of the French one was the cheaper English goods. A price comparison in 1689 showed that a trader with one beaver pelt could get 8 pounds of powder at Albany, but at Montreal it took four beaver skins for the same purchase. A gun cost two beaver in Albany but five in Montreal. If the buyer wanted forty pounds of lead to make bullets, his purchase would cost only one beaver, whereas with the French he had to have three skins to sell.⁵ The Albany traders had a comparable price advantage over the French merchants in various other Indian sales. One observer noted that the Indian could get twice as much for his skins from the English as he could from the French and that this was the reason for the English controlling so much of the trade.⁶

English traders noted that in this competition their advantage was their freedom in trade as opposed to the Canadians' state monopoly. In addition, the rum and duffels that the Indians preferred were easier for England to get from her dependencies; France had to make these products

⁴Ibid., xlv, n.

⁵O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, IX, 408-409.

⁶Wraxall, Abridgment, xli-xlii.

at home and ship them by a long voyage to the hard-to-reach interior of Canada. It was easier and less expensive to reach Oswego than Montreal.⁷

Frenchmen were heard to complain that it was impossible for them to compete with the English as long as they made the goods so cheap and the skins were so hard to obtain.⁸ The French were losing the fur trade to the English on this basis primarily with the result that they sought to gain control by other means.

The custom of exchanging gifts to cement trade relations between the Indian and the European gave the French an opportunity to influence the trade. Perhaps France, better versed in diplomacy and ceremony than was England, impressed the Indians with their pomp and ritual.⁹ Yet the representatives of the Iroquois and the English did meet, and the latter would promise strict control of all commercial dealing with the tribe, plus the pledge of the English traders that they would conduct themselves honestly.¹⁰

The old custom of giving and receiving of gifts was a decisive fact along the frontier. Both European nations found that in order to carry on diplomatic relations with the aborigines, all conferences had to include the exchanging of gifts. This became a part of the competition between England and France for the alliance and friendship of the tribes, which in turn became concerned with the acceptance of the gifts.

The silent native who impartially took the offerings of the

⁷O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, V, 726-733.

⁸Waxall, Abridgment, xlii, n.

⁹Dickerson, American Colonial Government, 339.

¹⁰Osgood, The American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century, I, 54.

Europeans was but the counterpart of the diplomats who bribed and were accepted in the courts across the seas. The red man may have been faithless to his bargains, but had only to watch the activities of so-called civilized man for justification. The Iroquois became masters at aiding the French while professing to be friend and ally of the English; at times he reversed the procedure. He was logical and farsighted in following this course, for as time passed the Iroquois came to realize that all Europeans, no matter what their nation, were bent on plundering his people, reducing the tribes to subjection, and seizing the land that was rightfully theirs.¹¹

Thus the Indian diplomat knew that he had to play his cards just right to continue to exist. For many years the Indian was highly successful at the game, until Britain finally drove France from the continent; it was then impossible for the natives any longer to play the Europeans off against each other.

Until that time of English supremacy, the French had to maintain cordial relations with the Iroquois in hopes that by so doing they could reach the interior tribes where the pelts were to be found. England proved slower at moving into the interior, forming permanent settlements inland, and trying to entice the natives into their own society. To the Indian this movement became a matter of adapting to survive or risking the complete destruction of his race. French cordiality brought to their camps the early success of the fur trade and allies to turn lose on the New England countryside.¹² Edmund Andros, governor of New York, noted

¹¹Charles H. Lincoln (ed.), The Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 171.

¹²Wilbur R. Jacobs, Diplomacy and Indian Gifts (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1950), 11.

that the Indians frequently attacked the English colonists and were encouraged in their actions by the French.¹³ But even during this critical time England reported that the main tribes of the League remained neutral.¹⁴ But the French were successful in stirring the other tribes to attack the colonists and again showed the English the value of the Iroquois neutrality for their safety and prosperity.

The actions of the Iroquois angered the French. They thought that they had bribed the League into being their allies with the presentation of lavish gifts at frequent conferences. But the League's representatives followed a policy of strict neutrality and accepted the gifts and then went home and did what they pleased.¹⁵

With the English underselling and doing everything they could to hinder the shipment of troops and supplies to the far flung posts of the French, the latter reacted by actively urging the interior tribes to attack the English, even going so far as to promise French assistance in these raids. If the League would not openly join with the fleur-de-lis, other ways could be used to stir the Iroquois and bind them closer to Quebec; the method most often used was the presence of Catholic priests as missionaries and on the side as agents for the French government. The priests were to win the Indians to Catholicism, coaxing them into forming an alliance with the Frenchmen, which would in turn bring the domination of the fur trade to Canada.

This method became a direct threat to the British attempts to dominate the trade themselves. The introduction of English priests into the

¹³Lincoln (ed.), Narratives, 187.

¹⁴O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, X, 94, 888.

¹⁵Jacobs, Diplomacy and Indian Gifts, 13.

tribes around Lake Ontario and mainly among the Iroquois checked the influence of France among the far western tribes and weakened their sphere of control in the trade. The Iroquois again were the close allies of the English and brought the skins to their posts.

Frontenac wrote that the attempt to use the priests failed because they became more concerned with the riches of the trade than with the salvation of the savages.¹⁶ France was determined to prevent any further expansion of England into the interior and the loss of more furs to the competition. The policy of blocking expansion and defeating the Iroquois led to the attempt to build forts and control the trade routes from the interior.¹⁷

The Iroquois feared the appearance of forts and tried to prevent their construction, because permanent forts would harm their position as middlemen with the western tribes. The League wanted the trade to be done through them so that they could have a cut of the profit.¹⁸

The position of middleman was made possible by the trade that came from the interior tribes. This was the remaining location of the valuable pelts. The Iroquois conquered these tribes with the guns and ammunition brought from the English. This conquest consolidated the power of the League in the northeastern section of the continent. England and France realized that they now could not afford to anger this powerful confederation, as it could easily destroy either nation's colonies.¹⁹

¹⁶Francis Parkman, Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1894), 25.

¹⁷Peckham, The Colonial Wars 1689-1762, 14.

¹⁸Wraxall, Abridgment, xlv, n.

¹⁹O'Callaghan (ed.), NYCD, XI, 113.

The Iroquois were not insensible to the needs of their people and their position of importance in the trade. Quickly they brought the goods from the far western tribes to their ally, the English, and prospered through the exchange. Any tribe which did not bring their pelts to the Iroquois faced the threat of annihilation from the League.²⁰ For the Iroquois it was a matter of survival as they had no more beaver in their country.²¹ Clashes along the border to France continued to occur, but if it came to a matter of total war, the Indian was ready and the whites would suffer. To the Iroquois it was obvious that France would lose because they did not need the Iroquois as the English did; moreover, the Iroquois needed the English to continue to exist.

An early trader in the far west wrote that the western tribes were eager to trade with Albany because they feared the French.²² So it was that the League was able to maintain their position as middleman in securing the trade to Albany while offsetting French influence in the New England area.

Throughout the conflicts in North America that led to the final French defeat in 1763, the Iroquois played an indispensable role. What started as a commercial interest turned into an international rivalry in which the position of neutral middleman was most dangerous but also most profitable. The early colonies did not maintain their positions by their numbers of men or vigilance, but from the Indians who were in alliance with them. The protection of the English came to mean the strength of

²⁰Ibid., V, 571.

²¹Ibid., IX, 80.

²²Ibid., III, 395.

the treaties with the League of the Iroquois against the French.²³ And the Indian's diplomacy was to set the English against the French and thus safeguard his own existence until 1763.²⁴

But the prize that all concerned tried to win and control was the fur trade. If the Iroquois had not been able to conquer the interior tribes and control the trade routes to Albany, they would not have lasted long in New York. The Dutch were the first to come to this area and offer the Indians European products for the pelts. As a result of this one action the Iroquois came to rely on the cloth, guns, food, and other articles that once were luxuries but now were necessities. This need made possible the sound basis for expansion of the trade and made the early colonies prosper.

This prosperity caused the beginning of conflict between the competing nations. As profits decreased in the trade, the conflict came to be for allies to use against each other in the struggle for the land. The Europeans were able to use the Indians only because they had first won their alliance in the trading posts of New York. Thus, from the early days of the Dutch colonists to the domination of a whole continent by the English, the influence of the fur trade and its by-product can be seen. It came to be the sole tie between the Dutch, their conquerors, the English, and the powerful confederation of Indians, the Iroquois. Each tried to win and hold the land of New York, but the victor was the one that laid a solid basis of prosperity and expansion. That basis was found in the wealth of the fur trade, which passed with the years under English control from that of both the Dutch and the Iroquois.

²³Wraxall, Abridgment, xxxviii.

²⁴Ibid., ix, 219.

England won the contest in North America for colonial empire which, due to her vast commercial, industrial, and maritime strength let her undersell the French and eventually win the Indians over to the stronger side. In New York this struggle was finally joined between the French, Iroquois, and the British for control of the Mohawk valley. The French dreamed that, following their defeat of the Iroquois and the English, they might expand to the gulf and cut off any further English expansion. Against such an event the British had to maintain the support of the Iroquois League, and that meant a continuance of trade policies from 1674 to 1763. It was these unavoidable natural and social conditions that made the fur trade valuable to all concerned.

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