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978-1-107-68896-4 - The British Government and Commercial Negotiations
with Europe 1783-1793

John Ehrman

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PREFACE

This is a piece of old-fashioned economic history, in the sense that it is concerned with Government policy rather than with the affairs of regions, groups or individuals, or with statistical analysis. The policy in question, moreover, is British alone. I have not tried in any instance to follow the story in detail from the other end—an exercise which, it seems to me, would have little point unless it could be related to the attitudes and actions of other Governments over the same extensive field. We still need to know a good deal about the exact nature of some economic policies in Europe over this period, and the relations between them all. This study may be regarded as a contribution, within its limits, to a wider theme.

The limits will be evident in due course. They need, perhaps, a word of explanation. This work arose from a succession of unexpected findings while I was examining the financial and economic measures of the younger Pitt. It was conceived as a long article. It grew into a paper. And while it is now honoured by an appearance within hard covers, I have thought it appropriate to keep the earlier form, and would stress that the result is offered as a report on a particular subject, not as an attempt to survey the whole of British commercial policy over a period. If it is found useful as a complement to recent work, above all Professor Harlow's, on colonial economic policy, and for the light it throws on other related themes—on foreign affairs, on methods of administration, perhaps on the relations between economic policy and theory in the age of Adam Smith—it will have been worth while.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge help received. Professor J. S. Bromley, the late Professor Vincent T. Harlow, and Mr D. M. Joslin have made detailed comments on the text. The criticisms have been of great value, and I hope the authors will notice some improvements as a result; but I cannot of course thereby claim

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their approval for the final version in every instance. Mr R. M. Hartwell and Mr C. H. Wilson have been most kind in discussing the possibilities of publication, and I owe to Mr Wilson in particular, as well as the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, a very real debt of gratitude. Professor Harlow allowed me to consult, and to quote from, the second volume of *The Founding of the Second British Empire* in advance of publication, and Professor T. S. Ashton did me a similar kindness in the matter of the late Mrs Elizabeth Schumpeter's tables of English overseas trade statistics. Other acknowledgments, of permission to quote documents and of help on particular points, will be found in the notes to the text.

October, 1961

J. E.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>A.H.R.</i>	<i>American Historical Review.</i>
B.M.	British Museum.
B.M., Add. MS.	British Museum, Additional Manuscript.
<i>D.N.B.</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography.</i>
<i>E.H.R.</i>	<i>English Historical Review.</i>
<i>Ec.H.R.</i>	<i>Economic History Review.</i>
<i>H.C.J.</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Commons.</i>
<i>H.M.C.</i>	<i>Historical Manuscripts Commission.</i>
P.R.O.	Public Record Office.
P.R.O., B.T.	Public Record Office, Board of Trade Papers.
P.R.O., F.O.	Public Record Office, Foreign Office Papers.
<i>Trans. R. Hist. S.</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society.</i>