

## **ANNEX 9**

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DIPLOMATIC STRUGGLES: BRITISH SUPPORT IN  
SPAIN AND PORTUGAL, 1800 – 1810

By

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note of 20 April by admitting, "Moreover, nobody being present when the conversation in question took place, the discussion would prove endless, and be of no other use than that of presenting to the public the indecent spectacle of two persons, each of whom has some claim to their respect, mutually contradicting themselves in the face of the whole world."<sup>6</sup> The conflict appears to have stopped there for the time being, at least judging from the newspaper accounts. After this point though, little hope existed for Frere and Godoy to repair their fractured relationship. That fact destined Frere to fail in any future missions in Spain, as long as that court remained so heavily influenced by Godoy.

After the announcement of Frere's departure, but prior to his actually leaving, Lady Holland recorded some details of a few encounters she had with Frere. While Lady Holland never came across as an admirer of Frere, she sympathized with him in this situation. On 14 August 1804 she wrote in her journal about a conversation she had with Frere. She described him Frere as "hurt at his recall; [Frere] compares England in consequence of this humiliation to the insolence of the Prince of Peace, to Prussia in her servility to Bonaparte. [Frere] resolved not to accept another mission, after having been sacrificed here by the person who brought him forward in politics, and who ought to uphold him."<sup>7</sup> Despite his statement about never accepting another mission, obviously Frere did return to the diplomatic world later in his life.

The allusion to "the person who brought him forward in politics" could only refer to Canning, but those words or sentiments never appeared in any known source directly attributable to Frere. At about the same time that Frere's issues with Godoy reached a head, Canning had just come back into an office, this time as treasurer of the navy under Pitt's newly formed administration, in May 1804. Therefore, it seems unlikely that Canning would have had much ability to help Frere in any significant way. Pitt certainly could have afforded more help, but it was doubtful so early into his latest term of office.

The exact nature of the relationship, if even one existed in any significant way, between Frere and Pitt remains difficult to ascertain. The relationship between Pitt and Canning though, is far easier to explain. Their link dated to 26 July 1792, when Canning

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<sup>6</sup> Frere to Godoy, 20 April 1804, as cited in *The Times* (of London), 10 July 1804.

<sup>7</sup> Holland, *The Spanish Journal of Elizabeth Lady Holland*, 164.

What has become of you? ...I am here till next week. Pitt I hope is coming here on his way from Bath. He is very ill, and the Continent worse. But he, I hope, will get better.<sup>50</sup>

Pitt did not get better, and died a few days later. Pitt's death marked the end of an era in British politics, and also a significant change for George Canning upon the loss of his political mentor. The state of affairs on the European Continent did not significantly improve either over the next few years.

John Hookham Frere remained in his self-imposed seclusion for several more years. Apparently the main issue with the Parliament was the fact that Spain and France formed an alliance, leaving Great Britain out. Despite the fact that the government had already made plans and issued orders to attack the Spanish treasure fleet, Frere received most of the blame for the outbreak of war in 1804. Even though the Parliamentary inquiry begun in 1805 had collapsed within a matter of months, the damage to Frere's reputation certainly seemed permanent. Frere no longer merited any mention in the London or Paris newspapers. He next came to light in 1807 upon his nomination for a diplomatic post in Berlin at the Prussian Court.

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<sup>50</sup> Canning to Frere, 9 January 1806, *John Hookham Frere and His Friends*, 106.