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## From Our Archives

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# Napoleon at the Gates of Baghdad

by Steve Douglas

In the Summer of 1807, on the eve of his military onslaught into the Iberian Peninsula, Napoleon was arguably at the zenith of his power. The provisions of the Treaty of Tilsit had ended the War of the Third Coalition, and accorded him virtually total control over continental Europe. Russia, Prussia, and Austria all made their “peace” with Napoleon. Prussia was largely dismembered, deprived of all but a token army, and saddled with a huge indemnity to France, while Russia was brought into a series of agreements and understandings, both public and secret, which committed it to support Napoleon in his continuing conflict with Great Britain.

Napoleon was determined to close all European ports to British trade, and thereby bring Britain to its knees. With Russia, and what was left of Prussia joining Napoleon’s system, Portugal, Britain’s oldest ally on the continent, remained the only substantial point of access for British shipping on the mainland. Napoleon resolved to invade Portugal, and made arrangements with Spain, his years-long ally, to secure passage for his troops accordingly. According to the terms of the Treaty of Fontainebleau of Oct. 27, 1807, he was granted the right to garrison his troops in key cities in northern Spain, to protect the lines of communication and supply of his army which was to invade Portugal. In return, Napoleon pledged to Spanish Chief Minister Manuel Godoy—a thoroughly duplicitous character already on the French payroll—that Spain would be awarded southern Portugal (*sans* Lisbon, which the French would retain) as a new principality.

A 25,000-man French army under General Jean-Andoche Junot commenced its invasion on Nov. 19. By Nov. 30, Junot led 2,000 exhausted, but triumphant, troops into the capital city of Lisbon. The Portuguese royal family had evacuated the city, with aid of the British navy, just two days before Junot’s arrival. While Napoleon was disappointed that the Braganza royal family—together with their fortune—escaped his clutches, he was nonetheless pleased with the 300-mile forced march of Junot, insofar as it yielded him physical control of yet another country. No sooner did he have this nominal control of Portugal, than the insatiable Napoleon set his sights on Spain. There is perhaps no greater example of imperial arrogance, stupidity, and overreach in modern history. There was absolutely no compelling reason for him to do so!

Spain posed no threat whatsoever to Napoleon. Militarily



*Napoleon’s romantic hubris is captured in this 1801 painting, “Napoleon Crossing the Alps,” by his court artist Jacques-Louis David.*

speaking, its armed forces were regarded as incompetent, or mediocre at best. But, to be on the safe side, Napoleon insisted that a 15,000-man corps, which was deemed to be one of the most capable in the Spanish army, had to be deployed into north Germany, as an allied formation under the direction of the French Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte. Economically, Spain had been in bad shape for years. Henry IV of France had called Spain “a country where small armies are defeated and large armies starve.” Politically, the country was a squabbling, paralyzed mess. The King, Charles IV, was much despised by the people, as was his Chief Minister Godoy. Prince Ferdinand, the heir to the throne, was in constant conflict with both of them. Napoleon gleefully exploited the animosities and weaknesses of all three.

In February 1808, Napoleon proceeded to seize a variety

of Spanish towns and garrisons, without prior consultation with Godoy or other Spanish authorities. In the chaos that ensued, angry citizens rose in rebellion against Godoy and Charles IV, and blockaded them in one of their palaces. The King became so frightened, that he abdicated in favor of Prince Ferdinand, or Ferdinand VII. When the crisis passed, the King appealed to Napoleon to intervene and restore him to his throne. Napoleon was only too happy to “intercede” at the King’s request.

Napoleon could have ruled Spain efficiently through a Spanish caretaker—especially Ferdinand VII. But Napoleon’s monstrous imperial ego dictated that he install one of his own family members on the Spanish throne, even though the country had been his loyal and pliable ally for years. In reality, many Spaniards even welcomed the prospect of “regime change” away from Godoy and Charles IV, and were not unhappy at the prospect of Napoleon facilitating that. But when word leaked out on May 2, that Napoleon had issued arrest warrants for the remaining members of the Royal Family, an uprising erupted in Madrid to prevent their extradition by the French. Angry mobs killed as many as 150 French soldiers, and the French responded by killing at least three times that number of Spaniards in street skirmishes that raged thereafter. Martial law was imposed, and court martial teams sought out the leaders of the uprising, and brutally executed large numbers of “suspects.” While order was restored on the surface, rage against the French—seen only months before as possible liberators—grew to volcanic dimensions. Napoleon fueled it by forcing Ferdinand VII to abdicate and restore his father to the throne, only to have Charles IV immediately abdicate in favor of a Regency Junta supervised by Napoleon; it, then, on May 6, 1808, bestowed the Spanish Crown on Napoleon’s brother Joseph, at the time also King of Naples and Sicily.

### **Patriotic Resistance and Bailen**

Napoleon was blind to the depth, breadth, and fury of the resistance he had unleashed. He wrote to his brother Jerome, shortly after the events of early May, commenting dispassionately, “There was an insurrection at Madrid on 2nd May. Two battalions of fusiliers of my Guard and four or five hundred cavalry put everything right.” Only slightly later, he declared that, “Opinion in Spain is taking the direction I wish; law and order is everywhere restored.”

There were two relatively distinct phases to the Spanish resistance that ultimately expelled Napoleon and his hated regime from Spanish soil. The first lasted from May to December 1808. It was characterized by a combination of deployments by the 200,000-plus man Spanish army, in the open field, against large French formations, coupled with complementary attacks from ambush by Spanish civilian/irregular forces on French military detachments, or even single French soldiers who wandered too far afield, as well as on Spaniards who collaborated openly with the French occupiers. The Brit-

ish expeditionary force that arrived in August also played an important role during this period.

The second phase began to take shape on Dec. 28, 1808, on the eve of Napoleon’s departure from Spain. On that date, the Supreme Junta of Spain, meeting in Cadiz in internal exile, in an effort to rally opposition to Napoleon’s onslaught, called for the creation of a “new kind of militia”—of *partides* or *guerrillas*—giving birth, thereby, to the little war” or “guerrilla warfare.” A decree of April 17, 1809 amplified that of Dec. 28, calling for “all-out struggle” on this new “guerrilla warfare” front. This phase of the anti-French resistance assumed a character very much like the character of the insurgency in Iraq today. It had strong religious, patriotic, and anti-French elements to it, and was conducted with a sense of remorseless, murderous fanaticism. It was devastatingly efficient. It has been estimated that the number of guerrilla/insurgents never numbered more than 35,000 to 50,000 combatants at any given point in time, between 1809 and 1814. Yet, their deft collaboration with Sir Arthur Wellesley’s 30-40,000 man British expeditionary force, and the Spanish and Portuguese “regular” army forces that were attached to it (that never exceeded a total strength of 25,000), proved sufficient to tie down from as many as 340,000 (!) French troops in 1810, to as few as 200,000 in 1812, after Napoleon had siphoned off tens of thousands of soldiers for his ill-fated campaign against Russia.

Less than four weeks after he had his brother Joseph crowned King of Spain, patriotic resistance against the French occupation was spreading like wildfire. By the end of May 1808, the pro-French governors of Badajoz, Cartagena, and Cadiz had been assassinated. At the same time, three provincial juntas—in Valencia, the Asturias, and Seville—began to raise armies of Spanish patriots, for the purpose of expelling the invaders. The junta of Seville issued an appeal to Great Britain for aid, and the British dispatched both naval and land forces.

Still, Napoleon persisted in his imperial blindness. On June 9, 1808, he wrote to his former Foreign Minister Talleyrand, asserting that the arrival of his brother Joseph “will bring about the dissipation of all these troubles, raise everybody’s spirits and lead to the universal re-establishment of law and order.” When, however, the various French generals Napoleon had deployed in different theaters, met with relatively little success in their efforts to quell the rebellion, he began to shift his thinking. He turned his attention to the capital, saying, “The object of all our efforts must be to hold Madrid—everything is there.”

Meanwhile, the conflict was becoming more ugly by the day, with growing instances of atrocities and counter-atrocities. The French Commander Castellan reported: “Our men did not want to take any prisoners. They said, ‘These men are brigands—they kill us when we march alone.’” General Dupont, who had been dispatched with a corps of 23,000 men to pacify Andalusia, further inflamed the ire of the Spanish,



*This is an artist's rendition of Spanish men surrendering to Napoleon after his conquest. Napoleon lived to regret this adventure, which cost him 180,000 men.*

when his forces sacked the town of Córdoba. Thousands of peasants flocked to General Francisco Castanos' 30,000-man "Army of Andalusia," vowing revenge against the French.

They proceeded to exact their revenge in short order, and in a most spectacular way. General Castanos capitalized on some bad decision-making by General Dupont, and defeated him at the Battle of Bailen on July 21, 1808, whereupon Dupont surrendered his 18,000 troops. This represented the first defeat of a sizeable French military force, since Napoleon's ascension to power in 1801.

News of the French battlefield disaster spread at lightning speed throughout Spain, and all of Europe. The myth of French invincibility was punctured! The anti-Napoleon political factions in Prussia and Austria rode the wave of dizzying optimism engendered by the French defeat in Spain, and launched new efforts to forge an effective coalition against Napoleon's empire. Freiherr vom Stein, the great leader of the Prussian Reform Movement and Chief Minister of the Prussian government in 1808, spoke of the sense of excitement that the success of the Spanish resistance against Napoleon had unleashed:

The popular war which had broken out in Spain and was attended with good success, had heightened the irritation of the inhabitants of the Prussian state caused by the humiliation they had suffered. All thirsted for revenge; plans of insurrection which aimed at exterminating the French scattered about the country, were ar-

ranged; among others, one was to be carried out at Berlin, and I had the greatest trouble to keep the leaders, who confided their intentions to me, from a premature outbreak. We all watched the progress of the Spanish war and the commencement of the Austrian, for the preparations of that power had not remained a secret; expectation was strained to the highest point; pains were necessary to moderate the excited eagerness for resistance in order to profit by it in more favorable circumstances.

In late August 1808, Napoleon's secret police intercepted a letter from vom Stein to Prince Wittgenstein, requesting financial aid for secret Prussian war preparations against Napoleon, that were being timed to coincide with similar preparations underway in Austria. Napoleon issued an arrest warrant for Stein, and Stein was unable to set foot

again in Prussia, until late 1812. In a bit of historical irony that most likely did not escape Napoleon, vom Stein accepted Czar Alexander I's offer to become his advisor in March 1812, from which position he helped ensure Napoleon's defeat in the depths of the Russian Winter later that year.

The Pope, on his part, seized the moment of the French defeat at Bailen to publish a strong denunciation of Napoleon. This had a profound impact on the staunchly conservative Catholic population of Spain, by infusing the resistance to Napoleon with a substantial added degree of religious fervor. There had been growing tensions between Napoleon and the Papacy, almost from the moment of the signing of the Concordat. At one point, Pope Pius VII had even threatened Napoleon with formal excommunication from the Church, if he did not abandon some of his more egregious demands against Rome. A furious Napoleon ranted to his brother, "Does the Pope think that the rights of the throne are less sacred than the tiara? They wish to denounce me to Christendom—the madmen! The Pope who takes such a step will cease to be a Pope in my eyes. I shall consider him an Antichrist."

The importance of the religious component in the opposition can hardly be overestimated. It was not without reason, that an embittered and enraged Napoleon later derisively referred to the Spanish insurgency against him as "bandits led by monks." Many in the Spanish insurgency saw him as a pagan infidel—or even the Devil. A French observer characterized the situation as follows: "Comparing the occupation of its country to the Moslem invasion, the mass of the people,

urged on by the clergy, waged a merciless war against our soldiers. In a nightmare country, surrounded by hostile nature, faced by the passionate and cunning hatred of the inhabitants, stirred up by the first national war sustained by a people for its legitimate defense, the French soldiers were . . . enduring constant privations and hardship.”

### Napoleon’s Redeployment

In the aftermath of Bailen, things went rapidly from bad to worse for Napoleon. His brother Joseph, who had only finally arrived in Madrid on July 20, 1808, immediately evacuated the town. He relocated far to the northeast, almost within the shadows of France, behind the Ebro River. Napoleon was none too pleased with his hasty and long retreat. He

became even more unhappy with events unfolding in Portugal. A 14,000 man British expeditionary force under the command of Sir Arthur Wellesly (the later Duke of Wellington) landed at Mondego Bay in early August. From Aug. 15 to 21, Wellesly inflicted a series of defeats and setbacks on General Junot, as he advanced on Lisbon. After Junot was routed at the Battle of Vimiero, he and Wellesly’s superiors signed the Convention of Cintra on Aug. 22, according to which Junot and his 26,000-man army had to evacuate Portugal. News of yet another massive French defeat rocketted throughout an astounded and excited Europe.

Napoleon resolved upon two courses of action to remedy the situation. First, he decided to redeploy 200,000 of his most seasoned troops from central Europe into Spain, in order to

## The Beastman With The God Complex

Adolph Hitler’s “crown jurist” Carl Schmitt wrote, in glowing terms, of the philosophical outlook of Joseph de Maistre, whose works inspired the real-live “Beastman” Napoleon Bonaparte:

De Maistre spoke with particular fondness of sovereignty, which essentially meant decision. To him, the relevance of the state rested on the fact that it provided a decision: the relevance of the Church on its rendering of the last decision that could not be appealed, and the infallibility of the spiritual order, was of the same sovereignty of the state order. The two words *infallibility* and *sovereignty* were “perfectly synonymous.” To him, every sovereignty acted as if it were infallible, every government was absolute. . . . De Maistre asserted . . . that authority as such is good, once it exists: “Any government is good, once it is established,” the reason being that a decision is inherent in the mere existence of a governmental authority, and the decision as such is in turn valuable precisely because, as far as the most essential issues are concerned, making a decision is more important than how a decision is made. “It is definitely not in our interest that a question be decided in one way or another, but that it be decided without delay and without appeal.” In practice, not to be subject to error and not to be accused of error were for him the same. The important point was that no higher authority could review the decision. (emphasis added)

This was most certainly the outlook of Napoleon, as he made the decision to launch a completely unnecessary and groundless invasion of Spain. It is also the outlook of de Maistre’s bloody executioner, the beast who is the “bond of human association” and the agent of de Maistre’s perverse notion of “sovereignty”: “All greatness, all power, all subordination rest on the executioner. He is the terror and the bond of human association. Remove this mysterious agent from the world, and in an instant, order yields to chaos: Thrones fall, society disappears. God, who has created sovereignty, has also made punishment; he has fixed the Earth upon these two poles.”

After he became First Consul of France, Napoleon had his Aug. 15 birthday declared to be a new religious holiday, the Feast of St. Napoleon. And after he became Emperor, Napoleon had the catechism for French children rewritten to encourage their worship of him:

**Q.** What are, in particular, our duties towards the Emperor, Napoleon?

**A.** We owe him love, respect, obedience, fidelity, military service, all the contributions ordered for the defense of the Empire and throne, and fervent prayers for his welfare and the prosperity of the State.

**Q.** Why are we bound to show these duties towards the Emperor?

**A.** *Because God has established him as our Sovereign, and has rendered him His image here on earth, overwhelming him with gifts in peace and war. To honour and serve our Emperor is, therefore, to honour and serve God himself*” (emphasis added).

Notwithstanding this rewriting of the catechism on Napoleon’s behalf, the dictator still lamented his inability to declare himself the son of God! Yet this did not prevent him from acting his “God-complex.”

substantially upgrade the caliber of his troops and commanders there. Second, he concluded that he would have to lead the campaign in Spain, personally, “I see that everybody have lost their heads since the infamous capitulation of Bailen,” he said. “I realize that I must go there myself to get the machine working again.”

In an effort to secure his exposed and now weakened positions in central Europe, Napoleon convened a meeting with Czar Alexander I at Erfurt in late September. A desperate Napoleon sought assurances from Russia, that it would keep Austria in check while the French dictator was tied up in Spain. The Czar, recognizing that Bonaparte had almost no leverage, drove a hard bargain and gained various concessions with respect to Prussia, the Balkans, and Scandinavia. How much things had changed since Tilsit, a scant 15 months earlier; and all because of Napoleon’s insatiable imperial appetite and God complex-driven ego!

On Nov. 7, 1808, Napoleon launched a month-long series of battles and maneuvers that brought him into Madrid. Another month of fighting ensued before he returned to France in mid-January 1809, never to return again to Spain. While it can be said that Napoleon succeeded in restoring his brother Joseph to his palaces in Madrid; that he bested the ill-organized and ill-coordinated Spanish armies that he met on the field; and that, as a consequence, France occupied most of northern Spain; there was, at the same time, an extraordinary and ominous down-side to his Spanish battlefield successes. He lost close to 75,000 men in less than a year of conflict there. As 1809 dawned, no less than 270,000 of Napoleon’s best troops—a full 60% of the Empire’s total armed forces—were tied up in the Peninsula. Worse, Napoleon’s aura of invincibility and infallibility had been badly tarnished, if not irremediably damaged. But the worst for Napoleon in Spain was yet to come: five years of insurgency (guerrilla warfare) for which Napoleon, for all of his battlefield brilliance, had no antidote. Furthermore, it should be noted that many of the soldiers of defeated and disbanded regular Spanish army formations, migrated to become potent “irregular” participants in the insurgency against the occupation, much like members of the Iraqi army did after it was imperiously disbanded by Paul Bremer and the Occupation Authority in 2003.

Napoleon had brashly stated before his assault on Spain, “If I thought it would cost me 80,000 men, I would not attempt it [to seize Spain], but it will cost me no more than 12,000.” By the time Napoleon’s forces were finally expelled from Spain, over one quarter of a million French soldiers had lost their lives!

## **Geographic Factors**

No doubt one reason Napoleon thought that he could summarily suppress the Spanish insurrection against him, was because he had successfully squashed earlier revolts in northern Italy and Calabria, in southern Italy. In fact, even as late

as October 1808, as he was preparing to take the field against the Spanish, he promised his brother (King) Joseph, that the 200,000 veteran troops that he would lead into battle in Spain would see to it that, in the entire country, “there will not be a single village in revolt.” But Spain, unlike Calabria or northern Italy, represented an entire nation—not merely a region or small principality—with a long and storied history. And, whereas Calabria comprised barely 8,000 square miles, and the northern Italian areas in revolt only 16,000, the Spain in revolt against Napoleon was nearly 200,000 square miles in dimension. Just as the Prussian Reformers prevailed upon Czar Alexander I to lure Napoleon into the depths of Russia to his doom, trading “space for time,” the insurgents in Spain capitalized on “space in time,” to force Napoleon to fight a “people’s war” on a scale that vastly exceeded any of his prior experiences. Where French burning and pillaging of selected villages, coupled with the torture of numbers of their inhabitants, had proven sufficient to force the smaller domains in revolt in Italy to capitulate, French acts of wanton destruction in the vast recesses of a devoutly religious Spain, made up of fiercely independent regions, actually tended to fuel and expand the insurgency.

Moreover, not only was Spain much larger than Calabria or the relevant part of northern Italy, its terrain was much more foreboding. It was rugged, barren, and mountainous, with very few roads; ideal country for small-unit ambush actions of the sort conducted so effectively and murderously by the insurgency.

As the insurgency spread in 1809, it rapidly made Spain into a true “hell on earth” for the hated French occupiers. King Joseph’s military adjutant, General Bigarré, evaluated the situation as follows: “The guerrillas . . . caused more casualties to the French Armies than all the regular troops during the whole course of the war in Spain; it has been proved that they murdered a hundred of our men daily. Thus, over the period of five years, they killed 180,000 French soldiers without on their side losing more than 25,000.”

It was not just the horrible death toll the insurgents wrought upon the French which was disconcerting—it was the means by which they did it. General Mathieu Dumas wrote about the insurgents: “These men are brigands; they kill us when we march alone. I shall always remember how I was afflicted with great anxieties; every day I saw the murder of several French men, and I travelled over this assassins’ countryside as warily as if it were a volcano.” Marshal Suchet observed, “This new system of resistance defended the countryside more effectively than a war regulated by disciplined armies, because it conformed to the localities and the character of the inhabitants.” A frustrated but insightful General Gouvion St. Cyr wrote about this new form of warfare: “Ready for all sacrifices, free from ‘soft’ needs or prejudices . . . they formed irregular corps, chose their leaders, operated by whim, attacked anywhere that numbers or conditions favored them, fled without shame when they were not the

strongest, and disappeared by a combined dispersion. . . . In the long term, such a system of implacable hostility must suffice to destroy the most numerous and valiant of armies, obliged as they were to fritter their strength away in mobile columns and convoy escorts.”

Colonel de Grandmaison spoke of the fiercely psychologically unsettling characteristics of this type of conflict:

The Spanish employed this means with an energy, an animosity and such constancy that only victory could crown. . . . The system certainly contributed to the final success of the war of independence, which would never have been achieved by regular armies. It was the unleashing of passion, the forgetting of the laws of humanity, the repudiation of military rules of discipline, the scorn for authority, the unbridled satisfaction of pride. Customs, the climate, and fanaticism inspired the methods of a merciless resistance—ferocious in the mountains, more feeble on the plain. Yes, really a war to the death, for to kill the enemy became the general aspiration, the brutal goal pursued unceasingly wherever there was hope of its achievement: in the silence of the night, in the shelter of a house, in the repose of one’s bed, in a corner of the woods, at the turning of a pathway—unexpectedly—through a hedge, behind a rock, on the highway—just as on the field of battle.

Napoleon’s secretary Bourienne reflected on the disquieting aspects of the Peninsular Campaign as early as December 1807, when, writing about General Junot’s (successful) invasion of Portugal, he noted: “Many men met their deaths through sheer misery—or at the hands of the peasantry.”

In a lecture delivered in 1987 at Southampton University in England, drawing upon a presentation he had made at the U.S. Army Staff College in Fort Leavenworth in April 1985, David Chandler characterized the French dread of an assignment to Spain as follows: “There are clear indications that French soldiers came to regard orders for Spain from 1810 onwards with as much enthusiasm as a member of the Wehrmacht received a posting order to the Eastern Front in 1943-44. In other words, it became regarded as very much of a ‘one-way ticket.’ ” Such was the psychological hell the insurgency created.

## Logistical Hell

The insurgents, as coordinated and supplied by the British expeditionary force’s commander Wellesly, wreaked havoc on the efforts of French garrisons and field units to communicate and coordinate with one another. The only reliable means of communication was via human courier, in those days, prior to the invention of the telegraph. As of the late Summer of 1808, an escort of 200 (!) cavalry was required to secure the safe passage of a single courier, from one French military base or formation to another; and even that number provided

no guarantee of success. By 1813, couriers on the “Royal Road” had to be accompanied by 1,000 cavalry! It is estimated that, by late 1812, the French had to deploy 90,000 troops—almost one-third of their total strength in Spain—just to keep the Burgos to Bayonne arterial road open!

When the French resorted to using multiple couriers carrying copies of the same message, in the interest of ensuring that the message reached its desired destination, they only compounded their problems. First of all, double, triple, or quadruple the amount of manpower had to be deployed for security escorts. And secondly, the possibilities of the insurgents intercepting the messages were multiplied two, three, and fourfold, correspondingly. As a consequence, Wellington was the beneficiary of fantastic amounts of intercepted military intelligence, which he used to great advantage. He was well aware of his distinct advantage in this critical realm: “The French armies have no communications, and one army has no knowledge of the position or of the circumstances in which the others are placed, whereas I have knowledge of all that passes on both sides.”

The difficulties that the French experienced in their efforts to communicate with one another, were compounded manyfold when it came to questions of food supply. Because the peasantry was generally implacably opposed to the French, and the country was so barren and ruled by the insurgency, the French could not forage to supply themselves, as they did in central Europe. This meant that major supply convoys, which required huge military detachments to protect them, had to be organized.

A bloody and fanatical campaign was waged by the insurgents against those who were known, or simply suspected to be collaborators of the French occupation forces. Torture, garotting, and burning at the stake were among the various forms of punitive terror that were employed. It is estimated that approximately 30,000 Spanish collaborators met their deaths at the hands of the insurgency—from aristocrats to ordinary townspeople. Their gruesome deaths were meant to discourage others; and judging from the way events unfolded, the message clearly registered.

Another way in which the insurgency’s displeasure with the collaborators of the French occupation was expressed, was its silence in the wake of the British army’s massacre of as many as 4,000 Spaniards, following its seizure of the fortress city of Badajoz in April 1812. Apparently, the Spanish population of Badajoz had been deemed to be excessively friendly and cooperative with the French occupation, and therefore did not merit avenging, in the eyes of the insurgents. As was recounted by the British historian Napier, in his *History of the Peninsular War*: “There now developed a scene of hideous crimes which tarnished our soldiers’ shining heroism. It is true they did not all show themselves the same, for hundreds of them risked—and even a few of them lost—their lives in trying to halt such unbridled violence. But madness prevailed generally, it must be said, and



*¡No valen!*

Spanish painter Francisco Goya's *Caprichio* etchings on the Disasters of War were based upon Spain's experience under Napoleon's invasion.

as in such cases, the worst species of men lead the others. All the most detestable passions of human nature gorged themselves in broad daylight: a rapaciousness without shame, a brutal intemperance, a savage lewdness, cruelty, murder . . . that was the spectacle offered by the streets of Badajoz for two days and nights."

### Wellington and the Insurgents

While much has been made of Wellington's battlefield exploits in the Peninsular War, his real wisdom, to the extent that it was manifested in this campaign, was expressed in the imaginative and effective methods of coordination and collaboration that he developed to cement his potent working relationship with the insurgents. He had the insight to recognize that the insurgency was the key to victory: Without its countrywide menacing presence, he would have been quickly run off the Iberian peninsula. With it, the French were forced to disperse their troops in garrisons all over the country, to respond to the insurgents' many attacks. They were robbed of the ability to effectively concentrate their vastly larger forces against Wellington's small army. Wellington, backed up by the British navy, kept the various independent bands and networks of insurgents well-stocked with money, weapons, ammunition, and other vital supplies that were necessary to sustain their operations.

The strategic and operational intelligence about French troop movements and deployment plans, with which the insurgents continuously supplied Wellington, saved his neck on more than one occasion. After the Battle of Talavera, for

example, in July 1809, Wellington was marching his 18,000 man force toward what he believed would be a surprise attack on a 10,000-man French contingent. A dispatch from the French commander which was intercepted by the insurgents revealed, however, that the French troop strength amounted to 50,000, not 10,000 men. Armed with this intelligence, Wellington was able to beat a hasty retreat, and avoid the crushing blow that the French had prepared for him.

From 1809-1812, Wellington maintained a fundamentally defensive posture against the French invaders. The insurgency played an especially important role in 1810, when it stood largely alone against Napoleon's forces in Spain: Wellington was bottled up in Portugal, and Napoleon, after his victory over of the Austrians was memorialized in the form of the Treaty of Press-

burg, dispatched reinforcements to Spain that swelled the number of French troops to 340,000! By 1812, however, the strategic dynamic began to shift. In that year, as Napoleon redeployed tens of thousands of troops from the Iberian peninsula to eastern Europe for his Russian campaign, Wellington finally went over to the strategic offensive. The process of the expulsion of the French occupation was irrevocably underway.

### 'The Spanish Ulcer'

The price Napoleon paid for his ill-conceived Spanish venture was truly staggering. His Spanish gambit produced so much bleeding, over so many years, in the diplomatic, military, financial, and political realms of his empire, that a number of historians have taken to referring to it as "the Spanish Ulcer." While it, in and of itself, did not bring down Napoleon's empire, it nonetheless immeasurably weakened the Napoleonic system as a whole, rendering it ripe for collapse. Perhaps it is only fitting that the Duke of Wellington, of "Spanish Ulcer" fame, presided over Napoleon's final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

It was the insurgency that kept the "Spanish Ulcer" bleeding. It was Napoleon's imperial arrogance which gave birth to the insurgency, as surely as his awesome military might could not extinguish it. As was noted earlier, at the end of his life, Napoleon, in a moment of truthful reflection, said of his undoing in Spain, "I embarked very badly on the Spanish affair. . . . The immorality of it was too patent, the injustice too cynical."