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Charles J. Esdaile, *Outpost of Empire: The Napoleonic Occupation of Andalucía, 1810-1812*.

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In the many histories of the Peninsular War (1807-14), consideration of the French occupation is often embedded in a larger narrative. As the kingdoms of Spain varied in customs, culture, economy, industry, agriculture, traditions, and geography, so, too, did the French occupation and the guerrilla response to it. For this reason alone, *Outpost of Empire* as a regional study of Andalucía is a valuable contribution to Napoleonic history, especially since there have only been studies of the regions of Navarre and Aragon.¹ Charles Esdaile (Univ. of Liverpool) uses Andalucía to show why the French policy of integrating disparate lands and peoples into Napoleon's Empire did not work in Spain.

Esdaile first helpfully places his methodology within the context of works on the Napoleonic Empire. He begins with Stuart Woolf's argument that the French based their occupation policies across the Empire on the notion of a civilizing mission inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.² He notes "the extent to which ... the local elites formed the bedrock of French rule in Andalucía" and that "the reformist agenda outlined by Woolf remained a live issue with the occupation forces. On top of this, the whole question of occupation policy is worth discussing: in brief, was French practice in Spain, and more particularly Andalucía, sui generis or did it conform to a more general pattern?" (xv). While historiography is rarely included in a monograph, Esdaile demonstrates how effective a well-crafted historiographical section can be as part of an introduction. He argues that there was considerable Spanish collaboration with the French occupation in Andalucía, that the guerrilla war there was not the popular uprising of Spanish mythology, and that ultimately it was the continual operations of Spanish regular armies supported by the British and Portuguese that doomed the French effort to failure.

Esdaile is exceptionally qualified to analyze the French occupation of Andalucía, having written several earlier books on the Peninsular War,³ the fruit of decades of primary source research across Spain. In fact, one of his explicit purposes in *Outpost of Empire* is to familiarize Anglophone readers with the most current historical work in Spanish on the war. He inserts many block quotations of primary sources to support his arguments in the words of those who experienced the French occupation. Unfortunately, the price paid for this technique is the frequent disruption of his narrative flow and line of argument.

Chapter 1, "Conquest," focuses on the French campaigns of 1808-9 as backdrop for the decision of King Joseph and Marshal Soult to invade Andalucía. This chapter introduces the major decision makers involved in the invasion, the relationship between Joseph Bonaparte and his generals, and Napoleon's impact on Joseph's kingdom.

Chapter 2, "The Context of Conquest," one of the book's best, outlines life under the Bourbons in Spain and the political realities of the *Dos de Mayo* revolution (1808). Esdaile shows in detail that *Dos de Mayo* was the work of the elites, not of a popular uprising, and that it was certainly not primarily a function of the French invasion (56). There follows a description of life in Patriot Spain and the disorder that reigned in Andalucía. Esdaile argues that, besides that disorder, pressures on Andalusian elites to collaborate included

1. Don W. Alexander, *Rod of Iron: French Counterinsurgency Policy in Aragon during the Peninsular War* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1985); John Lawrence Tone, *The Fatal Knot: The Guerrilla War in Navarre and the Defeat of Napoleon in Spain* (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina Pr, 1994).

2. *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* (NY: Routledge, 1991).

3. *Fighting Napoleon: Guerrillas, Bandits and Adventurers in Spain 1808-1814* (New Haven: Yale U Pr, 2004), *Popular Resistance in the French Wars: Patriots, Partisans and Land Pirates* (NY: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005), *The Peninsular War: A New History* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), and *Spain in the Liberal Age: From Constitution to Civil War, 1808-1939* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000).

a desire to safeguard their own privileges and a growing frustration with the Junta Suprema Central de Gobierno (79–85). The chapter also explains the limited resistance to the French invasion of Andalucía in 1810 and sets the stage for a general discussion of the occupation.

Chapter 3, “The Conquered Land,” examines pre-invasion Andalucía as a region—its economy, politics, and problems of poverty and banditry. The stark divide between rich and poor in the region, with its large estates and mostly migrant workforce, habituated the population to rule by a small minority (111). Esdaile writes that banditry and smuggling were such endemic problems that even Charles IV’s deployment of large regular army formations could not stamp them out (121). He analyses the condition of the poor and the banditry problems of the province using well researched statistical analyses.⁴ This puts the guerrilla war in Andalucía in a new light. Esdaile also covers the role of the Roman Catholic Church, concluding that, while participation was high, true religious commitment was not widespread among either elites or peasants (130–31).

Chapter 4, “Selling Joseph Bonaparte,” looks at the French use of propaganda to create a Bonaparte kingdom in Spain. Esdaile demonstrates that Joseph’s administration used newspapers to project a favorable image of French rule and that this propaganda effort reflected the French experience in the greater Napoleonic Empire (157). The French attempted to portray Joseph as a Catholic monarch and the legitimate successor to the Bourbon Kings. The chapter places French propaganda and police-state tactics, especially their more modern elements, in the wider context of the Napoleonic Empire.

Chapter 5, “Balls, Banquets, and Bayonets,” deals directly with the occupation from the perspective of the French imperial army. Esdaile outlines several of its distinctive attributes: a fiercely anticlerical revolutionary past; a conviction that guerrilla war was cowardly and criminal; an identification of Andalucía as more African than European (with all the consequent racist overtones of such a distinction); an ethos based on honor more than nationalism; and a deep-seated fear of a genuinely popular uprising. Such considerations led the French to rely on repressive and violent counterinsurgency measures (215). Esdaile also claims that collaborators among the Spanish elites had similar views of the proper means to suppress the population (219). He describes the political, social, and administrative methods the French used to sway the elites and peasants while simultaneously executing a brutal pacification program.

Chapter 6, “Collaboration and Coexistence,” is the heart of Esdaile’s argument. It describes the collaboration between Andalusian elites and French officers both politically and socially, something the great estate system made easier because the elites desired the order that the occupiers promised, and the peasants were used to being dominated by a minority (257). He concludes that a mixture of opportunism and fatalism with the patriot cause drove the Andalusian elites into the arms of the French.

Chapter 7, “Resistance,” recounts the guerrilla war in Andalucía, with meticulous attention to the statistics of attacks and casualties. While acknowledging the effect of anti-French guerrilla efforts, Esdaile points out that many bands resorted to a more traditional banditry that did as much harm to the native population as to French soldiers; the decision to become a guerrilla “was above all a response to economic pressure” (326).

Chapter 8, “Fights and Forced Marches,” offers a detailed narrative of the conventional fighting between the French, Spanish, British, and Portuguese armies as it pertained to Andalucía. Esdaile argues that Spanish regular armies, assisted by their allies, prevented the French from consolidating their gains in Andalucía by maintaining constant pressure from a variety of directions. Forced to race back and forth around the region, the French could not achieve decisive victories.⁵

The book’s overarching conclusion is that guerrilla operations against the French in Andalucía were complex and bore little resemblance to the mythology of popular uprising that so pervades Peninsular War historiography. Esdaile argues convincingly that the social and political structures of Andalucía favored the

4. Here and elsewhere in the book, I wish the author had included appendices with a more statistical presentation of his research, e.g., like those in John A. Lynn, *The Bayonets of the Republic: Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791–94* (Urbana: U Illinois Pr, 1984) 287–300.

5. This section would have been better served with more maps to place these conventional actions into the occupation context.

pattern of occupation and integration the French had implemented in newly acquired territory across their Empire. However, the region could barely sustain itself and the burden of supporting French forces precipitated an economic collapse. As a consequence, the French could provide neither the stability and order required by the elites, nor the basic services required by the population. The added pressure of almost constant attacks by allied armies doomed French efforts in Andalucía and, by extension, the rest of Spain.

Although Esdaile presents an interesting argument, he introduces several topics that require more study. His cursory explanation of the place of the Church before the revolution and during the occupation underestimates the influence of organized religion on motivations and sympathies. His treatment of French intentions in the occupation, both civilian and military, only scratches the surface of the topic. He brings out issues of racism that are central to understanding what, if any, civilizing mission the French undertook in their construction of the Empire. This attempt to answer the question of whether there was a greater mandate to the French occupation is not entirely convincing.

Esdaile succeeds admirably in the herculean task of making a case for the critical significance of the beliefs, convictions, and motivations of Andalucian elites and peasants as well as French officers, administrators, and soldiers in evaluating the Bonaparte kingdom in Spain and its place in the grand scheme of the Empire. His thoroughly documented analysis of the guerrillas paints a vivid picture of the peasants and soldiers who fought the French. Even those who resist his conclusions concerning the guerrillas must at least address the compelling evidence he has brought to bear. And, too, his discussion of the motives of Andalucian elites concerning both *Dos de Mayo* and collaboration with the French is nuanced and persuasive. *Outpost of Empire* sheds much new light on the goals and machinery of the French effort to expand their Empire into Andalucía. In the process, it enriches our understanding of the meaning of the Empire for the French and, more importantly, for the development and evolution of the French imperial army. It will reward readers interested in the Peninsular War or the nature of military occupation generally.