

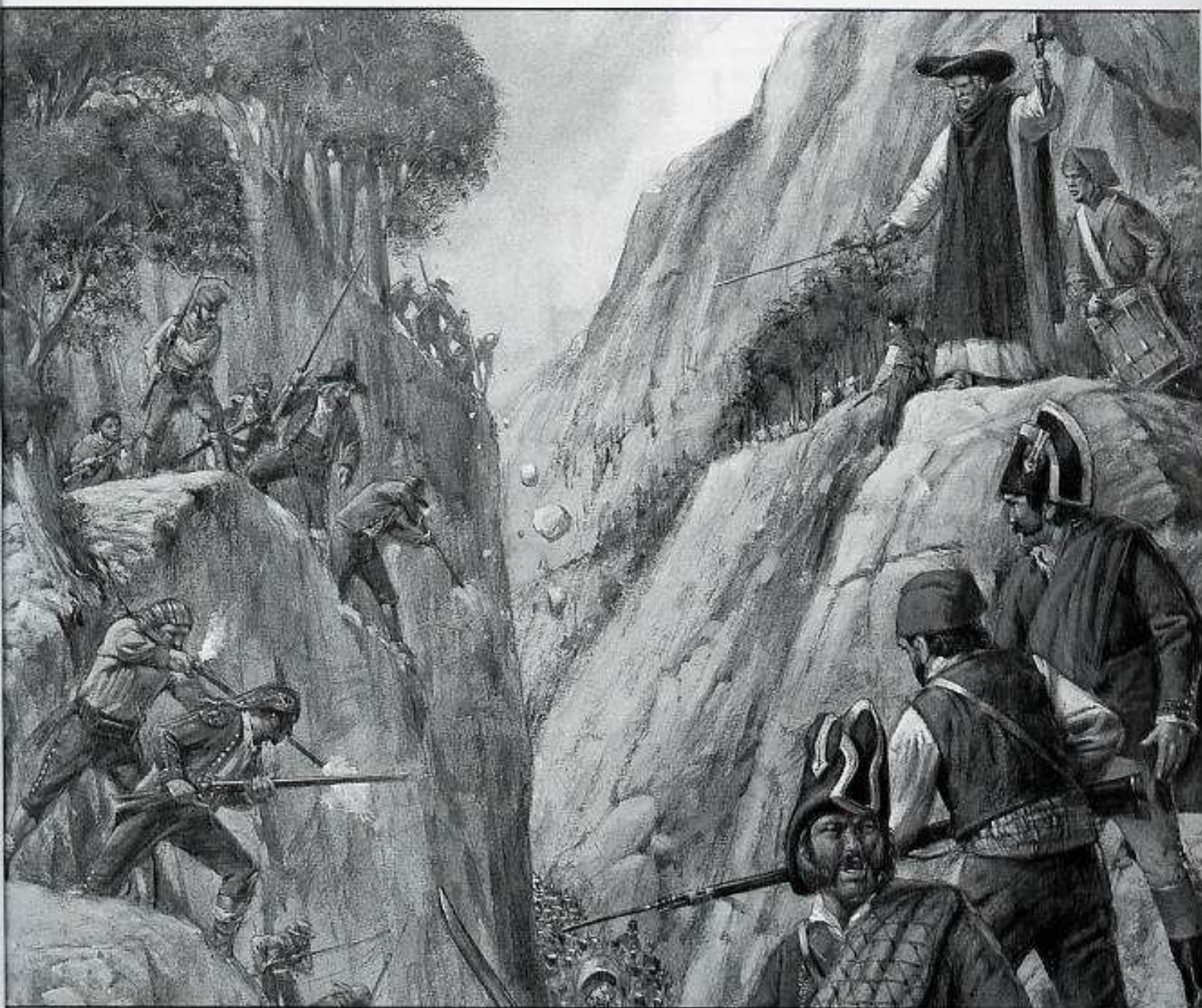
Elite

Spanish Guerrillas in the Peninsular War 1808–14



René Chartrand • Illustrated by Richard Hook

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SPANISH GUERRILLAS IN THE PENINSULAR WAR 1808-14

INTRODUCTION

'Every reality that is ignored prepares its vengeance' *José Ortega y Gasset*

The title of this book uses the Spanish word *guerrilla*, a word that entered many languages after the events of the Peninsular War to denote a particular type of rather savage warfare carried out by irregular forces.

The original guerrilla appeared in Spain from 1808. He was, for the most part, an ordinary man, nearly always of humble circumstances, who had little knowledge of the great principles of the Art of War. But, although often poor and illiterate, he was proud, deeply loved his country and, as he could not stand the gross misconduct of arrogant foreign soldiers, he took up arms.

In the first decade of the 19th century, Napoleon Bonaparte was the ruler of a France that humbled nearly all the great countries of Europe. The only sizeable nation remaining unvanquished was Britain – 'perfidious Albion' as the French often called the island nation – the most formidable naval power in the world. Its warships controlled every sea lane and blockaded Napoleon's Europe. Britain was Napoleonic France's greatest irritant but, while France was the greatest land power and Britain the greatest sea power, neither could vanquish the other, and the war had reached something of a stalemate.

The other irritant to Napoleon was the Iberian peninsula. Portugal was a country with a strong maritime and colonial tradition, and was known as 'Britain's oldest ally'. Spain, by contrast, had been France's somewhat lukewarm ally since the early 18th century. Portugal's behaviour enraged Napoleon while the hopeless behaviour of Spain's royal family spawned in his mind a wily plot to dominate both countries. During past wars, notably in 1762 and 1801, French army contingents had crossed Spain to join Spanish forces for attacks on Portugal. This would again be the case. In the summer of 1807, the French 'Army of Portugal' was formed and put under General Andoche Junot. Its mission was to cross Spain and

Prime Minister Manuel Godoy was escorted into protective custody by troopers of the Life Guards from an angry mob on 18 March 1808. Godoy, who had schemed to take the Spanish throne for himself, instantly lost all powers and King Carlos IV abdicated in favour of Fernando. (Print after F. de Myrbach)



invade Portugal with the assistance of Spanish troops. In return, Spain would have various benefits but, secretly, Napoleon had promised the vain and ambitious Spanish Prime Minister, Manuel Godoy, that he would make him king of part of Portugal. It all seemed wonderful in the corridors of power. But Napoleon had an even more secret and grand plan: to take over not just Portugal but also Spain, get rid of its 'degenerate' Bourbon dynasty and crown one of his brothers as king.

At first, everything went according to plan. General Junot and 25,000 French troops marched through Spain, were joined by an equal number of Spanish troops, and all marched into Portugal unopposed. That country was in no condition to resist such a force, and it now came under French and Spanish occupation from December 1807. Months went by and more French 'allied' troops were noticed entering Spain by increasingly suspicious Spaniards. Ordinary people in the country sensed something was dreadfully wrong. Furthermore, most were utterly fed up with the political abuses of Prime Minister Godoy. At Arranuez, south of Madrid, on the night of 17 March 1808, a huge crowd took to the streets and stormed and ransacked Godoy's palace. This was the first major sign that the government was losing control of the population. The common people resorted to violence, and this mood foreshadowed the guerrilla movement. Godoy barely escaped, but his power was henceforth broken and he was dismissed at last by a bewildered King Carlos IV. The king then abdicated in favour of his son Fernando, with whom he was also feuding, so that all was amiss within the Spanish royal family. The country's government was increasingly destabilised. Napoleon now played his hand and convened the Spanish royal family to Bayonne, just over the border in southwestern France, where he

would arbitrate matters. Pressured on all sides by Napoleon and following a stormy meeting with his parents, Fernando also abdicated at Bayonne. This was just what Napoleon wanted. The Spanish Bourbon royal family could now be pushed aside and replaced by a Bonaparte. Napoleon thus proclaimed his brother Joseph as King José-Napoleon I of Spain.

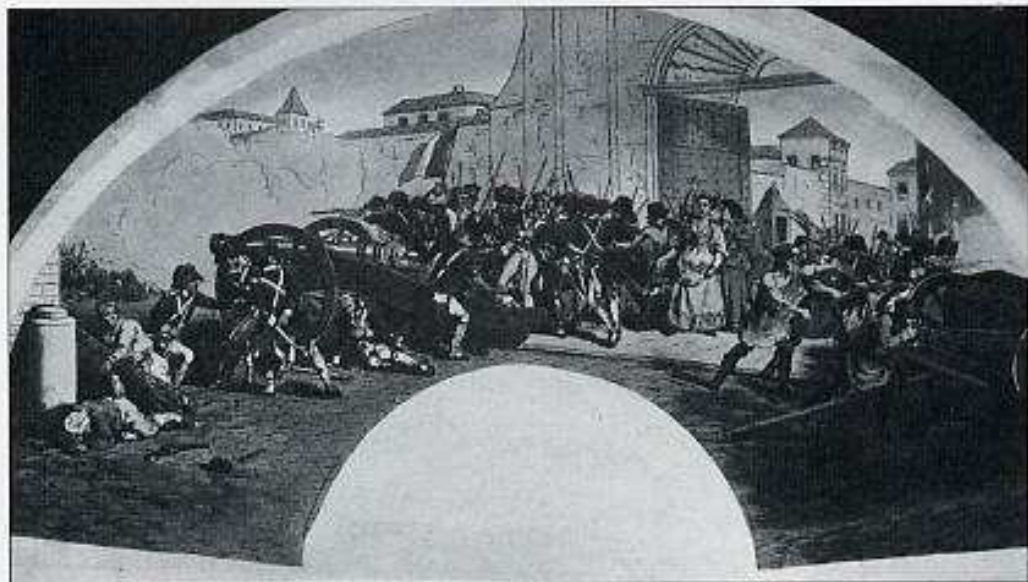
Insurrections in Spain from 1808

Even before the abdications of Carlos IV and Fernando VII, the Spanish people were increasingly worried and growing restless. By now the French 'allied' army in Spain numbered about 80,000 men. Some of these troops, under Marshal Joachim Murat, were already in Madrid, his men acting somewhat as if they were in an occupied rather than in an allied city. Tensions rapidly increased and, on 2 May, the populace of Madrid rose in revolt, killing some 500 French troops. The reaction was a predictably fierce counter-attack by Murat's French cavalry and infantry, turning the main streets of Madrid into battlefields. Eventually, the revolt was bloodily put down. Crowds armed with knives, sticks and the

Encouraged by Prince Fernando (the future King Fernando VII), the mob sacked and burned Godoy's palace at Aranjuez on 18 March 1808. This was the first serious outbreak of popular fury which eventually led to the rise of guerrillas. (Print after Maurice Orange)



Fighting at the Madrid arsenal between French troops and Spanish patriots on 2 May 1808. Contemporary fan print. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)



odd firearm were no match for the sabres, muskets and bayonets of regular soldiers. For some 400 Spaniards captured by the French, the end would come in front of the levelled muskets of a firing squad. The French, perhaps sensing that something was really amiss, were determined to crush the revolt swiftly and bloodily to teach the Spanish a lesson they would never forget. By the next day, the city was calm again but the Spanish people would never forget the *Dos de Mayo*.

News of the Madrid uprising against French troops spread rapidly through Spain. Far from being cowed by bloody repression and firing squads, the *Dos de Mayo* was the signal to all Spaniards for a general revolt. *Juntas* sprang up to rule in the name of Fernando VII, a process that was to culminate in October when the Central Junta convened at Seville. People everywhere patriotically rose against the world's finest army. New volunteer units appeared all over Spain to fight the scorned French. The much disorganised, badly led and poorly paid Spanish armed forces were somehow rapidly reorganised. One of these somewhat rag-tag armies numbering about 21,000 men under General Castaños was in Andalusia when, on 19 July, it intercepted at Bailen a French army of the same strength under General Dupont. A stunned world soon learned that Dupont's entire French force had surrendered to a Spanish army!

For the first time since Napoleon's rise to imperial power, a corps of his invincible French imperial army had been, not only beaten, but entirely lost. It was an extraordinary achievement which was to have profound consequences as this incredible news gave hope to all in Europe who were struggling against Napoleon's domination. Then, in early autumn, news came that the British had landed an army in Portugal, beaten the French army posted there under Junot and liberated that country. It seemed that Spain might soon be free as well; King José-Napoleon had evacuated Madrid. But Napoleon himself now stepped in and assembled a 300,000-man army – much larger than the combined regular forces of Spain, Portugal and Britain in the peninsula. In November, Napoleon marched into Spain, crushed the Spanish armies that opposed him and, on 4 December, entered Madrid and reinstalled his brother on the Spanish throne. But imperial order would never be restored.

CHRONOLOGY

1807

November Napoleon's troops invade Portugal with Spanish help, easily sweep off all resistance and enter Lisbon. A large number of French troops remain in Spain to the increasing displeasure of the Spanish people.

1808

17 March An angry crowd sacks Prime Minister Manuel Godoy's palace in Arranuez.

19 March King Carlos IV abdicates in favour of his son, who becomes Fernando VII.

End of April and early May Napoleon convenes the feuding Spanish royal family at Bayonne, France. Carlos IV and Fernando VII renounce their claims to the throne, and Napoleon names his brother Joseph king of Spain (King José-Napoleon I).

2 May The population of Madrid rises against the French troops stationed there. The revolt is put down in the city, but countless popular risings erupt all over Spain.

May The Spanish nation hears of Fernando VII's abdication, an act they believe to have been forced on Fernando by Napoleon.

6 June One of the first guerrilla-style engagements occurs when a column of Neapolitan troops in the French army at the Catalan village of El Bruch is ambushed by several hundred local irregular volunteers; the column's retreat march to Barcelona is then harassed all the way by snipers, rocks and boiling water hurled from rooftops when passing through villages. The first bands of guerrillas form in the Navarre mountains.

Guerrillas according to a contemporary French print. All are well armed. (Print after Roler)



19 July A French army is beaten and entirely lost to a Spanish army at Bailen in southern Spain. This victory has a tremendous impact as it is the first time an entire French army has been lost. Madrid is evacuated by King José and his French troops on 30 July.

August and September A French army under General Junot is defeated by Wellington and evacuated from Portugal by the British. In Spain, groups of loosely organised irregulars harass French troops.

October Spanish Central Junta is set up in Seville. It rules in the name of Fernando VII who, in his

captivity in France, becomes the uniting symbol of the vast majority of Spaniards against the French.

November Napoleon crosses into Spain with an army of about 300,000 men and marches on Madrid.

4 December Napoleon enters Madrid with his army. Most of northern and central Spain is occupied by the French.

28 December Spanish Central Junta issues its first regulations for guerrilla groups.



1809

18 January The last British troops in Spain evacuate Coruña. Spanish irregulars and even regular troops resort to guerrilla-style fighting against the French in Galicia in the following months.

17 April The Spanish Central Junta orders all able-bodied patriotic men in occupied territory to form corps of *Corso Terrestre* (Land Corsairs) for guerrilla warfare.

April–July Marshal Soult is driven out of northern Portugal into western Galicia by Wellington's British and Portuguese; he then must retreat, with Marshal Ney's troops, further east as the Spanish guerrillas, armed peasants and regulars of General Romana make the French positions untenable. Coruña is reoccupied by the British as a supply centre to the Spanish.

17 November The main Spanish army of 53,000 men under General De la Cuesta is ordered by the Central Junta to free Madrid. It meets a strong French army and is disastrously crushed by Marshal Soult at Ocaña, Castile.

1810

February The French invade Andalusia, and take Seville. The Spanish Central Junta moves to Cádiz, which will resist a two-year French siege. Guerrilla bands emerge all over occupied Andalusia.

Spring and early summer Low point of the Spanish guerrilla movement; guerrilla bands multiply again from July.

October–November Some 15,000 French troops pursue Espoz y Mina's bands in Navarre; eventually, the French have to leave.

17 November Espoz y Mina's men capture a large French ammunition convoy; hailed as a major victory because the guerrillas had very little ammunition.

1811

3 May Don Julian Sanchez with an undetermined number of men joins Wellington's Allied army at Fuentes de Oñoro, the first time guerrillas served with British and Portuguese troops; but these irregulars could be

French troops putting Spaniards to the sword near the Prado in Madrid on 2 May 1808.

Contemporary fan print. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)

As the insurrection spread across Spain in 1808, the monks and priests encouraged revolt against the 'anti-Christ' French. In Valencia, Canon Balthazar Cabo even blessed the knives to be used on any Frenchman encountered by all patriotic Spaniards. Many became guerrillas. (Print after Raffet)

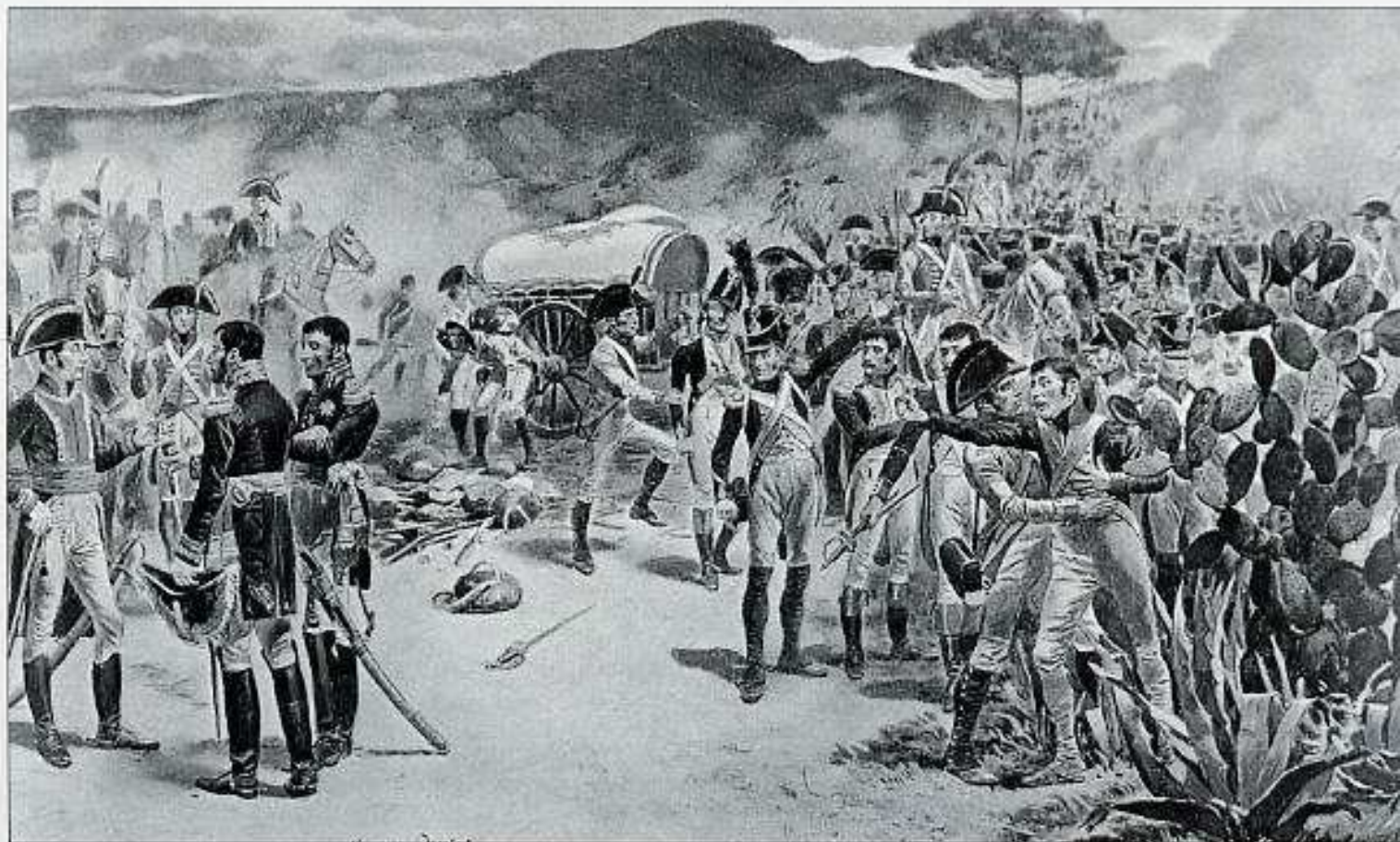


General Dupont surrenders his French army to General Castaños' Spanish army at Bailen amidst the protests of his own soldiers on 19 July 1808. The astonishing news that a whole French army had been entirely lost gave courage to all who were fighting against Napoleon's domination. (Print after Maurice Orange)

of little assistance in the tactics fought between regular armies. Sanchez's men, however, were invaluable providers of intelligence to Wellington and his staff.

27 May Espoz y Mina defeats a French convoy escort of 1,650 men at Arlaban causing some 400 killed and prisoners with trifling losses.

Summer Governor of French-held Ciudad Rodrigo is captured by Don Julian Sanchez's guerrillas.



1812

11 January Espoz y Mina crushes 2,000 French at Rocaforte.

5 February Espoz y Mina attacks the 2,000-man crack 'Infernals' division at Sanguesa causing some 600 casualties by General Soulier's account.

March Some 25,000 French troops enter Navarre, but this has no effect on the guerrillas who watch them from the hills until they leave.

August The seven carriages of the French ambassador to King José in Madrid are captured by Bartholomeo Munos' guerrillas. Muno sends a polite message to 'The Ambassador of the Wandering King' about his feat.

19 August Four of Espoz y Mina's battalions defeat about 3,200 French on the Tafalla Road near Tiebas.

1813

13 January King José evacuates Madrid for the last time.

June At Wellington's demand, Espoz y Mina with his division diverts some 19,000 men of the French army who would have otherwise fought the British at Vittoria (21 June).

2 August French in Zaragoza surrender to Espoz y Mina's division.

31 October Pamplona, after years of guerrilla blockade, surrenders to Espoz y Mina's men.

1814

15-17 February Mozon and Jaca fall to Mina's Division. French evacuate Navarre into France. Armistice ending the Peninsular War signed on 18 April.

April King Fernando VII, the 'desired one', is liberated by Napoleon in late March and makes a triumphant return to Spain in April.



THE RISE AND SPREAD OF THE GUERRILLAS

The typical Spanish guerrilla did not have a background as a professional soldier. For the most part, he was an ordinary civilian from the common people who had taken up arms in the extraordinary times in which he lived. There are no reliable records as to the types of trades practised by the men who became guerrillas, nor is there much information on their age, and marital and family status. Nevertheless, a number of assumptions can be made to define the typical Spanish guerrilla. As some of the most important guerrilla bands operated in the northern mountains and in the plains of León and Castile, it is fair to assume that, like most guerrillas, he came from a rural background.

Take the example of a guerrilla led by Francisco Espoz y Mina in the northern mountains of Navarre. Navarre was one of the old kingdoms which, since the Middle Ages, enjoyed various tax exemptions – the prized *fueros* – which were beneficial for its economy. Its typical guerrilla had most likely been involved in the area's robust agricultural economy, working moderate-sized plots of land in the mountains. Whenever possible this sort of activity continued even after the peasant had become a guerrilla. Mountaineers also kept large numbers of pigs as their main source of meat, while goats provided milk, cheese and meat. Sheep were also important although, in the mountains, the herds were small. This type of agriculture was very different to that practised on the plains, where a few landowners, mostly nobles, controlled most of the land, crops and cattle, and employed peasants to work their landholdings. A mountaineer, on the contrary, was likely to be working on a small family farm growing a variety of crops with a small number of varied animals. A most important aspect was that the land, usually of moderate size, was owned by the family. There was also some hunting. As a sometime shepherd, the typical guerrilla would become intimately familiar with all the features of the mountains in his immediate area as he followed his flocks.

Apart from these legitimate activities, it is almost certain that the average guerrilla recruit had also participated in smuggling. The border of France and Spain runs along the Pyrenees mountains, from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. On the Spanish side of the border and in Navarre in particular, customs were controlled by local authority according to the ancient *fueros* privileges, with the result that there were no Spanish-imposed tolls to speak of. On the French side of the border, however, there certainly were customs duties, payment of which was enforced by armed guards. Of course, anyone caught smuggling was liable to arrest, but the potential profits involved tempted many small farmers to take the risk.

Because of smuggling and hunting in the mountains, the future guerrilla was familiar with the use of firearms. Indeed, he had probably handled a musket for a much longer time than the average French soldier. From the time he was a boy, the mountaineer learned how to use muskets from his father or from uncles. As a result, the men of Navarre owned more guns and were more familiar with their use than men elsewhere in Spain. A good musket was a necessary tool on a smuggling

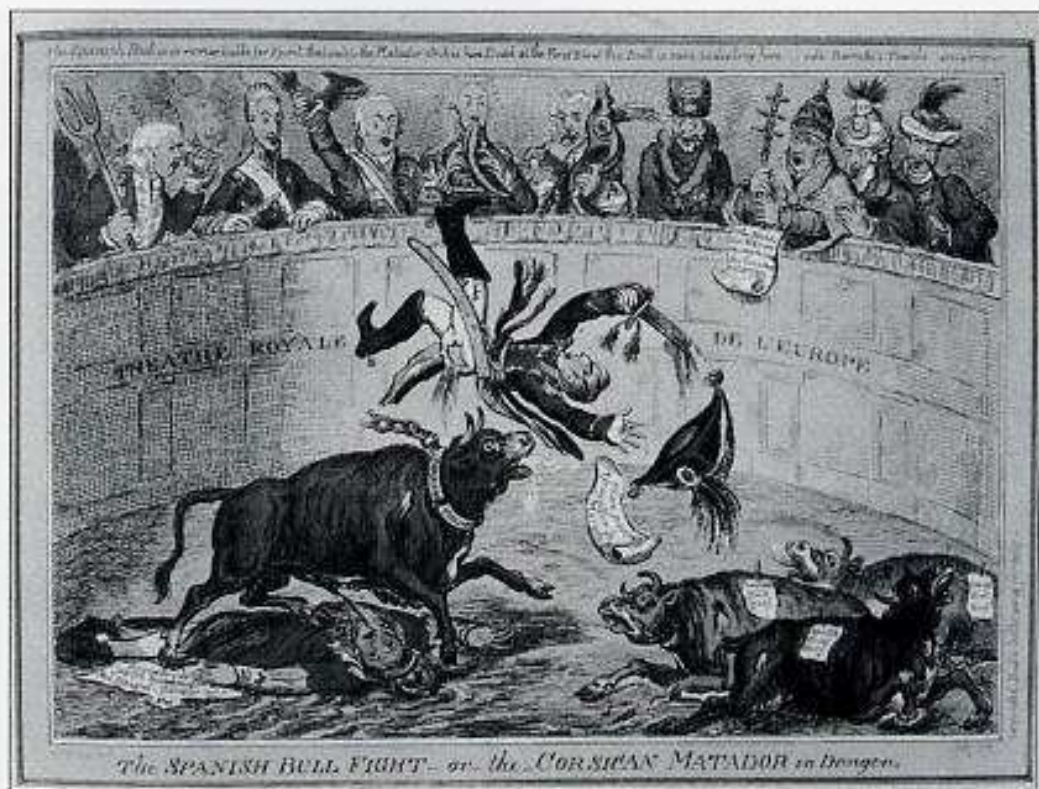
expedition and especially useful to keep French customs men at bay; a few shots from a well-concealed position usually did the trick. Men generally hunted small game, but they sometimes targeted prey as large as the Pyrenean bear (now rare and protected), which involved more danger and, consequently, many refinements in the art of hiding and stalking.

In most guerrilla groups, the guerrilla would find a lifestyle involving a mixture of military-style discipline, insofar as obedience to chiefs was concerned, blended with an egalitarian atmosphere. These groups could be called 'bands of brothers' as, more often than not, brothers, uncles, cousins or friends from the same mountain village often served together. Strong bonding between the men was common, and support could be expected from family members who had not joined the guerrillas.

The Spanish character and guerrilla warfare

Perhaps the hardest element to define regarding a Spanish guerrilla relates to the very nature of guerrilla fighting. This type of warfare featured incredible bravery, ruthless cruelty, extraordinary daring and a will to fight to the death for the sake of honour. In most European military cultures, all of these qualities could be found – except for the last. Men would be killed in battle or made prisoners – these were normal risks of combat – but the stubborn, almost blind, contempt for life shown by the guerrillas dumbfounded French enemies and British allies alike. They regarded such behaviour as irrational... but this was Spain.

In attempting to understand the behaviour of the Spanish guerrilla, a look at Spain and Spanish society as it stood towards the end of the 18th century is essential. It was, in many ways, a country like no other in western Europe. Spain was a collection of very different medieval kingdoms which gradually united during the Christian reconquest of the Iberian peninsula from the Muslim Arabs (Moors), who had conquered almost the entire peninsula in the 8th century. The reconquest ended with the fall of the last Moorish stronghold, the kingdom of Granada, in 1492. Spain enjoyed its 'Golden Age' in the 16th century, followed by a long decline during the following century. The degradation ended in the early 18th century, and, in the reign of King Carlos III (1759–88), Spain made something of a comeback as a major European power. Arts, sciences and the economy flourished.



'The Spanish Bull Fight or the Corsican Matador in Danger' c. 1808. This British caricature by J. Gillray showing the Spanish bull flinging Napoleon while trampling his brother Joseph to the delight of crowned heads echoed the feelings of many in Europe and nearly everyone in Spain. Print after Gillray. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)

Although a deeply religious and staunchly Roman Catholic society, Spain was one of the first countries to ban the Jesuit order which stood accused of too much political meddling. It was also a time when the dreaded religious Inquisition tribunals, all-powerful in the 16th century, saw such an enormous loss of influence as to become almost irrelevant. This progressive and enlightened period became known in Spain as the *Ilustracion*, the Age of Enlightenment.

However, Spanish society generally remained deeply conservative and was suspicious of outside influences. One reason for this was that communications were difficult due to the country's mountain ranges as well as its poor roads. Thus, people in Spain identified strongly with their native regions – each of which preserved strong cultural differences, including different languages – rather than with Spain as a whole. In such areas as Catalonia or the Basque provinces, most common people living in the countryside and mountains spoke the local language and might not even know Spanish, the language of Castile. Spanish was more widely used in towns and cities elsewhere and was accepted as the language of government and education.

Of the seven million people in the country, an amazingly large proportion of the Spanish population, about 600,000, were *hidalgos* of noble blood. A few noble families formed the kingdom's powerful and wealthy 'Grandees' while most other noble *hidalgos* were poor but fiercely proud of their blue blood. The many church orders and monasteries accounted for another 200,000 people. This also was a remarkably high figure, although it must be understood that in Spain, as in many other Catholic countries until recently, the Church ran the country's hospitals and the education system, and aided the needy. Religious orders were not simply organisations dedicated to prayer and contemplation but leading providers of health, educational and social services. A surprising number of clerics took up arms against the French, some as guerrillas, and there can be no doubt that this was tied to their close social commitment. The balance of the population was *El Common*, the common people. A few were merchants of some wealth, while others worked in various professions and trades and made up a small 'middle class'. The great majority of the population lived in an agrarian setting, for the most part in humble circumstances if not outright squalor. Poverty, however, was not scorned in Spain as in most other countries.

Perhaps the most perplexing Spanish feature was the 'Point of Honour' ingrained into the character of every Spanish man and woman. This required that to maintain one's social standing any challenges to one's honour had to be met, even if this meant risking death. As a result, many Spanish men, unlike ordinary Frenchmen or Englishmen, were routinely armed with daggers and swords. This fascination with the politics of pride could go as far as taking the life of an 'enemy' simply to



French Imperial Guard Grenadiers make a bonfire of guitars after having sacked the Bishop of Burgos' palace in the autumn of 1808. Napoleon looks on indifferently in the background. This behaviour was very mild compared to atrocities suffered by Spanish civilians at the hand of French soldiers, atrocities which were cruelly avenged by the guerrillas. (Print after JOB)

maintain one's Point of Honour. For example, following the May 1808 uprising, British traveller Blanco White and a friend fled Madrid to the southern Spanish village of Almaraz, where they were confronted by a menacing crowd. At length the villagers relented, sheepishly explaining that other towns had honoured themselves by killing 'traitors' so they had to kill some too! The result of such a mentality over a long period of time was a certain weakening of the value given to human life and a contemplation of death as an honourable solution, for it was most important to live and to die honourably.¹

Why become a guerrilla?

The basic motivations to join a guerrilla band were obvious enough for almost any proud Spaniard – and all were proud. The sight of foreign soldiers, initially passing for allies, who obviously scorned them and their country, was not something to warm any Spanish soul. The cavalier ways of the French, and their widespread incomprehension of Spanish society, which they looked down on as priest-ridden, corrupt and decadent, guaranteed the twain would never meet between the French and the Spanish. But there was much worse. French soldiers ransacked any building, from a humble peasant's hut to a bishop's palace. To quote an obvious propaganda manifesto of 1 January 1809 which, unfortunately, had much truth to it, French soldiers had indulged in 'the rape of mothers and daughters, who had to suffer all the excesses of this brutality within sight of their dismembered fathers and husbands, their [infant] children pierced with bayonets and carried in triumph as military trophies'. Nor were civilians the only targets of the marauding French. There were stories of convents invaded by the troops, the nuns stripped naked and gang raped, and of monasteries where monks had been bayoneted by soldiers and the monasteries transformed into stables for the French cavalry's horses.

All these unfortunate people, nuns and monks included, had families whose relatives were outraged. The younger men of these families would vow to fight by any means available to them to exact revenge. To maintain their country's and their own honour, French blood would have to be shed and as much of it as possible because, in many an injured Spaniard's heart, the desire for revenge was mixed with blind hatred. The example of Don Julian Sanchez, who started a guerrilla group to avenge his family, is an excellent case in point (see Guerrilla bands and leaders, page 18).

He was not alone, and there were obviously thousands of others whose lives and happiness had been broken forever. Lieutenant Moyle Sherer of the 34th Foot 'met with a very fine man, a native of Aragon, and a Guerrilla' in 1811. His life had turned upside down the day French soldiers had arrived in his hamlet while he had

King Fernando VII, although detained in France from 1808 to 1814, was the rallying figure of all patriotic Spaniards, guerrillas in particular, in the struggle against the French. Many met their end to the cry of 'Viva Fernando VII!' during the war. Yet, when the king came back in 1814, he instituted a repressive conservative autocracy which drove many former guerrillas of liberal persuasions to seek refuge outside Spain. (Print after Goya)



been away. 'My father was led out, and shot in the market place of my native village; our cottage was burned, my mother died of grief, and my wife, who was violated [raped] by the enemy [soldiers], fled to me... and died in my arms, in a hospital in Saragossa' two years before. Still, he felt 'too miserable.... I follow the boldest leader; but I have sworn never to dress a vine or plough a field till the enemy is driven out of Spain.' Like so many whose lives had been traumatised with grief and loss, he turned guerrilla to have his revenge.

There were also other motives besides all-consuming revenge. The old spirit of the freewheeling men-at-arms of medieval times had not totally vanished. Now the crusade was against the French rather than the Moors. Yet another attraction was that, suddenly, one did not need to be a *hidalgo* to rise in the career of arms. Men of the most common circumstances were becoming respected guerrilla leaders and this was not lost on other young men from *El Common*.

Tied to the patriotic and emotional reasons were economic issues. The question of taxes and the *fueros* was a very sore point, for it touched, especially in the mountainous areas of the Basque countryside, that most personal and utterly important aspect of any man: his wallet. The French occupiers, intent on raising as much money as possible, abolished the *fueros* and instituted a comprehensive tax system. For the Spanish peasant, this went against all the ancient *fueros* and exceptions that provided for a humble but decent living. That the French would send soldiers to collect by force the heavy taxes they levied and to punish those who did not obey was enough to make almost every young mountaineer in Navarre join Espoz y Mina's guerrillas.

A concluding remark is fitting regarding women who joined the guerrillas. Little is known about them, although they were sometimes mentioned by observers and in a few memoirs. No doubt, most women with guerrilla bands were 'camp followers' and, while never very far from action, were basically non-combatants. But there were instances

of women fighting as guerrillas. The motivation of a female guerrilla seems to have been much the same as for a man, usually an outrage committed by the French on family members with the added feature that some followed their husbands or parents in the fighting. Such a woman needed to have an iron will, be fearless, physically robust, skilled in the use of firearms and, more often than not, be a relative of a guerrilla or a guerrilla chief to be accepted in a band. When Don Julian Sanchez's troopers escaped Ciudad Rodrigo in July

French troops routinely raped and killed Spanish women, and even children, as shown by this terrible print after Goya, one in his famous series on the 'Disasters of War'. The retributions they had to suffer at the hand of vengeful guerrillas would be even more cruel.





These servants following the Barcelona Regiment in 1807 show remarkably well the ordinary costumes, of the common people, that guerrillas usually wore. Print after C. Suhr. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)

1810, the wives of two men were present, according to the British historian and poet Robert Southey, one of them, 'who went by the name of Maria Fraile, saved her husband by shooting a [French] dragoon who was about to attack him on one side'. *El Caracol's* niece, Catalina Martin, was a member of his band and was wounded in action in August 1810. In the Rioja, the guerrilla chief Cuevillos 'was accompanied by his son and daughter-in-law... In one action this Amazon was said to have killed three of the enemy with her own hand.'

ORGANISATION OF GUERRILLA BANDS

By the end of 1808, the Supreme Central Junta realised the value of the nascent irregular bands roaming the countryside and looking to harass the isolated French forces. Taking an important step to recognise and approve of the new *guerrilleros*, as many already called the individuals who

made up these bands, the Junta legitimised the existing groups and encouraged the formation of new units of *partidas* for partisan warfare, groups that would soon be universally known as guerrillas. The decree was issued by the Junta at Seville, on 28 December 1808.

The 'Regulation by the Supreme Junta' was proclaimed to create 'a militia of a new species, named Partidas and Cuadrillas', which is to say, the guerrillas. Each guerrilla group was, in principle, supposed to operate under the provisions of its 24 articles. Naturally, this was not followed to the letter, or even broadly, but it did provide guidelines to all aspiring guerrillas.

The main articles concerning organisation were Article 1, which specified that 'Each Partida will consist of 50 mounted men, more or less, and as many on foot . . .' and Article 5, which stated that 'Each Partida will have a chief with the title of commandant, a second [in command], two mounted subalterns and three on foot.' Article 13 declared the members of the Partidas were to be subject to the same royal regulations as other troops. This, in effect, put them on the same military footing as other Spanish troops in the realm. Article 14 quite logically stated that arms and clothing were to be at the discretion of the commandant according to what was available. Other articles concerned pay, booty and subsistence.

The principal articles concerning the duties and objectives to be pursued were towards the end of the document. They proved to be excellent guides. Article 22 directed that the Partidas army would intercept enemy parties, capture its couriers, impede its entry in villages for collecting money and food, and disturb its marches by shooting at the enemy from suitable positions. Article 23 went further and asked commanders that, when convenient, two or three or more Partidas would assemble to defend difficult and narrow passes, intercept convoys

and keep the enemy constantly on alert by false attacks, especially at night, so that enemy troops would find it difficult to rest. Here, in these two articles, were laid out the main guerrilla objectives, which became scourges to French soldiers for the next five years. The guerrilla bands would unite and attack a weaker French force, then scatter into the mountains in dozens of small groups as large French forces chased them. And, as French soldiers were to learn, there was to be no safety for stragglers, sentries and lone parties away from a respectable force, by night or day.

Article 24 was the one that was just about totally ignored by all leaders. It stated that, in order to prevent disorder and operate with advantage against the enemy, the guerrillas would be attached to divisions of the army under orders of its generals. This was not actually done until fairly late in the war, when the nature of the warfare waged in Spain was changing to a more regular type, calling again for the tactics of the regular armies. The Supreme Junta nevertheless did have some potent influence over a guerrilla leader: it could, and often did, grant him an officer's commission and might even recognise his band as an army unit.

Local Juntas echoed the Central Junta's regulations for raising 'the greatest possible number of detached corps', that is to say, guerrillas. They even specified the weapons to be used, namely, 'the musket for attacking the enemy's convoys and detachments by ambush and surprise; and the *cuchillo* [or side knife] for attacks by night and in the streets'. In areas occupied by the French, the guerrillas were 'to fall suddenly on the French and their partisans, to arrest their convoys, carry off their advanced guards, watch and harass their patrols, surprise stragglers, make an attack when they had the advantage of numbers, and lie in ambush when their safety depended on flight'. But they would not vanish for long and, as soon as the French had gone, they were back to disturbing communications and rendering life very unpleasant for the frustrated occupation troops.

A second ordinance from the Supreme Junta was issued on 17 April 1809 which further attempted to regulate the *Corso Terrestre* or 'Land Corsairs' as the guerrilla bands were termed. The legislators probably knew that the regulations would be largely ignored so that the duties were moved up to Article 1. It stated that all inhabitants 'of the provinces occupied by the French troops, who are capable of bearing arms are authorized to arm themselves, even with prohibited weapons, to attack and loot, on all favourable occasions, the French soldiers, either individually or in groups, to take the food and the supplies intended for their use, in a word, to cause them as much harm and damage as possible'. This was the very definition of guerrilla warfare: total war with little quarter asked or given. The population was called

Soldiers of the Barcelona Regiment in undress in 1807. They actually wear many items of Spanish civilian dress, notably the red or brown caps, the cloaks wrapped around their shoulders and, for the boy on the left, sandals. A military forage cap, a military jacket and gaiters are also seen. This mixture was typical of guerrillas who had been soldiers. Print after C. Suhr. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)



upon to feed and support the patriot guerrilla irregulars who, in turn, were reminded to collaborate with the regular Spanish armies.

The effect of these regulations certainly led to a rapid expansion and better organisation of guerrilla bands. The result, according to the 1810 *Annual Register*, was that the French, in spite of superior numbers, were 'unable to invade at once all parts of the country. Harassed on every side by an hostile population, they were ignorant of the numbers of enemies they had to contend with. The Guerrillas, dispersed by superior forces in one place, appeared re-organized in another. New bodies of armed men appeared to spring up from the earth after they were supposed to be destroyed.'

A guerrilla band was rooted in its own locality. It usually gathered men from the same village whose political loyalties and inclinations were known to each other. The band's members knew the geography of their area very well and were familiar with out-of-the-way places where one could vanish. Men who drifted in from other areas, besides being unfamiliar with the terrain, would be viewed with some suspicion as they might be spying for the French. As well, the band's members shared the same regional language and social customs. The local affinity was also expressed in costume, folklore, music and poetry. A *feria* – a festival lasting up to a week – held in Cordoba would have all the emoluments of the *flamenco* culture of southern Spain, whereas a similar feast held in Pamplona would revel in the Basque folklore of northern Spain. This definition by area is one of the reasons that the French found it next to impossible to penetrate guerrilla bands. Indeed, the fate of a French spy in the mountains of Navarre was as good as sealed if he could not answer questions in the Basque language.

As the guerrilla movement grew, so did the number of bands, to the point where, by 1811, neither the Spanish Central Junta, the French in Spain nor the British in Portugal knew who they were and how many were actually deployed. To this day, there is no absolutely reliable information on this aspect and a great deal will probably always be left to speculation. Possibly the closest thing to a general view of the guerrilla phenomena was an attempt by the British to tabulate all guerrilla bands in Spain known to them during the early part of 1811 (PRO, WO 1/400). It listed some 111 guerrilla bands active at that time, and presumably the previous year, each one going by the name of its leader, a few having thousands of men, most a few hundred and, for many more, no figures were known. As for the overall number of guerrillas, about 28,000 were listed in the 1811 British report. However, about half of the bands listed only have the leader's name but not the number of guerrillas he led. Assuming the larger bands would be listed with reasonably accurate figures, while the smaller bands would have no figures, an estimate of some 35,000 guerrillas in all of Spain at that time might be arrived at.

Other estimates have been put forward. Spanish historian E. Rodriguez Solis' research

Guerrilla Catalanian Miquelets in action. Note the cylinders for cartridges on the waistbelt. (Print after Linber)



concluded that about 58 guerrilla groups has been formed by the end of 1808, rising sharply to 156 as the movement had become national by 1810, and then gradually being reduced to only 35 in 1813 as the French had, by then, evacuated most of the country. Another historian, Juan Priego Lopez, felt there were about 25,000 guerrillas in northern Spain between the Gulf of Biscay and the Castilian mountain range. On the other hand, British intelligence reports of the period gave much lower estimates in that area. They tabulated about 11,000 in late 1811. British analysis was also very cautious later on. Colonel Richard Bourke reported at the end of 1812 that 'I have been able to ascertain with tolerable exactness their [the guerrillas'] strength and state of equipment. The gross numbers, including recruits and convalescents &c, of the corps in Biscay, Navarre and the parts adjacent amount to 20,600 infantry, their effective strength hardly reaches 14,500' (PRO, WO 1/263). The exact figures will probably never be known but, from these fragmented reports, it is obvious that, for a time, many a Spanish patriot became a guerrilla no matter where he lived.

As will be seen in the following pages devoted to briefly describing some of the main guerrilla groups and their leaders, the area in which a guerrilla band operated was all-important. In many ways, each group and its area defined a guerrilla's motivation and his ways of fighting the French.

GUERRILLA BANDS AND LEADERS

Regional costumes of Andalucia, southern Spain. The central figure is probably meant to be a guerrilla. (Print after Lacauchie)



Andalusia

The guerrillas of Andalusia were raised in two distinct periods. In 1808, several groups under Ramon Argote, Juan de la Torre and others (see Plate A1) were raised and then mostly dissolved in 1809. The French invasion of Andalusia in 1810 saw the emergence of more groups, often mounted lancers, under Juan Fernandez y Canas and Juan Soldado in Granada, Vincente Moreno Romero in Malaga, Luis Negros in Olivar, and many others.

Aragon

The old kingdom of Aragon became, from the first weeks of the revolt, an outstanding area of determined resistance to the French. This turned into an conspicuously heroic example of extraordinary resistance with the two sieges of Zaragoza in

1808 and 1809. The fighting spirit, bordering on a frenzy of fighting to the death, was not unique to the city's garrison and its population; throughout Aragon many guerrilla bands were raised from 1808. Unlike most other areas, Aragon had no very large guerrilla bands but numerous smaller ones. Groups under individuals going by the names of *Cura de La Palma* (Parish Priest of La Palma), Villamil, Perena, Villacampa, Carabajal, Gayan, Pedrosa, Baget, Sarraza [Sarasa], Theobaldo and Paniza were noted by Marshal Suchet and other French army officers during the campaigns of 1808 and 1809. Many were crushed by the French as Zaragoza fell in 1809, but others sprang up and the Spanish recorded some 15 guerrilla groups in Aragon from 1809 to 1813. *El Estudiante* (The Student) led a party in Sanguiepa, while Solano and Alegre had more guerrillas in the area of Jaca. Antonio Hernandez had some 400 guerrillas, possibly the largest group, in the Campo de Carinena area. Beneficiado de Laguarres led another party of guerrillas that attacked French troops in northern Aragon. Dorset Salvador did the same in the area of Lerida, as did Tomas Campillo in the mountains of Albarracin. Miguel Sarasa may have been the most celebrated, raising a group in 1809 that fought the French in upper Aragon and Navarre, winning the rank of colonel of the battalion of the Tiradores of Ribagorza in 1812.

A mounted guerrilla of the Asturias according to a 19th century print. He wears a brown jacket with a small red collar and cuffs, brown breeches, tan boots and a grey felt hat. Like all guerrillas, he is well armed with a captured French cavalry sabre, a carbine and a brace of pistols hooked in his red waist sash under which a grey cartridge belt can be seen. His horse furniture is decorated with red tail bow, tassels and drooping plume.

Asturias

Juan Diaz Porlier, *El Marquesito* (The Little Marquis).

There were relatively few guerrillas in Asturias, but Porlier more than made up for this. Born in Cartagena de Indias (in present-day Colombia), Porlier was a navy officer and veteran of Trafalgar when he transferred to the cavalry in 1808 and organised a guerrilla band that operated against the French in the Palencia area. His band quickly became a scourge to the French, and Porlier rose from brigadier in 1809 to major-general commanding the Cantabria Division in 1814. A liberal, he was found guilty of fomenting a plot to depose the conservative King Fernando VII (who regained the throne at war's end) and was hanged at Coruña on 3 October 1815.

Old Castile

Jeronimo Merino, *El Cura*, was a well-educated priest who, revolted by the wanton behaviour of French troops in his village of Valloviado during 1808, raised a band which

became one of the most famous in Old Castile. *El Cura* (The Parish Priest) had no previous military





Gen. Juan Diaz Porlier, *El Marquesito* (The Little Marquis), so called because he was the nephew of the famous Marquis de la Romana, c. 1812. He was a former regular officer who took to the hills. His band operated in La Mancha and the Asturias. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)

education, but his studies of Latin and the humanities may well have given him the opportunity of studying some of the military classics which, combined with his natural tactical ability, gave him the skills to prevail against the French columns sent after him. In May 1809, *El Cura's* band became a recognised light cavalry unit. Initially holding the rank of lieutenant, *El Cura* became captain in September 1809 and lieutenant-colonel in January 1810 due to his outstanding ability, which drew more and more men. A guerrilla with *El Cura* wore a red cross edged silver on his clothing. The unit numbered about 500 men. To the light cavalry was added an infantry component. The light cavalry was named the *Husares Voluntarios de Burgos* and the foot troops the *Regimiento de Altranza*. Perhaps the most notable feat of *El Cura's* guerrillas occurred in July 1810 when, near Soria, his men ambushed the 43rd and 44th French naval battalions on their way to join Masséna's army, causing some 200 casualties to the French before they withdrew. In October 1810, they captured a vast convoy which deprived the French troops in Burgos of supplies for several weeks. Merino was described by one of his prisoners captured near Burgos, Thérèse Figueur, as a stocky, squared-shouldered man 'below the average height' with black hair. He was dressed 'like a brigand... and proudly wore a shako taken from one of our [French] hussars'. He and his men 'passed their time roaming the fields, lurking about the towns occupied by the French, spotting the stragglers and isolated wanderers'. *El Cura* became a colonel in August 1811 and brigadier-general leading the Burgos brigade from August 1812. By then, *El Cura* was reported in control of 'the country from Lerma to Burgos', leading some 2,000 infantry and 400 cavalry (PRO, WO 1/400). Two years later, the parish priest had become a major-general, the highest military rank achieved by any

'A call to arms in Spain' showing monks mustered for fighting the French. Many priests, friars and monks joined guerrilla bands and a few even became leaders, *El Cura* (the parish priest) being the most famous. Print from *The Graphic*, 17 January 1874. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)



Spanish priest or monk who took up arms against the French. Now that they were out of Spain, the redoubtable General Merino laid his sword aside and went back to his church.

Saturnino Aubuin Fernandez, *El Manco*, was born into a family of peasants in 1781. A bright lad, he was sent to study Latin and the humanities in Valladolid. In December 1808, he joined *El Empecinado's* band (see below) and, fearless in battle and shrewd in tactics, became one of its officers, eventually leading his own band of guerrillas. In September 1809, he was badly wounded by a musket ball that caused him to have his left arm amputated, hence his nickname of *El Manco*, meaning 'one arm'. He went on fighting, becoming a lieutenant-colonel by June 1811. On 22 January 1812, he was captured by the French and sent to jail in France. Liberated at war's end, he stayed in France until 1820 because of his liberal views.

Bartolomé Amor was born in 1785, initially tried ecclesiastical studies and, probably finding he was not meant to be a cleric, joined the army in 1804. He became a sergeant the following year, probably because he had some education. Following the defeat and dispersal of his corps at Gamonal in 1809, he rallied to Porlier's band in March where he was made an officer, no doubt due to his military experience. By 1810, he was lieutenant-colonel commanding the Hussars of Rioja and operated mostly in that hilly wine-growing area. The following year, he reportedly had 500 hussars who were 'well clothed, mounted and disciplined' and 150 infantrymen under his command, which was now independent of *El Empecinado's* band. He became a brigadier-general in 1812, commanding the Rioja Brigade within the Soria Division. A liberal in politics, he had to flee to France in 1814 following the return of King Fernando VII, who installed a very conservative regime.

Juan Martin Diaz, *El Empecinado* (The Obstinate), who was destined to become the most famous of guerrillas, was born in September 1775 in Castrillo de Duero, near Burgos. Initially a farm worker, he joined the army in the early 1790s and served in the España Regiment in the 1793-94 Roussillon campaign. From June 1808, he raised a band of guerrillas that operated in the areas of Burgos, Valladolid and Salamanca. He then moved with his men to the area of Guadalajara and, in 1809, managed to unify all the bands in that region into a large and well co-ordinated group of 300 cavalry and 200 infantry. By 1810, he held the rank of brigadier-general, and his troops may have numbered as many as 3,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry by 1811. Of these, the elite unit was the mounted *Cazadores Voluntarios de Madrid*, which he led as its colonel. Such a force caused considerable trouble and worries to the French who sent powerful columns to track down *El Empecinado* and his guerrillas. It was to no avail. Even highly competent and experienced French officers, such as General J. S. Léopold Hugo, could not catch him or seriously diminish his

Portrait of Don Juan Martin Diaz, *El Empecinado* c. 1812-1814. He apparently wears the uniform of the mounted *Cazadores de Madrid*, which he raised in late 1811. Green coatee, scarlet collar, cuffs and piping, silver buttons and lace. (Museo de Ejercito, Madrid. Photo: RC)



El Empecinado's mounted guerrillas escorting French soldiers taken prisoner, c. 1812-1814. The guerrilla troopers wear the uniform of the *Cazadores de Madrid*: green uniform, red collar, cuffs, busby bag, plume and housings, white cords and lace. Detail from a fan print. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)



Don Juan de Palarea, *El Medico* (the doctor) in the uniform of the Iberia Hussar Regiment, c. 1812. The uniform shown consists of a crimson-red dolman with blue collar and cuffs, blue pelisse edged with black fur, blue breeches, pewter buttons, white cords, crimson-red hussar sash with white knots, black busby with red feather tipped blue and white cords, crimson-red housings edged with white lace. Contemporary fan print. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)



band's ability to inflict damage. Hugo later recalled the advantages that *El Empecinado* and his men had over his foes: detailed local knowledge; precise intelligence of French army movements; large numbers of men (who could be replenished by recruiting in neighbouring regions); the ability to draw on well-hidden stores of food while the French faced a countryside emptied of most grain and livestock; and a highly adaptable cavalry that could easily exchange tired mounts for fresh ones. To track down 'this skilful partisan', as Hugo called *El Empecinado*, seemed next to impossible.

El Empecinado's guerrilla group was eventually incorporated into the Spanish army, forming several regiments in its 2nd Army while, in October 1814, *El Empecinado* himself was raised to the rank of major-general.

New Castile and La Mancha

Francisco Abad, *Chaleco* (Waistcoat), raised guerrilla horsemen who, by December 1811, were about 300 strong when organised into the Valdepenas Hussars. Abad went on to lead the 5th Army in 1813.

Toribio Bustamente, *El Caracol* (The Snail), was a postman and not involved in the war until June 1810 when bloodthirsty French soldiers burst into his village and slaughtered his wife and infant son. He got away and raised a guerrilla group renowned for its ferocity that operated in the area of Avila and Toledo.

Ambrosio Carmena, *El Pellejero* (The Tanner), raised a fearsome party of guerrillas to avenge the gang rape of his wife by French soldiers at Arges, near Toledo. At war's end, he declined all honours and ranks and went back to his village and tanner's trade.

Juan Palarea Blanes, *El Medico* (The Doctor), was

born in Murcia in 1780 and had a flourishing medical practice in Madrid until its French occupation in 1808. Outraged at the abusive ways of the French, he raised a party of guerrillas from June 1809. Well led and successful in La Mancha, the party grew quickly and extended its operations to the areas surrounding Madrid, Avila, Salamanca, Segovia and Cuenca. This was initially mostly a mounted group and it was organised as the *Husares Francos* (independent hussars) *Numantinos* in May 1811, the *Cazadores Francos Numantinos*, a light infantry unit, being also set up in November. In 1813, both groups were incorporated into the 4th Spanish Army, the hussars later serving in Espoz y Mina's Navarre Division. By then, *El Medico* was a renowned guerrilla colonel recognised for his outstanding skill in light cavalry tactics. He did not go back to his medical practice after the war but remained in the army as colonel of the Iberia Hussars.

Catalonia

Being on the eastern border with France and containing Barcelona, Spain's most important city after Madrid, Catalonia was strategically important to the French, who therefore kept many troops there. There were nevertheless a number of Catalonian guerrilla groups based in the mountains.

Joaquín Ibanez, Baron de Eroles, was born into a noble family in 1785. Joining the revolt in 1808, he was captured by the French when the city of Girona surrendered to the French in 1809 but escaped in 1810. He fled to Vich and there became a guerrilla leader of note, one of the few in Catalonia who had a reputation with the British. He soon commanded all the guerrilla groups in the Ampurdan area and became a brigadier-general. The guerrillas in his area felt they were on a crusade and called themselves the *Ejercitos de la Fe* (the Army of the Faith) of which Eroles was called the *Generalísimo*.

José Manso y Sola. Born in 1785, he was working at a mill in Barcelona in 1808 when, hearing a rumour that all the young men would be forcibly taken to France, he went to his native village of Borreda and joined the *Tercio de Miquelete* as a lieutenant. By 1809, thanks to his tactical and administrative skills, he now led a band of some 800 men. However, the band was defeated and dispersed by the French at the siege of Rosas. Although wounded, Manso managed to escape and raised more guerrilla units, leading the *Cazadores de Cataluna* in 1811 as lieutenant-colonel and became a brigadier-general in 1814.

Francisco Rovira was a priest from Vich who became guerrilla chief of the *Somatenes de Ampurdan* in 1809 and, as colonel, organised the Regiment of San Fernando in 1811. He achieved the rank of brigadier-general in 1813. After the war, he went back to church duties holding a high office at the cathedral in his native town of Vich.

These 'Soldiers of the Army of the Faith' show remarkably well the costumes worn by mountaineers of the eastern Pyrenees. The general of the 'Army of the Faith' was the Baron de Eroles, an aristocratic leader of guerrillas. Print after Maurin at Perpignan. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)





'Portrait of a Guerrilla Chief' dressed in a blue regional costume trimmed with red with a brown cloak and blue cap. As it was published in London in 1823, this print appears to denote the civil war in Spain and the French intervention, successful this time, in favour of the conservatives led by King Fernando VII. However, nothing much had changed in the dress and arms of guerrillas from the time of Napoleon's invasion. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)

Extremadura

Ramon Noriega Garcia was an officer of the Canarias regiment seriously wounded at the battle of Talavera in 1809. While recovering from his wounds, he raised a guerrilla group which was active in the Toledo area until captured in early 1811. He escaped to Extremadura and there raised the guerrilla Extremadura Independent Hussars, which he led until captured and executed in December 1811.

Miguel Quero raised a guerrilla group of 100 *Lanceros del Tietar* and the 600-strong infantry *Voluntarios de la Cruzada del Tietar* in 1808, both of which harassed the French communications, fought at Talavera and were later incorporated into General Cuesta's army in 1809.

Galicia

Pablo Morillo was born in 1778, was a shepherd at 13, and later joined the marine infantry, seeing action in several battles, including Trafalgar. A sergeant in 1808, he was promoted lieutenant in the army after his participation in the battle of Bailen. At the collapse of the Spanish army in late

1808, he raised a guerrilla band in Murcia that went to Galicia in 1809. His later rise was quick: brigadier in 1812, major-general by 1812 and lieutenant-general in the Americas by 1815.

Francisco Puga led a group that took part in the assault on Vigo in 1809, but was badly wounded in April 1810.

León

Don Julian Sanchez was possibly the best known guerrilla chief to the British. This is largely because his band operated in the area of Ciudad Rodrigo, near the Portuguese border. His band possibly first came into contact with British troops early in 1809 when some were posted at the Portuguese border fortress of Almeida, about 50 km west of Ciudad Rodrigo. Born in the town of Muñoz (province of Salamanca) on 31 May 1774, he was the son of a family of farmers and had some education in his parish before joining the Mallorca Infantry Regiment in 1793. He was in several campaigns and, obtaining his discharge from the army in about 1802, went back to his home town and took up farm work.

In the summer of 1808, with Spain now in turmoil against the French, Sanchez travelled to Ciudad Rodrigo and there joined the cavalry of the newly formed *Voluntarios de Ciudad Rodrigo* in which this former soldier became an ensign. In early 1809, as French troops started moving into western Spain, Sanchez went off with a dozen men to form a *partida* and raid the French enemy. It seems Sanchez decided to do this following 'some cruelties exercised on a branch of his family by the French', after which 'he took an inveterate hatred to them', according to the memoirs of Rifleman Costello of the 95th. Sanchez had good reason to hate the French as they had killed part of his family in cold blood. It was the French's great misfortune that Sanchez turned out to be one of the most



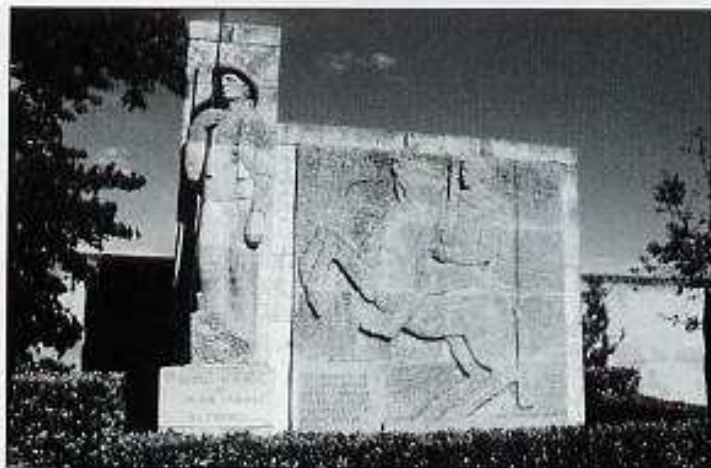
Don Julian Sanchez 'taken from life at the Camp of the Guerrillas in the Estrella Sept. 3, 1810, and esteemed by British Officers a correct likeness.' Don Julian is shown with black hair and moustache, blue pelisse trimmed black fur and gold lace, blue pantaloons with a red stripe. Note the French shako with the upside down eagle that he wore. In the background several guerrillas, in grey-blue jackets with red collars and cuffs and yellow lace, are visible. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)

talented practitioners of the new art of guerrilla warfare as carried out by cavalry. Emerging as a remarkable guerrilla leader, Sanchez, the former farm worker and private soldier, was now respectfully and admiringly called 'Don' Julian Sanchez, like a nobleman, by his countrymen. The raiding continued by the daring and well-armed horsemen who, unusually for guerrillas, wore uniforms. Don Julian's cavalrymen, with the smaller bands of Olivera and El Frayle, mustered an estimated 700 men deployed mostly between Salamanca and Ciudad Rodrigo.

In the spring of 1810, the balance of power shifted radically to the French side with the arrival of some 65,000 imperial army troops at Salamanca. This was Marshal Masséna's *Armée du Portugal*. Its objective as decreed by Napoleon was to secure Portugal by chasing out the much weaker British army and eliminating the newly formed Portuguese army. However, before any of that could happen, the city of Ciudad Rodrigo – held by the Spanish – had to be taken by the French before marching into Portugal via the northwestern route guarded by the fortress of Almeida. Sanchez and many of his men were in Ciudad Rodrigo when it was besieged by Masséna's army. When all hope of relief had vanished and the city was about to fall, its governor advised Sanchez to attempt an escape with his guerrillas. One night shortly before midnight, they slipped out, overwhelmed a French cavalry post and carried away eight French troopers with their horses as they made their escape. The French took both Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida and marched further into Portugal until forced to withdraw into Spain in the spring of 1811. Sanchez's mounted guerrillas were always on the lookout for French convoys and, their specialty, French messengers east of Ciudad Rodrigo. The Portuguese irregulars of General Silveira watched the country further west. The result was that mere messengers had to be escorted by hundreds of well-armed troops. Sanchez's men provided valuable intelligence to Wellington's army as he neared the Spanish border, west of Ciudad Rodrigo, and, in early May, some were present at the battle of Fuentes de Oñoro. The raids continued on the French, with Sanchez's men watching every move in and out of French-held Ciudad Rodrigo and, in one daring move, capturing the city's French governor.

Peasant infantryman of the Ciudad Rodrigo area 'militia' c. 1809, no doubt one of the patriot guerrillas led by Don Julian Sanchez. He wears a wide brimmed hat, a short jacket, breeches and an ample cloak (these homespun items were usually brown), and is shod with sandals. He is armed with a musket, an antique looking sword and wears a belly cartridge box. Print after Bradford. (Pedro de Brito Collection, Porto)





Monument to Don Julian Sanchez and his guerrillas in Ciudad Rodrigo. (Photo: RC)

A Spanish report of 1811 gave some detailed information on Don Julian's band. It was now called the *Lanceros de Castilla* (Lancers of Castile) and had 16 companies. Sanchez was the colonel, and he was assisted by a lieutenant-colonel and had some 51 other officers and 767 NCOs and troopers. The mounted troopers were now joined by six infantry companies totalling 28 officers and 1,098 men plus a light artillery company boasting two 3-pounders served by two officers and 42 gunners, all of whom roamed the western plains of Old Castile and León.

It is obvious that Wellington knew Julian Sanchez quite well. In November 1812 at the Spanish town of Guinaldo, Rifleman Costello 'saw Don Julian Sanchez, the noted Guerilla leader, linked in arm with the Duke [of Wellington] – an instance peculiar to the time of obscure merit rising of its own impulse to an equality with the greatest man of the age'. Costello observed that Sanchez had a 'square well-set figure, dark scowl and flashing eyes of the Guerrilla' and that his band was 'well armed, and equipped with British arms and accoutrements, and who rendered more assistance to the cause of the British than all the Spanish troops besides'.²

Levante and Murcia

Fray Asensio Nebot, *El Fraile* (The Friar), organised a guerrilla band in the Valencia area that had some 600 men in August 1812, operating in the whole region and also in Teruel and Cuenca.

José Romeu organised a group in 1809 and another after the fall of Valencia to the French but was betrayed by a traitor and executed by the French in June 1812.

Navarre

Xavier Mina, *El Estudiante* (The Student), was only 18 in 1808 when his father was arrested and



'VALDES – The Spanish Patriot friar is an extraordinary marksman and incredible are the numbers of French Soldiers he has shot with his single rifle, he usually stations himself in the craggy cliffs and on the sides of deep precipices of the Sierra Morena, from whence he takes his aim in security and never fails to destroy his object, he has always eluded his pursuers by his superior agility and speed, and his intimate acquaintance with the intricacies of the Mountains enables him to fire (even upon his pursuers) from quarters where he cannot be discovered, among various descriptions that have fallen by his hand, are two aids de camp one of the name of Rousseau – Niort, a well known partisan [of the French], General Sabran (while at the head of 3,000 men) and many others. He has so much annoyed the outposts of the French in Spain that a considerable reward has been offered by them for his head.' He is shown wearing a blue jacket with red cuffs, white shirt and breeches. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)

the family estate plundered by French soldiers in Navarre. He then became a guerrilla, leading a small band based in the mountains. He managed to unify the various guerrilla bands in his area and reorganise its 'Land Corsairs' into an effective strike force. As his fame spread, his party grew to some 1,200 men and inflicted many casualties on the French while cutting lines of communication between Madrid and France. But on 28 March 1810, Xavier Mina was captured by the French. His discouraged band dissolved, but many were rallied by his uncle who took over the leadership.³

Francisco Espoz y Mina was Xavier Mina's uncle and a humble peasant who worked on the family farm before the war. He had little formal education, could not read or write Spanish and was really fluent only in his native Basque. He first served in Doyle's regiment before joining his nephew's guerrilla band. Following Xavier's capture, Espoz y Mina rallied some of the band and soon proved to be the most outstanding of all guerrilla leaders. Colonel Don Lorenzo Xeminez reported that 'they call Mina the King of Navarre'. A guerrilla volunteer who joined Espoz y Mina was 'not allowed to bring anything but a pair of sandals, half-stockings, breeches, and jacket'. By 1810, Espoz y Mina had raised three infantry battalions of 1,000 men each. Some of the cloth, powder and weapons needed to equip them were actually bought in France and smuggled in by bribing French customs officials. By his own account, Mina eventually raised, disciplined and maintained nine infantry and two cavalry regiments amounting to 13,500 men. During this war, he later related, 'not counting the engagements of little importance, I took part in 143 battles or combats, of which the most remarkable are given here in alphabetic order: Aibar, Anizcar, Arlaban, Ayerbe, between Satinas and Arlaban, Erice, Iruozqui, Lerin and the plains of Lodosa, Maneru, Noatin, Peralta de Alcola, and Cabo de Saso, Piedradmillera and Monjardin, Plasencia, Rocafort and Sanguesa, Sanguesa and Valle de Roncal'. From 1813, Mina passed from being a guerrilla leader to become a leading general in the Spanish army, and his troops became a regular division of the army. From 1809 to 1814, he lost 5,000 men but reckoned the enemy lost about 26,000 killed and wounded and 14,000 prisoners to his forces.

Nearly all the smaller guerrilla groups in Navarre, such as those raised by Ramon Cores, Juan José Cruchagam, Dos Pelos, José Gorritz and Felix Sarasa, became part of Mina's command from 1809.

The North (Vizcaya and Santander)

The three northern Vizcaya (or Basque) provinces and Santander province, being close to France, were occupied by large numbers of French troops, making it difficult to organise guerrilla bands there. Nevertheless, there were some remarkably successful guerrillas in spite of the massive French army presence. In such a context, it was essential for those guerrillas to be natives of their area of operations and have a perfect knowledge of the least-known hideaways in its mountains.



Francisco Espoz y Mina (1781-1836); the most important guerrilla leader of the war. He was a gifted tactician in the guerrilla's hit-and-run warfare, a good organiser and administrator of his troops, the best of which eventually became part of the regular army.



Espoz y Mina's infantry undress coat, c. 1814. This simple blue coat with scarlet collar and cuffs, white piping and gold buttons was very much in the style of the British infantry clothing sent to Spain, some of it issued to Mina's Navarra Division, from late 1812. The cuffs reveal the wearer's rank: three stripes of gold lace indicating the rank of colonel, and above, the two rows of gold embroidered lace of a lieutenant-general. The sash is of the Spanish Life Guards and should not be associated with this coat. (Museo del Ejercito, Madrid)

Juan Lopez Campillo, born in 1785, was a tax and customs guard who turned guerrilla in June 1808, raising a group that became the Battalion of *Tiradores de Cantabria* (Cantabria Sharpshooters) who, by 1812, had become colonel of his guerrilla party within the 7th Army.

Francisco Anchia y Urquiza, *Longa*, nicknamed after the name of his native village, was the best known leader of this area. In 1809, he became a guerrilla with a small party of men, and his daring raids on the French attracted more recruits as time went by. By 1811, he had 700 infantrymen, enough to form a battalion of Iberia with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He also commanded some 350 light cavalry troopers and was said to have another 2,000 recruits. A year later he was a colonel leading the Iberia Division within the 7th Army, brigadier-general in 1814 and lieutenant-general a year later. *Longa* came in frequent contact with Wellington and his staff officers in 1813 when the Anglo-Portuguese army came into his part of the country. His guerrilla troopers were especially useful in providing good information on the French army, much as Don Julian Sanchez's men had done in León.

Gaspar Jauregui, *El Pastor*, was a shepherd (*el pastor*) born in 1791 who first joined Espoz y Mina's band and eventually became the talented commander of a party of about 100 Basques. The group grew in numbers, amounting to some 800 infantrymen in 1811, and eventually became the 1st Regiment of Guipuzcoa Volunteers. By 1812, the shepherd was a 22-year-old colonel.

Mariano Renovales was born in 1774 and became a career officer who served in the Buenos Aires cavalry. Back in Spain, he fought in both sieges of Zaragoza and escaped to the Roncal Valley where he raised a guerrilla band. Named commandant of the guerrillas in the Basque mountains, he went on to raise bands that later became regiments in Guipuzcoa and Vizcaya. In 1811, he was named brigadier-general, leading in La Mancha, and went back to the north as a major-general in 1812. In August, he was captured by the French as he was going to see Wellington. He was later exchanged and sent to England where he remained after the war.

WEAPONS AND CLOTHING

Weapons

The usual image that springs to mind when thinking of guerrilla arms is the rather romantic renderings made by countless artists of wild-looking men wielding swords, sabres, hangers and cutlasses of all sorts and all ages, knives, pistols and, especially, blunderbusses with a very wide barrel's muzzle. There is some truth to this image, in fact, at least in the early days of the war, but every guerrilla sought to have a good army musket and, before long, the guerrilla bands were usually armed with conventional military weapons. To these must be added the *cuchillo* side knife carried by almost every common Spanish man as a matter of honour as well as a handy tool. Many a French soldier, isolated in some dark and narrow city street or even in the bed of a 'friendly' prostitute, found death by the blade of the *cuchillo* in his back. The style of this personal knife varied greatly.

One of the persistent 'myths' held by both the British and the French

is that the guerrilla was amply armed and paid by the British. Research into British records fails to substantiate this in any great way. From time to time, there were shipments of British arms, usually dropped off by Royal Navy ships off the northern coast, that got to the guerrillas. One of the early records specific to a guerrilla group is a shipment of 500 muskets and bayonets, and 400 jackets, pantaloons, shakos and cockades to Coruña for General Porlier's (*El Marquesito's*) men in December 1810. In January 1811, Wellington ordered 'nine pieces of ordnance and their stores, to be delivered to the guerrillas in Castile'. As British intelligence officers sent into the guerrilla areas found out, the guerrillas were very much interested in ammunition and supplies of clothing. For instance, James Johnston, aide-de-camp to Major-General Walker, was sent to meet Espoz y Mina in the summer of 1811 and distribute some '500 sabres, 500 cutlasses, 500 pistols and 100,000 ball cartridges, ... 2,000 muskets & bayonets with their accoutrements & 200,000 musket ball cartridges' to the guerrillas in the mountains. He came in contact with such celebrities as *El Pastor*, *Longa*, Campillo and General Porlier, and finally met Espoz y Mina in person. Johnston concluded that what 'these chiefs mostly complain of is the great want of clothing & shoes, their troops being in general, very ragged & barefooted. I do not conceive that, for some time to come, any very considerable quantity of arms (muskets) will be wanted by them, but that it is essential that they should be supplied, as early as possible with ammunition, as it would be dangerous for them to form any sort of depot circumstanced as they are' (PRO, WO 1/261).

Mina himself lifted a corner of the veil over guerrilla arms procurement in his memoirs when he mentioned that he 'established, for the use of my division, travelling workshops of clothing, saddlery, weapons, ammunition, that I moved or put to work, or left hidden in the mountains as stores'. While this would have varied from one place to the next, even small guerrilla bands would have had gunsmiths with them.

In 1812, as the British came closer to them, the guerrillas asked for more arms. In August, a report mentioned that Espoz y Mina's guerrillas had received 1,500 muskets, Renovales had received 1,000 British and 300 French captured muskets, Campillo had 200 muskets and Don Gaspar (*El Pastor*, see below) 500 muskets, all delivered by Royal Navy ships off the northern coast of Spain. In October, Wellington ordered that Mina should have another 1,500 muskets, Renovales 1,000, *Longa* 1,500 with two howitzers, Campillo and Don Gaspar 1,000 each (PRO, WO 1/263). These supplies, some 8,500 muskets, were a small proportion of the vast numbers sent to the Spanish armies being reorganised that year. As the guerrillas became increasingly integrated into regular forces towards the end of the Peninsular War, they had more British arms and other supplies.

The main weapon carried by a guerrilla was his musket. Although it could be a British India Pattern 'Brown Bess', it was much more likely to be a Spanish or a captured French infantry musket. While differing in details, both the French and Spanish infantry muskets had the same essential characteristics. In the 18th century, Spanish army weapons were closely patterned after those of their then French allies. The Spanish Model 1757 musket, for example, was closely related to the French Model 1754. As the second half of the 18th century passed, both

countries put out different models. The French had their sturdy Model 1763 and the technically advanced Model 1777 which was, with small modifications, essentially the root of the An IX Model, the most common weapon in the French imperial infantry.

The Spanish had several models of infantry muskets. The M 1757, a fine weapon with brass mountings, was the standard infantry service weapon into the 1790s. New models were introduced in 1789, 1801 and 1807.

The M 1789 infantry musket was 1.5m long and featured a sturdier lock mechanism than that of the M 1757. This was the very solid Miquelet lock, also called the *Espanola* (Spanish) lock, long used by mountaineers in the Pyrenees. A second version of this lock introduced shortly thereafter had a brass flashguard.

The next infantry musket introduced was the M 1801 which replaced the Miquelet lock with the *Mixa* (mixed) lock, a combination of locks used elsewhere and the Spanish lock. The M 1807 musket was similar to the M 1801 except for the lock which now had a reinforced hammer, its general look being almost similar to French muskets except that Spanish muskets had brass furnishings.

Cavalry carbines introduced at the same dates as the infantry muskets had the same general features but were shorter at 1.19 m. There was also the M 1792 musket for Catalonian light troops which was longer at 1.54m and had a fancier trigger guard, as was traditional for these mountaineers' muskets.

The cavalry pistols, also introduced in 1789, 1801 and 1807, followed the same features as the musket regarding their locks, there being no other difference between the M 1801 and 1807.

All these muskets and pistols, often complete with their bayonets, were the main weapons used by the guerrillas. Some were brought by soldiers joining the bands, many were seized from government armouries and, most of all, vast numbers were taken from the French. Both Spanish and French muskets and pistols always had the same calibre (18mm/.69in.) so either country's service ammunition would work in both – which turned out to be a most important feature for guerrillas. British ball ammunition, it must be recalled, was slightly bigger (19mm/.75in) and might not work in French or Spanish muskets (although French or Spanish ammunition could be used in a British musket).

The accoutrements for musket and pistol ammunition used by the guerrillas were simpler than those of regular soldiers. The British sent tens of thousands of infantry pouches and belts to Coruña in 1810, but these were not popular with the guerrillas and more than 25,000 were still in stores a year later. The belly box was the guerrilla's favourite pouch, and a pattern of these was sent to England in 1811. It consisted of a pouch having 'one row of cells for the cartridges, made of leather sewn to a belt to buckle round the waist, with the bayonet attached to it; there are about 30 cells, and at each end of the row, a small pocket – one for flints, the other larger for a parcel of cartridges' (PRO, WO 1/261). This type of waist belt with cartridge cells was the predominant 'model' – worn by mountaineers as well as mounted guerrillas – and is seen in some contemporary plates showing guerrillas.

Swords were not commonly used by guerrillas on foot, officers or

men, and when they were, they might be anything that happened to be available. Guerrilla cavalry tended to carry swords, and the favourite types appear to have been the British 1796 light cavalry model and French cavalry swords. Lances, about 2.5 to 3m long, were also commonly carried by guerrilla cavalymen.

Clothing and food

The clothing of a Spanish guerrilla was strongly influenced by his regional costume. Initially, this was his only dress but, from the very beginning, there was a will to achieve some sort of uniformity. For instance, in mid-1809, Xavier Mina's party amounted to about 60 men, who were 'distinguished by a red riband in their hats, and a red collar to their jackets'. By December, some dress consisted of jackets described as 'raisin coloured' (which seems to have been a brownish dark red), blue waistcoats of fine material with high collar and braid, black breeches, blue stockings and *alpartagas* sandals. Lieutenant-Colonel Williams, a peninsular veteran and biographer of Wellington, summed up the basic costume of guerrillas in the following way: 'The dress of the guerrilla was a short jacket of russet brown, and leather leggings of the same dark colour; that of the *serrano* was velveteen, of an olive green colour, profusely ornamented with silver buttons, and his legs encased in leather *bottinos*. A belt of short leather surrounded the waist of each, stuck full of weapons of the French officers they had slain.' The basic material used to clothe a guerrilla in northern and central Spain was a hardy homespun of brown wool. This was often used to make the guerrilla's uniform when there was one, or just plain basic clothing. The 'whole flock [of sheep in Spain] are of a very dark brown approaching to black, which saves the trouble of dyeing the cloth, so that invariably you see the Peasants clothed in a brown short Jacket, waistcoat - breeches Leggings and Cloak - the last being indispensable' according to F. P. Robinson, a British officer writing in 1812. Velveteen and lighter materials were favoured in southern Spain.

A guerrilla in a well-organised band, such as Espoz y Mina's, had a uniform in the sense that there would be jackets and facings mixed with various elements of civilian clothing or, at times, captured clothing. For instance, on 22 March 1813, recalled Colonel Jean-Baptiste Morin, a party of the 5th French Dragoons captured Don Juan Martinez, a guerrilla chief of *El Empecinado*, at Vittatobas, province of La Mancha. Martinez, who was 'much reputed in this area', wore the uniform of a French War Commissary 'taken two days earlier' to which a French general's epaulettes had been added. Prints of paintings of the period, especially those of French artists such as Raffet, Martinet and Grenier de Saint-Martin, usually show the guerrillas wearing various aspects of regional costumes mixed with military items. On the other hand, some British artists, such as Dennis Dighton, sometimes



Spanish infantrymen, c. 1809. Many of the early guerrillas were soldiers who had fled to the hills after their unit had been destroyed. Their early costumes would have largely been their uniforms. Note the soldier at right smoking a cigarette. (Print after Bradford)

show a more 'uniformed' view of the guerrillas that we tend to follow as the British had more opportunities to observe them than the French. By the end of the war, in 1813-14, many guerrillas had been issued with uniforms so there was little to distinguish a guerrilla from an ordinary Spanish soldier.

As for the lodgings and food of a typical guerrilla, these were as varied as the regions and peculiar conditions the guerrilla warrior might be in. In the northern mountains, the guerrillas could lodge in caves or in various shelters for shepherds and hunters (and smugglers too) that were almost impossible for outsiders to find; in the plains, guerrilla horsemen would constantly move between barns and houses in the countryside. A blanket was likely to be the bedding and tents were unknown. Food was whatever a given region could offer, such as goat's cheese in the Basque mountains, so this varied greatly from one province to the next. There were times when guerrillas simply seized cattle or other food sources. And woe to him who offered the least resistance to this; his fate at the hands of the guerrillas could be similar to a French soldier's. Wine was the staple drink. On the whole, a guerrilla was fed adequately if not lavishly.⁴

GUERRILLA TACTICS

To vow to take revenge on an enemy was easily said; to put it into practice successfully in a country occupied by hundreds of thousands of French troops was another matter. Compared to the rather mediocre Spanish regular army of 1808, the French army was outstanding in all aspects. Its high command system was second to none and became the model for other leading armies. Its officer corps was, from top to bottom, filled with tough and dependable career officers who had campaigned victoriously in previous campaigns. Many had entered Rome, Berlin, Vienna or Warsaw at the head of their men. As for the French soldiers, there were many conscripts by 1808, but these were, for the most part, decently trained, marched well and, in battle, were steady and had a higher rate of fire than their Spanish opponents. As a bonus, the French infantry was often outstanding at the charge. The French cavalry was, on the whole, one of the finest in Europe and the French artillery perhaps the best.

The Spanish army was simply outclassed by the French in command systems, while the Spanish infantry could fire only two rounds a minute to the French infantry's three. The Spanish regulars were often good horsemen, but they could not compete with the manoeuvres of the French cavalry. The Spanish artillery was good, but it lacked battlefield experience. In any event, even if the Spanish army had been as well prepared as the French, it was hopelessly outnumbered. Nevertheless, it is one of the amazing facts of the Peninsular War that, in spite of all its defeats at the hand of the French between 1808 and 1812, the regular Spanish army was never utterly destroyed and kept rising from the ashes to fight again and again.

As conventional tactics failed and their armies were vanquished, the Spanish did not relent and, faced with wanton savagery from French soldiers, the tactics of guerrilla warfare evolved rapidly throughout

1

GUERRILLAS OF 1809-12

1: *Perseguidores de Andalucía* 1808-11

2: Espoz y Mina's guerrilla battalions
of Alava, fusilier, 1810

3: Navarre Hussars, trooper, 1811-12



3

2

GUERRILLA CAVALRY OF
DON JULIAN SANCHEZ, 1810-12

1: Colonel Don Julian Sanchez

2: Lancer

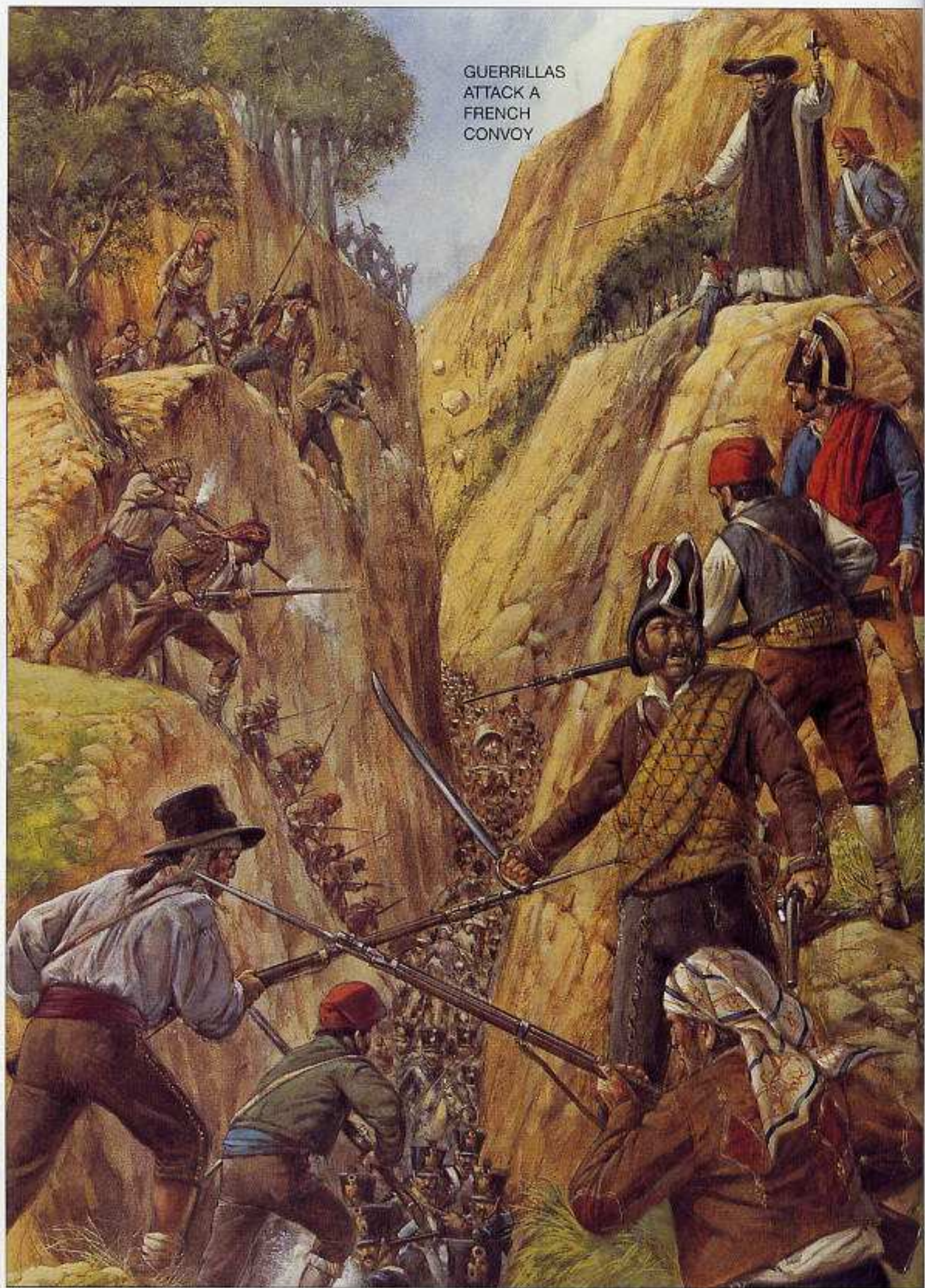
3: Lancer officer (back view)





A
GUERRILLA
CAMP

GUERRILLAS
ATTACK A
FRENCH
CONVOY



GUERRILLAS RETREAT
AFTER AN ATTACK
ON A CONVOY



SEVERAL GUERRILLA LEADERS

- 1: Francisco Espoz y Mina
- 2: Juan Martin Diaz, *El Empecinado*
- 3: Juan Palarea Blanes, *El Medico*
- 4: Joaquin Ibanez, Baron de Eroles



3

4

1

2

F

GUERRILLAS ATTACK
A FRENCH
DISPATCH RIDER,
c.1810



THE GUERRILLAS IN
THE REGULAR ARMY, 1813-14

1: Infantry, Espoz y Mina's Navarre Division, 1813

2: Infantry, 4th Army and Espoz y Mina's
Navarre Division, 1814

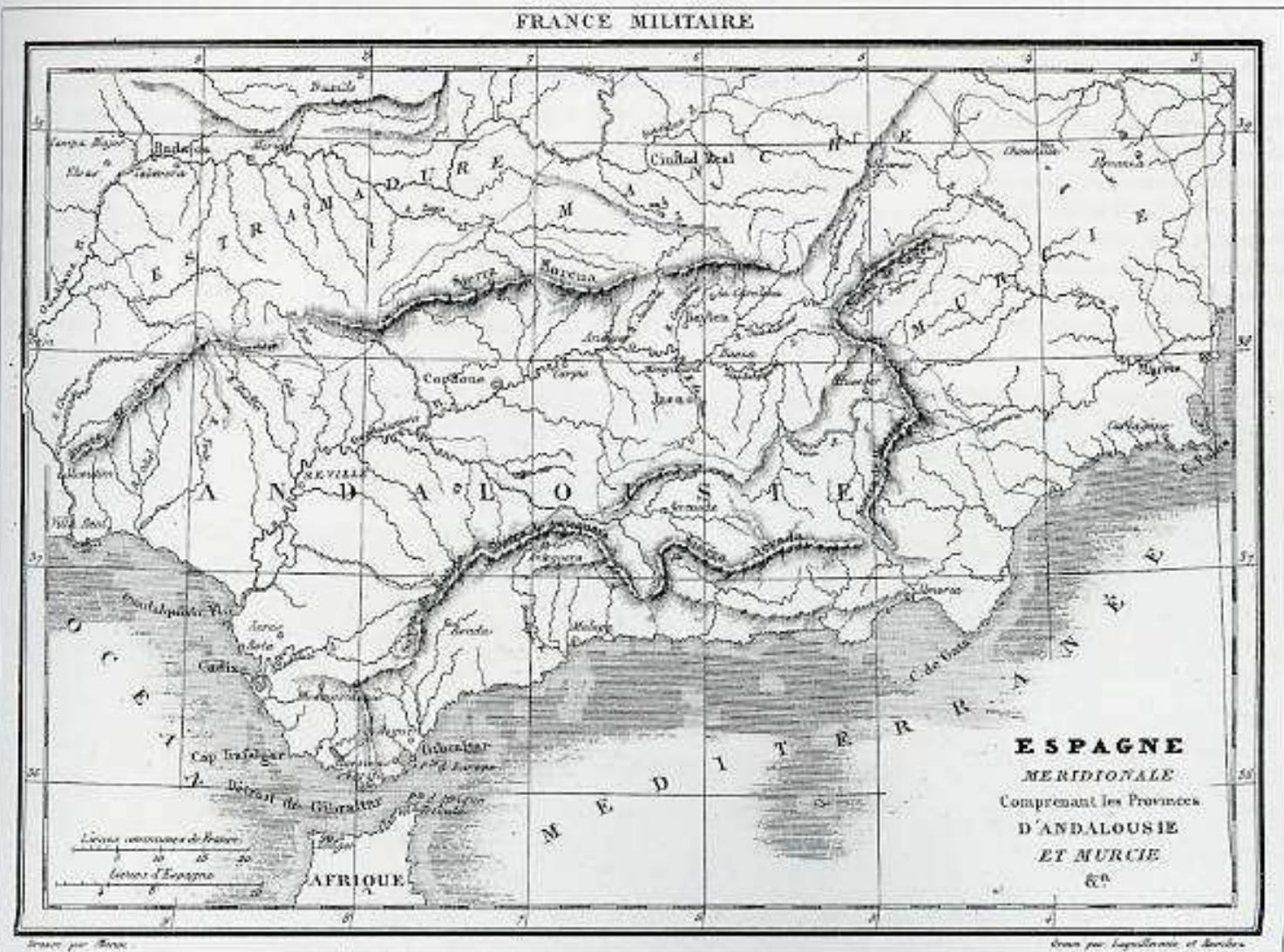
3: Officer, Don Julian Sanchez's Burgos
Hussars, 1814



Spain. These were more the instinctive tactics of an individual warrior rather than those of an army, and were closely related to hunting. A hunter sought his prey by hiding until it came into view. Once within range, the prey was not allowed to sense danger until it was too late. A single sudden shot would down the prey and the hunter would rush out to finish the animal with his knife. A few men forming a hunting party observed the same rules, which were – and are – the same the world over.

To use such hunting tactics against men was considered most unfair and cowardly in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century. It went against the basic military code of honour; these were judged barbaric tactics worthy only of bandits. Anyway, guerrilla tactics had not, by and large, proved to be very successful against regular soldiers in the past. But these were desperate times. In such a situation, thousands of men refused to endure humiliation and resorted to their hunting experience, the only way most knew to trap a living creature. With some modifications, hunting for game might be adapted to bring down the hated French soldiers. In the mountains, a man became a new kind of foot soldier simply by putting to new uses the practices of game hunting. On the plains, a man who worked on cattle ranches became a fast-moving lancer by combining his abilities as horseman (he had ridden since childhood) with his skill in the use of a short sword and long lance to prod bulls. Groups were spontaneously formed and natural leaders

A French map of Extremadura, Andalusia and Murcia in southern Spain. The mountainous Sierra Morena and Sierra Nevada were favourites of the southern guerrillas.



emerged. Guerrillas would surprise the enemy along roads and inflict maximum casualties and damage; the attackers then vanished. The French were largely helpless against such tactics.

A guerrilla usually operated in mountains and hills where the enemy could be surrounded and ambushed. He and his companions would then vanish back into the almost impenetrable terrain which they all knew so well. Northern Spain's mountainous topography was perfect for ambushing French convoys travelling on the area's narrow roads with steep hills on either side. But one had to be a born mountaineer to do this successfully and get away before the enemy could react in force. As it turned out, the mountains were home to an independent-minded breed who, when roused into fighting the French under talented leadership, formed the largest guerrilla bands in Spain. Guerrillas were also active in the Sierra Morena and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges in southern Spain. However, as this area was not a major thoroughfare with vital communications routes for the French army, the guerrillas' actions were less spectacular than in Navarre.

In the plains of western León, Extremadura, the Castiles and La Mancha, such 'hide-and-peek' tactics were far more difficult. Any movement by a sizeable group of mounted men could be seen dozens of kilometres away by any sharp-eyed French lookout from the dust they raised; not only was an approach difficult but a retreat could also be just as tricky. What a guerrilla such as Don Julian Sanchez understood was that successful raids in such a terrain would be possible only if carried out by a very fast-moving light cavalry force. This is what he developed with his band of horsemen. They might hide for days in a farm, a village, or in the bed of a narrow river or dried up stream. Any French patrols that came by would be set upon and killed by Sanchez's men, who would then gallop away before more French cavalry could come up from Salamanca which was, like most major cities, occupied by the French.

For the French, trying to go after the guerrillas was a most frustrating business. As French army pharmacist Blaze later wrote of the northern guerrillas: 'the least of our movements was reported to them [the guerrillas], and the promptest and most accurate reports arrived to

This photo taken about 15 km's west of the city, shows in the distance the plains around Ciudad Rodrigo. It illustrates the difficulty the guerrillas faced when attempting to hide in such a terrain. Don Julian Sanchez and his mounted guerrillas nevertheless turned it to their advantage. (Photo: RC)



them thanks to the skills of the inhabitants of the country. If we left a small garrison in a town, it was taken the next day by the guerrillas. If strong bodies of troops were sent against them, they would find no one. Following the orders of their chiefs, the [guerrilla] soldiers hid their arms, and dispersed to meet at another place totally opposed. Arrived at the rendezvous, they found other weapons and caused us new damages.'

Possibly the most formidable guerrilla in central Spain was *El Empecinado*, a man of outstanding tactical skill. His force caused considerable damage and difficulties for the French, who sent powerful columns to track it down. It was to no avail. Years later, General J. S. Léopold Hugo, one of the most successful French opponents of the guerrillas, recalled that *El Empecinado* and his men would have a 'perfect knowledge of the area, a division [of guerrillas] raised in the country whose every member knows all the byways and paths; prompt and exact information on the direction taken during our movements; a triple, or quadruple superiority of forces, and always increasing; a numerous cavalry, daring or prudent according to the circumstances, well mounted, and able to exchange its tired horses anywhere; finally, the option of going into a neighbouring government [or province], to recruit there... such were the advantages of the *Empecinado* over us.' General Hugo further related that 'we [the French] had to search constantly for him, and to sort out the good information from the false intelligence. When I defeated him, he [and his men] disappeared without a trace; no peasants were to be found anywhere, and information vanished with them; I would often run around for eight days without seeing a single inhabitant; consequently, there was no news nor new directions to pursue. Once our biscuit was eaten, there was no hope of finding bread nor meat. Luck might furnish a few chickens for the famished soldiers; but this was a resource for only a few individuals, and a very slim resource at that. Supplies of all sorts were buried [by the guerrillas], hidden in caves and in the deepest forests in the mountains.'

What this frustrated French general reveals is that, when well led – and there were many good leaders – the Spanish guerrilla was almost invulnerable. To conventional armies, holding terrain and tracking down the enemy force until it surrendered was the road to victory. But to the guerrilla, terrain was expendable and one place was as good as the other. Action was not a long, drawn-out slugging match to hold or take a position at all cost but a swift raid followed by a swifter exit to another place. Clearly, *El Empecinado* was past master at hide-and-seek tactics, emerging to strike hard where he was least expected, only to



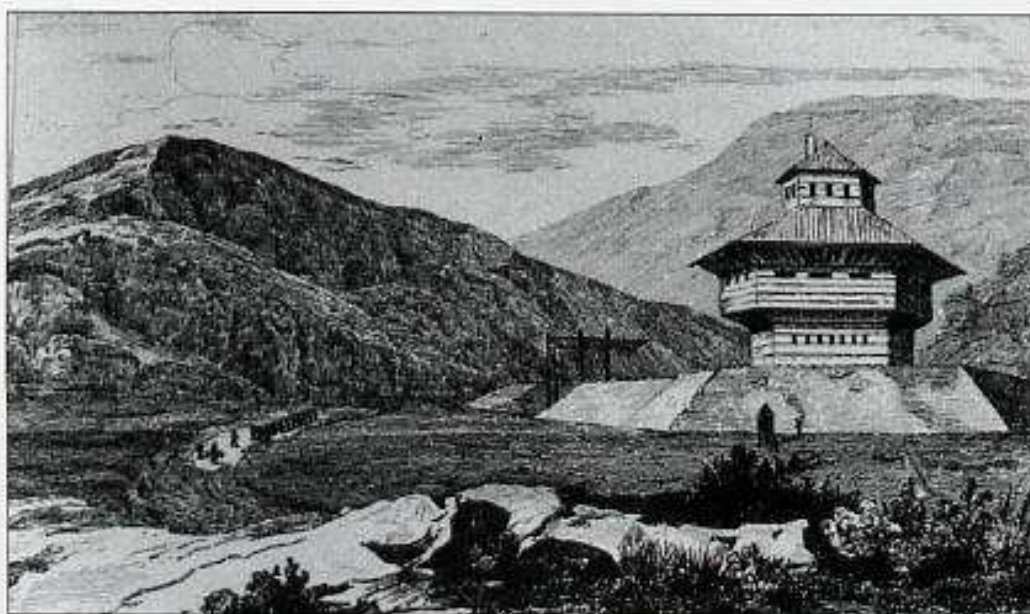
Don Juan Martín Díaz, *El Empecinado* (the obstinate) c. 1812 shown mounted in this fan print. He wears a green uniform with red collar and cuffs, silver buttons and lace, a busby with red plume and bag and red housings edged silver. At right, some of his guerrilla troopers escort a crowd of French prisoners. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)

disappear without a trace. General Hugo mentions 'defeating' the guerrilla but it was not really a defeat; it was an engagement that, at one point of the fight, the guerrilla chief decided to break off and vanish. The pursuing French soldiers experienced hardships in food and equipment while roaming around a deserted countryside finding nothing and seeing nobody. It is obvious that, even more than the physical hardships, the French soldiers had the most uncomfortable feeling of being watched all the time by an invisible enemy. It was a discouraging situation for the French with, as the years passed, no end in sight. The knowledge of the ever-present guerrilla did much to make the French soldiers despair of the whole war, and to make every officer and man who entered Spain go forth, not with the light heart that he felt in Germany or Italy, but with gloom and apprehension and want of confidence. That scorned individual, the guerrilla, always had the initiative. He knew it, and so did the French.

Countering the guerrillas

To counter the guerrillas, the French tried to fight 'fire with fire' by using a two-pronged tactic. It quickly became obvious to the French that forays by troops were not enough and that part of the guerrillas' terrain had to be occupied. The mountainous north of the country was the most difficult area and, from April 1810, some 6,300 militarised gendarme constables were posted there. They were organised into a *Gendarmerie d'Espagne*, 800 of which were light cavalry armed with lances. A series of fortified blockhouses were built along the highways with garrisons and patrols. The main object of the *Gendarmerie d'Espagne* was the protection of the couriers and the convoys.

The second measure was the raising of contra-guerrillas paid by the French to fight the guerrillas on their own turf. Although contra-guerrillas were raised among the *afrancesados* (the Spaniards favourable to the French), the exact motivations of these men are somewhat obscure. Their pre-war lifestyle in the mountains or on the plains, however, was identical to that of their countrymen fighting as guerrillas. Recruits were few; the typical contra-guerrilla tended to be a former outlaw. If caught by the guerrillas, a contra-guerrilla faced almost certain



The Catalan Guides, a mounted French contra-guerrilla unit, 1811-1812. They wore a blue coat with a green collar, yellow piping and white metal buttons. These guides also wore a fox fur busby with a long red bag hanging down on the left shoulder with a large silver tassel at its end. Watercolour by Herbert Knötel. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)

The French built elaborate blockhouses to better protect the roads in northern Spain. These strongholds could easily resist to guerrillas armed only with muskets.



Officer and private of the French contra-guerrilla Spanish Miquelets under Don Ryal, 1812-1813. They dressed in blue with a red sash, the officer having gold buttons and epaulettes. Watercolour by Herbert Knötel. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)

death. But the contra-guerrilla often was a desperate man, so the risk seemed worth taking. Such men tended to be gathered into small units, sometimes led by a former guerrilla who had become a renegade and joined the French.

The contra-guerrillas and the gendarmes were certainly not as successful as Napoleon had hoped. Before 1810, a French dispatch rider with a moderate escort of one or two dozen troopers had a good chance of getting through. With the arrival of the thousands of gendarmes with command posts all along the main highways, the efforts of the Spanish guerrillas against dispatch riders redoubled. By the summer of 1810, an escort of 250 to 500 men was necessary. Later on, it was not unusual to attach a couple of thousand men to escort a convoy, which still might be attacked. Thus, the contra-guerrillas were generally unsuccessful, although *El Empecinado* was once nearly trapped by some of them in 1812, but he got away. The contra-guerrillas gradually vanished in 1813 as the French evacuated Spain.

CRUELTY AND REVENGE

In a rather striking part of his memoirs, Rifleman Costello of the 95th recounts a gruesome story told to him by a member of the 13th Light Dragoons, who had been held for a time by some of Mina's guerrillas. It was about the fate of some 20 French prisoners who had been taken to the guerrillas' mountain hideaway, stripped almost naked and herded into a cattle pen. 'In the evenings, the ferocious mountaineers were joined by a number of females - their sweethearts and wives. Elated with the day's success, they made merry with drinking wine and dancing to the music of several guitars. During this merriment, both men and women frequently taunted their wretched prisoners, recapitulating the wrongs the Spaniards had suffered at the hand of the French. Having thus excited their passions to a partial state of frenzy, a signal was given by one of their number, and they rushed in among their hapless prisoners and commenced a general massacre. As they gave each blow, they drowned the cries and supplications for mercy of their victims, by enumerating the different losses each had sustained in his family during the war: 'Take that for my father you shot', 'that for my son', 'this for my brother', etc, until the work of death was complete. The most inhuman, and perhaps the most revolting trait in the general murder, was that some of the women actively assisted in the slaughter.'

At the gates of Pamplona, held by the French in 1812 and blockaded by the guerrillas, Mina had two officers and four men hanged. General Abbé responded by executing six Spanish prisoners, to which Mina responded by executing four more of his French prisoners after having blinded them and cut off their noses and ears. Abbé responded by having 40 of his prisoners shot and so did Mina.

Private of the Biscaya (Basque) Company, 1810, a French contra-guerrilla unit. Its uniform was brown with red collar, cuffs and lapels with white metal buttons and a shako. Watercolour by Herbert Knötel. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)



This horrid escalation finally ended for lack of victims, according to French army Captain Desboeuf.

French army Surgeon General P. F. Percy, in Spain in the later part of 1808, was 'horrified' near Mondragon at seeing 'hung to the same tree three hideous cadavers' which had been there 'since two months'. The local French commander had randomly picked a few petty thieves he had taken prisoner in the town's jail and had them hanged without trial or even the benefit of having a priest for their last moments. The motive of this appalling behaviour was even more revolting: the French commander near Mondragon had heard that another commander at a nearby town had caught and executed seven guerrillas by firing squad so he had to have several executions too. As for the French soldiers, Percy was mortified to report that they disobeyed their officers and, 'like a devouring lava flow', had burst into Burgos' churches, houses and convents, sparing nothing, not

even tombs, 'everything having been broken, torn to pieces, thrown off, lifted, displaced to find gold and jewels'. That night Percy slept in a ravaged house that had been robbed 'from the cellar to the attick' and which had belonged to a priest 'said to have died', the fate of many a Spaniard in Burgos that day.

The root cause of the savage actions of the French army and the guerrillas was the extraordinarily wanton and brutal behaviour of the officers and men of the French army from the time it entered Spain in 1808. Not only did the French troops kill, rob, maim and rape, but some also carried off scores of girls and young women to be used by the troops as sex slaves. There were many stories about this, and although these rumours were intolerable to any family, And, sadly, the stories were based on fact. Kidnapping expeditions to secure a 'supply' of pretty young Spanish girls for the soldiers' harems were indeed organised. Such a rampage occurred in February 1811, according to reports sent to Benjamin D'Urban, the British quartermaster general of the Portuguese army, who deplored 'a most horrible picture of the atrocities of the French' in villages along the Portuguese and Spanish frontier. During the first two days of a French column's 'march of plunder', they 'murdered more than 100 persons and after making a desert of the country, carried off many families and every female above 12 years old for the use of the soldiery'. Needless to say, such behaviour inspired a nearly blind desire for revenge by outraged relatives, friends and fellow citizens.

The desire for revenge in the heart of every guerrilla was sometimes satisfied and the gruesome trophies exhibited to the delight of patriotic Spaniards. Allied foreigners such as the British were, for their part, appalled at the savagery of it all. A company of the 95th Rifles was



Private, Catalan Miquelets, 1812-1813. This was a contra-guerrilla unit in French pay. They were brown with red collar, cuffs, trouser stripes and hat plume. Watercolour by Herbert Knötel. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)

quartered at Getaffe, a small village near Madrid, in the summer of 1812. One night, Rifleman Costello related, he and several comrades were joking with 'a very pretty Spanish girl' when 'a swarthy, savage-looking Spaniard came up. He was armed to the teeth with pistols, daggers and a long gun, which together with his crimson sash and free bearing, at once proclaimed him to be a guerrilla. He was welcomed with much joy by the girl and her parents... he was her lover, or suitor. While engaged in conversation with his sweetheart and her parents, he ostentatiously took from his side a long heavy-looking silk purse, the contents of which he emptied into the lap of his mistress. The Spaniard's eyes sparkled with pleasure, but in general, my companions and myself felt only disgust, for what we beheld were a number of human ears and fingers, glistening from the golden rings they retained. With an air of bravado, the Spaniard told us he cut them off from the bodies of the French whom he himself had slain in battle. "Napoleon" he observed, in his native dialect, and with a grim smile; "Napoleon loves his soldiers, and so do the ravens."

THE GUERRILLAS AND THE BRITISH

At the outset of the guerrilla movement, in the later part of 1808, British observers and liaison officers sent into Spain were seemingly just as dumbfounded as the French at the emergence of this new sort of unorthodox warrior. To the British, it was yet another manifestation by those strange, emotional and not very reliable people who inhabited Spain. It must be understood at this point that, in 1808, the British government found it difficult to convince the British public that Spain was its ally. To British people, Spaniards had been, since the time of Queen Elizabeth, Drake and the Great Spanish Armada, the ancestral enemy. As a result, since the 16th century, it was fair game for any red-blooded seafaring Englishman to go out and liberate some of the Spanish ill-gotten gold 'of the Indies' by the capture of galleons and colonial cities whenever possible. As late as 1806-07, a year before the start of the Peninsular War, the British press was cheering the (unexpected and unplanned) capture of Montevideo and Buenos Aires in Spanish South America. A year later, Spain suddenly became the helpless victim of Napoleon and Britain's new ally.

This was a something of a 'culture shock' for the British. When British troops did land as allies, they were totally taken aback by a way of

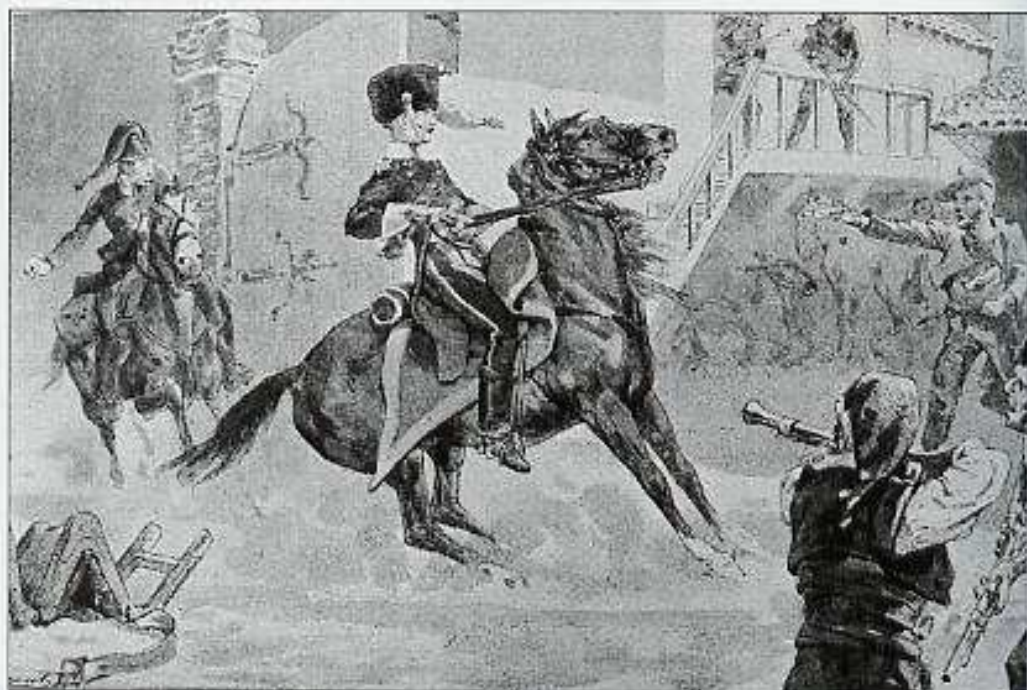


life which seemed to them quite primitive. Throughout the Peninsular War, some British officers, soldiers and officials in Spain were often unsparing in their sweeping and scathing comments as to the quality of Spanish troops and the character of the Spanish people. The circumstances, for Englishmen 'so accustomed to the enjoyment of every comfort', were the poorly kept inns, the flea-ridden beds and the local 'cookery that was declared 'disgusting to an English palate, most of their favourite dishes being seasoned with articles, amongst which garlic and rancid oil generally compose the principal ingredients'. These comments, taken from the *History of the Campaigns of the British Forces in Spain and Portugal* published in 1812, were quite mild compared to some others. A possible explanation may be that these British officers and men came from a country that was experiencing the world's first Industrial Revolution, a nation they believed to be at the very height of scientific, economic, technical and democratic progress. Obviously, when confronted with what they perceived as a poor, semi-feudal, agrarian and narrow-minded

The *Gentlemen's Magazine* supplement of 1811 reported an unfortunate incident involving guerrillas which would have reinforced the impression held by many in Britain that they were ill disciplined: 'Killed by a Guerrilla mistaking him for a Frenchman, whilst escorting a French captain exchanged for an English one, Lieut. King, 13th Light Drag. son of Mrs. K. wine-merchant, Ipswich. His remains were conveyed to Badajoz, and interred by the French General Philpon, with all the honours of war.' A century later, the incident was portrayed in this print by Harry Payne. (Photo : RC)

society in Spain, their prejudiced opinions quickly came forth. After all the 'Dons' who hated Protestants and were always trying to get Gibraltar back could not have changed that much overnight, even if they did have some fine Sherry and Malaga wines.

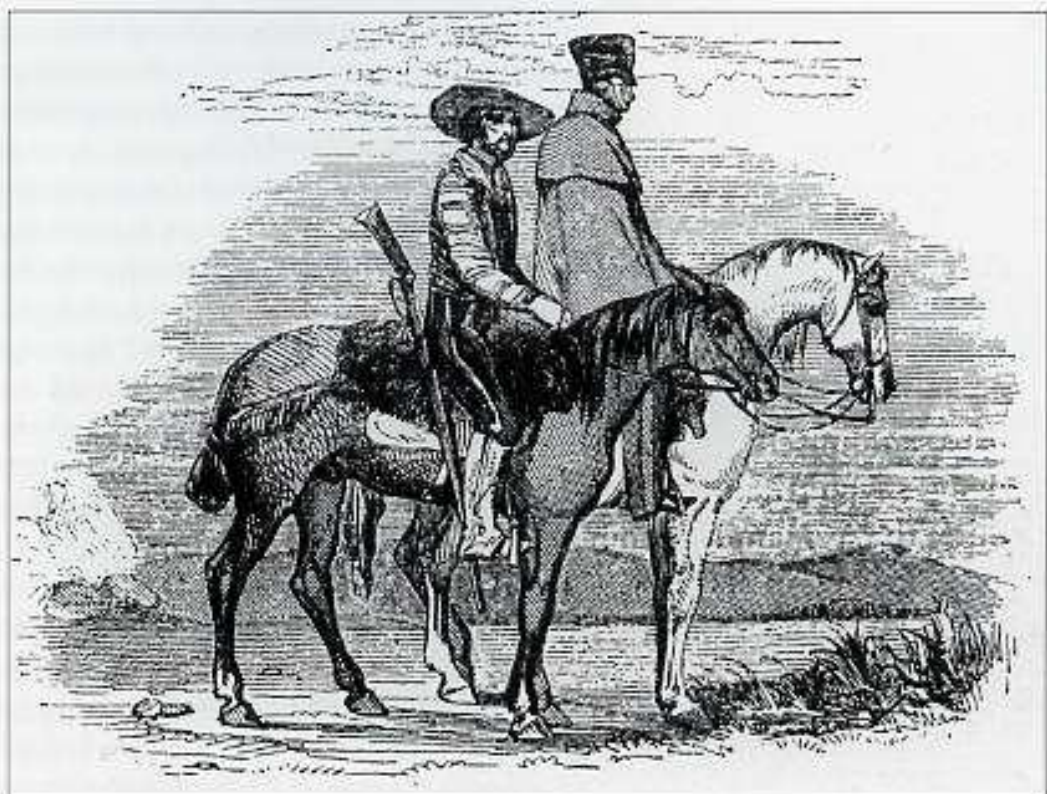
The lack of success of the Spanish regular armies after 1808, year after year, did little to convince Britons that this was a truly valuable ally. Privately, many British officers in the field, such as Benjamin D'Urban and William Warre, even despaired in their journals and letters that there existed such a thing as a Spanish army. All this was naturally



Guerrillas surprise a party of French light horse in a farm. (Print after L. Sergent)

reflected in sections of the British press which peppered their coverage of the war with political biases.

However, among the reports in the British press of the continual disasters experienced by the Spanish armies at the hands of their much more powerful and numerous French foes, there were accounts of a covert 'brigand' force that was causing havoc with French convoys. For instance, in November 1810 the *Bath Herald* published the revealing narrative of a German man who had been drafted into the French army and captured by the guerrillas. Obviously, there were sizeable bands of Spanish 'patriots' waging a merciless war deep within Spain. Perhaps as an attempt to educate British opinion towards Spanish ways and customs, and inform the Britons that Spain was really a very complex country with strong regional roots, the 1809 edition of the *Annual Register* devoted many pages to the 'Characters, Manners, Customs, Habits, Dress, and Languages' of Catalonia, Andalusia and so on, and the 'Spaniards in general'. Its 1810 edition had reports on the 'Nature of Warfare carried on by the Guerrillas'. Obviously, there was much curiosity in Britain at this new sort of warfare which certainly seemed savage but quite effective. The *Gentlemen's Magazine* supplement for 1811 contained a rather lengthy 'Short Account' of Espoz y Mina, translated from the report of a Spanish colonel by a British officer at Cádiz. This account apparently received wide coverage. For his part, Don Julian Sanchez had a letter published in *The Times* of London in August 1811. However, 'the Spanish' were generally regarded, at least in the first years of the Peninsular War, as a single fighting force, with little or no attempt to differentiate between regulars, guerrillas, volunteers or armed peasants. Except for certain



A guerrilla with a c. 1812-1814 British light dragoon, the latter wearing a cloak. Note the guerrilla's long *escopeta* type musket used as a carbine. (From Maxwell's *Life of Wellington*, 1840)

French troops ambushed by guerrillas on a mountain road in the Sierra Morena. (Print after Martinet)



colourful figures such as Augustina, the heroic maid of Zaragoza, General Romana, Don Julian Sanchez or Espoz y Mina, the British press gave little attention to Spanish personalities.

These stories gave the impression of a people in arms and showed the British public that, in spite of negative perceptions, there actually was some real fighting going on within Spain itself, and also that some colourful patriots grouped into bands called 'guerrillas' and 'guerrilleros' were giving the French occupation troops a very difficult time. An important aspect was that all these newspaper and magazine stories were largely corroborated by private correspondence from officers in the peninsula to friends and family in Britain. William Warre, for instance, often wrote to his father of the exploits of the guerrillas - undoubtedly the sort of good news that would be shared with friends and relatives in England. This process led to a favourable opinion by the British public towards the guerrillas, although stories of their cruelty were also trickling in. Such a situation obviously had a positive effect on the military and financial assistance given to Spain from 1808, and especially from 1812, when Britain practically took over the armament and supply of most of the Spanish army. The cost to the British taxpayer of support for Spain, added to other commitments, was great and served to increase an already spiralling national debt. But there was relatively little grumbling in England as real fighting by the guerrillas was seen to be successfully taking place in Spain, independently of the actions of Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese army. Indeed, Francis Horner, a British Member of Parliament could exclaim in July 1812 that 'I tremble, when I think of Spain. Surely, something more might be done by us...'

British aid to the guerrillas

This comment raises the question: what was done by the British for the guerrillas? For the guerrillas specifically, and not for the Spanish regular army which received large supplies of arms, uniforms and money. General opinion on both sides, even today, was that the guerrillas were

armed, supplied, clothed, often fed and sometimes even advised by the British. The French, from Napoleon down, certainly believed this and it was featured in many French soldiers' memoirs and letters. Napoleon was especially convinced of the perfidious influence of vast sums of British money paid out to oppose him wherever he went, and nowhere was the opposition so fierce as in Spain and Portugal. There was indeed a great deal of aid sent to these countries but it was mostly to reorganise their armies.

A large French convoy is attacked successfully by numerous guerrillas. (Print after Martinet)



The record of British supplies sent to the peninsula, between 1808 and 1814, contained surprisingly little for the guerrilla bands by comparison to the vast amounts sent to the regular armies.

As seen above in the section on the guerrillas' weapons, the British weapons reaching the guerrillas, especially before 1813, seemed a mere trickle of a few thousand muskets out of up to 40,000 sent to Spain in 1811 and 100,000 sent out in 1812. Indeed, on the British side, Sir Howard Douglas, who was in charge of issuing weapons and supplies to the Spanish at Coruña, was somewhat tight-fisted when it came to sending arms to the guerrillas. In one of his March 1812 reports, he even commented that if 'Mina had arms, he could raise 10,000 men tomorrow – but it would not be advantageous. The corps would... lose its impetus, and I do not afford him means to increase it' (PRO, WO 1/262). This is an almost incredible statement as Espoz y Mina's guerrilla 'army' was arguably the largest and most effective Spanish force fighting the French in the country. But could Sir Howard's caution really be blamed? After all, the guerrillas were a very new apparition whose impact on warfare was, as yet, uncertain. It was felt that it was more 'advantageous' to arm and discipline regular troops as only they, with Wellington's army, could totally defeat the French.

In the event, as seen above, Espoz y Mina obtained and made his own weapons and eventually obtained British arms from British ships in the Gulf of Biscay in 1812. And, contrary to Sir Howard's opinion, the British weaponry did indeed help to substantially increase Mina's force.

As guerrilla divisions came alongside the Spanish regular armies from the later part of 1812, they were supplied with some of the arms, uniforms and equipment sent to Spain from Britain that year. Porlier obtained supplies for 5,000 men in November 1812. In March 1813, some of Mina's Navarre Division finally obtained British clothing and British knapsacks. A year later, in March 1814, Mina's Division was again issued some 4,000 suits of clothing from a supply of 50,000 uniforms from Britain. These appear to have been the groups that received the largest issues. Other guerrilla groups no doubt also received various British arms and supplies but obviously in smaller numbers, and mostly from 1812 when, as Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese army marched into Spain, the line of communications with hitherto isolated guerrilla groups became easier. Before 1812, although

A dead French soldier left naked as guerrillas run off with his uniform and weapons.
(Print after Raffet)



guerrillas arguably bore the brunt, doing most of the fighting against the French, supplies from Britain reaching them only trickled in. They were very much on their own when it came to obtaining weapons, logistics and money.

The guerrillas as intelligence-gatherers

The value of guerrillas to Wellington's army in the war effort was tremendous. Familiar with their areas and the local lines of communications, they obtained generally very reliable intelligence. The British depended on the guerrillas for information on terrain, road conditions, the availability of supplies, and the location and strength of French positions. An idea of the sort of information asked for and given is shown by a document of July 1812 featuring 'Questions to Gen. Porlier with his answers respecting the road from Santander to Valladolid':

Question: 'How many days will it take to go from Santander to Valladolid? Answer - two or three days.'

Question: 'Is the road good and is it practicable for artillery? - Roads very good, artillery may pass every where.'

Question: 'How many days would it require for five thousand men to march to Valladolid? - Spanish troops could perform this march in five days.'

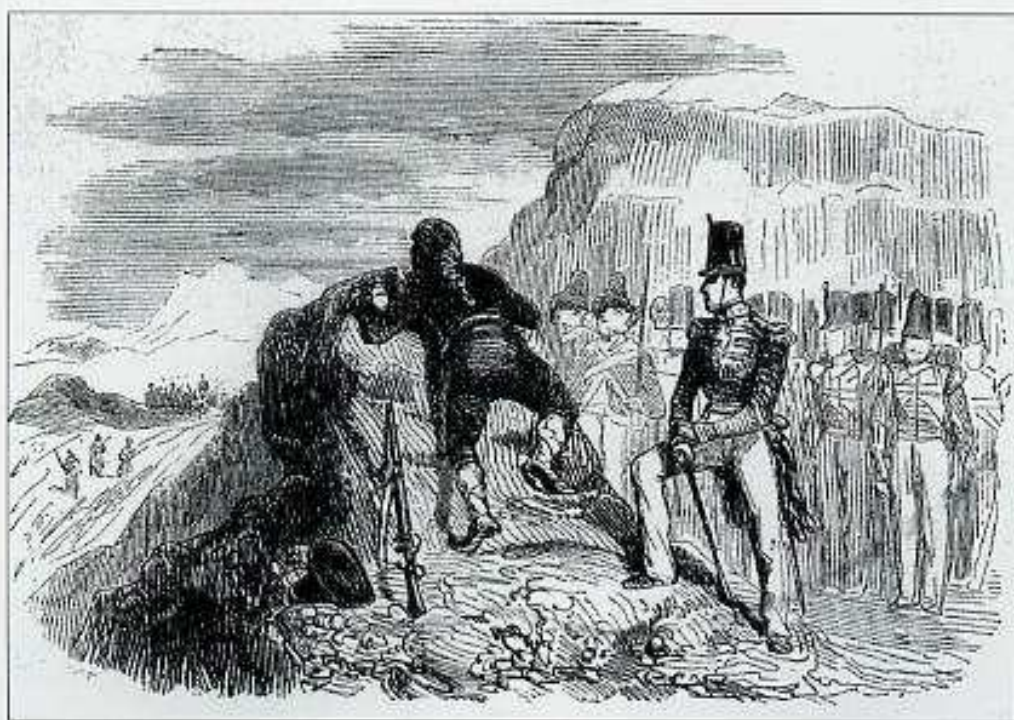
Question: 'Can rations for that number of men be procured on the road? - For the first two days march, there will be difficulty in getting rations because the Province of Santander has been much distressed by the enemy.'

Question: 'Are there any strong positions that from three to five thousand men can take on the road to defend themselves against any sudden movement of the enemy? - From St. Andero to Rynosa there are many hills which form very strong positions & the same from thence to Aguilar. From Aguilar to Herrera they will be flanked by a canal on the left, difficult for an army to [illegible] & from thence to Tromista, they can always fall back on the [illegible] where there are

no French, if attacked by a superior force. There are many strong positions between Tromista and Valladolid particularly in the neighbourhood of Terico, between that and Palencia.'

Question: 'Can the troops of Gen. Porlier, Col. Longa or any other Spanish troops act on the flanks of the British in their march till they open a communication with Lord Wellington? - Most certainly, they can always do so, and form a very powerful army.' (PRO, WO 1/263).

As the British moved deeper into Spain, the information supplied by the guerrillas was invaluable to Wellington and his officers. This scene shows, somewhat symbolically, a Spanish guerrilla spying the French in the distance with a British officer and troops nearby. (Print by Raffet)



A French officer, J. J. Pellet, possibly summed it up best by noting that 'the bands of Spanish insurgents and the English army supported each other. Without the English the Spanish would have been quickly dispersed or crushed. In the absence of the guerrillas, the French armies would have acquired a unity and strength that they were never able to achieve in this country, and the Anglo-Portuguese army, unwarned of our operations and projects, would have been unable to withstand concentrated operations.' And to the Spanish, who saw their regular forces repeatedly defeated, the guerrillas' successes meant hope in their relentless fight for independence.

THE OVERALL IMPACT OF THE GUERRILLAS

The real objective, obviously, was to wage a war 'to the death' on the French until they departed, with no quarter being asked or expected. Perhaps only in Spain, because of the peculiar feature of the Spanish character in dealing with honour and death, could this be asked with any assurance of it being carried out.

The guerrillas' 'hit-and-run' fighting methods and near-fanatical behaviour rendered life in Spain most difficult for French troops. As French army pharmacist Blaze wrote, 'the French army, spread in all provinces of the Peninsula, was surrounded by enemies yet had no army to fight. The guerrillas showed themselves everywhere, but one

did not meet them anywhere; they were invisible enemies [who] dispersed or rallied at the call of their chiefs.'

At length, Napoleon became impatient with the lack of success against the guerrillas and what seemed like a lacklustre royal performance by his brother. By a decree of 8 February 1810, Napoleon divided northern Spain into four semi-autonomous military regions led by generals in Catalonia, Aragon, Biscaye, and Navarre which held some of the most important guerrilla areas. King José-Napoleon still had nominal command, but in reality the generals had effective control. In spite of serious French efforts to wipe out the guerrilla scourge, the guerrillas prevailed and grew even stronger. By 1811, at least 35,000 guerrillas roamed the mountains or rode on isolated plains all across Spain.

The Peninsular War continued until 1814 when the last French troops finally left Spain. The French had been repeatedly defeated in the field by the superbly led and highly efficient British and Portuguese troops, and to a much lesser extent, to the indifferently led and poorly trained Spanish regular armies. However, the impact of the *guerrilleros* that had ambushed the French troops all over Spain for the last six years was

Guerrillas disperse as French troops arrive in strength. This was the classic guerrilla tactic to avoid being destroyed. The dispersed men would later gather at a meeting point to plan more raids. (Print after L. Sergeant)



El guerrillero from a print after a sketch by the Spanish military artist Gimenez in the mid-19th century. He wears a regional costume consisting of a jacket, vest, trousers and sandals with what appears to be a captured French shako on his head. He is armed with an *escopeta* short musket and carries a ventral cartridge box.



acknowledged by all as an enormous contribution to the defeat of the imperial armies. The British acknowledged the outstanding intelligence reports they received throughout the war. They also valued greatly the role the guerrillas played in forcing the deployment of tens of thousands of French soldiers to guard roads, forts and cities – men who might otherwise have been used against the regular armies. Furthermore, guerrilla activities severely disrupted communications between French army units; dispatch riders could get through only when escorted by hundreds of soldiers. The same was true for French convoys. The extent of the guerrillas' contribution to the final defeat of the French is difficult to measure as contemporary opinions varied, as they do today, regarding their strategic impact. However, all agree that a new element in tactical warfare had appeared: 'guerrilla warfare'.

THE FINAL ACTS

The end of the guerrillas

There can be no doubt that the Spanish guerrilla saved his nation's military honour while inflicting grievous losses on the French enemy. By 1813, however, Anglo-Portuguese and Spanish armies were marching through a Spain that the French were gradually evacuating. Some guerrillas switched their activities to banditry, preying on their own people, but most went home or joined the Spanish regular army. The 7th, 8th and 9th Spanish armies organised in 1812 were, to some extent, theoretical armies. Mostly made up of guerrillas of northeastern Spain, led by the likes of Mina, Longa, Campillo and Porlier, they could hardly be expected to function as regular field armies. The majority were absorbed into the 4th Army in the summer of 1813. This force served with Wellington's army, the last three of its eight divisions being led by the guerrilla leaders Porlier, Longa and Espoz y Mina. As a result, the formerly rather undisciplined guerrilla was now given a uniform and arms (of British manufacture) and instructed to be a soldier. Most of the leading chiefs of guerrilla bands were given field rank and some of the units eventually became incorporated into the regular army.

Many other guerrillas simply went back to their home areas and became the ordinary civilians they had been before the war, trying to scratch a living out of what was left of their local economy, which had had been virtually destroyed by the war.

After the war: Liberation and a political heritage

For some former guerrillas, the prospect of living on a pittance from hard labour in the fields was unbearable: they had known the easy earnings from looting the French convoys and stealing whatever valuables the dead soldiers might have on their bodies. For such a man, the only solution was to become a bandit.

During the war, there had been guerrillas who were thinly veiled highwaymen, attacking both the French and other Spaniards in the name of liberation. After the war, Spain was plagued by many bands of former guerrillas turned bandits, and it took the Spanish troops sent against them some time to contain the problem. Banditry was not really solved for many decades, a fact that gave Spain for much of the 19th century a reputation among British and French tourists for having roads infested with highwaymen. Indeed, the *Guardia Civil*, Spain's national police, was originally raised as a heavily armed constabulary to deal with the problem.



The post-war years saw much turmoil in the political arena. Liberal ideas seem to have been held by most guerrilla leaders. When Fernando VII – ‘the desired one’ – returned to Madrid in 1814, he instituted a rigid, ultra-conservative and repressive regime. Eventually, Espoz y Mina, Longa and many others left the country in a self-imposed exile. Other less politically inclined leaders simply went back home to rebuild their lives in their communities – as did, eventually, nearly every man who had been, for a time, a guerrilla. After all, a guerrilla was not a professional soldier but a most ordinary man who lived in extraordinary times. His life had been cruelly traumatised by the violence of enemies against his relatives and friends, and he had repaid those foes in kind, sometimes with unspeakable barbarity. At last, the nightmare was over, the country was free of the French, and the guerrilla became, once again, an ordinary man.

But nothing would ever be the same because the guerrilla's way of war was now part of the general political equation. People discontented with their rulers could now resort to arms to support a self-proclaimed *Caudillo* – a leader – with a chance of success against government soldiers. For many, first the Spanish, and eventually the men of many nations all over the world, the violent ways and habits that had been learned as guerrillas were put to use in politics. B. Perez Galdos, writing in the mid-19th century, gives perhaps the best summing-up of the effects on society of the guerrilla, in his historical novel *Juan Martin, El Empecinado*, a classic of Spanish literature:

‘The War of Independence was the grand school of the *caudillaje*, because it was at that school that Spaniards learned the art, incomprehensible to others, of improvising armies and dominating a country for a more or less lengthy period of time. They learned the science of insurrection, and the marvels of those exciting times, we have since wept with tears of blood.’

Unknown guerrilla leader
c. 1812-1814 according to a fan print. He wears a green uniform, red cuffs to his pelisse which is edged with black fur and silver lace, and black ‘Tarleton’ style helmet with crimson housings. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)

NOTES

1. The preceding paragraphs owe much to Bartolomé Bennassar's remarkable study of the history of Spanish character: *L'homme espagnol: attitudes et mentalités du XVIe au XIXe siècles* (Paris, 1975 and 1991). He also mentions that Spain has always had a very low suicide rate.
2. Costello reported that Sanchez 'gradually collected a small band, then a body, and eventually commanded upwards of twenty thousand Guerrillas' which was of course an enormous exaggeration but gives an idea of what was believed by men in the British army – Antony Brett-James ed., *Edward Costello: Military Memoirs, Adventures of a Soldier* (London, 1967), p. 117.
3. Napoleon's opinion of what to do with guerrilla prisoners is summed up in his letter to Marshal Berthier on 10 April 1810: '... See to it that Mina be executed by firing squad as soon as possible, and, in case this might be inconvenient in the country, order that he be escorted by a strong guard to Tours [France], where he will be at the disposal of the minister of police, as a state prisoner and not as a prisoner of war.' *Supplément à la Correspondance de Napoleon 1^{er}* (Paris, 1887). Amazingly, Mina survived the ordeal, being imprisoned in Paris until the end of the war.
4. A good guide to Spanish regional cuisine, with historical background, is the very attractive book by Marion Trutter, *Plaisirs gourmands d'Espagne* (Cologne, 1999). *The Private Journal of Judge-Advocate Larpent* (London, 1854, and Staplehurst, 2000) mentioned the seizure of some 90 oxen by Longa's guerrillas in June 1813 to 'the tears and lamentations, and no small fears' of the peasants. They were more fortunate than most as General Alava, on Wellington's staff, convinced the guerrillas to return the cattle.



Hussar officer, c. 1812-1815. The regiment is unidentified but the illustrator may have intended to show a guerrilla officer. He wears a scarlet dolman with sky blue collar and cuffs, sky blue pelisse edged with black fur, scarlet long breeches, gold cords and buttons, a crimson and gold sash, black fur busby with scarlet bag, belts covered with gold lace, black sabretache laced with gold and edged with scarlet and a gilt hilted light cavalry sabre in a steel scabbard. The housings appear to have been sky blue trimmed with gold. (Print after Giscard)

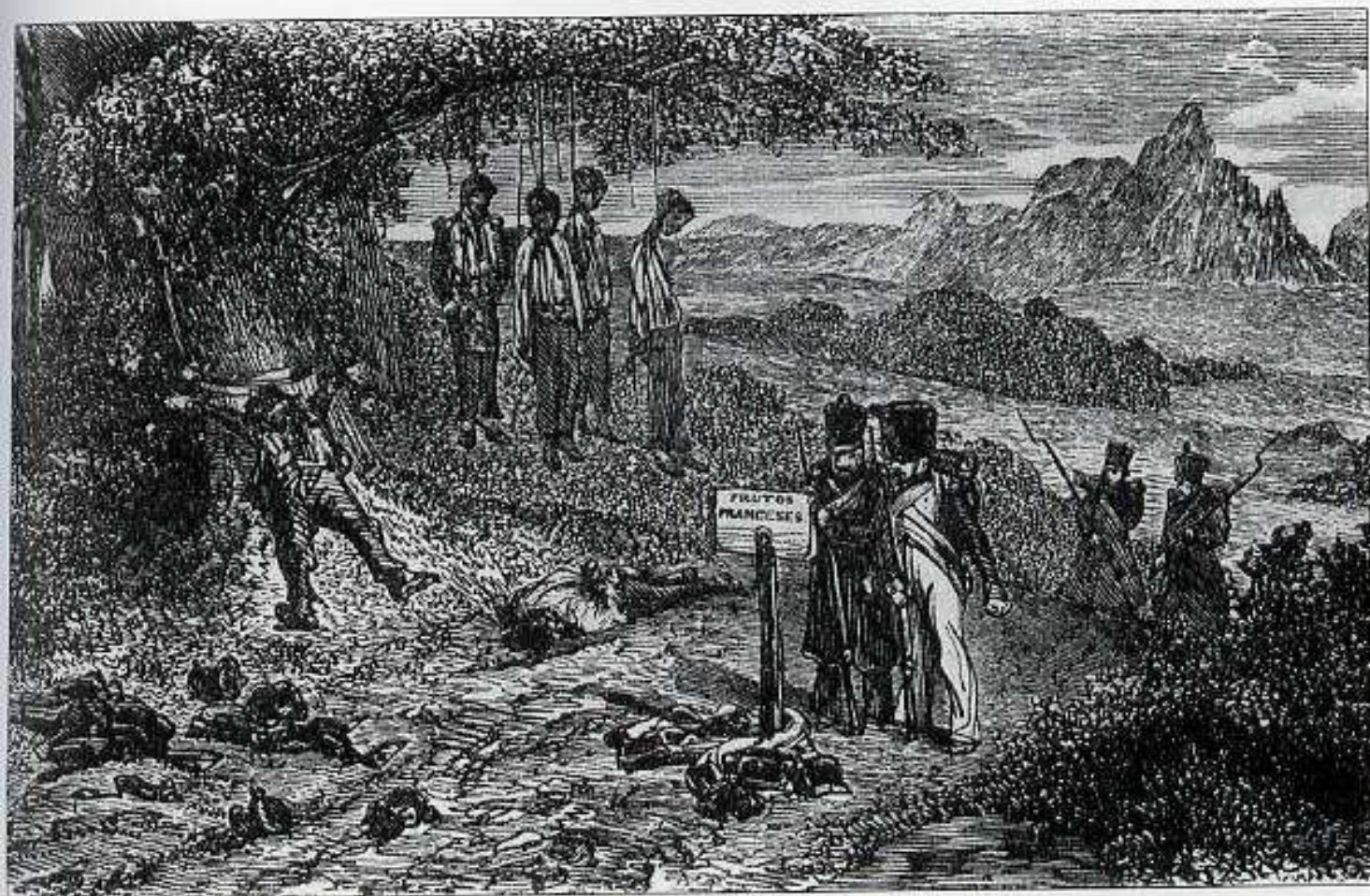
GLOSSARY

Afrancesados Nickname given to Spaniards favourable to the French.

Chacones Jackals; name given by patriot guerrillas to the Spaniards who fought for the French, and especially to the men in contra-guerrilla units.

Curso terrestre Land Corsairs; another name for the guerrillas.

Cortes Name for the Spanish national and local parliaments. Each was made up of representatives of the three estates: the church, the nobles and the commoners. The national Cortes during the Peninsular War started out as the Central Junta sitting in Seville and became the Cortes when it moved to Cádiz in 1810. In 1812, it issued



A party of French soldiers discovers a gruesome scene of dead comrades with a sign reading *Frutos Francese* (French fruits) left behind by the guerrillas. (Print after Raffet)

a remarkably liberal constitution, which was supported by many of the guerrilla chiefs including Mina but was annulled by the very conservative King Fernando VII following his return in April 1814.

Cuchillo Personal side knife traditionally carried by most Spanish men who were not nobles. Personal vows of revenge were commonly made by holding out this knife.

Diputacion Governing committee of the Cortes that often wielded executive power.

Don Mark of noble status, even among the poorest *hidalgo*, put before one's name. During the Peninsular War, many commoners who became noted guerrilla leaders, such as Julian Sanchez, were spontaneously given the title of *Don* by respectful fellow citizens.

Escopeta A peculiar and very sturdy type of musket that originated in Catalonia and was used either as a hunting and light infantry musket (if long-barrelled) or as a cavalry carbine (if short-barrelled).

Fueros Exemptions from taxes, customs and other government obligations granted to local areas or groups. These often originated in the Middle Ages and were considered fundamental laws of the areas.

Junta Local assembly. The Central Junta was the National Assembly until 1810 when replaced by the Cortes.

Hidalgo Denotes Spanish nobility. In the plains, most *hidalgos* managed to have enough property to avoid work but lived poorly and were barely distinguishable from the peasants. In the mountains of northern Spain, however, *hidalgos* usually worked as cobblers, tavern keepers and blacksmiths.

Pepe la botella Derogative nickname given to King José-Napoleon by patriotic Spaniards because of his alleged fondness for drink.

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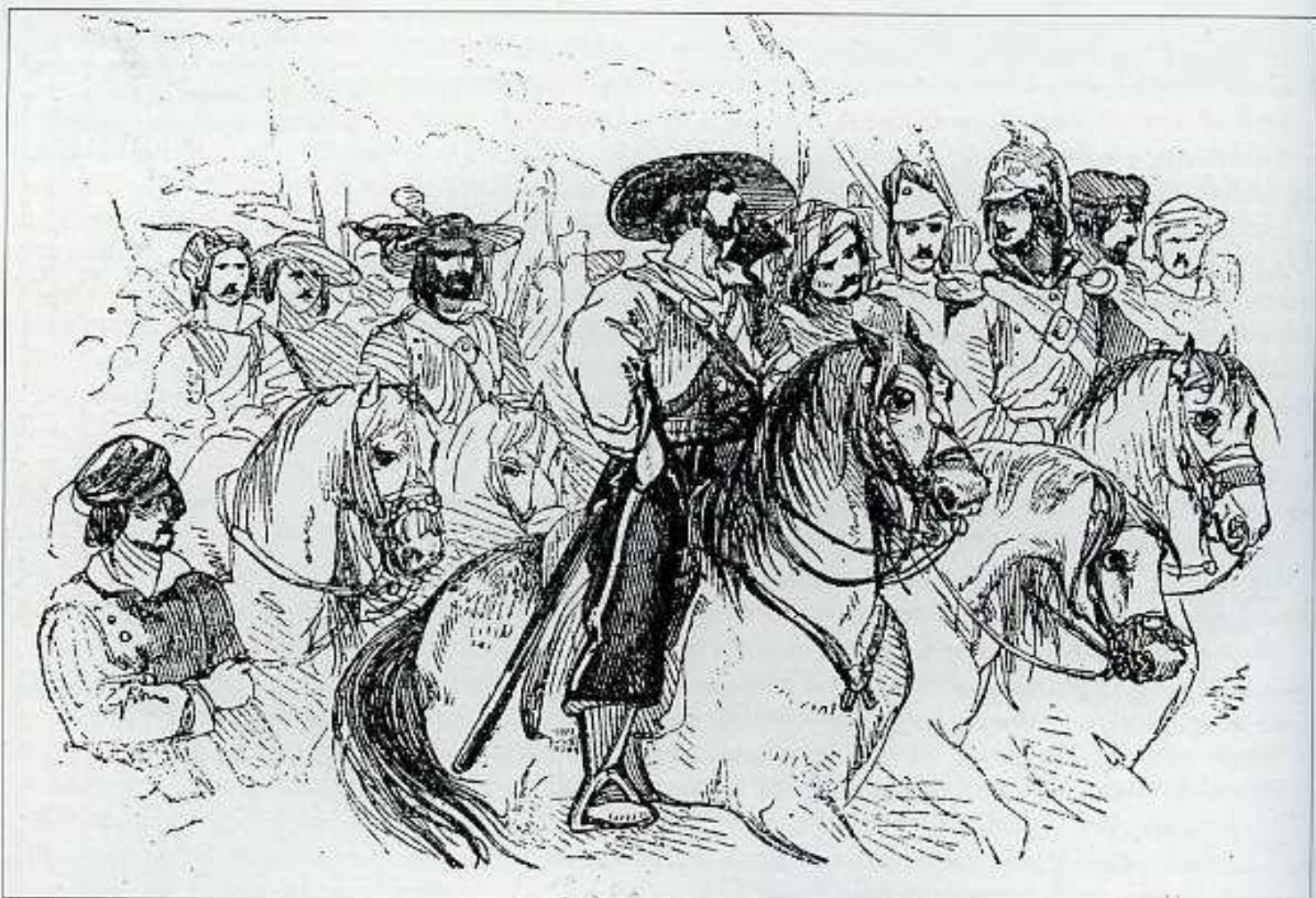
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THE PLATES

A: GUERRILLAS OF 1809-12

1: *Perseguidores de Andalucía* 1808-11

In southern Spain, the uprising of 1808 saw the organisation of a multitude of small guerrilla bands that had little cohesion, especially after the defeat of General Dupont's French army at Bailen. But the struggle was far from over and, on 31 January 1809, the Count of Valdecanas ordered the formation of the mounted *Cazadores de Andalucía* whose main duty was to harass French troops travelling on the roads of the Sierra Morena mountains. The *Cazadores*, who were better known as *Perseguidores* (persecutors), were also involved in many battles in the field with the French. The dress of a trooper was brown with scarlet facings, buff piping and waistcoat, white metal buttons and a round hat. The arms were typical of guerrillas, consisting of a pistol and a sword, together with a ventral cartridge box which each trooper furnished himself. The horse equipment was typical of Andalusia. From April 1810, the *Perseguidores*

were incorporated into other units, the last being integrated into other Spanish units in Cádiz following the successful French invasion of Andalusia. (Source: Juan José Sando Bayon and Paco Vela, 'Los Perseguidores de Andalucía...' *Researching & Dragona*, August 2001.)

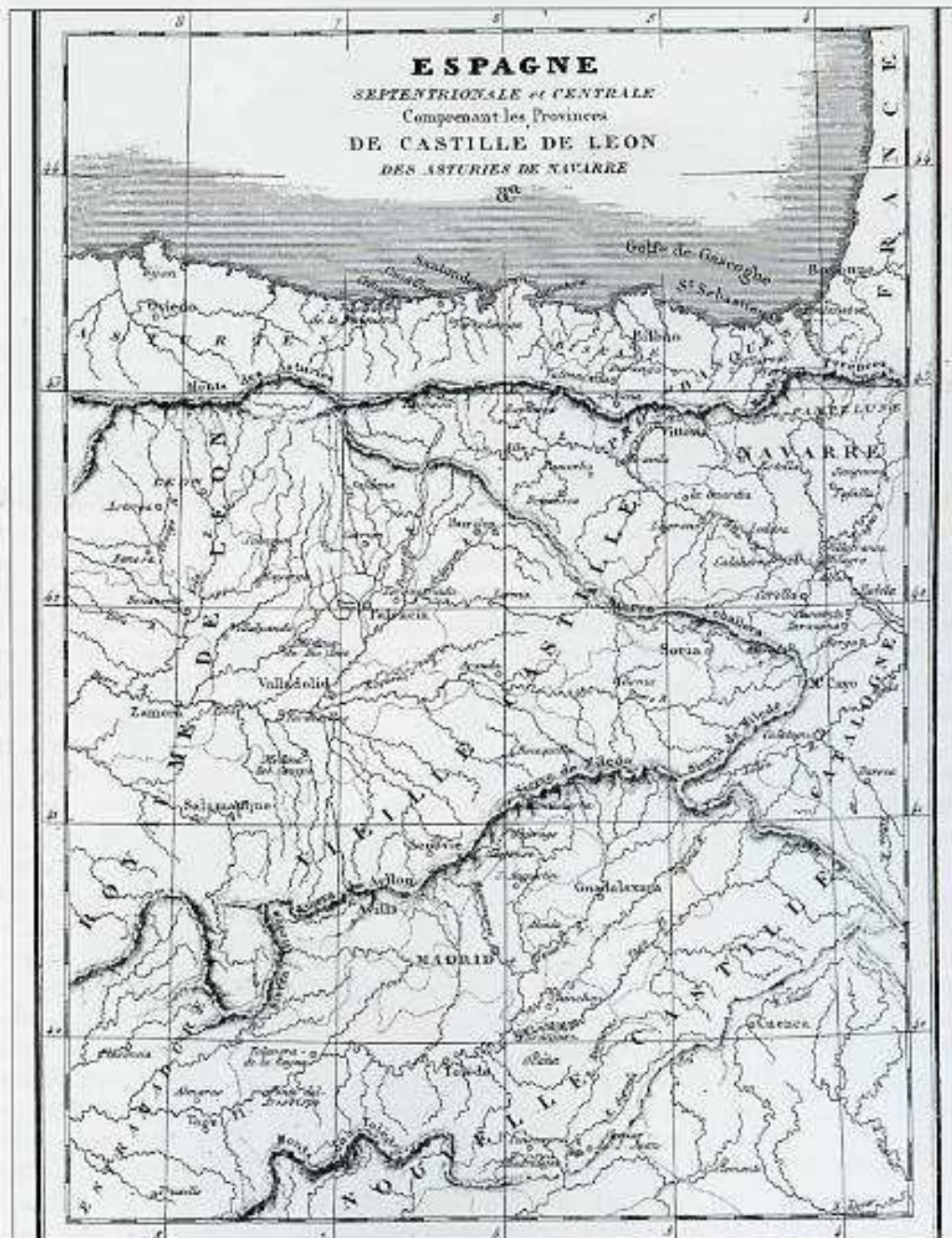
2: *Espoz y Mina's guerrilla battalions of Alava, fusilier, 1810*

The uniform of the three battalions was a black round hat with scarlet cockade; brown jacket with collar, cuffs and lapels of crimson for the 1st, green for the 2nd, and yellow for the 3rd; pewter buttons; short brown pantaloons; woollen stockings; and *alpartarga* sandals. The men were mostly armed with French muskets and had black or brown ventral cartridge boxes. A linen hunting haversack was carried at the side. (Source: A. J. Carrasco Alvarez, 'La Militarización de las Guerrillas', *Dragona*, March, 1995; J. M. Iribarren, *Espoz y Mina el Guerrillero*, Madrid, 1965.)

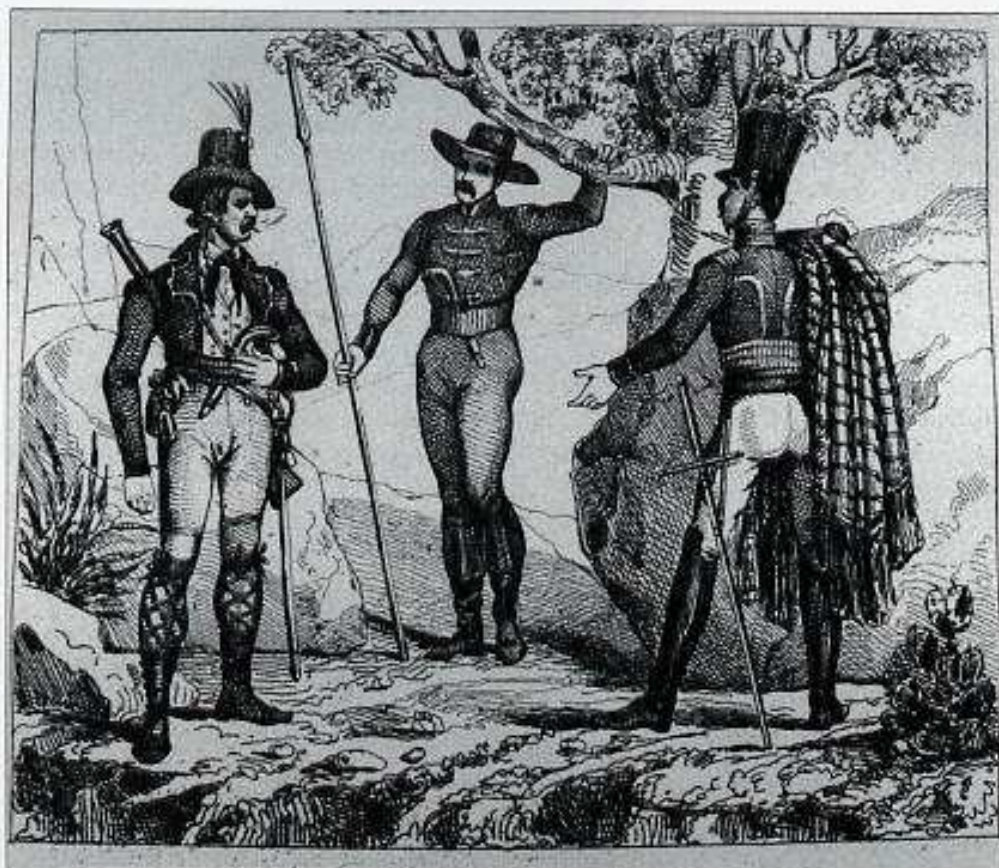
3: *Navarre Hussars, trooper, 1811-12*

Although most of Espoz y Mina's guerrillas were infantry, a few hundred were cavalry. The *Husares de Navarra*

A French map of central and northern Spain. Note the various mountain ranges which were ideal hideouts for the guerrillas.



OPPOSITE A group of guerrilla cavalry featuring a great mixture of regional costumes and arms complimented by various captured items such as a French dragoon helmet and a forage cap. (From Maxwell's *Life of Wellington*, 1840)



The central and right hand figures of Spanish 'insurgents' guerrillas in this French print were taken from Goddard & Booth with a few details, like the blanket and belt pistol, added.

were raised from 1 January 1811 by Don Francisco Javier de Mina. In early 1811, Colonel Don Lorenzo Xeminez described Espoz y Mina's hussars as consisting of: '150 intrepid and valiant men, dressed like hussars, with jacket and blue pantaloons; caps like the rest of the army with this difference, that they have about a yard of red cloth hanging down their backs, in a point from the cap, and a gold tassel at the end. All of them wear sandals and spurs.' The uniform shown by the British artist Dennis Dighton was emerald green dolman with scarlet collar and cuffs, white cords, pewter buttons, blue pantaloons with red stripe and strapped with black leather, and shako with white bands. The regiment eventually had an establishment of four squadrons totalling 480 men. It was incorporated into the Calatrava Cavalry regiment on 27 September 1815. (Source: *Annual Register, 1811*; Dennis Dighton watercolour in the Royal Collection.)

B: GUERRILLA CAVALRY OF DON JULIAN SANCHEZ, 1810-12

1: Colonel Don Julian Sanchez

Sanchez's guerrilla band seems to have had uniformity of sorts from the beginnings of their organisation. Don Julian himself was sketched by a British observer with black hair and moustache, wearing a blue pelisse with gold buttons and cords, blue trousers with double red stripes and his captured French shako with the eagle upside down, something that became famous in its day and was probably imitated by the officers and men in his band that had secured French shakos. On 28 August 1811, Don Julian and his suite suddenly appeared at the lodging of Commissary Schauman of the King's German Legion, near Ciudad Rodrigo, 'begging to be allowed to eat his luncheon there'. Schauman recalled him as 'a short, robust fellow with curly

black hair'. Captain William Bragge saw him near Salamanca in June 1812 and wrote that 'The Don himself wears a Pelisse like the 16th [British Light] Dragoons with an immense Hussar Cap and the Eagle of Napoleon reversed. In this dress, accompanied by two aides de camp equally genteel in Appearance, Twelve Lancers, a Trumpeter in scarlet on a grey Horse' which formed his escort.

2: Lancer

Sanchez's lancers usually had wide-brimmed black hats with red plumes or black shakos, grey or blue, or blue-grey jackets with red collar and cuffs, brass buttons or hook and eyes, broad yellow lace at the chest buttonholes, red sash, grey or blue trousers. The horses had, ideally, blue housings edged with yellow. The troopers were armed with a lance sometimes having a red pennon, a sabre and pistols. As seen above, the trumpeters were dressed in scarlet and mounted on greys, which conformed to the Spanish army regulations regarding light cavalry.

3: Lancer officer (back view)

Lancer officers wore the same uniform as the troopers, but their jackets had gold lace edging the cuffs, collar, buttonholes and back seams. Instead of epaulettes, they had gold lace shoulder tabs. Not everyone in Don Julian's rapidly growing band was dressed in the blue or blue-grey uniforms. In 1811, some were seen by William Kinkaid of the 95th Rifles wearing 'cocked hats with broad white lace round the edges, yellow coats with many more [buttons] than buttonholes, red facings, breeches of various colours, and no stockings but a sort of shoe on the foot with a spur attached. Their arms were as various as their colours; some with lances, some with carbines...' These were obviously Spanish dragoon uniform coats and hats, probably a couple of years old already, which may have been brought along by a party of regular soldiers from a defeated Spanish force

who rallied to Don Julian. Or else Spanish stores 'liberated' by Sanchez's men and put to use. Some of them also wore captured French uniforms intended for a detachment of the Polish Lancers of the Imperial Guard serving in Spain. In another instance, Schauman noted in August 1811 that Don Julian's 'men looked magnificent, were splendidly mounted, and wore their national dress, to which they added the large bearskin caps of the French chasseurs of the guard which they had taken from the enemy from time to time, or else picked up as spoils in the battlefield'.

C: A GUERRILLA CAMP

The camps of guerrilla groups were temporary, be they in

mountain caves or secluded gullies on the plains. Despite having to be always on the move, the guerrillas in these camps appear often to have been joined by visitors, who were important sources of information about activities in other areas. This plate shows several such visitors with a party of Espoz y Mina's guerrillas. A cigar-smoking 'Majo' from Andalusia brings news from the events in the south. There is also a British officer from Wellington's HQ on an intelligence mission; he is dressed in a plain frock coat and forage cap favoured by Wellington's staff. A female guerrilla is present with her musket and cartridge box tied over her dress. In the background, an apprehensive French prisoner looks on, wondering if he will to see another day.



Lancer of Don Julian Sanchez, c. 1811. The guerrillas enjoyed much support from villagers as shown in this scene of a trooper chatting with an admiring girl who is holding a small jug of house wine. For a time, as shown in this print, some of Don Julian's cavalry wore captured French Imperial Guard Polish Lancer uniforms of blue faced with crimson. (Print after E. Estevan)



Peasant costumes of the inhabitants of the Jaca Valley in Aragon, near the French border, many of whom joined the guerrillas.

D: GUERRILLAS ATTACK A FRENCH CONVOY

The guerrillas' tactic for attacking a convoy was simple but very effective. The band was divided into attacking and reserve groups. All would hide by the side of the road as the convoy passed by. As ammunition was in short supply, the attacking half would usually be allowed to fire only a single round. On a signal, the attackers would suddenly fire a volley and immediately charge in to slay the escort and drivers with knives, swords and pistols.

E: GUERRILLAS RETREAT AFTER AN ATTACK ON A CONVOY

A guerrilla attack could become a rout if French reinforcements arrived on the scene and caught the guerrillas from the rear. To prevent this, the guerrillas had to disperse as soon as French troops arrived in strength. Therefore, up to half of the guerrillas might not attack but would stay hidden in reserve by the sides of the road. If French relief troops arrived on the scene, the guerrillas involved in the attack would run back into the sides of the road as quickly as they could. French troops starting to pursue the guerrillas would be suddenly stopped by a volley from the hidden men. The startled French would hesitate until they regrouped, allowing the guerrillas to make their getaway. This was the classic guerrilla tactic to avoid being destroyed. The dispersed men would later gather at a meeting point to plan more raids.



F: SEVERAL GUERRILLA LEADERS

1: Francisco Espoz y Mina

In the early years of his activities as a guerrilla, Espoz y Mina never wore boots, or half-boots, 'but sandals, in order the more easily to escape, by climbing up the side of mountains'. There seem to be relatively few reliable likenesses of Spain's greatest guerrilla. This portrait is based on a period engraving and a bust, probably done in about 1814-15, both of which show him in his general's uniform. He had an escort dressed in red hussar dolmans and fur busbies.

2: Juan Martin Diaz, *El Empecinado*

This portrait is based on an old black-and-white photograph of a painting of this outstanding guerrilla by the great Spanish artist Francisco Goya. He is shown with a very expressive look in a full-dress, hussar-style uniform, most likely that of his *Cazadores Voluntarios de Madrid*, which was emerald green with crimson collar, cuffs and waistcoat, and silver buttons and lace. The original painting vanished many years ago. Another painting by an unknown artist in the Spanish army museum shows him in the regiment's undress.

3: Juan Palarea Blanes, *El Medico*

In 1811, *El Medico's* band was the *Husares Francos Numantinos* and his dress in the print of his portrait was likely this unit's uniform. The dolman was red with blue collar, cuffs, pelisse and breeches, silver buttons and lace.

4: Joaquin Ibanez, Baron de Eroles

The Catalanian baron turned guerrilla leader was shown in a period print wearing a brigadier-general's uniform of blue, edged with a wide gold lace. He would have worn this uniform from about July 1813.

G: GUERRILLAS ATTACK A FRENCH DISPATCH RIDER, C. 1810

The relatively mundane job of carrying dispatches performed by junior officers on the staff of armies soon became a most dangerous occupation in Spain. Initially, as shown in this plate, the dispatch rider was usually alone or with a few other companions as an escort. In this case, an officer with his escort of the Polish Lancers of the Imperial Guard is set upon by guerrillas on a mountain road in northern Spain. He might be able to cut down one or two guerrillas before being killed, although some did manage to cut their way out. There was little chance to escape as the guerrillas would simultaneously block the road to the front and rear of the riders. Other guerrillas would also attack from both sides. Strong escorts for dispatch riders soon became an obligation for the French, but to no avail; the guerrillas simply added more men and refined their interception tactics.

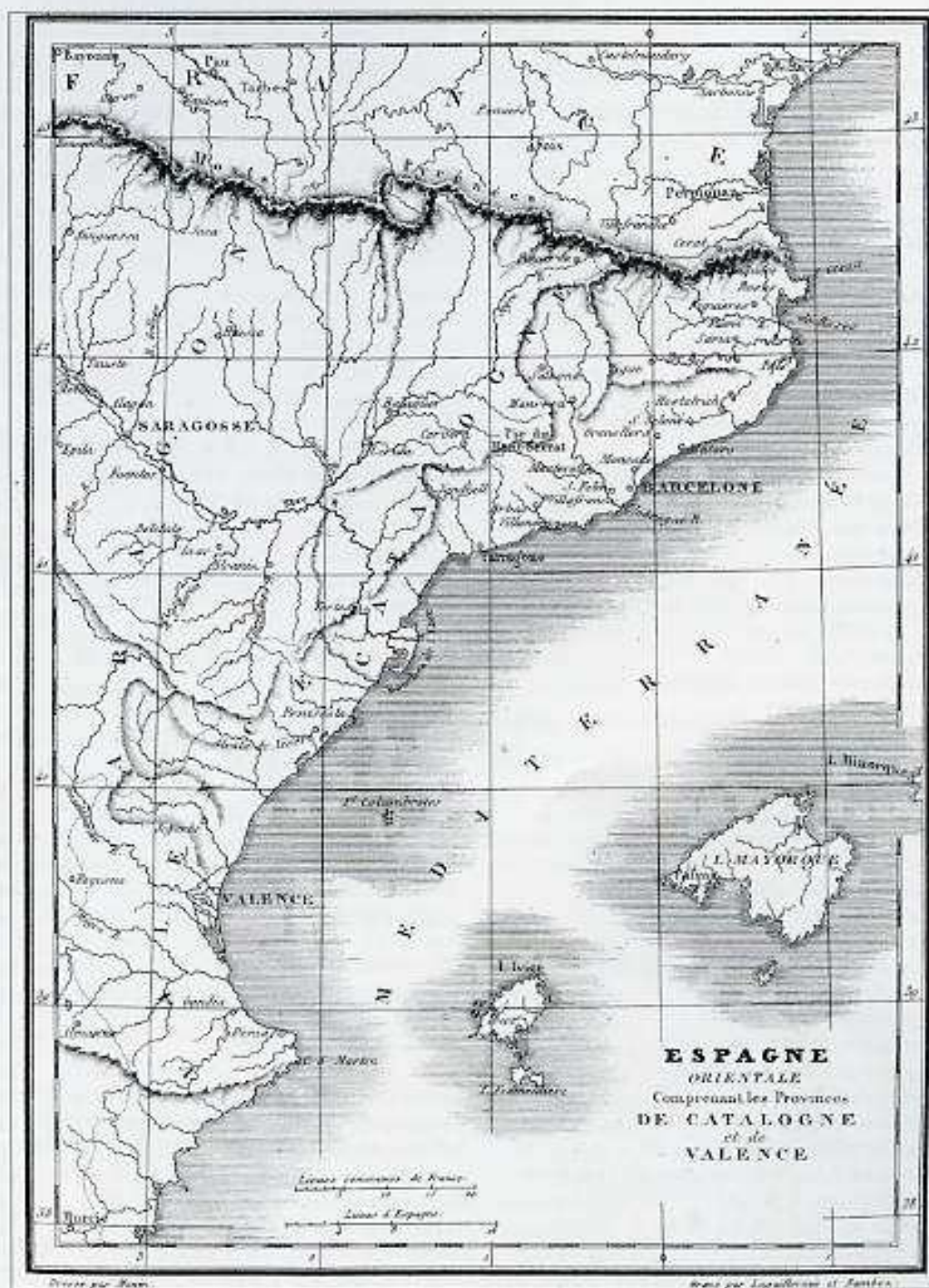
H: THE GUERRILLAS IN THE REGULAR ARMY, 1813-14

1: Infantry, Espoz y Mina's Navarre Division, 1813

In 1813, Espoz y Mina's guerrillas formed the Navarre

The figures on this print of 'Spanish Guerrillas under Col. Don Julian Sanchez' published by Goddard & Booth in 1812 were taken from those on Sanchez's print 'taken from life' in September 1810. The colouring of the uniform is rendered in a more grey-blue hue. (Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University, Providence. Photo RC)

French map of northeastern Spain showing Aragon and Catalonia to the north and Valencia to the south.



Division. From March 1813, the infantry received a consignment of uniforms that had been sent from Britain for the Spanish army. This consisted of a blue coat with scarlet collar, cuffs and piping, blue pantaloons, black short gaiters and shoes, and black stovepipe shako with a white plume. The units from Alava had, however, brown pantaloons. Some also obtained British muskets and accoutrements.

2: Infantry, 4th Army and Espoz y Mina's Navarre Division, 1814

In March 1814, the British issued supplies to the Spanish armies at Passages, northern Spain. One of the armies involved was the Spanish 4th Army, which included General Porlier's men (who received some 2,560 suits with red facings and 2,660 suits with green facings), and General Mina's men (2,000 suits with red facings and 2,000 suits with green facings). These uniforms came complete with shakos with red or green plumes, forage caps with red or green bands, wings for grenadiers and, for light infantrymen,

waistcoats, trousers, greatcoats, shoes, white or black pouches and belts, knapsacks, haversacks, etc. – possibly the most complete supply any guerrilla ever received. The Spanish by then favoured a shako wider at the top, like the French type, which they usually covered with white linen. (Source: University of Southampton, Wellington Papers, 1/358)

3: Officer, Don Julian Sanchez's Burgos Hussars, 1814

The guerrilla cavalry of Don Julian Sanchez (see Plate B) was ordered to reorganise itself into a regiment of Burgos Hussars from April 1811. The unit was incorporated into the regular army by 1814, complete with its own resplendent uniform, which was reported to be an all-emerald green dolman with buff pelisse and breeches, white cords, and emerald green housings edged with white lace. Officers had silver lace and buttons. Since 1810, squadron commanders had, in addition, a distinctive gold lace.

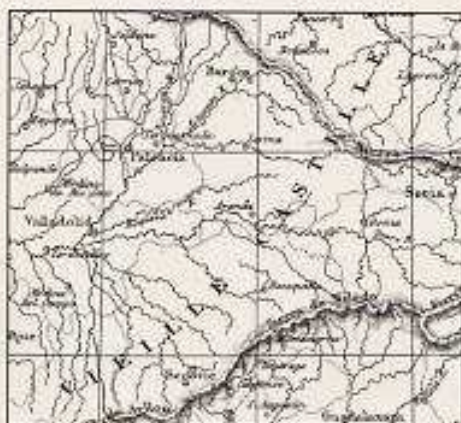
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