

Review Articles

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War and Resistance in Napoleonic Europe: Some Recent Works

Michael Broers, *Europe under Napoleon 1799–1815*, London, Arnold, ISBN 0340-66265-4 hbk; 0340-66264-6 pbk; 1996; xii + 291 pp.; \$49.95 hbk, \$19.95 pbk.

Robert M. Epstein, *Napoleon's Last Victory and the Emergence of Modern Warfare*, Lawrence, University of Kansas Press, ISBN 07006 0664 5; 1994; xv + 215 pp.; £26.95.

Charles J. Esdaile, *The Wars of Napoleon*, London, Longman, ISBN 0582-059550; 1995; xii + 417 pp.; £15.99.

Milton Finley, *The Most Monstrous of Wars: The Napoleonic Guerilla War in Southern Italy, 1806–11*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, ISBN 1-57003-0065; 1994; xv + 161 pp.; £28.50.

Brendan Simms, *The Impact of Napoleon: Prussian High Politics, Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Executive, 1795–1806*, Cambridge, CUP, ISBN 0521-45360-7; 1997; xiii + 390 pp.; £45.00.

John Lawrence Tone, *The Fatal Knot: The Guerilla War in Navarre and the Defeat of Napoleon in Spain*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, ISBN 08078-2169-1; 1994; viii + 239 pp.; US\$34.95.

With the bicentenary of Napoleon's coup d'état of Brumaire only a few years down the road, publishing companies and academics alike are undoubtedly bracing themselves for an outpouring of works on France and Europe during his reign. Even if the event is hardly likely to be celebrated in the same manner as the *bicentenaire* of the French Revolution, it is at least hoped that some scholars will reflect upon the results of almost 200 years of history writing, and that others will make use of the occasion to publish on political, economic and social aspects of the period that have to date been neglected. Most of the works that appear in this review attempt, with

varying degrees of success, to do just that. Two of the books are lessons in resistance to the French imperium (Tone and Finley), one is an analysis of the Prussian reaction to the Napoleonic incursion into Germany (Simms), two attempt to place the Napoleonic regime in a broader social and political European context (Broers and Esdaile, although both of these works have resistance as a sub-text), and one is an analysis of the Napoleonic battle (Epstein).

The theme running through both John Lawrence Tone's study of guerrilla warfare in Spain and Milton Finley's study of the southern Italian region of Calabria is resistance. Let me discuss Tone's work first. It makes up for the shortcomings in the historiography of Spanish resistance by posing simple but fundamental questions — who fought the French and why, and why did they fight in some regions and not in others? He focuses on the province of Navarre, the key to the whole French operation in the Peninsula, 'because it produced the most perfect guerrilla movement in Spain'. In most of the rest of Spain, guerrilla parties were small and of little military value. Indeed, many of the civilian guerrillas were barely distinguishable from bandits (72). Without wanting to get into the debate about the impact of the guerrilla war on the downfall of Napoleon (Tone, Esdaile and Broers, who places more emphasis on Portugal as a springboard for liberation, will probably agree to disagree on this point), it is worth noting a number of features about the actual nature of guerrilla warfare in northern Spain.

One of the more interesting aspects of Tone's work is his contention that the guerrilla movement was not national (Broers would agree) but that, on the contrary, it was confined to regions with the particular social, geographic and political characteristics found in northern Spain, and especially in Navarre and the surrounding provinces. Even in Navarre, however, the *guerrilla* was specific to a 'particular social class in a special rural setting' in an area in the north of the province known as the *Montaña*. Unlike other regions of Europe, peasants controlled production in the *Montaña* and this brought them into direct conflict with the French government's taxing and requisitioning apparatus. Requisitioning parties in the villages were the initial point of attack for the guerrillas 'and it was by protecting such villages from French exploitation that the guerrillas gained the allegiance of the peasantry' (30). The insurgents, in other words, were landowning peasants who fought to protect their own property.

Another factor that helps explain the almost constant guerrilla activity in the *Montaña* during the French occupation is the system of rigid primogeniture that prevailed in the region and which usually obliged young men either to migrate to the Americas or to Madrid.

The English blockade of 1796, however, curtailed the option of emigration to America while it caused an economic contraction that made work more difficult to find in Madrid. The result was an excess of young men with no prospects who were thus made available for the *guerrilla* (11). What is perhaps striking about these young men, however, is that almost all of them were of noble birth. 'In the Montaña entire villages, even whole valleys were populated almost exclusively by the noble born' (14). As a result, these people, who for the most part were not even Spanish but Basque, developed a sense of moral superiority and a very strong sense of community feeling. In other regions of Spain and Europe the commercial and political elites were more than happy to collaborate with the French. They sometimes fought alongside them against resistance movements (as in neighbouring Aragon and Castile, and in Prussian Silesia in 1809), and pledged allegiance to the French government in the hope of reaping political and economic rewards. Noble privilege, in other words, was exploited by the French to divide and conquer, a strategy that was especially effective where social elites feared the mob. The apparent lack of social distinctions in the Navarre, however, made this impossible, '... the nature of the nobility in the Montaña allowed the area to meet the challenge of the French occupation from a position of unity and strength' (17).

There are, of course, a number of other factors that help explain peasant resistance in the Montaña. The first requirement of guerrilla warfare is, after all, the proper terrain, and in the Montaña geography was more than favourably disposed towards this type of warfare — dispersed populations over rugged countryside. Poor communications hindered the pursuit of the *guerrilla* while French commanders were far too jealous of each other to be disposed towards joint military operations (80). The rapacity of the French generals was another factor that ensured the failure of the occupation (147, 159–62). For the French soldier, intervention in Spain went hand in hand with plunder. Perhaps an even greater problem, however, was the political programme that the French tried to implement. That is, the French military governors did everything that was consistent with the French revolutionary ideal; they attacked seigneurialism, the Church and privilege. This had particularly onerous consequences in Navarre where it alienated the majority of the population, seeming to lend weight to Broers's hypothesis about reform and resistance. There is no simple equation, however, between the exactions of the French on the Spanish civilian population and support for the guerrilla movement. 'French pressure and violence elicited different responses ... depending on the internal structure of the community affected' (161). Nevertheless, it is note-

worthy that the areas where the largest number of people volunteered for the guerrilla movement corresponded 'almost exactly' with the areas of greatest police repression (169).

Finally, no discussion of the Spanish adventure would be complete without reference to the horror that this type of warfare engendered. Tone points out that 'the occupation troops ... eased their consciences by convincing themselves that they were at war with a racially and morally inferior opponent' (181). It is obvious that years of 'seeing men shot, hanged, and impaled in roadside trees' led to a breakdown in societal norms (92) but, as far as I am aware, the manner in which French propaganda rendered the enemy sub-human has never been studied. Similarly, if there is a criticism of this book to be made, it is that the social context in which the peasantry committed their acts of savagery against the French remains unexplained. An examination of these factors would lend a great deal to an understanding of the processes by which individuals crossed the threshold to commit the barbarities that are associated with both the Spanish and Italian wars and is an avenue worthy of further exploration. More importantly, however, Tone should have made a comparison with Navarre's neighbouring provinces, Aragon and Catalonia, where the French successfully pacified the countryside without resorting to the brutality traditionally associated with the *guerrilla* in Spain. Why did the French succeed in one region and not in another?

The brutality of guerrilla warfare is one of the themes reflected upon in Milton Finley's study. Between 1806 and 1811, the French fought a war of attrition against Calabrian guerrillas that cost them over 20,000 men (proportionately as heavy a loss as the French would later experience in Spain) and whose brutality foreshadowed much of what was to occur in Spain a few years later. Indeed, there are a number of striking similarities between the Navarrese and Calabrian cases: geography (both regions were mountainous); the chasm that existed between rural and urban environments; the influence of the Church (although in the Navarrese case defence of religion was not an important motivating force); poor communications; the presence of the vendetta; the formation of guerrilla bands (known as the *Masse* in southern Italy) around brigand chiefs; the massacre of soldiers and civilians alike; the defeat of the guerrillas whenever they attempted to fight the French in open battle; and French control of the towns in contrast to guerrilla control of the countryside. There were, however, significant differences. Calabrian nobles were in the majority absentee landlords and seem to have played no role in the uprising; brigandage was endemic in Calabria and seems to have been an accepted part of the social fabric, even playing a role in supplementing peasant incomes (7); and the move-

ment was marked by a religious fanaticism that seems to be lacking in Navarre. It is also interesting to note that the French seem to have been more successful in bringing the guerrilla war in southern Italy to a conclusion. In September 1810, after successfully pacifying the Abruzzi, Charles-Antoine Manhès was given the task of suppressing brigandage in Calabria. The methods he used were brutal but effective; the most telling tactic he employed was to cut off food supplies from the guerrilla bands, so that by the beginning of 1811 guerrilla attacks had virtually ceased. Admittedly, the British had lost interest in the region (their original objective was limited to disrupting French plans to invade Sicily), and the winter of 1810–11 was extremely severe, but it also seems that after four years of fighting the *Masse* the French had become adept at this type of warfare.

Finley's study is more military than social history and as such tells us little about who the guerrillas were and why they fought. What little analysis there is is confined to the last chapter of the book. A deeper exploration of the underlying causes of the revolt, placing them within the context of Calabria's social and economic history, would have been more useful. Finley's book is, however, as much about the French presence in southern Italy and the British response to it as it is a study of the uprising of the local populace caused by the French occupation. It is still useful to our understanding of why certain regions in Europe responded in the way they did to the French threat.

Resistance was not exactly a key word in the Prussian vocabulary before 1806–7; conciliation is a more appropriate description of Prussian foreign policy under Frederick William III. Like the other authors in this review, Brendan Simms also examines the impact of the Napoleonic regime, but from an entirely different perspective — its influence on the workings of Prussian high politics and foreign policy before the catastrophic (for the Prussians) battle of Jena–Auerstädt. This is an excellent piece of scholarship based on a thorough exploration of both the archival and secondary material. It lends a great deal to our understanding, not only of Prussian foreign policy, but also of Prussia's place in Germany, Napoleon's incursions into North Germany and international relations during the Napoleonic era in general. At the same time, it revises many of the misconceptions about Prussian policy and why it went to war against France in 1806.

After a solid introduction which provides us with the theoretical underpinnings, the book is divided into three parts. Part One ('The Structures') deals with the structures and assumptions underlying Prussian politics in the reign of Frederick William III. Part Two ('The Events') consists of a narrative of events between October

1804 and June 1806. Finally, Part Three ('The Responses') analyses, as the subtitle of the book suggests, the impact of Napoleon on Prussian foreign policy, high politics and the executive. It is a good mixture of diplomatic history and narrative style but the structure of the book inevitably results in a certain degree of repetition (especially apparent in Chapter 8). This does not, however, detract from the worth of the book. It is the first detailed study to provide an examination of the ins and outs of Prussian foreign policy leading up to the military debacle at Jena–Auerstädt in 1806.

The main theoretical inspiration behind Simms's study is the primacy of foreign policy. Everything, Simms argues, was subordinated to it. Even after the Prussian defeat in 1806 at French hands, the Prussian reform movement had but one aim, to reform the tool of Prussia's foreign policy, the army, in an attempt to regain Prussia's lost Great Power status. To this extent then, Napoleon's hegemonic pretensions not only shaped the direction of Prussian foreign policy before Jena–Auerstädt, but also shaped and directed the debate around the Prussian reform movement (the focus of the last chapter).

One of the other concepts upon which the book is based is the notion of geopolitics. Prussian foreign policy was determined to a large degree by its geographical position in the north of Germany and Europe — its *Mittellage* — which explains not only its aggressive foreign policy but also its constitutional development (9). Geography posed an enormous dilemma for Prussia; it was, after all, caught between France, Russia and Austria, all potentially hostile states. For the first seven years of Napoleon's reign, Frederick William III avoided taking sides in the wars raging about him by successfully maintaining a policy of neutrality. In 1806, however, Prussia could no longer avoid choosing. Where it was once hoped that France could be conciliated and that an arrangement could be worked out, Napoleon was increasingly seen as an uncontrollable threat to Prussian interests in Germany. Prussia was left little choice but to opt in favour of war against France.

However, and this is another major theme of the book, Prussian foreign policy was often the battleground of rival statesmen vying for personal power. The two most important figures during this period, besides Frederick William III, were Christian von Haugwitz and Karl August von Hardenberg. Both held office as Minister for Foreign Affairs, both fought a political duel for power and prestige that could sometimes lead to some extremely complicated situations. The schizophrenic foreign policy adopted by Prussia in 1806 as a result of which it signed mutually exclusive treaties with both Russia and France is a case in point. The ultimate prize for these statesmen was control over the foreign-political executive.

The key to the struggle, however, lay within the inner circle of power, that is, access to the king's ear (this touches on another major theme running through the book — the 'antechamber of power'). The king alone could decide the direction his country's foreign policy would take. Only very occasionally, therefore, would a politician adopt a policy that went against the wishes of the king, for to do so would be to court disfavour and, ultimately, marginalization (155). Invariably, a struggle would ensue between those wishing to enter the inner circle or to eliminate rivals from within that circle. Hence, the adoption of a particular policy by advisors, Simms argues, was almost always subordinated to considerations of personal political survival (221). 'It was a clash of irreconcilable personal ambitions, not that of contrasting political programmes, which gave the struggle in the antechamber of power its particularly bitter edge' (147). This aspect of Prussian foreign policy was actively encouraged by Frederick William III. He did so to safeguard his authority against the influence of councillors that might vie with him in power. The result was, however, that policy would almost always be subordinated to the anticipated wishes of the king. If we look at the larger picture, however, and leaving considerations of high politics aside, the main formative force in Prussian politics was, of course, Napoleon.

The same, all-pervading influence of Napoleon and the manner in which Europe reacted to him is to be found in the works of Esdaile and Broers. Both of these works are impressive surveys of Europe that take into account the political, social and economic context of the Napoleonic wars. Both provide interesting and sometimes provocative insights into the nature of the Napoleonic regime. They have a number of themes in common — resistance, collaboration, the impact of the Napoleonic regime on the internal workings of European states — even though their approaches are fundamentally different.

Esdaile writes that 'Napoleon's one abiding diplomatic and strategic aim ... was to unite the entire Continent against the British' (75–6, 106). As such, it was necessary to effectively integrate and exploit all the resources at his disposal to carry this aim through. The reforms implemented by the French throughout the areas under their control were thus 'always a weapon of exploitation whose employment was necessitated by the demands of [Napoleon's] perpetual wars' (77). All the constitutional, social, political and fiscal reforms that were introduced, both in the *pays réunis* and in the *pays conquis*, were brought about by 'the exigencies of Napoleon's wars'. Various reform programmes were also introduced by a number of European monarchies, all of which were opposed to France at one time or

another, in a 'desperate attempt to keep pace with developments west of the Rhine' (215). In other words, the French Revolution and Napoleon influenced the social, political and military developments taking place inside those monarchies, especially Austria, Russia and Prussia.

An interesting feature of these reform movements is that all of them followed traditional agendas that were no different in character from those followed by any eighteenth-century monarchs. It was as though, confronted with a military challenge à la Louis XIV, the European monarchies responded by seeking the same types of improvements in their own states as those implemented in France. The best solution to their foreign political problems seems to have been to emulate the victorious enemy. The goal of reform was, therefore, limited to improving the state and to developing more efficient armies to better combat the French. In doing so, no profound social or political changes took place. Far more radical change occurred in countries like Spain, Sweden and Sicily. Here the Napoleonic Wars 'opened the way for revolution, the establishment of constitutional monarchies, and the implementation of more or less wide-ranging programmes of liberal reform' (217). It sounds like an argument in favour of the primacy of foreign policy, although it is never explicitly stated. This is not to say that domestic political considerations were not a factor in the upheavals that took place in those countries — on the contrary, they had as their origin the clash between the monarchy and noble privilege — but that foreign political developments often precipitated or exacerbated internal crises. Thus in Spain the economic problems created by the French wars engendered attempts at modernization that in turn led to a revolt among the nobility (243). Once the nobility seized power, however, they were not only confronted with problems within their own ranks, but they were soon subsumed by a revolutionary bourgeoisie.

There is, however, another, more ambiguous sub-text that runs throughout Esdaile's book (other than the primacy of foreign policy, that is), although again it is more implicit than explicit — the role of Napoleon in shaping the course of European history. Let me cite a number of examples. With regard to the reforms introduced into Europe Esdaile concludes that, much as Napoleon might have dreamt of integrating Europe into the French empire, 'in practice he could not do so, his aspirations in this respect therefore providing yet one more testimony to his incipient megalomania' (91). Regarding the Napoleonic wars themselves, Esdaile clearly states that there is only one person responsible for the prolonged conflict after 1804 — Napoleon Bonaparte (10, 36). Equally centred on the individual as a decisive force in history is Esdaile's view about the role of Napoleon

in successfully conducting the wars — 'it is ... safe to say that one of the most important reasons for French success was the irreplaceable genius of Napoleon himself' (66). Finally, we read that one of the reasons that helps to explain the collapse of the French empire in 1814 is that Napoleon 'repeatedly rejected a compromise peace in favour of a total victory that was ever more unattainable' (247, 284).

There is no denying the central role of Napoleon in the wars after 1803, nor the military genius involved in shaping the French army into an effective instrument for his foreign political ambitions. Nor can historians, as much as they might try, ignore that Napoleon, in part because of his personality, quite obviously had an enormous impact on the types of foreign policy choices that were made. But how does personality fit into a work the express aim of which is to analyse the broader, impersonal forces of the period? In stating that Napoleon was a megalomaniac or that his personality prevented him from accepting peace offers after the Russian fiasco, Esdaile inadvertently brings Napoleon's personality back on to centre stage as a force in history, but he leaves the reader with an inadequate explanation of why Napoleon behaved in the way he did. Is it not too much to assume, as Esdaile does, that Napoleon fought on after 1813 because of his personal inability to accept a compromise peace? Is Esdaile not overlooking the fact that the Allies had no intention of offering Napoleon peace terms, a view by the way which was advanced many years ago by both Houssaye and Thiry, neither of which are cited by Esdaile? It seems that, far from reconciling the role of the individual with the broader socioeconomic and political forces, Esdaile runs into difficulty on this score. This, however, is a minor reservation that should not disguise the impressiveness of a text that draws together so many elements — the depth of Esdaile's knowledge is strikingly evident — and which provides the student and teacher alike with what is probably the most solid synthesis of the period around. It is bound to become set reading for any course on Napoleon and Europe.

Broers's approach to his subject is similar in many ways to that of Esdaile — he attempts to place the Napoleonic conquests within a broader European context and in particular examines events from the perspective of the people who lived and suffered under the French yoke. Although an undergraduate textbook, Broers offers the reader numerous insights into Napoleon and his regime. The opening chapters set the scene. Broers describes the rise of France from a regional power — when it dominated Germany and northern Italy — to a continental power at the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807, thereby acquiring the status of a European superpower. Unlike Esdaile, or indeed Paul Schroeder who argues that Napoleon's character was

fundamentally flawed (*The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848*, Oxford, OUP, 1992, and more explicitly in 'Napoleon's Foreign Policy: A Criminal Enterprise', *Journal of Military History*, 54 [1990], 147–61), Broers attributes Napoleon's rise to mastery over Europe, not to a 'megalomaniac master plan of domination', but rather to haste (48).

This needs clarification but before doing so let me first explain an aspect of the book related to this theme. Broers makes a distinction between an 'inner' and 'outer' empire, the inner consisting of those territories incorporated into the Empire before 1807 and which remained firmly under Napoleonic control, while the outer consisted of those territories integrated after 1807 and which, for the most part, eluded centralized control. Interestingly enough, Broers does not include parts of Normandy, Brittany, the Vendée and the eastern Pyrenees within the inner empire; instead he considers them to be intermediate zones that were never fully controlled by Paris. Another sign distinguishing the inner from the outer empire is the degree to which they were controlled by either civil administrations based on the prefects or by military administrations (210). Finally, the impact of French rule on those territories belonging to the 'outer empire' was almost entirely negative (the subject of Chapter 5), traumatic and destabilizing, leaving few institutional traces once it had passed (266). In contrast, the impact of Napoleonic rule on the inner empire (France, western Germany, northern Italy and the Low Countries) left a 'powerful institutional heritage' (267) which was to set standards of efficiency in administration for generations to come.

Now to the point about the manner in which Napoleon consolidated his rule. Here, too, Broers seems to make a distinction between pre and post-Tilsit processes. The key words used by the regime during the phase before 1807 (the inner empire) were *ralliement* and *amalgame*. Broers argues that the success of consolidation depended on the introduction of French personnel at almost every level of a centralized and flexible administration (67–8). The reforms introduced by these administrators were often imposed after long periods of struggle and coercion. (The details of this consolidation process — a sense of loyalty to the regime, reconciling the propertied elements, overcoming the problems created by the Concordat and the introduction of the Code Napoléon — are clearly explained.) The post-Tilsit (outer) empire, on the other hand, was created with much hesitancy and out of a sense of frustration with the incompetence of the more limitrophe powers to implement the Continental Blockade (149, 230). The occupation of Portugal, Spain and the Kingdom of Naples has to be seen in this light. These invasions were meant to be tactical interventions to enforce the

Blockade, but they were also born out of the 'uncertainty present at the very heart of the imperial family' (177). In other words, Napoleon, no longer trusting the competence of those monarchs he had placed on the thrones of neighbouring countries to enforce the Blockade (even though some of them were of his own flesh and blood), was obliged to undertake a further reorganization of the empire after 1809.

This leads to another theme — resistance. Violent resistance, whether you are talking about Italy, Belgium, Spain or Portugal, was not only often led by members of the local elites, but almost always linked to the Catholic Church (159). If there was one thing the Napoleonic regime had in common with the Revolution, it was a hatred of the Church and a desire to diminish the influence of clerics wherever possible. To this extent there is a direct link between the Enlightenment, the Revolution and the Napoleonic regime. The Enlightenment was elitist, arrogant and oppressive (5). Resistance to Napoleon was born of hatred to enlightened reform introduced by his administrators (3) mixed in, of course, with a good dose of taxation and conscription. Indeed, Broers argues there is a direct causal relationship between the degree of resistance and the degree of enlightened reform (113). Take, for example, the occasions when the state tried to muzzle the Church by banning processions and feast days — 'at few other moments did the gap between rulers and ruled appear so great' (113). Eventually, there was a 'gradual, qualified triumph of collaboration over resistance within the inner empire between 1800 and 1807' (125). The regime found support from minority groups — religious groups freed by the Concordat, Freemasons, republicans and enlightened reformers of the late eighteenth century — who had been persecuted under the *ancien régime*. This, however, was exactly what made the Napoleonic regime so tenuous; its supporters were often the weakest and most marginal sections of European society (130).

Robert Epstein's revision of the Franco-Austrian conflict of 1809 is also military history. Most of Epstein's book is a detailed account of Napoleon's last victorious conflict, the Wagram campaign. (For those who are unable to plough through the minutiae of battle, you might do well to go straight to the Introduction and Conclusion where the bulk of Epstein's findings are to be found.) Epstein attempts to place the Wagram campaign in the 'context of the evolution of warfare in the nineteenth century', (8) and in doing so draws three conclusions. First, the campaign signified a break in the pattern of the Napoleonic wars, so much so that the war of 1809 between Austria and France had 'more in common with the American Civil War and subsequent conflicts' than with the wars

that preceded it. Second, contrary to accepted belief, Napoleon did attempt to train his generals in his approach to warfare (49, 174–5). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Epstein argues that the nature of war had changed significantly by the time the Wagram campaign had begun. The Allied armies had begun to learn from their mistakes and to consequently introduce reforms along the French model. If the French revolutionary armies were never able to wage a decisive campaign before 1802 it was essentially because they were dispersed over several theatres of war and because there was no real co-ordination between those theatres. The French victories in 1805–7, on the other hand, were so resounding because Napoleon concentrated all his forces into one theatre of operations and worked towards a battle that would knock out the enemy in one blow. The fact that he was facing armies that had not changed considerably from the pre-revolutionary era meant that victory came all the more easily.

All of this changed, however, after the Third Coalition. The Russian army began to modernize from about 1806 on, as did the Prussian and Austrian armies, so that the campaign of 1809 between France and Austria was the first clash between two modernized forces. One of the major shortcomings of Napoleon in military terms was his failure to understand that a change had occurred (176). In other words, there was no real decline in the abilities of Napoleon as a general — Napoleon's actions in military terms were consistent — it was the context in which his actions took place that had changed. The mistakes he made after 1809 were simply magnified as the quality of the opposition improved (182).

Teachers of the Napoleonic era will no doubt be very grateful to Broers and Esdaile for providing excellent syntheses of the era. They are not only important from the point of view of their suitability for the classroom, they demonstrate that it is still possible to revisit familiar ground and arrive at fresh insights. The scholarly monographs provided by Simms on the one hand, and Tone on the other, are very different in their methodological approaches but they both tell us a great deal about the impact of the Napoleonic imperium on their respective areas of study. They contribute not only to an understanding of the complex mechanisms underpinning the period in which France dominated the Continent but will probably lead us to view Napoleon in a new light, less idolizing, more understanding. If the standard of these works is anything to go by, then those interested in the Napoleonic era from a non-military perspective have, at long last, a great deal to look forward to.

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