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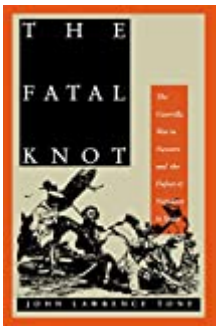

John Lawrence Tone. *The Fatal Knot: The Guerrilla War in Navarre.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994. viii + 239 pp. $34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-2169-5.

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Published on H-France (April, 1997)

John Tone's *The Fatal Knot: The Guerrilla War in Navarre* adds a great deal to our knowledge of Napoleon's 1808 invasion of Spain and the heroic Spanish guerrillas who resisted him. We know much about the prominent British and French campaigns in the Peninsular War (1808-1814) thanks to the work of many authors. However, the less well-known episodes in the war, including the activities and contributions of the guerrillas, have not received much attention largely because of the difficulties in trying to piece together the fragmentary evidence. From extensive use of archival material found in France and Spain, Tone has produced a work which fills a significant gap in our understanding of the Peninsular War.

The *Fatal Knot* is directed at the specialist, already familiar with the course and important turning points of the war and the personalities involved. From mainly a Spanish point of view, Tone ably analyzes the nature and structure of life in Navarre before the French invasion, the ebb and flow of guerrilla activity, the varied personalities and motivations of the guerrilla leaders, and the ultimate effect of the guerrilla resistance. It is a good mix of serious social history and narrative style usually associated with "traditional" history. The book's weakness is Tone's failure to demonstrate clearly what effect French policy had in motivating the guerrilla's opposition.

Tone builds his book from extensive use of Spanish archives, especially in Navarre, and the French military archives at the Chateau de Vincennes. He supplemented his archival material with a substantial bibliography of memoirs, first-hand accounts, and secondary works.

Organized into nine chapters, the first two chapters–two of the best in the book–analyze the demography, economy, and traditions of Navarre. Tone clearly identifies two different Navarres, the Monta~na and the Rebera. Appreciating the differences between these two regions is critical in understanding how and why the guerrillas fought the way they did. Most of the resistance came from the rugged, egalitarian, independently-minded, and relatively affluent mountain people. Although lacking industry, the Monta~na region of Navarre protected ancient political and economic privileges extracted from the Spanish monarchy. It thrived in an old fashioned but prosperous subsistence agricultural economy. Many Monta~na peasants supplemented their agricultural income by smuggling goods between Spain and France. In such a fashion, Tone demonstrates not only the availability of arms, but also the independent, resourceful nature of the people of the Monta~na. In contrast, Tone describes the Rebera region of Navarre as an area of market driven agriculture dominated by a few, wealthy families who operated large plantations. Consequently, differences in wealth are easy to see. Tone convincingly argues

that the French were able to dominate the Rebera by controlling the small landed elite in the area. Since there was no such concentration of political and economic power in the Monta~na, the French were unable to achieve similar success there.

The following six chapters explore the French invasion of Navarre and the course of the guerrilla war. In the most significant part of the book, Tone adds a layer of detail greatly needed by specialists in the field; he reveals the ebb and flow of guerrilla influence in the region. He identifies four distinct occasions in which the guerrilla movement almost collapsed from a combination of internal division and French pressure. Yet the guerrilla movement, often fragmented and criminal in the first two years of the war, evolved into a capable, disciplined, and effective force under the leadership of Francisco Espoz y Mina. By 1813, Mina led a force of over 7,000 guerrillas and succeeded in attacking strong French columns and isolated garrisons. Mina's force eventually blockaded Pamplona, the capital of Navarre, and almost singlehandedly drove French forces from Navarre when they could not obtain needed supplies, even after the French command sent out armed columns of several thousand men.

To cope with the guerrillas, Tone reveals that the French government sent in roughly four times Mina's numbers. When French troops arrived, Mina dissolved his army, dispersed his soldiers throughout the province, and waited for French troops to withdraw. Months of inactivity followed months of campaigning until massive numbers of French troops arrived again. Tone argues persuasively that the fighting in the Navarre, the time and place of which was most often chosen by Mina, and the constant diversion of troops from the main French armies hurt France's ability to win the war in Spain. In fact, Tone writes that in Navarre, "French losses including those wounded during the six years of fighting could not have been less than 50,000" (p. 177).

Tone's work confirms many unproven suppositions about the Peninsular War. Although it is well known that the guerrillas received a great deal of support from the Royal Navy, Tone reports that the British government also provided arms and supplies for the guerilla forces. Later in the war, the Royal Navy furnished Mina with siege guns which allowed him to attack and take entrenched French garrisons. Mina was thus able to reduce France's control of Navarre to the city of Pamplona. Tone also confirms that the nobles of the Junta in Cadiz, Spain's acting national government, had little control over the guerrillas and were slow to give them their deserved respect because of class fear and petty jealousies. Spanish nobles resented the guerrillas for their heroics, popularity, and effectiveness; ironically, they shared the French view of them as lawless bandits and adventurers.

Tone is weakest when he attempts to explain why the guerrillas took up arms. First of all, there is little attempt to explain French occupation policy in Navarre. Throughout, Tone implies that the French were there only to plunder the province and destroy the church. In one particularly ill-chosen generalization, Tone writes, "The French failure in Navarre (and in Spain generally) stemmed in part from the personal inadequacies of the French officers and soldiers. The men Napoleon sent to Spain between 1808 and 1814 were not inspired by any revolutionary impulse or ideal but the promise of booty. From the beginning, therefore, interventions in Spain went hand in hand with visions of plunder" (pp. 146-47). The campaign in Spain was different than any of Napoleon's other wars. Nowhere else did the French have to fight in hostile territory for as long as they did in Spain.

Many French and British authors, seconded by a few Spanish nationalists, claim the guerrillas fought to protect the church from the French. Tone convincingly shows that this was not the case. In fact, many clergy, especially in the larger metropolitan areas, eagerly collaborated with the French. The author also demonstrates that the Navaresse were not motivated by Spanish nationalism. While Tone proves that the Basque-dominated Navaresse were loyal Spaniards, it was not the nation of Spain which the guerrillas sought to protect. Rather, Mina and others wanted to defend their local privileges, tax exemptions, and ancient constitution. Fearing first that France would eliminate these privileges and then fearing that Napoleon would annex Navarre directly to France, the guerrillas fought to protect their lands from French taxation and to preserve the existence of Navarre as an autonomous region within Spain.

Tone's work on Navarre provides a much needed "case study" of guerrilla warfare, but his analysis leaves many broader questions about the nature of guerrilla warfare unanswered. Beyond a few generalizations, Tone does not adequately analyze French policy in Navarre. While he demonstrates very well that the Navaresse feared losing their special status within Spain, Tone could have drawn comparisons between the Navarre experience and those of other areas of Spain. For example, the author might have made his case stronger by ana-

lyzing the war-time situation of Navarre's eastern neighbors, Aragon and Catalonia. In those provinces, French General Louis-Gabriel Suchet pacified most of the countryside without the brutality normally associated with the French and he was relatively successful in attracting members of the Spanish nobility and bourgeoisie to serve in his government. In fact, Suchet was so successful that Napoleon awarded him a marshal's baton. Perhaps, in the future the author will take up these questions.

The Fatal Knot is a most welcomed addition to the history of the Napoleonic period and should be well received by traditional and social historians alike. Well organized and written, Tone has added greatly to our knowledge of the guerrilla war in Spain. Moreover, it raises many interesting questions about the motivations of the guerilla resistance, Napoleon's methods of governing conquered provinces, and the nature of the war in the Peninsula. Most important, Tone has personalized and portrayed the guerrilla war with detail unknown until now.

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Citation: Charles H. MacKay. Review of Tone, John Lawrence, *The Fatal Knot: The Guerrilla War in Navarre.* H-France, H-Net Reviews. April, 1997.

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