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Michael Broers, *Napoleon's Other War: Bandits, Rebels and their Pursuers in the Age of Revolution*. Oxford: Peter Lang Ltd., 2010. xi + 232 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography, and index. \$43.95 U.S. (cl.). ISBN 978-1-906165-11-6.

Reviewed by Frederick C. Schneid, High Point University.

One can always count on Michael Broers to provide insightful analysis to historical debate and move forward historical inquiry. The subject of his current book, *Napoleon's Other War*, examines the “bandit-rebel” of Europe and South America during the Age of Revolutions. This is perhaps Michael Broers’s most impressive literary achievement. The narrative flows and his ability to turn a phrase is impressive. Nonetheless, it falls short of his other works. Broers fully enters the realm of Napoleonic “resistance literature” with this publication, although this is not his first foray into this topic. His work on Napoleonic gendarmerie in Imperial Italy addressed such material fifteen years ago. With this book, Broers attempts to contribute to the debate dominated now by Charles Esdaile’s *Fighting Napoleon: Guerillas, Bandits and Adventurers in Spain* and his edited *Popular Resistance in the French Wars: Patriots, Partisans and Land Pirates*, as well as old works of historians Alan Forrest, Roger Dupuy, and Colin Lucas.[1]

Broers begins his narrative with an attempt to define “banditry.” This is no easy task, as he explains that the Revolutionary and Napoleonic regimes applied the term both to criminals and to those who rejected the ideological imperatives set forth by the respective governments. This conflation of criminals and rebels makes defining them in historical terms more difficult, since they often and frequently crossed the lines and became each other. Rebels became criminals to fund guerrilla war, and criminals acted against the authority *du jour*. The problem of identifying the true nature of banditry is further complicated by the romanticization of this bandit-rebel in local lore. Broers ably points out that the reputation of the bandit-rebel varied from one town to the next. One might be a hero in one village and brigand to the fellows down the road. In addition, Broers fully admits that he has his own heroes. The book’s focus is further complicated by the author’s tendency to depart from his definition or willingness to use the term flexibly in order to address individuals and regions that he wishes to discuss.

This book is divided into eight chapters, the first four address Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, followed by a discussion of bandits in the Napoleonic Empire. These chapters are the most extensively researched, but also are quite similar to Broers’s earlier work on the Gendarmerie in Imperial Italy. There is more on the bandits and rebels of Naples, but Broers provides nothing that Milton Finley has not already presented in his work, *The Most Monstrous of Wars: The Napoleonic Guerrilla War in Southern Italy, 1806-1811*, and this work does not appear in the bibliography.[2] The second half of the book explores Spain, the Balkans and South America and ends with a conclusion. Again, the content of the Spanish chapter reiterates what Esdaile and John Tone have already covered. Concerning South America, Broers seeks to extend the guerilla-bandit paradigm to the western hemisphere. While there is a clear connection between the Napoleonic Wars in Spain and the rebellions in Latin America, the subject is far too large to be adequately addressed in a single chapter.

Broers attempts to establish a historical unified field theory concerning the patterns of resistance. “[T]he ‘other war,’” he wrote, “was in great part, a series of local civil wars, and civil war is the highest expression of that very bandit trait, vendetta. Banditry was the practical glue that held the ‘other war’ together, that drove it on, and that made its manifestations...so remarkably similar all over the western world in these decades” (p. xv). Yet to accomplish this feat, at times he accepts and at others rejects his own definition of banditry, and quite often buys into the legend of the “bandit in memory.” Indeed, in a number of cases, prominent figures such as Andreas Hofer and Ali Pasha of Janina were not considered bandits by even the regimes that they opposed. Broers strays from his own definition and tries to force those who resisted or fought against their regimes for reasons that were not tied to ideological resistance. Andreas Hofer did not rebel against Napoleon, but King Maximilian Josef of Bavaria. Broers understands this, but simply considers his activities as anti-Napoleonic. Ali Pasha too, did not revolt against Sultan Selim III, and when he did challenge Mahmud II, it was not until 1822. The relative independence of Balkan pashas to act as they wanted was commonplace and, again, Broers acknowledges this, but continues with the narrative.

Broers inclusion of this Balkan prince as a bandit-rebel has numerous problems, as Ali Pasha acted as a legitimate regional potentate of the Ottoman Empire. By focusing on Ali Pasha, Broers misses perhaps the most successful of the rebellious Ottoman potentates, and one that is more properly a bandit-rebel, Mohammed Ali of Egypt. Like Ali Pasha, Mohammed Ali was also Albanian and an officer in the Ottoman Army who accompanied Abercromby’s expedition to Egypt in 1801. By 1808, Mohammed Ali had consolidated his power and in the midst of the upheavals in Istanbul that year, gained the blessing of the new Sultan, Mahmud II, to be governor of Egypt.

Broer’s choice of non-French and Italian subjects of the French Empire is quite curious. Although he examines Hofer, Broers completely ignores resistance in Napoleonic Germany and this leads this reviewer to ask why Major von Schill or Dornberg or Katte’s insurrections of 1809 are not included? For that matter, according to Esdaile (and a fact accepted by Broers), many Spanish guerrilla leaders were more often military men who took to the hills to fight the French. This was the case with the Germans mentioned above, and can be applied equally to the very successful Russian partisan bands commanded by Denis Davydov in 1812. Yet, there is no discussion of bandit-rebels in Russia either.

The problem then, is not the information, the narrative, or the sources. Each chapter taken on its own terms is brilliantly written and provides a great deal of information for the student. The issue, however, is Broers’s flexible definition of bandit-rebel and his choices of subject once he moves away from the discussion of France, Italy and Spain. The inclusion of Spanish America is appropriate, but it appears out of place, when Europe is not fully covered. The book perhaps should have been another 100 pages.

In all, *Napoleon’s Other War*, is a “think-piece” that synthesizes some of the literature on resistance in the Revolutionary-Napoleonic Era. Throughout the text, Broers has dialogue with Eric Hobsbawm and Richard Cobb, but the reader is only permitted a partial view of the discussion. This is very much then, an exploratory essay, which is only partially complete. Michael Broers should continue this intellectual journey and either broaden his definitions, or narrow his focus.

## NOTES

[1] Charles Esdaile, *Fighting Napoleon: Guerillas, Bandits and Adventurers in Spain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); Charles Esdaile, ed., *Popular Resistance in the French Wars:*

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*Patriots, Partisans and Land Pirates* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Alan Forrest, *Déserteurs et Insoumis sous la Révolution et l'Empire* (Paris: Perrin, 1988); Roger Dupuy, *De la Révolution à la Chouannerie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988); and Colin Lucas, "Résistance populaires à la Révolution dans le Sud-Est," in Claude Langlois (ed.), *Mouvements populaires et Conscience sociale (XVI-XVII siècles)* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), pp.117-135.

[2] Milton Finley, *The Most Monstrous of Wars: The Napoleonic Guerrilla War in Southern Italy, 1806-1811* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

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