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Response to Charles J. Esdaile review of Michael V. Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany, the Franco-Prussian War of 1813, I: the War of Liberation, Spring 1813*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. xii + 488 pp. Preface, maps, figures, notes, bibliography and index. £24.99 (hb). ISBN: 978-1-107-08051-5 and M.V. Leggiere, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany, the Franco-Prussian War of 1813, II: the Defeat of Napoleon*. Cambridge University Press, 2015. xiv + 887 pp. Preface, maps, tables, figures, notes, bibliography and index. £29.99 (hb). ISBN: 978-1-107-08054-6.

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I want to thank Professor Esdaile for his thoughtful review. Who could not be pleased at being labeled “the leading expert on the subject” of the *Befreiungskrieg*, or having his work called “a considerable personal achievement” and his bibliography characterized as “overwhelming?” I am grateful for Professor Esdaile’s words of praise but there, sadly, my agreement with his assessment ends. Let me begin by addressing Professor Esdaile’s comments regarding the length of the work. I am extremely grateful to Michael Watson and Cambridge University Press for allowing me to treat the Spring and Fall Campaigns of 1813 in separate volumes; not much different than the way scholars treat the campaigns of the World Wars or the US Civil War. The latitude afforded me by CUP is a victory for all scholars given the current trend in academic publishing to downsize and appeal more to the popular audience. Size does not correspond to accessibility.

Conversely, while Professor Esdaile declares that the work is too long and that two volumes should have been only one, he stands by his criticism of the work for not embracing the tenets of the “new” military history. A vast expansion in breadth and a 50 percent reduction in length would have resulted in a volume packed with the same vague generalizations on the campaigns and the era that have dominated the scholarship for far too long. And, finally, after urging the inclusion of enough new and complex material to warrant another full volume, Professor Esdaile ends his review by reminding us that “less is more.” Whether a reader wants to read all of it or not is up to the reader; most readers appreciate and profit from detail. Yet the detail is there for a reason. No English-language work has ever examined the campaigns carefully enough to illustrate how and why the Allies won and Napoleon lost. The last work that dealt in detail—and not always accurately—with the military events of 1813 was F. L. Petre’s *Napoleon’s Last Campaign in Germany, 1813*, published over 100 years in 1912.

Ignoring Petre’s book, Professor Esdaile mentions the chapter in David Chandler’s *Campaigns of Napoleon* as “the only readily available source that treats it [the German campaign of 1813] in anything more than a few paragraphs.” While true, Chandler’s chapter is fraught with inaccuracies and is based mainly on the French perspective. Without question Professor Chandler was a great military historian, but he did not walk the fields of Lützen, Bautzen, Großbeeren, Dennewitz, and the Katzbach when he did his research. How useful is reading for pleasure when the story is one-dimensional, plagued by inaccuracies, and filled with vague generalizations?

I find Professor Esdaile's charge of viewing "the history of Prussia between 1807 and 1813 as deterministic" quite surprising and completely inaccurate. Moreover, his statements fall short of my efforts to demonstrate how the Prussians, caught between France and Russia, carefully considered all options available to them. I make it clear that the Prussians did indeed seek better relations with Napoleon. Although King Frederick William III did not believe Napoleon would lose in Russia, he attempted to leverage the best deal possible from either Napoleon or Alexander in 1811. His decision to support Napoleon was a forced necessity, but not an affirmation of Napoleon's quest for world monarchy or a sign of Franco-Prussian amity. Consequently, I find it surprising that Professor Esdaile would expect open-mindedness by a king who had been humiliated by Napoleon on countless occasions. What self-respecting monarch would accept the results of Tilsit and not want to at least get back what had been lost?

After Napoleon's failure in Russia, the Prussians hoped to mediate between France and Russia. Frederick William again engaged in diplomatic maneuvering that led to double-dealing and desperation. Napoleon's refusal to offer the Prussians an attractive alliance package strengthened the voices of the pro-Russian party but Alexander's designs on Poland gave equal strength to the pro-French party. After failing to gain an advantageous diplomatic settlement with either France or Russia, Frederick William found himself forced to decide between France and Russia. But before he could render a decision, the Prussian army took matters in its own hands when General Yorck signed the Convention of Tauroggen and the resurrected Prussian military establishment along with the East Prussian provincial government forced a war on the king. I am grateful that Professor Esdaile mentions my 2002 work *Napoleon and Berlin* in his review. Many of his most egregious criticisms of *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany* are addressed in this earlier work and my position on the conclusions made in that book has not changed. For the sake of space, I did not reiterate them in the work currently under review, which Professor Esdaile finds to be too long as it stands. My findings in both *Napoleon and Berlin* (as well as *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*) pose a serious challenge to his claim that my view of Prussia between 1807 and 1813 is "deterministic."

Moreover, both works also call into question Professor Esdaile's insistence that the *Landwehr* "suffered enormously from desertion." Moreover, "desertion" is too strong a word. While some *Landwehr* did indeed desert, just like soldiers in any army of the period, straggling and the search for food proved to be greater hindrances to military discipline than did desertion. For some time, revisionist Napoleonic scholars have echoed Professor Esdaile's sentiments that the soldiers and militia who fought in 1813 had no real issue with the French and had no quantifiable Prussian patriotism or German nationalism. They of course want to make it very clear that the war in no way resembled the manner that the German nationalists and romantics of the nineteenth-century later portrayed the struggle. Fair enough, but they take it too far. While German nationalism played little to no role as a motivating factor among the rank and file, anger over the upheaval caused by the French occupation was present and a favorable sentiment for king and country did indeed exist.

In *Revisiting Prussia's Wars Against Napoleon*, Karen Hagemann affirms that "between 1806 and 1812, regional patriotism and loyalty to the Prussian king were expressed only on a few extraordinary occasions." However, after the *Grande Armée* desolated East Prussia in preparation for the invasion of Russia, Hagemann contends that "public opinion began to change" and that by December 1812 "the negative experiences with French domination had created an anti-French mood, which, now that the defeat of the French finally seemed possible, was transformed into a willingness to fight for liberation from French domination." "In February 1813," continues Hagemann, "public outrage reached the boiling point. The mood was fired not just by the advance of the Russian army... but also by the king's appeal of 3 February to form volunteer units and the resolution of the diet (*Landtag*) of the East Prussian estates to establish a provincial militia [*Landwehr*] and arm the population of its territory."¹ And, "the stirring up of the emotions of newly recruited militiamen that was the aim of so much war propaganda in 1813 appears to have been more effective than many leading Prussian politicians and

generals may have wished. The patriotic-national propaganda gave them words for their often devastating experiences with the French since 1806. It legitimated hatred of the enemy and his 'destruction,' which was useful for rousing the fighting spirit and war support by the population in 1813."^[2]

As evidence, Hagemann cites the journal of Karl August Köhler, a chaplain in a *Landwehr* brigade attached to the Prussian IV Corps, which mainly saw action defending Berlin. Three days after the 23 August victories at Großbeeren and Blankenfelde just a few miles south of Berlin, Köhler noted how the *Landwehr* had attacked the French with the rifle butt and bayonet in such a fury that they appeared not to be men, but tigers. Throughout the campaign, Köhler notes how the soldiers' hatred of the French only increased.^[3] Professor Esdaile maintains that the majority of the volunteers in Lützow's *Freikorps* were Silesian weavers "fighting Napoleon not so much because they hated him, but because they had no other means of gaining their daily bread." While only 131 of 3,847 members of the Lützow's *Freikorps* were actually weavers and seventeen percent were from Silesia, in light of Hagemann's findings, cannot the same be said of the *Freikorps*—that their hatred of the French motivated them?^[4]

Thus, I question the evidence upon which the revisionists base their conclusions that anti-French feelings and Prussian patriotism were not motivating factors among the Prussian troops: line, militia, and volunteers. We have few letters from the common soldier to make a sound argument but even if we had thousands of letters at our disposal, what statements would convince us that the Prussians 1) harbored ill-will toward Napoleon and the French and 2) felt some patriotic connection to king and country? I wonder how many GIs during the Second World War wrote home to explain to family and friends just how much they hated Hitler?^[5]

To be clear, *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany* certainly addresses the issue of desertion among the *Landwehr*. In his critique, Professor Esdaile wants to link desertion with social unrest, which he claims was afflicting "many areas of Prussia." What exactly constitutes "social unrest?" Social hardship and "economic decline" are not the same as "social unrest." Hatred of the current conditions, of the social hardships, and of "economic decline," which was clearly identified as being caused by the oppression of the French occupation, was enough to attract recruits to the colors. Nowhere does the work claim that "a patriotism-fueled rush to the colors" occurred in Prussia. I note that in regard to a people's war, enthusiasm and popular support did vary greatly.

In response to Professor Esdaile's admonitions that I failed to approach the subject of a people's war with a "critical eye," I must point out that while the struggle certainly did not end as a people's war, it certainly started as one. Thomas Nipperdey maintains that in the "To My People" proclamation of 17 March 1813, Frederick William made it very clear in his appeal to the people's willingness to make sacrifices that the struggle was to be a patriotic war, a people's war and this, according to Nipperdey, "was something completely new."^[6] Nipperdey wrote that "patriotic enthusiasm for a fight for liberation and freedom nonetheless took a special hold on the educated classes and the youth, extending to the *Landwehr* and the army in the field as well. ... The war acquired something of the character of a nationalist and people's war."^[7] And, "the spirit of sacrifice among the citizens was considerable: 6.5 million *thalers* were collected in the impoverished countryside [which Professor Esdaile maintains was experiencing considerable unrest in many areas]: 'I gave gold for iron' became the motto.

In Prussia, then, the war--leaving aside the exaggeration of later legend--had aspects of a popular uprising, even if one were to judge it with critical sobriety; the people appeared to perceive it as their war. Prussian-German patriotism forced its way into the public mind...."^[8] Christopher Clark noted that "on 17 March the king issued the famous address 'To My people' ... and called upon his people to rise up, province by province, against the French."^[9] After explaining the limits of the patriotic enthusiasm of the Prussian population, Clark concludes that "the social constituency for patriotic activism had expanded greatly since the days of the Seven Years War, but it remained a predominantly

urban phenomenon. Within these limitations, the Prussian public responded on an unprecedented scale to the government's call for help." [10] Karen Hagemann reports that of the 245,000 men in the Prussian field army in early August 1813, 46 percent were *Landwehr* and 8 percent volunteers. She concludes that "the rapid and relatively successful mobilization of Prussian men for the volunteer units and the militia, as well as the rest of society for the various forms of support necessary for the war effort, would have been impossible without the broad and intensive attempts to mobilize public opinion. Coercion by the state and the army was not enough. They urgently needed to win public support in 1813. Thus, in the propaganda of the time, the term people's war (*Volkskrieg*) was one of the most frequently invoked *Pathosformeln* (pathos formulas), or highly emotional national slogans. It represented the idea of a war based on universal conscription and supported by the entire population, whose success derived from the unity between princes, their governments, the army and the subjects of the Prussian and German nation." [11]

Rudolf Ibbeken, in *Preußen 1807-1813*, cautions that "the conclusions based on the calculations of our statistical research alone cannot explain the nature of the voluntary movement. The spirit of the age, the general opinion and mood of people is essential to the interpretation of even the most objective statistics." [12] In *Germany: The Long Road West*, Heinrich August Winkler asserts that "the patriotism preached in Prussian churches during the wars of liberation did not generally refer to 'Germany', but only to Prussia. Love of the Prussian, not German *Vaterland* was the sentiment that brought women together at that time in societies for the public welfare and in numerous associations for the care of the poor, sick, and wounded..." [13] While Frederick William certainly did not want "crowds of armed civilians taking to the fields and woods," he wanted in the very least for the mobilization to have a demotic quality and for the war to be based on a new spirit of self-sacrifice from all of his subjects. As Winkler concludes: "Prussian soldiers went to war '*Mit Gott für König und Vaterland* [with God for King and Fatherland]'" The *Vaterland* was embodied in King Frederick William III (who had invented the soldiers' rallying cry himself) and Queen Louise (who died in 1810), as well as in the Great Elector and Frederick the Great..." [14] Christopher Clark in particular has much to say about the role of women in this people's war that might surprise the revisionists.

Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany continues to investigate Gordon Craig's thesis by exploring the role played by the Prussians in the main theater of war. Craig presented his lecture, "Problems of Coalition Warfare: The Military Alliance Against Napoleon, 1813-1814," in 1965 and not "the immediate post-Second-World-War era." According to Craig, Prussia's foremost commanders labored to fight a different kind of war than did their Russian, Austrian, and Swedish allies. Christopher Clark agrees that "the Prussians played the crucial role in the campaign of 1813. Indeed, they were consistently the most active and aggressive element within the composite allied command. ... Whereas the Austrian command approached the struggle with Napoleon in the spirit of an eighteenth-century cabinet war, in which the purpose of military victories is to secure acceptable peace terms, the Prussian war-makers aimed at a more ambitious objective: the destruction of Napoleon's forces and of his capacity for making war. This was the outlook that would later be distilled in Clausewitz's *On War*." [15] This idea supports Craig's assertion that the Prussian military establishment, at times indifferent to the political restraints of a coalition, wanted to wage an almost fanatical holy war against the French.

In this sense, and thus in *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany*, I am examining the role of the Prussian army's leadership and evaluating its role against the claims made by Craig and Clark. Thus, the Prussian military establishment in this sense is not the rank and file but Blücher, Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, Yorck, Bülow, Kleist, Boyen, Grolman, Müffling, and by extension Hardenberg and Frederick William. I readily admit that the study of the men who made the decisions in this great conflict is just as much anathema to the "new" military historians as is campaign history. Nevertheless, I stand by my assertion that to the Prussian commanders and officers, the struggle with Napoleon was an ideological "fight against evil, a struggle against the anti-Christ and his successors."

When viewed through the lenses of nationalist writings by Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, and Ernst Moritz Arndt such a statement is not mere hyperbole. Fichte repeatedly invoked the Reformation and its accompanying wars as the very analogy of the present struggle with Napoleon and the French. “Just as Luther had fought against the clerical world domination of the Roman church, so Fichte fought against the rising secular world monarchy of Napoleon.”[16] Jahn famously demonized everything French, including the very language, which the native Brandenburger claimed to be “enthraling Germany’s men, seducing its youth, and dishonoring its women.” Arndt’s German nationalism and “holy madness of hatred against the French” assumed a “pseudo-religious character.”[17] Responding to the French conquest of 1806, Arndt’s *“Blick Vorwärts”* (January 1807) summoned the German people to seize the “bloody sword of vengeance—this is the religion of our time. Through this belief you must be united in harmony and strong, conquering hell and the devil. ... This is the highest religion: to conquer or die for justice and truth, to conquer or die for justice and truth, to conquer or die for the holy cause of humanity, which is being destroyed by tyranny....”[18] His 1813 *Katechismus für den Deutschen Kriegs- und Wehrmann* employed apocalyptic, antiquated language in the form of Luther’s translation of the Book of Revelation: “And a monster has been born and a bloodstained horror has arisen. And his name is Napoleon Bonaparte, a name of misery, a name of woe, a name that is cursed by widows and orphans, a name that the poor wretches will cry out when they are judges. ... Arise, you peoples! Slay him, for he is accursed of me; destroy him, for he is a destroyer of freedom and right.”[19] It is well documented that most of Prussia’s high-ranking officers like Gneisenau, Blücher, and Scharnhorst were ardent disciples of these early German nationalists. The manner in which they conducted their operations in the Spring and Fall Campaigns of 1813 as described in *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany* strongly supports the above assertion that Craig’s statements were not exaggerations.

Although Professor Esdaile claims that my work is at least 100 years behind the times, I refuse to seek the pardon of the practitioners of the “new” military history for writing these books, which clearly state in the Introduction that their goal is to “reconstruct the principal campaigns and operations in Germany” and examine “the complex diplomacy that led to the formation of the Sixth Coalition.” My goal was to provide an operational analysis of a decisive Napoleonic “war” in Germany. War is three-dimensional. It consists of tactics, operations, and strategy/grand strategy. Professor Esdaile wishes for more discussion of political maneuvering, social conflict within Prussia, the plight of Silesian weavers, samplings of the public mood, etc. Although these are certainly worthy topics, they do not fit into the construct of an operational-level analysis that is intended to enlighten discussions of military art and science. With all due respect to the “new” military historians, does the socio-cultural approach to the study of war necessitate the absolute exclusion of the “old” military history?

I interpret this seeming intolerance to a sad yet simple conclusion that I assume has been reached by the “new” military historians: operational and diplomatic studies no longer have anything important to add to the conversation. Based on what is missing from Professor Esdaile’s review in terms of a discussion of my interpretation and analysis of the war on the operational level, I can reach no other conclusion. “These two volumes could very easily have been written a century ago,” Professor Esdaile writes. My first response to such policing is that this “condemnation” is not always a bad thing. Upon deeper reflection, I will say that most of the histories written 100 years ago did not include extensive archival research, were usually one-sided in coverage/scope, and were charged by *fin de siècle* nationalism. The strength of *Napoleon and the Struggle for Germany* is the extensive archival study, the equal coverage afforded to the belligerents, and the fusion of operational and diplomatic studies. This is true of Professor Esdaile’s own work on the Peninsular War, many of which can likewise be classified as belonging to a bygone age. To conclude, Professor Esdaile wishes that I had written different books from the ones I wrote. I respond with the same simple admonition I give to my graduate students: “review the book that was written, not the book you wish had been written.”

NOTES

- [1] Karen Hagemann, *Revisiting Prussia's Wars Against Napoleon* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 58-60
- [2] Hagemann, *Revisiting Prussia's Wars Against Napoleon*, p. 185
- [3] Karl August Köhler, 1813-1814, *Tagebuchblätter eines Feldgeistlichen, des Dr. K. A. Köhler, Prediger der Brigade des Generalmajors Dobschütz*, ed. Kadettenhauspfarrer Jäkel (Berlin: E. Runge, 1912), p. 31.
- [4] Rudolf Ibbeken, *Preußen 1807-1813: Staat und Volk als Idee und in Wirklichkeit* (Köln und Berlin: G. Grotesche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1970), p. 395.
- [5] "What has been preserved in letters and diaries of contemporaries, is primarily the experiences of individual educated persons who best understood the feelings and actions of their state. Even these sources already reveal much of a general movement of the Prussian people than one could assume based on the official accounts of the war volunteers of 1813. But everything that the contemporaries wrote about in regard to the popular uprising of the people is so strongly influenced by the momentum of the great experience that in contrast only a return to the objective statistics of the total movement can be beneficial." Ibbeken, *Preußen 1807-1813*, pp. 404-405.
- [6] Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck*, p. 68.
- [7] Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck*, p. 42.
- [8] Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck*, p. 68.
- [9] Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, p. 363.
- [10] Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, p. 374.
- [11] Hagemann, *Revisiting Prussia's Wars Against Napoleon*, pp. 63-64. Thus, Hagemann refutes Hans Kohn's belief that "undoubtedly much national enthusiasm, resentment against the foreigners, and desire for vengeance existed among the educated classes, but the masses were hardly touched by these sentiments." Hans Kohn, *Prelude to Nation-States: The French and German Experience, 1789-1815* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 284.
- [12] Ibbeken, *Preußen 1807-1813*, p. 395.
- [13] Heinrich August Winkler, *Germany: The Long Road West* (New York: Oxford University, 2000), v. 1, p. 62.
- [14] Winkler, *Germany*, v. 1, p. 62.
- [15] Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, pp. 371-72.
- [16] Winkler, *Germany*, v. 1, p. 53.
- [17] Winkler, *Germany*, v. 1, p. 57.
- [18] Heinrich Meisner und Robert Geerds, eds., *Ernst Moritz Arndts ausgewählte Werke in sechzehn Bänden* (Leipzig: Max Hesses Verlag, 1908), v. 10, pp. 84-85.

[19] Ernst Moritz Arndt, *Katechismus für den deutschen Kriegs- und Wehrmann; die deutsche Wehrmannschaft* (Leipzig, 1813), pp. 19-20.

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