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Historia del levantamiento, guerra y revolución de España
de Conde de Toreno, prólogo de R. Hocquellet, Urgoiti Editores, Pamplona, 2008, CXLI + 1380 páginas

In January 2009 the world of Napoleonic scholarship lost one of France's leading experts on Peninsular-War Spain in the person of Richard Hocquellet. The victim of a tragic accident, Hocquellet was youthful, vigorous and a great scholar –his first and, alas, only monograph, *Résistance et révolution durant l'occupation napoléonienne*, received much acclaim when it appeared in 2001– and the work currently under review must therefore constitute his monument. As such it is at least a worthy one. First published in 1835-37, Toreno's history of Spain's struggle against Napoleon remains the first port of call for any scholar interested in the subject, but the only version that has hitherto been generally available outside research libraries is the edition published under the aegis of the Biblioteca de Autores Españoles in 1953. Badly printed on poor-quality paper and supported only by a biography of Toreno written some sixty years before, this is at the very least difficult to use, and it was therefore a great relief to see the publication of a modern edition accompanied both by a 150-page introductory essay and a detailed index.

Born in 1786, the Conde de Toreno was a scion of one of the leading families of the aristocracy of Asturias. Resident in Madrid in 1808, he witnessed the famous rising of the Dos de Mayo at first hand, and immediately fled to his native province, where he immediately became involved in preparations for an uprising against the invaders. Selected by the insurgent authorities as a suitable ambassador, he was then dispatched to London to proclaim the news of the Spanish insurrection and seek help from the British government. Whilst in England he inevitably came into contact with the deeply hispanophile Whig grandee, Lord Holland, and, already conversant with reformist thinking in Spain, he therefore returned to Asturias in November 1808 committed to the idea that the war with France both required and constituted an ideal opportunity for a radical remodelling of Spain's society and institutions. Confirmed in this belief by the violent overthrow of the provincial junta that had been formed in Asturias by a military coup headed by the deeply legitimist Marqués de la Romana, in the autumn of 1809 he travelled to Seville –the then seat of the provisional government that had been formed in the wake of the uprising– with various other Asturian politicians to petition for redress, and in consequence was in January 1810 caught up in the military disasters that saw the government overthrown, and a new régime established in Cádiz. Famously, there followed the establishment of a national assembly –the famous *cortes* of Cádiz– Toreno being elected as one of the members for Asturias. Some eighteen months later Spain had her first modern constitution, the count having in the process emerged as one of the chief figures in the revolutionary camp that had forced through the dramatic reforms which the new document embodied. Forced to flee to London with the return of Ferdinand VII in 1814, he spent most of the rest of his life in exile, returning to Spain only for brief periods thereafter (albeit ones of considerable political prominence: in 1835, indeed, he served briefly as prime minister).

Such, then, was the man who wrote what remains the greatest narrative history that Spain has ever produced of the so-called 'War of Independence'. Immensely detailed, anxious to take in both battles and political developments (something that is very important, for the emergence, say, of the *cortes* of Cádiz cannot be understood except in the context of the cataclysmic military defeats of the winter of 1809-1810) and peppered with sharp pen-portraits of many of the leading figures of the era, Toreno's work is simply indispensable. That said, like his English equivalent, Napier, the author is not always a reliable guide to events: ever anxious to legitimise the work of the *cortes*, Toreno is in consequence as determined to emphasise the role of the Spanish people in the defeat of Napoleon as Napier is anxious to extol that of the British army. It is therefore advisable to read his work alongside that of the contemporaneous *Histoire de la révolution de Espagne et Portugal ainsi que de la guerre qui en résulte*, a three-volume history of the conflict written by a Prussian officer who had fled to Spain in 1809 and taken service with the Spanish army, but, for all that, not to read him at all is simply unthinkable. At the same time, it has to be said that, working in exile as he was, Toreno was much better placed than many other Spaniards to take account

of non-Spanish views of the war, the fact being that his work takes a much broader view of its subject than many of its competitors.

Hocquellet, then, is greatly to be thanked and congratulated by the historical community, and all the more so as his introductory essay. How sad it is, then, that he is no longer with us. *Requiescat in pacem.*