Crown magistrates in the popular anti-French revolts.
The Ferragudo uprising of 1808

Teresa Fonseca

Abstract

This paper examines the question of the popular anti-French revolts of 1808 during the final stages of the occupation of Portuguese territory by Napoleon’s troops, which had invaded the country in November 1807 following its failure to enforce the continental blockade. First, we situate the uprisings within the Iberian context, and then we focus on the specific case of the revolt by the people of the fishing village of Ferragudo. We seek to gauge their motivations and characteristics, and place the event within the framework of resistance against the French occupation and the treatment meted out to supposed collaborators and sympathizers. In a detailed analysis of the case of the juíz de fora of Lagoa, we seek to explain how Crown magistrates were among the socio-professional groups in Portugal who suffered most from the wave of persecution.

Keywords

Algarve; French invasion; popular revolts; Frenchified; Crown magistrates

1 This study is based on a paper presented at the following meeting: Congresso Histórico Olhão, o Algarve & Portugal no Tempo das Invasões Francesas, Olhão, 14-16 November 2008.

2 CIDEHUS – University of Évora, Portugal. E-mail: tefonseca@hotmail.com

Versão integral disponível em digitalis.uc.pt
1. Introduction

The atrocities perpetrated by the French during their occupation of the Iberian Peninsula and the popular revolts that this violent treatment of the Portuguese population gave rise to were described in the numerous accounts produced by contemporary commentators from Portugal and Spain, as well as by authors from the rest of Europe—in particular France (Alegria, 2008; Assis, 2008) and England—who were based in Portugal or Spain for military or other reasons. The value of such testimonies is of course limited by the fact that they were produced in an emotionally charged and confused atmosphere and, because of this, they obviously lack the necessary sense of proportion that only the passage of time can bring. Nevertheless, the abundance of information and descriptive details means that, over time, these sources have come to be regarded as crucial and cannot be ignored in the study of the era in question.

Of particular note in this context are works such as História geral da invasão dos franceses em Portugal e da restauração deste reino [A general history of the invasion of Portugal by the French and the restoration of this kingdom], first published between 1810 and 1811, and republished in 1984 and 2008. This is a work of great importance on the subject of the French occupation and the Portuguese resistance to the invaders, in which the author, José Acúrcio das Neves, “a bitter enemy” of Napoleon (Vicente, 345), also deals with various instances of support lent to the Portuguese insurrection by rebels in Spain, particularly in the border regions.

Simão José de Luz Soriano also devoted a volume of his monumental work, História da guerra civil e do estabelecimento do governo parlamentar em Portugal [A history of the civil war and the establishment of parliamentary government in Portugal], published in the second half of the nineteenth century, to the Peninsular War, offering detailed descriptions of the uprisings against the occupying forces and their links with the Spanish insurrections.

The topic has attracted the renewed attention of historiographers since the late 1970s. Vasco Pulido Valente was one of the first of these (Valente 1979, 7-48), followed in 1985 by Isabel Nobre Vargues, who published a huge bibliography of the works written on the insurrections and revolts that took place in Portugal in the first half of the nineteenth century, including those directed against the French occupation and the national uprising of 1808. Some of these works were produced and published at the time when these events

---

3 Many such accounts are referred to in Valente 1979, Araújo 1985, and Moliner de Prada 2008, to mention only a few authors who refer to the greatest number of sources of this type.