

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S COMMAND OF THE SPANISH ARMY
IN THE PENINSULAR WAR

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Military History

by

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ABSTRACT

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S COMMAND OF THE SPANISH ARMY IN THE PENINSULAR WAR, Major Timothy Martin, 164 pages

In the post-World War 2 era of limited warfare, coalition operations have become the norm. The building and employment of these coalitions is complex, but hardly a new issue. Following the occupation of Spain by the French in 1808 and the crushing defeats of the Spanish army thereafter, the British intervened in the Peninsula to maintain Portuguese sovereignty. Because of the limited Anglo-Portuguese manpower, when the military objective changed to driving the French from Spain a coalition with the Spanish government and employment of Spanish troops became necessary to match French strength. This paper examines the political jockeying and contentious issues surrounding Wellington being named the commander of the Spanish army in the fall of 1812 and the challenges in employing and rebuilding the Spanish effectiveness to employ them as part of the allied force.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The French invasion of the Iberian Peninsula brought about the complete collapse of the Spanish government and some of the most disastrous defeats ever faced by the Spanish military. Despite the seeming impossibility of success, many resisted the French occupation with tenacity and violence. The longstanding British relationship with Portugal meant that British intervention in the region was likely inevitable but this did not alleviate the difficulties between Spain and Britain which had, in recent years, alternated between armed conflict and tense limited alliances. Through political maneuvering and outright success Arthur Wellesley, the 1st Duke of Wellington would become the commander for the allied forces of Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom within the Iberian Peninsula and he was tasked with organization and employment of a coalition of regular and irregular forces against a determined enemy.¹ In doing so he was forced to engage with conventional military leaders, irregular force leaders and policy makers within the nations of both Spain and Portugal. By reviewing this historical case study we can begin to understand the complex dynamics that exist within the framework of a multinational coalition, notably the human dimension aspects of personality and leadership, and the policy decisions that drove military success and apply them to our future endeavors with multinational military partners.

¹ Arthur Wellesley would be elevated to the social rank of Viscount following the battle of Talavera, and elevated to the rank of Duke following Vitoria in 1813.

The British foray into multinational operations against the French during the Peninsular War is a fascinating example of the frictions that occur between nations fighting with a commonality of objectives but vastly different approaches towards achieving success. In focusing the study between 1812 and 1813 we see the issues that the Wellington faced magnified, tumultuous relationships with the host nation, conflicting guidance from the Horse Guards and the Secretary for War and the Colonies, poorly trained and equipped partner armies, the difficulty in creating a unity of command exacerbated by revolutionary politics all with a background of a dangerous and determined enemy force bent on retaining territory and pushing back the allied offensive. In accepting the mantle of the commander in chief of Spanish forces in January of 1813, Wellington became the commander of the armies of three nations in the Peninsula. Wellington accepted the daunting challenge of unifying disparate command structures of Spain and Britain, modernizing and disciplining a challenged host nation force and employing them against a near peerless fighting force of veteran French soldiers. Whether it be because of a strictly pragmatic understanding that only a unified force could defeat the French threat or a genuine desire (altruistic or political) to lead the men of Spain, in a short time span Wellesley was transformed from the commander of British forces to the commander of allied forces. In understanding his success or failure, his methodology and motivations, as well as the motivations of the governments and soldiers that shaped the environment around him we can begin to understand the sheer complexity of situations that face combatant commanders to this day.

To examine this situation, the primary research question of this thesis is: How did the Duke of Wellington attempt to form an Anglo-Spanish multinational coalition and employ them effectively in land operations in the Iberian Peninsula in 1812 and 1813?

Additionally, as a secondary research questions:

How did Wellington leverage relationships and policy with the governments of Spain to achieve his goal?

How did Wellington manage multinational friction between Britain and Spain? What were the major points of contention that may have hindered coalition building?

How did Wellington organize his command structure with respect to his subordinate Spanish commanders? Was his methodology effective?

What were the other determinate factors that contributed to the outcome of the coalition forces success or failure? How did Wellesley utilize his authority to magnify or mitigate their effects positively or negatively?

A large amount of primary and secondary sources aid in the attempt to answer the research questions posed above, and provide understanding of the complexities surrounding the situation in the Peninsula between 1808 and 1814. Lieutenant Colonel Gurwood's compilation of the dispatches and correspondence of Wellington in *The Dispatches of the Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington K.G. During his various Campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, the Low Countries and France from 1799-1815* are instrumental in any examination of the situation in Spain and Portugal. Sir Charles Oman in his *History of the Peninsular War* series provides the most comprehensive overview of tactical operations in the Peninsula and the strategic context behind them. No other source provides a greater level of detail in regards to troop

movements, maneuver, the operational strength of the belligerents, and the decisions of the battlefield commanders. Although Oman discusses Wellington's initial requests from the Spanish government, he relegates most of the subsequent interactions towards the failings that had a direct effect on Wellington's operations, namely the supply of food and the capability of the Spanish army, both of which had a direct effect on the campaigns of 1813. Oman does not go into detail regarding the Spanish government at length, relegating most of that discussion as unnecessary.

Similarly, Sir William Napier in his *English Battles and Sieges on the Peninsula* provided great firsthand and secondhand accounting of the campaigns of Talavera, Vitoria, and the Pyrenees, but writing as a contemporary to Wellington placed most of the failure of the Spanish army in the hands of an incompetent Spanish government without providing any context for the reasons behind its incompetence. This could be the result of a desire to show Wellington's accomplishments as even greater than they were as he needed to overcome such ineptitude, or it could be to minimize the British government's role in the collapse of the Spanish government and Spanish economy, both of which contributed directly to the Spanish army's effectiveness. Regardless, Napier fills many gaps in understanding the major campaigns of the war.

J. W. Fortescue's *A History of the British Army* falls into a similar category. The work provides an incredible level of detail regarding the British campaigns in the Peninsula, and fills in some detail missing from the other second hand accounts of the British campaigns, but refrains from offering a great deal of insight regarding the contributions of the Spanish government or the causes behind their inability to sustain the

Spanish army. Much is relegated to an oversimplification of their ineptitude in favor of focusing instead on the tactical actions of the British.

Charles Esdaile's works *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War* and *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army* fill in the gaps in understanding missing from the two sources above. Both provide a holistic view on the Spanish government, Spanish society and the Spanish army from a distinctly Spanish perspective. The level of detail that Esdaile provides surrounding the interplay between the Spanish government and the Spanish army is simply astounding. Esdaile's works also demonstrate perhaps the most unbiased look at the relationship between the British and the Spanish, acknowledging the tumultuous relationship that existed between the two allies while also giving a variety of detailed reasons behind the tension between the two. In *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, Esdaile details Wellington's contribution to the Spanish army as its commander as well as the causes for his distress with the Spanish government through the lens of the political situation in Spain at the time, providing detail regarding Wellington's troubles with the Regency as well as his difficult interactions with the liberal contingent of Spanish society. Anyone searching for a scholarly work regarding the Spanish army in the Peninsular war should begin with these two monographs.

Joshua Moon's book *Wellington's Two Front War* provides great insight to some of the British perspective on the situation in the Peninsula. Although Moon's primary focus is the interaction between the British government, Wellington and British society in general, much can be gleaned regarding the British relationships interaction with the Spanish government acting through Wellington as the intermediary. Further, Moon provides great detail regarding British subsidies and financial contributions to the

Spanish war effort, as well as detail regarding British foreign policy and the economy, both of which are exceedingly useful in understanding the friction between the Spanish and British governments. The economic policy in Britain and the funding and success of the Spanish army are linked, and it is critical to explore these relationships to better understand the tension between the allies in Spain.

Additional sources of note are F. A. Wellesley's compilation, *The Diary and Correspondence of Henry Wellesley*, Haythornethwaite's *The Armies of Wellington*, and Esdaile's *Peninsular Eyewitness*. Wellesley's correspondence, although somewhat edited and limited in the peninsular years by F. A. Wellesley, provide an additional view on the interplay between the Spanish government and the British through the lens of Wellesley acting as the ambassador to Spain. *The Armies of Wellington* and *Peninsular Eyewitness* provide a functional understanding of the army of 19th century Britain and the experiences of the regular soldiers and low ranking officers that participated in many of the major Peninsular campaigns.

This thesis will begin with Wellington's initial combined operations with the Spanish during the Talavera campaign in 1809, which formed the basis of the paradigm that Wellington would use in dealing with his Spanish allies in the future and shape many of the reforms he would attempt to emplace as the commander of the Spanish army. Following this will be an examination of the process leading to Wellington's acceptance of the Spanish command in the fall of 1812 and the requests made by Wellington to the Regency regarding command authorities and initial reforms. This will be followed by a recount of the initial months of Wellington's command, from January to May and the

difficulties found therein and end with Wellington's campaign to Vitoria and entry into the Pyrenees and his efforts to employ the Spanish army as part of the overall alliance.

CHAPTER 2

TALAVERA, 1809

The Talavera campaign was more than just Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington's (afterward to be referred to as Wellington) first foray into the Spanish mainland against the French, it became a campaign of painful lessons that would shape his future alliance with the Spanish. Prior to the onset of the campaign in the summer of 1809, Wellington had little experience in dealing with the Spanish armies prior to 1809 and no unified campaigning experience. Talavera would teach Wellington a painful and difficult lesson on overreliance on the Spanish junta and the Spanish people in general as his force was starved out of Spain over the course of six months. Wellington's best efforts to mitigate the issue met with resistance and obstinacy from the government as it appears the Junta went as far as deliberately undermining the operation. Further, his trust of the Spanish military leadership was undermined at every opportunity by poor planning, poor execution in battle, and outright mistrust in even the most basic matters.

The experiences of the Talavera Campaign of 1809 formed the tenant of Wellington's future alliance with the Spanish, namely that in all future endeavors against the French in the Peninsula the decisive point of the operation would need to be firmly in British control, making them the cornerstone of operations against Napoleon's army in 1812 and 1813. Talavera would teach Wellington the ineptitude of the Spanish generals, the inability of the Spanish leadership to provide for the training and support of the any army and breed a lasting distrust of the Spanish officer corps and military leadership that forced Wellington to take striking actions when he assumed command of the Spanish in 1813. In future campaigns, the Spanish would contribute sheer numbers to provide a

numerical advantage at times but in the mind of Wellington could be counted on for little else. Despite this, Wellington would in the future face a nuanced situation to navigate. Talavera taught him that he could not rely on the Spanish for material support or place them in any position in which a battle or campaign could be decided on their actions alone, yet he lacked the numerical strength to conquer the French on his own, and had seen the danger of alienating the Spanish citizenry first hand in the actions of the partisans against the French forces.

The Talavera campaign was embroiled in controversy from its inception. By 1809 the British policy was for Wellington to focus on the defense of Portugal to assist in preserving the Portuguese monarchy and thus, preserving the longstanding trade agreements between Portugal and Great Britain. This was especially true following the disapproval of the Spanish Junta for the garrisoning of British troops at Cadiz which rankled many in the British military elite, and by the onset of 1809 any British intervention in Spain seemed an unlikely strategic objective.² This was reinforced by Sir John Moore's belief that Spain is simply indefensible and that the future of sovereignty of Portugal could only be maintained through the defense of the small coastal nation at its interior borders, not in the relatively large land mass of the Spanish mainland.

Wellington's instructions from George Canning, the British Foreign Secretary, were not fully restrictive. They did permit him to launch attacks across the border with Spain provided that the attacks were spoiling attacks designed to preserve the Portuguese

² Charles Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 10.

sovereignty.³ From his arrival, Wellington sought an aggressive strategy to drive the French under Marshal Nicolas Jean-de-Dieu Soult from Northern Portugal and, once his base was secure, follow that victory with operations against Marshal Claude Victor-Perrin whose army currently occupied Extremadura and presented a threat to Portugal.⁴ In doing so, he would court the assistance of the Spanish general in charge of the Army of the Extremadura, Gregorio Garcia de la Cuesta.⁵ Cuesta was elderly and in generally poor physical condition and he would be incapacitated by a stroke shortly following the battle of Talavera and die soon thereafter. Despite his infirmities, he was a man of some renown in the Spanish military and generally respected for his battlefield abilities. In his initial discussions with Cuesta Wellington outlined two possibilities for action. The first was the establishment of bases in Almeida and Ciudad Rodrigo and then advance upon Salamanca to force Marshall Michel Ney and Soult to pursue, the second option was a unified march against Victor.⁶ Wellington lacked the numerical superiority to make the first option viable, having only 20,000 British soldiers and 12,000 Portuguese troops under Marshal William Beresford, 1st Viscount of Beresford.⁷ Further, Wellington believed that he must ensure a series of quick, decisive victories to solidify his position as

³ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 10.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Sir Charles Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, vol. 2, *January to September 1809: From the Battle of Corunna to the End of the Talavera Campaign* (1903; repr., Pickle Partners Publishing, 2014), Kindle 7334.

⁷ Ibid., II, 7334.

the Commander of the British force in the Peninsula and possibly remove the stain of embarrassment from the Citra controversy.⁸ Wellington supported the second course of action and further subdivides this into two different methods of achieving the same end state.⁹ Wellington's choice was to cross the Tagus, unite with Cuesta's army near Badajoz and fall upon Victor with the combined weight of both armies. The benefit would be the massing of manpower, enough to decisively defeat the 25,000 man force of Marshal Victor. In failing to initially isolate Victor from safe passage back to Madrid, Wellington would risk the possibility that Victor would retreat rather than face annihilation.¹⁰ After consulting with Cuesta, the decision was made to proceed with the second option, and efforts were then made to establish how to best synchronize actions between the two forces. Wellington became aware of the possibility of including a third army, that of General Francisco Javier Venegas, commander of the army of La Mancha. Venegas would maneuver from the south to dramatically bolster the strength of the allied force and then follow on movement towards the Spanish capital by the combined armies of Wellington and Cuesta.¹¹ Military defeats and political machinations would

⁸ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 10.

⁹ The first would be to utilize Cuesta's army as essentially a fixing force, preventing Victor from wide maneuver while Wellington advanced north of the Tagus to sever Victor's ties with Madrid. This would have the benefit of allowing the forces to isolate Victor before defeating him outright and diminish the reliance that either force would have on each other as they would be operating essentially independently towards the same aim, but would open the very real possibility that in dividing forces, Victor would have the opportunity to defeat them in echelon. Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 2:7334-7335.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:7354.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

make this impossible, as the Army of the Levante was essentially destroyed at Belchite on 18 Jun 1809.¹²

Cuesta and the Army of the Extremadura was feared by the Junta Central for the power that they wielded.¹³ The possibility of seizing the Spanish capital was now impossible, but this was unknown to both Wellington and Cuesta. In the early summer of 1809, Victor began to view his position as untenable. Partisan attacks limited his communications from King Joseph and Cuesta greatly increasing the size and composition of his own army to 22,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry.¹⁴ Victor was forced to move, leaving Cuesta and Wellington with a now outdated plan and a shortened horizon for implementing a refined operational plan to destroy Victor. The rapidly changing situation caused Cuesta to reevaluate the plan he and Wellington agreed to and produce several alternate courses of action that irritated Wellington, as he had already begun to move his forces in position to execute the agreed upon plan against Victor.¹⁵ These changes led Wellington into a fit of frustration as he began to write of Cuesta's "obstinacy" to John Hookham Frere, the British representative to the Junta Central commenting that "[Cuesta] is now refusing to accept a plan that he himself had advocated

¹² Charles Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 139.

¹³ Fearing a possible coup de etat from its reluctantly populist leader and his revolutionary army, the Junta Central issued secret orders to Venegas telling him to take no action to jeopardize his force, as they were integral now in providing a safeguard against Cuesta, should he wish to usurp the authority of the Spanish Government. Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 139.

¹⁴ Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 2:7460.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:7573.

in his earlier letters, merely because that plan had been taken up and advocated by his ally.”¹⁶

Wellington’s army experienced numerous issues in preparing for the campaign and with the late arrival of additional regiments increased the overall number of his forces on the Peninsula to 33,000 but late arrivals and sickness meant that only 21,000 were available for the Talavera campaign.¹⁷ With his army finally prepared, Wellington marched into Spain on 3 July, 1809 with the intent of linking with Cuesta’s force near Talavera.¹⁸

Wellington advanced carefully through the Spanish countryside. Before moving forward, he established a large depot of supplies, enough to sustain the force in its advancement through the Tagus river valley, which he believed would be depleted of any provisions.¹⁹ He initially dealt with Lozano de Torres, a liaison sent to help the British force in the procurement of food, specifically a quarter million rations of flour.²⁰ Even if this were possible, the British force had a large, secondary issue to solve before the Army

¹⁶ Wellington to J. H. Frere, 13 June 1809, Sir Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, *The Despatches of the Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington K.G. During his various Campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, the Low Countries and France from 1799-1818, 1834-1838*, compiled by Lieutenant Colonel Gurwood (London: John Murray, 1825), 422, accessed 3 February 2017, <https://archive.org/stream/despatchesoffiel04welluoft#page/2/mode/2up>; Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 2:7573.

¹⁷ Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 2:7613.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:7806.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:7903.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

would enter the Tagus valley. The British had a severe lack of carts and only began the campaign with the expressed assurances of the government in Seville that supply carts will be available from other regions in Spain.²¹ These initial logistical arrangements would prove the eventual downfall of the Talavera campaign and create the greatest friction between the allies in 1809.

Wellington and Cuesta met on 10 July 1809 near the bridge of Almaraz with to finalize their battle plans. During this meeting, Wellington would evaluate the overall discipline and disposition of his allies in anticipation of direct contact with the French.²² The initial perception of the British toward their allies was far from positive. The consensus of the British officers in attendance was that the Spanish forces seemed young, equipped to no uniform standard, and very unprepared for the task before them. The British officers present remarked that they appeared “little better than bold peasants.”²³

Between 18 and 20 July 1809 the British army maneuvered toward Talavera, meeting with Cuesta’s army at Oropresa on the 20th of July, but the issue of the supply of the British army caused Wellington to question whether or not he would continue moving toward Talavera or return to Portugal.²⁴ On 27 July 1809 the battle commenced with Cuesta initially engaging with Victor, causing some confusion amongst the Spanish

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2:7923.

²² Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 2:7923.

²³ *Ibid.*, 2:7942.

²⁴ Lieutenant General Sir William Napier K.C.B., *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula* (London: John Murray, 1910), 29, accessed 11 April 2017, <https://archive.org/details/englishbattlesi00napiuoft>.

forces especially as Victor moved against the Spanish force at Salinas, causing of the Spanish force routing and running back to Oropresa, plundering the British and Spanish supply trains as they ran.²⁵ Despite the lateness in the day, Victor ordered his force against the allied line as he sensed the confusion in the Spanish, but instead found a sound British defense provided by the King's German Legion and General Rowland Hill's Second Infantry Division.²⁶ This stalled any further advance and allowed night to fall with the forces now in place for the battle the next day. The details of the battle of Talavera de la Reina lie outside the scope of this work, but what is universally agreed was that the British were engaged heavily and endured most of the French attacks, especially the main attack placed against Hill's division and that their Spanish allies composed largely of recent levies of raw recruits achieved mixed results. At times they performed well in their defensive positions and at times, as was the case with the four battalions of Portago's division that fled only to plunder the British supply trains, quite poorly. Regardless, this was far from an easy victory with the French at times so close to collapsing the British from their critical positions that they began to cry "victory" and Wellington having little to no reserve to bolster his line.²⁷ It also proved to be far less of the decisive victory Wellington desired. Venegas had failed to fix Sebastini as he was

²⁵ Napier, *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula*, 32.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

²⁷ Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 2:9094.

ordered to do, and Victor's defeated force retreated towards Madrid in the evening of 28 July to avoid destruction.²⁸

On the evening of the 12th of August, Cuesta was struck down with a serious stroke that rendered him paralyzed and was replaced with General Nazario Eguia.²⁹ Eguia faced the now near impossible task of convincing the British commander to retain his current position in Spain vice retreating to Portugal. Wellington had neared the point of total disillusionment with his allies as his force literally starved for want of basic supplies. Wellington was losing countless horses to starvation and his men, now completely exhausted, failed to march half the distance as normal on any given day.³⁰ By 20 August 1809, efforts to retain the offense had failed and Wellington believed his only course of action to prevent starvation and destruction would be to remove himself to Portugal, seeing that without a clear course of action and immediate supply his force would be unable to retain its most critical objective of defending Portugal from French incursion.³¹ Political pressures kept him from moving completely across the border until 27 December 1809 but the unified offense was over and they remained quartered at Badajoz with the ability to return back to support the Spaniards if necessary. When he reentered Portugal in late December, Wellington had achieved the win that he sought to solidify his position as the commander of the British force and won the accolades of

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 2:10184.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 2:10203.

many in the British government (including a peerage for himself) but had failed to achieve the strategic objective that he was seeking from the onset of the campaign. The experience colored his view of the Spanish army, its leaders, and the government in general in a way that very directly shaped the future of the Anglo-Spanish alliance. From the termination of the Talavera campaign onward, the future commander of the Spanish force would never again trust the fate of an operation to the Spanish.

No issue in the Talavera campaign created more friction between the allies than that of the logistics and resupply of the British army. During this period, there were no military run transport services in any of the allied armies leading to large logistical challenges for all campaigning armies.³² Wellington's own commissary was rife with incompetence and corruption and the standard for selection in the Commissary was low, even by 19th century standards.³³ The result was that the commissary system was slow to react, reliant on a pre-established network to be truly effective and this situation simply did not exist in Spain.

³² In 1794, the government of Great Britain formed the Corps of Royal Waggoneers to address the issue of getting goods to the campaigning armies, but this was ill funded and comprised of essentially the dregs of the existing regiments and run into failure. Although they never truly disappeared, the Waggoner Corps numbers remained negligible, resulting in the clear majority of goods transportation to fall in the hands of contracted civilians. Phillip J. Haythornthwaite, *The Armies of Wellington* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1994), 120.

³³ Before 1810 there were no official qualification standards, and many of the appointees owed their position to political connection rather than demonstrated competence or potential. From 1810 to 1812 the only necessary qualifications were an age limit of 16 years with one year of clerical time and it was not till 1812 that basic tests on reading and mathematics were imposed. Haythornthwaite, *The Armies of Wellington*, 119-120.

Despite the logistical issues in the British chain being well known to Wellington at this point, most of the blame for his soldier's starvation he placed directly on the Spanish. This centered upon several promises made to him that the Spanish government would ensure the transportation of goods to the British force. Wellington arrived in Spain with a clear expectation that he was being invited at the behest of the Spanish Junta to their cause and would be supplied by and through the workings of the Junta itself. This was made clear through Wellington's communication with the Spanish Junta of 18 July, in which he says:

Upon my entrance into Spain, I certainly expected to derive that assistance in provisions and other means, which an army invariably receives from the country in which it is stationed; more particularly when it has been sent to the aid of the people of that country. I have not been disappointed in the expectations I had formed of receiving supplies of provisions, and I am much obliged to the Junta for the pains they have taken upon that subject, and I am convinced that they did every thing in their power to procure for us the other means we required, although I am sorry to say we did not receive them.³⁴

Wellington outlined the expectations that he had of his Spanish allies prior to his entrance into Spain, and began to show his frustration with the lack of follow through. Wellington then wrote to General Juan O'Donoju, the chief of staff for General Gregorio Cuesta, on 16 July 1809 telling O'Donoju that the British army required additional transport for food and ammunition critically and placed this requirement at the feet of Cuesta. Wellington tells O'Donoju that "All countries in which an army is acting are obliged to supply these means; and if the people of Spain are unable or unwilling to

³⁴ Wellington to the Junta of Plasencia, 18 July 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IV*, 491-492.

supply what the army requires, I am afraid that they must do without its services.”³⁵ In this, Wellington placed a clear ultimatum at the feet of the two Spanish generals on the requirement necessary for his continued engagement in Spain.

Wellington authorized his Spanish Commissary-General Torres to contract for the delivery of 250,000 rations from the villages around the Vera de Plasencia through dealings with the mayors of each village with the understanding that the goods would be delivered no later than 24 July.³⁶ Wellington believed that despite the quantity requested, the Tagus valley had the ability to provide for his army. Yet by 24 July the goods had not been delivered and the British army continued its process of slow starvation. Wellington refused to acknowledge the possibility that the countryside simply could not provide for his force and begins to suspect that the whole affair is the result of Spanish perfidy. In his letter to the Honorable John Hookham Frere, British representative to the Junta Central, on 24 July 1809 he said that “It is ridiculous to pretend that the country cannot supply our wants. The French army is well fed and the soldiers who are taken in good health, well supplied in bread.”³⁷ Wellington viewed the issues more than simply not being able to provide, but abject incompetence or outright corruption at the hands of the Spaniards, in

³⁵ Wellington to Juan O’Donoju relayed through J. H. Frere, 16 July 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches IV*, 488.

³⁶ Anthony Brett-James, *Wellington at War* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 158.

³⁷ Wellington to John Hookham Frere, 24 July 1809, Sir Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, *The Dispatches of the Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington K.G. During his various Campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, the Low Countries and France from 1799-1815 Volume VI*, compiled by Lieutenant Colonel Gurwood (London: John Murray, 1825), 498, accessed 2 March 2017, <https://archive.org/details/dispatchesoffiel06welluoft>.

particular the alcaldes with whom Torres negotiated the initial contract. In the same letter, Wellington began to build the case for his eventual withdraw by telling Frere that without continued supply he would be forced to withdraw to Portugal where his ability to maintain his army is more guaranteed, this becomes the basis of his narrative throughout the campaign and continues to be his listed reason for withdraw until the retrograde finally occurs in December.³⁸

Wellington began to note that his Spanish allies appeared to be less than welcoming to the British in regard to provisions despite his campaigning for their cause of preserving national sovereignty. In writing to Frere on the 16 July he noted that:

The officers complain, and I believe not without reason, that the country gives unwillingly the supplies of provisions we have required, and I have been obliged to promise that they shall be replaced from our stores in Portugal; and we have not procured a cart or a mule for the service of the army. This does not look promising; and I shall certainly not persevere if our prospect of good treatment does not improve.³⁹

Even prior to the battle of Talavera itself, Wellington noted the friction that exists between his force and the Spanish people, equating it to a lack of gratitude toward their saviors, noting that the Spanish (even if there were food to be had) lacked the desire to give it to the British army. Wellington found this lack of gratitude galling and was forced to bring supplies forward from the Portuguese frontier to supply his army. This action that was rendered more difficult by the fact that he had not received the supply wagons promised by the Spanish leadership prior to the onset of the campaign.

³⁸ Ibid., 497.

³⁹ Wellington to J. H. Frere, 16 July 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IV*, 488.

The issue of supply continued to create deep divides within the allied force following the termination of the battle on 28 July 1809. The relative proximity of the forces and their respective current states of discipline combined with the effects of hunger meant that accusations of plundering and theft abounded on both sides, furthering the rift between Cuesta and Wellington. By the 1 August Wellington noted to Lord Castlereagh that the logistical situation in the campaign had effectively collapsed, but he attributed the collapse to the size of the Spanish army, saying that they “are so numerous they eat up the entire country. They have no magazines, nor have we, nor can we collect any, and there is a scramble for everything.”⁴⁰ He followed this with another message to Frere on 3 August distressing the quality of what little food they do receive, calling it moldy and overall lacking in the quantity to sustain the Army, believing that the Spanish may have retained the quality food for their own troops.⁴¹

Cuesta received complaints from the Spanish people of the British soldiers plundering the Spanish countryside and wrote of his concerns to Wellington on 10 August 1809. Cuesta listed his complaints as the theft of goods from the Spanish people, stopping supply wagons whose destination was the Spanish army at the British lines and taking the food, as well as the British Soldiers selling their bread to the Spanish and then complaining of starvation.⁴² This letter had the unfortunate timing of arriving after a

⁴⁰ Wellington to Lord Castlereagh, 1 August 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IV*, 523.

⁴¹ Wellington to J. H. Frere, 3 August 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IV*, 525.

⁴² Wellington to Don Gregorio Cuesta, 11 August 1809, Brett-James, *Wellington at War*, 159.

period (3 through 8 August 1809) in which Wellington claimed they received no provisions whatsoever.⁴³ Wellington was incensed at these accusations and issued a retort to the General. Wellington told Cuesta that “when troops are starving, which those under my command have been, as I repeatedly told your excellency . . . it is not astonishing that they should go to the villages and even the mountains and look for food where they think they could get it.”⁴⁴

As to the accusation that the British was stopping convoys sent to the Spanish troops, Wellington told Cuesta that while his force remained starving in the hills he observed a convoy of 350 mules with wagons heading to the Spanish and ordered his men not to interfere despite the desperate state of the British position.⁴⁵ He closed his comments by accusing Cuesta of taking all supplies sent to both armies from both the countryside and Seville, and questions Cuesta directly on the location of the depots and magazines that were set up by Cuesta and the Spanish army to sustain the operation, effectively questioning the general on whether there had been any rational sustainment plans in the first place. Wellington believed that no such measures have been made to sustain the British army and warned that “it will be impossible for me to remain any longer in a country in which no arrangement has been made for the supply of provisions for the troops.”⁴⁶ Provisioning an army of this size was simply impossible for Spain. The

⁴³ Ibid., 160.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 161.

French invasion had shattered the Spanish ability to provide for its own armies leaving most of the field armies to live off of the land.⁴⁷ This meant that there had never been any true plan to provide stable sustainment, even for the Spanish let alone for the British counterparts.

Wellington was not without reason to fear a starving army. The danger of misconduct and even mutiny was exponentially greater as the soldiers continued to go without necessary food and pay. Moreover, Wellington realized the strain starvation was causing between the British and the Spanish and feared the actions of his troops on the Spanish population. Writing to the Marquis Wellesley in 1809 he stated “A starving army is worse than none. The soldiers lose their discipline and spirit. They plunder even in the presence of their officers . . . with the army which a fortnight ago beat double their numbers I should now hesitate to meet a French corps of half their strength.”⁴⁸

This being the case Wellington had no option but to move his army to Portugal. Not only did he fear the annihilation of his force from external enemies, but he also feared that starvation may in fact present his disheartened soldiers an additional reason to desert or even mutiny.

The lack of support from Spain drove Wellington to Badajoz in September, a move meant to shorten his supply lines from Portugal and provide him with the option to

⁴⁷ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 140.

⁴⁸ Wellington to the Marquis Wellesley, 8 August 1809, Sir Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, *The Dispatches of the Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington K.G. During his various Campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, the Low Countries and France from 1799-1815 Volume V*, compiled by Lieutenant Colonel Gurwood (London: John Murray, 1825) 14, accessed 9 February 2017, <https://archive.org/details/dispatchesoffie05welluoft>.

retreat across the international border.⁴⁹ The move allowed Wellington to remain in Spain and continue to launch small expeditions into the interior from a location in which he could more effectively resupply his forces rather than move back across the border and face the political ramifications of the move to the alliance between Spain and Britain.

Quartering his army in Badajoz did not completely alleviate the issues between the allies as the troops not quartered in the headquarters were forced to quarter in the nearby towns and procure food from the local population. Wellington provided an example of this to the Junta of the Extremadura in a letter written on 13 September 1809. Wellington recounted to the Junta the troubles arising with British troops quartered in La Calzada, stating that given the circumstances, he would have preferred to house his troops in the woods than with the Spaniards in town as the Spaniards in La Calzada had little regard for the British and complain regularly about the requirement to feed the British army, despite being paid for the provisions.⁵⁰ Wellington pointed out the hypocrisy of the Spaniards to the Junta by saying that the Spaniards, despite talk of their commitment to the patriot cause, hope to see the end of defeating the French without any personal inconvenience. Wellington warned the Junta that should they not be able to convince the people of La Calzada to put up with the “trifling personal inconvenience” of supporting the British, he would likely abandon the fight in the Extremadura to Portugal,

⁴⁹ Wellington to Castlereagh, 9 December 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches V*, 343.

⁵⁰ Wellington to the Junta of Extremadura, 13 September 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches V*, 146.

leaving the area for the French.⁵¹ Regardless of his claims, this incident did illustrate the increasing frustrations Wellington has with supplying his force in Spain, and demonstrates how his opinion of the Spaniards is being colored by the perceived lack of support which he then believes is a lack of commitment to the cause.

On 22 September 1809, Wellington became more direct in his assertions. In this letter he told the Junta that the people of this area of Spain are either “unable or unwilling” to furnish what is required for his troops and that the lack of compliance in their dealings must arise from a “lack of inclination” to provide services to the troops in the Extremadura.⁵² He followed this by saying that should any further delay in the delivery of supplies occur he will withdraw from Spain entirely.⁵³ In this letter Wellington viewed the lack of supplies as a matter of Spanish willingness to support rather than a matter of ability. This will continue to strain and color the relationship between the Duke and his Spanish allies for the remainder of the Talavera campaign. The reality was that likely both that the Spanish were unwilling and unable. The Junta Central was preoccupied with prosecuting the war elsewhere and would soon be dealing with the shattering defeats of Ocana and Alba de Tormes and the regional Juntas had little ability to leverage resources to support major offensive operations, even if those resources existed in the first place.⁵⁴ The 1808 and 1809 British subsidies to the Junta Central were

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Wellington to the Junta of the Extremadura, 22 September 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches V*, 168.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 140-143.

substantial, but consisted mostly of weapons and material goods for the army rather than food to create depots.⁵⁵

Although the Talavera campaign officially ended with Wellington's occupation of Badajoz in August of 1809, the tensions that arose from the campaign continued into the winter. The supply situation remained strained, and each side placed the failure of the system on each other at every opportunity. In writing to the Marquis Wellesley, Wellington attempted to counter claims made by the prominent Spanish official Don de Garay that the issue had to do with the transports that the British had contracted rather than the lack of supply, essentially placing the failure back into Wellington's hands. Wellington reluctantly defended the service of his own commissariat and told Wellesley that the only factor that led to the collapse of the supply system was the scarcity of supply provided by the Spanish government and the people of Spain.⁵⁶ Wellington told Wellesley that Garay is spreading misinformation in the Spanish Juntas regarding the nature of the issues that surrounded the Talavera campaign and implying that the British force suffered no real hardships, undermining the British position regarding the withdraw. Garay had the opinion that Wellington's choice to discontinue combined operations is sudden and unexpected, an act of abandonment that points to a lack of British commitment in the region, an allegation that Wellington again denies. Wellington pointed to the numerous examples of warnings that he provided to the Juntas regarding his impending withdraw should supplies not be provided and also pointed to numerous

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁵⁶ Wellington to Wellesley, 30 October 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches* V, 247.

contradictory statements provided by de Garay, essentially calling the man a liar.⁵⁷ This message represented the deep divides that existed between the Spanish and British by October, with blame for the failure of any follow-on operation against the French being attributed to the other. By this point in the operation the issue has become more than a matter of resupply, and has morphed into a political battle between the two sides regarding the culpability of the failure to capitalize on the relative success of Talavera. To Wellington, these seemingly unfounded allegations about his decisions following the battle represent still more reason to distrust the leadership of the Spanish army.

By November the situation had deteriorated to the point in which no manner of political maneuvering can preserve British involvement in the Talavera campaign any further. In writing to the Spanish Junta at the Extremadura Wellington voiced his intent to withdraw from Spain over the lack of supply. Through the chief British Commissariat in the region Wellington learned that the Junta of Extremadura was ordering villages to refrain from dealing with the British, making the resupply of the British through local purchase of goods impossible. Wellington responded by saying that since Spain lacked the willingness to support the British army currently engaged in its defense, he intended to leave Spain the moment that goods failed to meet their scheduled delivery.⁵⁸ This was an impossible task as the French requisitioning of transportation assets in Spain coupled with the Spanish inability to pay for transportation when it was available meant that food was often rotten when it arrived late, or drivers deserted with the goods as they expected

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Wellington to the Junta of Extremadura, 15 November 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches V*, 280.

to not be paid when they arrived.⁵⁹ Regardless, in a letter to Frere issued the same day, Wellington took a more politically nuanced approach, attributing any pending withdraw into Spain as simply securing his supply lines rather than a retributive measure against the Spanish government.⁶⁰ Wellington saw the issue not so much as the lack of supply as the problems surrounding working with a government actively trying to thwart his efforts in maintaining his position in the region. This he viewed as simply inexcusable and self-defeating.

Throughout the course of the campaign, Wellington made bold characterizations on the quality and disposition of his Spanish allies, swaying between the assessment of them as “bold peasants” toward a belief that they were useless rabble and plundering thieves. The Spanish infantry, making the bulk of the army, had two pressing issues. The first being that they were extremely poorly equipped and outfitted. This was far from surprising in a nation that even prior to the onset of the conflict had an army that was in a state of disrepair, compounded by crushing defeats in 1808 at the hands of the French. Despite British subsidies, the manner in which the Spanish armies were formed and maintained meant that when they were defeated, most of the surviving soldiers departed the army itself with their equipment, and the entire force had to be remade in subsequent operations.⁶¹ This was a catastrophic drain on the equipment provided by both Spain and Britain. The second issue was that they in large part lacking in any sort of discipline that

⁵⁹ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 140.

⁶⁰ Wellington to J. H. Frere, 15 November 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches* V, 280.

⁶¹ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 139.

allowed them to perform effectively in a major campaign, and this lack of discipline stemmed from an inept officer corps. Wellington wrote to Viscount Castlereagh in 1809 saying:

In respect to the great body of all armies-I mean the infantry-it is lamentable to see how bad that of the Spaniards is, and how unequal to a contest with the French. They are armed, I believe, well; they are very badly accoutered, not having the means of saving their ammunition from the rain; not clothed in some instances at all, in others clothed in such a manner as to look like peasants . . . and their discipline seems to be confined to placing them in the ranks.⁶²

The Spanish officer corps in 1809 was simply not capable of the task at hand, proving themselves to be incompetent, antiquated, and incapable of producing any large-scale campaign plan to address the French threat in their nation. Wellington voiced his absolute disgust with the Spanish officer corps in 1809, saying “Nothing can be worse than the officers of the Spanish Army. . . . They really are children in the art of war, and I cannot say that they do anything as it ought to be done, with the exception of running away and assembling in a state of nature.”⁶³

This disrepair and incompetence stemmed from a long term multi-generational decline prompted by the excesses of the officer corps, political promotions, and the distrust of the Spanish people. By 1809 the Spanish government was faced two distasteful choices for its commissioned officers, one being the borderline corrupt aristocrats that bloated the service prior to the revolution, and the other being the populist leaders that amounted to little more than strongmen governing bands of ad hoc infantry. The massive

⁶² Wellington to Viscount Castlereagh, 25 August 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches V*, 82.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

spike in officer appointments following 1808 meant that no true quality control measures remained in place and misconduct and absenteeism was such a great issue that the government had to impose a rule banning the use of horses from junior officers simply to keep them in the field with their army.⁶⁴

This demonstrated incompetence in the officer corps colored Wellington's view of his allied partner, Gregorio de la Cuesta, before the battle commenced. Wellington believed that in the rapid changing of campaign strategies, Cuesta was simply ignoring him and depriving him of critical information that Wellington would need to be successful during the campaign. While engaged in the planning of the campaign itself, Wellington rails against Cuesta for a perceived lack of initiative and operational insight, as well as his seeming disregard for the opinions of Wellington in the matter by telling Frere that "I can only say that the obstinacy of this old gentleman is throwing out of our hands the finest game that any armies ever had."⁶⁵ In writing to Frere again on 24 July, Wellington told of his frustrations with Cuesta for a second time, calling him impracticable and implying that the General had no real plan of action against the French, leaving the British army to march aimlessly on meager rations.⁶⁶ Wellington went further in his discussion with Frere by saying that Cuesta lacked the ability and authority to command, that his followers were merely waiting for him to be relieved by the Junta and

⁶⁴ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 119-120.

⁶⁵ Wellington to J. H. Frere, 13 June 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IV*, 422.

⁶⁶ Wellington to J. H. Frere, 24 July 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IV*, 498.

that even his chief of staff Juan O'Donoju was tired of serving the old General.⁶⁷

Wellington's frustrations with his partner were clear and he equates the lack of Cuesta's incorporation of Wellington in the overall plan as a lack of respect for Wellington as a general, and Wellington is going as far as undermining Cuesta's ability to command as response.

The officer corps being primarily responsible for the training and discipline of the troops publicly demonstrated their incompetence to Wellington when, on 27 July in the initial engagements of the battle, four battalions of the far left of Cuesta's line routed following what appeared to be a volley of fire from their own Spanish troops in full view of their own officers and Wellington himself.⁶⁸ Wellington was absolutely shocked at the lack of discipline, with Cuesta dispatching his own cavalry to police up the deserters. The whole event was much less of a tactical disaster than an embarrassment, however as the entirety of the line did not collapse, mainly the second and third lines, so with Cuesta managing to wrangle a large portion of the deserters back the number that absconded for good reached only a few hundred.⁶⁹ The embarrassment for the Spanish was far from over as those that did manage to elude the Spanish cavalry pillaged the British baggage trains on their move away from the front. This was one of the first observations Wellington would have on his new allies, and would have a formative effect on how Wellington formed his paradigm regarding the Spaniards in general.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 2:8634.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2:8654.

On 24 and 25 August Wellington wrote to the Marquis Wellesley and to Viscount Castlereagh of his outright disgust towards the Spanish for this specific incident, and used it as a lynchpin to underscore his further attacks against the Spanish military at large in his letter to Castlereagh.⁷⁰ Further, stragglers from the Spanish army engaged in the theft of British horses in the rear of the battle lines causing Wellington to have to write to Equia shortly after the battle asking for the ponies to be returned.⁷¹ The theft and desertion at Talavera would directly affect Wellington's view of the Spanish as being fundamentally flawed under incompetent leadership, completely unprepared for any major battle, and at times more of a hindrance or danger than a valued asset on the field.

More pressing than the issue of the was the issue regarding the accused thievery of the British wounded's equipment. At Talavera, Wellington had sustained 4,000 wounded and believed that the Spanish carried off the British wounded weapons and personal effects when the wounded were carried from the field.⁷² In thieving the equipment from the British wounded, the Spanish left them nearly defenseless during their return from convalescence and took basic quality of life materials from men who Wellington believes fell in support of the Spanish cause. The fact that all this occurred in front of the Spanish officers underscored their complicity in dishonorable behavior or general incompetence to Wellington.

⁷⁰ Wellington to Viscount Castlereagh, 25 August 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches V*, 82.

⁷¹ Wellington to J. H. Frere, 31 July 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IV*, 519.

⁷² Wellington to Major General Juan de O'Donoju, 1 August 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IV*, 521.

The lack of a sound Spanish officer corps instilling discipline in the Spanish army during the battle of Talavera created situations that horrified the British, and showed the barbarity that their allies were capable given the freedom from rigid military command. One account was provided by George Wood of the Second Battalion of Detachments who described the actions of the Spanish after night fell on 27 July. Wood said, “We heard a few shots, and learned that they proceeded from the Spaniards, who were shooting the wounded French. There was in consequence an officer and twenty men from each brigade sent out to protect and gather the wounded enemy.”⁷³

These experiences created a paradigm for the British that their allies were little more than peasants with muskets, lacking control and highly unreliable, dangerous, and their officers incapable of controlling them effectively. This belief followed Wellington for the following years of the campaign, and Wellington believed at times that the Spanish army was good for little else besides filling in ranks. His lack of confidence in the abilities of the Spanish officers to instill discipline drove Wellington to question the future of his strategy to Viscount Castlereagh in a letter shortly following the battle by saying: “I do not think them in a state to of discipline to contend with the French, I prefer into endeavor to remove the enemy from this part of Spain maneuver to the trial of another pitched battle.”⁷⁴

⁷³ Charles Esdaile, *Peninsular Eyewitness: The Experience of War in Spain and Portugal 1808-1813* (South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Military Press, 2008), 111.

⁷⁴ Wellington to Viscount Castlereagh, 1 August 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IV*, 522.

This belief continued with Wellington into the future, and after the battle of Albuera Wellington noted again that “The Spaniards can do nothing but stand still, and we consider ourselves fortunate that they do not run away.”⁷⁵ Wellington saw firsthand that the lack of proper training and leadership in the Spanish army created a system in which the Spanish army could not execute complex battlefield maneuvers regularly, or at least regularly enough to gain the confidence of Wellington to employ them decisively in battle.

Wellington’s opinion of the Spanish leadership was further tainted through the fate of the 4,000 men injured and recuperating in Talavera. As early as 1 August Wellington lamented the poor state in which his wounded are being cared for, saying to General O’Donoju he had not received medical assistance of any type and as such, was forced to remove men from duty in the regiments to care for the injured.⁷⁶ Further, during the conference between Cuesta and Wellington on 2 August, it was decided that Wellington would leave Talavera with his force and a large concern that if Victor counterattacked Talavera when the main body was away, Cuesta would be responsible for evacuating the hospital and the wounded.⁷⁷ Wellington’s fear for the safety of his troops became greater as he moved away from Talavera, and with his growing distrust of

⁷⁵ Escdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 121.

⁷⁶ Wellington to Major General Juan de O’Donoju, 1 August 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches IV*, 521.

⁷⁷ Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 2:9656.

his allies he requested from O'Donoju that every injured man able to travel be loaded into carts and transported forward to the British army at Oropresa.⁷⁸

During the departure of the Spanish army, Cuesta tasked the job of evacuating the wounded to a subordinate operating out of Talavera who was only able to move eight carts of wounded to the British, and left the vast majority of them to walk if able to Oropresa where they could be moved to hospitals in the rear. The result was that out of the 3,915 wounded at Talavera, less than 2,000 made it back to British care.⁷⁹ To Wellington, this act was more than mere incompetence, it was simply barbaric. As Wellington noted many times before, he believed that the victory at the battle of Talavera was reached through the sacrifice of the British force far more than the Spaniards, and the casualty numbers alone bear that to be true with Wellington himself reporting his casualties at 857 killed and 3,913 wounded in his official report to Viscount Castlereagh.⁸⁰ Cuesta did not release the casualty numbers incurred on the Spanish side to his British allies but in later dispatches lists the number as 1,201 killed and wounded.⁸¹ Given the limited extent of his engagement during the battle this number is likely exaggerated or accounts for the deserters and missing.⁸² Wellington believed that because of the cost in blood, the Spanish must properly care for his wounded who he believes fell

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 2:9806.

⁸⁰ Wellington's to Viscount Castlereagh, 29 July 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IV*, 505.

⁸¹ Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 2:9376.

⁸² Ibid.

at the Spanish cause. He demonstrated this attitude prior to the battle commencing in his letters to John Frere, when he refers to his army as the one “upon whom everything depends” in regards to the coming Talavera campaign.⁸³ Following the battle, Wellington began his attack on the Spanish leadership for their inability to provide for the Talavera wounded saying “At this moment there are 4,000 soldiers dying in a hospital from want of common assistance and necessities which any other country in the world would have given to its enemies.”⁸⁴ Even at this moment, before the failed evacuation of Talavera, Wellington’s rage regarding the perceived treatment of men who fell at the Spanish cause was palpable, likening the Spanish treatment of their allies as worse than he would have received from the French. Wellington viewed the poor execution of the evacuation of his wounded as more than just another example of the ineptitude of the Spanish, but the violation of an agreement that he made with Cuesta to get him to move his force from Talavera and continue campaigning. This issue will be further compounded through the events to follow.

Wellington saw the relationship with Cuesta as strained to the point of collapse. The litany of allegations that Cuesta levied against the British army following the battle combined with the perceived lack of support and the lack of an overall plan for future campaigning made his dealings with the Cuesta nearly impossible. On 1 August 1809 Wellington wrote to Lord Castlereagh of his dealings with Cuesta and the future of the

⁸³ Wellington to J. H. Frere, 24 July 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches IV*, 498.

⁸⁴ Wellington to J. H. Frere, 31 July 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches IV*, 518.

campaign itself. Wellington told Castlereagh that because the battle of Talavera had cost the British army greatly he failed to see any possibility in fighting the French in another major engagement until he receives additional support from Cuesta. In this he sees no hope as he viewed unified planning with Cuesta as simply impossible because “his temper and disposition are bad” leaving very little hope for the future of the alliance.⁸⁵

Although Cuesta’s incapacitation did alleviate the issues surrounding his temper and disposition toward the British, Wellington was forced to contend with his replacement, General Nazario Eguia. As with Cuesta, Wellington believed that he was being marginalized if not outright ignored. Wellington voiced these frustrations to a liaison to Eguia on 7 September regarding the fact that his letters to Eguia had not been answered. In this message, Wellington told Roche that he believed that Eguia was not opening letters addressed from Wellington, and that he has yet to hear responses from several requests from the Spanish headquarters or from messages sent through the Spanish headquarters with the intent of being delivered to the French in regards to trading of the sick and wounded captured at Talavera.⁸⁶ Wellington was forced to rely almost completely on communication with the Spanish headquarters through Colonel Roche rather than direct communication with Eguia, demanding of Roche “let me hear from you constantly, and constant reports.”⁸⁷ This lack of communication between the allied forces

⁸⁵ Wellington to Castlereagh, 1 August 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches IV*, 524.

⁸⁶ Wellington to Roche, 7 September 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches V*, 127.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

following the Talavera battle made future coordination virtually impossible, severely jeopardizing the possibility that the forces unify to reclaim Madrid.

Wellington wrote to the Marquis Wellesley on 26 September 1809 regarding the requests sent to the French through the Spanish lines. The requests were sent via a messenger with a flag of truce to discuss a prisoner exchange but Wellington claimed that Eguia stops all correspondence, opens it, and inspects it before forwarding the message to the receiving party.⁸⁸ Wellington found this action disturbing, and certainly went against the rules of common honor amongst gentlemen. Regardless, the actions underscored a fundamental lack of trust between the allied forces acting in Spain at the time. This lack of trust should not come as a surprise to Wellington, every major British action to this point had been mired in some measure of distrust between Spain and Britain with Sir John Moore's withdraw appearing as an outright betrayal and Cradock's army being reported as 70,000 when the actual number was no more than 16,000.⁸⁹

This issue extended into October, further straining the relationship between Wellington and Eguia. Writing to the Marquis Wellesley in mid-October, Wellington continued to decry the practice of opening his messages to the French. Wellington told Wellesley that the practice of preventing correspondence between the British and the French originates with the Spanish government, perhaps fearful of secret negotiations,

⁸⁸ Wellington to the Marquis Wellesley, 26 September 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches V*, 182.

⁸⁹ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 10.

and that Eguia is merely the enactor of such a policy.⁹⁰ He furthered this with a reassertion that the armies of nations in a state of cooperation, especially in the case in which no officer has the finality of command of the other, have the right to correspond with the enemy in any manner they see fit regardless of the nature of the message provided that it has little to do with the other party.

Wellington ended his message with a somewhat ominous statement about his fear for the British force being dragged into the barbarity of the contest between the Spanish and the French simply because they have chosen to side with the Spanish. Wellington observed the callous way the Spanish treated the French prisoners, including the officers; and feared that his own prisoners will be treated poorly as retribution.⁹¹ This was likely the reason Wellington was attempting his own prisoner negotiations rather than colluding with Eguia, he wanted to distance himself as much as possible and prove that the British remained honorable adversaries if for nothing else than the sake of the British currently in French custody. Wellington saw this as such a critical issue that he questioned the future of British involvement with their Spanish allies if the French treat British prisoners with the same standard as the Spanish.⁹² Wellington's actions showed obvious reluctance to be

⁹⁰ Wellington to the Marquis Wellesley, 15 October 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches V*, 223.

⁹¹ The issue of poor treatment of French prisoners at the hands of the French comes forward from a message from Captain Gordon (Wellington's Aide de Camp), who observed the poor treatment seemingly first hand. This is especially critical now as the abandonment of British wounded at the hospital in Talavera left hundreds in French hands.

⁹² Wellington to the Marquis Wellesley, 15 October 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches V*, 223.

working with the Spanish, and he saw himself and the French as the only civilized parties in the contest for the Peninsula. Wellington's fear of the ill treatment of prisoners was completely valid, the brutal tactics of both the French and the Spanish were well known and extended to the British allies captured during the battles of 1808 and 1809.⁹³ If captured, the likelihood of returning safely to your lines was extremely slim.

All this turmoil of late centered around the Spanish detention of a French officer by Spanish whom Wellington claimed was acting under his protection, delivering messages regarding the negotiations above. Wellington ordered the release of the messenger and Eguia refused. Wellington then took the matter to the Junta, and they refused his request as well. Wellington saw this as a personal affront by his allies. In writing to the Marquis Wellesley he said "The pretenses for detaining him . . . are improper and ungracious to me personally."⁹⁴ He also views this action by the Spanish command as an "injustice and violation of the laws of war and . . . a continuation of an indignity upon the commanding officer of British forces in Spain."⁹⁵ Further, Wellington believed that not only does he not have credibility and the respect of the Spanish Junta, he believed that in purposely damaging the negotiations with France they were actively placing impediments in the process of liberating British soldiers who were "wounded in the service of Spain, and made prisoner only in consequence of a movement made by the

⁹³ Esdaile, *Peninsular Eyewitness*, 176-180.

⁹⁴ Wellington to the Marquis Wellesley, 15 October 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches V*, 223.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Spanish army.”⁹⁶ Other avenues exhausted, Wellington felt that his only recourse at this point was to appeal the matter to the King himself.

Wellington recounted his continued frustrations at his Spanish allies during this period in his annual memorandum of operations to Lord Castlereagh in which he describes the actions of August with clear disdain for the role in which the Spanish played. He began his footnoted comments with “The fact is, that the British army has saved Spain and Portugal in the past year.”⁹⁷ He followed with a statement to the size and composition of the Spanish force in its current state and blames the lack of action against the French following the Talavera victory on the Spanish leadership’s inability to take tangible action against their opponents. He asked Lord Castlereagh rhetorically “What would have been the relative state of the two contending parties if the Spaniards had been tolerably prudent and acted in the way they were advised to act?”, implying that the collapse of the campaign occurred from Spanish incompetence alone.⁹⁸ As in his previous comments from July to August 1809, Wellington felt that despite the vast sacrifice put forth by the British army for the cause of Spanish and Portuguese independence, was marginalized by his ally who continuously disregarded his opinions on the future strategy of the campaign itself, widening the rift between himself and the Spaniards.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Wellington to the Marquis Wellesley, 15 October 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches V*, 223.

⁹⁸ Wellington to J. H. Frere, 9 December 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches V*, 349.

By late September, Wellington saw little hope for further action against the French, particularly a combined march against Madrid. Wellington put this current state of confusion and chaos in the hands of the Spanish officers and in writing to Beresford on 24 September Wellington showed his displeasure for the senior officers of the Spanish army and their actions of late. Wellington wrote: “There was never anything like the madness, the imprudence, and the presumption of the Spanish officers in the way they risk their corps, knowing that the national vanity will prevent them from withdrawing from a situation of danger, and that, if attacked they be totally destroyed.”⁹⁹

Written in response to the Duque del Parque’s recent engagements and believing that Spanish strategy in 1809 was built more upon ego than common sense, Wellington demonstrated that his initial regard of the Spanish officer corps as being little more than “children in the art of war” had not changed following the battle of Talavera and that further engagements with the allied force only reinforce his opinions on their general incompetence. Wellington followed this message to Beresford with another to John Villiers in which he remained pragmatic toward the future of the campaign and of Spain itself, detailing that whatever the outcome of the ongoing Spanish action against France be, it was critical that Portugal be built upon a solid military foundation on which to defend itself.¹⁰⁰ At this point in the operation, Wellington’s own observations did not provide him with confidence regarding the future success of any endeavor in Spain with

⁹⁹ Wellington to Beresford, 24 September 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches* V, 176.

¹⁰⁰ Wellington to Villiers, 24 September 1809, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches* V, 177.

the Spanish military, choosing instead to focus on the contingency plan of preserving the Portuguese monarchy rather than reestablishing Spanish sovereignty in 1809.

The Talavera campaign demonstrated the vast challenges surrounding an attempt to maneuver against a determined enemy as little more than reluctant compatriots endeavoring toward a common cause. The lack of unity of command caused reliance on efficient communication to make decisions regarding the follow-on actions designed to occur after the battle of Talavera itself, and when the communications process failed, as it did in this case due to personality conflicts and confusion with the regional Juntas, the prospects of cooperation failed as well. The campaign was perhaps doomed from the start. The allies had little in way of organization and relied heavily on ad hoc decision-making, but with no one commander the final authority in the process the plan relied on one party's ability to communicate its strengths to the other. Given the vast cultural differences, the state of the Spanish army, the seniority of the commanders (Cuesta being significantly older than Wellington at this point), and the differences in regional and strategic goals coupled with the political machinations of a reeling Spanish government in this period, having a unified force take back Madrid seemed a bridge too far from the onset. Further, the allies only had a vague understanding of each other's capabilities from the start. Wellington had virtually no idea of the state of the Spanish army before the battle of Talavera, and despite his efforts to place qualified people act as liaisons with the Spanish, this could hardly mitigate the fact that the allies had never campaigned together prior to 1809.

Starvation alone did not drive the British from Spain in 1809, Wellington found it nearly impossible to plan effectively with his Spanish allies. Initially, Cuesta seemed

almost disinterested in his British counterpart, changing the battleplans with little input from Wellington, frustrating Wellington greatly and leading him to believe that the senior leadership of the Spanish army was inept and incompetent. The Spanish demonstrated that they were certainly not up for the task of defeating the French; and that with every successive move following the Talavera battle in which Wellington followed the Spanish he would be gambling with the fate of his own army. The performance at Talavera reinforced this, with ill—disciplined troops fleeing under their own gunfire and murdering wounded French soldiers while actively stealing from the British. Cuesta demonstrated his callousness towards his allies by abandoning the British wounded to the French short days following the battle in which the British endured the most of the combat, despite his assurances from Cuesta that he would avoid doing so. Eguia proved equally difficult, actively undermining Wellington's efforts to communicate with the French regarding troop exchanges and failing to set any clear objective for the allied force. These actions offended British sensibilities regarding honor and the honorable conduct of warfare between civilized parties. Ignoring British suggestions, the Spanish force marched to defeat and Wellington saw the responsibility of the destruction of the Spanish armies as clearly in the hands of the Spanish generals.

All of this would prove critical in shaping Wellington's view of future operations. Rather than trusting the fate of the allied victory in the Peninsula to the Spanish any further, not only would Wellington not trust the fate of any future operation to the Spanish; Wellington would require that the British force become the core of any future operation against the French in the Peninsula, and by extension that he as commander of the British force assume command of the allied forces throughout the Peninsula. In a very

direct way, the Talavera campaign of 1809 would shape the vision that Wellington sees for the defeat of the French in the future.

CHAPTER 3

FORMING THE COMMAND, 1812

Wellington would face the same challenge in 1812 that he faced during the Talavera campaign of 1809. He simply did not have the manpower required to decisively defeat the French in the Iberian Peninsula. Even with the addition of the reformed Portuguese troops integrated into the British army, he still lacked the manpower to overcome the massive armies that France brought against the allies. Further, from years of observing the slow attrition of the French by the Spanish guerillas and the mistreatment of French prisoners he realized the danger that could present itself if his soldiers mistreated the Spanish. In a very tangible way, Wellington needed the support of the Spanish army. Wellington had also observed that the Spanish army rarely acted as a unified body towards a common goal, and more often acted as separate entities pursuing limited regional objectives. Wellington would grow to believe that a singular commander of all the Spanish armies was needed, and he should be that man.

The campaign of 1812 was perhaps one the most critical periods during the Peninsular war. By the end of 1812 Wellington occupied the same winter positions that he occupied exactly one year earlier but the effect of his actions on the Peninsula left King Joseph reeling, setting the conditions for Wellington's eventual unification of the Spanish army under his command and expulsion of the French a year later.¹⁰¹ By the end of 1812, Wellington's armies regained territory around Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz,

¹⁰¹ Sir Charles Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, vol. 6, *September 1, 1812 to August 5, 1813 Siege of Burgos, Retreat from Burgos, Vittoria, The Pyrenees* (1922; repr., London: Greenhill Books, 1996), 167.

Salamanca, Madrid, Valladolid and Seville and took possession of their stores, making his force stronger by nearly 3,000 pieces of captured cannon and reducing the French force by nearly 20,000 soldiers captured as prisoners and sent to Britain.¹⁰²

Wellington's victory at Salamanca bolstered his popularity amongst the Spanish people who then found it in their direct interests to render material aide to the British, seemingly alleviating some of the consternation Wellington felt toward the Spanish population during his foray at Talavera in 1809.¹⁰³ The results of the victory reverberated through the government at Cadiz. From his brother Henry, Wellington learned that the government had placed the credit for the victory completely in the hands of Wellington and planned to award him the Golden Fleece as a result.¹⁰⁴ The victory at Salamanca had set the conditions for Wellington's entry into Madrid after Salamanca held obvious political benefits and presented a clear message to both the Spanish and the French that the tide of battle was beginning to turn in the Peninsula in favor of the allies.

On 12 August 1812 Wellington entered Madrid, flanked by Carlos de Espana, the French born Spanish general and the famous guerilla leader Julian Sanchez.¹⁰⁵ The

¹⁰² Wellington to Lord Liverpool, Sir Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, *The Dispatches of the Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington K.G. During his various Campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, the Low Countries and France from 1799-1815 Volume IX*, compiled by Lieutenant Colonel Gurwood (London: John Murray, 1825), 573, accessed 7 April 2017, <https://archive.org/details/dispatchesoffie09welluoft>.

¹⁰³ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 47.

¹⁰⁴ F. A. Wellesley, *The Diary and Correspondence of Henry Wellesley the First Lord Cowley 1790-1846* (London: Hutchinson and Company), 65, accessed 15 March 2017, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.503281>.

¹⁰⁵ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington, and the Spanish Army*, 49.

simple effects of this action cannot be underestimated. In his choice of companions, Wellington made a clear statement about the unification of the forces. By incorporating a relatively well respected member of the traditional Spanish military and a well-known guerilla Wellington demonstrated the value that all facets of the Spanish army had in the allied army. Perhaps more pragmatically, Wellington avoided the trap in which his entrance into Madrid would be another occupation from an external power vice a liberation of the traditional Spanish capitol. Wellington and his cohort were greeted with absolute adulation from the grateful Spaniards, who cheered the entrance into the city, embracing the British soldiers and giving them ample food and drink.¹⁰⁶ The successes of Salamanca and the occupation of Madrid reinvigorated calls to make Wellington the commander of the Spanish army despite the fact that to many in the Spanish government and the Spanish military, Wellington exercised almost defacto command of the Spanish force even without a formal edict from the Junta.¹⁰⁷

The idea of formal command was in large part championed by Henry Wellesley, ambassador to the Cortes at Cadiz who wholeheartedly believed that although cooperation was currently strong, it may be fleeting. Any future allied campaign against the French on the Peninsula should only be undertaken if Wellington possessed formal command of the entire army.¹⁰⁸ This was not a new idea and had been discussed to some degree since the onset of the British operations against the French in 1808. This was

¹⁰⁶ Napier, *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula*, 203.

¹⁰⁷ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 49.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

particularly true once the Anglo-Portuguese alliance began to bear fruit on the battlefield with the disciplined and integrated units of the Portuguese under Marshall William Carr Beresford. The dealings with Spain would prove more complex for a variety of reasons. Wellington's negotiations with the Cortes over the issue of command would extend throughout the summer of 1812 until the staunch British supporter Andres de la Vega was elected to the presidency and pushed the issue to a vote on 19 September 1812.¹⁰⁹ The offer of command to Wellington did not alleviate the issues surrounding the limitation of command as Wellington would come to believe that his command authority would stretch to the training, organization, and distribution of armed forces throughout the Peninsula while the Spanish government clearly believed that the authority of command only extended to ordering the Spanish force in the field. This left the complexities of force distribution and training to an amalgamation of sometimes contradictory decisions made by the Cortes and the generals commanding the Spanish armies.¹¹⁰

During this period, Wellington was not in Madrid to reconsolidate while negotiating over the terms of his command of the Spanish army. On 31 August 1813 Wellington split his army, leaving half with Hill in Madrid and departed with the intent of defeating Marshall Bertrand Clausel and preventing him from threatening attacks across the Douro river.¹¹¹ Without the formal command of the Spanish, Wellington was

¹⁰⁹ F. A. Wellesley, *The Diary and Correspondence of Henry Wellesley*, 65-66.

¹¹⁰ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 57.

¹¹¹ Napier, *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula*, 204.

outnumbered by the French, even including the addition of the Portuguese.¹¹² Wellington must pursue Clausel before he was reinforced by additional French forces or lose the effect of Salamanca.¹¹³ Wellington pursued Clausel but was continuously hampered by the difficulties of sickness and exhaustion involved in marching an army through the oppressive Spanish summer heat.¹¹⁴ Throughout September, Wellington continued to move in pursuit of Clausel while extending his own supply lines until he invested Burgos on 19 September 1812.¹¹⁵ Wellington's siege of the castle at Burgos was hampered by the lack of a sufficient siege train, resulting in rising British and Portuguese casualties and little damage to the French defenders of the Spanish fort.¹¹⁶ Wellington's extended supply lines caused him major issues with resupplying the inefficient artillery he did possess.¹¹⁷ Wellington attempted several futile attacks on the fort, but eventually raised the siege on 22 October 1812.¹¹⁸ The failure to secure a defensible base of operations at Burgos required Wellington to withdraw to winter camps at the Portuguese border, relinquishing virtually all of the territory gained in 1812.

¹¹² Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington, and the Spanish Army*, 50.

¹¹³ Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, 6:3.

¹¹⁴ Napier, *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula*, 205.

¹¹⁵ Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, 6:21.

¹¹⁶ Napier, *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula*, 208-215.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Despite the failure at Burgos he would accept the command of the Spanish army formally on 22 November 1812.¹¹⁹ The situation surrounding the allied forces in the Peninsula proved to be significantly more strained in November than it was when the offer was first offered in September. The offer to Wellington created significant rifts in the Spanish officer corps as they faced losing their traditional position of power in Spanish society due to the liberal reforms of the Constitution as well as the insult of a foreigner appointed over Spanish generals. This seemed a direct affront to the nationalist ideals that dominated Spain since the invasion.¹²⁰ The result was a decidedly anti-British sentiment in the senior levels of the Spanish army so intensive that even some of Wellington's most ardent supporters were known to go as far as accuse the British of fomenting the war in Spain solely for their own national gains.¹²¹

Wellington faced another setback with the loss of Madrid to the French on 31 October. Wellington left Hill and 16,000 troops in the city to defend, but King Joseph and his armies made this position untenable, causing Hill to rapidly abandon the city and burn most of the stores.¹²² Madrid's fall led to riots in the streets amongst the population that very shortly before had rejoiced at Wellington's arrival in the city as the near starving population saw Hill burn stores of food to avoid them falling into Joseph's hands. The city elite who shortly before had committed themselves to the support of the British were

¹¹⁹ Esdaile, *Wellington, and the Spanish Army*, 59.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, 6:107.

forced to flee with Hill's army to avoid French retribution.¹²³ The French reoccupation of the city would not last long, as Joseph abandoned the city by mid-November to mass troops against Wellington but the effect would undermine support for Wellington as the commander of the Spanish and support for the British in the Peninsula in general.¹²⁴

Joseph's pursuit of Wellington failed to produce any tangible results and his abandoning Madrid severely undermined his standing as the Spanish king. Wellington assumed winter quarters in essentially the same position as in 1811, but the 1812 campaign weakened the French occupation in Spain to a significant degree. Wellington reconsolidated his forces, strengthened his political base in both Spain and England, and prepared for operations against the French in 1813. This was especially true in context to his command of the Spanish army. The winter of 1812 and 1813 provided him the opportunity that he needed to look objectively at the Spanish army and decide where he needed to act.

To understand Wellington's motivations and goals for his command of the Spanish army it is critical to examine the detailed interchange between Wellington and the Cortes in the months between the initial offer and when it was accepted. The process looked similar to a business negotiation with responsibilities and limits offered and retracted based on the fluctuating political situation in both Spain and Britain. Throughout the process, Wellington continued to face the very real threat of the French army moving against his numerically inferior force.

¹²³ Napier, *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula*, 226.

¹²⁴ Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, 6:110.

Following the allied victory at Salamanca, with Wellington realized that his position in the Spanish government had never been higher. Wellington needed the Spanish army to accomplish his goals in the Peninsula. In a letter to Earl Bathurst on 23 August, 1813 he lamented the enormity of the undertaking in which he was engaged, made even more difficult without any manner of assistance from the Spaniards.¹²⁵ Further, in his letter to Henry Wellesley it appeared to Wellington that Spain needed him as well. Writing to Wellesley, Wellington took a turn to the dramatic and said “What can be done for this lost nation? As for raising men or supplies, or taking one measure to enable them to carry on the war, that is out of the question. Indeed, there is no one to excite them to exertion, or to take advantage of their enthusiasm or enmity against the French.”¹²⁶

Wellington thought that the lack of capable Spanish leadership was yet another sign that he would need to step in to be the leader that would enable the “excitement” of the Spanish people. In the same message, he made it apparent that the Spanish general officers were simply not up to the task of being the commander in chief, questioning who amongst them oversaw the direction of the Peninsula operations, or was even capable of doing so.¹²⁷ Additionally, when Wellington entered Madrid, he positioned himself to look like the de facto commander in chief by giving a proclamation to the Spanish people after entering the city flanked by two major Spanish figures of the resistance. This

¹²⁵ Wellington to Wellesley, 23 August 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IX*, 369.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 370.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

proclamation had all the trappings of a wartime commander trying to rally the population to resist the oppressor, as Wellington called upon every able-bodied Spaniard to raise his hand and do everything in his power to resist the French.¹²⁸ In a very real way, Wellington at this moment was the closest thing that Spain had to a commander in chief, months before the position was offered.

Yet Wellington saw failure as a very real possibility. Wellington realized the state that the Spanish army was in and feared the repercussions both in Spain and Britain if he should be overpowered and forced from Spain, potentially even to peace discussions between Britain and France.¹²⁹ To this, he cited recent historical memory to Wellesley, detailing his previous experiences in which he was forced back to Portugal as a result of the “gross ignorance” of the Spanish officers, the lack of discipline of the Spanish soldiers and the complete ineptitude of the Spanish government.¹³⁰ Wellington argued for both the need for a unifying command force in the Peninsula, the dangers associated with increased entanglement, and future potential areas of emphasis to avoid allowing the Spanish army to become the instrument of failure for the British cause. Wellington already possessed some measure of operational control over the Spanish army. By August he was issuing memorandums to General Don Carlos de Espana ordering the movements of Spanish troop formations and cavalry regiments, even going as far as

¹²⁸ Wellington’s Proclamation in Madrid, 29 August 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches IX*, 381.

¹²⁹ Wellington to Wellesley, 23 August 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches IX*, 371.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

directing the actions of guerilla groups.¹³¹ By mid-September he was directly advising the Spanish government on future operational plans and how best to deal with recaptured enemy fortifications.¹³² At this moment, Wellington was the only real choice for the position of the commander of the Spanish army.

Wellington positioned himself as the future commander of the Spanish army in several other regards, including supporting the actions of the popular government despite his own personal misgivings. In 1812, the Cortes implemented perhaps the most progressive constitution in European history up to this point, a document that provided universal citizenship to all the citizens of the Spanish colonies, providing the foundations for universal state sponsored education and clearly delineating the rights and responsibilities of the regency. It was populist in nature, clearly designed to appeal to the average Spanish citizen and perhaps engender some measure of support for the beleaguered government while also stirring nationalist pride. Wellington was not a populist and believed that there existed great danger in allowing the will of the people to decide many of the detailed manners of the government, calling the whole exercise in creating the constitution done the way “a painter paints a picture,” essentially without a real plan and designed only to look good. Wellington believed that the constitution itself was a “folly” and “foolish” yet pursued with the same blind zeal that the Spaniards

¹³¹According to Wellington, Carlos de Espana and the Army of Galicia had been under his direction since June. Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IX*, 492; Wellington's Memorandum to Carlos de Espana, 31 August 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IX*, 387.

¹³² Wellington to Wellesley, 9 September 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IX*, 413.

pursued the Inquisition, with such a staunch determination to preserve it even though it looked nearly impossible to implement successfully.¹³³

His personal misgivings aside, Wellington ensured that the constitution was proclaimed in every city reconquered by the allied army. In Salamanca, Wellington had the constitution proclaimed first and instituted general elections immediately after, and at Madrid he had it proclaimed immediately upon his entry into the city itself.¹³⁴ Wellington believed that this was a brilliant move on his part and this was echoed by statements from Henry Wellesley. Henry said proclaiming the constitution was perhaps Wellington's smartest move yet and "Whether the constitution is good or bad, it seems generally approved in Spain and this is all we have to look to."¹³⁵ In becoming a champion for Spain and its government Wellington reinforced his position as the only rational choice for the commander of the Spanish army, and demonstrated himself to not be a threat to the government. It also made it appear as though Wellington was committed to the cause of Spanish liberation, and would therefore not be tempted to turn away from the cause if the war became increasingly difficult.

¹³³ Wellington to Wellesley, 9 September 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IX*, 413; Wellington to Bathurst, 29 June 1813, Sir Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, *The Dispatches of the Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington K.G. During his various Campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, the Low Countries and France from 1799-1815 Volume X*, compiled by Lieutenant Colonel Gurwood (London: John Murray, 1825), 474, accessed 11 April 2017, <https://archive.org/details/dispatchesoffiel10welluoft>.

¹³⁴ Wellington to Wellesley, 23 August 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IX*, 369; Wellington to Wellesley, 12 September 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IX*, 418.

¹³⁵ Wellington to Wellesley, 12 September 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IX*, 418; Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 49.

Wellington discussed what he saw as his goals and the perceived flaws of the Spanish army with Don de Carvajal and the Earl of Bathurst in December and August of 1812. These two documents provide insight to what Wellington would see as the way to correct the deficiencies that have hindered the Spanish since before Talavera with the limited of time available before the campaign season of 1813 began.

In August of 1812, following a series of notes to the Earl of Bathurst about the performance of the Spanish army and the overall outcome of operations in the summer of 1812 Wellington wrote that:

I do not expect much from the exertions of the Spaniards. They cry viva and are very fond of us and hate the French but they are the most incapable of useful exertions of any nation I have known, the most vain and at the same time the most ignorant, particularly of military affairs, and above all military affairs in their own country. . . . I am afraid that the utmost that we can do is teach them to avoid being beat.¹³⁶

This low standard guided Wellington throughout his reforms in the next year. He realized that he would never be able to transform the Spanish army to a superior army with the time and resources available, but he could implement several targeted reforms that would result in the Spaniards not becoming the reason for British failure against the French.

Wellington wrote a detailed message to Don de Carvajal on 4 December 1812 with his views on the Spanish army. Wellington began with a statement of forthrightness, perhaps to soften the harshness of the comments to follow by saying that he will provide a fair representation of what he has seen regarding the army underscore the criticality of the importance of the truth, no matter how unappealing it may be to the Spanish

¹³⁶ Wellington to Bathurst, 18 August 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IX*, 366.

government. Wellington followed with his assessment of the morale of the Spanish army. Should he rely on the Spanish in any tangible operational sense, Wellington would need to ensure that they would not desert in droves mid-campaign or rout as they did at Talavera. Wellington told Carvajal: "I am concerned to have to inform you that the morale of the Spanish army is in its very lowest state, and the efficiency is, consequently, much deteriorated."¹³⁷ He also assessed why the situation was so bleak, believing that many of the officers and soldiers have not been paid for months if not years, a condition that Wellington felt would have destroyed the discipline and morale of all armies.¹³⁸ Wellington believed that it was simply impossible to expect soldiers to act with discipline and suborn themselves to their officers when the system that they were attempting to serve could not supply their most basic wants and needs.

Wellington felt that the problem extended far beyond the issue of pay. He believed that even should the pay and supply issues be corrected the ill-discipline would not disappear. The foundation of the organization had, by December of 1812, eroded so greatly that simply turning the pay back on would not fix the problem. Wellington felt that the Spanish troops had endured such privations for so long that they could simply could not be depended on as soldiers in battle.¹³⁹ Moreover, the officers did virtually nothing to fix the issues that continued to hinder the army, instead allowing the poor

¹³⁷ Wellington to Don Carvajal, 4 December 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IX*, 596.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 597.

discipline to continue and the rapid decline of the army to advance.¹⁴⁰ This not only made the army incapable of performing in the field, it also showed many of the officers as completely inept in the eyes of the soldiers, destroying the confidence in the chain of command. The issues with the army were so dire that Wellington believed that success was nearly impossible. He added “I consider that I have undertaken a task of which the result is as little promising as that which was ever undertaken by any individual.”¹⁴¹ Despite this dire assessment, Wellington remained committed to the task at hand and proposed a series of tangible reforms that he believed would change the disposition of the Spanish army. He reiterated the requests in more detail on the 27 December.

Additionally, as to the “evil” of the ill-discipline that existed in the Spanish army, Wellington was left with few options to remedy it. Wellington told the Earl Bathurst that it would be simply impossible to implement a system like that of Portugal in which the British officers exercised direct control over the Portuguese and enforced discipline within the ranks because the prejudices against the British were simply too severe in the Spanish army.¹⁴² Further, the Spanish did not believe the British system created more disciplined soldiers, meaning that the British had no real authority in the subject at all and certainly should not be dictating to the Spanish. Wellington saw only one way to begin to

¹⁴⁰ Wellington to Don Carvajal, 4 December 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IX*, 597.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Wellington to Bathurst, 17 October 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IX*, 492.

remedy the issue, to enforce the regular payment of the Spanish soldier.¹⁴³ Although this would not address the deep seeded issues in the Spanish army, it would be instrumental in keeping them from deserting. Yet this was far from a simple task as Wellington believed that the Spanish government was incapable of the task due to “abuses of the government and the misfortunes of the country.”¹⁴⁴ The answer must lie in the British government paying subsidies to arm and pay the Spanish army, which Wellington suggested they do in the amount of 50,000 troops.¹⁴⁵ In acknowledging that the pay system must be restructured for the good of the army, Wellington would set in motion the dynamic that would drive many of his future initiatives as the commander of the Spanish army.

Part of the delay of Wellington’s acceptance of command of the Spanish army had to do with the political necessity of clearing the appointment through the Prince Regent. The offer itself and discussion that created it within the Cortes surrounded the benefits of unity of command, and the time sensitive nature of implementing it in order to capitalize on the recent successes in the Peninsula, but left the end date of the appointment itself as somewhat vague, saying that it would continue as long as Wellington was “co-operating in the defense of the Peninsula.”¹⁴⁶ Wellington gave the Spanish government a conditional letter of acceptance almost immediately following his receipt of the offer, believing that this was more of a formality as he had already been

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, 6:196.

communicating with the Spanish generals on the future of his operations in the Peninsula for some time and expected that they fall in line with his particular view of the campaigns. Wellington did demand solidarity from the Spanish generals and government following his acceptance of the command, as he wrote to Cadiz that he expected “the full support of the Spanish government, the Cortes, and the nation.”¹⁴⁷ Wellington did however make several requests and addendums to the initial proposal regarding the limits of his command and employed the efforts of his brother to negotiate with the Regency council to ensure that the demands were met. Wellesley, for his part made overt declarations that the British government would look poorly on any member of the regency that failed to support the demands, or dared to challenge them.¹⁴⁸ How much of this is actually from the British government or merely blustering is unknown, but it is clear that Wellington deftly utilized the power vested in his brother to maneuver in the political realm to achieve his goals.

Wellington’s future interactions with the Spanish government regarding the exact nature of his command authority centered around Don Juan De Carvajal, the Spanish Minister of War. Wellington wrote to Carvajal on 25 December 1812 regarding what he viewed as the requirements he needed to effect change in the Spanish army given the relatively short amount of time before the critical campaign season of 1813 began in the spring. Wellington began this message with his discussion of the gravity of the situation by saying:

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 205.

The government and the Cortes have done me the honor to confer upon me the command of the Spanish armies; and at the same time they have thus manifested to the world the confidence they repose in me, they have imposed upon me the performance of duties for which I am responsible not only to Spain, but to my country and the entirety of the world.¹⁴⁹

Wellington believed that in accepting the position of commander, not only was the fate of the war in the Peninsula at stake, but his reputation in both the Peninsula and Britain. This being the case, he would not accept a position in which he was hindered from success through political bureaucracy. Wellington explained to Carvajal very clearly that “[I]f [the Cortes] they do not feel themselves authorized, or do not have the confidence in me to trust in me the powers I think are necessary, I beg leave to relinquish the command of the Spanish armies which has been conferred upon me.”¹⁵⁰

In this, Wellington was clear that he would not accept half measures in his ability to affect the reforms desperately needed within the Spanish. With his reputation at stake Wellington preferred declining the command position instead of being placed in a situation in which failure and disgrace was simply inevitable. Wellington was very clear about the necessity of unifying the armies of the Peninsula as early as his messages to Colonel John Malcolm following the battle of Talavera in 1809.¹⁵¹ He followed this

¹⁴⁹ Wellington to Don de Carvajal, 25 December 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches* X, 1.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Wellington to Colonel John Malcolm, 3 December 1809, Brett-James, *Wellington at War*, 179.

ultimatum with assurances that he will remain committed to the task regardless of the length of time or possibility of failure.¹⁵²

To understand Wellington's goals, it is critical to examine the requirements in accepting the position in detail. Wellington's first requirement was related to the promotion and appointment of officers within the Spanish army. Wellington requested that he be granted the authority "that officers should be promoted and be appointed to commands solely by my recommendation."¹⁵³ Initially this seems like a shocking amount of power to invest in one individual. It would seemingly contravene the authorities vested in the monarchy in the commissioning of officers at all ranks as was recently reinforced through article 171 of the Spanish Constitution that put the appointment of officers and generals directly in the providence of the King.¹⁵⁴ Wellington was aware of this fact and that such a request would be impossible under any circumstances and limited his request to "the extraordinary promotions that the government are in the habit of conferring for extraordinary service." and not encompassing the standard regimental promotions that are governed under Spanish law.¹⁵⁵ Likely this was an attempt to mitigate the meritless promotions based solely on political connections rather than actual or longstanding

¹⁵² Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 87.

¹⁵³ Wellington to Don de Carvajal, 25 December 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 2.

¹⁵⁴ The Political Constitution of Spain, accessed 17 March 2017, http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/c1812/12159396448091522976624/p0000001.htm#I_5_.

¹⁵⁵ Wellington to Don de Carvajal, 25 December 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 2.

military service. This was not unusual as in regards to the British army, Wellington was a pragmatic supporter of merit based promotions and often abhorred the concept of politically motivated promotions, but believed that all merit based promotions should originate with him as the commander of the British army in the Peninsula.¹⁵⁶ In effect, Wellington was not seeking to reinvent and centralize the military promotion system, but he was looking to reinforce it and make it function as it should by taking the political element out. He wanted to reward promotions based on merit as “rewarding the services of those who have exerted, or should exert themselves zealously in the service, and thus to stimulate others to similar exertions.”¹⁵⁷ Moreover, in demanding that he approve the promotions, he could retain some measure of control over the composition of the army itself, making sure that should the nature and will of the political climate change it would be near impossible to appoint officers quickly to a senior level that may undermine Wellington’s plans for the Peninsula.¹⁵⁸

The most powerful demands to Carvajal was the ability to appoint commanders of the field armies. Wellington had long abhorred the abilities of the officer corps of Spain, deriding them as incompetent and possibly corrupt. The ability to appoint officers to command positions would have allowed him to search the army for talent, and place

¹⁵⁶ Wellington to Lieutenant Colonel Torrens, 4 August 1810, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches VI*, 305.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ The large amount of political turmoil in 1812 created significant rifts in the Spanish government and the liberal reformers could push through what was considered one of the most radical documents in contemporary European history, the constitution of 1812. This was not without challenge and the more conservative Spaniards fought the reforms openly.

those whom he believed to be both competent and trustworthy in position. Further, the ability to appoint commanders being vested solely in Wellington meant that he had the ability to countermand the promotion system itself by positioning those he felt more capable in positions above those who perhaps held seniority under the Spanish military system. Wellington's experience with Gregorio Cuesta in 1809 had taught him that aged loyalists were ingrained deeply in the officer corps, and he possessed neither the time nor the national goodwill to remove them from service, but perhaps he could accomplish the next best thing, which would be to marginalize them through their removal from field command. Despite his logic, this would ironically exceed the authority that Wellington possessed in his own Anglo-Portuguese army in which the respective governments of Britain and Portugal had to approve command billets.¹⁵⁹

Wellington's second request was also designed to increase the overall effectiveness of the officer corps in the Spanish army. Wellington demanded of Carvajal that he be given "the power of dismissing from the service those I think deserving of such a punishment."¹⁶⁰ This too vested extreme powers into one centralized authority, exceeding Wellington's ability to discipline the officers in his own army. Dismissal under the British system was linked to a trial by courts martial and it was so difficult to remove well-meaning but incompetent officers from the service that they were often reassigned

¹⁵⁹ Wellington would describe this phenomenon regarding the appointment of British officers to command positions in the Portuguese army, done completely outside of his purview and at the behest of the Horse Guards and the Portuguese regency. Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches IX*, 187.

¹⁶⁰ Wellington to Don de Carvajal, 25 December 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 2.

rather than be dismissed.¹⁶¹ Wellington realized that the request to cashier officers based only on his opinion of performance would be met with incredulity but refused to marginalize it by placing caveats. Wellington claimed that the current system which required that a trial be performed by a council of war to determine whether the officer in question was unfit or incapable was simply too slow given the crisis that the army faced. Wellington told Carvajal “it was nearly impossible to assemble the council of war for the trial of any officer, and if such a council could be established, the duration of the proceedings were likely to be of such duration as to defeat the ends of justice and all punishment, which in an army must be an early example.”¹⁶² Given the limited time available for dramatic reforms within the Spanish officer corps, and to increase the discipline of the army, Wellington needed the ability to make an example. He clearly understood the power that a visible punishment meted quickly would have in changing the behavior of others and believed that this would be required to change generations of atrophy and incompetence in the short months before the spring campaign season. The current system lacked the timeliness so desperately required to affect change.

Wellington was already well aware of his detractors in Spanish society who feared the possibility of a military dictatorship with an increased fear caused by the appointment of a foreigner to lead the army and trusting him with such a wide range of powers. Wellington said: “The process of dismissing an officer from the service must

¹⁶¹ Haythornethwaite, *The Armies of Wellington*, 35.

¹⁶² Wellington to Don de Carvajal, 25 December 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 2.

exist in all armies, independent of the mode of cashiering him by trial, but I admit that there may be reasonable objections . . . against entrusting this power to myself.”¹⁶³

Wellington’s brief time spent at Cadiz during the negotiations of the command position taught him that following the liberal reforms that surrounded the implementation of the 1812 Constitution, a wide range of detractors began to surface in Spanish society and the news press, who questioned Wellington’s appointment and the place that a foreigner should have in the Spanish military in general. Wellington called these men “libelers” who wrote diatribes in the Spanish press describing Wellington and the Spanish army as the enemies of the new found idea of Spanish liberty.¹⁶⁴ The main issue was that at a time in which Spanish society was seeking to widen the gap between the military and civilian authorities, Wellington continued the push to strengthen the power wielded by the army over the course of what he viewed as military matters to effectively manage a wartime campaign.¹⁶⁵ Despite the friction that the request to have the authority to dismiss officers caused, Wellington was adamant, believing that the success of the Spanish army hinged on his ability to hold officers directly accountable for their actions in employing the Spanish army.

Wellington’s third demand surrounded the ability to sustain the army in the field. Talavera and later campaigns showed Wellington that the current Spanish system was incapable of effectively supporting any major field operation and significant changes had

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 97.

¹⁶⁵ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 155.

to be made to the corrupt and incompetent Spanish military logistics system. Wellington told Carvajal that “I required that the resources of the state which are applicable to the payment or equipment or supply of the troops be applied in such a manner as I might recommend.”¹⁶⁶ The convoluted system of Spanish supply that had responsible parties in both the Captains Generals of the provinces and the central government was simply too inefficient and lacked unity of direction, leading to the issues of poor pay and accoutrement that Wellington observed at Talavera in 1809. Further, Wellington understood the effect that poor pay and lack of supply would have on any army, driving them to plunder and supporting general ill-discipline. In the British army, Wellington would routinely seek measures to increase the payment of his own troops to ensure they acted in a disciplined manner to decrease the chance of plunder.¹⁶⁷ By centralizing the funding and supply of the army, Wellington could apply his expertise on military logistics directly to the improvement the Spanish army, which was what he required in the brief time remaining before the 1813 campaign season. Wellington clarified this request to Carvajal saying: “the resources of the government are not in their present state sufficient for the maintenance and support in the field of all troops now appearing as effectives . . . nor are the whole of these troops in a state of efficiency or discipline to effectively oppose the enemy in the field.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Wellington to Don de Carvajal, 25 December 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 2.

¹⁶⁷ Wellington would push for pay increases in the Non Commissioned Officer corps of the British army to ensure that they maintained the discipline of the line troops.

¹⁶⁸ Wellington to Don de Carvajal, 25 December 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 4.

To Wellington, discipline and supply were inexorably linked, and only through centralizing the supply and pay system could he improve the effectiveness of the army in the field.

Wellington added an addendum to this request. He demanded of the Spanish government that he be given the specific authority to choose which of the Spanish armies would be employed, allowing him to allocate the maximum resources available towards the units that Wellington would place in critical operations in the future. Wellington said “all I desire is to be allowed to recommend the financial and other resources be applied to a specific corps that I might point out” adding that should this fail to happen, “I shall certainly be in the unpleasant situation of giving commands to troops, which commands the troops cannot obey.”¹⁶⁹ Wellington realized that he possessed neither the time nor the supplies to completely refit the Spanish army, but if granted the ability to resource specific units, he could dramatically improve the effectiveness of parts of the Spanish army that he could use to supplement the Anglo-Portuguese army.

Wellington’s final request to the Spanish government was that he be allowed to keep and maintain a personal staff of British and Spanish officers to assist him in the management of the Spanish army.¹⁷⁰ This was hardly the most extravagant of his requests before accepting the command of the Spanish army, and would again allow Wellington to position loyal and competent Spaniards coupled with his more trustworthy British officers to assist him in the employment and management of the Spanish army.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 3.

Wellingtons further requested that “the government should direct that all military reports of all descriptions should be sent to me, and I will of course; make reports to your Excellency.”¹⁷¹ In this, Wellington reaffirmed his position as the central point of contact to the Spanish government from the military, hoping to avoid or mitigate the disgruntled Spanish officers who may attempt to minimize his actual position as the commander of the army and deal directly with the central government. Wellington added “No officer, according to the Ordenanzas, should address himself to the government excepting through me and the answers and orders of the government should reach him through the same channel.”¹⁷² This may seem obvious, but was counterintuitive to many of the Spanish officers who had, in their respective positions as field commanders or captains general, the habit of communicating directly with the central government, navigating operational needs and missions by dealing with the many authorities and councils that had a hand in military administration.

Although the above was the final request regarding command authorities, Wellington wasted no time in initiating his plan for a dramatic reorganization of the composition and disposition of the Spanish army itself. In a 27 December 1812 letter he outlined his plans for the future of the Spanish army writing “I propose to the government that the Army in Catalonia should be, as now, the 1st Army; the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, the 2nd Army; the 5th, 6th, and 7th, the 3rd Army; with the army of the reserve in Andalusia

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

and Galicia.”¹⁷³ The reason that he provided for this massive reorganization was clearly articulated as well, saying:

I am inclined to believe that the organization of the armies ordered . . . is not the most convenient for the service. The sphere of the 3rd army, as now organized encompasses objects entirely incompatible with each other. It would be impossible for the General or Staff of that army to conduct its duties on the Duero and in La Mancha.¹⁷⁴

Wellington believed that the basic organization of the armies in the provinces was simply ineffective, with a span of control that would exceed the abilities of any general to manage and proposed unifying smaller field armies under one command to streamline his ability to position and employ them.

Wellington addressed the second issue that he believed was dramatically hindering the operational success of the army—the separation of the civil and military authorities in Spain. Wellington firmly believed that the recent liberal reforms had divorced the civil and military authorities and undermined the time sensitive process to develop and employ an effective Spanish army. Wellington referred to this system as creating “practical evils, resulting from . . . separating the military from the political authority, or the financial from both, or in other words the practice of appointing different persons to exercise military and political authority, and to perform the financial duties in the provinces, each independent of the other.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Wellington to Don de Carvajal, 27 December 1812, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches* X, 9.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

Wellington also believed that regardless of the intention, differentiating the authority between civilian and military personnel could only create a situation in which they perpetually clashed with one another, to the detriment of the army itself, if not controlled by a powerful central government which simply did not exist in Spain.¹⁷⁶ Wellington noted that even in the best of situations the practice of separating the civilian and military authorities was often impossible and for the improvement of the military, the power to fund, raise, and control an army must remain in the hands of the military itself. He recommended that to address this issue the commander of the proposed 1st, 2nd, and 3rd armies be the captain general of the provinces thus unifying the architecture for the field army and the province under one authority.¹⁷⁷ As to financing the army, in its inefficient state the pay and supply of the army proved to be a potential critical point of operational failure. To this, Wellington recommended that the government appoint an intendant general to manage the finances of each of the new Spanish armies. This new intendant general would be responsible for the both the finances of the province as governed by the captain general and the field army, uniting the financial architecture under one responsible person. He further directed that the intendant general be placed directly under the captain general, and that the captain general be held directly responsible for the activities of the intendant general. This was a bold attempt at addressing the massive organizational flaws in the Spanish army. In many ways,

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Wellington does not specify which provinces, likely to infer that the commander would be the captain-general of the province with the largest manpower or resource contribution to that individual army.

Wellington positioned himself directly contrary to the reforms that shaped the Constitution of 1812. Despite this, he believed that this was crucial to employing a uniformly structured force against the French, refining the command structure and ensuring overall efficiency of the Spanish army. Wellington created a standard organization of brigades and divisions in the Spanish army to make the army more manageable and guarantee the strength of units he employed.¹⁷⁸ These unit strength numbers failed to match their French counterparts at only around two thirds the size of a French brigade or division, which underscored the belief that the officer corps of Spain was unable to manage such large numbers of men, nor was the system able to sustain them.¹⁷⁹

Shortly following his assumption of command, Wellington modified his proposal slightly and refined the new field army structure. On 7 January 1813 Wellington wrote again to Don Carvajal detailing the changes, saying because of the short time available “the 2nd and 3rd armies should be the 2nd army, the 4th the 3rd army, and the 5th, 6th, and 7th the 4th army.”¹⁸⁰ Perhaps more importantly he refined who should command the armies, aligning the positions with captains general of the provinces, reinforcing his previously stated desire to align the commands of the field armies and the captains general of the provinces who support them.¹⁸¹ In the following weeks, Wellington

¹⁷⁸ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 91.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Wellington to Don Carvajal, 07 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 23.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

communicated with Don Carvajal numerous times to appoint the correct people in the intendants general positions, communicating directly with the highest levels of Spanish central authority. This emphasis underscored what Wellington believed was the most critical reform that could directly affect the Spanish army in the time available, ensuring the correct pay and supply of the troops while minimizing mismanagement or corruption attached with the commissariat and financial system. In reforming this, and emplacing competent personnel in the correct positions, he believed that he could keep the Spanish troops in the field, minimize desertion and prevent the lack of supply from being a major contributing factor of a future operation.

Wellington attempted yet more reforms of the Spanish army to improve overall readiness in the upcoming operations. What he proposed to Don Carvajal was essentially a mirror image of the British regimental system in which the second battalion was created and utilized as a depot for the first battalion of the regiment. Wellington began with describing the current Spanish system and its flaws to Don Carvajal. The current system prescribed a single battalion composed of eight companies with a colonel, lieutenant colonel, and major with each of the companies comprising 150 men and commanded by a captain with four subalterns to assist.¹⁸² This system demonstrated many flaws to Wellington in operations as that number of men was simply too many to be managed effectively, especially given the level of competency in the officers and the level of discipline of the troops. Wellington wanted a two battalion system comprised of 10 companies (six in the first battalion, four in the second battalion) with the second as a

¹⁸² Wellington to Carvajal, 19 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 211.

depot for the first. Wellington believed that creating a second battalion would solve a multitude of issues, the first of which was the question of what to do with those incapable of performing field duties due to age or infirmity. The current Spanish military system had no way of dealing with these men, placing strain on the operational army as they continually had to supply and sustain men that were incapable of fighting. Creating a second battalion would allow these men to have a place in the army without creating a detriment to those engaged in fighting against the French. Additionally, the second battalion would provide the answer to the question of who would garrison the cities while the field army was operated against the French while also providing a reserve for the first battalion. Finally, the creation of the second battalion would provide Wellington a place to house the incompetent officers and undisciplined soldiers that would prove a liability in the battle against the French. Of the officers, Wellington noted that he would like to have them removed from service, but the Spanish government did not have the funds to pay the pensions and as such he was forced to contend with finding work for substandard leaders.¹⁸³ In theory, the second battalion system would provide Wellington:

[A] regiment would thus become much more manageable in maneuver. If the commander should have any occasion to leave troops in his district, he would have the facility of leaving the least disciplined and weakly of the men of the regiment under his command, who would be in a state of organization to provide some service.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Wellington to Carvajal, 19 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 212-213.

In reforming the Spanish military, Wellington was dedicated to streamlining the Spanish system, creating efficiencies designed to keep the most effective troops in battle while mitigating those who would prove to be a detriment to the operations.

Wellington faced many challenges in the summer and fall of 1812 as he prepared to accept the position as the commander of the Spanish army. Even his acceptance of the position itself was not done unconditionally and Wellington realized that his reputation as a military commander was attached to his success in Spain. Wellington also realized that he was accepting command of a shattered organization, torn apart by a litany of defeats, political infighting, and mismanagement. Yet Wellington felt he had no other choice; the numerical advantages of the French combined with a potentially hostile population meant that there was no other option than to take command of the Spanish army.

Wellington asked for a wide variety of authority that had not been vested in a single military figure since the times of Manuel de Godoy. To address the issue of the lack of competency of the Spanish officers, Wellington would redesign the basic composition of the army, limiting the span and scope of control, and combining many of the smaller organizations into more streamlined groups, eliminating much of the bureaucracy and allowing him to place the most talented officers in charge. Wellington would attempt to reform the supply and finance of the army by placing the position of the intendant general in the hands of military officers whom he could have a measure of control and by improving the regularity of the pay of the soldiers, he would attempt to keep them disciplined and in the field for longer periods. Moreover, he could hold the commanders responsible by promoting, appointing them to command positions and summarily discharging them if he felt the situation warranted it. If he had these abilities

vested in him, he felt that he could achieve the end state that he so clearly described to Earl Bathurst, of teaching the Spanish to avoid being beat and ensuring that they will not be the cause of a catastrophic British defeat. To the credit of the Spanish government, despite the distrust from liberal reformers, they capitulated to Wellington's demands, agreeing to all with the condition that they be allowed to approve of the Wellington's campaign plans before he took the field.

This political interplay ended the critical year of 1812. Although absolute victory was far from certain, allied operational victories combined with Napoleon's decision to withdraw forces from Spain to invade Russia placed the British as close to liberating Spain. Wellington set the conditions for success, but the spring of 1813 would test Wellington's authorities and create such a rift between him and the Spanish government that his command would rapidly end.

CHAPTER 4

INITIAL CHALLENGES, 1813

Wellington began his command on 1 January 1813 with the foundation built upon engagements that he made through negotiations with the Spanish government during the fall of 1812. He believed that through these powers he had the authority required to effectively organize and employ the Spanish army in a final push against the French. The Spanish government provided him a vast array of powers over the army, including the ability to promote and dismiss officers he felt deserving, unify the sustainment of the Spanish army under one person, and structure the army to mitigate the incompetence of the Spanish leadership. Wellington was to keep the Spanish government informed of his campaign plans and the government would issue all orders through him only. To Wellington, this arrangement was very clear. If Wellington employed the Spanish army effectively, he required these authorities to be unquestioned.

None of this occurred as Wellington imagined. The Spanish government made decisions that broke the previously agreed upon arrangements with Wellington and hindered him at every opportunity. The government of Spain moved units and men around without consulting Wellington, issued orders that bypassed Wellington's headquarters, appointed officers without contacting Wellington, and failed to abide by the arrangement made to sustain the army. Wellington asked this to be remedied, writing to the Spanish minister of war Don Juan de Carvajal almost daily. Wellington watched his plans almost collapse and was forced to face the possibility of leaving the Spanish army in garrison. By the time that Wellington took the field in 1813, his command of the

Spanish army was jeopardized and his relationship with the Spanish government had been pushed to its breaking point.

Wellington spent most of the time between 1 January 1813 and 20 May 1813 setting the conditions for a successful campaign against the French in the summer of 1813. Wellington wrote continuously to both the Spanish government and his subordinate commanders, attempting to not only streamline the army's vast and ineffective systems but also providing his input to the state of the Spanish government itself.

Wellington began his tenure of command of the Spanish army on 1 January 1813 with a proclamation made by the Spanish government to the Spanish army awarding him the position and the associated command authorities.¹⁸⁵ He would begin reforms of the Spanish force almost immediately, attempting to ensure a unified, integrated force prior to the commencement of his Spring offensive. The reforms proved troubling to implement and met with resistance from many in both the government and the Spanish army. By the spring of 1813 Wellington resumed attacks against the French whose position was critically weakened with the loss of Madrid and the retrograde of the French headquarters to Valencia. Wellington was hesitant to commit his force against the French in a large offensive maneuver in 1813 following his defeat at Burgos, believing that without significant reinforcement any major offensive would be foolhardy and attrite his force further, but by February 1813 Wellington realized the weakened state of the French and altered his plan in favor of an offensive operation designed to drive the French back

¹⁸⁵ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 108.

to the Pyrenees.¹⁸⁶ In his initial planning with Marshal Beresford he advised that Beresford take his force across the Portuguese-Spanish frontier in early May to cover the movement of Wellington's army toward the Tormes at Alba with the intent of seizing footholds in Zamora and Toro.¹⁸⁷

The campaign planning was shrouded in more political intrigue. In March of 1813 the Regency of 1812 was replaced with another Regency which then engaged in widespread political maneuverings in its efforts to undermine other government authorities and consolidate power.¹⁸⁸ The war would become almost a secondary objective to many in the Spanish government as they attempted to reinforce their own powerbase in society. Wellington continued with the ambitious planning and execution of what would become the Vitoria campaign, an effort to push the French back to the border.

Wellington's appointment should have created significant rifts in the Spanish army throughout the fall of 1812 as the officers reacted to the nearly simultaneous setbacks of losing their traditional position of power in Spanish society in the liberal reforms as well as the almost personal insult of having a foreigner appointed to a position over any Spanish general, a direct affront to the nationalist ideals that dominated Spain

¹⁸⁶ Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, 6:301.

¹⁸⁷ Napier, *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula*, 227-229; Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, 6:303.

¹⁸⁸ F. A. Wellesley, *The Diary and Correspondence of Henry Wellesley*, 67; Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, 6:205.

since the invasion.¹⁸⁹ This was exemplified in the actions of Francisco Lopez Ballasteros who openly challenged the Duke's appointment in October of 1812 in an open letter to the Spanish minister of war.¹⁹⁰ His grounds for the challenge was that he and the remainder of the Spanish generals were not consulted before the appointment of a foreigner.¹⁹¹ Ballasteros said that the threat of oppression from the British was equal to that of the French and that the Spanish should never subjugate themselves in such a shameful manner as the Portuguese did.¹⁹² The response from the government of Spain was swift and they immediately relieved Ballasteros of command and imprisoned him for suborning a mutiny.¹⁹³ Despite the conditions being right for wide disapproval of the Wellington's appointment such challenges to Wellington's leadership did not happen and many officers instead chose to challenge Ballasteros and support the decision made by the government to imprison him for attempted mutiny.¹⁹⁴ This was a surprise to Wellington who believed that the Spanish officers would rather surrender to the French

¹⁸⁹ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 63.

¹⁹⁰ Francisco Lopez Ballasteros served with Blake and Castaños in the Army of Galicia with distinction, and had fought in numerous battles with the Anglo Portuguese army prior to his letter to the Spanish government in 1812. He would be detained by the Spanish government at the north African fortress of Cuenta till after the war. Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, 6:62.

¹⁹¹ F. A. Wellesley, *The Diary and Correspondence of Henry Wellesley*, 6 November 1812, 66.

¹⁹² Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, 6:61.

¹⁹³ F. A. Wellesley, *The Diary and Correspondence of Henry Wellesley*, 6 November 1812, 66.

¹⁹⁴ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 181.

than allow the British to lead them.¹⁹⁵ This lack of dissent could have been a result of the officers not being aware of Wellington's requests for vast command authorities, resulting in a belief that Wellington would remain little more than a field commander.

Wellington anticipated a backlash that would surround his command of a foreign army, particularly one that has seen so much turmoil in since 1808. In his initial address to the Spanish army on 1 January 1813 Wellington ordered the soldiers and officers of the nation to align themselves to the Royal Ordenanzas rather than to himself, ensuring that the army saw the authority of command originating from the government with Wellington as the intermediary.¹⁹⁶ Wellington clarified that as commander he would enforce the discipline imposed by the Ordenanzas, saying to the officers that:

[A]t the same time that he [Wellington] will be happy to draw the notice of the government and extol their good conduct, he will not be backwards in noticing any inattention on the part of the officers of the army to the duties required from them by the Royal Ordenanzas or any breach of order and discipline by their soldiers.¹⁹⁷

Wellington showed the Spanish officers that he alone was the conduit to the regency, and rewards and punishment will flow through him only. Through his initial command speech, Wellington aligned himself with the Spanish government to solidify his position as commander of the Spanish army.

As ambassador, Henry Wellesley had the duty to inform the British government of the arrangement that was agreed to by Wellington and the Spanish government on the

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ The Duke of Wellington's Address to the Spanish Army, 1 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 15.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

27 January 1813.¹⁹⁸ This was a long form legal document that Wellington distilled in a letter to Earl Bathurst shortly following the start of his command. This letter revealed Wellington's belief about what had been achieved through the months of political negotiations with the Spanish government with respect to the organization and sustainment of the army, an issue that had withheld Wellington's employment of the army in cooperation with the Portuguese and British until solved.¹⁹⁹ The message explained what Wellington believed was the way forward for the Spanish army. Wellington prefaced this message by telling Bathurst of the political confusion that disrupted Spain through the reforms of 1812, and followed with his effort to establish and reinforce authority in the provinces which provided for the organization and sustainment of the armies.²⁰⁰ Believing that he had been given the powers requested in December, Wellington proposed two additional reforms to the system of the Captains General and the command structure of the army. Wellington first proposed that certain provinces should provide resources to certain armies which minimized the confusion regarding provisioning while campaigning and holding the captain general of the province as the single responsible party for that effort.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Wellington to Earl Bathurst, 27 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 51.

¹⁹⁹ Wellington to Major General Campbell, 4 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 20.

²⁰⁰ Wellington to Earl Bathurst, 27 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 51.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

To this, Wellington added that the Captain General of the province that sustains the army should also be the commander of that field army and remove much of the civilian oversight, “thereby bringing the military authority into one hand, and that the military governor [the Captain General] of each province should be, as he has always been, the Xefe Politico.”²⁰² This action ran contrary to many of the liberal reforms imposed in 1812 that had greatly curtailed the authority of the Captains General of the provinces in an attempt reform many of the political positions in Spain to encourage individual liberty.²⁰³ These reforms subordinated the Captains General to a civilian appointed “Jefe Politico” leading to great distress from the Captains General, who had long held positions that garnered great respect from the regency and allowed them to wield great power on the citizenry.

Wellington believed that this demand to remove the Jefes would be met with hostility from the liberal reformers who would use the text of the constitution to attack him. Wellington was aware of the details of the 1812 constitution and was more concerned with those that would extrapolate the document to their aims to undermine his command. In the same message to Bathurst, Wellington stated that unifying command under the Captains General was acknowledged by the Cortes, who had no objection to it as it “did not mitigate any article of the written constitution” but still held concerns relating to dissenters even though Wellington sarcastically said of their claims that “I do not know what is the meaning of a written constitution if we are to be afterwards told of

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 179.

intentions that are not expressed.”²⁰⁴ Regardless, in early January, 1813 Wellington had very real concerns with dissenters to his appointment and subsequent changes to the military structure coming from the liberal reformers. Chief amongst these was author and political figure Flores Estrada who challenged Wellington’s assertion that this change did not “mitigate” any element of the constitution and believed wholeheartedly that Spain should fear the possibility of an impending military dictatorship as more power became vested in the hands of military leaders.²⁰⁵ Flores Estrada flooded liberal news outlets with messages editorializing Wellington’s changes to Spanish society creating difficulty for Wellington, calling his appointment a “gigantic step that will destroy forever civil liberty.”²⁰⁶

Wellington’s second requirement was that the financial system be placed under the specific purview of that Captain General of the province, aligning the intendant general of the province and the intendant general of the field army in the same way in which he aligned the command structure above. Wellington believed that in minimizing the amount of personnel involved, he could also minimize waste and corruption which he categorized as the “scandalous waste of resources that exists in all these countries.” and hold individuals accountable for their actions.²⁰⁷ Wellington ordered that the commander

²⁰⁴ Wellington to Bathurst, 27 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 52.

²⁰⁵ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington in Command of the Spanish Army*, 104.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁰⁷ Wellington to Bathurst, 27 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 52.

of the army be the only authority for the release of any payment from the military chests.²⁰⁸ This effort, as with the one above, challenged the liberal reforms of 1812 which kept the intendant general of the province as a largely civilian run position. Wellington considered both requests as part of the agreement regarding his command and would have significant impacts in the following months of 1813. The Spanish government would capitulate to the requests in part. They believed that the constitution was clear that the intendant should remain a civilian position, independent of the military but did however put the intendant under the authority of the Captain General.²⁰⁹ Although Wellington saw this as an action in accordance with the Constitution of 1812, liberals in the government felt that the need to dictate that the intendants obey the Captains General as unnecessary. The constitution already dictated the terms in which the intendant must obey the Captain General for the good of the army, and additional government enforcement methods of this process beyond the Constitution both mitigated the overall primacy of the document and gave liberals fuel to accuse the government of creating a military dictatorship.²¹⁰

Wellington soon faced a test of his reforms to the supply system. The issue surrounded the complaints of Major General Samuel Whittingham and Major General Phillip Roche, both British officers formerly detailed by Wellington to liaison with the

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁰⁹ Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, 6:204.

²¹⁰ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 103.

Spanish force who then accepted commands of Spanish units.²¹¹ Whittingham and Roche, realizing that their organizations failed to receive supplies that they deemed necessary contacted Henry Wellesley and Major General Campbell and requested assistance.²¹² Campbell refused to supply the divisions. When Wellington learned of the request he contacted Campbell directly with his opinion on the subject by saying:

I entirely approve of your declining to supply the wants of the Spanish troops, and I beg you to continue the same conduct excepting in a case of urgent necessity in which you may be convinced that it is impossible to procure provisions for the troops by any arrangement; and that the deficiencies experienced have not been caused by the want of foresight and the arrangement of the commanding officers and heads of departments.²¹³

The two divisions, numbering at nearly 20,000 men equipped and paid by the British government, could not leave the cantonments because since the Spanish government had not built magazines in the field, starvation was inevitable.²¹⁴ Despite this, Wellington believed that in continuing to provide access the British stores, he was promulgating an unsustainable system. If he authorized the supply of the Spanish units in need, he would create a dependency that would hinder British operations in the

²¹¹ Samuel Ford Whittingham would be detailed to General Castaños in 1808, and take command of a Spanish cavalry unit with the rank of Colonel. Philip K. Roche would command a Spanish division at Alicante and fight at the Battle of Castalla with Whittingham. Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, 6:276.

²¹² Wellington to Major General Campbell, 28 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 56.

²¹³ Wellington to Major General Campbell, 28 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 56.

²¹⁴ J. W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army Volume IX* (London: Macmillan, 1920), 38, accessed 17 April 2017, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.210086>.

Peninsula. He said as much to Campbell, closing his letter with “I prefer to go on without the assistance of Spanish troops to taking upon the departments of the allied army the detail and expense of feeding them.”²¹⁵

Wellington then wrote to General Francisco Elio to direct what he viewed as the way to correct the deficiencies in the two Spanish divisions. Wellington told Elio that even though the troops of Whittingham and Roche were regularly paid, the divisions still required supplies and Elio would have to exercise the intendant general system to get the task accomplished. Wellington told Elio that “I request that [you] give directions to the intendant general of the 2nd army under your command to supply the wants of both these divisions.”²¹⁶ Given that both divisions were serving with the British at Alicante, simplicity would have dictated that the British supply the Spanish divisions. Wellington wanted to ensure that Spain remained responsible for sustaining Spanish troops, regardless of the location, to underscore the importance of exercising the system or at a minimum not overwhelming the British. In a letter to Major General Roche, Wellington lectured him of the impossibility of supplying the Spanish saying “if means cannot be found by the Spanish authorities to supply these Spanish troops, we must do without them, and they must be disbanded, and the pay hitherto given to them shall be applied to pay others.”²¹⁷ This quote showed an ulterior motivation for denying the Spanish

²¹⁵ Wellington to Major General Campbell, 28 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 56.

²¹⁶ Wellington to General Elio 28 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 56.

²¹⁷ Wellington to Roche, 28 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 57.

divisions supplies. Wellington wanted to test whether the units were supportable, and if they proved to be unable to be supported, to disband them to apply critically needed resources elsewhere. Wellington did not require the entirety of the Spanish army to defeat the French, he required a portion that was operationally strong and capable. Wellington wanted to test the supply system but would not allow the lack of Spanish supply to be a detriment to the British. In fairness to the Spanish government, this was not a unique experience found only at Alicante. The instability of the Spanish economy coupled with the government fascination with the institution of the constitutional government meant that the entirety of the army, including those in major garrisons like Cadiz and Madrid, remained severely undersupplied.²¹⁸ In accessing the operational conditions surrounding Spain at the time, it seems almost foolish to have attempted such a large maneuver in the first place.

In April, Wellington reinforced his stance surrounding the sustainment of Roche and Whittingham. In writing to Sir William Murray he clarified his position on the subject and gave insight to exactly why he chose this stance. Wellington believed that the expense of feeding the Spanish army was simply more than Britain could bear, overwhelming the commissary system, and burdening the British economy. Additionally, Wellington mentioned that he was aware from previous experience that the Spanish troops never want for food in Spain, regardless of what their British officers were claiming to be the case. He also noted that despite his position as the commander, British

²¹⁸ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 142.

commissariats would never be able to sustain the allied army in Spain.²¹⁹ This is perhaps a confusing position to take, as Wellington had previously denied food to Roche and Whittingham, both commanding Spanish divisions who could not take the field because they could not find food enough to do so.²²⁰ Further, the Spanish routinely starved on virtually every major operation in 1813, including ironically while blockading French positions with the intent of starving them out.²²¹ It seems that this cavalier attitude was a clear oversimplification of the issues affecting both the British and Spanish armies.

Not all issues affecting the Spanish army would originate in Cadiz. Major General Roche continued to displease Wellington in March of 1813 with his failure to follow the orders of his superior officer, General Elio. Wellington was forced to intervene and issued a scathing letter to Roche reminding him of his place in the army saying “You command a division of Spanish troops, which is part of the 2nd army, and which must so remain until I give orders to the contrary.”²²² Wellington gave him his options, saying “If you dislike your situation or make any further difficulties about obeying the orders you receive, or fail to carry on the service, you must either resign your command or . . . I shall recommend to the government that another may be appointed in your place.”²²³

²¹⁹ Wellington to Murray, 6 April 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 261.

²²⁰ Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, 38.

²²¹ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 142.

²²² Wellington to Roche, 12 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 184.

²²³ *Ibid.*

Wellington reinforced the Spanish command structure further by reminding Roche his superior officer was Elio and Elio would “give every facility in his power to enable the division to perform the duty as it ought in that situation.”²²⁴

Wellington reminded Roche in a separate letter (issued the same day in response to numerous messages sent by Roche that arrived at the same day) that he will not tolerate any element of the allied army acting independently. Wellington told Roche “I am perfectly aware of your merits, but cannot allow you or any officer to consider yourself independent of the regular authorities of the army in which you are serving.”²²⁵

Reinforcing the chain of command was critical to Wellington as one of the fundamental ills facing the Spanish army was a deep-rooted lack of discipline, and by allowing commanders to selectively follow orders he was reinforcing the lack of discipline instead of correcting it. Wellington previously demanded that all communication flow through official channels, and now Roche deliberately undermined that order and that breach must be addressed. Roche may be forgiven in part for his transgressions. Shortly before ignoring the orders of Elio, Sir John Murray assumed command of the Anglo-Sicilian Army at Alicante and all officers present, both British and Spanish had little grasp of the operational situation and an equally low chance of success.²²⁶ In fact, Roche, possessing the merits that Wellington detailed above, may have simply been attempting to preserve his own division in the face of obvious incompetence. Regardless, despite the tenuous

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid., 185.

²²⁶ Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, 36-40.

nature of his command in March, Wellington continued to create opportunities to instill order and discipline and address the issues that forced the Spaniards to fail in the past.

Despite his command position, Wellington found himself at odds with the politics at Cadiz. Wellington forwarded a captured message from King Joseph to Napoleon to Don Diego De La Vega, a man valued and trusted by Wellington. Joseph's letter to Napoleon was critical of the Spanish government in Cadiz, decrying it as inept and near collapse and Wellington supported most of what was said in the letter. Wellington was clear to Vega that despite his general agreement about the content of the captured letter, he certainly believed that regardless of the state of affairs, Spain was certainly better off in its current state than under the French yoke.²²⁷ Wellington articulated his own position in the system saying "I never interfere in concerns with which I have nothing to do, and I will fight for Spain as long as she is the enemy of France, whatever her system of government may be; but I can't avoid seeing and lamenting the evils which await this country if you do not retrace your steps."²²⁸

Wellington outlined what he believed were the root causes of the "evils" which also provides some clear insight on his opinion of his new superiors in the Cortes. The first he saw as the abject failure of the executive branch of the government. The executive government, per Wellington was so poor that "the people feel that [the executive] has neither the authority to control or protect them."²²⁹ While the legislative branch fared

²²⁷ Wellington to Vega, 29 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 63.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

little better, having “divested itself” in the failure that the executive proved to be, but remaining beholden to them in certain aspects, causing constant friction between the two. Wellington refers to this as “instead of drawing together, are like two independent powers, jealous and afraid of each other, and the consequence is that the machine of government is at a stand.”²³⁰ He also added that the legislative branch remained dominated by men who possessed only myopic regional views rather than the grander, holistic thinkers that could provide a more complete vision for the future of Spain. Wellington correct in forecasting the extreme friction between the Regency and the Cortes, shortly following this message the Cortes would force a complete overhaul of the Regency as they believed a Regency sponsored coup was imminent.²³¹ Regardless, Wellington was now violating a key principal of his policy in Spain, the neutrality of the British toward the affairs of the Spanish government.²³² Further, his actions may have been less than an altruistic desire to improve Spain, as his relationship with the Cortes was now extremely strained and his relationship with the Regency worse.²³³ His desire to improve Spain may have been be more a measure of self-preservation than of outright kindness.

Wellington proposed several reforms that he believes might address these issues. The first fix proposed was to reestablish the smaller Regency vested with the powers

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 170.

²³² Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 151.

²³³ Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, 133.

provided through the 1812 constitution. Wellington believed that the larger the Regency council, the more conflict it would create, so he advocated instead that Spain reinvest in the singular monarch with a small, unpaid guiding council of no more than five.²³⁴ Each one of the members should oversee a major portion of state affairs, such as a minister of justice, or war and the marine. Secondly, Wellington advocated changes to the constitution itself, initially including the repeal of the 110th, 129th and 130th articles of the constitution.²³⁵ These articles governed the prevention of the re-election of deputies in the Cortes, and the members of the Cortes serving in other positions in the government. Further, Wellington advocated the repeal of the entirety of the seventh chapter of the 1812 constitution created a “council of state” to govern state affairs, believing that should the constitutional government of Spain ever become fully functional, the minister of justice and council of state positions would become redundant and create conflict.²³⁶ Should they choose not to repeal the council of state amendments, Wellington believed that they should transform the council into a House of Lords to mirror the British system.²³⁷ Although Wellington thought these changes would ensure the liberty of the Spanish people and prevent the collapse of the liberal government, the reforms that he proposed were directed at the more liberal portions of the new government structure. Wellington was advocating more central authority, limiting the

²³⁴ Ibid., 63.

²³⁵ Ibid., 64.

²³⁶ Wellington to Vega, 29 January 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 66.

²³⁷ Ibid., 65.

more radical systemic changes. This is not entirely surprising as Wellington had been a longtime advocate of a streamlined system with power vested in the hands of a few responsible people. Moreover, his positions demonstrated his feelings towards the government which he remained an agent of. Not surprisingly, Wellington's subtle attempt to undermine the liberal policies of Spain was not solely based on his personal desire to make his army more efficient. As the liberal reforms that created the constitution became radical, Wellington began to see the beginnings of outright mob rule in Cadiz, harkening the image of the French revolution.²³⁸ Additionally, the liberals were severely undermining the British position in Spain, with a select number of liberal deputies participating in an Afrancesado plot to break the alliance and liberal media outlets accusing Britain of being the seat of Freemasonry in Europe.²³⁹ This being the case, it was easy to see why Wellington would want to structure the government in a way to be advantageous to his position, as well as the position of Britain.

By March of 1813, these attempts at military reorganization had failed to produce any tangible results. The government ignored most of Wellington's requests to conduct a structural reorganization of the army and made only the most practical changes necessary for the survival of the force itself, like combining severely understrength battalions to build combat effectiveness.²⁴⁰ Wellington would write Carvajal in a sense of frustration about the state of affairs. Wellington told Carvajal that even though he was now the

²³⁸ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 154.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 112.

commander of the Spanish army as well as the British and Portuguese, the only armies that have been in operations since November have been the British and Portuguese with the Spanish still in a state of disrepair.²⁴¹ Wellington told Carvajal that he was unwilling to take the Spanish from their defensive missions because “there is not a single battalion or squadron in a situation to take the field. That there is not in the kingdom of Spain a depot in place to support a single battalion in the field for one day, nor a shilling of money in any military chest.”²⁴²

In short, none of the reforms suggested by Wellington had any effect on the readiness of the Spanish military and Wellington was forced to complete reliance on the British and Portuguese. This was a clear overstatement on Wellington’s part. Although large portions of the army were stalled by a lack of money, others had sustained themselves well. Thomas Sydenham noted that Galicia provided for Castanos’s army well and they would campaign with Wellington less than two months later.²⁴³

Regardless, Wellington questioned Carvajal on the outcome of the financial reforms that he proposed earlier, having received no response since January. Wellington believed he was being actively ignored and this forced him to leave large portions of his allied army unused. Wellington believed that no Spanish corps could be placed into operation against the French with confidence until the reforms had time to create a

²⁴¹ Wellington to Carvajal, 11 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 180.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 114-115.

manageable, sustainable situation.²⁴⁴ Not all this failure was a result of the incompetence of the current Spanish government. The condition of the Spanish army could hardly come as a surprise to Wellington as he had seen the severe effect that the questionable British trade policy in the colonies coupled with the collapse of the domestic revenue generating mechanisms had on the Spanish government.²⁴⁵ The disrepair was so widespread that even officers in Cadiz had little better than rags to wear and starvation continued to run rampant, with some Intendants (as was the case in the Army of the Reserve in Andalusia) operating at a deficit in the millions every month.²⁴⁶

Further, Wellington now felt the pressures imposed by the command position as his decisions on the course of operations in Spain produced negative effects on the people. Wellington told Carvajal that he would not move troops of Spanish infantry under Brigadier General Morillo to protect villages under threat in Toledo and La Mancha. The reason provided was that the troops were not supplied to engage in even the simplest operations. Sending Morillo to do what would amount to an unsupported advance guard would have been disastrous, possibly resulting in the defeat or capture of all committed troops. Plus, the defeat could devalue the reforms themselves, as any defeat would give Wellington's detractors a reason to question his choices. The consequence was that several Spanish villages were left at the hands of the French to plunder. To this Wellington said "One of the misfortunes attending the existing war in the Peninsula is the

²⁴⁴ Wellington to Carvajal, 11 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 180.

²⁴⁵ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 164.

²⁴⁶ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 114, 142.

necessity of sacrificing the interests of the individuals to the cause of the nation, and to the great object of its ultimate salvation.”²⁴⁷ Despite this noble sounding idealism, Wellington prepared Carvajal and the government in Cadiz for a range of complaints that will arise from citizens victimized by the French because of the Spanish inaction. It is easy to see why Wellington would wish to place the blame for these relatively minor operational losses in the hands of the Spanish government. Not only was he continually at odds with the government, he was facing immense pressure from the liberal press. The exchanges were both public and brutal, with large news outlets in Spain proclaiming that Wellington had only a passing commitment to Spain and that by imparting the responsibilities of command to him, Spain had allowed itself to be betrayed in the same manner as it had been in 1808.²⁴⁸ Any loss of territory not attributed to the inadequacies of the government would have to be attributed to Wellington, and his unsteady command could not bear those consequences.

In his initial dealings with Carvajal, Wellington asked that he be consulted regarding any change to the Spanish army. By March, Wellington openly questioned the fact that he made requests to the Cortes regarding the transportation of troops in support of future operations and had yet to hear any response related to this or any other recent demands.²⁴⁹ The government incompetence was hindering Wellington’s ability to get

²⁴⁷ Wellington to Carvajal, 11 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 181.

²⁴⁸ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 103.

²⁴⁹ Wellington to Carvajal, 15 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 188.

much needed replacements to the units that required them, hurting the chances of a successful start to the spring campaign. Wellington was much more direct with Carvajal when writing to him two days later on 17 March 1813. Wellington had been appraised of the creation of a cavalry training school in San Carlos, a school which he was not consulted regarding its construction or its place in the overall scheme of the Spanish military. Wellington was upset and told Carvajal his opinion on the current arrangement and how he felt the reforms he suggested in December were received.

Of the cavalry school (referred to by Wellington as a depot of instruction) Wellington wrote that despite the value that an institution like this may have in the abstract, the institution was “formed without consulting my opinion, and without transmitting the orders of the government through me, although of all other points in any military establishment, those relating to technical discipline have always been reckoned the peculiar province of the Commander in Chief.”²⁵⁰

The cavalry depot was pulling cavalry troops and officers for instruction, therefore lessening the readiness of the army. This school took resources from Wellington and placed them elsewhere without his consultation, which Wellington could not tolerate. This was already problematic to Wellington as severe shortages of cavalry soldiers forced the amalgamation of several understrength regiments and the shortage of horses forced Wellington to employ some troopers as dismounted riflemen.²⁵¹

Wellington felt that the Spanish government has undermined his authority as the

²⁵⁰ Wellington to Carvajal, 17 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 188.

²⁵¹ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 111-112.

Commander in Chief. Military education and development are the responsibility of the commander in chief of the army. The fact that the government saw no need to consult Wellington in this matter underscored the belief that Wellington was meant to command the field army and little else, regardless of previous arrangements. From the Spanish perspective, this was a ridiculous request. Wellington was never vested in limitless powers and those powers that he did have had been carefully negotiated for by Wellington himself, nowhere in the agreement was any mention of the training of the army.²⁵² Wellington was clearly reading more into his actual authority than what was granted, as the government had no requirement to consult Wellington.

Further, Wellington placed the failure of the reforms in the hands of the Spanish government and blamed them for the inability of the Spanish army to take the field.

Wellington told Carvajal that:

I propose to take the field at the head of the allied British and Portuguese army at the earliest possible moment and . . . in consequence of the delays of the Spanish government in issuing the orders consequent to the arrangements settled by me in Cadiz . . . I do not believe that any Spanish corps will be ready to move till late in the season if any should be in a state to move at all.²⁵³

He added that he had yet to hear any response from the government regarding his December 1812 requests, asking Carvajal whether they “propose to adhere to their arrangement solemnly entered with me after repeated discussions” and closed with

²⁵² Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 6:199.

²⁵³ Wellington to Carvajal, 17 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 190.

another statement that militaries cannot operate when the government acts in concert with subordinate echelons without including the commander in the discussion.²⁵⁴

Wellington had reached an impasse with the Spanish government, yet he engaged in discussions in Cadiz with the government in December regarding the authorities he required as the commander and believed that they agreed. He made attempts at significant reforms to the Spanish army with no success. By March, little progress had been made and the government had failed to abide by the original agreements. Wellington believed that because of the government's inaction, he could only employ the British and Portuguese in the upcoming campaign. Interestingly, Wellington appeared to be severely overstating his own ability to take the offensive. Following the large offensive operations of 1812, many regiments in Wellington's army were below 50 percent strength, forcing Wellington into a contentious negotiation with the Duke of York to provide additional manpower.²⁵⁵

Wellington reached out to Henry Wellesley regarding being ignored by the Spanish government. In this message he equated the current state of being ignored or previously agreed arrangements countermanded as tantamount to a request for his resignation:

[H]ow desirous I am of carrying on in the service of the army in the manner that will be the most honorable, advantageous and agreeable to the government; but the engagements with me must be strictly carried into execution, if it should be wished that I retain the command. If that is not wished, it is only necessary to hint a desire that I should resign, or what is tantamount, to fail to perform the

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 191.

²⁵⁵ Joshua Moon, *Wellington's Two Front War: The Peninsular Campaigns at Home and Abroad, 1808-1814* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 154-156.

engagements entered into with me, and I shall resign with much more pleasure than I ever accepted the command.²⁵⁶

Wellington's frustrations were clear to those around him, and he believed that should the current situation remain unchanged he would be forced to resign rather than remain in the position in which success seemed impossible.

Additionally, Wellington faced difficulties surrounding the Spanish government issuing orders directly to unit's subordinate to Wellington in clear violation of the basic tenants agreed to in December of 1812. Wellington wrote to Carvajal on 24 March 1813 regarding the movement of a Spanish cavalry regiment from Aragon to Seville, done through orders from Carvajal himself at the behest of the Regency.²⁵⁷ The issue was that neither Wellington, nor the commander that the regiment was due to support received any orders respecting the disposition of the cavalry regiment. The orders to the regiment were sent directly from the central government to the regimental commander.²⁵⁸ Following his description of his operational aims with the troops that he had available and ensuring Carvajal that he did not simply forget about the cavalry regiments in Aragon, he reminded Carvajal of the issues that this was causing in the army. Wellington told Carvajal "Your excellency will observe how much the service is interrupted from the practice adopted by your excellency of sending orders directly to the troops, contrary to

²⁵⁶ Wellington to Wellesley, 19 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 217.

²⁵⁷ Wellington to Carvajal, 24 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 226.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

the positive engagement entered into by the government with me and the military practice of all countries.”²⁵⁹

Wellington followed this claim with the assertion that “every military plan must be deranged if you continue this practice.”²⁶⁰

Wellington was equally critical of the practice to Henry Wellesley on 31 March 1813. Wellington commented that this practice was causing, saying “The minister of war is going on as usual and I must either resign or throw him and the government their responsibility. . . . He sends orders to the troops, and so do I, and the consequence is that neither are obeyed.”²⁶¹ Wellington closed this message with a call to Wellesley that he employ his hand in influencing those in the Spanish government to stop this practice immediately, encouraging the chain of command and enforcing Wellington’s role as the commander.²⁶² The Spanish reason for this action was the widespread distrust of Wellington built from the perceived treachery of the British economic policy in the Americas coupled with a belief that Britain was withholding money desperately needed to fight the war.²⁶³ This was invigorating public movements to remove Wellington and replace him with a Spanish general bound to Spanish loyalty.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 227.

²⁶¹ Wellington to Wellesley, 31 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 247.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 126.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 127.

Funding and supporting the army remained a critical issue in March. Wellington engaged in further communications with the Conte de la Bisbal regarding the issue of the collection and use of funds to support the war effort.²⁶⁵ In previous months, Wellington was directly involved in the process of reforming the military pay and supply system in Spain as he had seen the ill-effects on previous campaigns and realized the very real danger of a starving, undisciplined army in the field. Wellington pointed to a promise made to him by the government of Spain that nine tenths of the revenue of all liberated provinces would be put towards the war effort.²⁶⁶ This would be used at the discretion of Wellington himself as the commander in chief, yet Wellington realized by March that numerous deductions were being taken from the military chests by the government without his approval.²⁶⁷ This practice was hampering the financial solvency of the Spanish army. Although Wellington believed that the nine tenths arrangement would be sufficient to sustain the army, he could not abide by the current practice of removing portions of this nine tenths to pay for extraneous things like pensions and the salaries of civil governmental employees.²⁶⁸ In fact, Wellington was unsure why pensions and salaries would be taken from the money that should provide for the supply and payment of the field armies. Wellington stated “[if the payment of pensions and civil salaries

²⁶⁵ Enrique O’Donnell, the Conte de la Bisbal was a Spanish General Officer of Irish descent, popular with the liberal government of Spain because of past successes against the French, currently occupying a position in the Regency council.

²⁶⁶ Wellington to Conte de la Bisbal, 28 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 236.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

should come from the 9/10th's dedicated for the sustainment of the army] it is quite certain that this arrangement is nugatory; and Spain may have an Army of pensioners and persons in civil and other employments, because she will never have one of soldiers."²⁶⁹

To Wellington the Spanish government seemed unwilling or unable to uphold the arrangements previously negotiated, these arrangements being necessary for the success of the expulsion of the French and continued liberty of Spain. The reality appeared to be more complex, however. Wellington was requesting resources from provinces that had never been truly wealthy and had been stripped of most of their remaining resources by the French in the final months of occupation which grew increasingly worse as the end of their occupation loomed near.²⁷⁰ In truth, regardless of the bureaucracies surrounding the collection of the provincial money, most of the provinces freed would have little ability to contribute anything of value to the war effort.

Interestingly, Wellington took a different approach regarding his assessment of the current state of the Spanish army with the Conte de la Bisbal. Wellington said that the main issue facing the Spanish army at present was not a general lack of discipline, as he had claimed previously, but rather that the number of capable soldiers exceeds the Spanish army's ability to sustain them. He told the Conte de la Bisbal that "instead of having too few troops in a state of discipline to take the field, we shall find that we have more troops clothed, armed and disciplined than the means of the country can

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 114.

support.”²⁷¹ Wellington made it clear that the detrimental issue was no longer the lack of qualified soldiers, but rather that the systems made it impossible for him to employ them effectively.

Wellington echoed these sentiments in a letter to Earl Bathurst. In this, he stated that he feared that he would receive little in way of payments from the provinces as promised by the Spanish government and told Bathurst that continued British funding would be required to keep the Spanish army from fracturing.²⁷² Further complicating the problem was that the implementation of British reenlistment bonuses placed increasing demands on the British war chest limiting Wellington’s ability to defray the costs of employing Spanish divisions in the field.²⁷³ This issue was so critical to Wellington that he feared he would be unable to begin the campaign at his desired time because of the lack of funds would mean that the army would be unable to sustain itself for long. To alleviate this problem, his only hope was to ask for continued assistance from Great Britain.²⁷⁴ This assistance was exacting a heavy price on Britain as between November of 1812 and July of 1813 they would send 1.15 million pounds to support Wellington’s efforts in Spain.²⁷⁵

²⁷¹ Wellington to Conte de la Bisbal, 28 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 236.

²⁷² Wellington to Bathurst, 30 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 245.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 236.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 235-236.

²⁷⁵ Moon, *Wellington’s Two Front War*, 150.

Despite this, the Spanish army remained in desperate need of money, and this need was contributing to Wellington's inability to employ the army as part of the allied force. Wellington faced yet another issue with the allocation of money from the responsible provinces as the Spanish government allowed the creditors of the state to unilaterally decide that they would not pay into the provincial system designed to support the army because of these debts. This created a situation in which the Spanish army could not sustain itself because of the decisions of the private citizen, done outside the purview of the central government. Because of this issue, Wellington reminded Carvajal that "[A]s I repeat that it is impossible to maintain an army without money, and it is impossible to find resources for our Spanish army, excepting the contributions of the people, and it cannot be expected that the enemy will be removed from Spanish territory . . . unless a respectable Spanish army is formed."²⁷⁶

In this Wellington merged the needs of the two parties, implying that without the creation of a functional Spanish army, the creditors would have no nation to seek repayment from and therefore it remained in their interests to pay into the provincial system. He also suggested numerous different methods to ensure that the creditors gain confidence in the Spanish government so that they believe they will be repaid regardless of whether they pay the provincial contributions. The creditors had valid concerns as well. Prior to 1811 the government in Cadiz was limited to the city itself to collect revenue to support the government, leaving the remainder of the country free from

²⁷⁶ Wellington to Carvajal, 24 April 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 324.

national tax collection.²⁷⁷ This created massive deficit which spawned a significant industry surrounding loans to the government, but realists quickly noted that without income from the Americas, the economic downward spiral continued unabated.²⁷⁸ The collapse of the financial sustainment system designed to support the army forced Wellington to extend his influence beyond the traditional role of a military commander into the domain of national economics for the basic survival of his army.

Despite his best efforts, Wellington remained in an untenable position in his relationship with the Spanish government. He believed that the arrangements made in December continued to be roundly undermined creating a situation in which little improvement had taken place in the months since January. In writing to Don Diego de la Vega on 3 April 1813 Wellington laid out his observations for what had occurred and why he felt that the Spanish army would be unable to take the field in mass till autumn of 1813. To de la Vega, he listed off the failings of the Spanish government in detail, providing insights about his frustrations as the Spanish commander. After providing Vega with a detailed retelling of the engagements that Wellington had made with the government to this point, he reiterated that his singular desire was to “place the armies of Spain at the same footing of subordination and discipline with the other armies of Europe; and to preclude all chance of the continuation of those intrigues, by application of the government which had brought the army to the state I found it.”²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 164.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Wellington to de la Vega, 3 April 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 252.

Wellington wanted to improve discipline and mitigate the negative influence of the government. Additionally, he ensured de la Vega that he was in no way motivated by personal ambition, telling him that he viewed the entirety of the situation almost academically and without emotion, appointing Spanish officers on merits alone rather than personal arrangements.²⁸⁰

Wellington followed by explaining to de la Vega that the government had violated every one of the arrangements set forth in December, making his position as the commander nearly impossible. This was in large part true, the government had issued orders to subordinate commands without consulting Wellington, failed to remove officers Wellington thought deserving of removal and severely hindered his ability to apply resources toward the army. There were reasons behind each of these breaches, but they remained breaches of their agreement nonetheless. Wellington first wrote that “They [the Spanish government] have removed officers from their stations, have placed them in others without any recommendation from me, and without even acquainting me, or the superiors of those officers that they had made such arrangements.”²⁸¹

Wellington required that he have ability to remove officers that he deemed unfit from positions in the army while retaining qualified ones, or more specifically that he be allowed to manage the officer corps directly to remove them from the political machinations of the Spanish government. Similarly, Wellington told de la Vega that “They have appointed officers to stations without my recommendation, or the

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Wellington to de la Vega, 3 April 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 253.

recommendation of their superior officer and given them assurances that they should remain in those stations.”²⁸² Wellington believed that he was no longer managing the officers of the army, and the government undermined him at every opportunity. Lastly, Wellington noted that the government continued to move and position subordinate units around Spain at their discretion and issued orders to the subordinate commanders that at times ran directly contrary to Wellington’s, making the process of organizing the army for operations impossible. This was an accurate claim, but failed to address the reason for this action. Public opinion based on a widespread mistrust of the British had infiltrated the government and they feared the very real possibility of becoming a British conquest. This was exemplified in the words of a deputy at the Cortes, Juan Romero who openly accused Britain of devastating the Spanish countryside, sacking cities in Spain, destroying Spanish trade and noting that thousands of British soldiers occupied every Spanish fort and defensible position.²⁸³ Given that (albeit slightly radical) position, it is easy to see why the Spanish wanted to maintain a semblance of control over the appointment of officers in its own army. Further, the Regency had always believed that they would issue the orders to the armies and Wellington would lead them to victory. The Spanish government had a wide range of operations outside of the purview of Wellington, including expeditions to put down insurrection in the Americas, so it is easy to see why the government would continue to give orders directly to units as it saw fit.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 125.

Because of the government ignoring Wellington's demands no positive change to the army's disposition since December. Wellington claimed that he has received virtually nothing to support the army, even from provinces long since liberated and thus any allied commander expecting to have the support of a Spanish division will "certainly be disappointed."²⁸⁴ This was certainly an oversimplification, as the Army of Galicia was completely capable of supporting itself, despite four years of being plundered by the French and was in a state to support the British in 1813.²⁸⁵ Regardless, Wellington reminded de la Vega that Wellington had a personal stake in the success of the Spanish army as his reputation was now firmly embedded with the success or failure of the Spanish army but as a result of the workings of the Spanish government he was unable to make any real change since January.²⁸⁶ Wellington believed that he would rather resign the position than become the cause of conflict between Spain and England or further damage his reputation as a military commander.²⁸⁷ Wellington closed this letter with the statement that he would soon be departing on a campaign with the British and Portuguese armies, leaving the Spanish behind as victims of their own systemic failures.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ Wellington to de la Vega, 3 April 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 254.

²⁸⁵ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 115.

²⁸⁶ Wellington to de la Vega, 3 April 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 255.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 254.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 255.

Soon after Wellington's message to de la Vega the Regency responded. As opposed to doing what Wellington wished, they chose instead to create a new military district around Cadiz governed by a Captain General appointed to control all troops in and around the city.²⁸⁹ Perhaps more unusual is that the Captain General appointed to this post, Don Cayetano Valdez, would receive his orders directly from the Regency council.²⁹⁰ Wellington was presented with no option other than to acknowledge the situation and obey accordingly, telling Carvajal that he will henceforth remove the troops and resources now allocated to the Cadiz district from his estimation of the forces he will have available to combat the French.²⁹¹ Wellington had concerns for the plan, however, telling Carvajal that not only was an entire corps of the Spanish army withdrawn from Wellington's control, but several institutions that governed the instruction of the army were now outside of his control, meaning that Wellington had very little control over the military education and standardization of the Spanish army.²⁹² This presented a clear issue as Wellington believed that military instruction was the purview of the commander in chief only, and this was yet another way in which his authority was being mitigated by

²⁸⁹ Wellington to Carvajal, 6 April 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 263-264.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 264.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² Wellington to Carvajal, 6 April 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 263-264.

the government.²⁹³ Further, Wellington viewed military education as means of ensuring conformity and discipline within the army, if he could not create standardization in instruction across the army, he would be forced to contend with confusion in battle.²⁹⁴

Wellington had a larger concern related to the creation of the Cadiz military district. He believed that the process of promoting the officers in the Cadiz district was based on political connection rather than merit would continue. This undermined Wellington's request that extraordinary promotions be awarded based on his recommendations. This undermine his overall ability to build professionalism in the Spanish officer corps. Wellington reminded Carvajal that he never requested the ability to control the regimental promotion system, and his demand was "not to make myself the sole and absolute dispenser of favor, but in order to eradicate intrigue which had been preferred to actual merit."²⁹⁵ Should the Regency retain the ability to award promotions based their discretion alone to those in the Cadiz district, Wellington foresaw vast rifts being created in the army. This was especially problematic in that the reforms of 1811 curtailed much of the privileges of the officer corps and many opportunities for advancement were already seen as tied to one's connections in the government.²⁹⁶ He told Carvajal that should the government control the Cadiz district promotions "not only

²⁹³ Wellington stated that technical instruction was the purview of the commander in chief in his message to Don Carvajal in his discussion regarding the cavalry depot, Wellington to Carvajal, 15 March 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 188.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 264.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 265.

²⁹⁶ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 172-173.

will the armies in the field be abandoned by all those who have direct or indirect means of appeal, (which are never wanting) but discontent will spread amongst those have not that power, and discontent once introduced in the army, all the world knows the result.”²⁹⁷

Wellington proposed several necessary reforms to ensure that the creation of the Cadiz district did not affect the field army. His first request was that those serving in Cadiz not be granted preferential treatment over any of those serving in the field armies regarding promotion.²⁹⁸ Wellington then asked that the Cadiz district not be able to remove manpower from the other districts without his approval.²⁹⁹ Wellington believed the Cadiz district would poach resources from elsewhere, harming the effectiveness of the force that Wellington needed to fight the French. He wished that this extend to “every officer of every rank” under his command as means of protecting his preferred field commanders.³⁰⁰ Wellington also requested that the Cadiz district not become exempt from the oversight of the intendants general, likely done to ensure that the region does not become a massive and unnecessary drain on resources meant to sustain the field army.³⁰¹

²⁹⁷ Wellington to Carvajal, 6 April 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 264.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 265.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ Requests taken from Wellington to Carvajal, 6 April 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 265-266.

Wellington told Carvajal that he understood the need for the creation of the Cadiz district, and outwardly supported its implementation calling it a “wise measure, suitable to the circumstances of the moment, and preventing a thousand causes of dissention that would have undoubtedly arise without it.”³⁰² Additionally, he told Henry Wellesley that the formation of the Cadiz district, if done with the recommendations he proposed to Carvajal, will prevent the “jarring and bickering” which have hindered operations to this point.³⁰³ It appeared as though Wellington tacitly supported the creation of this military as he believed that it would appease some of the more extreme critics who were asserting that Wellington was attempting to create a military dictatorship.³⁰⁴ The Cadiz district would draw resources and manpower from the field armies, and having a parallel command structure could create confusion, but it speaks to how chaotic the political situation was becoming if he was willing to accept this as a viable solution. Spain had other reasons for the creation of the Cadiz military district. Far from being a deliberate measure to undermine Wellington, the creation of the Cadiz district was meant to prepare another expedition to put down the American rebels, in effect alleviating Wellington of this necessary responsibility and allowing him to focus on the war in the Peninsula while the Captain General of Cadiz focused on the Americas.³⁰⁵ Further, the political situation in Cadiz had hit a critical point with tensions extremely high between the Regency and

³⁰² Wellington to Carvajal, 6 April 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 264.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 267.

³⁰⁴ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 69-70.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

the Cortes, and many observers believed that the creation of this district was the potential start of a military coup.³⁰⁶

A political restructuring in Spain removed the Don de Carvajal and replaced him with Don Bertran, but the issues that prevented Wellington from employing the Spanish army remained. Wellington wrote to the new Minister of War on 15 May 1813 to describe the current situation in relation to the Spanish army and the Spanish society in general. Wellington described what he saw as the fundamental flaw in the army itself saying “Great progress has been made in the clothing, the equipment, and the discipline of the troops, and much less has been done in the last three months to prepare a Spanish army for the field.”³⁰⁷ Despite what he viewed as significant progress in equipping the force, and an overall increase in the professionalism of the force likely tied to the better equipment, Wellington still viewed the army as impossible to sustain in the field because the provinces were simply unable to generate the necessary resources to support an army on campaign.

Wellington was forced to address the difficult issue of Britain’s contributions to the Spanish war effort. Britain had been providing large sums of money and resources to Spain to aid in the defeat of the French but was incapable of providing for a national army besides its own. Further, Spain possessed the resources to sustain its army, just not the ability to employ them efficiently. Wellington told Bertran that “Great Britain, owing to the misfortunes of the world, and particularly to the unfortunate situation of the

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Wellington to Bertran, 15 May 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 380.

Spanish colonies, cannot procure specie to give the assistance that is required of her.”³⁰⁸ Further, and perhaps more importantly Wellington made it clear that even if Britain could pay to support the Spanish army fully, it should not have to. Wellington said “it is not reasonable to expect pecuniary sacrifices from Great Britain when it is obvious that the country possesses resources that, if duly administered, and really applied to the object of maintaining troops in the field, would be more than sufficient for that purpose.”³⁰⁹

This was a somewhat fair assessment, the British economy remained in an extremely fragile state, significantly hampered by a global gold shortage which forced them to deplete their treasury vaults and issue treasury bills instead of real gold.³¹⁰ Even Spanish generals openly complained about the terrible bureaucracies that stalled their efforts, with men like the Conte de la Bisbal complaining that he could not even find the means to quarter his troops in Spanish cities and General Whittingham noting that the method that the Spanish employ to move supplies exists only to make the suppliers and transporters rich.³¹¹ Wellington ended with what he saw as the way forward, and an overview of the issues that remained. Wellington reminded Bertran that he was still preparing to take the field very shortly against the French and although the harvest would be on the ground and able to sustain the Spaniards on the march briefly, the lack of resources would rapidly deteriorate the Spanish discipline forcing Wellington to send all

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Moon, *Wellington's Two Front War*, 114.

³¹¹ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 115.

Spanish troops to the rear if he brought them at all.³¹² Despite his efforts to bring the forces of Spain to the field against the French, Wellington was now prepared to depart of his campaign with the armies of Spain remaining in their garrison.

From the onset of his tenure as the commander of the Spanish army, Wellington faced innumerable challenges that threatened his ability to effectively employ the Spanish army against his French opponents. Wellington had carefully crafted a plan that would achieve the fairly minimal goal of helping the Spanish avoid being beat, and pushed for many institutional and organizational reforms that would make a failing army more effective in the defense of its own nation. To this, the Spanish government agreed and allowed Wellington to accept the command position based on the premise that he would be afforded a wide range of powers to affect the changes that he believes were necessary. This was the arrangement in the fall of 1812, yet by 1813 the Spanish government had discarded most of these promises and made decisions that mitigated Wellington at virtually every opportunity. Despite this, Wellington continued to try and streamline the army in the best way he saw as possible, attempting to ensure the payment and supply of the army while at the same time trying to prevent abject waste, corruption, and lack of discipline.

The Spanish government was contending with a wide variety of issues at the same time. The nation had been virtually decimated by years of warfare and occupation, with large portions of the government recently created and underprepared for the tasks at hand. Further, British international policy coupled with the prevailing nationalist views of an

³¹² Wellington to Bertran, 15 May 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 381.

outspoken liberal contingent made public support of Wellington and enforcing the agreements made in 1812 increasingly unpopular.

With this being the case, Wellington would begin his campaign against the French that would culminate in the battle of Vitoria and the withdraw of the French to the Pyrenees on 20 May 1813. Wellington's future in the Peninsula and his future as the commander of the Spanish army remained unsure and would be tested by the events to follow.

CHAPTER 5

VITORIA AND BEYOND, 1813

The campaign of 1813 stressed the allied forces and tested the reforms Wellington proposed the previous fall. Despite the challenges of command authority, poor pay, and inability to abide by the decisions of 1812 the Spanish army demonstrated its tenacity and took to the field as part of the allied force. The Vitoria campaign began in May of 1813 and would stretch into the summer as Wellington looked to secure his victory by forcing the French back through the Pyrenees mountain passes. Initially, Wellington split his force, leaving some 40,000 soldiers under Major General Graham with instructions to move through Portugal to the Esla river and turn the line that Marmot had established the year earlier.³¹³ The second army of 30,000 made its way to the Tormes de Alba with the intent of linking up with Graham and drive the French back to the Pyrenees and began this march on 22 May 1813.³¹⁴ Despite his threat to the contrary, Wellington employed the Spanish 4th army under Castaños during his campaign into Vitoria, uniting them with Graham in his march to the Elsa river.³¹⁵ Part of this plan would involve the use of strategic sea movement to transfer the British army base from Lisbon to the Bay of Biscay and position supplies forward of the British movement so that they would move towards their supply depots rather than away from them, therefore shifting his line of

³¹³ Napier, *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula*, 238.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 239.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 238.

communication to better support the operation.³¹⁶ Graham's march proved difficult as he was slowed by the mountainous terrain and Wellington was forced to halt temporarily on 3 June to allow the armies to get into position for the attack on Vitoria.³¹⁷ As Wellington maneuvered toward Vitoria, the French were hampered by poor intelligence that exaggerated Wellington's numbers to nearly 190,000 men.³¹⁸ Meanwhile, Wellington fought several minor engagements along the Ebro at San Millan and Osma, forcing the French back towards Vitoria.³¹⁹ Converging upon Vitoria, Wellington believed that through synchronizing the efforts between his columns against different portions of the French defensive line he could overwhelm the French and force them into tactical confusion in their responses to the constantly changing operational conditions.³²⁰ To accomplish this, Wellington organized his army into four distinct columns placed in three areas. The southern column consisted of General Rowland Hill and General Pablo Morillo with the task of crossing the heights at Puebla to attack from the south, the center column consisted of Wellington and General George Ramsay with the task of attacking from the center once, and the column of the north under General Thomas Graham who

³¹⁶ Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 6:348-349.

³¹⁷ Napier, *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula*, 241.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 246.

³¹⁹ Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 6:373-376.

³²⁰ Dr. Mark Gerges, "Vitoria, 1813," in *Forgotten Decisive Battles*, ed. Richard V. Barbuto and Johnathan M. House (Ft. Leavenworth: Command and General Staff College Press, 2017), 47.

would cut off the French retreat.³²¹ The battle commenced on the 21 June and was a decisive victory for the allied armies, leading to a near rout of the French army who abandoned a large portion of their cannon and the baggage of King Joseph for the British.³²² Although Graham's failure to completely cut off the French avenues of retreat kept the French from total annihilation, the battle of Vitoria effectively ending the possibility of a continued French occupation of Spain.³²³ Wellington's success was incredible and demonstrated his ability to organize an extremely complex maneuver against a determined enemy while employing revolutionary ideas like the use of sea movements to alleviate logistical issues.³²⁴ Although the battle did not resolve the issues between Wellington and the Spanish government, it proved to be a hallmark in his career as a British officer and would effectively end the French occupation of the Peninsula.

The allied army followed this success with attempts to dislodge the French garrisons at Tarragona and San Sebastian and began a blockade of Pamplona, with both San Sebastian and Pamplona remaining invested until October. Meanwhile, skirmishes occurred almost daily throughout the summer and fall in the passes along the Pyrenees with larger battles as the French counterattacked at Roncesvalles in the Maya pass beginning on 25 July.³²⁵ During this time, Wellington continued his conflict with the

³²¹ Ibid., 47-48.

³²² Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, 6:441-442.

³²³ Gerges, "Vitoria," 56.

³²⁴ Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, 191-192.

³²⁵ Ibid., 608.

Spanish government. Wellington believed that the Spanish army had proven itself disciplined and capable but remained hamstrung by the ineptitude of the Spanish government. Further, the Spanish government continued to remove and replace officers without Wellington's consent and appeared committed only to reinforcing their powerbase rather than prosecuting the war. Wellington asked the new Regency to codify the arrangement made with the previous council to remove the possibility that they could ignore these promises for lack of either understanding or commitment. The government stalled or outright ignored Wellington's requests while the issues that plagued the Spanish army continued. The government's removal of Generals Castaños and Giron angered Wellington greatly as he believed they were dismissed because they had the favor of Wellington and therefore could not be trusted by the Cortes. This was compounded by the fact that Wellington heard from Wellesley, and not the Minister of War about these removals and was given no reason for the dismissal.³²⁶ Further, Wellington offered suggestions for officers he felt deserved promotion based on their performance in the campaign and the Spanish government rejected all of Wellington's suggestions outright.³²⁷ Wellington became embittered about the process of these continued requests with no response and tendered his resignation on 30 August pending a response from the Cortes regarding his earlier requests. He received none, and the Regency accepted his resignation in September, ensuring him that they would place the

³²⁶ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 144-145.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

request in front of the Cortes for final approval by October.³²⁸ Wellington continued as the commander of the Spanish army as promised until a replacement was appointed. Wellesley, realizing that Wellington's resignation would have far reaching effects in central Europe, used his political influence in Cadiz and the recent personnel changes in the government to change the process to a decision between confirming Wellington with the initial powers agreed upon in 1812 or a resignation.³²⁹ The vote passed to confirm Wellington as the commander.³³⁰ Regardless of the eventual outcome, the period between March and August of 1813 remained the most tenuous portion of Wellington's command, driving him to issue his resignation while battling for the good of Spain against both the Spanish government and the French.

As the Vitoria campaign began in May of 1813, Wellington vented his frustrations about the lack of Spanish involvement in the campaign to Juan O'Donoju who had assumed the position as minister of war following the departure of the Don Bertran in yet another political restructuring. In this message, Wellington lamented the fact that the Army of the Reserve remained detained in the Extremadura and could not be moved to reinforce his movements against the French because of the complete ineptitude of the intendants and the other civil authorities to procure the money and supplies requested by the Captain General.³³¹ Wellington previously demanded that the intendant

³²⁸ F.A. Wellesley, *The Diary and Correspondence of Henry Wellesley*, 69.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

³³¹ Wellington to O'Donoju, 4 June 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 414.

general be a military officer and the Spanish government denied this request, saying that it was in violation of the 1812 constitution, but did agree to make the intendant directly report to the Captain General. Wellington was acutely aware by June that this agreement simply did not work and the intendants by and large, remained as inept now as they were prior to his reformation effort and were forcing the army into immobility. Wellington's assessment was only true in part, although Spain was hamstrung by a civilian managed bureaucracy that made the establishment of a large logistics train impossible, many of the intendants operated from provinces unable to contend with the requests due to lack of resources or post occupation situations that looked like near anarchy.³³² Wellington was trapped in an unwinnable situation, as the liberal reforms of 1812 had created deep divides in the Spanish officer corps meaning that the appointment of an officer to be intendant would likely had little effect and most competent civilian administrators had been killed by or collaborated with the French, leaving only the most inexperienced to establish complex supply chains.³³³

This issue was now exemplified through the Army of the Reserve's inability to support the allied army in its campaign of 1813. Further, the intendants of the Army of Galicia, which was the only army that Wellington would include in the planning of the 1813 campaign, were desperately lacking mules for the transportation of supplies because of the incompetence of the intendant of Galicia.³³⁴ This was simply more than Wellington

³³² Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 115-118.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 118.

³³⁴ Wellington to O'Donoju, 4 June 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 414.

could take without complaining to the government. In his letter to O'Donoju he wrote that because of the continued incompetence of the intendants:

The consequence is that this army, which is clothed, armed and disciplined, cannot be brought into action against the enemy; and I am obliged to keep it in the rear. Thus this campaign will be fought without the aid of a single Spanish corps, notwithstanding that it is supposed that there are 160,000 Spanish troops in arms.³³⁵

Wellington made it clear in the past that the British government, through a subsidy paid to support the Spanish army, could only go so far and the Spanish must be prepared to do their part. In equipping and instilling discipline in the Spanish army, Wellington believed that he had done all he could and the present failure lied in the hands of the system itself. Wellington then questioned the very veracity of the statements themselves, claiming that it was simply beyond reason that given the notice provided by the Captain General, the provinces could not raise mules or money to support their army, implying that it must be a result of corruption or dishonesty more than simple incompetence. He then underscored the importance of the requests by adding “Yet for want of these exertions the cause may be lost.”³³⁶ The main issue was that the Spanish army was larger than the Anglo-British army in the Peninsula and despite the vast amount of money and time spent to revive the army, it was being immobilized through decisions made outside of his ability to influence. At this point, Wellington believed he would leave a massive military force in the rear for want of basic supplies, and be forced to bargain with a government that could not perform simple tasks to ensure its own

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid., 415.

independence. The intendant system in its present form made for an easy target for Wellington to vent his frustrations, but was far from being the all-encompassing cause of the problems he now faced. The difficulties in the British economy coupled with the conservative fiscal policies of Lord Liverpool meant that subsidies were routinely questioned for their necessity.³³⁷ Simultaneously, the implementation of the British free trade policy with Spanish colonies in the Americas and the British support of Portuguese encroachments on Spanish colonial holdings meant that little income was entering Spain from the outside.³³⁸ The intendants would be forced to employ what little resources they had internally, and even if they were capable of making this happen their ability to project this beyond their provincial borders was limited by the fact that the French had requisitioned most of their logistical resources.³³⁹ In effect, the intendants although certainly incompetent at times, were in an unwinnable situation.

As Wellington observed that he could not guarantee that the Spanish government was prepared to support the army, Wellington set about structuring a system that would do so without involving the central government at all. Wellington issued a memorandum to Sir Robert Kennedy, the Commissary General, on the exact disposition of any stores of supplies captured during the campaign. Of the foodstuffs captured, Wellington advised a fair split with half going to the British, one fourth going to the Portuguese and one fourth

³³⁷ Moon, *Wellington's Two Front War*, 217.

³³⁸ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 120.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 114-115.

going to the Spanish.³⁴⁰ Should any nation receive more than it's due, that nation would be responsible for paying the accessed difference to the commissary of the nation that received less.³⁴¹ Wellington directed that any "rents received in hand" would not be turned over to the Spanish government directly but would be instead applied to the sustainment of the Spanish troops acting as part of Wellington's army and would only be given to the Spanish treasury once the troops were fully supported by the goods and money received.³⁴² This policy showed Wellington's belief that the central government was so incompetent and perhaps outright corrupt that they could not be trusted with applying funds seized during the liberation of Spanish territories toward the significantly underfunded Spanish army that was liberating its territories. Further, outside of seized enemy magazines Wellington would reinforce his demand that Britain not supply the Spanish and directed that they only be provisioned from the British commissariat if they were acting subordinate to the British and collocated with the British headquarters.³⁴³ If the Spanish were anyplace else on the campaign, they would be supplied by the provincial intendants enforced through the Minister of War.³⁴⁴ Wellington remained true to his previous statement that he would rather leave Spaniards in the rear than be responsible for feeding them on campaign. Although his comments were clearly meant to

³⁴⁰ Wellington's Memorandum, 5 June 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches* X, 419.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

standardize supply distribution and circumvent many of the issues surrounding extended logistics lines, the level of distress that the Spanish 4th army was facing at this point seems to be questionable. Although Wellington claimed that the provinces that he calls “rich” (Extremadura, Castile, Leon, and Galicia) had contributed nothing to the 4th army and the 4th army did suffer from constant shortages, it was still able to project power into Vitoria and at times (as was the case with Morillo’s assault on La Puebla) perform instrumental roles in the battle itself.³⁴⁵ In effect, the performance of the Spanish at Vitoria undermined Wellington’s earlier claims that the failure of the intendants would prevent the Spanish from being of any real value in operations in the Peninsula.

As Wellington continued his campaign to liberate the remainder of the Peninsula, he was faced with another issue that would produce friction between him and the Spanish government. The question was what should be done with Spaniards who chose to, or were forced to side with the French. Five years of rule by the French had produced Spaniards who had supported the French either actively or tacitly and were now taking up with the French army in fear of retribution from the advancing Spanish forces.³⁴⁶ Wellington noted that many of these individuals performed notable acts for Spain worthy of distinction before the French overwhelmed their provinces, and some during the occupation as well. This was especially pertinent given the recent successes of guerillas under Mina in February and March of 1813 disrupting significant portions of Suchet’s

³⁴⁵ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 134.

³⁴⁶ Wellington to O’Donoju, 11 June 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 431.

force.³⁴⁷ Although Wellington was clear that he did not want to disparage the merit of those Spaniards that continually resisted the French oppression, he also made it clear that he can “forgive the weakness of those who have been induced by terror, by distress, or despair to pursue a different line of conduct.”³⁴⁸ Wellington reminded O’Donoju that before judging these people harshly, he should remember the poor state of the government at the start of the war, and the disastrous military failures and disorganization that followed.³⁴⁹ To remedy this, he advocated a general amnesty for all those that followed the “false king.” Wellington believed that should his efforts to liberate the Peninsula fail, amnesty would deprive the French of a portion of their support base and should liberation succeed, the pacification of Spain should be the government’s primary concern.³⁵⁰ Additionally, Wellington envisioned a potential situation in which Spain and France were at peaceful terms and the mistreatment of those that supported the French could potentially disrupt the peace process and provide France a reason to intervene.³⁵¹ The amnesty would not be wholesale and would exempt the most ardent supporters of King Joseph, his ministers, and those who have been instrumental in harming any Spaniard, and anyone that deserted a position of “public trust” (the army or civil

³⁴⁷ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 163.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 431

³⁴⁹ Wellington to O’Donoju, 11 June 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 431.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

authority) to join the French.³⁵² There were certainly pragmatic reasons to advocate leniency toward the French sympathizers. The liberals that had dominated large portions of Spanish society shared many similar beliefs to revolutionary France, including the establishment of a citizens army and a desire to perfect the civic institutions of government coupled with fierce nationalism.³⁵³ Further, the liberals had already been accused of fomenting plots with the notable afranceados to undermine the British alliance with Spain.³⁵⁴ It would be easy to foresee a situation in which the liberals reacted violently toward the ill treatment of the French sympathizers. The process of reunification was perhaps the most convoluted and potentially hazardous of any national liberation and Wellington's choice for empathy and mercy in dealing with these pro-French Spaniards demonstrated that he both keenly understood the complex social and political situation occurring in Spain and advocated stability measures and still wanted to pursue policy direction geared towards a successful Spain.

Shortly following this engagement with O'Donoju, Wellington was reminded why the Spanish army remained at a perpetual standstill when he received notice from O'Donoju that the Cortes had no intention of altering the situation regarding the intendants of the provinces or the armies.³⁵⁵ Wellington was understandably livid.

Wellington believed that this system, now upheld by the Cortes against his own wishes,

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 169.

³⁵⁴ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 123.

³⁵⁵ Wellington to O'Donoju, 14 June 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 441.

“completely prohibits the existence of the Spanish army.”³⁵⁶ In reality, the situation was far more complex. The lack of money remained the primary cause of the Spanish army’s distress, and the intendants (although they did present an easy target) were simply unable to garner the resources needed to make major operations happen. A large portion of the British contribution to the Spanish army in 1812 and 1813 was in the form of material goods, namely uniforms and equipment, rather than money meaning that in 1813 the lack of pay drove officers to beg and in some cases, starve while in garrison.³⁵⁷ The Spanish income from the Americas dropped by 93 percent from 1809 to 1813 and the overall Spanish domestic income was reduced by almost 75 percent.³⁵⁸ This catastrophic economic collapse meant regardless of their bureaucratic incompetence, no amount of skillful employment of logistics could have produced the results Wellington desired. Regardless, Wellington reminded O’Donoju that he saw the failure of the current financial system daily since he assumed command and offered recommendations to fix these issues. Not only had his recommendations not been followed, nothing had been put in place instead. In effect, Wellington saw that he lacked the trust of the Spanish government and their inability to fix this crippling system was yet more evidence of their incompetence or outright corruption whether it was true or not. At a minimum, it was representative of the fact that he did not have the ear of those who were in positions of

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 174.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 164.

power and they were unwilling to follow any of his suggestions to fruition. Wellington stated the effect that this had on the army by saying:

It is a fact, Sir, that the troops of Spain are starving in rich provinces, which only last year maintained ten times the number of French troops in plenty. It is also a fact that this is owing to the inexperience, the maladministration, and the misapplication of public funds. There are about 24,000 Spanish troops belonging to the 4th army and the army of the reserve in Andalusia serving with the grand army of the allies under my command . . . [despite the 9/10th arrangement designed to support the troops of Spain] yet I assure your Excellency that if it were not for the sums which are given to these troops from the military chest of the British army . . . these troops would not have a shilling to pay.³⁵⁹

Wellington believed that the Spanish government was completely incapable of implementing systems to correct basic inadequacies causing the army to be rendered immobile in such a poor state while continuing to underwrite a system that was “cruelly oppressive upon the people as it is ruinous to the army and state.”³⁶⁰ What was most certainly true was that intendants aside, without the 600,000 pounds paid by the British in a cash subsidy in 1812 or the 1.15 million paid directly to the British army to support operations on the Peninsula the Spanish would have been unlikely to support major offensive operations at all in 1813.³⁶¹

Despite his victory at Vitoria, Wellington viewed that situation that the British held in Spain as untenable and potentially dangerous. In writing to the Earl Bathurst Wellington relayed that he had received a letter from a member of the Cortes whom he

³⁵⁹ Wellington to O’Donoju, 14 June 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 441.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 164; Moon, *Wellington’s Two Front War*.

describes as “very sensible” that described the consensus of affairs in the Cortes toward the British army and how they see the future of the Anglo-Spanish alliance. Following this reading, Wellington offers his own somewhat dire opinion of the situation.

Wellington noted that the Spanish removed General Castaños and his nephew who had previously commanded the Army of Galicia from their positions without providing Wellington or Wellesley reasons for their dismissal and appointed a different man to be the Captain General of Galicia in his stead.³⁶² Wellington believed that this was because the Spanish government wanted to begin a war with the Bishops of Galicia, and Castaños would not have supported that decision.³⁶³ In essence, Wellington saw this political maneuvering as a potential precursor to violent internal conflict that could disrupt the conduct of the war with France by distracting the central government from the primary objective further. Perhaps more importantly, Wellington felt as though the government was simply uncommitted to the goal of defeating France in the Peninsula. To Wellington they appeared to only be concerned with implementing their constitution, which they acknowledge has no chance at success but is being pushed with such an orthodoxy that it reminded Wellington of their efforts at the inquisition.³⁶⁴ Wellington told Bathurst that as long as the Spanish government pursued this campaign of republicanism, he saw no hope for a long-term engagement between the British and Spanish and began to question

³⁶² Wellington to Bathurst, 29 June 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 473.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 474.

whether the British government should consider the timing of a permanent withdraw.³⁶⁵ Wellington saw divergent goals between the two nations. The government of Spain seemed concerned with consolidating their power base while Wellington and the British government were far less concerned with the liberation of an ineffective Spanish regime than they were in defeating Napoleon. Wellington's assessment of the situation appeared remarkably accurate, as Wellington continued to push towards France, even the Conte de la Bisbal commented that it appeared the government had forgotten about the war.³⁶⁶ Even before Bisbal's comments, court observers noticed that the Regency seemed more occupied with "trifling details" and "irrelevancies" than actively supporting the war effort.³⁶⁷

Wellington's initial sentiment was echoed in a message to Lord William Bentinck on 8 July 1813 when Wellington declared that neither the government or the Cortes care about the war in the Peninsula, and focused all of their efforts toward the enforcement of the constitution and their continued conflict with the Bishops of Galicia, resulting in the continued stagnation of the military.³⁶⁸ Further, Wellington noted that there has been no change in the last seven months and the basic military systems remained structured in

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 182.

³⁶⁷ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 119.

³⁶⁸ Lord William Bentinck served in the British army in the Peninsula prior to being assigned as the commander of British army in Sicily in 1811. Lord Bentinck would later be appointed as the governor general of India. Wellington to Bentinck, 8 July 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 516.

such a way that the potential for corruption remained ever-present.³⁶⁹ In a similarly themed letter sent to Bentick a week later he noted the failure of his effort to restructure the 2nd and 3rd armies of Spain, and the continued failure of his efforts to supply the Spanish army in a structured manner, insisting instead that they support themselves only through “rapine and confusion.”³⁷⁰ Wellington noted that the Spanish army, modeled in the corps system after the French army still acted independently of each other and was virtually impossible to manage.³⁷¹ The broader issue to Wellington surrounded the lack of initiative that existed in the Spanish government to prosecute the war in the Peninsula. The cause of this was that the revolution in Spain placed people in positions of authority that had little to no business governing the people due to lack of practical experience.³⁷² In part, this was by design. The constitution of 1812 was structured in a way that would prevent officials from holding positions too long, and prevented reelection to many of the same positions, so in effect any practical experience was lost due to a prevailing fear of creating a new nobility.³⁷³ This was coupled with the fact that the government that existed in 1813 was fundamentally different than the government of 1808. Even if

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Wellington to Bentick, 20 July 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 554.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid., 555.

³⁷³ The Political Constitution of Spain, specifically article 108 which dictates that an “entire new deputation shall be chosen every two years,” accessed 3 May 2017, http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/c1812/12159396448091522976624/p0000001.htm#I_4_.

experienced officials remained in place, they hardly be qualified to manage the post constitution government of 1813. Regardless, the actual changes to the army at large made since Wellingtons assumption of command have been minimal, and the army remained in a state of disarray even now that the French had been pushed back to the Pyrenees.

Despite the friction between Wellington and the Spanish government regarding the army, Wellington now found a use for the Spanish army in its employment guarding the mountain passes of the Pyrenees. This would seem like a good fit for the army as it required little need for complex maneuver and could build upon the well-established passion that the average Spanish soldier had in defending the homeland.³⁷⁴ In writing to Lord Liverpool, Wellington said that to employ these men effectively, all he needed to do was continue to feed and pay them, which the Spanish government simply could not do.³⁷⁵ Further, he noted to Liverpool that although the stated numbers of the Spanish army rank at 160,000 they are consistently unable to employ any more than a quarter or third of the 160,000 due to the problems mentioned above.³⁷⁶ As a result, the issue was not the want of men but the want of money to support the army.³⁷⁷ To Wellington, there was simply no other way to impose discipline on the Spanish soldiers outside of ensuring

³⁷⁴ Wellington had previously noted after Albuera somewhat sarcastically that the Spanish could not be moved, even when movement would be advantageous to the operation.

³⁷⁵ Wellington to Liverpool, 25 July 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches X*, 568.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

they get paid as they remained completely unwilling to accept direction from the British officers, or as Wellington said “the Spanish troops do not want discipline, if by discipline is meant instruction.”³⁷⁸ Wellington also believed that much of the success he had with the Spanish up to this point was a result of the fact that he had not forced British officers upon the Spanish army.³⁷⁹ By not forcing the Spanish to submit to British authority he fed into the overall nationalist movement occurring in Spain and avoided much of the friction and prejudice that would have occurred through imposing British officer oversight. This is perhaps Wellington’s most critical insight toward the Spanish army at this point. The Spanish had long held significant biases against the British, with some viewing them with extreme distrust, routinely questioned their motivations in the Peninsula. Further, the rift between the officer corps and the British grew greater as the British experienced additional success against the French with limited assistance from the Spanish. The Spanish officer corps grew jealous of the British victories feeling as though they had become of little importance in the liberation of their homeland.³⁸⁰ The addition of British officers would have been a catastrophic blow to the psyche of the Spanish officer corps and provided more fuel to the liberal attacks.

By mid-summer, Wellington was at the point in which he saw little value in continuing to command the Spanish army. On 7 August 1813 Wellington wrote to O’Donoju and threatened his resignation on the grounds that Giron and Castaños had

³⁷⁸ Wellington to Lord Liverpool, 25 July 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches* X, 569.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 181.

been removed without his consent or input.³⁸¹ The removal of Castanos, a longtime supporter of Wellington, seemingly without cause placed Wellington into a position where he was forced to act on his behalf. This was because it targeted someone whom Wellington trusted and it again violated the spirit of the arrangement he made with the Spanish government if not the actual wording.³⁸² Wellington acknowledged the fact that the government did have the right to remove Castanos, but took issue with the fact that Castaños was removed and punished seemingly without any rationale.³⁸³ Wellington explained this in a letter to the Earl Bathurst in which he said “The fact is that you were misled by my letter of the 29th June, in which I told you those arrangements were in direct violation of their agreements with me. The removals of Generals Giron and Castaños is not so; the appointment of officers to fill those stations without my knowledge and without my recommendation is.”³⁸⁴

This issue was compounded by the fact that the government ignored Wellington’s demands to appoint certain officers to replace them which was in direct conflict with the agreements made between Wellington and the government in December.³⁸⁵ Wellington

³⁸¹ Wellington to the Spanish Minister of War, 7 August 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 608.

³⁸² It should be noted that Wellington requested the power to dismiss officers, but not the power to keep them from being dismissed by the government.

³⁸³ Wellington to the Spanish Minister of War, 7 August 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 608.

³⁸⁴ Wellington to Bathurst, 7 August 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 612.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

now believed that the present government had no intention whatsoever of upholding the arrangements made by the previous Spanish administrators, and as a result Wellington demanded that the Regency explain its exact understanding of the situation in “language that cannot be misunderstood.”³⁸⁶ Should this fail to happen, Wellington would relinquish the position with the understanding that he would continue to support the Spanish when he could with the allied Anglo-Portuguese army. The reality was that both these officers were removed because of political conflicts in the government in relation to Galician conflict surrounding clerical opposition to the abolishment of the Inquisition.³⁸⁷ Although the move, and the secrecy surrounding it, looked like a deliberate insult to Wellington this was likely not the case at all.

Despite the threats of resignation posed to O’Donoju, Wellington urged caution in pushing the Spanish too far to Bathurst saying that even though they had violated their arrangement, “in the existing state of affairs, I do not think it is wise to push them to extremities, or to manifest an inclination to treat them.”³⁸⁸ With this statement, it begs the question whether his initial threat to resign was real or bluster made out to force the Spanish government to dictate terms that are clear to both parties in a relatively enforceable document. To answer this question, Wellington spelled out his intentions very directly to Henry Wellesley. To Wellesley he said “Indeed matters cannot go on

³⁸⁶ Wellington to the Spanish Minister of War, 7 August 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 610.

³⁸⁷ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 143.

³⁸⁸ Wellington to Bathurst, 7 August 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington’s Dispatches X*, 612.

much longer as they are; either I must possess the confidence and support of the government, and the minister of war, whatever the nature of their agreement with me may be, or I must resign the command of the army.”³⁸⁹

Wellington was serious about his threat to resign, but the resignation had less to do with the confusion around the powers vested in Wellington by the government and more to do with the overall trust and confidence that the government had in the commander of its army. Although O’Donoju did promise Henry Wellesley that the removal of Giron and Castaños had nothing to do with Wellington and that the reason for the removal would be explained soon, this action was multiplied by the fact that at virtually the same time the Regency rejected all of Wellington’s recommendations for promotions following the battle of Vitoria.³⁹⁰ Given the context, it would be impossible to imagine a scenario in which Wellington did not view this as an action based on distrust.

Wellington continued this debate with O’Donoju into late August when he wrote his longest letter to date regarding relinquishing his command of the Spanish army. Wellington acknowledged that the deal made to command the Spanish army was completed with a different Regency composed of now completely different members, many of which did not feel the need to honor the arrangements. In fact, the new Regency

³⁸⁹ Wellington to Wellesley, 20 August 1813, Sir Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, *The Despatches of the Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington K.G. During his various Campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, the Low Countries and France from 1799-1815 Volume XI*, compiled by Lieutenant Colonel Gurwood (London: John Murray, 1825), 22, accessed 15 April 2017, <https://archive.org/details/despachesoffie11welluoft>.

³⁹⁰ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 146.

was elected in March of 1813 in a state of turmoil. There was a widespread belief in the Cortes that the previous Regency was planning a campaign to suppress the Cortes which came dangerously close to creating a coup in Cadiz.³⁹¹ As a result, a new Regency was specifically chosen to provide as little threat to the Cortes as possible meaning that they shared some of the liberal beliefs of the Cortes and therefore questioned Wellington's wide command authorities.³⁹² Should Wellington continue the command he required the new Regency to enter into the same arrangement without question or alteration.³⁹³ Wellington told O'Donoju that he would not add anything to the arrangement and simply demanded the powers authorized by Carvajal.³⁹⁴ Wellington reminded O'Donoju that the current system to promote and dismiss officers was untenable, with Wellington claiming that some Spanish officers have been awaiting trial for incompetence or corruption since 1808 with seemingly no end in sight, and this lack of accountability is fundamentally detrimental to the existence of the army itself.³⁹⁵ In a more general sense Wellington said:

[I]t is impossible to carry on the services of the nature of those required by the modern system of war, or to revive and maintain in an army military discipline and subordination, and a true military spirit, unless the officer charged with the conduct of those services . . . has the authority not only of punishing but of recommending for awards; and that the Government, who alone can have the power of dispensing those rewards, should positively declare, that those only

³⁹¹ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 170.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

³⁹³ Wellington to O'Donoju, 30 August 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches XI*, 52.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

should receive them who should be thought deserving of them by that officer to whom the nation and the government had thought proper to intrust the conduct of the military operations of the state.³⁹⁶

Wellington demanded the trust and authority that should be vested in every commander by the government that they represent. He could not continue to support a government that failed to actively punish those officers whom the commander deemed worthy of punishment and reward those who he deemed worthy of reward. Lacking these basic tenants of authority, he could have no real effect on the Spanish army and would be relegated to little more than a tactical field commander, which he could easily do without the mantle and added political pressures of commander of the Spanish army. This mirrored the position of the Regency elected in March of 1813 which believed that Wellington's duty was simply to lead the armies of Spain to victory and nothing else.³⁹⁷ Despite this, Wellington remained harshly critical of the political promotions that remained ingrained in the Spanish army saying “[promotions should be given] in order to induce the officers of the army to look for advancement to the laborious performance of their duty with the army in the field, rather than to recommend themselves to the leaders of the parties of the day at the seat of the government.”³⁹⁸

Wellington remained equally clear regarding the process of delivering orders to subordinate units. As Wellington noted, the ordenanzas that governed the military prior to the onset of Wellington's command stated that orders would only flow from the

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 171.

³⁹⁸ Wellington to the Spanish Minister of War, 30 August 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches XI*, 53.

government to a subordinate commander through the superior commander, and would not bypass any element of the direct chain of command.³⁹⁹ Despite this common regulation the Regency delivered orders without including Wellington, even just to keep him informed of the movements and requests. To this Wellington said “It must be recollected that the army placed under my command is not in garrison, or in a state of peace, but is in state of active operation against the enemy, in plans concerted and ordered by me, and in combination with armies of other nations likewise under my command.”⁴⁰⁰

The wider picture dictated that the process of sending orders directly to subordinate units is not only detrimental to the employment of the Spanish army, but also detrimental to the combat operations of all the allies. The Spanish response from the Minister of State to this point was particularly cogent. The basis of the Spanish argument was that the exercise of the position of commander in chief could not be done in a way that usurped the authority of the executive to place its army in a manner to address urgent crises as it saw fit.⁴⁰¹ In effect, the executive retained the right to move its forces where it deemed necessary without informing Wellington or routing orders through him. Further, the Regency had already found a solution to this issue by sending duplicates of the orders it provided to the subordinate organizations that would be routed through Wellington’s headquarters thus keeping him informed but not necessarily as the issuing authority.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 149.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 148.

Additionally, the Regency had a history of being the orders issuing authority. In 1810, the Regency had established a general staff for the explicit purpose in assisting them with the task of ordering operational units.⁴⁰³ Regardless, Wellington reminded O'Donoju that he had upheld his end of the initial arrangement by sending routine reports regarding the disposition and placement of the Spanish army. Wellington said "I am quite certain that no part of the Spanish army from the situation in which they were placed when I took command in January last, that a special report has not been made to your excellency, or your predecessor."⁴⁰⁴

Additionally, Wellington claimed that he included detailed descriptions of the British and Portuguese movements in Spain, not out of a requirement but out of respect for the government of the nation in which they were operating.⁴⁰⁵

Nothing tangible changed within the Spanish government's relationship with its army or the commander of its army and Wellington requested that his resignation be presented from the Regency to the Cortes for finalization through the Spanish Minister of War. By 5 October the request had been received and Wellington contacted O'Donoju again to both thank him for pushing the resignation through to the Cortes and was in the process of preparing his actions following the end of his command.⁴⁰⁶ Wellington

⁴⁰³ Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, 171.

⁴⁰⁴ Wellington to the Spanish Minister of War, 30 August 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches XI*, 55.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Wellington to the Minister of War, 5 October 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches XI*, 163.

reminded O'Donoju that the reasons for his resignation fell directly in the hands of the actions taken by the Regency, who routinely failed to issue orders through Wellington and uphold the stated goal of reforming the officer corps through timely punishments and promotions.⁴⁰⁷ Because of these actions, Wellington believed that he was both untrusted by the Regency and also the commander of an army that remained hamstrung by the political machinations that surrounded its officer corps as well as its own inner turmoil to the detriment of its soldiers who starved from the ineptitude of the government. Although he remained of the mindset that a central, singular command of the allied army remained best he believed that he lacked the faith of the Regency to make that possible.⁴⁰⁸ At this point, the Regency had already accepted the resignation and it appeared it was only a matter of time before the process was finalized through the Cortes. Wellington clarified this process to Earl Bathurst by informing him that the Regency had the authority to accept his resignation, but he would remain in command until the Cortes could establish a new session and appoint his successor. The genesis of the resignation process began with his letter on 30 August and would end when the Cortes finalized his replacement.⁴⁰⁹

From September to November when the Cortes met to discuss the resignation, Wellington remained pragmatic toward the process. He felt he had continually been insulted by the Regency who Wellesley said in July would rejoice at Wellington's resignation and immediately replace him with Ballasteros, but despite this sentiment he

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 163-164.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 164.

⁴⁰⁹ Wellington to Bathurst, 5 October 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches XI*, 164.

knew the effect that his resignation would have on the Spanish people and Europe at large.⁴¹⁰ As such, Wellington largely refrained from any major complaints to the Regency following his offer to resign, believing that he had said all that needed to be said on the affair and not wishing to damage the relationship between Spain and Britain in any lasting way. Much to Wellington and Wellesley's surprise, when the Cortes met in November of 1813 they became nearly enraged by the conduct of the Regency toward Wellington and not only voted to codify his powers but had the opinion that "it would be highly impolitic to dispossess the Lordship of the command and the conditions agreed upon . . . should not only be strictly adhered to, but that more extensive powers should be granted to him if he should judge them necessary."⁴¹¹ Nearly simultaneously, Wellington wrote a poignant message to Bathurst regarding his last view on the Spanish situation of 1813. Wellington told Bathurst that Spain was full of libels surrounding the British conduct in Spain, especially following the fall of San Sebastian, and Wellington believed that all of these libels had the government as the common source.⁴¹² The Spanish soldiers however began to show a semblance of discipline as (although Wellington claimed that they still plundered every location) there was now a desire to find and punish the offenders, which had not happened in the past.⁴¹³

⁴¹⁰ Esdaile, *The Duke of Wellington and the Spanish Army*, 147.

⁴¹¹ F. A. Wellesley, *The Diary and Correspondence of Henry Wellesley*, 70.

⁴¹² Wellington to Bathurst, 27 November 1813, Wellesley, *Wellington's Dispatches XI*, 325.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 326.

The period from April to November 1813 tested Wellington's relationship with the Spanish government and the Spanish army as he was forced to contend with the inadequacies of the government in supplying its army as well as the threat of the French in northern Spain and their eventual resurgence through the Pyrenees passes. Although Wellington did not abide by his threat to leave the Spanish army in their garrisons, he did find it impossible to employ the army en masse and relied almost completely on the efforts of the Spanish 4th Army. In effect, out of nearly 160,000 soldiers available, he was unable to employ any more than a fraction of this because of he believed the government was unable to leverage the resources of the nation toward a common goal. The reality was more nuanced, and the dramatic economic collapse of Spain coupled with the inexperienced civilian administrators made any prospect of supporting a large field army on campaign impossible. In reality, this was much less of an issue than Wellington believed as he was still able to accomplish his operational tasks with the force on hand, and any more Spanish involvement would likely have produced additional confusion.

Further, the government outright ignored Wellington's requests to remedy the conflicts between him and the Regency while removing officers loyal to Wellington without offering any excuse for the action or even informing Wellington that they were due to be removed. Although this was in large part due to internal stability concerns that had nothing to do with Wellington, he still saw it as an affront to his position. Despite the chaos in the government, the performance and discipline of the Spanish soldiers improved. Wellington found them useful and effective guarding the mountain passes in the Pyrenees. This culminated with Wellington offering his resignation, only months after accepting the position. Despite his offer, and its acceptance by the Regency, political

maneuverings would keep Wellington in power in November and reinforce his authority over the army. This period emphasized the issues that Wellington had from the onset of his engagements with the Spanish, namely their inability to organize the military and provincial systems to sustain an army in the field, the almost dogmatic lack of trust for any foreign intervention in their affairs, and the general lack of trust that this created toward Wellington. Wellington, for his efforts was successful in building moderate discipline in the army, and keep them from being the cause of a major allied defeat. In effect, Wellington managed to achieve his goal outlined to Bathurst in 1812 which was to help them avoid being beat. Although the conflict against the French would continue into 1814, the Spanish army would play a smaller role as Wellington pushed into France as he feared the possibility of Spanish retribution on the French citizens, and therefore his role as the Spanish commander was diminished but the lessons learned during this period underscored both the challenges and successes that Wellington faced as the Spanish commander.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Wellington's command of the Spanish army was tenuous from the very beginning. Upon his arrival to the Iberian Peninsula, Wellington had no real imperative to liberate Spain, being directed instead to focus on ensuring the continued sovereignty of Portugal with the possibility of advancing the war against France should the conditions dictate. Throughout this initial period, Spain seemed less like an objective critical to the success of the war, and more like a hurdle that must be crossed to achieve the greater goal of defeating the French. This was coupled with the fact that the British had a long, somewhat tumultuous relationship with the Spanish, transitioning between open war and periods of tense limited alliances. Quickly Wellington realized that if he would expand the war against the French into Spain rather than remaining in defensive positions in Portugal, he would need the assistance of the Spanish army. This was both to make up for the British army's lack of manpower and achieve numerical parity with the French and to ensure that the British presence in Spain was relatively tolerated by the Spanish citizens.

Wellington's effect on the Spanish army was limited. By examining his two seemingly conflicting stated goals for the army, one being to have them avoid being beat and the other being to bring them to equal footing to the other armies in Europe, he only managed to create a system in which they were not the downfall of the British in the Peninsula. By 1813 the Spanish army remained very different from an army on an equal footing to others in Europe. This was not the result of Wellington's lack of initiative or lack of clearly identifiable goals. Wellington identified and pursued clear intermediate goals to improve the effectiveness and discipline of the Spanish army. These goals were

impossible to achieve due to the state of the Spanish government, which was completely ineffective in handling the task at hand. The government lacked the ability to prosecute a war against the French, rebuild and restructure its army, and rebuild the nation under the tenants of the liberal constitution of 1812 simultaneously. Further, political infighting and distrust of the British and their motives permeated the entire operation, forcing any reformation to a stall. Given the condition that the government was in throughout 1812 and 1813, any tangible change meant to bring the Spanish on equal footing to the other nations of Europe was simply impossible.

With respect to Wellington's ability to leverage relationships with the Spanish government to achieve a common goal as the commander of the army, his results were mixed at best. Although Wellington could employ the efforts of his brother toward his appointment as the commander of the army, Wellesley's ability to assist in affecting the changes that Wellington demanded from the government appeared to be minimal or nonexistent. Wellington's countless requests to remedy the ailments of the Spanish supply system were known to Wellesley, yet he was unable to put any pressure on the Regency to correct the issues. In fact, the tension between Wellington and the Regency grew worse as 1813 progressed, not better. This would imply that Wellesley was having no effect in the Regency council on Wellington's behalf. The same could not be said about his effect on the Cortes, which was much more positive as Wellesley was able to convince them to uphold Wellington's command and even turn them against the Regency. Wellington was unable to place much pressure on the Regency at all. Despite his successes that enabled him to achieve the position in 1812, Wellington was outright ignored through most of

1813 and the Regency took measures to curtail his power through the establishment of the Cadiz district and the removal of officers loyal to Wellington.

Wellington did make inroads to mitigate the friction that existed between the Spanish and British. Wellington saw the major point of contention that led to the ill-discipline of the Spanish army as being the significant issues that surrounded the pay and supply of the Spanish and he attempted numerous measures to correct this deficiency, and virtually all were stalled in the Spanish government. It is worth noting that in his efforts to make the Spanish army an army on equal footing to that of other Europeans, Wellington did attempt to impose discipline on the Spanish by means deliberately chosen to prevent friction. Wellington did not force British officers upon the Spanish army as he realized that it would have exponentially increased the friction between the two armies because of the large bias that the Spanish held toward the British. Further, in his initial address to the Spanish army, he assured them that he was to enforce the discipline of the Royal Ordenanzas rather than the British government, firmly placing himself as part of the Spanish system and defusing much of the friction that could have resulted from a foreigner commanding the army of Spain. In perhaps the most obvious attempt, Wellington enters Madrid flanked by a Spanish general and a guerilla leader, obviously meant to place himself as part of the Spanish military system rather than as an outsider. At a minimum, this demonstrated Wellington as being acutely aware of the necessity to demonstrate his commitment and competence to the Spanish population, if only just to stabilize the tumultuous Spanish army and win their tentative loyalty.

Wellington's belief that the Spanish army could be improved to any tangible extent with the time provided shows some naivety towards the extreme issues

surrounding the nation of Spain as a whole. The Regency and Cortes did mitigate Wellington's command authority and did violate the terms agreed upon in December of 1812, but not all of these violations were meant as a deliberate affront to Wellington. The extreme instability which permeated the Spanish government meant that the political decision-makers in Cadiz were preoccupied with solidifying their powerbase in the nation, leading to many decisions that Wellington viewed as a personal slight. Wellington, unable to ascertain the nature of these decisions and hampered by the secrecy surrounding them, viewed it as a signal of the Regency's mistrust of its commander in chief. Further, with his timing as commander straddling multiple major changes in the Regency, many of the key players felt that whatever the arrangement had been with Wellington in 1812, they had no need to abide by it in 1813. Additionally, Spain was in a period of recovery following years of shattering occupation that had rendered large portions of the nation in a state no better than anarchy. The reforms proposed by Wellington in 1812 and 1813 were simply unable to overcome four years of widespread collapse.

Even if Wellington's requests had been followed religiously, it is unlikely the situation would have turned out much differently. Regardless of Wellington's desire to place the bulk of the responsibility at the hands of an incompetent intendant general system, no level of competence could make up for the disastrous economic collapse in the preceding years. There was simply not enough money to pay and equip an army of the magnitude to which Wellington was expecting. Further, although Wellington railed against the process of the Regency issuing orders and building training depots, both of which underscored the belief that the Regency would issue the orders and Wellington

would win the battles. This was understood by all in the Regency, but somehow missed by Wellington himself.

Despite these significant issues, Wellington and the Spanish army achieved incredible success on the Peninsula. Although Wellington once pessimistically believed he would be required to leave the Spanish army in its garrisons while the British expelled the French, this proved not to be the case. The Spanish army proved more tenacious than Wellington initially believed and capable of assisting the British throughout his campaigns in Vitoria and the Pyrenees. Even in perhaps the most complex situations imaginable to a commander in the 19th century, Wellington was able to leverage an army that had known so much defeat since 1808 in a final push to liberate Spain. Although much of the political machinations and instability proved too much for Wellington to conquer, his success proved his value as a commander and administrator as well as the fidelity and tenacity of the Spanish army.

The post-World War 2 era of limited warfare has been dominated by operations conducted by coalitions, typically coalitions led by American generals, placed in confusing situations in which political maneuvering and nuanced tact are as critical to success as success at warfighting. The need to quickly develop and employ a partner nation's army may mean the difference between success and abject failure regardless of whether the general be the commander of the partner nation's army formally or not. As such, he must employ all the means at his disposal, both political and military, to achieve his goals and hopefully succeed in achieving his nations strategic objective. The lesson that was learned through Wellington's experience in the Peninsula as the commander of the Spanish army is clear. The complexities that surrounded his experience in 1812 and

1813 mirror the complexities faced by modern Joint Task Force and Combatant Commanders, and through examining Wellington's successes and failures in dealing with the Spanish army and the Spanish government we can hope to achieve a measure of success that eluded Wellington in the past.

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