

***Der Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg. Frankreichs Kriege und der deutsche Süden: Alltag—Wahrnehmung—Deutung, 1792–1841.* By Ute Planert. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh. 2007. map + 739 pp. €68 (hardback).**

In the second epilogue to *War and Peace*, Tolstoy lays bare the sinews of his understanding of history. For Tolstoy, history happens in the confluence of will and necessity. Great men do not control history, and ordinary people do not simply cave in to its design. Instead, the people have their own opinions, interests and patterns of action. The good historian, it follows, does not just describe the heroic thoughts and deeds of Napoleon, but also heeds the advice of Kutuzov, the Russian Field Marshall, who knew that ordinary men and women also mattered.

Remarkable that historians of the Napoleonic wars should have been slow to heed Tolstoy's advice. Remarkable too how successfully Ute Planert recreates ordinary people's experiences of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Concentrating on south Germany, in particular Baden, Württemberg and Bavaria, the core areas of the 'third Germany', she has made a fundamental contribution to what we know about the period stretching from 1796, when French troops first crossed the Upper Rhine, to 1815, when Napoleon's rule came to a definitive end. She suggests that we see this period as a unity marked by the everyday struggles of populations confronted with the trial and tribulations of wars that shook the foundations of society, and that contrasted markedly with the long peace that came before.

Planert's history is not an *histoire totale*. The view of the French occupation forces is missing, so too is the impact of the ideas of Fichte, Humboldt, Arndt, Schleiermacher, and other Prussian intellectuals, who are mainly addressed in order to show they have not penetrated into the deeper reaches of society in southern Germany. Instead, hers is the view from below. She has extensively mined the chronicles of towns and cloisters and she has unearthed scores of unknown memoirs and letters. These 'ego documents' are not, according to Planert, avenues for introspection, but rather speak of the cataclysmic events that marked the time.

They do not speak of nationalism. Planert shows in convincing detail that German nationalism was not part of the reaction of ordinary people to French occupation. But this does not mean that people took to the occupation, either. Instead, Planert shows us a wealth of reaction. The problem began in 1796, when an insufficiently provisioned French Army occupied parts of southern Germany. French soldiers plundered houses, robbed churches, damaged religious artifacts, assaulted people and committed rape. The incidence of rape was especially high in 1796, with 18% of parishes in one area near Augsburg reporting incidents. In the cabinet wars of the eighteenth century, the civilian population was largely spared such atrocities. Not so in 1796. The French army was larger than any previous army that had occupied southern Germany, and its soldiers were encamped neither in garrisons nor in garrison cities but in towns and in the countryside. The rate of illegitimate children rose dramatically in this period, and prostitution flourished. But so too, on the German side, did popular religiosity.

Some of Planert's most interesting pages show how religion structured the experience of occupation. Mindful of confessional differences, she investigates devotional panels and the description of miracles, and considers prayer paintings and eschatological expositions, such as Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling's best-selling *Heimweh*, which imagines a reign of peace, where those who believe in Christ will find salvation. In fascinating detail, Planert shows how in the countryside catastrophes were understood in traditional terms—as the punishment of God—even as university-trained theologians insisted on the more enlightened concept of a helping God. Comets, too, were part of the traditional arsenal of signs that augured worse things to come.

For many families, the war visited in the form of military conscription—which the rulers of the third Germany agreed to in exchange for the dramatic increase of the lands and peoples under their reign. In one town of one hundred and fifty families, for example, fifty young men were drafted. In those areas that had not belonged to the expanded states, resistance proved especially sharp, both in small, surreptitious ways, such as involved the hiding of young men in a series of towns near the Bodensee, and in larger, more public demonstrations, such as occurred in riots and revolts that centred on conscription. Partly, this resistance had to do with the changing place of the military in society. Hitherto soldiers had been a separate and not especially revered caste, and few people waxed enthusiastic about the citizen in arms. But acts of resistance also involved conflict with the centralizing territorial state, with riots concentrated in those lands that had been newly annexed. The famous Tyrolean Peasant Uprising of 1809 is to be understood in this context—not as anti-French German nationalist uprising, but as a manifestation of *ancien régime* antagonisms. Centred on military conscription, the maintenance of popular religious customs, and the regional privileges of estates, the uprising was mainly directed against Bavaria, which had acquired Tirol in the Peace of Pressburg. It was also encouraged by Vienna.

Planert sees very little of the popular resistance during the years of occupation as having a specifically anti-French dimension. Instead, this resistance was aimed at occupying armies regardless of their nationality. This is for me the novel aspect of her revisionist claims. For some time, we have known that peasants and townsmen throughout the German Empire couldn't give a rip about the nationalist constructions of Prussian intellectuals. Planert's claim is bolder, as she suggests that the myth is wrong about deep-seated anti-French sentiment as well. The wars to end!—that is what peasants and townspeople throughout southern Germany wanted. They did not think in nationalist terms, but rather thought these terms irrelevant to their lives. The salient matter, Planert argues, was instead the experience with occupying troops, and this experience was different at different times and with different occupying armies. Napoleonic troops, for example, proved more orderly than the Revolutionary

troops, and thus contributed to a climate in which anti-French sentiment abated. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, genuine resistance in south Germany was more commonly directed against territorial states intruding into the life worlds of the small towns and villages. This resistance was especially pronounced in territories that once belonged to the Habsburg Crownlands, and German freedoms, far from necessarily ringing anti-French, were directed against the territorial states.

It is however precisely in these states that Planert sees loyalties as crystallizing. Her case is especially strong for Bavaria and Württemberg, where even before the wars *Landespatritismus* existed. This love of country became especially pronounced in the victorious campaigns of 1813, where Bavarians came home to a welcoming Bavarian nation. This was a calmer patriotism than could be found in the north. Few south German clergy, Protestant or Catholic, engaged in the religiously-inspired nationalist bellicosity characteristic of Prussia. In a suggestive argument, Planert maintains that it was only in the 1830s and 1840s that south Germans began to see their contribution to the war in German national terms. Even then, it had less to do with the construction of German intellectuals than with the coming together of veterans' associations and retrospective reconstructions among old fighters of what they had fought for. Even then love of country—Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden—remained paramount to a narrative about the so-called Wars of Liberation.

Planert's work represents a major achievement. Massively documented, well written, imaginatively conceived and rigorously argued, it will remain a work of enduring significance. It is also a humane work, which allows us to hear quieter voices in a time when the din of high politics and large-scale military engagements assumed centre stage. It poses a challenge to historians who see this period primarily through the texts of its famous intellectuals, many of whom are Prussian. And it reminds us of the truth of Tolstoy and Kutuzov, for whom history depended on the thoughts and actions of ordinary people.

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