

# Popular resistance in catalonia: somatenes and migueletes in the french war<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract / Resum / Resumen

The author treats the characteristics of the somatenes and the migueletes during the Great War (1793-95) and the French War (1808-1814), he impacts in the strategies of the formation, the problem of the desertions, the profile of the war of guerrilla warfare and the activities of the irregular forces in relation to the military authorities. / *L'autor tracta les característiques dels somatens i els miguelets durant la Gran Guerra (1793-95) i la Guerra del francès (1808-1814) fent incidència en les estratègies de formació, el problema de les desercions, el perfil de la guerra de guerrilles i les activitats de les forces irregulars en relació amb les autoritats militars. / L'autor tracta les característiques dels somatens i els miguelets durant la Gran Guerra (1793-95) i la Guerra del francès (1808-1814) fent incidència en les estratègies de formació, el problema de les desercions, el perfil de la guerra de guerrilles i les activitats de les forces irregulars en relació amb les autoritats militars.*

## Key Words / Paraules clau / Palabras clave

Fench War, Great War, migueletes, somatenes. / *Guerra del francès, Guerra Gran, miguelets, somatens / Guerra del francès, guerra grande, miguelets, somatenes.*



## The formation of migueletes and somatenes

1. Somatenes and migueletes, traditional Catalan defence organizations, were mobilised both in the "Great War" (1793-95) and in the "French War" (1808-1814). The professional army having all but disappeared after Duhesme's troops had taken Barcelona, the "Corregimental" (local) Juntas and the Catalan High Junta, constituted at Lerida on 18 June 1808, promoted the formation of Miguelete Tercios and a general Somatén. Throughout the war, both forms of grouping were adopted by the military themselves, and their actions often overlapped with those of the guerrilla groups.

2. The migueletes were really a paramilitary militia, mercenary and voluntary in nature, recruited by the local authorities or war juntas with the aim of carrying out special actions or of reinforcing regular troops. Unlike the somatenes, which operated close to their respective towns and villages, the migueletes were mobile and independent and had a hierarchy similar to that of the army. In practice, migueletes and somatenes are often confused with traditional forms of military organization.

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3. The "*somatén era*", to use an expression coined by F.X. Cabanes<sup>2</sup>, lasted from late May to early August 1808. The first Catalan *somatén* was formed in early June 1808. Citizens of Igualada, Manresa and other neighbouring towns raised a *somatén* in the Bruc mountains with the aim of halting General Schwartz's march on Zaragoza. The skirmish, which took place on June 6, had the desired effect and succeeded in putting the imperial troops to flight.

4. Beyond legend and the myth of the "Drum of Bruc", the participation of the Swiss Wimpffen regiment in the action should be noted, with the detachment commanded by Lieutenant Francisco Krutter preparing an ambush for the French, as well as that of other regular troops, many of them deserters from Barcelona. Their participation was also decisive in the second action at Bruc on June 14, led by Joan Baget, a scribe from Lleida, in which besides the Manresa and Igualada *somatenes* there was participation by the Cervera and Lleida tercios, among which there were several Swiss companies, more than 500 men, dressed as peasants, even down to their Catalan *barretina caps*<sup>3</sup>.

5. It was a psychological victory, the first defeat Napoleon's army suffered before Bailén, and was to become a symbol repeatedly exploited by the civil and military authorities in their anti-French propaganda campaign. From the point of view of organising their defence, following the Bruc battle, other villages which had previously not raised *somatenes*, like Vilanova i la Geltrú quickly did so<sup>4</sup>.

6. Knowledge of the terrain, particularly in the hills, enabled the *somatenes* and *migueletes* to caused the Napoleonic army heavy losses. With the aid of the local population, the patriots carried out a defensive war of attrition, accepting no real battle unless they had clear numerical superiority. The ability of the Catalans to mobilise in the countryside and in the defence of towns under siege was noted by French officers from the start.

7. Of note among the first action seen by the *somatenes* was that at Arbós, carried out in June 1808 by the *somatenes* of Vilafanca del Penedès, La Segarra and Urgell, which attacked the French division commanded by Chabrán, who in reprisal looted and set fire to the whole town. There was also the skirmish at Congost on July 4, in which *somatenes* and *migueletes* participated under the command of Francesc Deu de Llisá and Josep Colomer y Riu, and the defence of the castle of Mongat. Outstanding among the heroines was Susana Claretona, the wife of a *somatén* sub-lieutenant, D. Francesc Felonch, who was named *somatén* commandant, along with her husband, and prevented the French from taking Capellades<sup>5</sup>.

8. Calling up a *somatén*, which was done only at times of great danger, was used systematically by the authorities from 1808 to 1811. On June 19, the Catalan High Junta agreed to form a *somatén* army commanded by J. Baget (an artillery officer), together with the commanders of other *somatenes*, Montanyà (Canon of Manresa) and R. Riera (an Igualada

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2. F.X. Cabanes, *Historia de las operaciones del Ejército de Cataluña en la Guerra de la Usurpación. Campaña Primera*, Barcelona, 1815, pp. 13-42.
  3. A. Carner i Borràs, *Les tropes suïsses a Catalunya durant la guerra « de la independència »*, Rafael Dalmau Ed., Barcelona, 1976; J.M. Torras i Ribe, *Sometents, Exèrcit i poble a les batalles del Bruc. Apunts sobre l'organització de la resistència contra els francesos l'any 1808*, Ajuntament del Bruc, 6 June 1982, p. 7.
  4. Conde de Toreno, *Historia del levantamiento, guerra y revolución de España*, Edición Rivadeneyra, Vol. 1, p. 267.
  5. A. Delvillar, *El somatén. Su origen, su historia, su organización, su espíritu*, Barcelona, Viuda de Luis Tasso, undated, p. 34.

lawyer)<sup>6</sup>. On 20 and 23 June 1808 it agreed to the formation of an army of 40,000 men (40 tercios of migueletes) from all the towns of the Principality. The third article of the Orders established that, once each town had met the numbers assigned to it, the other men recruited should form the reserve, "*to serve as Somatenes whenever need be; to which end companies and tercios shall be formed, and will drill in the use of arms in accordance with the dispositions of the main Juntas*"<sup>7</sup>. The Junta of Tortosa alone had provided 1,200 men by early October 1808, Vic 800, though other towns further from French control did not do so with the same speed<sup>8</sup>.

9. If at the thick of the June battles had been the somatenes, those of July were shared by the migueletes. Those of Juan Carlos were very active and pressed hard in their actions in the region of the Empordà, confronting Reille's Pyrénées-Orientales division, reinforced by Portuguese troops, first at Roses on July 1 and the next day at Castelló D'Empúries<sup>9</sup>. For their part, on December 27, Rovira's migueletes, having forced a contingent of a battalion of riflemen from the High Garonne from the bridge at Molins, appeared at the bridge at Capmany, guarded by 150 men of its garrison, causing many casualties and putting the rest to flight towards Bellegarde, abandoning their belongings, including the luggage of Captain Sacaze as they went. Reille's attempt to reoccupy La Jonquera on the 31<sup>st</sup> proved futile, as no more than 50 of those who had fled could be mustered<sup>10</sup>.

10. When the regulars under the command of the Marqués de Palacio disembarked at the port of Tarragona on August 1 of that year, the planning of the war fell to the military. As of October, Juan Miguel Vives having been made army commander, efforts were concentrated on organizing the Army of the Right, with the migueletes being integrated into it in the Vanguard Division and the Fourth Division commanded by F. Milans.

11. In September the somatenes were disbanded, much to the anger of the Martorell Junta, and their components were used together with the migueletes to form the line of the Llobregat. During the months of October and November the main objective was to organise the siege of Barcelona, in order to liberate the capital. The appearance of General Gouvion Saint-Cyr's VII Army Corps opened up new phase in the conflict and the strategic errors made by Vives led to defeats in December (Roses fell on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Cardedeu on the 16<sup>th</sup>, Molins de Rei on the 21<sup>st</sup>).

12. The disaster at Molins de Rei led to the total disorganization of the regular forces: "*having been responsible for a thousand excesses in the towns they passed through, they reached Tarragona naked, disordered, starving and possessed by an inexplicable terror and panic*". The Swiss Teodoro Reding, who replaced the failed Miguel de Vives as army commander for Catalonia, wasted no time in preparing the defence of Tarragona. For this he turned to the somatenes, the best means of continuously harassing the enemy<sup>11</sup>.

6. Arxiu Corona d'Aragó (ACA) (Barcelona). Catalan High Junta, Guerra, Box 74, June 1808.

7. R. Ferrer, *Barcelona cautiva, o sea diario exacto de lo ocurrido en la misma ciudad mientras la oprimieron los franceses, esto es, desde el 13 de enero de 1808 hasta el 28 de mayo de 1814*, Barcelona, 1815, Vol. 2, Appendix 2. p.CLVI .

8. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 68; Id. Box 3.

9. J. Sarramon, *Napoleón et les Pyrénées. Les chasseurs des montagnes et la couverture de la frontière, 1808-1814*, Selgues, 1992, p. 36.

10. J. Sarramon, *Napoleón et les Pyrénées*, op. cit. p. 44.

11. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 76.

13. Reding established civil order in Tarragona and ordered Field Marshall J. Joaquín Martí to draw up a plan to reorganise the miguelete forces. Consideration was given to reducing the number of Tercios in order to bring them into line with the financial resources available, to introduce some discipline and to turn the somatenes into a reserve force. With the aim of preserving order in the towns, "Honour Companies" were created.

14. In early January 1809, Brigadier Iranzo made a fresh attempt to reorganise the somatén forces, but produced only a column of volunteers, who were hardly more than stragglers or surplus troops. The army's decisive defeat at Valls, on 25 February 1809, meant that it practically ceased to exist.

15. Following these disasters, an attempt was made to bring some kind of order to the somatenes, for which purpose two general drafts were proposed, the first of migueletes or regulars up to the age of 35, the second for those beyond that age, to serve with the migueletes or in the Honour Companies. At the same time, the migueletes and the somatenes would share the same commander-in-chief. As an example of this policy, mention should be made of the activities of the Vilafranca del Penedès Junta, which attempted to reorganise the somatén by creating mutual support networks, fixed personnel and a chain of command<sup>12</sup>. Finally, in June 1809, R. Milans del Bosch and J. de Prats presented a new plan to the Junta to create line regiments and battalions of light troops from the migueletes, although nothing came of this.

16. In 1809 the Catalan High Junta divided the somatenes into four divisions: the Ampurdán division, which was to operate from the frontier to the Ter; the Montseny, to cover the area between the Ter and the Tordera; the Vallès, from the Tordera to the Besós, and the Llobregat, to operate from the capital as far as the Penedès. Joan Clarós was made inspector general of the four divisions; Rovira commander of the first division; and the other three were placed under the command of the governors of Vic, Mataró and Vilafranca, respectively<sup>13</sup>.

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17. Commanding some somatenes were clergymen, like Fr. Francisco Campos, who carried out a number of exemplary actions in the region of the Empordà. For services rendered, he requested of the Catalan High Junta, via army commander Marqués de Palacio, confirmation of his position and at the same time monetary reward. In the end, he obtained both objectives, with some speed, in August 1808<sup>14</sup>.

18. There were also in Catalonia attempts to form Crusading Parties at the hands of the clergy. As a model of their planning, attention should be drawn to the projected Crusading Party presented to the Central Junta on 18 June 1809 by the Canon of the collegiate church at Pons (Lleida) Joan Pau Constans, which included distributing the entire cost of this guerrilla band, calculated at 5,826 pesetas a day, between the different Catalan dioceses<sup>15</sup>. Although it had the support of General Blake and the permission of the Central Junta, it proved none too easy for the churchman to carry out the project, which came to nothing owing to the numerous obstacles

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12. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 76.

13. A. Delvillar, op. cit. p. 49.

14. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 69. (The request was signed in Tarragona and dated 24 August 1808).

15. P. Pascual, *Curas y frailes guerrilleros en la Guerra de la Independencia. Las partidas de cruzada reglamentas por el carmelita zaragozano P. Manuel Traggia*, Zaragoza, 2000, pp. 31-35.

he came up against in the Catalan High Junta and in ecclesiastical circles<sup>16</sup>. The Crusading Party the priest Joan Ferrer, chaplain of the Escuelas Pías School at Moià attempted to organise, with the aim of overcoming Catalan opposition to the militia, met with a similar lack of success.

19. The somatenes of Sallent, Moià and other villages, led by the priest Mas and by Otzet, carried out significant defensive actions, while from Collbató and Capellades there was effective cooperation from the peasants led by Baltasar de Eixalà and Josep Matheu<sup>17</sup>.

20. Outstanding in the Priorat region was the somatén of Porrera, led by the guerrilla Josep Pellicer i Fort, who captured much of the munition and food in a French convoy in late 1809. His participation was decisive at the famous battle on the river Valls and at the bridge at Goi, which took place on 25 February 1809, in which the military governor of Tarragona, General Reding was mortally wounded. This encounter with the troops of Marshall Saint-Cyr led to the defeat of the Spanish army and the demoralization of the Priorat somatenes. For his valour and behaviour, the Marqués of Campoverde made him commander of the somatenes. Finally, in August 1810, he participated in an encounter which prevented a French column from occupying Falset, his brother Pau being promoted to lieutenant in the infantry<sup>18</sup>.

21. In the villages of the Baix Camp, Alt Camp and Conca de Barberà (Albiol, Vimbodi, Coll de Alforja and Prades) regions of Tarragona, led by their commanders Jaume Palliser and Marià Palies, some 300 men of the somatenes carried out a series of strikes in March 1809 which forced the imperial troops to fall back on Montblanc. Fernando Chaparro, one of the commanders of somatenes in the mountains, formed a very positive impression of this guerrilla activity, emboldened as it was to face the enemy cavalry:

22. "Every day the Somatenes provide fresh proof of their dash, and surely glory is deserved by these men whose occupation two months ago were the innocent tasks of farming, who now know other tools than the mattock and the plough, and have replaced these by handily wielding arms and hurrying to the aid of the motherland and have humiliated the Saint-Crys, the Chabrans, the Lechis and other swarms of de Generals? They now laugh at them wearing their cuirasses, which inspire about as much fear in them as the Easter processions, and dispute first take on pillaging the same in order to have the most in each of their villages, especially so since they have learnt from experience that a musketball pierces the cuirass from more than 100 paces, killing the cuirassier and coming out of his arse. The somatenes know full well that once the cuirassiers have been knocked from their horses they are little different from turtles, being reduced to laughter by the clumsiness of men dressed up only to impress, to persuade us that they are invincible in their shells, weighed down in iron in such junk, that they should be treated as such"<sup>19</sup>.

23. In March and April 1809 the somatenes and migueletes of the Vallès Oriental made life uncomfortable for the enemy troops that had reached Terrassa on 23 March and Sabadell two days later. The action of the somatén of the latter city, commanded by Turull de Sentmenat,

16. *Vindicta y reglamento del cuerpo religioso y militar de la Cruzada de Cataluña, formado por orden de su Majestad, por Don Juan Pablo Constans, sacerdote canónigo de la Iglesia de Pons, obispado de Urgell*. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 89.

17. A. Delvillar, op. cit. p. 41.

18. E. Fernández i Pellicer, *Un guerriller liberal al Priorat*, Rafael Dalmau Ed., Barcelona, 1972, pp.16-20

19. R. Ferrer, *Barcelona cautiva*, op. cit. Vol. 3, p. 207.



forced the French to withdraw, but they returned on Easter Wednesday, with more men and took full revenge: "*Thieving, pillaging, the most horrific violence to women young and married filled Sabadell with wailing and consternation on a day as saintly as any celebrated by the Church*"<sup>20</sup>.

24. In June 1808, Capitan Antoni Roca, a veteran of the Rosellon War, was named by José de Palafox commander of the regular and the somatén companies of Igualada and on June 22 the Catalan High Junta made him commander of the right wing of the forces at Tortosa, Tarragona and Vilafranca. The captain became the heart and soul of Igualada's resistance, together with a guerrilla from the town, Antoni Franch<sup>21</sup>.

25. Maffre-Baugé refers in his Memoirs to the trap the Catalan somatenes prepared for him when, towards the end of 1809, a detachment of his troops headed towards the monastery at Montserrat and was attacked while coming down the mountain by men who sprang from all sides: "*Les catalans se précipitèrent en foule sur nous et du haut des rochers, ils nous firent une guerre de tirailleurs qui nous fit beaucoup de mal et précipita notre marche sans que nous puissions nous défendre avec succès*"<sup>22</sup>.

26. In July 1811, faced by the imminent danger that the enemy might take action against the stronghold of Montserrat, which would have been disastrous for the towns of Igualada and Terrassa, the Catalan High Junta ordered that, while the army was regrouping under Villamil and Manso, a somatén should be raised in the nearby villages, once the enemy crossed the river Noia.

27. Orders for forming the somatén were very precise: "*The somatenes will be warned to keep strict discipline as any excesses will be punished*". The villages would keep them supplied, and the magistrates would ensure proportional shares for that purpose. The objective would be to harass the enemy by all means possible, "*especially in the mountains, with parties going into place in their rear to intercept convoys*". "*The somatén will be organised in companies of 100 men, who will choose their commanders who will be a captain and a lieutenant and the corresponding sergeants*". Making up the somatén were to be the men aged 18 to 50, all those that could bear arms, except magistrates and priests who did not wish to do so. The somatenes would be ready for action as soon as the first bugle rang<sup>23</sup>.

28. One of the main problems the somatenes faced in the villages near the French frontier and close to the imperial forces was that they left them abandoned and unprotected when they had to go to the aid of other Juntas when they were attacked by the French armies. The villages of the region of La Jonquera denounced precisely that to the Catalan High Junta in a letter dated 4 November 1808<sup>24</sup>.

29. There are a significant number of petitions officially presented to the Catalan High Junta between 1808 and 1811 by private citizens (widows, elderly parents, the destitute) for their sons to be declared exempt from service, which in the end was done by drawing lots among the able-

20. R. Ferrer, *Barcelona cautiva*, op. cit, Vol. 3, p. 223.

21. A. Carner, *Un capità barceloní en temps de la Guerra del francès*, Rafael Dalmau Editor, Barcelona, 1974.

22. Maffre-Bauge, *Superbe et généreux Jean Maffre. Mémoires d'un baroudeur (1785-1834)*. Cited by M. Molières, *Guerra a cuchillo. La guérilla pendant la guerre d'Indépendance espagnole, 1808-1813*, Publibook, Paris, 2002, p. 140.

23. A.C.A., Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 89 (Vic, 11 July 1811).

24. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 68.

bodied population<sup>25</sup>. In many cases, as at Vacarises, the military Commission found it hard to raise the draft, as it expressed to the Catalan High Junta at the beginning of the struggle: "*This commission, as is its obligation, brings it to the notice of Your Excellency that the Draft of the Village of Vacarises having been raised all made off to join the Compañía Patriótica of Don José Boadas*"<sup>26</sup>. In other cases, as occurred at Manresa in 1810, enlistment was delayed by many months.

30. The complaints of some villages about the excessive contributions required to pay the somatenes and the continued failure of their actions obliged the Catalan High Junta to decide that the regular army should only be supplied with food but in no case money. Las magistrates of the villages of Vizcondado de Bas and de Sant Joan de Les Fonts distrusted so many complete strangers giving them orders "*on they knew not what authority*", and demanding costly contributions and the raising of somatenes<sup>27</sup>. But the main problem facing the somatenes was a logistical one, the lack of arms and munition.

31. Notable among the reports and memorandums sent to the Catalan High Junta on the organization of the somatenes is one sent by Antonio Borrás on 29 January 1810 on behalf of the Junta of Manresa. In it he relates the relaxation evident among officers, for which reason he proposes religious catecheses to be carried out by the camp priests as well as the writing of pastoral letters by village priests and friars, together with popular missions, with the aim of eliminating vice and fostering virtue. "*A nation armed en masse is invincible*". The war in Spain and Portugal had started the other way round, "*not with the military but with the peasants themselves*", and he called for all those able to take up arms. As a solution he proposed increasing the number of migueletes and companies of somatenes, well armed, even with cannon, and well led by their officers<sup>28</sup>.

32. At the critical moments, the unity of the somatén came to the fore. After the fall of Tarragona, it was rumoured that the "*Castilian*" army intended to abandon the Principality. D. Jacinto Buniva de Morera, a sub-lieutenant in the Baza Infantry Regiment, then proposed to the Junta Superior a *Plan or arrangement for the better administration and salvation of the province of Catalonia*, based on the formation of a general somatén, with the peasants from the villages being divided into four division, one always ready to combat the enemy<sup>29</sup>.

33. In August 1811, the Armaments Commission proposed a series of laws to the Catalan High Junta for the Reserve Corps or somatén, with a view to punishing the disorders of disobedience and breaking of law and order. All reservists would have to present themselves to the districts of the villages indicated to carry out the actions ordered and lend due obedience to their superiors, as "*subordination is the basis of all military instruction*". It condemned collaboration with the enemy with the most serious of penalties and on military issues Army

25. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 69. These petitions were usually ratified by the religious or municipal authorities.

26. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, Acts Vol. 2, War. Cited by J. Peres Unzueta, *El sometent a través de la història*, Barcelona, 1924. p. 285.

27. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 76 (Letter of 24 August 1810).

28. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section Box 76. (Antonio Borrás, *Memoria sobre somatenes de la Provincia de Cataluña*, January 1810).

29. *Plan o arreglo pa. el mejor regimen y salvación de la provincia de Cataluña, sacado nuevamente a luz pa. la instrucción y guía de los que desean su defensa, y presentado á la Superior Junta de Gobierno de dha provincia por Dn. Jacinto Buniva de Morera subteniente del Regito. Infantería de Baza, en el mes de Julio de 1811*. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 89.



orders were to be applied. It is significant how Article 8 views the question of thieving and pillaging, which was often condemned by military leaders themselves: "*Disorder on the march, arson; forged money; violence to women; heinous crimes; all false witness; rebellion, covering or helping to desert, cowardice or theft; will all be punished according to the sentences of Army orders; it being understood that, when sacking and pillaging is allowed or ordered, it is never permitted of the enemy except when the General orders it or permits it, when he orders and permits it; because although pillaging may be permitted for reasons of State, it is necessary for it to be contained within certain limits, the laws of humanity not being lost sight of, and never forgetting the due respect due to all that profess to the Saintly Catholic, Roman Religion of the Apostles*"<sup>30</sup>.

34. Following the capture of the castle at Figueres by the Rovira column in April 1811, the army commander Campoverde and the Junta saw to the raising in the month of April of a somatén general of some 6,400 men distributed as follows: Tarragona Junta, 1,000; Montblanc Junta, 400; Cervera Junta, 1,500; Lleida Junta, 500; Manresa Junta, 1,500; Vilafranca Junta, 1,500. When Tarragona was besieged, indecision by the Junta and the army commander forced the somatén to be suspended but the former attempted to reorganise it from Solsona in July 1811, with 12,500 men, with deserters being excluded from its ranks<sup>31</sup>.

35. As regards the migueletes, even before the decision taken by the Catalan High Junta, 20-23 June 1808, to raised an army of 40,000 men, some local juntas and towns, such as Vic, Olot, Lleida and Girona had already formed theirs. Chosen with great care, they took up arms and formed tercios or regiments of around a thousand men. Uniformed and paid wages, they were little different from the regular army, with the staff being named by the army commander and the other officers up to the rank of captain named by the local juntas. Paying homage to the archangel Saint Michael, they were faithful to old traditions. Their uniform, as agreed by the Junta on August 7, was a field grey, with buttons of the same colour. At the neck, which was red, and in black letters, was the initial and last name of the local junta. On the head, a rosette in the national colours.

36. In order to avoid intrigue and other problems, in early October 1801 the Catalan High Junta ordered that the miguelete captains should received 20 reales a day, the lieutenants 16, the sub-lieutenants 12, "*so that as is just the wages for officers in all tercios should be equal*". They thus had the same rights and prerogatives as the regular army<sup>32</sup>.

37. On 8 June 1808, the Catalan High Junta ordered the mobilization of 6,000 migueletes, to gather in Tarragona, with the quotas being distributed thus: Lleida 1,000; Cervera 500; Tarragona 1,500; Tortosa 1,200; Manresa 500; Vic 400, Vilafranca, 150 and Igualada 110. On 29 August it called for the raising of 4,100 in Vilafranca. The Junta of Lleida, meanwhile, armed three battalions. Among the migueletes were also to be found Swiss soldiers and officers of the Wimpffen Regiment<sup>33</sup>.

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30. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, Box 88 (*Leyes penales para los Cuerpos de Reserva o quando esten de servicio militar*. Armaments Commission, Berga, 28 August 1811).

31. J. Peres Unzueta, op. cit. pp. 368-370.

32. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 68 (Letter from the Junta of Girona, 9 October 1808).

33. A. Carner i Borràs, *Les tropes suïsses*, op. cit., pp. 24-31.

38. Of the 40,000 called up in the month of June, those actually gathered were not more than 23,000. Some regiments, such as those of Manresa, Seu d'Urgell and Puigcerdà produced rather more men than those required by the draft, while others fell short, like Mataró, La Marina, the Vall d'Aràn and Camprodon. Ch. Esdaile indicates the creation of a total of 27 infantry tercios in 1808: 2 in Tarragona, 4 in Lleida, 3 in Girona, 1 in Manresa, 2 in Cervera, 1 in Tortosa, 2 in Vic, 1 in Mataró, 1 in la Seu d'Urgell, 1 in Berga, 2 in Talarn, 1 in Cerdanya, 2 in the Vall d'Arán, 1 in Barcelona, 1 in the Ampordà, 1 in Igualada, 1 in Figueres and 1 in Granollers<sup>34</sup>. Of these, only 20 battalions were left in the whole of Catalonia in June 1809.

39. On 12 October 1808, the *Diario de Barcelona* reported the story taken from the French *Army Bulletin* of the previous day, referring to the migueletes' first failure, in the engagement that took place between Montcada and Sant Jeroni. The enemy force, comprising five thousand migueletes, under the command of Milans del Bosch, 1,200 men of the Lleida miguelete tercio, 1,500 from Manresa, 1,400 from Vic and 1,300 from the Vallès, as well as a body of peasants from Santa Coloma de Gramanet, had been defeated.<sup>35</sup>

40. Of the main miguelete engagements, mention must be made of that involving Canon Rovira's column, comprising 2,000 men, at the castle of Figueres on the night of 9 April 1811. With the collaboration of three supposed quislings in the city, they managed to penetrate the fort, having knocked out the French troops defending the gate, and detained the sleeping General Guillot. They took copious booty: provisions for four months, 16,000 muskets, clothing and shoes, the 400,000 francs in the strongbox and 2,000 prisoners. The surprise action cost the French 35 dead and wounded<sup>36</sup>. Following a four and a half month siege, in August the French took the fortress back. Half of the prisoners had died of hunger and of the atrocities perpetrated on them by the migueletes, according to the Memoirs of the French sub-lieutenant Angelbault.

41. The migueletes were also responsible for some very unsavoury incidents, as the Junta of Mataró denounced to the Catalan High Junta on 24 January 1809, referring to the destruction of weapons by migueletes from the town in order to avoid service<sup>37</sup>. For its part, the Junta of Granollers is most critical of the behaviour of the migueletes in the operations the French army carried out in the district of Sant Jeroni de Murtra, which caused the dispersion of Milans del Bosch's troops: "*the migueletes and their officers, far from withdrawing in good order, as was to have been expected, ran and scattered to the hills in shameful flight*<sup>38</sup>".

42. The picture he paints of these troops is a damning one, and he requests the Catalan High Junta to name a general to impose order and military discipline:

34. Ch. Esdaile, *The Spanish Army in the Peninsular War*, Manchester, 1988, Appendix 3, p. 205.

35. *Diario de Barcelona*, n.º. 286, 12 octubre 1808, pp. 1231-1232.

36. To bring attention to Rovira's heroic deeds, flyers were handed out around the country such one that translates roughly as, "*When they tell you that Rovira / has never been a soldier;/ that he does not know how to fight; / that he's the chaplain from a fair;/ that when there's an attack he won't be there;/ that he's really rather fat;/ that he has never worn a soldier's hat;/ that his principles done/ and in other ways poke fun,/ answer them: And Figueras?*" Cited by J. Perez Unzueta, op. cit. p. 358.

37. A.C.A. Letter from the Junta of Mataró, 24 enero 1809.

38. A.C.A., Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 68 (Letter from the Junta of Granollers, 13 October 1808).



43. “(...) a soldier of the highest rank who should use time, so precious always but particularly so when at war with the troops on the exercises corresponding to a soldier, who is currently in action or very close to it, who shall not permit what has been happening at the top, where diversions of all sort have been tolerated, even the most scandalous, dancing and prostitutes and abominations of all kinds, produced by such entertainment”<sup>39</sup>.

44. The abbot of the monastery of Sant Pere de Camprodón complained to the High Junta of the insults the migueletes directed at him and of the fact that the local Junta had not yet made any resolution on the matter<sup>40</sup>.

45. The migueletes of Rovira and Clarós made an incursion into the High Vallespir on 7 September 1810, occupying the old redoubts dating back to the Revolution at Saint-Laurent-des-Cerdans, ransacking farms, running off their livestock and murdering a number of the villagers. They then fled in the direction of Massanet, taking with them five hostages and demanding the sum of 30,000 francs as ransom. The next day the turmoil in the Cerdagne forced the commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Division, General Travot, to send 200 mountain troops from the Ariège and a hundred men from the garrison at Perpignan, and he meanwhile distributed arms to the National Guard garrisons of Céret, Arles and Prats de Molló for their defence<sup>41</sup>.

46. The Catalan miguelete invasions of the French Cerdagne occurred in 1811, but their behaviour towards the inhabitants of the region was less violent except as far as the ransoms demanded were concerned. In fact, as the mayor of Mont-Louis reported to the prefect and to Decaen in the month of October, some individuals did what the guerrillas bade them and a number of tradesmen made the most of the occasion to boost their “*infamous*” trade<sup>42</sup>.

47. Somatenes and migueletes were involved in the second and third sieges of Girona, July-August 1808 and June-December 1809 respectively, commanded by Bertran, Clarós, Rovira and Llauder. On 6 August 1808 the Marques de Palacio, who presided the Catalan High Junta, sent the Count of Caldaqués several thousand migueletes and four companies of regulars for the defence of the stronghold. On 14 June he was in Castellar del Vallès where he was joined by Clarós with 2,500 migueletes and Colonel Milans with 800 somatenes, in addition to the 3,000 migueletes brought along by Colonel Baget from Martorell<sup>43</sup>. When he reached the vicinity of the fortress, he met with the two colonels and they agreed to a joint strike on the troops besieging the castle. The combined attack, on August 16, of the defenders and Caldaqués' troops forced Reille to cross the Ter and Duhesme to concentrate his forces at Santa Eugènia. In this fashion Girona was liberated and the French forces, divided, withdrew to Figueres and to Barcelona.

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39. Id.

40. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 3 (Camprodón, 25 September 1808).

41. J. Sarramon, *Napoleón et les Pyrénées*, pp. 108-109.

42. J. Sarramon, *Napoleón et les Pyrénées*, op. cit. p. 117.

43. J. Pla Cargol, *Els Setges de Girona, el 1808 i 1809*, Rafael Dalmau Editor, Barcelona, 1962.

On 9 May 1809, the Girona garrison comprised 4,945 infantrymen, of whom 1,125 belonged to the Barcelona Volunteer Battalion, 600 to the First Vic Migueletes and 1,120 to the First Gerona Migueletes, the rest belonging to the Ultonia Regiment (800) and the Borbon Regiment (1,300). As regards the artillery troops, 240 were Migueletes of the Second Gerona Tercio, 130 Coastal Marines, 22 Sappers, 108 from the Sant Narcís Squadron and 278 from the Royal Artillery Corps. When, after heavy losses, they surrendered on 11 December 1809, only 1,168 infantry and 208 artillerymen remained.

During the first siege of the city there was distinguished help in logistical tasks from four women Teresa Balaguer and Isabel Pi (from Bagur), Esperansa Llorens (from Cadaqués) and Maria Plajas (from Calonge)<sup>44</sup>.

48. At the second siege of Girona, the Catalan High Junta and the army commander the Marqués de Coupigny hurried to send reserve companies from the Juntas of Vic, Manresa, Puigcerdà, Urgell, Talarn and Cervera. For their part, the companies of the Juntas of Mataró and the Vallès were to contain the enemy on the Besós, and those of Igualada, Vilafranca and Tarragona were to do the same on the Llobregat. The rest of the veteran troops and the migueletes were also to go to the aid of Girona<sup>45</sup>. However, the indecisions of Coupigny and his successor Blake meant that the Junta acted in the defence of Girona of its of accord, with the somatenes poorly equipped with arms and munitions. Although the Junta drew up a plan to collect arms throughout the territory it controlled, its efforts were unable to prevent the fall of Girona on December 11. Eight days later, the Junta contacted the army commander, urging him of the need to strike at the enemy<sup>46</sup>. In 1810, the Almogávares Volunteer Force was formed in Olot under the command of Narciso Gay, who between January 11 and May 31 managed to enlist a total of 378 men, aged between 16 and 36, most of them coming from the Empordà, as well as other Catalan regions<sup>47</sup>.

49. The volunteer nature of the migueletes was lost when the villages ran out of men. They soon found themselves without weapons, without wages and even without clothing, as army commander Milans del Bosh recorded in August 1808. But the fundamental problems of these inexperienced troops were their indiscipline and desertion. Maties Ramisa, referring to the Vic column, says that the insubordination of the migueletes towards their officers was common. Those garrisoned at Girona went as far to propose mass desertion to the Vic Junta and those at the castle of Hostalric had a face-off with the officers there during the summer of 1808<sup>48</sup>.



## The problem of desertion

50. While there is no doubt that resistance to the Napoleonic army was a common cause for the population of Catalonia, there was nonetheless a growing difficulty to recruit young men through the draft or to have them join the migueletes and somatenes. Many of them deserted the ranks of the army or bought their way out of military service, as the landowner Antoni Bellolell recalls in his Memoirs, referring to the draft ordered by General Campoverde in 1810 for the Gerona Junta<sup>49</sup>.

51. The problem of deserters in the Spanish army, which affected 20% of its total strength, also became a generalised one in the somatenes y migueletes, and a question of grave concern to the Catalan Juntas and the military authorities. Army officers were under orders to produce

44. A. Delvillar, op. cit. p. 36.

45. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, official communiqué, Vol. II.

46. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, official communiqué, Vol. I. Cited by J. Peres Unzueta, op. cit. pp. 339-340.

47. A.C.A., Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 76.

48. To this number should be added reinforcements that arrived between June and September, a number of battalions of migueletes from Vic (600 men), Cervera (500), Talarn (500) and Girona (100) as well as other regular troops, making a total of 3,648 hombres, of whom only 2,240 survived. Id. pp. 51-52. M. Ramisa, *La Guerra del Francès al corregiment de Vic, 1808-1814*, Vic, 1993 p.108.

49. A. Simon Tarres, "La Guerra del Francès segons les memòries d'un Hisendat del Corregiment de Girona ( Memòries d'Antoni Bellolell)", in *L'Avenç*, (1988), n°. 113, pp. 42-47.

monthly reports on the number of desertions that had occurred, which they sent to the military commissions of their Juntas with orders for their detention. In these was included an individual card with the personal details of the deserters.

52. The Military Commission of the Barcelona Junta includes a number of cases referring to 1810. Miquel Estop, a soldier in the third company of a battalion in the first Catalan Legion, 19 years old, was the son of Antoni and Serafina, five foot one in height, with dark brown hair, brown eyes, a broad nose, dark-skinned, and a scar, and had deserted on 2 May 1810, and the Commission was ordered to arrest him: "*It is urgent that with due zeal you endeavour to collect the said individual by whatever means you deem prudent, and if that is not possible you should arrest the Father, Mother, brother, Uncle or closest relative until he is produced and report that you have thus done so*"<sup>50</sup>. The other desertions, reported during May, were of five soldiers of the second company of the Catalan Legion: Miquel Ferreras, 33, a barber by trade; Joan Llubregat, 19, also a barber; the youngest, Benet Miravet, 17, a painter; Isidre Valba, 22, a shoemaker; and Josep Sola, 36. They were all citizens of Barcelona.

53. In order to halt the phenomenon of desertion, which undermined the army's moral, in the middle of August 1811 army commander Lacy had very strict orders circulated depriving deserters of all their rights and contemplating application of the strictest penalties<sup>51</sup>. The guerrilla leader Francesc Rovira himself, addressing the Junta of Manresa in January 1810, wrote: "*I am surprised to see continued and scandalous desertion occurring in all Divisions to the extent that I am likely to be left with no men but myself shortly though it may influence me to imitate them*"<sup>52</sup>.

54. For his part, in 1812 Josep Manso denounced the bad example set by magistrates in the villages in allowing members of their families and sons of the well-to-do to desert, and not imposing the corresponding fines. Particularly, the men in his party from Badalona complained that among the thirty deserters from the town were relatives of the magistrate and the sons of the richest families. As a solution he proposed that the deserters and draftees of wealthy backgrounds be returned as thus his troops would serve more willingly and desert less<sup>53</sup>.

55. Frequently, the deserters banded together and turned to theft and highway robbery. Their number grew, a reflection of the misery suffered by the lowest classes in these years of war. They were called "*Compañías de Brivalla*" – Rabble Companies – and while at first they were composed of common criminals, later they were joined by deserters from the army, and those from the somatenes and migueletes, especially between 1809 and 1811. Their ransacking of villages kept the entire population in a state of alarm. There were frequent tussles between the different bands and on occasions they even joined the French. Faced by such a complex problem the Junta of Mataró repeatedly had to seek help from the Catalan High Junta in order to keep these groups of outlaws in line, as they were a law unto themselves<sup>54</sup>.

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50. Institut Municipal d'Història de Barcelona, Consellers, File C-XVI-316.

51. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, Vol II War. Cited by J. Peres Unzueta, op. cit. p. 286.

52. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 76. (Carta de Francesc Rovira, 18 January 1810).

53. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, Caja 86 (Josep Manso to the Catalan High Junta, Esparraguera, 2 June 1812).

54. E. Beulas i A. Dresà, *La Guerra del Francès a Mataró (1808-1814)*, Barcelona, 1989, pp. 115-116.

56. The militarization of these groups grew apace in 1811. At the end of that year, the Catalan High Junta made a selection of the migueletes, with those most able and free of obligations to support the regular army and the rest to return to their homes. In July 1811, the parish priest of La Palma, Adrià Ochando Ros, reported to the Catalan High Junta and the army commander of the need to form a battalion or company of volunteers, of a thousand men, to join the 300 peasants he had enlisted, that figure being reached with draft dodgers, prisoners who had escaped from the French and deserters "*provided that they known and are of the region*". The military objective proposed was to position this force on the banks of the Ebro, between Mequinenza and Mora, the area under particular threat from the enemy, in order to harass him without quarter. To this end he offered his own services, provided this met with the approval of the authorities<sup>55</sup>.

57. Of the plan proposed by the priest Ochando, Barón de Eroles only approved of bringing together the stragglers. The High Junta gave its provisional approval and he was authorised to form the said company<sup>56</sup>. However, four months later, the Junta told him that it would be more useful for him to join the division of Colonel Joan Clarós. As it happened in the first half of 1811 the Junta had authorised the formation of seven honour parties or guerrillas, although in fact only those of Ochando, Francesc Montardit (from Ager), which operated in the region of Balaguer, and Franch saw service, the others requested never being formed. Experience advised against the formation of such battalions, which in the long run led to the desertion of the men and the committing of crimes of all kinds, besides depriving the regular army of men.

58. In fact, the Almogávares, Cazadores de Girona and Cazadores del Ampurdán Battalions were disbanded in August 1811, despite protests such as that of Narciso Gay, who praised the Cuerpo de Almogávares, formed in 1810, which was supported by the Juntas of Figueres, Girona and Vic<sup>57</sup>. In 1811, circumstances meant that military discipline had to be brought in if the enemy was to be defeated.

59. In any case, from the outbreak of the war the rules were very clear. The Central Junta's order of 11 November 1808 was clear: in no case was any soldier to be admitted to the newly created regiments without the approval of their respective commanders. It was a case of uniting efforts and of not competing for men, some of them stragglers<sup>58</sup>. In practice, however, things were very different. In November 1811, the arrest was ordered of Jaume Borrull, a citizen of Sant Climent, for having recruited men in a number of villages in order to form a patriotic guerrilla group, on the promise of exemption from the draft, with those recruited being forced to join an army battalion<sup>59</sup>.

60. The orders from the Junta and the military authorities regarding deserters from the army were clear, with the companies formed in no circumstances being able to admit them. In the end army commander Luis Lacy ordered the incorporation of all men belonging to the free forces into the army of the line but, on seeing the widespread desertion that the order produced, he was forced to retract it, and took in only those that had deserted their tercios and crusading parties<sup>60</sup>.

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55. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 87 (Letter from the priest Adrià Ochando Ros, Solsona 10 July 1811).

56. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, Vol I War, Cited by J. Perez Unzueta, op. cit. pp. 288-289.

57. A.C.A., Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 87, (Vic 20 August 1811).

58. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 68.

59. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 87 (Berga 19 November 1811).

60. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, File XIII. Cited by J. Perez Unzueta, op. cit. pp. 290-291.

61. The differences in wages paid to stragglers that joined the army was also a major problems for the military authorities. The Barón de Eroles repeatedly insisted to the Catalan High Junta that there should be no differences between any of those “*serving the homeland*”. While at Arenys de Mar Colonel Milans del Bosh paid stragglers that enlisted three reales a day, plus bread, and in Terrassa they got three reales and two pounds, in the rest of the Principality they barely got enough for the daily meals<sup>61</sup>.

## Guerrilla warfare

62. The road to guerrilla warfare in Catalonia went its own peculiar way as to the dispersion of the army, a breeding ground for the guerrillas, has to be added the close relationship existing between the somatenes and migueletes and the local population. The guerrilla columns were, as in other regions, closely united with their lands. They appear to have been more stable and better disciplined than the Junta militias and enjoyed a better reputation. Most of their leaders had led Junta and regular troops: Milans, Clarós, Rovira, Eroles, Torras and Manso. They all rose rapidly up through the military ranks, reaching even the rank of general. Some came from the ecclesiastical establishment, such as Josep Bertran, the beadle of Llorà, and Canon Francesc Rovira, who was a brigadier in 1812 and who in 1811 had managed to gather together stragglers and deserters from Manresa, Solsona, Cardona and Sant Llorens de Morunys<sup>62</sup>. Others, like Joan Barrera, nicknamed “*the mayor of Santa Coloma*”, distinguished themselves in 1810 in their pursuit of bandits in the region of Les Guilleries. In any case, the image presented by contemporary documentary evidence is very critical of these patriotic organisations, because of the instability, fragile nature, high cost of limited effectiveness<sup>63</sup>.

63. The activities of the guerrilla leader Joan Clarós quickly gained great notoriety. Although he failed in the siege of the fortress of San Fernando de Figueres, in July 1808, with 600 men he succeeded in defeating a column of 2,000 infantry and 200 cavalry sent by Reille when it attempted to take Castelló d’Empúries, and halted a French convoy making for the stronghold at San Fernando<sup>64</sup>. His Division, on 3 August 1811, comprised a total of 279 men: the 1<sup>st</sup> Cervera Battalion, with 203 men; a number of groups from different corps with a total of 18 men and 20 horsemen; a 40-strong group of peasants. The officers were captains José Cuadros and P. Barrios, named by Clarós, lieutenant José Moya (of the Granada Regiment, who had been captured by the French and later escaped), Ignacio Surés (of the Soria Regiment, a prisoner who had escaped), Francisco Franch (from the Catalan Legions, a straggler who had joined the division), Ramón Marcos (of the Third Cervera, an escaped prisoner), and sub-lieutenants Juan Vert (First Gerona Rifle Company), Juan Requena, Agustín Saberres y Mariano Borrás (stragglers from the Tarragona volunteer battalion), Miguel Viñes (a straggler from the Almogávares battalion) José Baleta (of the Savoy Regiment, a deserter) and Miguel Darder (a deserter from the Iberia Regiment). Some weeks later, on August 20, they reached a strength of 480 men<sup>65</sup>.

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61. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 87 (Letter from Barón de Eroles to the High Junta, Vic 4 August 1811).

62. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 87

63. M. Ramisa, *La Guerra del Francès al corregiment de Vic*, op. cit. p. 112-113; Id. *Els catalans i el domini napoleònic*, Abadía de Montserrat, 1995, pp. 433-440.

64. A. Delvillar, *El somatén. Su origen, su historia, su organización, su espíritu*, Barcelona, undated, pp. 30-32

65. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 87.

64. It is not easy to distinguish between migueletes, somatenes and the regular forces and gangs of bandits. Of the latter, the most famous was that of Josep Pujol y Barraca (alias “Boquica”), which became a counter-guerrilla force backed by the French<sup>66</sup>. Like his father, a peddler by trade in the Garrotxa region (Gerona), he was also a smuggler. At first he fought the French, intercepting convoys on their way to Barcelona. Later, in 1810, he became a French spy, in return for monetary reward. Discovered, he was taken to Tarragona but managed to escape. Paid and supported by Generals Lamarque and Mathieu he succeeded in forming a “brivalla” called the *Cazadores Distinguidos de Cataluña*, comprising at first between 70 and 90 men, later increasing to 150, from a variety of origins (Catalan, Andalusian, Basque and Mallorcan), all of them on the run from their homelands, where they were wanted for the robberies and murders that they had committed.

65. Captain Pujol complained to the quartermaster general of Girona (Rouyer de Lametz) that following the engagement at Figueres not a man in his company had been paid. In a letter of 7 September 1810 addressed to M. Esteve, the sub-quartermaster of Figueres, Rouyer de Lametz authorised him to assume all municipal powers to deal with the issue and pay the amount owed. In fact the French army and the miguelete company that had been involved in the action got only half of the money, with the rest ending up in the Government's coffers. Nevertheless, according to the quartermaster general of High Catalonia, all taxes should go to the Customs Register, under the control of the military administration (War Commission). On 11 September 1811, he authorised Captain Pujol to avail himself of 150 men for his column<sup>67</sup>.

66. “Boquica” distinguished himself with his continuous acts of banditry and often proved himself useful as at Olot in 1810, where he first forced the enemy to retreat and then entered the town, where he proceeded to carry out his habitual acts of pillaging and murder. His pact with the French, as has been seen, allowed him to keep half of what had been stolen, but it seems that when that promise was not kept he took revenge on the locals. In 1811 he attempted to reach the same agreement with the patriots, but did not succeed. When the war ended, Pujol was exiled in Perpignan and Eroles requested his extradition. Handed over to the Spanish authorities, he was sentenced to death and hanged before a vast crowd at Figueres which had been invited to witness his execution. His fame made him the protagonist of a novel (J. Aragó, *Pujol chef de Miquelets ou la Catalogne*, 1804-1815, Paris, 1840)<sup>68</sup>.

67. In September and October 1812, many complaints were made to the prefect of the Ter by towns such as Palamós, Figueres, Sarrià, as well as others, of the excesses of Pujol's migueletes, who were not content to extract large sums from the townspeople but in addition often did so under threats<sup>69</sup>.

66. Ll. Roura, “Soldats del rei i ciutadans en armes”, in *Història, política, societat i cultura dels Països Catalans*, Vol. 6, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1997, p. 227.

67. *Correspondance de Rouyer de Lametz intendant de Figueres*, (Letter of 5, 7, 11 and 14 September). A.C.A. *Dominación napoleónica en Cataluña*, Box XXXIV, File XIX, 1.

68. A. de Bofarull, *Historia crítica de la Guerra de la Independencia en Cataluña*, Barcelona, 1887, vol. 2, p. 499; E. Riera i Fortiana, *Els afrancesats a Catalunya*, Barcelona, 1994, pp. 336-345.

69. Administration Communale, Prefet du Ter. Plaines de diverses communes contre les migueletes de Pujol. A.C.A. *Dominación Napoleónica de Cataluña*, Caja LI, File, XXVIII, 3.

68. As well as Pujol's band, we also find other groups acting outside the law. The French general Guillord complained in December 1810 that the Clarós column refused to stand and fight and devoted itself to banditry on the roads of the Empordà. He was the "*captain of smugglers*", facing the "*gangs of vandals and brigands*" who violated all the rights of war, and continually called the Catalans to the somatenes.

69. In 1812 the situation was a very precarious one, as he lacked arms, munition and clothing. Addressing the Catalan High Junta, Clarós requested that jackets should be sent to his battalion, in order to raise his soldiers self-esteem, as they been working night and day for nearly nine months without a break: "(...) *so much so that even they are bored with seeing themselves naked and would surely being to feel much better about themselves and have their morale and self-esteem boosted to see themselves dressed*"<sup>70</sup>.

70. One of the guerrilla leaders from the clergy, Josep Bertrán (the beadle of Llorà) denounced the activity of a band of forty or fifty men, all of them Catalan deserters, who besides having gone over to the enemy also received help from the villages of Amer, La Salleta and Anglès, which were also in league with the French. The said company, in addition to committing many robberies and other outrages, prevented desertion from the ranks of the enemy through Llorà from falling. (Some 700 French troops had gone over to the Spanish side between December 1809 and June 1810). In the face of such acts, the only course that was open was the detention of the said individuals, "*dead or alive*"<sup>71</sup>.

71. The guerrilla leader Josep Manso quickly became a legendary. Popular legend has it that as a miller's lad he had been slapped by a French soldier and had sworn revenge. He first saw action at the head of the Berga tercio at Hospitalet. At the age of 23 he reached the rank of captain and organised a column of 800 peasants at Vallirana which were a continuous thorn in the side of the imperial columns. He enjoyed the support of the somatenes of Vilanova, Sant Sadurní and Martorell. Other engagements that brought him fame took place on the Llobregat plain<sup>72</sup>. Having been promoted to lieutenant colonel and commander of the Line of the Llobregat, he energetically sought the collaboration of the local Juntas. The situation of his men was not exactly optimal. He demanded that the Juntas of Manresa, Vilafranca and Barcelona should send clothing for his troops, as they were half naked<sup>73</sup>.

72. Manso had no qualms about justifying the reprisals taken of six French prisoners who he had hanged and strung from the tree of Cruz Cubierta, following the atrocities committed by Suchet's troops in the towns of Molins de Rei, Calleja and Sant Vicent dels Horts, where 15 sharpshooters and 30 defenceless civilians were shot, among them several women. He culminated his deeds, by then a general, with the engagements at Bellpuig, Sant Celoni and particularly the Ordal.

73. The French military had no doubts over identifying the somatenes with thieves and highwaymen. On 11 January 1810 the *Diario de Barcelona* reported an engagement at Santa Perpètua de la Moguda involving these individuals, with the support of the villagers, during which they were captured by Odonneau and taken to Barcelona<sup>74</sup>.

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70. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, Box 86. (Martorell 31 May 1812, J.Manso).

71. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 76 (Letter from Josep Bertran to the Catalan High Junta, 16 July 1810).

72. A. Delvilar, op. cit. pp. 51-55.

73. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 87. Carta, Martorell 12 July 1811.

74. Catalan public opinion was very demanding both of the military authorities and of the guerrilla leaders. Joan Clarós, for example, was much criticised when his column abandoned the Empordà region in October 1808, and following the fall of Girona<sup>75</sup>. He came to his own defence, in the face of the poor reports of his activities, promoted and spread among the population by the priests of Olot, Rifós and the guardian of the Capuchin Fathers' convent, as well as by the abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Ripoll. For this he requested that the army commander of Catalonia should restore his honour<sup>76</sup>.

75. In the face of the military defeats of 1811, many Catalans cast doubt on the effectiveness of the regular army, contrasting the successes achieved by the migueletes and somatenes in the early days of the conflict with the calamitous failure of the army. The loss of the castle of Figueres threw the entire population of Catalonia into total despair. Previously, as has been noted, the said castle had been seized from the French in April 1811 by Canon Rovira's column, who had had very little real knowledge of military tactics. In such critical circumstances there were many who attempted to remedy the army's failings. An anonymous citizen, signed a letter to the High Junta as "*The Patriot of the mountains, a friend of the Army and of the common good*", denounced the inefficiency of the regular army and attributed it to the fact that its officers had accepted French forms of dress, had turned their backs on religion, surrounded themselves by concubines, made excessive demands of the villagers -giving them nothing in return- and spent their time playing games of chance and making fun of the Capuchin monks and their beards. The key to the solution lay in greater morality for the army, the following plan containing five main points: (1) the prohibition of blasphemy; (2) the expulsion of all women from the army; (3) the regularization of wages; (4) prohibition of gambling; and (5) the capture of the deserters thronging the towns<sup>77</sup>.

76. Some of the popular sayings of the day sum up the critical view the Catalans took of the army's efficiency and that of its leaders: "*Lo baró d'Eroles, es un joch de boles*"; "*En Gay, no hi arriba may*"; "*En Milans, ja no ataca com abans*"; "*En Manso, ja fa el ganso*"<sup>78</sup>.

## The climate of unrest and banditry

77. From very early days the French government took drastic measures in Barcelona to solve the serious problem of the climate of unrest. On 22 December 1808, Duhesme named colonel Miguel Uranx d'Amelin governor and Corregidor of the city, to assume all responsibility for policing, and to this end he authorised the village authorities to form small armed detachments to arrest the "*vagabonds and peasants*", and at the same time he created a flying column, which operated in Barcelona and the surrounding towns, to detain arms peasants and migueletes, who were to be immediately hanged or shot<sup>79</sup>.

74. *Diario de Barcelona*, 11 January 1810.

75. M. Ramisa, *Els catalans i el domini napoleònic*, op. cit., p. 413.

76. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 76. (Report from Juan Clarós, Ripoll 2 January 1810 sent to the Catalan Army Commander).

77. *El Patriota montañés, amante del Exto. y del bien común*. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 89.

78. A. Blanch, *Historia de la Guerra de la Independencia en el Antiguo Principado, Barcelona, 1861*. (Literally, "*Baron d'Eroles is a game of bowls*", "*Gay never gets there*", "*Milans does not attack like he used to*", "*Manso plays the goose*")

79. *Diario de Barcelona*, n.º. 361, 26 December 18098, pp. 1535-1536.

78. On 16 June 1810 four young men, accused of numerous acts of violent robbery on the highroads, were sentenced to death in Barcelona by a French military commission: Geroni Albás, aged 33, an armourer, a resident of Olot; Jaume Fargas, 24, a shoemaker, also from Olot; Rafael Fluxeny, 20, a butcher from Molins de Rei; and a Frenchman from the Alsace, Pau Smith, a farmworker, residing in Mongat<sup>80</sup>.

79. In the same way, the problem of social unrest forced even the patriotic authorities in Catalonia to organise a form of urban militia to preserve order in some towns, with responsibility for internal policing. On 12 July 1808 the Catalan High Junta agreed to the creation in the principal town of each local Junta a squadron or flying column of 15 soldiers, armed and on horseback, or villagers led by an officer and a sergeant, in order to re-establish public order," *to prevent disorder of any kind, capture and take as prisoners to the jails of their country towns, disturbers of the public peace, thieves, spies and any other wrong-doers* "<sup>81</sup>.

80. It is noteworthy that from the beginning of the war, on 31 July 1808, Tadeo Artiés presented a Memorandum on the urban militia to Catalan High Junta, in order to preserve order in the town of Lleida, which was immediately agreed to<sup>82</sup>.

81. Catalan banditry, which had had a long tradition in the region going back to the seventeenth century, had a solid base and grew throughout the French war. The "*parrots*" and "*brivalles*", gangs of bandits composed of dangerous criminals, roamed the Catalan countryside during this time, committing robberies and excesses of all kinds. On occasions they presented themselves in villages as columns of patriots and demanded money and food. Banditry became a serious burden, sinking the villages into poverty and misery. Bands like those of "Boquica" and that of a certain "Pelegrí", which as has been shown became proper auxiliary units of the Napoleonic army, complicated life further for the villages, which were unable to resist the invaders.

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82. There was not much difference between the behaviour of the guerrillas and that of the soldiers, deserters and Catalan migueletes. The Junta of Vic reported to the Principality's High Junta on the extortion that its citizens were subject to by the troops and migueletes passing through the town simply because they were armed strangers<sup>83</sup>. The Mataró Junta denounced the fact that many of the lads drafted from the town ran away from home in order to escape military service. It also denounced the existence in Tiana of guerrilla bands, raised in the early days of the conflict by the wealthy farmer Pere Rovira y Galcerán, and which subsequently devoted itself to trafficking in goods smuggled into Barcelona, while keeping the local authorities under threat<sup>84</sup>. Some days later the Galcerán band shot it out in the Mongat area with another, composed of men of a similar background<sup>85</sup>.

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80. R. Ferrer, *Barcelona cautiva*, op. cit., Vol. 5, Appendix n° 45, pp. CLXXXIV-CLXXXVI.

81. R. Ferrer, *Barcelona cautiva*, op. cit., Vol. 1, Appendix n°. 12, p. CLXXVIII.

82. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 68. Memorial de Tadeo Artiés, Lérida 31 July 1808.

83. A.C.A. C. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 68 (Letter from the Junta of Vic to the Catalan High Junta, 27 October 1808).

84. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 76. (Letter from the Junta of Mataró, 29 March 1810 to the Catalan Junta).

85. Id. Mataró 31 March 1810.

83. General Nogués observed in Girona that the tradesmen were robbed and mistreated all too frequently “by our troops, our miqueletes and their supporters”<sup>86</sup>. The police commissioner in Barcelona, H. de Beaumont Brivazac, believed that the Spanish deserters investing the countryside “brought commerce to a halt and took terror with them everywhere”<sup>87</sup>. In 1810, Narcís Gay, the man behind the Cuerpo de Almogávares reported the troops scattered over the regions of Figueres and Olot, their illegal activities and the need to eliminate them: “*The Figueres and Expatriados tercios are scattered about the hills, along with some draftees and deserters that have escaped various Army corps; most of these people are robbing and murdering the Country, and travellers. In order to halt as far as is possible so many excesses, I have seen the Rev. Rector of Llorá and we have agreed to pursue, he with his force and I with mine, these people, so pernicious for society*”<sup>88</sup>. En Vallès region, the Granollers Junta denounced the crimes and robberies committed by the bands and soldiers roaming its territory<sup>89</sup>.

84. Lieutenant Pedro Antonio Alvanés, in command of a patriotic column, denounced to the Catalan High Junta the crimes committed in Arbolí (Baix Camp) in early June by a group of deserters who had their stronghold in caves at L’Alforja. Formed up in two groups, they attacked, stealing 16 mules loaded with flour that they themselves had previously stolen from the French. Not content with mercilessly killing the commander as he lay on the ground, they would have finished off his lieutenant as well, but the latter was saved *in extremis*, by hiding in the house of the village priest. In the end, having looked for him in all the houses, they destroyed all the weapons they could find. The leader of the group of “*ruffians*” made it clear: “*Any deserter or armed villager we find that does not join us will be shot*”<sup>90</sup>.

85. In 1811, a commission of the authorities of La Bisbal demanded of Brigadier Juan F. Milans that the existing military commission should be dismissed because its activities contravened government rulings, in letting captured deserters go free. They denounced the frequent cases of theft, disorder and crime of all forms committed by known migueletes, simply they were not given what they demanded<sup>91</sup>.

86. In May 1812, the party of Manuel Errando, of the Cazadores de Cataluña battalion, comprising a sergeant, a corporal and eight men, informed the Catalan High Junta from Calders of the numerous arrests of deserters and thieves that they had made since the month of April in different villages and on the roads of central Catalonia. It is noteworthy that some of deserters should be identified as thieves that were well-known throughout the land:

“(…) in the present month of April on the road that goes from Vique to Manresa, we arrested fully armed the thief Juan Quincles, alias Man, and a fortnight later his two companions Manuel and Franco. Serrat, brothers, all of them inhabitants of the town of Artes, who we took as prisoners to the Mayor of Manresa.

In the Sierra de Collespina five deserters who we took to Vique.

86. S. Wolf, *La Europa Napoleónica*, Barcelona, 1992, pp. 309-310.

87. H. de Beaumont Brivazac, *Rapports adressés a S.E. le général en chef comte Decaen, gouverneur-général de la Catalogne ; et a Mr. le général de division comte Maurcie Mathieu, commandant supérieur*, par (...), Barcelona, 1813, Vol. 1, p. 19.

88. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 76 (Letter from Narciso Gay to the Junta of the Principality, dated Olot, 22 May 1810).

89. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 71.

90. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 87 (La Bisbal 7 October 1811). (Letter from Pedro Antonio Albanés, Villanueva 11 July 1811).

91. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 87.

Near Vidrá in a house called El Barretó we caught three deserters who we also took to Vique-

Between La Fontella and Vilada and the parish of Malañeu three, one of them wounded in the thigh on trying to escape who we took to Berga

This month we have arrested as a thief and deserter Antonio Sala y Golobandas alias Solé an inhabitant of Prats de Llusanés.

In Llusá Juan Basa alias Animota also as a deserter and thief. And in Berga we happened to chance on Josef Montorno alias Tatxa an inhabitant of Prats de Llusanés all of these three last being well known as thieves and now in the hands of the Mayor of Berga with two more with the Commander of Arms of the town.

Besides this a number of deserters have come to us voluntarily and have been despatched to the Battalion of Dn. José Manso.

Which I report to Your Excellency for your information. Calders, 19 May 1812”<sup>92</sup>.

87. The activities of Manuel Errando's column were very effective and gave the bandits no respite. At Marlés in early June he had managed to arrest Casadesús, a well-known thief and a deserter, four deserters in Igualada, five in Vic, and had managed to eliminate two or three of a band of twelve thieves and smugglers operating from Viladecaballs<sup>93</sup>.

88. The activities of the guerrillas overlapped with those of bandits, common criminals, layabouts and vagabonds, rustlers, highwaymen and smugglers. The two groups had things in common, such as their social background, the wrongs they hoped to avenge, the nature of their struggle, the ambiguity of their relationships with their surroundings, and the “*vindictive justice*” that they sometimes exercised against the rich<sup>94</sup>.

89. Together with financial motivation, linked to the phenomenon of desertion and the need to survive in the midst of a long, cruel war, attention should also be drawn to the escalation of violence, perpetrated in extreme forms by both sides. The deterioration of conditions for those in the countryside, the aggression that came with the invasion by Napoleonic troops of the countryside, originated this form of response in individual, i.e. marginal, terms, as a symbol of rebellion, and was spontaneous and primitive in nature. The French War was a veritable breeding ground for bandits, very similar to the Balkan bandits (the *haiduk*), often tolerated and admired by the population, as their actions were directed against their oppressors and dominators, Ottoman domination of the Balkans<sup>95</sup>.

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## **The activities of Catalan irregular forces according to the military authorities**

90. The activities of the Catalan somatenes, as well as those of the migueletes, were much criticised by the military authorities themselves, such as General Coupigny and Enrique O'Donnell, Lieutenant Colonels F. X. Cabanes and Miguel de Haro, as well as Marshall Luis Wimpffen, for being indisciplined and insubordinate and lacking professional officers<sup>96</sup>.

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92. A.C.A., Catalan High Junta, War Section, Box 86.

93. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, Box 86 (Monistrol de Calders, 12 June 1812).

94. M. V. López Cordón, “La metamorfosis del bandido: de delincuente a guerrillero”, in *Spagna contemporanea*, 12 (1997), pp. 14 y 19.

95. J. Torras, *Liberalismo y rebeldía campesina, 1820-1823*, Barcelona, 1976, pp. 179-180.

91. The Marqués de Coupigny thought that there were migueletes worthy to be called Catalan, but others nevertheless "*obscure their glory fleeing shamelessly from danger*" and became deserters<sup>97</sup>. On 31 January 1810, army commander Enrique O'Donnell decided to raise a draft throughout the region in order to bring his men up to strength and thus "*resist the enemy and perhaps destroy him*", as "*the efforts of the valiant but indisciplined Somatenes are insufficient to safeguard this wonderful Principality*"<sup>98</sup>.

92. In the face of the desertions in the Castellterçol somatén in January 1810, O'Donnell wrote pointedly to the Junta: "*This scandalous desertion of the SOMATENES clearly indicates that they cannot be counted on for the defence of the Principality, and it seems that it is necessary to adopt other measures with which to increase the strength of the Army*"<sup>99</sup>. On 20 January that year, on receiving the news of the mass desertion that had occurred in Canon Rovira's column, in which he had left only 1,000 of the 5,500 he had had, we wrote from Moirà: "*God willing the disenchantment of those that must be served by these undisciplined people may stimulate Your Excellency to adopt swift measures in order to fill this army's ranks and thus free this great Country from the ruin that threatens it; the love I profess for the Principality and the love of my homeland make me desirous to see true military arms raised, the only means of making war*"<sup>100</sup>.

93. F.X. S. Cabanes expresses his reservations about the migueletes in his *Historia de las operaciones del ejército de Cataluña*. In it he says that while they may have been valuable in the War of Succession, when field artillery was barely heard of, in the war against the French, who were familiar with new military tactics, they were totally insufficient, given their less extensive instruction, the mistaken policy of remuneration applied to them, as they received "huge wages" compared with soldiers of the line, who were subject to greater discipline and desired only to enlist in the irregular forces<sup>101</sup>. A similar evaluation to that of Cabanes is the report that the member of the Catalan High Junta, Ignacio Miguel de Salés, sent to it on 14 July 1809<sup>102</sup>.

94. In the same manner, the Vic Junta repeatedly expressed its distrust of the somatenes, particularly following the loss of Gerona<sup>103</sup>. Very often the young men who were drafted avoid the commitment by joining a guerrilla band, like those of Rovira, Gay, Barrera, Fàbregas and the "beadle of Llorà", which collectively enjoyed greater repute than other units.

95. However, this negative view is in contrast to that drawn by Father Raimundo Ferrer, for whom somatenes and migueletes were the true protagonists of the war in Catalonia, not the regular army<sup>104</sup>. The defence made of the somatenes by the famous guerrilla leader Joan Manso

96. F.J. Cabanes, *Historia de las operaciones del ejército de Cataluña durante la Guerra de usurpación, campaña primera, por el Tte. Coronel (...), ayudante Mayor de las Reales Guardias Walones, oficial del Estado Mayor en el Ejército de Cataluña*, Tarragona, 1809, pp. 41-42; *Informe del Tte. Coronel del 2<sup>a</sup> Batallón de Baza, Miguel de Haro, s/f* (Archivo Histórico Nacional, State Section, Legajo 80 T, 261).

97. Biblioteca de Catalunya (Barcelona), Fullets Bonsoms, nos. 1.526, 3.882 y 3.894.

98. R. Ferrer, *Barcelona cautiva*, op. cit. Vol. 5, p.196.

99. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Legajo VII.

100. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, Legajo VII.

101. F.X. Cabanes, *Historia de las operaciones*, op. cit. pp. 41- 42 . On the view of this soldier of Catalan origins, refer to study of Esteban Canales "Militares y civiles en la conducción de la guerra de la Independencia: la visión de Francisco Javier Cabanes", in J. A. Armillas (cord.) *La Guerra de la Independencia. Estudios II*, Zaragoza, 2001, pp. 995-987.

102. A.C.A., Catalan High Junta, Box 73. Cited by E. Canals "Militares y civiles", op. cit, p. 979.

103. M. Ramisa, *La Guerra del Francès al corregiment de Vic, 1808-1814*, Vic, 1992, pp. 101-102.

is such that he claims for them the highest prize and recommendation, as "*with valour and inexplicable spirit they never failed in their obligations, obliging... the enemy to flee shamelessly*"<sup>105</sup>.

96. In the same way, for the liberal historian M. Agustín Príncipe, both homegrown Catalan organizations played a key role from the military point of view, one similar to that to the guerrillas. With their ability and their cunning, they fought a mountain war that left the enemy without respite, forcing him to divide his efforts to be everywhere at once, assaulting convoys, intercepting his messages, interrupting communications and meaning that he could manoeuvre only in full order<sup>106</sup>.

97. The British general Sir William Napier had himself observed the Catalan's great capacity for resistance: "*Their patriotism was purer and their efforts more sustained than that of the rest [of the Spaniards]: the somatenes were brave and active in combat, the population of the towns firm and the Juntas clearly disinterested*"<sup>107</sup>. And according to Teodoro Reding, the guerrilla war adapted very well to Catalan idiosyncrasies<sup>108</sup>.

98. His praise of the Catalan Central Junta and of the Catalans in 1809 is sound proof of the widespread support for the war using this particular form of organising resistance: "*There is no difference between men in Catalonia, all are soldiers, in the fields, on the roads, in places, in the cities occupied by the enemy, wherever the Catalans show profound hatred for the French, an inextinguishable zeal for the Fatherland, a loyalty beyond question... Supplies, munitions, the French convoys fall to the valiant patriots that cover every inch of ground, and in the towns and villages where they have superiority in weapons, it is the houses and walls that are captive, not the hearts, which constantly exalt their loyalty in the most energetic, most heroic demonstrations*"<sup>109</sup>.

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99. Somatenes and migueletes fought together on most occasions, but were subordinate to the general strategy drawn up by the military high command, except in the first few months of the war when there was no clear military high command. The calculations the Catalan High Junta made for creating and arming a new army of 40,000 came to nothing. The problems of financing and organizing it were never properly overcome despite the efforts made. The lack of weapons, indiscipline and the dispersion of the migueletes and somatenes gave rise to guerrilla bands, in which the need for survival led to banditry, as in other regions of Spain.

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104. R. Ferrer, *Barcelona cautiva*, op. cit., Vol 3, pp. 93 y 350.

105. A.C.A. Catalan High Junta, War Section, File IV. Cited by J. Peres Unzueta, op. cit. p. 347.

106. M. Agustín Príncipe, *Guerra de la Independencia*, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 285.

107. F. Soldevila, *Historia de España*, Vol. VI, Barcelona, Ariel, 1967, p. 336.

108. R. Ferrer, *Barcelona cautiva*, Barcelona, Vol. III (1816), p. 9 and Vol. IV (1817), note 1 pp. 4-6;Id. *Idea de la fidelidad de Barcelona durante su cautiverio a su adorado Fernando VI*, op. cit.

109. *Gazeta Militar y Política del Principado de Cataluña*, 17 de agosto de 1809; R. Ferrer, Barcelona, 1814, pp. 68-69.