

# RESPONSE

Juan Martin Diez (1775–1825)  
to Ramón Salas, Intendant of Guadalajara

Sigüenza, 14 February 1810

I have received both your letters, one of 21 January, the other of 5 February, and I have read them with the greatest attention. In answer, I say that we were in the full enjoyment of peace, and in the strictest alliance with France, and our monarchy was complete with our legitimate and beloved King Ferdinand VII who, as you know, was fully authorized to reign by his father and by the Spanish nation. Therefore I do not acknowledge any other king; and I conceive these my sentiments to be precisely those of all the rest of his subjects; and whilst I declare this, I feel a sense of those ties of mutual duties between a sovereign and his people; the more when I call to mind the oath of allegiance which I voluntarily took at the age of sixteen. I hold that oath to be sacred, nor will I violate it whilst I live; and in support of it, I am ready to sacrifice my life, as I have already done my little property. Such were the feelings which actuated me when I first took up arms, and I have never deviated from these principles. You yourself acknowledge that my conduct has gained for me the favorable opinion and estimation even of my enemies. If they are lovers of justice, they must allow that in proportion as I have gained their estimation, so have I proved the justice of my cause; towards them I have never forgotten to act according to the laws of war. Those who surrendered to me have been treated as prisoners of war, and with the greatest humanity; nor did I pay less respect to the rank and dignity of that distinguished officer General Franceski, as you perceive by the letter of General Belliard; nor were seventeen officers of the staff, together with a general of the empire, made prisoners last August less well treated; they were safely conducted by my orders and placed at the disposal of the Central Junta.

It is unnecessary to take up your time by a recapitulation of the number of officers and soldiers made prisoners and treated with equal kindness—the fact is publicly known, and your king is aware of the truth of this assertion. Under this conviction I lived in hopes that the French army would have acted with the same liberality and an equal love of justice towards me and those who act under my orders; but—alas!—a continued series of barbarities have destroyed those hopes.

The inhuman and shameful confinement of my aged, innocent, and beloved mother in the loathsome prison of Aranda de Duero for six months! Nine of my soldiers made prisoners of war were hanged in the very town of Sigüenza! A scandal to humanity! Four others made prisoners in the affair of Moernando, inhumanly shot in Guadalajara! The unheard of cruelty towards my second in command, Don Segundo Antonio Berdugo, strangled in the town of Hueto, an act that makes my blood run cold! How are these barbarous proceedings to be justified?

How unlike my conduct towards the prisoners made in the affair of Mazazulleque! Well might I have murdered them with such acts on your part staring me in the face; it would have been but just retaliation; you are well convinced of the truth of what I have stated, and you cannot for a moment, sir, look upon the part I take as an unnatural one; nor can you imagine the cause I have espoused to be a desperate one; however, be it as it may, it is that which I shall follow whilst I live, and it is that in defense of which I shall die; I say this not through obstinacy, but because I conceive it my duty. I am not to be intimidated by the threat of the numerous corps of French occupying every hole and corner of the peninsula, nor by the vile title of *Chief of Banditti* with which the French have honored me. The glory to which I aspire is that of dying in this just cause, in the service of my country, of my religion, and of my legitimate king; but never in that of Joseph the Intruder, whom I never will acknowledge to be the sovereign of Spain. I am astonished that General Belliard in his official letter should have ventured to assert the contrary; his Excellency must not be surprised at my contradicting his assertion, which is so injurious to my fair fame, and the reputation to which I aspire, and hope to merit, from my king and my country. If what General Belliard states were true, and that I was anxious to join Joseph, why should that gracious monarch find it necessary to take the trouble of authorizing you to use every endeavor to seduce me from my allegiance and to join him? If he be a king so graciously prone to pardon people, why require anything more from me than the simple request which I am stated to have made to be admitted into his grace and favor? I know not what his virtues are, but I never can forget those of my beloved Ferdinand VII.

I value not my life without honor; and all those distinctions which you promise me with your protection would only blacken my character and destroy that reputation which I have labored to establish, and which, up to this moment, is without a stain. I cannot understand for what act of mine I should look to your king for pardon? I carry on a defensive war; where then can be the crime? This very fact relieves my mind and conscience of any burden they

might otherwise labor under for carrying on the war. No, I feel convinced that I shall be mildly judged hereafter by that Supreme Being whose holy religion I profess.

I might have been weak enough to put faith in the promise you made me in your letter of 21 January, of safety to my person; but I must have been an idiot not to see through your double dealing and to remark that there was a great contradiction between your promise and your mode of acting, for at the very moment you wrote your letter, you were aware of my little corps being dispersed, and you sent troops to surround me in the town of Pastrana, and at least to make me prisoner!

To conclude—the sentiments of my heart (which I hope is a sound and pure one) are not to be changed, and I shrink not from all the dangers and punishments with which you threaten me.

This is my determined resolution and that of my soldiers; it will exasperate you the more, and draw down your vengeance upon us; but neither reward, nor threat, nor any punishment that awaits us can seduce us from our duty; we offered to our country our lives from the first moment of this struggle, and we still look upon them as hers, and seek with pleasure that death which intimidates only the unjust, the weak, and the cowardly; we have the honor to thank you for the protection you offer to us, and we hope that you will do us the favor to communicate this our resolution to the Governor-General of Madrid and to your monarch.

- *The Life and Military Exploits, etc. etc. of Don Juan Martin Diez, The Empecinado...*(1823):52–58.