SOLDIERS, SOCIETY, AND POLITICS IN SPANISH AMERICA, 1750–1821

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THE FALL OF THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT IN MEXICO CITY. by TIMOTHY E. ANNA. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1978. Pp. 289. $15.00.)

THE ARMY IN BOURBON MEXICO, 1760–1810. By CHRISTON I. ARCHER. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978. Pp. 366. $15.00.)

THE MILITARY AND SOCIETY IN COLONIAL PERU, 1750–1810. By LEON G. CAMPBELL. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1978. Pp. 254. $10.00.)

MILITARY REFORM AND SOCIETY IN NEW GRANADA, 1773–1808. By ALLAN J. KUETHE. (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1978. Pp. 234. $10.00.)

One wonders occasionally, during mercifully rare bouts of preconfessional examination of conscience, if the Bourbon reforms tend to bewitch all who study them. Did they really comprise the smooth, coherent, masterly program of imperial change and revival that generations of commentators, from the very imperial policymakers of eighteenth-century Spain to the researchers of today, have identified? Might they not be more realistically depicted in terms of a halting, uncertain, inconsistent desire for imperial modernization and centralization, characterized more by delay, contradiction, and obstruction than by decisiveness? Doubt is reinforced by reflection upon the fact that the much-praised overhaul of the outdated imperial commercial structure, for example, allegedly accelerated by the evidence arising from the British opening of Havana in 1762, produced no substantial changes until 1778, and even then the most productive part of the empire, New Spain, was to be denied full enjoyment of the limited benefits of free trade for a futher decade. In the sphere of administrative reform, too, significant implementation of the intendant system was delayed until the mid-1780s, despite the fact the José de Gálvez and others had provided eye-witness accounts of the urgent need to reform drastically local government some twenty years earlier. The deaths of Gálvez and Charles III in 1787–88 deprived New Granada of the system entirely, ushering in a general conservatism in Madrid that was to be compounded in the 1790s. In the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0023879100028612 Published online by Cambridge University Press

vital area of strategic and military reform, on the other hand, it is possible to discern a greater sense of urgency, cohesion, and commitment to change during the early years of the reign of Charles III, coupled with a determination, which was less evident in other areas of government activity, to see the reform through, despite the opposition of vested interests, and yet to modify it if it failed when put to the test.

The central importance of strategic considerations to the overall Bourbon program of imperial reform hardly requires explanation. No historian of the period would fail to recognize, for example, the defensive aspect of the territorial reorganization, which reached a peak in 1776 with the creation of the viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata and the Interior Provinces of New Spain. The reform of local government, too, was partially motivated by anxiety about the security problem provoked under the unreformed system by endemic local disturbances, while the exchequer reform, which was so central to the intendant system, was designed to raise the additional revenues required to finance improved defences. Even commercial reform had a powerful, if indirect, strategic purpose, for the strengthening of Spanish industry that free trade was intended to promote would, by denying Britain the fruits of supplying Spanish America with manufactured goods, help Spain regain her status as a major power. The literature on these and other aspects of the Bourbon reforms that had what one might define as a secondary strategic function has grown considerably during the last three decades. But military reform proper, which centered upon the strengthening of fortifications and, more significantly, the creation of disciplined militias to supplement the relatively small establishments of regular forces in the Americas, has hitherto provoked only one monograph of major importance, Lyle N. McAlister's *The "Fuero Militar" in New Spain* (1957). The almost simultaneous appearance of no less than three substantial studies of the military in late colonial Spanish America, covering three of its four viceroyalties, is, therefore, an event of considerable historiographical importance. The fourth work under review, that of Timothy Anna, is clearly in a separate category in terms of its subject matter but, insofar as it is concerned partially with the military establishment of New Spain in action between 1810 and 1821, it complements Christon Archer's book.

Archer, like Leon Campbell and Allan Kuethe, recognizes the military misfortunes suffered by Spain in the Seven Years War as the principal factor behind the program of military modernization and reorganization upon which the ministers of Charles III embarked after 1763. The role that a disciplined militia could play in policing the application of more rigorous fiscal policies in the mainland viceroyalties was not unobserved, but the principal goal was to make imperial defences secure against the by now traditional threat of British attack. The process

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of the program of change is charted with particular accuracy by Campbell and Kuethe. The former demonstrates with admirable clarity the way in which, by 1776, Viceroy Manuel de Amat had created a militia organization for Peru that could claim to call upon the services of almost one hundred thousand men. In the aftermath of the Túpac Amaru rebellion (1780–83) this establishment was more than halved, as the crown's suspicions of the Creole population of the interior of Peru led it to place greater emphasis upon a regular force of some fifteen hundred, which tended to be officered mainly by peninsulars. In New Spain a larger regular army, numbering up to six thousand when at full strength, was supported, after a similar process of inspection and readjustment, by a smaller, but perhaps more coherent militia force of twenty-four thousand. In New Granada the militarization process was less thorough than in the other viceroyalties: it did not really begin until 1773, when the process of reorganizing the militias of Cartagena and Panamá got under way, and, although introduced briefly in Popayán (for fourteen years) and Santa Fé (six years), was never extended to important interior provinces such as Antioquia, Mariquita, and Pamplona. The New Granadan militia, although reaching a peak number of fifteen thousand men by 1789, was reduced, largely for reasons of economy, to eight thousand by the end of the century, but the regular army, which was concentrated in the strategically important peripheral zones of Cartagena, Panamá, and the presidency of Quito, was more than double the size of that of the senior viceroyalty of Peru.

All three works on the military attempt for obvious reasons to evaluate the strategic impact of military reform, a task complicated by the fact that the major threats to imperial security were to arise after 1763 not from external challenge but from internal unrest. Kuethe makes the telling point that the Comunero rebellion in New Granada was centered in precisely those provinces where military reorganization had not occurred, which suggested to the viceregal authorities that greater military preparedness, to be attempted in the 1780s, would prevent future disturbances. In Peru, on the other hand, the reformed militia of the interior provinces proved to be most inept in its resistance to the Túpac Amaru rebellion, which was eventually repressed largely by Indian conscripts, officered by Europeans. Both Campbell and Archer draw particular attention to the inadequacies of the militia structure in terms of weaponry and training, and to the difficulties encountered in recruiting the men required to maintain nominal establishments. Archer is particularly informative on problems of discipline, health, and recruitment, especially for those garrisoned in Veracruz. Desertion and draft evasion seem to have been common in New Spain, where the *castas* were most reluctant to serve, whereas in both Peru and New Granada the *pardos* of

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the coast recognized military service as one means of marginal social advancement.

After strategic considerations proper, the aspect of military reform to which all these monographs address themselves is its social impact. Each, in differing ways, covers a wider range of subject matter than did McAlister's *Fuero Militar*, a work concerned primarily with the relatively narrow theme of military privilege, but each is concerned either to reassess his thesis (Archer) or to consider the extent to which it is applicable in viceroyalties other than New Spain. Campbell and Kuethe, whose present works originated as doctoral dissertations at the University of Florida, prepared presumably under McAlister's supervision, are particularly interested in structuring their approach to military reform in such a way as to test the McAlister interpretation, which argues, essentially, that in New Spain the extension of the military *fuero* to militiamen tended to weaken civilian jurisdiction and create an autonomous praetorian spirit. Both find evidence of jurisdictional conflicts between civil and military establishments, but Campbell eventually concludes that it is not possible for Peru to identify "an autonomous and irresponsible military jurisdiction," while Kuethe makes the rather more subtle point that viceregal-wide generalization is inappropriate. In New Granada, he argues, the limited and short-lived nature of military reform in the interior provinces, where influential Creole families regarded the militia with suspicion, meant that a close relationship between the local aristocracy and the military corporation did not emerge; in the peripheral provinces, however, especially in Quito and Guayaquil, the presence of regular and disciplined militia forces, coupled with a greater Creole awareness of their vulnerability to external aggression (Guayaquil) and internal social upheaval (Quito) did provide the conditions in which an accommodation could occur between the military and the local elite. This regional differentiation, his argument goes on, is reflected in the differing postindependence histories of Ecuador, where militarism was marked, and Colombia, which displayed a clear preference for civilian government.

Campbell and Kuethe base their monographs upon extensive research into primary sources in both Spanish and South American archives. One observation, rather than criticism, is that their sources seem to have been fuller and more coherent for the period when the issue of military reform was of major importance to policymakers, that is up to about 1795, than for the last fifteen years or so before the beginning of the independence period. On the other hand Archer, whose work is also impressive in terms of the range of sources used, tends to draw much of his supporting documentation from the period of the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, years in which the mobilization of the

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army of New Spain to meet the threat of external aggression coupled with greater financial stringency made active military service unattractive for many Mexicans. The principal conclusion that he draws from his findings on the unpopularity of military service and the relative weakness of the military establishment in relation to other sectors of late colonial society—the bureaucracy, merchants, and miners, for example—is that the martial spirit and the praetorian tradition identified by McAlister and others were simply not present in New Spain in the late colonial period. A partial explanation for this discrepancy may be that McAlister, like Campbell and Kuethe, draws most of his evidence about civil-military hostility from the first twenty years or so after the military reform program began to be implemented, a period when debates over the extension of the military fuero generated most heat, and not from the immediate preindependence years. The independence period proper is studiously avoided by all the experts on the military, although it is perhaps in this period rather than the 1770s and 1780s that future researchers will find the real origins of military elitism in Spanish America.

Archer concludes his study with the conventional observation that the army of New Spain almost in its entirety opposed the early revolution for Mexican independence because it saw the Hidalgo movement as essentially a "massive social upheaval" of a racist nature. This view is broadly supported by Timothy Anna's lively and readable reassessment of Mexican politics in 1810–21, although he is at pains to stress the strength of thwarted desires for autonomy among the Creole population in 1808–10. Where he does differ from previous commentators, although the difference is one of degree rather than of an absolute nature, is in his insistence that the 1821 seizure of independence represented not a counterrevolution against Spanish Liberalism but a reformist movement coming forward to fill the void left by the collapse of a royalist regime whose internal contradictions and violent political oscillations between 1810 and 1821 had deprived it of the "authority" without which it was unable to continue. The original documentation upon which Anna draws is concerned mainly with the problems of municipal government in Mexico City during this troubled decade, and his findings on the political attitudes of the *cabildo* and reactions to stringent police and fiscal measures introduced by the viceregal authorities between 1810 and 1816 are particularly interesting. The preoccupation with the viceregal capital does leave the reader somewhat in the dark, however, about political life and activity in the major provincial cities of New Spain, many of which were in insurgent-controlled territory in 1810–15. Although Anna's reinterpretation of Creole motives in 1810–21 is more convincing than the traditional insistence upon blind support for reaction, it might be suggested that it is too simple to explain the politics of

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New Spain as a whole. After all, insurgency did survive in this period, and Creole support for it in the provinces must have been considerable. The way forward for all researchers in the history of the late colonial and independence periods is perhaps that suggested by Kuethe, a recognition of the need to escape from all-embracing generalization in favor of regional specialization and differentiation.

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