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Christopher Storrs. *The Resilience of the Spanish Monarchy, 1665-1700.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. 288 pp. $140.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-924637-3.

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Spanish Decadence Revisited

This book presents a perfect case of truth in advertising: the title is about as apt a description of the book's content and argument as any reader may wish for. Christopher Storrs marshals enormous amounts of evidence and extraordinarily numerous references to argue that the Spanish royal government under Carlos II managed to defend and preserve the largest part of the monarchy that had once been the undisputed hegemonic power across Europe. The book is clearly written, and Storrs relies on primary and secondary sources from a variety of archives and in a variety of languages. The number of references is perhaps overwhelming and excessive (403 footnotes in chapter 1, 446 in chapter 3, an average of almost 10 footnotes per page throughout the book), but the book is in any case engaging to read, if rather sober–and at times somber–in tone. Storrs also provides brief, useful analyses of the type and quality of materials available for each of his topics.

Storrs positions his work as a revisionist–or in any case as a more focused and specific–approach to a revisionist historiography. The reign of Carlos II has often been presented by historians as one of unremitting decline, though a revisionist, more positive interpretation has also gained currency. Storrs aims to fill gaps and to correct biases in the revisionist view, which has tended to emphasize social and economic developments, to focus on the rise of the non-Castilian parts of the monarchy, and to look at the reign from the point of view of seeking in it the beginnings of the Bourbon reforms that followed it. Instead, Storrs focuses especially on government and the military, argues for the continuing centrality of Castile to the monarchy and its efforts, and emphasizes the Crown's "conservative" (p. 13) goal of preservation of the inherited empire, which primarily meant ensuring its military defense.

The book is divided into straightforward chapters that treat various aspects of the main question Storrs is concerned with. The first two chapters focus on Spain's armies and navies, and gather an abundance of materials to offer as complete a picture of their state and needs under Carlos II as we are ever likely to see. Storrs argues that, for all the defeats and losses of the reign, Spain still managed to field armies and equip navies that made it a reasonably formidable opponent–and an attractive ally–in the many wars of the period. He also reconstructs and illustrates the size, location, management, provisioning, recruitment, and arming of Spain's forces on land and sea. The next two chapters cover finance and government, and again Storrs argues that, in spite of its obvious difficulties, and of the political turmoil and factionalism of the reign, the monarchy managed to raise sufficient funds to sustain the armed forces it needed, and to allocate and manage those forces with reasonable effectiveness. Here too, Storrs provides a clear picture of the methods and sources the Crown used to collect revenues, and of the institutional and administrative bodies and approaches it employed. A final chapter reviews the contributions of the non-Castilian realms within Spain, of the Italian territories, and–very briefly–of the Americas to the defense and preservation of the monarchy.

Throughout these chapters, Storrs stresses and returns to his main points. Some retrenchment in the monarchy's capabilities and effectiveness is undeniable, but we should "not exaggerate" its decline (these words form a sort of mantra for the book). Spain did not always perform successfully in the military arena, and the monarchy encountered all sorts of obstacles in collecting the money, men, and supplies it needed, but these problems were not unusual in the seventeenth century, and other countries, even France, rarely did much better. The king was far from the incapacitated imbecile of much historiography: he and his ministers were aware of the monarchy's problems, and made serious efforts to address them (to make this latter point, Storrs rarely

misses a chance to mention that "the king" said, asked, did, proposed, whatever the royal government was striving for). Though there are, to this reader, a few excesses in the details of Storrs' own arguments and defenses of the monarchy's actions, the overall picture he draws is reasonable and convincing. At the end of the reign Carlos bequeathed to his Bourbon successors a monarchy that still reigned over a very substantial set of territories in Europe and across the globe, and a government that had managed to survive decades of wars with relatively marginal losses.

Thus, Storrs follows his plan, clearly declared in the introduction, of focusing on administration and government, and especially on the centrality of war to the monarchy's aims, efforts, and survival. In addition to economic or social developments, this approach excludes any consideration of intellectual, cultural, or artistic developments. The great creative minds of the Spanish Siglo de Oro–in art, in theater, and in religious and spiritual fervor–did not live to see the reign of Carlos II, with few exceptions like Murillo or Calderón, whose most important work, however, predates the reign. The notion of decline, however misleading it may be for politics or war, certainly seems apt for culture during the reign of Carlos II, as the virtual end of royal patronage and a rather strict moral and religious climate contributed to the drying up of the creative energies of prior generations. Of course, Storrs did not aim to write a history of the reign as a whole, and his book amply succeeds within the confines of its stated goals. Its overall argument is judicious and persuasive, its documentary and scholarly base is impressive, and its style is easily accessible and admirably clear.

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