

## MEDICAL REFORM IN BOURBON SPAIN

*THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SAN CARLOS: SURGERY AND SPANISH MEDICAL REFORM IN THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.* By MICHAEL E. BURKE. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1977. Pp. 215. \$10.75.)

Since the establishment of The Royal College of San Carlos in 1788 marked the culmination of several decades of efforts to modernize Spanish surgery, its history is synonymous with that of Spanish eighteenth-century medical reform. The author of this informative and concise volume examines the origins of San Carlos in order to comprehend better the transformation of Spanish medicine in the eighteenth century and to relate it to the broader currents of change in that period. Clearly, medical reform, as exemplified by San Carlos, represented the essence of the Spanish Enlightenment; that is, empirical change within the existing social and political order.

The Royal College of San Carlos came into existence as a result of the cooperation between progressive individuals and royal ministers. The government of Charles III was interested in educational reform to promote useful knowledge both as a means to stimulate economic development as well as to reshape public ideas. Moreover, educational reform was a convenient vehicle to expand royal power at the expense of traditional and autonomous institutions. As for the *ilustrados*, they viewed the traditional institutions as citadels of narrow-mindedness and obstacles to the acceptance of the new ideas. The interests of the progressives and the Crown coincided, and they worked together to create new institutions that would promote modern ideas and thus limit the autonomy of the traditional bodies. It was precisely because of this cooperation that considerable advancement was made, especially in the area of science and "useful knowledge." The position of San Carlos under the direct patronage of the Crown signified the decline of autonomous university faculties and the rise of centralized national education. It challenged the existing political and legal order. Thus, the struggle of the opposition—the universities and professional guilds such as the Protomedicato (governing board of the medical profession)—was based more on the protection of their vested interests and traditional rights than on any profound intellectual attachment to the old ideas. This leads the author to concur with those historians who view the failure of the Spanish Enlightenment as the result of the power of institutions and vested interest groups who defended their prerogatives in the name of tradition.

Throughout this book the author tries to integrate the reform of Spanish medical education with the larger aspects of the Spanish Enlightenment. He describes the objectives and institutions of change as well as the practices and structures of the medical profession in the eighteenth century. He also examines the reform of medical education in universities and hospitals in Spain and relates it to similar attempts elsewhere in Europe. The heart of the volume is an account of the complex interplay of ideas and forces that led to the establishment of San

Carlos. One of the most interesting chapters deals with an analysis of the college's curriculum, faculty, and administration with emphasis on the role of San Carlos not only as an innovator in the field, but as a model for all medical education in Spain. Here a more extensive statistical analysis of the composition of students and faculty might have added further dimension to the discussion. The frequent presence of priests among the student body also merits additional comment. Although the author does not present any new or challenging interpretations, this volume is a useful and well-researched account of Spanish eighteenth-century medical reform, a heretofore neglected aspect of the Spanish Enlightenment.

RUTH PIKE

*Hunter College, CUNY*