



General Miranda's Wars: Turmoil and Revolt in Spanish America, 1750-1816

Denis Smith

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Napoleon called him “a Quixote who was not mad... a man who has a sacred fire in his soul.” President John Adams said his plan to liberate Spanish America was “as visionary as an excursion to the moon in a cart drawn by geese.”

For 30 years the Venezuelan Francisco de Miranda plotted to free Spain’s colonies in the New World. Miranda lived a fabled life as an adventurer and mercenary soldier, supported by powerful patrons in England, France, the United States, and Russia. He was paid and protected by William Pitt of Britain and Catherine the Great of Russia, fought for France as a revolutionary general, was tried for treason in France, attempted to invade New Spain in 1806 with two hundred raw recruits, and for a few months in 1812 was the first dictator of an independent Venezuela. Betrayed by his deputy Simón Bolívar, Miranda was taken prisoner and died in a Spanish dungeon as Bolívar renewed his war for independence.

In this work of creative nonfiction, award-winning Canadian author Denis Smith tells a compelling story of intrigue and misadventure, posing questions about empire, diplomacy and the quest for freedom which continue to resonate today.

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