



Sim?n Bol?var: Venezuelan Rebel, American Revolutionary

Lester D. Langley

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This compelling biography offers a unique perspective on the life and career of one of Latin America's most famous and most adulated historical figures. Departing from the conventional, narrow treatment of Bolívar's role in the Spanish-American wars of independence (1810–1825), leading historian Lester D. Langley frames this remarkable figure as the quintessential Venezuelan rebel, who by circumstance and sheer will rose to be the continent's most noted revolutionary and liberator. In the process, he became both a unifying and a divisive presence whose symbolic influence remains powerful even today.

Twice Bolívar gained power, twice he confronted a formidable counterrevolution, twice he was compelled to flee. His ultimate tactic of using slave and mixed-race troops aroused both the admiration and fear of U.S. leaders and became a topic of heated discussion in the critical debates of 1817 and 1818 over U.S. policy toward the Spanish-American wars as well as the arguments over the admission of Missouri as a state in 1820–1821 and the U.S. decision to participate in the ill-fated Congress of Panama.

Although he earned the sobriquet of the "George Washington" of South America, Bolívar in victory became more conservative and critical of the democratic tide of the era. Unlike Washington, Bolívar was forced into exile, the victim of his own ambitions and the fears of others. In his tragic end, he symbolized the glorious warrior so consumed by his own ambition and hatreds that he was destroyed. In death, he became a cult figure whose life and meaning casts a long shadow over modern Venezuelan history. As the author convincingly explains, he remains the most relevant figure of the revolutionary age in the Americas.

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