

## SIMÓN BOLÍVAR, FREEMASON

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FEW, if any, historical figures can have a larger – indeed, more controversial – biography than Simón Bolívar, 'The Liberator', and as regards his being a freemason a great deal has been written, according to the writers' inclinations, in 'proof' and 'disproof'.

It has been alleged or suggested on various occasions that Bolívar first saw the light of Masonry in one of the political pseudo-lodges set up by the Venezuelan patriot and revolutionary, General Francisco de Miranda, who fled to London after an unsuccessful revolt against the Spanish colonial authorities at Coro, Venezuela, in 1807. These were known as 'Lautaro' lodges after a Chilean Amerindian *cacique* who died heroically fighting the Spanish *conquistadores*. These intimations vary as to time and place and appear to be based chiefly on subsequent declarations attributed to Bolívar but which may well be apochryphal. The year 1803 and Cádiz, Spain, are the time and place most favoured.

Nevertheless the consensus is that Bolívar was initiated, passed and raised in a regular *Écossais* lodge in Paris between 1804 and 1807, and this is the claim that will be most closely examined. Further claims have, however, been made, typical of which are those in Bro. William R. Denslow's *10,000 Famous Freemasons*, which states that Bolívar 'joined Freemasonry in Cádiz, Spain, and received the Scottish Rite degrees in Paris, and was knighted in a Commandery of Knights Templar in France in 1807. While on a diplomatic mission to London in 1810 he was active in Freemasonry in that country. He founded and served as Master of *Protectora de las Virtudes* [sic] Lodge No. 1 in Venezuela and Liberty No. 2 in Peru'. These claims too will be examined.

Dr. Buenaventura Briceño Belisario, at one time the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council 33°, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for Venezuela, said in his book *Humanos Inmortales* that Bolívar was initiated by Francisco de Miranda in a Lautaro lodge and received the Master's degree in the Lodge of Carúpano, but I know of no support for the latter claim.

At this point we may diverge from the masonic aspect and proceed to look at Bolívar as a person and as an historical figure. It would be pointless as well as exhausting to attempt to distil from such an immense and contradictory biography anything but a relevant selection of basic facts sufficient to show how this extraordinary man came to be what he was and do what he did to engrave his name so deeply on the pages of history for, if we are to assess with any accuracy his involvement with Freemasonry, it is essential to know something of his background and to be able to deduce his state of mind at certain crucial junctures.

A descendant of Simón de Bolívar, a Basque who came to Spain's American colony of Venezuela towards the end of the 16th century, Simón José Antonio de la Santísima Trinidad Bolívar y Palacios was born in Caracas on 24 July 1783 to Juan Vicente Bolívar y Ponte and his wife, Concepción Palacios y Blanco de Bolívar. The parents are said to have had claims to Spanish nobility on both sides and the father to a colonial marquisate as well (though Simón never followed them up); they were rich, with extensive holdings of land and a silver mine, and thus took a leading place in the colonial society of the day. The father was colonel of an aristocratic militia regiment, the *Batallón de Voluntarios Blancos de los Valles de Aragua*. Simón was the fourth child, having been preceded by two sisters, María Antonia and Juana, and a brother, Juan Vicente. A fifth child, María del Carmen, died soon after birth. According to the historian, Salvador de Madariaga, the family had some German and possibly also some coloured (Indian or negro) blood. At any rate Simón and María Antonia were dark, intense and turbulent; Juana and Juan Vicente were blond, placid and amenable.

The father died in 1786 and the mother in 1792, thus leaving the children double orphans. Both girls married at an early age. Simón, in addition to receiving a share of the family wealth, had been named in 1785 heir to the large fortune of an uncle, the priest Juan Félix Jerez y Aristeguieta, provided that he remained 'true to God and the King'.

At the age of nine Simón went to live with his maternal grandfather, Feliciano Palacios y Sojo. Brought up thus far among women as a dominant male of an imperious disposition whose every whim could be – and no doubt was – immediately satisfied, Simón had become – not to

put too fine a point on it – a ‘brat’, but at his grandfather’s house he was given a tutor, one Simón Rodríguez, who at 21 was an ardent liberal after the school of J. J. Rousseau and contemporary philosophers; he got on well with Simón and instilled in his pupil the groundwork for a lifelong commitment to liberal and republican principles.

On his grandfather’s death in 1793 Simón went to live with his uncle, Carlos Palacios, but – probably because his proclivities were curbed with less finesse – did not like it and ran away to the house of Maria Antonia, who took him in. A tug of war ensued over the rich youngster and Carlos began a lawsuit, but Simón suddenly decided of his own accord to return to his uncle.

At the age of 13½ he did not have much formal education, but a quick mind and a good grounding in the manly arts. At this time he joined his father’s old regiment as a cadet and at 15 years’ old, having earned a good report from his superiors, he was appointed a sub-lieutenant under a Royal Commission issued from Madrid on 4 July 1798. Two years later it was thought timely for him to enter a wider world and he left for Spain to live in Madrid with another guardian uncle, Esteban Palacios. Simón joined in the gay social life of the capital and for a time doubtless ‘lived it up’ as wildly as any of the young Spanish blades – though, as his uncle was not impressed with the standard of his education, he also studied, probably with the same innate intensity. After some time, however, funds ran short, he had a brief run in with the authorities and his uncle was for some reason arrested and imprisoned for a while. Simón also became aware of the contempt in which Spaniards held ‘colonials’, however wealthy and distinguished in their own *milieu*; he must likewise have been sensible of the oppressiveness of Spain’s authoritarian régime.

At this critical stage in his life the young Venezuelan was taken up by the learned Marqués de Ustáriz who made him free of his large library. Here Simón read avidly and imbibed a grounding for his future philosophy of government.

In such an atmosphere Simón met and fell in love with Maria Teresa Rodríguez del Toro, the daughter of a Caracas family who had been friendly with his own parents and were related to the Ustáriz clan. She seems to have been rather a plain girl but he adored her and was hot for an early marriage. Her parents, though, were more cautious and only consented after some time and a separation of a few months. The splendid wedding eventually took place in Madrid on 26 May 1802 and the young couple soon left for Venezuela to take up the life of landed proprietors.

But, alas, after a bare seven months Maria Teresa succumbed to a fever and died on 22 January 1803 leaving Simón distraught with grief. He swore never to marry again and he never did; but his sensual temperament could not do without women and he was always in and out of love affairs, of which only two were long-lasting.

Unable at this time to pull himself out of despondency Simón took his staid brother’s advice and returned to Europe, landing at Cádiz in the south of Spain where he was met by his uncles, Esteban and Carlos Palacios.

It is at this point that Freemasonry comes on the scene, though only as a vague possibility. Francisco de Miranda is said to have established one of his political *Lautaro* lodges, under the title of *Caballeros Racionales No. 7*, at Cádiz, which already had a masonic tradition dating back into the previous century (*vide* Ferrer Benimeli’s *Masonería Española en el Siglo XVIII*). and it would probably have been this into which Bolívar would have been inducted – if, indeed, he was at all. It is alleged in various papers that he ‘visited’ a lodge in Cádiz and Michel Vaucaire’s *Bolívar the Liberator* relates that, when Bolívar was in his cabin on his way back to Venezuela via the United States in 1806, he came across his masonic diploma and referred to a visit to a lodge in Cádiz ‘whither he had been drawn by curiosity rather than conviction’. But in 1803 he was barely 20 years’ old, a Catholic, still grieving for his lost bride, a liberal but not yet a revolutionary, and a Spanish officer on his way with relatives with Court connections to assuage his sorrow in the fleshpots of Madrid. Neither his age nor the circumstances favour the possibility of *initiation* in a political lodge – though he presumably could have *visited* such a body as a non-mason. He could also have done so *as a mason* in 1806 but I have come across no record of his having returned to Cádiz after leaving it in 1803. The question therefore remains a mystery pending further evidence.

Bolívar did not stay long in Madrid, which he no doubt found full of sad memories as well as of the irksome signs of despotic rule, but went on to Paris as an admirer of the French republican system under Napoleon. There he was well received and was taken up by the lively Mme. Fanny Aristeguieta de Dervieu du Villars, wife of a Napoleonic officer, on the basis of a vague cousinship which some biographers seem curiously reluctant to accept. Whatever the

relationship (and it is far from unlikely that it became an intimate one!), she introduced the young Bolívar into Parisian society in which he cut a dash that has been described as of 'Byronic extravagance'.

On 18 May 1804 France adopted an Imperial Constitution and Bolívar, while continuing to admire Napoleon's military genius, became disgusted at his projected assumption of an Imperial crown, regarding it as a betrayal of republican principles. It would seem that from then on Bolívar's mind gradually turned to serious things. Moreover he met again his old tutor, Simón Rodríguez, as full of advanced ideas as ever, and the German philosopher, Baron Alexander von Humboldt, lately back from a journey across South America. When Bolívar bewailed to him the inequities of colonial life he remarked that Venezuela seemed ripe for emancipation if suitable leaders could be found. This dictum made a profound impression on Bolívar's receptive mind and it seems probable that from then on separatist tendencies were confirmed in him. In March of 1805 Bolívar embarked on a tour of Italy in company with Simón Rodríguez and his late wife's cousin, Fernando del Toro, and being on Rome's Monte Sacro on 15 August he vowed, in a moment of exaltation, not to rest until he had liberated South America from its tyrants.

Some time after this episode Bolívar returned to Paris, leaving Rodríguez in Italy, and it was then that, beyond any shadow of a doubt, Bolívar became a freemason. The indisputable evidence rests on six documents, the first three of which – in manuscript – were purchased in Paris by the historian and mason Dr. Ramón Díaz Sanchez in 1956 and presented by him to the Supreme Council 33° A. & A.S.R. of the Republic of Venezuela, together with a fourth – typescript – document attesting the authenticity of Bolívar's signature on the first and of the three documents generally.

This first and most vital document [Plate 2] is in French and reads:

A la Gloire du G. : A. : de l'Univers et le 11e j. : du 11e mois de l'an de la G<sup>de</sup> : L. : 5805 les travaux de Compagnon ont été ouverts a l'Est par le R. : f. : de Latour d'Auvergne, l'Ouest at le Sud éclairés par les RR. : ff. : Thory et Potu. La lecture de la dernière planche tracée a été faite et sanctionnée, le Vble. a proposé d'élever au Grade de Compagnon le f. : Bolívar, nouvellement initié [i.e. newly initiated. It could hardly refer to an initiation in Cádiz in 1803!] a cause d'un prochain voyage qu'il est à la veille d'entreprendre, l'avis des ff ayant été unanime pour son admission et le scrutin favorable, le f. : Bolivar a été introduit dans le Temple et après les formalités requises il a prêté aux pieds du Throne l'obligation d'usage, placé entre les deux Surveillants et a été proclamé Chevalier Compagnon Maçon de la R. : Mère L. : E. : de St. Alexandre d'Écosse. Ce travail a été couronné d'un Triple Houza et le f. : ayant remercié il a pris place a la tête de la Colonne du Midi.

Les travaux ont été fermés a la manière accoutumée.

	LaTour d'Auvergne Vble.
Vu par nous Or.	
D <sup>e</sup> Haupt 33°	Thory Potu, 2 <sup>e</sup> Surv.
F <sup>i</sup> . : Vidal	Burard ex-Vble.
G. : J. : du 33°	D'Alez d'Anduse 33° Abraham
Simón Bolívar	Jeanne de la Salle"

[For translation, see Appendix A]

The other manuscript documents [not suitable for reproduction] relate to proceedings of the same lodge during the year 1814 and confirm certain signatures, namely those of Thory, Burard and d'Alez d'Anduse that appear on both documents No. 1 and No. 2, and those of Thory and d'Alez d'Anduse that appear on all three.

The fourth document [Plate 3], dated 26 June 1956 at Caracas, Venezuela, and signed by Dolores Bonet de Sotillo, palaeographer, is in Spanish on a sheet headed '*Academia Nacional de la Historia Biblioteca y Archivo*' and affirms that, after due examination of paper, ink, handwriting and signatures, the three preceding documents are authentic originals and the signature of Bolívar on the first is undoubtedly authentic. [For complete text and translation,

see Appendix B]. It will be noted, however, that this expert has fallen into the common error of taking Bolivar's impending journey mentioned in No. 1 to be that to Italy in company with Simón Rodriguez whereas this had, of course, already been accomplished when he became a freemason. She is likewise in error in ascribing the minutes contained in the documents to the Supreme Council 33° for France instead of to the *Écossais* lodge *St. Alexandre d'Écosse*.

The two documents whose examination follows are of an importance almost equal to that of No. 1. Both are in French and the originals lie in the masonic section of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, their authenticity guaranteed by the Conservator, Mme. Florence de Lussy, who kindly supplied photostatic copies. The heading of No. 5 [Plate 4] reads: 'Tableau Générale des Membres qui composent la Rble. L.: Écossaise de St. Alexandre d'Écosse à l'Époque du . . . Jour du Mois de la G<sup>d</sup>e. L.: 5804, de la Restauration 5564 et de l'Ere Vulgaire le An 13'; in other words, a list of members of the *Écossais* lodge St. Alexander of Scotland as at a date in 1804 or the 13th year of the Revolution. However it seems to be not so much a straightforward roll of members, who would presumably then be listed in order of seniority, as a list of the current administration, with those members without office following on and those joining during the administrative year being added. The fact that the list evidently spans the two years 1804 and 1805, while we know that at least one member was initiated and passed late in 1805, strongly suggests that the Installation date was 27 December, St. John's Day.

There follows a sequence of names and particulars under the columnar headings of 'Nomme' (surname), 'Prénoms' (Christian names), 'Qualités: civiles, maçonnique' (ranks: civil, masonic), 'Dignité en Loge' (office in the lodge), 'Naissance: Lieux, Mois, Années' (birth: places, months, years), 'Signatures, manu propriu' (signatures, in own hand). These are set out hereafter, omitting the birth particulars:

Godefroid <sup>+</sup> de la Tour d'Auvergne Thory	Maurice Marie Joseph C <sup>d</sup> e. Antoine	ancien Cap <sup>me</sup> . du Regt. de Bouillon ancien avocat en Parlement	G <sup>d</sup> .: Inspecteur du 33° G <sup>d</sup> .: Inspecteur du 33° :	V <sup>ble</sup> .: 1 <sup>er</sup> .: Serv <sup>t</sup> .:
Potu	Pierre Francois	Rentier	G <sup>d</sup> . Eco.:	2 <sup>e</sup> .: Surv.:
Burard de Pesche- loche	Guillaume Joseph- Louis Louvain	Docteur en médecine Major du 19 <sup>e</sup> Régiment de Dragons	S.: P.: R.: S.: G <sup>d</sup> . Inspecteur du 33°	Ex-V <sup>ble</sup> .: V <sup>ble</sup> .: d' honneur a perpetuité 1 <sup>er</sup> fond- ateur
Duron	Jean- Jacques Jerome	docteur régent de la faculté de médecine de Paris	,, K.: S.:	ex-vener- able
Demouze (?)		médecin oculiste	G <sup>d</sup> .: Ec.:	Ex-maître
de hautp	Frederic Ch. Jn.	membre de l' academie Roy- ale de Florence	G <sup>d</sup> . Inspecteur du 33°	Orateur
Carion de Nisan	Henry	Tribun Ch <sup>es</sup> . de a G <sup>d</sup> . Charte Ide La (?)	R <sup>+</sup> .: Ec.:	Ad. a l' Orateur
Bernin de Champetre (?) de Salase	Henry Francois	ancien employé ancien avocat	M.: P.: G <sup>d</sup> .: E.:	Secrétaire Sec <sup>e</sup> . adjoint

Bermond d'Alez d'Anduze	Jean Joseph Augustin	ancien Chuc. (?) et Vi-Gal	S. G. I. Gal. du 33°	Trésorier
Dutillet de Villar	Joseph Henri	Propriétaire	R. H. d'H. off. du G.C.	1. diacre
Jeanne de la Salle	Thomas	ancien marin	Grand Ecossais	2e diacre
Pipelet de Montijeaux		ancien avocat	Gd. Ec.	Garde des Sceaux
Burard	<i>idem ut supra</i>		M. P.	aumonier
Boudier de la moulière		ancien D <sup>cier</sup> . Régent		aumonier
Le Clerc		ancien Docteur Régent	M. P.	architecte
Martin de Mentque		ancien Magistrat	Gd. E.	M <sup>e</sup> . de Cerem.
Boric		médecin de l' Hotel Dieu	Elu.	M <sup>e</sup> . de Cerem.
Valeure	Cirus	Senateur	Gd. Const <sup>eur</sup> de l'Ordre 33°	M <sup>e</sup> . de Cerem.
d'Agrain destribat	Charles Philippe	ancien Cap <sup>ne</sup> .	K.H.	M <sup>e</sup> . de Cerm.
Thory de la Mothe	Guill. Hippolette	ancien off. au reg <sup>t</sup> . (?)	P. D. R. S.	Expert
Bourdoi de la Mothe		ancien avocat	Gd. E.	Ord. des Ban <sup>ets</sup> .
Lucipide(?)		Gd. Chancelier	Gd. Ad <sup>cer</sup> . du 33°	
de Grasse Tilly	Auguste	Cap <sup>ne</sup> . de Caval <sup>e</sup> .	Rep <sup>t</sup> . du Gd. M <sup>e</sup> . du 33°	
Marescalchi	Ferdinand	M. des Vel: Esc <sup>ses</sup> de la Rep. H: et Consul(?) d'Etat	Grand Of. et G. Conservateur du G.O.	
Rénier	Bernardin	Noble Venitien	Gd. I. du 33°	
Caleppio	Pierre	Noble Venitien	Gd. I. du 33°	
Serrurier Coupe		M <sup>al</sup> . de l'empire an. Groffier la Chef	R. L. Gd. du 33°	
de July de la Barte		ancien officier	M <sup>e</sup> . P.	
Héroux	Ange Louis Auguste Pierre	Propriétaire	M <sup>e</sup> . P.	
Héroux	Ange Louis Auguste Pierre	Employé	Maitre	
Collinet	Louis-Pierre	Docteur en Médecin	M. parfait et officier du G. Orient	
Dubreuil		Docteur en Médecin	Off. du G. O.	
Robelot	Hubert	homme de loi	M.	

Campos	Emmanuel	Noble Espagnol	M.:	
Bolivar	Simón	Officier Espagnol	M.:	
Perrin		Propriétaire	M.:	
Frasche		Négociant	M.:	
de S <sup>te</sup> . Colombe	Pascual	Propriétaire	Comp.	
Zancla	Paul	Négt.:	S. P. R. :	
Bianchi	Antoine	Comp. de Musique	M <sup>e</sup> .	Int <sup>de</sup> de l' harmonie
Crus(s)aire		peintre	ap.:	
Pyron		Propriétaire	G <sup>d</sup> . I.:	du 33 <sup>o</sup> M. bre hon- noraire
Rieffler		Musicien	M.:	Chef de la Musique
Masse de Corneille	Nicolas Antoine	avoué au T <sup>l</sup> . de ere Instance	R. Ec.:	Membre

## I.

The list has been reproduced exactly, down to the indiscriminate use of capital and common letters. Written in a crabbed hand, there are one or two illegibilities that have been queried but they do not, of course, affect the import of the document which contains some famous names, notably that of Comte Auguste de Grasse-Tilly who, with his father-in-law, Jean B. de la Hogue (or Delahogue), did so much to spread the Scottish Rite in the Western Hemisphere. This apart, the list appears to have been carelessly maintained; the birth particulars of many members are missing or incomplete, while the signatures of a number (including Bolivar) are also missing, the word 'absent' appearing against four names (but not Bolivar's).

Document No. 6 consists of the cover and pages 12 and 13 of a 16-page printed pamphlet titled (on the cover): 'Tableau de FF. composant la R. Mère L. Écossaise de France Sous le Titre distinctif de SAINT-ALEXANDRE d'Écosse, à l'O. de Paris. L'an de la G<sup>de</sup>. L. 5804 et 5805', which sounds like a repetition of No. 5 but confirms the spanning of the two years and presumably summarises the position at the end of the administrative year. On the two inside pages available surnames only are given, but grouped under masonic categories and with more explicit detail, as follows:

R. : ✠. : ECO.:

SERRURIER, *Maréchal de l'Empire, Grand Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur, Préteur du Sénat, Gouverneur des Invalides, G. Officier de 1<sup>re</sup>. Classe du G. O. de France.*

DUBREUIL, *Docteur en Médecine, Officier du G. O.*

COLLINET, *Docteur en Médecine, Officier du G. O.*

## MAITRES

ROBELOT, *Ex-Juriconsulte.*

HÉROUX, *attaché à la Comptabilité impériale.*

FRACHE, *Négociant.*

CAMPOS, *Gentilhomme espagnol.*

PERRIN, *Propriétaire.*

BOLÍVAR, *Officier Espagnol.*

## COMPAGNONS

De SAINTE-COLOMBE, *Propriétaire.*

## HARMONIE

BIANCHI, *Compositeur, Intendant de l'Harmonie de la R.: Mère L.: M<sup>e</sup> :*  
 RIEFFLER, *Chef de Musique, M<sup>e</sup> :*

## FRÈRES A TALENS

CRUSSAIRE, *Peintre, App. :*

## MEMBRES HONORAIRES

PYRON, *Propriétaire, Gr.: Orateur du G.: O.: de France, Gr.: Inspecteur Gén.: et Membre du Souv.: C.: du 33°.:, Secrétaire du St.: Empire, Membre honoraire de toutes les LL.: et Chap.: de France.*

## MEMBRES NON RESIDENS

toute l'année

VIDAL, *Propriétaire, S.: G.: Insp.: Gén.:, Secrétaire du St.: Empire, et Membre du Conseil du 33°.: des îles françaises d'Amérique, Secrétaire des commandemens du Gr.: Commandeur ad vitam, Officier du G.: O.:*

ICARD de BATTAGLIGNI, *ancien Officier de Marine, S.: P.: D.: R.: S.:, Officier du G.: O.:*

ZANCLA, *Ven.: de la R.: L.: Eco.: du Temple des Muses, R.: M.:, Officier du G.: O.:*

The foregoing not only gives a clearer picture of the structure of this interesting and distinguished lodge, but affirms beyond all doubt that by the end of its administrative year Simón Bolívar had been raised to the degree of a Master Mason in that same lodge.

To proceed, it has been asserted by several writers (though they may all have gone back to a single source) that Bolívar attained the 30° in France; for instance, the Cuban writer Cova Maza says so in Chapter IV of his *Mocedades de Simón Bolívar*. This does not seem to be impossible. We now know that by the end of 1805 Bolívar had become a Master Mason in an *Écossais* lodge which by definition worked further degrees. Indeed, Mme. de Lussy states in her letter of 21 February 1975 that this lodge, having amalgamated with the Lodge *Contrat Social*, then became the mother-lodge of the philosophical Scottish Rite and worked the 'old system', not that of the recently introduced (from Charlestown) Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Thus Bolívar could presumably have attended enough meetings before finally leaving Paris in 1806 to have qualified in at least some of the higher degrees worked. But as to whether he actually did there is simply no evidence. A Scottish Rite collar and apron reputed to be his are in the Museum of the Grand Lodge of New York, but doubt has been cast on their authenticity since they appear to be of later date. Could they relate to the conferment on Bolívar of the 33° nearly two decades later?

Writers who assert that Bolívar was knighted in a Commandery of Knights Templar in France at some time (usually given as 1807 when he was in fact returning to, or already in, Venezuela) may have made a false deduction from the words '*Chevalier Compagnon*' in Document No. 1, which I take to indicate only his status as a *gentleman* Compagnon in the Craft; as a Spanish officer, he would certainly have been regarded as such. In final refutation Mme. de Lussy, in her letter referred to above, says that the Bibliothèque Nationale has 'un ensemble assez important d'archives pour l'Ordre du Temple', but in none of the documents does the name of Bolívar occur. I think therefore that we can dismiss without more ado the claim that he was a Templar mason.

It would be interesting to know who was Manuel Campos, 'noble (gentilhomme) espagnol' whose name precedes Bolívar's in Documents Nos. 5 and 6. The name is less than aristocratic but its juxtaposition with Bolívar's and the fact that they are the only Spaniards listed suggest some connection.

It is not clear at what time in 1806 Bolívar left France for the United States via Holland and Hamburg, but on arrival he spent some time in Boston, New York and Philadelphia, and it was not until 1 January 1807 that he took ship for La Guaira, the port of Caracas. In this same year Caracas became the birthplace of the definitive movement for Spanish-American independence. Agitation against the inequities of the Spanish colonial system was aggravated

in 1808 by Napoleon's invasion of Spain when he forced the new king, Fernando VII, to abdicate and placed his own brother, Joseph Bonaparte, on the Spanish Throne. Both the Spanish-American people and the colonial authorities rejected Joseph. Bolívar participated in this movement, secretly at first but openly from 1810 and, when a *Junta Suprema Conservadora de los Derechos de Fernando VII* (Supreme Body for the Preservation of the Rights of King Fernando VII) was set up on 19 April 1810, Bolívar and his brother were among those who insisted on the expulsion of the Spanish Captain-General and called for full independence for Venezuela – a call that was echoing around South and Central America.

In June 1810 Bolívar was promoted to colonel of militia and sent by the Junta to London at the head of a small diplomatic mission consisting of himself, Andrés Bello (the future renowned philosopher) and Luis Lopez Mendez. He was received with official coolness and the mission accomplished nothing beyond making European governments aware that a new situation existed in the Americas. Nevertheless, on the social level Bolívar's two-month stay was a success though history is silent as to whether he made any masonic contacts in England at this time.

However Bolívar met Francisco de Miranda in London and must have spent some time at the gatherings the latter held at his house. The masonic historian Américo Carnicelli, in his *Masonería en la Independencia de América*, vol. 1, says (p. 73) that at this time Bolívar was inducted in a Lautaro lodge, but while this is possible, and certainly some of his contacts around Miranda would have been members, there is no known proof of it and somehow it seems out of character. In any event Bolívar prevailed on Miranda, an experienced soldier, to return to Venezuela to lead a military struggle against Spain. Bolívar left for home on 16 September 1810 and Miranda followed soon after.

Not much more is on record of Bolívar as a mason until, as Dictator of Colombia, he banned the Order, together with all secret societies, on 8 November 1828. Up to then opportunities for him to have been active in Masonry, in between his commitments as soldier and statesman, must have abounded because the Order flourished in Spanish America from about 1808 and no less than thirty lodges in Venezuela, Gran Colombia, Panamá and Ecuador were closed by his sad but necessary act in 1828. Evidence is, however, totally lacking; for instance, there is no known proof that Bolívar was ever a member of the lodge *Protectora de las Virtudes* No. 1, founded at Barcelona, Venezuela, on 1 July 1810 by Diego Bautista Urbaneja, or of *Orden y Libertad* No. 2, founded at Lima, Peru, reputedly by General Antonio Valero. Both lodges are still in existence but apparently lay no claim to membership by Bolívar, much less that he was a founder and Master as alleged by Bro. Denslow. Indeed there is a possibility that Bolívar disapproved of Valero's masonic activities since he wrote on 7 June 1826 to General Francisco de Paula Santander, then Vice-President of Gran Colombia, that 'El General Valero últimamente ha dejado establecidas unas cuantas logías que no dejan de dar qué hacer', [General Valero recently founded several lodges that never stop giving trouble] the last phrase of which seems to strike a note of concern.

The eminent Bolivarian scholar and 33° mason, Bro. Pedro A. Barboza de la Torre of Maracaibo, Venezuela, in a typescript essay in my possession entitled '*Simón Bolívar y la Francmasonería*', mentions both Mirandist pseudo-lodges and 'volantes' (flying) or ambulatory lodges held in the native regiments and British contingent whose meetings Bolívar could have attended from time to time. But again, no evidence has come to light that he ever did.

Many of Bolívar's colleagues and subordinates over the years were keen and active masons. Indeed lists of senior officers and officials and of contemporary lodge memberships appear virtually interchangeable! Yet Bolívar's name never appears in the latter though his copious writings include a few apparent references to Masonry that would indicate a continued awareness of its existence and virtues. For instance Bro. Barboza de la Torre quotes the following panegyric attributed to Bolívar: 'Masonry is a welcoming strand: happy are they who can reach it! . . . It is a sublime institution.' Other attributions are less unequivocal but on 29 October 1826 General Juan José Flores wrote to Bolívar saying that Masonry was growing in Ecuador, suggesting that he knew that this would be of interest to the Liberator . . . though whether favourably or otherwise is hard to say.

Perhaps at this point we should diverge again and take a look at the long, hard road that led Bolívar, through blood, glory and bitter disappointments to the day when he banned all secret societies including Freemasonry, and beyond it to his tragic, early death two years later.

On 5 July 1811 a Venezuelan Congress declared its independence and war with Spain ensued. The aging Miranda, called '*El Precursor*' (the Forerunner), bungled his campaign,

inexplicably surrendered, was taken by the Spaniards and died soon after in a Cádiz prison. The first Venezuelan Republic collapsed in July 1812 and Bolívar fled via Curaçao to Cartagena in Nueva Granada (now the Republic of Colombia) losing his baggage and funds. His estates were confiscated and he never recovered his fortune.

At Cartagena, Bolívar wrote the first of his three key documents, the *Cartagena Manifesto*, in which he set out the causes of the recent defeat and emphasized the necessity of co-operation against Spain. He was given a minor commission and on the strength of it invaded Venezuela, entering Caracas within a year without losing a battle. There he was elected President of a new Republic and received the proud title of '*El Libertador*' (The Liberator). But his victory could not be sustained against the Spanish regulars, royalist sympathizers, and fierce *llaneros* (half-caste plainsmen led by Boves), and the second Republic fell in 1814.

Bolívar returned to Nueva Granada where he imposed the revolutionary Confederation's rule on Bogotá, but failed to do so at Cartagena where rebellious officials refused him aid for his projected Venezuelan campaign. So on 13 May 1815 a disgusted Bolívar went into self-exile in Jamaica and later in Haiti, where President Alexander Pétion, said to have been a freemason, welcomed him and with Luis Brion, a wealthy merchant-adventurer of Curaçao, furnished the means for two daring but abortive raids on the Venezuelan coast. However, the same means enabled Bolívar to establish himself at Angostura on the Orinoco River from 1817 to 1819. Meanwhile a Spanish expeditionary force of some 10,000 regulars under General Pablo Morillo had captured Cartagena and the mainland revolution had virtually collapsed.

It was in Jamaica in 1815 that Bolívar wrote his second key document, the *Jamaica Letter*, giving a masterly analysis of conditions in Spanish America and predicting what republics would be formed there and how they would behave. The third key document was the *Angostura Declaration*, addressed to a Congress called there in 1819, which elaborated a complex series of political ideals the author hoped to see put into practice.

Convinced that they could not oust the Spaniards from Venezuela by direct attack, Bolívar and his colleagues conceived the daring plan of leading an army across the Andes to attack them in the rear. Doing so under great hardship, they met and defeated the Spanish forces at Boyacá on 7 August 1819, going on to capture Bogotá and to free Nueva Granada.

Bro. Barboza de la Torre states that after the capture of Bogotá there was a reunion there of freemasons who included the revolutionary leaders Francisco de Paula Santander, Carlos Soubllette, Pedro Fortoul, Antonio Morales, Pedro Briceño Mendez, Antonio Obando, Juan Nepomuceno Toscano, Justo Briceño, Vicente Andarra, Gabriel Lugo, José de Lima and Bolívar himself. . . but no authority is cited.

A truce with the Spaniards ensued during which Bolívar met Morillo, also a freemason. They apparently got on well, but whether they touched on Masonry is a matter of conjecture. Bro. Américo Carnicelli says that they did but again cites no authority.

The victory at Boyacá stirred a hitherto indifferent populace and won over the *llanero* José Antonio Páez. (Páez was a freemason and later – on 15 November 1826 – Bolívar wrote to him after Páez had been censured by General Santander, supporting him against the attacks of his enemies in Bogotá in terms that had a masonic connotation). Campaigns in Venezuela culminated in the decisive Battle of Carabobo on 24 July 1821 and the reoccupation of Caracas, while Páez, Soubllette, Montilla and others were freeing numerous areas in Venezuela and Nueva Granada. Then, in October of that year, Bolívar put into effect the plan he had already published to unite Venezuela and Nueva Granada in a new Republic of (Gran) Colombia, he being elected the first President.

Bolívar's victory at Bombona and that of General Antonio José de Sucre at Pinchincha liberated Ecuador, and Bolívar entered Guayaquil in triumph on 11 July 1822, following which Ecuador merged with the new Republic. It was in Quito that Bolívar met Manuela Saenz de Thorne, the young wife of an English doctor who, at Lima in 1823, left her aging husband to be Bolívar's mistress and companion to the end.

While still in Guayaquil Bolívar had a meeting with General José de San Martín, the liberator of Chile and Protector of Peru, but while the latter was satisfied that his army in Peru could defeat the Spaniards, Bolívar did not share his optimism. Bro. Carnicelli, in his *Masonería en la Independencia de América*, says that this meeting was an opportunity for the two liberators 'to know each other personally and exchange a fraternal masonic embrace' as members of regular and Mirandist Freemasonry . . . but again no authority is cited and the possibility remains conjectural.

Time proved Bolívar right as regards the liberation of Peru and he found himself obliged to assume the Protector's mantle, defeating the royalists at Junín on 4 August 1824, while

























