

GENERAL FRANCISCO DE MIRANDA FATHER OF REVOLUTIONARY MASONRY IN LATIN AMERICA

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HIS MASONIC LIFE AND LABORS**

Before the world even heard of Colossal Revolutionaries, such as: Bro.: Augusto "Cesar" Sandino, Farabundo Marti and/or Ernesto "Che" Guevara, men whose heroic struggles and ultimate sacrifice for Freedom, Justice and Equality went beyond the territorial limits of their own countries of birth, Latin America was able to look up to the towering figure of its First Revolutionary Leader Without Borders, our Illustrious Brother, Don Francisco De Miranda.

The Father of Latin American Revolutionary Masonry and Precursor of South American Independence (as Miranda was/is commonly known) inspired the foundation of "The Most Worthy Lodge of Rational Knights of Lautaro", which, operated in Cadiz, Spain, and where some of the most notable Founding Fathers of the yet to be born South American Republics, such as: Simon Bolivar, Jose De San Martin and Bernardo O'Higgins, were initiated into the Craft. Being a man of extraordinary culture, great conviction and a rebellious and restless spirit, Miranda was able to plant the seeds of Free-Masonry in almost every country where he lived.

Various North American and French Historians have contributed much valuable information on the Masonic activities of the Venezuelan Commander, whose initiation, they assert, took place in Philadelphia in the year 1783, at a Lodge, which was frequently visited by our equally Illustrious French Brother, General Lafayette.

There is no irrefutable data concerning the exact day and month of his initiation. It appears that, due to contingencies derived from the war, the archives of the Lodge where Miranda received the Masonic Light, were lost. What is amply known, however, is that Lafayette was his Principal Recommender or "Godfather of Initiation". There are also numerous references citing his constant visits to Lodges in New York, and his fraternal meetings with George Washington at a number of Masonic gatherings.

And it is precisely for that uncertainty concerning the day of Miranda's initiation in Philadelphia, that some of the most orthodox historians have shed much doubt over the Precursor's Masonic Induction taking place in the United States. There are some that even reject the idea in its entirety; However, posterior investigations to the publications of two volumes by Americo Carnicelli give plenty of evidence of the contacts between Lafayette and Miranda, and, which, culminated in the latter's initiation in a Lodge in Philadelphia, in the year 1783.

Other investigators assert that Miranda was initiated in Paris, France, in the year 1797, months prior to his return to London. But these theories have crumbled over themselves following the publication of references and commentaries published by various English News Papers in 1785, where Miranda is mentioned to having been seen avidly engaging in a number of Masonic Convivials with London's foremost Intellectuals and Nobles.

After considering all the available evidence and most appealing theories, a British historian concluded that Miranda was initiated in Philadelphia, in 1783; was passed to the Degree of Fellow-Craft in London, in 1785; and raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason in Paris, in 1790. This chronology seems to be in more affinity with the Truth, for it keeps an accurate relation with the General's constant journeys through those countries.

In 1798, while in London, he founded the Lodge "La Gran Reunion Americana", or, as translated into English "The Great American Reunion". This particular Lodge, which is highly questioned by a number of Masonic historians due to its alleged "lack of adherence to the "rituals" and for "giving preponderance to the Republican Cause", is the principal pillar of support for the arguments of those, whom, to this very day, place in matter of doubt the Masonic Identity of Miranda.

"The Great American Reunion" had very much of Masonic, and very little of Profane. Miranda conferred the Degree of Master solely to those who excelled in their intellectual capacities and were known for their Fervent Love to Freedom and to the Cause of American Independence. At the end of their oaths and obligations the newly raised Master Masons stated a special clause, which ended with the phrase: "ä thus I shall repudiate and combat all tyrans and tyrannies ä".

The true labors of "The Great American Reunion", in fact, did not revolve around Masonic Symbolism and Catechism, as much as they did, around the French Revolution and the necessity to liberate the Spanish Colonies of America.

And, that particular characteristic, is precisely what Orthodox Masons criticize about Miranda. They assert that he purposely ignored the rituals and the proper conduction of ceremonies, with the objective of creating "Clandestine Subversive Cells" that ultimately contributed to the establishment of a republican system, and a reform in the social structure of the colonies he wished to liberate.

What today's Masonic Historians and/or Critics of Miranda neglect to mention, choose to omit, or, simply ignore in their "enlightened account" of past events and/or opinions, is that in those days, every single Masonic Freedom Fighter gave avid priority, within the walls of their own Masonic Temples, to the discussion of tactics and strategies on the struggles they were engaging in. At that moment in time, NO adherence to any Masonic Ritual and/or Precept was more important, than to live up to the Masonic Principle and Commandment of fighting to the death for the Sovereignty of the People. And, that, is exactly what our fore-brothers of "The Great American Reunion" did!

It is note-worthy to add, at this time, that according to the Bolivian Masonic Historian, Bro.: Angel Salas, the Grand Marshall of Ayacucho, Bro.: Antonio Jose De Sucre, used to discuss and plan his project of government during "Special Tiled Meetings" at the Masonic Temple of Chuquisaca. For that reason, nobody has ever dared to question the Masonic Identity of this extraordinary Cumanian.

Unfortunately, for Miranda, his detractors keep on surfacing to this very day. It seems as though they cannot forgive him for being the son of a humble Canary Islander, and for never formalizing

his relationships with the European Nobility, notwithstanding his stature, admirable culture and military merits earned in the battlefield.

As mentioned earlier, Miranda was the Intellectual Creator and Principal Founder of "The Most Worthy Lodge of Rational Knights of Lautaro". At the end of 1785, while forcibly over-staying in London, due to having a prize put on his head by the Spanish Crown, he suggested for the historic Lodge the name of "Lautaro" in homage to the Araucanian (Chilean) Leader who defeated the Spanish Conquistador Valdivia in 1554.

During the subsequent period comprehended between 1807 and 1811, a number of affiliated Lodges began their labors in the Spanish cities of Cadiz and Madrid. Among their chartered members we find the names of the following Freemasons and Notables:

Jose De Gurruchaga
Santiago Marino
Andres Bello
Luis Lopez Melendez
Simon Bolivar
Jose Maria Caro
Bernardo O'Higgins
Jose Miguel Carrera
Juan Pablo Fretes
Jose De San Martin
Tomas Guido
Jose Cortes De Madariaga
Francisco Isnardi

In 1812, the first affiliated "Lautaro Lodge" was established in American soil. This ultra secretive Masonic Lodge was instituted and headquartered in Buenos Aires (Argentina) by San Martin, Alvear and Zapiola. It had as its prime objective to struggle for the achievement of continental independence, by succeeding in the military arena, and by insuring that all like-minded politicians and patriots gave it their full backing and support. Among its founding members we find the following names:

Jose De San Martin
Carlos Maria De Alvear
Jose Matias Zapiola
Ramon Eduardo De Anchoris
Bernardo De Monteagudo
Juan Martin De Pueyrredon
Antonio Alvarez Jonte
Nicolas Rodriguez Pena
Julian Alvarez

After issuing charters to a considerable number of affiliated Lodges in almost every important South American city, the "Lautaro Masonic Lodges" expanded their original aim to creating

virtual independent governments all throughout Latin America. Given their character of "Secret Fraternal Organizations", these Lodges were able to effectively create outstanding revolutionary networks in Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and even Brasil.

On March 12, 1817, immediately after the patriotic triumph in the Battle of Chacabuco, the "Grand Masonic Lodge of Lautaro" was duly established in Santiago. Their principal founders were our Illustrious Brothers, General Jose De San Martin and Bernardo O'Higgins, whom, appears to have been the sole architect of the Mother Constitution of "The First Masonic Grand Lodge of Lautaro" with headquarters in Chile.

Aside from San Martin and O'Higgins, some of their most distinguished chartered members included:

Tomas Guido
Jose Antonio Balcarce
Jose Ignacio Zenteno
Juan Gregorio Las Heras
Ramon Freire
Manuel Blanco Encalada
Miguel Zanartu
Ramon Arriagada

Presently, there is only a handful of Masonic Bodies that claim ancestry from these unique Lodges. Some of these Self-Proclaimed Masonic-Lautarean Inheritors are:

"Lodge of Lima" in Peru.
"Lodge of Bogota" in Colombia.
"Argentinian Lodge of Tucuman" in Argentina.
"Lodge of The Andinian Army" or "Lautarean Lodge of Mendoza" in Argentina.
"Grand Orient of Brasil", founded on June 17, 1822.

HIS PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LIVES

Francisco De Miranda y Rodriguez was born under the Astrological Sign of Aries, in the city of Caracas, Venezuela, on March 28, 1750. In addition to being a Legitimate Cosmic Child of Mars, he was the primogenital of the Canary-Spanish Sebastian Miranda y Robelo and the Native Venezuelan Francisca Antonia Rodriguez y Espinoza.

From his early childhood, he received the most painstaking education. He studied at the highly reputed "Santa Rosa Academy for Men", and, from there, off he went to various Universities in Europe. In 1771, he finally went to reside in Spain to finalize his superior studies. He then enlisted in the Royal Army, where he eventually attained the rank of Infantry Commander of the Princess' Regiment. He served in North Africa demonstrating a great military talent and an admirable valor in the war against the Moors.

Being studious in nature, and having the ability to learn languages rather easily, it did not take him very long to learn to speak and write English, French and German fluently. After some

incidences, in 1780 he was sent to the Garrison of Cuba in the capacity of Adjutant to Colonel Cajigal. He rapidly excelled due to his outstanding military preparation and fondness of reading; But, Scheme and Political Envy made him fall in disgrace. He was accused for his actions in Jamaica, where it was said that he had given speeches inciting to the rebellion of the Spanish Colonies.

Full of shackles and chains, in 1782, he was sent to the jail of Havana; However, his friend, Col. Cajigal, did not take too long in securing his release. From Cuba, Miranda traveled to the United States, where thanks to his knowledge of English and his republican ideas, he cultivated a friendship with Generals Lafayette and Washington, posteriorly enlisting himself in the American Army in the war against the English.

After the Independence and Sovereignty of the United States was duly recognized by the British Empire, by virtue of the Treaty signed in 1783, shortly after his Masonic Initiation in a Lodge in Philadelphia, Miranda prepared his baggage to move to Europe.

In 1785, the presence of Miranda in London was underlined by the British Press. He was introduced as an Indefatigable Champion of Liberty; His name began to gradually acquire prestige; He eventually became a regular at the Royal Halls, and intimated with the most Brilliant Intellectuals and fellow Free-Masons of the Royal Society.

Full of Yearnings for Glory, and Ever Desirous of accumulating Experience and Knowledge, he visited Holland, Germany, Italy, Greece, France, Denmark and Poland. In the spring of 1787 he made his way to St. Petersburg, the ostentatious city of the Russian Nobility. There, he was formally introduced to Catherine II. Eventually, the gallant stance and refined manners of the Venezuelan Officer caught the attention of the All Powerful Catherine, whom, soon thereafter, fell in love with Miranda and bestowed upon him a number of adulations and needless knightly distinctions.

Miranda wore the uniform of a Czarist Officer, enjoyed the splendor of the Russian Court, and was given the rank of Colonel in the Royal Brigade of St. Petersburg; But, ever avid of new adventures and very desirous of organizing the struggle for Independence of Venezuela, he returned to London by the end of 1788. His efforts to obtain the help of the British Crown were unfruitful. Due to the Treaty of El Escorial, the English Government avoided at all cost the possibility of engaging in war with Spain.

In 1790, he just could not resist the "Call of Revolutionary Duty" in France, and, again, off he went to visit his friend Petion, whom, by 1792, was Mayor of Paris. He then joined the Revolutionary Army and was given the rank of Field Marshall. During the campaign against Germany he was able to demonstrate his great military prowess, by accomplishing a number of sensational victories for France; But, once again, persecuted by the perennial envy and scorn of his ever-emerging detractors, this time headed by General Charles Dumouriez, Miranda was disgraced in the eyes of the New Constitutional Government of France, and was thrown in jail. The plot to tarnish his reputation and discredit him as a worthy Leader and Officer of the French Revolution, was eventually discovered and brought to light; But, not without first having saved

himself from the guillotine, by sole use of his own powerful rhetoric and persuasive skills, and, of course, through interference of loyal fellow Franc-Masons.

Sometime in 1798, after almost a decade, he returned to London, and there he founded the Masonic Lodge "La Gran Reunion Americana" (The Great American Reunion), where he actually planned and devised the expedition to liberate Venezuela. It is believed that his Republican Ideals and said plans to procure the Independence of Venezuela and the rest of Latin America, were influenced by the writings of a former Jesuit Priest, the Peruvian Free-Mason Juan Pablo Vizcardo y Guzman, whom, just before dying in London, had left valuable pro-revolutionary documentation in the hands of the U.S. Ambassador whom was a very good friend of Miranda.

In the summer of 1805, he went back to the United States seeking assistance for his military expedition of 1806, which, culminated in his landing at the beach of "Vela de Coro", where, for the first time, under his direct orders, the Venezuelan flag was planted and caused to waive in its own soil.

Posteriorly, back in London, he continued to labor for the Independence of Venezuela, by gathering any and all necessary human, political and financial support for such an undertaking. On July 19, 1810, he again met his protégé Simon Bolivar, with whom he had developed a great friendship and comradeship, after "El Libertador" (The Liberator)'s Masonic Initiation in "The Most Worthy Lodge of Rational Knights of Lautaro" in Cadiz, Spain, in 1803. Invited by the young Freedom Fighter from Caracas, he decided to move back to Venezuela, and, on October 10 of that same year, he got on board the ship "Avon" on route to the port of La Guaira.

On July 5, 1811, a significant part of his emancipatory dreams became a reality, by being one of the signatories of the Declaration of Independence of Venezuela.

The consequent reaction of the Crown and its rather abundant Spanish Nationals and Venezuelan vassals, did not take very long; and so they launched one the bloodiest and most devastating counter-revolutionary attacks that the world had ever seen. Step by step, the Spanish Army, headed by one of Miranda's long time friends, military mentor and fellow Free-Mason, Brigadier General Juan Manuel Cajigal, and the Spanish Navy, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Domingo Monteverde, consolidated themselves in strategic provinces of Barquisimeto, Valencia and San Carlos, and were dangerously closing in on Caracas. They surrounded Bolivar in Puerto Cabello, and forced Miranda into capitulation on July 25, 1812. To save Caracas from a blood-bath, "The Precursor" had to accede to the demands of Monteverde, as it is so recalled by Pedro Gual.

Brother Miranda's reversal of fortune, was yet far from over; the "Conservative Wing" of the Revolutionary Movement, their "Elders" and their Orthodox Catholic Supporters/Patriots who never liked him in the first place, began plotting against him. They convinced Brother Bolivar and the other young Officers that he was a traitor, and on the eve of his departure to London, he was apprehended in La Guaira and handed over to the forces of Monteverde.

As I come to the conclusion of this short and humble essay on such a Colossal Patriot, International Revolutionary and Free-Mason, I cannot avoid feeling distinctively touched by the memory of my late father, Dr. Carlos Antonio Martinez Tijerino, who outdid himself in inculcating in me the love for History of the World and those Men and Women who made it so fascinating and unforgettable. It was my father, whom on my first visit and day of arrival to "The City of Lights" (Paris), showed me the names of all five hundred and fifty eight (558) French Generals whose names are engraved on the walls of the "Arc de Triomphe" (Arch of Triumph), and, among which one non-French name stood outä FRANCISCO DE MIRANDA. As I travel back in time to that particular moment, knowing the little more that I know now, I can picture the Father of Latin American Revolutionary Masonry full of shackles and chains being locked up in various jails. He was first taken to the dungeons in the Castle of Puerto Cabello; from there he was transported to Puerto Rico; and, finally, to the fortress of "The Four Towers of the Arsenal of La Carraca" in Cadiz, Spain. Despite having "earned" his immediate execution upon arrival to the Iberian Peninsula, his sentence was mysteriously "revised", and, instead, he was condemned to life in prison. The hero died on July 18, 1818, and, despite having been buried in a common grave, his name and memory were given proper abode in the Halls of Immortality.