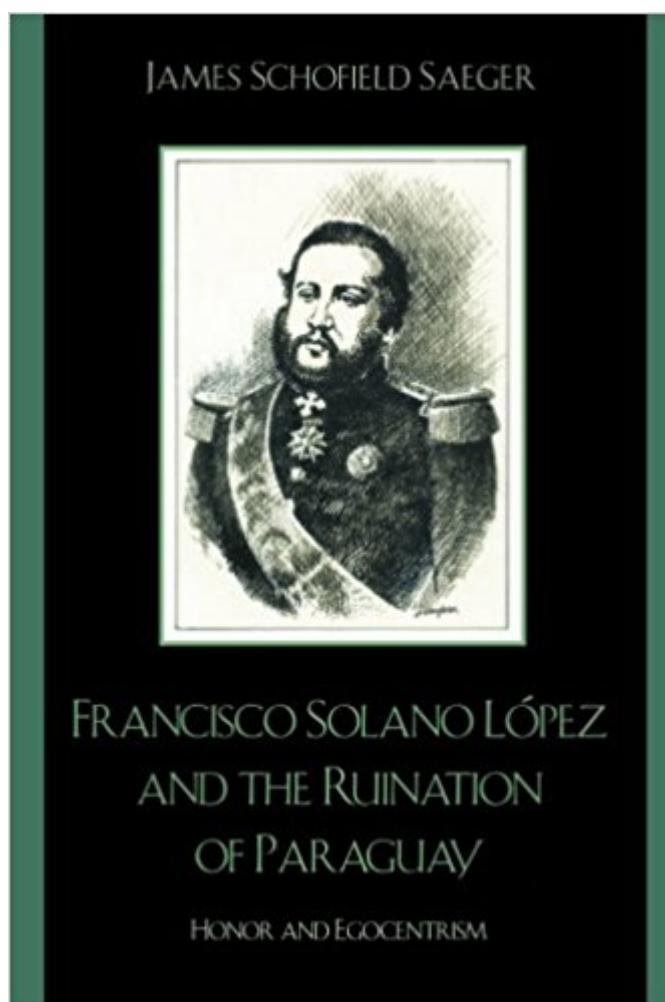


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# Francisco Solano López And The Ruination Of Paraguay: Honor And Egocentrism (Latin American Silhouettes)



## Synopsis

The first serious biography of Francisco Solano LÃ pez in English for decades, this richly researched book tells the dramatic story of Paraguay's most notorious ruler. Despite the heroic stature he gained after his death, LÃ pez was a monumentally flawed leader who made the disastrous decisions in 1864 and 1865 to invade Brazil and Argentina, initiating the most devastating interstate conflict in South American history. Drawing on a trove of primary sources, James Saeger offers a critical analysis of Paraguayan politics and LÃ pez's life and erratic rule in this meticulous study.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Saeger's text is an important contribution to a greater understanding of the creation of Paraguayan nationalism in the twentieth century. His work sheds light on one of the darkest periods in Paraguayan history while resurrecting the mindset of one of its 'heroes.' Ultimately, Saeger's work will stimulate more work on the War of the Triple Alliance and the men who led all four nations to the bloody battlefield. (The Americas: A Quarterly Review of Latin American History) This concise, well-written biography accurately reflects the author's assessment of the man who . . . has been officially exalted by Paraguayans as the nation's most admired national hero. . . .

Francisco Solano LÃ pez and the Ruination of Paraguay is a masterful portrait of a nation, an extraordinary dictator, and the evolution of a hero cult that can be debated and read with pleasure by scholars and undergraduates alike. (The Latin Americanist) Jim Saeger has penetrated the dark

heart of one of Latin America's most ruinous caudillos, Solano López, with on-site research in Paraguay and sympathetic insights. This is a unique political history, written with grace and from years of study. (Allan R. Millett, Eisenhower Center for American Studies and The Ohio State University) Saeger has provided us with a critical biography of Francisco Solano López that places the man in his times, reveals his character defects, and clarifies how the myth of the nationalistic hero emerged. (Vera Blinn Reber, Shippensburg University) Was Francisco Solano López a madman or a national hero? James Saeger answers this question forthrightly, undermining the conventional view and reviving a rational yet novel judgment of the man who dragged his Paraguayan countrymen through a misbegotten war against their far larger and more powerfully endowed neighbors with sad consequences for a population that did not deserve such punishment. Saeger has crafted a thoughtful, solidly documented biography of a deranged figure whose bizarre life is a classic example of the surreal Latin American dictator of literary notoriety. He deploys the sources carefully and fairly and provides his audience, undergraduates and general readers alike, with a compelling story of power gone awry in the pivotal middle decades of nineteenth-century Latin America. An uncompromising new assessment of a long-standing, self-deluding national mythology, this book surpasses biography. It will provoke many a classroom debate on any number of themes. Among them will be the timeless question of the dangers of a surrender of public power to irresponsible central authority and the dire national consequences of political self-delusion. (Vincent C. Peloso, Howard University) At last, an informative and well-written biography of Francisco Solano López. Saeger gives us a finely drawn picture of this national 'hero' in the context of his time and place. Bravo! (Susan M. Socolow, Emory University)

James Schofield Saeger is professor of history at Lehigh University.

James Saeger provides a critical look at one of the more brutal dictators in Latin American history and how this Caudillo changed the direction of his country. Francisco Solano Lopez was the only dictator in Latin America to succeed his father and his reign was categorized by extreme paranoia and brutality. This book also goes beyond Lopez to address a variety of issues related to life in Paraguay and explore the concept of honor and how it fits in Life in Latin America. Overall this is a very interesting look into life in Paraguay under Lopez and a great place to start for those interested in the subject.

I really wanted to like this book. Solano Lopez is such an interesting character, as bad guys so often

are. Unfortunately, Saeger doesn't add much to what is already out there. In fact, I own almost all the books he references in his volumes of footnotes (and they are all available from ). The book comes across as a fairly interesting monograph on the psyche of a dictator that was padded to book length through repetition of both assertions of Lopez's defects and factoids that were interesting the first time they came up in the text. A minor nit-pick is that there are some snarky comments about Thomas Whigham letting Lopez off easy in his book (although that doesn't prevent Saeger from citing Whigham's work frequently).

General Lopez was a megalomaniac who brought his country into war with its giant neighbors and eventually lead to the deaths of half the people in his country for which it has never really recovered. He styled himself a Napoleon of South America and decided to ally himself with a party in the civil war in Uruguay. Soon he was fighting one of the first 'modern' wars in South America against giant enemies. The Brazilian army, composed of black conscripts, threw its entire weight into the war and eventually vanquished the Paraguayan foe. Lopez had many flaws, but it was not just him that ruined his country. The enemy had something to do with it as well. He persisted and declared "I die with my country". It was almost true, for a generation or more there would be far more women in Paraguay than men. *Seth J. Frantzman*

A decent portrayal of the history of Paraguay, with emphasis on the character of Lopez; pretty well researched and easy reading.

but a slow read with much of it being redundant or repeating itself. There are better books on this period.

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