

# Francisco Solano Lopez and the Ruination of Paraguay

JAMES SCHOFIELD SAEGER



FRANCISCO SOLANO LÓPEZ  
AND THE RUINATION  
OF PARAGUAY

HONOR AND EGOCENTRISM

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The first serious biography of Francisco Solano López 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, López was a monumentally flawed leader who made the disastrous decisions in 1864 and 1865 to invade Paraguay's powerful neighbors, 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 López's personality and often-irrational persecution of enemies, adherents, and siblings. He traces López's preparation for high public office, work habits, control of his nation and army, propaganda, and execution. Concluding with an examination of López's posthumous rehabilitation, Saeger shows how the tyrant who ruined his nation became its most highly honored hero, crowning a campaign by revisionist publicists from 1870 to 1936, and a useful symbol for later authoritarians. Still largely unchallenged in Paraguay today, this glorification of a martial president is definitively put to rest in Saeger's meticulous study.

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