

Halfman

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THE BATTLE THAT CHANGED THE COURSE OF AMERICA

On 16th March 1741, the battle for Cartagena de Indias begins. ENGLAND DECLARES WAR ON SPAIN in order to gain the monopoly of trade in the Atlantic, and the fortress of Cartagena de Indias is the key to getting control of the Spanish colonies, the ultimate aspiration of the British crown. The Cartagenans fear the worst because there is a huge DISPROPORTION BETWEEN THE FORCES: 180 British warships and 30,000 soldiers against 6 Spanish ships and 3,000 soldiers. But Cartagena is very well fortified and its defence is led by an exceptional man: General Commander of the Fleet, Don Blas de Lezo.

While he prepares the defence and awaits the arrival of the POWERFUL ENGLISH FLEET, we

show who General Blas de Lezo is. Known, and feared, throughout the western world as HALFMAN, because he is one legged, one-eyed and one armed as a result of war injuries received in the many naval battles in which he has participated since adolescence, he has earned a well-deserved reputation as a BRAVE, INTREPID AND GENIUS WARRIOR.

The British fleet which is preparing to attack Cartagena is the largest ever seen up to that time. It is led by Vice admiral Edward Vernon, entrusted with the undertaking by the Parliament in London. He is backed by a powerful General Staff, the most notable of whom are General Wentworth, who is in command of the land forces, and Captain Lawrence Washington,

brother of the hero of American Independence and first President of the United States, who is leading the seasoned colonial troops from North America.

The disproportion of the armies is thirty to one as regards ships, and ten to one as regards men, in favour of the British. But the war is going to be much tougher than anyone can foresee.

On the English side, General Wentworth and Captain Washington have confrontations with the arrogant Vernon who will not accept any criticism of his decisions. On the Spanish side, Lezo has to deal with the proud Viceroy of New Granada, Don Sebastián de Eslava, who wants to direct the war himself and, in going against the opinion of his General Commander, makes serious tactical errors. While having repeated confrontations with the Viceroy, which will earn him his hostility, General Lezo skillfully directs the defence of Cartagena, making use of the numerous castles, forts and bastions which protect it (and whose restoration he had ordered). With impeccable tactical planning

and a fiendish skill for military ingenuity, he has above all a blind faith in his soldiers and in the people of Cartagena. But, also, Halfman knows how to make use of three key elements in any war: the terrain, the climate and time.

It is a matter of delaying the British landing as long as possible and preventing their entrance into the bay. Despite the enemy superiority the war is very even. But, after destroying the forts which protect the coast, the English, although reduced by the Spanish batteries and tropical diseases, finally manage to get into the bay. It seems inevitable that Cartagena will fall. Both armies stake everything on the final battle, the assault on San Felipe Castle which dominates the city from the top of San Lázaro hill.

The huge number of British assault troops have everything in their favour, but, once again, Halfman's skill at rousing his people and his tactical ingenuity turn the situation around: he manages to gain the full collaboration of the heroic people of

Plano de la Ciudad de Cartagena y sus inmediaciones.

- A. Cartagena.
- B. Castillo de San Felipe de Virajaca.
- C. Batería de Santa Cruz.
- D. Id. de San Mateo.
- E. Id. de San Juan.
- F. Id. de San Felipe.
- G. Id. de San Juan.
- H. Id. de San Juan.
- I. Castillo de San Juan.

Cartagena and, in one night, they dig a deep moat around the walls of the castle so that the ladders of the British sappers can't reach the top. With the enemy in confusion, Lezo orders a hand to hand attack with fixed bayonets. The British, disconcerted, attacked by surprise on all sides, and without the support of their artillery, flee in confusion, worsening their situation. The disaster is such that Vice admiral Vernon, in command of the remains of an army that is weakened, wounded, sick, humiliated and completely demoralized, has no option but to agree peace terms, fold sails and withdraw to Jamaica, knowing that they have suffered the worst defeat ever inflicted on the British Royal Navy in all its history. Such is the disaster that the English King George II and Prime Minister Walpole order a total censorship regarding the historic incident and forbid any publication about the battle of Cartagena which will never be mentioned in history books. In addition, they maintain and increase the honours awarded to Vice admiral Vernon in order to be coherent and not raise suspicions.

For his part, Viceroy Eslava, envious of Lezo's success and wanting to appropriate it for himself, sends a report on the war to the King of Spain, Philip V, attributing the victory to himself and accusing the general of insubordination, incompetence and cowardice. Philip V believes it, dismisses Lezo and sends for him to stand trial, but his decree arrives too late because Blas de Lezo has just died in Cartagena from his war wounds and from the epidemic that had helped him win the war.

Twenty years later, the truth of what happened at the siege of Cartagena is made known to the new king of Spain who revokes the edict, rehabilitates Lezo and grants the title of Marquis to his heirs. But justice delayed is justice denied. Blas de Lezo was buried without honours as an anonymous soldier in a grave that has never been found, and, although he is a national hero in Colombia, he is still completely unknown in Spain. It is time for justice to be done.

The battle that changed the course of America

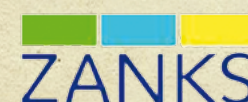
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