

**Simón Bolívar**  
**Letter to General Francisco de Miranda**  
**Caracas, July 12, 1812**

My General:

Having exhausted all my physical and emotional strength, where can I find the courage to pick up my pen and write to you now that the fortress of Puerto Cabello has fallen out of my control? Because of this action, my spirit is crushed much more than the spirit of the province itself, which has the hope of seeing its salvation and freedom reborn from the remnants we still possess. It is clear that those people are the most devoted to the country's cause, and they are the most opposed to Spain's tyranny. Despite the cowardice with which that city's residents acted in the end, I am sure that they have not stopped entertaining these same feelings. They thought that our cause was lost because our army was nowhere close to them. The enemy has gained very little from the guns we had there, since most of them were thrown into the brush by the soldiers who carried them, and the rest were most useless. In short, the enemy will hardly get two hundred rifles all together.

I trust that you will be kind enough to tell me what is to become of the officers who have accompanied me. They are very good men, and, in my view, there are none better than they in Venezuela. The loss of Colonel Jalón is irreparable. He alone equals an entire army.

General, my heart is so depressed that I do not feel I have the courage to command even one soldier. My vanity forced me to think that my desire to succeed and my burning zeal for my country would help me replace the talents I lacked as a commander. Therefore, I beg you either to place me under the orders of an officer of the lowest rank or to let me have several days to pull myself together and to regain the confidence I lost when I lost Puerto Cabello. To this I should add the condition of my health, for, after thirteen nights without sleep and in extreme distress, I find I am on the edge of a nervous breakdown. I will begin at once to write the detailed report about the acts of the troops that I commanded and the disasters that destroyed the city of Puerto Cabello in order to justify your selection of me and to clear my honor in the public's opinion of me. General, I did my duty, and, had only one soldier remained, I would have fought the enemy. But they deserted me through no fault of mine. I did everything in my power to hold them back and force them to save their country, but, alas, the country has been lost at my hands.

Simón Bolívar