



Jean-David Nau - better known as François L'Olonnais - was a French pirate who was once an indentured servant working in the Caribbean. In 1667, he planned an attack on Maracaibo (a city in today's northwestern Venezuela).

To be sure he was successful, L'Olonnais secured the use of eight pirate ships with crews numbering about 600 men. On the way to attack Maracaibo, he commandeered a Spanish treasure ship carrying (among other things) about 260,000 pieces of eight.

We learn about this escapade from Alexander Exquemelin and his pirate book, *The Buccaneers of America*:

...he [L'Olonnais] determined to go to the port of Maracaibo. Here he surprised a ship laden with plate, and other merchandises, outward bound to buy cocoa-nuts. With this prize he returned to Tortuga, where he was received with joy by the inhabitants, they congratulating his happy success, and their own private interest.

He ... designed to equip a fleet sufficient to transport five hundred men and necessaries. Thus provided, he resolved to pillage both cities, towns, and Tillages, and, finally, to take Maracaibo itself ...

[The] city of Maracaibo, very pleasant to the view, its houses being built along the shore, having delightful prospects all round: the city may contain three or four thousand persons, slaves included, all which make a town of a reasonable bigness. There are judged to be about eight hundred persons able to bear arms, all Spaniards.

Among these debates [of money ransom], a party of pirates came on shore, and carried away the images, pictures, and bells of the great church, aboard the fleet. The Spaniards who were sent to demand the sum aforesaid, returned, with orders to make some agreement, who concluded with the pirates to give for their ransom and liberty twenty thousand pieces of eight, and five hundred cows, provided that they should commit no further hostilities, but depart thence presently after payment of money and cattle.

The one and the other being delivered, the whole fleet set sail, causing great joy to the inhabitants of Maracaibo, to see themselves quit of them. But three days after they renewed their fears with admiration, seeing the pirates appear again, and reenter the port ...

L'Olonnais was known for his extraordinary cruelty. When he and his fellow pirates arrived at Maracaibo, they realized that the people had hidden their treasures, then fled. For two months, he and his men tortured the town's residents until they revealed where they'd hidden their gold.

Near the end of his life, L'Olonnais' methods were turned against him, with an even worse outcome. Running aground on a sandbar, on the coast of Darién [a province in Panama], he and his remaining men were captured by the Kuna people. Alexander Exquemelin tells us what happened next:

[The natives] tore him in pieces alive, throwing his body limb by limb into the fire and his ashes into the air; to the intent no trace nor memory might remain of such an infamous, inhuman creature.

In this image, the artist imagines how things may have looked, in Maracaibo, when L'Olonnais and his men demanded the town's residents to reveal where they had hidden their gold. The illustration appears in *Buccaneers 1620-1700* (by Angus Konstam, illustrated by Angus McBride).

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