

I have the privilege and honour today of congratulating the Republic of Venezuela and the Venezuelan people, and through them all of the peoples of Latin America, on the celebration during 1983 of the Bicentenary of the birth of Simon Bolivar -- El Libertador.

Simon Bolivar was truly an exceptional man who left an indelible mark on the political development of Latin America. As one of the major military leaders of the early nineteenth century independence movements in Latin America, he played a key role in the great victories of Boyaca and Carabobo which resulted in the independence of five nations --Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia.

Bolivar's exceptional nature was reflected, however, in more than his military career. A student of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Locke and Hobbes as well as of American and French Republicanism and the British Parliamentary system, he made a lasting contribution to Latin American political thought and to Latin American democracy. Bolivar also contributed significantly in the realm of international affairs. He was an early advocate of a Spanish-American league of states and he also wrote of the desirability of creating a world organization dedicated to peace. His inspiration in this area continues to influence developments in the Americas today.

Bolivar's life and work were dominated by a profound desire for liberty and justice for Latin America. His accomplishments in the military, political and international spheres will not be forgotten nor can they be minimized. On behalf of the Canadian Government and people, at a time when Canada's political, economic and cultural ties with Latin America have never been stronger, I wish to pay a well deserved special tribute to Simon Bolivar on the Bicentenary of his birth. Venezuela, Latin America and, indeed, all the Americas have benefited from his heritage.