

## THE MEETING OF BOLIVAR AND SAN MARTIN

**Narrator 1:** Spain controlled colonies in the Americas for 300 years but by 1810, these colonies started to fight for their independence from Spain. Each revolt was local and unrelated to the revolts in other parts of Latin America. The reason for this separation had a lot to do with the geography of Latin America which was difficult to navigate and communicate through.

**Narrator 2:** Jose de San Martin and Simon Bolivar were two of the great heroes in the fight against Spain. In 1822 they met in a secret conference in Ecuador. As we shall see, their goals were quite different.

**Bolivar:** Well, San Martin, you asked for this meeting. What can I do for you?

**San Martin:** You have your facts slightly twisted. The question is, how can we help each other?

**Bolivar:** That's not true, San Martin. I know that you are in trouble. The people of Peru are not too happy being ruled by a foreigner from Argentina. And you know very well that a strong Spanish army is waiting in the mountains to attack you.

**San Martin:** Your information is partly correct. But the Peruvians are beginning to accept me. As for the Spanish army, I'll defeat it easily. All I'd like from you, Bolivar, is a little help. I need more money for guns and supplies.

**Bolivar:** San Martin, I have very little money, I'm sorry to say. The best I can do is lend you a few hundred soldiers. I'm afraid you'll have to defeat the Spanish forces on your own. Anyway, I don't approve of the way you propose to govern Peru. How can you believe that monarchy is the best way to run a country? And you want to invite a European prince to rule on this continent. Have you lost your mind?

**San Martin:** Bolivar, the people can't or won't rule themselves. They need a king to tell them what to do.

**Bolivar:** And are you that king?

**San Martin:** Certainly not! And I'm not happy with your views of government. You ramble on about the wonders of democracy, yet you want the wealthy upper class to do your governing.

**Bolivar:** That's only temporary. Remember, we had a marvelous democratic constitution in Venezuela in 1811. It was based on the United States Constitution and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. It was a federal system. Each province was supposed to govern itself. But the average person wasn't ready for self-government.

**San Martin:** Admit it, Bolivar, you just don't trust the common people.

**Bolivar:** You're wrong. I do trust them. But in this case the people had not experience in running a country. They wasted money by paying themselves salaries for jobs they didn't perform. And they put their lazy friends in office. Then they tried to solve their money problems by printing worthless paper currency. They have a lot to learn.

**San Martin:** We all have a lot to learn. I learned that the best government for our new nations of South America is a monarchy. No, I do not want an all-powerful one like Napoleon Bonaparte's. I prefer a king whose powers are limited.

**Bolivar:** I disagree with you completely, San Martin. A federal government with equal rights for each state is a perfect choice- but not for now. What each new South American country needs at first is a well-trained army and a strong, centralized government. True democracy will come later. Now, let's stop our bickering.

**San Martin:** We seem to disagree about everything.

**Bolivar:** Perhaps. But why not look at the facts? You've conquered Chile, but your position in Peru is very shaky. I have successfully created the new nation of Great Colombia out of New Granada (Columbia). Of course, I still have to conquer Ecuador.

**San Martin:** No, Bolivar! Ecuador will be my conquest!

**Bolivar:** You are too late. I have just made Ecuador part of the territory of Great Colombia.

**Narrator 3:** In the end Bolivar was able to make Ecuador part of his larger territory called Great Colombia. In the end, Simon Bolivar had helped gain independence for Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Panama. Jose de San Martin had helped liberate Argentina, Peru, and Chile. By 1825 only Puerto Rico and Cuba were still owned by Spain.

**On a separate sheet of paper, copy and answer the following questions:**

1. Why did San Martin ask for a meeting with Bolivar?
2. How did San Martin's views of government differ from Bolivar's?
3. If you had a choice to vote for Bolivar or San Martin as your country's leader, who would you choose? Why?