

Simon bolivar essay



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South American Leader Simon Bolivar, who was the most important leader during South America's successful struggle for independence from Spain, collectively known as Bolivar's War. Together with Jose de San Martin, Bolivar is regarded as one of the Liberators of Spanish South America. Simon Bolivar's political legacy has of course been massive and he is a very important figure in South American political history. He was a great admirer of the American Revolution and a great critic of the French Revolution.

Bolivar described himself in his many letters as a " liberal" and defender of the free market economic system. Simon Bolivar, the Liberator, organized and led military forces, never numbering more than ten thousand, to free the northern portion of South America from Spanish rule in the early nineteenth century. His direct action resulted in independence for Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia. While others talked or dreamed of independence, Bolivar united and motivated a small group of followers to defeat the Spanish occupiers through surprise attacks and wise decisions in the midst of battle.

Born on July 24, 1783, to wealthy Creole parents in Caracas, Venezuela, Bolivar lived a privileged childhood despite the death of his parents before he reached his teens. His guardian saw to it that Bolivar received a sophisticated education from tutors in Caracas, followed by more schooling in Spain in 1799. At the age of nineteen, Bolivar married a woman of Spanish nobility shortly before returning home. Within a year of the couple's arrival in Venezuela, Bolivar's bride died of yellow fever. Brokenhearted, Bolivar returned to Europe and traveled extensively in Italy and France.

During this period, he engrossed himself in the study of the philosophies of Rousseau, Locke, and Voltaire while at the same time becoming captivated with the individual accomplishments of Napoleon I. On his way home to South America, Bolivar also traveled through the United States, which had recently won its independence from Great Britain. By the time Bolivar arrived back in Venezuela, he had become convinced that it was time for his country's independence from Spain and that he was destined to be the movement's leader. In 1810, Bolivar joined Francisco de Miranda in a revolt against the Spanish and quickly occupied Caracas.

After a brief third trip back to Europe to secure financial aid to continue the revolution, Bolivar participated in events leading to the July 5, 1811, declaration of Venezuelan independence. Spain, however did not give up their claim to the area and soon counterattacked and defeated Miranda. Bolivar commanded the defenses of the key port city of Puerto Cabello but lost the battle after a subordinate betrayed the rebel's plans to the attackers. Bolivar escaped capture, fleeing to New Granada (Colombia) to continue the independence movement.

In the summer of 1813 he led another force into Venezuela and by the end of the year against occupied Caracas and assumed control of the country. The following year, Bolivar successfully defeated his newly established government in several battles before a combined army of Spanish Royalists and local anti-Bolivar forces finally defeated the Liberator. Once again, Bolivar eluded capture and made his way to New Granada and then on to Jamaica. In 1815, Bolivar traveled to Haiti and made friends with the newly established government that had won its freedom from France.

Over the next four years, Bolivar attempted two invasions and numerous raids back into the northern portion of South America. While the expeditions failed, they added to Bolivar's reputation as the leader of the independence movement. In 1819, Bolivar reinforced his rebel army with English and Irish mercenary veterans of the Napoleonic Wars, paid with funds contributed by Haiti, and secured a base at Angostura, New Granada. He then led his army of less than twenty-five hundred men across a low plain and seven rain-swollen rivers to traverse the ice-covered Andes Mountains. On August 7, Bolivar surprised the Spanish defenders of Boyaca and three days later liberated Bogota.

On December 17, 1819, Bolivar proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of Colombia, consisting of New Granada and Venezuela, with himself president. Despite his claims, it took two more years of fighting before Bolivar actually freed Venezuela from Spanish rule with victory at the Battle of Carabobo on June 24, 1821. Bolivar now broadened his vision of liberation to all of South America. With help from his trusted subordinate Gen; Antonio Jose de Sucre, Bolivar freed Ecuador from the Spanish in May 1822.

He then turned to the last Spanish stronghold in northern South America and marched into Lima in September 1823. On December 9, 1824, Bolivar and Sucre, with an army of only seven thousand, defeated ten thousand Spanish troops at Ayacucho in a battle mostly fought at close quarters with sword and lance. The last Spanish resistance in northern South America ended the following year, and Peru, as well as the new country of Bolivia, formed from Peru's southeastern provinces, joined Bolivar liberated nations. Bolivar was not as successful in the role of government leader as he was in the role of a

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general leading revolutionaries. He insisted that his vision of a “ Grand Colombia” of united, liberated countries be the only one, and his harsh, autocratic rule led to internal strife that resulted in civil wars and independence movements against him. In only four years all the countries freed by Bolivar separated themselves from their liberator, and by 1828, Bolivar Sucre, whom he had groomed as a replacement, Bolivar resigned.

Before he could depart for his planned exile in Europe, he died of tuberculosis at the age of forty-seven on December 17, 1830, at Santa Marta. Bolivar’s accomplishments are remarkable, especially considering that with an army never numbering more than ten thousand, he liberated most of an entire continent, an area nearly one-half that of the United States. Often referred to as “ the George Washington of South America,” Bolivar in some ways deserves that label. However, in the end, Bolivar does not rank on the same level with Washington because the short duration of his control limited any long-term military influence he might have had and because the countries he liberated have not accomplished significant feats in the world community.

The Governments of all these countries remain tenuous at best, but they are still free – a direct achievement of Bolivar. With all Bolivar’s achievements it is obvious that he was a great leader. He manage to gain the independence of a very large area in South America. We can say that Bolivar is considered mostly a Transactional leader, but in times a Transformational Leader depending on the situation and needs. Since he freed different countries, it was obvious that he had the ability to adapt to different scenarios as well and implement different types of leadership as he needed. Sometimes he

would be a transactional leader by paying war veterans to join him in battle, and sometimes he would turn into a transformational leader to recruit people to inspire them and free their own land.