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**John F. Kennedy**

*Address at the La Morita Resettlement*

delivered 16 December 1961, Caracas, Venezuela



[AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio]

President Betancourt, Governor, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I want to express to you our warm appreciation and thanks for the generous welcome which you have given to Mrs. Kennedy and myself, and I know that in welcoming us you extend the hand of friendship to the people of my country who are so vitally interested and concerned with the common destiny of our hemisphere -- and for this we both thank you.



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Tomorrow is the 131st anniversary of the birth of the great liberator of this country, who not only had the satisfaction and pride in liberating this country but also, in a feat almost unprecedented in history, provided for the freedom and liberation of five countries<sup>1</sup> -- and I refer of course to Simon Bolivar.

I come here today in a tradition originated by him who saw and predicted that someday this hemisphere would be bound together by the closest of fraternal ties, and I come in the footsteps of a distinguished predecessor, Franklin Roosevelt, who in his own time and generation attempted to bring to fruition the work which Simon Bolivar had so well begun.<sup>2</sup>

We today share the realization which President Roosevelt expressed in 1944 when he said that "true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence."<sup>3</sup>

With a system of national independence originated over a hundred years ago, with a policy of friendship and good neighborliness which was developed in the Administration of President Roosevelt, now today in 1961, it is our obligation to move ahead and to bring to fruition the concept that along with national independence and individual liberty goes the well being of the people themselves.

We do not merely talk of slogans, of democracy and freedom, it is our function here in this hemisphere in 1961 to make it possible for all the people not only to be free but to have a home, and educate their children, and have a job for themselves and their security -- and that is what we're determined to do.



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Economic security, the bringing of a better life to all of our people must now be, in the 1960s, the principal object and goal of the Inter-American system. And what is happening here today at La Morita, in pursuit of that goal, symbolizes the gigantic new steps that are now being taken.

From this day forward, the Inter-American system represents not merely the unity of the governments that are involved, but the unity of peoples; not only a common goal of political alignment, but a common vow by all of our governments and all of our people to improve man's economic, social, and political well being -- not just an alliance for the protection of our countries, but an alliance of progress for our people. We will be, in the 1960s, more than good neighbors. We will be partners in building a better life for our people.

And here in Ven[e]zuela the meaning of the new *Alianza Para El Progreso* [Alliance for Progress] is being demonstrated, for you have made a tradition and transition from a repressive dictatorship into a free life for the people of this country to progressive, democratic rule under one of the great democratic statesman of the Western Hemisphere, your distinguished president Romulo Betancourt. And one of the first goals of the new spirit of this hemisphere must be the elimination of tyranny from the north to the south, until this is a hemisphere, as Simon Bolivar once predicted, of free men in free countries, living under a system of liberty.

Mr. President, the achievement of these two freedoms, freedom from dictatorship and freedom from the bonds of economic and social injustice, must be the contribution of our generation in this decade.



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It is in pursuit of these goals that I have come with you to La Morita. It is a long way from the noisy streets of Washington, D.C., to this field -- but is in this field and in fields and cities across our hemisphere that this battle must be fought -- not in speeches by Presidents, or exchanges of diplomats, or studies by experts -- though all those are important; but the work must be done here -- here today -- and tomorrow -- all through this hemisphere, until our people live the kind of life, Mr. President, for which you have dedicated your life and to which the people of my country are committed.

Today, 86 families will receive titles to their own homes under a program which is already settled -- 38,000 families on 3,800,000 acres of land. This is your program, the program of your progressive, far-seeing government, and the people of my country will share in this program by making available more loans to build rural homes and more credits to finance your crops.

This program is at the heart of the *Alianza Para El Progreso*, for no real progress is possible unless the benefits of increased prosperity are shared by the people themselves.

I do not hold the view, which some now preach, that the only way we can make economic progress is through dictatorship. I believe the reverse. I believe the experiences of Eastern Europe, the Wall in Berlin, the famine in China, the hardships in our own hemisphere, show that liberty and economic progress go hand in hand, providing the people and the government together are committed to progress for the people.



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Ladies and gentlemen, I shall return to Washington on Monday and tell the people of my country that you and they are bound together in one of the great adventures of human experience, to make of our hemisphere a bright and shining light for all the world.

The United States and Ven[e]zuela are bound together. And in the 1960s, I believe that we can demonstrate so that all the world will want to follow our example -- that freedom and prosperity can move hand in hand.

And I am proud today to stand on this platform with your distinguished President, who has been working in this field for so many years, and who now is showing the people of this country and hemisphere what real progress for the people can mean.

I express our thanks to you, and I can tell you that the people of my country - in good times and bad -- are committed to the progress of your people and this hemisphere.

Thank you very much.

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<sup>1</sup> Bolivar is credited for liberating from Spanish rule the five present day South American countries of Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru. A sixth, Panama (Central America), is also, generally, included in this list. [Sources: encyclopedia.com; wikipedia.org; britannica.com]

<sup>2</sup> A reference to Roosevelt's "Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs" whose inclination toward a "new Pan Americanism" -- transnational economic cooperation and political (democratic) solidarity with America's "sister Republics" on the South American continent -- found inspiration from and common ground with the ideals of Bolivar's "old" Pan Americanism. [Source: <https://www.americanforeignrelations.com/O-W/Pan-Americanism-Pan-americanism-to-1850.html>]

<sup>3</sup> Fireside Chat 28 - On the State of the Union (Economic Bill of Rights)