

From Russia with love



AT a time when the Iron Curtain is said to be descending once again, it was in a spirit of great friendship and mutual admiration that a party of Russians, headed up by Alexander Lediyayev, rector of St Petersburg's University of Roads and Communications, flew into Tenerife to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Agustín de Betancourt in Puerto de la Cruz 250 years ago.

Their visit centred on Betancourt's hometown where they were received by the regional president, Paulino Rivero, and the Puerto corporation, led by the mayor, Lola Pardón.

Alexander Lediyayev paid homage to Betancourt, thanking Spain, the Canary Islands and above all Puerto de la Cruz for the historic contribution made by the town's most illustrious son.

"It is thanks to him that Russia became familiar with modern engineering and could apply it to its

progress," he said.

During the visit the rector revealed that the Russians have named a star after Agustín de Betancourt. The news caused a proud stir among the gathered assembly.

Later on the party decamped to the historic centre of town to unveil the recently restored bust of Betancourt which stands in the public square outside the *Nuestra Señora de la Peña de Francia* church where a floral tribute was laid.

From there it is just a few paces to the great man's birthplace, though the site is now occupied by the Hotel Monopol (below).

