



Shadow Over the Summit

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The Senate Foreign Relations Committee's refusal to pledge concrete foreign aid support to LBJ in advance of the Latin American Summit Conference couldn't have come at a worse time.

It will hurt the President's ability to accomplish important goals at Punta del Este, and it will hurt the U.S. itself.

What Latin Americans will not know about the Johnson defeat is that one month ago he went to great pains to summon 40 Senators and Congressmen of both political parties to the White House to make plans for the Summit Conference. They spent two hours together, and in the end it was unanimously agreed that the President should ask Congress for a resolution of approval for foreign aid.

"I don't need to have a resolution," he said. "I've got the executive power to go ahead without it. But if you think it's a good idea, we'll do it that way."

Sen. Fulbright (D-Ark.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was not present, however. He had been invited, but went to Arkansas instead.

When he got back he dragged his feet. At one closed-door session just before LBJ was about to take all the Latin American ambassadors to his Texas ranch for the weekend, Fulbright grouched: "I'm not going to pass a resolution to have it passed around at a barbecue."

Also what the Latins won't know is that several Senators, including Fulbright and Frank Church (D-Idaho), are up for reelection next year and appear extremely anxious not to be identified too closely with the President. Arkansas is anti-Johnson on the school integration issue, and Idaho has become conservative isolationist. So these two Senators run away from the President on every possible vote.

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Right now the North American image in South America is not good—regardless of the Senate. It is hurt by the charges of Jim Garrison in New Orleans that a conspiracy existed to assassinate President Kennedy.

All up and down the west coast of South America I found the suspicion prevalent that it was Vice President Johnson who lured John F. Kennedy to Texas and had him killed. The Garrison investigation has helped encourage this shocking canard.

Chief Justice Earl Warren did his best to dispel this suspicion and succeeded with many people. In every country the Chief Justice held long and painstaking interviews, answering press and TV questions regarding the Warren report.

The Senate committee's snub also came at a time when the Colombian Chamber of Deputies and Bogota's right-wing press were blasting Johnson for trying to force birth control on Colombian families. One Colombian deputy publicly called the President a "cow hand." It mattered not that the Colombian government had officially requested birth control information from the U.S. government.

Lyndon got the blame anyway.

He also got part of the blame for the low price of coffee, sugar, bananas and cocoa.

Finally, the U.S. got the blame for the fact that the International Monetary Fund declined a Colombian request for a loan of \$60,000,000 to stabilize its currency. The veto caused President Lleras to go on TV and appeal to all Colombians to curtail imports (chiefly American cars) and bring their savings out of their socks to bolster the peso. The U.S. does not control the International Monetary Fund.

On top of all this came the Senate rebuff to President Johnson. It looked like a hemisphere-wide conspiracy. "It looks as if I won't be able to do much at the meeting except sit and listen," he remarked to his staff.

Nevertheless, the two most important economic goals at the Summit Conference must be: a common market for South America, and price stabilization for the basic Latin American products.

If President Johnson, even without doing much talking, can make a start toward these two goals, his trip to South America will have paid handsome dividends for economic stability and peace.