

S. America Believes JFK Plot

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By THOMAS B. ROSS

Washington (CDN)—A central, though scarcely whispered, problem for the U. S. in Latin America is that a big segment of opinion—perhaps a majority—believes John F. Kennedy was killed in a conspiracy.

Shocking as the idea may be, a surprisingly large number, even among the best informed and most influential, are also prepared to believe that President Johnson was involved.

During a one-month tour of six South American countries, this reporter had an opportunity to talk with hundreds of Latins, from president to bootblacks.

They outlined in the most graphic terms the enormity of

the economic, social and political problems confronting Latin America. But nothing they said was so disturbing as their views on the Kennedy assassination.

Their theories seemed endless in number, but nearly all involved a disbelief in the judgment of the Warren Commission that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone.

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Most reflected a conviction that Kennedy's death resulted from a domestic conspiracy of the right and not an international conspiracy of the left.

An astonishingly large number theorized that the assassination was the work of influen-

tial Texans and that Johnson could not have been unaware of it.

Few of the theorists exhibited any realistic grasp of life and politics in the U. S. Most of their views flowed from prevailing anti-U. S. stereotypes:

That the U. S. is a nation of violence in which hired gunmen abound.

That Texas is a particularly violent and evil place that "stole" Latin American soil from Mexico in the 19th century.

That President Kennedy, as a Roman Catholic, was the object of widespread religious hatred in a predominantly Protestant nation.

Probably more than any other people—including those in the U. S.—Latins revere the memory of the late President. They consider him one of their own, not only because he shared their religion but also because they judged him to have true "machismo"—that elusive combination of virility, style and charm that is honored as the highest of the Latin virtues.

Supplementing the stereotypes in the assassination theories is the fact that in Latin America most leaders are ousted from office as the result of conspiracies.