

President Is Pleased Press Has Its Doubts About Punta Talks

By ROBERT ROTH
Of The Bulletin Staff

San Antonio, Tex. — President Johnson got a great personal lift from the summit conference at Punta del Este.

It gave him an opportunity to do what he likes best and does best — talk out problems face to face and reach compromise adjustments of difficult situations.

At the Uruguayan summit meeting the President played the role of spectator most of the time, but he dominated the conference nonetheless.



Mr. Johnson

He was the focus of everything that happened and this was recognized by every one of the 20 Latin American presidents — or the representatives — who conferred with him.

Each of them had the benefit of a personal meeting with President Johnson, a meeting which usually ended with Mr. Johnson and his Latin American counterpart holding a joint arms-around-the-shoulder press conference on the lawn of the villa which was used as a temporary White House.

It provided an opportunity for each president to say something nice about the other and to indicate a sympathy of each others problems.

Ecuador President Protests

All the Latin American chiefs of state with one exception, gave every evidence of enjoying the opportunity to confer with Mr. Johnson and many of them took every public opportunity afforded them to express their satisfaction with past favors of the United States and their willingness to do all they can to merit further favorable consideration.

The exception was Otto Arosemana, president of Ecuador, who had some harsh things to say about the failure of the United States to support his country in the style to which it would like to become accustomed.

The other Latin American presidents quickly rebutted and disavowed Arosemana, but it may be that he came closer than anyone else at the conference to saying what is in the mind of the average Latin American.

Ordinary people did not attend the conference nor were they allowed anywhere near it. But their newspapers were and it is to be assumed that their newspapers reflected their views.

Press Gives Different View

Indeed, if President Johnson had read what was being said in news stories and editorials of the Latin American press while he was at Punta del Este, he might have returned to his Texas ranch near here much less satisfied than his aides reported him to be with the accomplishments.

With a few notable exceptions, the press of Latin America downgraded the summit sessions as an exercise in futility and a new demonstration of United States indifference to Latin American needs.

In Buenos Aires the conservative La Prensa observed that "There was a lack of concrete new subject matter," and the equally conservative La Nacion commented that "The development of Latin America depends on the self-interest of the United States rather than its good will."

The leftist El Mundo said that

"Latin America wants concrete solutions not promises."

'Yankee Blackmail' Charged

In Caracas the conservative El Universal spoke of U. S. preoccupation with Vietnam.

In Santiago the Communist press described the conference as an exercise in "Yankee blackmail."

The headlines in the leftist La Prensa of Mexico City, reporting the President's opening statement to the conference, said: "Johnson's Vague Promises—Statement Not Very Concrete." In Rio the liberal newspaper, Journal do Brasil, observed that the conference produced "signs of divergencies, of hesitation and of immobility which cause hesitation."

Added all together these comments reflected the traditional Latin American suspicion of North American sincerity and purpose.

By No Means a Failure

But this by no means shows that the conference was a failure. It brought the presidents of the hemisphere together—in itself no small achievement—and it brought into the open problems and emotions long suppressed.

It may turn out to be nothing but talk. It may also turn out to be the start of something bigger and better than anyone dared to predict a short while ago.

If it does, the credit will belong to the man without whom the conference would never have been held—Lyndon B. Johnson.

By WILLIAM L. RYAN
Associated Press Writer

Punta del Este, Uruguay—President Johnson and his aides, helped by a few allies, are struggling mightily to give the inter-American "summit" conference a look of success.

If a show of inter-American unity was the real objective of this highly-publicized and tightly secure "summit," it is falling short of the mark. If a show of confidence in the prospects for inter-American cooperation was intended, the target is still there.

The "summit" has had the effect of underlining divisions in an atmosphere here of every man for himself and every region for itself. This can have an abrasive effect on any notions North Americans might have had that Latin America could be dealt with as a unit.

Disagreement Is Mutual

The fact of the matter is that the United States cannot deliver to Latin American leaders all they want, and the Latin American leaders cannot or will not deliver to the United States what Uncle wants.

Clashes of interests among the Latin American countries divide them according to levels of internal development and according to regions.

There is a wry irony about what went on here. Some of the men gathered here represented countries whence the outcry has been loudest against "imperialism" and "colonialism." Yet some of these same men want the United States to give their nations' exports preferential treatment, on the model of the once-colonial powers of Europe and their trade relations with former colonies.

They want even more: U. S. loans, with the use of the dollars unrestricted—so they do not have to spend them in the United States, regardless of Washington's balance of payments problems.

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