

Nixon's Trip: Symbolic Journey

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Special to The New York Times

ROME, Sept. 27—The White House describes it as a symbolic journey, so President Nixon's foray into the Mediterranean area began with a helicopter ride from a secluded military airport to a barricaded Government palace.

The official spokesmen were not precise about how they wished to have the symbols of this trip translated. But as Mr. Nixon said from private life when President Johnson tried this sort of thing during the Congressional elections of 1966, some people are asking whether this is a quest for peace or a quest for votes.

The symbols suggest that this trip is both.

What began in Italy tonight will end a week from tomorrow in Ireland. In happier times, as one Nixon aide remarked, Israel would have been included to complete the traditional great ethnic route of American politicians. Having just conferred in Washington with Premier Golda Meir, Mr. Nixon appears undisturbed by the omission, a concession to security and the policy of even-handedness toward Israelis and certain Arabs in the Middle East.

John A. Volpe, the Secretary of Transportation and the President's special ambassador to 20-odd million Americans of Italian ancestry is leading the way in Italy. He will drop out of the party after Rome to discuss airplane hijacking elsewhere in Europe.

Daniel P. Moynihan, Mr. Nixon's counselor and most

Italian-Irish Route Is Seen as a Search for Votes at Home

conspicuous aide of Irish ancestry, will ride the whole circuit, as will the Secretary of State, William P. Rogers, and other officials.

Melvin R. Laird, the Secretary of Defense, will leave Mr. Nixon after Rome for his own symbolic journey to soothe ruffled diplomatic feathers in Greece and Turkey, which are also missing from the itinerary.

Meeting With the Pope

Mr. Nixon, meanwhile, will call on Pope Paul VI and then spend a night and a day aboard vessels of the Sixth Fleet, whose patrol of the Mediterranean, symbolic and otherwise, the President wishes to reinforce.

The President's schedule calls for five hours of formal meetings with American and allied naval commanders, by far the most intensive conversations of the week. In Ireland, he will spend three more hours conferring with Americans—the members of the Vietnam negotiating team from Paris.

Apart from dinner and motorcade conversations, Mr. Nixon's foreign hosts will have much less time to talk to him—two hours for the Italian leaders, one hour for the Pope, three hours for President Tito of Yugoslavia and a little more than an hour for Generalissimo Francisco Franco of Spain, including translation time. Prime Minister Heath of Britain will

talk to the President for an hour before lunch.

These discussions are always fairly loose, the trip's principal briefing officer said when asked for the agenda of Mr. Nixon's diplomacy this week.

Since Yugoslavia and Spain were promised visits the next time the President was in the neighborhood and since Italy is the logical base for a visit to the sixth fleet, something other than pressing bilateral business is conceded to have inspired the journey.

Concern About Security

The authoritarian environs of the Sixth Fleet, Belgrade and Madrid promise relatively safety to the President, but concern about security as well as Rome's traffic jams made a Marine Corp helicopter the President's primary conveyance here. Riot troops patrolled Rome and sealed off the American Embassy while ultraleftist bands ranged through the city.

As Lyndon B. Johnson learned on his travels, even these minor threats impose an annoying routine and further symbolism on White House travel.

The Johnson journey, whose motives Mr. Nixon questioned four years ago, was to Asia and South Vietnam. It was to have been followed by a more overt campaign tour around the United States, but Mr. Johnson canceled it at the last moment. The Democratic party lost more than 40 seats in the House of Representatives that year.

Mr. Nixon obviously believes that he can do better.



ANTI-ADMINISTRATION: Demonstrators in Rome Saturday displaying anti-Nixon banners and signs. One substitutes a swastika for x in Nixon. Sign, right, says, Nixon, NATO, war.

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