

TV Views

Traveling With the President

By Frank S. Swertlow
United Press

Hollywood

PRESIDENT NIXON'S trip to the Middle East is looking more and more like a picture layout in Life magazine, according to Dan Rather of CBS News. There are lots of photographs, but little comment.



Dan Rather

newsmen who followed President Nixon on his trip to the Middle East.

Although the White House has said the trip is an important followup to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's successes with the Arabs and Jews, some critics believe it was designed to cool the Watergate controversy at home.

Rather, however, is not so cynical.

"One reason, of course, is to allay the tension of Watergate politics. But if you lay this aside, the trip is important for world peace."

★ ★ ★

DESPITE the photographs and the banner headlines at home, many newsmen on the trip were anxious to learn the effect Watergate is having on the President.

"No one on the White House staff has said a word about Watergate. It seems to be the forbidden word."

Rather began this trip last week with the President's flight to Austria. He has since jumped to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Israel.

During this leapfrog tour of the Middle East, Rather said the President looked tired during his stay in Cairo and Saudi Arabia.

"However, in Damascus and Jerusalem, he seemed to have caught his second wind and appeared more rested."

★ ★ ★

ALTHOUGH the President dominated the trip, Kissinger's announcement last week that he might resign has been the topic of many conversations with Arab and Israeli officials.

"In every country you visit, every government official, whether high or low, asks what this Kissinger business is all about."

During Kissinger's first few days in the Middle East following the extraordinary announcement, Rather said he noticed a considerable change in the Secretary's relations with the press corps.

"It's very rare to see him in a bad mood in public. But when we were in Egypt he was sour and gloomy and didn't have anything to say and when he did say something he was surly."

★ ★ ★

RATHER SAID that one of the problems that he and the other television reporters faced on this trip was the lack of sophisticated communications equipment in the Arab world.

"Telephone communications out of Cairo were minimal and we had a lot of trouble getting out audio and TV broadcasts. We finally got them after a lot of long, arduous work.

"One big thing was lack of a mobile ground station in Egypt by which we could send back live broadcasts via satellite.

"The Egyptians, to say the least, were not really anxious to have it there, but the White House prevailed. However, for a few days it was touch and go."

Rather said that communications were more primitive in Syria and Saudi Arabia and CBS had its film flown to Japan for transmission to the United States. He said there were no problems in Israel.

Terrence O'Flaherty is on vacation