

WASHINGTON

Merry-Go-Round

by Jack Anderson



WASHINGTON — Secret intelligence reports claim that the shah of Iran and King Hussein of Jordan are working together to bring peace to the Middle East. The two leaders reportedly have been in close touch since Hussein's recent stay at the shah's summer palace on the Caspian Sea.

They have agreed, according to the Central Intelligence Agency, upon a secret plan for settling the Middle East crisis. Both the shah and the king have good relations with the United States. They hope to use their influence with Washington to get a message to Israel.

The message is this: King Hussein is ready to sign a peace agreement with Israel, which could break the Arab-Israeli deadlock. But the Israelis must give Hussein enough concessions to make peace possible. Without some reasonable concessions, Hussein argues, he could not sign a pact with Israel. He would be repudiated by his own people if he did. But favorable peace terms, Hussein contends, would persuade the Arabs that they can deal with Israel.

The CIA predicts that the shah will take the secret plan to Washington this month to push on President Nixon. The least the President must demand, the shah will say, is that Israel return some of Jordan's rights in East Jerusalem.

The shah will have a big ace up his sleeve. The critical gasoline shortage has left the United States dependent, as never before, on the oil-rich Arab countries.

NIXON UNMOVED: Friends who have been in touch with President Nixon since his illness believe the

Watergate strain helped to send him to the hospital. But they report he has not been budged by the damning testimony before the Senate.

The President still insists to his friends that he didn't know about the Watergate coverup until he began his own investigation in mid-March. He also swears he has not been coordinating his Watergate strategy with his two former trusted aides, Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman.

The President's greatest

concern, he tells friends gravely, is that Watergate is diverting him from the real priorities of the presidency. He depicts the world at a diplomatic crossroads, which could determine whether there will be peace or war in the decade ahead. The nation is also torn by economic strains, which could determine whether there will be prosperity or depression.

These tremendous problems, stresses the President, require his full attention. He has been able, he says, to keep the Watergate charges on the back burner and give first priority to developing peace and prosperity. But the public clamor for him to speak out on Watergate, he complains, is beginning to distract him from his duties.

It's President Nixon's style to concentrate deeply upon a problem before he makes a move. He cannot, therefore, engage in daily Watergate maneuvers without devoting more time to the problem than he thinks is justified.

SELLING 'NEW ARMY': The Pentagon is trying desperately to sell young Americans on the "new army." Advertisements promise that the new army has "equipment you can't wait to get your hands on." Magazine stories are laced with pictures of GIs sipping beer in private rooms decorated with fluorescent posters.

Reports from GIs all over the world, however, indicate the new army hasn't changed its old practices. Here are some examples:

• At a top-secret Army base near Woodbridge, Va., GIs were pressed into service as bush beaters to drive deer

out of the woods for the brass hats who liked to hunt.

• At Fort Lee, Va., dozens of officers and men were assigned by their commanding officer to be boy scout counselors for the summer.

• At Fort Belvoir, Va., soldiers complained that brewing coffee each morning for their commanders was demeaning. The general in charge immediately initiated the great coffee inquiry. Meetings were held and memos were written. Questionnaires went out to post personnel asking whether they objected to making coffee for others.

When my reporter inquired, he was given the solemn explanation that the general believes "in getting to the bottom of things — even if that means coffee pots."

FUEL FOR THOUGHT: Fuel experts and the Department of Transportation have concluded that the only way to prevent a continuing gasoline shortage is for the United States to switch over from large to small cars.

A five percent gas shortage is expected this summer. The experts expect it to get worse next summer. By 1975, it should reach the crisis stage.

President Nixon has suggested that motorists hold down their speed and that commuters form car pools. If half the motorists in the country held their highway speed below 50 miles an hour, it would reduce gasoline consumption less than three percent. If half of all commuters pooled their automobiles, the fuel savings would be less than three percent.