

Reporter's Notebook: A Kissinger Seminar

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As Secretary of State Kissinger's Air Force jet headed home Saturday night from Geneva on the last leg of his 15-day trip to 13 countries, the newsmen aboard were invited to his cabin up front for a farewell glass of champagne.

Mr. Kissinger greeted them with a smile, but the reporters noticed that his eyes were reddish and his voice was hoarse, and that he was constantly having to blow his nose. The Secretary of State had caught a cold the day before, and he looked as fatigued as most of the newsmen felt.

But instead of a final toast and some much-needed sleep, Mr. Kissinger turned to one of those present and asked: "How do you think the trip went?" That started an hour-long give-and-take that ended only when one of Mr. Kissinger's aides insisted that he ought to turn in.

When the newsmen returned to their seats in the rear of the plane they seemed to agree that Mr. Kissinger was human after all. He was clearly tired, but wanted to make sure that the reporters had the right message before he went to sleep.

The "message" on this trip was that everything had gone as well as Mr. Kissinger hoped: Relations with European allies had improved, and the Arab-Israeli peace talks had begun with a minimum of invective and a reasonable hope for progress in coming weeks.

It was hard to dispute Mr. Kissinger's interpretation because he had jealously guarded the details of his negotiations. Almost all the information provided to the press was dispensed by Mr. Kissinger personally, only occasionally by George S. Vest, the State Department's new spokesman.

Because of what the Secretary called the delicacy of the talks, he was reluctant to give a detailed rundown either for direct quotation or even as "background." Reporters still have only a general idea of what transpired at the crucial talks with President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt, President Hafez al-Assad of Syria and with the Israeli Cabinet.

But Mr. Kissinger was more than willing to discuss the philosophy of his approach to negotiations, a field in which he clearly does not regard himself as a neophyte. One newsman called such discussions with the press "Kissinger 242: A flying seminar in American Middle East diplomacy."

"In negotiations," he said one day, "if you put down specific proposals before you know where you're going, it is almost suicidal."

He warned newsmen that they should not expect him to say one thing to Arabs and another to Israelis. "Eventually, the two sides will get together and compare notes. If they find out they've each been told different things, you're dead."

During one session with reporters, Mr. Kissinger was asked the American position on oil embargoes. "You may not believe it, but what I say in private is not very different from what I have said in

public." Some laughter, in disbelief, followed.

Wherever the Kissinger party went, local officials and newsmen wanted to know whether President Nixon would probably not be forced out. He also wanted it known that Mr. Nixon was still running foreign policy despite his own seeming independence in that field.

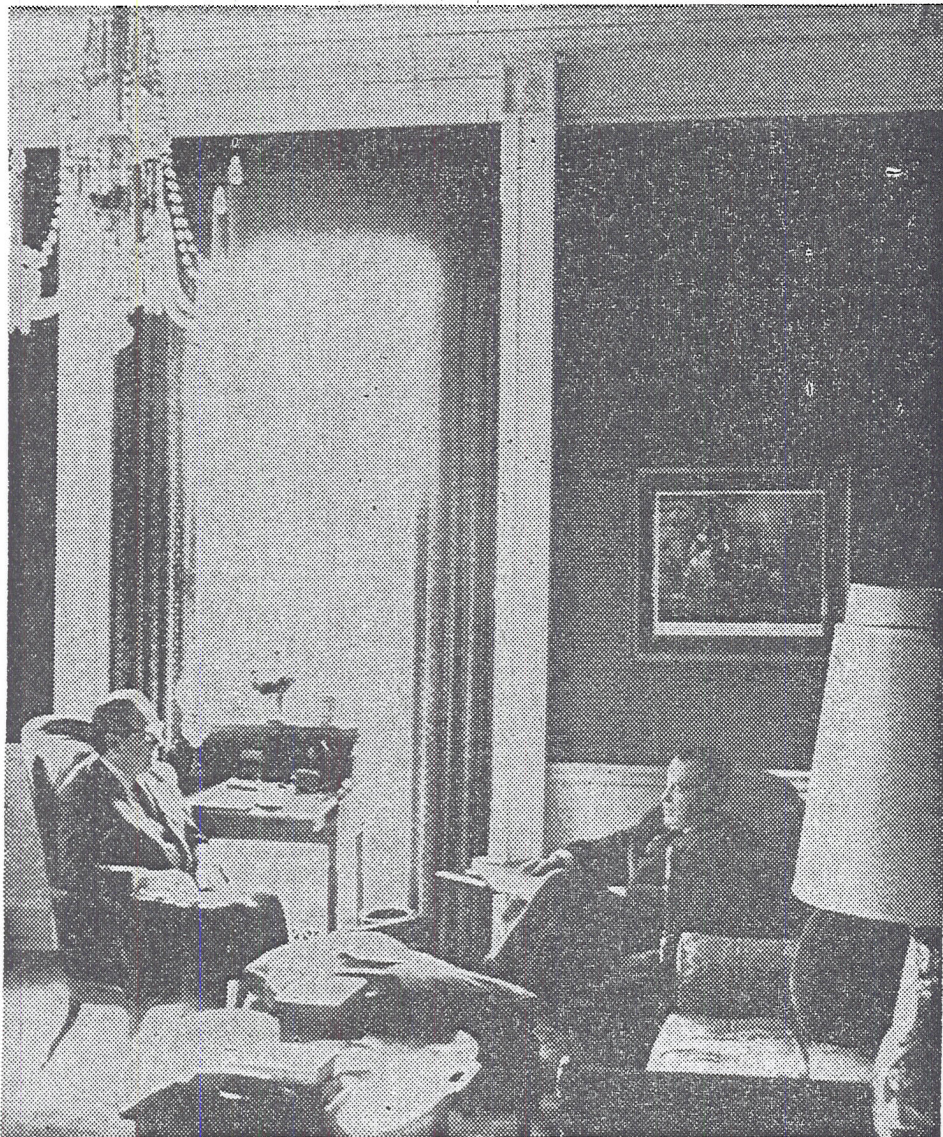
Every night on the trip, Mr. Kissinger sent back a 10-page memo to Mr. Nixon on what he had done during the day. And without fail, he received a reply from Mr. Nixon of two to three pages in the morning giving him instructions or advice.

Mr. Kissinger has his personal likes and dislikes about the people he must meet during these trips. When newsmen complained about the grueling pace of the journey, he replied, "But at least you don't have to sit through the talks."

His favorite leader seemed to be King Hussein of Jordan, the most pro-Western and colorful of the Arabs, who surprised Mr. Kissinger by hovering his helicopter over the Amman airport just as the Secretary was about to depart and waving goodbye to him. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, the most conservative of the Arab leaders, was described by Mr. Kissinger as "quite a savvy guy." He admires the Israeli leaders for their toughness, but it is clear that he finds it more difficult negotiating with leaders of democracies than of autocracies.

A special place on Mr. Kissinger's list is held by Le Duc Tho, the North Vietnamese Politburo member, whom Mr. Kissinger saw in Paris Thursday to talk about the shaky Vietnam cease-fire they negotiated over a four-year period. Mr. Kissinger sometimes expresses very caustic views of the Vietnamese, but he seems to enjoy seeing Mr. Tho, whom he calls "Ducky" in private.

"When we get together it's



White House Photograph via United Press International

President Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger meeting yesterday in the Lincoln Sitting Room of the White House. They conferred for an hour.

like an old, war veterans' reunion." Mr. Kissinger said. "We talk about how we overcame the crisis in the negotiations together."

One can only wonder what "Ducky" calls Mr. Kissinger in the privacy of the Politburo. Mr. Kissinger for years has been known around Washington as "Henry," but now some aides call him "H.A.K.," the way he is referred to in State Department cables. A growing number of people now simply address him as "Mr. Secretary."

On Mr. Kissinger's latest previous trip to the Middle East, in November, newsmen paid particular attention to how the Arab leaders reacted visiting the hilltop site alone,

without the press along to his being Jewish.

On this trip, the reporters were curious what effect Mr. Kissinger's background had on his visit to Israel. In both cases, the impact seemed negligible. Mr. Kissinger has stressed that he views himself as an American Secretary of State and whatever he may think of his religious background, he keeps it very personal.

Mr. Kissinger's only departure from this policy occurred last Monday morning as his entourage was preparing to leave Jerusalem. He asked to visit the Yad Vashem memorial to the Jews who died in Nazi extermination camps during World War II. But he insisted on

When he met newsmen later he refused to discuss his emotions at the memorial. Twelve members of his family were killed in the war.

While Mr. Kissinger was traveling, reports appeared in the American Press of an impending marriage to a long-time escort, Nancy Maginnes. At first he made light of the reports, but when they continued he authorized Mr. Vest to deny them. Finally, an exasperated Mr. Kissinger told reporters he was so busy that if he married anyone, it would be Joseph J. Sisco, his top Middle East expert, with whom he was spending most of his evening hours.

Security on this trip was exceptionally heavy. Mr. Kissinger's Secret Service agents often drove behind his car with submachine guns sticking out the windows. They feared an assassination attempt somewhere along the line. The murder of the Spanish Premier, Adm. Luis Carrero Blanco, on Thursday — just 24 hours after Mr. Kissinger had talked with him in Madrid — came as a shock to the security men, who seemed to worry even more.

When Mr. Kissinger was delayed for six hours in Damascus as the result of his talks with General Assad, some agents even began to worry about a kidnapping attempt. It was not until the Air Force jet began to near Washington that the agents seemed to relax.

But Mr. Kissinger does not like to appear nervous about his safety and tends — at least in talks with newsmen — to make light of his own tight security. As his plane was heading toward Andrews Air Force Base, Mr. Kissinger looked at the security men standing nearby and said jokingly, "I'll probably get knocked off on the way in from Andrews."