

Reporter's Notebook: Mood Music for Kissinger

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

Special to The New York Times

BONN, March 3 — As the Jordanian Arab Army Band marched past Secretary of State Kissinger before his departure from Amman this afternoon, a member of the Kissinger party shook his head and said: "It's crazy, isn't it? An Arab king honoring a Jewish-American official, with his British-style band playing its Scottish bagpipes to a desert background."

The newsmen next to him added: "And to complete the day, in a few hours, Kissinger will be greeted and honored by the country which he fled from 26 years ago."

Ironies seem to abound in Mr. Kissinger's trips. Newsmen have been struck, for instance, by the warmth that Arab leaders have shown for the United States in general and Mr. Kissinger in particular since Mr. Kissinger began his Middle East commuting in November.

However, despite all the rhetoric and banquets, the kissing and gift-giving, the Arabs have not given Mr. Kissinger what Americans want — the lifting of the oil embargo. It may come at the March 10 oil ministers meeting, but Mr. Kissinger, having been embarrassed by an earlier burst of optimism, has ordered American officials to say nothing.

"It would be easier for Arabs to settle it as an Arab problem," one official said today.

Mr. Kissinger has found enormous differences among President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt, President Hafez Assad of Syria, King Hussein of Jordan, and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, and he doesn't mind chatting about them with his assistant on the blue and white Air Force plane that carries him on these journeys.

Clearly the leader who intrigues him the most is President Assad. The one-time Air Force general has grudgingly but with what Kissinger aides call "a brilliant sense of humor" decided to test the negotiating climate by sending a delegation to Washington to explore disengagement with Israel.

But King Faisal remains the most puzzling because he controls so much oil and wealth and seems impervious to the Kissinger sense of humor. American officials said

that when Mr. Kissinger met with the King in Riyadh yesterday the King delivered his usual tirade, contending that Zionists were trying to take over the world.

Mr. Kissinger heard similar attacks in November and December from King Faisal. This time, perhaps in a conciliatory gesture, the King said he was willing to distinguish between Zionist and Jews; the latter were not all bad.

When the Kissinger party arrived in Riyadh, newsmen were told that Mr. Kissinger did not expect any breakthrough on the oil embargo. Mindful of this, two correspondents left the press center at the Sahari Palace Hotel and found a gas station in the center of town. They bought two quarts of motor oil for \$1 apiece, and one to Mr. Kissinger as a gag. But one correspondent put the second quart into his suitcase to take home.

Probably no Secretary of State in history has had a closer relationship with the newsmen who cover him. Particularly on these trips, newsmen are continually in communication with Mr. Kissinger. He likes to wander to the back of the aircraft where newsmen sit to crack jokes and exchange impressions.

On each leg of the journey, he invites the group, 14 on this trip, to his office in the front of the plane for a "background briefing." That means he himself cannot be quoted, and whatever he says must be attributed to "a senior American official" or something like that.

Since there are only about four or five "senior American officials" on the aircraft it does not take a sophisticated reader long to guess that Mr. Kissinger was the source of the story the reader may have just read.

Occasionally the rule causes confusion if a story is based on views held by someone other than Mr. Kissinger's. Mr. Kissinger, who in Washington almost always speaks for quotation, says that he needs the help of the background cloak to allow him to conduct his negotiations with a flexible hand. He argues that if he were forced to speak on the record, he would have to provide less information.

Newsmen have chafed at the background rule, and during the last week, raised the matter of at least easing the rules to permit some direct quotation.

In any event, wherever the Kissinger plane has gone, the newsmen aboard have been the envy of their colleagues on the ground. An article in the Israeli press caled the airborne press "the best informed in the world." Correspondents in Syria and Egypt who have virtually no access to officials of Mr. Kissinger's rank swarmed over the American correspondents when the plane landed trying to find out what was going on.

Mr. Kissinger flies in a specially configured Boeing 707. Its tail registration number is 86970 and it used to be the backup plane to President Nixon and President Johnson.

The plane, staffed by Air Force personnel, is probably one of the most comfortable planes aloft, in addition to Mr. Kissinger's own personal stateroom that has a single bed and private lavatory, there are four overhead racks that can be lowered and converted into bunks for top assistants to use.

One of his visits to Tel Aviv, Mr. Kissinger invited the Israeli Foreign Minister, Abba Eban, to take a look. Mr. Eban, whose government is continually in the red, gazed around and said in mock seriousness: "I like it. I'll order one for myself." Like most foreign ministers, Mr. Eban travels on commercial flights but it would be rather difficult for Mr. Kissinger to commute between Israel and Arab capitals on commercial routes.

The newsmen on the plane are billed by the State Department for their share of the travel costs.

Sleep is always in short supply on these trips. Mr. Kissinger apparently needs little of it and his aides are unable to find much time for it. The newsmen have to wait until Mr. Kissinger finishes his work for the night before putting their stories together. The doctor aboard was a bit worried about the haggard look of some of the passengers the other day, and suggested to the flight attendants that there be more protein in the meals

served. As the result, for breakfast yesterday, everyone was served steak and scrambled eggs.

Mr. Kissinger, who left with his family from Furth, Germany, when he was 15 in 1938, does not like to dwell on his experiences under the Nazis, and he rarely brings up the subject. Despite his distinct German accent, he speaks mediocre German.

He explains that when he left Germany he had a wide knowledge of soccer terms, but lacked the vocabulary need to conduct foreign policy.

When he meets with Foreign Minister Walter Scheel, Mr. Kissinger speaks in English and Mr. Scheel in German, with no interpreters present. Upon arriving at the Cologne-Bonn military airport today, Mr. Kissinger was addressed by Mr. Scheel in German and unexpectedly began his response also in German. Then Mr. Kissinger reverted to English, explaining that he lacked more than a sportsman's command of his mother tongue.

Mr. Kissinger's views on Germany appear rather complex. In conversations with friends, he has said that he has no particular love or hate for Germany. He prefers Britain as a country and, at least until recently, France. In fact, his previous Francophilia makes the economic feud with Paris that much more annoying to Mr. Kissinger. Nothing irritates him more than the French efforts to block American leadership in the West.