

## DIPLOMACY

## Kissinger's Rescue Mission

Rarely had Henry Kissinger given himself so downbeat a send-off on the eve of a major mission. Relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union have soured of late, and his stewardship as Secretary of State has become a political issue. Looking grim and combative, he told a news conference last week that Moscow's meddling in Angola threatens to scuttle both détente and the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. Nonetheless, Kissinger made a date to meet in Moscow this week with Soviet Party Chief Leonid Brezhnev in an effort to rescue détente by achieving a breakthrough on both SALT and Angola. The situation:

**SALT.** The talks have been stalemated since July, even though Brezhnev and President Ford agreed at Vladivostok in November 1974 to limit each side's strategic nuclear weapons to 2,400 long-range missiles and bombers. Of this number, only 1,320 could carry MIRVs—clusters of independently aimed warheads. But negotiators have not been able to agree on how the limits should be applied to two new weapons systems: 1) the U.S. cruise missile, a 1,200-2,000-mile-range jet-propelled bomb that can be launched from an airplane, ship or submarine, and 2) the Soviet Backfire bomber, whose 6,000-mile range can be extended so that it can reach the U.S. and return by means of mid-air refueling.

The U.S. proposed that the Russians count 273 Backfire bombers as part of its strategic arsenal, in exchange for a like number of cruise missiles, giving both sides 2,673 strategic weapons. That idea was rejected by the Soviets, who argue that the bombers—but not the cruise missiles—should be excluded from any SALT agreement.

Kissinger disclosed last week that Moscow has promised a "significant modification" of its bargaining position, and the U.S. has also prepared a new proposal, despite some misgivings on the part of the Pentagon. Even if Kissinger and Brezhnev agree in principle on a compromise, however, a final pact would require up to two months of further negotiations on details.

**ANGOLA.** According to Kissinger, the U.S.S.R. since March has sent more than \$200 million in military aid to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola. In contrast, the U.S. had earmarked about \$35 million in arms and equipment for two anti-Soviet factions before the Senate voted last month to ban further aid.

Kissinger feels the U.S. was close to a solution to the Angola problem before Congress got involved and, in his opinion, encouraged the Soviets to continue their intervention. Nonetheless, Western officials believe the Kremlin is still divided over the aid program. Some Soviet defense officials argued that it would militarily overextend the U.S.S.R.; some Foreign Ministry officials feared that the Angola intervention was jeopardizing détente. But the critics were overruled by the Communist Party hierarchy, which favored stepping up help to the M.P.L.A., largely to coun-

DIRCE HALSTEAD



KISSINGER AT PRESS CONFERENCE  
Downbeat send-off.

terbalance Chinese successes in Mozambique and elsewhere in Africa.

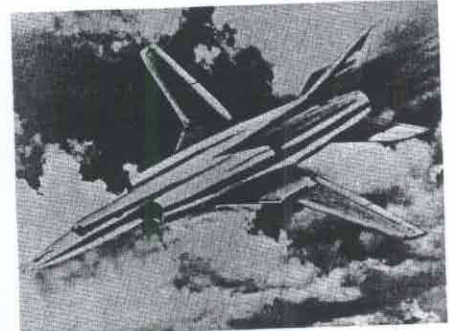
However, U.S. analysts believe Brezhnev may be amenable to Kissinger's arguments. Said one high American official: "You can be sure that Brezhnev is reluctant to throw away ten years of détente for the sake of a client in Africa."

Kissinger told reporters that the U.S. might agree to a vague "phased withdrawal" of foreign troops, chiefly South Africans and the far more numerous Cubans. But the Secretary warned that such an agreement would fail if the Soviets, anxious to avoid embarrassing an ally, delayed a pullout until the Cubans had managed to win the war—and that is precisely what the Cubans seemed to be doing in northern Angola last week (*see*

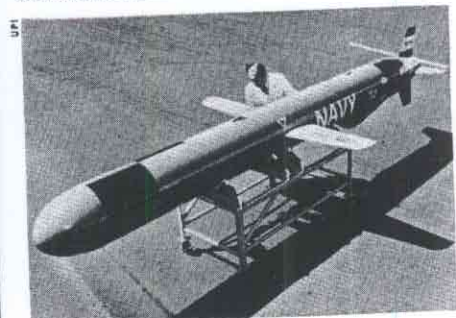
THE WORLD). Said Kissinger: "Major powers have a responsibility to think about the consequences they will face when they engage their troops or the troops of their friends. It is a lesson we have had to learn; it may be a lesson the Soviet Union should learn."

Kissinger's harsh words at his news conference were intended, in part, to undercut domestic critics, who suspect that in his eagerness to achieve a SALT agreement, he will go easy on the Soviets in Angola. A high-ranking colleague in the Administration maintains that Kissinger is in for more criticism no matter what happens in Moscow: if he achieves a breakthrough on SALT, his opponents may accuse him of making dangerous concessions to the Russians; if he comes home empty-handed, they will say

U.S. AIR FORCE



SKETCH OF RUSSIAN BACKFIRE



U.S. NAVY'S CRUISE MISSILE

the failure proves the bankruptcy of détente.

Such criticism worries Kissinger, who last week reiterated that he would resign if he became an issue in the presidential campaign. He is concerned that a politically inspired debate over American foreign policy may further weaken the U.S. position abroad. Said he: "It would be a tragedy if during this election year we did not find some means to put some restraint on our domestic debates in the field of foreign policy." To that end, he plans to meet with the Democratic presidential candidates, and perhaps also Republican Ronald Reagan, to work out ground rules for the debate. Otherwise, Kissinger fears, the debate runs the risk of becoming so divisive as to damage U.S. foreign relations for years to come.