

Ford Appears Bent on Making Angola Test of Will With Congress and Soviet

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 21 — Despite the sharp rebuke to its Angola policy voted by the Senate, the Ford Administration seems determined to press ahead and make Angola a test of wills, not only with the Congress but also with the Soviet Union. It is, in the view of several State Department officials, a dangerous course that can add to strains with Congress and lead to a new chill in Soviet-American relations, even jeopardizing the talks on limiting strategic arms.

But President Ford and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger appear undeterred.

Mr. Ford said on Friday that the refusal by the Senate to approve additional funds for support of Angolan factions was a "deep tragedy" for America's friends and would ultimately "profoundly affect the security of our country as well."

Yesterday, Mr. Ford urged again that the House of Representatives next month reverse the Senate—something deemed unlikely by most officials—and said Soviet behavior "does not help the continuation of détente."

Moreover, Mr. Kissinger has stressed in recent days his own conviction that regardless of the Senate vote, the United States has an obligation as a big power to do its utmost to counter what he regards as unacceptable Soviet intervention in Angola.

From the tenor of Mr. Kissinger's remarks, it seems likely that efforts will be made to enlist other countries to help out the factions opposed to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, which is supported by the Soviet Union.

U.S. to Use Its Influence

Mr. Ford also said the United States would use its diplomatic influence, which is not impressive in Africa, to persuade the Organization of African Unity to take steps to hasten Soviet and Cuban withdrawal from Angola. But since the organization is divided, with 15 members including Nigeria already extending diplomatic recognition to the Popular Movement, which controls Luanda the capital, the African unity group cannot be expected to be decisive.

What is frustrating to Washington is that the one country able to act against the Russians is white-governed South Africa. The presence of South Africans in Angola has been the trump card for the Russians in persuading third-world nations to support their side in Angola.

This has not made Washington's efforts easier. It was a further reason some State De-

partment officials disagreed with Mr. Kissinger and foresaw problems in getting involved in that part of Africa.

The whole Angolan affair has been untidy from the start.

It began as a secret, modest American effort to assist the Angolan factions opposed to the Popular movement in maintaining at least a military balance in the country. It sought to force the creation of a regime not oriented toward Moscow, at best, or, at worst, a neutral coalition.

Military Assistance Rose

But the Americans and Russians became involved over the summer and fall in a reaction, counter-reaction pattern.

Military support by both sides began to rise dramatically, until finally about 5,000 Cubans were sent into Angola to man the sophisticated Soviet tanks and other equipment.

At that point, Mr. Kissinger—and evidently Mr. Ford—decided that the issue had escalated into a classic cold-war confrontation, in which a Russian triumph would be regarded as an American defeat.

The Americans had hoped—as had the Russians—to keep the Angolan involvement secret, giving Moscow an opportunity to join in efforts to solve the situation without losing face.

What Mr. Ford and Mr. Kissinger did not count upon, even though their top advisers were ready to tell them, was the refusal of Congress to support, first, a clandestine military involvement without American combat personnel, and second, and involvement of any kind in a country as seemingly unimportant to American national interests.

Several officials said that the President should have sought advice and support from a wide sampling of Congressional opinion before secretly involving the United States in the Angolan war. Likewise, the officials say, the President should have spoken out clearly on what the United States was doing in Angola, once fragments began to leak to newspapers in October and November.

President Speaks Too Late

But Mr. Ford never addressed the subject publicly until last week, when it was too late to affect Congressional and public opposition to what many feared would be the start of another Vietnam.

Even when he did speak out, Mr. Ford's critics said he raised more questions than he answered; he sought to make Angolan support a test of American will, even though the

United States had no commitment to Angola.

Some senior State Department officials were clearly unhappy, particularly since Congress seemed so outspokenly opposed to an involvement in Angola.

The most crucial problem ahead, aside from the actual situation in Angola, seems to be future relations with the Soviet Union.

The Administration's policy of seeking reduced tensions with the Russians, generally known as détente, has been a major source of concern to Mr. Ford.

In Mr. Kissinger's view, relations with the Soviet Union have always operated on two tracks, one soft and one hard.

The first, and more publicly known, has been the persistent effort to ease superpower tensions and to work toward closer interdependency.

For that reason, Mr. Kissinger has put great emphasis on achieving a new accord on strategic arms, despite critics of all political persuasions, who doubt the value of an accord that puts a lid on offensive delivery systems.

Moreover, Mr. Kissinger has also sought to avoid introducing irritants into the relations, and opposed making a public issue of internal Soviet conditions, such as emigration of Jews, and lack of basic freedoms. Again he has given ammunition to the Administration's critics, who would like to hear a denunciation of the Russians.

Determination Is Urged

Less known to the public is the "second track" that Mr. Kissinger believes must be followed in parallel for the first one to succeed.

He has said repeatedly that the United States as a great power must act like one and show a determination to use force if necessary. At times it must even appear a bit reckless to keep the Russians from running risks that might expand into war.

In that category fall the alerts of 1970, when Syria, backed by Moscow, threatened to invade Jordan, and of 1973, when Soviet airborne units were ready to go into Egypt to throw back the Israelis. This also explains the strong stand in Angola.

If the Congress is not persuaded to allow funds for Angola, and the Russians and Cubans do not cease their involvement soon, Mr. Ford must decide how to follow up his public warnings that détente could be threatened.