

President Hints He Would Weigh Pardoning Nixon

Cuba Stance Eased *Decision Deferred*

By Laurence Stern and Marilyn Berger
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President Ford yesterday signaled a significant softening in the oft-repeated public U.S. stand opposing a relaxation of economic and political sanctions against Cuba.

The President laid heavy stress on U.S. action "in concert with" members of the Organization of American States, where there has been a strong surge of support for ending the 1964 hemispheric sanctions against the Cubans.

Official analysts here concede that as many as two-thirds of the OAS permanent council — certainly a majority — are now prepared to vote for an end to the economic blockade and support restoration of diplomatic relations with Havana.

OAS Secretary-General Galo Plaza of Ecuador acclaimed Mr. Ford's statement on Cuba and observed that "it is clear that a majority of the countries [in OAS] are now willing to lift the sanctions against Cuba."

He added that it is "highly satisfying to hear that President Ford intends to act through the mechanisms of the OAS."

The President said that U.S. policy toward Cuba "is determined by the sanctions voted by the Organization of American States, and we abide by those actions that were taken by the members of that organization."

He also said that the United States would exercise the option "to change our policy" if, as he put it, "Cuba changes its policy toward us and toward its Latin neighbors." In pursuing any such action, he added, "we would certainly act in concert with the other members" of the OAS.

It is widely conceded at official levels in Washington that the Cubans long ago abandoned the effort to export socialist revolution elsewhere in the hemisphere. The chief political justification for the 1964 sanctions was to repel the spread of insurrectionary socialist movements from Havana to other Latin American countries.

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger in the past has suggested to Latin American foreign ministers that they not rush the Cuban issue to confrontation.

There was also apprehensiveness within the administration about the effect of an abrupt reversal on Cuban policy before the November elections. Mr. Ford's statement yesterday was the first hint of a new flexibility on the question.

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By Carroll Kilpatrick
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President Ford hinted strongly yesterday at his first White House news conference that he would consider a pardon for former President Nixon if charges are brought against him in the courts.

The President said he believed that the American people think, as he does, that Mr. Nixon has suffered enough.

However, the President said that he will make no decision regarding a pardon before any legal process takes place.

"In this situation, I am the final authority," Mr. Ford said. "There have been no charges made, there has been no action by the courts, there has been no action by any jury, and until any legal process has been undertaken, I think it is unwise and untimely for me to make any commitment."

In reply to the first question asked him at a packed news conference in the East Room, Mr. Ford said he agreed with Vice President-designate Nelson A. Rockefeller's comment that the former President has been "hung" and should not in addition "be drawn and quartered."

"I subscribe to that point of view," Mr. Ford said, emphasizing that he would reserve his option. He said he believed the American people also agree with Rockefeller's comments.

The President made it clear, however, that he does not intend to interfere with Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski's course. Jaworski "has an obligation to take whatever action he sees fit in conformity with his oath of office, and that should include any and all individuals," Mr. Ford said.

Informed sources in Jaworski's office have said that the prosecutor will make no decision regarding action against the former President for several weeks, apparently to allow a "cooling-off" period on the matter.

Fielding a variety of questions on domestic and foreign problems, Mr. Ford offered no major new economic policies but called for belt-tightening by individuals and the federal government.

He repeated a spokesman's statement that he "probably" would run for a full term in 1976, and he seemed to be saying that he expected the Republican convention to endorse a Ford-Rockefeller ticket.

When asked how he planned to see that there are "no further Watergates," Mr.

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RESIDENT, From A1

Ford said he would have an open administration and be as "candid and forthright as I possibly can."

Declaring that he would expect all individuals in his administration to act the same, he promised that there would be "no tightly controlled operation of the White House staff."

"I have a policy of seeking advice from a number of top members of my staff," the President said. "There will be no one person, nor any limited number of individuals, who make decisions. I will make the decisions and take the blame for them or whatever benefit might be the case."

When asked if he would have a code of ethics for administration officials, the President said, "The code of ethics that will be followed will be the example that I set."

Mr. Ford defended his proposal for limited amnesty for Vietnam war deserters and draft-dodgers and his nomination of Rockefeller.

The President's comments came when a reporter said some of his conservative allies were grumbling because he seemed to be moving too far left.

"I don't think these are views that fall in the political spectrum right or left," Mr. Ford said. "I intend to make the same kind of judgments in other matters because I think they are right and I think they are good for the country."

As Vice President, Rockefeller will work on domestic programs and help prepare legislative proposals, Mr. Ford said. He also can be helpful "in the political arena under certain guidelines and some restrictions," Mr. Ford said in an unusual comment on limitations that are imposed on Vice Presidents.

When a reporter asked how soon it would be proper for

Democrats to hold the President accountable for economic problems, Mr. Ford said he did not believe that "making partisan politics out of a serious domestic problem is good politics."

The Democrats so far have been friendly and cooperative, he said. "I think it is a fair statement that our problems domestically, our economic problems, are the joint responsibility of government," the President said. "So we are all in this boat together, with labor and management and everybody else."

In reply to a question regarding the pending veterans education bill, Mr. Ford reiterated his conviction that Congress should take action to "keep the price down" because the measure is inflationary in its present form.

In Chicago last week, he told the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention he would not hesitate to veto a measure that is inflationary.

"I hope when the Congress reconvenes within a week or so that they will go back to conference, take a good look and hopefully eliminate any inequities and keep the price down," the President said.

In answer to another question, Mr. Ford made it clear that he does not favor plans to revive the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Noting that some of the programs have been moved to established departments, the President said there is duplication and overlapping in the Community Action Program and the Model Cities program.

Work in these fields can be carried on by local governments under grant aid proposed in the new housing and urban development measure, Mr. Ford said.

When asked what his position would be regarding another federal pay raise, Mr. Ford said he had made no judgment yet and that no recommendation had reached his desk.

President Hints Softer Stance on Cuba

DIPLOMACY, From A1

OAS Secretary-General Plaza indicated yesterday that there has been strong pressure within the OAS for a meeting of the permanent council within the next two months to deal with the Cuban question.

The foreign ministers of Costa Rica, Venezuela and Columbia have been pressing for OAS action designed to normalize Cuba's political place in the hemisphere. Venezuela was the initiator of the 1964 motion in the OAS to impose the sanctions against Havana.

Panama quietly last week sent a full diplomatic mission to Havana, ending the 10-year rupture of relations with Cuba. This action is expected to be followed by other moves to restore diplomatic relations.

While most of the questions at the press conference involved domestic affairs, President Ford dealt with several other foreign policy issues.

Mr. Ford said that an effort is under way to develop a U.S. position for the next round of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. Pentagon and State Department officials said negotiations will resume in Geneva in the second half of September.

The President said that there is now "an effort being made to bring the Department of Defense, the State Department and others together for a resolution of . . . the United States position regarding SALT II. This decision will be made in the relatively near future. I don't think there is any basic difficulty that cannot be resolved internally within our government."

Differences were known to have existed between Secretary of State Kissinger and Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger as to the timing and tactics on a SALT agreement prior to the last Moscow summit. These were superseded by the decision to conclude a 10-year agreement. Administration officials say the current discussions within the U.S. government have not reached a point where there are fixed departmental positions that require a presidential decision.

President Ford said Kissinger would be meeting with representatives from the Soviet Union "in the near future, I think in October." This was a reference to a trip Kissinger is planning in late October to discuss with Soviet leaders prospects for a SALT agreement.

Kissinger told reporters yesterday that he is also considering a brief separate trip to the Middle East in mid-October, before the Soviet visit, to expediate negotiations toward a settlement there. That trip, to unspecified Middle East capitals, would follow talks here with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and meetings with various foreign ministers in September at the time of the opening of the U.N. General Assembly.

The President yesterday sidestepped a question about

moving the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a suggestion he had made in 1972.

"Under the current circumstance and the importance of getting a just and lasting peace in the Middle East," he said, "I think that particular proposal ought to stand aside. We must come up with some answers between Israel and the Arab nations in order to achieve a peace that is both fair and durable."