

ford AD

NYTimes DEC 22 1975

The Need To Control

By Anthony Lewis

BOSTON, Dec. 21—When the Vietnam war came to its inevitable end last spring, Henry Kissinger said that Congress's refusal to try to drag it on proved America's unreliability as an ally. Now President Ford is doing the same on Angola. The Senate vote to stop covert intervention there, he said, "is a deep tragedy for all countries whose security depends on the United States."

Why do these men want to exaggerate the impact of distant events on their country's reputation? Why do they invite the world to judge American strength by our position in Angola, a land that has no historical tie to the United States and has never depended on us for its security? Exploring those questions may afford some insight into the real, as opposed to the advertised, premises of United States policy.

One reason given by Mr. Ford for taking the Senate vote so seriously was that it "deprived us of our ability to help the people of Angola." He said the United States should be able to help any people "decide their own fate. We have over a period of time helped to maintain free governments."

Talk of helping countries to "decide their own fate" has rather a mocking sound these days. Does Mr. Ford think people have forgotten the massive and conspiratorial United States efforts to upset the Democratic process in Chile? Can he use the word "free," without gagging, for such objects of United States support as the Governments of Brazil, South Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines?

In fact, hardly any official pretends that our Angolan policy has anything to do with the people of Angola. It is

ABROAD AT HOME

justified, instead, as necessary to maintain our influence in Africa against that of the Soviet Union. If we let the Soviet-supported faction prevail in Angola, Mr. Kissinger told Senate leaders privately, Africans would think of the U.S.S.R. as the superpower that matters.

Recent history goes against the notion that Soviet military aid in Africa leads to permanent influence. In Egypt it was counterproductive. Experts think the U.S.S.R. would reap more trouble than joy from neocolonial activity in black Africa. The specter of a Soviet naval base in Angola, raised by Mr. Kissinger, does not alarm the Pentagon.

Nor is there good reason to believe that the United States will win respect for itself in Africa by intervening in Angola. The effective way to gain influence would have been to condemn the South African army's intervention. Instead, the United States is on the same side as South Africa—a coincidence, we say, but one that could hardly be more fatal to our reputation in most of the continent.

The ultimate political argument is that failure to act in Angola will hurt our image with the Russians, making them think us weak everywhere. To the contrary, after Vietnam a shrewd Soviet leader might want to see America involved in remote quarrels outside her experience. He might also care less about Angola than about continued American willingness to be forthcoming on such matters as grain supplies for the U.S.S.R.

Altogether, the political arguments seem to me dubious. At best they cannot explain President Ford's overdone reaction to the Senate vote. Twice in a brief statement he called it a threat to America's greatness. "A great nation," he said, "cannot escape its responsibilities." The hyperbole suggests that the premises of the policy are as much psychological as political.

After Vietnam it was widely said that the United States had learned one basic lesson: It cannot be a global policeman. But the Angolan affair shows that Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger have not learned that lesson. For them, "greatness" depends on the will to be involved anywhere and everywhere in the world—and to see that events follow the script we write.

In the magazine *Foreign Affairs* last January Prof. Richard R. Fagen of Stanford examined what was then known about Chile and said United States covert activities were "the symptoms and consequences of a foreign policy which attempts to manage conflict and change on a global scale." The activities would continue, he said, as long as American leaders thought our interests were "threatened by almost any Third World experiment in socioeconomic transformation not directly under our control."

Control: That is the end so deeply, even irrationally, desired. The feeling stems in part from the personality of our dominant policymaker, Mr. Kissinger. He is authoritarian by nature and finds it more congenial to deal with the predictability of authoritarian regimes than with the disorder of democracy. But there is more to it than that. For years now, the highest levels of American Government have been fixed on the status quo, mortally fearing change in a world irresistibly changing.

It is the mark of the insecure to become hysterical at change. Great countries, like mature individuals, understand that life is complicated—and that they cannot make everyone else conform to their vision.