

Portuguese Aftermath DEC 18 1971

When Representative Charles C. Diggs Jr. of Detroit accepted an appointment as a United States delegate to the United Nations this year he knew he would have to follow instructions. Where he erred was in taking seriously the Administration's rhetoric against apartheid and white minority rule in southern Africa, as well as its promises to consult members of the delegation in advance about positions to be taken in the General Assembly.

The Michigan Democrat is a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the active, widely-traveled chairman of its subcommittee on Africa. He is also head of the Black Caucus on Capitol Hill. He says he had supposed that the Administration might be interested in "giving me an opportunity for input into these vital questions on Africa." He now knows better.

Yesterday, Mr. Diggs quit the delegation in anger and frustration. It was the first time in U.N. history that an American delegate had resigned during the General Assembly. With Washington increasingly unwilling to back any U.N. actions aimed at prodding the white rulers of South Africa, Rhodesia and the Portuguese colonies toward self-determination for black majorities, life had become a series of embarrassments for Mr. Diggs.

The "watershed" for Mr. Diggs was Washington's decision to revive an agreement with Portugal for the use of air and naval bases in the Azores and to prop up the Lisbon Government's floundering economy with up to \$435 million in credits. Mr. Diggs interprets this as an American commitment to assist Portugal in carrying on its colonial wars in Africa and as suggestive of an increasing "NATO interest in buttressing the white minority ruled areas of Africa." It is, in any event, part of an emerging pattern of far greater Washington concern for the sensibilities of white rulers of southern Africa than for the struggle of the black majorities for justice and self-determination.

Congressman Diggs is not alone in finding this policy hypocritical and disastrous in the long run for the United States.