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Ford expected to be tougher than

ANALYSIS

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WASHINGTON — President Gerald R. Ford can be expected to follow the foreign and domestic policies of his predecessor, but with a tougher, less expedient brand of conservatism.

Thus, aides, who have been planning his attack on the new administration's priority target — the sick American economy — warn that Ford will use his first honeymoon days in office to take "brutal measures" bordering on an austerity program.

Ford is expected to tackle the cycle of inflation and recession first not only because the problem is the most critical, in his view. But he and his closest advisers figure that his own presidency and his chances of leading a Republican victory in 1976 will rise or fall with the economy.

Ford's first action was to ask Henry Kissinger to stay on, at least temporarily, as secretary of state. And Ford intends to pursue the policies of detente with the Soviet Union and Communist China, as well as the Nixon-Kissinger grand design for a "generation of peace" policed by the world's power centers.

However, Ford is an old Cold War warrior and a hard-line advocate of military spending who is likely to take a tougher attitude than Nixon or Kissinger in demanding more from the Soviets and Chinese in return for detente.

Ford has been worried lately that the Nixon Administration, weakened by scandal and anxious to bring something home from abroad, has been at a disadvantage in bargaining. The new president, a strong friend of Israel, seems more

closely allied than Kissinger or Nixon with the opinions of Senator Jackson, who has been critical of American policy in the Middle East and towards the plight of Jews in Russia.

Furthermore, Ford, like Jackson, has a rather jaundiced view of the pending negotiations with the Soviet Union to reduce strategic arms.

Kissinger, in recent public

statement, has displayed some alarm at the prospects of a new spiral in the arms race with the introduction of newer intercontinental nuclear weapons.

From his first days in Congress, Ford has consistently supported virtually every new weapons systems request of the Pentagon. And if Kissinger makes moves towards the \$80 billion Defense Department budget, he's likely to clash with Ford, whose top staff is heavy with former Pentagon officials.

If and when Kissinger leaves — Ford associates say the secretary of state is weary and has just about run his string out — his policies could fade, under pressure from the Pentagon influence, unless an equally strong foreign policy man takes his place.

Ford, who has been boning up on foreign affairs with the help of Kissinger and his staff, is not expected to retreat towards the isolation associated with many of his Midwestern Republican forebears.

He came into politics as a reform Republican under the influence of one of his heroes — the last Sen. Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, who broke from isolationism to join President Harry Truman in what became a bipartisan foreign policy towards the cold war.

Ford calls himself "an internationalist in foreign affairs," and in the spirit of Vandenberg and his other hero — the late Dwight Eisenhower — he may be expected to make an attempt at re-establishing a modicum of bipartisan in foreign policy.

With Democrats badly divided on the attitudes the nation ought to take towards

the Communist world and trouble-making smaller nations, Ford's first political clashes are not likely to come on foreign policy.

But his plans to battle inflation probably will run into a wall of opposition from Democrats and big labor; for Ford's views are more classically conservative and Republican than Richard Nixon's.

According to Ford aides, he has been unhappy with the Nixon Administration's zig-zag approach to economic problems — protesting against controls, then agreeing to them, then taking them off, then talking about putting some back in.

Ford is expected to take a tough line towards cutting government expenditures and intends to stick with it — come congressional screams and higher unemployment.

Throughout his career as a congressman from western Michigan and House Republican Leader, Ford has fought against most social programs. He opposed aid to housing, diverting high trust funds for mass transit, anti-poverty programs and anti-pollution grants, Medicare and higher minimum wages. His general orientation is towards business prosperity, in the belief that if business is healthy the economy will flourish.

One of his staff's key economic advisers is University of Michigan economist Paul McCracken, who quit as chairman of Richard Nixon's Council of Economic Advisers when the administration surrendered to political and economic pressures and imposed wage and price controls.

In his last public statement before entering the presidency, Ford gave some indication of his attitude towards the economy.

He called for action to re-

duce government spending below the \$305 billion proposed this year by the Nixon Administration. And he was adamant that "we cannot tolerate" congressional proposals which would increase that amount.

"Washington cannot ask others to show restraint unless government demonstrates its own commitment," he added. "Accordingly, we must veto 'budget busting' legislation" — a term borrowed from Nixon.

Thus Ford generally supports the view of Federal Reserve Chairman Arthur Burns, who has sounded sharp alarms on the economy which were generally ignored by President Nixon. Burns' general view is that the availability of money and interests must be strictly curtailed, even at the cost of higher unemployment, until inflation is brought under control and a steadier rate of growth for the economy is established.

But many economists, especially those working for labor, say the situation is more complicated because prices are continuing their rise in spite of a slowdown in the economy, reduced consumer demand and unemployment that is already high — about 5.5 per cent.

Nixon Administration experts have conceded that economic illness has become

Hard bargains and 'brutal measures'

an epidemic in the Western world, tied in with chronic shortages. But liberal economists and anti-trust experts point out that some of these shortages have been manipulated by concentrated monopoly-like industries, which have the power to raise prices in spite of decreased demand.

Going by Ford's past legislative record, it seems safe to assume that the "marginally desirable" programs and "optional luxuries" he wants to cut include social domestic programs. And in spite of his honeymoon it's doubtful the Democratic-controlled Congress will take that without a fight.

But Ford spent 25 years in the House of Representatives and although he has been a partisan bitter-ender in some fights, he has shown an ability to compromise and to support social programs if they are packaged to his liking.

For example, the Nixon Administration's "new federalism," which includes

revenue sharing and block grants for domestic programs, was born of Ford's leadership among House Republicans.

In partnership with Melvin Laird, then a Wisconsin congressman, Ford and other House Republicans in the late 60s devised the revenue sharing-block grant idea to compete with liberal programs.

In 1967 Ford attacked the notion that "everything can be cured through federal dictation and federal funds, doled out through grants-in-aid which keep Washington as the manipulator of all the strings."

If the McCracken-Burns economic views prevail among Ford's policy-makers, the new president, while cutting government spending on some social programs, will at the same time favor limited aid to those temporarily hurt by austerity.

But labor economists predict an unemployment rate of at least 7 per cent under austerity policies. If that happens, Ford's shiny presidency and the honeymoon that is expected will be spattered with howls of derision. And Ford will be in a race to turn the economy around quickly enough so that the howls have faded in time for his presidency to stand its first political test.



Pebble Beach home?

Mrs Jack Westland puts a flag up on the balcony of her five-bedroom home in Pebble Beach. The hillside house has been offered to President Ford as a "Western White House" by Westland,

a former congressman. As vice president, Ford frequently visited the Westlands, using the room, lower right, as his office.

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