

By Graham Hovey

The Ford Administration's drive to persuade the Senate not to cut off funds for covert arms shipments to Angola failed so spectacularly because officials gave conflicting testimony on why such an American intervention was necessary.

Secretary of State Kissinger was—and evidently still is—in direct conflict with other State Department officials and the Central Intelligence Agency on the basic reasons for American concern about Angola's fate, a concern the Administration reportedly plans to assert by continuing covert and in the face of the Senate action.

Almost the only point of consistency in what the Secretary and other high-rank officials told the Senators was that all rejected the apocalyptic scenario envisioned by Daniel P. Moynihan, the free-wheeling Ambassador to the United Nations, in the event of victory for the Soviet-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (M.P.L.A.).

In a television interview, Mr. Moynihan saw this result if American aid to the anti-M.P.L.A. forces were halted: "The Communists will take over An-

gola and will thereby considerably control the oil shipping lanes from the Persian Gulf to Europe. They will be next to Brazil. They will have a large chunk of Africa and the world will be different in the aftermath . . ."

Senators say that on no occasion in his lobbying with them did Secretary Kissinger ever cite any geographic strategic concern, such as security of the oil routes or a threat to Brazil. In summarizing justifications for American arms aid to Angola, the State Department discounted a strategic interest. In making its case for aid, the C.I.A. mentioned none of the Moynihan factors.

In his Capitol Hill efforts and in statements since the Senate voted, 54-22, to block covert Angolan arms aid, Mr. Kissinger has emphasized not any strategic American interest but the political necessity for blocking the expansion by military means of Soviet world influence.

What is vital, Mr. Kissinger says, is not whether Angola ends up with a Marxist M.P.L.A. regime, but whether the United States still has the national will to behave as a great power and

to resist Soviet military intervention in an area where there is no legitimate Soviet interest. In deploring the Senate action, President Ford spoke in a similar vein, warning that "a great nation cannot escape its responsibilities."

Updating the domino idea, President and Secretary warn of dire consequences for many countries if the Kremlin can intervene without American hindrance thousands of miles from Russia's borders to impose its will—through the use of Cuban soldiers—on people who would, if they could, reject Communism.

One trouble with the test-of-will argument in Angola is that it seems to revive the postulate that the United States must oppose any Soviet adventure outside the Soviet bloc or lose credibility as a great nation and ally; in short, that American policy could consist largely of reactions to Soviet maneuvers, whether or not American interests are directly challenged.

Another difficulty with the Kissin-

Angola

ger thesis in this context is that it totally ignores both Angola as such and the long-run perils for Washington's relations with the world's non-white majority that inevitably arise from any American collaboration with the white rulers of South Africa, even to counter Soviet probes on that continent. Mr. Moynihan at least concedes the dangers of a South African alignment.

Finally, Mr. Kissinger's argument conflicts with that given to Senate committees by other State Department and C.I.A. officers as the main reason for American aid to anti-M.P.L.A. forces. These officials contend that a victory for M.P.L.A. would make catastrophic war between whites and blacks in southern Africa more likely.

They say a victorious M.P.L.A. could give maximum help to the guerrilla organization known as S.W.A.P.O., which carries out intermittent raids on Namibia (South-West Africa). They envision an alliance of M.P.L.A., S.W.A.P.O. the revolutionary Government of Mozambique and the more radical black Rhodesian faction bent

on settling the issue in Namibia, Rhodesia and finally South Africa itself by force, rather than by negotiation.

It is a bizarre theory that aid to anti-M.P.L.A. groups—aimed, presumably, at the emergence of some kind of federation or partition in Angola, free of domination by any foreign power—seriously diminish the danger of an ultimate racial confrontation in Africa. That issue depends primarily on the policies of the white rulers of Rhodesia and South Africa, with whom—both State and C.I.A. agree—the United States cannot afford to be allied. Mr. Kissinger rejects the racial war rationale for American aid to Angola.

Faced with such confusion and contradictions about the basic motive for a policy many already regarded as dangerous and ill-conceived, an aroused Senate dealt the Administration a crushing defeat. Unless Messrs. Ford and Kissinger can straighten out the policy line and lace it with greater credibility, the same fate probably awaits them in the House next month.

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