

Next Steps on Angola

President Ford has again called for a cease-fire in Angola, an end to all outside intervention and the formation of a government of national unity by the three rival nationalist organizations to end the civil war. This remains the official position of the Organization of African Unity—at least until its summit meeting begins in Ethiopia Saturday—and it was also reiterated yesterday by President William R. Tolbert at his inauguration for a new term in Liberia.

The formula is unassailable and probably represents the only way of avoiding interminable conflict and fragmentation of Angola. But it would take a miracle to bring it about, given the recognition by eighteen African states of the government established in Luanda by the Soviet-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola and the flat rejection by M.P.L.A. leaders of any negotiations whatever with their two rivals. The formula may not survive the next week as O.A.U. policy.

A more promising approach to the most critical matter—an end to outside intervention—may be Secretary of State Kissinger's projected conversations this week with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin and with higher Soviet authorities if his Moscow trip materializes later this month. An assertion in a Pravda editorial Saturday that the Kremlin "comes out for the termination of foreign armed intervention in Angola" has aroused modest hopes for these exchanges.

Meanwhile, Washington should take every possible action to insure that neither the Central Intelligence Agency nor private groups funded by it are recruiting mercenaries—whether Americans, Cuban exiles or other foreigners—to fight in Angola against M.P.L.A. The Administration's denials of a detailed article in the Christian Science Monitor about C.I.A.-backed recruiting and training of American and Vietnamese ex-servicemen and others for Angola combat have not been entirely convincing.

Recruiting mercenaries is sordid business anytime. For the United States to assist in reintroducing them at this critical moment into Africa—where they exacerbated one trouble spot after another long after the peak of the Congo crisis of 1960-61—would be to commit an act black Africa would be a long time forgiving.

The regular Cuban soldiers and the Soviet "advisers" assisting M.P.L.A. are no more savory than the white mercenaries on the other side. But black Africa will view them in that light only when the threat from the Western-backed mercenaries has been removed from Angola, along with South Africa's white regulars.