

MPLA Seeking Talks With U.S.

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The victorious Communist-backed forces in Angola have sent a surprising secret message to Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, requesting talks with the United States.

In the appeal to Kissinger, the pro-Soviet MPLA leaders made the promise that they would ask Cuban and Soviet troops to leave Angola once the civil war is over.

The urgent message to Kissinger was delivered to the State Department by Mark Moran, foreign policy adviser to Sen. John V. Tunney (D-Calif.). Moran spent eight days in the Angolan capital of Luanda talking with top MPLA leaders.

Both Tunney and Moran are cautious about the communication. Although the message is quite specific, they recognize it could be an exercise in propaganda rather than genuine diplomacy.

The State Department is also skeptical. A rapprochement with the MPLA, of course, would be an admission that past U.S. policy toward Angola was wrong. Kissinger and Company, therefore, may be merely trying to hedge their past mistakes.

Tunney feels the MPLA's offer of detente at least is worth exploring, even if it should lead nowhere.

The four-page message to Kissinger was delivered in the form of an aide memoire written by Moran, setting forth his questions and the MPLA's answers. These are not the answers of a spokesman who can later be repudiated. They were given

to Moran directly by MPLA's Prime Minister Lopo Nascimento, Defense Minister Iko Carrera and general secretary Lucio Lara.

From a copy of the confidential Moran memo, here are the key excerpts:

"Question (by Moran): What is the position of the MPLA on the presence of Soviet and Cuban troops and military advisers in Angola?"

"Answer: We have no desire for a permanent Soviet or Cuban presence. When the other foreign forces withdraw, so too will the Soviets and Cubans.

"Question: Is this an assurance which I can carry back to my government as representing the position of the MPLA?"

"Answer: Yes.

"Question: (Will) the MPLA . . . allow the Soviet Union the use of air and naval facilities in Angola?"

"Answer: You may assure your government that we will never permit the establishment of any foreign bases on Angolan soil, air or naval, including those of the Soviet Union. This is superpower business, and we want none of it."

The idea of U.S.-MPLA talks "on a public or private basis . . . on issues of mutual concern" drew an enthusiastic response from the Africans. "We are not only ready, we would welcome the opportunity," the three MPLA leaders told Moran.

Asked the Tunney aide: "Would formal recognition by Washington or a cessation of American assistance to other parties in the Angolan conflict be a necessary precondition?"

No, said the Angolans, "the MPLA recognizes the political difficulty of the United States (formally) recognizing our movement." In other words, informal ties such as those existing between the Peoples Republic of China and the United States would suffice.

Moran told the MPLA leaders bluntly that Americans feared that once the Communist forces had digested Angola, they would threaten the stability of neighboring countries such as Zaire, Zambia and South Africa.

The MPLA leaders hedged their remarks about white white-dominated South Africa, but they promised not to move against Zambia and Zaire. "We will have our hands full in Angola," suggested the MPLA leader.

The Tunney aide found the Angolans seemingly willing to seek an agreement on the Gulf-run oil fields of Cabinda, which are now in MPLA hands. They also indicated some form of coalition government was likely in Angola.

Their main complaint to Moran, curiously, was not that the United States had provided millions in arms aid to defeat them but that the United States had impounded two Boeing airliners paid for by Angola.

It should be said that the MPLA leaders are as suspicious of U.S. dealings with South Africa as the United States is suspicious of the MPLA's Soviet connections. Of course, there can be no doubt that the MPLA leaders look upon the Soviets as their saviors.