

What people say

From SWAPO website: www.swapoparty.org

◆ **Posted by Shilongoh-Shafiishuna**
Kindly, administrator, may you organise the speech by His Excellency Robert Mugabe over SADC in Windhoek 2010 August. We continue enjoying this platform of ours exclusive to SWAPO party.

◆ **Posted by Cde QG from Daures**
Cde. Jerry Ekandjo, I congratulate you for demoting Uis Village Council under incompetent UDF leadership. Just an only and final request, please

construct the Constituency office in Uis and allocate the current office to Okombahe settlement for their administrative operations. Only then will we the current regional councillor concentrate on his responsibilities and not confuse his roles and do the work of settlement staff and traditional leaders to gunner support! We are informed that Erongo Regional Council is in finale process of planning before the commencement of construction.

◆ **Posted by Cde. Land of the Brave**

He is really the Father of the Nation. Congratulations to Dr Sam Nujoma for showing them how to do it on Saturday morning at the Community gardening project in Khomasdal. The project of hope will keep the youngsters busy and focused. Viva Cde. Nujoma.

◆ **Posted by SFK**
I am touched by the speech of HE Robert Gabriel Mugabe. May be SPYL or NBC could make it available at a minimal fee for us young people to learn the history. What do you think?

Heroes Day

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fighters who lost their lives and shed their blood for Namibia to be free. When SWALA combatants launched the armed struggle that day, they announced to the occupationist army of racist South Africa and the entire world that Namibians were ready to reclaim their freedom by all means necessary. Independence, he went on, placed the destiny of

Namibians in their own hands, and it meant that they should plan, establish new frameworks for governance, build institutions and mobilize the required resources to fund developmental programmes to foster progress.

“It meant cultivating an enabling political climate to promote national reconciliation and mutual understanding after decades of war and conflict. This was necessary because the colonial regime attempted to pit our people against each other through the tactics of divide and rule,” he said.

“Our people have been able to live together in peace and harmony as brothers and sisters. This has made Namibia one the most politically and socially stable countries on the African continent. We are proud that Namibia is one of the oasis of peace and tranquility on our continent.

“Let us rededicate ourselves to the task of nation-building. Namibia needs all of us to do our part and to contribute to the development of our country, the strengthening of communities and the revitalization of our social fabric.”



Founding President Dr Sam Nujoma about to lay a wreath at the grave-site where the 474 remains were buried.



President Hifikepunye Pohamba and Colonel John ya Otto Nankudhu, who was Commander of the Platoon that launched the armed liberation struggle on August 26, 1966. (File Photo)



Zoom In

By Asser Ntinda



August 26, 1966 is a red-letter day in the history of Namibia, a day when Namibians under the banner of SWAPO finally decided that enough was enough. After many years of painstaking political campaigns and protracted negotiations, Namibians finally decided on that day that the most effective way to dislodge the colonial regime of South Africa from Namibia and bring about country's independence was through the barrel of the gun.

The first encounter between combatants of the South West Africa Liberation Army, SWALA, and the then apartheid colonial forces took place on that day, at Omugulu gOmbashe, in northern western Namibia, currently known as Omusati Region. It was a war that would last for 23 solid years and culminated in Namibia's independence on 21st March 1990.

When the war started, SWALA combatants had only PPSH sub-machine guns and a few semi-automatic rifles. When it ended in 1989, PLAN combatants had at their disposal heavy pieces of artillery and anti-aircraft machineguns such as T-35 Soviet made tanks, Strella C-2ms and the feared Stalin Organs, the BM40 barrel rocket launchers.

When SWAPO launched the armed struggle, Hendrik Verwoerd, the then racist Prime Minister of South Africa, announced with great confidence and arrogance that what was obtaining in “South West Africa” was not a “serious military threat to law and order” but a mere “terrorist attack” which the South African Police in South West Africa would “nib in the bud in a matter of weeks.” He was wrong. The next 23 years that followed ended with Namibia's independence, which he sought to prevent by all means possible.

Namibia's war for liberation – the longest in Africa – provided sober lessons for Pretoria. It taught the apartheid leaders that fanaticism was no match for patriotism, and that a nation critically short of advanced weapons could hold off an enemy with vastly superior weapons through the use of innovative tactics, highly motivated forces and a capacity for large-scale military operations.

Over the years, PLAN had grown into a formidable army, able to launch sustained armed attacks on enemy installations. During that war, Pretoria had committed more than 110 000 troops to active military combat in Namibia, and was spending more than three million Rands a day to maintain its huge army in Namibia in a futile attempt to contain the deepening and broadening of SWAPO's armed liberation activities.

Had it not been for PLAN combatants' military operations in Namibia, no one could talk about Namibia's independence in 1989. Through the barrel of the gun, PLAN combatants made racist troops pack their bags and go home for good, signaling the end of what some historians called Pretoria's worst financial blunder – the money the apartheid regime spent on fighting SWAPO, the costly war which it lost in the end.

Since 1966, Pretoria had sought a military victory over SWAPO. That, alone, cost Pretoria dearly, both in lives and money. Various operations were mounted, but each proved a disastrous failure. Operations such as Savannah, Cobra, Reindeer, Daisy, Smoke-Shell, Protea, Askari, Argon, Modular, Hooper and many others were designed to “break” SWAPO's back-bone, a thinly veiled reference to PLAN.

Each of these operations, fought in southern Angola, was described by Pretoria a “huge success.” Pretoria was so desperate for a military victory over SWAPO that it started to talk about things which never happened. In 1986, Pretoria claimed to all and sundry that it had become the “only country in the world after the British in Malaya, to have defeated a guerrilla insurgency in the history of modern warfare.” What a claim!

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw apartheid South Africa's large-scale military involvement in Namibia and southern Angola. Facing defeat in Namibia and Angola, and bogged down in township demonstrations back home, South Africa's army and police became overstretched and hard-pressed.

Pretoria came up with another plan – Operation Buttermilk – which saw able-bodied whites between the ages of 18 to 55 being registered for what came to be known as the “Citizen Force.” Because of the many older men serving in the “Citizen Force,” it was soon mockingly nicknamed the “Dads' Army.” The call up for the crocks of the “Dads' Army” meant that Pretoria was deploying its last reserves into combat.

The coming into being of the “Dads' Army” bolstered SADF's strength numerically. Or so Pretoria thought. With so many men under arms and ready for combat – old as many of them were anyway – Pretoria thought and probably believed that it was as solid as a rock. No dream was too distant, no bridge too risky to cross. New operations were hatched, and ground was broken to invade Angola, once again. Millions of dollars were lavished at supersonic speed to fulfill Botha-Malan's hegemonic dreams. The last in a series of these operations were Operation Modular and Operation Hooper. They were the last Pretoria ever mounted, and represented a catalogue of monumental military miscalculations.

Buoyed by its numerical strength and the new advanced arsenal at its disposal, Pretoria launched Operation Modular in July 1987. The aim was to strike deep into Angola, capture the strategic town of Cuito Cuanavale, and then set up UNITA as “an alternative South African backed government in the SADF-UNITA controlled areas. UNITA's Jonas Savimbi was so overjoyed by the plan that he prematurely announced that UNITA would “celebrate” Christmas in Quito Cuanavale in December 1987.

Pretoria rushed into Angola with 9000 soldiers supported by hundreds of pieces of artillery, tanks and armoured vehicles, four mechanized battalions and several jet fighter planes. Pretoria thought it was going to be a walk over. It never worked out that way. The end result was a case study in how not to conduct war. Operation Modular fell into difficulties as soon as it was off the board and launched. Within a few weeks, the South African troops were bogged down around Cuito Cuanavale. For seven solid months, Pretoria tried and failed to capture Cuito Cuanavale, pushed back by the combined FAPLA, PLAN and the Cuban Internationalist forces.

Each time they attacked, they were pushed back with heavy casualties. Thousands of its soldiers were killed and wounded, its tanks and armoured vehicles destroyed. With the shooting down of so many of its war planes, its air superiority was lost. Operation Modular turned out to be a disaster. SADF soldiers were strapped inside Angola.

To advance would have meant further heavy losses, and the South African white community back home was no longer ready for more body bags. It had received enough of those anyway. To retreat would also have been worse as heavy rains had made military movement difficult. Their fate was becoming too ghastly to contemplate. Time was running out. The combined FAPLA, PLAN and Cuban internationalist forces were fast closing in on them, waiting for a command to outflank, circle them and slaughter them there.

Pretoria had no option but to quickly and hastily negotiate and reach a deal to save the lives of its soldiers dangerously trapped in Angola. South Africa had no option but to participate in the London-Brazzaville-Cairo-New York and Geneva talks, finally agreeing to pull out of Angola and Namibia and allowing for the implementation of Resolution 435. The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale was a turning point in the history Africa in general, and Namibia in particular. It brought about the liberation of Africa's last colony – Namibia.

As Namibians commemorate Heroes Day this week, the battle of Cuito Cuanavale is to Africa what the Battle of Waterloo is to Europe during the Napoleonic Wars in the mid 1815s. Cuito Cuanavale ended colonialism in Africa. The Battle of Waterloo marked the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte's hegemonic dream, bringing to an end his dream to conquer Europe and make it his empire.

For Namibians, the barrel of the gun showed us the way home. As the flurry of talks took place in various capitals around the world in 1987 and 1988, Pretoria was grudgingly accepting defeat, while at the same time not making a firm commitment that it would adhere to the New York Peace Accord that guaranteed peace and security for Angola and independence for Namibia.

South Africa's then Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, shocked the world when he said in 1989: “We can give no guarantee that the guarantees will be guaranteed.” He was referring to the New York Peace Accord, which South Africa had signed. But of course he was just bluffing. He knew time was not on Pretoria's side. The rest, as they say, is history.