

**THE ROLE-PLAYED BY THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY OF NAMIBIA
[PLAN] DURING THE NAMIBIAN STRUGGLE, 1978 TO 1989.**

By

NENGOVHELA JOHANNES LIVHUWANI

A Short Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

HISTORY

in the

FACULTY OF ARTS

at the

RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR H.J. VAN ASWEGEN

OCTOBER 1999

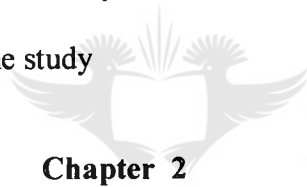
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of contents	i-ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
List of abbreviations	v
Summary / Opsomming	vi

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives and justification of the study	1
1.2 Historiographical analysis	5
1.3 Structure of the study	7



UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

Chapter 2

PLAN & SWAPO

2.1 Background	9
2.2 The organization of PLAN	10
2.3 Recruitment	16
2.4 Military Training	18

Chapter 3

THE NATURE OF THE WAR IN NAMIBIA

3.1 The military Tactics employed by PLAN	21
3.2 The role of women	23
3.3 The role played by the civilian population	25

3.4.	PLAN infiltration and SADF's reaction	28
3.4.1.	Background	28
3.4.2.	First encounters	29
3.4.3.	High tide for PLAN	33
3.4.4.	The battle of Cuito Cuanavale	38
3.4.5.	1 April 1989: The SWAPO incursion	39

Chapter 4

THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE FORCES

4.1.	Background	44
4.2.	Military support	45
4.3.	Financial Aid	46
4.4.	Educational Aid	47



Chapter 5

Conclusion	49
Bibliography	51
Appendices: A	57
B	58
C	59

DEDICATION.

One person took particular interest in my progress from the very beginning of my studies at RAU and had been praying day and night for my success. That person is my father Mr. Phandamulongo Ezekiel Nengovhela. I have dedicated this thesis to him.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Had it not been for the persistent support of Prof. H.J. Aswegen, my supervisor, the thought of submitting this dissertation would still be remote from me. For this reason I decided to express my sincere thanks to him. I will always be grateful for the type of education I received from the RAU and for the assistance and understanding that was shown by Professor Van Aswegen.

Needless to say, without the support I received from my co-workers at work, the study itself would not have been possible.

Word of thanks also goes to my friends Rendani Mathagu and Ravele Ramabulana who gave me remarkable support.

My special thanks go to my sister, Tshililo Nengovhela, who typed the manuscript. You gave much of your time and assistance.

This tribute will be incomplete without a word of acknowledgement to Justice Mudau who tirelessly edited my work at the most critical moment.

Finally I wish to mention the help and untiring support of my mother, Mpfunzeni Daisy, my wife Dovahani Welhiminalah, and my beloved children Takalani and Daisy.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FAPLA	:	People's armed forces for the liberation of Angola
HQ	:	Head Quarters
MPLA	:	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
OAU	:	Organization of African Unity
PLAN	:	People 's Liberation Army of Namibia
SA	:	South Africa
SADF	:	South African Defence Force
SWA	:	South West Africa
SWAPO	:	South West Africa People's Organization.
SWATF	:	South West Africa Territory Force
UN	:	United Nations
UNTAG	:	United Nation Transition Assistance Group



SUMMARY.

The South African government's intransigence to bring about political changes in Namibia had far reaching consequences. The South West Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO) was formed in Namibia to challenge the repressive measures advocated by the South African government in Namibia. The passive resistance met a deaf ear on the side of the South African government, and this coerced SWAPO to adopt a militant nature of resistance. SWAPO realized that a militant resistance can only be effective with the establishment of a guerilla network. As a result of that The Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) was formed.

PLAN became a well-organized guerilla network. PLAN set up its own rules and regulations although being supervised by its mother organization SWAPO.

PLAN guerillas were recruited in Namibia and went for military training in countries such as Tanzania, Egypt, etc. PLAN guerillas were furnished with effective military tactics, which they had to use against the South African Defence Force in Namibia. Women also participated in any PLAN department.

PLAN was well supported by part of the Namibian community and also enjoyed the backing of some African countries such as Botswana, Zambia, Angola and Egypt. PLAN also enjoyed the support of international organisations such as the OAU and the UN.

Most of PLAN guerillas infiltrated Namibian from Angolan soil. This coerced the South African Defence Force to attack PLAN on Angolan soil. Various battles were fought between PLAN and the South African Defence Force. Although PLAN claimed to be innocent from any atrocities, most of its activities were characterized by terrorist natures, e.g. abduction, looting, etc. The South African Defence Force was also involved in human rights violations.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. OBJECTIVES AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY.

Although much has been written on Namibian history, not much attention has been given to SWAPO's military wing, PLAN. This dissertation will try to give a critical account of the role played by PLAN during the Namibian struggle from 1978-1989.

It is imperative to note that there had been a number of clashes between PLAN and SADF before 1978. The main reason for starting this dissertation in 1978 was that it had been the year when large scale clashes between PLAN and SADF escalated. The main reason for ending in 1989 was that, it had been the year when the final battle between PLAN and SADF was fought.

The main focus of this study will be on the investigation of whether PLAN was a Liberation Movement or a terrorist organization. This encompasses a thorough synthesis of PLAN operations in Namibia. In order to obtain a balanced overview of the story, SADF raids against PLAN in Angola will be analyzed, i.e. Casinga raid, Daisy, Protea, Cuite Cuanavale etc.

South African government and SWAPO had different views pertaining to the role played by PLAN in Namibia. The South African government claimed that PLAN was a terrorist organization formed with a clear motive of destabilizing Namibia. SWAPO spokesmen and its leader Sam Nujoma in particular naturally denied that their military wing

practiced terrorism. Their claim was that they were engaged in guerilla warfare against the South African Forces ¹.

The South African government also claimed that the bulk of PLAN activity in Namibia was aimed directly at the civilian population, concentrating on general intimidation of those not well disposed towards SWAPO. SWAPO also claimed that PLAN scrupulously avoided causing civilian casualties. It was above all SWAPO's love affair with landmines that gave the lie to those protestations of innocence².

The South African government also argued that the murder of headmen, shopkeepers, businessmen, officials, politicians and often their families figured prominently in PLAN activities. That was regarded by the South African government as a telling testimony that PLAN was a terrorist organization³.

According to the South African government another terrorist nature of PLAN activities was shown when PLAN was failing in its recruiting method, and thereafter resorted to abduction as a means of increasing its guerilla network. They claimed that sometimes all the children of a school were forced to march across the border at gunpoint. Another occasion saw a bus highjacked across the border with its passengers. Owambos held to be puppets of the Boers were often dispatched in particularly gruesome ways, preferable in front of their families and neighbours. Thus despite its claims to the contrary, SWAPO remained very firmly stuck in the terrorism stage of insurgency, and made no real effort to move out of it into guerilla warfare⁴.

The South African government also rebuked PLAN for its use of landmines. They claimed that landmines were directed at the civilian population and served to spread fear and uncertainty among the population. It also served to hinder economic development. SWAPO claimed that landmine warfare was advantageous and proved to be a popular assassination tool because it achieved all this without the necessity of any contact with the security forces⁵.

Historians also differed on the fact that PLAN guerillas operated with the help of the civilian population in Namibia. Historians such as Louw who were anti-PLAN and pro-South African government hold the conviction that SWAPO guerillas did not get any help or support from the community. Walter Louw argued that PLAN terrorist initially took it for granted that they would be welcomed as freedom-fighters by the Namibian community, but to their surprise they were handed over to the police⁶. This fact was disputed by historians such as Richard Leonard who were pro-PLAN who argued that the civilian population provided PLAN guerillas with shelter and food. Those historians claimed that on occasion some guerillas used bicycles and light trucks borrowed from the local population or provided by supporters⁷.

The South African government and SWAPO also differed in their perspective as regards the cross border raids in Angola by the SADF. The South African government justified those operations as pre-emptive attack to quell down PLAN's terrorist strategies. They argued that external operations objection was to seek out and destroy or disrupt PLAN

activities in Namibia. SWAPO on the other side regarded the cross border raids by South African government as an invasion. SWAPO rebuked SADF for undertaking those type of operations and created the impression that South Africa was acting unreasonably⁸.

Various sources have been used for this dissertation. Much use was made of books, journal articles and official policy documents. South African and international newspapers were consulted. Research bulletins such as Issup, American Relations, Keesing's contemporary Archives, South African facts sheet, South African Record were also used.

Paratus and Hansards were some of the South government official sources used. They were good sources of information but too apologetic to the South African government. Other SWAPO official documents were also consulted. They proved to be good sources of information although biased towards PLAN.

The research for this study was done at various institutions in South Africa. Information was found at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, RAU library in Johannesburg, Johannesburg State library, UNISA and Africa Institute library in Pretoria and UNIVEN library.

1.2. HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS.

It is important to note that historians who wrote about PLAN had different views or perceptions on the role PLAN played during the Namibian struggle.

Certain authors are extremely pro-South African in their approach. This group naturally tends to be anti-PLAN. Those historians categorized PLAN guerillas as terrorist who only wanted to destabilize Namibia and carry out activities such as murder, rape, maiming and abduction of innocent men, women and children in Namibia. They tried by all means to condemn PLAN activities in Namibia. Those historians ignored certain basic flaws emanating from the SADF activities in Namibia. Authors who can be placed in this group are: S. Manuel, **The border Wars**, M. Moris, **Armed Conflict in South Africa**, W. Louw, **Owambo**, W. Turner, **Continent Ablaze: The Insurgence wars in Africa**, P. Stiff, **Nine Days of War**.

The second group of authors tend to be pro-PLAN and are sympathetic to her cause. This group also ignored certain basic flaws when analyzing PLAN activities in Namibia. These authors have unreserved praise for PLAN's military activities in Namibia. They deliberately ignored PLAN's human rights violation in Namibia. They justified SWAPO's armed struggle carried out by PLAN guerillas as the only viable means to achieve a peaceful settlement in the Namibian situation. The authors who are associated with this group are P.H. Katjavivi, **A history of resistance in South Africa**, Richard Leonard, **South Africa at War**, G.M. Carter and P. O' Meara, **Southern Africa: the continuing Crisis**.

The third group of authors can be identified by their strong academic approach to the topic, although these works are not by any means neutral. These authors are far more

realistic in their evaluation and criticism of PLAN's military activities in Namibia. Although they are mostly biased in favour of PLAN, they analyzed the SADF military activities in Namibia. Their evaluation is more academic. The most notable authors from this group are S.C. Saxena, Namibia and the World, C. Leys and J Saul, Namibia's Liberation Struggle.

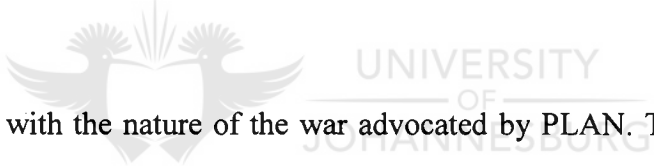


1.3. STRUCTURE OF STUDY.

This study has been divided into four chapters.

Chapter one is an introduction. It is in this chapter where the objectives of the study and historiographical analysis were discussed.

Chapter two gives a brief background on the factors that led to the formation of PLAN. It also analyzed the way in which PLAN as the military of SWAPO was organized. The recruitment of PLAN guerillas will also be considered. Military training of PLAN guerillas will also be highlighted.



Chapter three deals with the nature of the war advocated by PLAN. The military tactics employed by PLAN will be analyzed. Attention will also be given to the role played by Women in PLAN. A clear analysis will also be made on the role played by the Civilian population. This chapter will also take into account the way in which the South African Defence Force reacted to PLAN infiltration in Namibia.

The last chapter focuses on the support which PLAN get from international organisations such as OAU and the UN. The support, which PLAN got from other countries such as Russia, Cuba, Angola, Zambia, Egypt, Tanzania, etc, will be highlighted.

END NOTES

1. C.Leys and J.Soul: **Namibia's Liberation Struggle**, p 20.
2. H.R. Heitman, **South African Armed Forces**, p. 189.
3. **Ibid.**
4. **Ibid.**
5. A.L.J. Venter, **Challenge: South Africa Within the African Revolutionary Context**, p. 184.
6. W, Louw, **Owambo**, p.13.
7. H.R. Heitman, **South African Armed Forces**, p. 189.
8. A.L.J. Venter, **Challenge: Southern Africa Within African Revolutionary context**, p.186.



CHAPTER TWO

PLAN & SWAPO

2.1. BACKGROUND

The situation before the formation of PLAN was characterized by wide-scale repressive measures being taken by the South African government in Namibia. This repression led to resistance on the side of the oppressed community in Namibia, with SWAPO co-ordinating and giving direction to the scattered resistance which was by then gaining momentum.¹

The peaceful effort envisaged by SWAPO in trying to stabilize the Namibian situation met a deaf ear on the side of the South African government. The South African government's reaction was to nip the movement in the bud by restricting most of its army leading activists as well as by forcing many of its leaders into exile. A score of SWAPO cadres faced severe harassment in the form of dismissal from jobs, schools and expulsion from urban areas to the country side. This coerced SWAPO to resort to armed struggle, hence armed struggle could not be carried out without a strong military wing.²

In the face of the above stated measures of repression, it became necessary for SWAPO to establish a guerilla network. The people liberation army of Namibia (PLAN), SWAPO's military wing, was formed³.

The possibilities for successful armed struggle seemed very limited when SWAPO took that fateful decision. Portugal still controlled Angola, and the struggle for independence

there seemed unpromising. Nevertheless, it was possible for PLAN to infiltrate across the Angola border into Ovamboland, since by reason of ethnic origin SWAPO had strong sympathy among the Ovambos, who straddled the border. Infiltration of the Eastern Caprivi strip from Zambia was also possible despite the fact that the Eastern Caprivi was protected by a major air base near Katima Mulilo. The western portion of the strip, with much close vegetation was ideal for guerilla movement but contained no significant targets.⁴

Clashes between PLAN and the South African Defence Force gained momentum after the downfall of the Portuguese colonial government in 1974 in Angola, which was pro-South African government. This was followed by the withdrawal of the South African Forces in Angola after the end of Operation Savannah in March 1976.⁵

2.2. THE ORGANIZATION OF PLAN

PLAN was the military wing of SWAPO. Saxena argued that although PLAN was an integral part of the overall structure of SWAPO, it was allowed to function more or less independently as a specialized unit.⁶ It was empowered by SWAPO to frame its own rules and regulations governing its administration and activities. PLAN's rules and regulations had to be approved by the central committee, SWAPO's main policy-making body.⁷

PLAN had four operational zones i.e. areas targeted by SWAPO for sabotage, ambushes, and harassment, in the country. These were the northeastern zone (The Caprivi strip), the

Central (Grootfontein district), the Northern (Okavango and Owambo) and the Northwestern (Kaokoveld). All these zones lie in the Northern part of the territory, because the largest number of Africans were there, and also because the denser vegetation made the land more suitable for guerilla operations than the more barren south or open central parts of Namibia.⁸

In the operational zone the guerillas were organized in platoons. Those units carried out most of the operations, but sometimes several platoons were joined for large-scale operations. A political commissar and a commander led each unit. The duty of the political commissar was to maintain moral and discipline as well as conducting political education within the unit. This means that the commissar made sure that the fighters act in accordance with SWAPO's basic political principles.⁹

The commander focused on military matters. These encompass logistics, tactics, the conduct of operations, and military discipline. The platoon leaders were assisted by a deputy commander, deputy political commissar and other officers responsible for first aid, etc.¹⁰

Within each operational zone the platoon leaders coordinated their work through the regional leadership, headed by a political commissar and a commander. At the national level was the SWAPO military commanders.¹¹

The military commission was charged with the task of devising the military strategy. It traveled throughout the operational zones and met with platoon and smaller unit leaders, who advised the commission about the conditions in their areas. The people's political

developments, their geographical situation, proximity to the enemy bases as well as the strength of the enemy was different from one area to the next and were carefully considered by the commission in developing SWAPO's military strategy.¹²

The overall commander of the army was responsible to the secretary of defense that provided the vital link between the political and military structures. Both were members of the executive committee of SWAPO, empowered with implementing the decisions of the central committee.¹³

Each PLAN fighting unit, of whatever size, had a political instructor whose duty was to educate the cadres before and after the battle. A program of each week was carried out in which political instructors lectured the cadres with the aid of books and pamphlets produced by SWAPO, as well as those from countries in support of Namibian struggle. The experience of other countries whose people have had to fight an independence struggle was discussed in order to develop an understanding of the forces against which SWAPO and the people of Namibia were fighting.¹⁴

SWAPO freedom fighters were first and foremost armed political militants. It was the duty of each and every cadre to explain the aims and objectives of SWAPO so that people knew why they were prepared to sacrifice their lives for the freedom of their country.¹⁵

Literacy training was provided for PLAN cadres who could not read and write. There was wide-scale discussion over key issues such as relations between PLAN and the civilian population and SWAPO's policy and program for a future independent Namibia.¹⁶

PLAN was totally integrated into the overall structure and daily working of the party as a whole. There was a concern for democratic structures and discussion within PLAN, subject to the framework necessary for maintaining a disciplined army. After battle, cadres met and discussed the operation, and it was through those discussions that experience and knowledge was forged.¹⁷

Within PLAN, cadres of both sexes received equal training and there was no restrictions on women cadres holding responsible positions of authority. There were in fact several women commanders. One of the purposes of political education was to teach the cadres not to regard women as being confined to preparing food or childbearing and rearing. Although there was division of labor in PLAN (with units responsible for food gathering, cooking, repairing and maintaining of weaponry and vehicles, etc) it was not along sexual lines.¹⁸

Most of the PLAN supplies such as food, clothing and even medicines came from the Namibian people themselves. SWAPO leaders realized that they could not rely on supplies from outside countries. They preached the gospel of being well organized inside the country. It was mainly the responsibility of SWAPO cells to organize the people to help supply the freedom fighters. The political commissar for each platoon arranged with local cell leaders for supplying his unit. Sometimes the units paid for supplies, but if there

were no funds, they exchanged tobacco, salt or even an overcoat for an ox or goat. Sometimes the people would give food freely.¹⁹

Guerillas even grew their own food. Where the rainfall was good or where water was available, they grew tomatoes, or even maize, but generally only crops, which ripen quickly.²⁰

PLAN's Angolan deployment consisted of a military headquarters at Lubango, an operational headquarters near Cassinga and forward and rear divisions at Tecamutete and Jamba. PLAN had its four regional commanders near Cahama (Western) Mupa (Central and Eastern) and the SouthWestern Zambian town of Mongu.²¹

SWAPO president Mr Sam Nujoma was also commander-in-chief of PLAN, with the combat name Tshifishuma. PLAN's supreme commander was Dimo Hamaanbo, a seasoned military man, who spent much of his time with his forces in the bush.²²

The central region commander was Hamutenya Nandenga combat name Zulu. Ndakolo Mathias (Mbulungana) commanded the eastern region and Uno Shaanika (kanana) the western region.²³

Mr Nujoma, Mr Hamaambo and the regional commanders made up the command council, which usually met at Lubango whenever military policy or other important matters were to be decided.²⁴

Regional headquarters were organized on a purely military basis, but each had a political commissar, whose status was equal to that of regional commanders, and was responsible for political activation of the unit. Second to regional commander and commissar was the regional chief of staff. Those positions were followed by the chiefs of staff of operations, reconnaissance, intelligence, logistics, personnel, artillery and anti air defense, administration, transport and secretary for the regional command council.²⁵

PLAN also had a training base near Lubango code-named Volcano. It was where the Russians and East Germany trained elite fighters in advance techniques of assassination and urban sabotage.²⁶

The first commander of PLAN was Tobias Hanyeko. He was killed in 1967 by the South African forces on the Kwando River in Caprivi. His successor, Dimo Hamaambo, continued to lead the organization up to independence. The deputy commander was Solomon Hawala (Avala) who was the chief of security.²⁷

It is evident that the hierarchical structure and distribution of tasks for PLAN members was one of the main reasons for its limited success. Tasks were decentralized in order to involve all members of the PLAN and to envisage the kind of relationship that existed. There was no segregation as far as the allocation of posts was concerned because even women held responsible positions.²⁸

The substantial support which the PLAN guerillas received from the Namibian people was also one of the main reasons for their success. It is also difficult to state with absolute

certainty why the South African military force was unable to pin-down the PLAN guerillas who were even getting chance of growing tomatoes, maize, etc.

2.3. RECRUITMENT.

There are different perspectives as to how PLAN guerillas were recruited in Namibia. SWAPO held the conviction that PLAN guerillas were ordinary SWAPO members who volunteered to join PLAN. Those were Namibians who felt that they could no longer put up with conditions under the South African rule. Those Namibians who joined PLAN left their jobs, villages, and schools, to seek better opportunities outside their country.²⁹

The recruiting drive was sufficiently successful to cause approximately 900 recruits to leave the territory illegally. Mr H. Muller, the then South African Deputy Minister of Justice, police and prisons rebuked the United Nations for having provided bursaries to some of the recruits. Mr Muller also argued that some of those PLAN recruits were 14 and 15-year-old youths who were taken from the streets without the knowledge of their parents.³⁰

Historians such as Louw argued that PLAN guerillas were actually recruited from Namibia and sent elsewhere to receive training in guerilla warfare and sabotage. According to Louw as enticement the recruits were informed of their opportunity to acquire British and USA scholarships, complete with salaries during their scholarship period. Secret instructions were sent to SWAPO men still remaining in Namibia, asking them to induct men under those pretexts.³¹

Historians like Katjavivi have different perspectives regarding the issue of recruitment. Katjavivi argues that PLAN guerillas joined because they were inspired by the stories of the wars fought by their grandparents against the Germans and the South Africans. They felt that they were part of a direct line of resistance to colonial rule. As the number of recruits into PLAN increased, some of them were sent for academic studies.³²

Recruits from Namibia made their way into Botswana or into Zambia via the Caprivi. As the groups grew in numbers, batches of 10 to 30 at a time moved by air-lift or landrover to Lusaka and then Dar es Salam. The South African government alleged that when they reached Dar es Salam those recruits who at that stage still had academic illusions were moved out of such notions, and militarism was introduced into their handling. Some recruits naturally objected but if any such objections manifested itself in defiance, military arrest and punishment followed. This is actually a telling testimony that terrorism prevailed in PLAN activities.³³

Whenever PLAN failed in its recruiting method, abduction became the alternative. Examples of these approaches includes groups of 119, 200 and 60 abducted in 1978, 1979 and 1980 respectively. Another occasion saw a bus hijacked across the border together with its passengers. This sought of activity decrease in the early 1980's as another result of the cross-border operations and surveillance of the security forces, which made it difficult to move large groups of unwilling recruits even inside Southern Angola.³⁴

Many of the new recruits were trained in Zambia and Tanzania by Soviet and Chinese instructors respectively. Cuban instructors arrived in Zambia from April 1975. Negotiations with both UNITA and the MPLA brought SWAPO permission to train their terrorist in Southern Angola, virtually on the doorstep of their target areas.³⁵

2.4. MILITARY TRAINING.

PLAN guerillas were either trained within Africa (Egypt, Ghana, Algeria and Tanzania) or in Cuba and the Soviet Union. Those who went to Cairo were trained by Arab officers in the use of explosives.³⁶

Some were taught English for a month at a spot near Dar Es Salaam, then flown to Moscow where for six months they were the proteges of an English-speaking Russian officer. They learned the use of firearms and explosives, and how to sabotage installations and railroads. Then the fighters were brought together in Tanzania for final operational procedures that were appropriate for Namibia.³⁷

The South African government also contributed directly and indirectly to the rise of the number of Namibian people who wanted to join PLAN. Repressive measures such as the dismissal of SWAPO cadres from their jobs, detention without trial, etc, played an important role in increasing the number of PLAN guerillas outside Namibia. It is also clear that PLAN's recruiting drive was successful, therefore, PLAN must be credited for that.³⁸

END NOTE

1. C. Leys and J. Saul, Namibia's Liberation struggle, p.19.
2. Ibid. p.20.
3. Ibid.
4. G.M.Carter and P. O'Meara, Southern Africa in Crisis, p.173.
5. Ibid.
6. C. Saxena, Namibia and the world, p.70.
7. Ibid.
8. C. Leys and J. Saul, Namibia's liberation struggle, p.21.
9. SWAPO To be born a nation: The liberation struggle for Namibia, p.14.
10. Ibid. p.14.
11. Ibid.
12. Southern Africa Record, p. 56-57.
13. Ibid.
14. SWAPO To be born a nation: The liberation struggle for Namibia, p.22.
15. Ibid. p.262.
16. Ibid.
17. S.C. Saxena, Namibia and the world, p.70.
18. SWAPO To be born a nation: The liberation struggle for Namibia, p.262.
19. Namibia , SWAPO I. p.15.
20. Ibid. p.21.
21. The Star, 4 August 1982, p.10.
22. Ibid., p.21.

23. **Rand Daily Mail**, 4 August 1982, p.10.
24. **Ibid.** p.21.
25. **Eastern Province Herald**, 4 August 1982, p.8.
26. **Rand Daily Mail**, 4 August 1982, p.8.
27. **Eastern Province Herald**, 4 August 1982, p.8.
28. **Ibid.**
29. H. Hunke, **Namibia: The strength of the powerless**, p. 48.
30. P. H. Katjavivi, **A history of resistance in Namibia**, p.91.
31. W. Louw, **Owambo**, p.2.
32. **Ibid.**
33. P.H. Katjavivi. **A history of resistance in Namibia**, p.91.
34. W. Louw, **Owambo**, p.2.
35. H. R. Heitman, **South African Armed Force**, p. 189.
36. **Ibid.** p.146.
37. P. H. Katjavivi: **A history of resistance in Namibia**, p.91.
38. **Ibid.**

CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURE OF WAR IN NAMIBIA.

3.1. THE MILITARY TACTICS EMPLOYED BY PLAN.

The military tactics employed by PLAN were conventional guerilla tactics of limited attacks from a political supportive base, amongst the people. The SWAPO guerilla tactics were mainly small-unit sabotage, ambush and harassment of enemy posts. They ambushed river traffic, especially patrol boats, and used land mines against SADF units on the roads. Landmines were especially effective on the network of roads used by military vehicles. They also attacked military installations using bazookas, rifles, machine guns and hand grenades.¹

With the exception of the extensive mining of roads, to which South Africa also contributed, PLAN's tactics had been to avoid civilian casualties and to respect mission property and personnel. Another feature of PLAN strategy was the killing of those Namibian people, who were regarded as collaborators.² For example, Daniel Shooya, a member of the executive committee of the Ovambo administration was killed by PLAN guerillas who accused him of collaborating with the South African government.³

Another military tactic that proved to be effective was PLAN's attack on white farmers. This tactic led to the abandonment of farms by white farmers. For example, in 1981 a

number of farms in the Outjo District were abandoned as a result of the attack by PLAN guerillas.⁴

Equipping the guerillas with modern weapons was one of SWAPO's biggest problems. Some of the units had to use very old equipment; others had fighters with no arms at all. Therefore, the capturing of arms from the South African government proved to be an important objective in the operations. Those captured arms were again used to quell down SADF operations in Angola.⁵

Another PLAN tactic was the disruption of transportation along the highways. The deployment of PLAN units to the east of the Etosha Pan occasionally disrupted transportation along the highway north of Oshivello. PLAN also used mortars and rockets to attack the administration centers in Namibia.⁶

The attack on South African aircraft was one of the prime tactics carried out by PLAN. For example, in 1980 a mortar attack destroyed a number of aircraft at the South African base at Ondangwa. Limpet bombs were also used by PLAN guerillas to destroy government buildings in Namibia. For example, in July 1983 a powerful limpet bomb exploded in the center of Windhoek and caused extensive damage to property.⁷

The celebrated Ruacana Falls Dam power station was rendered unusable through sabotage of power lines to the South, and a new electricity supply was to be brought up from South African's grid. Telegraphic poles and bridges on the Ovamboland main roads were regularly blown up.⁸

3.2. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PLAN.

In the early stages of PLAN, the participation of women was small due to the social structure in the country. Women were caught up in the old tradition of being an inferior person in the household. Against this background, the involvement of women in the struggle was relatively slow compared to that of male comrades.⁹

The participation of women in SWAPO's armed struggle had expanded with the use of modern equipment and technology because old equipments were heavy to handle. Training was done jointly by both men and women.¹⁰ There were various reasons that compelled women to join PLAN. Women knew that they had everything to gain from the ousting of the South African regime. Women like men had been victimized for their SWAPO loyalties. For example, Gertrude Kadanga, deputy secretary of SWAPO women's council was detained without trial for over a year. Other women such as Ida Jimmy (a SWAPO member) were sacked from their jobs, for their political activities. These women facing repressing measures advocated by the South African government had no choice but to flee Namibia and join PLAN.¹¹

Women participated at all levels of the struggle PLAN was waging. The only limitation was one's physical capabilities. If a woman was not physically fit to carry out some of the more difficult tasks, then she was not allowed to do those kinds of work.¹²

In the course of PLAN's struggle, the male comrade's attitude was also an obstacle to women to a certain degree. Men did not expect much of the women's contribution. The

women took that obstacle up themselves when they started to demonstrate their capabilities in performing their duties equally well as their male counterparts. Among the Namibians who died in combat and were honored for their bravery were two women who died attempting to defend the Casinga refugee settlement during South Africa's 1978 operation. These women died with anti-aircraft guns in their hands.¹³

President Sam Nujoma confirmed that women in SWAPO were not only among the rank and file of PLAN. Women were active combatants at the front, but had also risen to positions of responsibility in the army. Together with the men they were determined to liberate Namibia. The increasing numbers of women combatants in the PLAN and in camps in Zambia and Angola was a clear testimony to the greater direct participation by Namibian women in the military effort for liberation. Women played a major role as Carriers, walking for days into the combat zone in Namibia, bearing supplies of arms and food for the freedom fighters.¹⁴

The integration of women into the military wing of SWAPO as armed combatants, signifies a great leap forward in the development of the liberation movement, and in the struggle by Namibian women to fulfill their historic duty on all fronts of the struggle for freedom. It signified a change in the perception of the role of women in the movement, to a new and democratic position which recognize the importance of equal opportunity for all Namibians, and the worth of all good combatants, irrespective of gender.¹⁵

3.3. THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE CIVILIAN POPULATION.

Most of the PLAN supplies such as food, clothing and even medicine came from the Namibian people themselves. In his speech before the Pretoria court, Herman Toivo Ja Toivo declared that he had passed on to the PLAN guerillas fighters not only medicine and money but even dynamite which he got from SWAPO members working in the mines. Toivo even encouraged the community to carry on supporting the guerillas.¹⁶

When the trained PLAN fighters returned home, the people welcomed them with open arms, giving them shelter, food and intelligence about enemy movements. Large sections of the population were really in harmonious relation with PLAN cadres, as a result of the protection they were increasingly able to provide against the routine searches and interrogation by the South African patrols.¹⁷

PLAN units relied upon the local population for food and shelter. The people, SWAPO members and supporters, were the eyes and ears of PLAN, and many of its cadres previously live and worked among the local population. The relationship developed and became more reciprocal. PLAN units based inside Namibia also grew their own food which they shared with the local population, and provided safer refuge for those unable to stand the terror of South Africa's occupation. It was also PLAN cadres who escorted those wishing to leave, for military training or to study, across the border to freedom.¹⁸

PLAN leaders realized that they could not rely on supplies from outside, fearing the danger of being attacked by SADF busy transporting supplies from the outside donors,

such as Russia and China. They preached the gospel of being well organized inside the country. It was mainly the responsibility of SWAPO cells to organize the people to help supply the freedom fighters. The political commissar for each platoon arranged with local cell leaders for supplying his unit. Sometimes the units paid for supplies, but if there were no funds, they exchanged tobacco, salt or even an overcoat for an ox or goat. Sometimes the people gave food freely. In some places where the rainfall was good or there was abundant water supply, the guerillas grew tomatoes, or even maize, but generally only crops, which ripen quickly.¹⁹

Most PLAN guerillas also carried money to enable them to supplement their rations with purchases from local shops rather than seizure. Extortion of food and other items, was however, rife despite this, as was looting. That itself proved that terrorist natures prevailed in PLAN activities.²⁰

Freedom fighters of PLAN had escalated the armed struggle to the point that it played the leading role in the liberation struggle as a whole. That meant increasingly close integration of the civilian and military wings of the liberation movement. In the combat zone in the north, PLAN cadres performed a whole range of political and welfare functions in addition to their military roles.²¹

PLAN cadres moved the length and breadth of the country, carrying information, gathering intelligence, recruiting volunteers for training and executing missions against the enemy's troops and lines of communications.²²

Local assistance included information about movements of South African forces and some provision of food and shelter. This close interaction between SWAPO fighters and the local people meant that the fighters knew the layout of the area before they undertook any military action. They were also immensely assisted by their knowledge of local languages.²³

Ammunition, grenade, mortars and land mines did not always have to be carried into Namibia by the backs of PLAN fighters. Local supporters would drive herds of cattle behind PLAN groups to conceal their spoor and often-heavy material was loaded on the cattle as well.²⁴

A few churchmen also helped fighters to cache arms. Many parish churches supplied food and shelter. Local businesspeople with vehicles provided transport to take guerillas and their equipment into the white farming areas south of the Red Line, where PLAN units could cache arms and begin political activation of local people.²⁵

The South African answer to the people who did not want them to capture PLAN soldiers was to escalate their repressive practices into a systematic reign of terror over the entire civilian population. In central Ovamboland many adult men were hauled in for torture and interrogation at army and police camps. But quite apart from special operations such as these, rape, beatings and atrocities against civilians were matters of daily routine for South African patrols. Many civilians died or simple disappeared.²⁶

The security forces stopped at nothing to force information out of people. They broke into homes, beaten up residents; shot people, stole and killed cattle and often-pillaged stores and tearooms. When the tracks of SWAPO guerillas were discovered by the security forces the local people were blindfolded, taken from their homes and left beaten up and even dead by the roadside.²⁷

PLAN guerillas on the side also attacked and killed civilians who were unwilling to cooperate. For example, Daniel Shooya, a member of the executive committee of the administration for Owambos, was killed by PLAN guerillas who accused him of collaborating with the South African government. Two other civilians who were also regarded as betrayers by PLAN were killed. The two victims, Petrus Antolium and Kephass Tonata were killed about 25 kilometers from Oshifutu.²⁸

It can be assumed that the substantial support the PLAN guerillas received from the Namibian people was an important reason for their limited success. It is also difficult to state with absolute certainty why the South African military force was unable to pin-down the PLAN guerillas who were at certain stage even getting chance of growing tomatoes.

3.4. PLAN INFILTRATION AND SADF'S REACTION.

3.4.1. Background.

In Owambo itself, PLAN terrorism began to escalate seriously not long after the South African forces had been withdrawn from Angola at the end of Operation Savannah in

March 1976. The ease with which PLAN guerrillas could slip from their Angolan camps into Owambo and back again, often the same night, made it virtually impossible for the security forces to counter those activities effectively. In 1977 President Kaunda decided to again permit PLAN to operate from Zambian territory. SWAPO exploited the situation and began to deploy a force of 900 men in South Western Zambia to reactivate Caprivi.²⁹

During 1978 terrorism escalated as a result of SWAPO 's ready access from Southern Angola and the ability of the terrorist to swiftly withdraw across the border when endangered. The new situation in Angola had also made incursions by large groups of terrorist a practical proposition for the first time, because they could then carry out their mission and withdraw before the security forces could react.³⁰

3.4.2. First encounters.

PLAN infiltration began on the eve of the rains. At that time of the year conditions were at their most favorable. The grass was tall and the bush thick, providing maximum cover, the Oshonas or level areas became large shallow lakes, and there was plenty of drinking water, while the heavy rain slowed down SADF and SWATF follow-ups making it easier to hide one's spoor.³¹

PLAN infiltration was a tiresome business because the camps were deep inside Southern Angola, bitter experience had taught PLAN that permanent bases within 200km or so of the border were vulnerable to lightning pre-emptive attacks from the southern part of Angola. The South Africans were never hesitant about bursting into Angola soil to break

up a planned movement Southwards. It was a startling successful tactic, and the majority of PLAN guerillas killed in the border war were lost on Angolan and not Namibian soil.³²

PLAN's 1978 rainy-season infiltration into Namibia took the occupation regime by surprise in its power. According to SWAPO, PLAN units repeatedly proved their ability to concentrate in large formation against South African military bases, to avoid detection and to execute missions to central and Southern Namibia.³³

In January 1978, members of PLAN in Ovamboland and Caprivi were involved in a series of contacts, laid numerous landmines with legal consequences, kidnapped 119 children and killed several civilians, including a member of the Ovamboland internal cabinet and two SADF officers.³⁴



A SWAPO war report for January – February 1978 highlighted major encounters between PLAN and the South African occupation troops, showing the range and scale of PLAN's operations. According to the report in January 1978, a landmine at Ohakafiya blew up a South African troop carrier on the Nkongo-Onunu road, killing five and wounding several South African troops. PLAN combatants also ambushed a convoy of trucks carrying troops at Odimba, northern region, using small and heavy caliber firearms. According to SWAPO, the South African soldiers suffered heavy casualties, and a large quantity of their war equipment was seized and destroyed.³⁵

The South African Defence Force spokesmen declared that abduction featured well in PLAN's activities in Namibia. According to him in February 1978 a large group of

terrorist took 240 children and a teacher from the Anglican school at St Mary's, mission station, 3km from the border. About 160 of the children were taken to Angola.³⁶

The South African government's reaction towards PLAN's infiltration was to embark on a cross-border operation. The South African government declared an external operation as a deliberate planned attack designed to pre-empt a known or suspected action by the insurgents before they can set it in motion. They argued that external operation's objection was to seek out and destroy or disrupt PLAN activities in Namibia.³⁷

In 1978, Operation Reindeer was the first and the most important SADF operation because of its long-lasting effects on PLAN. The South African Defence Force targeted the former copper-mining town of Casinga, 250km inside Angola, which military intelligence had identified as the main forward operational headquarters of SWAPO for Southern Angola and a training camp capable of housing up to 1200 insurgent recruits. That plan called for an aerial attack on Casinga by SAAF fighters and bombers. Paratroopers were expected to destroy all PLAN ammunitions, equipment and weapons and try to bring back trained PLAN insurgents for interrogation as well as documents and other intelligence material, particularly documents of Russian origin to prove that SWAPO was directly linked to the Soviet Union.³⁸ (See Appendix A)

The attack on Casinga caused heavy damage and casualties. About 1000 PLAN guerillas were killed and 200 captured, while its infiltration had been seriously interrupted and large amounts of valuable intelligence material captured.³⁹

SWAPO spokesman later denied that Casinga was an armed installation, describing it as camp for refugees from South African repression with only a “camp defense unit” of 300 men. The South African aerial photographs showed that the town had an extensive network of deep Russian type zigzag trenches, bunkers and various other indications of strong defenses meant for a large force.⁴⁰

In reaction to the Cassinga raid PLAN thereafter fired 122mm rockets at the base at Katima Mulilo on 23 August 1978. Ten soldiers were killed when a rocket hit the barracks hut in which they were sleeping.⁴¹

The second cross-border actions, Operation Saffron was in response to PLAN's rocket attack against the SADF base at Katima Mulilo. That operation, initiated on 23 of August 1978 effectively ended PLAN presence in the Zambian border area north of the Caprivi Strip.⁴²

The impact of Operation Protea on the conflict was as immense as the captured military material. Over 1 000 PLAN and FAPLA were killed and FAPLA had been defeated in three separate engagements. The PLAN base camp and logistical network along the border from the Cunene River east of Ngiva had been completely disrupted.⁴³ (See Appendix B)

A follow-up operation took place in November 1978, launched on the 1st of that month. This was operation Daisy, which was conducted by a task force, built around elements of 61st, 32 Battalion and SWATF elements. Many of the SADF personnel were reservists mobilized for the operation. Operation Daisy's target was a complex of PLAN bases 240km inside Angola in the Bambi and Chetequera area northeast Cunene. The primary objective for the operation was the destruction of the PLAN base complex at Chetequera, where the insurgents had regrouped after being scattered by Operation Protea. The SADF/SWATF forces attacked the base on 1st November 1978 after moving north for three days along the Ngiva-Anhaca-Nehone axis and then north toward the sources of Cunene River. For almost three weeks the force systematically searched out and destroyed the PLAN infrastructure in the vicinity of the Bambi HQ and the Chetequera base camp.⁴⁴ (See Appendix B)



3.4.3. High tide for plan.

During 1979 837 incidents of PLAN guerillas were registered. February 1979 brought the largest group of guerillas to ever operate inside Owambo, when 250 fired at the army base at Nkongo with small arms and mortars, before quickly withdrawing over the border. Later that month another group of guerillas mortared the base at Elundu. Kaokoland in the northwest of South West Africa also saw some several incidents of mine laying and murder.⁴⁵

SWAPO also analyzed their experience of the 1978 and 1979 raids. Their immediate reaction was to withdraw most of their bases deeper into Angola. They asked for Cuban assistance in training up a small conventional force, which would be able to protect those

of their camps, which had to be deployed in the vulnerable southern region of Angola. Cuban instructors were provided and began training selected SWAPO personnel in the finer acts of conventional warfare during 1980. The conventional training was carried out at the Tobias Hanyeko Training Center and at Jumbo Training Camp.⁴⁶

In January 1980 elements of PLAN's special unit, code named Volcano, and Typhoon, penetrated into the commercial farming district to the South of Owambo and some began operating inside Western Kavango. In February 1980, PLAN terrorists laid a record of 42 landmines on the sand roads of Owambo.⁴⁷

In 1981 PLAN's Typhoon and Volcano unit broke through to white farming areas during the rainy season. PLAN's attack on white farmers led to more unrest amongst the whites of Namibia.⁴⁸

1981 had been a good year for the SADF and SWATF in the continuing war with PLAN guerillas. The security forces killed over 2 500 PLAN guerillas while suffering the loss of 56. However, at least 154 civilians had been killed by PLAN, either directly or by land mines they had laid. But it remained obvious to the security forces that as long as PLAN could infiltrate and intimidate or terrorize the general population, the insurgents would have a claim to success that could be recognized by sympathetic political and media groups.⁴⁹

In 1982, during PLAN's push over from the Mangeti block to the Tsumeb District, seven SADF members were killed by PLAN guerillas. Six of them were killed when RPG-7 rocket hit their rattle troop carrier as they were investigating the reported presence of the guerillas in the Mangeti bloc.⁵¹ According to military spokesmen, PLAN guerillas were heavily armed with modern equipment including Sam-7 surface to air heat-seeking missiles, RPG-7 rocket launchers, automatic assault rifles and mortars. PLAN guerillas also destroyed telephone lines near the Owambo border.⁵¹

In 1982 the guerillas thrust into the white farming areas of Tsumeb and Grootfontein, led to the death of Daniel Rudolf Potgieter who was killed driving on the main road from Ruudu to Grootfontein. The security forces were forced to announce that the Horoabi gate where the road passed from Grootfontein district into Kavango would be closed while they undertook follow-up operations.⁵²

In 1982, the South African Defence Force carried out the most important cross-border raid into Angola from Namibia. The main aim was to nip in the bud a planned offensive in the operational area by a special SWAPO unit called, Volcano, which was responsible for infiltrating the Tsumeb district. The SADF destroyed two of SWAPO's three main southern operational headquarters and penetrated almost 200km into Angola. The commando also went into action at Mupa, a small town next to SWAPO regional headquarters.⁵³ The security forces' strike units destroyed three SWAPO military bases deep in Angolan territory. PLAN's western regional headquarters near Cahama, has been overrun by security forces.⁵⁴

SWAPO had 1 500 guerillas available for the 1984 rainy season, 750 of them were members of the Typhoon special unit. This was not only in PLAN's favour, as is reflected by their casualties: 157 PLAN terrorist has died by the end of February 1984, the security forces having lost 7 soldiers.⁵⁵

Landmines in Owambo's sand roads began to claim new victims, 21 Owambos by the end of March 1984. Bombs hit Ondangwa petrol station, shops, supermarkets, a meat packing plant and a soft drink bottling point. Other bombs were set off in a sports hall at the Ongwediwa College and in a disco at Oluno. Oshakati and the kraal of a headman near Tsandi were also mortared.⁵⁶

The 1984 PLAN infiltration into Angola forced the SADF to embark on another important operation called Askari. One of the immediate results of Askari, apart from the damage done to the operational capability of PLAN, was that the Angolans had been hurt badly enough to talk about peace. On 14 February 1984 South Africans and Angolans met at the Mulungushi Conference Center at Lusaka in Zambia for intensive talks referred by the Americans. The result was the creation of the South African- Angolan Joint Monitoring Commission (JMC) which was to oversee the removal of foreign troops (Cubans, South Africans and PLAN) from most of Southern Angola. This scheme did not succeed because the Angolans made no serious attempt to stop PLAN from travelling through and even living in Southern Angola. As a result of that, the JMC was formally disbanded in February 1985.⁵⁷ (See Appendix C)

PLAN's 1985/86 infiltration was delayed by the late rainy seasons, which had resulted in the rivers being in flood, but the vegetation too sparse to provide cover. On 21 May 1985 a large group of PLAN terrorist ambushed two army platoons which had pursued them into Southern Angola. The ambush did not go as planned, 56 terrorists were killed.⁵⁸

1987 opened much more violently than 1986: 100 PLAN terrorists and 11 members of the security forces had died by 22 January. The Angolan government continued to complain of South African incursions. Its own forces, for their part, were again becoming more active. The SADF reaction teams following a group of PLAN terrorist into Southern Angola were fired on by FAPLA troops near Mongua on 25 January 1987.⁵⁹

During the wet season in 1987 PLAN infiltrators signaled their presence by blowing up four telephone poles on the farm Vergenoeg, on the eastern border of Etosha Game Reserve.⁶⁰ The security forces killed a SWAPO insurgent in the Etosha National Park, who was alleged to be part of a group of six SWAPO fighters who blew up telephone poles on a farm next to Etosha. The other five members of PLAN were tracked down and killed in huge ground and air operations.⁶¹

In 1987, PLAN guerillas penetrated the white farming land around Etosha about 200km south of the Angolan border. They killed several members of the white ranching community as well as troops. Two members of the security forces were killed. They were riflemen Michael Gauseb and Mariru Maunda.⁶²

On 13 January 1988, a group of PLAN terrorists rocketed Oshakati, killing two civilians. On 19 February 1988 a bomb in a bank at Oshakati killed twenty civilians and injured forty-four.⁶³

In August 1988 SWAPO terrorists sabotaged the pipeline bringing water from Ruacana to central Owambo. That was a potential serious attack, as the main pipe from Calueque had already been damaged.⁶⁴

3.4.4. The battle of Cuito Cuanavale.

In 1988 South African's external operation had ended in grief in southern Angola. Cuito Cuanavale became the hinge of fate opening the door to Namibian independence. South African invasion got bogged down near the small town of Cuito Cuanavale in 1988.⁶⁵

A mixed Angolan-PLAN force stopped the South African forces west of Cuito Cuanavale and swept to the Namibian border. South Africa could not easily defend Northern Namibia as PLAN had superior air cover. South Africa was forced to abandon its strategic aim of holding Namibia and resorted to negotiate peace with Angola. More seriously, South Africa had lost in its long struggle to keep Namibia South African or convert it into a bantustan.⁶⁶

3.4.5. 1 April 1989: The SWAPO Incursion.

On 1 April 1989 SWAPO launched a massive terrorist incursion from Southern Angola. The first terrorist entered Owambo during the night of 31 March to 1 April 1989. The

nights 1 to 2nd April saw more SWAPO terrorist cross into SWA. Two groups of 150 and 100 respectively crossed the border just east of Ruacana and two groups of 50 each crossed into Eastern Owambo near Nkongo. Sunday 2 April 1989 brought at least 30 contacts, including two major clashes in which 25 and 17 terrorists were killed.⁶⁷ (See Appendix C)

The intensity of the fighting over those days was indicated by the fact that some 22 police and army vehicles were destroyed or damaged. Villagers in some areas were forced to abandon their kraals and began moving to the towns and villages near army bases for safety.⁶⁸

By 8 April 1989 there were some 1 900 SWAPO terrorist inside Owambo, and more were waiting to cross from Southern Angola. Between 1 and 8 April, 262 SWAPO terrorists and 27 members of the SWA police, the SAW Territory Force and the South African army had been killed.⁶⁹

On 8 April 1989, SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma finally bowed to extensive pressure and agreed to recall his terrorists from Owambo. Pressure came from the Angolan and Cuban governments.⁷⁰

Delegates from South Africa, Cuba, Angola had meanwhile met at Mount Etjo 250 kilometers north of Windhoek to discuss the crisis. Angola and Cuba both expressed themselves outraged by SWAPO's action, and were at pains to reassure South Africa that

they were abiding by the terms of the joint agreements. By 12 April 1989, Sam Nujoma had ordered his men back to Angola, but had not instructed them to report to the Untag assembly points.⁷¹

ENDNOTES

1. S. Maroney, Handbooks to the Modern World, p.384.
2. Ibid., p.39.
3. The Windhoek Advertiser, 18 March 1987, p.3.
4. J. Haare, Insight Guides Namibia, p.42.
5. Namibia, SWAPO I, p.13.
6. Ibid., p.13.
7. Ibid.,
8. B. Wood, Namibia 1884-1984, p.621.
9. To the women in Namibia; This is the time, p.18.
10. Ibid., p.20.
11. Ibid.
12. B. Wood, Namibia 1884-1984, p.350.
13. Ibid., p.350.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Namibia: SWAPO I, p.15.
17. SWAPO, To be born a nation: The liberation struggle for Namibia, p.226.
18. Ibid.

19. **Namibia: SWAPO I**, p.15.
20. H.R. Heitman, **South African Armed Forces**, p.190.
21. **SWAPO, To be born a nation: The liberation struggle for Namibia**, p.252.
22. **Ibid.**
23. P.H. Katjavivi, **A history of resistance in Namibia**, p.89.
24. C. Leys and J. Saul, **Namibia's liberation struggle**, p.20.
25. **Ibid.**, p.29.
26. **The Windhoek Advertiser**, 18 March 1987, p.4.
27. P.H. Katjavivi, **A history of resistance in Namibia**, p.89.
28. **The Windhoek Advertiser**, 18 March 1987, p.4.
29. **Hansard**, 17 April 1978, vol.1., p.6.
30. **Acta Academica**, Journal for Human Science Research Council, Volume 29, March 1991, p.117.
31. A.L.J. Venter, **Challenge: Southern Africa within the African Revolutionary context**, p.183.
31. **Ibid.**
32. **SWAPO, To be born a nation: The liberation struggle for Namibia**, p.253.
33. H.R. Heitman, **South African Armed Forces**, p.149.
34. A.L.J. Venter, **Challenge: South Africa within the African Revolutionary context**, p.185.
35. W. Steenkamp, **South Africa's border War**, p.74.
36. A.L.J. Venter, **Challenge: South Africa Within the African Revolutionary Context**, p. 198.

37. **Ibid.**, p.197.
38. H.R. Heitman, **South African Armed Forces**, p.151.
39. W. Turner, **Continent Ablaze: The insurgence wars in Africa** p.38.
40. **Ibid** .
41. **Ibid.**, p .40.
42. H.R Heitman , **South Africa Armed Forces** , p , 151 .
43. **Ibid** ., p.153.
44. **Ibid** ., p.154.
45. C . Leys and J . Saul , **Namibia 's liberation struggle** , p,32.
46. W .Turner , **Continent Ablaze : The insurgence wars in Africa** , p.43.
47. **The Cape Times**, 13 April 1982, p.2.
48. **The Star**, 26 May 1982, p1.
49. **The Cape Times**, 13 April 1982, p.2.
50. **American Relations**, Vol, No. 12, p.12.
51. **The Star**, 22 May 1982, p.3.
52. **Ibid.**,p.2.
53. H.R. Heitman, **South African Armed Forces**, p.173.
54. **Issup bulletine**, 4 September 1987, p.6.
55. A.L.J. Venter, **Challenge: South Africa within the African Revolutionary context**, p.203.
56. H.R. Heitman, **South African Armed Forces**, p.175.
57. **Ibid.**, p.176.

58. **Pretoria News**, 13 April 1987, p.1.
59. **The Argus**, 3 April 1987, p.2.
60. **The Citizen**, 3 April 1987, p.2.
61. H.R. Heitman, **South African Armed Forces**, p.176.
62. **Ibid.**,p176.
63. O. Furley, **Conflict in Africa**, p.212.
64. **Ibid.**
65. H.R. Heitman, **South African armed Forces**,p.179.
66. **Ibid.**, p.180.
67. H.R. Heitman, **South African Armed Forces**, P. 179.
68. **Ibid.**, p. 180
69. **Ibid.**
70. **Ibid.**
71. **Paratus**, Vol.41, 3 March 1990, p.5.
72. **Ibid.**



CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE FORCES

4.1. BACKGROUND.

The plight and pain suffered by Namibians from Apartheid Colonialism received sympathy from international bodies such as the United Nation Organisation (UN) and Organisation of African Unity (OAU). By aiding nationalist movements this bodies were criticized severely by the South African government.¹

By funding SWAPO in Namibia, the United Nations was criticized by South African government. Hunke argued that giving financial aid, UN was publicize as a covert pro-Marxist conspiracy. This view was shared by Robert who argued that the main objective of funding the so called liberation groups was to overthrow Western-Oriented administrations in certain territories and install neutral dictatorship almost always Marxist.²

The recognition of SWAPO by the OAU was necessary for the movement to qualify for OAU material and diplomatic support. After gaining OAU recognition and diplomatic support, PLAN was able to attract support from many countries outside Africa as well as various international Organisations. Further than that, the OAU and its liberation committee played an important role in co-ordinating policy on the aimed struggle strategy.³

4.2. MILITARY SUPPORT.

African countries played different roles during the Namibian Liberation war which was spearheaded by PLAN. Various African countries took care of military preparations for PLAN combatants. For example, by 1962, PLAN's first combatants began receiving military training in Egypt, where SWAPO had opened an office. PLAN guerillas also received training in Algeria. PLAN guerillas training sponsored by the OAU liberation committee was also provided at Kongwa in Tanzania.⁴

PLAN recruits from Namibia made their way to Botswana, or Zambia via the Caprivi. Those who went to Botswana went via Francistown. Normal requirements for travel-documents were waived by the Botswana, Zambian and Tanzanian authorities. That is an indication of the extent of the support PLAN received from most of the African states.⁴

After military training, PLAN guerillas moved from Tanzania through Zambia, Caprivi and Angola. This actually means that the route from and to Namibia was open for PLAN guerillas in most of the African states.⁵

The MPLA government in Angola also gave assistance to PLAN in the form of military facilities and logistic support. This was marked by the development of a formal-regular logistic support base camps for PLAN inside Angola. This was also marked by additional support for PLAN by Russia and Cuba in Angola and at PLAN sites in Zambia and Tanzania.⁶

The extent of support which PLAN got from most of the African states was also a very important reason for its success. If those various African states did not provide PLAN with training facilities, PLAN could not have worked effectively. Therefore, military training of PLAN guerillas only developed as a result of the assistance of African countries such as Tanzania, Zambia, Egypt, etc.⁷

4.3. FINANCIAL AID.

The OAU did not only concentrate on PLAN's military training, it also provided PLAN with funds. The OAU support for PLAN was shown by its channeled funds to PLAN through its African Liberation Committee. At an OAU ministerial meeting held in Addis Ababa on 24th February 1980, ministers called for increased support for PLAN to intensify the guerilla struggle.⁸



The ministers endorsed a decision made by the OAU liberation committee in Arusha (Tanzania) calling for increased material, financial, diplomatic and political aid to SWAPO of \$700 000 (USA) from the OAU 1981-1982 budget.⁹

Russia and Cuba also played important roles during the Namibian Liberation War. Under the leadership of Sam Nujoma, SWAPO moved closer to the Soviet bloc. Nujoma visited Moscow and received promises of more sophisticated weapons for PLAN. Nujoma also went to Cuba as the guest of Cuban communist party's central committee and he had talks with Fidel Castro and Ernesto Viega who gave him promises of Cuba's unshakable support for PLAN.¹⁰

PLAN also enjoyed some financial backings and the provision of weapons by the Soviet Union. The Soviet commitment to support PLAN was shown by the fact that in 1978 large Soviet transport, similar to Boeing 707's, unloaded ground-to-air missiles and ground-to-ground missiles in Angola. Some of the ground-to-air missiles found the way to PLAN bases in Cassinga in the south of Angola.¹¹

PLAN also received constant material assistance and diplomatic support from China for the cause of liberation of Namibia. This information was disclosed by the president of SWAPO, Sam Nujoma, during his seventh visit to China. In his speech Sam Nujoma thanked the Chinese government for what he called constant material assistance. Nujoma also reiterated the fact that PLAN also received arms and ammunitions of all kinds from China.¹²



It is clear from all available evidence that the financial, material and diplomatic support which PLAN got from Russia, Cuba, China and international organizations such as the OAU and the UN did a lot to boost the morale of PLAN guerillas.

4.4. EDUCATIONAL AID.

According to Herbstein and Evenson education in exile was a powerful magnet for the school children in Namibia. Many decided to leave the country and went abroad where they could get good education. When they arrive in foreign countries they got chance of joining PLAN. Sometimes many people from one school left the country and went as far as Cuba Island, Zambia, Ghana, Uganda, etc.¹³

Those PLAN guerrillas who were abroad were able to show the plight and pains suffered by the Namibians. Consequently, they received international support, which was in the form of scholarship. Furthermore, they campaigned against the presence of apartheid Colonialism in Namibia and earned the sympathy of the international community. ¹⁴

END NOTES


1. **Namibia, A direct United Nations Responsibility** , p.183.
2. H. Hunke , **Namibia the strength of the Powerless** , p.47.
3. **Namibia : A direct United Responsibility** , p.221.
4. R. First , **South West Africa Travesty of Trust** , p.221.
5. D. Herbststein , **The devils are among us** , p.48.
6. C. Leys and J. Saul , **Namibia 's liberation struggle** , p.29.
7. A. Mazrui and M. Tidy, **Nationalism and New States in Africa** , p.152.
8. C. Leys and J.Saul , **Namibia's liberation struggle** ,p.20.
9. M. Palmberg ,**The struggle for Africa** , p.32.
10. **Keesing 's contemporary Archieves** , 15 May 1981 , p .30864.
11. **American Relations** ,vol .1. no .12 , p .2 .
12. A. Mazrui and M. Tidy, **Nationalism and New States in Africa** ,p .153.
13. **American Relations** , vol .1, no.12, p.2.
14. **The Citizen** , 19 march 1985, p.22.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION.

This thesis aimed at giving an account of the role played by PLAN during the Namibian struggle. The emphasis was on investigating whether PLAN was a terrorist organization or a liberation movement.

A clear background had shown that the repressive measures taken by the South African government in Namibia were the real causes of the emergence of armed struggle. PLAN was thereafter formed as a clear response to the South African government's intransigence to bring about political changes in Namibia.



It is imperative to note that the South African government claimed that PLAN was a terrorist organization formed by SWAPO with a clear motive of destabilizing Namibia. Although SWAPO claimed that its military wing was innocent, PLAN's activities had terrorist natures. For example, abduction featured strongly during the recruitment of new guerillas by PLAN. Children became victims of abduction and had to travel many kilometres from Namibia to Angola.

It is clear from all available evidence that PLAN enjoyed the support of most of the Namibian community. It is also interesting to note that another section of the Namibian community was pro-South African government and therefore anti-PLAN. This was the section which reported the presence of plan guerillas to the police.

The military tactics employed by PLAN in Namibia were also of a terrorist nature. The attack on headmen, shopkeepers, businessmen, officials, politicians showed that terrorist characteristics featured well in PLAN's military stactics. PLAN regarded landmines as a good weapon against South African Defence Force; most of the civilian population became victims of landmines. The South African forces the other hand also used landmines. Some of the landmines were planted by the South African Defence Force with the idea that Namibian Community would lay the blame on PLAN.

It is also interesting to note that just like PLAN, the South African Defence Force also found itself engaging in human rights violations. Rape, beatings and atrocities against civilians were matters of daily routine for South African patrols. Many civilians were killed or simple disappeared.



The support which PLAN got from the OAU and the UN did a lot to boost the morable of PLAN guerillas. The fact that the OAU and the UN did not distance themselves from PLAN activities showed that SWAPO's stand was supported internationally.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS: PUBLISHED

- Hansard : SA Parliamentary debates, House of
Assembly, Cape Town,
: 17 April 1978, Vol. 5
: 23 March 1983, Vol. 1
: 31 March 1983, Vol.3
- Paratus : Official monthly periodical of the
SA Defence Force,
: 10 October 1989, Vol. 40
: 3 March 1990, Vol.41

2. NEWSPAPERS

2.1 NAMIBIAN

- The Windhoek Advertiser** : **18 March 1987**

2.2 SOUTH AFRICAN

- Eastern Province Herald : 04 August 1982
- Pretoria News : 13 April 1987
- Rand Daily Mail : 04 August 1982
- The Argus : 03 April 1987
- The Cape Times : 22 April 1982
: 22 April 1983
: 04 August 1987



The Citizen : 19 March 1985

: 03 April 1987

The Star : 22 May 1982

: 26 May 1982

: 05 August 1982

3. RESEARCH BULLETINS

"American Relations", Vol.1, and No. 12 : Institute of American Relations,
Washington, 1978.

"Keesing's Contemporary Archives", Vol. 27, 1981.

Vol.31, 1985.

"Southern African Facts Sheets", No. 8, Southern African Editorial Services,
South Africa, 1986.

"Southern African Record", South Africa Institute of International Affairs,
Bulawayo, 1981.

4. BOOKS

Anon. : Namibia: A Direct United Nations
Responsibility, United Institute for
Namibia, Lusaka, 1987.

Duignam, P. and Gann, L.H. : South West Africa. S.A.I.I.A.,
Johannesburg, 1977.

First, R. : South West Africa Travesty of Trust.
Penguin, Harmandworth, 1963.

- Furley, O. : Conflict in Africa. Tauris Academic Studies, Bloomsbury, 1995.
- Haare, J. : Insight Guides Namibia. APA Publication Ltd, London, 1993.
- Hall, R. : South West Africa: Proposal for Action. Africa Bureau, London, 1970
- Heitman, H.R. : South African Armed Force. Buffalo Publications, Cape Town, 1990.
- Heitman, H.R. : South African War Machines. Central News Agency Ltd, Johannesburg, 1985
- Herbstein, D and Evenson, S : The devils are among us: The War in Namibia. Zed Press, London, 1989.
- Katjavivi, P.H. : A history of resistance in Namibia. Unesco Drukkery, Parys, 1988.
- Legum, C. : The Battlefront of Southern Africa. Africana, New York, 1990.
- Leornard, R. : South Africa at War. A.D. Donker, Cape Town, 1993.
- Leys, C. and Saul, J. : Namibia's Liberation Struggle. Ohio University Press, Athens, 1995.

- Louw, W. : Owambo. Suid-Afrikaans, Voorbrand, Stellenbosch, 1989.
- Maroney, S. : Handbook to the Modern World. Facts Publications, New York, 1989.
- Mazrui, A. and Tidy, M. : Nationalism and new states in Africa. Heinmann Educational Books, New Hampshire, 1984.
- Morris, M. : Armed Conflict in Southern Africa. The Citadel Press, Landsdownie, 1974.
- Palmberg, M. : The struggle for Africa. Zed Press, London, 1983.
- Saxena, S.C. : Namibia and the world. Kalinga Publication, Delhi, 1991.
- Serfontein, J.H.P. : Namibia? Suid Publishers, Randburg, 1976.
- Steenkamp, W. : South Africa's Border War 1966-1984. Ashanti, Gibraltar, 1987.
- Stiff, P. : Nine days of War. Lemur books, South Africa, 1989.
- Turner, W. : Continent Ablaze: The insurgency

- Wars in Africa. Streling Publishers,
New York, 1998.
- Venter, A.L.J. : Challenge : Southern Africa
Within the African Revolutionary
Context. Ashanti Publishing Limited
Gibraltar, 1989.
- SWAPO : To be born a nation: The liberation
Struggle for Namibia. Zed Press,
London, 1981.
- Wood, B. (Ed) : Namibia 1884-1984: Readings on
Namibia's History and Society.
Namibia's Support Committee,
London, 1988.



UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

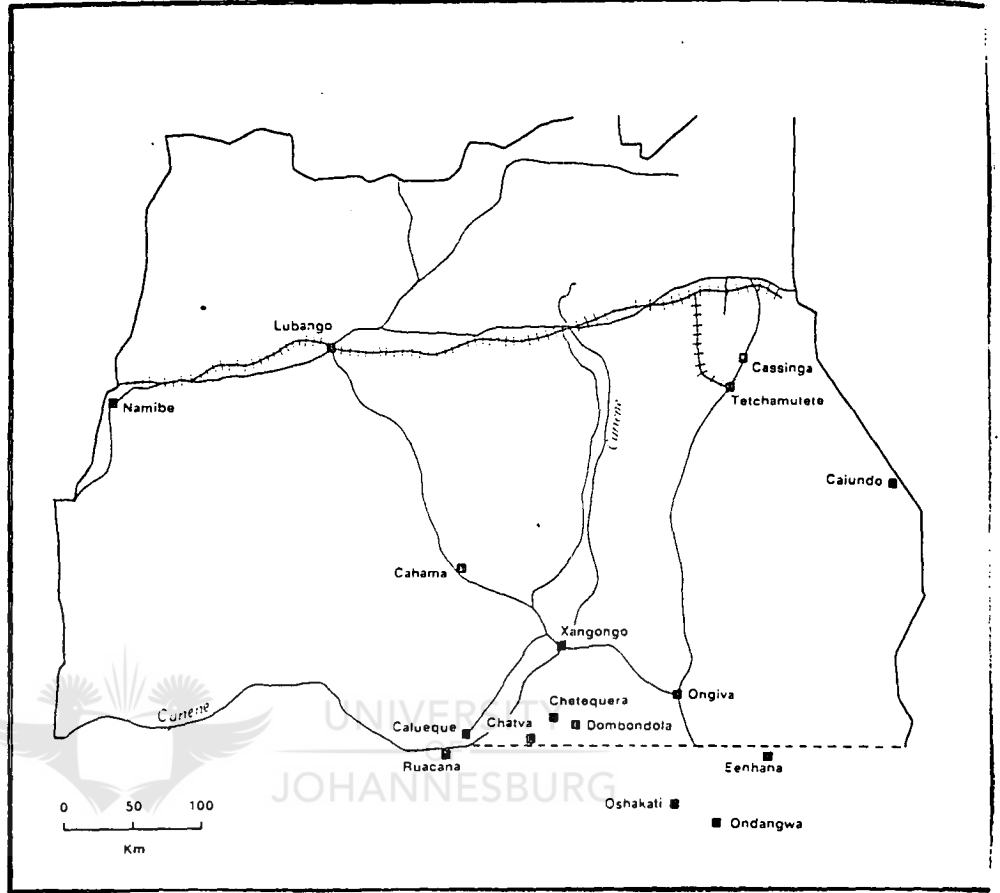
5. ARTICLES AND JOURNALS

- Acta Academica : Journal for Human Science Research
Council, Volume 29, Bloemfontein,
1991.
- Anon. : Namibia, SWAPO I. Interviews in
Depth, LSM Information Center,
Auckland, 1979.
- Anon. : Namibia, SWAPO Fights for
Freedom. LSM Information Center,
Auckland, 1978.

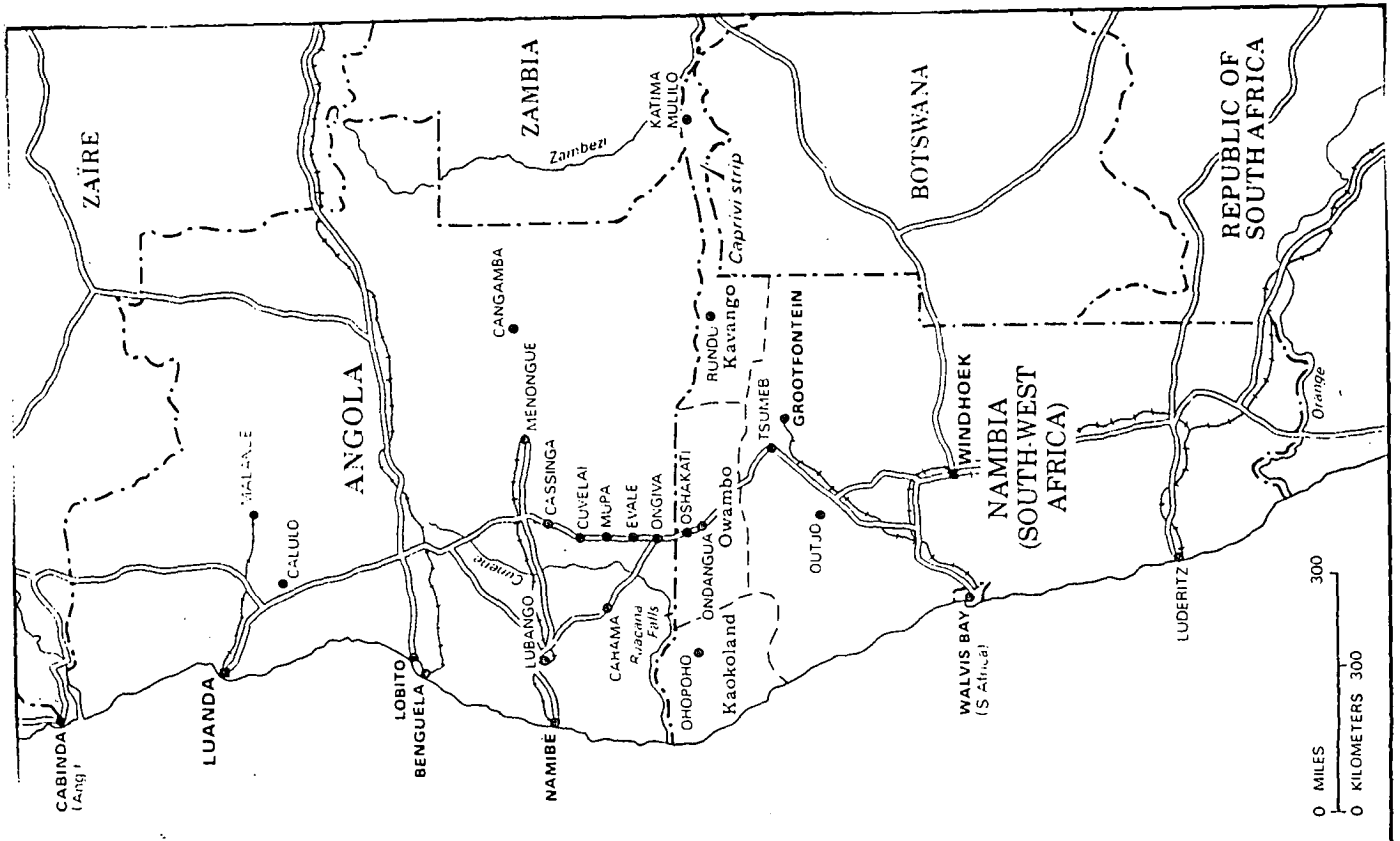
- Anon. : The Political Program of SWAPO.
SWAPO National Headquarters,
Windhoek, 1978.
- Anon. : To the Women in Namibia, This is
The time. Chicago Committee for
African Liberation, Chicago, 1977.
- Hunke, H. : Namibia The Strength of the
Powerless, Rome, 1986.
- Issup Bulletin : 4 September 1981, Institute for
Strategic Studies, University of
Pretoria.
- Issup Strategic Review : December 1981, Institute or
Strategic Studies, University of
Pretoria.
- Manuel, S. : The border wars: South Africa's
Response: The institute for the study
Of conflict. No date, No place.
- Militaria : Military History Journal of the South
African Defence Force.
Documentation Service Directorate,
Pretoria, 1995.

APPENDIX A

Operation Reindeer 1978

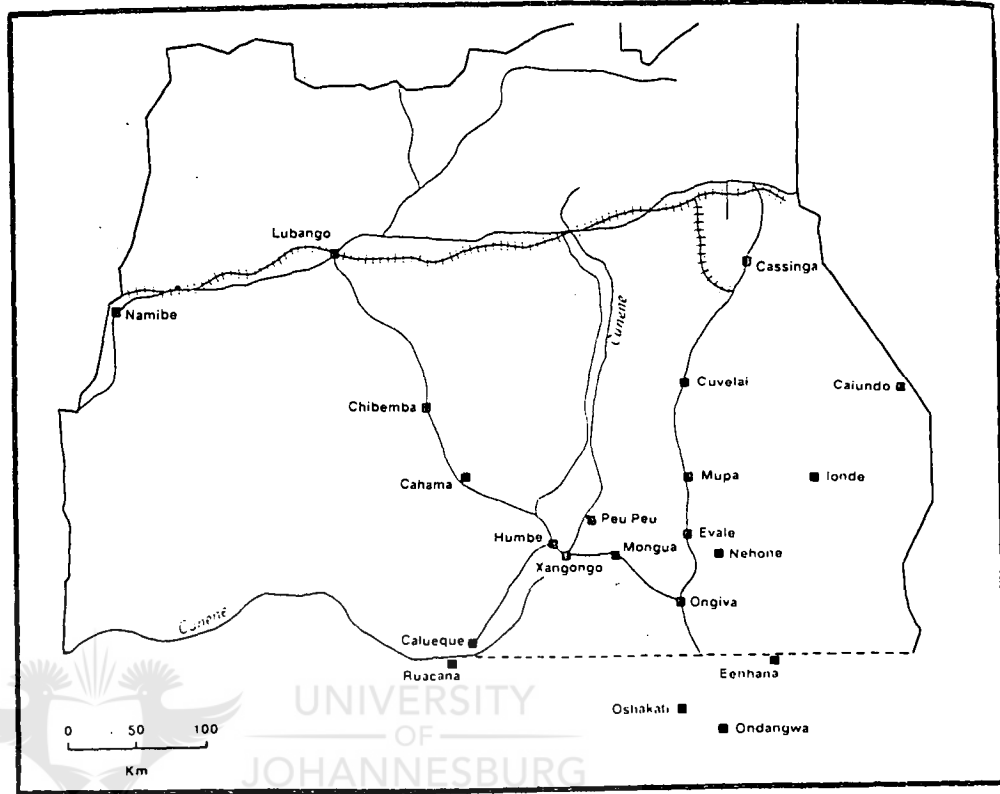


Heitman, H.R. South African Armed Forces, P. 150



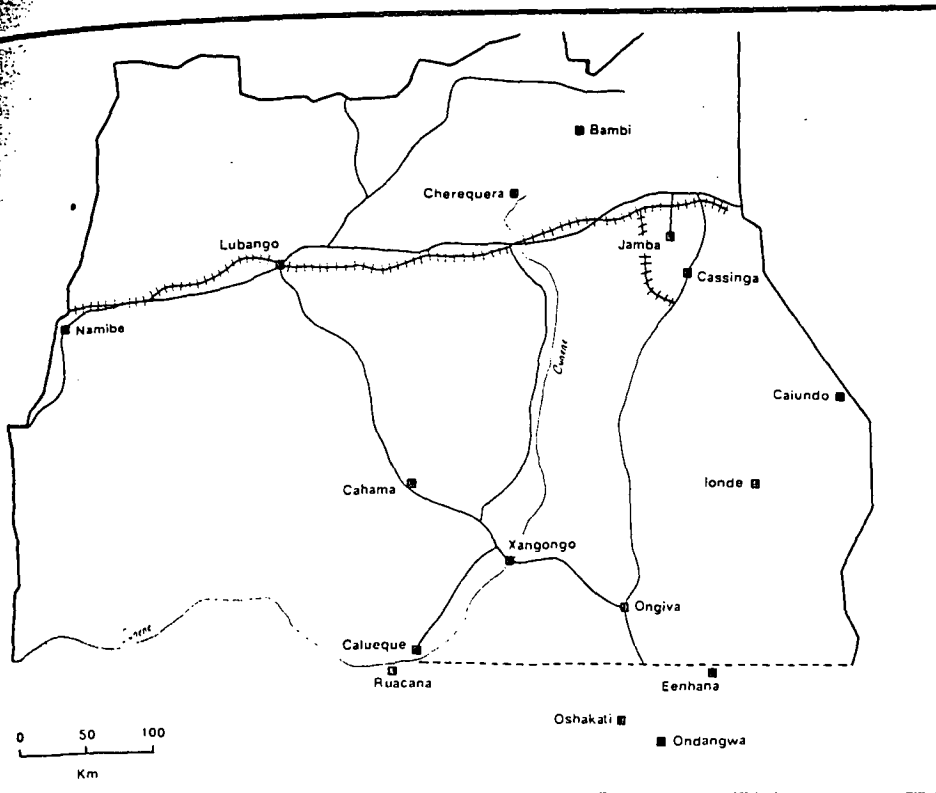
APPENDIX B

Operation Protea 1978



Heitman, H.R. South African Armed Forces, P. 160

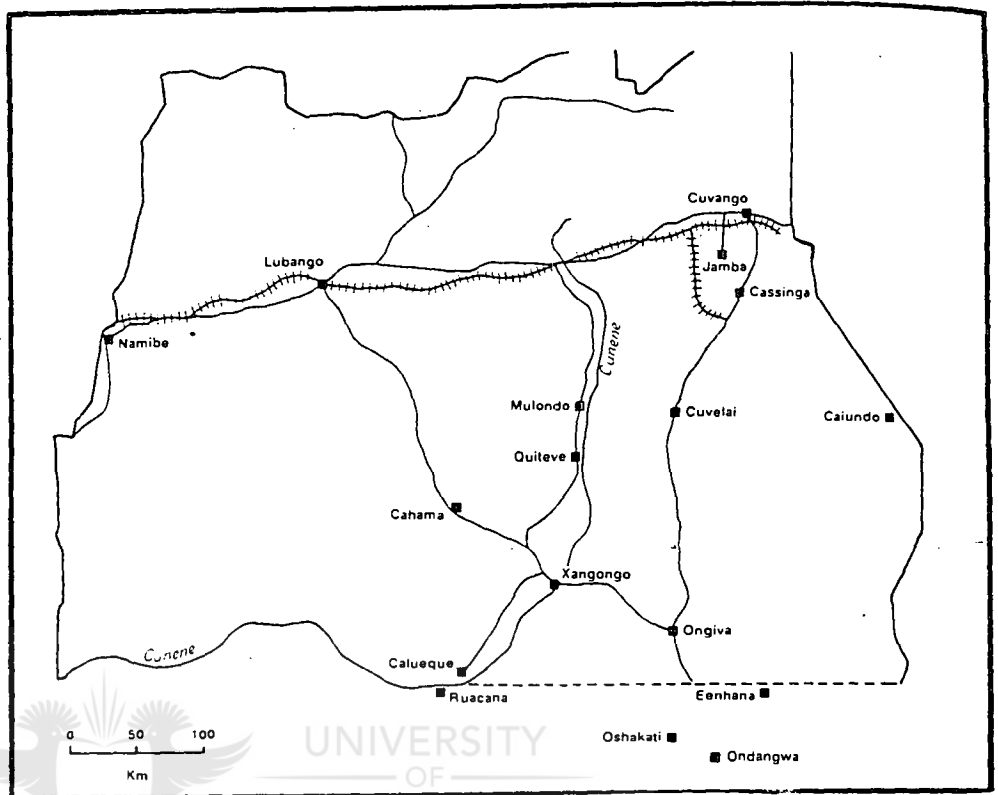
Operation Daisy 1978



Heitman, H.R. South African Armed Forces, P. 165

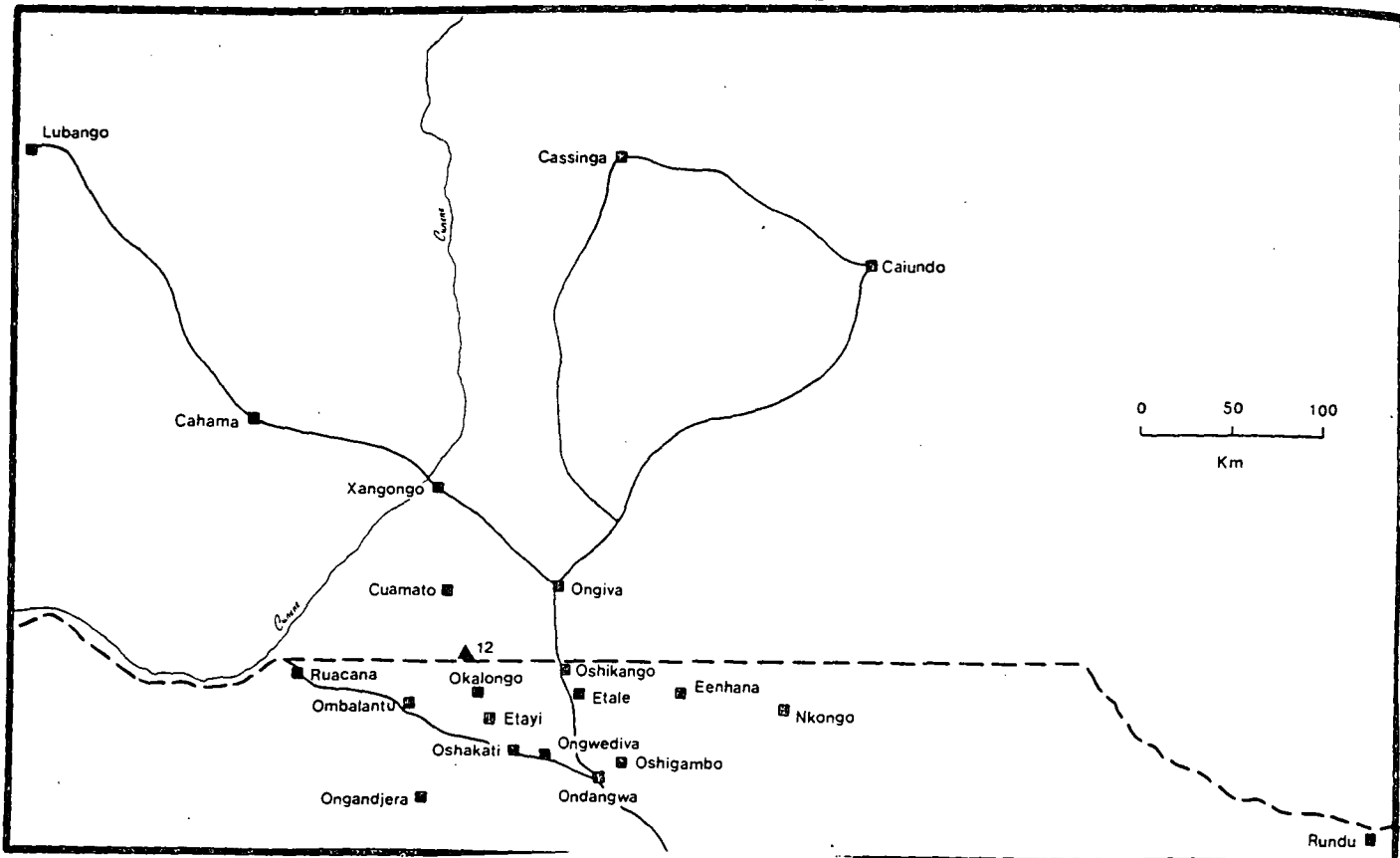
APPENDIX C

Operation Askari 1984



Heitman, H.R. South African Armed Forces, P. 168

Heitman, H.R. South African Armed Forces, P. 180



The 1 April Swapo infiltration 1989