

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
BY DR RICHARD NCHABI KAMWI, MP
ON THE OCCASION OF
COMMEMORATION OF THE CASSINGA DAY
ONDANGWA, OSHANA REGION
20TH July 2008

Programme Director – Cde. Rabanus-Nyumba

Hon. Governor – Cde. Penda Ya Ndakolo

Hon. Regional Councillor, Onyaanya Constituency – Cde. H. Kankoshi

The Chairperson – Management Committee

Senior Headman of Uukwanambwa District – Tatekulu Shilongo Uukule

Ontunda Village Headman – Tatekulu Angula Elago

Station Commander Okatope Police Station – Sgt. Shiwaya

SWAPO Party Women’s Council

Church and Community Leaders

Members of the Print and Electronic Media

Comrades and Friends

Before I begin with my remarks, may I respectfully request that we observe a moment of silence in the memory of the fallen heroes and heroines who died at Cassinga and during the liberation struggle!

Comrades and Compatriots,

The SWAPO Party Government declared 4th May as a public holiday in memory of the fallen heroes and heroines who were massacred at Cassinga 30 years ago. As a result, every year on this day, 4th May, throughout the country, we assemble, in sorrow, to pay tribute to more than 600 women and children mowed down in cold blood by apartheid bullets at Cassinga in Southern Angola. In this respect and on this historic sombre day we also reflect upon our colonial past and the brutality inflicted upon our people by racist minority white settlers. We pause therefore to pay tribute and salute those no longer with us and so brutally taken from this land by the vicious and inhuman system of Apartheid colonialism.

Programme Director,

We shall never forget that hundreds of thousands South African troops were deployed throughout our motherland. Heavy armaments were daily falling on the surface of the soil of our land and brutally mowing down our people. We shall never forget that our mothers, sisters and daughters became targeted victims of sadistic rape and other forms of abuse by the South African troops of illegal occupation.

We shall never forget that our fathers, brothers and sons were perishing daily in hails of bullets as suspects or potential “enemies” of the system. We shall never forget that our villages, hamlets, homes, crops, livestock, churches and schools were being burnt down or bombed indiscriminately. For how can we forget that many more thousands of our people were alienated from our land and communities of the Namibian nation; that the evil forces of apartheid military occupation put brother against brother, brother against sister, through a cycle of death and deception!

We also remember vividly that the racist regime steeped up its aggressive and provocative acts against the neighboring Frontline States, especially the People’s Republic of Angola and Zambia. Using sophisticated NATO weapons, it attacked innocent civilians, economic and social infrastructures of these countries. It was daily killing, maiming and displacing thousands of people and destroying valuable properties, livestock and roads in the People’s Republic of Angola. This barbarism was extended to Cassinga on 4th May 1978.

Thus, today, as we mourn our dead, it is also fitting that we pay tribute to the people of Angola who have sacrificed so much for our liberation and independence. We must salute the MPLA-Workers’ Party, the Government, the People of Angola, FAPLA and other Angolan defence and mass organizations for the bravery and resolute determination with which they stood on our side.

Comrades and Compatriots,

Indeed, since the time of Jan van Riebeeck to that of Dirk Mudge, these racist settlers came uninvited to scavenge and plunder the natural resources of our land. This plunder was carried out through the sheer arrogance of racist superiority complex, as they arrogated to themselves the authority to subject us, the indigenous people of this land, to perpetual servitude and slavery. We were not free to move throughout our country without the pass of approval from the racist settlers who were running the affairs of our lives. Our forefathers and mothers through years of relentless efforts sought to rid our country of racist South Africa's illegal occupation, colonial domination and ruthless exploitation. They fought for the realization of our national aspirations namely genuine and unconditional independence. We the offspring of that brave resistance, since that historic 26th August, 1966, when the first bullet was fired at the racist soldiers at Onguluwombashe, we pursued the struggle and made significant inroads towards the final collapse of the racist and colonial system.

Ours was a liberation struggle that brought revolutionary change in our society for the benefit of all our people. It was a just cause, one for which some of our best sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters have sacrificed their precious lives and for which hundreds have been maimed and crippled. Therefore, in honouring those selfless martyrs and heroes, it must be remembered that we

fought to win! Everything and every effort was devoted to the struggle and for the final victory.

Now that we are free and independent, the principal question is: how do we honour the supreme sacrifice of our fallen heroes and heroines. As government, as communities, and indeed as individuals, we show our gratitude by advancing the cause for which they gave their lives by taking an independent Namibia from strength to strength. In this regard, we remain grateful to the SWAPO-led government for putting in place development programmes, for creating a conducive environment, and for sustaining the peace we all cherish.

In particular, I challenge the youth: empower yourselves through education so that you may realise what so many brave Namibians fought and gave their lives for. Without education, we will remain victims of our ignorance haunted by poverty and disease. Do not belittle the power of education, knowledge and learning that can protect us from the scourge of HIV/AIDS, emerging and re-emerging diseases, and from the devastation of poverty.

I call on all of us to rally behind the task which we have set for ourselves through our 2004 SWAPO Party Election Manifesto, NDPIII and Vision 2030 by ensuring that we remain committed, determined and a united people. United we have been; but let us further cement this unity and use it in promoting our cause. This

means collective action and, above all, mutual respect, vigilance and discipline.

Comrades and Compatriots,

It is in this context that the people of our country, brave men and women, decided to form the revolutionary movement, SWAPO, to champion the rights and fight for self-determination and independence. Characteristically, the war for liberation was waged on all fronts: in our cities, towns, villages, mahangu fields, classrooms, churches and in particular on the diplomatic and military fronts.

To this end, thousands of the sons and daughters of our country left this land to go into exile to fight for the liberation of our motherland Namibia. As part of this supreme sacrifice, many Namibian people crossed the border into Angola with the sole aim of fighting for the independence of our Motherland.

Our gallant freedom fighters under the invincible banner of the Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) spearheaded the campaign against the occupation enemy and won significant battles since 1966. Faced by the guerilla superiority of PLAN and the professional evasiveness of our combatants, the enemy stooped so low in battle by resorting instead to targeting innocent and defenseless women and children at a refugee camp at Cassinga.

On this day, 4th May in 1978, at exactly 08H00, the racist white settlers launched a cowardly and barbaric attack on these civilians (women and children) using four Canberra jets to drop 300 Alpha bombs, followed one minute later by four Buccaneers which dropped seven 400kg fragmentation bombs. This murderous operation, which the Apartheid settlers and their supporters called Reindeer, left more than 600 Namibians murdered in cold blood and many others injured.

We are here therefore to remember and honour the memories of the fallen compatriots whose blood waters our freedom. The brave men and women, living and dead, who struggled for our independence, we shall never forget! We dedicate ourselves to preserve our political independence and to the unfinished work of economic independence that they have so nobly advanced. In dedicating ourselves to the great task remaining before us, we take increased devotion to that cause of independence for which they gave the last full measure of devotion. It is our sacred duty therefore that we resolve that the sacrifices of those who died at Cassinga and elsewhere throughout the liberation struggle did not die in vain!

Programme Director

Comrades and Compatriots

Let us always remember that the peace that we enjoy, the peaceful sleep that we cannot deny, was achieved at a cost. Our fellow Namibians paid the ultimate sacrifice, offering their lives, dying for

the Namibia that we are fortunate to call home. Let us not betray their memory, their resolve, or their just cause. Let us remain as a united Namibia.

It is only when we are united that we can have peace. Whilst acknowledging our diverse cultures we must harness our diversity for unity and strength. We must always remember that these were the ideals that the gallant sons and daughters of the soil sacrificed their lives. As we commemorate Cassinga Day, let us honour their legacy by re-committing ourselves to preserving peace, unity and democracy. We all have a duty to ensure that we conduct our affairs in a manner that promotes the maintenance of peace and stability.

We must not intentionally or unintentionally make utterances, irresponsible statements, especially those in leadership positions, which could be insightful or provoke others. I therefore urge all leaders to refrain from utterances that could disturb peace and democracy in our beautiful Republic.

SWAPO Party government made a clarion call for national reconciliation that we all should cherish. As we commemorate Cassinga Day, let us forgive But we should never forget.

One Namibia! One Nation!

I thank you.