

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY HIFIKEPUNYE POHAMBWA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEMORIAL
SERVICE OF THE LATE HONOURABLE REV.
DR. HENDRIK WITBOOI**

23 OCTOBER 2009

**PARLIAMENT GARDENS,
WINDHOEK**

Director of Ceremonies

Mrs Johanna Sophia Witbooi, the Widow of the late Comrade Witbooi and the entire bereaved family

Your Excellency, Comrade Sam Nujoma, Founding President and Father of the Namibian Nation

The Right Honourable Prime Minister,

Honourable Deputy Prime Minister,

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,

Honourable Chairperson of the National Council,

Your Honour, the Chief Justice,

Your Grace Arch Bishops and Bishops of Various Denominations,

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers,

Honourable Members of Parliament,

Honourable Governor of Khomas Region and Governors of other Regions,

Your Worship, the Mayor of the City of Windhoek,

Honourable Chairperson of the Council of Traditional Leaders,

Honourable Traditional Leaders,

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Dear Religious and Community Leaders

Fellow Mourners,

Tuesday the 13th of October this year will go down in the history of Namibia as one of the saddest days.

This is the day when Namibia lost a freedom fighter, a nationalist, a hero, a comrade, a traditional leader, one of the beacons of Namibia's struggle for national liberation, a reconciliator, a humble servant of the nation, a patriot, a loving husband, father and uncle, a dear brother, a dedicated SWAPO Party cadre and a servant of God. From the date of his death, the Namibian people have continued to express their grief from all corners of our country. A number of memorial services have already taken place in honour of this humble servant of our nation. This is a clear testimony of the late Comrade Hendrik Witbooi's popularity among the Namibian people.

For the most part of his life, the late Comrade Hendrik Witbooi knew nothing else but a life of the struggle for national liberation, a life of detention, and a life of Christianity. We are gathered here today to pay our last respects and later on 25th October 2009, lay to rest our dear Comrade, the late Comrade Witbooi. To many Namibians, and as you have already heard from those who have spoken before me, the departed Comrade Witbooi was a man of vision and conviction. He actively participated in the national struggle for Namibia's freedom and independence.

His early life was not only shaped and influenced by the political situation prevailing in our country but also by the

political situation experienced by our forebearers such as the legendary Hendrik Witbooi, his grandfather. Like his contemporaries, Comrade Witbooi grew up under colonial oppression, and like the overwhelming majority of his fellow citizens, he was denied basic fundamental human rights and freedoms, a situation he could not accept.

Director of Ceremonies,

The late Comrade Hendrik Witbooi was a pillar of strength, a fountain of wisdom, a source of inspiration and a torchbearer who stood firm in the face of colonial brutality in defence of our people's rights to self-determination, freedom and independence. The life of the late Comrade Witbooi was a life of selfless sacrifices, bravery and visionary leadership. Like many of his comrades, Comrade Hendrik Witbooi joined SWAPO of Namibia, a mass movement that enjoyed the support of the majority of Namibians, to fight for the freedom of our Motherland. Through his words and actions, he demonstrated his determination to building Namibia that was free from ethnicity, tribalism, regionalism and racism.

Following the transformation of SWAPO's military wing from South West Africa Liberation Army (SWALA) to the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), the

SWAPO Political leadership made concerted efforts to mobilize the Namibian youth to join PLAN in big numbers in order to intensify the armed liberation struggle. The Namibian youth favourably responded in large numbers from 1974 onwards.

The mobilization of the Namibian people to support the national armed liberation struggle went hand in hand with our determination to spread the struggle to all corners of our country. In this regard, there was a need to extend the armed struggle from the north southwards. In 1976, this objective was achieved when the late Comrade Hendrik Witbooi joined SWAPO. It was partly due to the support rendered by Comrade Hendrik Witbooi that PLAN's underground military units were able to strike at the enemy deep in the south of our country.

It was partly due to the efforts of the late Comrade Witbooi that PLAN received recruits from the South of our country in large numbers. Indeed, the late Comrade Hendrik Witbooi turned Gibeon into a PLAN underground military base.

Some of the Comrades who were based at Gibeon include the late Comrade John Pandeni, Comrade Willem Biwa and Comrade Petrus Iilonga. Some of them settled at Gibeon and were placed under the care of Comrade Witbooi, disguised as workers from the North who had come to the South to build a SWAPO office.

The late Comrade Witbooi facilitated some of the storage of PLAN weapons and explosives which were smuggled from the northern part of our country to the then Police Zone, including the South. This was a very big risk because in terms of some of the repressive laws then in force, such activities carried a maximum sentence of death.

It is clear, therefore, that the role of this remarkable Namibian patriot in the liberation struggle of our country is unique. He was a servant of God while at the same time a passionate supporter of PLAN. He provided PLAN with vital information which led to successful military operations in the South. He facilitated the storage of PLAN's arsenal in the South. He provided education to many previously disadvantaged Namibians. He provided spiritual guidance to many patriotic Namibians. To him there was no contradiction between the bible and AK47 used to free a nation from bondage.

To him, death, slavery and colonial oppression were one and the same thing. No wonder that very few could emulate the positive deeds of this remarkable son of our soil. There is no doubt that he will be missed by many former PLAN freedom fighters. He will be missed by the workers, peasants, parliamentarians, fellow church leaders

and fellow traditional leaders. Indeed he will be missed by the Namibian Nation.

Director of Ceremonies

As one of the leaders of SWAPO, the late Comrade Hendrik Witbooi also played a crucial role by contributing to the development of policies and programmes of the Party. He was one of those few leaders who could openly travel abroad without fear in order to consult with the exiled SWAPO leadership. This culture was maintained until 1989 when all the exiled leaders of the SWAPO Party came back home following the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 which paved the way for Namibia's independence.

By engaging in the education of the previously disadvantaged Namibians, the late Comrade Witbooi was successful in bringing together Namibians from different cultural background. Many Namibians who schooled at AME Private School are today playing a positive role in the development of our country. Some of the former teachers such as Honourable Jerry Ekandjo are today playing a vital role in both the Legislative and the Executive branches of our State. This indeed bears

testimony to the fact that the legacy of the late Comrade Hendrik Witbooi lives on.

Director of Ceremonies,

Honourable Comrade Rev. Dr. Hendrik Witbooi is no more but his legacy lives on. The soft spoken Comrade Witbooi is no more but his legacy lives on. The freedom fighter Comrade Witbooi is no more but his legacy lives on. The beloved traditional leader Comrade Witbooi is no more but his legacy lives on. The educator Comrade Witbooi is no more but his legacy lives on.

The reconciliator Comrade Witbooi is no more but his legacy lives on. The servant of God Comrade Witbooi is no more but his legacy lives on.

The father, uncle, brother, husband, friend and hero, Comrade Witbooi is no more but his legacy lives on.

As a nation, we can only keep his legacy alive if we remain united; if we keep promoting the policy of National Reconciliation; if we maintain peace, security and stability in our country; if we hold hands and march forward in unity to build Namibia in order to secure the

welfare of future generations. Sadly, we will miss the presence of Comrade Hendrik Witbooi in the line-up of the voters on the 27 – 28 November 2009 Elections.

May the soul of Honourable Comrade Rev. Dr. Hendrik Witbooi rest in eternal peace.

I thank you.
