

THE TIMES

Politically Correct.....

[Apartheid forces vs Liberation forces in Parliament](#)

By Ndivhuho Mafela 20 March 2008, 12:25 GMT + 2

The battle of Cuito Cuanavale was re-enacted in Parliament yesterday as the ruling party and the opposition could not agree on which side was the actual victor in the battle 20 years ago. While the battle of Cuito Cuanavale pitted Southern African liberation army forces assisted by the Cubans against apartheid's South African Defence Force, yesterday's battle featured opposition party MPs and ANC MPs.

ANC speakers claimed that the military encounter held in Cuito Cuanavale, Angola, in 1988 was won by Cuban and Angolan Fapla forces. Introducing the debate, Sport and Recreation Minister Makhenkesi Stofile was adamant the SA Defence Force and Angolan opposition Unita fighters were convincingly trounced.

Opposition parties heckled his claims and laughed them off before launching counter-attacks at him. But Stofile was supported by fellow ANC member Joseph Maake who maintained that "apartheid forces were thoroughly thrashed". Not to be outdone, miffed opposition party MPs also claimed that the South African Apartheid forces won the battle.

Freedom Front leader and self-styled spokesman of Afrikaner interests and history, who was once conscripted to the apartheid army, went to the extent of proposing an independent commission of inquiry to establish the "truth" about who the "real victors" were. The truth, he said, was the casualty of the ANC's claims. But it was the IFP's maverick general and chief whip Koos van der Merwe who prominently led the charge from the opposition benches, in support of the apartheid forces. "I am a bit surprised. I thought we were going to talk about the lessons we have learned from Cuito in respect of international progress, peace and prosperity," he thundered. "But instead of that, we had to listen to the fables of Stofile. No longer do we listen to Esop [Pahad] fables, but to Stofile fables, because everything he said about the South African Defence Force being defeated by Fapla is a fable and a fable is untrue.

Van der Merwe said there was no victory to for the Cuban and Fapla forces. He claimed that 4785 Cuban and Fapla soldiers were killed against 31 South Africans, 94 Fapla tanks were destroyed against only three from South Africa. "There can be no doubt that the South African forces won the battle," van der Merwe said. Van der Merwe was supported by FF+'s Pieter Mulder who said the ANC was spreading its own propaganda.

ANC leader and Intelligence Minister Ronnie Kasrils, took the fight to the opposition benches, in defence of the liberation forces, attacking Van der Merwe's claims. General Kasrils whose autobiography, "Armed and Dangerous", is perhaps an indication of his fighting spirit during his stint with MK, wanted to know why the apartheid forces retreated from the battle in Angola, Namibia and eventually leading to the demise of apartheid, if indeed they had won as claimed by Van Der Merwe. The parliamentary battle ended in stalemate...