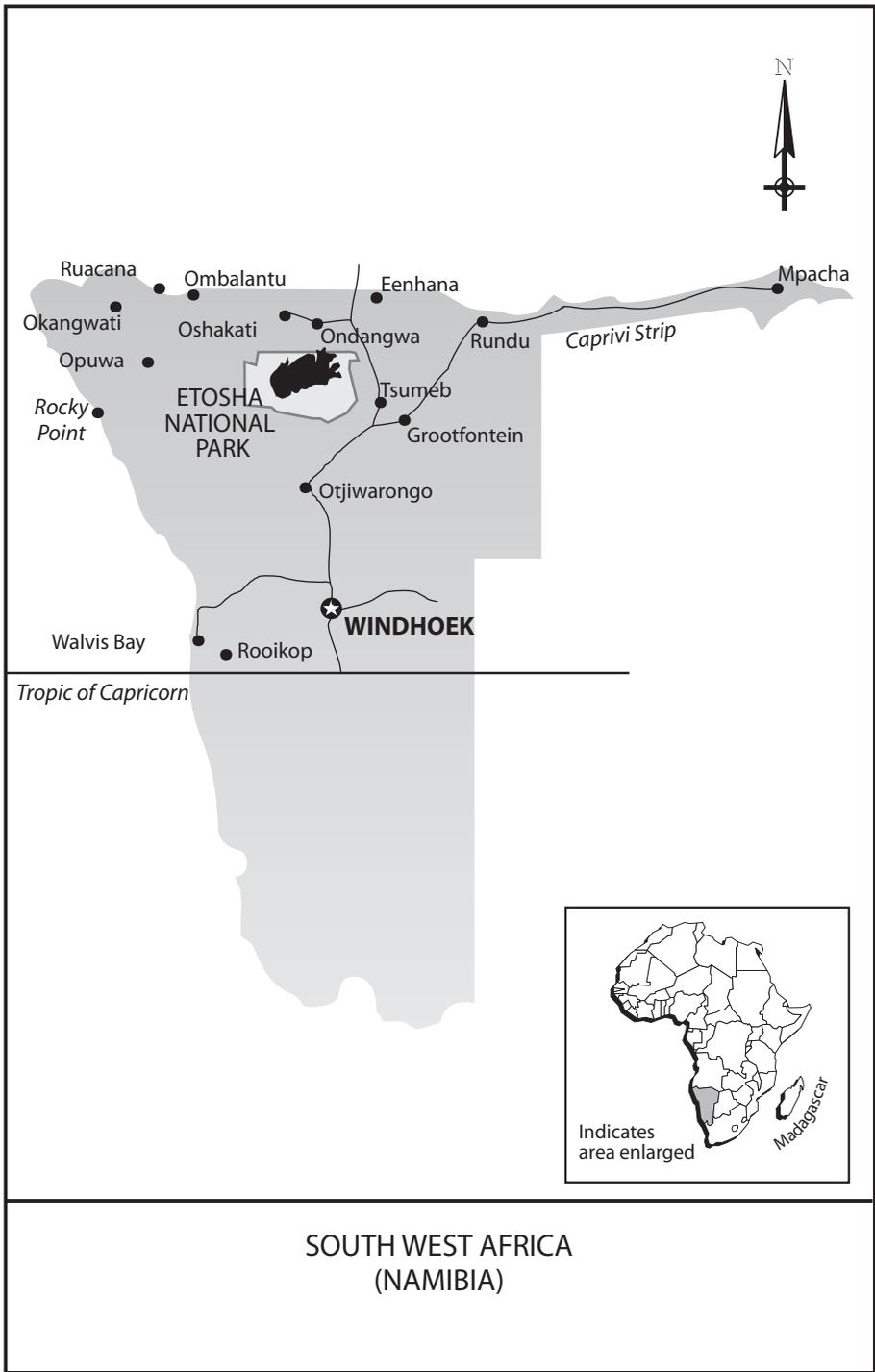


19 with a
BULLET









ANGOLA AND NAMIBIA

CONTENTS

Understanding the Border War between Angola, SWAPO and South Africa	14
Howzit	16
Growing up in South Africa	25
SWAPO—the bush war on the Angolan/South West African border ...	29
Into the army	35
1 Parachute Battalion	41
Jump course	47
1 Reconnaissance Commando selection course	55
Now what?	62
Gatvol	68
Back to 1 Parachute Battalion	72
Ondangwa—1 Parachute Battalion’s operational base on the border	76
Into Angola	90
Base nights	102
First blood	108
Contact	116
32 Battalion	136
Free Nelson Mandela	145
Back into Angola—Operation <i>Ceiling</i> , June 1981	148
Dawn ambush—‘Take no prisoners; kill them all’	162
Deadly clash with FAPLA	174
More contact	192
Bush justice	208
Hidden from view	222
Court martial	232

Operation <i>Protea</i> —August 1981	250
Trenches and bunkers	261
21 at last	275
The end of Operation <i>Protea</i>	288
Glorious 21-day pass	305
Operation <i>Daisy</i> —October/November 1981	311
Enough is enough	322
Epilogue—March 2008	336

Understanding the Border War between Angola, SWAPO and South Africa

Angola

The Portuguese had colonized and been in possession of Angola for some 400 years. Since the early sixties three main Angolan liberation movements/guerrilla groups had formed and commenced operations against the Portuguese in what became a multi-factioned struggle for the control of Angola. This was called the Angolan War of Independence, or the Portuguese Colonial War, which raged from 1961 to 1974. The three liberation movements were:

MPLA—Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, headed up by Agostinho Neto and backed by USSR, Cuba and East Germany. The MPLA's military wing was FAPLA—People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola—which in due course became the Angolan defence force when the MPLA took power in 1975.

FNLA—National Liberation Front of Angola, headed up by Holden Roberto and backed by the United States, South Africa and China.

UNITA—National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, headed up by Jonas Savimbi and backed by the United States and South Africa.

In 1974, after 23 years of draining colonial bush wars, a left-wing military coup in Lisbon overthrew Salazar's right-wing government. Overnight the new Portuguese government decided to pull out of Africa, handing Angola on a plate to the astonished Marxist MPLA which had been on the verge of military defeat at the hands of the Portuguese army. In 1975 South Africa sent forces in to support FNLA and UNITA, almost taking the capital Luanda, but the Soviet-backed MPLA regained control of the country (only because of the US-motivated South African withdrawal), forcing UNITA and FNLA back to the bush to continue the struggle against MPLA, in what became one of the largest and deadliest Cold War conflicts with well over 500,000 deaths. FNLA soon fell by the wayside as the South Africans shifted their support

exclusively to Savimbi's UNITA. With the demise of the apartheid regime in the early nineties, South African support dried up and Savimbi struggled on vainly until he was cornered and killed by FAPLA troops in 2002, which signalled the end of the civil war.

South West Africa/Namibia

South West Africa, now known as Namibia, was a German colony, mandated to South Africa for 99 years by the League of Nations in 1919 after World War I. In the early sixties the nationalist liberation group, SWAPO—the South West Africa People's Organization, led by Sam Nujoma—commenced operations against South Africa for the independence and control of South West Africa. Backed by the Soviet Union and China, SWAPO used guerrilla tactics to fight the South Africans. The Norwegians began giving aid directly to SWAPO in 1974 and in 1976 the newly formed Marxist government of Angola, MPLA, offered SWAPO refuge and bases in Angola from where to launch attacks against the South African military. In 1978, the United Nations passed resolution 435, which called for an immediate ceasefire, South African withdrawal and UN-supervised elections (in other words, a SWAPO assumption of power). However, Soviet imperialism, with its designs on South Africa, assisted by 50,000 Cuban troops and aviators, precluded any settlement as the South Africans and South West Africans slugged it out with FAPLA, SWAPO and their Soviet and Cuban allies. In 1989, the last shots of the conflict were fired as the South Africans withdrew prior to Namibian independence in 1990 under Nujoma's SWAPO.

HOWZIT

I don't like Mondays—Boomtown Rats

It was a beautiful spring afternoon. The bright sun filtered through the long rows of jacaranda trees that lined the main road. The sidewalk was covered in a thick purple blanket of fallen blossoms that spread out into the busy street, crushed into a purple pulp by the wheels of passing cars.

It was a little past noon; the lunch crowd was starting to throng the sidewalks. Cars stood idling in gridlock at the traffic lights, honking their horns at impatient pedestrians who ignored the 'don't walk' lights as they dashed through the slow-moving traffic.

I was on my way to meet my friend Paul at the Wimpy burger joint for lunch. I had left the town library early hoping to beat the lunch crowd to a seat, and was taking a short cut through the small mall. But it seemed like fate had other plans; it began to look as though I would be late anyway. There were three clear reasons for this and they all stood in the entrance of the plaza eyeballing me.

The first one ran about 95 kilograms, with huge hairy forearms and curly blond hair. The other two weren't as big as their friend but all three glared at me as they stood wide-legged, guarding the entrance to the plaza.

It had all gone down in a few seconds without a word being said. The three goons had watched me as I approached the entrance where they were standing, my shoulder-length hair no doubt the object of their conservative technical-college attention. Never one to back down from a challenge or the chance of a quick scrap, I glared back at them and, holding their collective stare for a few seconds too long, raised a macho eyebrow that clearly said: "What the fuck are you looking at, prickhead?"

That's all it took for things to go down.

Hairy Arms was clearly the leader of the pack. I watched him crack a little smile as he made a show of passing whatever was in his top pocket to his goon buddy before heading towards me. There was a hectic sparkle in his eye that said this was really going to make his day.

At 77 kilograms I was lean and in pretty good shape. Changing course in mid-stride, I met Hairy Arms head on. It was child's play. I had already judged my timing as he started towards me and closed on him in five or six quick steps.

The moment he was within range I threw a hard, fast straight left to his mid-section, followed by an immediate right to his mouth. I had done it many times before; both punches landed solidly. I had leaned my head into the punch and felt it connect but as I lifted my head I was puzzled to see that Hairy Arms was still standing in front of me.

“What the hell ...?”

Quick as a shot, I cocked my right hand. With all my strength I smashed a straight right into his face and, this time, I watched as he went head-over-heels and then down flat on his back. He half sat up on his butt; for a second I thought he might try to get up— but he stayed put, looking dazed and confused.

As I stood poised over him with my fists cocked, daring him to get up, I realized that there were actually two bodies sitting on their asses in front of me, dazed. It mystified me for a second and somehow stole my concentration.

“What the hell's going on here?”

I snapped out of it when the third goon hit me low with a sloppy tackle from the side. He knocked me off balance a little but I could feel there was no conviction in his grip around my waist and I quickly recovered and managed to flip him over in a sort of half-assed Judo throw, using his own momentum to slam him onto the floor. As he fell he grabbed a handful of my newly permed, shoulder-length hair and held on fiercely. I felt my hair tearing out at the roots, so I began bouncing him up and down seriously against the tile floor.

“Let go, you fucking moron!”

I bounced him until he couldn't take any more and let go but not before he had ripped a good chunk of my hair out by the roots. I slammed him once