

Statement by the Minister of State for Policy Implementation in the Office of the President and Cabinet, Comrade Webster Shamu, following the death of David Martin on Saturday 18 August

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It is indeed with a profound sense of shock and grief that I have learned of the passing away of David Martin, a person who has marched with us in the liberation struggle all the way from Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique to the achievement of independence in this country and the end of apartheid in South Africa; and has continued until now in an active and unwavering manner to use his skills to articulate the issues and values involved in building a strong and independent nation and region, as a true son of southern Africa.

Although born in the United Kingdom, he always credited his education to the decade he spent working in the media in Tanzania in the 1960s, influenced by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, his close friend Cde Benjamin Mkapa and others; and with the liberation leaders and movements based there, including Cde Eduardo Mondlane and Cde Samora Machel from Frelimo in Mozambique. He marched with Frelimo into the liberated zones in Mozambique 1973, and it was there that he met the ZANLA commander, General Josiah Magama Tongogara, with whom he formed a close personal friendship. During the liberation struggle, David met and interviewed His Excellency, Cde President Robert Gabriel Mugabe, on many occasions, through this presenting to the international community a deeper understanding of the just causes of the liberation struggle based on our national grievances.

David Martin was a writer and photographer, and later in life, a publisher. During the 1970s, based in Lusaka, he was Africa correspondent of *The Observer*, London, and was often quoted in other media, including BBC. He was an indefatigable investigative researcher, always getting to the bottom of the story, and telling it through the eyes of the people. He wrote the first articles from the front at the start of the liberation war in Mozambique, and later Zimbabwe, at the start of the decisive phase of the liberation war in 1972. He played a leading role in exposing South African destabilization in the region in the 1980s. He played a unique and long-term role in presenting the African perspective internationally, and was well respected as a fair and balanced reporter.

He was a prolific writer, who spent his life writing books as well as articles, including *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: the Chimurenga War* (1980); *The Chitepo Assassination* (1985); *Destructive Engagement: Southern Africa at War* (1986, updated as *Frontline Southern Africa* in 1989); *Apartheid Terrorism: The Destabilization Report* (1989). He had previously written the first exposé of the reality of General Amin in Uganda in 1974 and the first report by the International Commission of Jurists on Uganda, that eventually led to the withdrawal of international support for Amin.

His retirement project was dedicated to creating better understanding of people and places through tourism, by writing and photographing area-specific, pocket-size *Into Africa* guidebooks. He produced more than 20 books on all of Tanzania's national parks, as well as on the capital cities of Mozambique and Namibia; and five guides for Zimbabwe, on Great Zimbabwe, Victoria Falls, Hwange, Kariba, and Vumba.

He was a co-founder of Zimbabwe Publishing House, the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre, the Musokotwane Environment Resource Centre for Southern Africa, and the Zimbabwe International Book Fair. He was a trustee of the Josiah Magama Tongogara Legacy Foundation.

He had two major operations for cancer in 2004 and 2007, as well as operations in 2006 to repair broken bone in his shoulders, but he never stopped writing. Being the fighter that he was, the physical challenges of the past three years failed to deter him and he continued writing up until June this year, when collapsed vertebrae in his back made sitting uncomfortable and affected his respiration, together with the affects of the previous surgery. He passed away on Saturday morning, 18 August, at home in Harare, age 71.

He is survived by his spouse and life partner of 32 years, Phyllis Johnson; and his son, Tony in Perth, Australia. On behalf of myself and my family, I would like to express my sincere condolences to Phyllis and son Tony. Funeral arrangements are still to be announced.