

**SADC**

**Hashim Mbita Project**

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**Southern African  
Liberation Struggles**

**1960–1994**

**Contemporaneous Documents**

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**edited by  
Arnold J.  
Temu and  
Joel das N. Tembe**

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**Namibia**



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# Namibia

Independent on 21 March 1990

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# 3.1

## **Namibia and the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa**

**by Bernard Ben Mulongeni and Victor L. Tonchi**

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## Introduction: 1

Two centuries ago, imperialism, colonial domination, and their unfounded reactionary theories of the racial inferiority of the oppressed nations looked unshakable. This chapter tells a different story.

Many African countries attained their independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Even though the level of violence preceding independence in some of these countries could not be underestimated, the intensity and length of the independence struggles in southern Africa are incomparable. During the post-World War II period, with an increase in the oppression and unbearable inhuman activities being carried out against the African people, the emerging political organizations in southern Africa were growing into popular mass national liberation movements with clear aims and objectives to physically fight for their national freedom and independence. National liberation movements in southern Africa fought with courage to achieve their ultimate goals against all odds. They were regarded by their respective local populations as vanguards against the political and social orders of the day, the apartheid systems, racism, racial segregation, and the exploitation of the national wealth of their countries. Their comrades and friends, amongst others, were the Soviet Union, Angola, Tanzania, Zambia, Cuba, the Front-line States, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Non-Aligned Movements, and some member states of the United Nations (UN).

It was the heroism of the combined forces of the Angolan FAPLA, Cuban internationalist forces, and SWAPO's People Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) that defeated the presidential regiment of P.W. Botha of the minority white regime of South Africa at Cuito Cuanavale, leading to the collapse of the last vestige of colonialism in Africa and paving the way for the independence of Namibia on 21 March 1990 and the birth of the democratic and non-racial South Africa on 27 April 1994. The flag of freedom was hoisted over the entire territory of Namibia, and declared to the world that Namibia is free forever.

It is in this context, that this study was conducted. It periodises and contextualises the various activities that took place during the course of the liberation struggle spanning from the period of petitioning for independence and the launching of the armed liberation struggle to the victory and independence of the republic of Namibia.

This study presents the history of the liberation struggle of Namibia based on oral interviews, supplemented by archival and contemporary records. The main objective of this study is to document the experiences of participants in the liberation struggle. In this regard, a stakeholder matrix was conceptualized in identifying interviewees and twelve categories were identified, representing various groups of participants. The research on the liberation struggle in Namibia is understood in the context of all

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(1) The Research Team included Mr. Victor Tonchi (Focal Person), Dr Ben Mulongeni (Associate Researcher), Miss Justine Iipumbu, (Assistant Researcher), Miss Anna Shilongo (Assistant Researcher), with Dr Bernard Ben Mulongeni and Victor L. Tonchi as Team Leaders.

Namibians, who have, in one way or another, contributed to the demise of apartheid and the South African occupation. Categories of interviewees include: Senior government officials represented by the current President and Prime Minister; Senior SWAPO-Party officials and cadres represented by the First President of SWAPO, leader of the Namibian revolution and founding father of the Namibian nation, Cde. Sam Nujoma; Senior military officers in the Namibian Defence Force (NDF), the majority of whom are ex PLAN combatants and former PLAN commanders; the Omugulu gOmbashe group; Survivors and witnesses of the 1968 political upheaval in the Caprivi; the Oshatotwa Attack survivors; the Cassinga Attack survivors; Trade union leaders; Traditional leaders; Religious leaders; former PLAN combatants and other participants of the liberation struggle, as well as senior non-SWAPO political leaders in the country.

## **Early History and the Colonization of Namibia:**

The history of Namibia is like that of many histories of exploitation of both natural and human resources. It is the history of a long and bitter struggle by the indigenous people throughout generations until genuine freedom and independence was finally won in 1990. The Namibian people resisted foreign intervention on their land by the Germans and waged a heroic struggle against South African occupation.

Before the Germans, Dutch, and British settlers put their feet on the country which we now call Namibia, the territory was home to many communities ruled by their respective kings and queens. The first group to live in this dry land of savannah and deserts were the San, later renamed ‘bush man’ by the white settlers. They are also regarded as “Ovakuruvehi” in Otjiherero, meaning the ancient ones. They were joined by the bantu groups such as the Ovaherero, Ovawambo, Namas, Damaras, various ethnic groups in the Kavango and Caprivi, and many others, living side by side mostly at peace with each other.

With its harsh and fragile environment, Namibia has always been sparsely populated. In pre-colonial time, the migration of population groups to the north led to the rise of concentrated settlements in the more fertile northern areas of the country, whilst isolated populations to the south and east depended on hunter-gather modes of survival. Cattle and small livestock formed an important part of the social economy for all the other cultural groups.

The first whites started to arrive in the 1700s, bringing goods such as liquor and guns which they traded for land and cattle. By the 19th century new settlers from Holland and Germany began to arrive in big numbers, grabbing for themselves the most fertile land and water points. Since Namibia is a dry country, there was not enough good land and water for everyone and this led to clashes between people within the territory. Additional settlers were accompanied by their missionaries.

The arrival and settling of so many whites in the territory was soon stimulating the appetite of European governments, particularly that of the British and the Germans, to take all of Namibia as their colony. Colonial authority was imposed fairly

rapidly, and, by 1909, the German colonial administration had extended from the harbour of Luderitz in the south-west of the country to the far east of the country, the Caprivi Strip, so named after their German Chancellor of the day.

Nearly a hundred years earlier, Europeans had already started to lay claims to some parts of Namibia. In 1793, the British took Walvis Bay. But it was the Germans who took the rest of Namibia in 1883, other than Luderitz, for which the Germans traded goods to a chief in exchange for the land. In 1885, the Germans brought soldiers to take full control of the whole country, except the land in the far north.

Herero and Nama groups resisted the German invasion, but by 1884 the Germans, with their guns and their military training defeated the resistance and made Namibia a German colony. The Germans continued to take more and more land from the people and to give it to German settlers from Europe. By 1903, the Herero people had been robbed of more than half of their land.

This robbery triggered the launch of the popular uprising against the Germans by the Nama and Herero communities under the leadership of Chief Hendrick Witbooi and Samuel Maharero, who encouraged their people to resist the capture of their lands, the distribution of their traditional livelihoods, and the loss of their elders' freedom. Samuel Maharero also wrote a letter to the new German Governor Leutwein in which he stated that:

The war has been started by whites.  
You yourself know how many Hereros  
have been killed by white people, particularly by  
traders with guns and in prisons... (And so) I became angry  
and said – now I must shoot the whites even though I die.<sup>2</sup>

After the death of Hendrick Witbooi, resistance by the Nama people continued unabated, this time around, under the leadership of Jacob Marenga (whom the colonialists referred to as Morenga). Marenga was also forced out of the country by the now heavily increased German troops. In exile, Marenga gave a press conference, where he clearly stated that, “so long as an inch of South West Africa was occupied by Germans, the Nama people will continue to attack the German wherever they encounter them, until the land conquered by the Germans is returned to the rightful owners.”<sup>3</sup> Jacob Marenga died in one of the fierce battles.

The German authority reacted to this resistance with genocide and reducing the population of the central and southern areas by more than half in three years. On 11 August 1904, the Germans killed thousands of Herero men, women, and children in the battle of Hamakari, causing the majority of the surviving Herero people to flee to present-day Botswana through the Kalahari Desert, where many died on their way across the harsh sun-baked sand. Many more died after they were taken to prison and used as slave labourers on the railway. The devastation of these wars is signified by

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(2) Maharero, Samuel. Letter to German Governor Leutwein. 1903.

(3) Marenga, Jacob. Press Conference.

the decimation of Herero and Nama population groups from 80,000 to 15,130, and 20,000 to 9,781, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

Even so, the people fought on until 1907, when they were finally forced to give up. The Germans took all the remaining good land from the defeated groups and gave it to German settlers. They did not allow people to keep cattle and they executed chiefs and headmen.

As the encounter escalated, some of the Herero fled north to Ovamboland and requested assistance from their Oshiwambo speaking cousins. In response, Chief Nehale IyaMpingana of the Ondonga tribe sent reinforcements to the central region, and battles took place, particularly in the district of Outjo and Onamutuni, where many German troops were killed by Ondonga warriors. To the present day, a monument can be seen there, where the names of German soldiers who died at the Onamutuni battles are inscribed. The names of the dead Ondonga warriors remain unrecorded.

The anti-colonial resistance initiated by these forefathers served as an inspiration for a protracted and bitter struggle for Namibia's decolonisation and self-determination which was to continue for some 86 years.

### **The Beginning of Internal Slavery in Namibia:**

When World War I broke out, the newly independent dominion of South Africa rallied to the British cause. The only German target in the immediate region was German-South West Africa. In February 1915, the South African leader, Louis Botha, led the invasion, and in July the German forces in the colony surrendered. At the end of the war, the League of Nations placed South West Africa under a British mandate, with the administration of the territory entrusted to the government of South Africa. In 1921, the League of Nations gave South Africa a mandate to administer Namibia. South Africa was assigned to govern Namibia and to lead the country to

independence as soon as possible. The mandate stipulated that:

South Africa shall promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being, and special progress on the inhabitants of the territory ....No forced labour is permitted except for essential public works and services, and only for adequate remuneration.

When South Africa first took control of Namibia, many Namibians thought that the South Africans would give them back their land. They were wrong. General Jan Smuts and Louis Botha soon took more land from the Namibians and gave it to the Afrikaner settlers. In this way, the South Africans went against the mandate. The South Africans broke the trust they received from the League of Nations. They immediately set up the same kind of apartheid government in Namibia as that in South Africa. Thus begun the gradual process by which South West Africa became more and more integrated and oppressed by its larger neighbour, until it was in many ways regarded as the fifth province of the union, ignoring what the mandate stipulated. The South African

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(4) Dierks, Klaus. *Chronology of Namibian History: From Pre-historic to Independent Namibia*. Windhoek: John Meinert Printing, 2002: See p.143.

government encouraged the poverty stricken Afrikaner community to migrate and settle in South West Africa, today Namibia.

Following World War I, communities in the northern part of Namibia under the leadership of Chief Mandume yaNdemufayo, Chief Iipumbu yaTshirongo, and others, took up arms against the invading South African forces and the colonial Portuguese settlers emerging from Angola.

In the early years of the twentieth century, the Portuguese, who were advancing in southern Angola towards northern Namibia encountered popular resistance in many battles led by Chief Mandume yaNdemufayo of the Uukwanyama tribe. The Portuguese were defeated and asked help from South Africa. The combined Portuguese and South African troops fought against Chief Mandume, who was killed in action in 1917 at Oihole. Oihole is today part of the Kunene province of the Republic of Angola. Although the battles were fierce, Mandume did not surrender and fought until his last bullet was spent. As illustrated by his famous words:

*Oililima yokongulu itai  
dulika Oifendela yokongulu  
iyehama Oupika nefyo  
shimwashike.*

“The payment of capital tax to the  
Colonial masters is a tiresome exercise  
And colonial vassal reporting is unbearable  
Death and slavery are one and the same thing.”

Another fearless leader from the north was Chief Iipumbu yaTshirongo of the Uukwambi tribe:

A fly in the ointment-Ondilimani, a man from the village of Amupolo, a man who does not give up on a fight....a man who looks after himself and keeps himself clean, a man with bangles on his arm....

This quotation is taken from a praise-poem recited for this brave King of Uukwambi. Regardless of the huge colonial effort to impose their administration on him, Iipumbu refused to succumb to their authorities. In 1932, Chief Iipumbu refused to obey colonial orders (to pay taxes) from the South African Commissioner Hugo Hahn and Major of Ovamboland Charles Nicholson Mining, who considered his refusal as an act of rebellion and ordered the South African Air-Force (flying for the first time in the region) to bomb the chief's palace at Onashiku. Chief Iipumbu was captured and forcefully exiled to the Kavango Region. When he was being loaded in the aircraft, he prophesied in his challenging words that:

*Nande mu kwate ndje  
Oohinia taa ya tshito  
Yemu tse otshiti.*

“You can hold me hostage  
But the day will come

When our children will take revenge  
And teach you a lesson.”

Iipumbu was later brought to Uukwanyama, then to Uukwambi, where he shortly died in 1959.

During the following years, resistance from other ethnic groups, e.g. Bondelswart, Rehobothers, and other brave local kings and chiefs ensued, but they were eventually overwhelmed by the better equipped South African occupation army. Once the occupation forces established their administration, they became entrenched and did so by using several administrative methods. Intransigent traditional rulers were subdued and where there was a vacuum, new ones were appointed by the regime. They were termed “puppets” by the members of their communities, as they were acting as puppets on the strings of the colonizers. This trend that had begun during the German colonial period was continued by the South African colonial administration in the northern regions of the country, namely the then Ovamboland, Kavango, and Caprivi. In September 1915, Major Z.A.M. Pritchard was sent to Ovamboland to explain to the chiefs about the new administration in the territory. On his trip, Pritchard was accompanied by a certain Carl Hugo Hahn, who later became the resident commissioner of the north, from 1921 to 1946. The significance of Hahn

was the role he played in the pacification process. He became known as *shongola*, an Oshiwambo name for “the one who always carries a whip.”<sup>5</sup> As Kotze observes, the purpose of Major Pritchard’s trip to the north was two fold: To provide information about changes in administration and to make an attempt to persuade the chiefs and headmen of the eight Ovambo tribes to send their young men to work in the south. The country at the time was experiencing a serious labour shortage, and the economy was struggling to recover from the effects of the war between the Germans and the invading South African forces.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Contract System:**

After the people lost their land, they were forced to work for the colonial system and were subjected to many racist laws, particularly the Pass Law, whereby every black person was required to carry a permit in order to enter the restricted white areas. However, these special permits were only granted to those enlisted to work for the white settlers, especially in the farms and mines where they were paid starvation wages.

Namibia was both a colony and a settler-colony; that is, it was colonized by South Africa as an external agent and was also colonized internally by the earlier German settlers and the South African Afrikaner and English settlers. Namibia has always carried the burden of an uncertain status, thus making the country’s exploiters, external and internal, rather reckless. Namibia’s exploiters have indulged in their

(5) Kotze, Carol Ella. *The Establishment a Government in Ovamboland, 1915 – 1925*. Thesis. 1984: See p.19; Dierks, 2002: See p.163.

(6) Kotze, 1984: See p.18.

greed to an unparalleled proportion. As such, Namibia bears ample witness to the sad truth that settler colonialism was the worst form of colonialism in that this form of colonialism entailed, not only economic exploitation and political oppression, but also super-exploitation and brutal political repression. All forms of colonialism have a racist predicate, but settler colonialism has a virulent racist predicate. A central characteristic, if not a constant companion of settler colonialism, is fear of the deprived and oppressed natives. This constant fear is never overcome, but is rendered manageable by constantly and persistently instilling the same or even greater fear in the natives. The native is confronted with the pervasive message that the white, settler-colonialist, is *Baas* (boss) and will brook no opposition. This fear in the natives was instilled and maintained by incessant acts of subjugation and repression such as brutality.

The logic of settler colonialism also dictates that the natives be denuded of their humanity and be relegated to a sub-human or even non-human category or species to justify their exploitation. This denudation of the native's humanity is generally outwardly manifested by the settler colonialist's appropriation of the identity of the land and reference to the native through a negative. In Namibia and South Africa, it was normal for the whites to refer to the blacks as monkeys, baboons, or *kaffirs*<sup>7</sup>. This naming rendered the initial exploitation even more complete. The colonial settler becomes *Suidwester* (South-westerners) and the native becomes non-white or non-European. Under this set of circumstances, the native is not only proletarianised, but is reduced to helotry. In Namibia, the Africans are completely stripped of their humanity; they have become only units of labour and mere commodities on the market that serves the privileged existence of the whites.

### **The Creation of "Homelands" (Bantustans) in Namibia:**

South Africa's first step was to put Africans on reserves, separating ethnic groups for the strategy of divide and rule. In 1923, the South African government passed a law which gave Africans in Namibia only two million hectares of land, out of a total of 57 million. The land allocated to the natives was dry, barren, arid, and not suitable for any form of farming.

By 1937, all the people had been moved into reserves that were similar to the homelands created in South Africa itself. There were no jobs in the reserves. In order to survive, people were forced to go to the mines, the railways, the farms, and the factories in the "white" areas. On top of this, South Africa did not pay proper attention to housing, education, and health services for people in the reserves.

With the inception of commercial farming in the central and southern parts of the country, as well as the opening of mines and other major industries like fishing, many Namibians endured hardships of inconceivable proportions. Labour organisations such as the South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA)

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(7) *Kafir* in Arabic meant infidel, but it was used in southern Africa to pejoratively designate black Africans.

were established just to provide a pool of cheap labour to work in those establishments. There was also the issue of the chiefs in the northern regions of the country who forced black male Namibians to go to work for the white farmers in the central and southern parts of Namibia. These issues came out strongly during interviews, especially with the elderly people who had lived through these terrible experiences. An interview with a retired pastor, Vaino Kaapanda, confirmed that the chiefs were actually paid by the white authorities to sell their subjects. Some black leaders collaborated with the white minority regime and were actually rewarded by whatever means, which could be a bag of maize meal, bottles of liquor, or any other basic commodities.<sup>8</sup> It is also a fact that these were the chiefs who had no real power as they were imposed on the people after the demise of such defiant kings as Mandume Ndemufayo and Ipumbu yaTshirongo. These new chiefs were either forced or bribed, in order to enforce the contract labour system. As a result, people walked on foot from all corners of northern Namibia, up to Namutoni around Tsumeb, and from there they were loaded on trucks or trains and distributed to various farms and industries. A narrative of the methods used by the apartheid government shows that firstly, the recruits had to walk from their respective homesteads to Ondangwa, where they were issued with numbers, and a card put round their necks like cattle. At Ondangwa they would sleep in the open while waiting for their turn to be called for medical check-ups. Just like the period of slavery, people were stripped naked for a physical medical examination and the white man checked parts of their bodies including their private parts. Rev. Kaapanda further related that, “When you go to work you don’t even choose what and who you want to work for. It was total slavery.”<sup>9</sup> Namibia’s current president Hifikepunye Pohamba confirmed this kind of humiliation of contract labourers. He asserted that: “when you are enlisted to the respective companies for employment, they did not respond directly to you but through the third person, as that was the way the contract operated.”<sup>10</sup>

At Ondangwa, prospective workers were selected and categorised into B and C categories. Those in the B category were selected for work in the hotels and municipalities, while category C recruits were selected to go and work on the farms. People were categorized mainly according to their physical fitness and age. “Recruits were taken to a big hall where they were stripped naked,” related Vaino Kaapanda, and a white man who Pohamba believed was in no way a qualified medical practitioner examined them. Pohamba explained: “This gentleman was always accompanied by another white man whom the Ovambo people nick-named ‘Haikukwafa,’ meaning ‘I will help you,’ but what he really meant was to beat you up.”<sup>11</sup>

Not only did workers have no choice about where they were going to work, they also did not know how many hours they would have to work, or even how much

(8) Interview with Vaino Kaapanda, (Windhoek) 07 January 2007; NBC radio interview with Hifikepunye Pohamba, 1994.

(9) *Ibid.*, Kaapanda.

(10) Interview with President Hifikepunye Pohamba.

(11) See NBC Radio interview with Hifikepunye Pohamba, 1994.

pay they would get. This story is also corroborated by Festus April who worked in the Gobabis area. He narrated that white farmers could exchange black workers at will: “They would send you to another farmer without your concern, where you have to walk your way on foot with no proper directions, and this is the reason why many people disappeared without a trace, as there was no tracking system for farm workers.”<sup>12</sup>

Since SWANLA ran the contract system, it stipulated unilateral rule, whereby one was given a specified period of eighteen months and was not paid until the end of the contract. Although it was indicated as such, there was no guarantee of full pay for all the eighteen months one had worked once the contract lapses. Rev. Titus Ngula, well known as Kasindani, has narrated his ordeal in his autobiography titled, *Omadhimbuluko ga Kasindani Kangula (Kasindani's Memoirs)*. In 1944, he was sent to work at the farm called Babie in the Gobabis Area, next to the Botswana border. Rev. Ngula describes his new boss, a certain Mr. Van der Spy, as “hot” and cruel. Kasindani could not stand the “heat” of Van der Spy; he and his colleague, who he only remembers as Haihambo, planned to escape. One fateful day, they started the journey on foot from Gobabis, heading westwards to Swakopmund towards the Namibian coast. They had to cover about 700 kilometres across the mountains of inland Namibia and the harsh Namib Desert with scarce food and water. Since they were not carrying permit documents, they were immediately arrested on arrival in Swakopmund. They were detained for fifteen days and, upon release, were ordered to go to Ovamboland on foot. They were each given two loaves of bread and two tins of beef for another 800km journey.<sup>13</sup>

Another horrific story was told by Vitalis Ankama, now Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education. In his interview, Ankama revealed that people were not only subjected to exploitation and abuse on farms, but were even killed and cooked for the white man’s pigs. Ankama, whose political awareness started while schooling at the Dobra Catholic Missionary School, near Windhoek, was inspired by news he read in local newspapers about African countries that were attaining their independence in the early 1960s. It was in these newspapers that he one day read the shocking news:

I used to read and keep a copy of each newspaper. I kept all of my copies because there were reports of nasty incidents occurring in the country, especially in farms. That is how I learned about one of the horrific incidents of a certain white man, Schalk Nolte, who used to kill his black workers, cooked them, and fed his pigs. This story was published in the *Windhoek Advertiser*. These incidents happened at the farm around the town of Outjo, about 300km from Windhoek. The white farmer recruited as many contract workers as he could. He was reported to have killed and cooked his workers for pigs whenever they “misbehaved”.<sup>14</sup>

(12) Interview with Festus April, (Gobabis) 07 December 2008.

(13) Interview with Rev. Kasindani Ngula, 2007; *Kasindani's Memoirs*. 1997: See p.12.

(14) Interview with Vitalis Ankama.

This horrific story featured prominently in local newspapers in 1963, after it was reported by farm workers who escaped. Nolte was, however, prosecuted and sentenced, simply because he was feeding his fellow whites with pigs which were fed with human flesh. The whites were his only clients at that time, who could afford to consume pork meat. He did not deny killing people and cooking human flesh for his pigs. He admitted the action, explaining that it was for the love of his pigs. Some human flesh was also discovered in pots during investigations at his farm. His light sentence was ridiculous. Ankama concluded the story, by noting that, “Luckily it was his fellow whites that fed on human flesh; otherwise he could not have been prosecuted.”

Black farm workers were mainly killed toward the end of their contract when they were about to receive their wages. The whites also killed many blacks, who did not want to obey their racist rules.

The *Windhoek Advertiser* of 26 October 1959 carried another story illustrating how black farm workers were treated by their white masters. The story tells about a 22-year-old Ovambo, without referring to his name, who was fined two pounds or fourteen days in prison for refusing to work on his employer’s farm in Gochas near Mariental. In his defence, the farm worker said the *mealie-meal* (maize meal) he received from his employer had paraffin in it. The report continues that he had been only ten months on the farm and had been giving the police endless trouble. He said he wanted to go to hospital, so he was sent to hospital, but was declared medically fit. He was later returned to the police to wait for another doctor from Aranos to examine him, but before the doctor arrived, the Ovambo ran away and made fifteen kilometres in half an hour before the police caught up with him. It took three men to hold him for the doctor to examine him. He was put in the bus to appear in court for refusing to work. Half way there, he jumped off the bus and ran away. In court, all he did was complain about food.

During this period of oppression and exploitation, black people were becoming impatient, but were not yet organised in a structured form of resistance. However, during the late 1940s, some groups were emerging.

## **The Late 1950s and Early 1960s:**

All resistance to colonialism and colonial occupation has been particularly hazardous in Namibia. German colonialism was brutal in the extreme, and its response to any African resistance or opposition was crushed. South Africa took the brutality even further by institutionalizing racial oppression through apartheid policies and laws. Namibians were forced into the labour market as forced immigrant workers, deprived of the most elementary freedom of labour. The status of African labour was akin to slavery. Divide and rule became an official colonial operating principle more than in other colonial situations, so much so, that even people of the same ethnic groups were forcibly kept apart and were not allowed to move from one Reserve to the other without a permit. Added to these restrictions was the fact that the social development of the people was truncated by the destruction of their institutions, and

their debarment from those institutions that came to dominate. A good example of this destruction is the utter neglect of African education by both the Germans and the South Africans. All of these factors combined to render Namibia almost *sui generis*.

The new authorities provided little education for the people of Namibia. By 1940, there were only two state schools in Namibia, and until around 1960 there were no state schools at all in the northern region, where over half of the population lived. The Nationalists came to power in South Africa in 1948. Five years later, they passed the Bantu Education Act. Hendrik Verwoerd, then the Minister of Native Affairs, made it clear that the White Minority did not want blacks to have a proper education when he said, “There is no place for (the African) in the European Community above

the levels of certain forms of labour.” Verwoerd’s kind of education was aimed at training blacks only to become good servants. It was this Bantu Education system that the South Africans imposed on Namibia.

The situation of blacks in Namibia at the time was criticized by many leaders of emerging political movements in the country. Sam Shafishuna Nujoma, then president of the newly founded Ovamboland People’s Organisation (OPO), was one of those who openly condemned the apartheid system in the country. In his letter published in the *Windhoek Advertiser* of 11 August 1959, which he wrote to the native commissioner for South West Africa, he states the following:

Sir, according to the *Windhoek Advertiser* of 30 July 1959, Chief Kambonde and Chief Ushona Shiimi, in an interview with foreign correspondents at Ondangwa in Ovamboland, were reported to have affirmed their loyalty to the union agreement.

The practice in SWA today is that whenever foreign correspondents visit the so called native reserves, they do so under a permit and are usually accompanied by government officials in order to protect the visitors from the danger of obtaining the truth from the Africans.

**Denied:**

It is not true that the statement was made by two chiefs – the duo Chiefs cannot understand English and the six foreign correspondents who visited Ovamboland were in the company of the Chief Native Commissioner, Mr. Blijnaut, who according to his custom was their interpreter.

On previous occasions, the same Chief Native Commissioner presided to the people of Ovamboland discrediting the UN, Michael Scott, and Mr. Mburumba Kerina. He went on to say that if South West Africa was placed under the United Nations, she would be given to Russians, Indians, and Chinese—It is his favourite sermon in all the native reserves.

The foreign correspondents addressed the chiefs in English and as Chief Native Commissioner, himself was the interpreter. We leave it to the world to guess what actually took place at that meeting.

**His Opinion:**

The true position in Ovamboland is that there are seven tribes, the Kwanyama tribe being the largest and not the Ndonga as was reported in the newspaper.

Johannes Kamonde is the Chief of the Ondonga tribe; all these tribes co-operated with the Hereros and are opposed to the South West Africa being administered by the Union of South Africa. It is their earnest desire that SWA be removed from the control and administration of the Union of South Africa and they want South West Africa to be placed under the United Nations.

**Maize:**

As for the 12,000 bags of maize and beans mentioned by the Chief Native Commissioner to have been supplied by the administration of the Ovambos in the time of the drought, the fact is that the maize was bought with money from the Ovamboland tribal fund, which is financed annually by every Ovambo male living in Ovamboland, which fees are 10/-per person and this maize is being resold to them at 2.70 pounds per bag.

**Grievances:**

The following are our grievances against the administration of the South West Africa by the Union of South Africa:

1. After 39 years of administration by the Union of South Africa, all natives in South West Africa have no votes in the land of their birth and have no representatives in all the government of their state. They are represented by self-appointed whites and European settlers who do all in their power to retard the progress of the Africans.
2. Twenty one million hectares of the total land in SWA have been allotted to the Africans, whose population is 472,000 while 37 million hectares of the land have been given to the 66,000 Europeans living in SWA.
3. The government spends 781,000 pounds annually on European education, while they are less than 12 per cent of the population. The government expenditure annually on natives' education is 190,000 pounds.
4. The Ovambos are employed under the hated contract system, which does not allow them to choose the type of work they want to do or choose the employer for whom they are going to work while the rate of pay is 1/3 per day.
5. The oppressive laws such as the pass laws and other laws which have neglected the African to the status of slaves; the above five points are a challenge to any person who defended the native policy of the union government.

All one can say about SWA is that her prospects look blacker each year, and it will be in the interest of the white community if the Chief Native Commissioner and other government officials make honest attempts to solve the above problems rather than play the role of dishonest interpreters.

Sam Nujoma, President of Ovamboland People's Organisation, (OPO)

**The Early Organized Resistance against South African Oppression:**

In the 1920s, organizations against South African oppression started to grow. These organizations were inspired by anti-racial and civil rights movements especially in the diasporas, particularly in America where African Americans founded a Universal Negroes Improvement Association (UNIA), whose slogan was "Africa for the Africans". Through this organization, which started in the United States, the message of black

unity and independence was spread across the entire African continent. But UNIA collapsed in the late 1920s because of police harassment and leadership problems.

One of the early organizations in Namibia was the Otjiserandu. This organization was formed on 26 August 1923 at the graveside of the Herero leader, Samuel Maharero. Its aim was to unite the Herero people who were dispersed after the genocides carried out against them by the Germans, and also to honour those who had died in the war of resistance against the Germans.

Organizations like UNIA and Otjiserandu began to unite the Namibian people, but they were not national organizations and they did not have a programme of action for the national liberation of Namibia; that would come much later.

Namibian workers tried to fight back against South African exploitation. There were many strikes on the mines, in the factories, in the fisheries, and on the farms, but there were no strong trade unions to unite the workers and the police stepped in every time to crush the strikes.

The churches also played an important role in resisting South African oppression. Namibian Christians who were angry at the way some missionary churches were passive towards the South African apartheid system broke away and formed independent churches, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), which was formed in 1947. Both the German Lutheran and Roman Catholic Church had taught Namibians that they should be obedient to the government. And if they suffered hard lives in this world, they would have a better life in heaven. As illustrated by a common phrase, used at that time by the preachers in counselling suffering and

grieving black people: “*ndjambi megulu tuu*” (Meaning the reward is in heaven). The new independent churches worried about the living conditions of Namibians and started preaching against the injustice and exploitation of the indigenous by the South African colonial regime.

The Anglican and African Methodist Episcopal (AME) churches, together with the then newly founded South West African Teachers Association (SWATA), protested against the Bantu education system. They tried to start their own schools, but were refused permission.

In South Africa, the South West African Students Body (SWASB) was formed to represent Namibian students in 1957. They also had close links with the ANC. When these students returned to Namibia, they formed the South West Africa Progressive Association (SWAPA) led by Watja W. Kaukwetu. They gained mass support from students in Namibia and they later founded the first black newspaper in the country, called *South West News*.

As the struggle gained momentum, many churches played a role in supporting political activists. The churches therefore grew into a powerful voice for freedom in Namibia. They even became safe havens for prosecuted inhabitants and leaders, especially those who were on the “hit” list of the racist police. Later, most of these church leaders became members of the political organizations. For example, Rev. B.G. Karuaera and the Rev. E.S. Tjilirimuje became members of the executive committee of

SWAPO, and Rev. Hendrick Witbooi (a grandson of the late Witbooi who fought the Germans) became SWAPO's vice-president.

At the end of World War II in 1945, the United Nations decided that all the Mandate territories that were former German colonies should become independent. But South Africa had intended to make Namibia part of South Africa as its fifth province. The Boers “consulted” with puppet chiefs and headmen and misled the UN that 208,850 blacks were in favour of Namibia becoming a part of South Africa and only 33,520 blacks were against the idea.

### **The Birth of Nationalism in Namibia:**

Genuine leaders in Namibia, led by Chief Hosea Kutako asked for a UN commission to visit Namibia to see for themselves, but South Africa refused to allow this. They also refused passports to leaders who wanted to go address the UN.

It was during the 1950s that black people started to integrate socially and politically. Many people, especially those from the northern parts of Namibia, were now settling in central and southern Namibia. Students from all over the country were admitted at schools and colleges such as Döbra and Augustineum. These two schools in particular were the highest institutions of learning in the country and had played a big role of integrating Namibian students from different parts of the country. This integration opened a platform for all Namibians to actively and jointly debate and exchange information and ideas about the colonial and contract labour system in the country. Namibians started debating the political changes in their country and the entire continent. This was the time when Ghana achieved its independence as the first black African state, and was followed by other African countries in attaining their self-rule. In December 1946, the UN voted against Namibia becoming a part of South Africa, but the Boers said that Namibians were not yet ready to take such an important decision as to decide on their independence, hence the UN left the issue undecided. It was clear at this time that the international community was not ready to give full support to the Namibian people in their struggle for independence. The people of the country realized that the future of the struggle for independence lay in their own hands.

After World War II, like other colonized people, Namibians expanded their political horizons and deepened their understanding as a result of the war. They became aware of anti-colonial struggles raging everywhere, especially of those in their immediate surroundings. Nujoma wrote that,

There was a new spirit taking hold in the 1950s, especially among the youth, men and women, with whom I associated in Windhoek. The same spirit was also taking root in other regions, in factories and mines, and in the rural areas where people were even more strictly controlled by the apartheid South African colonial regime and its puppet chiefs than they were in the urban locations. This was true not only in our country, but also in South Africa, where some of our compatriots were working.<sup>15</sup>

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(15) Nujoma, Sam. *Where Others Wavered: The Autobiography of Sam Nujoma*, London: Panaf, 2001.

This was a period in which Namibians became more aware of the situation brought about by the apartheid system of keeping the natives apart. The apartheid system of forced labour and racialized education, however, did not separate people from different ethnic groups and at such centres Namibians from all corners of the country were able to experience common hardship, problems, and destiny. Namibia's first Foreign Minister and currently Speaker of the National Assembly elaborates how he was inspired by the political changes of his time, first as a student in his home town in Usakos, and later at Agustineum College near Windhoek, where he met up with many young activists from different parts of the country. Many of his contemporaries are now leaders both in the Namibian government and in different opposition political parties.

When I went to a School in Usakos for the first time, I was not only proud for the fact that I was starting school, but also for a new exposure. I found myself standing in a queue with representatives of young people from Damara, Ovambo, Herero, Tswana, and coloured community. I was also exposed to people who were drawn to joining the railway, farming and the fishing industry. After my studies at Usakos I joined the work force at a general dealer shop in Usakos. While I was working at the dealer shop, the idea of going back to school sensed me again. This time, at the age of twenty, I went to Agustineum College in Okahandja in 1958. This year marked the largest intake ever of newcomers at Agustineum with students from the far north, 'The Great Ovamboland', from schools such as Odibo and Oshiganbo to join us here (central part of the country) so we had a large colony of young stars who were getting some ideas about political situations around the continent. A few kilometres from our college was Dobra, another education centre located between Okahandja and Windhoek. Here too we had a similar influx of people from all parts of the country. During sports activities and other interactions, we were competing against each other, but soon sport fields became centres of political debates. At the same time, Namibian students older than me who were studying in South Africa such as Mburumba Kerina, Fanuel Kozonguizi, Otilie Abrahams, Kenneth Abrahams, Nora Chase, among others, were coming back at breaks with news about the Freedom Charter that was adopted in South Africa in 1956. Among other things, the Freedom Charter stipulated that the land in South Africa belongs to all the people who live in the country, both Blacks and Whites. It was this slogan that caused a split within the ANC. Leaders like Robert Sibukwe and other nationalists felt that the land belongs to the black people and that led to the split in the ANC and the formation of the Pan-African Congress (PAC). More information was also brought to us by trade unionists and Namibian activists, who were based in South Africa, the likes of Simon Kaukungwa and Jacob Kuhangwa. We were also inspired by the news of the independence of Ghana in 1957, through radio broadcast and press with the pictures of Kwame Nkrumah dancing with British people. The same period of between 1957-1958, we were seeing the pictures of other African leaders such as Kenneth Kaunda of Northern Rhodesia, Joshua Nkomo of Southern Rhodesia, Kamuzu Banda of Nyasaland, Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika, and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya. At the same time, the situation in Congo was another reference point with Patrice Lumumba who was saying things that we liked very much. We were responsive to white people coming and dominating us, taking control of everything. It was making sense and we were relating to that and demanded freedom. This was enhanced

by stories I heard when I was young in Usakos, that the world would turn upside down and that black people will become white people and white people would turn black, and that part I liked very much.<sup>16</sup>

*This*, however, was not a literal meaning but a prophecy that black people will one day live just the same way as the whites at that time.

Stirred by the events and the awareness that the Namibians must achieve their inalienable rights, the people of Namibia, particularly the youth, started to break the system of ethnic segregation, through intermarriages (which was prohibited at the time) and by closely forming alliances with other ethnic groups (i.e. the Herero Chief's Council, and with the Damaras, Ovambos, and Namas). It was this generation, the youth of the 1950s, that attacked the tribal system to destroy tribalism and to rid the country of white colonial rule, following a successful inspiring struggle by the people of Ghana under the leadership of President Kwame Nkrumah. It was the cruelty of the contract system and other oppressive laws that convinced the Namibians to do something, as they could not allow this oppression to continue unchallenged.

Simon Hafeni Kaukungwa, well known as Mzee, was one of the first political activists in the country after the Second World War. At the break of the war, he was enlisted in the British army: "It was in Tsumeb where I got my first army uniform. I was impressed by the uniform; I remember taking a picture in it and I sent it to my young brother, Toivo ya Toivo, whom I had left at school."<sup>17</sup> After he was recruited in the army, he was sent to South Africa for military training and later transferred to Egypt. In Egypt, he was tasked to handle and escort prisoners of war.

I left by ship and it was through this trip that I first learned that the Boers were not the owners of our country. I heard the information from the Abyssinian (Ethiopia) and Liberian soldiers. They were the ones who sensitized me on our country's political situation. They said to me: "Look your country is supposed to be independent, your country is under the United Nations, the Boers are not your boss, and they were only put there by recognition to look after the land because you are still young," said soldiers. The soldiers added we could be free any time because the Boers are not the rightful owners of the land. I kept that in mind and one good day I told ya Toivo about what I heard and he said he had already read about such information, but just didn't know how to go about.<sup>18</sup>

In 1958, Chief Hosea Kutako and Samuel Witbooi of the Herero and Nama communities respectively, petitioned the United Nations against the UN Good Office Commission, which had been given the task of consulting with the apartheid regime about a possible solution to hand over South West Africa to the UN. Although they initiated the confrontation, these two men were not the only ones who challenged the United Nations on the Namibian subject. Others such as Reverend Theophilus Hingashikuka Hamutumbangela, Clemens Kapuuo, Reverend Michael Scott and the

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(16) Interview with Theo Ben Gurirab, (Windhoek) 9 August 2007.

(17) Interview with Simon Hafeni Kaukungwa.

(18) Interview with Kaukungwa.

Namibians in Cape Town, South Africa, such as Toivo, Mburumba Kerina, and others who had been working with the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, the Congress of Democrats, the Communist Party of South Africa, also joined the act of petitioning to the United Nations.

### **The Formation of the Ovambo People's Congress (OPC):**

In 1958, an organisation was formed by Namibians living in South Africa. The Ovambo People's Congress (OPC) was formed by a group of Namibians in a barber's shop in Cape Town. Many of them were contract workers, working on the mines and railways in South Africa.

Andimba Toivo ya Toivo led this group, which included Peter Mweshihange, Salomon Mifima, Andreas Shipanga, Jackson Kashikuka, Jacob Kuhangwa, Maxton Joseph Mutongolume, and many others. The organisation's members also included students such as Emily Appolus, Fanuel Jariretundu Kozonguizi, Otilie Abraham, Mburumba Kerina, and others. Their original aim was to fight for better living and working conditions for their members in Cape Town.

Toivo ya Toivo relates the story of how he ended up in Cape Town and how he and his comrades started their involvement in modern politics and eventually founded the first political movement. He also revealed his difficult life of deportation from South Africa back to Namibia.

I applied to go and work in the mines, on a six month contract. I worked night shifts, together with a number of Botswana speaking nationals. Toward the end of the contract, it was the mine policy to see to it that each contract worker is provided a ticket that will take him to the nearest station to his home. Our nearest station was Upington, but I refused the ticket, I demanded money to buy my own ticket. I bought my ticket and travelled to Kimberly because I knew a few friends. By the time I reached Kimberly, I found my friends already left. It was cold and I only had one blanket, I didn't have a place to sleep, so I thought of the police station, but they chased me away, saying that I should go and sleep at the location. When I went to the location, I was warned to sleep there. I went back to the station, but they still did not allow me to overnigh there. In fact they referred me to the magistrate; he told me he would punish me if he happens to find me brought forward by the police. So I went back to the police. By that time I had already sent a telegram to my friend to send me money so that I come over to Cape Town. I asked the police not to chase me away because I was only waiting for my money to arrive with the telegram, once I received it I will go. So they allowed me to sleep over; it was on a Wednesday night. I was then hoping I will receive the money the next morning, but to no avail. It was extremely cold. I had no money or food to eat. Luckily I met up with some friends whom we were together at the mine and they gave me two shillings. I was at least able to buy bread. On Friday my money arrived and I took the first train to Cape Town.<sup>19</sup>

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(19) Interview with Herman Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, by the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation Radio, 1992.

However, life in Cape Town had its own problems. Ya Toivo and his countrymen had to struggle to make ends meet. They had to survive on a shilling per day, which could only buy a loaf of bread.

I arrived on a Saturday morning. It was a busy day and people came from different suburbs to do their shopping in the city. It was my first time to see such a number of people. I happen to see a person on the telephone. I also wanted to use it, but I have never used a telephone in my life. Since I was a teacher, I could read and write. I tried reading the instructions, but I couldn't go through. I spend time without success. At the phone box I asked a coloured man to direct me to Sea Point. He took me until the bus station. I told the bus driver that I was going to Sea Point, but it seems as if he had forgotten. He passed the bridge where I was to get off. He decided he is not turning back. I just jump out and walk back to the bridge. I happened to find my friend that I have been looking for. He took me to the public pool so that we take a shower, but none of us had money. We couldn't afford the entrance, so we walked to medical school, where we found a lot of Nyasa nationals, Rhodesians, and Namibians. It is where we took a shower.<sup>20</sup>

Here he was further introduced to a fellow Namibian Eliaser Tuhadeleni, who was also settled in Cape Town, whom he described as a generous man. After a while Ya Toivo got a job in a factory, where he only worked for a week. He was paid three pounds and fifteen shillings. As a former soldier as he said, he liked to be in uniform. So he decided to join the railway police, where he met most of his friends, including Mzee Kaukungwa, Mathews, and Joseph. Ya Toivo explained:

I was sent for three months training when I started my duty as a railway police at Cape Town. This was during the beginning of 1953. I used to work in the evening and it was extremely cold in June. I got tired of working in the weekend while others were enjoying. I left my work and got employed in a furniture shop some time in 1954.

While working at Cape Town, Ya Toivo used to hear political speeches from liberation movements such as the ANC, the Communist Party of South Africa, and others on radio. During this time, his traditional chief in Namibia, Kambonde ka Mpingana, used to write letters to the Native Commissioner requesting Ya Toivo to come back home.

In 1956, he used to communicate with Fanuel Kozoguizi and many others from the liberation in Namibia.

In 1957 Kozoguizi completed his studies and he wanted to continue studying International Law in Cape Town, but he didn't know anybody. I told him to come and he did. I found him a flat next to my flat. He could however not continue with his study as he wished, but he lived in Cape Town for that whole year. While in Cape Town, he introduced me to Jack Simon's place. We used to go for political lectures together with Salomon Mifima, Emily Appolos, Willy Kaukuetu, and others. At the meetings, we were encouraged to join ANC. By that time I was a member of the Modern Youths Society, a society for International Youths. We gathered each Wednesday and Friday. I served as a Deputy Chairperson.

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(20) *Ibid.*

In 1957, I had organized my fellow workers in Cape Town to inform them about the political situation, because already from home, while I was still at school, I used to read newspapers sent by my friend, the late Joel Namundjembo, who used to work in Windhoek for a member of the Legislative Assembly. Whenever his boss finishes reading the papers, he would put them in a wrapper and send them to us. It is when I learned that there was a poor white man living in the location. He (Reverend Michael Scott) was sent by Chief Maharero in Botswana to get information from Chief Hosea Kutako.

In 1957, on 2 August, I formed Ovamboland People's Congress in Cape Town. I organized all my fellow colleagues. We use to petition the United Nations and our own aim and objectives was to request the UN to pressurize South Africa to do away with the contract system as well as to allow South West Africa to become a member of the trusteeship council because by that time all former mandates territories had become members, but South Africa refused. However, the South West Africa issue was taken up by Rev. Michael Scott between 1955-1956 on behalf of the Herero Council, until he was joined by Kerina, Kozonguizi, and Nujoma.

In 1958, I sent a taped cassette to the United Nations through Kerina, and with the help of Denis Goldberg. Firstly before the tape arrived, I sent a letter, which Kerina took to the General Assembly and by the time the tape arrived, the General Assembly had already known the content of the tape, as all was written in the letter.

However the South African authority found out about the tape that I sent to the United Nations. Newspapers came to me to confirm whether I really sent the tape, but I denied. Shortly when they left, Emily Appolus came to me and told me to confess about the tape. So I had to call the journalist back again.

These activities brought Ya Toivo into trouble as his job was immediately terminated. He was served with a letter by his boss informing him that he was fired.

On a Monday, I left to Langa to get the newspaper for employment. I was asked, "Are you Ya Toivo, the man who sent the letter to the United Nation?" and I confirmed, "Yes, it's me," so they said to me, "Stand aside, you need to go and see the Native Commissioner at the South River." I did as I was I told. Upon arrival in the Native Commissioner's office, I was questioned about the letter that I sent to the United Nations. I was then given 72 hours to vacate Cape Town by train.

I recalled he said to me: "If I find you here after 72 hours, you will be in trouble.

We are prepared to pay your ticket." I said no, I will not accept their ticket I will find my own ways. From there I left home and I informed my friends that I am given

72 hours to vacate Cape Town and to return to my home land. My friends collected money for my ticket. I left Cape Town on the 4th of December, 1958, in a company of

Kozonguizi. At the station there were securities watching if I would really leave Cape Town as instructed to do. Little did I know that Libertine Amadhila was also in the same train we travelled to SWA. She was with another girl, and both of them

were coming from school, heading home for holiday.

While in Keetmanshoop, I came to think about that there is no way I could travel straight to Windhoek. I thought twice that I could be arrested upon arrival. So Kozonguizi and I decided to cut our journey short in Keetmanshoop. We were lucky

to find our friend Philip Muzerekazi, who was employed at the Magistrates' Court as a translator and an administrative clerk. We went to his place and he arranged us passes under false names.

Since we still had planned to continue with our journey, I agreed upon that Kozonguizi leave before I do, so that he go and monitor the situation in Windhoek. He left on Wednesday and I followed on Saturday. I arrived in Windhoek on Sunday. I found David Meroro and Kozonguizi waiting for me. We drove to the Old Location where I had a meeting with Chief Kutako. In the meeting he persuaded me not to leave Windhoek to the north but to rather stay. The Chief told me that I will go suffer physically and economically, but I said I want to go and see what will happen. Meanwhile he offered me accommodation at his sister's place. He told me to go and get my passes fixed, to avoid further arrest. The following Monday, Kozonguizi and I left to arrange for my pass. We found a white clerk who asked if I was ya Toivo, the man who wrote the letter to the UN. I said yes. I am the one. He said to me: "I want you to stay in Windhoek", adding that if I return to Ovamboland I will come back on contract labour. But I said no. He asked for my pass and he never returned it. He gave another paper.

After a week, Ya Toivo travelled to the north. He could, however, not reach his destination as was planned. By the time he arrived in Tsumeb, he found the bus to the north had already left. He had to overnight at the bus station. The following morning, he took a walk to town where he met a friend that took him along at the compound. It was at the compound that Ya Toivo found himself behind bars. He was arrested on Christmas Eve for trespassing in the compound. Before living Cape Town, Ya Toivo was corresponding with Kerina. Kerina gave him some of the names of the people who he could contact at home. Among them were Sam Nujoma, David Meroro, Rev. Karuera Tjilimunje, and others. According to Kerina, these were the people who were involved in the struggle working together with the Herero Council, so he should continue having contact with them, which he did. When he arrived in Windhoek, he could, however, not meet up with Sam Nujoma as he was up in the north. He met Luise Nelengani, Lukas Nepela, and many others. Ya Toivo explained what happened while locked up by the police at Tsumeb:

When I was detained in Tsumeb, President Sam Nujoma passed by. I was locked up on a Christmas Eve. I was taken to court on Wednesday, which was a Family day and was sentenced to two pounds or a fourth night in prison. I had money and I was prepared to pay for the bail, but they said to me I could not pay bail because there is another case opened against me for fleeing the country illegally. Hence I could not be released. After a week they took me to the charge office to sign the prisoner's form, but I refused to sign it because some of my documents were missing. My travel document that I had received in Windhoek was not there. Because I refused to sign, they decided to take me to a Magistrate who made a lot of noise. He threatened to lock me up for a month if I continued refusing to sign. I stuck to my words and said no I won't sign unless all my documents are present. While in prison there were two police officers that were cooperative with me, whether their cooperation was genuine or not, is only known to them. I picked up a piece of paper and wrote a letter to my friends in Cape Town. I gave it to one of the officers to post it, but I am not sure if they really post it or they

gave it to their masters. I never received any response from my friends. One day I sat and asked myself carefully, what I shall achieve by staying in prison, especially when I didn't know any lawyer to my defence. So I gave in and signed the papers.

While in prison, Ya Toivo was isolated from other inmates. He was put in a cell alone. He did not have contact with anybody, but after he signed the forms he was allowed to mingle with others. This was an opportune moment for him as he started sensitizing other prisoners about political development in the country and abroad. Most of the prisoners he politicized were detained simply because they had deserted their masters, especially in farms where black people experienced hardship and oppression; some were even sentenced in assaulting their bosses in self-defence.

After some days I was released handcuffed and deported to Ondangwa. The Boers put me on a bus together with my escort. We happened to stop at Namutoni, where I met a certain driver from Ondangwa who used to drive government vehicles. This driver told me that he has a letter for me from Sam Nujoma, but he will only give it to me when we get home. He was on his way back home from Windhoek, where he took a retired Native Commissioner and picked up another one who was travelling with him to Ondangwa.

Upon arrival in Ondangwa, my escort asked me where my home is. I told him it was just a mile from where we were standing. So he said to me, "Go home. Tomorrow I will come by to take you to the Native Commissioner." The following day I went to his place. He took me to the Native Commissioner. The Native Commissioner, he asked if I was the man who wrote letters to the United Nations and I said yes. He said: "I heard about you from the Magistrate in Tsumeb last night. I am new here so let us forget about the past and start working together." He asked who my Chief was and I told him it was Chief Kambonde. The Chief was called in and he started asking me questions why I wrote letters to the United Nations without consulting the elders. He said to the Native Commissioner, "This man has been away for long. He had forgotten the customs of the tribe; I better take him with so that I can teach him the customs." The Native Commissioner agreed. He gave a special vehicle to the Chief although he had his own. We travelled to the Chief's home whereby I was put in the kangaroo court. Ananias Shipena, a man who used to work together with Chief Hosea Kutako and Michael Scott, was the presiding Judge in that Court. This Shipena used to give Scott information, but later he became a traitor. They were asking me questions why I wrote letters without their consultation and so on. The Headman of my area also went with me to the Chief's place. The Chief said to my Headman, "Take this man with you and whenever you come to tribal meetings bring him along so that he can learn tribal customs. After the Court, I was taken home and I continued with my correspondence with Kerina and others in Cape Town.

Despite these political harassments by the chiefs and white authorities, Ya Toivo was adamant and continued to carry out his political mission.

I recall a meeting that was held at Ondangwa. Before the meeting started, the Chiefs and the Boers at conference decided that no SWAPO person will be allowed to speak in that meeting. Bishop Leonard Auala was also present at that meeting. The following day he was going to Ongandjera to attend another meeting. Before he left for the Ongandjera meeting, he passed by my place early in the morning around 03h00 and told me his

disappointment with yesterday's meeting, as the SWAPO people were not allowed to talk. He then left in a company of a Finnish missionary worker who drove him. At the meeting he (Auala) was given a chance to speak. He slashed the administration and the officials who were surprised to hear such expressions from the Bishop.

On the other hand, Eliaser Tuhadeleni tried by all means to reach Ohangwena but he could not. The following day, another meeting was held at Ohangwena. The Chairman of SWAPO in the north, Mzee Kaukungwa, wanted to speak at the meeting despite the fact that they were initially warned that no SWAPO member must speak at that meeting. He said to them: "You have come to talk to the people of the north. We are members of this community and if you don't want to talk to us I am going to break this meeting up." The Bantu commissioners had a conference where they agreed that if the SWAPO people try to break their meetings up, they must do something about it. They continued with the meeting, but then Mzee rose again and said: "I want to talk on behalf of this people." They refused him the chance to talk. Following the refusal for him to talk on behalf of his people, he said once again: "I am going to break this meeting, all SWAPO members come, follow me!" SWAPO members followed him. The commissioner together with his headman Vilho Weyulu went to have another meeting that decided to eliminate Mzee.

Luckily, a man who was related to Mzee by the name Emanuel Nghixhulifwa overheard that the Headman and the South African regime want Mzee dead. In that light, Nghixhulifwa sent a word with somebody on a bicycle to go warn Mzee that there will be people armed destined to kill him. He said these people were coming in

trucks armed with all sort of rifles and *pangas*. But before Mzee received the message, he had just finished addressing his people. There were about seven Government trucks looking for Mzee all around the *cuca* shops and whoever was found on their way was beaten up. When they came by Mzee's place, he had already gone hiding in the bush with Hifikepunye Pohamba as he had since received the message from Nghixhulifwa.

Angula Kapitia also came to inform me that Mzee is in trouble. He briefed me on what happened at the meeting. I organized my friends, Erasmus Erastus Mbumba, and Matheus "Jouberg" Joseph. We got into a car and drove; at a certain point we met with Captain Akerman with his group coming from Ohangwena direction. I stopped the vehicle and told him that I want to speak to him. He called his people to listen to me. My people also came to stand by. I said: "I understand that the Headman wants to kill Mzee." He said to me, "Please you must never interfere yourself into tribal affairs, otherwise you will get into trouble." We left and they also went. On our way we saw Ruben Nicodemus following us and on the other hand there were seven trucks parked

at a *cuca* shop with armed men. We saw that Ruben later went to them. Our car got stuck in the mud. We later managed to push it out. Ruben came to tell us that while he was listening to the armed men, he heard them saying: "There is a Chief of SWAPO heading to Ohalushu", and one of them said, "Let him get there, we will arrest him upon arrival." We decided to go back to the place where we met Captain Akerman, while others decided to go and see how Mzee is doing.

In Ondangwa I was again locked up because I failed to tell the Boers where Thomas Shihepo was. This Shihepo and others came to tell me that the Boers had been looking for them. So I told them not to come at my place again because the Boers know where I stay. That we should rather meet elsewhere. The commander ordered one of my friends, who was also detained, to go to my house and search for those wanted people.

We were locked up and unfortunately the man who had a truck with Thomas Shihepo and the other men also went at my place. The police asked him what he was doing at my place. He had a lot of money on him, about N\$ 600. They asked which area he came from and he told them that he came from the area of Ushona Shiimi. So they asked if Ushona was in town and he said yes. So they went to get Chief Ushona Shiimi to the station. He was asked if he knew the man and he said yes. I gave him a pass to go to Otjiwarongo to buy his stock and fix his truck.

When Ushona saw Jouberg, he asked what he was doing in the cells. They wanted to lock us up in one cell, but they took my friend to another cell. We were in those cells for about three days, and after that they drove us out to an unknown destination. We later found out we were taken to the Chief's place and [they] told us that this [is] where [they take] the people who are looking for problems.

From these days, Ya Toivo was not allowed to leave the north, especially when he wanted to visit southern towns such as Windhoek. This was literally a home arrest in his traditional area of Ovamboland. He said,

Chief Kambonde would not permit me. He had detained me. Sometimes I couldn't even leave my tribal area. In 1959 my friends in Windhoek heard that I was being detained, so they sent Leevi Nganjone to see me. It was not an easy way for him but he managed. He came to my house and we spoke. He was light in complexion and those years he could be mistaken for being white. I took him to the Chief's place to go and take pictures and I told him not to say a single word to let him know that he was Herero. He should only speak English.

By 1960, I was still detained by the Chief until in June when he died. This Chief used to drink a lot, even though he knew that he was suffering from TB [Tuberculosis]. One day he got very sick and was taken to the hospital where he died. After the Chief died, the man who used to watch over me, Penda Nangolo, released me. He said to me: "Go, the person who held you is dead. I have nothing to do with you." He warned me not to hold political meetings in the area, but he doesn't mind if I held them very far from the tribal area. Since then, I continued assisting people into exile. The people I helped included Namibia's first Minister of Education after independence, Nahas Angula, and the current Prime Minister and many others.

When it was founded in 1957, the OPC had close links with the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SAPC), and the Pan African Congress (PAC). Together they joined the struggle against their common oppressor – the apartheid regime. They demanded a free and independent Namibia. The OPC sent petitions to the United Nations, the Roman Catholic Pope, and the Queen of England. The Queen sent their petition back, saying they should give it to the Governor in Cape Town.

The South African white regime did not tolerate these "cheeky Bantu" from the north. That's how at the end of 1968 Ya Toivo was deported back to Namibia. He left Cape Town saying the following:

I came here to study and to gain more experience in political activities. I have made many good friends, particularly among members of the African National Congress. It is now time to return and carry on the struggle in my own country.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Formation of the Ovambo People's Organisation(OPO):**

On 19 April 1959, the Ovamboland People's Organisation (OPO) was formed in Windhoek. It was a follow up to the OPC. A young railway worker, Sam Nujoma, was elected President and other members included Louis Nelengani, (Vice-President) Ishmael Fortune, Lucas Nepela, Jacob Kuhangua, and others. Most of the members of the OPO were contract workers who came from Ovamboland in the north. But right from the beginning, the organisation opened its doors to all Namibians. The OPO clearly stated that it was fighting not only for the Ovambo, but for all the people in Namibia.

One of the founding members of the OPO, Simon Mzee Kaukungwa, explained in detail how the OPC and OPO were founded and merged and how later the organisation was transformed into SWAPO. As Mzee related:

The founding President (Sam Nujoma) also used to travel to South Africa with the railway. We met there. The first time I met with Sam Nujoma, he told me that the people at home had formed an organization, Ovamboland People's Organisation (OPO), in Windhoek. I asked for a transfer to Windhoek with a hidden agenda, my application was approved. I came to Windhoek, where I worked for six months, and got transferred to Mariental Railway, but my wife was not happy with the transfer, hence I had to come back. Back in Windhoek I was promoted to a rank of Chief CID; this time I had to be stationed in Usakos, where I was responsible for monitoring most of the railway stations in the country. At that time black men were not allowed to drive government vehicles, and I was therefore given a white man by the name of Van Der Merve, who drove me around. This created an opportunity for me to mingle with my comrades the likes of Eliaser 'Kahumba Kandola' Tuhadeleni and Theophilus Hamutumbangela, who were among the leaders crying for freedom, spear headed under the Motto "*Onghuwo ye pongo okalunga heyi tondoka.*" There was also another group based in Windhoek called Mandume Ndemufayo (named after the late King of Ovakwanyama tribe). Members of this group included Chief Hosea Kutako, Aaron Hamutenya (father to Hidipo Hamutenya a former Minister under SWAPO government and now president of Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), and Aaron Shivute.

Since I was the Chief of the CID, I did not have any restriction. I could speak to anybody. During many of my trips, I travelled to Oshikango. In Oshikango we could not finish our work on time, therefore, we could not go back to Usakos, we had to overnight at my home village with my driver in Ohalushu, which is a few kilometres from Oshikango. Van der Merve was a good person, and we understood each other well. He didn't have a problem sleeping in Ohalushu. Since then, Ohalushu became our sleeping place whenever we were working in that area.

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(21) Interview with Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo, by the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation Radio, 1992.

This was a crucial time that I just needed an excuse to resign from my duty, but didn't know how to go about it, so one day we visited my home with Van der Merve and we found both my parents sick taken to the hospital. Their health was no longer good as they were in and out of the hospital. I used them as an excuse to resign from my work. Citing that I am going to look after my parents as there was no one to look after them. Van der Merve was my witness to my parent's situation, so my resignation was approved. This was now my chance to organize freely because when I was a police officer I could not address people in our meeting because I was an official.

Having left my job, I was now freely attending meetings and motivating people to unite together in fighting for our country. At that moment, we had two organizations: OPO in the country and OPC in Cape Town. We proposed not to have two names for the organization, but rather one name representing all our interests. There were no membership cards, but only an open letter with member's names. Towards the end of 1958, it was decided that we elect the president of OPO. Most people had targeted Sam Nujoma to be the president, but there was also another candidate on the list of presidency, Jackson Kashikuka, who came from Cape Town.

Nujoma defeated Kashikuka in the elections. I recall Gabriel Mbidi, Aron Shivute, Aron Hamutenya, and one Titus who were among those present during that election. All I can say, Nujoma was already President of OPO before it was renamed into SWAPO. During this time, Nujoma was actively communicating and coordinating with SWANU and the Herero Chief's Council. He was a friend to Clemence Kapuo and Chief Hosea Kutako. Kapuo was Chief Kutako's very important man. During those years all political organizations were working together and sharing one political platform for the common goal – freedom and self determination.<sup>22</sup>

During those days, political organisations in the country were working together for a common cause. This is clearly emphasized by Fanuel Kozonguizi, who in his words, while petitioning the United Nations, quoted page three of the *Windhoek Advertiser* of 15 October 1959, said, "I am the representative and spokesperson of the Herero's and Ovambo People's Organisation (OPO)."

Kaukungwa continued:

When we elected Sam Nujoma to be the President of OPO, our main objective was for him to free Namibia from colonialism. We were two parties, SWANU for the Hereros and OPO for the Ovambo. We communicated very well because we were all fighting towards one common goal. We therefore decided that we needed to send someone overseas to speak on our behalf. We said Nujoma should go and represent the people. Initially we had sent Gideon Ndadi to represent our interest to the international community, but couldn't make it. We smuggled him in the ships at Walvis Bay, but he was caught and deported back to Walvis Bay.

After this attempt failed, arrangements were made that Nujoma go through Botswana, Zambia, to Tanganyika, and once arrived in Tanganyika, further arrangements would see to it that he reached New York.

## **The Formation of SWANU**

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(22) Interview with Simon Mzee Kaukungwa.

The political activities around the formation of the South West African National Union SWANU started on 20 August 1959, under a temporary body called the South West African National Organisation (SWANO). SWANU, however, was officially launched at a public meeting in Windhoek's Old Location on 27 September 1959 with the backing of the Herero Chief's Council and incorporating the SWA Progressive Association (SWAPA). Advocate Jariretundu Kozonguizi became the first President of SWANU.

SWANU was the first nationalist liberation movement to be formed in Namibia. In September of the same year, SWANU was joined by the Ovamboland People's Organisation (OPO). Most prominent political figures in the country at that time were instrumental in the formation of SWANU. SWANU was formed as an umbrella organization, composed of people from various groups such as the OPO and the Herero Chief's Council. Members of these groups also served on SWANU's executive, while maintaining their independent existence. They were as follows:

President: Fanuel Jariretundu Kozonguizi

Vice President: Uatja Kauketu

Secretary General: Useta Mbuha

Assistant Secretary: Isascar Kambatuku

National Treasurer: Louis Nelengani

Propaganda and Organizing Secretary: Nathaniel Mbaeva

Additional Members: Sam Nujoma, Augus Gariseb, Aaron Kapere, John Muundjua and Emil Appolus

The first political action of SWANU as an enlarged movement was its participation in the highly successful 1959 defiance campaign in protest against the forced removal of residents from Windhoek's Old Location to what became Katutura Township. The alliance between OPO and SWANU was short-lived, due to the tension that arose in the leadership. The other group to quit SWANU was the Herero Chief's Council because they were against SWANU's domination by Mbanderus and its rejection of Herero leadership.

The formation of these mass movements brought a new dimension to the Namibian political spectrum. Compounded with the independence of Ghana in 1957, and the independence mood across the African continent, many young Namibians were now more conscious than ever, of their political environment. In contrast to the 1940s and early 1950s when lone clergy such as Reverend Michael Scott and Theophilus Hamutumbangela challenged the illegal South African occupation of Namibia, there was now a diverse and contingent group of workers, teachers, and students prepared to take the independence struggle further.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Formation of SWAPO**

Kaukungwa explained that,

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(23) Grotpeter, 1994: See p.458; Dierks, 2002: See pp.166, 206.

In Tanzania, Nujoma was advised by Tanzanians, Kenyans, and other countries that he should change the name of the party; he could not have a party that only represents one tribal group. So he wrote a letter informing me that he needed to change the name of the organization. He sends the name South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) as proposed by Kerina Mburumba.

Before the OPO leadership went into exile, they had received letters from one of the OPO leaders, Mburumba Kerina in New York, asking them to reconsider change. This was confirmed by Kerina in his letter he wrote to Ya Toivo, saying: "I have been urging Mr. Nujoma to change the name of the Ovamboland People's Organisation into the South West African National Congress. This will give the organization a national character..."<sup>24</sup> Soon after Nujoma and other leaders went into exile, the OPO leadership decided to take Kerina's advice.

In 1960, the OPO was baptized and renamed SWAPO. As Kaukungwa recalled: If I can recall well, we accepted the name OPO to be changed into SWAPO, but we insisted that the date of the establishment of the organization will remain unchanged.

OPO was established on the 19 April 1958, while SWAPO was established in 1960. The name was channelled to everybody in the organization and we approved it.<sup>25</sup>

The formation of SWAPO came at a time when South Africa itself was going through political upheavals. Pressure was put on the apartheid government by nationalist movements such as the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SAPC), and the Pan African Congress (PAC). The late 1950s saw pressure mount on the South African government through demonstrations and boycotts. The 10th December 1959 saw an uprising by residents of the Old Location refusing to relocate to Katutura, a township designated for Africans.

In the 1950s, the first African nationalist organisations and trade unions were formed and became vehicles for discontented urban workers. Mass organisation became more formalised with South Africa's refusal to place Namibia under trusteeship as had been done with other Mandate territories. The dispute over the mandate is highlighted by the several attempts that Namibians made to voice their discontent towards the South African administration. By the late 1950s, political activists such as Herman Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo had managed to send a petition to the United Nations. This he did with the help of Mburumba Kerina and Reverend Michael Scott. Several petitions to the United Nations as well as to other western imperialist powers were sent by Herero Chief Hosea Kutako during the time. It was with this determination for self-government and independence that, in 1960, political activists decided to send Sam Shafishuna Nujoma to New York to present the Namibian case. Assisted by Chief Hosea Kutako and by Ovambanderu Chief Munjuku Nguvauva II in Botswana, Nujoma was able to reach Dar es Salaam, and from there New York, where he was able to petition before the Sub Committee of the Fourth Committee of the General

<sup>(24)</sup> Kerina, Mburumba. Letter to Ya Toivo.

<sup>(25)</sup> Interview with Kaukungwa.

Assembly of the United Nations. Before returning to Dar es Salaam, Nujoma had an opportunity to appear before a UN Permanent Committee on South West Africa to further advance the cause of the Namibian people.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Old Location Uprising:**

In 1912, the Windhoek Town Council, steered by the minority white occupants, established the main location (also called Old Location) where blacks could live and by the year 1913, blacks living in various parts of the Windhoek area were moved to these new locations. In those days, a law forbid marriage and sex between whites and blacks. In 1932, the main location was reorganised, straight streets were laid out, and the ethnic group section formally established.

An advisory board, consisting of twelve non-white members under the chairmanship of the white location superintendent, was established in the main location in 1927. Half the members of the board were elected by the location superintendent, elections were held when a vacancy occurred. The most frequently discussed topics at the board meetings were health, sanitation, education issues, and the operation of the board.<sup>27</sup> A subject that was periodically discussed was heavy drinking, illegal brewing, and illegal selling of alcoholic beverages.

In 1947, the number of immigrant contracts increased, especially, the men hailing from the north through the contract labour system, *Okaholo*, facilitated by Ovambo puppet chiefs. The municipality built a “compound” where they were accommodated. Together this location or compound was called *Pokkiesdraai* contract Ovambo compound. By the year 1955, there were as many male contract Ovambo workers as residents in Ovamboland.

During the 1950s, the municipality of Windhoek, in consultation with the South West African administration and the South African government decided to “whiten” the city by building a new suburb for the whites or Europeans as they referred to themselves and a new location for the non-whites or non-Europeans, as they referred to the Africans, north-west of Windhoek, similar to Soweto, an equivalent township in Johannesburg, South Africa. This plan was due to a rapid increase in the number of South African whites migrating to Namibia. In the 1950s, the Windhoek municipality decided together with the South African administration to build a new location for the blacks.

A meeting was held by the Windhoek Town Council. The Town Council also consisted of “non-European Advisory Board members”; it was comprised of six white members appointed by the municipality and six Africans who were said to represent black residents of the Old Location. The latter strongly rejected the planned relocation to the new location.

The plan to build a new location where the non-white population would be allocated was met with bewilderment and dismay by the residents. The existing social

<sup>(26)</sup> Nujoma, Sam Shafishuna. *Where Others Wavered: The Autobiography of Sam Nujoma*, London: Panaf, 2001.: See pp.105-111.

<sup>(27)</sup> Wagner: 1951: See p.115.

structure was doomed as the new location was planned to neatly place each tribal group into their own area. Lifelong neighbours and friends would find themselves transplanted into an environment where they would experience enforced segregation, higher rentals, fewer facilities, and less freedom, coupled with a policy that made no provision for freehold ownership of land.

Segregation procedures continued, but most Old Location residents refused to move to the new location, which they called *Katutura*, “the place where we do not want to settle”. Weeks of uncertainty followed, coupled with escalation of repressive actions by the South African authorities along with ongoing harassment of the Old Location

residents. The brewing of traditional beer and other traditional occupations were a main source of income for many of the women of the community; the municipality all of a sudden deemed these activities to be illegal and imposed new regulations which included the statement that all beer should be purchased only from the beer hall, which was operated by the municipality.

These actions were met with protest by women whose very livelihood had been taken away. In early December 1959, a group of women marched to the administrator’s residence in Leutwein Street. The residents of the South West Africa House refused them an interview and in reply to this act of ignorance by the authority, the residents returned to the Old Location, whereupon they began to boycott all municipality facilities such as buses, the beer hall, and the cinema.

Records indicated that the boycotts were conducted in a non-violent manner with people gathering in groups caucusing and standing outside the municipality beer hall and offices. On the night of 10 December 1959, a crowd was told to disperse and they ignored the instructions. These protest meetings held in the Old Location ended in a bloody confrontation with the police. During this confrontation, Rosa Kakurukaze Mungunda, a resident demonstrator, set fire to the mayor’s car. In response, the police shot and killed her as well as twelve other demonstrators. Immediately after the confrontation, between 3,000 and 4,000 people fled in fear of further trouble. This event is largely considered the genesis of SWAPO (the South West Africa People’s Organization).

Mangumana Vetiyani, a Himba man from Kaokoland, moved to Windhoek in 1943 in search for work and settled at the Old Location. Vetiyani was among those who witnessed the forceful removal of blacks from the Old Location to *Katutura*. He narrates the events that happened surrounding the Old Location uprising.

I remember a meeting with politicians, in which a white official, called Strijdom said, “If the lion goes into the bush don’t go after it,” adding that “Monkeys will always be monkeys, and monkeys don’t stay with people,” but what he really meant was that... us blacks could not live together with whites. That was when they started moving us forcefully from the Old Location.

We boycotted because we knew that *Katutura* was far from our workplaces. The whites provided us a bus for transportation, which we needed to pay a fee to get on the bus. They knew we couldn’t afford the bus fee every day, so in the end we would have to walk long distances to get to our work places.

When the boycott started, there were some ladies who were thirsty and wanted to drink water. They entered the white people's beer hall which was the nearest place. They got arrested and jailed for drinking water from the white man's premises. That was when the first gun was shot. I saw them shoot Rosa Kakurukaze Mungunda, who immediately fell on the ground. That first shot I heard was on Mungunda. We picked her up and took her to the nearest house, where she later succumbed to injury. From there I ran home to get petrol so that I could burn the white people's vehicles. I also brought along my *Onkunja* in Otjiherero, (*knopkierie* in Afrikaans), so that I defend myself from the whites, because they had guns. I was going to show those Boers what I am made of, but I did not get a chance to use it on them; they shot me on my leg before I could use my stick.

They shot me while I was still pouring petrol on the vehicle of a white man called Snyman. However I managed to flee the scene, and removed the bullet out of my leg. I removed it with the knife and burnt the wound to prevent infection. I could not go to the hospital because hospitals were run by our enemies, the "Whites". The night of the uprising had many black arrests, while others were injured and killed in the process.<sup>28</sup>

**The following are the names of some victims that were either murdered or wounded in the massacre known to date.**

Comrades Killed		Comrades Injured	
1	Cloete Willem	1	Cloete Karl
2	Haseb Asser	2	David's Eva
3	Haimbodi Johannes	3	Gariseb Jonathon
4	Kahiko Bartholomew's	4	Goseb Paul
5	Kasuto Hugo	5	Hangero Paul
6	Kuiri Rheinhardt	6	Hoveka Simon
7	Kutsche (Gutsche) Bernhard	7	Kahipura Ismael
8	Kakurukaze Mungunda Anna	8	Kaimu Adolf
9	Tjombe Zacheus	9	Kariange Albanus
10	Uripa Zacheus	10	Karuuombe Dankie
		11	Kashipuku Dominicus
		12	Katjirumbu Dan
		13	Katjiuongua Albert

The uprising was followed by the dawning of 11 December which revealed, to some extent, the previous night's horrors. The corpses of the murdered were removed under darkness to the local hospitals by the authorities during the night, but the following day municipal trucks each with its team of workers were seen to be driving through the streets, tidying up. One truck was "full of shoes" that had been left behind by the people fleeing from the ongoing hail of bullets and carnage. Many of the residents had fled the Old Location to hide.

(28) Interview with Vetiyani.

Today, December 10th is celebrated as the “Day of Human Rights and Namibian Women’s Day” and many people come to the graveyard near the Old Location to honour the martyrs of their revolution. The segregation procedure was officially completed with the closing of the Old Location on 31 August 1968. Eventually, almost all of the black people were forcibly moved to Katutura without further incidents by the racist police. The Namibian people were threatened and informed that any “misbehaviour” would be confronted. The local people with a slightly lighter complexion were settled in an area named Khomasdal, thus assuring that only whites lived in Windhoek.

By 1968, Katutura consisted of about 4000 standardized rental houses without water and electricity, organized into sections of five different ethnic groups. Each house had a living area of 45sqm and a large letter on the door symbolizing the tribe (D = Damara, H = Herero and O= for Ovambo, etc.). In addition to the rental houses, there was a single-quarter of dormitory-type housing accommodating about 1000 people. Another singles quarter was a men only quarter where mostly Ovambo contract workers lived.

Nujoma reflected during his interview on the situations and events of those years, particularly the shootings of black people in the Old Location of 1959. He also elaborated on his participation in organising the boycott and his subsequent arrest before he fled into exile in 1960.

At that time, Chief Hosea Kutako used to petition the United Nations; he mandated Reverend Michael Scott to go to the United Nations to represent the people of South West Africa. He wanted SWA to be placed under the UN trusteeship system with the purpose to develop the people of Namibia toward self-determination and national independence. Of course the Boers, when they received the mandate from the League of Nations, which clearly stated that the mandatory power should promote social well- being for the indigenous people and assist them to move toward self-determination, were not happy.

The Boers imposed their policy of apartheid racial discrimination in education, denying us better education. They introduced Namibia’s slavery contract labour system through the so called South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA). In a nutshell, the Boers were basically just interested in self-enrichment. Rev. Michael Scott was the great man in South Africa within the Anglican Church in Johannesburg. He learned that the Boers had a strategy of going to the UN, requesting to incorporate SWA into South Africa.

In this light, Rev. Scott went to Botswana to approach Seretse Khama and Samuel Maharero, a brother to the Chief of Ovaherero, but Maharero had directed the Rev. to speak to Chief Hosea Kutako in South West Africa, which he did. Thus Chief Kutako agreed and mandated Rev. Scott to petition the UN. At that time, the British also voted against him not to be heard before the fourth committee of the UN General Assembly. We used to read newspapers while at night school. It was through the papers that we learned about Chief Kutako’s petitioning. As dedicated and committed youth, we decided to stand the ground and act, because we learned that Tanganyika, which was also a former mandate territory, was moving toward self-determination. Cameroon

and Togo which were also German colonies became League of Nation Mandate and they were also moving toward self-determination. The duo countries were now placed under the UN trusteeship system. Meanwhile, us, the youth used to go to Chief Kutako for meetings. It was where we heard that a group of Namibians established the Ovambo People's Congress (OPC) in South Africa. The organisation's aims and objectives were to put an end to the slavery contract system, as well as to join the two Chiefs (Kutako and Samuel Witbooi) in writing a petition to the UN demanding SWA to be placed under the UN trusteeship system.

This is how we started politics in Namibia. At that time, the Boers started campaigning at the Municipality of Windhoek for the blacks to be shifted very far from the township. The municipality sided with them adding that the Old Location was very close to the white residential areas. Apparently we should move to Katutura, which was 5 km away from the white residential areas. The Boers agreed on a buffer zone, which was the policy of Verwoerd, who was the Minister of Native Affairs under the Malan government in South Africa. Thus the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948. However, Chief Kutako had objected the removal of residents from the Old Location. He disagreed with the whole idea of moving to Katutura and he had our support. Against that background, residents of the Old Location, united as a force to fight against their removal from the location, irrespective of whether one was Ovambo speaking, Herero, or Nama-Damara. We all stood for one common goal. Moses Garoeb, Chief Kutako, and the Damara Council by that time also launched a petition objecting the removal of the people from Old Location to Katutura. We hired a vehicle mounted with a microphone. For the first time, our people ever heard their local languages spoken on the microphone. I was speaking in Oshiwambo, the late Willy Kakwetu and Nathanael Mbaheva spoke in Otjiherero, while Moses Garoeb spoke in Damara- Nama. The message was loud and clear to all. We announced that nobody should move from the Old Location, nobody should go and drink at the beer hall because they prohibited indigenous from preparing and selling their own traditional beer as it was the case before.

Once found selling or preparing beer, you will be arrested and put in prison. This is how apartheid policies affected our people. Since the announcement, our people abstained from bars. However, this move annoyed the Boers. On the 9th December 1959 early morning the Chief Native Commissioner Bignaut and Snyman who was then the mayor of the town, Snyman and the SA chief of police Major Robert, came to the Old Location as early as 08h30.

The trio invited the Advisory Board responsible for the Ovambo, Damara, and Herero sections. After they held talks with the board, we heard that Boers were angry because of the native broadcast that said residents should not go and drink beer at the hall. They also added that we were interfering with the affair of the municipality. But we told them that there was no municipality because we didn't vote. We questioned if they were the whites who impose apartheid policies? A question that annoyed Major Robert, he was not impressed at all. He said, "You Bantu, I want to tell you a story: If there is a wounded lion in the area, do not go there, otherwise you will be hurt." This was the first time we learned that the Boers referred to us as Bantus. I should say the boycott was effective that nobody ever went to the beer hall. This was the very same day that the Boers arranged themselves to shoot our people at night while bars were open, but fortunately our people stopped visiting the beer hall. We were well alerted

and knew their plan ahead before they realised it. On that night I went to box dry at Ovambo Compound to address workers as a member of OPO, [to say] that we should unite and work together. I was accompanied by Clemens Kapuo's niece Kurundiro. Kurundiro was just curious, she wanted to see how I address the workers, and it was about 20h00 when we arrived at the compound. I found more than 100 police officers drilling at the compound. Thus workers who were members of OPO came and warned us that the night could be dangerous for us because the Boers are drilling nonstop at an odd hour. They were drilling with the 303 guns of the Second World War.

I was warned and told to go back home. I took Kurundiro back at her uncle's house (the late Kapuo); we spared time reading newspapers and talking about politics. We were later joined by Ngavirue, a social worker at the municipality in the Old Location. We escorted Ngavirue half way, until at a house which was constructed as a demo of how houses in Katutura would look like. Just when we entered the house, the Boers started to fire shots at the people who were walking near the municipality hall.

This is basically how they killed the people of the Old Location on the 10th December 1959. After the uprising, twelve people were killed while more than fifty people were injured. I remember a number of people walking from Ovitoto to the Herero native reserve; they were also shot down on their way.<sup>29</sup>

Some leaders and organizers of the protest were deported to their respective native reserves (tribal areas). Nathaniel Mbaeva was deported to Omaheke and Jacob Kuhangwa, then Secretary General of OPO, was deported to Ovamboland. Nujoma was also about to be deported to Ovamboland, where he was born, but managed to quickly get a lawyer who defended his case and the charge was withdrawn. He was arrested on several occasions during this period, and had to pay a lot of money to be released. The executive committee of OPO had a meeting, where a decision was taken that Nujoma should leave the country as soon as possible. In this regard, they had to work very closely with the Herero Chief Hosea Kutako and to link up with Hereros living in Bechuanaland after fleeing the German inflicted genocide of 1904-1907. At the request of the Herero Chief's Council and OPO, it was decided that Sam Nujoma should join Fanuel Jjariretundu Kozonguizi, Mburumba Kerina, and Michael Scott in the petitioning at the United Nations. At his last meeting with Chief Kutako, Nujoma was given blessings. However, Kutako prophesized the future in advance: He cautioned Nujoma to be prepared to be away for a very long time and if necessary not to come back until SWA had won genuine freedom and independence. Chief Kutako and the OPO executive then assisted Nujoma for the long journey into exile.<sup>30</sup>

The coordination by Sam Nujoma of political activities during those years demonstrated his leadership and political maturity. He had already envisioned the importance of unifying the different political forces in the country regardless of their ethnic background. It was for this reason that ardent nationalists like Chief Kutako chose and trusted Nujoma, thereby arranging for his travel. Nujoma was assisted in his preparations for the trip by Chief Kutako's close confidants, including Clemence

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(29) Interview with Nujoma.

(30) Dirks.

Kapuuo, Johannes Karuaihe, and Elifas Tjingaete. The Chief advised him to meet with some Hereros resident in Botswana at the time. One such Herero was Stanley Black, who drove Nujoma from Gobabis where he was dropped by Johannes Karuaihe to the Namibian/Botswana border.<sup>31</sup> While travelling through Botswana, he was supported by the Ovambanderu Chief Munjuku Nguvauva II, who was resident in Bechuanaland at the time, and Daniel Munamava, the Chief's advisor.

Reflecting on his preparation to leave the country after the uprising, Nujoma continues:

We were, however, arrested after the uprising. The late Nathaniel Mbaheva was deported to Omaheke; Jacob Kuhangwa, secretary general of OPO was deported to Ovamboland; I was also to be deported to Ovamboland, but I had a legal representative who defended my case.

When I appeared before the court, the Magistrate informed me that my case was withdrawn. I walked out freely and excited as a free man, but as I stood outside, I was again arrested and taken to the police station. They accused me of being among the group that organised the uprising. This time I had to pay ten pounds or I would be imprisoned, that they are charging me ten pounds for bail application. So we heard a meeting protesting the bail fee that was just too much. We had realised that we had been paying them a lot of money whenever we were arrested. So we, the executive committee of OPO, decided that I should leave the country. We worked in hand with Chief Kutako, who knew a number of our people in Botswana that could lend a hand.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Different Routes to Exile: the First Exodus of the Early 1960s:**

Sam Nujoma explained that,

The night of 29th February 1960 I travelled by road with the late Johannes Karuaihe's truck, which was heading to Otjinene. He dropped me off in Gobabis. Whereby I took another hike that dropped me at the border of Namibia and Botswana; I arrived around midnight at the border.

Nujoma travelled to Tanganyika through Botswana and Southern Rhodesia. He had travelled via Maun, Francistown, Bulawayo, and Salisbury (Harare), and was at this time accompanied by Daniel Munamava, who knew the routes to Bulawayo. Munamava assisted him in buying a plane ticket to Mbeya, Tanganyika. The flight had to go via Ndola, where he was assisted by Fines Bulawayo, a member of the Northern Rhodesian United National Independence Party (UNIP). Since he was already in the copper belt province nearer to the Congo, he decided to cross into the Katanga Province of Belgian Congo, where he met with Moise Tshombe from the Conakat Party. Later on he flew from Ndola to Mbeya. In Mbeya he was treated for malaria and escaped from the hospital after being threatened with arrest by the British authorities. From Mbeya, Nujoma travelled with the assistance of officials of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) via Njombe, Iringa, and Dodoma to Dar es Salaam. In his own words, Nujuma explains:

(31) Interview with Stanely Black, (Windhoek) 28 April 2007.

(32) Interview with Nujoma.

I was escorted to the border by a coloured young boy Stanley, who lived very close to the borders of Botswana land. My first destination in Botswana was Omahalapye, where most of our Herero speaking people lived. These people were helpful; they took me to Chief Munyuku's home. The Chief and I knew each other very well, as he and the late Daniel Munamava used to visit back home. It was the very same Chief that helped me get into a truck that was taking contract workers to go work for mines in South Africa. This truck was coming from Rundu and Shakawe. I jumped in together with the late Munamava until Francistown. We stayed there for two weeks trying to find a way to leave Southern Rhodesia then through Northern Rhodesia to Tanganyika.

In Francistown, I met some Malawians who were coming back from the mines; they used to be transported by plane from Francistown to Broken Hill now Kabwe in Zambia. By that time President Kaunda and late President Dr. Hastings Banda were in prison. They were fighting against the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The federation comprised of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland.

The whites wanted to consolidate these countries in one, so UNIP under the leadership of Dr. Kaunda, were also fighting against the federation. In the process, I met these comrades going back to Nyasaland and I asked how can I get to Broken Hill? They said it was very difficult to get there. I asked what the common name there was. They said Chipinga, so I named myself David Chipinga. I drafted a telegram for them, to send it back to me. The telegram reads as follow: "Your uncle Chipinga is very ill and there is no hope."

By the time I went to the post office, they had already sent the letter. It was a plot for me to access entrance in Broken Hill, so I gave them money to pay for the telegram. With that telegram, I passed through the borders of Botswana and Southern Rhodesia. I went into a very expensive shop, and bought myself pyjamas, sleepers, a gun. I also bought a first class reserved single compartment ticket, because that time if you have money you could go in a first reserved class, which was reserved for Indians.

I bought myself South African newspapers: *The Cape Argus*, *Cape Times*, *Daily Mail*, *The Star*, and some magazines. The whole way I pretended to be a teacher. I then got dressed in my expensive pyjamas, when I got to Southern Rhodesia, one Boer came

and knocked at my door; I ignored him and pretended I could not hear his knock. He started knocking forcefully. I...acted as if I was asleep and he just woke me up. I opened the door and I said, "What kind of person are you? Why are you knocking at the door like a mad person?" He looked at the newspapers, the expensive gown I had on, and assumed I was a different native.

I recall him saying, "I'm sorry I am the immigration officer; I want to know whether you have a visa or a permit to enter the Southern Rhodesia British colony? I said no; then I produced the telegram. I told him I am a teacher in Botswana and I just received this telegram that my uncle is very ill in Broken Hill. He fell into my trap. This is how I passed through with the late Daniel Munamava, who was in a different compartment. He had a British passport because he used to travel to Namibia from Botswana.

In Bulawayo, I sent Munamava to enquire if there was any flight to Mbeya in Tanzania. He found out that there was a flight of Central African Airways, flying from Bulawayo to Salisbury (now Harare) and then from there to Ndola. There used to be flights from Eastern Africa Airways flying from Mbeya to Ndola each Sunday. I bought myself a ticket. When I arrived in Salisbury, since it was my first time there, I did not know where the African residential area was; luckily there were these African

women employed as cleaners at the airport. I asked them if they knew any political leaders, and they told me of Mwamuku who owned a general store in Salisbury, in the African section. I paid them to take me there; of course there was also apartheid in their country like Namibia.

Luckily I had enough money to travel from one place to another; I had about 500 pounds with me, which was a lot of money that time. When I went to Mwamuka's store, he knew about South West Africa. I asked him, whether there are some politicians in the country that he could refer me to, of which he told me of another political party, the Southern Rhodesia Democratic Party. The party had a president and a vice-president. I met them at High Field with the help of Mwamuka. We had a long talk on how to liberate Africa and my plane from Salisbury to Ndola was to take off at 5 o'clock. I missed the plane and I had to come back to Mwamuka's store to overnight. The next morning I took a plane to Ndola with Central Africa Airways, but by the time I arrived in Ndola my plane had already taken off. I had to walk around the streets hoping to bump into someone to help as it was my first time in Ndola.

I came to an Indian store. I was afraid to talk to anybody, fearing the people to identify me as a foreigner. I went and speak to some kids playing in the street, and I bought them sweets. I asked them about their teacher and they showed me where he lived. This teacher was a kind person; he had just returned from Accra, Ghana, where he attended the Commonwealth Association for teachers. I asked him if he knew of a hotel I could book in. But he told me that blacks were not allowed to stay in hotels, unless I can try a guest house. This guest house was built by the federation for those Africans who were supporting the whites.

I book myself in the hotel for a week, waiting for my next flight. There was only one flight per week from Ndola to Mbeya. During my stay in Ndola I met UNIP members; we talked and they asked me how I got to Ndola. I also met Fines Bulawayo, who told me that I couldn't stay at the place I was booked, citing that the place belonged to the puppets that were supporting the federation. He took me to the township, whereby I lived with UNIP youth league leader, Daniel Chitunda.

Bulawayo and I met throughout my stay in their country. In the night, he took me to Katanga. Moise Tshombe was the president of Conakat Party. They were also fighting against the Belgian colonialists in Congo. They speak one language, Lunda, which is being spoken in Katanga DRC, in the Copper Belt of Zambia, and even in some parts of Angola.

On Sunday, my comrades from UNIP booked me in. I only had a briefcase and a kit bag. A moment before the plane was about to take off, an announcement came through saying that all passengers on the East African Airways departure for Mbeya, are invited to embark upon the aircraft. I presented my boarding pass at the immigration. They asked where my passport is, and I told them I was just going to Mbeya, but I was going back to Broken Hill by road. Meanwhile I was walking towards the aircraft. The air hostess saw me coming and they knew that one passenger was not there, so I went in. The immigration officer was still trying to ask me more questions, but I told him my plane was about to leave, so I embark upon the aircraft. The officers brought us emigration and customs forms to fill in. By then I had assumed a new name David Chipinga and I could not write my real name. The emigration form at the back states that anyone who enters the British mandated territory of Tanganyika without a visa or permit will be fined 3000 East African Shilling or three months in prison or both. I

got scared and I tore it up and threw it in the toilet. When we arrived at Mbeya airport, I was the only African and I could see the British moving, but I remained behind, I looked through the window and I saw there was no fence around the airport. I decided either to run into the bush or to follow the British. Meanwhile I had a bundle of newspapers. I followed the British, as soon as they went inside the building, there were some spectators who were looking as the airplane was arriving. Some were Africans and Indian kids. I changed and moved towards them, sitting pretending to be reading newspapers and planning how to get my luggage.

Luckily, an Indian bus driver for the Eastern African Airways came by and asked if I was David Chipinga? I said yes, and then he said to me: "Your luggage is here, can I go and fetch them or will you go and fetch them yourself?" I said please bring them for me. He brought them. He asked me if I knew any hotels here in the surrounding. I said no. He said, "Can I take you to Mbeya Hotel?" Because all the British I was travelling with were met by their friends and there was nobody in the bus.

By that time, March 1960, Tanganyika was about to have self-government and independence in 1961. Unlike in some African countries, here blacks could book in certain hotels. I booked myself in Mbeya Hotel as David Chipinga, and I was fortunate to get a bungalow outside the main building. In the evening, I thought how I will find the Tanganyika African National Union, President Nyerere's party. I took a walk and I found a number of kids playing. I bought them sweets and asked if they knew where the town office was. They took me there around 20h00.

The next day, early morning I came and found the regional secretary of the Tanganyika African National Union, Ali Chande. He understood me well and he advised me to move out of the hotel fearing the British Intelligence to arrest me. Normally he said, "no Africans stayed in that hotel." He took me to his house. By that time, the late President Nyerere was in New York petitioning the UN for Britain to agree for Tanganyika to move towards self-determination.

While staying at his place, I caught a fever, and he took me to the Catholic Hospital where his wife was working as a nurse. She gave me an injection and I lay down while Ali went to the post office. He met a British Police Officer, patrolling and they told him that they were looking for a person with the name Sam Nujoma.

That very same day in the morning, I sent a telegram to the UN, requesting for an oral hearing. The British wanted to find out how I entered Mbeya, because now I am using my real name. He realised now that the police are going to issue a warrant to search the houses of TANU members, including his. He told me the situation was getting worse, we should leave the town.

We hired a taxi from Mbeya to Njombe, while the British were at lunch; Njombe was about 100 km away. We went to the town district headquarters residence. They left me there and went to the office. The police came there and asked whether there was a strange person. There was just youth between the age of 10 and 12 years. They said no, they haven't come across any stranger.

Meanwhile, Ali Chande and the district secretary saw the police coming. They quickly came back and the police left. They realised that it was not safe for me to stay there, so they went to the hospital to ask if I could be admitted. We found an African doctor on duty. He took me in. But the next morning he had to be replaced by a white

doctor. He discharged me before he left. This time I was taken to the chief's court. It was closed and only opened when there were proceedings. Thereafter, I took another taxi to Dar es Salaam.

We arrived around 10 o'clock in the morning. This was how I escaped when I came to Dar es Salaam. President Nyerere had just arrived from New York, where he filed a petition on the independence of Tanganyika. We had a long talk and he organised accommodation for me. I stayed very close to his house. We started arranging how I could travel to Accra. By that time Mau-Mau freedom fighters in Kenya were still fighting. President Nyerere was a member of the legislative council of Tanganyika. He wrote me a letter, in which he simply stated that: "To Whom It May Concern, This is Sam Nujoma from South West Africa. He wants to go and petition at the UN, please assist him where you can." I bought a ticket from Dar es Salaam to Khartoum, Sudan, and back to Dar es Salaam, because the British Overseas Airways Corporation couldn't take me because I didn't have a passport. If the Khartoum government (Sudanese) sent me back then they will not be blamed. I spent about two hours at Nairobi airport waiting to take another plane from Nairobi to Khartoum.

I took a DC 6 aircraft and it was very slow; we took off around 9 o'clock in the evening, just to arrive around 7 o'clock the next morning. Upon arrival at Khartoum, I was the only African in the aircraft. I let everybody go first and I went to the immigration officers. I met an elderly tough man at the airport. I said to him. Uncle I am from SWA and I am going to Ghana, from where I will proceed to the UN to petition for Namibia's independence. He asked me whether I have money, I said yes and I showed him, then he said, "Ok, I will book a hotel for you."

He told me that there is only Air Liberia which flew every Thursday from Khartoum to Accra via Lagos. That time Nigeria was also not independent. It only became independent by the end of 1960. While in the hotel, I started making arrangements; I contacted the Ghanaian embassy. The Ambassador of Ghana sent a telegram to Accra which stated, "This is Sam Nujoma, he is on his way to New York to petition."

The Ambassador sent me the message and on Thursday I took the early Air Liberia; it landed in Lagos. Then I had to stay in a waiting room to continue my journey to Accra. In Accra, the Ghanaians received me well. I arrived at the time they

had a conference organised by President Kwame Nkrumah protesting against the French government's plan of testing the atomic bomb in the Sahara Desert. This was the time Algerians were fighting for their freedom and they had their office in Accra. At the conference, I met Oliver Tambo the president of the ANC, Fanuel Kozonguizi

and Rev. Michael Scott. I briefed them on what happened after the uprising at home; I had fresh information.

After the conference, I left to Liberia. I got to Liberia during the time Ethiopia and

Liberia had taken the South African apartheid regime to the International Court of Justice on behalf of the African independent states. These two countries were members of the League of Nations, and they discovered that the SA apartheid regime failed to implement the League of Nations mandate in promoting the social well being of the Namibian people.

I met Ernest Gross, the American lawyer who represented these two countries. We had a meeting and I told him fresh information. I should say the Liberian government assisted me throughout, especially, the time I was using travelling documents from Ghana. At least now I had proper documents to travel.

All was now going according to plan, even the telegram I sent to the UN while in Mbeya was responded to, granting me the oral hearing before the Sub Committee of the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly. With that telegram, I went to the American embassy and they put my visa on the telegram. This is how I addressed the UN for the first time.

In June 1960, I petitioned before the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly. I was further joined by Rev. Scott, Mburumba Kerina, and the late Kozonguizi. Kerina was also petitioning the UN. We became a strong team together. I stayed in New York with Kerina and Kozonguizi, waiting for the General Assembly which was to meet in September. After the General Assembly ended, I returned to Dar es Salaam. I was the first Namibian to be in Tanzania. I established SWAPO offices in Tanzania and I started writing to my fellow comrades back home that they could come to Tanzania. I paved the way. The first group came from Cape Town, comprising the likes of the late Peter Mweshihange and the late Salomon Mufima. By 1960, the SWAPO office was fully operational in Tanganyika. By that time, we had now joined officers under the Pan-African Freedom Movements of Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa: SWAPO of Namibia; the South African ANC; ZANU and ZAPU of Zimbabwe; and UNIP of Zambia.<sup>33</sup>

John Otto Nankudhu, commander of the first group (G1) that fired the first bullet in Omugulu gOmbashe on 26 August 1966, said that,

Before we left Namibia in 1961, Comrade ya Toivo gave us names. He told us that when we get to Botswana, we will find Seretse Khama, in South Rhodesia we will find Joshua Nkomo and in North Rhodesia we will find Kenneth Kaunda. He gave us all the names and we went around networking and asking for their offices until we found them.<sup>34</sup>

Contacts were already established in every country so that fleeing people knew, somehow, who and where to look for assistance in Botswana, in Rhodesia, and in Nyasaland, before reaching Tanganyika. The example is that when the group of John Otto Nankudhu left Namibia in 1961, Comrade Ya Toivo gave them names of political movements led by Africans in their territory which were just on the verge of gaining their independence in a few years to come.

In Zambia, SWAPO members could join UNIP as card carrying members. Nankudhu explains, "The next morning we went to Lusaka. We stayed there for two weeks. We joined UNIP youths. They sent us to the north. We joined the UNIP youth league and got membership cards." This is how John Otto Nankudhu described the relationship between SWAPO and UNIP of Zambia in the early 1960s. This was done for many purposes. First, to put SWAPO members under cover. Second, to give them the opportunity to undergo political education in mobilization strategies and techniques and also to strengthen the solidarity between comrades and their parties. Although Nankudhu and his twenty other Namibian comrades were on their way to Tanzania, they could not just stay idle in Zambia, where they had to be assisted

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(33) Interview with Nujoma.

(34) Interview with John Ya Otto Nankudhu, (Windhoek) 28 January 2007.

to pass through smoothly, but had to be part of all political activities that UNIP was organizing. Even the bus that took them to the border with Tanzania, Nankudhu explained, was paid for by UNIP.

In his interview, President Hifikepunye Pohamba, explained that:

In 1961, some of us decided to follow Nujoma in exile. When we arrived in Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika, the people were celebrating as their country just got independent. I was with my two colleagues, Frans Daniel and Vilho Shinyafa Haitembu. It was in Dar es Salaam where I met Sam Nujoma for the first time.

Namibia's current president, Hifikepunye Pohamba, was one of the freedom fighters and founding members of SWAPO. He went into exile in 1960. He and his colleagues decided to leave the country to follow Sam Nujoma to Tanganyika. The group decided to travel to Bechuanaland (Botswana) through Rundu in the Kavango region. At the time, Rundu maintained a Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WENELA) office that catered for Angolan recruits to work in the South African mines. Namibians, except those from the Caprivi Strip, were barred from joining WENELA. Pohamba and his group then had to devise a strategy and disguised themselves as Angolan recruits. They succeeded and travelled by road to Shakawe, then by aeroplane to Francistown. The idea was to disembark at Francistown and proceed to Dar es Salaam, but it became difficult to do so since the premises for recruits were heavily guarded and controlled. They ended up getting on the train to Johannesburg, but managed to jump off the train while still in Botswana. The difficulties those days were, however, insurmountable and the group was arrested and sent to Johannesburg. As they were already in South Africa, they decided to work so that they could save enough money to travel to Tanganyika. Since the mining regime functioned on the same philosophy of contract labour, the group became separated. Pohamba's friend Vilho Haitembu and others were relocated to the different mines and therefore could not plan further their trip to Tanganyika. Pohamba, however, had determination and, being discouraged by the pay of R2 per month, decided to fund raise his trip by contacting some Namibian workers that he came across at the different mines in South Africa. He was able to raise R40 and a certain Nehemiah Shovaleka arranged papers for him to reach Francistown. Although he lost the money and his travel papers after being mugged at the train station, he finally reached Francistown. Prior to his departure from South Africa, Nehemiah Shovaleka had given him the name of Maxton Joseph Mutongolome as the person to contact upon arrival in Francistown. Apparently Maxton was in Mahalapye, which meant a roundabout turn from Francistown. Maxton was quite helpful and was well established among the local Herero people in Botswana. Pohamba finally got some money sent from Ondangwa by Toivo ya Toivo and from Dar es Salaam by Solomon Mifima. By travelling through Southern

Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), Pohamba was able to reach Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika and join his fellow comrades.<sup>35</sup>

In his interview, Pohamba related how the liberation struggle started and how he journeyed into exile:

The liberation struggle in Namibia started with workers resisting against the contract system of exploitation. We demanded the contract system to come to an end. We wanted the black people to also move freely throughout the country without (pass) permit. We also wanted our Namibian women to visit their husbands during their long term of contract labour. We were led by Sam Nujoma, then president of OPO. It was during this time in 1960 when we realized that if the people of Ghana have attained their independence, we too can achieve ours. When our organization was transformed from OPO to SWAPO, Nujoma was elected as president in his absence because this time we had already sent him to New York to speak on our behalf. While in New York, we sent a message to him that we had elected him as SWAPO President. In 1961, some of us decided to follow Nujoma in exile. I left the country for Tanganyika with my two colleagues, Frans Daniel and Vilho Shinyafa Haitembu. At that time Tanganyika was preparing for their declaration of independence. On our way to Tanganyika, we passed through Bechuanaland. We were met by Maxton Joseph Mutongolome, who was responsible for receiving and facilitating the movements of all fleeing freedom fighters from occupied countries. He acted as a representative for all liberation movements, who were using Botswana as a transit to their destination, Tanganyika, where all headquarters of southern African liberation movements and training camps were based. His political role ended him in trouble with the British police. He became a wanted man. Mutongolome arranged our trip to Tanganyika. We arrived in Tanganyika on the 9th of December 1961. The date we arrived in Dar es Salaam, the people of that country were celebrating their independence. It was here in Dar es Salaam where I met Nujoma for the first time. In 1962 SWAPO took a decision to send some people on political mobilization mission back home. It was in this light, that Eliander Mwatere and I volunteered to take up this challenging task. We took the journey through Southern Rhodesia and upon our arrival we were immediately arrested for more than two months and deported to South Africa. In South Africa we were detained at Jan Smut airport for several hours and sent back to Namibia. Back home, we joined our comrades, including David Meroro, Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo, John Ya Otto, Jason Mutumbulwa, Nganyone, Karita, and many others. They were amazed and shocked to see us coming back from Tanganyika to Namibia and were asking a lot of questions like... "Is it really true that Tanganyika is now really a free country, and how do people there look like?" They also briefed me about the political situation inside the country.

After spending a week in Namibia, we were arrested by the racist administration in South West Africa. We were detained for a week in a state maximum security prison opposite the building, what is today called Kenya House. As prisoners, we used to be taken and work in the colonial Administrator General's Residence, dressed in short pants and wearing shoes made out of tyres. This residence later became the State

<sup>(35)</sup> Namibian Broadcasting Corporation. Radio interview of Hifikepunye Pohamba, 1994; Interview with President Pohamba, 03 December 2008.

House of the independent Republic of Namibia. Today, I, being the second president of Namibia, it was here where I assumed my presidential duty. I am saying this because today I am sitting in this State House as a President, not as a Prisoner.

The colonial authority decided to deport us to our native homelands, each of us to his tribal area. I was deported to Okanghudi in Ohangwena Region, where I was born, while my comrade Eliander back to Ukwangula in Ukwambi tribal district, where he was born. We travelled from Windhoek to Grootefontain by train. John Ya Otto and other comrades deliberately sneaked into the train, and gave as the news that Mburumba Kerina had deserted from SWAPO. From Grootefontain we travelled by bus to Tsumeb. In Tsumeb I was met by two young men, one tall and thin and the other one short. The tall and thin man was Hage Godfrey Geingob, who later became Namibia's first Prime Minister at independence, and the short man was Linekela Hailundu Kalenga, who later died in Zambia in a car accident.<sup>36</sup>

Although restricted to their tribal homelands, Pohamba and Mwatere continued with the initial obligation that brought them back home to mobilize the masses. They joined forces with the internal leadership and SWAPO activists such as Eliaser 'Kahumba Kandola' Tuhadeleni, Simon Mzee Kaukungwa, Isaac Shihome, and others. Together they created political awareness among the masses and recruited many new members, who were joining the movement in their thousands. Pohamba's vigorous political work soon got him back into trouble with the colonial authority. He was soon detained and sentenced to several lashes, executed by his own traditional authority. He was flogged with *makalani* (palm tree branches). Despite this punishment, Pohamba continued with his mobilization mission for more than a year, before he fled back into exile in 1964, taking along Mzee Kaukungwa, followed by many other cadres.

Amutenya Nandenga "Zulu" was one of the young Namibians who went into exile during the first exodus of the 1960s. Nandenga joined OPO in Walvis Bay in 1964, after the inspiration of SWAPO veteran Nathaniel Maxhili. In the same year, Zulu decided to cross the borders via Rundu in Kavango Region, where he met with Hifikepunye Pohamba and Mzee Kaukungwa, who were on their way back into exile. Pohamba was the only Namibian at that time that broke the taboo by making a miracle return from exile. During those days, once one vanished into exile, it was a mythical belief that no one ever returned. His return was viewed as a coming back from heaven. He also met the first guerrilla fighters. The first group named G1 under John Otto Nankudhu. This group of six guerrilla fighters was infiltrating Namibia on their mission to train and recruit Namibians in preparation for the armed liberation war. This was the first group that fired the first bullet at the South African occupation forces, marking the launch and the beginning of the liberation struggle of Namibia. From Rundu, Zulu proceeded with his journey to Tanganyika, through Zambia. At this time, Zambia was already independent and some SWAPO fighters were already starting up bases in that country. It was in Zambia that he received his first test of training in guerrilla warfare

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(36) Interview with Pohamba.

tactics in the Zambian bush near Lusaka by a wellknown veteran freedom fighter, Jackson Kakwambi. In his interview, Zulu tells of his journey into exile:

I was a cattle herder before I completed my primary school. In 1958, I went to Walvis Bay to work on a ship as a foreman. Through the likes of Nathaniel Maxwili, I saw myself joining OPO in 1964. It was the very same year that I crossed the border into exile via Rundu, where I met President Pohamba and Mzee Kaukungwa on their way back to exile. I met Pohamba at the time he was returning to Tanzania, after his release from detention in Namibia. Here I also met the group of Nankudhu. After my short training in Zambia, I was sent to North Korea for a more advanced military training together with Salomon “Jesus” Auala in 1967. These developments served as an inspiration to many Namibian nationalists.<sup>37</sup>

Inspired by this wind of change that was sweeping across the African continent, many young and able bodied Namibians started to leave the country in the early 1960s. Those who were much older and already involved in the formation of OPO and SWANU, for instance, were privileged to have travelled outside Namibia before and therefore easily used those same routes at the time of going into exile. Early pioneers such as Simon “Mzee” Kaukungwa, Jacob Kuhangwa, and Peter Mweshihange were already workers in Cape Town and were familiar with the routes to take once decisions were taken to leave the country. Those who left Namibia in the early 1960s had to cross through Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia before reaching Dar es Salaam. When Sam Nujoma left for New York, he had to travel through the same route. At that time, none of these countries had attained independence, therefore travel through them posed a number of challenges. The journey to Tanzania in the early years is well illustrated by the story of Sam Nujoma and Hifikepunye Pohamba. Many Namibians did not willingly leave the country, but were forced to do so by the draconian policies of the South African government.

The Augustineum Teachers College in Okahandja became a hotbed for Namibian politics in the early 1960s. After the 1959 Old Location uprising, there were a number of student protests at the school. Many young people participated in these student protests, and among them were Hidipo Hamutenya and Moise Tjitendero who had to flee the country after these political incidents. Those who left the country in later years, between 1960 and 1965, travelled the same route through Rundu in the Kavango Region to Shakawe and then Francistown.<sup>38</sup> Only a few, such as Jacob Kuhangwa, managed to reach Tanganyika through Angola at that time.

Despite the difficulties, many exiles had the opportunity to be assisted by several Herero people already resident in western parts of Botswana at the time. Since Botswana was still a British Protectorate, those who were found to be transgressing the immigration rules were usually jailed.<sup>39</sup> As it was narrated by Helao Shityuwete,

(37) Interview with Amutenya Nandenga “Zulu”.

(38) Interview with Prime Minister Nahas Angula, (Windhoek) 26 July 2007; Interview with Helmut Angula, (Windhoek) 22 April 2007.

(39) NBC radio interview with Pohamba, 1994; Interview with Helao Shityuwete, (Windhoek) 12 April 2007.

Herero women with their elegant traditional dresses, saved many exiles from arrest by hiding the men under their dresses. Upon reaching Francistown, cadres were met and assisted by the industrious Maxton Joseph Mutongolome, who arranged for their transport to Tanzania and later Zambia.

Namibia's current Prime Minister, Nahas Angula, had his political exposure while still a student at the missionary school in northern Namibia. At the school they were receiving newspapers with updates on current affairs in the world and the wind of freedom sweeping across the African continent, coupled with the SWAPO radio broadcast waving all the way from Dar es Salaam, where SWAPO had already established a radio station. Through these media, they learned about Kwame Nkrumah becoming the first black President of Ghana, as well as about other African countries that were in the process of gaining their independence during those years. As he narrated his story, those years marked the climax of the African struggle for self-determination. Like many others who went before him, Nahas's route was not easy:

Those days, the voice of Kwame Nkrumah was heard because he was loud. He inspired many African countries to struggle for their independence. And then we saw the success of the Mao Mao in Kenya and other forces around. With the nationalist messages spreading through the media, it was actually fashionable to belong to a political movement. We grew up in missionary schools, where we had access to newspapers and magazines. Through those publications, we became enlightened at a tender age. By then SWAPO also had its own publication which used to print in Windhoek. The paper was smuggled all over, and reached most of the youth in the country. Radio became another informative and sensitizing tool to us. When SWAPO spread its wings and opened its headquarters in Dar es Salaam, we took note of the radio station that waved across the African continent.

This radio station had caught many young listeners' attention, and at the same time gave them morals and courage to flee the country and fight for their freedom. It was this mood of media that inspired the political upsurge of many young people in the country, coupled by SWAPO activities, such as meetings and public rallies that also contributed to our political awareness. SWAPO meetings were not to be missed; they were very informative and interesting, especially at the time that Sam Nujoma started petitioning at the United Nations.

Since then, a number of young people started fleeing the country. I also followed suit. I went on foot via Nkurenkuru, Rundu, Shakawe, until Francistown in Botswana. It was never an easy route; there were so many challenges that we came across – challenges such as transport, the interruption of chiefs in the Kavango area that were on a look for trouble makers. Chiefs in those areas were not friendly; they contributed to many arrests of our people who were fleeing the country to exile. We were warned to be careful with them. Obviously at that time, when we were fleeing the country we couldn't let anyone realize that we were going to join SWAPO, but we rather pretended to be heading to South Africa to work in the mines. On various occasions, we were questioned on our whereabouts. People so much wanted to know what we were up to. But we never revealed our plan to join SWAPO. In fact we told them we were Angolan nationals, heading for work contract labour in South Africa.

This was during the time Namibian nationals were prohibited from leaving the country as there was already a shortage of labour here. In Rundu, we were spotted by a former school mate who had just returned home for holiday. He was from Kavango. Despite the fact that he spotted us, he, however, was also under the impression that we were going for contract labour in South Africa, and the idea of us fleeing the county to go and join SWAPO never came to his mind.

Somehow, somewhere, we had to confide in people we trust and told them that, yes we are going to SWAPO. We confided in these people because we needed cooperation and assistance to reach our destination. Those days SWANLA used to transport people from Kavango to Grootefontain. So in the process, we pretended that we were also on our way to Grootefontain so that we get a lift, which we eventually got, but before we reached Rundu we asked for permission to go and see other people and we would join them in the compound later. Permission was granted.

We rushed into the bush in Andara and waited until it was dark to proceed with our journey. While in Andara, we found out that the area had food shortage that year, but we were assisted by students from Dobra who had just come home for school holiday. They assisted us with food; they showed us the direction to Shakawe and again warned us to be on a look for their chiefs who were not so friendly. They warned us to avoid trucks that were transporting workers to South Africa, because we were too young, nobody would have believed us, if we told them that we were going on contract labour in South Africa. Had sleepless nights and spent most of our daylight hiding in the bush, fearing exposure and deportation. It took us about a month to reach Francistown. We travelled to Shakawe in Botswana, where we found most Namibians who went to work for mines in South Africa. They gave us information of whom we should contact. These were also SWAPO sympathizers. They organized transport for us from Shakawe to Maun. We were transported by a truck. The day we arrived in Maun, we were again given names of some Herero speaking people who could assist us further. This was some time in 1965. Maun was also experiencing shortage of food that year, and we didn't have money. We were simply just students. But eventually we managed to reach Francistown, through our own means. Luckily, we had a representative in Francistown by the name of Medium Kasheta. He was responsible for receiving and recruiting SWAPO members, especially those who were on their way to work for the mines. Mine workers were in most cases convinced not to go back to work, but to rather stay and join the party. Thus we registered ourselves with the Refugees Council and of course Botswana was not independent by then; one had to be careful not to provoke the colonial authorities. The Refugee Council had the responsibility to transport us to Zambia. In Zambia, SWAPO and the UN High Commissioner took care of us.<sup>40</sup>

Retired veteran politician, Andreas Shipanga was politically inspired by his late brother Simon Shipanga, and the likes of Herman Andimba Toivo ya Toivo. Shipanga is a former student of the Ongwediva boy's school together with Bishop Cleopas Dumeni, Johannes Nangutuwala, and Gerson Shipwata. He is a teacher by profession.

In 1956, I left for Angola in a company of two friends. We wanted to move and leave South West Africa because we were fed up with the whole colonialism and racism system in the country.

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(40) Interview with Nahas Angula.

We went via Ondjiva with an aim to get to Liberia through Lobito. When we got to Ondjiva, we were informed that we could not get to Lobito; we first had to work contract labour (*Ombishi*). We had no option but to join the contract labour. At that time we were informed that Liberia was a free republic, but myself I wanted to attend school in America.

From Lobito we failed to get the ship to Liberia, we returned back to Novalis Boa; it was in Novalis Boa we decided to go to Johannesburg. We were given directions on how to get to SA by a Kwanyama couple while a Shimbudu old man guided us to Biladaponte.

We were on foot until the Angolan border. At Hompa, we took a lift from a truck which was on its way to chop wood in Manongwe. We were welcomed by Portuguese men. They asked us where we were coming from, and we told them that we are from Ukwanyama, than one of them responded, “Kwanyama? Mandume killed my father.” Mandume Ndemufayo was the king of the Kwanyama speaking people. We realized that we had made a mistake. Nonetheless they allowed us to overnight. The next day they told us that there were some officials who wanted to meet us at the head office of Embonge. We agreed to meet with the officials whom in the course of the meeting offered us jobs in the coffee plantation. We accepted the offer, but we made our escape that very same night with the assistance of a black man who married a Mulato woman. This noble man dedicated his boy to lead us through to the borders; the young boy escorted us some forty kilometres, near the Okavango River. We crossed the River into Rundu. As we took the camp in the forest that night, heavy rain came and washed away

some of our belongings. We waited until sunset.

On our way, one of my friends suffered from malaria; his illness had affected our journey as we couldn't leave him behind. We proceeded until Nkurenkuru for his medical attention; it took us two weeks before making our way back to Rundu. It was in Rundu that the three of us applied for Wendell labour. We were fortunate to be accepted for the job.

We were put on trucks heading to Shakawe; thereafter we took a plane to Francistown, then a train to Johannesburg.

We arrived in Johannesburg around 06h30 the next morning. We were amazed to see a city like Johannesburg, a city with tall buildings, the buildings were so tall that they blocked out the sun. It was like a whole new world. There were well dressed black people and exceptionally beautiful African women; it was indeed another world. While in Johannesburg, we were dispatched to work at a gold mine, at the city deep; at the mine they placed us into lifts. It was our first time seeing a lift, we gazed at each other as we felt our stomachs go up and down.<sup>41</sup>

Here we found Namibians who told us that we could not cope with the work, which was true; they were right. They gave us drills, and oh my God, when you lay on your back and drill you will think the rocks will fall on you. Seeing the situation I got myself into, I made a pledge to God to save me. Our monthly salaries were approximately one pound and seventeen shillings per month, but we did not work until month end.

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(41) Interview with Shipanga.

As the labour gets tougher and tougher, the trio of us started thinking hard, trying to find a way to escape. In the process, we were informed of a Kwanyama speaker, Lucky Peter, who owned a grocery shop in the location. On our way to his shop, some guards questioned where we heading too, but we told them that we were working nightshift and needed to buy bread.

When we arrived at the location, we asked around for Lucky Peter; he was a famous man in the location, known by almost everyone. It was through Lucky that we met a number of Kwanyama speaking people, Ndongas and Kwambi in the location. I

got more politically influenced in Johannesburg. It is when I actually started getting involved in real politics.

In Johannesburg, I witnessed first-hand how the ANC and others organized themselves in order to get rid of the all-white domination in their country, during their rallies and so on. I was particularly impressed when I got to meet Chief Luthuli in person.

In 1957, we went to Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia; I was more politically empowered by this time. I found leaders like Muzerekazi, Stanley Square, Fire Prince, James Sikerema, and George Nyandoro, the man that was moving thousands of people. They pledged people to fight for their land, so when I heard and saw all this, I asked myself if we could do the same for our country. I spoke to my two contemporaries and they were of the same opinion as I. We got the address of Toivo ya Toivo in Cape Town and corresponded with him and Salomon Mifima. It was through this meeting that my colleagues and I decided to join Ya Toivo in politics.

In 1957, we moved to Cape Town where we found Ya Toivo already formed the Ovambo People's Congress (OPC). Ya Toivo was the recognized leader, followed by Salomon Mifima, Jacob Kuhangwa, Apollos, Dr. Frans Telmaha, and then Abraham etc, thereafter I moved to the west where we formed a branch of OPC with Polly Kaukungwa and others. It was also in Cape Town that we found Tobias Hainyeko working at the filling station; he also joined us.

Unfortunately, Ya Toivo got deported for being politically active; his deportation had left a huge a gap in the organization, and we had to change the name OPC to OPO when he got deported. This was toward the end of 1957.

In 1960, I was replaced by Mifima. I became second in charge. During that same year, Mifima left for Tanzania where he opened the office of OPO until Kerina Mburumba decided to change the party's name. In 1963, Mifima opened another office in Cairo and in 1964 he opened a SWAPO office in Lusaka, the same year I was delegated to South West Africa to organize another office. It was in Windhoek, I met some SWAPO executives, the likes of John ya Otto and others, before I proceeded to Walvis Bay to see my late brother, Simion Shipanga. I had plans of opening a small business in Walvis Bay, but then I received news that I was going to be arrested; as a result I saw no point

in it. I left to Windhoek in June and I remember buying a newspaper, *The Sunday Times*, where the paper reported that a red Chinese cell was found in Cape Town. Dr. Neville Alexander and Elizabeth van Heiden had been arrested and the police are busy looking for Dr. Kenneth Abrahams, and in Ovamboland, Andreas Shipanga. It is when I knew that the game was over.

The Bustels took Abraham and literally hid him in the mountains as he was also on the run, whereby we requested that Abraham join us, together with the old man Beukes and Paul Smiths. We decided to leave the country that night for Botswana. We

went through Gobabis, into Aminus, than crossed the border to Botswana Land. In Botswana, the Boers arrested us and deported us to Gobabis prison, while Abraham was taken to Cape Town.

We were represented by a certain Bryan, the only lawyer who defended blacks at that time. We were charged for leaving the country without valid documents and for returning to cause trouble. In the end, the Boers released us and took us back to Botswana. We never gave up, we proceeded to Francistown and in October that same year, we travelled to Elizabeth Valley, where I met Sam Nujoma for the first time. We left for Dar es Salaam together. At that time, SWAPO did not have an executive committee. It was in this light, that we established the committee, but then we were still faced with other problems of who will be the president of the party. We had Sam Nujoma in Dar es Salaam as the President of the party, Louis Nelegani as the President based in Cairo, and back home we had Maxwilili as President. This problem was not solved until 1966 following a meeting that was held in Dar es Salaam, where the decision was made to choose between Nujoma and Nelegani for presidency; it was clear that we could not have more than one President. This was before Sam Nujoma and Hifikepunye Pohamba came to Windhoek. Nelengani became the vice president of the party, the message was then sent back home for Maxwilili to become Acting President. In Dar es Salaam, we had two secretaries, Kuhangwa and Ishmael, but the two did not want to come to terms, and so Ishmael decided to come back to SWA, leaving the struggle.<sup>42</sup>

### **Preparing for the Armed Struggle – Strategies for Executing the Struggle:**

According to the SWAPO political programme:

As the dialectic of repression and resistance, it became necessary for SWAPO to advance the struggle to a new phase, namely the armed struggle. This phase started with the training and establishment of underground guerrilla cells in the country. One such cell was Ongulu gOmbashe Base, at which the first shots of the liberation war were fired on 26 August 1966. Thus the latter half of the 1960s saw sustained efforts by SWAPO's guerrilla army, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) to reinforce its ranks with more and more recruits and to build up caches of arms and ammunitions in various parts of the country.

After the establishment of the first SWAPO head office in Tanzania in 1960, the leadership adopted the three front strategy: the political front, diplomatic front, and military front. The political front was to mobilize the masses in Namibia to understand and support the liberation struggle. The diplomatic front was to campaign for solidarity and support from the international community, and the military front was to fight and liberate the country through military means.<sup>43</sup>

As it was stated earlier, many people who joined the struggle in the 1960s did it with a strong belief to further their education. But when they arrived in Tanganyika, Nujoma was already preparing and organizing the Liberation Army. That move created the first conflict among the leadership of SWAPO. The main problem centred

(42) Interview with Andreas Shipanga.

(43) Interview with Sam Shafishuna Nujoma, (Windhoek) 26 July 2007.

around a number of issues, mainly: Liberation through armed struggle, Liberation through education, and ideological differences.

These issues led to the division within the organization. Firstly, there were those who did not believe in the strategy of armed struggle as a means to achieve freedom. They believed that education was the only means to liberate a nation. The group which included Andreas Shipanga, Jacob Kuhangwa, and other members, especially those from the group that came from Cape Town, felt that they were “more educated” and therefore wanted to be led only by highly educated people. Shipanga, for example, had an issue with Nelengani being a Vice President of SWAPO, while he was not as educated as Jacob Kuhangwa, who was the Secretary General.<sup>44</sup>

Another issue that actually led to a conflict in the leadership was brought about by ideological differences. The Kuhangwa camp, which included Shipanga and other so-called educated leaders, were more pro-West/pro-America in their world outlook. While the group of Nelengani, who was the first leader to receive military training in Russia, were perceived to be pro-East/pro-communist.

Amutenya Nandenga, affectionately known as Commander Zulu, was one of the bravest regional commanders that SWAPO ever had. Zulu started fighting from the 1960s through the 1970s till the 1980s. He participated in the Liberation struggle, where he rose through the ranks, from an ordinary guerrilla fighter to a regional commander of the modern SWAPO Army of the 1980s. His guerrilla activities led him to be known as the most legendary guerrilla fighter of his time. It was under his direct command and participation that the first South African soldier was captured in 1978. It is most important to mention that Zulu represents the link between three generations of freedom fighters, namely the Tanganyika group of the 1960s, the 74 of the 1970s, to that of the 1980s. This makes him one of the most important links, central to this research.

According to Zulu, the differences and conflicts experienced within SWAPO, particularly in the early 1960s ended in a tragedy. Kuhangwa was stabbed several times with a knife by Nelengani after a quarrel. He became paralyzed and died some years later. This incident was also confirmed by Paul Helmuth, also known as Uncle Paul, in his interview.<sup>45</sup> Following the incident, the party decided to send Kuhangwa for treatment in China. Kuhangwa, who was Secretary General of SWAPO at that time, refused and opted to go for treatment in America.<sup>46</sup>

Although SWAPO adopted the military strategy as one of its three fronts, education was also supported by the organization as one of its key priorities, making it its fourth front strategy. This is supported by Nujoma’s statement when he said, “When we received hundreds of people from home, we started sending some for military training in Egypt and other countries while the young ones we sent to school.”<sup>47</sup>

(44) Interview with Amutenya Nandenga Zulu, 13 December 2008.

(45) Interview with Paul Helmuth, (Windhoek) 2007; interview with Nandenga Zulu.

(46) Interview with Nandenga Zulu.

(47) Interview with Nujoma.

SWAPO started preparing for the armed struggle at the time when Liberia and Ethiopia took South Africa to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for violating its mandate over South West Africa. Liberia and Ethiopia had challenged South Africa on the basis that the imposition of apartheid laws and policies did not comply with the UN mandate over the territory. According to the mandate, South Africa was supposed to uplift the morals and the living standards of the inhabitants. Anticipating a negative outcome, SWAPO was ready to launch the armed liberation struggle. This was significant in the many liberation songs such as the popular “through the barrel of the gun we will liberate Namibia our country, to be ever free.” Such songs came as a result of statements made by Nujoma and other SWAPO leaders after the International Court of Justice had failed them.

In the early 1960s, SWAPO started implementing the military strategy by sending its members for military training to countries such as Egypt, Ghana, Algeria, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), China, India, North Korea, and other friendly countries. One of the first cadres to receive training is the legendary guerrilla Commander John Otto Nankudhu. Nankudhu received his first military training in Egypt. He revealed his captivating story in the interview.

Nankudhu commanded the first guerrilla unit that came to Namibia and engaged the first military confrontation against South African forces at Omugulu gOmbashe. Namibia’s first army commander, Dimo Amaambo, the legendary guerrilla fighter, Patrick “Lungada” Iyambo, and many others were all trained in Cairo. According to Nankudhu, in Egypt, they received the toughest training, where live bullets were used for target shooting. “If you get shot and you die, then you were going to die sooner anyway,” recalled Commandant Nankudhu. This training was followed by a second one in the Soviet Union, before returning to the SWAPO headquarters in Dar es Salaam.

Nankudhu and his group, including Patrick Iyambo, were assigned to go to Namibia. They had to travel the long and arduous journey from Dar es Salaam through Zambia to Namibia. From Zambia they continued their way into Namibia through the Kavango and proceeded to Ovamboland (northern Namibia). Although they were carrying guns, their tactics and strategies were not necessarily to start fighting. They intended to mobilize the population and train as many recruits as possible. As mentioned earlier, Nujoma had stated that political mobilization was one of SWAPO’s important strategies of executing the liberation struggle. Bearing in mind that SWAPO guerrillas were trained in the Soviet Union, it was obvious that the teachings of the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Illich Lenin were put into use. Lenin’s teaching on the “Theory of the Dialectic of Revolution” emphasizes that “No revolution can be victorious unless necessary objective conditions and subjective factors are present.”<sup>48</sup> For the liberation struggle to succeed, one first needed to mobilize the local people to create an understanding as to what revolution is all about. At that

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(48) A. Sertsova *et al.* 1986.

time, not everybody in Namibia believed that black people could wrestle power from the white man. This perception was coupled with false theories of superiority of one race over the other. Hence, many black people did not have confidence in themselves. People, therefore, needed to be politicized so that they could receive the guerrillas in their midst, by hiding them and giving them food and medicine. SWAPO believed that highly politicized masses will easily provide guerrillas with information. This was again emphasized by Nujoma when he stated that, “.....We have adopted three front strategies, one to mobilize people inside the country politically.....that is why in 1962, we sent back Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba and the late Eliander Mwatale to go and mobilize our people...”<sup>49</sup>

### **The Battle of Omugulu gOmbashe:**

Upon their arrival in Ovamboland, Nankudhu and his comrades went straight to Eliaser Tuhadeleni (Kaxumba KaNdola)’s house, who was a SWAPO leader and activist in the north. The next day, Kaxumba took them to Ondangwa, where they met the SWAPO internal leadership, which included Toivo ya Toivo, Isaac Shihome, Lamech Ithete, and Ben Amathila, amongst others. Here, they briefed the leadership about their mission in the country, which included the mobilization of masses, the recruitment and training of new soldiers, and many issues related to guerrilla warfare, tactics, and strategies.

Nankudhu’s group included Simeon Shihungileni, Victor Namuandi, Patrick Iyambo, Nelson Kavela, and James Hamukuaja. They started looking for a suitable place to set up a military training camp. They established their first camp called *Ondaadhi* (Reconnaissance) at Otamanzi in the Ongandjera area. Amongst the first trainees were the legendary Kaxumba kaNdola, Immanuel Shifidi, Festus Heita, Johannes

Musheko, Paulus Shikolalje, Simeon Namunganga Hamulemo, Henok Jacob (Malila), Festus Nanjolo, Kornelius Shelungu, Thomas Haimbodi, Isak Shihome, and Festus Muaala. As part of their tactics to avoid being discovered by the enemy troops, they had to continuously move from one place to another. Therefore, they shifted their training camp from Otamanzi to Uuvudhija (the border area between Uukwambi

and Ongandjera). The camp was named *Oondjokwe* (Oshiwambo for the wild geese that dominated the area).

After some time, the group shifted once again from Oondjokwe to Omugulu gOmbashe, northwest of Tsandi in Uukwaluudhi district. This place was identified by Isac Shihome, a local activist, who knew the area better and thought that at Ondjokwe the fighters were more prone to exposure and needed to be in a bushy area for cover. Shihome, who was 90 years at the time of this interview, was amongst the first to receive military training by the PLAN fighters. At the time of writing, Shihome is still alive at his private residence in Tsandi, near Omugulu gOmbashe.

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(49) Interview with Nujoma, 2007.

They built structures and trenches for defence purposes at Omugulu gOmbashe. Their presence was reported to the enemy, and on 26 August 1966, early in the morning, the South African troops backed by helicopters attacked Nankudhu's training base at Omugulu gOmbashe. In self-defence, PLAN fighters returned fire. This battle, which lasted for several hours, marked the beginning of the armed liberation struggle for Namibia. Although the South African troops were better equipped with more advanced armaments, the PLAN fighters put up a good fight and there were casualties on both sides.

During this battle, some PLAN fighters were captured, and a number of people who were believed to have assisted the guerrillas, including the SWAPO internal leaders, such as Toivo ya Toivo, were arrested. A total of thirty-seven SWAPO leaders were arrested and later tried under the Terrorism Act, No. 83 (1967). Toivo ya Toivo was arrested together with Immanuel Gottlieb Nathaniel Maxuilili (who was later restricted to house arrest until 1985), Kaxumba ka Ndola, Axel Johannes, John Otto Nankudhu, Eliaser Tuhadeleni, and Daniel Utoni Nujoma, just to mention a few. On 8 February 1968, thirty-four of them were convicted: twenty of them being sentenced to life imprisonment, nine were sentenced to 20 years, and five were given a five-year suspended sentence. Those sentenced were sent to the notorious prison of Robben Island.<sup>1</sup> Daniel Utoni Nujoma, 70 years old at the time, was arrested simply because he was the father of Sam Nujoma. During his incarceration in Pretoria, he developed tuberculosis from which he later died.<sup>2</sup> It is important to mention that not only SWAPO members fell victim to the South African repression after Omugulu gOmbashe, but several other leaders and political activists were arrested as well. For example, Gerson Vei, who was president of SWANU at the time, was arrested following a public address where he encouraged people to support their brothers who fought at Omugulu gOmbashe. As a symbolism of the Namibian struggle, Vei's public meeting was held at "Freedom Square" in the Old Location area of Windhoek.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, Vei was prosecuted and sentenced to five years imprisonment, which he served on Robben Island. During his trial, Vei was defended by Bryan O'Linn, who in the past had defended many Namibians accused by the racist regime. In subsequent years, O'Linn came to the defence of freedom fighters such as John Pandeni, John Ya Otto, Johannes Nangutuuala, Victor Nkandi, and Axel Johannes.

Since the launch of the armed liberation struggle on 26 August 1966, the United Nations started to aggressively call for South Africa's adherence to the mandate and to start preparing the people of Namibia for independence. Despite South Africa's propaganda in underestimating SWAPO's fighting capabilities, it became clear to the world that the guerrilla army was something to be reckoned with. This was evident from the fact that within a few years, South Africa increased the size of the Security Police force and ultimately replaced it with the South African Defence Force.

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(50) Interview with Gerson Vei, (Windhoek) 01 January 2007.

Following the launch of the armed struggle, thirty-seven SWAPO leaders and fighters were arrested. They were taken to Pretoria and detained there. At first they were held *in communicado* under the Suppression of Communism Act, but later the South African regime introduced a new legislation which was passed in June 1967, this legislation came to be known as the Terrorist Act and it was made retrospective to 1962, to cover SWAPO and other nationalist movement activities. Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo and his comrades were sentenced on 9 February 1968. Toivo now tells his unforgettable experience in Robben Island prison together with the first black president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, at the hand of the racist South African government.

We left the same day for Robben Island and arrived the following day. We were put in a special constructed section for terrorists. South Africa wanted to give us a death sentence. Fortunately, because of the international status in which our country stood, they could not do that. On our way to Robben Island, we were joined by SWANU Acting President Gerson Hitjevi Vei. He was sentenced to a five year imprisonment for incitement according to the SA regime. We lived in that section for three years. Early in 1972, we were transferred to Section 2, which was the Nelson Mandela section. But before that we used to communicate in our own methods with the Mandela section and others. We used to work at the sea side collecting the seed weed or clearing the forest with our hands, chopping fire wood, and carrying out many other hard labour activities that the racist police could come up with.

We used to travel in the same truck with the Mandela group. We established our post office in the truck whereby we would leave them messages and they would also do the same to us. The post office idea went on very well, but it appeared that when we were transferred to Section 2, we were actually tricked. The Boers realized that there was a communication somewhere, but they had no clear evidence as to what we used to communicate. So they sent somebody who brought us food, an outsider from APC and delivered the message about our party and we needed to respond as soon as possible. So we told him to return the following day. He came by, but we had still not sit on the matter, so we told him to return on Wednesday. On that day he came to collect the message as he was told. He reported that we didn't go to work. All of a sudden here comes the warden. They instructed us to line up because they wanted to search us. The late Comrade Colen Tjipaura, who was the contact between this man and our group, was standing in front of the queue. He had the correspondence in his pocket wrapped in plastic bags. He was called and he had the message in his mouth. He tried to chew the message, but it was wrapped in the plastic. He was told bring the paper. It was mutilated and this man, the so called "contact", was also there to identify him. He was taken to the Chief of the Security and he was questioned, but was later allowed to go. After a week we were transferred to another section.

Meanwhile, the Mandela group used to send us study materials, such as mathematics books, as well as for the other groups. I remember a special case when we got books for the other section. We left one of our Comrade Shiponeni to throw these books into others section. He tried his best, but the books felt enormous. The wardens pick them up and this perhaps was also the cause of us to be transferred to other sections. The first week we were transferred, we were allowed to mix freely. We were dishing our food at our tables, but meanwhile the wardens were watching us. They expected us to

be fighting when we meet, but in fact we hugged and got along very well. They have realized that we had become a dangerous group together. One day we went to work and we came back full of dust. Others went to take a bath and I was the last one. There was this man watching me. He started throwing insults and shouting at me and I told him don't insult me. So he took me to the office to see the jailer who was not there. He came out and continued insulting me. Two huge Boers came out and stood by me. So I stood very hopelessly. I didn't have much to do or say. He took me to my cell and he started searching my cell. He found my study materials, and he asked me you want to be a lawyer? So he said as long as I am here as a warden in this place, I will make sure you will never study again. They went away for about 45 minutes and they returned to insult again. We were in a solitary confinement. The assault started from the Mandela group and they came to us. They started with Jafet Masimula of PAC, who they killed. One young fellow came into my cell and ordered me to strip, face the wall; all of a sudden another young fellow warden came in again and started insulting me. I said no, no! You have missed a point, it doesn't happen to a Namibian. I returned a slap to him. He fell down and came out running, shouting that this *kafer het my ge slaan* (this *Kaffir* hit me). He reported to his bosses. Eighteen of the Boers came to my cell armed. They started assaulting me. I fell down and still tell me to stand up. They punished me and I was only allowed half an hour exercise in the morning and in the afternoon. I was not allowed to talk to anybody. They took my blankets out in the morning to prevent me from lying down or covering myself because it was cement floor. Our jacket with three buttons must be closed, but if one is lost it's a punishment. They will come to my window in the morning expecting me to say morning Boss, but I said no forget about it.

The South African regime regarded Toivo as an important leader, and hoped to break his spirit and turn him into a state witness; the regime also tried to detain Jason Mutumbulwa, but then they failed.

We were working at the sea side. A car came to take me and took me to the visiting area. I found somebody facing on the stoop, he was introduced to me and he asked me to follow him. He introduced himself as Mr. Ken. He said I have been trying to talk to you ever since you were jailed, but I was not allowed to talk to you. I must tell you that perhaps you have been in jail for a very long time. South Africa wants now to speak to SWAPO like the United Nations, but before I start talking to you and what we are going to talk here will be publicized. There are a lot of developments in Transkei, Rhodesia, and in Mozambique. So we still want to warn you that everything will be publicized. I said, who are you and what do you do? He said he is a Researcher at the University of South Africa. I said I am sorry. I don't want to talk to you. So he said it's okay, one day we will meet in different circumstances. We shake hands and later on I left.

I learned that he also called one of the comrades from the other section. Eino Kamati Ekanjo, who is now working at the President's office. He said to Ken, English is not my language and I am not conversant in English I want an interpreter. They called Joseph Shituwete to interpret. Ken repeated the same as he said to me. Kamati responded, well we are in jail, if you want to talk to SWAPO, go and speak to SWAPO outside; we are prisoners. He let go. It was the end of it.

In 1977, University of Cape Town, Summer School, which was attended by the late Daniel Tjongarero and the Abrahams and I think Kerina too, was established. This Kerina when he was there, he wrote me a letter saying: "My brother I came back to the country after twenty-four years in exile, but I come back because I see that the country is about to become independent through the DTA. I want you to discuss with the prison authority so that I can come and visit you and we shall discuss the Namibian issue." It was not long before I was called to the jail Governor's office in town. Upon arrival in his office he asked if I knew Professor Kerina Mburumba. I said yes. He then gave me a letter from Kerina. I opened the letter and there was a small newspaper cutting. In those days if you were found with a newspaper cutting as big as my hand it was a crime. You will be charged and sentenced. In the cutting there was a story of how the contact group came to see Vorster (then Prime Minister of South Africa) for the first time in South Africa. Kerina also enclosed a long list of people who they claimed were killed by SWAPO. This list included the name of my own brother, who is here today in Windhoek. Kerina claimed that he was dead, killed by SWAPO. I went to the section and I was delighted to see this piece of news, but I was having a problem. I noticed something was wrong. I read the newspaper and I said no I cannot read this alone. I went back to the Governor and I asked him to give me a chance to speak to my people, who were in other cells. He said how many and I said twelve. He said no, no! That is too much. How about eight? I said fine give me that eight. He sent me back to speak to the jailer, Prince who came here. He was the one who ran away with Col. Robert after independence. They brought the eight men and left us alone. We started looking around, but we couldn't see anybody. I said here are the letters from Kerina, but I don't want to meet him. I brought the letter so that we can think and decide what to do. We decided we are not going to meet him as a group. Moses Katjuongwa also came to me in 1983. I think in my own views, these people were all sent by the DTA to come and see if I can come and work together with them. Their main objectives were to come and destroy SWAPO.<sup>51</sup>

Although many cadres were arrested, some managed to escape and continue to carry out fierce attacks against the South African occupation forces. One such attack was on the South African police station and administrative building at Oshikango, situated along the Namibia/Angola border. After regrouping, the remaining PLAN fighters later established a new base at Iiti yeeholo, and later moved to Okalonga ke Nepaya, south of Ongwediva.<sup>52</sup>

Amongst the PLAN fighters who managed to escape from Omugulu gOmbashe was the legendary guerrilla fighter Patrick Iyambo (Lungada), who spend nine years in Namibia, attacking the enemy troops. Lungada utilized guerrilla tactics of "hit and run" and "hide and seek". This frustrated the Boers as they could not locate him.

Tulimeyo Haiping, who was a nurse at the time revealed how she used to steal medicine from Oshakati Hospital to treat Lungada. As mentioned earlier, Lungada spent years underground causing many casualties among the enemy troops. "He was

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(51) Interview with Toivo Ya Toivo, by the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation, 1992.

(52) Interview with Nankudhu.

just strange,” says Shiponga. Sikunawa Negumbo (Shiponga) declared that he has never seen a man who can run as fast as Lungada could. “The man could run.”<sup>53</sup>

Tulimeyo narrated an interesting story about how they would take food to Patrick Iyambo, and had to climb and place it up in a tree. Lungada instructed them that, if the situation was tense, they must place a dry leaf on the food. And if the situation was calm, they must place a fresh green leaf on the food.<sup>54</sup> Other groups including the one led by the late commander of the army, Tobias Hainyeko was later to carry out the same mission as that of the initial group of John-Otto Nankudhu. Hainyeko was killed in the battle on the Zambezi River, at Katima Mulilo.

Many incidents that hindered the successful military operations of PLAN and even incidents leading to the death of Hainyeko were blamed on the infamous “Castro”. As revealed by most informants, “Castro” betrayed the first group by giving himself up to the Boers. But when he returned to his comrades, he did not reveal that he had been in contact with the Boers. It was later discovered that he continued to pass information about their activities to the Boers. Isaac Shihome revealed that “Castro’s” behaviour was suspicious.<sup>55</sup>

## Early International Support for and Solidarity with the Liberation Struggle:

Sam Nujoma remembers that, “While we were going to the night school, we always read newspapers about the petitioning of Chief Hosea Kutako and by that time we were very young. So we decided to do something because we read that Tanganyika, which was a former mandatory territory, was also moving towards self-determination.”<sup>56</sup>

### Tanzania:

It was Tanganyika (now Tanzania) that played a very crucial role in receiving and hosting political refugees from colonized countries, including Namibia. Sam Nujoma was the first Namibian to have arrived in that country in 1960 on a political mission. Upon his arrival, he started writing to his comrades back home that they can come. Nujoma had first travelled to New York, where he petitioned at the United Nations on the Namibian case and thereafter returned to Dar es Salaam. As he reflects in his autobiography and during the interview, “I was alone in Dar es Salaam after returning from New York early in 1961. One of the first to join me from SWA was Mrs. Putuse Appolus, a nurse who had been deported from SWA to South Africa by the Boers, and who had escaped via Southern and Northern Rhodesia. She had spent some time in Katanga Province before coming to Dar es Salaam and becoming active in SWAPO.”<sup>57</sup> The first group that followed him came from Cape Town and included the late Peter

(53) Interview with Tulimeyo Haipinge and Sikunawa Negumbo, (Windhoek) 06 January 2007.

(54) *Ibid.*

(55) *Ibid.*

(56) Interview with Sam Nujoma, 27 July 2007.

(57) Nujoma, 2001: See p.113.

Mweshihange, who later became Namibia's first Defence Minister at independence, and the late Salomon Mifima.

For his first trip to New York, it was in Tanganyika that Nujoma was given a letter by Nyerere to travel with. The letter stated the following: "To Whom It May Concern: This is Sam Nujoma from South West Africa. He wants to go and petition at the United Nations, please assist him where you can."<sup>58</sup> He travelled from Tanganyika to Sudan and from there to Ghana, where he met Fanuel Jariretundu Kozonguizi and together they went on to petition at the United Nations.

Tanzania adhered to the principles and the spirit of Pan-Africanism, shared the same objectives and values as those of Namibians, and many other Africans on the continent. These included the defeat of imperialism and colonialism and the rejection of all forms of foreign oppression and racial discrimination. The role Tanzania played in the liberation of Namibia became much easier as from 1961, when the Republic of Tanganyika was born. This support enabled SWAPO to set up its first provisional headquarters in Dar es Salaam. The Tanzanian government had made available joint offices under the Pan African Freedom Movement of Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa. Different liberation movements were housed in this building. Liberation movements such as the ANC, PAC, ZANU, ZAPU, UNIP before Zambia's independence, FRELIMO, and the MPLA shared offices in the same building. Upon establishing the SWAPO office, Nujoma was joined by Putuse Appolus, who later played a significant role in SWAPO and eventually led the SWAPO Women's Council (SWC) which she established in 1969. The newly established SWAPO office faced many difficulties and challenges. However, despite the fact that the country was not independent until later in 1961, SWAPO received immense support from the party and government. This was appreciated by Nujoma when he says "Meanwhile, Putuse Appolus got a nursing job at Muhimbili Hospital in Dar es Salaam. Nevertheless, life was very difficult for the rest of us. Some had to wait for scholarships, like Moses Garoeb who went to study later at a university in the United States of America, while the rest of us depended on the generosity of TANU and its government, whose people under the leadership of Julius Nyerere encouraged us to continue with the liberation

struggle."<sup>59</sup> The Tanzanian government under *Mwalimu* Julius Nyerere called on its civil servants to agree to pay a certain percentage of their salaries to fund the liberation movements.

In the meantime, SWAPO continued to receive many people from Namibia. The young ones were sent to schools, while others were sent for military training in Egypt and other friendly countries. Due to the large number of people from Namibia, Tanzania decided to offer facilities such as land for military training for SWAPO and other liberation movements. Several SWAPO soldiers received their military training in Kongwa, Tanzania.

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(58) *Ibid.*

(59) Nujoma, 2001:See p.117.

### **Zambia:**

Together with Tanzania, Zambia bore the brunt of the liberation struggle. Zambia suffered physically and economically, particularly because of President Kaunda's commitment to the total liberation of Africa, particularly southern Africa. Zambia's situation was compounded by its proximity to the hostile and aggressive racist regimes of Portugal, Southern Rhodesia, and South Africa. The two Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique both shared borders with Zambia, while the minority racist government of Southern Rhodesia and the South African occupied Namibia formed its southern boundaries.

Not only did Zambia host refugees from southern Africa, but it also risked its internal and territorial security by permitting liberation movements to establish military bases in order to launch their guerrilla warfare operations from its territory. The relationship between SWAPO and UNIP was cemented during the early 1960s, when Zambia itself was still fighting for independence. John Otto Nankundu recalls that in those days, SWAPO members could join UNIP as card carrying members: "The next morning we went to Lusaka, we stayed there for two weeks. We joined UNIP youths. They sent us to the north. We joined the UNIP youth league and got membership cards."<sup>60</sup> This was done mainly for the following purposes: Firstly, to put SWAPO members under cover; secondly to give them opportunity to undergo political education in mobilization strategies and techniques; and thirdly to strengthen the solidarity between comrades and their parties. Although Nankundu and his Namibian comrades were on their way to Tanzania, they could not just stay idle in Zambia while waiting to be assisted for their passage, they had to take part in all political activities that UNIP was organizing. The bus that took them to the border with Tanzania, for instance, was paid for by UNIP.<sup>61</sup>

From the inception, Zambia allowed SWAPO to establish military bases for executing the armed struggle. It is well known that the country became a host to most of the liberation movements of southern Africa. This implied that Zambia had to provide land and security for the numerous freedom fighters in its territory. The fact that Kaunda had allowed guerrilla activities from within his territory exposed his country and people to military attacks by the Portuguese, the Smith regime in Southern Rhodesia, and the South Africans. Thousands of refugees under the auspices of their respective liberation movements such as SWAPO, MPLA, UNITA, ZANU, ZAPU, FRELIMO, and ANC had established camps all over Zambia.

Immediately after Zambia became independent, SWAPO established its regional head-quarters in Lusaka, bringing the fight closer to the home ground. Zambia also provided land for educational, health, and agricultural centres for the Namibian refugees under SWAPO care. Among the well known centres, were Old Farm near Lusaka, Nyango in the Kaoma area of Western Province, and Oshatotwa in the

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(60) Interview with John Otto Nankundu, 28 January 2007.

(61) *Ibid.*

operational area. A special institution of higher education was also established in Lusaka for exiled Namibians. The United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN) was funded by the UN to provide the necessary human resource capacity that the independent Namibia would require. In addition to such direct support to individual liberation movements, Zambia also helped with the formation of important regional blocks whose role was to assist in the decolonization process of the sub-continent. In this instance, the country played a key role in the formation of the “Front Line States” and the Southern African Coordinating Conference (SADCC). SADCC’s major objective was to reduce the dependency of the member countries on South Africa.

Several factors may have played a role in determining why Zambia under Kaunda played such a critical role in the liberation struggle. The first and perhaps the most important one is the influence of the ideology of Humanism. One important tenet of the ideology of Humanism was the rejection of all forms of discrimination and exploitation, including racism. The ideology of Humanism was thus incompatible with the white supremacist regimes in the region. These regimes oppressed and dominated Africans, while denying them basic human rights. It was this ideology which provided the Zambian government with the moral grounds for supporting the liberation struggle. Zambia’s stance on racial discrimination and foreign occupation can also be explained by its experiences during the anti-colonial struggle against British rule.

Another factor was the influence of Pan-Africanism. This continental movement stressed the unity and liberation of the entire continent from colonialism and white domination. Kaunda was a strong believer in Pan-Africanism and adhered to all the resolutions of the Organization of the African Union (OAU), which called for unity among the liberation movements in the individual colonies. The role that Zambia played in support of the liberation struggle for Namibia is clearly illustrated by SWAPO, whose activities mushroomed and the liberation struggle grew from strength to strength in the early 1960s to the time of independence in 1990.

### **Botswana:**

Even though neighbouring Botswana did not allow SWAPO to put up military bases on its territory, this country played an important role, especially in the early days of the struggle. As indicated earlier, many comrades of the first exodus passed through Botswana in route to Zambia and Tanzania. It is also evident from the stories told by those interviewed that they preferred the route through Botswana at the time due to the following reasons:

- The Herero people who lived along the Namibia/Botswana borders were those who had run away from Namibia during the Herero/German war. Over the years, these Hereros had kept contact with their counterparts in Namibia and this sometimes made travel arrangements much easier.

- The presence of Maxton Mutongolome as a SWAPO representative in Francistown was always a relief, as freedom fighters knew that there was someone who would attend to their travel needs in Botswana.
- The concentration of leaders and members of several liberation movements from the region gave impetus to the noble ideal of independence. The well known building called the “white house” in Francistown became the transit point and housed most members of the liberation movements at the time.

Although Botswana was not independent until 1966, it is fitting to show how the spirit of Pan-Africanism had permeated the African continent and transcended the artificial colonial borders. John Otto Nankudhu explains that in 1961, while travelling through Botswana with his comrades, including Tobias Hainyeko, Titus Mwailepeni, and a certain Kaalushu, they were arrested by the British and South African police for entering the territory illegally. Upon hearing the news of their arrest, the residents of Mahalapye immediately organized a demonstration and demanded the unconditional release of their compatriots from Namibia. The SWAPO representative then approached nationalist leaders in Botswana for their intervention in their release in order to avoid possible deportation to Namibia.

As Nankudhu revealed, “Sir Seretse Khama, then President of the liberation movement in Botswana, quickly ran to our rescue by testifying in court that these were not foreigners but our own people.” Seretse Khama further wrote a letter to the Queen of Great Britain in which he protested and explained that people from the SWA and Bechuanaland are one. Nankudhu recalls that the Queen promptly responded by ordering the immediate and unconditional release of the Namibians. She further instructed that all the people entering Botswana from SWA must be allowed to stay in that territory freely because they were running away from the oppressions in their country.<sup>62</sup>

In subsequent years, Botswana became one of the major players in the politics of southern Africa. It is therefore not surprising that when a decision was made to create SADCC, Gaborone became its headquarters. Botswana supported the Namibian struggle in many ways. The SWAPO office in Francistown, for instance, facilitated a number of material needs such as vehicles that SWAPO needed to execute the liberation struggle. These deeds were augmented by the fact that Botswana’s ambassador to the United Nations, Legwaila Legwaila, was appointed deputy to Martti Ahtisaari during the implementation of UN Resolution 435 leading to Namibia’s independence.

### **Angola:**

Angola’s contribution to the liberation of Namibia is quite immense. SWAPO had waged the armed liberation struggle from Angola between 1975 and 1989, when Namibia finally moved towards its independence. The story of Angola is well illustrated by several SWAPO activities already reflected in this synopsis. Not only

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(62) Interview with Nankudhu.

did Angola provide military bases for SWAPO, but its people also fought alongside SWAPO guerrillas. The comradeship in arms was consolidated in 1975 when the South African forces invaded Angola and had joined forces with UNITA to overthrow the MPLA Government. As will be later illustrated, it was finally the combined forces of SWAPO, Cuba, and Angola that drove the South African troops out of Angola in the decisive final battles at Quito Cuanavale.

During the long and bitter struggle for independence, for many Namibian freedom fighters in exile, Angola simply became their home. Soon after Angola became independent in 1975, SWAPO shifted its headquarters from Lusaka to the Angolan capital, Luanda. Apart from many military operational bases which were scattered all over southern Angola, adjacent to the Namibian border, it was in Angola where SWAPO built a formidable army and established a modern and well equipped military academy. The military academy that was located in Lubango was named after the first commander of SWAPO's military wing, the late Thobias Hainyeko. Numerous refugee centres such as Cassinga, Kwanza-Sul, Sumbe, Dalatondo, and Jamba, provided shelter for refugees and were also the places where they engaged in several social activities.

## The 1970s:

### The Second Exodus:

The acceleration of independence struggles throughout Africa led to several African countries gaining independence in the early 1960s. The independence of the Congo was such a highlight, although marred by the subsequent civil war. Towards the early and middle of the 1960s, several countries within the southern and eastern African regions attained independence, including Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, and Zambia. This political development strengthened the resolve of the liberation movements to intensify their struggle for independence. It also gave rise to political pressure and demand by nationalist groups for the South African apartheid regime to relinquish power in Namibia. International solidarity was gained by SWAPO, and political pressure was exerted by the international community, especially through the United Nations, for South Africa to leave Namibia. Liberia and Ethiopia, being former members of the League of Nations, were tasked by independent African states to take the Namibian case against South Africa to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague. The case dragged for a couple of years and on 18 July 1966 the Court ruled that the two applicants had no standing (*locus standi*) in the matter, and the United Nations was the only competent legal body to lodge the application. The ICJ judgement shows that Liberia and Ethiopia did not enjoy the support they deserved from UN member states when they lodged the Namibia case. South Africa, of course, was ecstatic.<sup>63</sup> The South African intransigence in Namibia led to the launching of the armed liberation struggle at Omugulu-gOmbashe in 1966. As indicated earlier, the

(63) According to records retrieved from the South African Department of Foreign Affairs in Pretoria, the South African government worked tirelessly to win the case and had even tried to influence the Chinese judge on the IJC panel.

period between 1960 and 1966 saw a number of young men and women leaving the country and going into exile. Also, the intensification of the armed liberation struggle from 1966 and the demise of Portuguese colonialism in Angola opened up flood gates for young Namibians to leave the country in large numbers.

There were also several factors that influenced many young men and women to leave the country. Charles Namoloh recalls how his father left an everlasting impression on him regarding the political situation in Namibia. He relates,

My father being a former soldier was sometimes politically aware of what was happening. I think I was 6, 7 or 9 years [old] and I would listen to him. He always carried a radio and he was listening either to BBC or to Voice of America or any other station. Then he will call you one by one, and one day he called us when there was music playing and this was African music and I think he was listening to a Congolese station and he told me, “You see, these people who are singing here, they are free people, they are free people...” And I said “Hoo! They are free?” And he said, “Yes, they are not like us; they are free. They are ruling themselves these Africans.” And I said, “Okay.”<sup>64</sup>

Namoloh had his political education at this early age as deportations and indiscriminate arrests were taking place all around him. His father, who was working in Tsumeb, had at some point gone into hiding when he was wanted by the police. Namoloh learnt at a later stage that his father went to hide as far away as Luderitz. At the time when Namoloh started school, it was the same time that South Africa declared itself a Republic and school going children were forced to carry badges with the South African flag and symbols. His father forbade it and some parents who were politically conscious even discouraged their children from attending school that day. As his father was politically conscious, he discouraged his child from going to a school where Afrikaans was a medium for communication. He was then sent to Odibo Primary School which was an English medium school. Going through school at Odibo and a stint at Ongwediva had some trials and tribulations.

Discontent ranging from cruel treatment by white teachers and demands for ordained black Namibian bishops led to the disruption of Namoloh’s academic career. He ended up in Walvis Bay, where he got involved in the 1971 general strike. Prior to his deportation to Ovamboland with close to a thousand other workers, he and his friends, such as Ndali Kamati, had made several attempts to send a letter to the then South African Prime Minister John Vorster. The political situation inside Namibia at the time was quite tense and according to Namoloh, the internal leadership, including the clergy, were jittery about political activism. He was therefore among the key figures that organised the 1971 general strike, while other leaders were trying to discourage it. There were always mixed feelings about political involvement. The Bishop, who tried to convince the workers not to strike, for instance, felt that if the workers are deported to Ovamboland, they will have no jobs there and hunger and

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(64) Interview with Major General (Rt) Charles Namoloh, (Windhoek) 08 August 2007.

destitution will take its course. But Namoloh and his colleagues reasoned it was better to die fighting, than to continue with the slave wages and conditions.<sup>65</sup>

After the 1971 general strike, the South African government strengthened its security apparatus by including the armed security forces and the army. During his temporary teaching at St. Mary's, Namoloh had to avoid arrest by seeking temporary refuge in Angola, where he stayed with some relatives for one year until 1973. But during his one year stay in Angola, he would sneak into Namibia and at some point went as far as Walvis Bay. This was despite the fact that he was still a wanted man. The SWAPO youth league at the time had become very active and well organised. It was at the same time that the Youth League wrote to the SWAPO President to expedite the independence of the country. They lamented in the letter that the Namibian people were waiting impatiently for independence and the Youth League had promised that this would come soon.<sup>66</sup> The letter was intercepted by the authorities and the authors, Joseph Kashea, Nashilongo Taapopi, and Shihepo Iimbili, were quickly rounded up, tried, and sentenced to Robben Island.

It was under these circumstances and the heightened youth activism that a number of youth activists such as Charles Namoloh, Ndali Kamati, and Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah were detained, and in many cases without trial, in Ondangwa and Oshakati. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah related how they were rounded up, especially after their representation to the UN Secretary General's Personal Representative, Alfred Escher, in 1972. The youth had to use many tactics to be able to speak to the UN envoy at the time. The period between 1968 and 1975 was characterised by mounting pressure on the apartheid regime from the international community, the intensification of the armed struggle, and continuous student revolts and demonstrations.

Students in secondary schools were faced with difficult decisions as to which high school to continue with their Grades 11 and 12 and what to do after high school. In the early 1970s, there were no institutions of higher learning in Namibia and therefore students aspiring for university education had to go to South Africa for studies. In South Africa itself, Namibian students were limited as to which universities they could join, since they could only choose from a handful of the so called Black universities. This aspect also limited one's choice of a career and profession, but it is important to mention here that some professions such as law were off limits due to the apartheid system. If black students managed to study law, they would still end up as mere paper pushers because blacks at the time were not allowed to serve as advocates. Different rules sometimes applied under apartheid Namibia. Coloureds were allowed to engage in certain trades and professions, while blacks were prohibited to do so. In the Caprivi for instance, white administrators were sceptical and discouraged aspiring black candidates from studying medicine. During the same period though, a small number of black Namibians from the northern and central areas were allowed

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(65) Interview with Charles Namoloh, (Windhoek) 08 August 2007.

(66) Nujoma, 2001: See pp.240-241.

to venture into this profession. This was also the period when separate development and the policy of Bantustanisation was being implemented. The regime used these homeland administrations as a scapegoat for any flaws in governance. It exonerated itself whenever it was convenient to do so, even though it was fully in charge.

The year 1974 saw an exodus of Namibian youth into exile. This time around, it was convenient, but not very safe, to use the Angolan route because of the collapse of the Portuguese rule in Angola. The Portuguese regime of Marcello Caetano was overthrown by some forces led by the “*Capitães de Abril*”, who were disillusioned with the unpopular war of the Portuguese empire, leading to its collapse on 25 April 1974. It was

due to such political changes that Angola played the role as free passage for SWAPO members leaving Namibia to join the movement in Zambia. The Portuguese soldiers in Angola directed SWAPO members, or people fleeing from Namibia, through the Angolan jungles, to the right paths that led to Zambia. They even transported them by trains, trucks, and buses, after which hundreds and thousands of Namibians walked on foot from Angolan borders in search of SWAPO camps in Zambia.<sup>67</sup>

It was at this time that young men and women, including Pendukeni Iivula-Iithana, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Martin Shali, Mathias Shigwedha, Joseph Iita, Erastus Negonga, Andrew Ndishishi, Tuli Hivelwah, Charles Namoloh, Max Nekongo, Petrus Iilonga, Sirka Katuta, Samuel Goagoseb, Eddy Amukongo, Sikunawa Tshiponga Negumbo, Darius “Mbolondondo” Shikongo, and many others left Namibia to join SWAPO leaders in Zambia.

At that time, SWAPO had also intensified its radio campaigns in Tanzania and Zambia with Vinia Ndadi, Mvula Ya Nangolo, Richard Kapelwa Kabajani, and other combatants, calling upon all young Namibians to join the liberation struggle, and giving promises of better education abroad.<sup>68</sup> Those going into exile from the then Ovamboland opted to leave through Angola, crossing into Zambia. During the interview with Joseph Iita, he recalled that a Portuguese soldier was telling them, “You have to fight for your country.” Iita and his comrade were at first suspicious because it was a white man who seemed to support their cause. They could hardly believe that a white man was genuinely telling black people that they must fight for their country.<sup>69</sup> Joseph Iita was in one of the very first groups that crossed into Zambia through Angola in early 1974, after the collapse of the Portuguese regime. Thereafter, thousands of people walked this long and arduous journey on foot until they reached Zambia.

Leaving the country was not always easy; one had to avoid detection by the security forces at all cost. This sometimes meant crossing the respective borders at night. As for those crossing into Botswana, they could still not avoid being detained although

(67) Interview with Martin Shali, (Windhoek) 2008.

(68) Interviews with Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, (Windhoek) 4 July 2008; Ndaupapo Amagulu, (Windhoek) 19 December 2007; and Charles Namoloh.

(69) Interview with Joseph Iita, (Windhoek) 07 May 2007.

the Botswana government would say it was for the refugee's own good and security.<sup>70</sup> In his interview, Max Nekongo narrated a story of the hardship experienced by their group on their journey to Zambia.

Some people left with their boyfriends and girlfriends into exile, but these relationships just ended on the journey due to the hardships incurred on the way. Some even had babysitters and babies, but all these did not work out. There were those that brought their foldable chairs and beds, but all those items were abandoned as well, because the journey was long and bitter. We even had to sell our clothes in order to eat, until we reached (Yuka) Kalabo, in 1974. It took us two months to reach Kalabo.<sup>71</sup>

This was the journey where the mythical story of the “Boeing” came to be known. It was said that one could just walk and somewhere on the way you will find a “Boeing” which could take you to Sam Nujoma in Zambia. There was even a saying in exile about the difference between those people who travelled by trains, trucks, and buses and those who travelled by a “Boeing.” In reality, however, there was no such a thing as a “Boeing” meeting people half way and taking them to Lusaka. People spent weeks and months walking and eventually reached SWAPO camps such as Oshaatotwa in Zambia. That was the “Boeing” – the long march to Sam Nujoma.

Those in central and southern Namibia used the old Gobabis route through Botswana, while the ones exiting from the Caprivi just crossed into Zambia or, depending on the circumstances, would first cross into Botswana, then move to Zambia.<sup>72</sup> By 1975, thousands of cadres had joined SWAPO and the People's Liberation Army in particular, such that it became a formidable force to reckon with.

### **SWAPO Military Campaigns after Omugulu gOmbashe:**

After the clash at Omugulu gOmbashe, the South African government increased its troops and police force in Namibia, especially, in the northern and north-eastern regions of Kavango and Caprivi. This was done with the aim to patrol and block further infiltration through the borders by the PLAN combatants. They also started recruiting local black people into their army, who were later termed by locals as “*Makakunyas*.” This however did not help much. Despite the arrest of the Omugulu gOmbashe group, the struggle did not cease. The fight continued, especially at the north-eastern border with Zambia.

The early 1970s saw the groups led by Mbulunganga, Zulu, Haiduwa, Nakada, and Hanghome, amongst others, pushing the armed struggle further. These were the legendary commanders that formed the link between the old and new generations of SWAPO soldiers. Zulu and Mbulunganga lived to see the independence of Namibia, and were interviewed.

(70) Interview with Brave Tjizera, 06 December 2008.

(71) Interview with Max Nekongo, (Northern Namibia) 17 February 2007.

(72) Interview with Frederick Matongo, (Windhoek) 26 June 2008; Brave Tjizera, 06 December 2008; and Frederick Siluzungila, 20 April 2007.

Zulu, who joined the struggle in 1964, became one of the first guerrilla fighters who confronted the enemy following the Omugulu gOmbashe clashes. He explained how he went into exile during the difficult times of 1964. On his way to Tanganyika (Tanzania), Zulu met Namibia's current president Hifikepunye Pohamba and Mzee Kukungua in Rundu (Namibia), and together they headed for Zambia. Pohamba was on his way back to exile after spending several years inside Namibia on a political mobilization mission. In Mbeya, Tanganyika, he met Nankudhu's group, which was heading to Namibia, where they later clashed with the South African forces at Omugulu gOmbashe.

Zulu received his first test of training in guerrilla warfare tactics in the Zambian bush near Lusaka by a well known veteran freedom fighter, Jackson Kakwambi. He later received his comprehensive military training from North Korea together with Salomon (Jesus) Auala and other comrades. In 1968, after the training, Zulu went to the eastern front as a political commissar for Unit A.

Zulu started his guerrilla career after the Ongulu gOmbashe event at the time when the SWAPO army was undergoing reorganization and restructuring. From the Tanga (Tanzania) Congress, held from December 1969 to January 1970, the South West Africa Liberation Army (SWALA) was transformed and baptized into the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). PLAN was then divided into three units, namely A, B, and C. Each unit had about thirty-five guerrilla fighters. These units were commanded by the following legends: Unit A by Amutenya "Zulu" Nandenga; Unit B by Mathias "Mbulunganga" Ndakolo; and Unit C by Mandume Handjebo.

The restructuring of the army was done after Hainyeko's death, and the arrest of Castro, who was Hainyeko's deputy, after he betrayed his fellow soldiers. This consequently left a void in the leadership of the SWAPO army. The leadership then appointed Dimo Hamaambo as the overall commander of the army, deputized by Hanghome, Haiduwa, and Lungada.

The three Units (A, B, and C) started their military operations at the eastern front in Caprivi and Kavango, crossing the Cuando-Kubango River at Luena and Bwabwata. They started carrying out guerrilla tactics of "hit and run", inflicting heavy casualties on the South African troops who were patrolling the borders. This was difficult, because Zambia, where they were operating from, did not support the armed liberation struggle or "violence" as the means of achieving freedom. It was for this reason that Zambia, initially, did not permit armed struggle to be waged from its territory. As a result, many commanders were arrested, including Haiduwa, who was briefly arrested in 1969.<sup>73</sup>

According to Zulu, the Namibian local population in the areas of operation was not fully mobilized, and therefore was not ready or prepared to support the guerrillas on their arrival. The chances of them being rejected and reported to the South African forces were very high. Zulu confirmed, however, that in Kavango, they received a bit

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(73) Interview with Zulu.

of support from the Mbukushu people, but those who were known to be supporting the SWAPO guerrillas were later relocated from that area to faraway places deep in Angola, by the South African administration, in collaboration with the Portuguese authorities.

Frederick Matongo corroborated Zulu's story when he explained that upon arrival from North Korea in 1968, they were sent straight to the Eastern Front. It was at this time that an attempt was being made to open up bases in the Kavango Region. In December 1969, he and six other combatants began their journey to Namibia and had to walk from Senenga, Zambia, through Mukwe and crossing the Kavango River to Shakawe in Botswana. His group of seven reached Mukwe on 23 December 1969. This group consisted of comrades Shiyandja, Canisius, Lucius Kambangula, Raymond Buiswalelo, and Martin Ndopu. Accordingly, there was a commander, a deputy commander, and Matongo himself as secretary of the group.

The purpose was not to fight the enemy troops, but "to meet people, we cannot survive without people."<sup>74</sup> He further explained their ordeal while in the Mukwe area and trying to make contact with the local population. They spent many days without food. He related that "after recruiting two San men, we had spent eight days without food."<sup>75</sup> And, as if the lack of food was not enough, they still had to face enemy fire under those circumstances.

Zulu also speaks of their ordeal when they had to sneak out of Zambia illegally and secretly infiltrate the country, to carry out attacks against the enemy bases with little or no assistance from local people. When necessary, all three units would reinforce each other to render heavy blows to the enemy troops. Zulu recalls one of his historic battles in 1971 at Kamenga, about 200km north-west from Katima Mulilo, where they attacked the South African army camp and captured a lot of equipment, including weapons and radios which they handed over to Sam Nujoma himself. Zulu said he was not exaggerating by saying that Nujoma cried tears of joy.<sup>76</sup> This was the battle that earned SWAPO international recognition. The captured materials were taken by Sam Nujoma, accompanied by Salomon "Jesus" Auala, to the OAU meeting for display as proof of the bravery and success of the PLAN combatants. "From that day, the Russians started supplying us with guns," said Matongo.<sup>77</sup> Several battles followed, where numerous military bases were completely destroyed, with Peter Shilumbu showering the enemy with machine guns, under the command of Zulu and Mbulunganga.

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(74) Interview with Frederick Matongo, (Windhoek) 26 June 2008.

(75) *Ibid.*

(76) *Ibid.*

(77) *Ibid.*

### **Military Activities on the Eastern Front (1967–1974):**

Different communities in Namibia played significant roles in the struggle for the independence of the country. The role played by people of the Caprivi Region in the liberation struggle will clearly adorn the annals of Namibian history. The Namibian history of liberation between the period 1967 and 1979 is clearly illustrated in the Caprivi Region. There is, however, another important period to be emphasized in the history of this struggle with regard to the Caprivi Region, and this was the period between 1967 and 1970.

The rise of nationalism in Caprivi began with the formation of the Caprivi African National Union (CANU) in 1962. CANU had existed as an underground movement at least since the end of 1958.<sup>78</sup> It was formally founded on 7 September 1962<sup>79</sup> and its history is rooted at the Holy Family Mission (Kizito College) where two of its founders, Brendan Kangongolo Simbwaye and Albert Zacharia Ndopu, were teaching. Because of its geographical remoteness from Windhoek and the rest of South West Africa, the rise of nationalism in Caprivi was greatly influenced by events in adjacent territories, especially in Northern Rhodesia. CANU shared offices at Sesheke in Zambia with the United Independence Party (UNIP) of Kenneth Kaunda; UNIP personalities such as Nalumino Mundia,<sup>80</sup> a former teacher in the Caprivi Strip, and Munukayumbwa Sipalo, UNIP's Secretary General, made relations between CANU and UNIP easier. The first CANU constitution and membership cards were written and printed with the assistance of UNIP. As Sam Nujoma would write in his autobiography in 2001, "Brendon Simbwaye was in close touch with UNIP in what was then Northern Rhodesia" and that "the struggle in then Northern Rhodesia led by UNIP, inspired the Caprivians to form their own party, since they had no contact with Windhoek."<sup>81</sup> CANU did not exist in Caprivi as a free political movement beyond its first public rally. Immediately after launching its struggle for independence in 1964, the authorities arrested its founding president, Brendan Kangongolo Simbwaye, and Tongo Nalishuwa, at the first CANU public meeting at which the party was to be formally launched. The two were banished to various parts of South West Africa as a way of lessening their political influence in the Caprivi and even today their whereabouts remain unknown.<sup>82</sup> A harsh clampdown on its supporters forced many to cross into Northern Rhodesia from where CANU operated briefly before it joined forces with the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) in November 1964.

(78) Interview with Mr. Adrian Waluka Simubali, (Bukalo) 16 April 2006, in Kangumu, B., *Contestations over Caprivi Identities: From pre-colonial times to the present*. PhD Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2008: See p.255.

(79) Interview with Albert Zacharia Ndopu, (Katima Mulilo) 17 April 2006, in Kangumu, B., *Ibid.*

(80) He would later serve as Prime Minister in Kenneth Kaunda's government.

(81) Nujoma, 2001: See pp.135-136

(82) Kangumu, B. "Archival Research Report: The life history of Brendon Kangongolo Simbwaye, A missing SWAPO Vice-President." Submitted to the Steering Committee of the Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and Liberation Struggle (AACRLS), a project of the National Archives of Namibia, February 2006.

The merger between SWAPO and CANU opened up the Caprivi as a vital corridor and battlefield for PLAN and the South African Defence Forces.

The launch of the armed liberation struggle on 26 August 1966 at Omugulu gOmbashe in which PLAN fighters clashed with forces of the South African colonial government is a well described historical event. Among others, it culminated in the arrests, detention, and trial of Namibians in the so-called Pretoria Terrorism Trial at the close of the 1960s and their eventual incarceration in the then infamous Robben Island Maximum Security Prison, off the coast of the city of Cape Town. The aftermath of 26 August 1966 on the Caprivi and other parts of Namibia requires further and deeper historical enquiry and analysis. A couple of studies have examined the role of the Caprivi within the Namibian liberation war. Susan Brown, for example, has usefully described the tactics employed by PLAN in Caprivi between 1968 and 1974 as ‘hit and run tactics’ that were characterized by widespread use of landmines and anti- tank mines, as well as guerrilla activities.<sup>83</sup> Helao Shityuwete, in his autobiography, shows how the Caprivi was a transit corridor for the first group of PLAN combatants on their way to set up a camp at Omugulu gOmbashe.<sup>84</sup> Already in 1966, he shows how they were received by their contact in Caprivi before they hastily left after their presence was detected by the South African security forces. Oswald Namakalu<sup>85</sup> has discussed accounts of PLAN’s combat operations in Caprivi from a liberation fighter’s viewpoint while Steenkamp, Stiff, and Breytenbach have discussed South Africa’s operations, border strikes into neighbouring territories especially Angola, and its ‘soldiers of fortune’ with relation to the Caprivi.<sup>86</sup>

What all the above historical works agree on is that the Caprivi was of utmost strategic importance during the confrontation between apartheid South Africa and liberation movements in the area because of its location in the heart of central southern Africa. As Kangumu explains,

For South Africa, the Caprivi Strip was its military frontline, a first line of defence, a training base for its forces, especially special units, and a launch-pad for attacks on frontline states. For black Africa the Caprivi Strip was freedom alley, a South African soft underbelly which was waiting to be hit hard. For PLAN combats of SWAPO, the Caprivi Strip was a transit corridor to the rest of South West Africa.<sup>87</sup>

As indicated earlier, the 26 August 1966 attack exposed the vulnerability of large and permanent PLAN bases inside Namibia at the time. Due, largely, to logistical

<sup>(83)</sup> Brown, Susan. “Diplomacy by other means: SWAPO’s liberation war.” In Colin Leys and John Saul. *Namibia’s liberation struggle: The two-edged sword*. London: James Currey, 1995.

<sup>(84)</sup> Shityuwete, H. *Never follow the wolf: The autobiography of a Namibian freedom fighter*. London: Kliptown Books, 1990.

<sup>(85)</sup> Namakalu, O.O. *Armed Liberation Struggle: Some accounts of PLAN’s combat operations*. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 2004.

<sup>(86)</sup> Steenkamp, W. *Borderstrike: South Africa into Angola*. Durban: Butterworth, 1983; Stiff, Peter. *The silent war: South African Recce Operations 1969-1994*. Alberton: Galago, 1999; Breytenbach, J. *They Live by the Sword*. Alberton: Lemur Books, 1990.

<sup>(87)</sup> Kangumu, B. *Contestations over Caprivi Identities: From pre-colonial times to the present*. PhD Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2008: See pp.208-209.

considerations, PLAN adopted guerrilla tactics of “hit and run” on military installations to inflict pain and damage on apartheid South Africa, especially in the Caprivi during the early and formative years of the armed liberation struggle.

In just nine months after the 26 August 1966 attack, PLAN suffered a heavy loss in Caprivi on 18 May 1967, when its first commander, Tobias Hainyeko, was killed in action on the Zambezi River. He had been conducting a mission to investigate conditions in the Caprivi Strip in order to determine how to improve communication between the operational headquarters at Kongwa, Tanzania, and PLAN’s fighting units in Namibia. PLAN resolved to avenge Hainyeko’s death and infiltrated two fighting units into Caprivi. Reference here is made to the group that entered Caprivi at Singalamwe on 18 June 1968. At the time, a police post at Singalamwe was under construction, but a temporary one already existed.

Charles Sampati Lutokwa, our interviewee, who was at Singalamwe during this period, remembers Jonathan Silubanga, a policeman at Singalamwe, waking them up on one very cold winter night to tell them that a group of armed men had just passed and asked him to show them the direction to Finaughty’s shop.<sup>88</sup> William (Bill) Finaughty hailed from Petersburg in the then Northern Transvaal and came to the Zambezi Region in the early 1940s, being posted first to Kazungula in Bechuanaland and then to Katima Mulilo by the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WENELA). After a year or two in the service of WENELA, he developed interest in trading and was granted an extensive general dealers’ site at the Katima Mulilo rapids, where the Finaughty informal settlement at Katima Mulilo stands today. Finaughty was a mechanic by profession, and his business consisted of a large shop, butchery, a workshop for repairing motor vehicles, and a carpentry workshop. He also owned other stores across the Eastern Caprivi.

At Finaughty’s shop at Singalamwe, the PLAN fighters banged on the door while calling on Mr. Daniel Maswahu Sankasi, the store *kapitao* (store keeper) to open for them. Sankasi decided to escape with the cash box through the rear window, but little did he know that one fighter was already stationed there to whom he was forced to hand over the cash box. Apparently, the fighters told him: “Old man, this money is not yours. If this shop belonged to you, we could have asked for food or any other assistance. That is how we operate wherever we go.”<sup>89</sup> They forced open the door and found an old man inside, a cleaner whom they instructed to take some jackets for himself, but he refused saying the Boers would kill him if found wearing them. It is related also that the fighters wanted to petrol bomb the shop, but that there was no fuel in the drums kept inside the shop. Nonetheless they fired shots, especially at the baobab tree at the shop, causing a deafening sound that was heard in the whole of Singalamwe. After one week, the PLAN fighters raided another shop that belonged to

<sup>88</sup> Personal interview with Charles Sampati Lutokwa, (Katima Mulilo) 30 July 2006.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Mr. Lutokwa, *Ibid.*

Finaughty at Sibbinda. The group was led by Richard Kapelwa Kabajani. After another week, PLAN fighters attacked a military convoy between Mpacha and Katima Mulilo. The months of September and October 1968 witnessed a brutal police clampdown on the local population, especially in the western parts of Eastern Caprivi in search for collaborators and those harbouring PLAN fighters. In the process, about sixty-three people were killed, 350 arrested, and about 2000 forced to flee either into Angola or Zambia. Among those who fled were the influential Mano of Kongola and Wankie.

According to SWAPO reports, of the 100 children who fled the country with their parents into Zambia, fifty-three died of starvation and disease on the way.<sup>90</sup>

This repression culminated in the Singalamwe Massacre of October 1968 in which the colonial forces used helicopters to petrol bomb a village. A number of people were killed during this period, and notable among them was Benjamin Bebi, who was killed by the police at Katima Mulilo. Another is Kulibabika, who was killed because he had transported the PLAN fighters using his employer's truck.

Of those arrested, the following are some of those taken to the Pretoria Central Prison and charged with high treason: Ingenda Masiye, Dixon Masida Chatambula, Manowa Mulibe, Weeklyson Muluti Lukonga, Judea Lyaboloma, Daniel Mutanimiye, Bernard Matomola Malapo, Haizaya Muhupulo, Alfred Siloiso Lukonga, Charles Sampati Lutokwa, Chrispin Mutwa, Amon Mutonga Mwiya, Nelson Zambwe, Joel Mwilima, Boswell Mwita Mwilima, Richard Lutombi Sushiku, Sosayati Limbo, David Babusa, and Reuben Chata. Brendon Kangongolo Simbwaye, who had already served five years in detention, joined them at the Pretoria Central Prison.

Two members of the group died while at the Pretoria Central Prison: Judea Lyaboloma, who was reported to have committed suicide, but is likely to have been killed by the police and his body was brought back to Caprivi for burial; and Dixon Masida Chatambula, who died most likely from burns on his whole body. Before he was taken to Pretoria, the police took him into the bush and forced him to gather firewood and gave him matches to light the fire, on which they roasted him alive.<sup>91</sup>

This was because, as village *Induma* (headman), he ordered his people to give food, water, and information to the PLAN fighters, declaring that "they are our children", but then an informer from the same village reported to the police that he was feeding "terrorists." He was taken from the Pretoria Central Prison apparently to the hospital, but no one knows what happened to him afterwards.

Half of the group that was taken to Pretoria were released in 1968 and brought back to Caprivi, probably because their offences were not considered to be very serious. It is also probable, as was widely the trend during the Pretoria Terrorism Trial that they might have cooperated with the state in providing information to assist with the case.

<sup>90</sup> Katjavivi, Peter. In *Namibia News*. 7.6/7 (June/July 1974): See p.4. Information about the massacre first came to the attention of the world in a testimony presented to the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts of the Commission of Human Rights by Peter Katjavivi, then SWAPO Representative in the United Kingdom and Western Europe. See Katjavivi, Peter. *A History of Resistance in Namibia*. UNESCO, 1988.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Mr. Sampati, *Ibid.*, op. cit.

The case of those who remained in prison was brought to court in August 1969 and they were charged with high treason for the attacks at Singalamwe, Sibbinda, and the one between Mpacha and Katima Mulilo. They remained in prison until March 1970. On release, they were flown back to Katima Mulilo, but Simbwaye was taken to other parts of South West Africa.

Life in Pretoria Central Prison was not good. Inmates survived on half-cooked corn grain porridge with no sugar, but lots of salt, tea made out of roast corn with salt instead of sugar, and were allowed a bath once a week. It was here that inmates from the Caprivi met their fellow Namibians, the Omugulu gOmbashe group who were arrested on 26 August 1966. After hearing that they were on the same floor, Mr. Charles Sampati Lutokwa recalls skipping a shower to search for his colleagues. In the first cell, he remembers finding a man standing and not talking even when spoken to, in the second cell there was an old man just lying on the floor, and in the third cell he found three men. He entered to chat to them and the two that he remembers identified themselves as John ya Otto Nankudhu and the other as Lameck Ithete. They related to him the story of 26 August 1966 and reiterated their resolve to take the struggle to its logical conclusion, which was the independence. They also told him that the old man who he saw lying on the floor was Daniel Nujoma, the father to the President of SWAPO, and the one standing and not talking was Immanuel Shifidi.<sup>92</sup>

### **The Shipanga Rebellion 1975-76:**

Andreas Shipanga, now a retired politician, lives at a traditional homestead in the village where he was born in northern Namibia. The interview with Shipanga was conducted at the back of his *cuca* shop (*shebeen*). In later years, Shipanga became a leader of a political opposition party, SWAPO Democrat (SWAPO - D). He later joined the Congress of Democrats (COD), formed in 1998. The COD party was founded by the former Deputy Minister in the SWAPO government and later a Namibian Ambassador to the UK, Ben Uulenga. In the general elections of 1999, COD managed to attain only five seats, and since Shipanga was down on the list, he could not make it to parliament. He later retired from active politics.

Shipanga went into exile in 1963, where he met Sam Nujoma for the first time. His account on the history of the liberation struggle clearly indicates that he began having issues with the SWAPO leadership much earlier than the 1970s. Shipanga confirmed that he had problems with the following issues: first, was that SWAPO at the time, did not have a real national executive committee, and after the committee was established, it seemed that it had three presidents, one being Sam Nujoma (in Tanzania), and the others being Louis Nelengani and Nathanael Maxulili, who were based in Egypt and Namibia respectively. According to his record, he claims that a meeting was later held in which a decision was taken to make Nujoma the President of the party, and Nelengani the Vice-President: “A message was sent back home that

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Mr. Charles Sampati Lutokwa.

Maxulili must become Acting President internally.”<sup>93</sup> Second, Shipanga alleges that the party had two Secretary Generals, Jacob Kuhangua and Ishmael Fortune. He claimed that the two did not want to come to terms, and as a result Ishmael decided to go back to Namibia, leaving the struggle behind. At the SWAPO Tanga Congress, held in Tanzania in January 1970, Shipanga was elected Secretary for Information and Publicity. He was later transferred to Lusaka and took charge of the SWAPO Radio, together with Sackie Namugongo and Frieda Shimbuli, under his supervision. According to Shipanga, it was during those years in Lusaka that “things started happening.” He highlighted that there was still a pressing and pertinent issue, because the party did not have a constitution, meaning that people could not fight in an organization without proper structures. He therefore felt that the party should hold another congress, but to his surprise, Nujoma refused on the basis that they should not rush with congresses while still in exile. He further alleged that there was lack of transparency in the party leadership, because Nujoma trusted only a few people, like Mweshihange, Nanyemba, and Pohamba, amongst others.

Shipanga also expressed great joy when more and younger Namibians started joining the struggle in Zambia from 1974 and demanding a drastic change in the leadership. He explained, “I was glad; so I told my wife that we are being forced by real people (youngsters) to change the situation because we are just old folks and not young any more, unlike these educated and inspired new young recruits. They really want to do something, but unfortunately my colleagues in the leadership do not want to agree with me.”<sup>94</sup>

Another issue that Shipanga mentioned was corruption. He alleged that the youngsters immediately noticed this when they arrived in Zambia. Shipanga claimed that the organization’s money was only controlled by Nujoma and his associates, such as Nanyemba, Pohamba, Mweshihange, and Muyongo. As a result, people were dying of hunger. He alleged that the food donated by the international community was not reaching the people, some women died while giving birth at Nyango and Old Farm, and those soldiers were not given milk and medicine to take with them to the battle front.

Shipanga stated that he personally had to intervene and took some of the comrades in dire need of medical attention to pharmacies and bought them medicine. He also took them to the Swedish Embassy which gave them cheques to buy food. He added that “They (exiled Namibians) also collected blankets and other needed materials, and that made me enemy number one.”<sup>95</sup>

During the interview, Shipanga raised the problem of weapons that were exchanged for cash: “Guns were sold to UNITA for cash, while the people who wanted to fight were given sticks and *omapokolo* (palm tree branches) instead. Some guns were sold to ZANU by Nanyemba, and some old soldiers just wanted to hang around, while the

<sup>(93)</sup> Interview with Andreas Shipanga, (Northern Namibia) 17 January 2007.

<sup>(94)</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>(95)</sup> *Ibid.*

newly arrived SWAPO youth league members from home were demanding for guns to go and fight straight away.”

In his own words, Shipanga stated that there was no such thing as a “rebellion.” According to him, the people were just critical and were demanding that a congress be held so that the leadership could be changed or reorganized. Shipanga confirmed that many people preferred to go to his house in town whenever they came to Lusaka:

My house was just like a railway station; they always passed-by, and maybe because they were not welcome in other houses besides mine, so some people started claiming that I was sent by the Boers. I just found myself being arrested and sent to prison, and the next thing I heard while in jail was that Nujoma had a press conference in Lusaka, saying that Shipanga was a South African agent and that he misled the people, and wanted to take over power in the struggle. He is going to be tried and if found guilty, he will be put on the firing squad.<sup>96</sup>

Shipanga and his leadership in the rebellion were arrested by the Zambian government, and according to Shipanga about 2000 others were detained and later relocated to other parts of Zambia, because SWAPO could not handle them. He explained that, “Some people were taken elsewhere, some died literally of hunger, while others went to Angola and ended up in Cassinga. After I spent three months in prison in Tanzania, Oshatotwa was attacked and they said that it was Shipanga’s people who betrayed and sent the Boers to kill SWAPO people.”<sup>97</sup>

Upon release from prison, Shipanga went to his wife, who was a black South African, living in London with British citizenship. It was from London that he started giving interviews to the BBC on issues concerning the Namibians in exile. In one of these interviews with the BBC, Shipanga’s voice was still defiant as he said that “Nujoma was not fit to lead.” During our interview, Shipanga was asked to recall this statement and to confirm if he still believed in what he said then, in contrast to the fact that Nujoma led the Namibian struggle to victory, and became its first elected President. To this he answered: “It is possible, that it was me, because I still believe that Nujoma is an accident of history. Well, that’s my view, but others may think that he is a great leader. I think it must have been me, because I even said it on the BBC African News.”

Before independence, Shipanga returned to Namibia and participated in the then South African imposed government as Minister of Mines. At that same time, he also contributed to the so-called Internal Arrangement that gave birth to the establishment of what was known as the Multi-Party Conference, organized by the South African Regime to counter SWAPO coming to power in 1983.

After the implementation of Resolution 435 in 1989, Shipanga participated in Namibia’s first democratic election supervised by the United Nations as a leader of SWAPO Democrat, a party which he founded. In the election, he received 0.5 percent

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

of the total votes, which could not qualify the party for a single seat in parliament. SWAPO-D has since died.

When asked why he failed to secure even a single seat in the first parliament of Namibia, while SWAPO, under the leadership of Sam Nujoma, whom he described as an “accident of history” obtained enough votes to form government and Nujoma become the first President of an independent Namibia, Shipanga responded to this by saying: “I understand the people; when I came to organize for my party, I knew that the people would not really take me because they were tired of white South African rule.”<sup>98</sup>

There are other views and versions of the Shipanga rebellion. Joseph Iita and Sirka Katuta, Fillemon Moongo and many others were among those who witnessed these events. Fillemon Moongo, who was one of Shipanga’s strong supporters in the rebellion, contradicted some of Shipanga’s allegations, especially the claims that people were forced to fight with sticks after SWAPO had sold the guns. Moongo, who was a trained soldier himself, verified that sticks were not used for fighting, but rather, for training purposes only. Moongo further explained that sticks were simply given to new comers to drill with: “You could not be given a gun if you were a new recruit, for safety measures.”<sup>99</sup>

As confirmed by Joseph Iita, Brigadier Shigwedha, and Sirka Katuta, the situation was critical, and that people were divided during the time of the rebellion.

There were those who were loyal to Nujoma and those on the side of the rebels. One of the reasons why the guns were removed from the people was because of the fear that they were going to shoot each other. There was a high expectation and enthusiasm and also some power hungriness from the side of the youth.”<sup>100</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the youth played a very active role in mobilizing the workers during the nationwide strikes of 1971, 1972, and 1973 inside Namibia. When they later joined the struggle in Zambia, as from 1974, they thought SWAPO was a bit quiet and slow in executing the mission of the liberation. They thought that they were capable of defeating the South African army within a period of two years, and that the elders were wasting time.<sup>101</sup>

The elders cautioned the youth that they had no knowledge about military affairs and guerrilla warfare tactics, and had no idea as to how strong the South African army was. The SWAPO leadership had been advised before-hand, by more advanced countries, such as China and Russia, where SWAPO guerrilla fighters received their training, about the strength of the South African army, and how to counter it. SWAPO’s military strategy was not to over-run and push South Africa out of the country by force at once, but to wage a guerrilla war. This was going to be accomplished by targeting specific enemy points, to make Namibia “hell on earth” for the Boers, so that they

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(98) *Ibid.*

(99) Interview with Fillemon Moongo, 27 January 2007.

(100) Interview with Josef Iita.

(101) Interview with Sirka Katuta, 29 May 2007; Josef Iita; Mathias Shiwedha, (Windhoek) 27 October 2008.

could agree to sit with SWAPO on the negotiations table. This was what the youth did not know and understand at the time. The SWAPO leadership tried to explain these strategies and tactics. That is why in SWAPO the following words became a slogan: “*Iita i hai tondokwa*”, meaning, don’t rush the war lest you perish. “Generally, some of the concerns raised by the youth might have been genuine, but Shipanga simply hijacked this opportunity for his personal interest,” says Iita.<sup>102</sup> Interviews revealed that many youth at that time did not know Shipanga’s intention. Shipanga craftily associated himself with the grievances of a highly impatient and ambitious youth and managed to convince a few of them to go along with his scheme.<sup>103</sup>

### **SWAPO Re-organizes after “The Shipanga Rebellion”:**

Although the “rebellion” caused disruption within the struggle, there were military units which were still intact. As for those soldiers who were affected by this havoc, they were taken to special camps for rehabilitation. Following the rehabilitation process, the now reformed soldiers were allowed to return back into the rank and file of the SWAPO party. SWAPO survived “the Shipanga trauma” and continued with the intensification of the armed liberation war.

The Eastern Front which was affected by the mutiny was reorganized. Joseph Iita, currently the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Mines and Energy, was one of the well trained SWAPO soldiers at the time. He received his first military training in Russia in 1974 followed by a tough training in commandos, coupled with military leadership, military intelligence, psychological warfare and propaganda, in India. As he said, he was trained in anything that a special force can do.<sup>104</sup>

Iita, who later served as a political commissar, was among the soldiers tasked to set up a new unit called “Morning Star” in addition to Unit A, Unit B, and Unit C, which were still intact after the rebellion. Morning Star consisted mainly of young fighters from Nyango. Unit A was commanded by Nashongo, B by Shihepo Shamuntele, C by Shoopala “Uukwangali waHanyanga”, and Morning Star by Nande Shafombabi, all under the command of the legendary Hanganee Katjipuka, Regional Commander for the Eastern Front. Amongst these highly motivated young fighters, were fearless female guerrilla fighters, including Magdalena Haixwiki (Morning Star), Frieda Shipopyeni Elifas (Morning Star), Feni Kafula (Unit C), Ndakola Nakanyala (Unit B), Elise Stephanus (Unit A), Rita Hangala (Unit B), Rauna Manda (Unit B), Maria Imbili (Unit B), Sarah Mwatotele (Unit C), Toini Awala, Anna Lamack, Sharlote Nepembe, Nalukale Tsheehama, Vicky Hapulile, and Sirka Katuta (the first PLAN combatant to have shot down a South African military helicopter with an AK-47).

At this particular time in the cause of executing the liberation war, PLAN was equal to a conventional army that was adequately equipped with modern weapons. SWAPO was again ready to start with its military offensives and attacks in Namibia. One of the

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(102) *Ibid.*

(103) *Ibid.*, Josef Iita.

(104) *Ibid.*, Josef Iita.

first attacks took place in 1976 when Morning Star and the other three units at the Eastern Front jointly decided to enter Namibia from Zambia; as Iita stated, they were “Specifically, just looking for the Boers.”<sup>105</sup>

After moving some kilometres into Namibia, one of their soldiers spotted a South African soldier running around, perhaps exercising. They observed him and followed him back to his camp. “They seemed to be relaxed as there had not been fighting in the area for a long time,” said Iita.<sup>106</sup>

Under the command of Shihepo Shamuntele, PLAN fighters opened fire at the unsuspecting South African troops. Although the enemy responded, their response was not effective as this was a surprise attack. It was a quick and successful battle for the PLAN fighters, in which all the Boers present in the camp at the time were killed and only one PLAN fighter was injured.

PLAN fighters continued to engage the enemy in many battles on the Eastern Front. Another memorable battle was the big operation which took place at the end of 1976. This battle lasted for hours, resulting in the disappearance of the Regional Commander Katjipuka, who was on his way to reinforce his soldiers at the battle field. To date, no one can reveal exactly what happened to Katjipuka.

Although all the battles that were fought at the Eastern Front in the 1970s cannot be mentioned, we believe it is of historical importance that we conclude with the battle of August 1978, when Katima Mulilo, the regional capital of Caprivi Region, was engulfed in the fire of SWAPO guns. Heavy artillery and missiles were used. The casualties on the South African side were so heavy that the South African Prime Minister Balthasar John Vorster visited the area to assess the damage of the attack. As it was expected at the time, the South African administration under-reported their casualties, but inflated and exaggerated the PLAN casualties, being nine South African soldiers, and sixteen PLAN fighters. However, the fact was that after the Katima Mulilo attack, the South African troops went on a rampage and slaughtered Zambian civilians whom they paraded as PLAN fighters.

### **SWAPO Opens a New Military Front in Angola:**

In 1973, a decision was taken to move some troops closer to the home ground. Consequently SWAPO troops were moved from the eastern front in Zambia to Angola, at the border with Namibia. By this time, Zulu, Mbulunganga, and Anghome had already become members of the PLAN Military Council. They were amongst those commanders assigned to relocate the troops. The first person to move to Angola was Jackson Kakwambi, who was Director of Intelligence. He came to “spy” on the situation in Angola following the promises by Jonas Savimbi, that UNITA would provide information about the movement of South African troops on the border between Namibia and Angola. UNITA was in a better position to do so as they were already operating in the southern part of Angola. UNITA also promised

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(105) *Ibid.*, Josef Iita.

(106) *Ibid.*

to provide 200 soldiers to accompany SWAPO commanders upon their arrival at the borders, to enable them to assess the situation by themselves. In return, SWAPO was to donate modern weapons and ammunition to UNITA, since they were not well equipped compared to other liberation movements and especially those supported by the Soviet Union.<sup>107</sup>

The relationship between UNITA and SWAPO had started much earlier, dating back to the 1960s. It is said that some of the first UNITA commanders were trained by SWAPO. Zulu, who was also the political commissar for SWAPO troops, left Zambia in 1973 with Kapuleko and Uno Shaanika, amongst others, and went with a group of UNITA soldiers, who were relocating from Zambia to Angola. He took with him an AK-47, a pistol, a map, and two radios, as presents from SWAPO to Savimbi. On their arrival, they were met by a UNITA commander, Samuel Shiwale, at Zone One (a UNITA camp) at the border between Zambia and Angola.

Zulu later proceeded to Zone Three, another UNITA camp, to prepare the arrival of other SWAPO soldiers assigned to relocate from the Eastern Front to Angola, under the leadership of Army Commander Dimo Hamaambo. Hence the song: *“Mo Luanda mo Angola, omo twa shakena Na Sema, Dimo takomand’ oyita, Zulu tati forwardi.”* (Translated as: In Luanda, Angola, that’s where we met Sam. With Dimo

commanding the war, while Zulu leading us forward.) At Zone Three, Zulu spent two months waiting for the “green-light” from Savimbi, before he could advise Dimo and his troops of 200 soldiers to start moving from Zambia. Zulu got tired of waiting and started questioning Savimbi on his promise concerning the re-location of the PLAN soldiers to Angola. Savimbi, however, just instructed Zulu to continue training UNITA soldiers, while he claimed to be handling the issue.

As was agreed, Savimbi was to provide SWAPO, through Zulu, with information regarding the situation at the Namibian borders, but he failed to do so. He also failed to provide Zulu with soldiers to accompany him to the border as promised. Savimbi later gave petty advice to Zulu that, as a senior commander, he should not take the risk of going to the border in person. It was after this funny behaviour by Savimbi and his leadership, that SWAPO army commander Dimo, commanded Zulu to proceed with his soldiers to assess the situation at the border by themselves. Dimo advised them to wear UNITA uniforms for camouflage. It was necessary for them to pretend to be UNITA soldiers so that the Boers would not identify and recognize their presence in the area.

These were some of the reasons, as it will later be articulated by another PLAN commander, Mbulunganga, why SWAPO had to enter into a “marriage” of convenience with UNITA. According to Zulu and Shimwino, this was when UNITA’s behaviour started becoming rather strange and suspicious, and Savimbi’s true colours of being a traitor started to show. It was later confirmed that he had been collaborating with the South African troops all along.

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(107) Interview with Zulu.

Zulu left the UNITA camp with sixty SWAPO soldiers and moved forward to the border as instructed by Dimo. At the border, they crossed the Kavango River and moved to Oshimholo. This was also the region where Zulu grew up as a young man, herding cattle before he joined the struggle. They reported their findings to Dimo, who then decided to bring his 200 soldiers along. This was towards the end of 1973.<sup>108</sup> In 1974, after the Portuguese empire collapsed, thousands of Namibians leaving for exile to Zambia started using Angola as their passage. This situation created easy communication and coordination between SWAPO members and supporters inside the country; concurrently, enhancing the SWAPO guerrillas as they were setting-up new bases at the border between Angola and Namibia.

By 1975, more soldiers were relocated to Angola. A group of about 350 volunteers marched all the way from Zambia to Angola. They were termed volunteers as they were not fully trained, but felt it was necessary for them to go and strengthen the formation of the new front. Amongst the volunteers, there were only two female fighters namely, Otilie Todenge and Laimi Uunona. Most of the volunteers came from the group that joined the struggle in 1974. They took this mission after a three- month basic training at Oshatotwa in Zambia. By this time, a number of new bases were already set up on the Angolan front, near the border with Namibia, at places such as Endongo, Oshimholo, Omakololo, Omulemba, and Efitu. New units were formed, headed by the following commanders: Kapuleko, Martin Kapewasha, Niilo Taapopi “Kambwa ka Shilongo” (the current Chief Executive of the City of Windhoek), and Shikuma Kamati.

SWAPO leaders and local supporters inside Namibia were coming to the border to meet the PLAN commanders in the bush. These leaders and activists included David Meroro (then Chairman of SWAPO based in Windhoek), Aaron Mushimba, Axel Johannes, and Usko Nambinga. Prominent businessmen such as Eliakim Namundjembo and David Mwaala were the first to meet the commander Dimo and Zulu at Oihole, a few kilometres inside Angola.<sup>109</sup> The purpose of the meeting was for briefing and exchanging information about the situation inside Namibia and at the war zones. Businessmen supplied the needed material, particularly vehicles, to enable freedom fighters to transport fleeing Namibians into exile.

Another commander who played an important role in bringing SWAPO troops to Angola, under cover of UNITA, was Mathias Ndakolo, well known as “Mbulunganga”. Mbulunganga, now a 68-year-old man in poor health, lives with his wife in his new house, built under the government housing scheme for senior war veterans. He narrated an interesting story of his journey into exile in the early 1960s:

(108) Interview with Amutenya Nandenga, 13 December 2008.

(109) Interview with Zulu.

At the borders of Angola and Zambia I came across MPLA and I joined them. They just took me in. I was sent for training to Algeria and came back to fight for MPLA. Soon thereafter, I was promoted to the rank of commander, because my troop killed a number of Portuguese soldiers in the battle. We attacked them while they were busy watching *Kino* or something of that kind.<sup>110</sup>

For the whole time that Mbulunganga was fighting for the MPLA, he never forgot that he was Namibian. Although the MPLA was fighting mainly in the northern parts of Angola, they later found it necessary to attain support from the Angolan population in the south of the country. Mbulunganga was Oshiwambo speaking, the MPLA thought it was wise to send him to fight in the southern province of Cunene so that he could easily communicate and mobilize the Kwanyama speaking Angolans at the border with Namibia. Mbulunganga did not like the idea, and decided to flee and join SWAPO in Zambia, saying, “I am a Namibian. I am not an Angolan, and I am going to fight for SWAPO.”<sup>111</sup>

Mbulunganga joined SWAPO in 1968 and soon became one of the senior commanders in PLAN. When SWAPO opened a new front in Angola in 1973, Mbulunganga was the platoon commander of both Zulu and Nakada. He explained with confidence the strategies and tactics of SWAPO as follows: “We knew that we were allies with MPLA, but MPLA was in Luanda. On the other hand, UNITA was in the southern part of Angola, next to the Namibian border. Hence we needed their cooperation to gain easy access into the country.” Under these circumstances, UNITA took advantage and played dirty tricks by stealing some Namibians who were crossing through Angola to join SWAPO in Zambia. Instead of directing them to SWAPO cadres, UNITA deceived them. They would say: “UNITA is SWAPO and SWAPO is UNITA.” It was only the trained army that was supposed to be working with UNITA, but not civilians. SWAPO as an organization was not an ally with UNITA, but there were specific guerrilla units who were assigned to work with UNITA for special assignments as it was earlier explained by Zulu and Mbulunganga.

David Shimwino was one person who played a central role in the relationship between UNITA, MPLA, and SWAPO. Shimwino was assigned to represent SWAPO in the Angolan southern border town of Ondjiva. His task was to ensure that all Namibians who were going into exile, through Angola, were properly directed on how to get to SWAPO. Shimwino mentioned that in one incident he had to physically intervene to bring back some of the civilians who were taken and recruited by UNITA. He highlighted that it was a risky role, having to “flirt” with UNITA and MPLA at the same time: “Only the senior commanders knew that SWAPO and MPLA are allies. However, some MPLA members and supporters thought that SWAPO was playing dirty. They thought that SWAPO was siding with their enemy (UNITA).” Shimwino would get food from both MPLA and UNITA offices.<sup>112</sup>

(110) Interview with Matias Ndakolo aka ‘Mbulunganga’, (Ohangwena Region) 12 February 2007..

(111) *Ibid.*

(112) Interview with David Soul Shimwino, (Windhoek) 19 February 2007.

In the end though, UNITA betrayed its agreement with SWAPO and the “divorce” was eminent. One such incident that marked the eventual “divorce” between SWAPO and UNITA was the “Kangaroo court” brought about by Wakulukuta, a UNITA senior commander. “I received the report from our agents at the border that Wakulukuta was campaigning against the presence of SWAPO in Angola amongst the local people. This was an obvious way of sending a message to the Boers, who were already patrolling the borders, about the presence of SWAPO guerrillas in the area,” explained Shimwino.<sup>113</sup>

This behaviour angered SWAPO and Dimo in particular. He marched all the way from the main base at Efitu to Ondjiva, and ordered his soldiers to repossess all the guns that were initially donated to UNITA by SWAPO. In an attempt to rectify the blunder, Savimbi organized a “Kangaroo court” in which he summoned SWAPO leadership. Savimbi initially believed that the incident was caused as a result of miss-information conveyed by SWAPO agents at the borders, hence, mentioning that the guilty party will be put before a firing squad. When evidence was presented, including the tape recordings of Wakulukuta propagating against SWAPO at one of his meetings, Wakulukuta was found guilty. Consequently, Savimbi withdrew his sentencing suggestions, which further angered the SWAPO leadership. Since that day, until the death of Savimbi some years later, SWAPO and UNITA never saw eye to eye. SWAPO distanced itself from UNITA and continued its operations in Angola with the MPLA.

In 1975, after the independence of Angola, SWAPO forces in Angola were reinforced, with new brands of well trained and well equipped fighters from the second exodus of 1974. The independence of Angola allowed SWAPO an opportunity to easily fight the Boers by penetrating Namibia through the wide-opened borders, from Kunene River to the Zambezi River.

### **Another Turning Point, PLAN Enters Home Grounds:**

After the first military confrontation in 1966, many fighters who participated in the battle of Omugulu gOmbashe were arrested and sentenced to prison on Robben Island. It was only Patrick Iyambo “Lunganda” who evaded capture, and continued carrying out political mobilization among the local population. Posters were placed around shopping complexes with a R1000 ransom to anybody who would offer information about him. This sum was quite substantial in those days.

Following Omugulu gOmbashe, there were very little guerrilla military activities in northern Namibia and other parts of the country, except in the Caprivi. Military confrontations between PLAN and South African forces continued in the Caprivi due to the fact that Caprivi served as the only open border point between Namibia and Zambia. At this point the two countries shared an over 200 kilometre stretch

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(113) *Ibid.*

of land conducive for guerrilla activities. It was only after the establishment of the Angolan front that the war of liberation was taken to another level.

If Patrick Lunganda was a myth of the 1960s, the 1970s saw a new brand of mythical character – Kanisius Heinrich and Nduvu Nangolo. The tale of these fearless fighters started spreading throughout the entire country. While Nankudhu's group established its base in the jungles of Uukwaluudhi at Omugulu gOmbashe, Kanisius chose to establish his base in the capital city (Windhoek), right in the heart of Namibia, marking the introduction of Urban Guerrilla Warfare a reality. Kanisius' group of commandos was sent from the newly established Angolan front to go and take the war right to the door-steps of the South African regime.

Sakaria Nashandi, well known as “Zaa”, was a *Mudjiba* (collaborator) to the freedom fighters. During the interview, he revealed his role in transporting people to the border with Angola, when they were leaving for Zambia, during the exodus of 1974, and later having to transport them back into the country, when they came back to attack the enemy. Subsequently, this effort earned him torture and a long term jail sentence at Robben Island. Nashandi said,

In 1974 many people started going into exile, crossing the border into Angola, so I committed myself to help them cross safely into Angola. In Ovamboland, I was assisted by *tate* Jairius Amuleka, who was deported from Windhoek for his participation in political activities. In Windhoek I used to collaborate with Namalambo, who was one of the SWAPO leaders inside the country. .... The first group I escorted consisted of Kaboy kaAsseri liImene, John ya Kandjembo, Kaino Shikomba, and a certain guy from Oniimwandi, whose name I can't remember. We took the way that passes through Odibo, for I believed it was safer. I knew this route as I had used it several times before. I used to go and spy on how the Boers were patrolling at the border.”<sup>114</sup>

In September 1975, Nashandi received two soldiers at his house. They told him that they were instructed to go to him once they have arrived at Onaena, a village in Oshikoto Region, Northern Namibia. These soldiers who were actually Kanisius and Nduvu Nangolo, who told him that they wanted to go to the Boer's bases at Ruacana and Grootfontein, and afterward to Windhoek, to mobilize and train the people in guerrilla warfare techniques; therefore, they needed his help. They left for Ruacana and when they came back they held a small meeting to discuss how they would get to Grootfontein. This was particularly necessary since Grootfontein was mostly a “White man, no entry, zone” to a wandering black man. Nashandi explained that:

I and other two comrades, the late Eino Shikomba and Naftali Ndokosho, borrowed a car to take the soldiers to Grootfontein. We drove till a certain distance before Oshivelo [Red-zone Gateway separating black homeland from white settlement areas]. I instructed them to get out of the car with their weapons and should jump the fence to avoid detection. We drove through the gateway, and as agreed, they found us waiting for them on the other side and from there we proceeded to Grootfontein. We offloaded

(114) Interview with Sakaria Nashandi.

them and drove-off to Otjiwarongo, about 180 km from Grootfontein. While we were busy with some shopping in Otjiwarongo, we heard the alarming news that two white farmers were shot and killed at Grootfontein.<sup>115</sup>

Special commandos, Kanisius and Nduvu Nangolo caused nightmares among the white population. They operated right from their farms up to their residences in towns and even in the capital, Windhoek itself. As a result, the locals gave the areas of Grootfontein – Otavi – Tsumeb the notorious name of “the Triangle of Death.”

Zaa Nashandi was arrested in the same year, 1975. He was tortured and sent to Robben Island. He believed that some of the people he used to work with betrayed him.<sup>116</sup>

Another SWAPO member who collaborated with and assisted Kanisius and Nduvu Nangolo was William N. Amagulu. Amagulu is now the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Namibian government. While in exile, Amagulu became one of the brightest political commissars in the People’s Liberation Army in Namibia (PLAN). He also served in PLAN’s military council. Amagulu was later appointed as a SWAPO representative in various countries. After independence, he continued his diplomatic career as an ambassador to countries such as Russia and India, amongst others.

In his interview, he recalled hearing the news of the two PLAN fighters who were in Windhoek. Rumours had it that they were apparently sent by their commanders to recruit and train young Namibians in urban guerrilla warfare. They were operating around Okahandja on the outskirts of Windhoek. As Amagulu recalled:

They first made contact with my brother Marius Amagulu and other comrades such as George Iita. One day Marius brought these two guys to my house in Katutura, a township in Windhoek. My wife was a nurse and was on a night shift. He said he was with his friends and perhaps we should talk to them. He requested that we must go to my bedroom to discuss their mission and for them to display things they wanted to show me. I was afraid and found this funny and strange... We went into my bedroom, but none of the two “guests” said anything, they were just quiet. I brought chairs from the sitting room, one sat on the chair and the other sat with me on the bed. As we were seated, Marius told me that these two guys you see here are part of the liberation movement. Marius further explained to me that the guys had been with them for some time now and had been training on how to use the guns... Which guns? I asked... Marius told me not to worry as they were going to show me right there... One of the guys took out a pistol and he handed it over to me. I held it in my hand and I felt it was heavy and told him to please put it back. He later took out a hand grenade, and then my heart started beating fast, because I had only seen them in the newspapers, and in books. He demonstrated to me how to use it... The other guy went further to remove a foldable AK-47 and said those were the machines they were using to kill the enemy... I

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(115) *Ibid*, Nashandi.

(116) *Ibid*.

told them that I did not want to touch anything anymore because I didn't know where to touch... Marius explained to me that the comrades needed food and civilian clothes and other forms of assistance.<sup>117</sup>

Amagulu continued his story and said that from that day onwards, the guerrillas continued coming to his house for food and clothing: "Luckily, I had enough clothes that I used to wear when I was at the University." Amagulu's old university clothes later brought him trouble. It was common practice for them to write names on their clothes in order to identify the owner when taken for laundry. One day, towards the end of 1975, his wife Margaret, returned from work with news that one of the two guerrillas had been seriously injured and was brought to the hospital by the police. As was the common trend at the time and also to signify the seriousness of the matter, the police had occupied the whole floor of the hospital where the injured guerrilla was being attended to. To Amagulu's misfortune, the police had identified the name of the guerrilla from the shirt he was wearing. Amagulu, his wife and their baby, had no choice but to immediately flee the country in order to avoid arrest. Marius, on the other hand, was arrested and sent to Robben Island.

In the meantime, the military campaign by SWAPO intensified. This intensification was confirmed in interviews with a number of commanders and fighters, including current Minister of Defence, Major General (Rt.) Charles Namoloh, current commander of the Namibian army Lt. General Martin Shali, Brigadier General (Rt.) Mathias Shiweda, Joseph Iita, Max Nekongo, Erastus Negonga, Andrew Ndishishi, Mathias Ndakolo Mbulunganga, Amutenya Nandenga (Zulu), Sirka Katuta, Monica Nashandi, Peter Indongo, Andrew Niikondo, Clemens Kashiupulwa, David Shimwino, Samuel Goagoseb, Darius Shikongo (Mbolondondo), and many other participants and witnesses.

At the beginning of the military campaign, guerrillas received their training in Kongwa, Tanzania. By the 1970s, advanced training was offered by countries such as Russia, China, India, and others in different fields of military affairs. As Magnus Malan, then SA Defence Minister, explains "In 1977 SWAPO began infiltrating South West Africa in large groups. The groups had previously consisted of only a few members, but now they numbered between 80 and 100. This almost conventional assault required a different approach from the South Africans."<sup>118</sup>

SWAPO established four military regional operational fronts, each with its own regional commander. They were divided as follows:

**The Eastern Front** operated from Zambia to the border of the Caprivi Region under the command of the late Hangan Katjipuka and later under Baby.

**The Northern Front** operated from Angola to the border of Ohangwena, Oshana, and Oshikoto Regions under the command of Amutenya Nandenga (Zulu).

(117) Interview with William Ndeutapo Amagulu.

(118) Malan, 2006.

**The North Eastern Front** operated from Angola to the border of the Kavango Region and parts of Oshana Region under the command of Mathias Ndakolo (Mbulunganga).

**The North Western Front** operated from Angola to the border of Ombadja, Oshana Region, all the way up to the Atlantic Ocean, under the command of Tashiya Nakada.

The formation of the military fronts was accompanied by the reorganization of the army structure from the section, platoon, and company and battalion level. Dimo became the overall commander of PLAN. A number of informants have provided insight as to how the war of liberation took place. Such details were given Max Nekongo, one of SWAPO's most illustrious fighters. Nekongo, who now serves as a Regional Councillor for Oniipa Constituency in Oshana Region, lost an eye during one of his fiercest battles. Upon completion of his military training in the Soviet Union in 1975, he and hundreds of other soldiers were taken to the Angolan front. As Nekongo tells the story of his life in the struggle, he joined the powerful group of Mbulunganga, Nakada, Shikololo, Hauliyondjaba, and Haiduwa, among others. They moved through Cassinga towards the Namibian border to join their comrades in SWAPO military bases. The military bases were: Efitu under commander Zulu, Ohamunime under Mbulunganga, Eheke under Hauliyondjaba, and Onalumono under Kapuleko.

Here Nekongo became a platoon commander under Zulu. When the war gained momentum in 1976, Nekongo was promoted to the rank of detachment commander. As a detachment commander, Nekongo was responsible for the Northern Front. Here, he led successful battles at various places such as Onaibungu, Okotoke, Onamwandi, and Ohakafia. Later in 1976, he led a strong combined force of ninety-nine PLAN and the People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA) forces, and engaged in a heavy battle against UNITA. In this battle, they destroyed a UNITA camp at Omatope and UNITA suffered heavy casualties. Nekongo lost four soldiers in this battle. In the course of the year, Nekongo was deputized by John Pandeni and they were ordered to move the detachment into Namibia so that they could operate from inside. Part of his mission was also to go and search for Kanisius, who was operating in Windhoek. According to Nekongo, they thought Kanisius's group got lost in the south of the country: "Kanisius group was tasked to go and operate in Windhoek, but after they left, nobody knew where they vanished to."<sup>119</sup> Nekongo's group crossed the border and were based at Omuntele near the Etosha Pan in Oshana Region. They stayed at Omuntele for a month engaging the enemy on a daily basis: "I can assure you that during my stay in that area, there was never a day that we did not clash with the enemy. Each and every day we were shooting at one another... This time the bigger group split into small units of about twenty-four, as it was a risk to operate with a big group."<sup>120</sup>

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(119) Interview with Max Nekongo.

(120) *Ibid*, Nekongo.

Nekongo's group included other brave fighters such as Erastus Negonga, Peter Iilonga, John Pandeni, a certain Shipuluva, and Mazambani. Commenting on Peter Iilonga, Nekongo said the following with laughter: "Ilonga was so problematic; firstly, he could plant land mines without being instructed. If he remains behind alone and just hears the sounds of Boer's war trucks, he would just plant a land mine. Before you know it, you will just hear an explosion."<sup>121</sup>

During one of many battles in this area one of Nekongo's comrades was wounded and captured:

As I was listening to the radio, that very same day, in the afternoon, I heard Mazambani being interviewed live on the radio. He confessed that he was with Shikongo's group and the rest of the group was at Onalusheshete. The Boers spread all over the area and even held some kids hostage. The next morning we decided to attack them ... we were frustrated by Mazambani's issue. We were at Oshalongo at that time. In fact, we never stayed at one place for long. The Boers attacked us at Oshalongo. After the Boers left, we proceeded to a desert kind of area. The Boers attacked us there again. After the fight had ceased, we walked into a small jungle, heading to Mr. Nangolo Shimbango's place. While we were walking, Pandeni told me that one of our comrades was injured, fortunately the injured person was not our comrade; it was a Boer. Just as we went back and realized that it was not one of us, the injured Boer fired and the bullet went through my eye. My comrades shot him dead. It was terrible and painful. I did not fall, though it was just so painful. I can say that was a terrible day because it was the third time we clashed with the Boers just in a day. It was quite horrible to a point that people started scattering, others left, but Pandeni decided to remain behind with me. I tried to convince him to leave and at least gather the soldiers. Pandeni was a commissar; he was my deputy. A commissar is always the second in charge. He wanted to take my big gun, he was just arguing. He took the AK47 and left. I told him that he would not leave me without any gun and I threatened him, that if he was bothering me I would shoot him. Actually I was just scared to be captured alive; I would rather kill myself. Well, he did not want to leave me all alone as he could see I was weakening. He and another guy carried me and hid me in a bush. They tore a piece of cloth from my uniform and used it to stop the blood. In the afternoon, I was given a medical treatment by Nanghonda from Shikuma's group. It was just a normal first aid treatment. I was injected but I could not open my mouth, I would not eat. Until now, one of my jaws is still a bit weak. In the evening, they carried me on a stretcher, but I did not want to be carried on the stretcher, especially when it got dark. After a distance, the Boers had already camped and made a fire at Omena. They were busy patrolling the surrounding area, starting from where they were camping, get away and come back again at the same fire place. It was difficult because we had to cross-pass by the fire place. What we did was that, as soon as they moved from the fire, facing the dark side, then one of us would pass. I had to cross this area on my own. We left and I was given a donkey the next day by a certain local man. The Boers discovered that place where I was being treated, but we had already left that place. They followed us till where I was given a donkey. From there they followed the donkey track, and found us at Othimbika, an area where Helmut Angula (current Minister of Trade and Industry) is recently residing. It happened that

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(121) *Ibid*, Nekongo; see also interview with Petrus Iilonga, 16 April 2007.

one of our soldiers, who was at the battle where I got shot, was also in one of those *mahangu* fields. The Boers followed us with horses and helicopters. While people were cooking for us, the Boers with their helicopter arrived. As we were just being told that the food was ready, the Boers were also entering the fence. They were waiting for me at the border..., while my comrades were busy pulling the B10 guns inside the country, I bump in the trucks. I went up to Uufukalelo near Omulunga, where I got a horse which took me to Onalumono. In Onalumono I was medically treated at Kapuleko. From Onalumono, I left for Oshana, I found Dimo at Oshana and he sent me to Cassinga. From there I went to Ondjamba and from Ondjamba I went to Lubango. The car I travelled in from Ondjamba later over-turned, but fortunately before the accident I had left and had gotten another lift. I was with Tresia Mweshihange, who was taking me to Lubango.<sup>122</sup>

### **The South African Invasion of Angola:**

As Angola was preparing to proclaim its independence on 11 November 1975, the South African racist regime invaded Angola, backed by the CIA to support UNITA in preventing the inauguration of the MPLA Government. This happened in mid October of the same year.

The event briefly disrupted SWAPO's military operations, because the PLAN fighters in Angola, especially those at the border, found themselves caught up in the cross-fire between the MPLA and UNITA. Clemens KASHUUPULWA, the current Oshana Governor, and David Shimwino barely escaped death when SA troops launched an attack on MPLA at the border town of Ondjiva. KASHUUPULWA, who together with his heavily pregnant fiancé had escaped arrest by the South African regime in Namibia, had barely settled, when Ondjiva was attacked. With no basic military training, KASHUUPULWA had to improvise on how to take cover and to direct fellow Namibians to safety.<sup>123</sup>

David Shimwino, who was a SWAPO representative in that town at the time and was responsible for directing and coordinating the operations and smooth passage of Namibians who were arriving in Angola, was not prepared for this attack either. He recalled that one MPLA comrade started shouting that the Boers were marching towards them and had already passed the Catholic Church at the border settlement of Omupanda. His fear was aggravated by the fact that the presence of MPLA forces in Ondjiva at that time was limited, and they were not in a position to protect the huge number of Namibian civilians, who were in transit to exile. In an attempt to secure the safety of the civilians, he requested petrol from FAPLA comrades to fill up his car in order to drive them to nearby villages. His intentions were, however, obstructed, because by that time the Boers had already arrived and started attacking.<sup>124</sup>

After capturing Ondjiva, the combined forces of South Africa and UNITA continued their offensive on MPLA, taking on town by town and forcing the MPLA

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(122) *Ibid*, Nekongo.

(123) Interview with Clemens KASHUUPULWA.

(124) *Ibid*, Shimwino.

forces further north with the intention of getting to Luanda, the capital, which was the stronghold of the MPLA. The MPLA leader Agostinho Neto sought military assistance from Cuban President, Fidel Castro. With the help of the Cuban troops, the reinforced MPLA army drove the South African forces, which were now just a few kilometres from Luanda, back across the border to Namibia.

The joint forces of Cuba, the MPLA, and SWAPO continued to carry out many successful attacks against the combined forces of UNITA and South Africa, which consequently led to the weakening of UNITA and South Africa in Angola. Amongst the well recorded battles of the joint forces were the decisive battles of Cuito Cuanavale, in which the South African army incurred heavy casualties, not to mention the heavy financial costs it involved. The military operation of Cuba in Angola was one of the most outstanding performances of the Cuban internationalists; it was named “Operation Carlota” after a Cuban female slave who participated in an uprising against slavery and gave her life in the struggle.

### **The Cassinga Massacre:**

On 4 May 1978, at around 7 am, the Cassinga Camp residents were gathered at the morning assembly to be assigned their daily duties when the South African Army launched a barbaric attack on this SWAPO refugee transit camp. Cassinga is located about 200 km from the Namibian border in Angola. The result of this attack on the Namibian refugee centre was a massacre of about 1000 people. Many went missing and others were captured and taken to concentration camps inside Namibia. Others disappeared, possibly taken to South Africa, and were never seen again. Namibia continues to commemorate Cassinga Day every 4th day of May in remembrance of hundreds of innocent civilians who were wounded, disabled, captured, and killed at Cassinga.

After the attack, the so called South African Defence Force issued a statement, claiming that they had broken SWAPO’s backbone with an attack on Cassinga. They further alleged that Cassinga was a communist type military training camp, but it was later confirmed that Cassinga was never a military camp where soldiers were based, but a transit camp for people fleeing from Namibia into Angola.

At the same time that Cassinga was under siege, “Vietnam”, another SWAPO transit base, was also being attacked. The atrocities experienced at that base were narrated by Monica Nashandi, who had been in the base for less than three months after arriving from Namibia. She relates:

We had just finished with our exercises; I remember it was around 2 o’clock. I was with Olivia, a girl I befriended at the camp... We were seated, waiting for our lunch, then we heard a big bang [explosion sound]... then I said to Olivia, lets run, but before we could do anything, the planes were all over. We were always told by our commissar that, if we ever hear any shootings, we should run to the trenches... I managed to get to one of the trenches, and then, the helicopters came overhead and started shooting towards that trench. There was blood flowing everywhere, and people screaming in agony. I don’t know how I survived in there... I saw people dying next to me and it was terrible,

honestly, until now every time I close my eyes, it's like I can still see them. My hair and dress were all soaked in blood... I had to leave because people were dying there and I thought I would die there... I ran for about a hundred meters, through the shootings and bombings that were happening all around me. The camp was now on fire, and I could hear the commanders shouting, maybe giving orders or something... They were shooting at us from the helicopters. I wanted to run and get to a tree, but before I could get to the tree, I found myself lying in a hot ditch, the tree was completely destroyed by a hand grenade, I got up and started running towards the east... there was a *Mahangu* field [crops] just near the camp, so I headed straight for it... I was not the only one running, there were other people too. As I was running, I met with their military APC (Armed Personnel Carrier), with four men heavily armed, in military camouflage. They started shooting right towards me. I was running towards them because I didn't see them from a distance, they passed me and their vehicle had to go and make a turn to come back to me, I kept running and falling to the ground, I was being trapped by the bean's trees. While they were busy making a turn, I headed for a tree. Reaching the tree, I fell asleep for about two to three minutes. I think it was the gas covering the air that made me sleep. When I woke-up, the jeep with soldiers was standing very close to where I was laying... I jumped up and they started shooting at me again, but I think I was saved because I kept on falling, and they were up there and I was down... It was a situation I had never experienced before. They kept on shooting at me, and when I looked at my dress, it had holes in it, but I did not feel anything. I did not know what I was doing, perhaps it was all to do with panicking... I got to the house and made my way inside. The soldiers did not follow me into the house, but as I entered the house, I found other dead bodies there. I entering a room where I found a bed and I went under it... under the bed I found a girl. I remember her arriving just the previous day at the camp, she was screaming, shouting that she wanted to go back home, so I told her to be quiet or else we would be found and be killed... The soldiers where now on foot and coming into the house... I could still hear people screaming as they were being killed...and at that point, I remembered what commissar Malima and Zox told us every morning that, a soldier should never be captured alive... I looked around for a gun, but could not see any; I spotted an axe, a hammer, and some bow and arrows. Some of the arrows had wooden tips, but then there were those with the metal ends... I took one with the metal tip and I held it against my neck. I wrapped my ankles around one of the bed poles and started pushing the arrow into my flesh when I saw some soldiers inspecting the house going from one hut to another hut. I told myself if they came into my hut, I would slit my throat... I tried. As you can see there is a scar... when I realised that the situation was quiet, I pulled it out, at first it was stuck because I had it in for a long time... I closed my eyes and just pulled as hard as I could, and then the blood just went shooooop! [Sprinkling] But I told myself that I would not die from this... As I was leaving the house, I saw something that I will never forget. Can you imagine, a man lying on the ground in a pool of blood with his stomach split open? I could see the rice that was served for lunch in his stomach! He was in pain and crying at me to help him, but there was nothing I could do, I had to run for my life... I did not know where I was running to, but as I was running, I saw some things that looked like balls, colourful balls, all over the place. I remember they were blue, yellow, and orange, and some were exploding... I ran till I saw a thick forest, and I headed for it in the aim of finding a hiding place, without knowing that it was a pond or lake or something of that

nature ... I stood there, I did not know what to do, I could not swim. Anyhow I jumped in, but fortunately, it was not too deep so I just walked through... When I got out of the water, the wound on my neck was now painning, but then I felt another pain elsewhere. I pulled my dress up and I said, my God, I have been wounded... It did not bother me much because the other wound was more painful, the pain did not bother me, I was just thinking of what was going to happen next... As I stepped out of the water, I heard a whistle; it was our soldiers who were helping some of the wounded people... We moved from that spot with one of the wounded girls on my back. She was not heavy, but at that time I was about 19 years old and pretty small... The problem was that, she was messing with the wound on my neck with her arms and at the same time rubbing against the wound on my leg, which was really painful... My God, I felt like putting her down, luckily we could stop and rest every now and then...<sup>125</sup>

Although Cassinga was one of the darkest chapters of the Namibian struggle, it never discouraged SWAPO from taking the war of liberation to a higher level. As told by the current Namibian Army Lieutenant General, Martin Shali, the war was not easy and telling stories to share ones' experiences still sends shivers along ones' spines: "It is still painful for us because we have our soldiers who died without being buried because there was no time to bury them. People should appreciate that because of independence people died... Now they are being reburied and we can host burial ceremonies for them. Our heroes and heroines deserve to be respected."<sup>126</sup> As a young man, Shali participated in many, and some of the fiercest battles that saw him rise up the PLAN military hierarchy.

## **The Establishment of Education and Health Centres:**

Since the inception of the liberation struggle, education has been instrumental for the development of the Namibian society. Even for the few young men and women who had left the country in the early 1960s, efforts were made by SWAPO to send some of them for further education. That generation of scholars has steered the course of the struggle for many years since independence. The provision of education was therefore one of the many strategic fronts SWAPO had adopted to ensure the economic, social, and political development of Namibia at independence. After the 1968 political upheavals in the Caprivi, a number of young people had left with their parents while fleeing the political repression and brutality of the South African forces. During the early 1970s, a number of these had joined SWAPO and had become a sizable community in Zambia. President Pohamba recalls that one of the leading women among these Namibian refugees was Ma George, which translates as the mother of George, in Silozi. The SWAPO leadership realized that these children and thousands of those who were to join them later needed educational grounding.

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(125) Interview with Monica Nashandi, (Windhoek) 14 December 2007.

(126) Interview with Martin Shali.

As a liberation movement, SWAPO tried to make a distinction between its people and ordinary refugees. There was therefore a need for better administrative and organizational planning for the settlements. It was with this view that Nujoma told Nahas Angula, who had just graduated from the University of Zambia at the time, “Look, we don’t want our people to become refugees.” Most of those who had left Namibia from the Caprivi in the late 1960s were settled in refugee camps such as Maheba in North Western Zambia. Then it was feasible for SWAPO to take care of those Namibians at Maheba. SWAPO strategy, however, was to mobilize its people to fight for the independence of Namibia and not to be ordinary refugees.

SWAPO was then given a place near Lusaka, known to many Namibian exiles as the Old Farm, to settle the refugees. Nahas Angula was therefore given a task to develop a school from scratch. He recalls, “I had nothing to start with, and had to ask assistance from my Zambian friends I had graduated with from the University of Zambia.” With the arrival of many young Namibians from 1974 onwards, it was necessary to move the settlement to another area and the Namibia Health and Education Centre at Nyango in the Kaoma District of Western Zambia was established. The centre became SWAPO’s model education and health facility. Many young men and women studied at Nyango and upon completion of their basic primary and secondary schooling were sent to other parts of the world for further education. The opening up of the Angolan front created another opportunity for another education and health centre at Kwanzasul. It was imperative that SWAPO train its own teachers and nurses in order to run these facilities. Many were sent for teachers training in countries like Sierra Leone and for nursing in Tanzania. Several high school and university graduates were also used as teachers and medical staff up to the time of independence.

It is also important to note that countries such as the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Congo Brazzaville, Czechoslovakia, and Cuba provided educational facilities for Namibian children to study in their respective countries under the supervision of Namibians. The leader of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro, explained Cuba’s role in the liberation struggle of the African people and SWAPO in particular. He said,

In 1961... when the people of Algeria were still fighting for their independence, a Cuban ship took weapons to Algerian patriots and on its return to Cuba it brought back about 100 Algerian children who had been orphaned and wounded in the war.

This story of rescued children would be repeated many years later in 1978 when the survivors of the Cassinga Massacre arrived, the great majority of whom were children. Interestingly, the current Namibian ambassador to Cuba was one of those children. Just so you can see the twists and turns that life can take.<sup>127</sup>

The Youth Island School near Havana hosted hundreds of children, most of whom were able to complete university education. Today some of those graduates are Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, and senior members of the Namibian public service. Gabriel Mweshihange is one of those many children who attended this school

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(127) Ignacio, 2007.

as a young man. He later completed his university degree in Cuba. Mweshihange now serves his country in the Namibian government in a managerial position.<sup>128</sup> His story is corroborated by Kanana Hishoono, the current Secretary for the SWAPO Elders' Council and Special Advisor for Political Affairs to the President, and Samuel

!Goagoseb, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration. Their stories provide an invaluable account of the educational support by Cuba under this arrangement.<sup>129</sup> At this school, Namibian children were given additional attention and parental guidance by specially selected Cuban elders, as their parents were far away on the battle fields in southern Africa.

Similarly, Congo Brazzaville, the GDR, and Czechoslovakia assisted Namibian freedom fighters in the field of education. In the 1980s, the government of Congo Brazzaville established a school specifically for the Namibian children at Loudima. The GDR and Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, provided special kindergartens for SWAPO children, especially war orphans.

## **Internal Political Arrangements and Life under Apartheid from the 1970s:**

### **The Bantustanisation of Namibia:**

South Africa started implementing its Bantustan program in South Africa in the early 1960s. The so called 'Homeland' self-governments of Bophuthatswana and the Transkei were the pioneers in this political experiment. In Namibia, the Odendaal Plan, which provided the policy framework for the implementation of the homeland policy and the *bantustanisation* of Namibia could not be implemented due to the pending ICJ ruling during that period. The South African government had, however, started to put in place structures that could pave the way for homeland administration and self-government.

The political environment in Namibia during the early 1970s was becoming unbearable for many Namibians. The contract labour systems remained intact, leading to political unrest, and the successful labour strike of 1971. Black people had restricted mobility prompting the clergy under the leadership of Bishop Leonard Auala to meet with the then South African Prime Minister John Vorster and the so called Commissioner General for Indigenous Peoples in Namibia, Janie de Wet in 1973. It was also at this time that the offices of the printing press of the Ovambo- Kavango Evangelical Lutheran Church at Oniipa were damaged after an explosion. By the mid 1970s, the South African security forces had increased tremendously and this led to brutality against ordinary people, especially in the northern areas of Ovambo, Kavango, and Caprivi. At the same time, the mounting international pressure,

(128) Interview with Gabriel Mweshihange.

(129) Interview with Kanana Hishoono, (Windhoek) 22 February 2008; Samuel !Goagoseb, (Windhoek) 01 July 2008.

particularly from the United Nations and the intensification of the armed liberation struggle by SWAPO led South Africa to come up with various political strategies as envisaged solutions. These desperate moves expedited the implementation of the policy of self-government homelands. The construction of the Damara Legislative Council building started in 1972. The same period saw the introduction and issuing of racial and ethnic identity documents. Proclamation R104 paved the way for Ovamboland to be granted self-government. The apartheid regime fast tracked the process to the extent that in the same year Kavango was granted self-government, and elections for the same purpose were organized in Ovamboland.

To the dismay of the apartheid government, the elections in Ovamboland were successfully boycotted, with SWAPO supporters spearheading the protest. It was inevitable that mass arrests ensued, followed by the public flogging of SWAPO supporters. By 1974, other homelands were created and Legislative Councils were formed. Coloureds held their first election during this period, and the Caprivi, known then as the Eastern Caprivi, was granted its self-government status. As the homeland policy was not working, South Africa devised another political strategy by creating the Turnhalle Constitutional Conference in 1975. Again this was another desperate move as the country was becoming ungovernable. There was immense opposition to the homeland policy, to the extent that some leaders of these homeland governments were assassinated. The assassination of Chief Filemon yElifas was the climax of this ill conceived political strategy.

The Turnhalle Constitutional Conference was a conglomeration of ethnic and racial groupings intended to perpetuate South African rule. Members of the organization were paraded at international fora such as the United Nations to prove South Africa's seriousness in preparing Namibia for self-government. These moves were, however, contradictory as the regime continued with the parallel policy of *bantustanisation*. As a result, Rehoboth was granted self-government in 1976 and another legislative election took place in the Caprivi for similar purposes. As was the case three years earlier, with the assassination of Filemon yElifas, Clemence Kapuuo the then President of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) was also assassinated in 1978. It was standard practice by the regime then to blame these acts on SWAPO and to use them as opportunity to arrest and detain its members. The assassination of Kapuuo was followed by the South African attack on the SWAPO civilian camp of Cassinga in Angola. Gabriel Ithete avers that:

SWAPO members were arrested in very big numbers in 1978 after Cassinga was attacked... We were arrested in a very big mass from Caprivi down to Opuwo and then we were put in Gobabis prison. Most of them were in Gobabis prison under AG26. Those are all the comrades in the top leadership... So a lot of people were arrested and that was a lot and they were put under AG26 and that is the law giving the administrator general power of arrest and detention.130

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(130) Interview with Gabriel Ithete, (Windhoek) 23 March 2007.

These political manoeuvrings by South Africa had a serious impact on the effectiveness of SWAPO internally. SWAPO activities were curtailed and supporters detained in great numbers.

The 1980s saw active participation of students in the political arena. The exodus into exile in the mid 1970s had created a vacuum in student activism for a while. However, the occupation by South Africa could not silence all those yearning for liberation. Students and trade unions started to confront the regime in many ways, even though they were always met with repressive and brutal responses. Student protests, trade union agitation, and challenges from the churches kept the flame of the independence struggle burning inside the country during the 1980s until independence.

### **The Role of Traditional Leaders:**

Traditional Authorities played a significant role in the war of liberation. For example, the case of the Masubiya Khuta, in the Caprivi Region, demonstrates how these structures, in many ways collaborated to advance the struggle for independence.

At a recently held SWAPO Party Star Rally (2008) at the north-eastern town of Katima Mulilo, in Caprivi Region, the Masubiya Traditional Authority, through its chief, Munitenge Liswani III, presented gifts to the SWAPO Party leadership, including in absentia, to the former president of the party, Sam Nujoma. This gesture signifies the relationship that had existed over the years between the liberation movement and some traditional authorities during the struggle for Namibian independence. In the Caprivi Region, the story of the Masubia Khuta reveals a relationship based on the belief in self-determination, freedom, and independence.

During the colonial days and more so in the course of the liberation war, most traditional authorities were perceived largely as collaborators and instruments of oppression. Indeed, because of the administrative set-up and the nature of indirect rule, most of them played suppressive roles, as the colonial state machinery found expression through punishment meted out to political activists by traditional leaders. Throughout the struggle for independence, there was no other incident signifying such despicable acts than the public flogging and the detention of activists like Hifikepunye Pohamba and Herman Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo by their respective traditional authorities. However, to make this the only conclusion would be to simplify the relationship of SWAPO as a liberation movement and the traditional authorities inside the country. The lives of ordinary people were tied by a conflicting relationship with the state, particularly after the demise of independent African chiefdoms that led many Africans to flock to the cities and their confinement to the reserves or homelands. It was over this 'conflicting relationship' that traditional authorities presided. Essentially, the 'collaboration with the colonial state' by traditional leaders is permeated by stories of heroism by a few traditional authorities during the war of liberation. One such traditional authority is the Masubiya's Munitenge Royal Establishment.

The political involvement of the Masubiya Khuta dates back to the early 1960s with the formation of the Caprivi African National Union (CANU). At that stage, CANU convinced the traditional authority to help win the subjects to its cause. The chief was even convinced to be a co-signatory to a petition that was sent by CANU to the United Nations which shocked the then South African representative at the UN. With the merger between CANU and SWAPO, SWAPO naturally inherited the support of the said traditional authority and its people.

The defining moments of that relationship came in the 1980s. The end of the 1970s was a busy period on the political front in Caprivi. It was during this period that massive groups of young people from the region crossed into Zambia to join SWAPO. In fact, this was the biggest recorded crossing since the 1964 group under CANU. As discussed earlier, some of these revolutionaries crossed through Kasane, in Botswana, on the pretence that they were invited to a soccer match in that town. Other incidents included actions by activists in the Caprivi who organized demonstrations against the South African regime and this coincided with the visit of Martti Ahtisaari, the then UN Representative for Namibia, to whom they handed a petition in August 1978. Earlier in January that year, the first SWAPO rally was organized at Katima Mulilo, where internal SWAPO leaders such as Mokganedi Thlabanelo, Martha Ford, and David Hausiku were invited to address the gathering. Benjamin Mabuku and Victor Tonchi had been tasked to travel to Windhoek in order to arrange for this historic SWAPO rally. They were assisted by Charles Sihani, who provided contacts in Rundu, Grootfontein, and Windhoek. As was common to all SWAPO organized rallies, this one was similarly disrupted by the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance supporters, assisted by the security forces. Organisers, supporters, and the invited SWAPO delegation from Windhoek had to play hide and seek with the police and DTA supporters throughout the night. It was also the first time that a SWAPO branch was established in the Caprivi and membership cards were issued. SWAPO memorabilia became visible in Katima Mulilo, with SWAPO t-shirts worn publicly for the first time by Leornard Chaka, Benedict Likando, and Victor Tonchi. The colonial state responded with impunity to these developments, leading many SWAPO leaders to skip the border in fear for their lives.<sup>131</sup>

Thus the 1980s began with a SWAPO leadership vacuum in Caprivi. The task to reorganize SWAPO in Caprivi and particularly to harness its relationship with the Masubiya Khuta fell on a young man, about 30 years old then, by the name of Richard Nchabi Kamwi. Kamwi had trained as a Health Assistant and later in Public Health at institutions in South Africa. Even though he was a keen follower of CANU activities, mainly through his uncle Moses Mushe, it was in South Africa that he was exposed to nationalist politics. He served as a secretary of the Student Representative Council, and thus had friends within the ANC Youth Movement.

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(131) Personal account of Victor Tonchi in his capacity as one of the delegates sent by the organizing committee in Katima Mulilo to go to Windhoek to convince the internal SWAPO leadership to hold the first ever SWAPO rally in the Caprivi, and also in his capacity as SWAPO branch treasurer in 1978.

While in South Africa, he came in contact with fellow students from Namibia who told him that SWAPO had an office in Francistown, Botswana. He therefore decided to travel by road using the Martins Drift road to reach Francistown, where he was warmly welcomed by the SWAPO Representative, Victor Nkandi, and Edwin Tonchi. The two gave him documents and other material on SWAPO that would later prove useful in his mobilization campaign in Caprivi. He assisted those students intending to cross the Zambezi into Zambia to join SWAPO, by transporting them in his allocated government vehicle, usually over weekends and during the night.

Richard Nchabi Kamwi met Sam Nujoma, President of SWAPO, for the first time in the early 1980s in Harare through the SWAPO Military Attaché in Botswana, Mathews Hamutwe (Kamedhu). President Nujoma then gave Kamwi the difficult assignment to convince Munitenge Joshua Mutwa Moraliswani II of the Masubiya, together with his people, to quit the Bantustan government. He offered that in return SWAPO would support the Masubiya Khuta financially every month, and that the party would buy vehicles for use by the traditional authority. The assignment was difficult because it was a big risk in those days to admit to another person that you are involved in the liberation cause, let alone that you are in touch with the president of a ‘terrorist’ organization. President Nujoma knew that Kamwi, apart from his commitment to SWAPO, was married in the chief’s family, and that he was from the area. Once Kamwi had tactfully explained the concept of ‘divide and rule’ to the late Chief Moraliswani II, he understood and decided to quit the Bantustan government. As a punishment, the colonial state stopped all benefits, including the salaries which were given to the traditional authority. SWAPO followed through on its promise and Richard Kamwi would bring money every month to the Khuta from Francistown, where he was now in contact with Leonard “Killer” Iipumbu. Iipumbu had replaced Victor Nkandi as SWAPO Representative in Botswana. People in the Caprivi would

remember a blue Nissan *bakkie* (truck), in which the chief was driving, that was bought by SWAPO to assist him and the Khuta in their operations. Apart from the chief, Richard Kamwi managed to convince two others, Boniface Likando and Paddy Mwazi to leave the Bantustan government and to join SWAPO.

It was at this point that a trip was organized for the Munitenge Moraliswani II to meet the SWAPO leadership in Francistown. That delegation was headed by Richard Kamwi, and included Ngambela Robert Ntelamo Sinvula, Boniface Likando, and Paddy Mwazi. On this trip, they met with Aaron Mushimba and Ambassador Amagulu, then SWAPO Representative to Harare, Zimbabwe. This was a preparatory meeting to finalize arrangements for Munitenge Moraliswani II to meet President Nujoma.

Two things were discussed in the meeting between President Nujoma and Munitenge Moraliswani II. The first was the assignment which Nujoma gave Munitenge Moraliswani II to convince all his people to join SWAPO. Munitenge Moraliswani II pledged to do that. The second was a request from Munitenge Moraliswani II to President Nujoma. He requested that since he heard that in Windhoek and other places SWAPO was dealing with puppets of the colonial regime and that since he

also had people in SWAPO who could carry out such an assignment, he wanted the same to take place in Caprivi. President Nujoma answered in the affirmative, but emphasized that it was not only those in exile that were carrying out that task, but it was done in collaboration with those cadres inside. The president promised that if the chief had people willing to take that responsibility, he would arrange so that they be put in touch with PLAN combatants, and that a message would be sent to the chief in this regard.

Barely a week after the meeting between President Nujoma and Munintenge Moraliswani II, Richard Nchabi Kamwi was called for a meeting at Kasane with Mathews Kamedhu, a SWAPO Military Attaché. It was arranged for Mathews Kamedhu to cross illegally at Nankole where the Chobe River gets dry during certain periods of the year and Richard Nchabi Kamwi crossed at the Ngoma border post and picked him and drove to Bukalo to meet Munintenge Moraliswani II and later proceeded to Kabbe to meet Ngambela Robert Ntelamo. This was in preparation for a trip to Harare, where only the Chief, the Ngambela, and Richard Kamwi were allowed to attend because of the sensitive nature of the discussions. Munintenge Moraliswani II, Ngambela Robert Ntelamo, and Richard Kamwi travelled to Francistown and boarded a flight from there to Harare. In Harare they had a meeting with the SWAPO Acting Secretary for Defence, Richard Kapelwa Kabajani and Moses Garoeb, then SWAPO Administrative Secretary.

At that meeting, the SWAPO officials reiterated the issue of support for SWAPO by the chief 's subjects and that the Khuta should be steadfast now that PLAN combatants would enter Caprivi and teach his subjects how to use landmines and time bombs. These were in fact already stockpiled in Kamwi's house in Ngweze Township and Evans Simasiku was responsible for training in the use of weapons.

The results of these endeavours were two bomb blasts at Katima Mulilo, one at the Bantu Investment Corporation (BIC) filling station and the other at the Boma, which was the colonial administration block. The bomb that ripped the offices of the administration block was blamed by the colonial government on the Munitenge Royal Establishment and the SWAPO regional leadership mainly because of information leakage by informers who were privy to their trips and meetings with SWAPO external leadership. A number of SWAPO activists were arrested. At the Bukalo Khuta, the Ngambela, Robert Ntelamo Sinvula, the Natamoyo, Samson Mbanga Ntonda, and Luka Matengu Mbala were arrested and detained under AG9 and the Terrorist Act of 1967. Ngambela Robert Ntelamo Sinvula was taken to Bagani/Divindu where he was severely tortured and reportedly at times held dangling under the bridge over the Okavango River. He was later taken to Rundu where he joined Natamoyo Ntonda and Luka Matengu Mbala in detention. During this time, Munintenge Moraliswani II was taken daily for four weeks for interrogation by the Boers on his involvement and that of the traditional authority, in the planning and execution of the bomb blasts and their contacts with SWAPO. This narration reveals the many individual and collective acts of determination and perseverance by those yearning for liberation. Although

Ngambela Ntelamo and Natamoyo Ntonda were later released from their lengthy detention, Kamwi had to escape into exile under extreme difficulties.

## **The Role of the International Community up to 1990:**

As mentioned above, many countries gave invaluable support to SWAPO. Many governmental and nongovernmental organizations also rendered their support to the liberation movement. The following are some of the key organizations that assisted Namibia during the struggle.

### **The Role of the United Nations:**

SWAPO's three pronged strategy included the diplomatic campaign aimed at lobbying for support from the international community, especially the UN, OAU, and the Non-Aligned Movement. Whenever and wherever there were international conferences and continental gatherings, SWAPO sent representatives to go and plead with the international community for aid in the struggle for Namibian independence. This support has culminated in the phenomena at the UN, called the African Block, which campaigned vigorously to the extent that South Africa was thrown out of the United Nations and from all its organs.

Through these campaigns, SWAPO also managed to achieve support from the Afro-Asia Bloc, which included countries such as China and India. The Scandinavian countries and the Eastern Bloc countries, led by the Soviet Union, were among the many countries that supported SWAPO in its cause. These countries made it difficult, if not impossible, for the South African representatives to even complete a sentence when addressing the UN.

A local weekly newspaper, the *Windhoek Advertiser* of 13 July 1956, reveals an example of such a case, where the South African Foreign Minister, Dr Eric Law expressed his fear of the "dominating position" of the Afro-Asian States in the United Nations General Assembly:

It has become useless to say that a representative of South Africa could reply to attacks at the UN and put forward a case. During the past two years, all black representatives, as well as several Asians left the hall the minute the leader of South African delegation walked up to the podium to deliver his speech.<sup>132</sup>

### **Petitioning the UN:**

In the 1950s, the pioneering nationalist leaders of the Ovamboland People's Congress (OPC), the Ovamboland People's Organisation (OPO), and the Herero Chiefs' Council worked together after recognizing the special mandatory status of Namibia at the United Nations. In its attempt to politically confront the South African regime, SWAPO launched a diplomatic campaign, directed to the international community,

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(132) *Windhoek Advertiser*. 13 July 1956: See p.3.

starting with the UN. This intervention later became the first of its three strategic fronts for the liberation struggle.

The United Nations had a historical responsibility towards all former German colonies, including South West Africa, which were placed under its mandate. It was, therefore, natural that nationalist leaders of that time turned to the international body, urging it to fulfil its responsibilities with regard to the mandate.

SWAPO drew support from a wide spectrum of Namibians – from the working class of migrant labourers, the rural peasant farmers, to students, and this mass movement contributed to its diplomatic successes in dealing with the UN and other sympathizers. Other Namibian organizations such as SWANU, on the other hand, only drew support mainly from the urban intelligentsia and students. It placed less emphasis on the role of the United Nations towards Namibia's independence. SWANU even criticized SWAPO and the Herero Chiefs' Council for making a "career" out of petitioning.<sup>133</sup>

SWANU leaders pointed out that it was only the Namibians and not the UN, who are responsible for liberating themselves from South Africa. Its members were encouraged to pursue only one front strategy which was education. They believed that this was the only way that Namibians could demonstrate to the world and to South Africa that they had the capacity for responsible self-governance. The SWANU leader, J. Kozonguizi, made this point frequently in his speeches, including his address to the All-Africa People's Conference in 1960:

The territory of South West Africa through no fault of its own may be regarded as having had to start from the top (at the international level), and to come down to the bottom (national level). We have come to realize that the interest of the people can best be served by the people themselves ... for a country to be independent is one thing, and for a people to be independent is another.<sup>134</sup>

SWAPO continued its vigorous diplomatic campaign. In contrast to SWANU, they were aware of the fact that the members of the United Nations had assumed the responsibility for administering the territories, whose people have not yet attained a full measure of self-governance. SWAPO also knew that the UN recognized the principle of self-determination and the interests of the inhabitants of the territories, and therefore accepted the obligation to promote the utmost well-being of those inhabitants, within the system of international peace and security.

It was already mentioned that Sam Nujoma left in early 1960 to petition at the United Nations. He petitioned before the Sub-Committee of the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly for the first time. Later on, he petitioned before the Committee on South West Africa, on 5 July 1960, where he gave his firsthand account of the Windhoek uprising and massacre that took place on 10 December 1959.<sup>135</sup>

(133) Dobell, Lauren. *SWAPO's Struggle for Namibia 1960 – 1991: War by Other Means*. Switzerland: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 2000.

(134) *Ibid.*

(135) Nujoma, 2001.

After the first petitions, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution which made provisions for UN bursaries and scholarships for students from South West Africa to study abroad. However, as Theo Ben Gurirab and Uncle Paul Helmuth revealed in their interviews, these scholarships and bursaries were only available to those outside the country (exiled); therefore people who intended to further their studies had to leave Namibia.<sup>136</sup>

On 27 October 1966, the General Assembly passed Resolution 2145 (XXI) which terminated South Africa's Mandate over Namibia and assumed direct responsibility for the Territory. This was later followed by Resolution 2248 (S-V) of 19th May 1967, which catered for the establishment of the United Nations Council for Namibia. The Council was entrusted with the responsibility of defending the rights and interests of the Territory and its people, and functioning as its legal Administrative Authority, until it gained independence. The UN also passed a resolution which recognized SWAPO as a sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people. Since then, the Council made a sustained effort to secure the withdrawal of the illegal South African administration from the Territory so that the people of Namibia might exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, freedom, and independence.

Despite all the scepticism from some quarters, the United Nations demonstrated its historical responsibility and commitment towards the people of Namibia by passing Resolution 385 of 1976, calling for free elections which were to be supervised and controlled by the United Nations. This Resolution was later succeeded by Resolution 435 of 1978 which called for a speedy implementation of the independence plans for Namibia. It was under this Resolution that the first free and fair elections were conducted in November 1989, leading to the proclamation of the Republic of Namibia.

### **The United Nations Council for Namibia:**

The United Nations Resolution 2248 (S-V) of 19 May 1967, established a United Nations Council for South West Africa, and by 1968, resolution 2372 (XXII) was passed, changing South West Africa to Namibia, hence renaming the Council as the United Nations Council for Namibia. The same resolution also empowered the Council with executive and administrative tasks to prepare Namibia for its independence, thus, emphasizing and highlighting the responsibility of the United Nations towards Namibia. The Council's activities included identification of ways and means by which South Africa could be pressured to withdraw its illegal regime from Namibia.

The United Nations appointed a Commissioner for Namibia, but because his office was based at the UN Headquarters, they found it necessary to maintain offices in Botswana and Zambia so that they could assess the situation inside the country from a closer range. This approach further assisted in project implementation and in maintaining liaison between SWAPO and the governments of those countries.

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(136) Interview with Theo Ben Gurireb, (Windhoek) 9 August 2007; *Ibid*, Paul Helmuth.

The Council, assisted by its secretariat, gave particular attention to seeking means by which South Africa could be induced to withdraw. These means included consultations with other governments, in an effort to ensure compliance of states with United Nations resolutions, and to condemn the repressive policies of South Africa on Namibia; exposing the activities of foreign economic interests; mobilizing international support and promoting publicity. The Council also provided humanitarian assistance, including the provision of identification and travel documents for Namibians in exile. This enabled them to fully participate in the works of the Council and to represent Namibian interests in international organizations and other fora.

In addition, through SWAPO, the United Nations assisted the Namibian people by financing their education and other training programs, supporting the struggle, and administering and raising funds for the United Nations Fund for Namibia. It also established the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN) in Lusaka, Zambia.

The Institute was established by the General Assembly Resolution 3296 (XXIX) of 13 December 1974. It served the purpose of training mid-level administrators for the civil service of a future independent Namibia and engaged in research and related activities. The Institute became operational in 1976. Its structure was comprised of a Senate, made up of sixteen members, which served as its policy-making body. It was managed by a Director, assisted by the Management Committee. The Institute had seven divisions namely: Agriculture and Land Resources; Constitutional, Legal and Judicial; Economics; Historical, Political and Cultural; Information and Documentation; Social and Educational; and Teacher Training/Upgrading. Each of the divisions was entrusted with both training and research activities in its spheres of competence.

The UN Council for Namibia was composed of the following countries: Algeria, Angola, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Egypt, Finland, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Liberia, Mexico, Nigeria, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, and Zambia.<sup>137</sup>

### **The Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Liberation of Namibia:**

The 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s were shaken by the awakening of the sleeping giant. A number of African countries were getting their independence, one after another. The year 1960 marked the history of the African continent when seventeen African nations gained their national freedom and independence, hence, that year came to be known as “the year of Africa.” The newly independent African countries began to participate in the affairs of international diplomacy as sovereign states.

In order to strengthen their diplomatic role in the world, the free African states soon realized the importance and the serious need for establishing their own continental body. In 1958, the first steps were taken to form the inter-governmental organization, when eight independent African countries held their first conference in Accra,

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(137) United Nations. *Basic Facts*, New York: Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia, 1988.

Ghana. The second conference was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1960, where the participants declared that their main objectives were the total independence and unity of the whole continent.

Three years later, during the African States' third conference, a continental organization was formed and named, the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The main objective of the organization was to rid the continent of the remaining vestiges of colonialism and apartheid. It also aimed to promote unity and solidarity among African states, coordinate and intensify cooperation for development, safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states, and further to promote international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations. As a continental organization, the OAU provided an effective forum that enabled all member states to adopt coordinated positions on matters of common concern to the continent in international fora, and to defend the interests of Africa effectively. The formation of the OAU became a blessing for SWAPO, as immediately after, the OAU Liberation Committee was established, whose purpose was to coordinate, facilitate, and provide direct assistance to genuine liberation movements in Africa.

In 1964 SWAPO presented its plan for waging a liberation war to the OAU, and was therefore awarded the entire fund that was allocated by the OAU for the liberation of Namibia. All the other Namibian political organizations, including SWANU, failed to gain respect and recognition from the OAU or from other international bodies (including the UN) and therefore could not receive any assistance. Unlike many African countries where there were a number of liberation movements with relatively equal strength, SWAPO took control of the liberation struggle in Namibia. In the eyes of the international supporters, SWAPO became a genuine vanguard liberation movement, making it a legitimate recipient of all forms of assistance, including weapons.

The OAU also recognized SWAPO as the authentic and sole representative of the Namibian people. In the same year, the Caprivi National Union (CANU) merged with SWAPO, a move that demonstrated to the OAU, the UN, and the entire international community that SWAPO was the only mature and serious political organization representing all Namibians, regardless of their ethnic and regional backgrounds. This fact was later to be reflected in the report of the Working Group on Political Questions of the United Nations Council for South West Africa which was set up in 1967. This report, tabled to the UN Secretary General, was produced by the UN Council for Namibia after its visit to SWAPO headquarters in Dar es Salaam in 1968. The report stated as follows: "It would appear that SWAPO is the best organized group among the various South West African Political Movements. The other groups are SWANU and NUDO-SWANUF."<sup>138</sup>

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(138) Dobell, 2000.

### **Support from the Non-Aligned Movement:**

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is made up of developing countries, mainly from Africa, Asia, and Latin America with the aim to represent the political, economic, and cultural interests of the developing world. One of their objectives was to stay away from participating in any military blocs or treaties such as NATO or the Warsaw Pact, especially during the Cold War. Amongst the founders of the movement were legendary freedom fighters such as Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Joseph Tito of Yugoslavia, and Gamal Abdel Nassir of Egypt.

The NAM traces its origins to a meeting in 1955, where twenty-nine Asian and African heads of state discussed issues of common concern, including efforts to end colonialism and apartheid.

Later, in a meeting held in 1961, conditions were set-up for NAM membership. They stipulated that member countries should not be involved in alliances or defence pacts with the main world powers. In this way the NAM sought to prevent its members from becoming pawns in Cold War power games, and distanced itself from the Western and Soviet Union power blocs.

The first summit of NAM Heads of State took place in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1961, at the instigation of President Joseph Tito. Twenty-five countries were represented, and the threat of the war between the US and the Soviet Union dominated the summit. NAM reaffirmed its aim to protect the rights of nations to “independent judgement” and to counter imperialism. The movement further committed itself to restructuring the world’s economic order.

The third conference of the movement of the Non-Aligned countries was held in Lusaka, Zambia from 8-10 September 1970. This conference was attended by sixty- three member countries and eight liberation movements as observers or “guests”. One of the decisions taken during the Lusaka conference was the unanimous call to support the struggle against colonialism and racism. Participants expressed their anger over the failure to implement a number of UN resolutions on the independence of colonised countries, including Namibia. They declared that the armed liberation struggle in Namibia was legal and that member countries were ready to render moral, political, and material support to SWAPO.

The fourth conference took place in Algiers, Algeria, from 5-9 September in 1973, where the number of member countries had swelled to 75, and the number of liberation movements had doubled.<sup>139</sup>

The founding of the Non-Aligned Movement became another pillar of strength for the liberation movements, including SWAPO. In the 1960s, a number of African countries became independent and this boosted the continent’s effective representation in the Non-Aligned Movement.

At the meeting of Ministers and Heads of Delegation of Non-Aligned Countries during the 39th Session of the General Assembly, held in New York, 1-5 October

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(139) Isdat, Parti. *Istoria Na Diplomaticia*. Sofia, 1981.

1984, the delegates issued a communiqué in which they expressed strong indignation on the continued non-implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 (1978); they condemned and rejected the persistent attempts by the racist South African government and the United States administration. South Africa and the United States insisted on extraneous and irrelevant issues such as linking the independence of Namibia to the withdrawal of Cuban internationalist forces from Angola. The delegates urged the Security Council to take urgent action to implement its decisions by adopting enforcement measures against South Africa under Chapter VII of the Charter, and to renew their determination to convene an extraordinary ministerial meeting of the Co-ordinating Bureau of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on the question of Namibia, not later than April 1985.<sup>140</sup>

The Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting of the Co-ordinating Bureau of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on Namibia, held in New Delhi, India, on 19-21 April 1985, adopted a declaration by which the Ministers reiterated the categorical rejection of “linkage” as repugnant to the United Nations plan for the independence of Namibia and a blatant interference in the internal affairs of Angola, designed to subvert its sovereign rights as an independent state. The Ministerial delegations recalled that the Security Council, by its Resolution 539 (1983), had rejected “linkage”. Furthermore, it strongly condemned Pretoria’s decision to install a so-called internal administration in Namibia.

In its Programme of Action, the Bureau requested that an urgent meeting of the Security Council be called in order to resume consideration of the question of Namibia and to give effect to Security Council resolutions in this regard, in particular Resolution 435 (1978). In view of the importance attached by the Movement to the Namibian question, the Bureau invited the ministers for foreign affairs of eighteen member states to attend the meetings of the Security Council on Namibia. Pending the imposition of mandatory sanctions against South Africa under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Programme of Action exhorted all states to sever all links with South Africa, and urged all states to increase their diplomatic, political, material, and military assistance to SWAPO, with the aim of helping it to intensify its armed struggle.

The Programme of Action appealed to all states to recognize and respect Decree No. 1 for the Protection of the Natural Resources of Namibia, and requested the United Nations Council for Namibia to take urgent steps to implement the Decree in order to reaffirm its validity under international law and to put an end to the plunder of Namibia’s natural resources by South Africa. The Bureau invited the Council, the sole legal Administrative Authority for Namibia, to take appropriate action to help implement the Programme of Action.<sup>141</sup>

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(140) United Nations, 1985.

(141) United Nations Council for Namibia, 1985.

### **The Frontline States:**

The liberation of Namibia and the collapse of apartheid were regionally supported by Frontline States. These were originally Botswana, Tanzania, and Zambia, and, after liberation, Angola and Mozambique from 1975, and Zimbabwe from 1980. The Frontline States were formed in the early 1970s to co-ordinate their responses to apartheid and to formulate a uniform policy towards the apartheid government and the liberation movements in southern Africa, as well as to defend their national sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the newly independent countries.

Although Nigeria is geographically far away from southern Africa, it was considered one of the Frontline States because it offered financial assistance and also helped the liberation movements to map out effective military strategies against the South African army. This even drew public attention to the change in terminology from Frontline States, to Frontline States and Nigeria.

Numerous resolutions were passed by these states to enhance and retain the continuity role of the Security Council and of the Secretary General of the United Nations in implementing Resolution 435, which declared the independence of Namibia and denounced the policy of "linkage" and the so-called constructive engagement by the Reagan administration. The Frontline States called for the unconditional and immediate withdrawal of the South African troops from Angola and appealed for continuous support for SWAPO, in its effort to liberate Namibia.<sup>142</sup>

The price paid by the Frontline States for supporting the liberation movements in South Africa and Namibia was dear, ranging from acts of aggression and destabilization caused by military raids and attacks on their respective countries. South Africa also imposed economic sanctions on landlocked neighbours, meaning diversion to longer and more costly routes to the sea for the import and export of their goods. These countries had to spend billions on defence costs.

Although the Frontline States did well on the diplomatic front, they could not enforce sanctions or isolate South Africa. Some of their economies were closely dependent on South Africa. For example, the economy of Botswana was directly tied to South Africa through the Southern African Custom Union (SACU) which was responsible for the collection and distribution of revenue generated from tariffs.

Also, many workers from Mozambique and Lesotho laboured in South African mines and farms. However, in an effort to survive economically, the Frontline States succeeded in cooperating among themselves to become self-sufficient. This somewhat increased pressure on South Africa, especially after the formation of the Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), in Arusha, Tanzania in July 1979. SADCC was formed by the Frontline States with the aim of promoting their own development in an attempt to extricate themselves from the South African economic hegemony. The formation of SADCC added to the isolation of South Africa in the world when the international community increased their support for the SADCC. The

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(142) United Nations, 1985.

body was transformed into the Southern African Development Community (SADC) through the 1992 Windhoek (Namibia) treaty. The transformation of SADCC into SADC represented an increased emphasis on responding to international trends through mobilization of the region's own resources, potential, and capacity. The new organisation, SADC, concentrated more on new opportunities and demands raised by changes in the region and the external environment, which were much more economically orientated than the mainly political-security considerations that underlay the earlier establishment of SADCC. SADC was therefore not only a result of, or response to changing international trends and demands, but also a response to the changed political climate within the region.

What started as an effort in the fight against colonialism and the defence of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the sustainability of their weak economies against the economic sanctions imposed on South Africa, was transformed into a regional economic bloc that inspires Africa and is praised in the international community as one of the most powerful and stable regional organisations.

## Independence:

Sam Nujoma said, "In spite of increasing attacks on me by three successive South African Prime Ministers – H.F. Verwoerd, B.J. Vorster, and P.W. Botha- and more recently by the western media, whipped up by South African propaganda, I had lived to see these three architects of apartheid fall in various ways, while I survived as President of SWAPO, to lead our movement to the final victory, after nearly three decades of bloody struggle against white minority South African occupation of Namibia."

South Africa continued delaying the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435, which called for a speedy execution of the independence plans for Namibia. It was only after the South African army was finally defeated by the combined forces of Angola, Cuba, and SWAPO at Quito Cuanavale that the Boers agreed to sit around the table and negotiate a ceasefire with SWAPO. It took SWAPO close to twenty-four years to victoriously end Namibia's long and bitter struggle. As Nujoma remarked, "we went there as youth and came back old."<sup>143</sup> The ceasefire agreement was to be followed by the process of repatriation of political refugees from exile back to Namibia, so that they could freely participate in the elections. "The war was to end on the 31st March 1989, and the cease-fire was to commence exactly at midnight on 1st April 1989. However, this did not happen. I was awakened with the news that our PLAN combatants in Namibia, who were waiting to report to UNTAG reception point, as they have been restructured in accordance with UN Resolution 435, have been fired at by South African forces."<sup>144</sup>

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(143) *Ibid*, Nujoma.

(144) *Ibid*.

Following the breach of Resolution 435 by South Africa, PLAN fighters decided that they would not down their guns for as long as there was no clear indication that the enemy was willing to comply with the United Nations safety and security standards. When South Africa realized that their tactic of negotiating with a big stick under the table was not working, and SWAPO was not prepared to be intimidated, they had no choice but to agree on a second attempt to re-negotiate the terms for cease fire.

Toward the end of April 1989, South Africa and SWAPO held a meeting at Ruacana, located at the north-western borders of Namibia and Angola. Nahas Angula was the head of the SWAPO delegation, accompanied by Erastus Negonga, Philemon Kambala, and Andrew “Bongi” Intamba. Negonga remembered that:

It was a very, very unique experience because there was no mediator. It was only us people from the other side, and the people from the other side.....As we stood there waiting for them to come, they simply passed us by and did not even say hello, more, or afternoon. They simply proceeded into the hall I am telling you, he (Nahas Angula)

just started and it worked. Had it not been for him, and it was just between us soldiers, we could have simply opened fire. It was completely an atmosphere of firing... He (Angula) started by saying, yaaah, as you can see, there is no chairman in this meeting and I can see that I am the only civilian here, and I can handle it, so is it okay? Can I start?. He was smiling. And the other civilian who was there said, it's fine, you can

be the chairman. Then he (Angula) just started ....really the way that he was handling it .....He happened to neutralise the sad situation which was prevailing and then at last when we all had to talk, we were doing it willingly.. We agreed that there would be no more fighting, and we would both withdraw our troops from the battle field,... We shook hands, and I was now comfortable to shake hands with them because there was an agreement and the atmosphere was no more tense.<sup>145</sup>

South Africa agreed for the elections to take place although it was not easy for them. This was clearly demonstrated by the South African Administrator General, Mr. Louis Pinaar's crucial blunder for attempting a *de facto* suspension of the application of Resolution 435 and P.R. Botha had to quickly reply, contradicting Pinaar, with a statement affirming that South Africa remained fully committed to Resolution 435.

Finally, proper arrangements were made for all Namibians in exile to be repatriated to Namibia and to take part in the national elections which were scheduled for November 1989. The major repatriation process took place between June and September 1989.

On 16 November 1989, the first free and fair elections were held, with very few exceptions. Out of the total number of registered voters, over 95% cast their votes. However, many Namibians suffered atrocious acts perpetrated by the police, *Koevoet* (“South West Africa Police Counter-Insurgency Unit”), and the South African army, with the worst victims being the populations from the northern and north-eastern

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(145) Interview with Erastus Negonga.

regions of the country, who had been in the frontline of the war zone throughout the liberation struggle.

Many political parties participated in these elections, and the results were as follows

Political Party	Votes	%
South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO)	384,567	57.32
Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA)	191,532	28.55
United Democratic Front (UDF)	37,874	5.64
Action Christian National (CAN)	23,728	3.53
National Patriotic Front (NPF)	10,693	1.59
Federal Convention of Namibia (FCN)	10,452	1.55
Namibia National Front (NNF)	5,344	0.79
Others	6,640	0.94

After the elections, a Constituent Assembly was formed, consisting of forty-one SWAPO members, twenty-one DTA members, and ten members from the other smaller parties.<sup>146</sup> The Constituent Assembly had a duty of drafting the first constitution of the independent Republic of Namibia. It was also tasked with the responsibility of establishing the National Assembly and the National Council, and the demarcation of thirteen political regions. The Constituent Assembly declared the 21st March 1990 as the day on which Namibia would become independent. This day which is also a United Nations Day was chosen to emphasize Namibia's international linkages during the country's long years of struggle.

On 21 March 1990, Sam Nujoma was sworn-in as the first elected President of the Republic of Namibia. During his inaugural speech, Nujoma reviewed the history of Namibia, particularly the heroic deeds of the forefathers during the war of resistance against the early colonialists. He outlined the Namibian war of liberation waged by PLAN combatants, in conjunction with FAPLA and the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces, particularly the decisive battles of Quito Cuanavale, which resulted in the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435. President Nujoma further highlighted that it was the responsibility of every Namibian to tell the truth about the Namibian struggle and about those who gave it support. Those friends, amongst others, were the Soviet Union, Angola, Cuba, the Frontline States, the OAU, the Non-Aligned Movement, and some member states of the United Nations. The President stressed that the people of Namibia should extend a hand of friendship and nationhood to one another. He emphasised that although it would be difficult to forget the past, Namibians would need to learn to forgive, as stipulated under the policy of National Reconciliation, so that, together they could face the common enemy which was then poverty, underdevelopment, and ignorance, amongst others. This ceremony signified the end of the armed liberation struggle for Namibia.

(146) Nujoma, 20s01: See p.424.

## **Conclusion – The Aftermath of the Liberation Struggle:**

Of the approximately 45,000 Namibians who were repatriated in 1989, 80% were able to return to their homes. Most of these fighters came from the northern parts of Namibia, the predominantly rural areas of former Ovamboland. “Returnees,” in particular, experienced difficulties in finding employment because job opportunities in the north are limited. There was an antipathy amongst many employers towards employing repatriated exiles who were seen as representatives of the ruling party, although scepticism of their qualifications was also a factor. Despite the fact that many “returnees” had qualifications, few had relevant work experience; furthermore, their skills did not often match existing work opportunities in the north or around the country. Confusion over the evaluation of qualifications led to difficulties in the appointment of “returnees”. Their inability to communicate effectively with prospective employers because of the language, which was predominantly Afrikaans or German, became yet another justification for rejection.

Amongst some repatriated exiles, the code of discipline and obedience, which was of vital importance to the independence struggle, had served to stifle initiative and created something of a “dependency syndrome”. Certain individuals, for example, still expected SWAPO, as a political party, to find them jobs and housing.

The problem of unemployment among “returnees” was compounding the already existing problem of reintegration into the Namibian society, including having to change their lifestyle and living standards. The failure to fulfil the expectation of “returnees” to acquire employment has been a source of considerable embarrassment to them and their families. This is because those who remained in the country, and who are perceived to have been collaborators with the enemy, now appear to be better off.

In the after-math of over twenty years of war, numerous individuals from both sides of the political divide suffered the traumatising effects of violent conflict, either as victims or as combatants. For the “returnees”, the effects of this stress, was temporarily dissipated by the euphoria of their return from exile, the elections, and the excitement of independence. After the celebrations, the realities started to dawn on many of the returnees, and nightmares were manifesting through a number of ways such as depression, alcoholism, suicide, and in certain cases violence and other forms of anti-social behaviour. There was no adequate psychological counselling facility to deal with the effects of the war trauma.

The problem of unemployment amongst the returnees continues to prevail in the country. As a counter-measure, the “returnees” made several attempts to outline their plight to the government, including waging massive demonstrations demanding jobs from the government. They believed that, as freedom fighters who had contributed to the liberation struggle, they were fully entitled to gainful employment in the public sector. Over the years, many arrangements to address the plight of ex-combatants have

been made by creating parastatal organizations and by employing them in the police as Special Forces. Lately the government had to create a Ministry of Veterans' Affairs, which has embarked on registering all the veterans and Namibians, who in one way or another were victimised due to their actions during the independence struggle.

**Abbreviations:**

AME:	African Methodist Episcopal Church
ANC:	African National Congress
CAN:	Action Christian National
CANU:	Caprivi African National Union
COD:	Congress of Democrats
DTA:	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
FAPL	A: People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of
Angola FCN:	Federal Convention of Namibia
ICJ:	International Court of Justice
NAM:	Non-Aligned Movement
NNF:	Namibia National Front
NPF:	National Patriotic Front
OAU:	Organization of the African Union
OPC:	Ovambo People's Congress
OPO:	Ovamboland People's Organisation
PAC:	Pan African Congress
PLAN:	People's Liberation Army of Namibia (SWAPO's military
wing) RDP:	Rally for Democracy and Progress
SACU:	Southern African Custom Union
SADCC:	Southern African Development Coordination Conference, (now
	SADC: Southern African Development Community)
SAPC:	South African Communist Party
SWANLA:	South West Africa Native Labour
Association SWANU:	South West Africa National
Union	
SWAPA:	South West Africa Progressive
Association SWAPO:	South West Africa People's
Organization SWAPO-D:	SWAPO Democrat
SWASB:	South West African Students Body
SWATA:	South West African Teachers
Association TANU:	Tanganyika African National Union
UDF:	United Democratic Front
UN:	United Nations
UNIA:	Universal Negroes Improvement Association
UNIN:	United Nations Institute for Namibia
UNIP:	Northern Rhodesian United National Independence Party
WENELA:	Witwatersrand Native Labour Association



# 3.2

## The Namibian Liberation Struggle

by **Jeremy Silvester, Martha Akawa and Napandulwe Shiweda**

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## Introduction

In 1968 Herman Andimba Toivo ya Toivo was presented with an opportunity to speak in ‘mitigation of sentence’ on behalf of himself and thirty-five other defendants (one had died during the trial) at the end of the first ‘Terrorism Trial’ of SWAPO guerrilla fighters and activists in Pretoria. However, instead of pleading for reduced sentences, ya Toivo made a powerful statement that asserted the nationalist vision. The core argument was wrapped up in a single sentence – “We are Namibians and not South Africans” (Carlson, 1977: 121). The claim was a milestone moment in the conceptualisation and naming of a new nation that would break the shackles of colonial history. The boundaries of Namibia had been drafted during a thirty-one year period of German colonial rule (during which the territory had been known

as *Deutsche Sudwestafrika*) and consolidated during a forty-eight year period (at the time of ya Toivo’s speech), of South African occupation when the territory was known as ‘South West Africa’. The statement was not just a declaration of independence, but also a denial of the right of a foreign power to label the territory. Namibians would never recognise the right of South Africa to claim and name their land. As SWAPO argued at an international conference held in Sudan in 1969 “South West Africa is essentially a misnaming of our country . . . For, it is we, the people of Namibia, who must ultimately shape our own destiny and identity. And we call it Namibia”.<sup>1</sup>

When Namibia launched its own national currency, after independence in 1990, the notes bore the image of Hendrik Witbooi, a heroic figure of anti-colonial resistance who died in action in 1905 fighting the German *Schutztruppe* (the military police force). The image shows the way in which local leaders, who defended their traditional lands and rights at the local level against colonial domination, have been embraced as Namibian heroes. The resistance to the imposition of colonial rule by German forces did also lead some local leaders to recognise the need to build broader alliances that would transcend previous ethnic rivalries. Hendrik Witbooi for example, argued as early as 1892, that “By colour and way of life we belong together and . . . That we possess separate kingdoms and territories; is an insignificant subdivision” (quoted in Bley, 1996: 30). Samuel Maharero, also wrote Hendrik and others, seeking a multi-ethnic alliance to fight against the German colonial forces in 1904, making the famous assertion ‘let us die fighting’ rather than accept colonial rule (Drechsler, 1980:142-143; Katjavivi, 1988:9; Gewalt, 1999:156). The liberation movement sought models of resistance and heroic narratives to inspire a new generation of fighters. History was recruited to emphasise the legitimacy and continuity of struggles for freedom, land and justice and the need for strength through unity. Nationalists would draw particular inspiration from the long war of guerrilla-style resistance to German control that they dated from 1904-1908 (and dubbed the ‘War of National

<sup>1</sup> UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/2/4/11 - ‘Background Paper submitted by SWAPO’, International Conference in support of the Peoples of Portuguese Colonies and Southern Africa’, Khartoum, 18th-20th January, 1969.

Liberation’), which was led by historical figures such as the early guerrilla leaders Hendrik Witbooi and the later resistance of northern leaders such as Mandume ya Ndemufayo of Oukwanyama and Ipumbu YaTshilongo of Uukwambi (SWAPO, 1981: 158-165). Earlier historical leaders, such as these, even featured in some of SWAPO’s posters with contemporary leaders of the liberation struggle during the 1970s and 1980s (Miescher and Henrichsen, 2004: 33).

Yet, whilst anti-colonial resistance has been incorporated into nationalist history to give historical depth to the notion of the nation, the focus of this chapter will be on the liberation struggle period which encompassed the psychological battle, the diplomatic as well as the launch of the armed liberation struggle from 1966. Only a brief preview of the earlier period will be provided in order to explain the way in which Namibia’s unique position, in the context of international law, as a ‘mandate’ of the League of Nations and then a Trusteeship of the United Nations, that shaped the early strategy of the struggle for independence will be highlighted. The chapter will use the name ‘Namibia’ for the country for the period, from 1968, when this name was officially recognised by the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution 2403 and the name ‘South West Africa’ to indicate the colonial name used by South Africa for the territory for the period 1915-1968.

The creation of Namibia did not merely require the relabeling of a bounded piece of African land. The new nation also required the forging of ‘Namibians’, people with a loyalty to a concept that was larger than the small area around a birthplace or a group that shared a common language. Namibia embraced at least eleven different language groups and the struggle would constantly face the challenge of fostering a national identity in the face of alternative models presented by South Africa which sought to fragment the territory into ethnic polities. One might say that there were three broad fronts to Namibia’s liberation struggle. The first was the home front – the psychological battle for the ‘hearts and minds’ of Namibians inside Namibia; the second was the armed struggle and the third was, the diplomatic struggle – to gain international recognition for the nationalists’ vision of an independent nation.<sup>2</sup> All these three fronts were of equal significance. The necessary foundation for the eventual success of the liberation struggle was the consistent rejection by the majority of Namibians of the ethnically-configured forms of government that were repeatedly packaged, sponsored and presented by the South African administration as alternatives to the nationalist vision of ‘One Namibia, One Nation’.

The chapter will adopt a chronological approach in order to emphasise the relationships between the three parallel dimensions of the struggle. However, the chapter will also stress the regional dimension of the struggle. Namibian history does not stop at the border controls. Namibians participated in a regional economy that led migrant workers to live and work alongside comrades from Angola, South Africa

<sup>2</sup> This strategy was adopted by SWAPO at the Tanga Conference in 1969. Ben Amathila, personal communication, 1st August, 2013.

and other neighbouring countries. People were smuggled into exile, particularly through Botswana and Angola, and SWAPO, the main nationalist movement, had important military camps in Tanzania, Angola and Zambia. The Namibian struggle must, therefore, be located within the broader history of Southern Africa.

An extensive literature now exists on the Namibian liberation struggle. The most prolific authors have been the ex-soldiers of the South African security forces with both senior officers and ordinary soldiers producing autobiographical accounts presenting their perspective of the military conflict. However the authors of this chapter have made a substantive effort to obtain a multi-vocal approach and have drawn on original archival documentation and interviews with participants to develop a more complex reading of the past. The chapter will not be a simple summary of the existing literature, but will add new insights into some of the most important incidents in the history of Namibia's liberation struggle.

The chapter will conclude by considering some of the legacies of the liberation struggle and the questions they raise. One set of questions relates to the ways in which the post-liberation nation has been 'dealing with the past'. Namibia did not pursue the South African model of establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but did promote a Policy of National Reconciliation. At independence, a blanket amnesty was provided to both parties. The issues of reconciliation and memory also contributed to the debate as to whether victims and ex-combatants should receive compensation. If provision were to be made who should qualify and in what form?

A second stack of questions relates to the political impact of the liberation struggle on Namibia. The generation that has emerged since 1990 are known as 'the born frees', and the political landscape and Namibia's political discourse still reflect the language of the struggle. In what ways has the manifesto of the liberation struggle been translated or transformed since the liberation movement has become the government of an independent nation? Finally, one can ask the extent to which the personal and organisational relationships that developed during the liberation struggle through mechanisms such as the OAU's Liberation Committee, the Frontline States and the Southern African Development Community still influence the foreign policy of Namibia today. The chapter will, therefore, provide a narrative of the struggle and argue that the way in which this narrative is shaped continues to also shape the nation.

## **Incorporation or Independence?**

The aftermath of the Second World War saw a significant increase in political and nationalist consciousness. Earlier anti-colonial struggles had focused on the defence of the local autonomy of traditional authorities and the preservation of communities' access to ancestral community land. Whilst the stories of earlier conflicts provided inspiration and a legacy of anti-colonial resistance, the post-war period saw the framing of opposition to South African rule taking new forms. The contract labour system had been used to recruit Namibians to serve with the South African army and

men such as Toivo ya Toivo and Simon ‘Mzee’ Kaukungua had not only travelled to South Africa, but also as far as Egypt.

After the Second World War, increasing numbers of Namibians were recruited to work in South Africa. However, the end of the Second World War also saw the dissolution of the League of Nations and the launch of the United Nations. ‘South West Africa’ had been a German colony from 1884-1915 when the German colonial forces, the *Schutztruppe* in the territory, surrendered to South African troops who had invaded on behalf of the British Empire in an operation within a conflict that was so global in nature that it was dubbed World War One. After the end of the war, the former German colonies were transformed into ‘Mandates’ of a new international organisation, the League of Nations. Individual countries were given the responsibility of administering each mandate. ‘South West Africa’ became a ‘C’ Class mandate of Britain which delegated the Union of South Africa to act on its behalf to implement what was described as ‘the sacred trust of civilization’ and the responsibility to ‘promote to the utmost the material and moral well being and the social progress of the inhabitants’ (Dugard, 1973: 72-74). South Africa argued for many years that the best way to achieve this task would be to incorporate ‘South West Africa’ within South Africa, whilst nationalists sought independence.

After the end of World War Two the dissolution of the League of Nations and its replacement by the United Nations was perceived by the South African Government as an opportunity to incorporate ‘South West Africa’ as a ‘Fifth Province’ for the Union of South Africa. A ‘referendum’ was held during 1946 with the South African Government seeking to prove popular support for their proposal to transform ‘South West Africans’ into ‘South Africans’. The results were rejected by the United Nations, but the South African Government ignored UN demands that the territory should become a UN Trust Territory during a transition to independence.

Instead the South West African Affairs Amendment Act of 1949 provided for the white electorate of the territory to select six members and four Senators to sit in the South African House of Assembly and (Cockram, 1976: 251). Yet there was also rising awareness in the territory of the growing opposition within South Africa to the imposition of apartheid policies and strengthening Pan-African optimism as a number of African colonies moved towards independence. The discourse of liberation pervaded the schools and locations. John ya Otto remembers that, whilst he was studying at the Augustineum, one of the few secondary schools for black pupils in ‘South West Africa’, in 1956 and 1957 “. . . papers were full of articles about the Bus Boycotts and other protests against the government in South Africa. In 1957 the independence of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah became an inspiration to the young activists in Namibia. Ya Otto recalls . . . On Sundays, my group of friends and I would sit in the shade of the big poplars near the dormitory and talk about the things we had read such as the Suez crisis” (ya Otto, 1982: 29-30). Andreas Shipanga recalled that: “Our ‘Bibles’ at that time were Kwame Nkrumah’s autobiography, *I Speak of Freedom*, Fidel Castro’s *History Will Absolve Me* . . . and Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched*

*of the Earth*".<sup>3</sup> The campaign for the complete decolonisation of Africa was spiced with revolutionary rhetoric that presented independence as the means to obtain the greater goal of social and economic justice. However, the initial strategy was to use the mechanisms available to petition the United Nations and seek international intervention to end South Africa's rule.

## Petitioning the United Nations in the 1950s

When General Smuts addressed the United Nations General Assembly in January, 1946 to announce South Africa's proposal for the incorporation of 'South West Africa', he provoked an immediate response. Chief Tshekedi Khama, leader of the Bamangwato in Bechuanaland immediately sent a request (which was refused) to the British High Commissioner to send a telegram of protest to the UN. The President of the ANC in South Africa, A.B. Xuma, also sent a telegram of protest. The telegrams marked the start of an international campaign against incorporation (Dreyer, 1994: 18).

The Reverend Michael Scott, an Anglican priest, drove to Bechuanaland in November, 1946 to meet with Chief Frederick Maharero. He showed the Rev. Scott bundles of letters that he had received from Herero still living in South West Africa raising their concerns about General Smuts' proposal to expand the northern border of 'South Africa' to Angola. Whilst Rev. Scott was able to travel to New York and, eventually, present petitions, the South Africans persistently frustrated peoples' efforts to leave 'South West Africa' and travel abroad and refused to issue passports to Chief Hosea Kutako and others.<sup>4</sup> The International Court of Justice ruled on 1st June, 1956 that the Committee on SWA would be able to receive both written and oral petitions and Mburumba Kerina had also obtained permission from leaders such as ya Toivo and Chief Kutako to represent their views and lobby on their behalf at the United Nations.

Chief Hosea Kutako was recognised as the senior Herero traditional leader in Namibia and he played the central role in the constant production of petitions to the United Nations over the next decade or more and he also served as the leader of the Herero Chief's Council. As Allard Lowenstein observed: "It is Chief Kutako who has set much of the tone of the African opposition since World War II . . . and he has insisted that change must come through action by the United Nations" (Lowenstein, 1961: 117). It was the petitions that, throughout the 1950s, challenged South African claims that the residents of 'South West Africa' were content with South African rule. The petitions particularly raised concerns about the imposition of apartheid in 'South West Africa', such as the plans to introduce the Group Areas Act that would force the relocation of residents from existing centrally situated urban locations to peripheral,

<sup>3</sup> Whilst titles such as these were banned in Namibia, Libertina Amathila and Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah remember reading copies of Frantz Fanon and other books that circulated clandestinely. Pers. Comm. 1st August, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> NAN BAC (Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Windhoek) 202 'Secret files, South African Police, 1959-1978' contains numerous cases where applicants were refused travel documents because of their alleged political activities.

new, separate townships and the residential separation of those classified as ‘black’ from those classified as ‘coloured’. In Windhoek, the main city in the territory, this would mean the removal of the residents of the ‘Main’ and ‘Klein Windhoek’ locations to new residential areas. The removal was propagated in terms of urban renewal and the upgrading of houses and services, but as Kutako wrote to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 1956: “We have no objection to better houses being built for us, but we are against being moved from the present site”.<sup>5</sup>

A wave of petitions flooded the United Nations in the late 1950s and early 1960s with a number of individuals also using the opportunity to raise issues of concern to their communities. Besides Chief Kutako, other prolific writers were Mr Jacobus Beukes and the other members of the Beukes family who raised issues of particular concern to the residents of Rehoboth and Rev. Markus Kooper of Hoachanas. Another of the first Namibian leaders who recognised the potential for raising issues at the United Nations was the Rev. Theophilus Hamutumbangela who worked as an Anglican parish priest in northern Namibia, the region which was drained of young men by the contract labour system.

In April 1954, Father Theophilus Hamutumbangela, asked the members of his massive congregation at Onekuaja to share their grievances with him. Father Hamutumbangela wrote to the United Nations raising the concerns of the contract workers and Father Hamutumbangela was persecuted for his political activism.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, on 13th June, 1957 a letter from ‘*Nghuwo Yepongo*’ (a pseudonym that roughly translates as ‘The cry of an orphan is responded to by God’) of the ‘Oukwanyama Tribal Congress’ was sent to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to complain about the deportation of the Rev. Hamutumbangela ‘for his writings on our behalf to UNO’. The authors argued that “Because we are voteless, we are defenceless”.<sup>7</sup> Toivo

ya Toivo described ‘*Nghuwo Jepongo*’ as ‘an underground pressure group’ that later, in 1958, merged with the Ovamboland People’s Congress (OPC) to form Ovamboland People’s organisation (OPO). The name was an abbreviated version of the expression ‘*Onghuwo yepongo kalunga teyi tondoka*’.<sup>8</sup>

## The Formation of Nationalist Political Parties

The political activism was not just in Namibia. When Andreas Shipanga arrived in Cape Town in August, 1957 he found a community of around 200 migrant workers from ‘South West Africa’. Many of these Oshiwambo-speaking workers met regularly

<sup>5</sup> UN Archives. S-0443-0060-TR240. ‘Letter from Chief Hosea Kutako, Windhoek to the Chairman of the Ad-Hoc Committee on South West Africa, New York’. 11th May, 1956.

<sup>6</sup> Interview by Tony Emmett with Solomon Mifima 23rd August, 1979.

<sup>7</sup> UN Archives. S-0443-0060-TR240. ‘Letter from Nguwo Jepongo, Ukuanyama Tribal Congress to Secretary-General, United Nations’ 13th June, 1957, 5pp.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Interview with Hafeni “Mzee” Kaukungwa’, Tonchi V.L. & Mulongeni B, *Voices of the liberation: A history of the Liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*. SADC Secretariat research-Hashim Mbita Project, March 2010, p152.

at 35 Somerset Road – a barber’s shop run by a Namibian, Timothy Nangolo, to discuss politics. The group launched the Ovamboland People’s Congress led by Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, Solomon Mifima, Jacob Kuhangua, Jariretundu Kozonguizi, and Isaac Newton (other activists in the group included Andreas Shipanga, Eliaser Tuhadeleni (Kaxumba kaNdola), Emil Appolus, Kenneth Abrahams, Maxton Joseph Mutongolume, Peter Hilinganye Mweshihange, Otiliè Schimming and Simon (Mzee) Kaukungua (Katjavivi, 1988: 20; Els, 2007: 33). The original aim of the Congress was to raise funds to help establish black-owned businesses in northern Namibia, but it became increasingly involved in issues relating to workers’ rights and the status of ‘South West Africa’ (Shipanga, 1989:35-36).

On 6th May, 1958 the ‘Ovamboland Peoples’ Congress’ wrote to the Queen of England noting that the mandate over ‘South West Africa’ had been granted to South Africa in 1920 as a member of the British Empire and that, therefore, the British monarch should take responsibility for the fact that the mandated power had “. . . failed to comply with the agreements embodied in the mandate agreement”.<sup>9</sup> A few weeks later a petition from the ‘Ovamboland Peoples’ Congress’ to the United Nations (dated 25th June, 1958) complained that the territory was gripped with ‘fear of an eventual emancipation of the African people’. The Congress complained that white teachers were trying to suggest that African nationalism was a vehicle for the spread of communism, but argued that “. . . our problem is not against communism, for the reason that we have never been colonised by communism”. Instead the petition focused on a racial, rather than an economic, perspective on the political landscape in the territory where, the OPC argued, ‘the white man is a little self-made GOD in his little acre of land, whilst Africans serve as slaves in this heaven’.<sup>10</sup>

In October 1958 Toivo ya Toivo, the President of the Ovambo People’s Congress, based in Cape Town, sent a written protest to ‘Kerina Gertzen’ in New York to deliver to the United Nations. As he was concerned about the letter being intercepted he also recorded the message and smuggled the tape recording out concealed in a copy of *Treasure Island*. On 1st December, 1958 Toivo ya Toivo, was given a deportation order that gave him 72 hours to leave Cape Town (having worked in South Africa for the previous six years).<sup>11</sup>

On arrival in Ondangwa ya Toivo was told that he would never be allowed to leave ‘Ovamboland’ again and was handed over to Chief Kambonde who made one of his headmen, Kambuta, responsible for guarding ya Toivo. It was alleged by a journalist with *New Age* that the Chief told Kambuta “This nuisance must not be allowed to hold any meetings in Ovamboland. He must not be allowed to leave Ovamboland

<sup>9</sup> UN Archives. S-0443-0060-TR240‘Petition from Toivo H. ja Toivo and D.D. Shoombe for the Ovamboland People’s Congress to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II’, 6th May, 1958, 1p.

<sup>10</sup> UN Archives. S-0443-0060-TR240‘Ovamboland People’s Congress Petition from Festus Isaacs for the BergDamara People, Toivo H. ja Toivo for the Ovambo People and D.D. Shoombe for the Ovambo People’, 25th June, 1958.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Tape-Recording Responsible for Eviction?’, *Contact*, Cape Town, 13th December, 1958.

and he must stop writing letters abroad”.<sup>12</sup> Thus, whilst ya Toivo was invited to travel to New York and appear before the Fourth Committee of the United Nations as a petitioner he was unable to do so because of his detention.<sup>13</sup> Ya Toivo would have to focus on political organisation within ‘South West Africa’ and to seek ways to develop the OPC’s activities and build working relationships with other political activists.

When the ‘African Improvement Society’<sup>14</sup> had been launched in Windhoek in 1947 by a small group of sixteen OtjiHerero-speaking men, the ‘Native Affairs’ Management, especially the Manager himself had immediately been suspicious that it was a cover for a political organisation. The society established an evening school for workers at St. Barnabas School in 1947 where, by 1952, Berthold Himumuine would be the principal and Clemens Kapuuu would become one of Sam Nujoma’s teachers.<sup>15</sup> One of the founding members of the Society, Dr Z. Ngavirue, later reflected that: “The members of the society interpreted for the chiefs and the Rev. Michael Scott, drafted and wrote up petitions, read newspapers to the illiterates and, in this way, politicised the people before parties were established”.

Solomon Mifima recalled that during 1958 there was a wave of arrests in South Africa involving local ‘congresses’, such as the African National Congress, and it was decided that the OPC should change its name to the Ovamboland People’s Organisation.<sup>16</sup> The Ovamboland People’s Organisation was, therefore, officially launched in Windhoek on 19th April, 1959 with Sam Nujoma as President, Louis Nelengani as Vice-President and Jacob Kuhangua as the Secretary-General. Within a couple of months, on 25th June 1959, Sam Nujoma was visiting Walvis Bay to speak at the different compounds for workers employed by the railway, the Tuna Company and the Ocean Fishing Company. The constitution of OPO is significant as it indicated the organisation still had a strong commitment to the use of the United Nations as the means to achieve independence. Whilst there was a commitment to democracy and unity, this was presented in the form of an alliance of ethnic (Ovambo, Herero and Nama) communities, presumably a reference to ya Toivo’s initial plan to ally the OPC with other regionally based parties. The constitution also acknowledged the party’s close working relationship with ‘chiefs’, such as Chief Hosea Kutako, who, by definition, had ‘traditional’, ethnically defined constituencies. The constitution reflected the organisation’s roots amongst the workers through its emphasis on the importance of trade unions as partners.

<sup>(12)</sup> ‘Ja-Toivo exiled to Ovamboland, is Suffering Great Hardship’, *New Age*, 21st January, 1960. See also UN Archives, S-0443-0061-TR240. Mr Jairetundu Kozonguizi, SWA to Mr Mburumba Kerina, New York 20th January, 1959. The letter included an extensive quotation from a letter by ya Toivo describing his experience.

<sup>(13)</sup> A telegram dated 29th September, 1959 gave his apologies. UN Fourth Committee (Trusteeship), 14th Session, 892nd Meeting, 2nd October, 1959.

<sup>(14)</sup> The African Improvement Society was influenced by developments in the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). See Katjavivi Peter H (1988) *A History of Resistance in Namibia*. James Currey, London; OAU, Inter-African Cultural Fund – Addis Ababa; UNESCO Press, Paris, pp.24-33.

<sup>(15)</sup> BAB PA 48. African Improvement Society. ‘Minutes of an interview between Capt. Bowker and the following members of the African Improvement Society’ – 6th September, 1947.

<sup>(16)</sup> Interview by Tony Emmett with Solomon Mifima 23rd August, 1979.

Levy Nganjone had argued strongly within the Herero Chief 's Council for the creation of a political party that would unite people from different ethnic groups and organisations into a single, 'national' party. A Constitutional Committee was, therefore, established by the Herero Chief 's Council and the group of young intellectuals and activists known as the *Ozohoze* (translated as 'The Reconnaissance') that also advised Chief Kutako. The committee had five members: Clement Kapuu, John Garvey Muundjua, Rev. Bartholomews Karuaera, Erwin Tjirimuje and Zedekia Ngavirue. Uatja Kaukuetu and Tunguru Huaraka of the South West Africa Progressive Association (SWAPA) were also co-opted later – SWAPA had developed from an organisation formed in 1952 by students who had previously studied in South Africa (Ngavirue, 1997: 214; Dreyer, 1994: 29).

In August, 1959 a meeting was organised at the hall owned by Mr Glorius Katajee Kaunozondunge, dubbed 'International Hall' because of being a favourite spot for cultural events, in Windhoek. The purpose of the meeting was to launch the South West Africa National Union (SWANU), under the presidency of Uatja Kaukuetu. (Katjavivi, 1988: 41-4). In September, 1959 another SWANU meeting chaired by Clemens Kapuu.<sup>17</sup> The voting at the meeting was simply organised by the crowd dividing with those supporting one candidate standing on one side, while those for the second candidate stood on the other. Jariretundu Kozonguizi was elected President (with the support of OPO's members) and Uatja Willie Kaukuetu as Vice- President, but as Kozonguizi had already travelled abroad to join Rev. Scott as a petitioner at the United Nations, Kaukuetu was effectively SWANU's leader inside the territory (Ngavirue, 1997: 218).

## The 'Old Location' Shooting

Hindsight means that in Namibia today people talk nostalgically of the 'Old Location', but in the 1950s the black population of Windhoek lived in what was known then as the 'Main Location' and a smaller 'Klein Windhoek Location'. Proposals to implement the Group Areas Act in Windhoek and remove all the residents to two new townships on the outskirts of town date from at least 1955 and provoked political resistance.<sup>18</sup>

A huge public meeting (reportedly attended by over 2,000 people) was held at the soccer field in the location on 2nd December 1959. Chief Kutako and members of the Herero Chief 's Council as well as Sam Nujoma of OPO spoke against the plans for the destruction of the existing locations, whilst the 'Chief Native Commissioner', Bruwer Blignaut, and the Superintendent of the Windhoek Location, Pieter Andries de Wet, tried to encourage the residents to accept the proposed move. However, as John ya Otto, remembered the crowd were hostile to the officials with some chanting

<sup>(17)</sup> BAB. Kozonguizi archives. 'South West Africa Union' – Hitjevi Vei, Propaganda and Organising Secretary.

<sup>(18)</sup> Hall .C. "Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Occurrences in the Windhoek Location on the Night of the 10th and 11th December, 1959, and into the Direct Causes which led to those Occurrences", South West Africa Administration, Windhoek; 1961, p3.

‘We won’t move’, whilst others shouted comments such as ‘Boers go to Kakamas!’ (ya Otto, 1982 :48).

The Windhoek Municipality started to visit homes in the Location to make valuations so that families that were to be removed to the new townships would receive ‘adequate compensation’. On 4th December, Fritz Gariseb, a member of the Location’s Advisory Board (the ‘patriot’ referred to in Sam Nujoma’s account), refused to have his house valued and was beaten by a Municipal Policeman, Mr Maritz. Four women from the Damara Section of the location who sought to intervene were arrested. Shortly afterwards a spontaneous demonstration took place when a large group of women marched in protest to the Government Buildings. When the senior official, the Administrator refused to see them and, instead, went home, they followed him and marched all the way to his Residence. The police then sent the protestors to speak to the Chief Magistrate. The women who were estimated to number 500 by this point were, eventually, persuaded to disperse, but a boycott was then organised to start on 8th December 1959.<sup>19</sup>

The boycott covered all the municipality services in the location – the buses, the bioscope and the beer hall – as a form of non-violent protest to show the strength of opposition to the removals. The boycott was effectively organised by SWANU and OPO who worked together. Sam Nujoma explained that: “I went to a certain shop in Windhoek to buy a loud-speaker that we successfully installed on to a car and patrolled the whole compound mobilizing. I tell you, all the people were excited as they heard their languages being spoken through a loud-speaker. As I was announcing, Comrade Moses Garoeb . . . was interpreting in Nama and Comrade Mbaeva in Herero. This campaign was successful”.<sup>20</sup>

On 10th December, Mayor Snyman, called an emergency meeting of the Advisory Committee to try to stop the boycott. The Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police, Major Lombard, addressed the meeting and told the participants the story of migrant workers who had taken a wrong path and been eaten by lions. The Police Chief then, according to John ya Otto, asked the meeting: “Are you moving to Katutura – or are you going to meet the lion?” Other participants at the meeting remember Major Lombard warning that “He who does not hear, must feel” and the Mayor, Snyman, told the people ‘You Must Move’ (Ya Otto, 1982: 83; Jafta et al, 1991: 28).

In the evening three men who were trying to picket the beer hall were arrested and taken to the municipal office in the location. It was reported at the time that one of the men arrested was Mr Franz Kujambera “. . . as he was preventing the people to use the bar. Kujambera’s screams attracted a big crowd. Two people who were together with Kujambera were unjustly arrested. The people demanded their release which was refused by the police. Mr Snyman called for police reinforcements.” The large

<sup>(19)</sup> ‘Natives march on Administration Buildings to Protest’, *Windhoek Advertiser*, 7th December, 1959.

<sup>(20)</sup> “Ours is a formidable National Liberation Movement”: An exclusive interview with the President of SWAPO, Comrade Sam Nujoma on some aspects of his autobiography, *Namibia Youth: Official Bulletin of the SWAPO Youth League*, September/October 1982, pp7-11.

crowd that had gathered were given just 5 minutes to disperse, as they surrounded the office, and when they failed to do so, the police opened fire.<sup>21</sup> Willie Kaukuetu, the SWANU leader, had stood between the crowd and the police and observed that ‘the crowd could not hear the warning’. Kaukuetu claimed that he would have succeeded in getting the crowd to disperse peacefully if the police had given him more time. A total of 13 people died in the shooting (11 died immediately and 2 died the next day) and 54 more were injured. The dead included one woman named Anna Kakurukaze Mungunda and a teacher, Bernhardt Gutsche, who was the step-brother of Mburumba Kerina (a list of the dead and injured is provided in Jafta *et al*, 1999: 42-43, Katjavivi, 1988: 47-9).

On 15th December 1959, Sam Nujoma, the President of OPO, was issued with a deportation order which would have forced him, like Toivo ya Toivo, to return to ‘Ovamboland’ and remain there. The Secretary-General of OPO, Jacob Kuhangua, and Nujoma’s employer, Batholomeus Shimbama, were also given deportation orders as well as Nathanael Mbaeva, SWANU’s Propaganda Secretary (Nujoma, 2001: 78). SWANU and OPO invited the law firm of Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo to defend Nujoma and Mbaeva, but Tambo was stopped at Eros airport and returned to South Africa without being able to meet his clients.<sup>22</sup>

On 26th February 1960, Sam Nujoma had his last ever meeting with Chief Hosea Kutako and then, three days later, crossed the border into Bechuanaland and exile – it would be almost thirty years before he would return (Nujoma, 2001: 81-83). In April, 1960, it was decided that OPO would be renamed the ‘South West Africa Peoples’ Organisation’ (SWAPO) to reflect its nationalist perspective (Katjavivi, 1988: 20-3).

The response of the United Nations to the sustained bombardment of petitions it received from ‘South West Africa’ was both legal and bureaucratic. A ‘Special Committee on South West Africa’ was tasked to visit ‘South West Africa’ before 1st May 1962, with an optimistic set of goals which primarily consisted of achieving the ‘repeal of all laws or regulations which establish and maintain the intolerable system of apartheid’ and the organisation of a general election based on ‘universal adult suffrage’ under ‘the supervision and control of the United Nations’.<sup>23</sup> A delegation led by Mr Victoria D. Carpio of the Philippines were able to meet representatives of the SWAPO, SWANU & SWANION parties who were all reported to have ‘expressed strong opposition to ‘apartheid policies’ that restricted the ‘welfare, education and development of Africans’ and their ‘freedom of movement’.

The Carpio visit was not significant because of what it achieved, but for what it did not achieve. On 26th May 1962, the two UN representatives issued a joint communiqué with the South African Government which stated “...that in the places

<sup>21</sup> UN Archives. S-0443-0060-TR240 Mburumba Kerina and Jariretundu Kozonguizi, Windhoek to Secretary-General, United Nations, 1p. 24th December, 1959.

<sup>22</sup> *Windhoek Advertiser*, 4th August, 1960

<sup>23</sup> United Nations Special Committee on South West Africa. *Report of the United Nations Special Committee for South West Africa*, United Nations, New York, 31st July, 1962, p1. A/AC. 110/2. S-0443-0058 TR214/1.

visited they had found no evidence and heard no allegations that there was a threat to international peace and security within South West Africa; that there were no signs of militarisation in the territory; or that the indigenous population was being exterminated” (Serfontein, 1976: 51). The two men later disowned this statement claiming that South Africa had changed the wording after they had left and submitted a more critical final report, but the damage had already been done.<sup>24</sup> When SWAPO’s Executive Committee met in Dar es Salaam in November 1963, it concluded that “The visit of Carpio drove the final nail into the coffin of the United Nations’ reputation in SWA.”<sup>25</sup>

On 4th November 1960, Ethiopia and Liberia initiated a case against South Africa at the International Court of Justice (UNIN, 1987: 315). The case dragged on for six years before the Court finally decided, on 18th July, 1966, that Ethiopia and Liberia had never actually had the right to bring the case to court (O’Linn, 2003: 61–63; Goldblatt, 1971: 258). The majority of the members of the General Assembly of the United Nations reacted with shock and indignation and on 27th October 1966, Resolution 2145 (XXI) was adopted. The resolution formally revoked the mandate and stated that the United Nations should take over direct responsibility for the administration of Namibia. In effect, this meant that the continuing South African administration of Namibia was now seen as an illegal occupation.

## Exile and the Launch of the Armed Struggle

The first petitioners from ‘South West Africa’ to stand before the Committees of the United Nations were those who had managed to obtain passports to pursue studies (apart from Hans Beukes who was smuggled out of the territory in 1959 in the boot of a car). However, after Sam Nujoma was served with a deportation order, he made the decision, supported by Chief Hosea Kutako, to leave the country to lobby the United Nations and seek support from some of the newly independent African countries. Sam Nujoma left on 29th February 1960 and after an arduous journey, arrived in Tanganyika three weeks later (Nujoma, 2001: 83, 90).

The first political activists who left for exile without passports in the 1960s were able to use the network of the Otjiherero-speaking community of Bechuanaland and the local Chiefs who supported their struggle to assist them, with the aim of then travelling onwards to Tanganyika. Maxton Joseph Mutongolome arrived in Bechuanaland on 8th July 1961, and set up a SWAPO office that facilitated the journeys of those travelling into exile. Mutongolome, for example, assisted Libertina Amathila, one of the first female SWAPO activists to leave and to reach Dar es Salaam in September 1962 (Amathila, 2012: 27). The ‘White House’ in Francistown became

a welcome resting place for those *en route* to exile. Often the lack of legal documents

<sup>(24)</sup> Sam Nujoma, pers. comm, 1st August, 2013.

<sup>(25)</sup> NAN A690. Box 6 (31) ‘Report on meeting of National Executive Committee’, Dar es Salaam, 2–9th November, 1963.

meant that the early exiles had to adopt false names and cover stories to help them evade the authorities. For example, when Theo-Ben Gurirab escaped in 1962 he travelled as ‘Peter Mafurira’ from Blantyre in Nyasaland (Malawi).<sup>26</sup>

Whilst Francistown was a staging post for migrant workers from Angola travelling to and from the mines in Namibia, some activists also used this transport system to leave and Mutongolume as well successfully obtained additional recruits for SWAPO from some of these workers. Vinnia Ndadi, for example, used the ‘Wenela’ (the ‘Witwatersrand Native Labour Association’) route to escape in June 1964 (Ndadi, 2009: 128). Several members of the local OtjiHerero-speaking community also joined SWAPO or SWANU. For example, SWAPO recruited Kahaka Kaikoroma (who later served as the party’s Deputy-Secretary for Justice) in Botswana (Muller, 2012: 161, 101).

However, the route to Dar es Salaam was fraught with danger, particularly for men (predominantly) travelling without legitimate documentation. Peter Katjavivi, Brian Bassingwaithe and Ferdinand Merero reached Francistown in September 1962, only to be arrested at Plumtree and ‘deported’ to South Africa, when they tried to pass through ‘Rhodesia’ because they did not have valid travel documents. In this instance, the train supposed to take them to South Africa, was stopped by the British High Commissioner as it passed through Gaborone in Bechuanaland, and they were released (Muller, 2012: 68). Amnesty International attempted to build a new ‘White House’ for political refugees, only for it to be destroyed by an explosion on 26th July 1964, a day before it was due to be opened (Muller, 2012: 81).

It is clear that one of the major concerns that many young people in ‘South West Africa’ had was the lack of educational opportunities and concerns about the quality and content of ‘Bantu Education’ (which had been imposed on the territory from 1955). Helao Shityuwete explained: “Although, as SWAPO members, we were increasingly harassed and pressurized by the authorities, we were not leaving the country for these reasons, and we did not regard ourselves as political fugitives. We were, rather, academic refugees, people thirsty for education which was denied us in Namibia. We wanted to take up education from wherever it was available” (Shityuwete, 1990: 77).

It is against this background that Resolution 1705 (XVI) was passed by the General Assembly on 19th December 1961. Consequently, the ‘UN Special Training Programme for South West Africans’ with the provision of US\$50,000 per annum for scholarships for suitably qualified applicants from the territory for 1962, 1963 and 1964 was established. Member states were also encouraged to offer further scholarships. By 15th May 1964, it was reported that twenty-one scholarship holders were studying in Ghana, Nigeria, Sierre Leone, Tanganyika, Uganda, UK and the USA (seventeen of these were for secondary education).

(26) ‘Interview with Theo-Ben Gurirab’. Tonchi, V.L & B. Mulongeni, *Voices of Liberation: A history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*, Windhoek, March, 2012, p.177.

Many other activists, such as Ngarikutuke Tjiriange of SWAPO and Issascar Katuuo of SWANU, said that the quest for education was an important motivating factor. Tjiriange and Katuuo stated that they had both left ‘South West Africa’ in January 1963, to escape ‘Bantu education’. The system had been introduced into the territory from 1955 (when the state took over many mission schools) and they complained that it only provided ‘a backward and primitive education’ and sought better educational opportunities abroad.<sup>27</sup> In March 1964, a large group of Otjiherero-speaking Namibians crossed the border into Bechuanaland with a second smaller group of seventeen arriving a few days later. The group, reportedly, included sixteen of Chief Hosea Kutako’s councillors. Individual interviews conducted with the members of the group showed that all had educational aspirations. However, the larger first group reportedly consisted mainly of men who were illiterate and often, relatively, old and did not, therefore, qualify for any of the scholarships that were available.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, education continued to be an important incentive and was further boosted by the news, in 1965, that the United States of America had funded the construction of the Nkumbi International College near Kabwe in Zambia (through the African-American Institute) to compliment another at Kurasini in Tanzania (Muller, 2012: 122).

After the departure of Nujoma into exile in 1960, the decision was made to change the name of the Ovamboland Peoples’ Organisation.<sup>29</sup> Simon Hafeni ‘Mzee’ Kaukungwa recalls that, “In Tanzania, Nujoma was advised by Tanzanians, Kenyans and other countries that he should change the name of the party, he cannot have a party that only represented one tribal group, so he wrote a letter informing me that he needed to change the name of the organisation. He said the name ‘South West Africa Peoples’ Organisation (SWAPO) had been proposed by Mburumba Kerina”.<sup>30</sup> The change in name was significant as it was made to emphasise the point that SWAPO was a national organisation that aspired to represent all the residents of ‘South West Africa’. Whilst there was a steady flow of people into exile, it was still believed that change could be achieved through non-violent means if young people could empower themselves by obtaining better educational opportunities and the United Nations could be persuaded to actively intervene. In September 1961, Mr L.H. Nepela, a SWAPO leader inside ‘South West Africa’ argued, “If you want to climb a tree you start from the bottom To harbour atrocious thoughts as an ideal for a solution

<sup>27</sup> UN Archives. S-O443-0059 – TR222 ‘Letter from Erenst Ngarikutuke Tjiriange and Issascar Katuuo, Dar es Salaam to Secretary-General, United Nations’, 7th May, 1964.

<sup>28</sup> UN Archives. Special Committee with regard to the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, ‘Special Educational and Training Programmes for South West Africa’, A/AC.109/L.118. 15th May, 1964. 8pp. S-O443-0060-TR222/21 (Part A).

<sup>29</sup> The last correspondence to the United Nations in the name of OPO was dated 6th May, 1960, whilst the first correspondence to the UN in the name of SWAPO is dated 1st June, 1960. *Report of the Committee on South West Africa*, United Nations General Assembly, Fifteenth Session. Supp. No 12 (A/4464), New York, 1960, p 5-7.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Interview with Simon Hafeni ‘Mzee’ Kaukungwa’, 11h March, 2997 in Tonchi, V.L & B. Mulongeni, *Voices of Liberation: A history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*, Windhoek, March, 2012, p154.

would be climbing the tree from the top. Ideas of blood spilling and bloodshed should not be shelved – they should be buried and forgotten as a solution to the problem”.<sup>31</sup> SWAPO, therefore, sought to gradually build up its grassroots membership.

SWAPO continued to actively mobilise inside Namibia, particularly in the north, Walvis Bay and Windhoek. One of the trees next to the church in Endola even became known as *omwandi waKaxumba* as Tuhadeleni (*Kaxumba kaNdola*) would use it as the shaded venue for political meetings that would be held every week after church.

However, whilst SWAPO was not banned, the authorities made it very difficult for its political activists to operate. For example, on 17th October 1960, Tuhadeleni was arrested and confined at the homestead of Elia Weyulu, a senior headman of the Oukwanyama Traditional Authority at Ehafo. Simon Shivute, the Acting Secretary-General of SWAPO claimed that ‘the strong man’ of SWAPO had been arrested to prevent him delivering ‘unfavourable speeches’. After his release it was alleged that a SWAPO meeting organised by Tuhadeleni on 31st March 1961, was dispersed by the police (Namhila, 2002: 44-51).

It became increasingly clear that it would be difficult for SWAPO to operate as a normal political party within an abnormal context, where freedom of speech and movement were restricted. Important to note was the fact that the obstruction of SWAPO meetings by the authorities was not limited to northern Namibia. For example, in December 1962, the President of SWAPO, Nathaniel Maxuilili complained to the South African Minister of Justice that SWAPO had been refused permission to hold a meeting in Walvis Bay. Maxuilili argued, “We are a non-violent lawful organization and you will appreciate that we have to listen to legitimate grievances of our members”.<sup>32</sup> The administration refused to relax the ban. Despite these challenges, SWAPO continued to expand its membership. By 1963 the SWAPO branch in Tsumeb was led by Vinnia Ndadi as the Chairperson and Levi Mwashekele as the Organising Secretary. This branch organised mass meetings to inform the residents of Tsumeb town about political developments such as the pending case at the International Court of Justice. Ndadi recalls a meeting on 17th June 1963, where, “The Special Branch came too, led by Sergeant Boois with his tape recorder.” (Ndadi, 2009: 112-113). Clemens Kashupulwa remembers Leo Shoopala addressing a large meeting in Okatana in 1964 during which he urged people to leave the country.<sup>33</sup> By 1963, SWAPO’s letterhead was listing a ‘National Executive Committee’ with 21 members that included SWAPO’s leaders from both inside Namibia and those in exile.<sup>34</sup>

(31) ‘SWAPO President wants Africans to co-operate with Whites’, *Windhoek Advertiser*, 14th September, 1961.

(32) NAN. SWAS 847. M. Nathaniel, Vice-President, SWAPO to Minister of Justice, 19th December, 1962.

(33) ‘Interview with Clemens Kashupulwa’. Tonchi, V.L & B. Mulongeni, *Voices of Liberation: A history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*, Windhoek, March, 2012, p.21.

(34) UN Archives. TR212. Blank SWAPO Letterhead, date stamped 30th September, 1963. The 21 members listed (spellings as printed) were L. Aoutapama, J. Auseb, H. Beukes, V. Eixab, S. Erlia, L. Fortune, P. Haileka, T. Haitembu, T. Hamtumbangela, M. Haikupuraa, P. Hilongua, M. Kerina, J. Kuhangua, N. Machuiriri, L. Muashekele, A. Naseb, V. Ndadi, L. Nelengani, S. Nujoma, L. Shaduka, J. Shoombe, T. Therresien. T. ya-Toivo and E. Tuhadeleni.

The external leadership in Tanganyika also sent a small team back to ‘South West Africa’ to help with the recruitment of men to go into exile. Hifikepunye Pohamba and Eliander Mwatale were sent from Dar es Salaam in May, 1961, but were arrested and imprisoned in ‘Rhodesia’ because of their lack of travel documents. Pohamba eventually reached northern Namibia in December 1962 and spent more than a year working with the local SWAPO activists before leaving for exile again on 1st March 1964.<sup>35</sup>

The external leadership of SWAPO experienced a number of significant changes during the early 1960s. Petitioning and lobbying the different Committees of the United Nations remained a priority. A range of representatives, predominantly from SWANU and SWAPO, were permitted to make oral presentations to the Fourth Committee during the 1960s. In June, 1960 Sam Nujoma spoke to the Fourth Committee for the first time and the number of petitioners expanded significantly during the 1960s as more people left ‘South West Africa’. For example on 20th November 1960, the Committee heard presentations from Uatja Kaukuetu, Charles Kauraisa, Jariretundu Kozonguizi and Zedekia Ngavirue for SWANU and Ismail Fortune, Mburumba Kerina, Rev. Markus Kooper, Jacob Kuhangua and Sam Nujoma for SWAPO as well as the Rev. Michael Scott.<sup>36</sup> However, Mburumba Kerina resigned as the Chairman of SWAPO in September 1962 and it was reported that he was trying to establish a new political party – the Namib Indigenous Peoples Party (NIPP).<sup>37</sup>

In July 1963, SWAPO’s leadership reported that Kerina had attempted, unsuccessfully, to obtain a hearing with the OAU’s African Liberation Committee and that his activities were “... ..in danger of creating hatred and disunity among the Africans of our country”.<sup>38</sup> Kerina then travelled to Bechuanaland, arriving there on 23rd July 1963, and a year later announced the launch of the Namib Convention Independence Party (NACIP) on 3rd July 1964. Kerina himself was to be the President of the new party, whilst the Executive Committee included Clemence Kapuu, Bartholomeus Karuaera and Kuaima Riruako. The party later evolved into the National United Democratic Organisation (NUDO), officially founded in November 1964 (Muller, 2012: 183-185, 188).

The formation of the new party was linked to the efforts to encourage more people, mainly through the structures of the Herero Chief’s Council, to cross the border into Bechuanaland. When 154 people (with Kuaima Riruako as one of its leaders) crossed the border in March 1964, attracted partly by promises of educational opportunities, Bartholomeus Karuaera had been actively involved in their recruitment. However,

<sup>(35)</sup> ‘Biography of His Excellency Hifikepunye Pohamba’, <http://209.88.21.36/openccms/openccms/grnnet/GRNOOverview2/ourPresident>. Accessed 13th December, 2012. Hifikepunye Pohamba, pers. Comm. 1st August, 2013.

<sup>(36)</sup> UN Fourth Committee (Trusteeship), Sixteenth Session, 1217th Meeting, 20th November, 1960, p.377.

<sup>(37)</sup> NAN. A690. Box 6 (31) ‘Report on meeting of National Executive Committee, Dar es Salaam, 2-9th November, 1963.

<sup>(38)</sup> NAN A 690. Box 6 (30) Sam Nujoma, Louis Nelengani, Peter Mueshahange and Peter Nanjemba ‘Report to all members of the South West Africa People’s Organisation in South West Africa’, Dar es Salaam, 5th July, 1963.

the group found few opportunities available at the OAU. A handful managed to obtain military training in Ethiopia, but most of the remaining refugees, eventually returned to Namibia in 1975 when Clemence Kapuuo announced that he would be participating in the Turnhalle Constitutional Conference (Muller, 2012: 137, 201, 209). In November 1963, the 'National Executive Committee' of SWAPO held an important meeting in Dar es Salaam. The Committee consisted of: Sam Nujoma (President), Louis Nelengani (Vice- President), Ismail [van] Fortune (Secretary-General), Peter Mueshahange and Peter Nanyemba (Representatives for East Africa), Putuse Appolus (Women's Representative) and four 'new arrivals' who were also co-opted. The four 'additional members' were Andreas Shipanga, Paul Smith, Otilie Abrahams and Dr Kenneth Abrahams. The other members of the Executive Committee who were not able to attend the meeting were Jacob Kuhangua (Deputy Secretary-General), Emil Appolus (Publicity Secretary), Solomon Mifima (Cairo Representative) and Maxton Joseph (Bechuanaland Representative).

The main topic on the agenda was a proposal that SWANU and SWAPO should form a united front. The initiative seemed to have been a likely response to the decision expressed by the African Liberation Committee at its first meeting at the end of May 1963 that, they would only support a single, united, liberation movement in each of the countries which were still seeking to end colonial rule. The importance of avoiding divisions and factionalism and developing a strong unified anti-colonial resistance movement had been one of the recommendations that had emerged from the important 'Freedom Fighters' Conference held at Nkrumah's Winneba Ideological Institute in Ghana in May-June 1962.<sup>39</sup>

In fact, Sam Nujoma and Jariretundu Kozonguizi had already made a joint presentation to the African Liberation Committee on 1st October 1963, to introduce the SWA National Liberation Front (SWANLIF). In an effort to create an alternative structure through which to seek Africa Liberation Committee support Mburuma Kerina and Nathaneal Mbaeva launched an alternative 'unity' organization – SWANUF in New York, but both SWANU & SWAPO denied that it had their support as Kerina had already left SWAPO and Mbaeva was subsequently suspended from SWANU (Gibson, 1972: 135). In December 1963, a 'SWANLIF' meeting was held which agreed that "At least 75% of the FUNDS raised abroad will be transferred to the Liberation Front in South West Africa . . . " and that ". . . all the decisions taken would be referred to South West Africa for ratification" . . .<sup>40</sup> However, it was significant that both organisations retained their separate identities, that no practical structures were created for the transfer of funds to 'South West Africa' and that no mechanism was established to decide how funds would be effectively distributed.

<sup>39</sup> NAN A 690 Box 6 (31) 'Report on meeting of National Executive Committee, Dar es Salaam, 2-9th November, 1963

<sup>40</sup> NAN. A690. Box 6 (9) Meeting of the External Representative of the SWANU and SWAPO, Dar es Salaam, 22nd December, 1963.

Whilst the ‘Front’ was one model for ‘unity’, another was for the larger party, SWAPO, to absorb, smaller parties to form a single movement and it seems that the preference for this option kept SWAPO’s leadership from committing itself fully to the Front. Sam Nujoma accused Ismail Fortune and Kenneth and Otilie Abrahams of launching an ‘anti-SWAPO campaign’ at the African Liberation Committee on 8th January 1964, and SWAPO members were informed on 14th February 1964, that the three Executive Committee members had been expelled. Nujoma argued that SWAPO’s support by the Committee had been jeopardised by the argument that the party “... does not need financial assistance until a South West African Liberation Front is formed”.<sup>41</sup> In July 1964, it was reported that Ismael Fortune had returned to Windhoek, whilst the Abrahams had moved to Sweden.<sup>42</sup>

Fortune was initially still accepted by the SWAPO leadership inside the territory as the Secretary-General although the June edition of SWAPO’s *South West Africa Times* (produced in Dar es Salaam) had already claimed that Fortune was working with the South African Special Branch.<sup>43</sup> The temporary difference reflected the challenges facing a liberation movement with leadership structures inside and outside the country and restricted communication facilities. It was SWANU, rather than SWAPO, that seemed most disappointed by the failure of the front with the August 1964 edition of their newsletter, *Freedom*, claiming that critics of the Front would ‘disrupt the unity of the people’. The article argued that the Front presented exciting new revolutionary possibilities, but warned that “. . . trees must be bent before they

become dry”.<sup>44</sup> However, instead of supporting a coalition of separate parties, SWAPO preferred to develop itself as a national party that would represent everybody. Whilst, SWANU and OPO were both launched in Windhoek in 1959, and quickly adopted a ‘nationalist’ agenda,<sup>45</sup> another party was launched a couple of years later many kilometres away in the distant region of Caprivi. The Caprivi African National Union

(CANU) was officially founded on 7th September 1962, with an Executive Committee that was expanded in May 1964, and the rallying cry *Lyazwa twaa!* - meaning ‘The sun has risen’.<sup>45</sup> The President of CANU was Brendan Simbwaye with Albert Mishake Muyongo as Vice-President (Kangumu, 2011:206).

The name of the party might have suggested a separatist agenda, but the 1964 Constitution of CANU summarised the aims of the organisation succinctly: “. . . to promote independence for South West Africa and the Caprivi; to establish democracy and ensure an equitable distribution of land and wealth” (Kangumu,

<sup>(41)</sup> NAN A 690 Box 6 (20) Sam Nujoma to ‘Comrades in Struggle’, 14th February, 1964

<sup>(42)</sup> NAN A 690 Box 6 (33) ya Otto to ja Toivo, 8th July, 1964.

<sup>(43)</sup> NAN A 690. Box 6 (33) ya Otto to ja Toivo, 8th July, 1964; Box 7 (10) *South West Africa Times*, June 1964.

<sup>(44)</sup> UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/20/27 - ‘Are the People of SWA to be Betrayed?’, *Freedom: International Organ of the South West Africa National Union*, Dar el-Hana Press, Cairo, August, 1964, p.3.

<sup>(45)</sup> Shiremo, Shipapi, ‘Greenwell Matongo: A Celebrated Freedom Fighter of Namibia (1945-1979)’ *New Era*, 9th September, 2011.

2011: 202).<sup>46</sup> Whilst it emphasised Caprivi's distinct identity, it proposed that Caprivi should be included in the campaign for the territory's independence. Swift action was however undertaken to decapitate the new organisation. Although there is some uncertainty about the exact date, it seems likely that the President of CANU, Brendan Simbwaye was arrested on 15th July 1964 and on 24th September 1964, he and Vernet Maswahu (CANU's 'Education Secretary') were served with a 'Ministerial Order of Removal' banishing them from the Caprivi to Ohopoho in the Kaokoveld, hundreds of kilometres away (Kangumu, 2011: 216-217). In the meantime, on 26th September 1964, Sam Nujoma left Dar es Salaam for Zambia to open a SWAPO office in Lusaka. CANU had established close links with Kenneth Kaunda's UNIP party. Indeed Kaunda is said to have purchased the first membership card of the new party and UNIP's Secretary-General, Munukayumbwa Sipalo gave assistance to CANU to print their Constitution (Kangumu, 2011: 203 -205). Whilst in Lusaka, Sam Nujoma met CANU's Vice-President, Mishake Muyongo, and reached an agreement that there should be a merger of CANU and SWAPO. A formal undertaking to merge was signed on 7th October 1964, by Mr Nujoma and Mr Muyongo who stated that: "... for the sake of African Unity, the Charter of Addis Ababa and the guarantee of our National integrity we the Executive Leaders of our two organizations declare the merger of our two Political Parties into a single movement which will lead our people to Freedom and National Independence".<sup>47</sup> "The CANU merger with SWAPO was announced in Dar es Salaam on October 13th 1964 by Jacob Kuhangwa, the SWAPO Secretary-General"(Morris, 1971: 14). The formal agreement between CANU and

SWAPO that was signed stated as follows:

'We, the undersigned members of South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and Caprivi African National Union (CANU) do hereby declare that, for the interest of our people and freedom and independence of our Fatherland, South West Africa, CANU and SWAPO cease to exist as separate Organisations. We further resolve that CANU and SWAPO merge and unite as one Organisation".<sup>48</sup>

The three stated objectives of the merged organisations were announced as 'the total liberation of South West Africa', 'to foster the ideal of Pan-Africanism' and "... the creation of true democratic Government in South West Africa, a government that would serve the interest of all the people of our country irrespective of their colour, race, ethnic origin, religion or creed" (Kangumu, 2011: 230).

A further boost to SWAPO's efforts to broaden its base and to support its claim to be the Organisation that represented all the People of 'South West Africa' came in early 1965 when the traditional leader of the /*Khowesin*, a Khoekhoegowab-speaking community based in Gibeon became a SWAPO member. Kaptein H.S. Witbooi had

<sup>(46)</sup> Crispin Simasiku Mulondo, Albert Ndopu, Vernet Maswahu, Alfred Tongo Nalishuwa and Gideon Matengu were the other members of the Executive Committee.

<sup>(47)</sup> NAN A 690. Box 7 (4) South West Africa Today. Dar es Salaam, nd (late 1964 ?)

<sup>(48)</sup> UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/20/42 A.J.K. Kangwa, Under Secretary for International and Pan-African Affairs, UNIP, Lusaka to Vice-President, CANU, Sesheke, 20th July, 1965.

been one of those who had signed petitions to the United Nations in the late 1950s with Chief Hosea Kutako and Sam Nujoma and his membership of SWAPO showed that the party could also claim support in southern Namibia. 49

Whilst the Namibian (inside and in exile) support base of SWAPO was growing, changes in the international political arena also helped advance the struggle for the liberation for Namibia. A SWAPO briefing paper from 1969 highlighted the first Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung in 1955 and the independence of Ghana in 1957 as inspirational. 50 The Conference was particularly significant because it sought to identify the ‘stronger’ liberation movements in each country. After the Conference SWAPO, ANC, MPLA, FRELIMO, PAIGC and ZAPU became known as ‘the authentic six’ (Shubin 2008: 161; Sellström, 2002: 249). Meanwhile, within southern Africa, the independence of Zambia on 24th October 1964, was also a significant turning point in the history of the Namibian liberation struggle as “. . . the ‘front line’ advanced from Tanzania to the Zambezi river”. 51 SWAPO established an office in Lusaka and ZANU and ZAPU also set up their main offices there. Nujoma admitted that the close interaction with the Zimbabwean colleagues meant that Ian Smith’s banning of the two nationalist parties and his ‘Unilateral Declaration of Independence’ on 11th November 1965, had a significant impact. The ‘Second Chimurenga’, the Zimbabwe’s armed struggle, was also launched in parallel with that of Namibia as the Battle of Chinoyi took place on 29th April 1966, a month after the first arrest of SWAPO’s guerrilla forces inside ‘South West Africa’ (Els, 2007: 50).

SWAPO continued to provide evidence that, whilst the party was not banned, it faced constant intimidation. One case that attracted considerable publicity was the murder of SWAPO’s Organising Secretary in northern Namibia, Leo Shoopala, on the 11th March 1966. Shoopala, a SWAPO activist, who had been deported from Walvis Bay where he had worked with Nathaniel Maxuilili was shot by the bodyguard of a Senior Headman of Uukwambi, Jackie Ashipala, whilst another activist, Fidelis Laban, was seriously injured. In September, it was claimed that another activist, Johannes Shembe, had also been shot while addressing a public meeting. 52

Whilst political activists faced intimidation and violence inside Namibia, the exiled leadership of the political parties faced a struggle to obtain international recognition and financial and practical support. SWAPO and SWANU were initially represented by a handful of politicians and students scattered across the globe. In January 1960, Kerina (representing OPO) and Kozonguizi (representing SWANU) attended the Second All-African Peoples Conference in Tunisia. SWANU at this time was struggling to position itself as a ‘nationalist’ organisation and define its relationship with the Herero Chief’s Council. When Clemens Kapuuo was elected as the Deputy

④ NAN. A 690. Box 6 (13) John ja Otto to Mr I.G. Nathaniel Machuiriri [sic], 18th February, 1965.

⑤ UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/2/4/11 - ‘International Conference in support of the Peoples of Portuguese Colonies and Southern Africa’, Khartoum, 18th-20th January, 1969. Background Paper submitted by SWAPO.

⑥ PA 1/2/4/7 – Hall, Richard, ‘Zambia and the Liberation Movements’, 28th February, 1968.

⑦ ‘The Pretoria Outrage’, SWAPO, *Namibia Review (Special Issue)*, Lusaka, January, 1968, p.3.

to Hosea Kutako as Paramount Chief of the Herero in March, 1960 several of Kutako's leading councillors resigned from SWANU. Ongoing generational conflict would be a factor that reduced SWANU's effectiveness inside Namibia (Katjavivi, 1988: 44). The following year, in March 1961, Sam Nujoma attended the Third All-African Peoples Conference in Cairo where he was able to meet with President Nasser – a meeting that would lead to the first SWAPO recruits travelling to the United Arab Republic (Egypt) for military training in 1962 (Nujoma, 2001: 114).<sup>53</sup> The initiative was to be an important factor in determining that SWAPO, rather than SWANU, would obtain the bulk of international support.

Initially, in the wake of Ghana's independence in 1957, the widely shared belief in Pan-Africanism and the vision of a potential 'United States of Africa' in the future meant that liberation movements, ideologically and literally, often worked closely together. Sam Nujoma remembers that when SWAPO was first able to establish itself in Dar es Salaam "We had a little office, which we shared with SWANU, ANC, PAC, UNIP and the liberation movements of Rwanda-Burundi, Kenya and Uganda". In fact, a wide range of movements consisting of UNIP from Zambia, KANU from Kenya, the ANC and PAC from South Africa, SWAPO and SWANU from 'South West Africa' and TANU from 'Tanganyika' briefly formed the 'Pan-African Freedom Movement of East, Central and Southern Africa' with the long acronym PAFMECSA in January, 1961. However, Dr Ngavirue argues that the Movement was 'largely symbolic' having few practical outcomes, and was only important because it 'established the principle of collective responsibility for the liberation of southern Africa' (Ngavirue, 1997: 35). The large number of political movements already operating in Dar es Salaam at the time Tanzania obtained her independence on 9th December 1961 helps to explain the roots of the shared histories and long personal friendships and rivalries that built up over time between many of the leaders of the different movements (Nuyoma, 2001: 121-122).

The South Africa United Front (SAUF) that was founded in Addis Ababa in June, 1960 was an attempt to create an effective partnership between the liberation movements in 'South West Africa' and South Africa in order to co-ordinate their activities and their arguments more efficiently. SWANU and SWAPO worked with colleagues from the Indian Congress, PAC and ANC and the Front had representatives in London, New York, Cairo and Dar es Salaam (Ngavirue, 1997: 243-244). Despite this working relationship there was also pressure for SWANU and SWAPO to merge. Jacob Kuhangua left Dar es Salaam on 31st May 1962, for Ghana to represent SWAPO at the 'Freedom Fighters Conference' at Wineba where SWANU and SWAPO leaders agreed that they should create a united front. Kuhangua reported that President Nkrumah had explicitly stated that "... he will be reluctant to aid one party so long as such assistance may be used against another party".<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> BAB. Kozonguizi Papers 'C. Brief Outline of the History and International Action by Namibians'.

<sup>54</sup> NAN A 690. Box 7 (6) Report by Jacob Kuhangua, n.d. (1962?).

It was also extremely significant that Sam Nujoma of SWAPO was able to attend the Conference that launched the OAU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 23rd-25th May 1963. Nujoma reported that one of the most important outcomes of the Conference had been the decision to establish an African Liberation Co-ordinating Committee (ALC). When President Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika (which would later become Tanzania upon unification with Zanzibar in 1964) offered to host the Committee in Dar es Salaam he affirmed that, “. . . we in Tanganyika are prepared to die a little for the final removal of the humiliation of colonialism from the face of Africa” (Nyerere, 1967: 215-216).

The Committee, consisting of nine member states and chaired by the Foreign Minister of Tanzania, Oscar Kambona, was quickly established in Dar es Salaam and held its first meeting on 25th June to 5th July 1963. The Committee was tasked: “. . . to help the Nationalist Political Organizations in non-Independent territories in Africa and also to approach leaders of different Political Organizations in these territories to form what they call United Fronts where the African Liberation Committee will channel material assistance to the Liberation Movements to eradicate Colonialism and Imperialism in the remaining colonies in our motherland, Africa”.<sup>55</sup> It was in this context that the proposal by SWANU and SWAPO to launch a ‘united front’, SWANLIF, just three months later can best be understood. In 1963 both SWANU and SWAPO received recognition from the OAU as ‘liberation movements’ (Sellström, 1999: 263).

Important funding guidelines were also set by the OAU and African Liberation Committee which made the waging of an ‘armed struggle’ a prerequisite for support and placed a concrete incentive for ‘unity’ by stating that in order to achieve this goal funding would be provided to ‘united fronts’, rather than individual political parties (Dreyer, 1994: 61). The capacity of the OAU to give practical and co-ordinated assistance to the armed struggle would be enhanced at a meeting of Heads of State that took place in Kinshasa on 11th-14th September 1967. A committee consisting of military experts representing seventeen nations was established to provide professional advice and assist with the budgeting of support for the different liberation movements (Morris, 1971: 24).

The impact of the political landscape in which SWAPO’s leadership was operating in the early 1960s can be clearly seen in the development of their political aims. In 1961 SWAPO issued a ‘Political Programme’ that set out its goals which included ‘a free, democratic government’ on the basis of ‘one man, one vote’ (although the party committed itself to give the vote to every woman and man over the age of 18 ‘irrespective of their race, ethnic origin, religion or creed’) and the achievement of ‘complete national independence . . . not later than 1963’. When the Pan-African Congress of South Africa had launched the ‘Positive Action Campaign’ on 21st March

<sup>55</sup> NAN. A 690. Box 6 (30) – Nujoma, Sam. ‘Report of the Addis Ababa Summit Conference of Independent African States, 22-25 May, 1963’, 23rd June, 1963.

1960 (a campaign met with force by the state in the form of the Sharpeville Massacre) it had also set 1963 as their target date for independence (Gibson, 1972: 134). The Programme clearly affirmed the party's allegiance at the time to a radical Pan- Africanism: 'SWAPO believes in Pan-Africanism . . . and one common nationality for all Africans'. In addition the party recognised some of the difficulties created by the way in which the borders created by colonial rule had divided communities: 'SWAPO advocates the review of all artificial boundaries created by the colonialists in Africa'.<sup>56</sup> The programme included a commitment to nationalism, stating that 'All basic industries shall be publicly owned' and the redistribution of land on the basis that 'all existing land with foreign title deed and ownership shall be placed under the Government in conformity with the principles of African communal ownership'. The programme also contained commitments to achieving 'free and compulsory education' and 'free medical treatment for all South West Africans'. The Programme was circulated inside the Territory in *Unity Wings*, the party newsletter that was produced locally with limited resources by John ya Otto and Jason Mutumbulwa and then translated into Oshiwambo by Helmut Angula (Ngavirue, 1997: 298-299).<sup>57</sup>

Whilst SWAPO was able to firmly establish itself in the early 1960s, the other major nationalist party, SWANU, was less successful. The aftermath of the 'Old Location Shooting' (as it became commemorated in later years), also impacted on SWANU, with many of its leaders leaving the country and seeking international support. For example, Uatja Kaukuetu and Charles Kauraisa (SWANU's Walvis Bay representative) took up scholarships in Sweden.<sup>58</sup> Sweden was to become an important base for the external leadership of the party. Jariretundu Kozonguizi had also visited China as early as 1960 and met Chairman Mao Tse-tung on 18th March 1963 although, he argued, this was "not so much for ideological support, but for funds and material aid".<sup>59</sup>

Like SWAPO, SWANU faced problems in maintaining effective lines of communication between the internal and external leadership. Nevertheless, Jariretundu Kozonguizi and Ambrosius Kandjii were able to travel to Bechuanaland to meet members of the internal leadership at Francistown in February 1964. The meeting preceded SWANU's National Conference that took place in Windhoek on 31st May – 1st June 1964 (Muller, 2012: 131, 134).

SWANU suffered a major blow in 1965 when the OAU Liberation Committee withdrew its recognition of the party. Charles Kauraisa explained that the Committee ". . . wanted us to make a clear statement that SWANU was embarking on armed struggle. This we could not do" (Sellström, 2002: 238). Kozonguizi resigned as President

<sup>56</sup> NAN A690 'Programme of SWAPO', Box 6 (17) *Unity Wings*, 8th November, 1966.

<sup>57</sup> NAN. A 690. Box 6 (17) 'Programme of SWAPO', *Unity Wings*, 8th November, 1966. 'Interview with Eddie Amukongo'. Tonchi, V.L & B. Mulongeni. *Voices of Liberation: A history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*, Windhoek, March, 2012, p 343.

<sup>58</sup> BAB. Kozonguizi archives. 'South West Africa Union' – Hitjevi Veii, Propaganda and Organising Secretary.

<sup>59</sup> Yale-UN Oral History Project, 'Interview with Moses Katjiuongua by Jean Krasno', New York, 9th March, 1999, p19.

and member of SWANU on 4th July 1966.<sup>60</sup> The declining fortunes of SWANU were also linked to shifts in terms of international recognition and rivalry between the USSR and China that supported different liberation movements. Kozonguizi's links with China had helped SWANU obtain recognition from the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) established in Cairo at the end of 1957. However, after China left the organisation and the USSR gained more influence, SWANU was expelled and SWAPO admitted as Namibia's sole representative (Dreyer, 1994: 58).

In January, 1966 Sam Nujoma wrote to the SWAPO comrades in Windhoek of his “. . . hope that the year 1966 will be crowned with the victory and the achievement of freedom and independence for Namib (South West Africa).” The SWAPO President announced that frustration with the inaction of the United Nations and the ICJ meant that he had decided to return home to ‘continue with the struggle’. In his autobiography, Nujoma writes that he was angered by claims being made in The Hague by the South African defence team in the case brought by Ethiopia and Liberia that SWAPO's leadership were in ‘self-exile’. On 20th March 1966, Nujoma flew to Windhoek from Livingstone in Zambia in a small plane that he had hired with his comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba (SWAPO's representative in Lusaka). The aim was to challenge the argument that they were in exile by choice.<sup>61</sup> The two men landed at lunchtime, but instead of being greeted by their supporters found that the authorities had diverted their plane to ‘Ondekerenda Airport’ on the outskirts of the city. The men were questioned overnight and then deported back to Livingstone at 5am the next morning (Nujoma, 2001: 173).<sup>62</sup>

## The Odendaal Plan, Apartheid in Namibia and the Establishment of Homelands

The Odendaal Plan was a major South African initiative to reshape the political, social and economic landscape of Namibia and to present an alternative to the nationalist narrative of the liberation movement. A history of the liberation struggle must therefore critically consider this alternative vision for the future of Namibia as it presented an important framework for the struggle for the ‘hearts and minds’ of the Namibian people.

A ‘Commission of Enquiry in South West African Affairs’ was appointed on the 21st September 1962 under the chairperson of Fox Odendaal (and is thus commonly labelled ‘the Odendaal Plan’). The commission was entrusted with investigating the welfare and progress of the inhabitants of Namibia and was expected to come up with

<sup>60</sup> UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/20/28 – Response to ‘Kozonguizi – A South African Spy?’, *Windhoek Review*, May-June, 1969.

<sup>61</sup> H.E. Hifikepunye Pohamba and Founding Father Sam Nujoma, pers. Comm. 1st August, 2013.

<sup>62</sup> NAN. A 690. Box 6 (9) Sam Nujoma to Act Sec-Gen. SWAPO Windhoek, 2nd January, 1966 quoted in *Unity Wings* Vol. 2 (11) 19th July, 1966. – included info on Zambia, Zimbabwe and the Rivonia Trial. See also NAN A 690. Box 6 (9). *Unity Wings*, Vol. 4 (1) 7th April, 1966.

recommendations for a five year plan for the development of those described as the 'non-white' residents of the territory.

The Commission defined and divided Namibians into 12 different 'population groups' and recommended the establishment of 10 geographically defined 'Homelands' that were presented as providing distinct territories for each defined ethnic group. The groups identified in the Plan were Bushmen, Damara, Nama, Basters, Coloureds, Whites, Hereros, Kaokovelders, Ovambo, Okavango, East Caprivians and Tswana (Cockram, 1976: 307 and Lawrie, 1964: 2). The fact that many people did not live within the territory designated for their particular ethnic group presented a major challenge if the plan was to be vigorously implemented as large numbers of people would have to be moved. The Odendaal Plan rested on the assumption that every ethnic group had a natural 'territory'. In the case of those classified as 'Bushman' and 'Tswana' who were not identified as having clear historical claims to a defined territory, new 'homelands' were to be created. As the 'Coloured' community were viewed as problematic to place, both physically and ethnically, the plan proposed the establishment of separate urban communities and a special rural farming scheme where members of this 'community' could be settled on the northern bank of the Orange River (O'Linn, 2003: 67-68). The report argued that the "provision of homelands for the different ethnic groups is the best, if not the only, way to ensure harmonious development" (Lawrie, 1964: 1).

The central principal of the Odendaal Commission was the antithesis of nationalism. The report argued that:

"owing to fundamental difference in socio-cultural orientation, stages of general development and ethnic classification, the differences between the groups concerned are of so profound a nature that they cannot be wiped out, a policy of integration is unrealistic, unsound and undesirable, and cannot but result in continual social discrimination, discontent and frustration, friction and violence – a climate in which no socio-economic progress can be expected to take place" (Odendaal, p426).

The commission was convinced that "If such divergent groups were to be represented in one central authority, the Commission foresees endless friction and clashes between groups, which will tremendously hamper, if not bring to a complete standstill, the development of the Territory." The report further warned that: ". . . the numerical strengths of the various population groups vary so much that if, say, a system of one man one vote were to be introduced for the Territory, with one central authority, the result would be that one group, the Ovambo, representing almost half the population would completely dominate the other groups".<sup>63</sup> Prime Minister, Dr Verwoerd in a debate on the Odendaal Commission on 5th May 1964, emphasised that "There is no question of extending apartheid to South West Africa, there is no forcing apart of groups. What is suggested is to refrain from forcing together, against the whole trend of their history, peoples who are separate. Therefore I wish to emphasise that the basic

<sup>63</sup> Report of the Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa Affairs, 1962-1963 (Odendaal Commission), Pretoria, 1964, pp.55, 426.

idea with which we are dealing is not the creation of homelands. It is the preserving of homelands”.<sup>64</sup> Under the ‘Development of Self-Government for Native Nations of South West Africa Act’ (No. 54 of 1968) which was introduced to implement the major provisions of the Commission, each separate ‘native nation’ would have its own legislative council and even a national anthem and flag (UNESCO, 1974: 148). However, the Departments of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Internal Security and Border Control Posts, Water Affairs, Power Generations and Transport, Currency and Banking would remain under South African control (O’Linn, 2003: 68). André Du Pisani described the plan as an example of the “politics of controlled change” as South Africa sought to shape political development in Namibia according to an ethnic template (2010: 68)

The reaction to the Odendaal report inside Namibia was mixed. On the one hand, several powerful traditional leaders gave it their support as they saw it as presenting an opportunity to expand their own authority. Uushona Shiimi, the Omukwaniilwa (King) of Ongandjera argued that “. . . this thought of bringing all the tribes together to have one central authority for Ovamboland will not only lead to the advantage of all the people of Ovamboland but will bind together the Ovambo people” (Cockram, 1976: 364). Shiimi realized that the new political structure would strengthen the sense of a common ‘Ovambo’ identity, based on linguistic and cultural similarities between the members of the ‘seven kingdoms’ of northern Namibia.

Advocates of the plan also highlighted the fact that it made provision for economic development and improvements in sectors such as health, education and the provision of water and electricity to the rural ‘homelands’. A selected group of traditional leaders were taken (in 1965) to visit the Transkei, the first ‘Homeland’ in South Africa which had been established in 1963, whereupon several expressed concerns that tribalism made the nationalist alternative unfeasible. For example, Dr Kampungu, Chief Councillor of Kavango Legislature was quoted as saying: “. . . if the United Nations give us a central government at this stage, embracing all the tribes, it will be suicide” (Cockram, 1976: 428).

However, despite the fact that some traditional leaders welcomed Odendaal’s recommendations, SWAPO and SWANU both condemned them. Chief Hosea Kutako, Kaptein H.S. Witbooi and SWAPO issued a statement as early as 6th May 1963, condemning the concept of ‘homelands’.<sup>65</sup> In March 1964, SWAPO activists in the north learnt that De Wet Nel, the ‘Minister for Bantu Affairs’ would hold a meeting in Ohangwena to ‘explain’ the Odendaal Plan. Simon ‘Mzee’ Kaukungua recalled:

<sup>64</sup> Parliamentary Debates, 1964, Vol. 11, cols. 5452-3

<sup>65</sup> *Suidwes Afrikaner*, 7th May, 1963.

“I stood up to answer De Wet Nel: ‘We reject every word and paragraph of the Odendaal Commission Report. We do not desire independence for Ovamboland. We want freedom for the whole of South West Africa, every inch and square mile of it. Your move to establish a Bantustan here will bring about bloodshed which you have never seen before’”.<sup>66</sup>

When police arrested six of the SWAPO activists who had disrupted the meeting, including Kaxumba kaNdola, Kaukungua decided to leave the country having made his own personal decision that ‘the license to violence’ should no longer be restricted to the state, but that when he and his colleagues returned, “The gun must also be in our hands.<sup>67</sup> SWANU also clearly indicated their opposition to the proposals and claimed that any ‘traditional rulers’ who supported it must be ‘corrupt and politically ignorant’.<sup>68</sup>

The Odendaal Plan was also condemned at the United Nations as it was perceived as exporting apartheid and imposing a political system that virtually constituted an annexation of the territory. Opposition in the UN General Assembly eventually contributed to the adoption of UN Resolution 2145 (XXXI) by the General Assembly on 27th October 1966, that finally terminated South Africa’s mandate over Namibia and placed it under the direct responsibility of the UN (O’Linn, 2003:71-72).

Despite both the internal and the international criticism the South African State pressed ahead with the implementation of its alternative vision of the political future. The ‘Minister of Bantu Administration and Development’ returned on 17th October 1968, to officially open the ‘Ovamboland’ Legislative Council at Oshakati and it would become the first ‘homeland’ to gain its ‘independence’ in 1973 (Kerina, 1981: 208).

Whilst the Odendaal Plan presented a vision of a politically fragmented future, SWAPO activists were reaching the conclusion that the possibilities for peaceful change in ‘South West Africa’ had been exhausted. The closing statement made by *Kaxumba kaNdola* (Tuhadeleni) at the 1968 Terrorism Trial drew on both tradition and Christianity to reflect on his experiences of attempting to bring political change in ‘South West Africa’ and his, reluctant, recognition of the need to support an armed struggle:

“A peaceful struggle was not possible. We of SWAPO were not allowed to hold meetings and our leaders were victimised . . .

The decision to take up arms against South Africa was a troublesome one to me. I am proud of being a South West African and I am especially proud because of the history of my people. My people have a tradition of peace, both in its own affairs and with its neighbours. The place or area settled by a clan or group of families is called

<sup>66</sup> NAN. A 690. Box 7 (10) ‘The Kaukungua Story’, *South West Africa Times*, June 1964

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>68</sup> UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/20/27 - ‘The proper place for the Odendaal Commission Report is the waste paper basket’, *Freedom: International Organ of the South West Africa National Union*, Dar el-Hana Press, Cairo, August, 1964. The plan was also condemned by SWANU at their National Conference of 30th May to 1st June, 1963 (Ngavirue, 1997: 229).

OMUKUNDA which means ‘IT HAS BEEN DISCUSSED’ and the area settled by a tribe is called OSHILONGO, meaning ‘IT HAS BEEN DONE’. That is how we have conducted our affairs, by discussion and agreement . . .

Our struggle against South Africa is an unequal one. I have seen the power of South Africa at Ongulumbashe.<sup>69</sup> But David slew Goliath because he had right on his side, and we Namibians have faith that we, too, have right on our side”.<sup>70</sup>

It has been claimed that by the end of the ‘Freedom Fighters Conference’ on 10th May 1962, the SWAPO leadership had already drawn up a plan to wage a guerrilla war in ‘South West Africa’ (Els, 2007: 45). Sam Nujoma acknowledges that the first seven men were sent to obtain military training in the United Arab Republic (Egypt) in July 1962, with another six being sent to the ‘Nanking Military Academy’ in China in January 1963. Lazarus Sakaria was part of the second group of the six men (including John ya Otto Nankudhu, Tobias Hainyeko and ‘Leonard Shuuya’) which went to Egypt for training. The first four weapons that the nascent guerrilla army obtained came from Algeria in 1963 which also provided training (Nujoma, 2001: 129-130, 158-159). Shortly after the launch of the OAU, President Nyerere of Tanzania opened a special training camp at Kongwa in Tanzania (on 27th May 1963). One estimate claims that SWAPO had about 176 trained guerrilla fighters in Dar-es-Salaam by 1965 (Els, 2007: 47). The fact that the members of the different liberation movements often trained in the same institutions also helped to develop personal links. For example, John Otto Nankudhu (who became the base commander of Omugulu gwOmbashe) remembers that when he was sent for training in the USSR, he was with Samora Machel who would later become the President of FRELIMO in Mozambique, whilst Sakaria noted that his group also trained with nine South Africans.<sup>71</sup>

When the first commanders to be trained returned, the guerrillas were organised into the South West African Liberation Army (SWALA). SWALA was formally constituted on 17th June 1964, with Tobias Hainyeko as its first Commander, Petrus Hambija as the ‘Military Secretary’ and Titus Mwailepeni as the ‘Deputy Military Secretary’ (Namakalu, 2004: 1; Nujoma, 2001: 160). The guerrilla army would be renamed the Namibian Peoples’ Liberation Army (NAPLA) in January 1966, and finally, the Peoples’ Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) at SWAPO’s Tanga Congress which was held at the end of 1969 (Namakalu, 2004: 1).

The OAU’s African Liberation Committee was able to obtain an early consignment of sub-machine guns from Yugoslavia and informed SWAPO on 4th December 1964, that they would provide twelve for the first guerrillas who would be entering ‘South West Africa’.<sup>72</sup> The first SWALA guerrilla unit of six men led by John Otto Nankudhu

<sup>69</sup> The spelling used by the South Africans in the court transcript was widely used, but the correct local spelling of the site of the battle is Omugulu gwOombashe (‘forest of zebras’)

<sup>70</sup> NAN. A690 Box 4 (24) ‘Statement by Accused No. 1 – E. Tuhadeleni.

<sup>71</sup> NAN. Interview with John Otto Nankudhu by Laban Shipange, Ontananga, 27th August, 1997. Interview with Lazarus Sakaria by Laban Shipange, Windhoek, 21st May, 1998.

<sup>72</sup> Mmbaga, Dinah Richard, *Historical Description of the African Liberation Committee: Reconstructing the Process*, (Summary of holdings of the OAU’s ALC Archives). Box 6. LC1/59.

left the Kongwa Training Camp on 4th March 1965, with a mission to travel to 'South West Africa', infiltrate, establish a base and start recruiting and training new members. The six men were armed with just two 'pepeshas' and two pistols and some pangas. The guns were brought by Sam Nujoma from Algeria and handed to Peter Nanyemba who carried them across the border into Zambia to the SWAPO office. Nanyemba and Tobias Hainyeko travelled with the guerrillas to the border at the Kwando River.<sup>73</sup> After a long 90 day journey they finally reached *Kaxumba kaNdola's* homestead on 17th August 1965. The unit would operate in northern Namibia for over a year before they were located and attacked by South African forces. The first eight months were spent at Tuhadeleni's homestead but in March 1966, it was decided to establish a bush base and start recruiting men locally for military training. The first, established at Otamanzi was abandoned when the presence of the guerrillas was reported to the traditional ruler of Ongandjera, Ushona Shiimi. Thereafter, the base was moved three more times over the next few weeks before the group settled at Omugulu gwOmbashe. At Omugulu gwOmbashe, a more substantial base was established with an underground bunker for the commander, defensive fox holes and a well that provided the camp with water. (Nujoma, 2001: 159-160; Namhila, 2002: 59-60; Els, 2007: 54; Namakalu, 2004: 6).

As the first guerrilla unit were setting up bases, a second guerrilla unit of ten men led by Commander Lazarus Sakaria ('Chinaman'), Deputy Commander Helao Shityuwete, and Leonard Fillemon ('Castro') Shuuya the Deputy Commander of SWALA left Kongwa on 14th February 1966. The group crossed into 'South West Africa'

on 23rd March 1966. Three men including 'Castro' and Shityuwete, were arrested by the Oukwangari traditional authorities on 26th March 1966. Captain Theunis ('Red Russian') Swanepoel from the Special Branch arrived a couple of days later to start questioning the prisoners and they were thereafter transferred to Pretoria for further questioning (Shityuwete, 1990: 101, 119, 127-130; Namakalu, 2004: 12; Els, 2007: 12, 58).<sup>74</sup> With the exception of one person, all members of the group were arrested over the next few weeks and Sakaria recalled that some of the guerrillas were detained by the traditional authorities in Oukwanyama and Ukwangali and then handed over to the South African Police.<sup>75</sup>

By 2nd June 1966, the South African Police had recruited 'Castro', the Deputy Commander of SWALA, as an agent and travelled with him to Katima Mulilo to test his loyalty. 'Castro' was sent across the border into Zambia with a policeman, Constable Eino Johannes, and returned to meet and report back to Captain Swanepoel. 'Castro' was to be known by the SAP by the codename 'The Major' (Els, 2007: 66). It is interesting to note that whilst Helao Shityuwete calls 'Castro' Leonard Phillemon Awala, Sam Nujoma refers to him as Leonard Phillemon Shuuya and when 'Castro' returned to Namibia for a brief visit in 2002 he called himself Leonard Phillemon Nangolo

<sup>73</sup> H.E. Hifikepunye Pohamba. Pers comm. 1st August, 2013.

<sup>74</sup> NAN . Interview with Lazarus Sakaria by Laban Shipange, Windhoek, 21st May, 1998.

<sup>75</sup> NAN Interview with Lazarus Sakaria by Laban Shipange, Windhoek, 21st May, 1998.

(Shityuwete, 1990; Nuyoma, 2001: 172).<sup>76</sup> Paul Els reproduces a document (that was allegedly obtained from Swanepoel's personal archives) dated 29th September 1966, in which 'Castro' agrees to serve as 'special agent' with the SAP (Els, 2007: 238). On 15th June 1966, 'Castro' was a member of the reconnaissance unit which left Pretoria to drive to 'South West Africa' and arrived in northern Namibia on 19th June 1966. The group posed as road construction engineers under the pseudonym 'Pasco Civil Engineers' (the first three letters being SAP reversed). In addition to obtaining regular intelligence reports from 'Castro', the South African Police increased their technical capacity in 'South West Africa'. After receiving information about the first SWALA infiltrations, in March 1966, a Canberra bomber was stationed in the territory with the task of carrying out weekly flights to monitor guerrilla activity through aerial surveillance with specialised photographic equipment (Els, 2007: 29, 71, 76).

At 7am on 26th August 1966, eight Alouette 111 helicopters landed a strike force of 46 men, drawn from both the police and the army (accompanied by 'Castro'), to surround and attack Omugulu-gOmbashe (Els, 2007: 163). Pillemon Shitilifa remembers that there were only seventeen men at the camp on the day of the attack, although the base commander estimated that as many as 90 men had been trained at the camp by the guerrilla unit. Two were killed (Akapeke Hipangelua and Jonas Nakale), one wounded and ten captured. It was reported that James Amukwaya was seriously wounded while firing a sub-machine gun at a helicopter and as he was being transported away, he kept repeating, "I am SWAPO and I will not talk . . . I know I am going to die for my country". He would be later found hanging in his cell in Pretoria and never went to trial. Two of those captured, Theodor Hanyaanya and Thomas Haimbodi, turned state witness and gave evidence for the prosecution at the trial (Nujoma, 2001: 163-164; Namakalu, 2004: 10. Els, 2007: 133).<sup>77</sup>

After the attack there was a wave of arrests of 44 prominent SWAPO activists (including Toivo ya Toivo) on 7th September 1966. The survivors of the attack reorganised and established a new temporary base at Otshiku shaLaban. Shortly afterwards they launched an attack on 27th September 1966, on the offices of the 'Native Commissioner' at Oshikango (Namakalu, 2004: 10; Els, 2007: 160). Arrests continued and by the end of 1966, hundreds of fighters and ordinary SWAPO members had been flown to Pretoria for questioning. Nevertheless, several evaded capture for weeks, months or even years. Oswin Namakalu identifies Patrick Iyambo and Festus Kanangolo, as two fighters who managed to escape capture for nine years. In June, 1970 posters in northern Namibia were offering a reward of R1,000 for information leading to the arrest of Patrick Iyambo (Namakalu, 2004: 10).<sup>78</sup> The families of men and women who the authorities believed had left the country to join

<sup>(76)</sup> Nangolo, Leonard Pillemon, 'Setting the Record Straight', 28th February, 2002. <http://www.nshr.org.na/index.php?module=News&func=display&sid=128&theme=Printer>. Accessed on 1st December, 2012.

<sup>(77)</sup> NAN.. Interview with Pillemon Shitilifa by Laban Shapange, Windhoek, 29th August, 1997. Interview with John Otto Nankudhu by Laban Shipange, Ontananga, 27th August, 1997.

<sup>(78)</sup> '1000 Reward offered for Notorious SWAPO leader', *Windhoek Advertiser*, 8th June, 1970

PLAN were often the victims of harassment. Meme Lahja Ndawedha Iyambo, the sister of Patrick Iyambo, recalls the repeated visits that the security forces made to her homestead. She describes being beaten, hung from a tree and electrocuted by those seeking information about her brother and concludes “I was not trained as a combatant, but I equally fought the war of liberation of this country (Namhila, 2009: 189).

The length of time that the fighters evaded capture, created a number of empowering rumours about SWAPO’s guerrilla fighters. Ndahambelela Tuhadeleni remembers:

“I learned that in our community, my father [Kaxumba kaNdola] was now referred to as a guerrilla fighter, a freedom fighter, a *fiifii*, *ondume yomomufitu*, and as a person who changed into objects. My father was said to have learned the trade of changing into objects in Zambia and Tanganyika, where he had gone through the magical process and been cooked in large pots”.

She explained that the title *Eendume Domumufitu* (plural) was used to refer to ‘the soldiers in the bush’ (Namhila, 2001: 71). Even the combat names of some of the early fighters encouraged the belief that the fighters had special powers. For example, John Otto Nankudhu was known as ‘*Koshiuanda*’ perhaps suggesting an ability to turn into a termite hill, whilst Patrick Iyambo was also known as ‘*Lunganda*’ suggesting that he had the craftiness of the bird known to rise the earliest. Elina Ndapuka explains: “Patrick Lunganda was known to be a magician as it was alleged that he used to turn into an anthill or in a certain bird called Thunder bird (*epumumu*). All these birds were nearly extinct as the Boers used to shoot them saying Lunganda could be one of those birds”.<sup>79</sup>

A seven man third guerrilla unit was involved in an initial reconnaissance trip to southern Angola in between September and October 1966, but reported that conditions were not yet conducive for the establishment of bases. On 14th December 1966, while led by Kaleb Tjipahura, the unit entered Namibia through Botswana and launched the first attack on a commercial farm. Thereafter, four of the guerrillas were captured and a further wave of arrests took place during December. The Vice-President of SWANU, Gerson Vei, was also arrested on 4th December 1966 after giving a speech in the Old Location protesting the detentions, whereupon he had allegedly argued in support of the armed struggle claiming that ‘the redder the blood, the sweeter the victory’ (Ngavirue, 1997: 272; Els, 2007: 164, Levinson, 1978: 72).

The ‘Terrorism Act’ of 21st June 1967 was made retro-active to 21st June 1962 (in the belief that this was the date on which SWAPO had sent its first recruits for military training) and was the law that was used to prosecute the men captured and arrested before and immediately after the attack on Omugulu-gOmbashe. Joel Carlson, the solicitor who organised the legal team for the defence noted that the Act meant that the prosecution did not need to prove that the defendants had been

<sup>79</sup> ‘Interview with Elina Ndapuka’. Tonchi, V.L & B. Mulongeni, *Voices of Liberation: A history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*, Windhoek, March, 2012, p 299.

personally involved in any military activity. Carlson argued that the Act “. . . provided a guilt-by-association clause, joining all defendants together and holding all of them responsible for any criminal action of any defendant or of any named member of the organization to which the defendant belonged” (Carlson, 1977: 83-84; Morris, 1971: 101). The case would be listed as ‘The State vs. Tuhadeleni and 36 others’ (Shityuwete: 157-158). On 14th October 1966, the ‘Suppression of Communism Act’ was extended to SWA.<sup>80</sup> The Act was almost immediately used on 1st December 1966, to arrest John ya Otto, Nathaniel Maxuilili and Jason Mutumbulwa, all members of SWAPO’s internal leadership structures, whose names were then added to the accused in the Terrorism Trial.

It is difficult to estimate the total number of prisoners who were brought to Pretoria for the trial, although it is obvious that some were arrested with the aim that they could be pressurised into becoming witnesses for the prosecution against the main accused. The prisoners were all told that they would probably be hanged. George Bizos, one of the three barristers in the defence team, was impressed by Tuhadeleni’s Christian faith and willingness to sacrifice himself: “He wanted to plead guilty and be put to death on condition that all the others were freed” (Bizos, 2007: 323). The defence team were secretly funded by the International Defence and Aid Fund (a banned organisation in South Africa) which channelled the funding covertly, using a Scottish aristocrat, Lord Campbell of Eskan as a cover (Herbstein, 2004: 145-149). One of the accused, Efraim Kapolo, died during the trial after he complained of headaches and requests for medical attention were denied (Carlson, 1977: 104).

As the trial drew to an end Toivo ya Toivo took the opportunity, against the advice of the prisoners’ legal team, to make a powerful speech from the dock. The speech asserted an inclusive nationalist vision and firmly rejected the legitimacy of South Africa’s occupation. Ya Toivo proclaimed:

“We find ourselves here in a foreign country, convicted under laws made by people whom we have always considered as foreigners . . . We are Namibians and not South Africans. We do not and will not in the future, recognise Your right to govern us, to make laws for us, in which we had no say; to treat our country as if it were your property and us as if you were our masters”.

The speech also made a prediction that the use of force by the South African state to maintain its control over Namibia would prove unsustainable:

“We believe that South Africa has a choice – either to live at peace with us or to subdue us by force. If you choose to crush us and impose your will on us, you not only betray your trust, but you will live in security for only as long as your power is greater than ours”.

The judge was, reportedly, angered by the lack of ‘remorse’ in ya Toivo’s statement and sentenced most of the prisoners to life sentences and ya Toivo and eight of the other

<sup>80</sup> UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/2/4/3 - ‘Memorandum presented by the SWAPO before the seminar on Africa’s national and social revolution held in Cairo, UAR – October, 24th-29th, 1966’.

defendants to 20 year sentences, with 33 of the 36 surviving defendants being sent to Robben Island (Shityuwete, 1990: 174).

Despite the heavy sentences imposed in Pretoria, SWAPO guerrillas continued to attempt to infiltrate Namibia. A fourth unit of fifteen guerrillas led by John Shiponeni attempted to travel through Botswana with the mission of starting operations in central 'South West Africa'. However, they were intercepted and on 28th February 1967 there was a clash with SWAPO guerrillas at Serongo on the border with Caprivi and this resulted in the capture of between ten and thirteen SWALA fighters (Morris, 1971: 153).<sup>81</sup> A further major blow to SWAPO occurred on 18th May 1967, when SWALA's Commander Tobias Hainyeko was ambushed as he travelled on a river ferry from Mambova to Katima Mulilo, when it stopped just west of Sesheke. Helao Shityuwete believes that 'Castro' also provided the South African Police with information about Hainyeko's planned trip to Namibia and was thus, also responsible for his death although, another account suggests that the information was obtained from a Special Branch operative in Zambia, Bernard Sibungu, and that Hainyeko was ambushed after the ferry responded to a pre-arranged signal. It was further alleged that Hainyeko was then buried three days later at the SAP 'Boma' in Katima Mulilo (Morris, 1971: 101; Shityuwete, 1990: 168).<sup>82</sup> The death of Hainyeko prompted a reorganisation of SWAPO's military command structures with 'Castro' taking over as SWALA's Commander with the guerrillas divided into three units. Nandenga Amutenya became the Commander of Unit A, 'Mbulunganaga' the Commander of Unit B and Mbandu Namundjebo the Commander of Unit C.<sup>83</sup> At the time the SWAPO leadership decided to elevate 'Castro' to the position of SWALA Commander, they were not fully aware that he was collaborating with enemy forces. However, there were already speculations and suspicions of this possible betrayal, given the circumstances surrounding his 'escape' from enemy captivity (Katjavivi, 1988: 61).

After the end of the Pretoria trial Nathaniel Maxuilili, John ya Otto and Jason Mutumbulwa had returned to Namibia and continued their work as SWAPO activists, as SWAPO was not banned inside Namibia. The men faced frequent arrest and harassment, leading ya Otto to leave for exile (in 1974), whilst Maxuilili was placed under house arrest immediately after his release. His banning order would be renewed in July 1976, under the Internal Security Act of 1976 and the restrictions would remain in force until 1985 (TRC, 1998: 65; IDAF, 1981: 11).<sup>84</sup>

A Consultative Congress was organised by SWAPO in Tanga in Tanzania on 26th December, 1969 – 2nd January, 1970. The Tanga Congress was attended by 28 of SWAPO's leaders in exile, although none of the internal leaders were able to attend.

<sup>81</sup> Whilst Morris claims the clash was with a group of ten, one of the participants states that 13 were captured in March, 1967. NAN, Interview with Uushona Malakia by Laban Shapange, King Kauluma, nd (1997?).

<sup>82</sup> UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/12/3 [Loose documents] Document marked 'Private and Confidential'

<sup>83</sup> 'Interview with Amutenya Nantenga'. Tonchi, V.L & B. Mulongeni, *Voices of Liberation: A history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*, Windhoek, March, 2012, p.17.

<sup>84</sup> Jerry Ekandjo, pers. Comm. 1st August, 2013.

President Sam Nujoma called on the Congress to develop a ‘master plan’ to achieve the independence of Namibia and so that the party could more effectively present itself as a ‘government-in-exile’. The Congress created new ‘wings’ to represent and mobilise particular constituencies. The new structures were the SWAPO Elders Council, the SWAPO Youth League (which defined ‘youth’ as people aged 35 and under) and the SWAPO Women’s Council. Libertina Amathila remembers that there were few SWAPO women in exile and that, “...in the early 1960s there had only been three women in exile at that time including, *Meekulu* Putuse Appolus, *Meme* Mukwahepo and me but that Appolus would move to Algiers to work for the Pan-African Womens’ Organisation as a representative of the SWAPO Women’s Council”.

Libertine Amathila was appointed as SWAPO’s Assistant Secretary of Health in 1970 and would be instrumental in establishing kindergartens for children at SWAPO’s camps in Zambia and Angola in later years (Sparks & Green, 1992: 142). SWAPO’s armed forces were also restructured and renamed the Peoples’ Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). The structural re-organisation also saw the election of a new 12-member Executive Committee and a larger, 30-member, Central Committee as the main decision-making organs of the party and from this date the external leadership clearly asserted its authority over the internal leadership (Dobell, 1999: 37-40; Amathila, 2012:85).

The Tanga Conference in Tanzania also resulted in the creation of detailed SWAPO Party structures and important changes in its leadership positions. Whilst Sam Nujoma was confirmed as SWAPO’s President, the former Vice-President, Louis Nelengani, was formally expelled. Nelengani had been involved in a knife fight on 31st December 1965 with SWAPO’s Secretary-General Jacob Kuhangua, which left Kuhangua paralysed.<sup>85</sup> Louis Nelengani was arrested by South African authorities a year later in Rundu on 13th December 1966, upon his return to Namibia (Katjavivi, 1988: 104-5; Els, 2007: 164).

Nelengani was allegedly tortured and it is claimed that he later turned into a state witness at the 1968 Terrorism Trial, although no evidence of his testimony has yet been located in the archive of the trial. In recognition of the merger between SWAPO and CANU, Nelengani’s position was taken by the former President of CANU, Brendan Simbwaye, however, as Simbwaye was in detention, the post was filled by the former Vice-President of CANU, Mishake Muyongo. Jacob Kuhangua travelled to the USA for treatment to his injuries and his post of Secretary-General was abolished and a new position of ‘Administrative Secretary’ was created. Moses Garoeb became the first Administrative Secretary with Hifikepunya Pohamba serving as his deputy. Dimo Hamaambo was appointed the new leader of PLAN following the arrest and imprisonment of ‘Castro’ in Tanzania (Sellstöm, 1999: 273, 291).<sup>86</sup> In June 1972,

<sup>85</sup> NAN. A.0665, 92 (0528) Letter by Jacob Kuhangua (SWAPO Secretary General) – Rusk Rehabilitation Centre, New York dated 9th June, 1966, addressed to H.E. Douglas Ncube (First Secretary, Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations)

<sup>86</sup> Vigne, Randolpe, ‘SWAPO Congress’, *Africa Report*, March 1970.

another important development was the decision made by the OAU at its Summit in Morocco to give recognition to single liberation movements as the 'sole authentic' representatives of each struggle for independence. The African states also started to make the argument for the need for selective recognition at the United Nations to prevent resources being fragmented between different organisations.<sup>87</sup> One of SWAPO's major diplomatic achievements at this time was to also obtain the status (like the Palestinian Liberation Organisation) of being a 'Permanent Observer' in the UN General Assembly.<sup>88</sup> By the time of the Tanga Conference, SWAPO had also established a number of offices to support its diplomatic efforts to obtain international support for the liberation struggle – with offices in Algeria, Botswana, Egypt, Sweden, Tanzania, the UK, the United Nations, USA and Zambia (Katjavivi, 1988: 112-113).<sup>89</sup> SWAPO's guerrillas infiltrated into the Kavango and Caprivi Regions of Namibia from 1968 in an operation which was codenamed *Ruadenaka*, but had been unable to inflict losses on the South African security forces. However, a significant incident took place on 22nd May 1971, when a landmine killed two South Africans and injured nine others and these became the first South African landmine casualties. A few months later, in October, another policeman was killed and four more wounded. Amutenya Nantenga also recalls a battle that took place at Kamenga, about 210 km from Katima Mulilo in 1971 and argues that this evidence of effective military action by SWAPO played a significant role in ensuring SWAPO's international recognition (Stiff, 1989: 11).<sup>90</sup>

## The 1971 ICJ Judgement and its consequences

In 1970, following the disappointment of the 1966 'advisory opinion', the General Assembly requested the International Court of Justice to give its view on 'the legal consequences for states' of the continuing illegal occupation of Namibia by South Africa. On 21st June 1971, the ICJ handed down its opinion which clearly stated that South Africa was legally obliged to withdraw its administration from Namibia and 'end its occupation of the territory' and that member states were obliged to refrain from any acts that might imply recognition of the South African presence in Namibia (UNIN 1987: 339).

<sup>87</sup> The Summit took place at Rabbat in Morocco on 12th-15th June, 1972. OAU, Special 9th Summit, Press and Information Section of the General Secretariat, Addis Ababa, 1973 (?). Yale-UN Oral History Project, 'Interview with Theo-Ben Gurirab by Jean Krasno', New York, 3rd November, 1999. This Rabbat Summit took place just after the SWAPO delegation led by the Party President, had returned from an international conference on Namibia in Brussels where there had been a successful recognition that Namibia had to be granted its independence thereby reinforcing the bargaining stance of SWAPO Party.

<sup>88</sup> Yale-UN Oral History Project, 'Interview with Theo-Ben Gurirab by Jean Krasno', New York, 3rd November, 1999, p.14.

<sup>89</sup> Mushelenga, Peyavali. 'Foreign policy making in Namibia: The dynamics of the smallness of the state', MA Thesis, UNISA, 2008: 49.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Amutenya Nantenga quoted in Tonchi V.L & Mulongeni B, *Voices of the liberation: A history of the Liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*. SADC Secretariat research-Hashim Mbita Project, March 2010, p.56.

Less than two weeks after the announcement of the World Court at The Hague (on 30th June 1971) the two most popular churches in Namibia addressed an ‘Open Letter’ to the South African Prime Minister, John Vorster. The letter was drafted by a group of theology students based at the Paulineum in Otjimbingwe, but the letter was quickly endorsed and signed by Dr Leonard Auala of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambokavango Church (ELOC) and Paulus Gowaseb of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa. Bishop Auala circulated a questionnaire to congregations that provided him with evidence of the views of the people (Katjavivi, 1988: 66).

The ‘Open Letter’ made explicit reference to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights to argue that South Africa had failed to comply with many of its provisions and to argue for ‘a self-sufficient and independent state’. It gave a damning indictment of South African rule complaining, for example, that “Our people . . . do not feel safe . . . people are denied the right of free movement . . . People are not free to express their thoughts and opinions openly”. The letter particularly dwelt on the social damage that was being inflicted by the unnatural contract labour system; “There can be no doubt that the contract system breaks up a healthy life – because the prohibition of a person from living where he works, hinders the cohabitation of families”. Whilst the condemnation of the labour system was biting, the most damning aspect of the letter was its dismissal of the homelands policy as a viable political model as the letter directly argued that ‘South West Africa’ could only be a single ‘unit’. (Lessing, 1996: 55-60)

On the same day that the letter was sent to the South African Prime Minister a letter was sent out by the two leaders to be read to every congregation in ‘South West Africa’. The fact that Namibia had and has such a high percentage of church-going Christians meant that the letter reached a massive audience. “True peace does not allow people to hate each other. But we observe that our people are caught up with fear and that the hate between people is increasing, especially between white and non-white. In our opinion this fatal development is caused and upheld by the policy of apartheid”. The most significant paragraphs motivated for the explicit rejection of the application of the Group Areas Act and the ‘Homelands policy’ based on the designs of the Odendaal Commission to ‘South West Africa’. The letter argued that the policy would have a negative impact as it ‘contributes to the creation and continuation forever of the divisions between the races’. The letter to Vorster which received widespread publicity through distribution to congregations throughout Namibia was particularly damaging to the South African Government not just because of what was being said, but because of who was saying it. The leaders of the church were publically agreeing with the arguments of SWAPO whilst South African propaganda consistently tried to present the church and SWAPO as having diametrically opposed views (Lessing, 1996: 55-60). The Open Letter attracted a barrage of criticism from the ‘White press’, but resulted in the Prime Minister, Vorster, travelling to Windhoek to meet with

Bishop Leonard Auala and a team consisting of Pastors Paulus, Gowaseb, Albertus Maasdorp, Eiseb and Reeh (Soggot, 1986: 40-41).

## The 1971 Strike

The workers strike which took place in 1971-2 and the subsequent ‘deportation’ of thousands of workers from the ‘Police Zone’ played a crucial role in increasing mass support for the liberation movement. The consequences of the strike included increased militancy in northern Namibia and violent repression that significantly undermined the authority of traditional authorities. The violence which was one of the consequences of the strike contributed to the massive exodus of thousands of Namibians from northern Namibia during 1974 and 1975 and marked a pivotal point in the Namibian liberation struggle. Political change in Angola and the infiltration of Namibian freedom fighters into Southern Angola to establish new bases would be crucial as it led to the opening of a new military front and a significant shift in the scale and orientation of the armed struggle from the mid-1970s. An overview will be provided of the network of bases established within Angola and ways in which they were organized internally, to provide insight into the political culture that developed in exile.

The name given to the contract that migrant workers from northern Namibia received to work in central and southern Namibia was known as *odalate or okaholo* in Oshiwambo. The name translates as ‘the wire’ as workers felt that they were tied to their jobs without any freedom of choice or movement and also refers to the actual wire tag that they were given to mark/ ‘wear’ to indicate that they have accepted the

‘contract’. The treatment of workers employed through the contract labour system had been one of the topics of earlier complaints by petitioners to the United Nations.

In November 1971, Bishop Auala sought a meeting with Jannie de Wet, who bore the impressive title of ‘Commissioner-General for the Indigenous People of South West Africa’, to complain about the harassment of church workers following the Open Letter. The judgement of the ICJ had described the contract labour system as ‘akin to slavery’ and Bishop Auala and his colleagues had also made the comparison when they met de Wet. However, de Wet’s response was to issue a public statement stating that “. . . the system could not be described as slavery because the Ovambos entered freely into their contracts”. It is claimed that it was this statement that ignited the

strike (Kane Berman, 1972: 23)

John ya Otto argues that as early as April 1971, there were student protests taking place in northern Namibia and that he met with Erastus Shamena, Nghidimondjila Shoombe and Skinny Hilundwa to discuss SWAPO’s response to the school demonstrations. In September 1971, David Meroro and Nathaniel Maxuilili visited Ondangwa to meet with ya Otto to discuss the possibility of a strike and on 11th December 1971, ya Otto himself travelled to Windhoek “. . . disguised in overalls, work boots and a tattered cap” (ya Otto, 1982: 141-142). The strike started in Walvis Bay and then spread to Windhoek where, on 13th December 1971, thousands of

workers refused to go to work. On 15th December 1971, armed police surrounded the compound and arrested 13 of the alleged strike leaders, but the strike quickly spread to other mine compounds at Klein Aub, Oamites, Berg Aukas and Uis (ya Otto, 1982: 141-142, Soggot, 1976: 46-48).<sup>91</sup>

Andreas Shipanga who, at the time of the strike, was SWAPO's Secretary for Information and Propaganda in exile stated that: "The South African Minister of Police alleged that the strike was instigated by SWAPO, but this is not entirely true". Shipanga acknowledged the important role of Nathaniel Maxuilili, the 'Acting President' of SWAPO inside Namibia in Walvis Bay who, he claimed, 'was head of the workers' central committee' and argued that 'many SWAPO members were strike leaders', but he also claimed that the strike had been ". . . to a very great extent organized and led by the contract workers themselves".<sup>92</sup>

A diary kept by one of the activists in the Katutura workers compound in Windhoek and later used in the (unsuccessful) trial of 13 strike leaders provides considerable insight into the events leading up to the strike from the perspective of one of the active participants. A letter written by activists in Walvis Bay on 28th November 1971, complained that Jannie de Wet had claimed that "we ourselves want to be under contract", but that the workers should 'stand together'. The letter (written by Charles Namholoh and Ndali Kamati) proclaimed "Brothers, you will hear that we are leaving Walvis Bay and the contract.<sup>93</sup> Then we will stay in Ovambo". The diarist reported that the letter had been received on 5th December 1971, and read by and to all the residents of the compound who themselves, passed on the message as further letters were written. The diarist recorded that a meeting in the Katutura compound on 12th December 1971 made the final decision that people would not go to work the next day. The 'first leaders' in the compound were identified as "Leonard Nghipandulwa from Endola, Michael Hamakali from the western side of the Omupanda Area, and Absalom Cornelius of Endola". The diarist notes that a delegation from the Ondonga Traditional Authority led by Chief Fillemon Elifas travelled to Windhoek to meet with the strikers on 14th December 1971, but was unsuccessful in its efforts to persuade the men to go back to work. Instead a mass meeting of the strikers 'decided to return to Ovambo' (Moorsom, 1988: 609-613).

After thousands of workers were repatriated to northern Namibia a 'Contract Committee' was set up on 3rd January 1972, and within a few days a mass meeting attended by about 3,500 deported workers took place at Oluno, on 10th January 1972. Mr Johannes Nangatuuala was then elected as the Chairman of the Committee. A series of resolutions entitled 'The Contract System is a Form of Slavery' were passed, unanimously, at the meeting. The resolutions included the statements that ". . . this

<sup>(91)</sup> The accused 'strike leaders' were Harold Sam, Immanuel Mbolili, Erastus Shanila, Thomas Shepumba, Vilho Villiha, Cleopas Kapapu, Maiakias Hiloohamb, Laserus Shikongo, Jason Nghituamata, Jonas Nejulu Matupang Shimuefeleni and Leonard Nghipandula (O'Linn, 2003: 188).

<sup>(92)</sup> 'Interviews in Depth, Namibia, SWAPO 1: Interview with Andreas Shipanga, Director – SWAPO Information Service, Member of the National Executive, LSM Press, 1973, p.10.

<sup>(93)</sup> Jerry Ekandjo, pers. Comm. 1st August, 2013.

system undermines the God-given dignity of an Ovambo worker” and argued that workers’ salaries “. . . must be according to the work done regardless of his colour” (SWAPO, 1981: 200-2010).

It was significant within the political culture of northern Namibia that the Committee represented an alternative leadership structure to that of the traditional authorities that were seen as collaborating with the labour recruiting system and as participants in the development of ethnic homeland governments as an alternative to the nationalist vision of ‘One Namibia, One Nation’. A contemporary observer from the Anglican Church remarked “The strikers lost confidence in the headmen and their ability to represent their grievances to the South African authorities and so formed a committee of their own headed by a man of their choice”.<sup>94</sup>

The strikers were highly organized and quickly printed and distributed pamphlets widely across ‘Ovambo’. The pamphlets contained a series of complaints about the contract labour system which was compared to ‘slavery’ as “SWANLA sells Ovambos to the employers . . .”. The workers argued that they “‘Did not want’ . . . any improvement of, or [a] new name for [the] wire’, but a proper labour system giving the worker freedom in the choice of his job, and freedom to leave an unwanted job and look for another.” (Kane-Bermann, 1972: 24-25).

The return of thousands of contract workers to northern Namibia created an atmosphere of extreme tension as the workers took direct action against institutions that were seen to represent South African efforts to politically and economically control the region. One of the first targets was the network of ‘stock inspection kraals’ which were used to check animals for disease and it was reported that 140 of these had either been burnt to the ground or smashed to pieces.

The second target was the border fence that had recently been erected between Namibia and Angola, but which also prevented cattle from being driven to traditional grazing land around Oshimolo in southern Angola. A total of 220 kilometres of the fence was destroyed during January 1972. A letter to the authorities claimed that it had been erected “. . . unconstitutionally and undemocratically and prevents our cattle from reaching the grazing areas now at Angola”. It was also reported that the strike and demonstrations spread to the Angolan side of the border with 600 workers on the Cunene power project joining the strike and OshiKwanyama-speakers also protested against tax and forced labour, an indication of the effective cross-border communication that existed due to kinship networks. A battalion of Portuguese troops was ordered to southern Angola where “. . . huts and cattle vaccination stations were being burnt and barbed-wire fences round sheep-pens cut.” (Kane-Berman, 1972: 27-28; Dreyer, 1994: 73).

Finally, the striking workers also resisted efforts to recruit Ovimbundu workers from Angola to break the strike (the migrant labour system already had systems in

<sup>94</sup> UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/20/43. De Beer, David ‘Some Comments on the Ovambo Strike, South West Africa, 1971/2’, 15th January, 1972.

place for recruiting ‘extra-territorial’ workers, the majority of these were from Angola). For example, a large crowd gathered on 10th January 1972, when efforts were made to recruit Ovimbundu workers to travel to Walvis Bay to replace striking dockworkers. On 16th January 1972, it was reported that Angolans who were seeking work were being handcuffed and escorted to the border by striking workers. 95 Jerry Ekandjo remembers that the South Africans also recruited 60-100 labourers in Upington for Walvis Bay to help unload ships, but that they got drunk whilst unloading a ship containing alcohol. Another attempt to use schoolchildren from Windhoek High School to unload trains also failed as the cargo was too heavy.<sup>96</sup> The conflict provides another example of the ways in which Namibian history transcends national borders.

One of the features of the period was the open defiance of the authorities by the deported workers. For example, when a Police Chief, Captain Gijsbers, attempted to address a meeting of around 150 workers on 14th January, ‘he was asked whether he was white or black and told that he had no right to speak to them’. When another senior police officer, Brigadier McCarthy, confronted a group of around 250 workers at ‘Otombo’ a few days later, on 18th January, demanding to know who had destroyed the border fence in this area ‘all replied that they had done it’ and the police broke up the meeting with a baton charge.<sup>97</sup> The escalating violence was to culminate in the police opening fire on a group of churchgoers at Epinga, which would lead to the death of five men including the brother of SWAPO’s exiled Secretary of Defence,

Peter Mueshihange.

An account of the events that took place in Epinga was recorded by a member of the Anglican Church in Windhoek, Steve Hayes, on 28th February 1972, after he had met Philip Shilongo, Archdeacon of St. Mary’s Church at Odibo and written down his account of events. In fact it is clear that there were at least two separate incidents during which the police opened fire on protesters in northern Namibia during January. At least three men were killed on 28th January 1972, at Ondobe and five more were shot dead by South African police at Epinga on 30th January 1972.<sup>98</sup> “At the inquest into the deaths, the police said they had been attacked by a group of 100 Ovambo armed with axes, pangas, bows and arrows (the Rector of the parish said they were armed with Bibles, prayer books and hymn books)”<sup>99</sup> Steve Hayes

<sup>(95)</sup> ‘Young police captain sketches the background to the shootings’, *Windhoek Advertiser*, 26th June, 1972, p.3.

<sup>(96)</sup> Jerry Ekandjo, pers. Comm. 1st August, 2013.

<sup>(97)</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>(98)</sup> At the time only four of the eight dead were identified (Herman Benjamin, Petrus Haufiku, Philipus Shilua and Joseph Shunguvai). ‘They Fired and Killed in Course of Duty – Finding: Probe into Police Action’, *Windhoek Advertiser*, 16th June, 1971, p1. Hayes’s account identified four victims who died at Epinga as Thomas Mueshihange, Benjamin Herman, Lukas Veiko and Mathias Ohainenga. Three men were wounded (Seimba Musika, Phillipus Katilipa and Kakaimbe Hidunua) and one of these died later in hospital. Hayes states that the list of names was compiled by the Venerable Lazarus Haukongo who was the Archdeacon of Ovamboland and had previously served as the Rector of the Parish of Onamunama, close to Epinga, but was dictated over the phone. Hayes, Steve, ‘The martyrs of Epinga’, 12th April, 2007. <http://methodius.blogspot.com>. Accessed on 20th November, 2012.

<sup>(99)</sup> Hayes, op cit. The Rector of St. Lukes at Epinga at the time of the shootings was Revd. Stephen Shimbode.

was deported from Namibia with Reverend Colin Winter a few days after writing his account.

Hayes argues that the authorities tried to break up the gathering because of a ban on meetings. Proclamation 17 was only officially gazetted on 4th February 1972 (and amended as Proclamation 26 on 14th February 1972), several days after the killings, but it is possible that the traditional authorities had also imposed a ban. The regulations stated that all meetings were prohibited unless written prior permission had been obtained from the 'Native Commissioner', although church services were treated as an exception. The regulations were clearly also intended to strengthen the authority of the traditional authorities in 'Ovamboland' as they made it an offence for anyone to 'undermine the authority' of a 'chief' or 'headman', to disobey an order given by them or to boycott a meeting called by them. Individuals could also be detained without a warrant and questioned for an indefinite period. By 11th April, 1972 the regulations had led to the detention of at least 267 people in 'Ovamboland' (Serfontein, 1976: 222).

In addition to the responses from the church and the workers to the ICJ judgement there was also a significant development in domestic politics. The National Convention was launched in November 1971 to create a unified platform to meet the UN Representative, Escher, who was due to visit the country. The Convention was initiated by Clemens Kapuu who managed to forge a broad alliance that included SWAPO, NUDO, SWANU, the Rehoboth Volksparty, NAPDO, the Herero Chiefs' Council, the Nama Chiefs' Council, the Damara Tribal Executive and DEMKOP. However, whilst the internal leadership of SWAPO initially supported the initiative to create a united front, the external leadership of SWAPO were opposed to the initiative. SWAPO, therefore, withdrew from the convention.<sup>100</sup>

The criticism was based on two main arguments. Firstly the Convention included several parties that were clearly organised around an ethnic constituency and it was feared that the acceptance of such a coalition would undermine the argument that SWAPO was a party that represented all Namibians. Secondly, SWAPO was campaigning for recognition from the United Nations as the 'sole representative' of the Namibian people. The Convention threatened to be an organisation that could also claim to express the views of the Namibian people. Clemens Kapuu travelled to the United Nations to lobby for UN recognition of the Convention. Yet it was SWAPO who were successful in obtaining recognition from the General Assembly as the 'authentic representative of the Namibian People' on 11th December 1973 and, despite Kapuu's efforts, the NNC failed to gain UN recognition (du Pisani, 1985: 254). The fact that Gerson Veii of SWANU still travelled to New York to address the UN Trusteeship Committee on 12th November 1974, to argue that the National Convention should also be recognised as a 'representative' and the subsequent 'Turnhalle' initiative (that will be discussed in more detail later) explains why SWAPO subsequently

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(10) Jerry Ekanjo, pers. Comm. 1st August, 2013.

pushed for, and achieved, UN recognition as the ‘sole authentic representative of the Namibian people’ through Resolution 146 (XXXI) of the General Assembly in 1976 (Torreguitar, 2009: 193; Thornberry, 2004:11)). Critics argued that the campaign to obtain this status indicated that SWAPO was authoritarian, but Peter Katjavivi argues that “It did not necessarily mean that we were not interested in encouraging a multi- party democracy, or pluralism. It was simply for the purpose of carrying out a decisive and unified liberation struggle” (Sellström, 1999: 75). However, the designation was a major diplomatic achievement for SWAPO. Festus Muundjua of SWANU explains: “It affected us to the marrow . . . because it brought to a standstill any activity by SWANU on an international platform. You could not appear anymore as a petitioner before the UN, the platform of the OAU, or the Liberation Committee of the OAU, Non-Aligned Movement, and Commonwealth - you name them. You were told that SWAPO is the sole and authentic representative”.<sup>101</sup>

The point was that it was important for SWAPO to reinforce the concept embodied in their rally slogan of ‘One Namibia, One Nation’ at a time when South Africa was promoting the first major test of its alternative electoral model by organising an election in ‘Ovamboland’. By the end of 1974 Axel Johannes, a member of SWAPO’s Executive Committee was warning the press that the “National Convention has been perverted into an element, not of national unity, but of national dis-unity”.<sup>102</sup>

## The Ovamboland Election of 1973

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr Kurt Waldheim arrived in South Africa on 6th March 1972 for talks and also made a brief, two day, visit to Namibia, before returning to New York and submitting his brief report to the UN Security Council on 19th July 1972. However, during this brief visit he managed to meet 64 people representing 20 groups (Cockram, 1976: 430). A more substantial visit to Namibia was conducted a few months later when a UN delegation led by Dr Escher (who was accompanied by Mr Chako of India, Mr Pedanou of Togo and Mr Hubert Noel of France) spent over two week (12th-28th October 1972) holding 74 meetings in Namibia which all took place “. . . in private and without South African officials being present”. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah remembers presenting a statement to Dr Escher on behalf of Namibian women.<sup>103</sup> Dr Escher’s report concluded that “. . . it was my general impression . . . that the majority of the non-White population of Namibia supported the establishment of a united independent Namibia. They expected the assistance of the United Nations in bringing it about” (Cockram, 1976: 431-433; Serfontein, 1976: 72).

(1) Mushelenga, Peyavali. ‘Foreign policy making in Namibia: The dynamics of the smallness of the state’, MA Thesis, UNISA, 2008: 53.

(2) BAB Archive. PA 48. ‘National Unity and National Disunity’ Press release, Axel Johannes, SWAPO Secretary in Windhoek, 23rd December, 1974.

(3) Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, pers. Comm. 1st August, 2013.

At the end of January 1973, the South African ‘Minister of Bantu Administration and Development’ announced the next stage of ‘Homeland’ development which would involve the holding of elections and the design of flags and ‘national anthems’ for each area. On 9th May 1973, the Kavango became the second self-governing territory within Namibia (Cockram, 1976: 435-436). The internal response to this agenda of fragmenting Namibia into a patchwork of ethnic homelands was the rapid growth of the energetic SWAPO Youth League. In another development on the 12th May 1973, a bomb explosion at Oniipa destroyed ELOC’s printing press which produced *Omukwetu* (Soggot, 1976, 59). It was believed that the printing press became a ‘legitimate target’ of the South African regime, given its stance regarding apartheid and the importance of managing media coverage of events leading up to the ‘Ovamboland’ election scheduled to take place a few months later.

Whilst it was announced as an ‘election’, a total of 35 of the 56 seats that were available in the ‘election’ for the ‘Ovamboland Legislative Assembly’ were already filled by candidates nominated by the seven recognized ‘tribal authorities’ in ‘Ovamboland’. Only 21 seats were elected and only six of these were contested (by independent candidates). However, as an exercise in democracy and a demonstration of support for the new Council the election was a marketing catastrophe. Voting took place on 1st–2nd August 1973, but only 1,300 votes were cast, less than 2.5% of the electorate.<sup>104</sup> A couple of weeks later Jerry Ekanjjo, Martin Kapewasha and Jacob Nghidinwa were arrested under the Sabotage Act of 1962 for statements they had made at a SWAPO Youth League rally in Katutura on 12th August 1973. Martin Kapewasha was reported to have referred to the death of the workers at Epinga in a passionate speech telling those present that: “. . . that blood calls for the nation, the youth of Namibia, to start immediately to fight for your country, Namibia. Do not wait for tomorrow or another day, you must also not wait for Waldheim or Escher to give you your freedom on a plate”, whilst Jacob Ngidimi was alleged to have said “every white person is your enemy” (O’Linn, 2003: 199-200). The speeches indicated that the SWAPO Youth Leagues was adopting a more militant tone than the older leaders in SWAPO inside Namibia.

Shortly after the arrest of these leaders, the SWAPO Youth League published a short ‘Manifesto’ in the *Windhoek Advertiser* in August, 1973:

1. We the suppressed people of Namibia, in our embarrassment, call on God, and make an urgent call upon the whole world by means of a national labour strike as from Monday, August 20, 1973. Namibia must be freed!
2. The political prisoners of Namibia that are locked in our jails must be freed immediately.
3. We must have freedom of speech in this country.

<sup>104</sup> Amer, John ‘Namibia (South West Africa): Physical and Social Geography, nd., p.580.

4. Freedom of movement is not granted to Black people. The pass system is unbearably suppressive. In our country people are not paid according to the nature of the labour, qualifications or experience. To the contrary, they are paid according to colour and race.
5. The migratory labour system, whereby people are bought, degrades humanity and is necessarily an evil.
6. The homeland policy in Namibia must be ended immediately. Namibia is one country.
7. We are sick and tired of FM broadcasts which distribute misleading propaganda which is aimed at making homeland matters look attractive.
8. The discriminatory educational system prevents the natural academic and cultural development of our nation.
9. The types of small houses to be found in locations are humiliating for everybody.
10. The B.I.C. (Bantu Industrial Corporation) is the organisation that works for nothing else but to disrupt the economy of the Black man.
11. The treatment of the Black patients in State hospitals is unsatisfactory.
12. The dissemination of the Gospel among our people is hampered considerably by the Government: (a) Missionaries are put out of the country and (b) free sermons are hampered.
13. On the whole, the South African Government is nothing but a big liar. The so-called concessions which it made to the UN have never materialised. In northern Namibia the emergency regulations are still in force and mass arrests are the order of the day. People continue to be manhandled by the illegal police".<sup>105</sup>

Two other members of the SWAPO Youth League, Joseph Kashea and Eshriel Taapopi, wrote a letter to the SWAPO leadership abroad requesting them to send more fighters to Namibia. When this letter was intercepted at the post office they were arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment on Robben Island.<sup>106</sup>

## **The Beatings in Northern Namibia and the Exodus**

In May, 1973 when the 'Ovamboland Legislative Council' had announced that the homeland election would take place in August it also announced that only 'recognised' parties would be eligible to compete. However only the 'Ovamboland Independence Party' was recognized, with SWAPO and DEMKOP (the Democratic Co-operative Party, led by the former strike leader Johannes Nangatuuala), instead campaigning for a boycott of the election. The weeks leading up to the election were

(15) 'Manifesto of the SWAPO Youth League', *Windhoek Advertiser*, 20th August, 1973 (translated from Afrikaans).

(16) Jerry Ekandjo, pers. comm. 1st August, 2013

marked by the arbitrary arrest and punishment of any political opponents of the South African rule and particularly, of those advocating for an election boycott. The arrests and ‘punishments’ continued after the successful boycott. The South African Police ‘arrested’ hundreds of political activists, but, instead of putting them on trial, handed them over to local traditional authorities (victims included Ndali Kamati and Kandindima Nehova). The ‘traditional courts’ would then impose punishment in the form of a flogging with a branch of a Makalani palm (*epokolo*), with victims receiving from 15 to 35 strokes. In at least one case, the punishment was carried out at the ‘Government Buildings’ where, “. . . prisoners were chained together in the middle of the square, under the hot, noon-day sun”.<sup>107</sup>

Phillip Alwendo described the way in which the South African Police collaborated with some of the traditional authorities to apply corporal punishment against political activists:

“On 15th August, 1973, I was detained at the police cells at Ondangwa by members of the South African Police, in terms of Regulation R17 until my release from such detention on 3rd October, 1973. On 3rd October, 1973, I was taken by members of the South African Police Force to the Tribal Offices at Ondangwa. After the policemen had conferred with Headman Philimon Shilongo, members of the Tribal Police employed by the Ondonga Tribal Authority came to me and one of them, Nakwafila, handcuffed my wrists. I was then taken to a hall where I appeared before Headman Philimon Shilongo and the Tribal Secretary, Julius Ngaikukwete. Shilongo told me that I had been sentenced to receive fifteen strokes of the makalani cane”<sup>108</sup>

The victims were generally not accused of any crime, other than that of being the members of parties that were critical of the election and of the South African occupation of Namibia. George Ngesheya explained that “I was informed that because I am a member of SWAPO I have been sentenced to thirty strokes of the makalani branch”. Whilst Spener Shigwele, complained that “The Tribal Secretary stood up and stated that I had been found guilty because I had sung SWAPO songs and had contributed . . . twenty cents . . . to the funds of SWAPO. He then said that the Court was sentencing me to receive fifteen strokes with the palm cane “. In the case of Franz Nangutuuala (the brother of the DEMKOP leader) he was charged of being a SWAPO activist because “I had a shirt that indicated that I am a member of SWAPO. He also accused me of walking with my hands in the air. I understood this to mean that I had given the SWAPO sign. He also accused me of walking on occasions with a SWAPO flag on my jacket, indicating that I was a member of SWAPO. He said that I had been found guilty of these acts and my punishment was to receive fifteen strokes. He ordered that my shirt should be taken from me”.<sup>109</sup> The victims were stripped and beaten in public in an act of mental humiliation as well as physical punishments.

(107) ‘Flogging in Namibia: Extracts from Affidavits’, Amnesty International, July, 1974, p1.

(108) *Ibid*

(109) *Ibid*, p.3-4.

It was not only men who were punished by flogging (victims included Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Ndaiponofi Nehova and Ulitala Hivelua). One of the women who were flogged by the Oukwanyama Traditional Authority was Miss Elise Nghilwamo. She described how, on 6th September 1973; she was taken with three other women to the homestead of the Senior Headman Gabriel Kautwima. The women were detained there without trial for six days during which time, “. . . we were told that we had been sent to work for him as slaves”. On the 11th September the Tribal Court (that included Phillipus Kaluvi, Gabriel Kautwima, Valombola Kalomo, Vilho Weyulu, Vatilifa Vaendanawa, Johannes Shekudja(sic)<sup>110</sup> and Vilho Weyulu Elia) sat and sentenced each of the women to six strokes with a whip made from the palm tree.<sup>111</sup>

On 19th November, 1973 an urgent application was lodged with the Supreme Court to stop the use of flogging by the traditional authorities of Oukwanyama and Ondonga and a temporary injunction was obtained to stop the floggings. John Ya Otto played a central role in collecting statements from the victims of the floggings to be used in a court case to challenge the legality of the floggings. The statements were then provided to Bishop Colin Winter of the Anglican Church who worked with Amnesty International to prepare the evidence for the court case. The case was brought by Bishop Winter of the Anglican Church, Bishop Leonard Auala of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango Church and Thomas Kamati, a SWAPO Youth League activist who had been one of the victims of the floggings (ya Otto, 1982: 146).

The defence team obtained affidavits that indicated that a concept of ‘tradition’ had been fabricated to justify the excessive use of force through floggings by the traditional authorities. One particularly convincing witness was David Shihepo, who was almost ninety years old and provided information about the way in which the punishments meted out by the traditional courts of Ondonga had changed during his lifetime. He claimed that flogging had not ever been used as a punishment to his knowledge until the 1940s as offenders were usually made to pay fines (often in livestock) if found guilty, with capital punishment being applied in very serious cases of murder.

Shihepo argued that it was only during the reign of King Eino Johannes [Kambonde] Namene ‘Sheepo’ (1942-1960) that a South African government official, the ‘Native Commissioner for Ovamboland’, ‘Cocky’ Hahn, had instructed the traditional authorities to introduce flogging. It was for this reason, Shihepo argued, that Hahn was known in Oshiwambo by the nickname ‘Shongola’ meaning ‘the Whip’. After the introduction of corporal punishment offenders never received more than six strokes, although during the reign of King Martin ‘Nambala’ Ashikoto (1960-1967), who was described by Shihepo as “a reckless, irresponsible, and temperamental Chief, who was given to heavy drinking” the number rose as high as ten. After the end of Ashikoto’s reign, King Paulus Eliphaz (1967- 1970) stopped using flogging as a punishment at

(110) The correct spelling should read Shekudja and not Nhekudja

(111) *Ibid.*, p.7.

all. He argued that there was nothing ‘traditional’ about flogging people in the nude or flogging women (Namuhuja, 1996: 44-56). 112

Bishop Leonard Auala himself provided a sworn affidavit for the court stating that in his lifetime he had also never heard of the infliction of such heavy and violent beatings by traditional courts. The defence team even obtained a statement from a professional anthropologist, Robert Gordon, who gave evidence on customary law demonstrating that it was incompatible with the punishments that were being given to the political activists.113

However, despite the strength of the evidence there were a series of attempts to overturn the injunction in the courts and it was only on 24th February 1975, that the Appeal Court finally imposed a permanent ban on the use of corporal punishment (Soggot, 1976: 75). One of the victims of the floggings, Andreas Nuunkwawo, the Secretary of DEMKOP, was one of the thousands who left the country and claimed that the exodus was fuelled by the violent repression that SWAPO and DEMKOP

members were experiencing. After leaving for exile, Nuukwawo told the *Zambia Daily Mail* of 25th February 1975, that: “More than four hundred SWAPO members have

been victims of infamous and horrifying public floggings. Not less than a hundred teachers were kicked out of their posts for being members of SWAPO. Many people joining the exodus have been dismissed from their jobs for their political activities” (Quoted in Serfontein, 1976: 232). During the period from June 1974 after Portuguese military control over southern Angola collapsed and August 1975 when South African forces attempted to block the new route to exile, it is estimated that between 4,000 and 6,000 Namibians crossed into southern Angola. The exodus would place heavy strains on SWAPO’s under-resourced infrastructure and limited food and military supplies (Cockram, 1976: 438; Soggot, 1986: 109).

## SWAPO in Zambia

SWAPO established its office in Lusaka shortly after Zambia obtained its independence in 1964. However an incident in the Caprivi in October 1968 seems to have led to a dramatic increase in the number of people under SWAPO’s care.114 It was alleged that a massacre had taken place in a village in the Caprivi Strip with as many as 63 people being killed and that this resulted in people fleeing from the region, although, the ‘Native Commissioner’ in the region at the time claimed that people had fled after guerrillas had attacked shops at Singalamwe and Sibbinda. The site was filmed by Per Sanden who was taken to the site in 1973 by Peter Nanyemba and, Sanden was subsequently able to interview Aaron Haingura, a survivor of the attack who claimed

(112) UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/20/43 ‘Affidavit of David Shihepo, 5th December, 1973’. Mr Shihepo stated that he had been born about 1883.

(113) UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/20/43 ‘Affidavit of Leonard Nangolo Auala, 22nd February’, 1974; ‘Affidavit of Robert, James Gordon, 26th February’, 1974;

(114) UN Archives. ‘Preliminary investigation’, Mac Aonghusa, 1st August, 1974. The investigation informed the Commissioner for Namibia that an alleged incident in 1973 had actually taken place in ‘Singazamne’ [sic] in 1968.

that the village had been destroyed in reprisal for attacks by SWAPO (Kangumu, 2011: 227-229). Andreas Shipanga who was SWAPO's Propaganda and Information Officer at the time, later after he had left the party claimed that the village had actually been the one destroyed by the Portuguese 16km inside Angola which Dimo Hamaambo had discovered (Shipanga, 1989: 96-97). Bennett Kangumu identifies the village as 'Mayala' near Singalamwe, whilst a UN Press Release, referring to Sanden's film, refers to 'a village in Kalonga'.<sup>115</sup>

The sudden large influx of refugees resulted in a reception centres being established in October 1968, in Senanga in the Western Province particularly to house refugees who had crossed from the Caprivi Strip. One estimate was that over 1,000 refugees had left the Caprivi by the end of 1968.<sup>116</sup> A camp at Mayukwayukwa was closed and about 300 refugees were moved to a new camp at Maheba in 1970.<sup>117</sup> SWAPO established its main camp in Zambia on a 2,000 hectare farm which became known as the 'Old Farm' and was obtained from the Zambian Government in 1973. The camp was located about 40km outside Lusaka. By the end of 1973, the camp housed about 120 Namibian refugees and this figure had risen to 500 (including 200 children) by January 1975, (Sellström 2002: 263).

SWAPO broadcasts on Radio Zambia were an important source of motivation for people to leave for exile and many of SWAPO's activists in northern Namibia as well as the remaining leadership of the SWAPO Youth League crossed the border in the mid-1970s. External observers suggested that the large and rapid exodus temporarily weakened SWAPO's organisational ability in the north and contributed to the fact that, in contrast to the successful boycott of 1973, there was a higher turnout in January 1975, in the second election in 'Ovamboland'.<sup>118</sup> The dramatic increase in the number of refugees from 1974 meant that the 'Old Farm' became overcrowded, even though additional tents were added. The Zambian Government then made available a much larger, 10,000 hectare site at Nyango, near Kaoma, in Zambia's Western Province. In October, 1975 the 'Old Farm' was closed and by March, 1976 it was reported that the new camp at Nyango contained around 1,000 Namibians.<sup>119</sup> Military bases – 'Central' and 'Oshatotwa' were also established near the border with Namibia by 1976.

The logistical problems of supplying and housing the rapidly expanding refugee population were considerable. Eunice Ipinge remembers that when she arrived at Shatotwa "... people were eating Kafube (flour used to make porridge) ... and sometimes that Kafube is not available and we ended up eating these wild fruits".<sup>120</sup>

(115) UN Archives S-0902-0005-02-00001 'Human Rights Group in Geneva Hears Evidence on Caprivi Strip Massacre', 21st August, 1974.

(116) 'UN Council for Namibia decides to send a three member delegation to Africa', UN Council for Namibia, 22nd January, 1969.

(117) UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/2/2 'Namibian Educational and Health Centre, SWAPO, nd'

(118) 'Is SWAPO strong enough inside?', *Africa Now*, February, 1976, p16.

(119) 'Nahas Angula - The Man who Educated the Exiles', *New Era*, 22nd August, 2012.

(120) 'Interview with Eunice Ipinge'. Tonchi, V.L & B. Mulongeni, *Voices of Liberation: A history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*, Windhoek, March, 2012, p.23.

By the beginning of 1979, when most of SWAPO's military forces had been relocated to Angola, the Zambian authorities indicated that SWAPO had 5,074 members at Nyango, 264 at Meheba and 10 in Lusaka.<sup>121</sup> It should be noted that these figures seem to exclude the students and staff of the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN) which officially opened on 'Namibia Day' (26th August 1976), with Hage Geingob as its Director (with places for Namibians from SWAPO and SWANU). The Institute would provide an important opportunity for young Namibians to obtain higher educational qualifications and by 1989, HE. Dr Kenneth Kaunda, was able to note that UNIN was able to produce 1,263 graduates in a single year.<sup>122</sup>

In the mid-1970s SWAPO faced a major crisis in Zambia that threatened the unity of the organisation. In April, 1975 the Zambian army raided the homes of a number of senior SWAPO officials in Lusaka. The arrests included three members of the Executive Committee including Andreas Shipanga, SWAPO's Secretary for Information and Propaganda and Solomon Mifima, one of the founding members of the party. Later arrests included Shangula Sheeli, the Secretary-General of the SWAPO Youth League and Keshi Nathanael, President of the SWAPO Youth League. (Williams, 2011: 106-107).

SWAPO established an internal Commission of Enquiry (Chaired by John ya Otto) on 23rd May 1976, to investigate the background to the arrests. Sam Nujoma explains that one of the main reasons for the arrest of Andreas Shipanga was that it was believed he had been recruited as a spy for the West Germans. The SWAPO leadership had refused an invitation to have lunch with Mr Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the West German Foreign Minister, in Lusaka and had demanded that the West German Government should close their Consulate in Windhoek as the international committee were not meant to give any diplomatic recognition to South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia. However, Shipanga and six others attended a lunch in defiance of the leadership and agreed to receive two consignments of food from West Germany for the camps (Nujoma, 2001: 246). An incident that provides further important background to the arrests was the fact that, a few months earlier, in October 1975, a 29 member delegation representing the Turnhalle initiative, including prominent members of the 'Ovamboland' Government such as Rev. Ndjoba and Mr Toivo Shiyagaya had been hosted by West Germany.<sup>123</sup> After the arrest of Shipanga and his colleagues the detainees were kept at Nampundwe Camp. The group wrote a series of letters appealing for assistance, although these make no reference to Genscher. The letters detail a broader range of complaints including that PLAN fighters were

(121) UN Archives. Office of the Commissioner for Namibia S-0602-0005, 'Meeting with Mr E.M. Sikawe, Commissioner for Refugees, Zambia, 4th February, 1979.'

(122) Mmbaga, Dinah Richard, *Historical Description of the African Liberation Committee: Reconstructing the Process*, (Summary of holdings of the OAU's ALC Archives). Box 56. 'Address by HE Dr Kenneth Kaunda to the 10th Graduation Ceremony of UN Institute for Namibia held at Mulungushi Hall, Lusaka, Zambia, 21 January, 1989'

(123) UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/20/37 - 'Visit of South West Africans to the Federal Republic of Germany, 22nd-26th October, 1975'

being sent to fight “. . . well-armed enemy forces with sticks and outdated arms” and that ‘public floggings’ were, allegedly, taking place in SWAPO camps as a form of punishment.<sup>124</sup>

A second source of complaints came from the fighters at the Central Base (close to the Kwando River, near the intersection of the Zambian, Angolan and Namibian borders). In April 1975, a document entitled ‘The PLAN Fighter’s Declaration’ emerged which re-emphasised their demand for a ‘National Congress’ to develop a ‘clear, socialist’ programme “. . . because we believe that socialism is a better society. We are against exploitation of man by man and condone in strong terms the exploitation of our mineral resources by foreigners. The document also claimed that there were spies within SWAPO that were ‘collaborating with the enemy’, complained about SWAPO’s military collaboration with UNITA and made allegations of corruption. In the same month a group of forty-eight soldiers who had established an ‘Investigation Committee’ were also arrested by the Zambian Army.<sup>125</sup> A letter from the base dated 23rd March 1976, listed a number of concerns raised by the new recruits there, who had mainly arrived in exile during and after 1974, and stated that they wanted to meet directly with the OAU’s Liberation Committee to discuss their concerns. The points that were raised included complaints that “we were told that there were not enough war materials for every Namibian” and that “. . . according to our commanders we are not allowed to operate from the Zambian soil anymore”. The soldiers who signed the letter also demanded that a SWAPO Congress should be held so that a new leadership might be elected.<sup>126</sup>

The ya Otto Commission which investigated the reasons for the ‘mutiny’ submitted its report on June 4 1976, and concluded that there had been a ‘conspiracy’ leading to a revolt and it had been “. . . plotted, masterminded and executed by South African-Imperialist . . . interests, using reactionary, opportunistic, ambitious and disgruntled elements within SWAPO”. The report, however, also acknowledged a number of problems that had been created by the particular challenges that SWAPO was facing. The Commission particularly highlighted the need for a clear political programme and to recognise ‘constructive criticism’ and recommended, not a Congress, but ‘an enlarged extraordinary meeting of the Central Committee’ (Quoted in Dobell, 2000: 53-55).

A legal challenge was mounted for the release of the detainees at Nampundwe. The judge, Mr Justice Silungwe, argued in September 1976 that, “. . . no army of liberation, let alone an ordinary army, could survive without having and observing its own rules of conduct, for soldiers might begin to butcher one another until disorder

(124) UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/1/14. ‘A Statement’, Jimmy Amupala (and 10 others), Nampundwe Camp, Lusaka, 16th June, 1976.

(125) UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/1/14. The PLAN Fighter’s Declaration (SWAPO Military Wing, Western Province, Lusaka, Zambia, 23 April, 1976.

(126) UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/1/14. Letter from SWAPO Military Wing, Western Province, Zambia to ‘Dear Comrades’ with headline “Why we have to meet directly the Liberation Committee of the O.A.U”, 23rd March, 1976.

or extermination prevailed for political expediency Zambia has allowed various armies of liberation to observe their own rules of conduct in relation to discipline and internal administration". The judge referred explicitly to the Government's apprehension of factional violence, borne of the experience of the internal dissension in ZANU which culminated in the murder of Mr Herbert Chitepo and dozens of other people".<sup>127</sup> The judge allowed an appeal, but by the time it came to court, Shipanga and other prisoners had already been flown to Tanzania, on 18th July 1976. Shipanga and his colleagues were, eventually, released on 25th May 1978 and Shipanga went into exile in Sweden where he was involved in the launch of a new political party, the SWAPO-Democrats (Shipanga, 2001: 145).

SWAPO's Director of Youth at the time, Homateni Kaluenja, argued that the conflict represented a leadership challenge which had threatened to destabilise the liberation movement "... since no revolution anywhere has ever succeeded to win victory without an organized authority".<sup>128</sup> The internal conflict was indicative of the tensions that many liberation movements experienced when faced with logistical challenges and the challenge of discerning legitimate democratic protest from mutinous confrontation with the disciplinary values of a military hierarchy.

A further wave of arrests took place in July 1976, the month after the publication of the ya Otto Report, when a large group (up to 1,000) of the PLAN fighters at 'Central Base' were arrested by the Zambian Army and imprisoned at Mboroma camp near Kabwe (Williams, : 116). On 5th August 1976, the guerrillas at Mboroma attempted to march to Lusaka to speak to the OAU Liberation Committee, but were prevented by the Zambian Army that opened fire killing four fighters (Shipanga, 2001: 133). Eventually about 200 of them left SWAPO, whilst the remainder were re-admitted to the party after signing statements of loyalty. The conflict should be clearly understood within the context of the logistical pressures facing SWAPO in the face of the rapid expansion of the number of people in its camps, the difficulties associated with the disengagement with UNITA, the internal ideological debates and the leadership tensions between the 'Tanga' group and the younger leadership of the SWAPO Youth League. SWAPO's priority during this period was to maintain military discipline and unity.

## The Militarisation of Northern Namibia

On 1st April, 1974 the South African Defence Force took over responsibility for patrolling the border area in Namibia, just as the coup in Portugal opened up a 'second front' and colonial security forces reported a significant increase in attacks by PLAN fighters in northern Namibia (Steenkamp, 1989: 26). One of the most prominent attacks took place on 16th August 1975, when Chief Filemon Elifas (who

(127) 'Supreme Court allows Shipanga appeal', *Zambia Daily Mail*, 22/9/1976

(128) UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/20/2. Homateni Kaluenja 'The September Thesis on the Role of the Namibian in our Revolution', SWAPO Youth League of Namibia, nd.

had served as the ‘Chief Minister’ of ‘Ovamboland’ since 1st May 1973) was shot dead outside a store near Oniipa. The police arrested at least 54 (and perhaps over the next few weeks, as many as 200) people including SWAPO’s ‘National Organiser’, Aaron Mushimba [Sam Nujoma’s brother-in-law]. Section 6 of the 1967 Terrorism Act was applied, which permitted a senior police officer to order the arrest and indefinite detention of anyone without the need for an arrest warrant. Almost all those arrested were SWAPO members. There were clear indications that the police used torture to obtain witness statements and to persuade seven of those arrested to become state witnesses.

By November 1975, it had been decided to proceed with the prosecution of three men and four women (all nurses from Engela Hospital), under the Terrorism Act and that the case would be heard in Swakopmund from 16th February 1976. The men were accused of purchasing or driving a Land Rover that had been used by the assassins, whilst the nurses were accused of collecting money and materials for the guerrillas. Victor Nkandi and Axel Johannes were both called as witnesses, but refused to testify and were sentenced for contempt of court (Soggot, 1986: 151-158).

The 94 page judgement read by Judge Strydom indicated that the court was not only seeking to identify and convict the killer of Elifas, but also seeking to condemn SWAPO as a whole and to portray it as an anti-Christian organisation. Judge Strydom therefore, argued in his summary that “Despite SWAPO, according to their exhibits, claiming or proclaiming that it is an organisation which enjoys world-wide recognition, I do not find here any profession of God, who through his omnipotence and guidance controls the destiny of things and people”. The court also allowed the security police to present a long list of other killings and explosions which had been attributed to SWAPO since they had started operating from Angola (Christenson, 1999: 62). The Judge found four of the accused guilty. The two nurses who had donated money to SWAPO, Rauna Nambinga and Anna Nghihondjila, were sentenced to seven and five years in prison respectively, while Aaron Mushimba and Hendrik Shikongo were sentenced to death, although, “None of the four sentenced in May 1976 was accused of pulling the trigger” (Christenson, 1999: 36). The men would, probably, have been hung but, it emerged that the prosecution had been illegally provided with information by informers recruited by the security police within Lorentz and Bone, the law firm which had conducted the defence and all the convictions were set aside (Soggot, 1986: 159-162).

Whilst PLAN guerrilla units had the advantage of local knowledge and support networks, the South Africans had significant advantages at this time in terms of military hardware and surveillance technology, and PLAN units made considerable sacrifices. For example, in May 1976, Ben Ulenga was a member of a unit of seventeen PLAN fighters who infiltrated into Otavi District. Ulenga remembers that after two months, only eight of the group were surviving. He was seriously wounded in an

attack on five of the survivors which left three other members of the unit dead.<sup>129</sup> At times, even larger units crossed the border into Namibia. For example, in July 1976, Ruben Mbwalala Itengula was one of 80 fighters under Commanders Leonard Nambahu (Kumbo) and Mabone, who infiltrated towards central Namibian towns such as Tsumeb, Otavi, Otjiwarongo, Outjo and Omaruru.<sup>130</sup>

However, smaller units were often more effective as it was easier for them to obtain supplies and move undetected. For example, two PLAN combatants, Nduuvu Nangolo and Canisius Heneleshi were blamed for a series of attacks on the white farming community that left four white civilians dead and which was perceived as a significant shift in military strategy. The men spent some time in Okahandja where they sought to recruit and train people for urban guerrilla fighting.<sup>131</sup> In February, 1976 the two guerrillas were involved in a shoot-out in Katutura during which Nangolo was seriously wounded, but Heneleshi escaped. Heneleshi was never captured, although it was announced that his burnt body had been discovered after a veld fire swept the mountains near Windhoek. A year later, Nduuvu Nangolo, became the last freedom fighter to receive capital punishment when he was hanged from his wheelchair on 30 May 1977 despite international protests, after being convicted of the murder of four whites (IDAF, 1981: 11). Ulenga was in Windhoek prison (before he was sentenced to his fifteen years of imprisonment on Robben Island) and Nangolo spoke to him shortly before his execution. Another example of a small unit which carried out a series of successful operations was that of John Pandeni and Petrus Iilongo, who were arrested in August 1978. The two PLAN fighters were charged with a series of acts of sabotage that had been carried out during May and June and were sentenced to 18 years imprisonment on Robben Island, whilst community members who had assisted them also received heavy prison sentences (O'Linn, 2003: 210).

## The Turnhalle Conference and Resolution 435

Inside Namibia the South African regime was making a concerted effort to establish a political system which might persuade people that Namibia had obtained self-rule and that there was therefore no further need for the liberation struggle to continue. The most important success of SWAPO and those in civil society opposed to South African rule was the consistent successful criticism of these political models which prevented them from obtaining sufficient popular support to obtain either local legitimacy or international recognition. In September 1974, the Administration had announced that it would be organising a Conference to draft a new 'national' constitution. The 'Turnhalle Constitutional Conference' was convened on 1st September 1975, and it would run until 19th March 1977 (Udogu, 2012:55).

(129) Ndjebela, Toivo. 'Ulenga blames greed for CoD's woes' *New Era*, 27th April, 2012.

(130) !Hoas, Irene 'Itengula – the silent soldier', *New Era*, 6th January, 2012

(131) 'Interview with Willem Ndaupapo Amagulu'. Tonchi, V.L & B. Mulongeni, *Voices of Liberation: A history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*, Windhoek, March, 2012, p.13.

The most significant outcome of the Conference was probably not the documents that emerged, but the split that occurred in the Namibian branch of the National party. Dirk Mudge narrowly lost to A.H. du Plessis in an election for the party leadership on 27th September, 1977 and, subsequently, left with his followers to form the Republican Party and then launch the ‘Democratic Turnhalle Alliance’ that united eleven, mainly ethnically based, parties to form a multiracial alliance (Du Preez, 2003: 93). A huge propaganda effort took place to try to encourage people to accept the initiative as a genuine initiative that could lead to the end of apartheid and achieve the goal of Namibian independence. At the same time, thousands of pamphlets and posters were distributed that, literally sought to ‘demonise’ SWAPO claiming that, as ‘communists’, the movement would destroy churches if they came to power. Andrew Niikondo, a schoolboy at this time, recalls ...“I can remember quite vividly when I was at Oluno Secondary School. There were flyers that South African propagandists distributed in communities depicting that President Sam Nujoma had a tail. There were also some photos showing him with horns”.<sup>132</sup>

A few of SWAPO’s founding members, such as Mberumba Kerina and Emil Appolus, were encouraged to return (as part of the attempt to provide legitimacy to the new initiative) and to participate. They would later be joined by others, such as Andreas Shipanga.<sup>133</sup> However, Daniel Tjongerero, speaking on behalf of SWAPO at a Press Conference in Windhoek on 27th May 1976, clearly expressed the view of the party that the exercise was unacceptable as it was still based on the assumption that the constitution should acknowledge an ethnically fragmented map of Namibia, rather than a united nation. Tjongerero’s speech also provides an indication of the sense of constant surveillance that SWAPO operated under inside the country:

“Comrades, Pressmen and Reporters to the Military Intelligence, Security Police and BOSS. I welcome you all to this Press Conference . . . we are not interested in an exercise in tribal politics in the Turnhalle . . . We see in the Turnhalle an attempt to maintain the status quo, and to further entrench the rights and the privileges of the White minority  
– to keep the Black man in a state of servitude and slavery in a modern form”.<sup>134</sup>

An election held in December 1978 would install a Government led by the DTA which would for the first time, include black members. Moses Katjuongua, another veteran of the liberation struggle argued that as only SWAPO was recognised by the OAU and the UN it no longer made sense for other parties to have external offices now that they were able to campaign and mobilise inside Namibia – and so he also returned in 1981.<sup>135</sup> However, South Africa retained control over defence and other key economic areas and the ‘Interim Government’ never obtained international recognition. In 1983, it was dissolved by a South African appointed ‘Administrator-

(132) ‘Interview with Andrew Niikondo’. Tonchi, V.L. & B. Mulongeni, *Voices of Liberation: A history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*, Windhoek, March, 2012, p.261.

(133) UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/20/42 - ‘Report from a Visitor to Namibia’, April, 1977.

(134) UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA Quoting from *Namibian Viewpoint*, Press Statement.

(135) Yale-UN Oral History Project, ‘Interview with Moses Katjuongua by Jean Krasno’, New York, 9th March, 1999, p5.

General', Mr Dannie Hough. The Administrator-General took over the powers of the defunct Government, although he announced, through Proclamation AG8, that the ethnic administrations would remain. It was important that throughout the period of the Turnhalle Constitutional Conference, there had been continuing evidence inside Namibia of popular opposition to the ethnic political template that South Africa sought to impose on Namibia. A good example of this is a teachers' strike that swept southern Namibia at the end of 1976.

## The Nama Teachers' Strike

Whilst the SWAPO Youth League found most of its leadership were in prison or exile by 1976 this did not mean that the voice of youthful protest in Namibia was silenced. A wave of unrest broke out in schools in Namibia in solidarity with the protests against 'Bantu Education' that had broken out in Soweto in South Africa from 16th June 1976.

Students boycotted classes in schools across Namibia with action being taken at schools that included Okakarara High School, Petrus Kaneb High School at Uis and Dobra. At the Martin Luther High School in Omaruru, it was reported that the learners destroyed their end-of-year exam papers in November 1976. A meeting was called where learners were warned that they needed to sit their exams in order to complete their schooling, but 123 of the 140 learners voted to continue their boycott. Indeed, many of the staff joined the students to organise a mock funeral on 8th November as 'Bantu Education' was to be 'buried'. At Cornelius Goraseb High School when students refused to write their exams, armed police were called to the school and, it was reported that a petrol bomb had exploded at the Augustineum in Windhoek. 136

One of the anomalies which resulted from the imposition of apartheid based on the ethnic template provided by the homelands policy related to the Nama communities of southern Namibia. In South Africa Nama-speaking communities were classified as 'Coloured' and resorted under the 'Department of Coloured Relations'. However, in Namibia the different 'Nama' communities strongly affirmed their cultural identity, but under the 'illogic' of apartheid this meant that they received lower wages than those set of people who were classified as 'Coloured'. At the end of 1976 teachers in southern Namibia confronted the administration about the inequality inscribed in the pay scales and went on strike.

The South West African Nama Teachers' Association had been formed in 1970 as the administration sought to promote ethnic organisations, but the Association became increasingly conscious of broader political issues. A further indication of the shifting political dynamics of southern Namibia came when, on 4th November 1976, traditional authorities at Gibeon, Hoachanas, Berseba and Vaalgras announced in a

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(136) UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/20/42 - 'Report from a Visitor to Namibia' – Katjavivi Peter Hitjitevi, April, 1977.

press release that they and their communities were joining SWAPO (Joas, 1994: 48). In November 1976, they sought a meeting with the ‘Minister of Coloured Relations’, Mr H.H. Smit to demand equal pay for equal work, but the Minister refused to meet the Association. The teachers responded by immediately launching a strike with 237 teachers joining the strike (although some claim that as many as 400 left work) and gathering at Gibeon. At the time of the strike the Association’s leadership consisted of Mr J. Isaack (President), Mr S. Goliath (Chairman), Mr W. Konjore (Deputy- Chairman), Mr J. Richter (Secretary), Mr D. Schmidt (Deputy-Secretary) and Rev.

H. Witbooi (Chief Advisor). The strike led to the closure or disruption of 43 schools throughout southern Namibia.

Teachers that participated in the strike were docked their wages for November and December, but succeeded in obtaining a meeting with the authorities on 14th January 1977. At the meeting “. . . it was clear from the discussions that followed that the equalisation of salaries is not possible unless the Nama become Coloured”.<sup>137</sup> However, the financial pressures and a threat by the Administration to close the school at Tses meant that when schools re-opened in January most of the teachers were forced to return to work.

The strike leaders faced victimisation with Rev. Witbooi and Rev. Konjore being forced to leave their posts at Gibeon and Koichas. Nonetheless, the background of the strike inspired an initiative that led to the establishment of four ‘community schools’ in southern Namibia at Gibeon, Hoachanas, Koichas and Berseba and, the Peoples Primary School in Katutura, and these became known as ‘schools of resistance’. The schools were privately run and so could develop their own ‘alternative syllabus’ and use English (rather than Afrikaans) as the medium of instruction (Joas, 1994: 12-13). A number of significant events took place in the early months of 1978 as the liberation struggle intensified. On the evening of 18th February 1978, a unit led by ‘Danger’ Ashipala captured two South African soldiers during an attack on a water point at Elundu. One was killed, but the other, a young nineteen old conscript, Johan van der Mescht, was moved to a base at Ohaipeito in Angola and then transferred to Cassinga (Namakalu, 2004: 70-72).<sup>138</sup> On 27th March 1978, Clemens Kapuuo, the ‘Paramount Chief’ of the Herero and one of the most popular leaders in the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance was assassinated. Whilst the media at the time reported that the killing had been carried out by SWAPO many in his party believed that he had been killed by the South Africans because of his reluctance to co-operate (Katjavivi, 1988: 100-102).<sup>139</sup> One historian, Dr Jan-Bart Gewald, has argued that the assassination provided a pretext for the subsequent South African attack on Cassinga and was also designed to undermine support for SWAPO inside Namibia (Gewald,

(137) UNAM Archives. Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/17/3 – 9a ‘Gibeon School Teachers’ - ‘Tape Transcripts: Interviews with Nama School Teachers on Strike’, 1977.

(138) Jooste, Rina (Director), *Captive and Captor: The story of ‘Danger’ Ashipala and Johan van der Mescht*, 2010.

(139) Weidlich, Brigitte ‘DTA remembers slain leader Kapuuo’, *Namibian*, 29th March, 2007.

2004). After the assassination, there was a serious outbreak of ethnic violence in Katutura Township on the outskirts of Windhoek.

Elina Ndapuka, recalls that SWAPO activists referred to it as ‘Kapuuo’s War’ and also suspected that the security forces sought to use Kapuuo’s death to destroy Herero support for SWAPO. She believes that there was a plan that somebody should “. . . pretend to be a Wambo and throw something to the crowd of Hereros as they passed by taking Kapuuo’s body to the burial place at Okahandja”. The consequence was to create serious ethnic tension. Ndapuka explained “We had our members who were residing in the ‘Herero section’ of Katutura such as Immanuel Ngatjizeko, Charles Tjijenda,

Phillip Tjerije, Tate Edwin Tjirimuje and Tate Bartholomew G. Karuaera, a pastor then. Nambinga and Marco Hausiku had to go and collect them from ‘Hereroland’<sup>140</sup> as their houses were being burnt by fellow Hereros that were DTA supporters and all this happened in 1977/78.” She also recalls the way in which SWAPO’s ‘Namibian Police’ sought to maintain security within Katutura: “ We had to stop the vehicles

and greet all the passengers in Oshiwambo. We could also ask questions like “what is that food that is dried on top of the hut?” - then if the person answer was *evanda* (wild spinach) then we knew the person was a Wambo”. The conflict left several people dead and created ethnic tension in Katutura with Ndapuka explaining: “We had to relocate all the SWAPO supporters including the Hereros to Ondjambo (Owambo

location)”.<sup>141</sup> As in any conflict rumours and suspicion spread rapidly.

Whilst the political environment within Namibia remained volatile, the international community clearly acknowledged SWAPO’s alternative vision for Namibia’s political future. The UN Security Council passed Resolution 385 on 30th January 1976, which stipulated that ‘free elections under the supervision and control of the United Nations’ should be held for ‘Namibia as one political entity’. Theo-Ben Gurirab, SWAPO’s representative to the United Nations, described the resolution as a ‘ground-breaking’ moment in the diplomatic struggle for Namibian independence.<sup>142</sup> However, there was little progress in the negotiations that sought to agree on a practical programme for the effective implementation of this resolution. In March 1977, the first meeting took place between delegates from five countries (Britain, Canada, France, USA and West Germany) that came to be known as the ‘Western Contact Group’ with the aim of producing a ‘statement of principles’ (Vergau, 2010:3).

The Contact Group, following extended and heated discussions with SWAPO’s negotiating team (which included Theo-Ben Gurirab and Hage Geingob) would agree on a framework for the transition to independence. The framework was adopted by

(140) ‘Hereroland’ was one of the ethnic ‘Homelands’ created following the recommendations of the Odendaal Plan. It was officially created on 2nd October, 1968 and granted ‘self-government’ on 26th July, 1970 with Chief Clemens Kapuuo serving as the Chief Minister until his death on 27th March, 1978. ‘Hereroland’ , like all other ‘Homelands’ was dissolved in May, 1989 to enable the establishment of a unitary Namibian state.

(141) ‘Interview with Elina Ndapuka’. Tonchi, V.L & B. Mulongeni, *Voices of Liberation: A history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*, Windhoek, March, 2012, pp305-307.

(142) Yale-UN Oral History Project, ‘Interview with Theo-Ben Gurirab by Jean Krasno’, New York, 3rd November, 1999, p.10.

the UN Security Council on 29th September 1978, as Resolution 435. The Resolution established a United Nations Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG) which would be responsible for managing the transition to independence and monitoring the elections. Resolution 435 did not include Walvis Bay (which South Africa argued, for historical reasons, should remain part of South Africa), but SWAPO eventually conceded that this issue could be resolved once independence had been achieved.<sup>143</sup> The Contact Group submitted a list of ‘Constitutional Principles’ to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in July 1981. These were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1982 and eventually, provided the framework for the drafting of the constitution of the Republic of Namibia (Wiechers, 1991: 82).<sup>144</sup>

However, some important details of the implementation process remained unclear. When the new Commissioner for Namibia Martti Ahtissari met with Sam Nujoma on 10th February 1979, one of the most significant issues that remained unresolved was the question of the confinement of soldiers to the base. The minutes of the meeting show that Sam Nujoma argued: “We have agreed to restriction to base and the monitoring of SWAPO forces and those of South Africa within Namibian territory, but not outside Namibia . . . SWAPO feels that due to the fact that its forces are a guerrilla force and are scattered throughout Namibia, it would be difficult to get the message to them in a short time”. Nujoma argued that once a ceasefire had started, PLAN fighters should be given three weeks to assemble at five designated bases inside Namibia and that this should also include the possibility of troops outside Namibia joining their comrades. The main argument was that if a fixed number of South Africa’s security forces were to remain in Namibia, confined to their bases, during the period prior to the election than an equal number of SWAPO troops should also be confined to their base inside Namibia.<sup>145</sup>

## Cassinga

The most infamous and deadly attack on a SWAPO camp that took place during the Namibian liberation struggle was that which took place on SWAPO’s ‘Moscow’ base at Cassinga on 4th May 1978. The surprise attack took place during the early morning parade. “Claudia Ushona, then a 16-year-old refugee at Cassinga, but now a Namibian diplomat, remembers seeing the bombs falling and initially thinking Sam Nujoma was dropping sweets for the children”.<sup>146</sup> Immediately after the attack there was fierce disagreement over the role of the camp with the SADF claiming that it

was a legitimate military target, and SWAPO claiming that it was a civilian camp where the South African forces had committed a massacre. Two important sources

(143) When Namibia obtained its independence in 1990 Walvis Bay was excluded and military checkpoints were established, but negotiations resulted in the transfer of the coastal port to Namibia in 1994.

(144) Geingob, Hage ‘State Formation in Namibia: Promoting Democracy and Good Governance’, PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, 2004, p99.

(145) UN Archives. Office of the Commissioner for Namibia S-0602-0003, 2nd Meeting of Commissioner for Namibia, Mr Ahtissari with Mr Sam Nujoma, 10th February, 1979.

(146) ‘Battle of Cassinga still rages’, *The Star*, May 19, 2007, p.11.

of information are available that give insight into the purpose of the camp and the background to the attack. The Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) of South Africa was able to access a large number of declassified documents from the security forces when it produced a whole section on Cassinga in Chapter Two of Volume Two of its report. The survivors and participants in the attack have also recorded, or published, their own accounts of the assault on Cassinga.

The TRC refers to a communication dated 27th February 1978, in which the Chief of the SADF was informed by his 'operations' department that their intelligence indicated that 'Kassinga' was the largest of SWAPO's five principal bases in southern Angola and that it contained an 'estimated' 800 guerrilla fighters. On 8th March 1978, the Chief of the SADF received a second communication from Lt-General Viljoen in which he claimed that 'Kassinga' was the base used by PLAN for planning its operations and, therefore, contained PLAN's senior leadership and was also "... the assembly point for insurgent recruits before processing them to training centres at Lubango and Luanda".<sup>147</sup> Viljoen argued that the attack would give the SADF an opportunity to capture the Commander of PLAN, Dimo Hamaambo, and important documentation. Viljoen also argued that the camp had PLAN's most important medical centre for injured fighters and was a 'concentration point' for guerrillas before they were dispersed to other camps. The TRC concludes that "All the planning documentation, including aerial photographs, would indicate that the SADF command was convinced that Kassinga was the planning headquarters of PLAN, and thus a military target of key importance".<sup>148</sup> Photographic reconnaissance flights were conducted over the camp on at least two occasions (1st and 29th April, 1978).<sup>149</sup> The conclusions drawn by the senior officers in the SADF differ considerably from the memories of those who experienced the attack.

Agnes Kafula, a young teacher, had arrived at Cassinga about six months before the attack. She had received some training in medical aid and had helped to establish a kindergarten for young children. She describes the camp as a 'transit' camp with a constant stream of people passing through.<sup>150</sup> Paavo Max, one of the camp administrators also emphasised the significance of the camp as a 'transit' camp: "In view of its strategic geographical location between the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre (SWAPO fighters' training base) and the combat regions, Cassinga was a crucial networking site, particularly in terms of transportation. There was a garage and a 'petrol station'. All SWAPO vehicles travelling from Lubango to other places or from the fronts were expected to refuel in Cassinga before proceeding to other places. So, PLAN combatants could not avoid traveling through Cassinga . . . at the time of the attack a number of combatants from Zambia were in transit in Cassinga.

(147) The memorandum is quoted in detail in Edward Alexander, 'The Cassinga Raid', MA Thesis, UNISA, 2003, p 83.

(148) *Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Vol. 2, Ch. 2, paras 21-25 & 44, Pretoria, 1999

(149) Some of the photographs taken during these two flights and a subsequent 'damage assessment' flight made on 4th May, 1978 are contained in Edward Alexander, 'The Cassinga Raid', MA Thesis, UNISA, 2003, pp. 3A 1-10.

(150) Ndjebela, Toivo 'Kafula on her Cassinga ordeal', *New Era*, 24th February, 2012.

They had just arrived there a few days earlier, unfortunately they had no weapons”.<sup>151</sup> Whilst there were core administrative staffs, it was clear that the population of the base was fluid.

Darius ‘Mbolondondo’ Shikongo, who was the Political Commissar for Cassinga and took over command after Commander Nalikonghole Ndalikokule was killed in the first air strike, remembers that the leadership became aware of aerial surveillance before the attack: “In the night we heard sounds of the planes coming from the east to the west and, as a trained soldier, suspicion arose”. In response to the flights Shikongo recalls that “. . . members were on alert, they were warned of what might happen”. The decision was also taken to dig protective trenches (which would, ironically, later be used by the SADF as evidence that Cassinga was predominantly a military base).

Max recalls “Security-wise we dug long trenches [*omatelendja*] in the camp, because the enemy attacks from the air were expected. What we did not expect was an attack by foot soldiers . . .”<sup>152</sup> The PLAN commanders also decided to move Johann van der Mescht (at the time, the only South African prisoner-of-war) from Cassinga to Lubango. <sup>153</sup>

The attack on Cassinga started at eight o’clock as most of the residents of the camp were attending the daily morning parade. Four Canberra bombers each dropped 300 ‘Alpha bombs’. The anti-personnel bombs were each the size of a football. The bombs would ‘bounce’ on impact and explode above the ground showering the area with a deadly hail of solid steel balls. It was believed that Cassinga contained 4,098 residents on the morning of the attack and most of them were attending the parade. A second wave of bombing was then carried out by four Buccaneer planes that dropped a total of twenty-six huge 1,000 pound bombs. A third strike was carried out by two Mirage planes that raked the camp with cannon fire. Three companies of South African paratroopers were dropped and after about an hour to an hour and a half, started a ground attack on the camp.<sup>154</sup>

Max remembers that “When the planes dropped the first bombs, people were commanded to take cover, lie down flat on the parade. As the first wave of the bombings passed, we ordered everyone to retreat to the trenches . . .” However, as survivors sheltered in the new trenches it became clear that the camp was about to be attacked by ground forces and a defence was mounted to buy some time for the rescue and evacuation of survivors. Max describes the bravery of the PLAN fighters who mounted this desperate defence:

(151) Interview of Paavo Max with Vilho Shigwedha, Efindi, 2007 quoted in Shigwedha, Vilho, ‘Enduring Suffering: The Cassinga Massacre of Namibian Exiles in 1978 and the Conflicts between Survivors’ Memories and Testimonies’, PhD Thesis, University of the Western Cape, December, 2011 pp. 35 & 67.

(152) Interview of Paavo Max with Vilho Shigwedha, Efindi, 2007 quoted in Shigwedha, Vilho, ‘Enduring Suffering: The Cassinga Massacre of Namibian Exiles in 1978 and the Conflicts between Survivors’ Memories and Testimonies’, PhD Thesis, University of the Western Cape, December, 2011 p.113.

(153) Interview with Darius ‘Mbolondondo’ Shikongo quoted in Tonchi V.L & Mulongeni B, Voices of the liberation: A history of the Liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia. SADC Secretariat research-Hashim Mbita Project, March 2010, p.32.

(154) Edward Alexander, ‘The Cassinga Raid’, MA Thesis, UNISA, 2003, pp.121-122.

“We had two anti-aircraft guns. One was a double-barrel and the other one a single barrel . . . We also had a lighter British anti-aircraft gun, but that one proved ineffective, it jammed after firing a few shots. The one-barrel anti-aircraft gun was also put out of action immediately. However, the double-barrel anti-aircraft gun was located in a dugout, almost disguised and obscured from the direct enemy view and fire.

“When the enemy dropped from the air, the crew at the only remaining anti-aircraft gun concentrated the fire on the advancing ground forces. That gun really caused trouble for them as it delayed the enemy advance into the camp for much longer. The temporary holdup of the enemy was significant in many ways. For instance, it enabled us to rescue some of our people to safety before the enemy moved inside the camp. Unfortunately, the anti-aircraft gun ran out of ammunition and the gunners were shot dead. Following the silence of the anti-aircraft fire, the enemy broke inside the camp . . .”<sup>155</sup>

The commander of the South African attack, Colonel Jan Breytenbach later praised ‘the unwavering bravery of the SWAPO gunners’ who had manned this gun.<sup>156</sup>

The delay between the bombing of the camp and the arrival of the ground forces, and the prolonged defence of the camp gave time for the rescue of many civilians and the evacuation of senior PLAN commanders who were visiting the camp from their Headquarters in Lubango. Max explains: “Hamaambo could have died or been captured in Cassinga. He stubbornly refused initial attempts to escort him to a safer place outside the camp. We acted in accordance with the ethos of our army that senior commanders must be covered and provided with maximum protection . . . It has always been our principle that the safety of our leaders was the first priority . . . We took Hamaambo across the river, to a hidden location, where he stayed with his bodyguard ‘Nakadila’ and others”. Whilst the Commander-of PLAN, Dimo Hamaambo, the Deputy-Commander of PLAN, Jonas Haiduwa and PLAN’s Political Commissar, Greenwell Matongo, were all efficiently evacuated, Max believes that Haiduwa, returned to the camp and that is how he was killed during the attack.<sup>157</sup>

When the attack on Cassinga took place, efforts were immediately made to send a relief column from Lubango led by John Kawalala, but the column was forced to retreat after being attacked by South African planes. A second column of PLAN combatants led by Commander Uushona (*‘Komanda yeeKomanda’*) arrived in Cassinga on 5th May 1978, and was responsible for the burial of the victims. The dead were buried in two mass graves. The first used a deep, narrow trench located near the medical clinic that had been dug for the disposal of medical materials and was used for the ‘badly damaged bodies’. The second mass grave had been excavated to provide a secure, underground storage depot. Paavo Max was responsible for counting all the bodies

(155) Interview of Paavo Max with Vilho Shigwedha, Efindi, 2007 quoted in Shigwedha, Vilho, ‘Enduring Suffering: The Cassinga Massacre of Namibian Exiles in 1978 and the Conflicts between Survivors’ Memories and Testimonies’, PhD Thesis, University of the Western Cape, December, 2011 pp 114-115.

(156) Edward Alexander, ‘The Cassinga Raid’, MA Thesis, UNISA, 2003, p 138.

(157) Interview of Paavo Max with Vilho Shigwedha, Efindi, 2007 quoted in Shigwedha, Vilho, ‘Enduring Suffering: The Cassinga Massacre of Namibian Exiles in 1978 and the Conflicts between Survivors’ Memories and Testimonies’, PhD Thesis, University of the Western Cape, December, 2011. Another,

that were buried and states that 144 people were buried in the smaller grave and 582 in the larger grave. However, whilst 727 people were buried, it is likely that many other people died trying to escape across the river to the west of the camp. Max remembers that Dimo Hamaambo tried to maintain strict controls over the photographing of the victims of the attack as: “PLAN had strict combat ethics regarding the protection of identities of fallen fighters, especially senior commanders, for example those senior SWAPO commanders who were among the bodies of civilians, such as Commander Jonas Haiduwa, the Deputy Commander of PLAN, and Ndalikokule, the Chief Administrator of the camp”.<sup>158</sup>

It was not possible for the South Africans to return with prisoners from their attack. General Magnus Malan argues that “. . . there was no room on the overloaded helicopters for prisoners of war. Normally prisoners of war are a very valuable source of intelligence, but unfortunately there was simply no room for even one.” However, contemporary communications show that the force had to be swiftly evacuated because of the threat posed by an armoured column of Cuban troops that was advancing on Cassinga from a nearby base.

On the same day as the attack was made on Cassinga, another air and ground attack took place on another SWAPO base (code named ‘Vietnam’) at Chetequera. The base was only 40km from the Namibian border and a large number of prisoners were captured and taken by truck. One of those captured, Magdalena Nghatanga estimated that ‘about 270’ people had been captured during the South African attack on ‘Vietnam’. The prisoners were initially taken to a military base in Oshakati. Nghatanga explains the process by which the security forces not only sought to obtain information from the captives, but also sought to undermine their support for SWAPO: “I remember one girl who was called Lydia Musheko. She was beaten very hard because they were forcing her to agree that in SWAPO, people don’t have food or religion. She told them that in SWAPO we have got education, we have food, we have religion, and because she was not agreeing with them they beat her and shocked her with electricity . . .” (IDAF, 1981: 37).

A group of 63 prisoners were released in Oshakati at the end of May (as they had persuaded their captors that they had only recently left Namibia or had been forced into exile), but a further 134 were taken to a secret prison camp that was established at Keikanachab, near Mariental in southern Namibia (as with many events during the liberation struggle the mathematics does not add up, but this indicates the need for much more detailed research on individual incidents such as this). As the South African Government did not recognise PLAN combatants as prisoners-of-war they claimed that they did not need to pay heed to the Geneva Convention which stipulates that the names of any prisoners-of-war must be released and the remaining men and thirty-five women were kept without trial and without any contact with their families.

(158) Interview of Paavo Max with Vilho Shigwedha, Efindi, 2007 quoted in Shigwedha, Vilho, ‘Enduring Suffering: The Cassinga Massacre of Namibian Exiles in 1978 and the Conflicts between Survivors’ Memories and Testimonies’, PhD Thesis, University of the Western Cape, December, 2011 pp. 35 & 67.

However, the group had taken the precaution in Oshakati of compiling a list giving all their names and one of the men who had been released, Jason Nangombe, managed to send a copy of the list to the International Red Cross (IRC) in Geneva, Switzerland. By May 1979, SWAPO had provided the list to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and complained that the prisoners were being held under AG9. Five IRC representatives visited Keikanachab on 8th June 1980 and reported that they had located 118 SWAPO members who were held there.

Once the existence of the secret prison camp had been revealed, legal measures were put in motion to secure the release of the detainees. In addition to the prisoners from 'Vietnam' the hidden prison camp received a number of additional prisoners, including a large group of about 200 FAPLA troops captured in Angola in September 1982 (who were released just over a year later) and a number of seriously injured PLAN combatants. David Smuts of Lorentz and Bone led a legal challenge demanding the release of the detainees with 56 being released on 14th May 1984 and the remaining 77 on 18th October 1984 (Amutenya, 2011: 38, 53, 72-77; Soggot, 1986: 288).

One of the other tangential legacies of the attack on Cassinga was the establishment of a centre for Namibian children at Mecklenburg in East Germany, with the first group of 80 pre-primary school children (many of who were described as being orphans from the attack) being flown there in 1979. A further home, the 'Belin Castle' was established and, during the 1980s around 340 children were educated in East Germany (Berndt, 2009:350-351). A final important consequence of the attack on Cassinga was 'Operation Revenge' which was launched by SWAPO on 23rd August 1978 (Namakalu, 2004: 75-79). The operation involved a mortar attack on the SADF base at Katima Mulilo in the Caprivi and led to the death of ten South African soldiers, the highest losses that the SADF had suffered in a single action during the war (Steenkamp. 1989: 83; Hooper, 1990:63).

## SWAPO in Angola

The expansion of SWAPO's network of camps in Angola and the United Nations Institute for Namibia in Zambia increasingly saw the liberation movement able to project itself as a Government-in-waiting. During the 1980s, SWAPO's camps provided an opportunity for SWAPO to develop programmes that would pilot its agenda for socio-economic change in a future, independent Namibia. A good example of this was the literacy campaign implemented in line with the commitment made in SWAPO's 1976 political programme to the elimination of illiteracy in an independent Namibia.

At an early date, it was clear that there were issues of common concern impacting on communities on the Angolan and the Namibian sides of the northern border. This border fence known locally as *Onhaululi*, had been particularly damaging to the powerful pre-colonial kingdom of Oukwanyama, splitting it and disrupting traditional grazing patterns and hunting (Namhila, 2002: 26-27). In 1961 the South Africans already started erecting a fence along the border and collaborating with the

Portuguese authorities to confiscate cattle that were crossing into Angola to reach traditional grazing grounds. Ronald Dreyer argues that co-operation with UNITA was “a tactical necessity” in the early years of the armed struggle as its forces were present in the areas of south-east Angola through which PLAN fighters would have to travel and where SWAPO was seeking to establish its own bases. (Dreyer 1994: 50). A seminar held in 1978 drew up a practical proposal and a campaign organised by SWAPO Women’s Council and the Namibia Refugee Project was implemented from 1980. It was estimated that, by 1982 there were about 25,000 women in SWAPO’s main Education and Health Centre in Angola at Kwanza Sul and a further 1,600 at Nyango in Zambia.<sup>159</sup> The campaign used colleagues from the Adult Literacy Organisation of Zimbabwe to provide training of trainers.<sup>160</sup> By 1986 there were 124 ‘literacy promoters’ operating in SWAPO’s camps and it was estimated that 3,000 people were participating in classes at Kwanza Sul and a further 700 at Nyango.<sup>161</sup> Whilst Kwanza Sul and the surrounding area became the major SWAPO settlement in Angola, the camps near Lubango, such as the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre were mainly used for military training, whilst ‘forward’ operational bases were closer to the Namibian border and were often temporary in nature.

Whereas the majority of those who had travelled into exile during the 1960s had been men, by the 1980s, there were significant numbers of women in SWAPO’s camps with traditional gender roles being challenged by the demands and revolutionary discourse of the camps. In 1984 Pashukeni Shoombe described life in the camps as ‘abnormal’ for women. On the one hand, she explained, “We cook, collect firewood, fetch water, and we look after our children as other women do”. However life as a refugee also often meant that there were shortages of basic resources. Shoombe, for example, explained: “We do washing when we have water, and when we have soap .

. . In the camps we get up even earlier than back home, when it’s still dark, because we are expecting our enemy to come at any time; we don’t sleep so nicely ..... we have to fetch water and firewood very far from the settlements..... Our situation is also different in that we have a daily parade where each section gets the work that they will do”.<sup>162</sup> The camps produced a radical revision of the homestead and family model with, for example, people eating in communal kitchens which often served two or three hundred people and men being required to take on cooking duties. Ellen Namhila, has argued that the exile experience provided an experience of greater gender equality and SWAPO literature produced during the struggle promoted the idea that the struggle empowered women (Namhila, 1997: 193; Ashipala, 1994). Dr Libertina Amathila, for example, was able to become the first black Namibian

(159) NAN A555. Namibia Refugee Project Draft Proposal: Swapo Womens Council Literacy Campaign. 1982.

(160) NAN A555. Anne Hope to Mrs Pashukeni Shoombe, Swapo Women’s Council, 11th February, 1983. Mrs Sylvia Kuimba and Mrs Techla Manambara were two of the trainers.

(161) NAN. A555. SWAPO Literacy Campaign, ‘Report for the Period from January, 1986 to January, 1987’, p.3

(162) NAN. A555. Dateline Namibia, No. 2, 1984. ‘Belonging Nowhere’.

woman to qualify as a doctor and was instrumental in improving health services and childcare in SWAPO's camps (Amathila, 2012).

One of the particular challenges that was faced in the camps was that influx controls and the apartheid 'Bantustan' system imposed on the country had severely restricted social interaction between members of different ethnic groups. Many of those interviewed about their experience of exile commented on the challenges of overcoming linguistic barriers and different cultural backgrounds to realise a new, inclusive 'Namibian' identity. One of those who lived in the Angolan camps explained: "I used to think Ovamboland was my country until I came here and saw the other Namibians who belong to the same country", whilst Ellen Namhila has also written of her surprise at meeting 'Namibians' who didn't speak her language, Oshiwambo, when she first arrived in exile (Namhila, 1997: 12).<sup>163</sup> The fact that the majority of exiles had crossed the border from northern Namibia meant that there was uncertainty and suspicion of those who had travelled from different regions of the country, particularly those with lighter skin colour or who spoke Afrikaans. Susan Nghidinwa, for example, said "I still thought that, maybe Hereros are also whites, because we didn't see each other at all".<sup>164</sup> 'Nation-building' had to begin before the nation had even obtained its independence.

The daily routine in the camps was based on military discipline as there was a constant threat of attack. SWAPO, therefore, sought to strengthen its internal security and intelligence services with intelligence officers receiving specialised training in the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany) after a visit there by Peter Nanyemba, SWAPO's Secretary of Defence, in April 1979. SWAPO subsequently organised an intelligence and counter-intelligence unit of around 250 men, led by PLAN's Deputy-Commander, Solomon 'Jesus' Hawala (Schleicher and Schleicher, 1998: 206-207, 214; Sellström, 2002: 333). The importance of the GDR as a source of weapons and training for SWAPO is indicated by the fact that SWAPO's President, Sam Nujoma, made thirteen official visits to the GDR in the period 1975-1988 and met senior GDR officials when they visited the region. For example, Sam Nujoma was able to meet with Werner Lamberz, the SED Secretary for Agitation when they both attended the 3rd FRELIMO Congress in Maputo, Mozambique in February 1977 (Winrow, 1990: 91-92; 101).

## 1980s Military Operations

During the 1980s PLAN received equipment and training that, increasingly, allowed it to operate more like a conventional army, rather than a guerrilla army. The war was fought in two forms. In Angola PLAN fighters were increasingly involved in large

(163) 'Interview with Willem Ndaupato Amagulu' in Tonchi V.L. & Mulongeni B, *Voices of the liberation: A history of the Liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*. SADC Secretariat research-Hashim Mbita Project, March 2010, p.6.

(164) NAN A555. Jan Pickard, Editor, Now, Methodist Church Overseas, Division to Mr Justin Ellis, Namibia Refugee Project, 21st February, 1984. 'Interview with Susan Nghidinwa'.

scale battles to counter a number of direct incursions by South African forces and were probably able to field an active military force of between 12,000 and 16,000 men at any point in time (Torreguitar, 2009: 293). By 1980 PLAN combatants were being trained by Soviet advisors at the Jumbo Training Centre to use T-34 tanks leading to the establishment of SWAPO's First Mechanised Brigade.<sup>165</sup> Meanwhile, inside Namibia there were a series of major PLAN operations, but also a war of attrition.

The Alvor Agreement of 15th January 1975, provided for the establishment of a transitional government with equal representation of the three main liberation movements – the MPLA, FNLA and UNITA, but quickly broke down as each movement sought to assert their individual claims to be the legitimate representative of the Angolan people and to secure international support before 11th November 1975 – the date set for independence (Gleijeses, 2003:242). The relationship between UNITA and SWAPO changed when UNITA started to receive military assistance from South Africa and in return, provided South African forces with information about SWAPO's first bases in Angola (Dreyer, 1994: 65).

Following the fall out between SWAPO and UNITA, PLAN fighters worked more closely with the Angolan army and at times they would, find themselves operating within FAPLA units. For example, Emanuel Hashiko one of the survivors of the attack on Vietnam base of 4th May 1978 recalled that, after the attack, the surviving soldiers from the base withdrew to Xangongo, a FAPLA base, and that 200 PLAN fighters then moved to Ondjiva in August, 1978 and formed half of a 400 man FAPLA unit which fought UNITA at least ten times from then until the end of the year.<sup>166</sup> Military co-operation between the MPLA and SWAPO forces was extensive and protracted. Andrew Niikondo recalls that in August 1983 PLAN fighters operated with FAPLA to defend Kwanza Sul: "We received new FAPLA uniforms and we dressed like them. We engaged with the enemy that time that they were coming to capture Kwanza-zul". One of the biggest battles with South African forces took place on 3rd January 1984 when an attack was launched on a PLAN base close to Cuvelai – and the subsequent battle also involved FAPLA's 11th Brigade and two Cuban battalions (Geldenhuys, 2009: 166). It was clear that there was close co-operation between the different forces deployed in Angola with PLAN combatants also being used to load Cuban MiG 23 fighters at Malanje Airport for bombing missions.<sup>167</sup> One might argue that the focus in the historiography on national liberation struggles has cloaked the extent to which one might speak of a 'Southern African' liberation struggle against South Africa.

South African forces launched a number of major cross-border operations during the 1980s that attempted to destroy PLAN's operational capacity. Starting from

(165) Interview with Andrew Niikondo'. Tonji, V.L. and B. Mulongeni, 'Voices of Liberation: A History of the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa: The Case of Namibia,' Windhoek, March, 2012, p.263.

(166) NAN. A.0665. File 27/0213 'Statements of Andreas Shipanga, Dickson Namolo and Emanuel Hashiko before the U.S. Senate Sub-Committee on "Security and Terrorism"'.  
 (167) Interview with Andrew Niikondo' quoted in Tonchi V.L & Mulongeni B, Voices of the liberation: A history of the Liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia. SADC Secretariat research-Hashim Mbita Project, March 2010, p265

‘Operation Savannah’ in 1975, South African forces crossed into Angola with large forces on twelve different major ‘operations’ in the period up to 1988. However, as the South African Minister of Defence finally acknowledged in 1988, security forces had also, often carried out a policy of ‘hot pursuit’ when tracking a PLAN unit across the border into Angola.<sup>168</sup>

One of the ways in which SWAPO were consistently able to penetrate Namibia was through the airwaves. In March 1964, Radio Tanzania started broadcasts to Namibia and in 1966 the SWAPO officially started with a one hour show called ‘the Voice of Namibia’. In 1973 Radio Zambia also started broadcasting SWAPO programming and in 1976 the ‘Voice of Namibia’ also started broadcasting from Luanda in Angola. SWAPO would also broadcast from Egypt and Congo-Brazzaville. Helao Vinnia Ndadi, who served as the Director of the Voice of Namibia, explained that they tried to counter South African propaganda by explaining that they were ‘not terrorists’, but ‘liberators’ and to encourage the people ‘to provide food, water and shelter to SWAPO combatants’. Mvula YaNangolo, who also worked for many years with the ‘Voice of Namibia’ argues that the service sought to give people an alternative ‘impression of reality’ to that provided by South African propaganda through ‘Radio Ovambo’ and other state sponsored media (Mosia, Riddle & Zaffiro, 1994: 6, 9-10). Nahas Angula argued that there were times during the struggle when SWAPO’s radio broadcasts kept the spirit of resistance alive in Namibia.<sup>169</sup> The ‘information war’ should be seen as the fourth dimension of the liberation struggle and, it has even been argued in one article that it was the most significant (Sturges, Katjihingua & Mchombu, 2005). General ‘Jannie’ Geldenhuys who, during his long career, served as the Chief of the ‘South West Africa Command’, ‘South West Africa Territorial Force’ and ‘South African Defence Force’ acknowledged that “one war which we did lose was the propaganda war” (2009: 144).

The nature of a guerrilla war is that there are a whole series of engagements of different scale scattered over a wide area. PLAN’s main objective was to infiltrate fighters into Namibia on recruiting and combat missions, whilst the South African forces and their UNITA allies sought to engage PLAN fighters in southern Angola and to attack SWAPO’s bases there. Infiltrations were most frequent during and after the rainy season from December to February when there was more vegetation to provide cover and more places where water could be obtained. Oswin Namakalu conducted extensive interviews with PLAN’s military leaders and compiled a list of 72 battles and 107 attacks on 65 different South African bases that took place during the liberation struggle. However, more detailed research still needs to be done to collate oral histories with documentary records to create a comprehensive chronological list of operations inside Namibia. For example, General Geldenhuys refers to a large attack on the SADF base at Okongo on 13th February 1979 and another on 26th February

(168) *The Citizen*, 22nd February, 1988.

(169) ‘Interview with Nahas Angula’. Tonchi, V.L & B. Mulongeni, *Voices of Liberation: A history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*, Windhoek, March, 2012, p.124.

1979 on Elundu although; no attacks are listed for that month on Namakalu's list (Geldenhuys, 2009: 114-115). One of the most audacious PLAN operations at this time was a mortar attack on Ondangwa airbase which damaged two Impala jets and wounded four South African soldiers on 5th April, 1979.<sup>170</sup> Of the battles listed, three took place in the 1960s, 61 in the 1970s and 10 in the 1980s, whilst no attacks on South African bases were reported to have taken place in the 1960s. However, Namakalu, writes that the list only provides 'examples' that emerged from the interviews that he conducted and there is still a need for a comprehensive research project that collates oral histories with the military records of both sides in the conflict (Namakalu, 2004: 159-165).

One of the most insidious features of the conflict was the use of landmines. For example, on 14th June 1979, Greenwell Matongo, PLAN's Political Commissar was killed in a landmine explosion (Tonchi, Lindeke & Grotpeter: 254). The Military Council met in July 1979 and appointed Helao Nafidi to replace Greenwell Matongo as PLAN's Chief Political Commissar, whilst 'Ho Chi Minh' Ndaxu Namoloh became PLAN's new Chief of Staff.<sup>171</sup> Landmines were also responsible for the death of many people inside Namibia, including some who had been identified as *Mapapete* (puppets). The colonial security forces recorded that 1,743 landmines were defused by the SADF inside Namibia in the period 1974-1989 whilst many others exploded

and some still remain submerged and deadly in Namibia's soil. The uncompleted 'Civilian Casualties' project has already identified 1,222 civilian victims of the war inside Namibia of which half were landmine victims (Geldenhuys, 2009: 197; Silvester & Akawa, 2011). At independence it was estimated that there were 50,000 landmines and pieces of unexploded ordinance littering the landscape and during the period 1999-2006 alone it was reported by Landmine Monitor that 138 civilians were killed and at least 450 others injured by explosions.<sup>172</sup> The Namibian Government had to conduct an extensive public awareness campaign with posters warning civilians who

found suspicious objects '*Ino Shi Kuma ! Shi Lopota*' ('Don't Touch It! Report It!').

The war was uneven in its intensity over time and space as PLAN resources were directed to different fronts. Logistics were always a challenge as guerrillas had to be provided with a constant stream of weapons and ammunition. As a consequence of this nature of support, SWAPO increased its operations on the North-East Front with guerrillas entering the Kavango Region in increased numbers in 1981. Guerrillas were involved in a number of significant engagements with South African forces in this region over the next three years led by Commander Hakushinda Kalomoh, before his reported capture on 12th October 1984 (Steenkamp, 1989: 124).<sup>173</sup> In another

(170) SANDF Archives. 'The History of AFB Ondangwa, 1972-1989', nd., p5.

(171) 'Interview with Brigadier-General James Auala'. Tonchi, V.L & B. Mulongeni, *Voices of Liberation: A history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*, Windhoek, March, 2012, p.235.

(172) United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), Joint Assessment Mission Report. Namibia, 13th March, 2000, Annex 1, p1. Landmine Monitor, Annual Report, 2006.

(173) Shiremo, Shampapi, 'Voito Jasson 'Kondjereni' Manyengo - a Dedicated Political Commissar of Typhoon (1951 - 1983)', New Era, 25th August, 2011.

example, security forces also reported that three groups of PLAN fighters entered Namibia from Botswana between 22nd February and 2nd March 1984 to launch ‘armed propaganda’ in ‘Hereroland’ (Geldenhuys, 2009: 181). However, the 1980s saw the South Africans create a new para-military police unit that would play a leading combat role and also be accused of serious human rights abuses.

On 11th January 1979, Colonel Hans Dreyer arrived in Ondangwa with five Security Branch policemen and established an initially secret organisation that would be known and feared in northern Namibia as *Koevoet* (Crowbar). Whilst the unit was established in secret the extent of SWAPO’s intelligence network is shown by the fact

that they were immediately able to make a press statement indicating their awareness that the new unit had been created.<sup>174</sup> *Koevoet* was to be a heavily militarised police unit that would later adopt the official name South West African Police (SWAPOL) Counter-insurgency (COIN) Unit, but was quickly dubbed the *Omakakunya* (‘Bone-suckers’ in Oshiwambo) by the residents of northern Namibia (Stiff, 1989: 17).

One of the tactics adopted by Colonel Dreyer was to seek to ‘turn’ captured PLAN combatants following interrogations carried out at Oniimwandi in Oshakati and ‘Operation Barnacle’ (the forerunner of the CCB) was involved, from 7th July 1979, in the disposal of uncooperative prisoners by dropping their bodies in the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>175</sup> By October 1979, SWAPO was already raising its concerns about the new secretive military organisation and rumours were circulating widely of a South African sponsored unit that was assassinating political activists in Namibia. The

newspaper of the ELCIN church, *Omukwetu*, reported that a ‘death list’ containing 50 names had been found on the body of a man known as ‘*Kamongwa*’ (but named by SWAPO as Leevi Naftali Amadhila) following a car crash. The editor of the newspaper,

Ambrosius Amutenya, was himself forced to leave for exile shortly afterwards following death threats, but the list was reproduced in the *Windhoek Observer*, a local English-language newspaper.<sup>176</sup> The reference indicated growing public awareness of the existence of the new unit that operated under the control of the police, ‘*Koevoet*’ (although it was also said to be known as ‘One Way’ by some people).<sup>177</sup>

Dr Abisai Shejvali, a senior church leader, explained “These people put themselves in freedom fighters uniforms, they go to houses and villages saying that they are SWAPO men and they want to be given food. They pretend to be SWAPO. But after they are given food, they come again and say, ‘you are the people who are giving the terrorists food’, then either they beat up the people or they kill them and do everything they want”.<sup>178</sup> The atmosphere of suspicion and fear was deliberately fuelled by the authorities. General Georg Meiring, recalls that, sometimes, if the SADF suspected

(174) ‘90 SA Assassins in SWA’, *Windhoek Advertiser*, 29th January, 1979, p.3.

(175) Gould, Chandré and Peter I. Folb, *Project Coast: Apartheid’s Chemical and Biological Warfare Programme*, United Nations Publications, UNDIR, 2002. p.53.

(176) ‘ABlack-Listed Editor Flees’, *The Combatant*, Vol. 2. No 1 August, 1980, p.5.

(177) ‘News from the Battlefield’, *The Combatant*, Vol. 2. No 4 1 November, 1980.

(178) NAN A 570 Interview with Dr Abisai Shejvali (the General Secretary of the Council of Churches in Namibia) 26th October, 1984.

that a particular family were giving assistance to PLAN fighters they would drive to the homestead and, very publically, ‘dump a load of maize and sugar at his home’ and thank the puzzled homeowner in order to create suspicion that they were paying an informer (Hamann, 2001: 75).

Whilst PLAN commanders had to constantly evaluate the mass of information and rumours that they received PLAN also sought, themselves, to confuse the security forces. Peter Ekandjo, a member of SWAPO’s elite Department of Military and Combat Works was trained by the KGB in the Soviet Union to specialise in underground operations inside Namibia in the early 1980s. Ekandjo recalls that he would sometimes set up false information that would make the security forces waste resources looking for non-existent guerrillas (Ekandjo, 2011: 184). Another PLAN fighter who was trained in counter-intelligence, Peter Indongo, provides a detailed example of how he operated: “...You start spreading false information to the South African troops that on this day the commander of SWAPO forces in Kavango will be in forest X with his men ... You just go there at night and then you start putting up small fires; one there and another one there. They will look around and find only two footsteps. And now they will think of how much money have they wasted in terms of the movements of troops, the aeroplanes, the ammunition and fuel”.<sup>179</sup>

The South African forces also introduced a comprehensive programme for ‘Winning Hearts and Minds’ (WHAM) to attempt to win the support of the local population – although, at the time, they used expressions such as Komops (communications operations) or Ploeg en Plant (Plow and Plant) for the programme (de Visser, 2011: 85). For example, in an effort to create a more positive image for the soldiers deployed in northern Namibia, 76 SADF national servicemen were deployed to black schools on 22nd March 1977, and the programme continued for a number of years (Geldenhuys, 2009: 64).

Yet the strategy failed because the attempts to introduce reforms or to present South Africa’s armed forces as a positive presence were contradicted by the repressive security legislation that was enforced and the coercive actions of, particularly, Koevoet. Koevoet operated in highly mobile units. The South African Police ordered 140 Casspirs in March 1980 and these were deployed with Koevoet units at the start of 1981 (Stiff, 2004: 81-83) The draconian powers of the security legislation to detain and question people in Namibia were regularly used, particularly in northern Namibia, to disrupt political activity and to obtain information about the movement of guerrilla units inside Namibia. People who were detained frequently indicated that they had been severely tortured. For example, Thomas Shindobo Nikanor, a mineworker from Oranjemund, was arrested on 22nd January 1985 at Engela under Proclamation AG. 9 of 1977, but was reported to have killed himself in police custody a few days after his arrest. It was reported that, in the same month the authorities

(179) Interview with Peter Indongo’ quoted in Tonchi V.L. & Mulongeni B, *Voices of the liberation: A history of the Liberation struggle in Southern Africa: the case of Namibia*. SADC Secretariat research-Hashim Mbita Project, March 2010, p.393.

paid financial compensation to the family of another detainee, Jona Hamukwaya, to prevent a case that accused the authorities of abuse and beatings that had resulted in his death in custody.

The two cases were used by the international human rights organisation, Amnesty International, to raise awareness about the mistreatment of hundreds of detainees who were arrested and questioned whilst in police custody in Namibia. Detainees were held *incommunicado*, so families remained uninformed about the fate of those arrested, for a limitless period of time and there were repeated allegations of torture, including water-boarding, beatings and the use of electric shocks.<sup>180</sup> Two incidents inside Namibia that obtained international publicity were the ‘Oshikuku Massacre’ and the ‘Oshakati Bank Bombing’. On 10th March 1982, nine people, almost an entire homestead, were shot dead at Oshikuku.<sup>181</sup>

A second major atrocity took place on 19th February 1988, when a massive bomb explosion destroyed Barclays Bank in Oshakati killing 27 people and wounding seventy. SWAPO’s President, Sam Nujoma, argues that the security forces exploded the bomb ‘to discredit SWAPO’ with one of the survivors of the attack identifying ‘Nakale’, a soldier from the local Koevoet base as the leader of the massacre (Nuyoma, 2001: 380).<sup>182</sup> The retired judge, Brian O’Linn believes that the bomb was planted by a PLAN Combatant, Leonard Sheehama, who was convicted of the crime and also points out that another PLAN Combatant, Afunde Nghiyolwa, had been convicted of an earlier bomb attack on the same bank on 6th February 1987 (O’Linn, 252-255). Bishop Dumeni, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church from December 1978 (following the death of Bishop Auala) remembered the display of the bodies of dead PLAN fighters to communities as a particularly counterproductive tactic used by the security forces, particularly Koevoet, during the 1980s.<sup>183</sup> Initially, the security forces denied that human remains were being carried through villages on the wheel hubs of Casspirs and other vehicles, although the allegation was made by the *Windhoek Observer* newspaper as early as February 1983.<sup>184</sup> However, photographs taken by John Liebenberg and Oswald Shivute and published in *The Namibian* newspaper provided graphic and undeniable evidence of the practice (Miescher, Rizzo & Silvester, 2009, 201). Several former soldiers have claimed that the practice had a practical explanation as the bodies of dead PLAN combatants had to be taken back to base for identification and that it was nauseating to carry a dead body inside a tightly confined

(180) UNAM Archives Peter Katjavivi Collection. PA 1/5/1. Amnesty International, ‘Death in Detention, Fear of Torture’, Letter of appeal addressed to Administrator General Dr Willem van Niekerk (marked Urgent), 1st February, 1985.

(181) ‘Family wiped out’, *The Combatant*, Vol 3 No. 12 June, 1982. ‘Oshikuku Roman Catholic Mission Massacre’, *ROAPE*, Vol.9 No.24 (Summer 1982), p122.

(182) Truth and Reconciliation Commission, ‘The State outside South Africa between 1960 and 1990’, Volume Two, Chapter Two, para. 104.

(183) Yale-UN Oral History Project, ‘Interview with Bishop Kleophas Dumeni by Jean Krasno’, New York, 17th March, 1999, p19.

(184) ‘On-the-foot visit to place of murder and robbery orgy: 4 were hanging from Casspir’, *Windhoek Observer*, 19th February, 1983.

space in the scorching heat of southern Angola and northern Namibia (Feinstein, 1998:64). However, Bishop Dumeni states that people believed that it was primarily a display of ‘power’ aimed at intimidating local residents but instead, that families were angered.<sup>185</sup>

## Politics inside Namibia in the 1980s

On 17th – 19th July 1980, SWAPO’s Central Committee met at Ndalantando and decided to expel, the Acting Vice-President of SWAPO along with two Central Committee members, Lemmy Matengu and Jackson Mazazi as well as six other SWAPO members (Ignatius Matengu, David Mutabelezi, Denis Shikomba, Ernest Likando, Ben Mabuku and Kalvin Songa). The group were accused of having “. . . engaged themselves in activities aimed at dismembering Namibia’s national territory. They have actively been advocating and organizing for the breaking away of our Eastern Region – Caprivi, from the rest of the country and have petitioned the Frontline States and the OAU to solicit support”.<sup>186</sup> Muyongo and his colleagues returned to Namibia and re-launched CANU before creating a new party and joining the DTA as Vice-President in 1985 ((Tonchi, Lindeke & Grotper: 51).

The South Africans hoped that they might encourage another division within SWAPO when they released veteran SWAPO politician Toivo ya Toivo from Robben Island on 1st March 1984, with the other Namibian prisoners on Robben Island being released during 1984 and 1985.<sup>187</sup> The aim was clearly to give credibility to the Multi-Party Conference which was another attempt, supported by the South African Government, to create an ‘internal settlement’ that might be credible to both Namibians and the international community. Moses Katjuongua had even been sent to Robben Island to visit ya Toivo before his release, but had failed to succeed in getting ya Toivo to leave SWAPO. Once again efforts were made to introduce some visible changes to persuade the public that there had been a genuine transition of power from the South African rule.

For example, on 9th October 1987, the huge migrant workers compound in Katutura was demolished and additional housing was constructed at Hakahana.<sup>188</sup> A ‘Transitional Government of National Unity’ was launched on 17th June 1985, but the high-profile SWAPO prisoners who had been released refused to endorse it.<sup>189</sup> Toivo ya Toivo went into exile, whilst others became involved in building SWAPO’s support amongst the workforce by developing the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) as a powerful force inside Namibia. The foundations for the establishment of a strong trade union movement had historical roots dating back to the 1920s when the International Commercial Union

(185) Yale-UN Oral History Project, ‘Interview with Bishop Kleophas Dumeni by Jean Krasno’, New York, 17th March., 1999, p19.

(186) NAN. PA 1/1/13. ‘Aide Memoire on SWAPO Central Committee’, Peter Katjavivi, 28, July 1980

(187) ‘In the news’, *Africa*, No. 156, p25.

(188) *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 13, 1988, p95.

(189) Once again the South African authorities sponsored a campaign to popularise the new initiative. See for example the publications of the SWA/Namibia Information Office such as *Namibia: Towards Nationhood* (1986).

established branches in Namibia and the 1950s when there was an active Food and Allied Workers Union branch in Lüderitz. Ms Ida Jimmy was a SWAPO activist in Lüderitz who campaigned with the fisheries workers in the local compound. Ms Jimmy was arrested in October, 1980 and received a seven year prison sentence after addressing a rally in Luderitz (IDAF, 1981: 10). Ben Ulenga recalls that when people were detained at a SWAPO Youth League meeting on 26th January 1986, they discussed the idea of reviving the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW).

The meeting led to the establishment of a team of 'field workers' who went out to unionise the workers. By August 1986, around 40 'Workers' Committees' had been established in different work places. As 'about 28' of these were in the food industries, it was decided that the 'Namibian Food and Allied Workers Union' would be the first to be launched, followed by the Mineworkers Union of Namibia which was launched shortly before the end of the year.<sup>190</sup> By independence the NUNW would also include the Namibia Public Workers Union, Namibian Transport and Allied Workers Union, Namibia National Teachers Union and Namibian Domestic Workers Union (NUNW/ COSATU, 1990).

A further indication of the increasing strength and unity of support for the implementation of Resolution 435 as the preference of the majority of Namibians was found in the /Ai-//Gams Declaration that resulted from a meeting held in southern Namibia on 29th – 30th April 1986. The meeting was co-ordinated by the Council of Churches in Namibia and involved 16 organisations. Those signing the Declaration included all the major church denominations, SWAPO, SWANU, NUDO and the student organisation, NANSO (Harlech-Jones, 1997: 125).

## **The Transition to Independence (1988-1989)**

Resolution 435 had set out the basis for the transition to independence and all those involved had even accepted a set of 'Principles concerning the Constituent Assembly and the Constitution for an independent Namibia' as early as 12th July 1982 however, the inauguration of Ronald Reagan as the new President of the United States in 1981 led to the introduction of a new argument that led to delays in the implementation of the 'peace plan'. Dr Chester Crocker, the new US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa argued, from March 1981, that the independence of Namibia should be connected to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola – a principle that became known as 'linkage' (Thornberry, 2004: 25).

In the period 1988 – 1990, a number of crucial developments took place and they led to the attainment of Namibian independence on 21st March 1990. Whilst Resolution 435 had established a plan for the transition to independence in 1978, a series of diplomatic initiatives to reach agreement on the implementation of the plan failed and it was only at the end of the 1980s that a series of events coincided and

(190) NAN. A 665 'Interview with Ben Ulenga [sic] by Brian Wood, 19th March, 1987'. Verbaan, Mark 'Miners merge in powerful union', *The Namibian*, 28th November, 1986.

enabled a successful conclusion to be reached (Melber and Saunders, 2007; Wood, 1991; Shepherd, 1979).

For a better understanding, it is necessary to recap the decolonization plan for Namibia that commenced in 1976 with the diplomatic initiative by the Western Contact Group following the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 385. The resolution demanded the withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia to allow a free and fair election that would be supervised by the United Nations, and stated that South Africa should release all political prisoners, abolish discriminatory laws and allow all exiles to return freely (Dobell, 2000: 70). Resolution 435 had provided a more detailed framework for the transition to independence and as discussed earlier, was accepted by both sides in 1978. The UN established the apparatus to fulfil its role in the process, establishing the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG), however instead of a transition to independence by the end of 1978 as planned, the years that followed were described by Henning Melber and Christopher Saunders as ‘war without victory, negotiations without resolution’ (Melber and Saunders, 2007: 83). It would only be in 1988 that the decades of negotiation would finally lead to the implementation of Resolution 435.

One of the factors that forced South Africa to accept the cease-fire which was the first crucial prerequisite to the implementation of Resolution 435 was the fact that it was facing increasing military pressure from the Angolan, Namibian and Cuban forces in Angola. The arms embargo instituted and adopted in November 1977 against South Africa by the UN Security Council gradually started to shift the military balance and this was particularly crucial in terms of air cover. The final major battle of the liberation struggle would take place when South African forces launched a major cross-border invasion codenamed ‘Operation Modular’ on 4th August, 1987 to prevent the fall of Jonas Savimbi’s UNITA bases at Mavinga and Jamba (close to the Namibian border). The SADF’s 61st Mechanised Battalion fought with UNITA to block FAPLA’s advance and then advanced and in October, 1987 laid siege to Cuito Cuanavale.

In November, 1987 the MPLA requested Cuban reinforcements and these started to arrive the following month. SADF estimates that by 1988 they faced a force of around 20,000 FAPLA troops, 7,000 PLAN fighters and 900 ANC soldiers (Geldenhuys, 2009: 204), whilst a publication based on accounts by some of the Russian advisers at the battle states that there were 40,000 Cuban troops and 30,000 FAPLA troops (a figure that probably includes PLAN fighters) in southern Angola at the time of the battle (Shubin & Tokarev, 2008: 197). A series of South African assaults in the early months of 1988 failed to take Cuito Cuanavale and by March, 1988 the SADF were withdrawing their forces as attention turned to the negotiating table (although it was only on 27th June, 1988 that the last SADF units finally crossed the border back into Namibia).

The ‘Battle of Cuito Cuanavale’ led to a significant increase in Cuban troops in Southern Angola and the perception that the war was in danger of escalating to a level

that South Africa could no longer sustain (with growing domestic discontent from the loss of lives in a seemingly interminable conflict). Increased troop numbers were supported by serious military hardware with one estimate that up to 400 T-55 and T-62 tanks had been provided by the Soviet Union. SWAPO and Cuba established three joint battalions – Tiger battalion at Xangongo, ‘Zebra’ at Mupa and ‘Lion’ at Cahama. By June 1988 joint Angolan, Cuban and SWAPO forces had advanced as far as Ondjiva and the Calueque Dam, only a few kilometres from the Namibian border (Vannemann, 1990: 39). The Cuban deployment of MiG jets to airfields in southern Angola meant that a real possibility was emerging that South Africa might lose the security of air cover that had consistently provided their tactical advantage during the war and that a credible threat might develop of air raids into Namibia (Wood, 1991: 749-750).

The Geneva Protocol that was signed by the Governments of Angola, Cuba and South Africa on 8th August 1988, created a timetable for the disengagement and eventual withdrawal of both South African and Cuban troops from Angola. Article 5 of the Protocol included the clause that “Angola and Cuba shall use their good offices so that, once the total withdrawal of South African troops from Angola is completed, and within the context also of the cessation of hostilities in Namibia, SWAPO’s forces will be deployed to the north of the 16th parallel”.<sup>191</sup> However, it was significant that neither SWAPO nor UNITA were signatories to the Protocol. The Brazzaville Protocol that was signed by Angola, Cuba and South Africa on 13th December 1988 established a Joint Monitoring Commission which would monitor the implementation of the ceasefire and troop withdrawals with the USA and the Soviet Union appointed as observers.

As the military balance shifted, South Africa forces also faced increasing broad-based opposition within Namibia. In March, 1988 around 400 students at Ponghofi Secondary School boycotted their classes in protest about the dangerous proximity of a South African military base (a monument at the school today lists the names of three students and one teacher who had been killed in cross-fire before the boycott).<sup>192</sup> In April, three more schools in the north (at Outapi, Eengendjo and Ongha) joined the boycott and, by May, ten schools were involved (ILO, 1990: 78). The students’ boycotts against the presence of SADF bases was co-ordinated by the Namibia National Students Organisation (NANSO), which had been established on 2nd July 1984, at a congress held at Dobra (Gowaseb, 2007). The schools boycott provided the catalyst for a wider mobilisation of civil society and was only officially called off by a ‘National Peoples’ Assembly’ on 19th July 1988 (Cleaver and Wallace, 1990: 61).

The attempt to ‘Namibianise’ the war through the establishment of Namibian units, particularly the South West African Territorial Force was also not without problems, with reports of ‘mutiny’ in 101 Battalion as early as 1981 and a more widespread

(191) UN security Council S/20556. ‘Protocol of Geneva’, 8th August 1988.

(192) Personal observation. Site visit to Ponghofi Secondary School, 20th November, 2006.

outbreak of protests reported to have occurred in SWATF units during 1987 (Wood, 1991: 751; CIIR, 1989: 110).<sup>193</sup> One Koevoet officer, Michael Hindengwa, even drove his Casspir across the border in 1988.<sup>194</sup> Such incidents may have contributed to the fact that the South African Defence Force never fully handed over responsibility for military operations to locally recruited troops, but continued to play an active role right up to the end of the conflict. After the ceasefire agreement was signed by parallel letters - signed by SWAPO and South Africa in New York - fighting in Angola ceased and the last South African troops left Angola by the end of the month. However, PLAN combatants would still be engaged in one final, major, conflict against the security forces inside Namibia.

After many years of Namibia under colonial rule, the attainment of independence was now within reach. Nevertheless, on 1st April 1989, the day of the implementation of the UN supervised cease-fire, clashes in which hundreds of SWAPO combatants were killed, took place between SWAPO combatants, Koevoet and the South West Africa Territorial Force.<sup>195</sup> Statistics provided to UNTAG indicated that 316 members of SWAPO and 27 members of the security forces were killed in the fighting, whilst 31 PLAN combatants were captured (Thornberry, 2004: 122, 125-126). Whilst South Africa cited the Geneva Protocol that had stipulated that PLAN forces should have been confined to bases deep inside Angola, SWAPO argued that they had not been a signatory to the Geneva Protocol and their President, Sam Nujoma, recalled earlier negotiations that had provided for the confinement of Namibia's guerrilla forces to UN supervised bases inside Namibia. Indeed, Theo-Ben Gurirab argues that the main cause of the clashes was that, whilst in Zimbabwe there had been 'Assembly Points' where guerrillas inside the country could assemble, the issue of whether the UN could provide a similar system for Namibia had not been clearly resolved. Gurirab acknowledges that all sides should bear some responsibility for the confusion that led to the tragic deaths inside northern Namibia over a nine day period.<sup>196</sup>

However, despite the violence, thousands started to return from exile with Hage Geingob, SWAPO's Director of Elections flying into Windhoek with his team on 18th June 1989 (Gowaseb, 2007: 182). Events started rolling, with the slow arrival of more members of the United Nations Transitional Group (UNTAG) and the return of thousands of Namibian exiles from all over the world. The final official figure for 'returnees' was given as 42, 736 exiles from 42 countries who had arrived in Namibia by the end of 1989 (Wallace, 2012: 306). SWAPO's election manifesto was circulated within two weeks of Geingob's arrival in Namibia (Dobell, 2000: 92-93). There would however still be one final incident that threatened to destabilise the peace process. On 12th September, 1989 Anton Lubowski, one of the few prominent white members of

(193) 'Mutiny in Namibia', *NewsWatch*, Vol, 6, 1987, p.36.

(194) 'Koevoet-lid wyk uit na Angola', *Die Burger*, 28th September, 1988.

(195) Yale-UN Oral History Project, 'Interview with Theo-Ben Gurirab by Jean Krasno', New York, 3rd November, 1999, pp.30-31.

(196) 'Renewed fighting in April', Namibia Factsheet, United Democratic Front, No. 4, April, 1989.

SWAPO inside Namibia was assassinated outside his house by a member of the Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB), a 'hit squad' that emerged within the South African security apparatus and became operational around 1988. The assassination took place just two days before the arrival of the President of SWAPO. Whilst nobody was ever successfully brought to trial for the murder, considerable evidence to support the claim that the CCB was responsible emerged at the hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa (Pauw, 2006: 163; O'Brien, 2011: 137).

Ten political parties contested the UN supervised election that took place on 7th – 11th November 1989 (Chesterman, 2005: 60). All parties agreed to an Election Law that was finally passed on 17th October 1989 and whilst there were a number of concerns about the 'importation' of voters from South Africa and a few cases of intimidation, the UN and international observers concluded that the election had been 'free and fair'.

The SWAPO campaign complained about difficulties in obtaining access to the electorate during the campaign, especially to the farm workers widely scattered across southern and central Namibia. However, the strength of its power base in northern Namibia and amongst workers in major towns and cities such as Windhoek, Swakopmund, Walvis Bay, Luderitz, etc and the youth that had been mobilized by NANSO over recent years meant that the party secured a majority with 57.4% of the total vote and 41 seats enabling it to form a Government (Dobell, 2000: 92).<sup>197</sup>

The DTA became the main opposition party with 28.6% of the vote (21 seats). Due to the system of proportional representation used for the election to the 'National Assembly' (the first chamber in Parliament) a number of smaller parties also won seats in the 1989 election; UDF (4 seats), ACN (3), NPF (1 seat), FCN (1 seat) and NNF (1 seat), although three other parties that contested the election (SWAPO-D, CDA and NNDP) failed to secure a single seat. It was calculated that 97% of the registered voters cast their ballots in the first free and fair UN supervised election (Töttemeyer, Wehmhoerner & Weiland, 1996, 217).

According to Dobell, the results were the best outcome for democracy as no party obtained a two-thirds majority which would have allowed it to draft and adopt the national constitution without discussion with other parties (2000: 98). The newly elected Constituent Assembly convened on 21st November 1989 to draft the constitution. Chaired by Hage Geingob, the Constituent Assembly, quickly adopted the 1982 Constitutional Principles as the basis for the new constitution. Members agreed to use SWAPO's constitutional proposal as the starting point for discussion on matters not covered by the Principles (Dobell, 2000: 100-101). The fact that the constitution was adopted by 'consensus' and that a wide range of parties participated in drafting and adopting it has given the constitution a significant aura of legitimacy. Agreement on content led to a strong sense of 'ownership', with no significant

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(197) Freeman, Linda, 'Contradictions of Independence: Namibia One Year After', PhD Thesis, Carlton University, Ottawa, 1991, p.692.

dissenting voices and unanimity on the importance of the principles enshrined in the constitution. Namibia's draft constitution was released in January 1990 with its main features being a commitment to a multi-party democracy, a firmly embedded bill of fundamental rights and freedom, an independent judiciary, and an electoral system based on proportional representation (Dobell, 2000: 101; Freeman, 1991: 693). Namibia attained Independence on 21st March 1990, with Sam Nujoma as the President elect.

## Legacies of the Liberation Struggle

One of the challenges facing any nation in the aftermath of a war in which citizens have fought on both sides is the challenge of reconciling former enemies within society. On 23rd May 1989 SWAPO's Central Committee announced that it had adopted a resolution proposing 'a policy of national reconciliation'. When the President of SWAPO, Sam Nujoma, spoke on the day of his arrival in Namibia on 14th September 1989, he urged Namibia to 'learn to forget' and urged them to "... open a new chapter based on peace, love, human rights, patriotism, respect for one another and genuine national reconciliation". Emphasis has been placed on the importance of 'nation-building' and translating the liberation struggle slogan of 'One Namibia, One Nation' into reality. The formula advocated by SWAPO was to encourage Namibians to 'forget' the conflicts of the past and make a fresh start, thus taking a significantly different approach to the, later, South African model of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was based on a belief in the need for disclosure as a prerequisite to genuine forgiveness.<sup>198</sup>

Namibia has enjoyed peace and social stability since independence and politicians have argued that this is evidence that social harmony was best served by not reopening the wounds of the past. The policy, it is claimed by some, also contributed to the peaceful transfer of power in South Africa. An approach that sought 'confessions' or compensation and criminal charges against alleged perpetrators of wartime atrocities would have been likely to derail negotiations in South Africa.

The memorialisation of the liberation struggle in Namibia has been conducted in three major ways. The first was the introduction to the Namibian calendar of public holidays to commemorate key dates associated with the liberation struggle and the adaption of the commemorative rituals that had marked these events in the camps. The three very significant public holidays associated with the Liberation Struggle in Namibia are: Heroes Day on 26th August (to commemorate the launch of the armed struggle at Ongulu-gwombashe); Cassinga Day on 4th May (to commemorate the attack on Cassinga Camp in 1978) and International Human Rights Day on 10th December (to commemorate the date of the Old Location shooting in Windhoek and also commemorated as National Woman's Day).

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(198) *Windhoek Observer*, 16th September, 1989.

The second form of commemoration has been the construction of a number of public monuments. The most visible of these state projects have been the development of 'Heroes Acre' on the outskirts of Windhoek, and the creation of the Eenhana Shrine in Ohangwena Region and the building of a display centre at Ongulu-gwombashe in Omusati Region. Recently, the Government unveiled a monument in Oshakati to commemorate the February 1988 bomb blast victims at the First National Bank, Oshakati, which killed 27 people and badly injured many others, most of whom were nurses and teachers. Projects that are still under construction include the development of the 'Independence Memorial Museum' in Windhoek and the construction of the 'Military Museum' by the Ministry of Defence in Okahandja, which is complete but yet to be formerly unveiled. The third major strand of the memorial project has been the public recognition of individuals who played an important role in the struggle through the re-naming of buildings, streets or even towns, for example, the renaming of Oshikango as 'Helao Nafidi'.<sup>199</sup>

The task of re-integrating ex-combatants into society was a major challenge for the new Namibian Government. Whilst the SADF had taken charge of 'counter-insurgency' operations from 1974, there had been substantial efforts to 'Namibianise' the war (to try to give an impression that the war had become a 'civil war'), especially from 1st August 1980 when SWATF was formed (Geldenhuys, 2009: 102). When the military units on both sides of the conflict in Namibia were demobilized it was estimated in June 1989 that 43,000 SWAPO refugees had returned to Namibia. A total of 32,000 of these refugees were categorized as former PLAN fighters. In addition 25,000 soldiers were demobilized from SWATF, plus an estimated 3,000 men from the para-military 'COIN' (formerly Koevoet) police unit and 2,000 San soldiers.<sup>200</sup>

A further challenge was the issue of compensation for ex-combatants and the families of those who had sacrificed their lives during the liberation struggle. A publication produced by SWAPO, *Their Blood Waters Our Freedom*, listed the names of 6,846 people who had died while in exile whilst hundreds more were listed as missing (SWAPO, 1996). The conflict has, therefore, left a significant challenge regarding both those who died and those who survived the liberation struggle. Thousands of Namibians are buried in graveyards in places such as Kongwa in Tanzania, Nyango in Zambia or Lubango and Cassinga in Angola. The memorial commemoration of these sites is a shared regional responsibility. Since independence, Namibia has also introduced a series of measures to support ex-combatants and established a Ministry for Veterans Affairs in 2006 which has been responsible for the registration of all those who fought in the liberation struggle (but not those who were recruited by Koevoet and SWATF), the recording of individual histories, and the disbursements of a once-off grant to veterans of N\$20,000 or N\$ 50,000.00 and N\$ 2,200.00 per month.<sup>201</sup>

(199) Dentlinger, Lindsay 'Eight Settlements to be proclaimed villages', *The Namibian*, 11th August, 2003.

(200) Colletta, Nat, M Kostner and I Wiederhofer, *War-to-Peace Transition: the Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Namibia*, World Bank, 1996, pp.128, 131.

(201) The web site of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs is <http://www.mova.gov.na>

The liberation struggle of southern Africa left an important legacy in the form of a sense of common historical goals. Many Namibians spent years of their lives living in Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia or Angola and obtained a sense of community as well as forming bonds and relationships with particular places and people in those countries. The experience of exile was an important ingredient which flavoured the political culture of SWAPO when it formed the first Government in independent Namibia. The fact that Namibia's political leaders had spent years as guests of neighbouring nations and this international exposure provided useful diplomatic foundations for Namibia's bilateral and multi-lateral negotiations after independence. For example, when a boundary dispute arose between Botswana and Namibia it was resolved peacefully with both sides accepting the verdict of the International Court of Justice.<sup>202</sup>

One might argue whether the 'exile experience' also influenced the political culture of the ruling party. For decades the majority of the SWAPO community in exile had lived in camps organised in a military style with a hierarchy in each camp of 'Commanders' and 'Political Commissars'. However the camps also created a spirit of 'volunteerism' that, some argue, has been carried into independence. It has also been claimed that the liberation struggle 'liberated' women participants. Women were trained and obtained positions in the movement that contested traditional assumptions about women's role in society. One might argue that SWAPO decision at the Extra-ordinary Congress in 1983 to give 50:50 representation of women and men on its party list is a reflection of this.

One of the most profound legacies of the liberation struggle in southern Africa was the extent to which it was a regional struggle. The struggle for Namibia's independence benefitted from the support people received on their arduous journey into exile through Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Angola. The training of combatants saw PLAN fighters train with comrades from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola. Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia and Angola provided for SWAPO and SWANU, bases and missions, military support and training. Notwithstanding the military and material assistance provided by other foreign states, it was the land and logistics availed by southern Africa states that made the Namibian liberation struggle possible.

When *Mwalimu* Julius Nyerere spoke at the last meeting of the OAU's African Liberation Committee in 1994 he reflected on the lesson that might be learnt from the combined efforts that had resulted in the freedom of the colonised territories of southern Africa. He argued that it had laid the foundations for the next phase of the liberation struggle, which should have the goal of greater 'African unity' in order to reduce economic dependence (Nyerere, 2011: 315-319).

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(202) Republic of Namibia, *Case concerning Kasikili/Sedudu Island (Botswana/Namibia)*, Memorial of the Republic of Namibia, International Court of Justice, Vol. 1, 28th February, 1997, pp.6-7.

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# 3.3

## Namibia

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## Amagulu, Marius Nelson

*Marius Nelson Amagulu is one of many Namibians whose political story began at an early age. He came into contact with pioneers of the liberation struggle at an early age and provided a basis for him to provide adequate support to freedom fighters such Kanisius Heinrich also known as Kanisi. Amagulu was arrested for supporting freedom fighters and had to spend eight years on Robben Island. Upon his release he continued his activities in the liberation struggle. He currently resides in Northern Namibia.*

My name is Marius Nelson Amagulu. I was born here at Onawa and this is where I

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grew up. I spent my childhood looking after cattle. When I was a bit older, I started school at Okatana. I must say I was really late to start school. I started school in 1959 when I was eight (8) years old when. At school, we were taught how to pray and sing. You know that the Catholics like praying and are quite spiritual. Some years later, in the 1960s we started to open up, and due to the lessons we were taught at school, we started realising that we were under colonialism.

It was the history that we were taught at school that ignited my political consciousness. We were taught about Jan Van Riebeeck, a man who came from Europe and took a route around Africa with the aim of exploring Africa. This was like an eye opener for us, and that was how we realised that we were being colonised by the foreign nationals who came from their native countries and they were now in charge of everything while, us the natives had no say.

We realised later that those people came in two different categories. One group came with the bible apparently teaching us about God, while the other category came with the gun. But in reality these two categories were just the same people working together with the same aim, since they all came from Europe. The difference was just that one group was telling you about the bible, teaching you not to admire or want what the other person had, but rather to be satisfied with what we had. This was just a strategy to keep us in poverty. They did not want us to grow economically.

In addition to the schooling, my elder brother Amagulu who was literate knew history. He is the one who educated me about history. He and I would sit at home after school and he would teach me about history telling me that the people governing the country were from Europe. At that time, men like Leo Shoopala, Gaus Shikomba and Fidelis Laban had already started holding meetings at Okatana. I think they started these campaigns around 1963 and 1964 and were educating us to be aware of the South African colonial rule that prevailed in our country. I was not a SWAPO member by then but rather just a follower. I joined SWAPO in 1975 at Okahandja under the leadership of comrade Katamila. I went to Okahandja in 1969.

With regard to my schooling, I went to school until I reached Standard five (5). My teachers were Mr. Ashipala, Mr. Andrew Israel and Mr. Lukas Amayulu. I quit school because I did not have enough clothes for school and then I decided to go and look for a job. So I went to Okahandja. My plan was to go and work for a certain period of time and come back to continue with my school. But after I came back from Okahandja,

my plan of going back to school could not materialise due to circumstances at home. My mother alone could not sustain the house thus I decided to look for a job. I got employed at the construction site of the Ongwediva College of Education hall, which supervised by builders from Rehoboth. My work was just to push the wheelbarrow and give bricks to the builders. That time we were merely paid R20.00 per month. I can remember working together with people like Elia Shimanda, Petrus Paulus and many others from different places. Some people came as far as from Oshikoto. Some could not even speak Afrikaans.

The difficulty that we experienced was money. The salary was very little, it could not even keep the workers motivated but we had no other option. In some cases when employees reported late at work they were assaulted by the bosses. There was an incident when a Boer assaulted a worker claiming that his bricklaying was bad. That man who was assaulted did not think twice, he just picked up a brick and hit that Boer on the head. That Boer died later in Windhoek. I cannot remember his name, but he was Kwanyama speaking. He was arrested and I think he was sentenced to death because we never saw him again. I think it was in 1972 when this happened. And when this happened we were happy that one of the Boers was killed but we did not do anything. If it had been a black man killed by a Boer we would have done something. The Boers did not do anything apart from arresting the guy who killed their fellow man. From that job I learnt how to do bricklaying and to put in window panes.

We always reported for work at six o'clock in the morning and knocked off at five in the afternoon. But, there were times when we could work up to nine at night and for that we were paid extra 70 cents. I was not really into politics by then, but I was just a supporter. On politics, we used to get chances to attend meetings, especially on Sundays, at places such as Oniimwandi and Endola. During the 1960's I was still a supporter and this was before the Omugulugwombashe event. I heard about Omugulugwombashe when it happened and I was aware of what was happening. I met some of those who participated in that battle. I met Lungada at Onawa because he liked coming to Onawa with Gaus Shikomba. We used to meet at night in the veld, where he encouraged us to be strong and fearless, and also cautioned us not to mention it to anyone that we had seen him. We used to listen together to the radio broadcasting from Tanzania. I did not undergo training that was conducted here but we all used to bring food and eat together at the evening gatherings. Lungada stayed at our village for quite some time with my uncle Gaus Shikomba and with Tate Naftal Kakonda. My uncle Shikomba is still alive. He is just here nearby, at Onatshiku tsha Laban in Uukwambi. I have his telephone number if you need to contact him.

Well, from the construction work, I got employed at the lumber factory still at Oshakati. This was in 1972 up to 1974. In 1975 we were transferred to Okahandja by the same factory. The Okahandja factory was called Okahandja Middle Fabriek. At the factory we worked as carpenters, manufacturing wood products such as tables, chair, cupboards and coffins. I was transferred together with Veta Leo, Wilhelm Kambonde,

and Kondja Haikali. In fact we were many. This was either in June or July when we moved to Okahandja. Okahandja is where I joined SWAPO in 1975.

At that time meetings were held both at Okahandja and Windhoek. We always ensured that we attended the meetings irrespective of the venue. Whether the meeting was in Okahandja or Windhoek, we would make sure we attended and that is how I gained political understanding. What I came to understand was mostly the fact that we were being oppressed by the Boers in our own country and the fact that Namibia is our own territory and if we could not defend it and fight for our rights, nobody would do it for us. We were influenced through discussions. They spread awareness throughout the nation that Namibia belongs to the Namibians. The Boers were also told straight forward that Namibia belongs to the Namibians.

From there I acquired a SWAPO membership card after being recruited by Tate Katamila who worked as a SWAPO coordinator in Okahandja. We were recruited with Beta Leo, Damian Leo and so many other colleagues of mine. At the end of that year (1975), which I suppose was in November, was when we were found by comrade Kanisius Heinrich and Nduuvu Nangolo. They were on a mission to fight the Boers inside Namibia. I knew Kanisius before I met him at Okahandja. He was born at Okaku ka Paulus Amunime located just a short distance to the west of Oshakati. When I was still working at Bonoday in Oshakati, he was also employed at a certain construction company in Oshakati. He is of my age. Let me say he went towards 1970 or 1972, after the Omugulugwombashe battle. We were old enough when he left the country. The comrade that he was with is comrade Nduuvu Nangolo. Nduuvu Nangolo got injured and was captured by the Boers and got a death sentence and was killed by hanging. Kanisi on the other hand escaped.

Kanisi and Nduuvu Nangolo found us at Okahandja compound. I guess they were just walking around from the location when he met me at the compound and we greeted one another. At that moment I already knew that he had gone into exile, so he instantly told me that we should not mention one another's name, we should just greet one another as friends but should not mention his name. He did not want people to know he was Kanisi because the Boers were already looking for him and Nduuvu. The Boers had started looking for Kanisi and Nduuvu from the day they killed a White man in Grootfontein in 1975. Their search was in the newspapers. There was even a reward to be given to whoever that would report that he or she had seen them. People were encouraged to report him so that they could be rewarded with a farm.

There were so many promises.

Kanisi told us many things and mainly to caution us to be very careful with what we talked about and for us to know that Boers were killers who could kill any of us at any time. We often used to meet with him at night. We used to meet at the compound or we would arrange to meet in the bushes. Whenever he came to the compound, those of us from the compound would go to collect our supper from the kitchen and share the meals with him.

My responsibility with regard to Kanisi was to be on the look-out for the Boers since they liked to surround the compound without our knowledge. We were also responsible for providing him with clothes so that even if someone saw him and reported him giving the description of the clothes he was wearing, it would not work because by the time they found him he would have changed into different clothes.

It was mostly all of us SWAPO members who worked with him. When I met him, I took him to Katamila who was the Head of SWAPO in Okahandja. I took him there between nine and ten o'clock in the night to introduce him. I told Katamila that comrade Kanisi was from exile and was on the mission to fight the colonial regime inside Namibia. When I went to introduce Kanisi I was accompanied by Leo Iita. I can say that he trusted me because from amongst all of us I was the only one known to Kanisi. He did not know anybody else apart from me. I was their front door. Even when Nduuvu got arrested it was only my name he mentioned amongst all those who used to assist them. He said that they had been assisted by Marius Amagulu, residing at Okahandja Compound.

It was easy to collect clothes for them. We would just donate our own clothes. Some would give shirts and some would give trousers, depending on what one was able to give. There was no problem for people to give out their clothes because people knew it was the right thing to do.

Before Nduuvu got arrested in 1976 they had killed a white farmer in the Okahandja area and confiscated his guns and I think they had been using those guns for quite some time. Those whites who resided on the farms were beginning to fear for their lives and started migrating to towns. They could see that their lives were no longer safe at the farms as they were being killed. At the time it was not known that it was Kanisi and Nduuvu who did it. The Boers were just suspecting that it was some PLAN fighters but they did not know anything more. By that time they had already killed another one at Grootfontein. The one from Okahandja was the second one just after two months or so.

To us as freedom fighters, we felt very proud especially that the guerrilla had come as far as the central part of the country to fight the enemy. We felt that things were heading for the better, as it was through that process that we could gain independence. It was quite encouraging seeing the guerrillas amongst us in the central part of the country.

In April 1976 during Easter, Kanisi and Nduuvu went to Windhoek while I went to Owamboland. In those years telephones and radios were not very common for people to be in touch. Nevertheless, Kanisi, Nduuvu together with two other guys from Windhoek, broke-into one farm in the outskirts of Windhoek and took away the

White man's car as well as some liquor. That farm is at Tekalemba, east of the airport.

I really don't know what type of liquor but the point is that this White man had a bar at his farm so Kanisi then loaded the liquor into the White man's sedan car and drove to Windhoek. When they came to Windhoek they got drunk and some of them went to the location. Altogether they were five, because there was Nduuvu

Nangolo and Kanisi plus three other guys. The other three were not yet guerrillas but they were about to undergo training. They were still members of the general public. They were about to embark upon training and the site was somewhere in the bushes. I myself was not trained but there were those who were trained at a certain site in the bushes. I can still remember people like Willem Iitana, Karel and Mbango, all from Oshikoto Region. After Kanisi and his group consumed the liquor and got intoxicated, the non guerrilla ones got arrested by the Boers. First of all they were drunk and weak, secondly they overturned the car and the police officers who came to the scene identified the car as the one stolen.

After the car overturned, all the occupants abandoned it and walked into the bushes. The police officers who found the car followed the foot tracks into the bushes where they found non soldiers sleeping while Kanisi and Nduuvu had gone far away. Those guys were arrested and they told the officers where they lived in Katutura. As a result the owner of the house where they lived was arrested. She was a certain Oshindonga speaking woman but I cannot remember her name. She was arrested together with Mr. Paulus Amunime, originally from Okaku village near Oshakati. When they were being arrested their kids were threatened that if they did not talk their parents would be killed. As I told you earlier, I was at Owamboland for holiday when all this transpired and I was not aware of what was happening in Windhoek. So in April 1976, when I came back from my holiday in Owamboland, I spent only one week in Okahandja before I also got arrested.

I was arrested at the Okahandja compound by Mateus Paulus a police officer. He had worked at Tsumeb and Oshakati but originally he was born at Elyambala. It was during the day and I did not go for work that day as there was nothing much to be done at work, and most of us were thinking of going back to Owamboland. While I was at the compound, Mateus showed up and he came to greet me, shaking hands with me since he knew me. When I saw him I sensed that something was wrong. After he greeted me he requested me to go with them to my room and they searched in all the cupboards, on the bed and in my suitcase, but they did not find anything. He then told me that I had to go with them and that I might not come back soon, meaning

I was arrested. This was in April 1976, just a week after Easter. We went together to Okahandja police station where I was tortured with electricity and water on my ears. All that they wanted from me was to tell them about Kanisi. They asked me

whether

I was not aware that Nduuvu was arrested and they wanted me to tell them when last I saw Kanisi. I told them that I just came back from holiday in Owamboland and it was before I went for the holiday when I last saw Kanisi. This time I could not deny knowing Kanisi because I was told not to hide anything since Nduuvu was already arrested and he had revealed that I was their accomplice.

Despite the fact that I told them that I knew Kanisi, I was still tortured continuously apparently so that I could tell them where Kanisi was. They thought I was lying when I told them that the last time I saw him was before I went home for the Easter holiday. I was mostly tortured with electricity on the head and in the ears. There was

a time when I was severely tortured and I even bit my tongue and it was swollen for a long time that I couldn't even talk. I was tortured from the moment I was taken to the Okahandja Police station to the time I was transferred to Windhoek. The only question they were asking was for me to reveal where Kanisi was. But honestly I did not know where he was.

They kept threatening that they were going to kill me if I did not talk since Nduuvu had already revealed that they used to come to me at the compound and I was the one who provided them with food and arranged all logistics for them. The officers further accused me of turning myself into a small boss and that I had turned the compound into my personal hotel where I conducted all my dirty work.

Nduuvu was tried and sentenced to death. In fact I was in the same jail as Nduuvu in Windhoek. We spoke, we were together. Nduuvu confessed to me that he was the one who revealed that I was the one who used to assist them but he also asked me not to blame him because he was shot. Well, I also could not hold a grudge against Nduuvu for revealing that information to the Boers, considering the state he was in. He was seriously injured. He could not walk as his back was broken and he was on a wheelchair. He even needed someone to lift him up when he wanted to sit, so most of the time he was just lying down. Considering all those facts I understood that was how the liberation struggle had to be.

I was in jail for some time and there were no major accusations against me. I was just charged on the ground that I was apparently stubborn. During my trial, I was represented by Mr. Pio Teek who was just starting his career. Teek requested me to tell the court that I knew Kanisi and Nduuvu. On the other hand Nduuvu was brought in to testify that I was the one who used to assist them. Teek also advised me to plead guilty so that the case could not become such a big thing. So I pleaded guilty as advised. The case did not drag for too long and the following Monday at two o'clock in the afternoon I was sentenced. At the time I was charged for staying with Kanisi and Nduuvu and not reporting them and for illegal possession of weapons as we blacks were not allowed to own guns. That was the reason I was sentenced for 8 years imprisonment from 1976 to 1984.

Although this was difficult, we already knew that in a war situation one could expect anything; either to be killed or to be arrested. We knew that the liberation struggle was not easy. I therefore I did not regret because being arrested was just part of the struggle.

While in jail I was visited by Primus Hango from the SWAPO leadership, but none of the people from Okahandja visited me. During those days we were not really allowed to be visited, we were strictly to be visited by relatives only. The comrades were not allowed to visit us.

I served my whole sentence because when I came back from Robben Island I came to finish the remaining few months in Windhoek. On Robben Island I was with comrade Herman Ya Toivo, comrade Kaxumba ka Ndola, comrade Helao Shityuwete,

who were our leaders in jail. There was also Joseph Ipangelwa, Gaus Shikomba, David Hamunime, Simone Shixungileni and many others.

On Robben Island we had the chance to discuss a number of political issues, as that was part of our determination. We had been discussing issues and we wrote letters addressed to the Boers demanding that we preferred to be imprisoned in Namibia but not in a foreign country. The Boers had also been challenging us with funny questions just to test our political strength. They asked questions such as 'If we release you from jail what are your plans?'

We could answer them by saying we would go back and resume the work that we used to do since our country was still not yet independent. This was the work of the liberation struggle. Most of the times they walked away frustrated because none of us surrendered or gave in. In some cases they would even tear the letters we wrote to them in front of us due to the frustration.

I had heard of Ya Toivo before I met him on Robben Island, but I knew Kaxumba ka Ndola (Eliaser Tuhadeleni) when he used to address meetings at Okatana together with comrade Leo Shoopala and comrade Fidelis Laban from Onatshiku. We were not physically abused on Robben Island except for the food which was not good. Sometimes we were served dried maize meal full of sand and it was uncomfortable to chew because of the sand. The water was also salty and when taking a bath the soap could not take effect on the skin and could not foam.

What I cannot forget about Robben Island was the work we used to do. We used to break stone into small pieces. It was not easy because sometimes as we broke the stones we would accidentally hit our own hands. The funny thing was that the stones we used to break were not used for anything, but the work was just to abuse us. We also used to crush a Baku. A Baku is a certain weed from the sea crushed to feed cattle and also for other usage. Sometimes we also used to clear and bush areas earmarked for road construction or to fence water points and many other works.

Unfortunately, while I was there, I did not meet Nelson Mandela because the elders were kept at a different section while us, the young ones were at another section. They did not want us to mix apparently to ensure that we did not influence one another politically. YaToivo was also in that section but I saw Ya Toivo one day when we were cleaning the area near his room. I saw him on a stool watching us through the window. He later got to know my name and we came back together. There were five of us when we came back. I, Ya Toivo, Willem Biva, Lazarus Quinteb and Sackaria Wilbard. We came back by plane.

At Robben Island we were made to work. In some cases we were also made to have our meals outside in an open area although there was a dining hall. It did not matter whether it was raining or not, we would eat our food in the rain.

Well, our strength was that one day our country would be free and that those who brought us to the Island would have to take us back home. We were also kept strong by the newspapers and radios. It was through such media that we learnt about the return from exile of the likes of Mburumba Kerina, Katutire Kaura and Andreas Shipanga

who came to collaborate with the Boers. We read about all these in the newspaper. Whenever we were taken out to work outside, one of us would sneak into the boats to steal the newspapers in order to update ourselves on the progress of SWAPO inside the country.

When I came back from Robben Island I stayed in Windhoek for quite some time. I was doing nothing but I could also not go to the north because of the war situation. It was not safe to go there as the Koevoets were there. I stayed in Windhoek until I was encouraged by Mr. Frans Aupa Indongo to go back home with him and work at one of his shops just to earn a little bit of income.

People like Mateus Shikongo used to come to me but their presence was still confusing. One could not really figure out in what category they were. This was the Shikongo the police officer who arrested me. Although we were not on speaking terms he used to come to the shop but he could not face me. If by accident we met in the same shelve he would move to another shelve immediately. I could tell that his eyes were full of embarrassment. Sadly enough he died. He committed suicide in 1989 at the NBC studio after killing his wife first. I really have no idea what caused him to do so. Perhaps it was personal problems at his house.

Towards independence we were active with SWAPO meetings. I was responsible for distributing SWAPO membership cards at our work place. It was with many people such as Gaus Shikomba, lithete, the late Maxwilili and many others. Currently I am employed by the Ministry of Education at Iipumbu Secondary School. When the government decided to recognize distinguished freedom fighters I think I was one of the first people who received cows from the government. I was given ten (10) cows.

The things that I will never forget about the liberation struggle is the torturing and killing of innocent people. Some people would just disappear without trace. Some would just be called from their houses and disappear permanently.

To ease this pain, there are so many ex-combatants all over the country that are still unemployed. For example there is comrade Idda Jimmy from Keetmanshoop who contributed greatly to the liberation struggle but up to now she is unemployed. It is not just her alone, there are so many others like Nataniel Homateni, Joseph Iipangelwa, Wilbard Sackaria from Onambutu, Sackria Nashandi from Ondangwa and Risto Nakanyala. Yes Sackaria Zaa Nashandi and Risto Nakanyala did not receive cows. Actually there are many others who were left out from the cattle allocation and they were promised to be given theirs at a later stage but I don't know what happened to what was promised to them.

My advice is that, first and foremost, we should consider the old people especially those who started the liberation struggle of this country, noting that the beginning is always tough, it needed someone with commitment and determination, and they are the ones who sacrificed themselves for independence. It is not good for us just to turn a blind eye on them. We might be neglecting them. You know that most of them are now old and they cannot be given jobs as they are over the employable age and some of them are blind while some are now deaf ; that is why we need to take care of them.

It is a good thing that you have mentioned children. My house is full of school children under my care, but as you can see my water has been disconnected because I cannot afford to pay. The salary that I receive is very low and I do not qualify for the Veterans pension apparently because I am employed. I work as a cleaner but the salary that I get can not suffice to settle the water bill.

My salary is N\$1200.00 per month. There are times when some of the kids are sent back home because I could not pay the school fees.

I don't receive the veterans' pension because I am employed. I am 56 years old now. Well the cattle that I received from government have now reproduced and currently they are twenty eight. I am very grateful to the government. My cattle are at Mangetti. They are at the farm for all veterans and Comrade Joseph Iipangelwa is the one taking care of them. His cattle are also there. Every year each of us contributes a cow, basically a calf to be sold and the money is used to buy vaccination for our herds.

As for the future of this country I don't know whether it is heading for the better or for the worse. We the veterans were promised many good things such as fishing quotas and employment in the mining sector but none of those materialized. We used to be told about those things at meetings held in Windhoek. Our senior leadership made those promises but I do not know who signed those documents in which we were promised things. But it was comrade Hellao Shituwete who used to update us on issues pertaining to the plight of the veterans. It is difficult to tell why those promises were not fulfilled and I do not want to point fingers at the seniors. Maybe they really wanted to do good things for us but the government is not able to fulfill those promises. We can not say the government should only look at us the veterans, because since everyone including us belong to the government, we should all be treated equally.

Thank you too for your visit.

## Amagulu, William Ndeutapo

[Windhoek; 19 December 2007]

*Ambassador Ndeutapo Amagulu is a freedom fighter and a former commissar. He contributed to the liberation struggle of Namibia. He played a big role in both fronts of diplomacy and the military. He has been a SWAPO representative during the liberation struggle and an ambassador to a number of countries after independence.*

I am Amagulu, I am still that but I have added my African name to that and I thought

I would get rid of the others and remain with Ndeutapo among others, but the others refuse to die. I was born in Ongwediva, by that time it was the Lutheran church school alone but now it has developed into a town I was born in a peasant family, Amagulu were my parents. My mother is still alive, but my father died a little bit early. He died when I was almost 12 years old and the mother had to single handedly bring us up; we were more than seven children. I started my school at Ongwediva – Otana Primary School, which was a Catholic school. In 1964 I got transferred to Debra Secondary School, some few kilometers from Windhoek. It is where I completed what we call Grade 10 today, but by then it was Form 3. I started with Standard 5, by then very beautiful school. The medium of communication at that school was Afrikaans. German was taught and English was the second language of the school.

It was a very beautiful school. Children from all over Namibia came together from different back grounds; surely blacks only, because it was during the Bantu system. After completion I went through 2 years of teacher's training at the same school, but upon completion I felt I was too young to teach. In 1971 to 1973 I did my Form 4 and Form 5. I felt the same way still, so I went for further studies at the University of Fort Hare in Eastern Cape. I thus didn't stay long because in 1974 the Portuguese territories of Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea Bissau became independent. It was what inspired Namibia to get liberation. In 1975 I returned home, but I could not leave to join the liberation struggle waged by SWAPO, I had to flee Namibia in 1976. All groups of Namibians met at that school. The school created awareness of the youth at that time. There was unity and love amongst the learners. The most important thing was the big difference between what transpired at Debra and what happened at the other school where I started. That was a school in the setting of the north and only one language was spoken. There were no other groups of Namibians. Now here you have young stars who meet other young stars from different languages and different back grounds and different experiences and that created in us a different feeling. Earlier we knew only the group and the setting in which we were born; we were there concentrating in our own mother tongue. We were thinking that the only language we were speaking when we grew up is the only language, and surely that developed that geocentricism in our thinking that we were the only ones, and we were the best ... and the rest of Namibia was not our home.

I used to think Ovamboland was my country, my land; and that was how I was brought up. I believed that until I came here and saw these other Namibians who belong to the same country. Now the portion we were born in, and that which we thought was our own home, I think that had been a mistake, and in fact we have realized that the Namibia we call home is not the only portion which is there, but we have a larger country and we have more people than that group. I think mainly it grew out of the type of students that were at the school at that time. If I were to recall very well some of the seniors at that time I would recall Hambrosius Kaputu, and Akama. In fact when we came there we grouped ourselves still as the Ovambo students, neglecting and in fact fighting the others. Every motive by the others to come close to us was seen as you know...

And then it was this older colleague who brought this home to us that, "Look, when you are here you don't sit and you don't stay by yourselves. Don't even continue to communicate only in your language, because the other people you are living with do not necessarily communicate in your language. So you should communicate in a language that everybody can understand, so that they can also communicate with you." But then the teachers too, played a very important role. Dobra is normally a catholic school. Teachers were brought in specifically from Holland. They were called Fathers. It is the same as the other Catholic schools where they are called Brothers; they are not Priests but they are there you know living a celibacy life; working for the church. They don't marry; some of them go to teach, some of them are there to build the church and construct church buildings, and so on. But my school was specifically just for teachers. However these fathers also played a role in subjects such as History, there were no other important subjects to influence someone politically.

Geography to a certain extent; and these people you remember in 1969 that was the time when Africa was moving very fast liberating itself and as we learn about the independence of the new Africa that was being born, it encouraged us too, that in the long run Namibia will become independent. They told us that Namibia will never become independent when you yourselves are sitting at the school; you have to go on studying to enable you to run the country. It was difficult to believe them, because I remember at that time the problem which was adhered to us was that the white man was there to stay and to rule; and we believed that. We never believed if a black man can rule a country. But in the long run when we saw Zambia becoming independent, I think in 1964, and quite a number of countries like Tanganyika, Congo by then Democratic Republic of Congo today we got hope. The teachers used those countries as examples and they said look at this and sometimes they brought to classes photos of those leaders such as Kaunda who was prominent at that time.

Kaunda was a young man at that time with hair combed backwards; very eloquent. We used to read articles in the newspapers. I remembered reading an article about him calling on African people to unite and help other African countries that were not yet independent to be independent. In fact those were the words that helped us believe that it was true Africa is likely to be independent while the white man ruling

our country is likely to give up at one point or another. In order for us to come back to school, we were transported from Okatana to Dobra by trucks and sometimes the trucks were not operative so we had to take the train. The first time we took a train, we thought we would be freely to roam around, but we ended up in areas where we were prohibited. We were ordered out. They told us that the area was not for blacks but only for whites. But then I thought maybe it was because we were youngsters and possibly people who would sit there would be mature people and grown up people, and they did not want children to make noise around them. It was not clear, yet but we accepted because at that time there was no really strong feeling as into what non- sense that was. The train was divided into three classes, the first class, second and third which was for blacks, the first class was for the filthy rich whites, while the second class catered for the whites who could not pay more.

In the train I met the son of Abraham, who questioned why he couldn't get into the second class? He spoke in our vernacular language that the apartheid going on in our country will soon come to an end. I knew nothing about apartheid that time as it was my first time on the train, but he had been on the train for quite some time. I also questioned him what he meant by the term apartheid? He said apartheid was the reason why we couldn't get into the first or second compartments. From there I started opening up. At first I didn't see the difference; I would feel we have been done a favor not to walk from Tsumeb to Dobra, but to get into somebody's train. So I thought, why complain when somebody is offering you a ride and now you want to choose were you wanted to sit? I learnt later that the transport was paid to take us to school. But even if you had the money to sit in the first class you wouldn't sit there because the law did not allow that to happen, you could not sit with white people.

When I tell my children today about this they don't believe me and they say that I am exaggerating things. In 1966, the People's Liberation Army opened their camp at Omugulug Ombashe. They were spotted in the newspaper and at my school the news was that terrorists have invaded Namibia. The paper described how the fight started and how many were killed and injured. That was the year when we were made to join South West People's Organization (SWAPO); there was a colleague of ours, Andreas Shimwandi, unfortunately he died immediately after independence. Shimwandi worked with the Council of Churches, He was in contact with Patrick Lungada all along. They knew each other and I think they are from the same area. We asked around with Stephanus about what was happening, because we didn't understand the newspaper, and we were wondering what was happening. But we were told that those people implicated in the fight are our people and they were coming to liberate the country. So many of the students at Dobra joined SWAPO, but our membership cards vanished later on. It is when we started understanding the struggle. That was an eye opener to some of us at school. We started educating ourselves privately on what the South West People's Organization was all about.

We also started comparing it to other organizations that we used only to hear about, such as South West Africa Union, (SWANU) and NODO, which is the Herero

Chief Counsel. This was done through private discussions. Teachers were also careful not to allow the school to be turned into breeding grounds for political activities, because they were afraid that the school could be closed down if it was seen to be advocating for independence and teaching students to get rid of South Africans. We used to have a student's society that met every evening especially on Friday and Saturday in the school hall. But there were no were formal things that were discussed

– our political discussions were most of the time discussed during soccer meetings. Sometimes, under trees or river beds. At this time we started to know activists in the country, who were brave men ready to come and address a meeting while most of the other people were afraid to be preaching the gospel of independence and liberation. It was not a meeting. If you go to Okatana now and you see where the school currently is, not the one which is next Kandondo, you see there is that one near the cemetery; there was the first meeting that I attended as a student from Dobra. I happened to meet Kaxumba Kandola under a tree. He was wearing old shoes, the shoes were torn and you could see the nails and underneath there was nothing.

At that meeting he attacked people who were afraid to join the SWAPO party. He also taught us a song that day. But that was now an after effect, when I look back; it was not like as if he was telling deeper issues, but he was talking more to the people on the issue of fear. He was saying Namibians were afraid and we should be ready to tell the truth and ultimately Namibia would be free. That was plus or minus the story as he introduced it to the people- it was merely introducing them to the reason why young Namibians needed to come together to fight for the independence of their country. At that time I called myself Negro, I wanted to show that I am not afraid of my identity. Now at school, the feeling was just that the message should get to South Africa; something they wouldn't want to hear. I was not ashamed of being black; we were the black people, we were those blacks, the negro, though when you look back and deeper into it, there is no white Negro, all Negroes are black. But the message was that blackness, even the skin which we had was also dark – they were black. I was inspired by Martin Luther King, and we felt that it was high time that we should be proud of ourselves and be proud of who we were. Exactly we discovered that when we were at school with my other colleagues whom I was with at school at that time, I said, "Do you know what we called ourselves?" They said yah- but then I said it doesn't matter because what matters is that we emphasized the blackness and that we should be proud of that.

That was merely because you remember that at that time the schools that we went through and the history being taught, was as if being black was something not so nice; black was something which is not bright; blackwa dull, black was something that was ugly and everything that was bad. If any good is being sold illegally it's the black market, if a child in the family is bad he/she is referred to as a black sheep. We said what don't your colour as you are? Why do you want to be lighter than the one that you have naturally?. In the process we were going out and as we were going out and as we are going back to our villages we started talking about it. Black is beautiful, and

in fact, later on when we grew up we thought our people learnt it from the American people. You remember the Americans started with the t-shirts ‘Black is Beautiful’?

When I was at the University, that was the time of the most advanced black movement consciousness; movement which started in South Africa when we were there. We had guys like Abraham Tiro and Steve Biko who used to come regularly to the University. But they were expelled from the university at that time. They were going around instigating black consciousness at black universities. The University of the North, the University of Ngoya in Zululand, those were the only universities for the blacks at that time. We were with a South African national, a member of SASO. We, the Namibian students, were always a part of that, though we were not necessarily members because we came from Namibia. They said but your name is very funny – they said a black man lives in the heart of Africa where black people

come from naturally and you call yourself “*Villem*”; even when you die there, there is nothing that is seen except people see your documents. They didn’t understand why Namibians were not using their original names. They needed to understand why we were using names of Europeans while we are from Africa. So I wrote to the examining board, telling a nice story that in fact those were my names, but I was a catholic and my church only wanted William. Villem was my father’s name, while Amagulu was my family name. My African name is Ndeutapo. In fact it didn’t take long before they responded; they agreed with me and offered to send my old certificate so that they could send me a new one.

Ha said that those were schools designed to turn black men into obedient slaves, but we can still take advantage of the education, go through and learn, in the long run we will learn what is bad and what is good for us. He encouraged the young ones to go to these Universities, I recall him emphasizing what young men should do. Surely he meant all the youth whether male or female, but he insisted that it is important that we attend the university to be able to differentiate the difference for ourselves. That was the message in that second meeting we attended. The others deliberated on mobilizing people to speak out, to discard fear, to be proud and not to be afraid to talk about any organizations like SWAPO and FFO. We did not know that FFO was in Afrikaans but it meant the United Nations Organization.

Many people did not know what independence was all about, and never had they heard or seen an independent country, but for me I knew because we were close to some missionaries who had a different view. The other thing is that the people who were oppressing us were not seen as truly super human beings; in fact what they were doing was viewed as favor for poor black men. People had different perception of them. However, our case was different from that of America because blacks were more respected compared to Namibia. In America black people had written books and they spoke international languages although they were being discriminated against at that time.

I met quite a number of intelligent students; they were politically wise and I learnt a lot from them. These were people like Andrew John Shimwandi. It was

through him that I knew all the leaders of independent African countries. He knew all the independent African country leaders. Shimwandi created political awareness amongst students at school; he was a natural narrator and if he came to you and told you something- and you would believe everything he said.

In 1970 we had a strike at Dobra – I was part of the students association that used to meet in the evening and at that time we decided enough was enough. We wanted the school to realize that they were preparing a future for us, and they should ensure that we were brought up in a good manner in order to produce mature and responsible citizens of our country.

The school wanted to separate girls from boys which is why we came together to hold a meeting. Since they refused to take our demands into consideration, we decided to march to the priest's house. He was frightened because he thought we would burn his house and demolish the school, so he called for help from the police and Father Henning who was the Bishop at the headquarters at that time.

About ten guys were injured by the police that night, and they were taken to the hospital many others fled to the mountains fearing for their lives; we slept in the mountains. We were however dismissed from school and that was the time we were preparing for our exams. We were told to pack up our stuff, and as we were packing we were also being kicked.

We returned to our homes and after a week we received messages telling us that those who were preparing for exams had been granted a chance to write their exams but we should first go to Dobra to collect a letter from the principal and then go wherever, but we should write at Nama schools. I was given a room in which there were newspapers under the bed and in boxes, and it was a privilege for me to read more.

After the exams, I could not wait for the results; I went on to look for another school, and I was accepted at the school but politics was a taboo at that school; we were not allowed to talk about politics. Emmanuel Ngatjizeko, Nestor Shivute and Faniel Tjingaete were among my classmates, and together we formed a group and encouraged ourselves to study hard so that we could all apply for universities in South Africa for better education. I left for further study in South Africa, where I majored in Education and Political Science. South Africa was really an eye opener.

Fort is an old University established by the Anglican Missionaries it was highly respected, a number of African leaders also graduated from there; leaders such the President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe. I can also remember the former Chief Justice of Zimbabwe, two leaders from Kenya and Zambia and another one from Malawi; but I cannot say whether these are now presidents or not. Most of us were inspired by them. We thought it should be a good school. The school also had active young black South African students.

Now the ANC was behind the Black People Convention and the the South African Students Organization (SASO), which was nearly at all black students Universities including the Colored University, the NAMA colored University of Western Cape in Cape Town.

ANC formed the South African Black Students Association. They showed that the pigmentation of a human skin does not make you any different, whether you are black or not, and it was also explained to us why certain parts of the world had black people.

In fact after Form 1, there were three streams depending on the subjects you wanted to take. There was pure science where you take Physics, Chemistry and Biology; there was another stream where you have to take three languages, subjects such as typing, subjects like accounting geography, and history. Then there was another stream which was meant for poor people who wanted to become secretaries, so mainly the emphasis here was to take two languages. They took Afrikaans, and English; typing, and office management was their major subjects.

Mathematics and science subjects were for white people, as we were meant to believe that black people cannot think and they were dull by nature. They said if there was any black man that was clean, then a white man was behind his cleanliness. They tell you what these people have philosophized; and when you go to Egypt the pyramids that you find there they are not build by Arabs who are living there now. This was a group – African group, whether they were pitch black like us, or whether they were yellow like the Nama it did not matter really these were people we refer to as black like in the rest of the Africa.

Possibly the issue of the tradition was not into writing so most of the history and the discoveries they made was more carried on by stories. In fact, scientifically, when you look at the pigmentation of human skin there is no difference about that, it's the circumstances of the climate where a person lives that in the long run change your skin color. They wrote books explaining the situation of a black man, and why the history of black man especially in Namibia and in South Africa has been distorted in favor of the white man always.

In 1974 Jeremiah and I joined the Adult Education Literacy programme formed by an American man Dr. Boko. This organization used to develop and print materials for our local elders that could not read or write. In 1975 my colleague and I were later sent to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe today) for three months. Our mission was to learn how Zimbabweans were handling the organization.

We enjoyed our visit, but some people were scared of us; those were the times of ZANU and ZAPU. I should say I learnt quite a lot of useful lessons there. Upon our return we were given a task of touring Namibia. We formed different classes and trained teachers who would be teaching the elders. At that time the People's Liberation Army of Namibia had moved to Angola. I remember two young men who came to us, claiming that they had been sent by their commanders to come and recruit and train young Namibians in city guerrilla war. The two men were Kanisius and Dough Kangolo, they were operating around Okahandja. They were brought to my house by my younger brother Mario, who worked for a furniture shop in Okahandja. He said they needed to talk to me and there were also some few things they wanted to show me. My brother later told me that the two men were part of the liberation movement. I became a little bit uneasy, but my brother told me that the duo had been training

people for a long time and now they wanted me to get closer to them because they needed my help. They needed assistance in the form of food and more civilian clothes from me. So I questioned my brother as to what proof do we have that the two men were really from the liberation movement? So, one of the guys picked a pistol and handed it over to me. My heart started beating when I held that pistol in my hand. I felt it was heavy and I said “no please take it away” It is when they started explaining, I failed to understand why he was carrying pistols, and to make matter worse he took out a hand grenade. I hate hand grenades I had seen them in the newspapers and in books “he said to me this one is also useful”.

The other colleague of his unbuttoned his jacket and took out a foldable AK 47, I remember him saying, “These are the machines we are using.” I said, “I don’t want to touch them.” That was because I did not know where to touch. Since then they started coming often, and eventually they *vacuumed* my whole wardrobe. These were the clothes I got from the University; we used to get free food and clothes. Unfortunately

one of the two guys later got shot and was seriously injured, and my wife Margaret who was also a nurse and was working night shift that day, came to tell me that one of the guys I was telling her about was taken in by the police as was seriously wounded. She also told me that the whole floor was crowded with police officers. People were not allowed to visit him, not even the nurses from that hospital; he had a Doctor that was brought from white people’s hospital. When we heard that, Nambinga and I were scared that the guy would eventually speak out, if he got cornered by the police. We thought of a plan. We thought of using my wife to take wrong prescription to the guy so that he may just die, but my wife refused. She said they swore that they would never enter that floor.

As we see nothing was materializing in our plans, we thought of nothing else but to flee the country. The problem was my child, she was only three months old, and didn’t know what to do? We decided to take the child with us; Jeremiah Nambinga drove us to Odibo that night. This was some time in 1976. I was however tipped off that the police went to my work place looking for me, with my brother Mario. They forced my brother to say where I was. We passed three road blocks and everything went according to plan we didn’t encounter any problem until we reached our destination, Odibo. I stayed overnight in Odibo at Pastor Shilongo’s house, and in the morning I approached a Catholic priest and told him the truth that I was fleeing the country, but I needed some money from him to continue with my journey, but the pastor refused, he said they did not help people who were going to fight. No hard feelings, I just left and decided to approach another pastor, this time from the Anglican Church, he did not have much money but he gave me 500 pounds. This pastor also later came to exile because we met in Zimbabwe. His name was Father Myroll. He was a white British priest; he was a very good friend to Nambinga, since they were both from the same church.

Pastor Shilongo gave us Nangolo’s sister, Elizabeth but she is dead now. Nangolo is the current Minister of Defense. Thus the girl knew the way from Odibo to the fence;

we went through the fence and moved a little bit in the bush of Angola until Oshikango on foot. While still walking on foot, my wife saw the South African patrolling the border. They might have seen us early in the morning when we were on the other side of the fence. Margaret was very excited and she started shouting at them saying, “Power, power we shall come back.” I told her to stop shouting if she did not want us to be in danger, but she said they were useless they wouldn’t do anything to us.

We were using coupons, and you know it was a war area at that time. So we went with them and we told them of our problem, and they said they would give us a truck to take us to Ondjiva, because it was not safe where we were. They were quite friendly people, they had a Kwanyama guy who speaks Kwanyama fluently and he was translating to them as we talk. They organized transport for us all along. They had a big truck with air defense systems and Baulkers and anti-amoured guns. They also prepared dinner for us when we arrived.

Soldiers appeared to be very active and very observant and very alert; now my wife was a little bit too happy and she said she wished that UNITA could just attack them so that we could see action. The guys were really alert and the types of systems at that place, its heavy machine guns and the arbiter, the AK, the Baulkers, and the anti air systems; they were two of them. I don’t know if they did that to give us an impression that we were protected or whether that was the way they used to move. These people were half a platoon, about 15 men, and very heavily armed; coupons were all over the place and these guys were all over the place permanently in the dug-outs as if they expected the South Africans to attack at any time. **Amagulu, Ambassador**

## Amukongo, Eddie

*Eddie Amukongo joined a number of young Namibian political activist during the 1960s and early 1970s. Due to political strife inside the country he became part of thousands of young Namibians who went into exile to join SWAPO. He held several positions including serving as SWAPO representative in a number of countries. Upon his return from exile, he worked in the government and was sent to several diplomatic missions where he served as ambassador. He is now the chairman of the Public Service of Namibia and is currently serving his second term.*

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My father is Tobias Amukongo. I am the seventh child in a family of 10. I was born in Ontananga in December 1945. At the age of 15 I moved to Oniipa to attend a boy's school. I lived there with my elder brother. In 1964 I went to Ongwediva to do standard six and started with teacher's training after one year at the Ongwediva Seminary which was run by Finnish Missionaries. Our Principal was Mr. Nico Cargo and, some of my class mates were Immanuel Nambahu, Dr Kalumbi Shangula and his brother Ruben Shangula. We later went to Oshigambo High school where I met with the current Prime Minister Nahas Angula.

After 1965, it was the time Oshigambo opened, and then we were selected to go to Oshigambo. Nahas Angula was ahead of me. I met my classmates from Ongwediva, Immanuel Nambahu and others from Engela. That was when we started a mixed class. The class was a mixture of girls and boys. There were girls from Okahao and boys from Ombalantu. We were 35 people in the class. But when I went there most teachers who taught me at Onayena became fellow students. I completed matric in 1969 but I was not admitted to University although I had applied to three different universities that time.

The most popular one in those days was the University of the North in South Africa. I was influenced by Daniel Namuhuya who had just finished university and was a teacher at Ongwediva. I also used to know him as a family member. My first choice was really to go the University of the North. My second choice was to go to Fort Hare, and the third choice to go to Zululand. But I was not admitted. I was later admitted in 1970. It took long because the Universities did not respond to my applications, and there was nothing that I could do about it. In 1970, I got myself a good job in the department of Bantu Education and Administration at Ondangwa. I was a Clerk Grade 2, dealing with personnel. It was a very high post and I received R20.00 per week, which was R80.00 per month.

There was a very wellknown educationalist in the North who was known as Mr Boas. Mr Boas was the head of education in the North. He was not a teacher, but he was in charge of education. During that year when I was working in Ondangwa, so many things happened. Some of the things of course were following me. If I can say something about the politics while I was still at Oshigambo, maybe even while I was at Onayena, one of my childhood friends and who also became a school mate, our current Director General of the National Planning Commission, Mr. Helmut Angula, was expelled. That happened while we were still at Onayena. There were three of

us, and we were all supposed to be expelled together, but I was just lucky because I was not found there. When he got expelled, he was lucky because his mother by that time was in Windhoek. At that time he was recruited by SWALA (South West Africa Labour Affairs), a recruiting agency for contract workers. In order for him to get to the South he had to be recruited through SWALA but, lucky for him I think he was working in the farms, which were not far from Windhoek. He got a chance of living on the farm and being with his mother who was already a teacher in Windhoek.

He immediately teamed up with SWAPO activists, which involved OPO at the time. He teamed up with people like Jason Mutumbulwa, and John ya Otto. They were teachers but at the same time political activists. During that time the newspapers produced by OPO were called the Unity Wings. Helmut was the translator for Unity Wings here in Windhoek and translated in Oshiwambo. He would send me copies, not only to read, but also to distribute to the others. While I was at Oshigambo, he used to send them through the post. If there was somebody coming to where he was, then he would send them through that person.

I would distribute them to the community and at schools because politics was mainly more active among the students. I also knew that there were activities in the area where I was, and so I would distribute to the community members but I would also share the information.

The content of the newspaper in most cases was just to explain the disadvantages of the contract workers, to mobilize the people to realize what the colonial regime was doing in Namibia and in mobilizing people to boycott ongoing contracts. The idea was actually to prepare the people gradually to realize that they needed to do something political for themselves. This was because most people who could be enriched and who could understand were those who were touched by the harsh conditions of the apartheid laws and were mostly contract workers. The Unity Wings newspaper was also talking about the relationship between the League of Nations, and what it meant for Namibians who had left the country. The names which we mostly heard about were those of Sam Nujoma, Jacob Kuhangwas, Mburumba Kerina, and of people like Andreas Shipanga who were either in New York or in Tanganyika.

I heard through the newspaper, Unity Wings, that John Ya Otto and Jason Mutumbulwa and others who were living in Windhoek were actually the people behind this newspaper. There is also one important element that I should mention. This was during the time when Kapuo was a very important figure politically. I used to know him as I attended my very first political rally at the Old Location. That was before I went to Ondangwa. In 1966, I personally attended the very first meeting that was a political rally addressed by Kapuo. That was after the release from prison of ya Otto and Mutumbulwa. He was actually receiving them to introduce them to the public.

Kapuo was a NUDO member but in those days, there was no clear discrimination for which party one belonged to. I think it was just blacks who were politically motivated and they were working together. The meeting was good and emotive because that was

my eye opener when it came to addressing a political meeting with so many people and, seeing somebody in action and getting arrested. These were John a Otto, Jason Mutumbulwa, I think as well as David Namalambo who had just returned.

Kapuo's was condemning the South African regime in Namibia which arrested some nationalists and transported them to Pretoria. Nevertheless, they had to release them simply because they could not find anything to accuse them of. I think the only wrong thing that they could have committed was simply being politically active. I went back to the north, and of course by that time I had heard about Toivo ya Toivo but had never made an effort to meet him. When I returned to the north my main task was to go to meet Ya Toivo physically.

No one had assigned me to do that, but it was my own decision. My aim was to ask him to give me a membership card. I then got my membership card in 1966. The first time I was with ya Toivo was actually in 1964 while I was still at Ongwediva. I got sick because I had contracted cerebral malaria. I was admitted in the Onandjokwe hospital. We met there because our beds were close to each other, but I had never spoken to him. After my first political rally experience here in Windhoek, I decided to talk to ya Toivo. The reason why we had never talked was because I used to think that he was completely different person. I had to gather all the courage to go and talk to him, and to ask him for a membership card.

I remember going to him on the 1st of August 1966. I was with another guy from Oshigambo called Martin Hanaye when I met him. Martin Hanaye was working at the Post Office when we came back from exile. Ya Toivo was quite a difficult man to approach, very reserved. He neither laughed nor smiled and, I did not know how to approach him. We did not only ask for membership cards from ya Toivo, we but tried to engage him in conversation by asking him for possibilities of leaving the country because by that time my childhood friend Helmut Angula had left the country and I wanted to go and join him. That was before OngulungOmbashe, because one week or slightly more, after my meeting with ya Toivo and asking him for a membership card we heard that ya Toivo was arrested. I think ya Toivo's arrest awakened a lot of students at Oshigambo, Ongwediva and other places. Also sometime back, I was not present but ya Toivo and Simon Kaukungwa, addressed students at Ongwediva before he left the country.

With the arrest of ya Toivo, I think SWAPO became more known because it was really associated with ya Toivo. His arrest was seen as a political arrest. I went back to Oshigambo and stayed there until 1969. I had to work for a year after not having been admitted to any University. That year was beginning of an era because more students became engaged in political activities, mostly after the first strike of the workers in December – January 1971. I was still at Ondangwa at that time. I went to the University in February 1971. In June, while I was on leave back in Namibia, I learned through the Wing newspaper that the World Court had declared the presence of South Africans in Namibia illegal.

We organized a meeting at Oniipa because by then it was called Captain Uushona Shiimbi who was considered the Chief Minister in Ovamboland. He was made to issue a statement stating that the world court's opinion was interfering in the affairs of Namibia and, that the Namibians were very happy with the presence of the South Africans. The South African Administrator by then was Jan De Wet. So we organised a meeting at Oniipa on a Sunday. At that time I was based in Ondangwa. The meeting was attended by many people like Dr Sheyavali who at that time was still on holiday because he was a student in Finland. The meeting was also attended by many teachers from Oniipa. We decided to write a petition and handed it over to Uushona Shiimbi the next day on a Monday. I chaired that meeting because at that time I was a chairperson of the Students Movement. It linked churches and schools but it transformed into a political organization for students. It is something like Nanso, which later became a SWAPO Front.

The next day we went to present the petition at Ondangwa. My duty station was Ondangwa but I had already left work six months earlier. Uushona Shiimbi and De Wet knew me when I was working there. But I was the guy leading a political petition; the Chief Minister of Ovamboland and De Wet, the supreme, South African representative in Namibia were shocked. Two days later I left for University. As a result I was not arrested but, I was under the spotlight of the police. It did not matter whether I was in Namibia or in South Africa.

Before that, while I was still at Oshigambo, my correspondence even before I left Oshigambo, I mentioned the receiving of Unity Wings but then by that time my schoolmate Helmut had already left the country. We were still in correspondence while he was in Zambia. I think he was attending a school known as Nkumbi. He would write to me through his girlfriend in Botswana. That girlfriend in Botswana would transform the letter in her own handwriting and send the letter to me as if she wrote it herself. I would write back as if I was writing to her, but she was not supposed to read the content, but she would send it to Zambia.

At one point those letters were intercepted, and they were brought by the police at Oshigambo. I think I was not the only one, but there were at least four of us. We were called out of class to come and receive our letters and there I made a blunder. I asked the policeman why he had brought the letters, when he was clearly not a post man. I asked him where he got the letters since he was not working in the post office. The Chief was white and there were also two blacks. I knew both of the blacks as David Jefta and Gabriel David. One of them was my elder brother's schoolmate.

Simply by asking that question and what his interest was in it, he answered by saying that his interest was for me to explain who was writing to me from outside Namibia, which was South West Africa by then. He told me to explain who the person was and what it was all about. I said to him, "My friend, if you want to keep the letters, you can keep them because I don't know what connection you have with letters written to me. If you are interested, keep them."

Then subsequently there was a search conducted at my father's kraal and they discovered all the copies of Unity Wings. They said, they had discovered where to search. I was interrogated about all the copies of Unity Wings. They asked me why I had them in my possession, and why I was interested in them. They told me that I had to concentrate on my studies since I was a student. Well, I did go to the university but due to the political situation I had to leave the country for Zambia.

## Angula, Nahas Gedion

[Windhoek; 26 July 2007]

Nahas Gedion Angula was born at Onyaanya. He became a member of SWAPO's Youth League while still a student. He left for exile to join the liberation struggle in 1964 and his major activity had been providing education to Namibians in exile in order to prepare them as future leaders. He was tasked to start the first SWAPO school in Zambia and was a teacher there. He worked at the United Nations for several years and was appointed SWAPO Secretary for Education in 1981. When he returned to Namibia in 1989 he was SWAPO's head of voter registration. He was appointed to President Nujoma's first cabinet as Minister of Education, Culture and Sport. With a cabinet revision in February, 1991 his title became Minister of Education and Culture, and later Minister of Education, Science and Technology and Employment Creation. He was tasked with the challenge of restructuring the Namibian educational system. This includes the introduction of English as the first language. During the SWAPO Extraordinary Congress of 2004 for the election of a SWAPO candidate for the 2004 presidential election Angula contested the candidacy together with Hifikepunye Pohamba and Hidipo Hamutenya. After losing the first round in that election his supporters seem to have rallied behind Pohamba, an act that may have influenced his appointment as Prime Minister in the Pohamba Administration in 2005. He retained his parliamentary seat after the 2009 national assembly elections.

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Thank you for your interest in my life experience, especially as a political activist. I think we can go on with this interview in a number of phases. First, it's very important to accept the background which led some of us to be politically active. Secondly, to look at our youth; thirdly, to look at our participation in the struggle itself; and then of course the post independence itself which was the mission.

The background is very, very important to understand what actually shaped our thinking. You know people of my age grew up in the mid-1950s. That time was a time of many happenings. First of all the independence of Ghana in 1957 as we came to know about it, the conflict in Angola, led by Holden Roberto in the early 60s. Then the height of the war in Vietnam and of course the influence of people like Mao Tse Tung and others; and all these things combined created some sort of political consciousness in our minds. But in Namibia itself there was actually the deportation of Ya Toivo from Cape Town and his detention at Chief Johannes Shihepo Namene's place which actually provoked us to think why this man was detained, and chained there. At that time we were studying, you know, with these private schools of course, and there was the kind of political upsurge in the north. Then the war in Angola, which was characterized as the war of pangas, you know people used these pangas in the plantations and were to be used to fight the Portuguese.

At that time that created a lot of affection around there at that time. So, of course as we were going through our schools we are prone to read and to try to follow what is happening in the world. Then of course there was the formation of the Organization of African Unity. Those days the voice of Kwame Nkrumah was heard because he was

very loud those days. He inspired the African youth to struggle for the independence of their countries.

Then we saw the success of the Mau-Mau in Kenya and other forces around so when the nationalist message was spreading it was actually falling on fertile ground those days. It was actually fashionable to join the political movement to be seen to be part of it, in particular the enlightened young people.

With regard to information we grew up in missionary schools and they were giving us Magazines that were available you don't get it instantly but you would get it and obviously we were in contact with people who were in Windhoek and there usually used to be actually two influential publications.

One was a publication from Cape Town it was either from the Liberal Party or from the Communist Party called Contact you know. So we were very enlightened right in those days.

SWAPO come up with its own publication which they printed in Windhoek and smuggled all over you know especially the young people and all that. Then eventually the radio becomes another tool. Then SWAPO went to Dar es Salaam to broadcast because they were given facilities to broadcast from there, and we were listening as young people; so it was a combination of all these things that inspired the political upsurge of the young people. Obviously the SWAPO activists were active having meetings and public rallies; sometimes in the homes and not going in the open space and having a rally there. They talked about what was happening especially when Cde Nujoma and others started sending petitions at the United Nations; we always got some news on that.

Every year some young people were leaving; and I also decided to leave in 1965. We actually marched all the way from Ondangwa through Nkurenkuru, through Rundu, through Divundu to Shakawe, Maun and to Francistown. We walked on foot. It was not easy because actually we had to walk for about a month to reach Francistown. Then from Francistown we stayed there for some time and we were taken by the Refugee Council to Kazungula.

The Chiefs in Kavango were not friendly. What happened is that, the very time when we left, as we were in Divundu, some of PLAN combatants were spotted in Kavango around the same time.

Obviously when we were leaving, we said we were not leaving for SWAPO. We pretended that we were going to work in the South African mines. In fact when we were asked we said we were Angolans, because at that time Namibian workers were not allowed for to go and work in South Africa because of the Labour shortage here. Only one of our colleagues was born in Kavango because we had just come out of school, and we were just secondary school boys at the age of 19 or somewhere there. This guy spotted us and he become suspicious because he thought that our mission was not to go to the mines, but we were going to join SWAPO at that time. Eventually we had to confide in people we trusted and told them that it was true that we were going to SWAPO. We did that so that we could get them to cooperate and help us.

Those days SWANLA used to collect people from Nkurenkuru to Rundu and then transport them to Grootfontein. So in the process of that, we pretended that we also wanted to go to Grootfontein so that we could get a lift from those people from Nkurenkuru to Rundu. Which we eventually got and then before we reached Rundu we asked for permission to go and see other people and we would join them in the Compound. There was a Compound in Rundu. We got off before we could get into the compound, and we went into a bush and we stayed there waiting for it to be dark.

With the cover of darkness, we crossed Rundu to the east and we walked all the way to Nyangana and from Andara we walked all the way to Divundu. I think it was Andara where we found out that the area had food shortage that year. But we were assisted by the students who were studying at Dobra. You know that was the month of December and students were on holiday; so they were the ones who assisted us and gave us the direction of how to go to Shakawe.

Now, the movement of the trucks which were transporting workers who were going to work there in South Africa was worrisome. Since we could not secure the permission, we behaved as if we were going to the mines because we were too young. We could not convince anybody that we were going to work in the mines. We were too young and we had to avoid those trucks. Those guys assisted with food and other stuff, and also to warn us about the Chiefs, that the Chiefs were there to look out for trouble makers and that type of a thing. We were able to leave Andara and travel to Shakawe in Botswana and in Shakawe there were also Namibians there; Oshiwambo speaking Namibians who went to work in the mines. We went back and heard some information to the effect that there are some people whom we should contact because they were sympathetic to SWAPO; they were SWAPO operating there. I went there and found this guy who was staying there with his family. They organized transport for us. There were some lorries to help us through after some struggle, and we travelled from Shakawe to Maun. We stayed in Maun for almost a week, and eventually we found space on those lorries. The day we arrived in Maun we were given some names of people; these were Oshihero speaking and sympathetic to SWAPO.

Then that year, in 1965 there was also shortage of food in Maun, and we didn't have money. We were students and we used to march with the assistance of Oshihero speaking people to secure some food and also to organize transport to go to Francistown. We eventually reached Francistown, through our own means. Usually what happened was that you go to Rundu and then in Rundu, you pretend that you are going to work in the mines, provided that you had declared yourself as an Angolan. Then they will transport you to Shakawe then from Shakawe you take a plane and that plane will take you to Francistown then from Francistown you are supposed to take a train. Some of the colleagues travelled that way, but we could not because we had not secured a contract from Rundu for working in the mines. So we just had to go by our own means, by foot, lifts, or by what ever means. Language was difficult; when we got to Kavango we tried not to talk to somebody because they might find out that

we were not from that area. So, much of the day time we were hiding ourselves and spending a lot of time in the bush, so that we did not expose ourselves.

We reached Francistown. We had a SWAPO representative in Francistown, by the name of Edium Kasheta, who was there to organize and to receive SWAPO recruits who were coming from Namibia, pretending to be going to work in the mines. Some of the recruits were those coming from the mines, and before they boarded the plane to go to Shakawe, they tried to convince them not to go back to South West Africa. That was how the recruitment was taking place through people pretending to go to work in the mines.

All along we just had to pretend that we were going to the mines because that is what people knew, and that had been going on for some time, and people had been going through that place.

Earlier, if you wanted to go and work in the mines you used that route; It was also used if you wanted to go and work in the sugar plantations and the tobacco plantations in Zimbabwe. So it was not as if we were inventing that route, but it was a traditional road that had been there for a long time and used by migrant workers going through from anywhere to Zimbabwe tobacco plantation or to work in the South African mines. If you wanted to go and work in the mines you had to go through that route. It was already there and it was a route which was used by many people and it was well known. We eventually got to Francistown. We had to see the person in-charge and register ourselves with the Refugees Council. Botswana was not independent and one had to be very careful not to provoke the colonial Authorities there, as they could report you to South Africa.

The Refugee Council was responsible for transporting us to Zambia, but to get a ride to Zambia it took a long time so we spent some time in Kazungula. We were cleared by SWAPO, but basically by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, because by that time the Americans had built a refugee school in Zambia; they competed with the National College. Actually, when we were being cleared we spent time there exploring the area. We stayed there for about three months suffering from malaria and other diseases. We were being terrorized by the many hippos there. That time was actually the time when ZANU or was it ZAPU waged an armed struggle in the then Southern Rhodesia. You know that was the time of UDI in Rhodesia. It was not safe to stay at Kazungula because of the meeting of the three countries, around Kazungula. There, you are at the border of Rhodesia, Botswana, the then South West Africa, and then there is the Zambia side and we were there and there were many refugees from South Africa as well. People like Ben Turok were there, and a couple of other white South Africans. We were together there waiting to be cleared to proceed. So eventually we got admission to go to Nkumbi College and we left for the college. That was in 1966. As students we were a group of Namibians and also Zimbabweans, South Africans and I think there were some Mozambicans as well, at the Kazungula base. All of us were taken to Nkumbi College. There were also students sponsored by

the United Nations under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The school was being run by the Americans.

This was also the time of the Vietnam War. It was the height of the Vietnam War and it was also the time of the cold war. So, the Americans wanted to win the hearts and minds of refugees. We were also in touch with the Soviets so much that some of us were caught in between. We did not want to be any of those two things, so some of my colleagues left to study in America. I decided that I would study in Africa because of that confusion of the cold war. So when eventually I finished at Nnkumbi I was admitted into the University of Zambia, where I studied there and I eventually finished. I taught for some time at the College of Further Education in Lusaka.

Then what happened in 1968 is that SWAPO established bases around Kaunga Mashi and they started to launch military offensives in the area of Singalamwe. The South Africans reacted very furiously to that; it was so bad that people from that area were forced to flee into Zambia, where they were taken into a refugee camp in north- west Zambia. But SWAPO decided that we should not allow our people to live in the shared refugee camps, and instead we should establish our own refugee camps which we came to call Namibia Education and Health Centre. The first one was established near Lusaka.

We found ourselves with children wanting to go to school but we could not fit in the Zambian Education System. So after finishing my studies at the Zambia University I had to teach a little bit in Zambia, where I was assigned to go and start a school for these kids. And that was in 1973 and 1974. But that was just a twist of history, if you like. When I finished my graduate studies, I was first assigned to be Deputy Representative of SWAPO in London. But that never happened. That is why I am saying that sometimes history has its own way of doing things.

I found myself going around, sometimes representing the youth with the likes of the late Homateni Kaluena, and sometimes representing the workers with the likes of Joseph Nawa, and others. But eventually I had to settle down and start a school for those kids. That was so to say my second phase. You know of the struggle; it involved working with displaced people and working with children, especially when I started to work with these children. We did not have a common language of communication; and probably that was the reason why we started teaching in English. But you know that area of Singalamwe, their language there is Sifwe and some of them also spoke Mbukushu. So we were there to form a community. In fact last week one of those women came here to see me. Some people were amazed to meet this woman who spoke Oshiwambo like her mother tongue. We formed a community and eventually the Zambians decided to give us a place in western Zambia. That is where we established a base called Nyango.

Then things were changing very fast. In 1975 Angola became independent. Remember the confusion with the Portuguese and that opened up opportunities for many Namibian youth to get out of Namibia. So at the end of 1975 and early 1976 we received a lot of young people and the school had to be expanded; and so we had

to establish many other educational programmes to cater for the not young ones, because that was only a primary school. That was when we started to send young people to West Africa and East Africa, namely Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia and even Senegal. Those days solidarity was very high in Africa; so much so that countries like Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, gave us quotas every year in their secondary schools to send 25 youngsters to Ghana, 50 to Nigeria and perhaps 10 to Gambia and that was promising because it actually helped us cope with many of the young people who came to join the struggle en mass. Again solidarity those days could be seen and could be felt, otherwise we could not have coped with such large population of people in terms of feeding them, clothing them, housing them and preparing something meaningful for them. It was really a trying time because some people had just left home.

After the arrest of Patrick, Toivo and others, and their imprisonment in South Africa there was a political vacuum in the country. There was not much political activity. Then there was this open letter written by these two Bishops. I mean two religious leaders, Auala and Gowaseb; he just died after independence. The letter was addressed to Vorster and it provoked us; and that combined with what was happening in South Africa at that time, like Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement, and that strike, all increased the political awareness of the young people. The young people become very much active, and some of them ended up being flogged by the Chiefs. So after the coup in Portugal, and all that some of the youth just left and some probably left without knowing where they were going.

In fact, there was a story which started and I don't know who started it, telling the young people that once you get into Angola you will be transported by Boeing aircraft; it was just a myth. So who does not want to travel by a Boeing aircraft? Some were creating myth that when you go to Zambia you will be sleeping, in flats, and this kind of thing created that kind of a myth, it encouraged many young people who were desperate and doing nothing to leave home and join the struggle at a tender age and at the end of the day ended up walking long distances. The Boeing they were talking about actually turned out to just going through a long road; it was not an aircraft at all.

When some of these young people came and found themselves in situations they never dreamt of being in, it was difficult to explain to them, and it was not easy to handle them. When they found themselves in a refugee camp, in something like a compound, or something, it was not easy for them to accept the reality of that new life. So we had to struggle with them. Some of them perhaps had left home with criminal records, and they wanted to transfer that kind of behaviour in to the struggle, but that was not acceptable. So we had to reorient them; and that was not easy for many of us who lived with these young people. But on the bright side, I must say that in many ways we did succeed because we were able to first of all to create all the possibilities and opportunities for these young people, for their personal development.

We were able to create institutions and infrastructure to cope with their needs and the history of the struggle, so much so that many of the people you see around, including yourselves, (Tonchi and Mulongeni), benefited from our efforts; and sometimes I think that some of the young people, when they found those structures there, I think perhaps they did not even know how the things happened. I suppose they think that it was supposed to be like that, or something like that.

Because I look at them even now, some of them, adults as they are, they really have to appreciate what we, who came first, went through. They don't really appreciate it because they found the structures there; they found that there was food, and there was a way of getting a scholarship or something like that, and going somewhere else. There was some kind of rudimentary organization and administration, and I think some of them just thought that it was just supposed to be like that, not knowing that those things had to be created by those of us who were tasked to create them. So that was my second phase.

In my third phase, which was in 1976 I was assigned to work at the United Nations. I worked for the United Nations, representing Namibia in New York up to 1980. I had to come back to Angola because one of my colleagues, the late Linekela Kalenga, died in a car accident, a tragic car accident, and SWAPO was a bit thin on the ground, in terms of cadres to run its many departments. So actually I had to leave New York to come and reinforce SWAPO administration.

When I came back I went to Luanda I was assigned to the portfolio of Information and Broadcasting, and I worked for that department for only two years, then I went back to my natural habitat if you like, education and culture.

You will remember that that time around 1981, 1982, and 1983, there was again that conscription which caused a lot of people to leave the country, and we actually had to expand our education system to many other countries. First of all, the aftermath of Cassinga led to the establishment of SWAPO schools in Cuba; but also the influx of young people resisting conscription led us to expand our education systems. It was for that reason we had to establish a school in Congo Brazzaville. So we had schools all over; in Zambia, Angola, Congo Brazzaville, and Cuba. Then we had many other programmes like in GDR and other socialist countries in Eastern Europe who accepted our young people to train them as artisans.

We were looking at the possibility of sending people to other Universities and to expand our programmes, and by that time the young people we had sent to West Africa were coming back, and we also had to prepare for their further education. Lucky enough the Council of Namibia was very active, and as I said, in those days there was a lot of solidarity. The Council of Namibia established a fund for Namibia, including the Nationhood Program for Namibia, and that gave us resources to do a number of things including the establishment of the United Institute for Namibia (UNIN). That gave us resources to expand. On the political front, SWAPO was gaining recognition internationally as the authentic representative of the people of Namibia. That also helped us in many other organizations and governments like the

Commonwealth, and actually provided more sustained assistance to the development of the Namibian youth. So we had an extensive network of young people studying all over the world. I think you (Tonchi) went to California to study and also Mulongeni went to Bulgaria. Now since he is here, you know that Bulgaria is the only place where Namibian students were not quite united, they were fighting among themselves. It's only that country and I don't know why... I had to go there and draw their attention to the fact that they did not go to that country to fight among themselves, and all those things. But otherwise everywhere there were Namibians, and they formed a kind of Students Union or a Youth Union so that they always had somebody who was their spokesperson. When they had problems or something they always relayed these problems to SWAPO headquarters in Lusaka or Luanda, and we attended to them.

Another credit I always give to the young Namibians who went abroad is that – not many of them were keen to abscond from SWAPO, but very few, perhaps not more than ten or so. I can remember, sending them somewhere and they came back and made their contribution. That was despite the fact that sometimes they came at difficult times such as when there was not enough food; and others came when the accommodation was very bad. But invariably when they finished what they had to finish they always came back, to make their contribution to the struggle. I found that it was rewarding because these young people, perhaps you met them when they were still teenagers, and you sent them back to school, and the next time you saw them, when they came back, they were the same age as you. So that was the last phase when it came to the struggle.

Otherwise the next phase was State formation. The writing of the constitution; the declaration of independence; the liquidation of apartheid in the public sector; those were the next challenges. We had to reform education and we had to deal with very highly politicized youth and young people who were more interested in making systems that were workable. But eventually they cooled down. During the early days of independence, if three months passed without demonstration we asked ourselves, "What is happening? Is there something wrong?" Otherwise you could expect a demonstration any time in those early days. But now people have settled down. I am not quite sure if these young people had focus as to what was their role in the future; that I cannot say but all of us were young people and perhaps that is how we were behaving too. I don't know. Sometimes you are not quite sure about these young people in terms of what they do? Whether they have some kind of purpose in life or not?

So in a nutshell those are the kind of experiences that I went through. I am talking about a period of maybe about fifty or at least forty years. Maybe to add to that, on my part I must say that I regard myself to be perhaps one of the lucky ones in my age group; that is in the sense that the assignments I was given by SWAPO were so rewarding. But that does not mean that they were easy. At least when I look back I feel that I made my contribution. Mind you, many of those in my age group were not able to return to Namibia; you should always keep that in mind. I could have died on the

front, or I could have died in a road accident, or I could have had malaria or whatever, you know. But we went through that until the point where we are today.

Another dimension of our independence story is that what happened in the mid 1960's was that we had in the country the political leadership after Omugulugombashe, the 26th of August 1960 being rounded up and there was a general terror as people were being followed up to be arrested and all that. Some people were also collaborating and you could not even trust your own shadow during those days. Between 1966 and around 1970, the only things that sustained the struggle were basically two things, namely, the voice of Namibia which was beaming broadcast programme here and also the armed struggle.

When you plant a bomb in Caprivi and South Africans died; and our people have a tendency of exaggerating, but there was also the voice of Namibia to inflate what happened. People have also this tendency of inflating other stories, perhaps as a part of psychological warfare. If one South African Captain died, the Voice of Namibia would report that it was a whole company or the whole battalion that had been wiped out. Then you add to this the revolutionary songs. Those were very, very important in mobilizing the masses. When you heard others singing there, you were not quite sure whether it was a cassette. You see them singing "*We are marching, we are marching*" and you see that they are there. The thing is that they are just there, at the border marching. These kinds of things, like the voice of Namibia, were instrumental to keeping the spirit of the armed struggle going.

At that time, we were more involved in the use of the bombs called landmines, because SWAPO had only eighteen people that time. They planted land mines, laid ambushes and then lay low for a while; by the time the Boers thought they had forgotten, they came to put more land mines and then made a big strike. This was because we had to save on manpower. Before 1975 there were not many people, you could actually count the numbers..

There were also the ups and downs of the struggle. You will recall that earlier on there were political differences, or whatever with people like Abraham Fortune, Kenny Abrahams and others who had to leave the party. And at one time there was confusion in the training camp in Kongwa, and there were some people who had to leave for Kenya. Then, eventually when the mass of these young people arrived at the camps, another confusion developed, that came to be associated with Shipanga rebellion.

There were also those ups and downs and confusions in SWAPO itself; and sometimes even if you are few the differences, sometimes ideological especially the Cold War. Some people supported the Americans and thinking that the Americans would bring about the South Africans to negotiations; and others thought that the armed struggle was the only way. You always find those differences and tendencies.

Well on the Shipanga rebellion. The Shipanga rebellion was actually rooted, in my view, in two things. First, when these young people came back from abroad, they found that within the leadership of SWAPO there were differences, and these were ideological differences, we are talking about. The Shipanga orientation was more of

the worst. It was actually ideological. Now when the young people returned, there was this generational difference; the young people thought that the old SWAPO leaders, or the old leadership, was just happy to live abroad and to fly around; they were not patient. They wanted to go back, they just wanted to go in, immediately.

So, you see, when they were told by the old Commanders that traditionally wars had to be planned, they thought that the guys were just sellouts.

Then of course the Boers were also not stupid. Within the ranks, I think they also pushed some people through, and when people saw the differences some of these people of course exploited them. In the process Shipanga also joined these people, as if he was their spokesperson. The Biko politics were also a problem, because Biko's politics were not far from anarchy. You see these people who never wanted authority; but of course in a political party which is fighting a war, Authority is a structured organization. You have to have a commander, you have to have a leaders, – some of these people just thought it was authority, then some of them were the ones we are talking about. They had enjoyed the glitter of going abroad to sleep in flats. By the time they got there they could not come back, because what they expected to find they couldn't find it. So any type of confusion for these people was easy to follow because they were in the state of confusion themselves. In other words there was no proper political grounding. to guide some of the young people in terms of where they should go.

It did not just start with the group of 1975. I say it had happened before, because even Nkumbi and other places some of our colleagues deserted us there, again under the pretext that the old leadership were just complacent. They said that they were not pushing the struggle; and this was the group that went to be trained in China, which was going through the Cultural Revolution and there was total confusion. Again those fellows had a mindset of Biko type, that everybody was a revolutionary. They ended up setting up a party, and going to Kenya. So these things had been happening, and sometimes it was ideological; sometimes it was generational differences; and sometimes it was just general confusion. A person who found himself caught in between that situation, which was not expected, was not able to readjust and face reality. All these things created a lot of tension. These guys said that the old leadership was just like an engine of a car which needed to be overhauled. This was a guy saying that in public. In other words they were saying, "Your leadership is not needed here." Also, the old people could not understand the young people fast enough. They might have had their own background when they left the country. They were the militants of that time but eventually the reality and the objective reality caught up with them and they became sober. Even now, you can see the the young people in the SWAPO Youth League; they can say something, and then after ten years they will say that they did not say it. These young people found us there, and we had been there for ten years, but they were in a hurry to come back to Namibia. I came to accept it as the spirit of the youth; that youth will always, on the basis of their experience, be more of the opinion that things would just happen just like that, without looking for the

objectives, the reality, and other things like possibilities. It is very interesting. Imagine the young people that I have dealt with; they repeated almost the same things all the time, and they were likely to do the same thing; they see you as an obstacle, and, as being a reactionary. They will always have this skepticism. Makwerere type; gets the same but perhaps different personalities, but the way they want things done is more or less the same.

The UNITA/SWAPO connection; well, did Mbulunganga tell you that he fought the MPLA? Yah! I knew Mbulunganga myself since when I was a child and he used to work for the Missionaries at Onandjokwe. He used to look after their cattle and he used to have cattle posts near our village. I was surprised when I found him in Zambia, and I thought, “How did he come here?”

You must continue with the story of UNITA, though. It is concrete and it is kind of a reality you should know, that those in days to cross from Zambia through that area which used to be called Cuando-cubango, or something like that, it was only UNITA who knew those areas. It was only UNITA who knew those areas before coming down to Bwabwata, in western Caprivi. MPLA was at that time positioned more in the North. Most of the UNITA forces were Bantu speaking, and Bantus and Vambos are not far from each other; so you had to combine all these things.

When Savimbi left his organization, SWAPO decided to assist him and sent him to China or wherever he went because of such kind of consideration that these people will assist us to cross from Angola into Namibia. These people were considered to have certain abilities – some cultural links of sorts. So at that time it was not a marriage of convenience, but it was a pragmatic move- that if you want to do something somehow you have to have a way to do it – we wanted to get through Angola and we had to find a way to do it. Unfortunately we had not analyzed the politics of Angola well because the only person who was recognized there was the late Kaluena, because he was ideologically driven. But well, we had other comrades who were pragmatic people who just wanted to do things.

## Ankama, Vitalis

*Vitalis Ankama was born on 30th March 1947, in Ombalala. He had his early education in his area and moved to Dobra to continue with his education. During the time he was going to school there was a lot of harassment of local people by the colonial administration and he explains how they were being arrested just to be intimidated. His political awareness came during that time through reading papers and talking to some SWAPO leaders in Windhoek. In 1965 he managed to cross the border into Botswana, where he stayed until he went to Zambia in 1967 and continued with his education at the Nkumbi International College, He took a course as a Laboratory Technician, practiced for some time. He studied for a Bachelor of Science Degree and went to teach in Nyango; then he took over Sumbe Centre in Angola, from the time it started, and later became the principal. He was there from 1981 to 1987, and he taught vocational training courses. He was later moved to the party headquarters in Luanda where he worked as an assistant Secretary General until his return to Namibia. His team was among the first to cross back into Namibia on 3rd May, 1989.*

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I am Vitalis Ankama. I was born on 30th March 1947, in a village called Ombalala, just half way between OshIkuku and Okatana, on the eastern road to Endola. I grew up at home and attended the nearest school called Hamiti, a Catholic Church school that was there. The highest grade was standard one, In terms of our current set up must be at the level of grade two, I stayed In standard one I believe for four years, two of which I was a child teacher, teaching the ones who were In sub A and B, I had that advantage that we had sub standard A and B before standard one.

In 1958, I left the north and came to Dobra to continue with my education, starting with standard two. When we wrote standard six, we were three and apparently there was just two good results; we were told that we could not go to seven A, so we jumped one grade to seven B. One of them was doctor Hochobeb who is still here, and he is a medical practitioner, and the other one was the former Judge President, Peo Teek, those were class mates. When we were finishing grade ten (10) which was then standard eight, the system was selective and the Bantu education was then coming in. There was a conflict between the Bantu administration and the Catholic Church. The church wanted to continue with the cape education but the South African administration of that time threatened, and In fact cut off subsidy, unless they took on the Bantu Education. They even advised the church that people like me should not continue to standard ten. Maybe it was because I was one of those collecting SWAPO cards from Comrade Ya Otto and others, and selling them to my fellow students.

Well, during our time as a colonial administration was now getting effect, we all got affected. At the time of my birth in the north the only presence of colonial administration was the so called Bantu Sarke Commissars, who stayed basically In Ondangwa and he went nowhere. We only heard about him from the people who went on contract; the rest of the people who lived In the surrounding areas had no contact, and they were not touched by whatever that went on In the Bantu administration,

because they led their lives. But as the administration wanted to have more control, everywhere you went people were harassed and troubled.

This started especially at the time we came to Dobra. Whenever we came to Windhoek for weekends, as the school was not far, we wanted to walk, but we were often arrested. There was a policeman called Jacob and another one called Janief; these were known as the naughty ones, and besides, they had been given a directive that blacks should not be seen roaming the town after a certain time, but we were there.

One such incident was that in 1962 we lived in the convent; there were friends who were working there, and we often went there because we belonged to the same church anyway, so Jacob caught us somewhere around the Independence Avenue; we were three and we were thrown into the *backie*. Before that Jacob stopped the car, he did not really do anything, he did not even talk. He had his black policeman and

unfortunately when I came back this fellow had died. I just wanted to talk to him whether he was normal or he was pleasing the master, As soon as the car stopped he jumped out, and the one nearest to him got a slap. Then we would push each other and he would start acting like a mediator telling them to stop and just pushed them into the cars. Unfortunately it seemed that his children were also In exile. This guy

was related to the Nakatanas and the Benzes. In any case, we were kept at the *backie* the whole time, until they found other kids. The moment they found other children we were pushed out and it did not matter where or what time it was that they pushed us out, in order to get a new group in. It was not really an Issue of us being charged or whatever, it was just a way of intimidating us so that we would not dare to walk in a white area In the night. So when we were thrown out we would walk to the compound to look for our families and if we were unlucky and they find you, they could still take you and throw you out again. Sometimes Jan came in to our school, but we felt that it was our premises and he had no right to come and harass us in the school. He did not have any good reason for coming Into the school but he said he was coming to look for people who were around illegally, but of course during that time there were no ID's, we were only given passes which were used when visiting the white areas. So we almost beat him up and he left with his team threatening that he is going to retaliate. Throwing us into the vans was typical harassment, we thought they were going to drive us where we wanted to go, but we were just driven around town, everywhere,

until we found other loiterers to replace us in the van.

My political awareness came through at the time I was at Debrah, because while at we were there we had access to newspapers. I was buying Suide West Afrikaner and practically I was buying all those copies and I was even keeping them, but unfortunately by the time I came they said my boxes containing those papers got dusty and could not be kept for long without proper care. I had kept them because there were nasty Incidences in there. If you have heard of the certain Norte who use to kill the contract workers and cook them for pigs; but luckily enough the whites were the ones who were eating the pigs, so they were actually being fed on meat from

murdered black men, through the pigs. They sentenced the white man simply because he made them eat the meat of black men.

It was in the direction of Outjo where this farmer used to recruit as many workers as he could. If one of the workers misbehaved he killed him and asked the other workers to cook him. This went on until one of the workers who escaped reported the matter; and even when the police went there they found some human meat in a pot. He admitted that he was cooking the meat for his pigs, but we all know that during that you and I did not have money to buy pork; it was only the whites who could afford that. He was taken to court and he just got a light sentence; I cannot even remember what it was, but it was ridiculous. The story was in the newspapers of the early sixties around 1963, it was in all newspapers. The farmer was called Charles Norte.

When we came to Windhoek some of us had a habit of going to see John ya Otto, Jaison Mutumbulwa and David Meroro to look for help because they were the SWAPO leaders. We were already attending political meetings organized by them. The first meeting was in 1962, but the one that impressed me was the second one when Comrade Pohamba returned to organize that meeting, at Iipanda. It was Pohamba and one of the Ithetes who addressed that meeting.

It was opened during that time because the Afrikaner rule did not have any influence out there; we were free to talk and there were no agenda. The issue of agenda came later after Ongulumbashe. Leo Shopala, who was a very fluent speaker, was also there; he was shot by a former head of Ukwambi, Jack Ashipala. The meeting went on quite well for about two hours and each one took turns to speak, but Pohamba spoke in terms of his experience, and what he had seen, but also people were encouraged to join those who were going out. I only recall that he gave us the impression that if one succeeds to join there were all the opportunities to go out.

I did not go at that time. It was in nineteen sixty four; I wanted to go, but my friend David Kaadhila, he is now late; he just jumped the queue, because he wanted to go first. They caught him and tortured him; even Raphael had gone, and they caught him when he entered in Botswana. So eventually I realized that I wanted to finish my grade 10 in order to go to University. But then since the system had changed, and It was not going to allow me to continue, I decided to go and pick up the principle of our school. We were only supposed to be two, but at Ondangwa Comrade Ya Toivo, it was not like he was going to deny me information, he put up a condition that if I was not going to take that dead body, then I would have to find my own way of getting information of how to get there, but luckily all the people we took came back and they are arrived safely. I lost no body during my mission. I had planned that mission at Debrah.

My teacher came in coincidentally because of Ya Toivo and Asser Mudhika, who was a former director of mines. The other person I had in mind was Sheehama Shilumbu because our fathers were very close and they used to go to southern lodetia it was Sheehama Shilumbu, there was no negotiation, and we left the school without the knowledge of the principle. If you have heard of Oluwingi, Oluwingi is coming

from Livingstone; people going through there some of them will go up to South Africa, so our fathers use to go there.

We went to his shop at Ondangwa where he was running the SWAPO, to be briefed before we could go. We agreed to take along the third person who was Kanana Hishono, who gave us the route that we should take which was Oshigambo, through Ehnana, and the one through Elondo ya Kanyandi, through Nkurenkuru, Rundu and to Shakawe on the border with Botswana.

We all walked on foot, although we wanted to go with our bicycles because all the three of us had them, but Ya Toivo and Kanana felt that it would have been too obvious that something was wrong. We were not allowed to take them so we just left them, intending to take them back to our homes, which they did. That was in 1965. My fear was never to risk getting arrested because many people were being arrested, and I think they were taking the risk. We were almost arrested and we thought of picking up a fight, but eventually the Boers messed up, and the Botswana police chased them away. We had a detailed map from which we could see, even if there is a little turn. So every time we reached such points, we cut off the parts we had covered, so that even if we were caught nobody could tell where we came from. I bought the map in Windhoek, because we needed it so that we were properly guided and so that we could estimate the correct distance, between points.

We carried only our basic clothing and some food, but food we mainly depended on some of the communities around; after all it was during the rainy season and people were working, so we helped them with work and got food to continue. By the time we reached the first village in Kavango, it was about 21h30, but luckily we did not see wild animals; we could only see their foot prints, but anyway, who cared about the animals we had our own mission we had nothing to do with them and luckily we did not collide with any one, so we went and slept. However we cheated. We said it was quite tough WENELA thing which used to recruit, so we joined in as if we were going to the mines and when we got to Rundu we jumped out at the camps and we walked around the camps waiting for the sun to go down, to continue walking on the road to Botswana. We walked at night and slept during the day, and it was raining, which was good because there were no foot marks; so even when we came to the border of Botswana, we knew there was police, and so we waited until the time that heaviest rain was falling in the night. But I don't know who it was amongst us, but somebody crashed on the chain, and so we had to run; luckily even if they used a torch, it was raining so heavily that they could not see us.

We had to walk for between eight and ten days. We made a mistake when we reached Shakawe and it was at night; we agreed I was going to stay behind with our stuff, somewhere outside, while they go and scout in the town to try and find a safe place. They came back, and according to what they said, they had found a safe place; so we just sat down and because we were so tired, we fell asleep. The next thing people were waking us up! We should have slept in the bush because people went to call the police and told them that there were people sleeping there. So the police came and

took us to their office, and apparently the South African police normally patrolled the area. In any case it was so very near, so they came and I don't know whether they were called or not. it was one white and two blacks and only the white was active. The SA police was making up stories that he came with the instruction of our parents to come and take us, and the Tsuana head of office was actually believing In the story and we said no, the fellow did not know our parents, our destination was Tanzania, and we were not going to board his car, may be our dead bodies. The head felt he wanted to do courtesy for the fellow police officers who came to visit, so as soon as he went to make tea for them, I told them that, the fellow was not going to drink from the cup which he believed you were using. So, as soon as the head went to order tea, I jumped into his sit, and I told them again that when their chief came, he was not going to stand up because he saw them all as CAVALS. He did exactly what I predicted, when the cup was brought he pushed it away, and he never stood up. I asked them, "What did I tell you?" The police turned against them, and they even offered to help us to continue with our trip, by helping us board an EVEKO. We organized ourselves, and we were charged about twenty Rand, which was not a big amount of money that we were being asked, so we went to Francistown. We had to find a way of escaping and then look for the *White House* because we knew we had an office there. We went to comrade Gideon Kasheta; Maxton had just left for Zambia when we got there.

The place was called White House because It was a house for the refugees and it was white in colour; it was a big place. We stayed there until February 1967, and then we flew to Zambia to attend school. We got placement at Nkumbi International College. I had completed my secondary education, so I started with standard nine; and at that time there were all levels. When I finished I went to EVERYNHON COLLEGE

In Lusaka. Since I wanted to be a technician, I took Laboratory Science Technology.

I completed Nkumbi in 1968; I only needed two years because I had already finished my standard eight. In 1972 after I completed my training, I went for practice in Zambia Institute of Technology. I did not stay there for long; I wanted to leave because people at the institute what it meant to study to be a Lab Technician; they thought a Lab Technician was someone to mix chemicals for their experiments; so I applied to the OU for a scholarship and got a scholarship to go to Makerere University, where I took a degree of Bachelor of Science. I completed in 1975 and when I came back we lived at Old Farm, where I was a teacher while Nahas was the principal; and when we moved to Nyango, Helmut became the principal.

There were crazy people, but anyway, people who did not understand lived with fear like the late Danger Haukongo being misled by idiots like David Shikangala, who is also late. You know what? A plane passed over and they simply thought that the plane had landed in the bush. If we asked how on earth can a plane land In the bush, they will go like, "You people think you are educated?" And so on. We had another stupid teacher, I will call him stupid because he joined the others, he is the late Hamutumbangela; unfortunately all the people who used to do stupid things are late. He used to side with others and said he had seen it in America, its true its possible for

the plane to land there, we practically isolated him because people were sent out to go and hide in the bush, and anyway this created fear among people.

There was an old Caprivi woman who we used to call Nashimbandule. In their tradition, be it a man or a woman, at night they remained naked. Sometimes they could make a mistake and go to the bush to help themselves because we did not have proper toilets or homes. So these fools practically interpreted it as witchcraft, and as such thoughts invaded their minds, they started thinking that they were being strangled while sleeping. Again Hamutumbangela joined them by saying that he was also strangled, and at the parade we almost fought, because Haukongo's gang caught the Caprivan women tied them, and started torturing them; apparently they thought they were torturing the witch craft. This moved some members such as the Helmut, who went to report the Incident but then the party decided remove him from there, and I was later the principal. This issue of Nashimbandule was never resolved, but eventually the leadership had to remove Danger Haukongo, and replace him with France Kapofi, after that we had a very good environment and administration. I was only responsible for the school while Kapofi was responsible for the camps in general; he found me there and we worked together very well. We had a very good set up and by the time I left it was like a town.

Maybe in Uganda it was tougher because we went there at the time when Idi Amin just took over power. We lived there during the period of dancing with the crocodiles. It was in the news media because Amin's people killed anybody and dumped them in Lake Victoria, and while the bodies were floating, another person wrote that the bodies were dancing with the crocodiles.

In Kampala during that time, anywhere we went we were likely to find a dead body and someone could not even pick up his brother's body because they feared that since they did not know who killed him, the same people might come to them. So, many Ugandans lived in fear and could not even move out of their homes or even out of the campus, but some of us, I don't know whether we were sick, because at night we were at night clubs jumping on dead bodies, but who cared? We did not even know them. There were two of us, I and this fellow who had left with Riruako, Werner Mamuhe, he died three or four years ago here at home. Then there was John Norbell; he was not in the university but he was married to a Ugandan woman; his children were here, but I don't see them anymore, maybe they have gone back to Uganda.

The challenges I had included finding schools for the children who finished at Nyango. We normally had scholarships from UNHCR, but sometimes I had to go to West African countries and speak to their leaders, even their Presidents and appeal to them, so that we could get admissions for our students.

The top five countries among those that helped us were Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria. But we had students in many other places like Senegal and Tokyo; even if the schools we got were at the furthest village, one had to go.

Another challenge that we faced was discipline; but we solved it. We had the students elect a team leader; even for the physical work that we were doing, each team

had a leader and an assistant; so the people monitored everything for themselves. The physical work included building class rooms, offices, and homes.

The most memorable time during the struggle for me, it was may be the time I was In Sumbe, I had to build up the UN Vocational Center for Namibia, replacing Joe Ithana, who was blackmailed by the Intelligence offices in 1981. I was a bit delayed because we were involved in a car accident with Kalenga in 1980, and Kalenga died. He had come rushing to pick me up, so that we could go to Angola, for me to take control of a center that I had to build. We had a tyre burst; the driver panicked and lost control. We overturned and hit a tree and we were saved; that happened nine kilometers before we reached our destination. We turned back and took the body for burial.

I took over Sumbe and from 1981 to 1987, I taught the vocational training courses. We got most of our support from the UN; there was a fund for the Council for Namibia.

May be being a freedom fighter has helped me living a life, where you are facing an enemy. It actually becomes liberating in terms of fear. Even the seniors did not like my driving. I had to drive to Lubango to collect weapons with just one truck. The weapons were to guide and protect our camps. Passing through Kandjara, was a risk as we always found dead bodies; but eventually the problem was solved when soldiers were placed there. I had a driver called France Bolla, he was a man, because no matter

how far or critical the place was, he said, "Don't worry, we will go."

In preparation for coming home I was appointed to be the Assistant Secretary General at the party head office in Luanda that was in November 1987; I was responsible for administration while Moses, the Secretary General, was dealing with political issues.

In exile they had one unifying factor, in the sense that people had just one common enemy, and they had lost their identities in terms of ethnic groupings. The liberation struggle had nothing to do with which ethnic group you came from, it was only the question of what you did and what you did not do. But now we have lost that and it hurts me a lot. Life In exile brings back good memories In terms of various achievements, but unfortunately I have not gone back to Sumbe to see whether they still make use of the place, and under what condition it is. I left it in the government's hands, and it was fully furnished. We couldn't take a thing because the Angolans lost more lives than we did.

On 1st April, 1989, our soldiers just crossed the border into Namibia and they were slaughtered; and on the 3rd May 1989, I had to go in. I was told to form a team and I selected, Anna Amukoto, because we needed to include a woman. We also selected Mathew Katanga because he was a builder; and we took Reverend Nadanga, because there were Christians in Namibia. The UNHCR also wanted someone to represent the refugees, but I don't remember who was chosen. We took the plane and Hartisali was already here when we landed. We had a program to meet with Bishop Dumeni and other CCN leaders, and a schedule was made for us to go to many places such as Engela, Ondangwa, that was where we held the big meetings.

Pinaar wanted to have a meeting with me, but I simply decided that Pinaar might have wanted to have a meeting with me, and then go to misinterpret what I had said and confuse the people. So I said that was not on my program. He went through Martti Ahtisaari, but I also told him that the meeting was not in my programme.

Thank You.

## Auala, James

*Brigadier General James Auala joined the struggle at an early age. After undergoing military training in Zambia he rose through the ranks of the military wing of SWAPO, PLAN. He participated in many battles both in Zambia and Angola. As chief of Reconnaissance and intelligence, he was the eyes and ears of PLAN. Upon returning to Namibia, he joined the Namibian Defence Force where again rose to the rank of Brigadier General.*

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Thank you very much. As you refer to me I am James Auala. In fact I joined SWAPO in 1972 in Windhoek. Already by 1968 as a student at Oshigambo High School I used to participate in SWAPO Youth programs and, of course ending up in demonstrations against the administration in Ondangwa, joint demonstrations by the students in Ongwediva, Odibo and those high schools in Ovambo.

When I finished high school I come to Windhoek and I joined SWAPO and I got a membership card. It was in Windhoek where I lived and got actively involved in SWAPO. I stayed in Donkerhoek there in Katutura and, support for SWAPO very strong. Leading members included old Namalambo, Axel Johanes, and Theo Asino.

The meetings were always held around Namalabo's house. Ahh, as the situation was getting worse following the 1971 strikes that hit industries and the whole country, people were becoming more political. The colonial forces were trying to be fierce by harassing people unnecessarily anytime, day, night and throughout the day. Our area Donkerhoek was once such a notorious place that they were always there. I remember there was a time when we were holding a meeting at night. They came and started to shoot at the people and they killed a youth, Benjamin Ekanjjo. He was a SWAPO youth boy.

As I was working at the South African Broadcasting Corporation as an announcer I remember whenever I was interpreting news from Afrikaans to Oshivambo - because I was an Oshivambo announcer, I was interpreted correctly but always altered contents on the original copy with pen because the correct one was understood to be in Afrikaans News. I didn't know that when you speak there is another machine. I don't know what they called it. It was monitoring everything that was read through and they were keeping it there. I remember one of the announcers was Hangula. He was more senior and was with the other side. He was with the Directors who were the South African White chiefs.

One day I was called and stopped reading the news. This was in Windhoek, and they asked me why I was always altering news? And they said negative, negative. But I said I was always reading news and you can always check the copies of my translations. They said yes, you are always interpreting correctly and all right and your Afrikaans is good and its fine but what you are reading is not what you have written.

Then I said no I was just reading what I wrote, so they took me to the Director's room. He was by then the director of SABC and SABC Namibia, and Onno. So they put on that tape and I was recorded saying "as they are saying and as they are trying to say" the entire double thing now that I was adding.

Whenever there is something about SWAPO I said yahh, “according to them”, and “as they are trying to say” and he said “who are they that you are saying” and I said, “No this is a way of speaking Oshivanbo.” He said I never said that. So I was warned. One day on 12 August 1973 I attended a rally. That rally was the one that lead to Comrade Jerry Ekanjo, Joseph Kashea and Jacob – somebody I cannot remember the surname, those were picked up and were taken to Robben Island afterwards just immediately after Jerry Ekanjo’s pronouncement when he said “once Namibia was liberated the Boers will be thrown into the sea”. When he said so the whole meeting was dispersed and the people were butchered, they were butchered and they were beaten up because it was this organization type of meeting that the youth were conducting across the country.

Unfortunately somebody spotted me around the people who were on the ground at the rally. At work I was called again: “This is your last warning. If we hear again that you are involved in these things you are checked out and you can go to jail”. So I said but I have done nothing wrong.

And there was a meeting organized to go to Rehoboth. That was January 1974, that is the origin of that song (He sings the song). When we were going to the High Court to get the right to conduct the rally we got arrested between Windhoek and Avis. And we were all taken back and we were jailed for one month, that whole January. We were arrested, because, apparently we were going there without a permit. Now when I went back to work I was then asked “Did we not tell you not to participate?” I said, “You did, but I was just going to Rehoboth. I was not participating.” The argument went on.

I then realised that it was getting tougher and tougher even though I was not really a leader at any level that time. I was just a supporter. I was already grown up and these things we had started doing during school days. Even during the International Court of Justice when they pronounced South Africa to be illegal in Namibia and, during those days we were able to understand and follow the meaning. That was 1974 after the fall of the government in Portugal in April.

We understood that the route to Zambia was no more as difficult as it used to be. There were a number of us including comrades Kashea and Makopa. We had planned to go through Botswana in 1973 and we agreed to meet at a particular place. Either we went there at a wrong time because it did not materialise and Nashilongo Taapopi suggested that we had to go through Botswana. That was in 1973. Now, because there was so much harassment that the Police were imposing on us, the majority of people were leaving the country through that point to the extent that it was watched properly and frequently.

There are people who do not know that Comrade Johanness had a half ear. His ear got damaged by a petrol drum when they were traveling in a land rover through Botswana. They had an accident and the car over turned and the drum hit him. He was very lucky for the drum not hitting him and killing him. He was just lucky that the drum scratched him like that and didn’t kill him. That is how his ear got cut.

In 1974 after the changes in Angola we decided to leave. We were also neighbours with the Ya Ottos and Ya Otto had left earlier that May I think. The other group left in June and, we left in July. But we met with some of those who left in June. We left through Windhoek, Oshivero Engela which is up there and, through to Namakunde in Angola now. We were a small group. I think we were 12. At first we were 10 and we found two other people in Namakunde.

We left through Ongiva. When we arrived in Ongiva it was on a Sunday and it was the first time seeing a black person entering a restaurant, seating and eating there with our adversaries. We went in there to eat. It was interesting because when you get served with soup you thought it was everything. You say give me another one and, then another soup. By the time the main course is served you are already full with soup.

The first group went through Santa Bandeira which is Lubango today. They left earlier than us. We had to wait until Monday morning but we were no longer going through Lubango. We were to go through the other route that came to be known later as the ingu road. We went through Kapango, to Kasinga then straight to Huambo. We left on a Monday and we arrived on a Tuesday in Huambo. We were taken to some place that used to be a school, but it was used by the UN, I think the UN High Commission for Refugees to keep people there. We then proceeded through to Lwena with trucks to the Border of Angola and Zambia to be ferried by the Comrade Daniel. Were we all assembled and we started to be ferried across the river. That took us about 2 days because we were a group of 169 youth. We happened to be going to Kalabo which is now a town in Zambia. We then walked for three days from the border to Kalabo.

I would not bother myself really with what happened on the road going there because it was just normal. People getting tired, carrying each other, and that's a normal way of moving. For those of us who were already grown up ; I was 26 by then and it was not really a big problem walking such a distance. From Kalabo we were taken by SWAPO trucks. That was the first time that we were getting into proper SWAPO hands. SWAPO trucks were led by the late Maxton Joseph Mtongolome. We were taken to a new camp called Oshatotwa in Western Zambia. We were the second group to arrive at that place. The gentle man who was in the so called office registering people who were arriving happened to be Mr Eddie Amukongo who happened to be from the first group. The group was supposed to be going to Maheba to become proper refugees. However, SWAPO had to go and tell the Zambians that no, those are freedom fighters not ordinary refugees. So Amukongo happened to be there. When he checked the list he found my name and, we knew each other. He then called my name, James Auala, James Auala and when I heard him I rushed and I found him. I was young then. He then asked me to help him register the people. He did, and I was registering the group that I came with.

This is how I started getting in. The next time we were given areas where to stay. I remember the second day while we were washing in the pool, boys on one side and girls the other side. I got called that I should go to the parade. The parade was where the people were gathering and you are told to do one thing or another.

I remember comrade Patrick. He spoke in English but everybody was Oshiwambo speaking there. Oshiheroero speaking were very few, and I remember 2 and other Damara speaking, but 95 to 99 % were Oshiwambo speaking. I was now charged with interpreting from English to Oshiwambo and that is how I got my foot into the Administration area.

Later on I was put in the platoon as people started coming in and, as the numbers were growing there was need to establish another camp next to that one. So those who came after September and October were taken to that camp number 2. I was charged with receiving people and keeping people's money. Upon your arrival if you had with you 300 Namibian dollars which was South African Rand by then, you had to register at the office and I would enter the name, the amount and everything else that people thought were sensitive to keep with them. People began placing orders when they wanted to buy something. So I was doing that as well with the assistance of Maggie who was a young lady by then. The two of us used to go with the commanders to Sinanga in Zambia to buy the products. I then had to distribute the items after returning to the camp.

Something happened earlier after our basic training. We decided not to opt to going to schools for further studies. We thought that we were enlightened enough and we wanted just to go and fight. We proclaimed that at the parade informing the commanders that we don't want to go for further training all we wanted was to get armed. We appreciated the training that we were getting knowing how to assemble and dismantle the weapons and how to aim and how to take cover.

We thought that was basic enough for us and we should go and fight and learn in the process because the taste of the pudding is in the eating. So it was a big thing and the commanders were saying no you should not rush. Just accept what we are telling you and listen to us. There will be a time when we will go to the front. But we could not reason. I remember Eddie Amukongo was the one who was ahead of this and he was the spokesperson for the group.

At that point we got sorted out. Those who appeared to be grown up were the ones who could go. We were 150 men. 100 had to go to Angola straight away. That was in November '74. The rest, who were 50, had to remain in Zambia. This meant that the commanders were planning to conduct special training for these people.

I could not join the other people going to Angola because I had the responsibility of the money that I had to sort out and, I could not just disappear. We argued about that with the late Mac Namara. I said that I could do that within a day and then join the others along but he said no. So I remained and others went.

I remained with the group of 50. When the 50 left for a place called Munyangani I again remained because of those commitments. After they were sorted out, there was

a group of girls and myself. We were only two with Penda Nashandi. Penda was also going to become a mechanic at the Base where we were to go. I was with some other two ladies. The girls were five altogether. We went to Nyangani to prepare for special training. Then we joined the rest and we did the training.

The “baptism of fire” was in April of 1975. This was the first time those people who remained and those of us who were in Nyangani went together to the front, to the eastern front to attack Kamenga. That is the day when we used various special weapons. That was baptism of fire and that was followed by so many other battles. I was in the group of reconnaissance. I was not a commander but I was kind of. May be say commissar. I was given this responsibility by the late Greenwell Matongo who was by that time the Commander of the reconnaissance in his capacity because there were no proper structures by then and he was overall in control of that side of Zambia.

He gave me a radio so that I could listen to the news both regional and overseas so that I could interpret to others but only to the reconnaissance group. The reconnaissance was always out and away from the others. We went up the river, the Kwandu River to establish a Base in Angola just on the outside for us to pave the way to Kavango and those areas. That we did and the main body joined us. In 1975 we led ambushes along the Bwabwata and those areas west of Caprivi.

There is one incident that I remember, I was there and I had become an acting Commander of the reconnaissance because our commander fell sick and went back to the rear, but he was to join us later. Some people fell sick while we were there because we stayed at that area for almost 5 days, going to the ambush area in the morning very early and coming back in the afternoon to sleep somewhere far. It was like that and some people fell sick.

I had to escort these people back. On that day when I was away the patrol came and attacked them and, as I was coming back, I met with them. Kaapanda then said some people had not reported at the assembly point. So I should go back to the assembly point to find out whether there was any casualty. I went there to find that the patrol there was attacked with its contents and it was just left intact and the group that was supposed to do the attack did not manage to do much so we went there and overturned the car and set it on fire. We took the maps. We were only four now. That was the time when they started to sing one of the revolutionary songs on this incident. We took those maps back and now that was the beginning of a fierce encounter along that river in south eastern Angola.

There were a number of battles. Other ones were just launched from a distance. The close encounters like the first one which I called the baptism of fire, we moved around and it was now apparently the same time that the South African Forces were coming from Bagani going along that route to prevent the government of NPLA from coming to power.

We did not understand when many trucks and a number of South African troops were coming into the area. By then I had become the Detachment Commander of

reconnaissance. That happened in August. Before the end of the year I was the regional Commander of reconnaissance in that eastern region according to our fronts.

I was then tasked to come back from Angola to Zambia and to join the Zambian forces that were patrolling along the Kwandu River, East-West to monitor the movement of the South African troops across the river. Because we did not understand the idea of them blocking that side, we thought that they were going to come back through the other side to Kalabo and come inside through the Zambezi. We stayed there for two weeks, and we realized that they were going far deeper into Angola.

On the Political side in Lusaka they knew what was happening. There was no proper communication at that time. The Zambian government was under threat because of harbouring us and giving South Africa problems. However, before that happened came 1976 when we were tasked again to go and operate from Kavango direction. We were having two detachments at the time: Detachment B to which I belonged, and Detachment A. Detachment A was the one which was tasked to go to Kavango.

The incident of the Shipanga group, let me call it that way because I will be understood that way I think I know it will hurt other people because its politics but this is how it was known. When we came back from the direction we had taken when the Boers were crossing, of course we fought so many battles and we lost some people. Some people were saying that we did not have enough ammunition and other sophisticated weapons. To me it was a question of reorganization and properly informing people. It had to be understood one should not rush into the wars, but should get prepared. It was also a matter of mental preparation. As it happened later the people were being attacked in a normal war situation and they were handling it accordingly.

When we were now requested to come back to Zambia, I was the one who was tasked to lead the team back to Imusho, the last small village in Zambia to the East. We went there with a truck at night. In the morning I called a parade. I was now an instructor and, I said "Comrades we are here to cross back into Angola and our mission is to go and establish where we can have water far away from the river and once that is done we have to come back, so that the main group follows us." Somebody hit a boot as a sign to draw your attention and I said, "Yes?" He said "We are not going to cross the river unless we are given new arms." Then I said, "No. The same arms we are having are the same arms that our enemy has." Then he said, "No. Unless it is your mother going, not us." I understood the temper already because it had already been organized and agreed on before we got there.

So I had to go back and leaving them there. I went with the truck and the driver and reported what was happening to the commander. The truck was sent to go and collect them so that the commanders could talk to the people. They were now opening up and saying they were not going to go across the river unless they were given new Bazookas and new weapons.

That was the main thing that they were saying. Others were saying people who used to go to Lusaka to collect reading glasses and to attend to other health problems

might have come in contact with people who might have been able to mobilize them but that remained to be proven. People refused to go to the front, and we broke into two groups. The group that was listening to the commanders and, the other one that was saying they would not go unless they were given what they wanted.

I was with the group that was obeying, because I had become a commander by then already although we were at the front. So we were kept in Zambia and the Zambians had to come and tell us that we had to be moved back to Oshatotwa to be disarmed. In 1976 we were now that small group of ours who were tasked to go and follow Detachment A to come back and we had to break into that war and try and find them. We did, and we brought them back to Zambia. There were fears that, the other group that was saying they were not going to do this or that might one day attack the remaining forces, because they were the majority military wise, but not in numbers. That was why the commanders were saying the others should come back because they did not know what these others were up to.

These people were taken back by the leadership, deep into Zambia to Mboroma, and we had to do the reorganization of PLAN. In April 1976 I was appointed as Deputy Chief Intelligence and Reconnaissance at PLAN level.

This is how I started climbing up. I don't know if it was too much and too fast. My task was to do reconnaissance, that was to detect where the enemies were, predict or guess what the enemy was planning and, to see what were the other people doing.

And I was now deputized by the late Issac Shikongo known as Pondo who was at that time on the other side of Angola. As I went to Zambia it was only Solomon Hawala who was the overall commander of the Eastern front. At that instance I was assisting him with that post of mine.

I happened to be at the parade at that time and I had to take an oath with the flag and a pledge to SWAPO. To me it was an achievement. I was not sure that I would be able to do so but, as it happened there we went. We then got attacked by the South African troops at Oshatotwa, I think in July of 1976. I have read somewhere people talking about 200 killed and others captured and it was false. It was stupid and false for that matter, Sorry, we lost people but I have no figure and I am sorry to say so but the number was less than 50. I know there is a number somewhere in SWAPO archives and, there was no single individual captured. What happened was, I happened to be the first to get to the Zambian position where our arms were and a small group of people. I remember Comrade Philip Nambuli and some other colleagues went with me. As soon as we got the arms we went back to counter attack the attackers who had attacked camp number 2.

Those of us who came from the front were all positioned at number 2. As we were coming from the other side because they spent time planting mines knowing that we would be moving around there. The mines really got to some of our people. As we were coming from the south western direction, people were running away in the direction of north- west and the helicopter was then arriving close to them and we were literally chasing them. They ran and got into the helicopter and they took off.

Now you could not understand how people could have been captured. Perhaps they were running and how could they run, or could they be running together? So people should not be lied to. So that is what happened and it was very unfortunate.

We moved from there and established another base. The fighting from that angle was seriously reduced because of the pressure by South Africans on the Zambian government.

I went to school in 1978 to do more security related studies in the Soviet Union. I happened to be the head of the group. We came back and I was given an opportunity to tour the fronts in Angola and by then the western front was in establishment after the attack on Vietnam. This was when it was attacked together with Kassinga in 1978 but the tour was at the end of the year. We went to the north eastern front just to visit the commanders there and to see what they were doing and went across to the Detachments to see how they were mobilizing. Later, on 31 December 1978 I was recalled again because Solomon, Commander Hawala had to go for treatment of an eye problem in Tanzania. So I had to go to the fronts to be in charge and, to take care of the front. I arrived there and I remember Comrade Nujoma was arriving from a meeting in Tanzania. We stayed in the same house in Lusaka. It was him, Nambinga and Mario. Mario was keeping the house, Nambinga was always moving with the old man. Now, in the evening we were almost dozing and he was saying we should not fall asleep but we should carry on singing so that we cross over to 1979 with joy, as during the new year we would be liberating our country. It happened that way and I went back hoping that they proceeded back to Angola.

I stayed in Zambia till the end of 1979. It was also decided by the SWAPO leadership that we should now constitute or form a proper command structure of PLAN and not to have some splinters in Zambia and others in Angola, but rather have a unified structure with the headquarters in Angola. It was after this decision that Commander Hawala and I had to join others in Angola.

The development of PLAN structures was on going. I mentioned before, from the group of the youngsters as we were being referred to at the time, those who come to reinforce the others in 1974. In 1976 I was the first to be promoted to the PLAN command level, as I told you. In 1979 I automatically become a member of the military council and of the planning steering committee. They called it a planning committee at that time. I became automatically a member of that although the planning committee never met. However, the military council started meeting when we went to Angola.

At a military council meeting of July 1979 is when Comrade Ho Chi Minh Ndaunamoloh was appointed as chief of staff of PLAN, and the late Tauno Hatwiikulipi took over as PLAN Commissar after comrade Greenwell Matongo in June the following year. From there on we formed our permanent structures. Dimo had two commanders, three deputies. There were two left with after the one who was sacrificed in Casinga. So Hawala became the deputy commander of PLAN and Comrade Patrick Iyambo was given some other responsibilities.

Comrade Shali joined in later in September 1980 as part of the PLAN operations and still that was in the next meeting that they appointed him as such. Although he has been in operation at the regional level, he was now appointed at the PLAN level. Now I came to join the military leadership. This time it was not only reconnaissance and intelligence but it was security proper including the underground network. Previously those people who used to come to the country to do the underground work were under the command of Pondo and I took over that responsibility. We were together on the other side with the late Patrick Iyambo who was now counter intelligence. I remember that I was requested by the late Nanyemba to attempt to put something on paper about the structure of security of SWAPO, maybe let me say the one of PLAN was not adequate.

I tried to do something together with comrade Kashea That became the basis of the counter intelligence service and intelligence of PLAN. Although it was further modified and amended, it was the basis. And truly whenever there was something to explain on this issue I was consulted. I remember even going with the late Nanyemba to the polit bureau meetings. I stayed outside and when they asked something he got out and asked me and I would explain it and he goes back inside to explain it. Truly speaking that was god given not that we were trained but what you see is not that we were trained but we did something. When you have established this you then have to send people to school. I had that task to select people that I thought might do well in that aspect. People were being sent to train in counter intelligence, proper intelligence and, for underground network.

There were people who were sent to come and do work inside the country. At that time the majority of those had been already prepared by the late Pondo. I was facilitating by receiving people when they were reporting, recording and keeping what they were saying. But when he passed away I took over the whole responsibility. Some cadres were successful, some failed, some were captured and, some after being captured came back. When they came back they were telling stories and of course this was in any liberation movement I think. I may add that I only knew and am familiar with our own situation.

I remember in 1981 I went to Botswana just to understand how it works there because for Botswana there was no weapon carried through. Politics yes, but if you are found with a bullet or with a gun it was ten years straight and no comment and no talk. You go to jail. Now, I could not go into a country without a gun. So I had to bring that. I remember that I was carrying a pistol I then put on a small t-shirt just pretend that I am an ordinary person but I had to go with somebody who was familiar with the place and had been there before.

Comrade Kamedu had just come back and his UN passport had just expired. So we decided that he had to go through behind and to cross through Impalila in the canoe. I was to go through the proper crossing point. That was now Kazungula border post. I went through there with another comrade. I went there by a car and they said that I had to go and be searched. I said, "What searching? You mean this gun will be found

and I am ten years in prison.” I was trying to talk to the man who was the head and saying but what was the need for searching me, while I was putting on a t-shirt and jeans, and where was he going to search? He told me it was just a formality.

I started praying hard and so we went in the tent and I stood and he searched in the legs and he said it was done. I knew from training that if someone started smoking non-stop there was something wrong. Once a person started sweating, he was becoming nervous and something was wrong. So even though I knew about all this before I could not resist when we were coming back. I could not resist. I started smoking and even sweating, but I was already searched, and so I came back, I had succeeded.

Back to the car I drove to Kasane. I knew and I saw the small airport. So I moved around there and I heard that Kamedu was coming from the river. I had gone there first in 1981. This was now 1984 when I decided and told the leadership in Lubango that I had to penetrate through Botswana to come and fight on the Kalahari side. Anyway this front was opened up and some people were airlifted to designated areas. I can still recall when commander Nambahu left for Lusaka. On

August 26 a battle took place at Luyana. It lasted from 11 - 17h00. As the struggle reached its climax, the South Africans were using smoke shells in the 1980's. Several battles took place. Overall PLAN was now better equipped and organized. I was given immense responsibility because as commander I had to move around a lot on intelligence matters and military activities. I had to ensure the protection of our embassies in Tanzania and Zambia. I finally went for further studies and upon returning I became an infantry commander. I can say that I participated in the Lusaka talks in the late 1980's. I did not come together with everyone else in 1989, I stayed behind as there were other issues, especially that of Paulus Tostao which contributed to my detention. I only came back later in 1990 and continued in the army rising to the rank of Brigadier General and I am now with the August 26 Company.

## Black, Stanley

[Windhoek; 28 April 2007]

**This is the son of Stanley the man who transported Sam Nujoma across the border to Botswana when he left the country in the early 1960's. His links to his family in Botswana made him an obvious transporter of freedom fighters leaving the country in the early years. He is currently a farmer and a businessman.**

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Well brother Ben I told you earlier that the boss in this country or the people is not about who I was. I said I have got a white complexion but they thought I was a white man, you know; but unfortunately I don't have any connection with white people.

That comes from my mother's side; the first wars between the Germans and the Tjiherero speaking people happened to be the cause of it all. The English man who comes by ship in Walvis Bay probably had a fight with his chief captain and jumped into the sea and swam till Walvis Bay and he ended up in Okahandja. He married into the Chief Maherero's family; the chief was one of the rulers of this country as one of my great-great grand mother's family. Then came this English man Stanley and married this cross bred Herero/ English girl. He was making his living between the Tjiherero speaking people and the Germans. My great grandfather from my mother's side came from the south with an oxen wagon. This German guy must have fallen in love with this black girl and my grandmother was born. Then came another English man Mr. Black, you know all these Blacks are my brothers, because they are having my mother's surname. He came and he also took this half blood for his wife that is why I am having this complexion, but I am a black man. All my people are black but I happen to have this color.

Then when I was still a youngster, there was the uprising of people during the time of Hosea Kutako. It was in 1957, and they started that uprising and there was a riot which later led to bloodshed. We were organizing things and telling people not to move to these places and asking why they were moving us to places we did not know; these areas were faraway places in the mountains away from everything and away from the shops. People were being dumped here in Katutura, where there was nothing. There were no shops because the place was far away from town. This other place, Hochland Park was close to town and it was a walking range, but now people were t being removed forcefully, and we were against that. I used to operate with a guy called Thomas Bujumbura and Ya Otto.

On the 10th December 1959, there was a riot in which I participated. There were only 10 police men armed with rifles, but there was a big number of black men, and we were so many that we decided we could out-number these guys and take their rifles. But then they went into the office there and it was protected with the burglar bars and stuff. So we went in there and we just moved forward and said get away and we had decided to get these guys but we did not reach the objective we set among ourselves.

There was a lot of confusion sometimes because there were some people who were giving us threats that we were working for the Boers. I don't remember them now but there were these people. But ultimately we decided to do it but as we approached that place they started shooting in the air and we heard the sound of gunshot then we started to run. And as people ran man, they started shooting people like rabbits. Some people were shot maybe 300 to 400 meters away from them, and you find people running away. That was on the 10th December 1959. We had sticks and stones and didn't hurt anybody we were just demonstrating but they still shot at us.

We had to do it because we were being removed forcefully. Now, there was a beer hall at a location. There was this place like an administration station it was protected with this type of thing. People started to run, we had decided that maybe they will shoot two or three of us but we will be so swift that we would take their guns and do our thing so fast; we had decided we were not going to move until we had taken their guns. We knew that they would force us with guns, so we must take the guns. But then they started to shoot in the air and people started to panic.

One of the leaders and organizers was Willy Kaukuetu, and I was among the guys who were organizing, but the top guys were Willy Kaukuetu and others. I don't think he is still alive but he was in exile but then he came back and he died, he went to Sweden.

At that time there was only one or two political parties which were SWANU and OPO. The founding father was also involved with other political leaders. But when we were attacking I didn't take note of this information but I was just organizing; that information was classified. This whole movement and uprising was planned. You had to join forces and there was not a political party that was liberal but all political parties wanted to liberate the country. There was no political party then that was organising this movement of people and there was no division unlike now. There was one common enemy in those days, and that was the oppressor, so whether you were Nama speaking, Oshihehero speaking or Oshiwambo speaking; we were one. We had one common enemy, and we wanted to liberate the country. Unfortunately people were shot point blank.

At the time I was active in SWANU as an organizer, I was with Willy Kaukuetu who was then one of the big guns. Later on, as things developed and as I travelled, I joined SWAPO. I joined SWAPO around 1965 or there about. By then the Founding Father had left in 1962. Before the riot, in 1959 I was called by the then chief who was doing the organizing, that was Hosea Kutako, and he told me to help. We were living more or less in the same area, and he knew that I was traveling between Botswana and Namibia. Some of my relatives had ended up in Botswana so I knew the route to Botswana very well, and at that stage I was young probably sixteen. It must have been in 1958, it must have been before the riots, I know that; and that was when I met the founding president, Chief Hosea Kutako was the one who introduced me to him. He told me that we were going to join the forces, all the oppressed people in this country. Hosea Kutako said that to me. By then the founding father was maybe 24 or 25 years

old then. So we joined the forces and we were doing a good job up north. We had to join forces and we had to take him out of the country. They told me that since I knew Botswana very well and all the roads, I should show them how to get the man, who was their leader out. So that was when we engineered how to take him out.

This was how it was planned: I called my brother who was living in Gobabis and my father's brother was working in Gobabis in the name of Goodwill he was a painter there. As you know there were very few cars and very few people had motor cars those days; which meant that there were very few of them on the road.

They said that this man had a car so we could take him to Gobabis, and then from there we could take him to the border and somebody could collect him on the other side; which happened to be my father who took him to Maun. My father was on the other side so he took him from Maun and then from there he went to Francistown and those days it was by Rhodesian railways and then he went to Dar es Salaam.

These are the stories that I know and some of which I heard. The Gobabis route was the easiest route because the police patrol was not that much in this area. So Nujoma's trip was organized and ultimately we implemented it to take him out. Of course I was not physically on that trip, but I just gave my ideas on how to go about it. At that time there were many people who had gone already; some people had gone before, , but in 1962 or 1961, I was with my first little bakkie that I had bought, and I came into Gobabis and saw one guy who used to work with me and that was a brave son. That guy was a great guy he was brave but I don't see him anywhere in the history of this country. He was a great guy and he was organizing, so I saw him in Gobabis and was he with Joseph Ithana. We used to stay together there and so he said, "So you are the right guy; do you want to go to the border?" I asked him, "What you mean the right guy?" Those days there was no tar, and it was a 130 km in the Trans Kalahari highway. They said that they wanted to go and cross the border and I was to help them by any means.

So I said, "Fine, just wait until it is sunset and I will take you." I had driven until I was about ten kilometres before the police and the border. I did help quite a lot of them to cross the border. I knew the route but I was not organizing to take people; these people just came across somebody who wanted to join the liberation struggle abroad, and I just used to help them to go out. The first thing was of course to do it during the night, because during the day there were police patrols. At day time the police were there on the border patrolling up and down and at night there was none or rather there were no systems.

I also happened to have relatives in Botswana, in a village at the border post here, which used to be called Mamuno, but today there is no police station called Mamuno. This police station used to be here where the Buitepos police station is now, and the road goes something like this, you go to the police station, you go to this side of the border and you go to the Botswana side.

There used to be some members of my families who lived there, just next to the border, I think from the border post or close to the border post. So I used to drop

people there and I said to them, “You go. There is my uncle, he will organize everything for you; he will take you to the police station, and they will help you organize and take you to Gaborone where you will be issued with United Nations passports.” You know that kind of stuff.

Interestingly I was not afraid of being caught at the time. But at one stage I was caught and locked up and that was some time in 1958. I think they wanted me to leave and they said that I should not stay in the location and I had to leave because I was a communist. I said I did not even know what the word communist meant or what are you guys they were saying. So they asked me what was a white man like me doing in the location, and I answered that I was not a white man. According to them I was supposed to be a white man; but I was never caught for getting people out of the country. I was just very lucky.

About the charge for living in the location, the reason was that they saw me with black people in the location and they asked me what I was doing in the location and I answered that I stayed there. Then they said that but I was a white man and I said that was my uncle’s place and I was there with my people. Then they picked me up, and at some point there were four policemen who took me to the police station interrogated me; they asked me what I was doing there and who I was, and why I was there. They told me that I was white and they were going to declare me white, and issue me with papers to that effect, and I had to be a white man from there on. I told them that I did not want to be a white man. To that response they said that I was going to have a good life and they were going to give me this and that. They offered to send me to Durban and to Cape Town and live there; they said that the bottom line was that I was white and I could not stay with those people in the location. So they did that to me all day, and that was the state of things. They did not want me to stay in the black community and they said, “You are a leader; you are not from those people and you are a communist.” I said I did not know that stuff and I did not know what they were talking about. They kept me there until 9 o’clock in the night and at that time no one was allowed into town. If you were seen, you would be arrested, given a trip to the border, dropped there and asked to clear off.

They saw that I was not collaborating and they had no ground to charge me, they had to leave me, and probably they went into the location to investigate the matter. I finally went back to the location because I had to go back to my people, and I am a black man it was just the colour that was white. That was something they would not accept because to them I was something else rather than that.

In the mid 1960’s, before I joined SWAPO, I was a SWANU supporter and I was glad. It was a very good party at that time but it started to disintegrate, it did not perform too well. The only strong leader was Veei, and he was caught and sent to Robben Island and after that there was really not much going on. I had to look for a substitute to change and move things; and things could be driven to a point. So I was just got involved in SWAPO. We would get together in meetings and talk about the liberation struggle, as I told you, with Ya Otto. Later I just took it cool and I did

not want to just help people, and then I got married and returned to these things you know. At the moment I am not in politics I am resigned and I am just cool. I don't want to be caught in politics. Politics nowadays seems to me quite different. I have done quite a lot, and I think now I will just look at what is happening; I have decided to be neutral. I go to anybody whom I think but now I am neutral; now I am cool.

I think a lot was achieved by the actions we did. I don't know whether you know, the people who were living here we were in hardships and I am not any better now, for arguments sake. I was a hard working man, understand? I used to run this abattoir here and it used to be super when I used to run it. I had a good job, actually, but I was just being exploited by those guys; they had all the money and I was just a tool. Imagine if you are white you would earn all the money and you didn't have to do anything you are just exploiting other people. Other people had to do something and you are just sitting there and eating the sweat of other people. That was the order of the day and that was why I decided to start my own thing never mind and I had to run everything in the absence of the so called big boss, and I had to run the whole abattoir and at the end of the day he was getting the money.

Today we feel like human beings, not like tools anymore, is it an achievement, I think a lot has been achieved. You are not to look at your color because your color is just a tone; because of my color they wanted to make me somebody, while I was not one of those people. That was because the color was more emphasized than anything else. Is it not an achievement that you can now live in peace? Now you can associate yourself with whoever you want and not to be restricted.

If I had registered myself as a white, then I was not supposed to say "Hi?" to my mother or to my uncle! I was not supposed to do that. Otherwise I would be caught and be locked up. That was not freedom; that was something else. But now this is freedom. You can live where you are, and express your views. Those days if you tried to say something you were sent to jail and you were locked up. Now you can buy property wherever you want to buy property unlike in those days when you were not supposed to be in town at nine in the evening, and most areas were exclusive.

Although it was not the case with Windhoek, in smaller towns you could not go into a shop and have a look at what you wanted to buy. If you came to a shop, you could go to the window and point what you wanted, and you could not go inside the shop. You felt like you were not a human being.

Of course there was no time for arguments and when I was with my friends and we went out of town to the smaller towns and pretended to be the owner of the car because my friends had a motor car and then I entered a bottle store in particular, because blacks were not allowed to buy liquor. And this applied anywhere in the whole country; it was a law that only whites and coloreds were legalized to buy liquor with a permit which was written that you may buy so many beers or wines per week and you had to keep that paper. You needed a permit to buy beer, a brandy or what ever your permit shows; and when you go to the next station you have to show them that. When you try to buy again they will ask where your permit was, and when you

show them, they may say you are full already. With me who had a white complexion, we took the car and I would go to Okahandja for argument sake, and then I pretended to be white, then I would tell my friends that you cannot sit with me you have to sit on the back man. Then I entered the bottle store and I bought what I wanted, then I go to the “blacks” and tell them, “You bastards. Come and carry these things; hurry up and carry and let’s go.” And then I kicked them, because you had to be a real boy, you know. I had to be rough to these people and that was how it was then. But it felt terrible you know; it was terrible! But I had to play around to achieve the goals I had set for myself, because we could not booze then. It is only now when people can booze anywhere. During those days I had to be rude just like a real boy, but not now. I had to do things that made them happy; you know they liked that.

Let me add that the system of apartheid was a bitter system. It was easy to know that I was only a human being and the whites were also human; but because of their colour they could vote and be paid more but I could not even vote it was hurting; you know that man? Just look around, there was no house with a toilet here. There was only one toilet which everyone should use, they called them common toilets. But now you can see everybody has toilets in their houses. In those days there were times when the boys were queuing up for the toilet and some guys were messing up and some were drunk. It was miserable man; and it got to your head.

I want these people not to forget what one pastor told us that do not do to others that you do not want them to do to you, irrespective of color and creed. Young people must unite and let us be one people of Namibia. I feel and I see that there are still those things and people are conditioned to think, “I am this, and I am that.” They do not think “I am a Namibian first.” They think “I am Oshihero” or they think “I am Nama” If you are not of their clan, they separate themselves from other people. This is a bomb! We must forget this is our problem; and it was because of apartheid and oppression; because whites were thinking that they were this and other people are just nothing. People must forget to be Vambo, they must forget to be Oshihero, and we must be Namibians. Young people, please, we must think Namibia first. Think

Namibia first, that is why I like Zambia a lot because I noticed in Zambia, even in Botswana people forget that I am this and that I am Zambian or Mutswana but here in Namibia our young people are still struggling with this ethnic barriers; It is a burden. I will be very strong on that. Please my people, we must do away with these barriers. No money will be too much to bring these Namibians together, they must come together to bring a one Namibia. The faster the people unite, the faster we can  
get over

those barriers and the better this country will be.

## Exile Children

*Veronica Mwehanyekange, Tangeni A. Angula, Shaliu A Kanana, Shinedama S Tangeni and Nanteni Onesmus are youth who were born outside Namibia, during the liberation struggle and spent their early years in the camps, being cared for by various people. Some of the youth did not know their parents or did not spend much time with them. They all share the perception that their lives could have been better if they had been born in Namibia and brought up by their biological parents, particularly in the questions related to Identity Cards and opportunities in employment. Others think they could have been more disciplined if they had spent more time with their biological mothers in specific homes, rather than in the camps and in kindergartens, where they sometimes experienced somehow rough handling from those who were in charge.*

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### 1.—Angula, Tangeni A.

My name is Tangeni and my surname is Angula and I was born in Kwanza-Zulu in 1980.

During the time we were in Kwanza-Zulu, I did not stay with both of my biological parents because I was going to school; I was only staying with my mother. I did not know who my father was but my mother used to tell me that my father went to fight in the war.

Something that I can still remember is that one day when we were in the camp, at around 12 o'clock, as we were coming from the dining hall, we heard some gun shots. Our parents used to tell us that when we heard gun shots, we should not start running, but we were supposed to take cover; we just lay on the ground as if dead though we were not dead. Then when the firing stopped we could stand up and run into the bush. One day when I heard the gun shots, I ran into the bush and I met a SWAPO soldier. He asked me where I was coming from, and I answered that I was coming from the camp; he asked me what the situation there was like and I told him I did not know because I just heard sound of gun shots and I started running. The soldier was with other soldiers who were wearing uniforms and they were having guns with them. They told me to stay where I was and they went to the side where the gun shots were coming from.

I was lost for three days, during which I was captured by some soldiers from Angola who brought me back to the camp. After the PLAN fighters took me back to the camp everything continued to be normal. I was at the camp and I continued to go to school as usual, up to 1988 when I heard this story that Namibia was going to be free, and that we were going to be taken back to our parents, meaning our biological mothers and fathers.

We were then taken to Luanda, where we stayed for about two days; then they put us in a small camp with tents, where we stayed there for about a week, then they took us to the airport. We were then dropped at the Ondangwa airport; from there we were

taken to Hengela camp, where we stayed for about a week and then we were taken to our parents.

Our parents were in different homes and that is where they took us to 1989. I was really happy to be introduced to my grandparents; who were my grandfather and my grandmother and to be part of a big family.

I did not know there was such a thing, because I was not used to being around people like that or someone whom I could call my grandmother. She was in a very poor condition, and I was emotionally moved.

When I came into Namibia it was in 1991 and they took me to an Oshiwambo school, where they used to give us those bursaries, and we were not paying fees. After a few months we were told that there was no longer such a school and we had to attend schools just like any other children who were in the region. The situation was very difficult because we did not know how to speak and write proper Oshiwambo; and I remember that time I was in grade 4 and then they sent me back to grade one. I started my grade one and passed through and I continued and then I completed my grade 10 and then I went for advanced secondary. I went to secondary school for grades 11 and 12; I passed my secondary school in 2004, and now I am studying at the Polytechnic of Namibia.

The camp in Kwanza-Zulu was like a shanty town; like that place Babylon, which is at the outskirts of Windhoek. We used to eat wild fruits and the older children used to prepare food like rice, and sometimes we used to eat fish, and they used to give us special rice and they used to call it Katokora; we also ate potatoes and things like that.

I can remember the day that our camp was attacked by the youth; they were those people we used to call *Mapapetas*. They were people who were trained by SWAPO, but they joined hands with the Boers or the enemy. After these *Mapapetas* joined the enemy, they were sent to assess the situation in the camps, and when they found that there was no powerful army, they would come and attack them.

In Kwanza-Zulu we did not have any access to the media and were not used to listening to the radio. What I know is that they didn't want people to get information because they thought that it would not help the South African forces if the people were to have all the information.

I would like to comment about the housing and medical facilities when we were in exile; the situation was a bad.

Then about this situation in Namibia; now the politicians are celebrating and they are getting what they want in the independent Namibia and they are enjoying the fruit of independence. But at this time I would like to say that they should remember those who participated in the liberation struggle to bring the independence to Namibia and also try to help their children.

Thank you

## 2.—Kanana, Shaliu A

My name is Kanana and my father is Ruben Amunyela but then he is known as Commander Kunja he was a very strong man. I was born in Lubango in 1985 I was going to school at Education International. I started going to school in 1987.

When we were in Angola my father used to come and see me and my mother at the camp. We were three children, my sister, my brother and I. We used to spend most our time with our Auntie together with other children, then at night we would see my father with other soldiers because he was a commander.

Then we started harvesting something, but I don't know if there is something like that here in Namibia but I have never seen it.

We also used to play with other kids, and then something which is very important is that I was like my father. When he was coming into the house and he was with other people, or other people came to him I would just go and get the gun to bring it to him. The gun used to be very heavy and I was not able to carry it properly on my shoulder, but then I would just try and pull it or try to carry it to him; when he saw me with the gun he took it away.

One day as we were just moving around we saw some cattle which belonged to Angolan people; they called them Kakukwa. Later on we just heard a gunshot and we knew that something was wrong.

When we come into Namibia I was 5 or 6 years old. I was already doing grade one and then they made me repeat same class; in fact they put me into kindergarten and then I had to start grade one again. When we came here, my father was no longer working, but before he had been working for NAMDEF. When we arrived here the family had taken everything including the house, so we had nothing. It was difficult to settle down because they had taken everything. My father started looking for a job but then nothing came up. He is now in Ovamboland. I have one sister who is older than me and she was also born in exile.

When I came here I started in grade one. At that time my father was working in the security so when he was transferred to Oshakati and we moved with him. Later I moved to Ovamboland and I continued to go to school up to grade 10. I found it difficult to cope with the new Namibia because when I came here I was speaking Oshiwambo and those people at the village could not understand me; I can even say that they could not understand what I was saying because I was speaking Oshikwanyama.

In the camps we were talking another language and when we come to our village they were speaking another language, so we could not communicate, and it was difficult for us.

When our grandparents came to see us, they had very big things under their feet; they were very dirty and we didn't want to sleep with them. We did not want to be near them and so we were always crying.

I did not grow up with my mother because she was in Luanda while I was in Lubango, I only lived with my father and when my father went to another camp he took me along.

My father also attacked a certain camp and he was the one who was commanding, together with another fighter. My name is Kanana but then here in Namibia it is Kalongo.

In the camps there were no buildings like these ones. People used to dig trenches, and they did not have walls and rooms; they were not using grass at the camps. Even when one was coming to attack, it was not that easy to see the place. I didn't see anything that was too much, but then I just heard stories about Kwito Kanavare.

When my father came home he was just dressed like he was in the air force. He was wearing something around the legs and when he kicked something, he could destroy it.

While we were in the camps we were just eating tinned fish called *Saladin*, beans called *mapoke*, fruits being sold by people, some that we used to get from the bush by ourselves. Sometimes the soldiers went out and shot a cow and brought the meat

for us to eat. They used to shoot those cattle belonging to the Angolan people and brought the meat for us to eat. We also used to eat something called Kakukwa.

Sometimes those people who wanted to see the camps came in the afternoon because they knew that there was no one who could fight with them, as only kids were there at that time. So when they were looking for their cattle they sometimes passed through the camps looking for the cattle belonging to UNITA. When those people came looking for their cattle and found the children, they took them away. There were many kids taken by those people and they never came back. I didn't see any of them again.

When I was at the Central Hospital, my father saw a child who was speaking Oshiwambo, and when he was talking to him he asked him what had happened to him and he said that it was those people who had taken him. So when the kid was better my father took him back to the camps. When he was asked what had happened he said that those people killed his mothers and father and took him away. There were two kids that they found, that man who killed their parents took him to the hospital because he was sick, and I was with them in Lubango.

Yes we had names other names when we were in Lubango. Yes but they were calling me Kanana when we were there or they were calling me Kanyunga. When I came back I did not have shoes, and I did not want to go to school because it was very hot; I just ran and hid under the trees and this was something that I was not used to doing. The place was very hot. Even when I was being taught, I could not understand.

There is a difference between us and those who were born here. Even when we are all youths, there is a difference; we are not disciplined. Most of us like talking too much, and fighting without cause. If you touch him he might even kill you. We youth lack discipline, that is all.

You see those people lack discipline, even in drinking. Some of the people drink too much, but when we are not here they are not drinking that much. When you are with your mother there, you are disciplined but then when you are here it is something else.

I just want to say that we are suffering because of this situation because here in Namibia when you go to a company and these managers were here and they know the history of our mothers and fathers. When after looking at your ID or Qualifications, they tell you that you are not a Namibian, and you try to explain that you were only born in Kinshasa because your father was a PLAN fighter, that person is already looking down on you. Why? Because that person would be thinking about your background. They are forgetting that this is our country as well, but it is just that we happened to be born outside. If you were born here and you tell those Boers that your father was a Kufuta, they would employ you.

Thank You So Much.

### **3.—Mwehanyekange, Veronica**

My name is Veronica Mwehanyekange I was born in Luanda in 1984. My parents were born in the North in Haungwena Region and my father's name is Nehemiah. They are alive and my father is in Walvis Bay at the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and my mother is at Grootfontain at the army base, she is a soldier. My parents are not married.

All I can remember is that when I was at the base, especially at Lubango we used to hide in some trenches, and when they started firing we used to run and hide. Whether it was during the day or at night, when we heard the firing sound, we used to run and hide.

We were afraid to remain alone while they were firing at the camps alone and we were only kids, our parents used to leave us as they went into the bush, but we used to have other elderly people to take care of us while our parents were away or when they went for training. I cannot remember my age very well, but I think I was about three years. Before coming back to Namibia we first stayed in Kwanza- Zulu for some time. We don't know who was shooting at us when you were in Lubango – I did not really know what was happening. But I think it was the enemy, because everyone was just afraid; and you could see that because everyone was running for their lives. Everyone was trying to save themselves and it was really frightening, that was why we were trying to hide under the trees, in holes or in the bush. It was not easy because we used to struggle to get food; we went into the bush looking for wild fruits and luckily they were available in Angola. We used to pick some bananas, mangoes, grapes and other fruits to eat. There were also other local wild fruits available in the bush.

Sometimes we were hungry and there was no food.

Sometimes our parents and other times it was the older children who were doing the cooking. I can even remember some of the older people who used to cook for us while we were playing with other kids.

We used to have kindergarten and it was only for the smaller kids; they used to go there and play, and at times they used play at the playing grounds as well. The older children used to go out and look for fire wood very far away; and they also used to get some food from the bushes.

I was very small at that time and we used to stay in traditional homes that were made out of grass and sticks it must have been between late 1986 and 1988, or there about. You cannot say that the structures were not houses, because we survived in them, and that was what was most important. The houses were built like this and like that, they were really stable; and although they were not that comfortable, it was home.

I remember that the parents used to tell us not to go far from home because there were wild animals in the bushes, but as kids we never used to listen and we still went far. My worst experience was that when we went far we used to come across strange people who used to threaten us, and then we used to run back home.

There were songs that we used to sing but these were only sung at school. There was a particular song that meant school kids should come together so that we could take over the country. It said that we were getting ready to attack the enemy. We even did actions showing that we had to be strong. But then I am not good at singing. We never listened to the radio or things like that; we never knew those things.

We used to see soldiers every time; they were in uniforms and they were armed. My father used to be one of those who wore uniforms and when I saw the soldiers I used to feel free, like I was protected, you know. It was not the way I felt when they were away.

I cannot remember getting sick during that time; I still don't know why, but then they used to vaccinate us at different times. When I came back to Namibia I was 5 years old.

During the liberation struggle I was young and when we saw those armed soldiers, we used to run away. Sometimes we ran and hid under the bushes and in trenches. Whenever we heard gun shots we hid and kept very quiet, thinking it was the enemy firing at us

Here in Namibia it is different because we are free; in Angola we were afraid to even walk around or from one place to another, while here we are free to do anything within the law, that we want. Yes in Namibia we are free.

Thank You

#### **4.—Onesmus, Nanteni**

My name is Nanteni Onesmus I was born in Kwanza-Zulu in 1981. I did not grow up with my biological parents when I was six years old I used to ask the people around me where my mother was. They told me that my mother went to Zambia were she was studying. My father's name is Samuel (surname) and I did not know who my father was until 2000.

When I was in Angola I was staying with my mother's friend and that was the woman I thought was my mother because I didn't know who was my mother and who was her friend.

I went to school at Education – this is the place where they used to take the kids who didn't have their mothers and fathers. In Angola I went up to grade 3, and when I came here I completed my grade 12 at a secondary school. I have one kid and I am unemployed.

I know of something that happened to me when we were in Angola, there were these small worms that used to get into our skins, under our feet. The worms got into one of my feet.

I grew up with different women who were looking after me and I called all of them my mothers. When we came back I just went to stay with one of my mothers at Otjivelo and when my real mother came she found me at the house in Otjivelo. She came and picked me up and took me to the village to meet my grandparents for the first time. My grandfather and my grandmother were living in the village. I also met more family members like my mother's brothers and sisters.

The challenge that I have here in Namibia is that there is poor handling by the government, like the government takes us like we are nothing. You see right now I don't have anyone who can help me. I feel like they don't care or maybe it is because I did not grow-up with them and I don't know what they want. Is it because I did not grow-up with them?

We are now here at the Ministry of Veteran Affairs to look for government attention so that we can be given jobs; we have been here now for three weeks and three days. At the camps life was different. We went to school and when we came back from school we found our teachers had prepared food for us. The food was normally soft porridge and fish. I can remember very well that there was a company that used to bring us food especially fish and other things. There was a time when we went to Luanda and I stayed there for about one month before we came to Namibia. In Luanda life was very tough it was very complicated there.

When we arrived there in Luanda there were many people at the camp waiting to come to Namibia. There was one woman who was crying that she has lost her child and she didn't know where the child was and if she would be able to find him; it was so sad. In that same place we also saw other kids older than me who were confused and crying that they had lost their parents as well.

When we left Angola we came to Ondangwa airport and I went to Owambo and then some of our colleagues went to Odibo, but luckily I didn't go to Odibo because my mother came to pick me. When we arrived they put us in a sort of keep, where they place men on this side and women sleep on the other side; the place was restricted and we had to stay like that. We were in one place and we had to survive.

In the camps, it was just like you get a mattress and you can share one mattress and maybe you are four and you have to share everything and as long as you sleep and you wake up the following morning and went to school. There was no problem.

There were no houses, there was a big place, sort of a church, and we were just sleeping on the mattresses, on the floor, and waited for the teacher to wake us up. She then gave us something to eat before we went to school.

I can remember in one of the camps there was one guy and we used to go to school together and one of our friends has already passed away he was in the NDF. We also used to go to school with another guy; and one day he got ill and then the teacher took him to the hospital but then since we came back I have never seen that guy. I don't know if that guy is still alive or is dead.

Thank you.

### **5.—Tangeni, Shinedama S.**

My name is Tangeni Shinedama. I was born in Luanda in 1985, and I stayed there for two or three years; from there I went to Germany.

I cannot remember which year I went to Germany but all I know is that I went to Germany. I came back to Namibia in 1990, and that was after independence. I had a sister, so we were two. When I came back I stayed at the State House because of my mother. My mother is well known by all of the PLAN fighters, and even the Founding President Sam Nujoma knows her because she is the one who saved the SWAPO flag. That is the reason why I was raised at the State House; and from there I started my school; from there I went to the People's Primary School in Katutura and then I went to Augustineum. That is where I completed my education, but I did not make it. I went to school only up to grade 10 because I didn't pass the exams. From the school I went to work at Sam Nujoma's farm. That is where I used to stay and help out at the service station, but the money that I was getting was very little. I used to get little money, they used to give me something like 300 and I felt that it was very little. At times when I did not go to work they deducted some money from my pay, and when that happened I got something like 250 at the end of the month. That was a very small amount of money to get at the end of the month. The money was not enough for the things that I needed, for example I had to buy food and for me it was not enough.

Then I went to Walvis Bay and I applied for a job with City Police. Right now I am just waiting for them to approve it and call us. At the moment I am unemployed.

In Germany we were in a kindergarten in Berlin; that was where we were raised by white ladies who were like our parents. We were up to five children in a group with one mother; all the kids in the group were taken care of, and anything they needed was taken care of, and that was very nice.

I cannot remember any songs that we sang there because when I came back we were separated and some of us went to German Schools, but I went to schools where I was taught in English. It was very difficult for me to cope with my lessons, or even with my mother because of the language; we should remember that when I came back I was only speaking German, and it was very difficult for me.

Actually the mode of teaching was like my mother language; and Afrikaans I never studied it in school; I learnt it through living with people from different tribes. I learnt

Afrikaans from the streets, and that is why I cannot read or write it, but I can speak it. I am not sure if it would have made any difference if I was born here; I wouldn't have known about that. Surely I don't know and I am not sure.

You know when I was in Luanda we used to stay in the same camp together with Sam Nujoma. Let me say that most of the people who were PLAN fighters who are still working here like in NDF most of them they know me. The PLAN fighters used to call me Shikomia, which was a combat name. At that time Dr Sam Nujoma used to have gardens and whenever he finished eating he told me to take the leftovers to the dogs; and on the way I started eating them, and maybe it was because I was not full most of the time. Even if you want to get more information about me and how I came through, I think you can even ask Dr Nujoma.

The thing that makes me feel really bad is that they say that my mother was a hero, but nothing was done for us since I came back; and we are only two from my mother's side.

My mother died after she saved the flag. After a month she went to buy paraffin at a service station, that was where she was killed by bandits, and at that time she was pregnant.

When I came back to Namibia I found out that all this had happened, and that was after two years; that was also the time I found out that I had a sister. My sister was staying in Swakopmund, with her father but her father is from Botswana. So her surname is different, because we only have the same mother but different fathers; but she is my sister. If you see her she is lighter than me, and you will not think that she is a Wambo.

I do not want to add things that I don't know but when I come back I was told the whole history by Dr Sam Nujoma, he told me how things were because they used to make fun with me. He would say things like, "When we used to be in the camps you used to do these things." A lot of soldiers in fact used to say those things to me.

All I can remember is that, where we used to stay, there were a lot of soldiers, and they were just going around and they were in uniforms.

In that place there were ladies who used to come and take care of cleaning and washing and ironing. You know, after my mother died we were taken care of as if we were really children of Sam Nujoma. Those people who used to come and help us were really nice and I know them, and they also know me.

All that I would like to add is that, on my mother's issue, she has to be remembered. They could even name a street after her. Why I am saying this is because they only know that she did something very brave for the SWAPO Party and nothing was done. I am worried that they say she was a hero but then nothing was done.

I only know part of the story but then you can get the whole information about the story from Dr Sam Nujoma. What I remember from what they told me is that on the day that she saved that flag, most of the people were killed by white soldiers in Cassinga, and she just came and she picked up the flag and then she ran away with it.

No it was not on the day of the massacre, it was a different day. I don't know what year it was; but then all I know is that the flag was supposed to go with the whites but then she saved it- she ran away with it.

Thank You.

## Gurirab, Theo Ben

[Windhoek; 09 August 2007]

**Gurirab, Theo Ben was born and educated in Usakos. He received a Teaching Diploma from the Augustineum College in 1960. He went to the USA, where he got a BA degree in Political Science and an MA degree in International Relations (1969, 1971) from Temple University. A forceful and dynamic spokesman for SWAPO, in his role as its representative at the United Nations beginning in 1972, he was a significant leader of SWAPO's external wing. For many years he served as the party's principal advisor during diplomatic negotiations and as a party spokesman. In January 1986, he was appointed SWAPO's Secretary for Foreign Affairs. He returned to Namibia in 1989. Highly placed at number nine in SWAPO's electoral list, he easily won a sit in the Assembly. With his education and experience, his appointment as Namibia's Minister of Foreign Affairs surprised nobody. He later served as the country's second Prime Minister in 2002 and became the second Speaker of the National Assembly under President Pohamba.**

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I was born Theo Ben Gurirab on 23rd January 1938 in the outskirts of Usakos. In my language Usakos means *this is ours*. My parents were on the one hand peasants and on the other hand miners, given the mining activity that surrounded Usakos and its expanse workers at this mining activity. I am the only boy with six sisters. I am touched therefore, as there is some significance to the fact that this interview is taking place on 9th of August. During the struggle we were using the month of August for so many reasons. This is the month when we launched the armed struggle and it is also the month during which our forbearers launched resistance against the German colonialists. But we popularized the month of August during the liberation struggle for those reasons, but also at the UN to raise the profile of women as essential participants in the struggle at all fronts that is in the political, diplomatic and military fields.

I went to school in Usakos starting in 1947; in retrospect I am proud of the circumstances of my going to school. At that time you needed to be seven years old to start school and I was among those that had that advantage of being near where the school was, and started schooling. But what makes me proud of the moment is not so much that I started school at the required age, but the day when I went to school I stood in a queue with a representative group of youngsters, representing a group of Damara community, Herero community, Oshiwambo community, Tswana community and Colored community. I mean the colored constituted three branches: one light skinned people who could do this and that; and the other this and that; but they were taking advantage of being light skinned and taking the front sit over us, because they were light skinned and we were not. They could have been me in the queue with Gurirab who is light skinned, and given the nature of apartheid

system, they took advantage of being a little bit different from me. Any way it was a perception that they took advantage of the system and it was not by force. The other ones were people whose parents have located themselves in Usakos but originally from Rehoboth,, and perhaps other Afrikaans speaking communities. The third group was of those Cape coloreds, who had come mainly from South Africa in Cape Town area, those were Cape coloreds.

It was a manifestation of how much cosmopolitan Usakos had become; and the reasons for it were that there were endless job opportunities, and the big employer was the Railway system. The others were drawn there by the mining activities and others located there because they had fathers, brothers and uncles who were working at the coast in the fishing factories at Guano, or were otherwise involved in the infrastructure building because of the attraction that Usakos had at that time

I went to a Rhenish missionary school and some of the teachers including the principal were from Gibeon in the south. The principal was married to Dr Hendrik Witboois'sister and the others like the man who took over after he passed on, was Richard from the Omachete area. The rest of the teachers were in one way or another related to me in some way in the line of my father, and some were my brothers. Some of them were my uncles and others were brothers because of the line of ancestry.

I have talked about how proud I was at the enrolment and going to school, that is one; but second and perhaps of all things that happened to me, the most important, I think personally for me, and when I think about it the younger I become, every year now, is the decision taken by my father, my parents obviously, but my father – I would like to think. I said that they were peasant farmers who had cattle, goats, sheep, donkeys and horses.

Somewhere between Tukuris and Okombahe there was a village, an ancestral village; it is still there now, and that is where my father is buried. Of the six sisters five of them are older than me, two have passed on, and three are still alive; two older than me and one younger than me. My father sent the older ones to relatives to go to Usakos, Karibib, Omaruru or Swakopmund, when they were became of school going age. But I was told that until my birth he was very much settled at this village. Occasionally during drought when he left farming and took a job at the mines and Karakul sheep industries and worked on the farm, but mainly he was a peasant farmer at that ancestral village. But after I was born he decided, so to speak, to uproot his family entirely and relocated to Usakos. I have no memory of that action I might have been months old. My place of consciousness is of cause Usakos, but later on I got to learn a great deal about the village. So everything that I became, I attribute it to the decision taken by my father. I think the decision was on my behalf and he passed on when I was thirteen years old, and my mother later.

When I came back from exile I had instituted a tradition and I took my family, that is, my wife who is American by birth and all my children who were born during the struggle, to introduce them to my parents who are buried there, my father and mother are buried there in Usakos. The tradition that I have instituted is that I go

to talk to him at least once a year. I literally talk to him because now being from the United States, my wife and my children were wondering, you know.

We went as a family, a large family that included grandchildren, nieces and nephews and also my sisters who were still living, and I gave a talk there. They were wondering why and whom I was talking to, because I was pointing at the grave and talking. You have to talk to living people, but you don't talk to dead people, do you? So I do that and I talk to my father and I chat with him. You know what I have become now? I have reported everything to him; everything I have done since I left. So you know I was actually born on a farm. But I wouldn't know if he didn't want me to grow up on a farm. I tried to figure out what was in his mind. Here he had five daughters before me, and he had not made the decision whether he had a son or he will have another girl. Now five girls and another came and at that moment he decided to relocate and the reason for doing that was to enable his children, I would like to say, his son to have an opportunity to go to school.

As I said that I went to a missionary school, but at one stage, after his passing on, I disrupted my going to school. There were a lot of disruptions; you know Usakos was full of excitement, but in spite of being brilliant and caring people teaching me, some of them, or a majority of them, as I said were my relatives, I still stayed away from school. It doesn't mean that I was right, but I did not think that I was learning anything by going to school; I disagreed with the teachers, you know, because the outside distractions took the better part of me. I am telling the truth now, that I exploited for my own benefit, that thinking of the passing on of my father, and I convinced everybody, I think. The teachers discovered later that I had left. At the age of thirteen, the story that I took I told everybody was that, the passing on of my father left my mother alone. I told everybody in the village that I felt a sense of responsibility to disrupt school to go and live with her to assist her. That is the story that I told and everybody was so touched that I was demonstrating leadership in the absence of my father. But it was no like that – I just didn't think I was learning anything new, and I was just reminiscing of not wanting to go to school and sitting there and not learning anything. I certainly decided, and I want to say that every decision that I have taken, starting from that moment at age thirteen, I did not necessarily indulge in making myself feel or think that I was making the right decision, but I felt that it was my responsibility to make those decisions.

I was fortunate that there were always wonderful people around to encourage me to just follow my sense about deciding on what I want to do, and I started making that decision from that age.

After some two years plus, I went back to school, and I started experiencing a different kind of headache. This was because I had jumped two levels, and then we were doing for example long hand arithmetic and then when I came back I found my old classmates were now two years older than the people whose class I was in. But all in all I stayed on for another two years, but then I left school and I started working. I was working in a general dealer shop and helping to pack groceries for the

local, mainly white community, but also providing such service to farmers who were coming in for shopping.

There were a lot of farms around Usakos, mainly in the Namib desert where there was the Karakul sheep industry which was later sent to Karas region. So it was some how operative but mining was a big deal, road construction, railway extension were big activities and there was a lot of money and people were coming to Usakos and I was working in one of the biggest general dealer shop. I don't know how much I earned per month; it is such a long time ago. Well, maybe two pounds and sometimes three pounds. That was a lot of money at that time because some teachers, the junior teachers were getting less; a typical pay for a black head of a family was one pound ten less than two pounds which I was getting.

Then while I was working in the shop I sensed the idea of furthering my education again. There were a group of young boys who were two to three years my juniors who, the whole ten of them were finishing standard five in 1957, and had applied to Augustineum in Okahandja to start their standard six. Because I knew them so well, they regarded me as an old person; I was nineteen then. The following year when I went to Augustineum I was twenty. Again I did everything, usually the procedure was that the school principal or one of the teachers would make the application on your behalf to Augustineum and write the covering letter, but I did that myself. I sent it and I waited and got a letter back that I had been admitted. So I went with these youngsters who are now quite big and very important people. You probably do not know them, but one of them was recently elected mayor of Karibib –the father of Florence Haifene, who is at NBC and who later became the principal; her mother, I think, is still a teacher at Emmanuel Routers School in Walvis Bay. It was a good number of them.

Well, Augustineum was a new phase in my life. I left school mid way standard four, I was never in school since then and I never stayed because I was working, but I signed for Standard VI pretending that I had finished Standard V and all that. I was telling my former teacher Martin Shipanga that I did that, but he said no, no, he could not tell; So I went to Augustineum in 1958. That was maybe another incident that I went through and that was the largest intake of newcomers ever at Augustineum, in 1958. Then I signed up after Standard VI for teacher's training so I spent three years after 1958, 59 and 60 and completed my teacher's training at the end of 1960.

That period in Namibia, and particularly this gathering of a large number of youngsters from all parts of the country, it was also the first time that students from the far North, from Great Owamboland came down from Odibo and Oshigambo to join us here. You see, we had a large colony of these youngsters who were already getting some ideas about political things, gathered at one place from every corner of the country. The second gathering was at Dobra. Most of us who went to Augustineum and the ones at the nearby Dobra were basically a similar influx of people from all parts of the country. Relatives like in my case, one part of my family are catholic and I don't know what happened but we had similar stories.

Then during athletics and other interaction we were competing against each other Augusteum and Dobra. In 1958 it was ten years after the National Party had taken over power in South Africa and extended apartheid to Namibia. Political activities were already spreading and hitting our eyes. Namibian students, older than me, who were studying in South Africa, were coming back after breaks. You know the Kerinas and others. They created influence especially here in Windhoek during school breaks and we were getting stories that were indicating that there was growing political activity in the country. We were slowly and naturally being drawn into these activities; in 1959 of course it was a big deal, it was in December 1959.

There were other events that influenced me. I went to Augustineum in 1958 and in 1957 Ghana had become independent and there were Radio broadcasting, stories and the pictures of Kwame Nkrumah dancing with the Princess of Kent. Actually March this year is the 50th anniversary her son represented her because she had passed on, her son represented Britain. We saw the picture of Kwame Nkrumah and the talk about Kwame Nkrumah, with the names of Kenneth Kaunda of Northern Rhodesia, Joshua Nkomo of Southern Rhodesia – Kamuzu Banda of Nyasaland and for some reason Jomo Kenyata and his fellow Tom Mboya. These names were coming and older fellows who had more contacts than we had, and we recently buried one of them Marine Nathan in Okahandja, and the other one who is a farmer now I found him in the Ministry of Foreign Affaires when I came. These things were happening.

But also in South Africa in 1956, that we got to know later, the Freedom Charter was signed. Women's demonstration which is now being recognized this morning I saw on TV a big meeting being organized for the 9th August 1956 Freedom Charter. These things were being brought from South Africa through students, and the trade Unionists Simon Kaukungwa and Jakob Kuhangwa, who were there and students became a community of people from South West Africa. These workers were learning things from these youngsters, who were reading and studying things. But the 1959 Freedoms Charter, as you know, said among other things that the Land in South Africa belong to all the people who live in the country, both black and white.

Robert Mangalizo Subukwe and other Africans felt that the Land belonged to the South African black people, and that led to the split and the formation of the Pan Africanist Congress and we liked that language. We liked that language that time because there was a link from what the Pan Africanist Congress was saying and the experience of German Colonialism. We were able to link that because we were banished to Native reserves and that the Bantu education that was rearing its ugly head at that time, not quite pleasing, were linked; and afterall we are black people and we are indigenous people and the land belongs to us and that it was stolen. These things were being said by the people that I have mentioned to you in Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia and even in Nyasaland and Nkrumah during the independence celebrations in his speech said things that were relevant.

The situation in the Congo was another reference point with Patrice Lumumba who was saying things that we liked very much, although we didn't really quite

understand the damage that colonialism had done and we were not intellectually analyzing these things. We were responding to white people coming and dominating us – taking control of everything; it was making sense and we were relating to that and demanded freedom. It was freedom that would change – they were religious interjection in this; that however was going to come about. Stories were being told that one day, and the day was coming, that I already heard in Usakos when I was going to Okahandja, that the world will turn up-side-down. And that Black people would become White people and that White People would become Black people; and that part I liked very much.

It was also that the color of skin and I remember that was something around the mid 1950s and I remember there was a young boy, and I still remember his name, who was roughly my age. He probably came from rich parents, because he had a nice bicycle that I liked very much and he had football boots that I liked very much you know and I knew it that when that happens I will be him. And it has happened; people needed to express it in terms of Freedom, that freedom will come and liberation will come instead of saying those things, you know; and that things will change. But that is what happened. I could see from 1956 and 1957 it became a place where political consciousness and critical response to things that were happening were able to put labels on oppression, and need for organizations to call for unity among the Black people. The need to resist for example the basic headache at that time, Pass Laws, for example, that compelled people to carry passes. These things were filtering in too.

The demands for freedom, or organized independence were becoming very much the talk of the town, that we will liberate you and occasionally that was printed in a newspaper.

Of course the biased Afrikaners with a backward mind was saying what is it that the Blacks are demanding? Freedom? They have always been free in their place; what freedom do they want?

Do they want to become white people or want to have things they never worked for? What is it that they want? The Minister of Education who was expecting the difference had said that a black child should be made aware from a very young age that the green pastures that he sees were not meant for him.

So we were responding to that, and now there were people who were telling us that yes you can.

That is what they were saying to us that Ghana you see, has become independent and Kenneth Kaunda, Joshua Nkomo, Banda and Jomo Kenyata are fighting for independence and it is because of those reasons that Jomo Kenyata is in Prison. Things were coming and we were trying to make sense out of them and we didn't quite know how to go about being political but the awareness was there.

For example, the former PS wrote a composition and his hero was Nkrumah and it was something that was built around Ghana's independence and Kwame Nkrumah, and that he wrote that in English for the school and when the teacher submitted it there was a raw I couldn't understand what it was about. He was summoned in the

principal's office and the English teacher was called. And of course the only Black teacher was Martin Shipanga and then the other Black teacher come on later. So this gentleman was being interrogated and things were being analyzed.

And they were saying where did you learn about Kwame Nkrumah and all those things and they were saying what do you mean by this and that and they were almost – maybe he was black listed I don't know. He was being subjected to hard questions. At the time we were also told that Black people did not have the capacity to be students at a University; those who were very smart could only manage to get up to Matric, because our intelligent quotient was limited, maybe, to Matric. So University education was meant only for white people.

Augustineum was a place where political consciousness developed and of course the 10th December in the location, exposed the whole thing. We did not know what that meant. Why the people were being killed. Those were able to explain the meaning of resistance and the manner in which the apartheid system reacted to it. It was being explained politically during school breaks and we were looking around to our relatives, and I had a number of them here, and when we went home to our places we always came and spend about two or three days. Being here in Windhoek in the whole location, was being in a laboratory, you know, listening to people discussing political and social issues; putting labels on them, and not only education came to have a purpose; but being able to react to things with some sense of understanding of relationships. And not only human relationships but the reason why that was happening was that because the white man did not want us to live in the same area that he was living in, because of the philosophy that had to be sustained.

The system is called apartheid which is separateness, so these things were beginning to make sense to our minds. Let me explain, the 10th of December was something that happened in Windhoek. We did not really know what was going on there, but of course you know SWANU, and there were other organizations before 1959. One was called South West Africa Progressive Association, and it was more of a social organization, formed by the people who mainly started it in South Africa; some teachers who were involved, and people like John Mundjua, he is an old man now, and I see him every now and then. He is alive his name is Mundjua and he works for the Public Service Commission. There was Joshua Hoebieb who was a High Commissioner to Botswana and of course Dr Sam Nujoma, together with Apollos and Abrahams, as part of the crowd.

During that time, that was how things were, and as an organization at weekends they were organizing social get-together in a location, and somebody gave a talk about the situation, and some person would give a lecture on a subject like History, and about some person who had done something like a great teacher who had thought so many people. Those who were coming from South Africa brought stories and we used to hear about the African National Congress, about Nelson Mandela and other heroes. We also heard how in South Africa the liberals were mainly in Cape Town area, as well as the South African Communist Party.

These issues were being brought up, and that is how it was not so much political, but some personalities out of that came together and formed SWANU, probably with more clear political objectives, but there were organizations not quite political at the same time. OPO came at the same time, and OPC was also coming in full and was in existence.

The formation of SWANU did not really impact much; it was more of a resistance organization that was open to everybody. Even if you belonged to OPO you could still belong to SWANU, Comrade Sam Nujoma for instance; and some people think perhaps he was destined to be the first President of SWANU. But here there was a reason to have the people's choice because all the people from the different communities had Sam Nujoma as their choice. But Kozonguizi became the first president of SWANU. Sam Nujoma became a member of the Executive of SWANU. I remember one comrade asking me this question when I became SWAPO's Secretary of Foreign Affairs in Luanda. Because he has been hearing this and because he was then SWAPO representative in the Soviet Union and I organized SWAPO's Ambassadors conference in Luanda. And I remember him asking me this question "Are you doing propaganda for some elements who claim that Comrade Sam Nujoma was a member of SWANU?" and I said yes.

So he thought that I didn't hear what he said and he repeated it again and I said yes. So it's only in 1961 or maybe 1962 onwards that the lines started being drawn because of the change of OPO into SWAPO that the lines become distinct.

I remember meeting in a location in Walvis Bay and becoming a teacher and I think it was in 1961 and our delegation lead by my friend Gerson Veil, he led a delegation of SWANU to Walvis Bay which was a SWAPO territory. But they invited SWAPO people like late Maxwilili, the late Frank Abraham, Comrade Ben Amadhila and I, who were then a group of SWAPO already in Swakopmund. The initial people who lived there had gone over to the location where the meeting was held and Gerson Veil was explaining the purpose of their going to Walvis Bay from here and was to explain the constitution of SWANU to the Walvis Bay public. Then we were getting into debates, the Augustineum people, all of us; it was an intellectual argument and talking about the differences between the two and so forth and so on. But initially it was in addition to OPO, SWANU and the Chief's Council. Even though the Chief's Council was built around Hosea Kutako, it also included the Nama/Damara people. The Chief's Council was just aligned; people like Nujoma were being drawn into the Chief's Council discussions.

The ideological, even the sharp political differences were not there; there was a common enemy and the common hardships that the black people faced; and if you found people coming together and discussing, you just joined them, and you did not ask who was organizing the group. We also knew the people who were going there; that was something that later got out of hand, but the beginning was wonderful. It was later that we started to patch things together, but the division had become hardened

you see. The main differences were personality ones and it was the respective alliances that each one was forming because of the east – west.

First and most probably I think it was more east wards on the side of Soviet. Here you had major liberation movements like SWAPO which succeeded in getting recognition and support. As you know we didn't want to get involved in the ideological matters and we wanted to get both their support. We convinced them and they checked up with both of them, and ANC and MPLA, ZAPU, FRELIMO were more Soviet, and ZAPU too; and later after the split and after the formation of ZANU. So ZANU, SWANU and a small organization called COREMO in Mozambique were in their group at the time. Maybe I should add also PAIGC of Amilcar Cabral was in that group of SWAPO, and we were able to get support from them as well.

We dealt with the Chinese and Savimbi, so, we succeeded in convincing a lot of people. This enabled to open our headquarters in Dar es Salaam and we had this support and where we were able to send combatants to Soviet Union and the Chinese set up a training camp to train our combatants. So we succeeded in that.

What I want to say is that here at home, at that stage, the ideological cleavages did not have much impact. One thing was that the formation of the initial organizations for example one could see that OPO was Ovahambo inclined and SWANU was Herero inclined. But the personalities, the individual leaders, the prominent people in these organizations were friends. So in spite of that mass base, they were able to branch out at the Windhoek residence, and they saw things differently, they saw things alike. The Chiefs for instance were looking to this Urban based young people who helped them to understand things when they asked, and even if at the end, a petition to the UN was signed by Hosea Kutako, but the people who assisted in writing it were a mixed bag. The likes of Appolos, Ngavirues and so on are the people who got together; and some were teachers who wrote the letters they gave to Kutako to sign. That is why we thought of Hosea Kutako, not as a Herero leader, but as a National Leader.

First of all I was based in Walvis Bay and I became a teacher at the end of December and decided to move home to Walvis Bay. You know the political landscape there was dominated by Nathaniel Maxwilili and a few others, so some other people wanted to be part of that, but the signs were already there in 1960 that we were moving in different directions.

Gerson Veii at one time made a point that SWANU does not attack SWAPO so why should SWAPO leaders attack SWANU. I remember that; and they made that point another time Veii and Ben Amadhila were getting into some political debates showing off who read more African poetry than the other one. There was no really substantive difference, but then you know SWANU had never made a name for itself in Walvis Bay to this day, up to today. So it remained a SWAPO's strong hold.

But then I left Windhoek by the beginning of 1961 and during the Christmas holidays I moved on to Walvis Bay as a qualified teacher. But at the end of that and midway on the road I changed my mind and I really wanted to further my education. That has been really an interesting thing in my life, and I probably feel the same

way even today. I always return to education, at times, but of course I don't think I will be a student again but I have not ruled out the possibility of being a lecturer. Whatever else that I do I always want to have an opportunity to share the knowledge. So I decided that I really wanted to further my studies and the idea of going abroad meant at that time going to South Africa. Because of the decision that I made I did not start teaching.

Then I found a job at Middle Box Company in Walvis Bay. I worked there and I was saving money to pay for my studies and on that job I made good money. I was getting five to six pounds a week and that was a lot of money, no other employment for a black person could give you that much at that time. I was not the only educated one; there were other fellows who had finished their studies and some finished Matric and I was just lucky that I got this job and somehow they took a liking for me somehow, and maybe because I was trustworthy I don't know. I worked there and I saved big money. On this job I was a clerk, but I was involved in doing a variety of things. It was an experience and learning, for instance, when you get a can of fish and any thing contained in metal container, there are different types of metal. These metal sheets were coming through Cape Town because the company was owned by companies based in Cape Town. So different types of sheets, and when they arrive in the Harbour I would go there wearing an overall and then just sort them out.

I would get up early and wait for the cargo and when they arrive I would sort them out and they would be packed in the factory in a certain way, like in a warehouse in some way. Some of them with a certain nature you set them apart and so that is what I did, I was a clerk. The fellow who became my immediate supervisor, he was perhaps of my age group, lived on and became a very rich man; he was resisting the integration of Walvis Bay into Namibia because he was a South African himself but he had come to live here. Maybe he came in 1961 and when I came back in 1989 I found him and he was now a very rich man, Trouas was his name, but he has since died. He was a young fellow and I had my own suspicions; I had always wanted to meet him and talk to him, but I telephoned him and he wanted to take the case to the International Court of Justice to stop the integration of Walvis Bay. He was the leader of a group. Ben Amadhila met him and he was telling me that the man in-charge was Ben, and we must talk to him. He made a speech in support of those rejecting the integration of Walvis Bay, I always had suspicions about him, and it is interesting that he was a colored fellow who was trying to pass as a white man. We were friends and we had worked together as my supervisor and as friends; we of course talked about girls and we talked about football and talked about this and that. I wondered why he was so nice to me. At one time we stood and chatted and that was in 1961.

While in Walvis Bay, we read in the paper that the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on South West Africa and the essence of the resolution was that those who administered the territory were contravening the trusteeship. The case had been made in 1961.

The South African President was oppressive and police brutality and Bantu Education, intensification of oppression and the Army and the Police being increased in numbers and spread across the country. The stories were being told by petitioners like Dr Sam Nujoma, Fanuel Kozonguizi, Michael Scot and Simon Kooper. You see the case was being made in reaction to that and the UN adopted a resolution that made provision for sponsorship for students from South West Africa who happened to be outside of the country. To benefit from that you simply had to find your way physically out of the country and how you do that was entirely up to you. But if you wanted to go outside the country, you had to find your own way and means. So that became now a topic between Ben and myself and a fellow man that I left behind by the name of Jan Benbeb Uirab. He was a fellow teacher in Walvis Bay when I started teaching in 1961; so we used to discuss a lot on these political issues. Ben then worked at a Tunacor and you know how it is, if you work late you could get more money so we were sometimes working late. During the day after we pass through his place, as he was staying at his brother's place, and we would sit down talk. We would draw out a map and as we were talking we would be thinking about this and that they had at that stage they had passed the Suppression of Communism Act in the South African Parliament, the Sabotage Act and some of the incidents that were taking place in South Africa and how they were reacting to that. We could also see the military movements, because what later become Rooikop Military base at Walvis Bay, where the airport is today, was already starting and this long chain of train carriages bringing in young Afrikaners; and at that time Walvis Bay was more of an English town.

So one day we were talking, and we said how one get out does and we were looking at the map and the possibilities of leaving. Of course one or two people had attempted also to go before the adoption of the resolution by the UN. Then after talking would walk away and then Ben would go to work but we kept on thinking about it and we just said let's do it man, let's do it. So we continued doing that up to 1962 then we left eventually later in September 1962. During the planning stage we temporally decided to do it; but then it was a secret because it was a thing which was known only to the three of us. We kept on talking and Ben ruled himself out because of the other political work that he was involved in. Ben is one of those unsung heroes. In the meantime he used to leave his work at Walvis Bay, under one pretext or another; leaving maybe for a week and going up north as we were preparing the ground for what later became the launching of the armed struggle. You see he was going up north as preparations were going on between those who were outside and then laying down the network for what later became the Launching of the Armed Struggle; and he was going there to talk to the traditional leaders. I am not sure what exactly he was telling his employers but he ruled himself out that he was not going into exile but the two of us were planning to go but he encouraged us. He encouraged us and when we had a small talk and then we decided we were going to do it and we agreed that during the school break in September 1962 we would leave.

But then SWAPO had become a political force in the country and actually the political activity revolved around Maxwilili, Ben Amadhila, but I was so disappointed about this boy's father, the young boy who was involved in the making of the liberation struggle movie, Kaumbi's father. His father Gideon Kaumbi might have finished at most standard two or standard three but that time Gideon Kaumbi was one of those home grown intellectuals and there was another fellow who was Secretary General of SWANU he was based here in Windhoek, Wener Mamukue; those two were the capable ones and Frank Abrams was the side kick of Maxwilili, you know we had so many heroes.

Frank Abrams was a business man and was good friends of Maxwilili and lived in Walvis Bay he has passed on now, but this Nico Bassinger has everything; he has his records. This girl who worked for NBC her name is Sandra Williams is her great grandfather.

So, every now and then there was a big thing on the SWAPO activities, from its foundation and its transformation from OPO into SWAPO, because the activities were concentrated, not in Windhoek but in Walvis Bay. Organizing rallies at the school where I was and Maxwilili would be addressing them and this time Ben Amadhila would be talking about Mburumba Kerina who was then Chairman of SWAPO and then Sam Njoma, the President, Jakob Kuhangwa as Secretary General, and he would be talking about that.

If you are talking about somebody brave, I have never met somebody as brave as Nathaniel Maxwilili. This man was insulting the police there. He was saying "bloody police, stupid police this and that, your mother is this and that" you know that kind of thing.

Teachers as they are today, as civil servants paid by the state, in the colonial state they were not allowed to engage in political activities. We were not public speakers but of course very active and trusted lieutenants of Maxwilili. I was very much active, and I was involved in that actively from 1961. We decided to fix a date, that in September school break we had to leave. We went and talked to Maxwilili and shared with him our plans, but on that particular day Ben was out on one of his regular trips outside Walvis Bay to the North.

We then told Ben about the plans when he came back. He listened and listened to us as he was walking up and down and that was in his house. He finally responded that it was okay and he was going to let us know. He was even talking taller because at that time he got his twins and he was announcing it, "I have twins you know" Then he called us in the evening and he introduced us to a fellow who happened to be my neighbour a certain Philemon Silvanus. I was talking about him the other day and President Pohamba was saying he knew him very well because they were contract labourer in Tsumeb and from there on he went to Walvis Bay. He is the father of so many children, he is the father of this guy's wife, he is at the Ministry of Trade and is the Trade Director, Kambowa, and his wife (Sirka) is the daughter of Philemon Silvanus.

Perhaps this is one of the things you should know that what he did was, he was asked to do something. It was not clear if he was working as a contract labourer, but he was at the time working in the Magistrate's office. I don't know of any other black person but he was the first one and he was working as a clerk in the Magistrate's office. I don't know what his qualifications were and he was issuing passes to those traveling; those race pass, ID Pass and travel pass, he was doing those things. What this fellow did was he looked through and I don't know who helped him and found appropriate legislation ordinances. So later we were called back for him to tell us what he was planning to do. When we got there him and Maxwilili was there. And the plan that he had worked out was that, the way for us to leave the country was that we would disguise as foreigners from Nyasaland, who had come at one stage to South West Africa and working around Walvis Bay. But we had stayed beyond our contract and the government had to somehow intervene and we were being asked to leave the country. It was actually, as it was stated on the form, a voluntary deportation order.

Under this Voluntary Deportation Order and I become Peter Mafurira from Blantyre Nyasaland and my friend's name also had a Nyasa like sounding name. And once we agreed to that he went and filled out the forms signed by some appropriate but false signature. And it is with those documents that we left the country in September 1962.

I came through Usakos and nobody knew what was happening and even the core of inner friends, except for my cousin whom I was staying with. Otherwise only a very, very limited group of people knew. So I got there and at the school break, just like the normal thing I visited my sister and other relatives, but it was the last time we were going to see one another; and I was even engaged to get married. I spent the night with my fiancée, and told her that I was going to Windhoek and then from there I was going to a Conference and then from there I was going to Otjimbingwe and on my way from there I was going to go to pass through Usakos and then go back to Walvis Bay.

We travelled on and we got off in Okahandja to meet a man who has just passed away, Martin Neil, and after two days we came back and picked him up from Okahandja. Katutura was just starting then and there were few houses and we went to comrade David Meroro's shop, which was in the single quarters. We also wanted to meet some people and my compatriot basically wanted to see his mother and he wanted to see some other people. Now, in the absence of Jacob Kuhangwa who was the Secretary General, there was a fellow who was the acting Secretary General and he had John ya Otto as his helper, this fellow Brian Geingob Basinghweite, you know, since he left the country he never came back, so if he is still alive he is there in New York.

The requirement was, as we were advised by Ben, that we should come to the SWAPO head Quarters in Windhoek and get what they called credentials and these were letters of introduction to SWAPO leadership that introduce us that we were members with good standing.

Francistown was where we were headed. So we were looking for this man and we couldn't find him, and we went to all locations and we went to Katutura and we couldn't find him. My colleague knew the fellow's mother because they grew together. We met the lady but from the way that we were dressed, because we were in factory overalls and we were asking where Brian was, because we were going from one place to another and we couldn't find him, and we were asking, "When last did you see him?" She was there standing and looking at us; maybe she was suspicious that "Who is the other one? Maybe a police man." Because she knew that her son had left the country so she was not responding. So we left.

Later we sat then we wondered what do we should do; and whether there was someone else because we couldn't find John ya Otto, and the credentials were to be made by the national headquarters. Later we decided. But also around that time, Kozonguizi and Sam Nujoma were being confronted by Nkrumah and others, being asked, "When are you people going to come together?" There were Unity Talks at that time. We then decided to go to SWANU offices. That was where this fellow I mentioned, Werner Mamugue, was the Secretary General so we went and we explained that we were actually SWAPO members and we just did that and it was true. Then he issued the credentials, but of course on a SWANU letter head and he stated in the letter that we were members of SWANU. We did not bother if that was important; all we wanted was to get out of the country. And then we left. It was on a Sunday and I have to look at the Calendar because some church event was taking place and that is where we ran into Joshua Hoebeb. They were playing a brass band then we walked in and we were looking around as if we were looking for somebody and when he turned around he said "boys where are you going" and we later got to the train station and off we went. We were headed for a long journey and we went by train, we travelled the civilized way not through the jungle. We were very respectful and my friend was even drinking beer on the train which we were not allowed.

We went by train all the way to Upington, to Kimberly then Mafikeng and then to Bechuanaland. And we continued to Gaborone, by then Gaborone was a little train station with only a few houses, then we continued to Francistown. So that was how we left the country.

## Haipinge, Tulimeyo

[Windhoek; 06 January 2007]

*Tulimeyo Haipinge is one of the Namibian women freedom fighters who left the country in her early years and participated in the armed liberation struggle. She was born on 31st of January 1948 at Oshali near Endola Constituency; she completed her primary school at Engela. In 1966–1968, she was at Oshingambo Secondary School, and later became a nurse. She got political influence through attending meetings on such issues, in her village. In 1974 she crossed the border and went into exile. She received military training in Oshatotwa. In 1978 she was sent for further studies in the United Kingdom, and returned to work as a nurse in Kwanza. After returning from exile during the general repatriation of all Namibians in 1989 she continued working in Namibia as a nurse.*

I was born on 31st of January 1948 at Oshali near Endola Constituency, but I completed my primary school at Engela. In 1966–1968, I was at Oshingambo Secondary School. I was among those who attended Oshigambo, after the establishment of the school. I was there up to standard eight, which is Grade 10, today. My father is Lehabian Haipinge and my mother is Petrina Shaanika. There were six children born in our family and I was the second born. Nursing has always been my call. I remember when I was in Primary school, I used to help out my teacher in some work and I hated it, it was never in my heart. That was the reason why I decided to be a nurse rather than a teacher. I loved and enjoyed taking care of patients.

During that time, my parents were not really politically influenced, but in the village where I was raised, there was a man called Kashikuka; he is late now. The late Kashikuka was more involved and active in political issues. After the Sunday service people used to gather to sing and listen to him. If I can recall well, my first meeting was at the time of Kwasha Kwayela Kwasha, and we were told that there were certain people who wanted to fight the colonial people.

By attending these meetings I also became politically influenced; I started understanding why we needed to cross the border to fight for our Independence. It was in this light that I decided to cross the border and go to exile in 1974. During the years of political activities in the north, I met Negumbo in Oshakati, who became a very good friend to me. They used to arrange little meetings of their group, which I later joined; these were done in the darkness I was asked to help out. I was a nurse at that time, and I used to steal medicine and injections for the sick every day.

There was this man who was wanted by the Boers and sometimes the Boers were offering money to those who were willing to give information about his whereabouts. But unfortunately I was not attracted by that money. I valued my friendship with him and at the same time I wanted the Boers to leave our country, there was no way I was going to sell him out. I had been taking care of Patrick Lyambo since 1971; that was the year I was introduced to him. Lyambo was determined that one day we were

going to be free from colonialism. He was a man of his words. He had a vision that time would come when we were not going to be hiding.

In 1974, when I was going to exile, I told my mother that I was going to cross the border, and she was really worried. She tried to convince me not to go, by saying that nobody ever returns back home, but I insisted and went. We left in a group and we ended up meeting a lot of our fellow countrymen at Ondjiva. I remember living with a train which dropped us near the border of Angola and Zambia. From Zambia we walked on foot to our destination; I cannot even remember how many days we walked to reach our destination. We were fortunate to meet another group in Oshatotwa. While in Oshatotwa we received military training. I must say we were excited having learned the tactics of the Oshivanda. The story about Oshivanda is kind of confusing and incredible; during those days there were rumours being spread

that Patrick Lyambo used to turn into *Oshivanda*, and at times he would disappear. It was a rumour that was going around, but basically after I received my training I realized that it was all rumours, and why there were such rumours. All that was required was training; we were also taught how to disappear without being noticed. Sometimes you could leave and the person watching would think you turned into a tree. It was all about training and nothing more.

After the training, I moved into the civilian camps whereby I later went for further studies. I attended afternoon classes at Anyang. I was taught by Ankama, Shimbode, Mbango, Kanime and the Hamutumbangela. In 1978 I went to Britain to study social studies, and after graduating, my colleague and I continued with our studies at the University of Liverpool in Britain. We studied tropical diseases for two years. Upon completion I went to work at Kwanza as a nurse.

The struggle was never an easy road at all, as many people suffered. For me what I experienced was the hunger at Oshatotwa. I also experienced the division of the party which was caused by Shipanga; the division almost prevented the country from getting independence, but he did not succeed.

After returning from exile, I just continued with my nursing career. Despite what I did for Patrick, I don't think I want to be rewarded, because I was doing my job. I was a public servant and I had to assist by all means that were possible. I think there are other people who suffered more than I did; people's homes and fields were destroyed, some were burnt to ashes. Others continued suffering harassment from the South Africans, who never wanted to leave our country. It will not be proper to be compensated because many other people suffered and were tortured by the Boers. Being Patrick's nurse in the north was not the end of our meeting, we again met in Zambia. He was telling the story that I was once his nurse during the struggle in Namibia, and the person he was talking to knew my parents.

I think I am fortunate to witness the independence of this country. When I was in Kwanza I suffered an asthma attack, and I thought I was not going to make it. But here I am, enjoying the fruits of our independence. I am still strong and working as a nurse. Thank You.

## Hishonaa, Selma T.

*Selma Tutaleni Hishonaa was born in Lubago in 1981. She moved with her mother to Luanda. She stayed with her mother in various camps, and sometimes she was left under child care or kindergarten when her mother was at school. She tells how she was raised by several people, and could not remember her real father or mother. She recounts how she has not been able to get proper papers because she was born in Angola, raised by various people in the camps and now cannot be accepted back into the communities in Namibia. She still believes that the Ministry of Veteran Affairs can look into her case and those of the other children born in exile.*

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My name is Selma Tutaleni Hishonaa I was born in Lubago in the year 1981. From there I moved with my mother because I was sick that is what she said; at least that is what she told me. I was sick when we moved to Luanda, then from there we stayed there I don't know for how long.

What I can remember was when we were going to Kwanza-Zulu. She left me with one lady at the kindergarten and her name was Meme Helena; and that was the name that we used to call her. This lady was the wife of Tate Kafita. While we were there she was taking care of more than ten of us, by herself. I can only remember the names of some of the other kids.

We stayed there when my mother was at school; then she came back to pick me up and we went to stay at Omulenga because the nurses were staying at Omulenga.

From Omulenga my mother went back to school and left me with my aunt, who was staying at Roykas. There were so many of us children staying at that same place; I don't know how many of us were there because we were so many.

One day, during the time we were in Roykas, we went to the camp; I was very small at the time, and some of the kids were very naughty so they set the dogs on us. As the dogs were attacking us, I was fighting with a dog, so when the dog was biting me I was also biting it back. I had to fight, until the dog was tired and left me. After that incident we went back to Auntie's house and after some time my mother came back, picked me up and took me to the Central Hospital for medication.

At the places we lived, there were no buildings like the ones we have here, because they were mainly camps for soldiers. That particular camp was for PLAN Fighters. We just went there and I don't know what we were looking for, I think it was just because we were very naughty.

Later, when I started going to school at the Education for All centre, I used to be the number two in my class, and my teacher liked me a lot. Her name was Miss Rosalia, but I cannot remember her surname. After I completed, I got a certificate from the Education for All but I don't have it here; but she commented on it that I was good in mathematics.

I can recall that we had two drivers, a man and a lady; we used to sing on our way to school. I can even remember the songs that we used to sing.

I witnessed something of the actual war at one time. I remember that my father had come to pick me up and I was now going to stay in Luanda. We heard gun shots,

and we could see red bullets in the sky; and as kids we used to go outside to see and go back into the house because we wanted to see what was happening. We were young and we didn't know what was happening.

After that incident my father left, and he just left me alone there with another lady who was taking care of me; and my mother sent another man to come and pick-me up and that was the time when we were coming back to Namibia. When we arrived here in Windhoek they took us to some place, I can remember that I was with Teclar.

We were told not to eat anything from the ground the people in charge of us insisted that we were not to pick up anything from the ground and eat it. I remember that one day Teclar picked up something and ate it. Immediately after that her tongue was red. She got scared and she ran away. We started to chase her; we caught her and took her to the parents and then she was beaten up. I remember that her mother was my mother's friend. I cannot remember her name right away, but that Teclar is now

the singer they call Tequila; but then her real name is Teclar.

At school my teacher was Miss Rosaria but then I cannot remember her surname. At that time our principal was Mr. Richard and the other teacher was Tate Mukomba. We used to sing about the teachers and the principal because they used to beat us. When we were at morning devotion, the PLAN fighters used to do an inspection, moving around the rows, and we used to stand very still in the rows, at attention.

When we were standing at attention, no one was allowed to move. One could not even scratch his or her head, if it was itching; If one happened to do that, then they beat us. We were just trying to be like soldiers; imitating them the way they do in their parades. The only thing I could do was to cry, I can remember with my tears running down my face, but then I could not do anything; I just had to stand at attention like that.

I don't really know if that was their way of training us, but they did that; and what I can remember is that when they said that it was time for devotion, then everyone had to be at attention and one could not move or scratch themselves. We just stood still, even if we felt like scratching our selves.

I cannot really remember well, but the classes were in a building and it had divisions to separate the older children from the younger ones. I cannot remember the number of children but we were quite a big number.

I remember that they used to give us some food, but I cannot remember its name in English; most of the things which were brought to us were contributed by people. People brought whatever they could give us, including food, clothes and other stuff. We were not buying anything, but we were just getting our needs from those people who were supporting the liberation struggle.

One thing that I want people of this country to remember is that I was raised by so many people; there were at least three ladies who raised me up. You know how we kids are like. If I *peed* on the bed and the person taking care of me happened to catch me and beat me, I ran away. In most cases, after running away, I went to an uncle of mine and hid there. I used to call him uncle because he was my mother's brother. So

whenever someone beat me I ran to him. At times when my mother beat me and I ran away, she knew that I always went to this uncle of mine, so she came there looking for me, saying, “Where is Selma?” So each time that I ran away she knew where to find me.

The other thing is that since we came back here we have been suffering a lot, because some of us, me in particular had not stayed with my mother that much, I usually stayed with my father. As a result we were raised by many different people, and as we moved from person to person, the rules in the different households were also different. What happened was that I was not staying with her for many years. I went to live with my mother after I completed my grade ten. I proceeded to complete grade 12 at Okule Senior Secondary School; I did not pass my grade 12, I failed.

So life after school is very difficult for me because I cannot find employment. Even when they advertising for work in the Police and the Namibian Defense forces, they are not taking me. So we are not copping with life, and until now we are just suffering like this.

If I was empowered I would really do everything for people like me, It is really difficult for us because our IDs are written that we are Angolan people. If you go looking for a job they say that there are no jobs for Angolans. Our Identity Cards are written that country of birth is Angola. We are discriminated because of that, and it is really not fair because my criticizing us unfairly and all that. It is just as if we were born here. They cannot just do things just like that to us; they have to look after us because even if I have got a father and a mother, I don’t know how they look like because I was brought up by many different people, you know.

That is my point because the lady who raised me, she raised other twenty, or even more children as well. I think that is why we did not have our parents love. Even if we have parents, we don’t know them that much.

Report of the Secretary of SWAPO Elders Council (FCD) as per their First Congress in Independent Namibia, from 23rd to 25th 1992, in Windhoek

At page 8 they said:

“However the young people should always be reminded that the independence of this country was fought for by men and women of strong will, commitment and determination. We would not want, when we are in our deep sleep, to be troubled with betrayal ... we want to see true patriots, a nation of Unity, a nation of people who are working hard, self-reliant.”

Now our parents, we are asking you, you have to listen to your hearts, never listen to those who are against us. At least find that place in your hearts and feet pity on us. Do whatever we are asking you to; please just listen to us and listen to your hearts and do what your heart says. Can you please just do this for us? Just that little favor

that we are asking you to do for us because we are really suffering.

Some of us are even sick; just last night we took someone to the hospital and we were coming from the Katutura Hospital after midnight. When we reached here at

the Veteran Affairs it was 0215 am. So please find it in your hearts and do something. Have pity on us and give us jobs because we are really suffering.

Now I want to tell you because now you are our parents. We will not back-up because we are also comrades. We were born in SWAPO, we grew up in SWAPO and we will die in SWAPO.

Thank You.

## Indongo, Peter

*Peter Indongo was a young revolutionary who left Namibia in his teens. Upon joining SWAPO in exile, he was trained in both Lubango and Russia as an intelligence officer. He executed his duties diligently and with absolute commitment until his return from exile. During his time in the struggle he operated as an intelligence officer in the Kavango Region and in later years was posted to Lusaka and Harare. His story vividly illustrates what the liberation struggle entailed with regard to planning and encounters with the enemy forces. He currently works for a security company in Windhoek.*

My name is Peter Indongo. I am currently working for Dynamics Security services. I have been working for the company since 2003. After independence I was employed by the Ministry of Defense as part of the intelligence. I started as a captain and I was heading a division. This was in Military intelligence. I held the rank of captain from 1990 to 1994. I was later promoted to a rank of major and was now heading a division that was responsible for intelligence evaluation. After becoming a major I stayed on until I resigned in 1997 and went to Nampower where I started heading their security Department. I was the Chief Security Officer there. I stayed there from 1997 to 2003. I resigned again from there to set up Dynamics Security Services.

I was born on 25th February 1959 in a small village called Osihenge near Oshakati, just as you go to the South West. I was born in a very big family. My father had three wives in the house and, my mother was the youngest. As her children, we were also the youngest of all our brothers and sisters in the house. My father is Indongo and my mother is Rauha Ratti Shiundja. During those times they did not have to use someone's surname so everyone had his or her own surnames.

I started school when I was 6 years old and, I went to different primary schools because of the extended family factor. Sometimes I was sent to my grandparents who were living in the next region. I started attending school there and every term they would say that I had to go and take care of so and so's cattle. Then I would move to another school. I think that I studied at about 5 primary schools and I can remember them. The primary schools included Onyimwandi, a catholic one, and Ekamba.

The moving around was not good but, then the discipline at that time, when you are told by your family to go and take care of so and so's cattle you had to do it.

I managed to finish my primary school after sometime and that was in 1975. I then moved to Oshakati Secondary school in 1977. In Form I the schooling was good and, I remember that I was always the first in the class. I was also the first in all the Form I classes, which were about 6 or so. I was also the first with the highest marks and, that was good. The same happened in 1978 when I was in Form II and in Form III when people had to split according to subjects. Although I did not want to study mathematics I was always the first in that subject. Despite the fact that the fees for the school were not so high, I still struggled very much to pay for the school fees, for my clothing, for soaps and all the hygienic things one needs to keep themselves clean. I only had one uncle who supported me. So when I related that to my former Vice

Principal and Principal who is now one of the professors at UNAM, he told me that he would find somebody who could support me through a grant or something. At the same time one concern that I had with that help was that the then Owambo Bantu Administration could help me. But at that time I had already joined SWAPO and had a membership card.

That time we had a friend who was staying at Elcin Church in Oshakati. We had a very good relationship with him. He is the one who told us that if we wanted to join SWAPO he could arrange the membership cards for us. He had contacts with one senior SWAPO member that time and I cannot remember whether he was staying in Oshakati or Ondangwa. They were the people who were recruiting members for SWAPO from the Owamboland area. So I said to him “Yes, yes I would like to join SWAPO” and this was because I had heard about SWAPO activities before I even came to Oshakati to attend school.

I knew that SWAPO was the only party that was going to bring liberation to our country Namibia. That time also we used to listen to the Voice of Namibia and it was transmitted or Broadcast from Luanda. We could understand the politics of that time. Therefore, I asked him to get me a membership card because it was costing about 3 dollars or 5 dollars. When I got registered and got my membership card, I decided to inform my colleagues from my village as well as some of my brothers.

I then travelled to the village with a friend and, that is when we started to issue membership cards to my brothers and my other colleagues. From that time we started being together during the weekends and in the afternoons. I remember we used to listen to a lot of songs and we would also sing along. I remember one day we were found there by one of the soldiers, I think he was Ndjomba’s son. One of my friends was arrested for this. Apparently while we were singing this side the others were listening to us on the other side of the take away. So they came and arrested him. Yes, he was arrested just for singing that.

So they took him to his father where he was just shown some South African movies as well another Bantustan film showing that those people had already gained independence. They then released him the next day. I think the reason for showing the movies was to show that as a SWAPO member trying to bring about independence only to Owamboland through SWAPO and other communist organizations, it was the wrong way of getting independence, as it could result in it not happening like it did in a certain country during that time or like in other South African states. So he was supposed to avoid those communist things. They were saying that you must avoid those Communist things that are coming from Angola and Zambia.

So I got my card and I continued with our mobilization in and around our Secondary school. They used to come to our room there and we used to have our meetings. In 1978 I was elected as a prefect. Then I had good reasons to go from room to room talking to people. Through that way I could also inform them that there was a need for us to join SWAPO when we were inside the country. Those of us who wanted to go and fight outside could go because we had contacts that were helpful.

I did not personally have that but certain people had contacts. So they knew who to contact to go when they had people who wanted to go outside the country. As for me, at that time I did not know a lot of people and, I had never even seen a PLAN fighter before. I only used to see them in photos because they had photos. Some of them were photographed near Okongo in eastern Ovamboland.

Now there was this feeling of being more active in politics, of going abroad and then becoming one of the fighters. Then on the other hand there was also this fear of being associated with the Bantu Administration, especially if I accessed any fees from them. So I decided that it was time for me to just go and fight. I knew that the education that I was getting was not good quality education since it was the Bantu education. Even if I went on studying, I would not have good quality education. I knew that if I went into exile I would not go out there to study because I was fed-up with all this. I also knew that if I continued with my studies and with this colonialism continuing then there would be no one to help bring independence. We had to go out and bring independence so that our brothers would be able to enjoy better education.

At that time I was particularly concerned more about education than political independence at our level. So I started asking Victor and the others how I could go and join SWAPO abroad. Since they knew my performance at school they told me that I could not go then and that I just had to continue with my studies so that I could be somebody in society as well as be able to play my role in the country even

in politics.

I asked my Uncle Ishmael how I could become a medical doctor since he was a chief clerk in Oshakati hospital; he was more senior to the nurses and; he knew all the medical staff. He then introduced me to one doctor, I think it was Hamata. He was the first black medical doctor in Namibia.

Dr. Hamata then told me which subjects I needed to study well. These were particularly Mathematics, Biology and English. Lucky enough I was already good in those subjects at that time because my marks were ranging between 80% and 100%.

So I continued with my studies up to Form III. However, I still had a problem when I was visiting Dr Hamata at the clinic. I realized that the white doctors were treated differently whilst Hamata was treated almost like a nurse although he was a fully qualified medical doctor. I thought to myself, this is how I would be treated when I came back. I wonder whether the authorities would allow you to set-up a private practice during that time. Maybe nobody would come to the place after all and they would probably question the black man's ability to do so.

In June 1979, I decided to leave for exile since I had started losing interest. On many occasions the teacher asked me what was wrong with me and, I would just say that I was okay or that I had a headache. Yet in my heart I would be thinking or singing the song *Shitoveni, Shitoveni (atembo)*. I was no longer interested in studying. There was even a proposed tour to Walvis Bay where those from my class who could

afford it went. However, I could not afford the trip.

I then told one of my teachers, Maria Hawala who is Joseph Hawala's wife that I wanted to go but I did not have money. Thereafter, she said that there was no problem because she would tell her colleagues during their staff meeting. Yes at a staff meeting, but then they had an Afrikaans name for it. She said she would tell her colleagues and they would see what they could do. The staff included the Shomberos and others who were good guys. So when the others were told about my plight they said they would assist me. I cannot remember how much money I went with but I was one of the people in the group who had enough money to cater for everything I needed.

So we travelled together with Mrs. Maria and the others but then there were road blocks when we went through the road from Owamboland to Walvis Bay as well as at Oshivelo. At one of these roadblocks my colleague and I were separated from the others and we were questioned. That time I didn't have an ID card but I had temporary paper which we were given while waiting for the ID card to come.

Both my colleague and I had temporary papers so we were separated from the others and at that time I was still young. They were asking us questions about the terrorists in Owamboland, SWAPO and other things. In the evening when we arrived in Walvis Bay, we were accommodated at one of the Primary schools close to the grave yard for the blacks.

I don't know whether we were fortunate or unfortunate because the next morning corpse of a black person was found there and the people who saw it said it was dumped there by white policemen. They had burnt it so that it could not be recognized and when we went there to see it I was very furious about this. When I thought of what the other white soldiers were telling us on our way from Owamboland again I could not bear it.

So when we went to the compound in the night, we met some of the workers there and these were people who were from the villages in the North. We started talking about the situation there and how they could join SWAPO. They told us that they did not want to join SWAPO inside the country but wanted to go outside to fight. I then thought of my decision because I also wanted to go into exile and I did not want to go back to school. They also said that they could come to Owamboland after a few weeks to arrange so they could go. They then asked us if it was okay. We then returned to Owamboland after the tour. When we went back to school I only stayed there for two days and contacted those guys who were working in Walvis Bay. I had already packed my things. They had a small car which could carry about 8 to 10 people if you overloaded it. Then we decided that we would definitely go but then the only question now was where to get somebody who could lead the way from here through the borders of Angola.

However there was one guy who used to stay there and he said that he was a PLAN fighter although he was a UNITA soldier. The reason why he said this was because he just wanted to take people into UNITA camps in Angola and so we were very unlucky that the first person whom we approached was him. So we arranged our small car. It

was a sedan. Then we hit the road. From Oshakati we took the direction of Odibo because this place was very, very close to the Namibia and Angola borders.

We were told that if we went there we would definitely find PLAN fighters. So this UNITA guy just took us somewhere to the Eastern side of Odibo but not directly to Odibo. There we were lucky because we met a lady who was from SWAPO who then quarrelled with the UNITA guy that there was no way he could take us in that direction because with that direction we would only find UNITA and the South African Defense Force.

Now we were in-between the two people and we did not know whom to believe. We then decided to test this lady and that is when she said that she would not take us but would give us a small boy who would take us to a house at Odibo where we could stay and also that we could tell the owner of the house that we wanted to go and join SWAPO in Angola. In addition to this, she told us that this man would find soldiers for us and that we did not have to take the other direction. We began thinking where we would leave the car and that was when we decided to give it to the UNITA guy so he could take it home to our parents.

At that time we did not know that he was a UNITA guy because during those days UNITA used to tell people that they were ready to assist those who want to go and join SWAPO in exile. When you fall into their hands it was very difficult or impossible to run away from them.

This is the reason why we had many Namibians who happened to be in the ranks of UNITA before, during and after independence. It is because there were people like the other UNITA guy who would come here telling those lies to our people to join UNITA by force or by tricks. They could not even escape from UNITA until Savimbi was killed.

We then went to Odibo. I can still remember that there was one man called Kambala. This is because we spent one evening at his house and the PLAN fighters came. We decided to cross the border the same night they came. We were joined by other students from different schools and other places when we crossed the border into Angola. So this is how I went into exile. I did not take any bag with me even though I had packed. I gave that bag to one of my cousins from our village and told him that I was going somewhere and that he had to take it to my father and explain to him that I had left. However, I told him that he was to do so only if I did not come back in a week's time.

My cousin asked me whether I was going into exile to join SWAPO. I told him that I was not and that he had to do what I had asked him to. He then said "What if I want to go there as well?" I asked him where he wanted to go. He responded by saying "Where you are going". I then told him that he could not go where I was going and that he just had to do what I was telling him to do. Despite the fact that I had played a very big role defending him when he first joined SWAPO or when he got his membership card, I was reluctant to go with him since I had never heard him saying

that he wanted to go. He was a card caring member and so I was not sure whether I had to tell him.

My greatest fear was that if I told him that we were leaving before I found out when exactly we were to do so, he could tell someone. You know you could never determine what could happen to you when you mentioned something to somebody, especially if such information was to end up in the hands of the South African police. Therefore, I decided not to tell him that. I can remember very well that I only went with a few things and these were two long trousers that I put on just before we left as well as three pairs of socks. So when I bought the boots, I decided to buy a bigger size so that they would fit since I had put on three pairs of socks. I also took a few t-shirts and vests with me. My colleagues also did the same. The reason why we did this was because we wanted to avoid being caught by the South African Police or troops. If we happen to meet them in Cuka shops whilst buying something we would tell them that we were in that area only to visit someone.

So they would definitely know that you had the intention of going into exile once you carried bags and went in other direction. So that was all that I took. We then went to a certain place but I cannot remember the name of the place. However, this place was close to the Namibian and Angolan borders inside Angola. We stayed there with the soldiers. These were the PLAN fighters for about a week. We had one small boy from Walvis Bay whose parents were already in Angola. The boy had problems walking in the bush so we took turns to carrying him. We continued on foot until Namakunde.

We were not only boys in the group but also girls. Some of them came from other secondary schools and villages from the North. Now the group had become quite big because we were approximately thirty. By the time we reached Namakunde we were now sixty or seventy of us. Others came from other directions. We only stayed for a few days at Namakunde. There was little food there because there were FAPLA soldiers and, these other civilians who came from Namibia.

At that time SWAPO soldiers used to pretend to be FAPLA so that they could take care of us as well and be able to return to the Border line. So now we were told that there was not enough food and that we had to go to this other place. The place was named after a certain tree which produces fruits and it is found in Owamboland. They would send us there every morning so that we could go and eat some of those fruits since they were already ripe at that time. I also remember that we used to have the same meal for breakfast, lunch and supper.

Those fruits were not good for us but we just had to eat them so that we could survive. Consequently, some of the girls would cry and some of the boys would say that they wanted to go back home but, then there was nothing else we could do. We could only comfort ourselves by saying that we did not care and that the situation was just a temporary one. We ate the fruits for two or three days and then they brought us rice on the fourth day so we could cook but there was no relish.

We were then taken to Ondjiva which is further north. There we stayed in one of the prisons because they said they did not have anywhere else to accommodate us. It was not in the cells but in some strong rooms. During the day we would be in the yard which was in an open area but with very high walls around it. We were actually very close to the other people who were serving their sentence in prison but, we could only talk to them through the windows or the bars in the absence of the guards, or maybe when they would be eating or doing something because they could punish you severely if they saw or found you talking to prisoners.

Although we stayed there for a few days, I suffered because I can remember that I did not have a blanket or anything to cover myself with and, at night one would just recline against the wall to keep oneself warm since it was around July at the time.

One night while we were sleeping one of the FAPLA soldiers came in with someone with a pulled face. They took me but at the time I did not know why they were taking me. When we went into another room, we found one officer there and that time I could not recognize the different ranks that were there since they put on different badges on their shirts. The officer who pointed at us was the one whom we had left our car with in Namibia. Whilst he was sitting, the other FAPLA officers were standing and they asked me whether I knew the guy but I just looked at him and though I knew him, I did not say anything. He then said that he knew me very well and that I came from Owamboland. They then asked him where he knew me from and that was when he said that we were schooling together. I was surprised with that and so I looked at him and asked him why he had said that. He was the one who had told us that he was a PLAN fighter and had directed us to the border.

When they asked me I told them that I only knew him because we had met him earlier before we crossed the border and, had told us that he was a SWAPO fighter.

He then directed us to come to the border although one lady told us not to take this direction. I also told them that we gave him our car so that he could take it back to our house but that he could pick up anybody else who wanted to come here because that was the main purpose of the car, and thereafter could take the car back to our parents.

Now I remember that they gave this guy a shambock and then they put this other liquor or something in front of him. After some time the guy was very drunk and they started questioning him again. That was when he said he was a UNITA soldier and that he was just trying to bring us to their camps from the border area.

He was also asked about his other colleague and he said that he was at Omene and, that he was also trying to get people from there. After this questioning we left and moved further north until we came close to Shangongo River. However, Shangongo Bridge had been destroyed by the South African forces so there was no way for us to cross further north. We stayed there at one of the camps for about two or three months because we had to wait until the Shangongo Bridge was repaired so that we could cross. This place was called Makutu Camp.

I remember we were many there and it looked like one of the guys was the camp commander. I also remember they started training us in some military tactics and

other things like dismantling and assembling fire arms such as the AK47. One of the trainers was David Pohamba who is currently the Angolan Minister of Defence. Then after the bridge was reconstructed we were taken to Lubango. The bridge was reconstructed by the Cubans.

I have mentioned a lot of things that happened when we were in Ondjiva, but then when we were in this camp there was water shortage because the shift well that we dug was very far from where the base was. You see the base was for example where we are now, and the well as far as Donkerhoek here in Katutura. So we had to walk up there very, very early like around 4 o'clock in the morning. We needed sticks and drums so we would carry the drum on the sticks and it would be the two of us carrying the drum. We would bring the water and put it in the kitchen there. We could not make fire there because the South African air force would just bomb you as soon as they saw smoke, so it was very tiring especially for somebody who has just come from school and had never really gone through such an experience. We could only eat once a day and we ate only porridge with no relish. For the period of about three months that we were there, it was only once or twice that some meat or beef was brought to the camp.

We were around five or six in our group. But we were very determined and we were prepared for any type of suffering. However, the problem was with the kids and the women who were there. There were also some very young guys who had come there because they wanted to go to school, and they were always complaining. If you were to be sent to go and fetch water with one of them then you will suffer because he would not be able to carry the container. These kids were always complaining and making demands. They wanted some medicine, nice food and they would be telling you stories as to how they used to eat Katete and other good things at school. We felt sorry for them because not having such things was really not a problem to us.

In the liberation struggle, the way of providing information was not straight forward. Things could not be explained the way they were. For example, the young people in the camp could not be told that the bridge which we were supposed to use had been destroyed by the South Africans, because such information would demoralize them. Instead, we were told that we were where we were for training, and after finishing the training we would be equipped with fire arms and then we would start fighting. They would tell us that they went through the same situation when they first came, so we should persevere.

Apparently we were just there on a temporary basis and we were on our way to Lubango. Because of the living conditions at that camp some of the guys were regretting why they had decided to go there. But some of us were thinking that when we finished training we would get our AK47s and then go back. We were even thinking that we would go back and we would be able to drive some of those cars from the South Africans. But when we heard rumors that the bridge had been destroyed and it was being reconstructed, we started asking questions to some of the soldiers who were familiar to us. They told us that the place we were in was just a temporary camp,

and we could not be sent back to the border after such short training, so we had to go to Lubango for proper training. I said to myself that was fine because I did not care about the suffering, since it was only temporary and, we were proceeding to somewhere better. After three months we proceeded to Lubango.

From Lubango we went to another big camp called Ongulumbashe where there were hundreds if not thousands of people who were gathered there and, all of them were coming from Namibia. This was the place where people were divided at the parade into different categories. The kids were sent to school and those who were eighteen years and above had to go for military training.

We did not have any identification documents, so when people looked at me they thought I was very young, and decided I should go to school. I was twenty years old at that time, and I told them that I was twenty. They then asked me if I wanted to go for the training. I answered that I wanted to. We were told that those who were over 18 should go for training and I was going for training. Although I was supposed to go to school I went with the group that was going for military training.

We arrived at Tobias Hainyeko camp and the food there was also not so good at that time but we did not care much because we knew that we were only there for six (6) months after which we would go back to the battle field. The training was fine. I was selected to go and do reconnaissance. That was something that I had been thinking about because I had heard so much about the PLAN reconnaissance guys who move around the villages there in civilian clothes carrying AK47. So that is the type of profession that I wanted when I went there. Lucky enough I was given the chance.

Of course when people were gathered at the parade, the Chief of Reconnaissance was the first to select his or her people. While walking in front of the lines he would just say “you go there”. I think they chose the people by analyzing their physical appearance and looks. He would check how a person looked like, and then he would decide whether the person would be a good spy. I came to know about this after I had learnt the tricks, at that time I thought that I was lucky because I didn’t know what he was looking for when he looked at us. Finally we went to the reconnaissance companies and we started training.

Training in reconnaissance was normally much tougher than in other military fields. Most of the training that we did was done at night when it was raining, cold or while other people are sleeping.

Towards the end of the training, say after four (4) months, we really had rest because that was when other groups like infantry, communication and medical were going to start. We were the ones in front, and we had to go and check the sites and arrange where the water could be dropped and what foodstuff could be found in what place. So it was a tough but quite an amazing training.

The most interesting part of the training was that one had to find the enemy before they find him or her. So first all we had to know the topography of the area. We had to learn this theoretically and then physically go out for practice. What we did was we hid or the instructors hid things somewhere and we were given a sketch from which

to find it. They could also put booby traps like bombs where those things were hidden. Of course these were not real bombs; they were dummies which could explode with smokes or splash some mud on your face. But that was a challenge to us. We were supposed to find ways of getting around the object and diffuse it. When a bomb was detected, it had to be diffused. So we were trained both in what we called military engineering, sabotage, radio communication on its own, first aid, and topography so that we would not get lost. Sometimes they dropped us somewhere in the bush without us knowing where we were.

In Tobias Hainyeko training camp the training sometimes involved going into the enemy camps. What we used to do is that for example one night we had to abduct a person from the camps and take him or her somewhere in the bush at night. At that time I was deputy section commander of our group, so the commander would give instructions. The plan at times was that, we are given a mission to capture, and normally they would say “capture a South African soldier”.

So what we did was to go into Hainyeko training centre, find somebody asleep, carry that person with the whole bed, tie him/her up, and put something on his or her mouth so that they would not make noise. The reason was that if they made noise we could be shot because there were people with guns out there. It was only the camp commander and the reconnaissance officer who knew the plan. So it was up to us to choose where we were going to capture that person.

Sometimes we went to one of the infantry companies and we by-passed all of the trenches. The trenches always had someone on duty. I was with two other guys on this mission, which was to identify the weakness of the trenches. The people in the trenches always had what we called a password and if they asked you for their company's password, you would not know since each company has its own password. If they asked you and you did not know it, you could say something like Njamba or Kamero but if it was not the right word, they could shoot you. So we had to find out about the password or signal first. These are usually given at the parade. Two of us would pretend to be looking for our friend who could have gone to that camp in the afternoon and then we would end up at the parade where we would have the opportunity to hear the password. Thereafter, we would go back to our camp and give the report and, again in the evening we would go and check when the whole group would start. We had to move very swiftly without making much noise and pass through the trenches.

They could not detect us as we passed by because of the way that we walked. We had to put the grass here and there, for example, one could take grass and then tie it on their boots in a certain way so that they did not have to make noise even if they had to step on something hard. So that was what we did in order to pass through.

We went towards one of the tents for the ladies and we were using signals only. These were the sounds of animals that usually move around in the night, like crickets. We made the sounds using our hands and you know near the river there are little creatures that make different sounds there.

So we used those signals and when we entered the tent, we chose our target, and then we just lifted the bed while the person is sleeping. We would carry the bed and when we were now a few meters away, we would tie a cloth around the person's mouth, tie their hands and their legs and then we carry the person. We carried the person through the trenches but in a different direction, through the bush before we entered our base, which was a temporary base, where we were camping.

Unfortunately somebody reported that I was missing. My name came up when someone from our company reported to the officers on duty that somebody was missing from this company. A roundup was done. But we were there in the bush, because our camp commander and our officers knew what was happening. Then the next morning we brought the captured person to the headquarters and then in turn we were praised for the good performance and they said that it was excellent work. Unfortunately the other group failed but ours was very successful in that mission.

That was one of the training that we got and it was very challenging to be in the reconnaissance.

The other area was that we learnt all the trades so that when we went into the bush, we could do everything. We were also trained in all types of fire arms, both those that were used by the PLAN fighters and those that were used by the South African Forces so that in a case where you find yourself in a situation where you went into their camps and you were not having any fire arm, you could try and steal a fire arm from the South Africans and then use it. For instance if they were on duty and they were sleeping, you could just take it and then use it. If you went there while you were armed it is possible that you would raise alarm.

However, these were the basics. When we finished training after those seven months I was selected to be the reconnaissance instructor so I could not go to the battle field any more since I had to stay behind training the new recruits from Namibia. I trained them for about four months and then I was sent for further training in Moscow, Russia, for intelligence training. This was towards the end of 1980. We trained there for the whole year and it was a very advanced training because we were trained to operate both in the bush and in urban areas. We were trained in fighting using all types of modern communication techniques.

We received training in psychology and other aspects of intelligence, some of which were highly classified, but we finally completed the training. I remember at one time we trained with the South Africans from Umkhonto Wesizwe and there were also people from other countries. The training was conducted in English but for some of my colleagues English was a problem. People who went there and didn't have even a grade 10 were struggling to understand things and therefore the two or three of us who had some secondary education had the responsibility of explaining to our colleagues after class.

We tried to explain what we learnt meant but then it was very difficult for them because we could not find words or terminology in Oshowambo, for some of the subjects so we had to repeat things in the manner the trainer was teaching us.

There also we had to for practical training in cities like Moscow. We were dropped somewhere and given a sketch and then we were asked to meet in such a street at such a time. It was difficult for those who were semi- illiterate because they could land into trouble, so sometimes they were excluded from some exercises to avoid having them getting lost and putting their lives in danger there.

The most interesting experience was the running of the intelligence networks and that was the most challenging part of intelligence. In simple terms we called it network intelligence, starting with how you identify people, that is to say that this person can work with me in intelligence, in the first place. You would meet three, four or five people, for example but then you only need one or two of them. We had to go through the process of choosing the best among them, how to train them and how to manage the relationship through the right communication. All these relationships had to be managed. So this was the most challenging thing which those who failed did not master well right from the beginning, that was from the theory to the practice.

After the training we would use people who worked for the South African police but also it was an important way of avoiding arrest or assassination because this was a risk relationship and a dangerous way of carrying out these tasks. If the South Africans for example found out but they could not find out who was actually giving out information they could bobby trap that brief case.

In such cases one should be well versed with explosives so that when this brief case comes to me, for instance, I don't just open it. There must be ways in which I can check it properly before I open it so that I am safe. I must also be able to know that there is now a change of behaviour of the person I am using that shows that she might be a double agent now. And there should be a way and a method of cutting her off so that there would be no more relationship. So there should be a method of cutting her off safely. Those were the challenges that we had when we were training especially for our colleagues who could not read and write very well. Anyway we managed to finish the course, and I was always the first one to go when we finish something.

When we finished our training, I think we were three or four from Tobias Hainyeko training centre who were reconnaissance instructors and had become intelligence officers.

When we came back to Hainyeko I think I slept there for only three days and I was told that I had to report to Ngulumbashe, Lubango and the next day I should report to Shamutete.

I arrived there and joined other colleagues. I however I had this weight that I had picked up from Moscow and the group that I joined going to Kavango had already done their training for weeks and they had adapted. So I didn't have any time to train physically. Then I was told that I was going to Kavango with them to become the intelligence officer for the whole of Kavango. I was expected to set-up an intelligence network there and I had to run it and feed specified intelligence information as needed. But I didn't know Rukwangari and I didn't know any language in Kavango.

Language is part of the intelligence network requirements when you operate in a particular area, so I accepted because I liked challenges like that, and I went.

I knew that it could have taken time before I could really send information back to the headquarters because the preparations in the beginning were tough due to the language and cultural barriers. If you go somewhere you should know how they sit or else you will sit the wrong way amongst people. For me that is intelligence because that was how I was trained.

But then we said fine, and we walked from Shamutete. At that time the situation was very dangerous for trucks to move close to the borders and that was at the beginning of 1982. So we had to walk from Shamutete to Kavango. That group was lead by Kamushinda and I think you have heard about him; we walked for about a week to reach the area next to Rundu.

The enemy was everywhere and especially the patrols and the ambushes were the main problem because we couldn't walk straight we were just walking in zigzag formations with the reconnaissance in front there and then they would provide certain information that the South African troops were at this or that village. Then we could take alternative route to avoid unnecessary battles which could exhaust the soldiers before reaching their intended destination. Some of them were going to Kavango and some to Mangeti. The last group was going to Grootfontein.

We then proceeded from Shamutete to northern Namibia and then we came through to the border. But some of our group members were detected by the enemy reconnaissance planes that patrol along the borders. But the first contact with the enemy came at a river near Amukongo in Ohangwena Region. When we arrived there I was little exhausted, because I had just come back from Moscow and I was not physically fit for walking and running, but then the commander decided that I should be close to him and so we were in the group of five or six. It was him and his body guard, the medical attendant, Radio Communication guy, and I. He said that I must not carry heavy items like him but then there were some compulsory things that we were supposed to have, like our magazine, ammunition, water bottle, first aid kit and food. I was spared from carrying spare ammunition for the group because he thought that I might have problems with mobility. But anyhow I took one bazooka and a rocket, and then we left.

When we arrived at one place near the border I felt that I was tired. I could feel that I my ankle was swelling but I kept going. While we were there at around midday the Caspiars came. Apparently they just came after following our foot prints which they saw from somewhere as we came from Shamutete. Unfortunately for us it was a windy day, so we couldn't really hide from the Caspiars because we couldn't hear them from a distance. The moment we heard something was when one of the soldiers called others, saying that "they are there"

In that group I was the only one who had never shot at any real enemy. We could get targets, and even in Moscow where we were trained to shoot running targets we were shooting at papers and computer targets. I was the only guy there who had never

experienced a battle while all the other people had some experience. But immediately we heard that the Caspiars were after us the commander gave instructions to get in the line and get ready to open fire while the other two or three guys were hiding the spare ammunition.

They were hiding them in the ground by digging. They had to dig a hole and then bury them while we were defending and had to report once they had finished. They were to do this by giving a signal to the commander and he would say retreat. And that is what happened. Now while those guys were busy hiding the ammunition, including one land mine we were firing at the enemy. We were only firing with small guns and machine guns.

But the Caspiars had heavy machine guns on them but then they were not sure about what we had, but they also just started shooting. We shot at each other for about two to three minutes and then we heard a small air plane, the ones that can drop bombs. However the commander continued to instruct us to fire until the other guys gave a signal that they were finished.

Burying the guns was meant to protect us and to ensure that we can fight easily and when we shoot we really meant to shoot to kill. But as I said when we shoot we were buying time so that our guys could hide the spare ammunition, and as soon as they did that, we had to run. When they finished, that was the time that the small air plane came and it started to drop some bombs. Apparently around us there were some horses, and because the air plane was flying low, they just came running through our line and through the Caspiars, and this gave us a chance to run away because it became very dusty.

I remember that there was another guy Shalambo who was calling on me saying: Shinomona, Shinomona to your right, to your right. He had told me in advance that in case we happen to fall into an ambush or we get involved in a contact I should just listen to what he was telling me. If he said cover, I had to go and take cover at a nearby bush or trench and if he said fire I had to fire and if said run I had to run. "Run to your right, to your left, because if I say east or west you will not know which one is east, west or what ever. If I say right so you will quickly think oh this is my right and you can run". So this guy was saying this to me when we left that spot. But then with the situation which we were in I could not hear his voice and then I just ran in my own direction.

So I kept running and running and then going through the bushes because the main problem here was the planes, those small planes, because those who were in the Caspiars had got off and came running after us, they were now on foot. I believe that their main purpose was to capture some of us alive but then we managed to run away. I ran until I got to one of the villages there but I was very tired. Then around 4 or 5 pm I arrived at that village but I was very tired. I still had my AK 47 and my food and then I hid myself and waited until it was dark before I went into the village. As I said I was alone at this time. Now every body was on his own. So when I got in the village I asked for some food I got some.

This was in Owamboland and I think that village is called Okakango. The villagers had heard the gun shots and the small bombs that were dropped by the small air planes so when it was now sunset I just moved slowly into the krall of the cattle and there were some kids that were milking the cows I think. I just went close and I greeted them and then asked them whether there was food. I was wearing my uniform. I asked them whether they had seen the South African troops, the Koevoets or anybody there. They said they had not, but then they only heard gun shots and they thought there was a battle at a direction of Xaiva.

They asked me if I was coming from that direction and if I was alone, and I said that was where I was coming from and I was with the other colleagues, but I did not know where they were. So after they finished milking they took me to their elders who talked to me later. I think they were trained to identify whether I came from SWAPO or a part of the South African Koevoets.

At the village they prepared food for me and after I eating I said bye-bye to them I went into the bush. They asked me where I was going and I told them I was going to try to find my colleagues. They asked me if I knew where to look for them, because I appeared to be new to the area. I told them that I had stayed in that area before, but I had gone to Angola recently. But I was lying. I didn't want to stay there because I knew that the South Africans might come there or maybe some of them were working for the South Africans, and then they might tell them that there was a new comer there and then I could get caught.

So I left and I went to the other village the next day. But the moment I was receiving Oshikundu from one lady, I just saw from stone throw away a member of the South African soldiers, and I ran into the bush. But I think they were trying to get us and at times they dropped those soldiers further into the direction where we had run. Maybe they were trying to search for those who survived. I ran and I hid in the bush, and stayed in there for the whole day.

During the night I went into another village this was called Omandjonga. There I did get help and it was again food and I went back into the bush and the next day I went to another village called Oshima. At that village I was again checking in the bush whether I could see any foot marks of my colleagues and you know those guys at that time they can walk in those things that have grass and you won't notice that somebody have walked there. But then I was just walking like I am in town and that is why one of the villagers there told me that, "I have seen your foot prints there in the bush, don't walk like that" Then I said, "What?" The villagers knew more about guerrilla tactics than we thought.

Then I went to one of the headman's homestead, he was the village headman and then he said, "Oh! One of your colleagues was here last night and he went back, he went back to check on one of you there because one of you died at Xaiva. Were you there as well?" Apparently one of us died in battle. He said "They were saying that it was a light complexion guy, well fed and they said that maybe it was the one who had never participated in a battle before." The description fitted me. The headman said

“He went back to see what he could do but we have also heard that the local people have seen him, those who have been there. Okay he has passed.” and I said, “Okay, but when he went did he say whether he was going to come back here or what?” He told me, “No he did not say anything but he just went back to identify the deceased properly. Although he is good, he will ask the militants and they will tell him exactly how he looks like.” Okay, that was Sairamo, the one that was saying right, left, who went back to see what happened to other soldier.

Now I was stuck. Our mission was to go to Kavango but now we were in this area because we were disturbed and ran into a battle. So when Sairamo came back apparently from the Xaiva, he came to tell the village headman that it was Peter who had died because the villagers had told him how he looked like. But the one who died was Chirunbu. He was also light in complexion. He does not really look like me but it was only the color of the skin and also he was severely damaged on this part of the head and they could not identify him properly. They decided that since the person was already buried we should proceed.

This group was not my group but it was another group. In my group we were only six at that time but when we crossed the border, one group of twenty goes like this, through this point and one group of twenty maybe go through this other point and one group of may be five like ours, the one which is now the headquarters crossed at yet another point. It happened that it was only our group that was involved in such that battle. The other groups managed to cross and they were going to Kavango as well. They were coming through Kavango to Kanyeke and Grootfontein because from this side you could not pass through Oshivero and those places. But in this area there was also a big unit of South Africans troops, which in this case was a mobile one and they had vehicles. So it was good that we went through Kavango. So my colleagues proceeded while I was still looking for them but they were assuming that I was the one who was killed.

They had thought about the whole thing and decided that Shilumbu knew Kavango and he would still go there because he had been there before, but Peter was dead. Had they known that I was alive they could have waited for me, because they knew that I didn't know the area, but then they proceeded. Now I was in the Eastern Owamboland there looking for them. Just imagine that it was January, so January and February I was there and it was only in March that I managed to come in contact with other PLAN fighters who were operating in that area and they were from a particular detachment. So for three months I was in the area and no one said anything about my colleagues being on this side of the Mahangu field. They just did not say anything. But then if they got a group they will tell them that there is one soldier who is there and he says that he is a SWAPO guy who survived a battle and he is looking for his colleagues. But the problem was the moment a villager left me sleeping, when I woke up I never remained in that same place, so when other guys came looking for me they would only find foot prints. That was the reason we could not find each other. The locals were trying to help me to find my colleagues but I could not trust them. After a

few weeks I was given an overall, a blue one, by one of the headmen. In fact it was one of the headman's sons who gave me an overall. So I hid my AK and I my other things, and they gave me some bows and arrows. I just looked like an ordinary village boy.

During my three months stay there I sometimes went with the boys when they were going to herd the cattle. I would go with them although I was not among them. But then I was just there, but any person seeing me from a distance would think I was a boy just like the others. But just in case things don't go well and the Caspiars come without any warning then I could be in trouble, so I made sure that if anything should happen or if we bumped into the South African troops, then I would be safe somewhere.

So now I was in my blue overall looking for my colleagues and I was told that those going to Kavango had already left and now I had to look for those who operate in the area. The problem was that we could not find each other and that was because I was not sure who was who. Later Martin Shalih was the Chief of Operations was then informed.. He was told that apparently Peter is alive and the guy who was shot dead was Shilumbu. Apparently Peter is in the area looking for the PLAN fighters, but he is very illusive and he was not easy to find. Then he said that I must go back to Angola, even if I could not find any other colleague, and then he would see what he could do. The message came through but I said I came with a mission to go to Kavango and I was going to Kavango.

One day the headman told me that some of my colleagues who were operating in the area were coming to his house the next day and they wanted to speak to me. I said that it was okay, but I was not sure whether they had not been captured by the South Africans so how would I know if they were still SWAPO. May be they would now be coming from the enemy camp!

Then I arranged with him that the next morning after they had arrived he should come to a specific tree. It was a dry tree, a dead tree. I asked him to come with an axe, and start chopping the tree, and then I would be there. Then after the guys arrived, the old man came to the tree and started to chop. There were three of them; one was a platoon commander and his body guard and another soldier. They were waiting at a distance at a tree near the house.

But I was on the other side of the mahangu field and he kept chopping there at the tree, chopping while these guys were just looking at the old man. While they were doing that I was just standing at a distance and I had a hand grenade with me. I greeted them and they replied. But they were not giving much attention to me, they were just looking at the old man because I was in civilian clothes and not the blue overall they were told. I was just in a shorts and a funny shirt.

The old man got tired of chopping on the tree and came back talked to the PLAN fighters while I was standing there and watching and when they talked to me I just said that I was looking for some cattle. The old man said that it seemed the guy did not want to come out he was tired of chopping on the tree as he had told him to do, but then he must be nearby. But I was just standing there.

Then they said it was okay and they would tell the other group to move forward. When I heard that I said that it was me they were looking for, but I wanted to know which group they were talking about. They said that there was another group they had left there, and they had come to fetch me so that I could go with them. But I asked them how I would know if they were SWAPO fighters. They said it was from how they were equipped and the way they were moving. Then I told them we could go, but they should walk in front of me and I was following behind, and if they touched their guns the wrong way they would be gone.

At that moment the old man was shaking. Then I said we should move and then they started to walk and they were there in front some twenty to thirty meters depending on the density of the bushes and I was behind them. Then we went for about five or ten km and then we reached the other group. This was a big group and then I called one from the group and I told him that you have to put your AK on sling. So the commander said that just do that and then go. So he put it on sling and then he came. He then said, “There is one other medical person that you might know there his name is Kambonde he was there and he recently came here”

Again the group was very big to have been captured. To assemble people of a group as many as twenty and all to have been captured is very difficult and even the South Africans know that you will be inviting trouble because they can attack you and you cannot control them.

And then Kambonde came he was happy and then he said that “I heard that Peter is around here and he is missing and then I didn’t know that it was you.” Oh I was now happy and then I said we could now go to the place where I had hidden my AK; we were given other two young men and we went. We collected my AK and the other things and then I came to join the group.

I was later told that there was one group that was going to Kavango but it was still inside Angola but near the border. And then I said then I would not go back to Angola as he had instructed but I would go to Shinota, just inside Angola to join the other group and then go to Kavango.

I went to Shinota inside Angola and then I came back with that group and again we went through the same road as before. Then we crossed Kure and we were in that bush area and it took two days to cross the whole area between the major villages. We arrived in the area of the border between Ohangwena and Kavango and we were intercepted again somewhere near Omana. But we were prepared to fight this time and we had a different commander. This time, lucky enough, when the Caspiars came there, we had already got information that the group that they were following there had been joined by the other one from the south west. So the strength was too much for them and they had to radio communicate to Ondangwa or Okongo for reinforcement. So they just came into the village and we were on the out skirts ready to fight. We waited for them to come out for almost an hour. It was a very big group, this typhoon special force group. This group was led by Grey Dumisang; they were supposed to drop me in Kavango and then proceed. So if I was to fight I was

ready to fight because I had to avert their defeat and because they had to escort me to my destination. But then they waited for the reinforcements which took almost an hour or more and then the commanders said we should go. So we left and when the reinforcements came we were already deep in the bush and we had planted some land mines there because we thought they might follow us.

I finally arrived in Kavango and I found my colleagues there because they had arrived earlier with the other group. The others were just laughing at me and they were saying that they thought it was me who had died because it was only me who did not have any kind of war experience. I told them that I was the last person to leave the battle field and I was still there fighting, but when I turned and looked around, I found nobody because they had all run away.

I had to start with my challenges of establishing an intelligence network in Kavango. My first challenge was that of the language and the culture. But luckily enough there was one man who schooled at Kavango and spoke Rukwangari. He used to be at the bible school or bible study that used to be there at the Owambo/Kavango church so this old man also spoke Oshiwambo and he was the headman. His name was Fidelis Hainyeko. So he agreed that he would teach me Rukwangari and all the traditions and customs. So during the day I was in the bush hiding and at night I was in the house attending some classes. It took me up to about three months to learn; after three months I could greet, ask for water and for directions and I could walk and behave as a Rukwangari boy or young man, which was very important. If I greeted an older person first, it would be disrespecting and disturbing the older people.

After that I started with identifying people whom I can work with and tried to recruit agents, informers and other people as well. This included finding places where we could meet, such as people's houses and people's cars so that I could have a proper network. We managed to have those people who were informers and so forth within the local battalions there who could provide us with information. We also recruited some of the local politicians who were not of course SWAPO members, and had their own political parties and local business people. But it was not easy to do this. For instance, there was one thing that made keeping secrets in one of the tribe's customs there quite difficult. When they greeted each other they said "Mbudi" which meant "tell us the news". It was a tradition which forced someone to say that, when he was coming there he saw a foot step or he met soldiers and so on. So for them it was very difficult not to mention that what they had seen. So part of my network which was very supportive or of a supportive nature to the combatants was that, since I could not have reached everyone I just started to write for them some set of rules to use and how they must behave when they were in the communities, or when they met the police or soldiers.

I taught them that they should not mention such things, and there was some improvement. Some members of the supportive group were arrested but it did not do much harm because they knew only part of what they were doing and not the whole thing, and so they could only tell a part of what was happening.

Some of our informers were caught at the beginning of 1983. I don't know what happened but according to one of my sources, one man called Tule had three homesteads. There was one along the river and two in the bushes and I used to stay at one of his homesteads in the bush. He went to Rundu by car and then he was stopped at a road block. Unfortunately his car had a problem. But I am very sure that was just a cover story for the South Africans to get him so that they can try to get information from him because sometimes they would arrest you for a traffic offence which is not valid.

He mentioned that I was there at the bush house so then they came at night. By this time I had already got identification documents for Kavango. So they came to know about me through that supportive network but then the man only knew that name which was John Hamana. This was a Kavango name. The man only knew that I am John but then I had chosen that name because there were many Johns of my age around that area and every time they came around they would arrest the wrong John and people would go and say that “no, this is his mother and this is his father and he schooled there”.

This time when they came looking for the real “John”, they came in the night and they came with the trucks. I heard the sound of the trucks and then I sneaked out of the house and out of the homestead. I used grass to destroy my footprints right from inside the room where I slept and out into the bushes. That night I slept in the bush. Early in the morning the next day as the dogs started barking I woke-up and looked back at the house and I could see that it was still surrounded by the white troops. In the house there was only the wife of Tuli and one of his sons so they were shocked and surprised when the troops did not find me sleeping in the hut. They kept walking around and around the hut and beating Tuli's wife. At that time I was more than a kilometre away because there was a thick bush and even if you are a kilometre away nobody can see you and you can just climb on a tree and see what was happening there.

So they kept beating the lady and asking her where John was and they were told by her husband that he was there. She would respond that she did not know John, and asked them which John they wanted, as there were so many Johns there. But they insisted that it was John who was a terrorist, who is living with her there. But then the lady did not want to say anything and then they looked around the house and they continued searching until they picked up my footprints which I left somewhere when I came out, as I could not camouflage my footprints properly. Then I heard one of them shouting, “Yahh he is out.” Then they started searching for me in the bush, but they couldn't find me.

There after many things started happening like the attacks of the camps still in Kavango and my narrow escape and arrest. I had to devise other strategies because first enemy when doing intelligence work is the counter intelligence. These are the guys that are behind you and who are trying to get all the information about you, even your behavior and what you like, so that when they send someone, that person

will approach you in a way that he tells you all those things that you like or need. Then you get arrested or if they cannot arrest you they will point at you and shoot you. So these are the people that you have to be very, very careful about.

There were attempts to get me in all the places that I lived in. They are so many incidents that are very emotional. After that incident I moved to another village. I could not stay at a village for a long time because even one week was too long for me. People were cooperative and helpful especially where I was mainly based. This was a place in Kavango and this place is normally known as Rukwangari. So I stayed at one of the villages there for a week and then I moved to another one. I thought that by not staying in one place for long I would avoid the enemies, and so I would not be caught or killed easily. This proved correct, otherwise I couldn't have survived and become the longest serving intelligence officer in terms of the spy networks. So far, I am the only survivor; my comrades if they were not captured alive they were killed.

There were also some temptations, for example when the counter intelligence realized that this John was very elusive and subversive they could send beautiful girls to the area where you were so that they could find how they could capture you alive. When they realized that you were very subversive and that you must have been well trained the first goal for them was to capture you alive. They could send some people to get you but they would be given instructions that "If you shoot him then you loose." So they would try to get you alive.

I remember one day when I was at the village called Karuk where I learnt Rukwangari. It was early in the morning and my colleague who was from the same area of Rukwangari was living in that village and he had a cover story of assisting a local teacher to teach the kids. That morning I had gone there to meet him and I slept there, so in the morning the teacher was trying to teach the kids the South African National Anthem and the song was in Afrikaans. But then he did it because apparently there were some South African troops and agents who were moving around in the area. Then after this he came with the other teacher to the room in which I was sleeping, as I was waiting for him. While we were seating and talking the South African troops came from the other side of the Mahangu field.

At that time I didn't have ID papers yet, so when I saw them I thought that they were coming for me because when I just peeped through the homestead sticks, I saw one of them kneeling next to a school kid and the school kid was pointing at the direction of the house where we were. I thought that maybe the kid was showing them where we were. So I just told Peter, who was my friend, that here they come. I just went through the house, through the fence and the sticks used for surrounding the homestead and then I put them back properly. I looked around and I saw some four or five cars moving in the direction where the South African Soldiers were.

I just started running because I was wearing shorts and I had a pistol on me. I just ran and chased the calves in the direction of the South African troops just to make sure that they remain in that direction so that I could buy time to get to the thick bushes. So when they saw me they started shouting "stop, stop, stop".

But then I was just running and then the calves did not want to cover me because as you know with calves when you case them in this direction one of them goes this way and the other one the other direction. So I couldn't follow them in that wrong direction and then when I heard them shouting, Stop, stop I responded in Rukwangari saying that I am going to get my ID. Then they said, "no come, come" they were calling me and it was a black guy who was calling. But then there was a white guy who was coming from another direction who then said "No, no, don't shoot." But then they were not sure that it was me because they were just suspicious. Then I ran into the house of the headman and there was another house just close to that one of the head man. I just went through the house, through the sticks, and then to another house and then into the nearby bushes. That time I had already arranged with the other people especially the older people of that house that if there was any situation when I behave like that and if I run away you say this... So the old man already knew that when he saw me running through the houses he knew that there must be a problem so he quickly got out of the house to the direction where I came from.

When the soldiers came there some four to five minutes after I had left, they asked the headman, "Who was that person who come in and was running through here? Was it a person or a kid?" Now you see, there was this one man, or a young boy who was mad who lived in the village and he was almost of my age. So the old man said, "Was it not this mad boy, my neighbour who was running? You beat him and now when he sees you he is running around, so why do you beat mad people? See now what is happening". The soldiers said "No we called him and he was chasing cows and when we called him he is now running around coming this side, yahh it's because the person is mad ahh". Then they went back to the camp to report.

Later I just went into the bush and proceeded near the homestead of the son of the bushman Epundo. I told them that I was sent by the headman to tell you that the Boers are coming, so you have to hide. So run into the bush. Then everybody together with the kids they took whatever they could and they ran into the bush. The South African army sent other soldiers to check and make sure that they follow the footprints and find out all the relevant information if it was really that mad boy who was running or not. They still thought that maybe it was John Kamana, the terrorist.

Then they came following the footprints through the houses and then they followed it up to Epundo and then when they came to Epundo it was deserted. But then when they got deep into the forest I used the tactics of walking on leaves and when they saw this they said "No, a mad person cannot do that, it must be John." But by then I was already gone.

Another day after this incident they came again and this time they wanted to recruit the teacher so that they can give him radio communication and some money which he can attract me with so that if I am there then they can just come and get me and then kill me or arrest me. When I came there another day the teacher told me that there is this thing that they are proposing and I said yahh just get the radio and if

they give it to you we can make a plan so that when they come they can only find my footprints and they will know that I was here.

So we agreed that he can take the radio and use it because they already knew that I sometimes came there and therefore it was okay I wanted to use it to my own advantage. So I told him that, if we did that and then after they see that I was no more coming here then you can just tell them that the guy is no more coming so can you please take your radio back. This was so because we wanted to make sure that we work according to their expectations. So we waited for the radio but then they didn't bring any radio

Then at one stage as we were heading for the dry season, as you know that during the dry season the South African troops burnt the forest to make sure that there was no grass on the ground when they walked. They knew that the footprints would be clear in the open and they could see them and it would be easy for them to follow their targets.

Then we arranged for a trip whereby we said that our soldiers must move from the east to the west in a big group; and they were walking in groups so that everyone in the area would see that SWAPO troops were moving out towards Owamboland. Everywhere as we moved and when you ask for food you will say that, we were going because all of us had been recalled to Angola, but maybe there would be two or three people left there, so we were going, we are going. So this propaganda went round and the message reached the South African troops and then they sent a patrol to confirm that this information was true and they heard that it was true they left. But then our soldiers came back through the other way in the forest and back to their positions.

More training was arranged for us in Rundu where there were no army patrols. We also used some tricks during that time so that we could achieve what we wanted. This was how we survived that difficult period, instead of trying to fight them, because we knew that if we engaged in fighting we would have many casualties on our side.

As an intelligent officer my task was two-fold. There were the operational tasks, which included getting information about the operations of the enemy, the locations and the patrol systems of the enemy in Kavango. I would give that information directly to the commander of the troops that were around. I had another task which was strategical. This was highly sensitive information which I had to give to the commanders in Lubango. I did this by using the radio communication equipment that was there.

I remember there was the camp near Kahenge there which was set to protect the secondary school there. The camp was there to protect the school against the SWAPO fighter's attacks. This camp was manned by white South African soldiers. So for me to find out exactly what was there I wanted to get in there myself. I had a contact with one of the teachers who were there but then I thought that he might not give me the proper information that I wanted, and we could risk soldiers in case the commander wanted to attack. So together with one guy called Gereline Shitheta who was a business man in the area we arranged with one of the teachers inside the school.

The school was in a security fence and then behind, towards the bushes, that was where the camp was, and also we could see the building of the school. Now what we needed was proper information that when the SWAPO fighters shot into this camp they would not also shoot and harm the school students who were nearby. Otherwise it would be a big propaganda for the South Africans, and that was their main reason for camping near the school.

I arranged with the school teacher to organise a birthday party inside the school; it was a false birthday for one night, so we bought drinks and meat for the party. We arranged that we would have our party somewhere in the open where I knew that during those days during the night, they used to fire into the bush with all their equipment. So what I wanted to do was to see them firing from there and I would know their position and the positions of their equipment so that when our soldiers come they would just target those important positions.

The birthday party was arranged, and that time was the time of the curfew there so we could not move at night. But then the house of the businessman was just a few meters from the school and the military base. So when we came in during the afternoon I arranged that some of the beer be given to the South African commanders. They accepted the beer because they thought it was just a party. So we just said that take this to the commanders and tell them that the relatives and friends at the party were giving them the drinks as an appreciation that they were protecting them and they were happy.

The Boers were very happy that the people understood the reason why they were there and they never expected the people to think or do that, but at the same time they continued patrolling the place. Then the commander agreed to give us time until nine in the evening and then move from there by car back to the businessman's residence, and all the patrol would be aware of that. We went in, and we put on our music and we danced and partied. Then when it became dark they started to do use the explosives. It was fine with me because this was what I wanted to see. Then the next morning when we came across the patrols they allowed us to proceed.

Meanwhile I drew out a sketch and gave it to the commander in the area and after several weeks the camp was overrun by PLAN combatants. So that is one of the good examples how we worked and the role that I played on the operational level on the ground, giving relevant information to the commanders.

I don't know exactly how many enemy soldiers were killed at that attack because after the battle normally you just have to withdraw because the other neighbouring camps can just come and attack you. So our soldiers were just on the outskirts and didn't get into the camp itself but then the teachers and students said that the next morning, no that same night when the reinforcements came the school and the teachers were told to pack their things so that early in the morning they had to go on a holiday which was a one or two days holiday.

There was no school that day because they didn't want them to see the damage which was inflicted by the SWAPO soldiers and they wanted to make sure that

nobody could see when the corpses were being moved out. They told us that a lot of ambulances came that day to take the corpses.

For that attack the SWAPO fighters used weapons such as mortars, bazookas and some machine guns. But in those days the latest mortars we had were the 32mm mortars. You know that type of mortar was very good and when you hit targets in trenches it was disaster for them. And the information that we got was that the commander of that camp was retrenched after this attack. I remember a comment from one of the commanders and I don't remember which radio said it at that time, they didn't know where those PLAN fighters who operated in Kavango were trained because the way in which they operated was different from the others. Now I remember that it was also repeated by Mr. Hiodipo Hamutenya and that information was related at a parade by the typhoon commander who confirmed that he heard on the radio that the Boers did not know where those people who operated in Kavango were trained. So they wanted to find out that information so much that they thought if they could capture us alive we would give them that information as to where we trained and about the tactics used to confuse them.

Due to this the businessman was arrested when someone reported him that he was one of the networks and he therefore revealed that he was being used. But maybe the boers made a follow up later after they captured some of the PLAN fighters from that group that was operating in Kavango. Those were the ones who gave them the information that they had received the information about the military base from John Kamana who is operating in that area and the one they were looking for. So with their own intelligence they may have linked some of this information to that businessman as one of my supportive networks. It seems that businessman was the one who later told them that the commander of the camp was drunk from the beer that he was given by the terrorists. You know that the commander would normally survive because he would be in a dug-out somewhere. So the counter intelligence were told about this party incident and the commander got demoted. So it was found out, he drank beer with the terrorist and then the camp was attacked.

At some stage, especially towards the end of 1983 before I left, the situation was so tense that I had to have some cans of water and canned beef hidden somewhere in the bush, just to make sure that I could still survive in case I had to spend the whole month without visiting the homesteads.

I also used the same area in the bush for disinformation. If I knew that this person and that person were enemy agents and they had good communication with the enemy, I would arrange that just two of us act like civilian people and go deep in the bush and create some small fires, one there another there and another there and then we started spreading false information to the South African troops that on a certain day the commander of SWAPO forces in Kavango will be in forest "x" with his men. On that particular day or on a day before we just went there at night and started putting up those small fires; one there and another one there. This is what we used to do when we gathered somewhere. This information got to the South African forces

who flew to those places in the night and they were able to see the fire. Once they saw the fire they would believe that the information was true, and the next morning the planes would start bombing and the troops would start moving in.

But then after an hour or so, when the firing stopped and the ground troops came in, and normally it was the intelligence section of counter intelligence which came in first, they would look around and find only two sets of footsteps. They would think of how much money they had wasted in terms of the movements of troops, the aeroplanes, the ammunition and fuel and the commander would face the intelligence or counter intelligence and will say, “Hey, tell me what this is? Look at this battle and our time and what the soldiers are saying, you said that you have people in intelligence so how can you make us come here and fight nothing? These are empty fire places.” And then they would say must have been John. And I would just be somewhere drinking my local beer.

When they went back to the barracks and told their colleagues what had happened there it would be an embarrassing story. But I used to do that just to demoralize the South African soldiers. That was part of the trick to demoralize and make sure that they wasted their resources so much that the next time they received such information from the same person again, they would sometimes go and beat-up that person. They would beat him and he would stop talking. We usually never did anything to him but it was that process which put that person in his rightful place.

At the end of all this, they found out that they could not get me and so they drew up a sketch which looked like my face because they did not have my picture. I had made sure that even at social gatherings which I attended there were no cameras. In those days, especially in the rural areas, there were not so many cameras, but still I made sure that I didn’t want to be photographed.

So they drew up this picture of me using the information that they had and then they went around the places where I frequented asking people and telling them that if you got the guy on the picture, dead or alive, especially alive, there was a reward of Ten Thousand Rand. Ten Thousand Rand at that time was a lot of money, and they told them that each member of the household would get ten thousand rand. So they were really encouraging people to look for me and grab me if I went into the homesteads. This included the father, mother and the children who were to grab me so that they could take me to the police and each one of them would get the Ten Thousand Rand. That was when I really started to walk, and from there on, where ever I went I had a hand grenade and I was no longer relying on my ID or any other documents, because I knew that even with my ID if should bump into them riding a bicycle and posing as John they would still arrest me. I also had a pistol because I was provided with one, and I was always moving around with all those things. I made sure that in case I bump into them I would try to trick them instead of fighting them. Sometimes when the trick did not work then I would see what I could do.

It happened that at some stage when they were looking for me it became very difficult because where ever I went people would say that he looks like John. I tried

to change my appearance and I cut my hair bold so that I could look like a bushman, (san) and I even wanted to cut my teeth so that I would look like a Kavango man, but then I thought that would be permanent, so I changed my mind about the teeth..

It was then that I noticed some people had different ideas about me. During one of our meetings as PLAN combatants, one of the guys sent a message to Angola suggesting that I should be sent back to Angola maybe not for good, but that I should stay there for a while until the situation improved. It was necessary to do that because my survival was becoming very difficult in Kavango. The commander did not want to wait for an answer from there, he just wanted to give me someone to escort me back to Angola for my own safety. But apparently during that same week, before I was sent me back, the commanders responded from the intelligence headquarters in Lubango that, it was okay, but I should be given an escort of about two people so that I could go. These people had to escort me right from Kavango to the rear in Angola, as you know we were always travelling on foot.

That was also the time when we were planning for another activity. There was an order from Lubango for the South African soldiers to be taken there alive. We were supposed to capture one of them alive, and we already had a plan. I had identified a target which I had scouted. This was one of the soldiers who used to guard Shitenge Agricultural project. I used to go there sometimes because they had a team of may be ten guys but whenever I was there they were always sleeping, the rifle was there, and they only woke up to open the gate. Sometimes I would say hey wake-up. One day I heard these young South African soldiers saying, "Hey, wake up and open the gate." So they would wake up and we would drive in to buy vegetables and mealie meal. So all these guys were put there to protect the place and make sure that no one gets inside without permission.

The guy I had targeted was lazy and he did not want to stand-up, and so he would order me, who was going to buy things there to open the gate. This was one of the guys whom I wanted to capture alive for the task that we had been given. I had already got a piece of rope to tie the guy and since the guns of the others were very far you could just get away easily by simply tying the guy and throwing him in into thebakkie.

On the other hand we knew that when the South Africans discovered that two of their guys had been captured alive they would make it difficult for us to go through Kavango and then through Owamboland to Angola and we could incur even heavy losses, which would be worse than what we wanted to achieve. So we decided to leave them. Sometimes these guys used to come from the camp to a spot outside the gate of camp where I used to bring a very big drum of ombike and say that I was selling ombike for my grandmother.

They would always come out to buy the stuff when they saw me. When I knew a guy always bought from me, I used to add a little more and said it was especially for my customer who always bought from me.

This was the time I was sent to Angola with two escorts. One of the escorts whom I remember very well was Endela Endola. So we went back to Angola through the

same way up to Lubango or near Lubango. This is where I was briefed and de-briefed. I remember that I went with a report on the levels of enemy operations in Kavango at that time. I was told to stay in Lubango for some time before they could decide whether to send me back or not.

Later I was told that it took some years to accept the report because they were wondering how a person of my level could access all that information, and whether I really got all that through my network. During those days things were not as good as you see them now, especially when it came spies and people like that. I think it was later that they realized maybe I really worked very hard. So there were some suspicions, but after some time I was told that the report was very good. Some were saying that there were other people who lived in Kavango who knew what I had been doing there.

I think my report was so good that and at that time the commanding headquarters wanted to send more troops to Kavango. In my recommendation it was stated that during that time, there should be a minimum of so many SWAPO soldiers in Kavango in order to avoid disaster. The factors considered were mainly topographical and demographical. I knew all that from my training in Moscow. At times we could not understand. As you know, you don't become an intelligence professional by training, you become a professional by practicing intelligence. It's just like journalism, because one does not just come from the school of journalism and say that he or she was a journalist and could do anything. It was through experience; and this is when you can really become a journalist.

There were other things that I learn when we were being trained but then I realized that in practice I would do things this way and not the other way around. Later I learnt that things could be done in another way, and not necessarily the way we learnt in school. I remember that when I went to Angola I was sent to the commanding headquarters to be a staff officer there in the intelligence department. So I started working there as a staff officer until 1984 and then in 1985 I was told that they needed someone to replace a military attaché in Zambia.

So then I was sent to Zambia as a military attaché, a job which also included intelligence. No, I was not there as a military attaché but assistant military attaché which is normally intelligence guy in that office. I stayed there from early 1985 until towards the end of 1985 when there was a special mission to Zimbabwe that needed two guys. They called me to Angola for briefing and then they sent me to Zimbabwe. This was also an intelligence operation on the direction of Zimbabwe and that time the people of Zimbabwe had helped us a lot. At around 1985, 1986 and 1987 we were running our intelligence networks from Zimbabwe through Botswana, and

Zambia to Namibia.

We used to avoid dealing with leaders inside the country because sometimes when leaders were speaking on the platform they could expose us. So we did not want them to know us because today I might be there as a business man the following week as a reverend of a certain church. As intelligence officers, we were sometimes coming

here or even to Botswana and posing as media people. We managed to do that by using several passports, these were African passports, we had Zimbabwean passport, Zambian Passport, and Ugandan passports and we used to come here through Botswana and via Gobabis.

We disguised as business people and at times we formed part of a church tour and some of them I cannot mention them now because they are still functional. We used church activities as a cover so that we could come into the country and get the information that we wanted and then go back. We were doing that until 1989.

Not many people could identify me except once when I met someone who knew me and then the way that I behaved towards him was quick to caution him so that he would not blow my cover. I just told him that he looked as if he knew me. This was when others were busy with something and then he said "I know you come from this area of Owambo and we thought that you went to Zambia" Then I told him that what ever had happened to the area when I left was not something that we could discuss there, because he was not supposed to say anything. This was when we had just come from Kavango and I think we were there for some business. So I told him that while we were there and when he was back in Owamboland he was not supposed to tell anybody that he had seen me.

So we always gave a serious warning to a person for them to remember that if they talked, something would happen to them, although in reality nothing really happened because I wouldn't be there. I can tell you that I never tried to eliminate anyone there in Kavango and that was why those who worked with me and against me especially in the intelligence had respect for me because they were saying that, that was pure professional intelligence. It could only happen if someone threatened me and that was when used force. Otherwise I always tried to play it smart, because any threats coming from someone were well dealt with and maybe that was my way of resolving issues.

One had to be more cautious in executing intelligence work. If you could not judge or make a good judgment about a movement or warning that you saw and instead you just start running, then you may be making a big mistake. During our operations one of us was arrested in Botswana because we had played wrong games. Also remember, when it came to such operations, money had to be available otherwise we could not go through all those controls and people.

Just to wind up, my struggle activities ended up in Zimbabwe. In 1989 we received a message that we should come to report in Windhoek for the elections. We came in September, because it was a few weeks before the elections, as the elections were in November. So I drove from Harare through Botswana, Katima, and then Windhoek.

## Ipinge, Eunice

*Eunice Ipinge was born Enike Daniel Inghepa. After experiencing the wrath of apartheid she left the country into exile in 1974. After joining SWAPO in exile she received military training in both Zambia and Angola. She was later sent for studies at the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN) in Lusaka and upon completion of her studies became a political commissar until she was appointed to assist in the office of the Administrative Secretary in Luanda. She later got a scholarship which took her to Holland where she completed her graduate studies in 1989 before repatriating to Namibia the same year.*

Thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to recall 17 years ago the situation that was taking place and also the situation before that. My name is Eunice Ipinge; I used to be called Enike Daniel so Ipinge is my husband's surname. When I got married I changed my surname, but in fact I am a daughter of Daniel and I was born at Ongudi in Ohangwena Region in the area close to Omungwelumbe and our congregation is Ongenga. So I sometimes call myself that I was born in Ongudi but the area and specific village is Ongudi.

When did I join the liberation struggle? Maybe that is the question, and how did I become politically conscious? I was born in 1950 and in 1966 I was more or less 16 years old; that was the first year when SWAPO guerrillas fought at Mukumbazu, so before that time there had been a lot of meetings and my parents were part of OPO – this is the Ovamboland People's Organisation. I recall how my mother got her membership card, she bought it – she gave a basket of Mahangu in order to have a membership card. I also recall those meetings that used to take place under the trees; but we were young at that time. But then those activities made us to be aware of what was going on.

I am a product of Bantu education and the time that we came to be aware I was 17 years old and we had very strong teacher who was teaching us about the United Nations, which is called FIFIO or something like that. He was also teaching us about colonialism and of course this was taught underground during break time. During break time the teachers would come where we were gathered, be it while playing or having discussions, and then they brought in those topics and we were engaged in discussions. So I think that is how I originally become aware, but the situation we were living in was not a normal situation.

Then I also witnessed the arrest of our teachers like comrade Shoombeat Ongwediva and comrade Shamena and so on. When they were being arrested I always asked why such people were being arrested and the reasons I was given gave me some awareness. Then this thing of Omugulugombashi also opened up our eyes because one of our neighbours, Tateguru Silas Netupe, gave accommodation to the guerrillas when they left for Ombulumbashi, and in his field there was a dug-out where they put their guns, and they were also hiding under trees in his field, so he was arrested. He was taken to Pretoria together with his wife, and this made us be more aware of what was going

on. Our parents told us how they lived, about how the kings were killed, and how they were subjected to the colonial periods.

There were a lot of activities in our area. So I became politically conscious and I joined SWAPO in 1971; that was the time that I got my membership card, and by that time we were more aware and had time to have meetings; we had underground meetings and discussions and also did some reading. So in 1974 we were more, more aware and there was radio broadcasting from Dar es Salaam that used to broadcast during the night, at around midnight. So we used to put the radio on top of the trees and we remained on the ground and listened. By the end of 1974, it was around April of 1974, some people left, including my brother. I was left behind, and then I left Namibia in December 1974, to cross the Angolan Border to go and join the liberation struggle.

What motivated me mostly and what led me to really want to contribute to changing the situation was mainly the education system, the Bantu education and also the working conditions of most people. I looked at my father and my mother who were peasants; they were old and they could not participate in the struggle, fighting in the bush and so on. So I decided that as a young person, I did not want my children to suffer the same way that I was suffering, and that was the most important thing that caused me to leave. I looked at myself and I looked again and I saw that I had the energy and I was told that people were fighting and there were guns there; and was also told that people were being sent to school. The radio was telling giving us a lot of information and Tate Vinia Ndadi used to broadcast. He used to tell us many things that could happen, how we could liberate our country and how we could govern our country.

They were broadcasting that people were literally fighting and some people were also going to school to educate themselves in order to get out of the Bantu education and be able to govern the country when they came back. So, I decided that I should be one of them. That was how we went out, and how we organized ourselves, the three of us, and we left the country. But when I reached Onjiva I was the only one. One of us returned and the other one said that she was going to visit her relatives in Angola, so I went to Onjiva alone.

We were three women, and we were assisted and so crossing the border was not a problem. There the Boers were not yet awake because people always passed and then caught a bus from the other side to travel to Onjiva. From Onjiva during that time there were SWAPO people who assisted us, and I remember comrade Shimwino was among them. There was a guy called David, and before I reached there I had already been tipped by some nurses from Oshakati who were friends of mine and used to take medicines to Onjiva about where to go. I went to a particular tree, sat down under it with my bag, and this boy came. So that is how I got into contact with the others. In the house I was taken to there were already a lot of other comrades who were there.

It was more of confusion because Angola was not yet independent by then, but further to that there was no government, and so these Portuguese police were there,

but they could not arrest anybody. So it was easier for us because there was no point for checking IDs. We were only supposed to show our IDs to the Boers, but the Boers were also not there, they were just around in the Namibian borders, it was confusion, and we benefited from it. We benefited from that confusion because the comrades who were there knew the points where to go and much more. Then we got another bus and we went to a place called Biladaponte and then we went to another place and we got a train. But before we got to Lusu in Zambia we were told that we should wait. So we were returned to Angola and then we set up this camp called the Okasapa in Angola. We met the people coming there; among the guerrillas that were coming, some of them had already been in Angola for some time.

So we could not go to Shatotwa at that point although I went to Shatotwa later. We were taken to Okasapa and this is where we received our military training, up to I think, June 1975. We were still where we got our training as we could not proceed by ourselves. We were in the camp, and it was during this time that Angola had the civil war, just as they were heading for their independence on the 11th of November 1975. I think the differences were seen; comrade Nanyemba came to the camp and told the commanders that the Angolans seemed to be heading for a war, while there were so many of us in that country and arrangements had to be made to send our people to Zambia. So from Platoon 1 to Platoon 6 were all ordered to go to Zambia, and we packed our things. However it took some time to leave the camp. We were taken to a place called Omunyangwe, and this was where we experienced the first fight between UNITA and MPLA. It was around June or July 1975, I cannot remember the month but that was the period when they started fighting among themselves. So that was the first fight that I experienced.

By that time we were under the leadership of comrade Kakwambi and then Nakada was our commander in Okasapa and other commanders came later. When the fight at Omunyangwe took place were around there. Of course you know from the history our struggle that we were assisted more by UNITA, even after we left our camp in Okasapa, we were brought into UNITA camps. Like when we were brought to Omunyangwe we were in a UNITA camp and even when that fight started, we had to leave a UNITA camp and go to another site just to see what was happening. Our commanders had to go to our camp quickly and brought weapons; we did not participate in a physical fight but we had our weapons to defend ourselves.

The journey was a bit delayed because of the war and we had to stay longer at this place for the train to be cleared so that we could board that train. There were a lot of people and some of them came in 1975, and others were arriving every month. But after some time the road was cleared and we boarded the train and went to a place close to the DRC. The fighting in Angola was now getting heavy, and we also witnessed a fight there, but we were under the protection of the United Nations forces. Before they started fighting the different forces there had a meeting, I think in Nakuru, Kenya, for them to put their forces together towards independence then they had a neutral force. UNITA agreed, FERERA agreed, MPLA agreed, and these were

the soldiers that were assisting us to go through the country. The other mixed forces were in the camps, and that is why they started fighting, but these mixed soldiers could not participate in the fighting, only later on when they decided to go back to their groupings. At the time we passed through Angola had the neutral group. Even in their camps like in Tera de Sus, in the interior of the southern city was in the hands of this neutral group that was there, and they even accommodated us at night.

At around August 1975 we went to Zaire, now DRC. While we were there we were assisted by the government; of course Mobutu did not want us but by that time his resistance to a liberation movement like SWAPO was not very strong. We were accommodated there on our way to Zambia. We passed the Angolan border leaving the war behind us as we went into Lubumbashi, Zaire, then to one place next to Ndola on the Zambian border. This is where we stayed, I think, for three months because also in the SWAPO, in Zambia, Shipanga's rebellion was starting, and so the leadership did not want us to mix with those ones who were in Zambia because of the Shipanga influence.

But the war in Angola was now escalating. So one day the Boers came to our parade because we used to have a parade in the morning and in the afternoon just to see, who was sick, who had disappeared or who had any other problems. So they started following us. They had detected that we were there and they sent an enemy to spy on us. Then the leadership decided that we should just go to Zambia. There we were guided by comrade Peter Tshirumbu, the one who is now the minister of Safety and Security, and Naitembu. They were the commanders of those people who came from Zambia to lead us and to give us assistance. This camp was more of a village life and we were not in the camp as such; we were divided, as we were accommodated in people's homes and we sort of became like refugees.

We could go to people's farms or people's field and work for money and so on and then that was life we lived. So we came to Zambia and spent a night I think we spent two days at Nyango and that time Nyango was a new camp. Then we were taken to Shatotwa – I was at Shatotwa Number 2 working as a logistics officer and also receiving training. We were still under training during the time of Shipanga rebellion. We were now put in a situation where we were mixing with the rebels, who had different thinking and even different talking. I experienced that seriously in Shatotwa No 2, but I didn't join them because I realized that something was wrong somehow. They could tell us a lot of stories and they could go and tell other people some stories so we realized that what they were doing was not right. But I was a logistics officer working with this late Thomas Nekomba and our commander was comrade Ndimana and others such as Namara who was commanding that camp, Oshatotwa No 1. I was there and I witnessed all these things that happened between  
the Shipanga rebels and

those that were not with the Shipanga rebels.

In 1976 I was sent to Senanga I was pregnant then and I delivered by daughter then in August of 1976 in Nyango, and just two weeks after I left, Shatotwa was attacked. So I was very fortunate or what, I don't know, but I was not in the camp when it was

attacked. At Nyango we were working like refugees, but I also started school and in 1977 I left my daughter when she was 8 months. There was a policy that if your child is fit and you have passed examinations then you have to go to school. That was a policy of comrade Kalenga who was the secretary for education by then.

So I left my daughter and I went to UNIN and I left my daughter with a comrade who we lived together and I think that we travelled together from Angola.

We met at Okasapa and this is the lady who was looking after my child, she also had a child of the same age as my child so she was feeding both children and also the 24 hours kindergarten was in the process of being finalized at Nyango.

So I went to UNIN where I studied and I graduated in 1981 and then we were sent to Angola to Tobias Hainyeko for another training and that was my third military training where I was trained as a Political Commissar. At the same time after training I was sent to Greenwell Matongo Centre for teaching so I started teaching and I remember some of my students like Liinekela Mboti (now ambassador to Angola) I used to teach Biology there. One term I was teaching them about this the difference between oxygen and carbon dioxide, and how we get the air that we breathe in from the trees and so on.

Then they asked me a question how we were preparing ourselves to go and fight for our country while half of our country was a desert; and that I was telling them that we breathe in air from the trees while the deserts had no trees so were they not going to die before they liberated our country, because of lack of oxygen?

Then I told them that they were not going to die because the air did not have limits whether one was in the desert or wherever, it could still reach him. I was teaching and so I taught for a while and then I was commanded to go and organize the SWAPO elders Council and Congress in Luanda. Elizabeth Neumbo and I were both UNIN graduates and we were called to go to Luanda and organize the congress. However, we did not organize the congress because by the time we arrived in Luanda the congress had already taken place.

Later I was appointed to be a passport officer in the office of the Secretary I Comrade Moses Garoeb. I was working with Tate Shoombe, then after sometime I took up that task and continued working. I was later appointed to be a senior administrative officer in the office of the Elders' Council. I remained on that job in Luanda for many years, I think from 1982 up to 1986, when I was sent for further studies on Women and Development, in Holland.

I first did research and development in women and then I was did a diploma course after I had completed the certificate in Research and Development. There was a program organized by the SWAPO Party Women's council for SWAPO women to be trained in research and in women and development there in Holland. We were the second group, and we were seven. I then continued to do my master's degree from 1987 to 1989; so when people were coming home I was still there.

When we were in Luanda as staff members there were a lot of tasks that we performed, and as a soldier I was also assigned military tasks. I remember that I was

the only woman appointed in the security and credentials committee, and that caused me to undergo another military training in Lubango, so that I could perform my duties properly. Other things were also taking place. My major responsibilities were as a political representative in meetings and international fora and also campaigning for our struggle in those meetings and in events. I remember that I was sent from Angola by SWAPO to go to Britain in the Nelson Mandela Freedom March, where we marched from Glasgow to London a distance I think from Windhoek to Oshakati. There were two of us from Namibia; comrade Ekandjo and I. He had just been released from Robben Island when he joined me in London. To campaign for support for our liberation struggle was a serious challenge that I experienced during the liberation struggle, and maybe it was one of the major tasks.

I went to Holland in 1986 and in 1987 I finished and came back to Angola and then I was sent again to go and do the master's degree. So in 1988 before I went to start my masters I was sent again to go and do this march. The march, I think, took place in August of 1988, but the studies started in September. So I finished the march and I came quickly to Luanda and then I went back to Holland.

As for life in the camps, you know at times we had no food and other things. However, the people managed to survive. My first experience was really bad, when we were at Okasapo setting up the camp, there were no communication, there was no food, no blankets, hygiene particularly for women was very, very, bad.

There was hunger because the camp was far, far in the jungles of Angola, where people do not even know these European clothing. It was the bark of the trees – you know they had to cut the bark from the tree and then use the soft side to put on as clothing, and also made blankets from it. They made other things from the hard part of the bark. They ate seeds from grass and drank “Maheu” and made a number of other things out of those trees. There were some trees that were very sweet and they cut them and pounded the roots and made a drink out of it. So it was very, very difficult for us to cope with situation there.

After about four months in the camp the leaders found a shop somewhere where they bought goods and somehow even money was available. SWAPO made contact with a certain business man and that is where we were getting mealie-meal, but it was far and you know that Angola is mountainous country with many rivers. Platoons could be commanded to go and fetch supplies but some of us could not carry the load back to the camp. First, there was a long walking distance, and then we were going through mountains while we were hungry and there was no food.

There was a very strong commander I think he is from Oshikuku, his name is Shamena, who could command us to go to that place and to come back in a day, while others will make you travel during the night and then maybe rest somewhere and then you arrive early in the morning and then come back. But then people in the camp would be waiting for food. We were eating Yellow maize meal once per day without relish. We ate once, and if you eat at 12 o'clock, you have to wait until 12

o'clock the next day to eat. Of course there was that starvation and malnutrition; it was tough.

There were no sanitary towels there, and we had to make beds out of grass, because there was a lot of grass. But there were some insects called 'uripi' and the others called 'oitakaya' which get into your skin, when it is very small and grows in there.

Life was difficult and some people died when we were there but somehow we survived. Water had to be fetched from the river. We had to go to the river and carry these big, big drums cut into half, with a stick through it so that two of us could carry it between us. The task became even more difficult when going uphill.

Life for women in the camp in Angola became so tough that they stopped menstruation, and we thought it was because of the condition there. People were not getting pregnant and we stopped menstruation and we started getting fat but we were not really fat.

It was just the situation and I think we were really shocked by the situation and when you are menstruating you have to be in bed and open up this grass so that the blood goes there and then you close it.

We were many in that camp, I think we were between three and five thousand people. There were not many kids, and I remember one or two families had kids. It was tough because during that time to go anywhere you had to walk, so walking with kids would have been more difficult.

It was mostly young people who had left the country; older people were mostly men. There was only one woman whom I saw that was older than us.

Although life was difficult, morale and determination among the people was very, very high. I think it was because of the high morale that many people survived; people did not despair. You can imagine living in the bush where there were no bicycles or cars, and for the whole time I had not seen even cattle there.

After six months there we saw a car in the camp. I think some of the comrades came with it from Namibia. I can remember that because it was on the day that we were celebrating the independence of Mozambique's independence. I remember that

I was on duty at the gate and I thought that it was the Boers. I was very scared and we started giving signals to the camp. People came and they started making a road for the car as there was no road. We thought that was a serious case, but it ended well. Then at Shatotwa in Zambia there was a situation where people were eating

Kafube.

Sometimes when that Kafube was not available we ended up eating wild fruit, so that is how people survived. Kafube is flour that was used make porridge. I don't know which country used to support us with that food. Some countries supported us with other types of food, but that flour for porridge could not be used to make pap, it could only be used to make porridge for kids. But it was nutritious so when it was about to get finished we had to leave it as food for the sick the young ones. Older people you had to find other means to survive. So that is how we lived.

When we went back to Angola in the 1980s to Tobias Hainyeko, we then found this Kafube business, there was hunger there and there was no food, but as we had arrived

from schools, we were given food. Apparently people in the camp were sleeping hungry and we only saw people when we came to the kitchen. When we were given Kafube, we did not want Kafube because at school we had food. We said that we were not going to eat Kafube, and we gave it to the people who were coming to the kitchen, but it appeared people were not having food.

We came to know that there was a strike there at the port and people were not off-loading food, so SWAPO people at camps fell victim of that strike. There we experienced a lot of problems; we also saw people eating things that were poisonous. I remember this George Iita who was a nurse there and other people ate what they thought were mushrooms but they poisonous things that look like mushrooms. So we spent seven days without food, that is why we say that there was hunger at that camp; but anyway we survived.

The running of the administration of the camp was so good that the sick people, children, including lactating mothers would not go without food. So whether there was little food, or little food sourced from somewhere, these were the people who were first considered. The young ones, lactating mothers and then the sick people, so that is how the situation was and we did not eat grass but the leadership was always ready to run around and also some of us were running around campaigning for food, for materials – clothes, guns and books for studying.

In Luanda the situation was not bad because we were at the headquarters; of course when things were brought, they first came to the headquarters. We were staff members although we were not paid but we used to get privileges of getting nice clothing from the magazine (SWAPO depot) and we got meat and also our children had an opportunity to go to kindergarten in town and so on. So life at the headquarters, particularly in Luanda and Lusaka, and I think other offices too, was better than in the rest of the camps. But even at the camps there administrative staff had better life than the ordinary people. I remember when I went to Lubango for training, when we were in committees, we were regarded as officials, and we enjoyed the privileges given to officials and commanders. This was so because should anything happen and the commander is hungry he or she will not be able to do the commanding so there were those arrangements in the camps.

In terms of support and acceptance, we had good relationship with the local people, they supported us and used to call us Ma F.F. They meant that we were Ma Freedom Fighters, and there were other names, but the relationship was very good because we used to get these old clothes and food which we exchanged with the local people; so those who were surrounding the camps also benefited from these donations. We used to exchange items and if we wanted fresh meat for example and there was no fresh meat in the camp and we would sneak out of the camp with our clothes and then exchange with Chicken or with vegetables and fruits, or even with maize and flour. I remember when I became a logistics officer, when I was in Shatotwa, I wanted more of Mahangu porridge so we used to travel long distances into the villages to go and

look for this Mahangu from the people. I did not experience much difference among local people in Lusaka, Zambia and in Luanda, Angola..

I remember when Ian Smith bombed a Zimbabwean camp in Lusaka and when our liberation centers were bombed , the local people were really sympathizing with us; but there were also those who were saying that we should go back to our camps because we were bringing the enemy to them. But anyway, support was very strong, we were really supported, even in Holland when we were students there, the local people were really supporting us, and without that support we wouldn't be able to succeed.

Even when we were studying, we needed the support because we were thinking about the people that we left in the war, our parents inside the Namibia and we did not know anything about them because there was no communication at all. Then we would think about the husbands and children we had left behind, some children were in Luanda and some were in Lusaka. Sometimes we were told about the presence of the enemy at the same time that we were supposed to be concentrating on our studies. I am telling you it was not easy..

When I came back, my father had died in 1984 of natural causes, but my mother was still there. My mother and the three of us who went into exile and came back are there. We were lucky because others couldn't make it. We also lost our cousins and uncles through the war. My uncle's house was destroyed and he was killed. But then that was the war.

I was a leader of the union, I was a leader of the Women Council, I think that was in 1983, when I was in Luanda. I was the Branch Coordinator there for the women and I used to travel a lot coordinating these women's meetings and so on.

During the time I was at Lubango I was elected as a chairperson and then after that I went to Luanda and became the coordinator and also the District Party Coordinator for SWAPO there in Luanda. The responsibility of SWAPO'S Women' Council was heavy because I remember before I went to school person passed away and I was given her child to look after. So I looked after this child together with my daughter, when I left for school I left my child with comrade Ellen Musialela and up to now that child is still with Ellen. So for women it was really a heavy responsibility when combining the tasks of being a mother and a care giver and a soldier, a politician and a diplomat.

So all these heavy tasks like looking after kids were on women; those kinder gardens were manned by women and the camps were managed by women; also women looked after each other, looked after the young ones and they looked after each other's children and so on.

One thing that I don't want to leave out is that there was a kind of gender discrimination and sexuality control of women by man. I remember very well that in Nyango for example there were some women who were said to have relationships with Zambians and they were imprisoned. Some of us were scared even to talk to Zambian men in the streets, because we were afraid of being put into prison, and to

be taken to the river early in the morning. Commander Danger was very cruel and he was later replaced by comrade Helmut as the Commander in Nyango.

They used to command that someone be taken to the river in the morning at 6 o'clock, to be put in the water and made to roll in the sand. Sometimes that punishment was so bad and serious that one would think it was because this lady slept with a Zambian man. But on the other hand the men in the same camps were making Zambian women pregnant, and they were having a lot of kids in the jungle there with Zambian women, but no man was punished for that. I thought that was very bad.

Issues of forced relationships were also there because some of the commanders were just taking advantage of the young women and then gave them some of the things that were brought to the camp. So the men also took advantage of the situation. So they took advantage of that and forced the girls to sleep with them because the girls had no choice. You could see that some commanders had about 20 kids.

I also think that the SWAPO guys also took drastic decisions and they passed a resolution to punish those commanders, and the situation improved somehow, but before that it was bad.

It was so bad for girls and young women because there were things like rape and seductions; we used to call it 'Onjoro'. Girls got hooked by the commanders with small gifts like soap and food because the commanders had money, and direct access to resources, they could use these resources to hook the girls. Sometimes, if the commander was corrupt, he could send your boyfriend somewhere else and then take charge of you. Even marriages were caused to break because of such behaviour. You know there were ups and downs and not everything was smooth sailing. Those were some of the challenges, but anyway we survived.

Thanks.

## Kaapanda, Vaino

[Windhoek; 07 January 2007]

*Kaapanda was born and raised at Onandjila village in 1932. He started his early childhood school in 1944 at Okahao. At the age of 15 years he migrated to Otjiwarongo hoping to secure employment which he did. Kaapanda is one of the elders who observed and experienced the hardship of the contract labour system. As a contract worker he was responsible for digging dams during winter and looking after donkeys as well as other animals at a farm. Kaapanda worked on a contract for 18 months without visiting or communicating to his family. In his interview he narrated how contract workers were exploited during colonialism. He explained the terms and conditions of contracts. His political awareness started in 1960, while he was still at boarding school in Engela, studying theology. He was inspired by the likes of the late Kaxumba Kandola, Mzee Kaukungwa and the current President Hifikepunye Pohamba. He graduated as a pastor in 1964. Kaapanda was tortured for refusing to provide confidential information to the Boers. He played a great role of a mudjiba or collaborator to the freedom fighters which lead to his numerous arrests and tortures. He is now a retired Clergy.*

I am Vaino Kaapanda. I was born in 1932 at Ongandjela village, by Ushona Kaapanda and Nugwanga Asino, in a village called Onandjila north of Okahao. I grew up in that village helping my parents. I don't really know my father as he died while I was young. I was raised up by my grandparents. In 1944 I started my early childhood school at Omaha (Ototjukwa), I still remember my teacher, Samuel Malodhu. In 1949 I moved to another school still in Okahao, but this time I used to walk some 10 kilometers to get to school. My teachers were the likes of the late Johannes Ekandjo and Jesaya Shiyagaya.

In 1950, I left to Otjiwarongo in search of employment in the surrounding farms. I was employed by an British, Eliot, from Scotland. While working as a farmer, my duties involved digging dams during winter, looking after donkeys as well as other livestock in the farm. I was employed on an 18 month contract without visiting my family. Although I could read and write, I was prohibited from getting in touch with my family. I could only see them once the contract came to an end.

Each and every Friday, employees at the farm were given a small sack of maize meal, sugar, and cigarettes for those who smoked. It could take two to three months without eating meat. We hardly got meat and sometimes we were craving for it. Milk was the order of the day for the lucky ones but most of the time we were subjected to absolute poverty and hunger. We would eat sugar water and maize meal for the day. We were paid peanuts; our monthly salary was about N\$ 1, 50 per month. The wages were very low compared to work we did, and we could not do much with it. Maybe one could buy pants, shirt, shoes, a suitcase and a blanket, if he really saved up. Image I was only 15-year-old when I started working at the farm. Even though the salary was little, there was no way I could sit home idle, while other men had to leave the village in search of employment. I had to go and look for a job to provide

for my family. Sitting idle was never my cup of coffee. Moreover, I would have been regarded as a coward if I just stayed at home. I believed I was a man and I had to leave the village despite low wages.

Our employer was good to his people. He had a sense of humour but my only concern was that he overworked us. The work was too much, and at times we could not handle the job. We would work all day long without resting. I recall working from 08h00 to 20h00 without resting. The good part about our boss was that he allowed us to visit friends in the nearby farms. This was a privilege to us, because other farm workers did not have such privileges; they were mistreated, abused and beaten up. That situation prompted many to escape from the farms and returned to their home villages. It was however, not easy to escape, as many people died of hunger and thirst on their way back home, while those who survived long distances were likely to be sent back to work once they reached home. It was sad. The English people had good relations with the Chiefs and headmen of our villages, that was why farm workers were returned back to complete their contracts. On the other hand, the chiefs were not aware of the reasons why farm workers were returning home before the contracts ended. Only the farmers themselves knew the reason behind their escapes. Upon return to the farms, workers were beaten up by their employers; they were badly beaten to the extent that they never repeated the act of escaping.

Somehow working in the farms was like a gateway for us to work for bigger companies such as the mines. In 1952 when my contract ended I specifically went to work for a mining company in Luderetz when I left the farm. I worked for a Jewish man who was mining diamonds. I was employed on an 18 month contract but this time we were not mistreated, as it was the case in the farms. This time the work was hard, as everything was hard work; there was nothing easy. We had to dig non-stop. We did not work for long at that mine. The work came to an end. We went to open another mine near Orange River, but this time we were tricked, we were told it would still be diamond mining, but we were mining Ongopolo. We demonstrated throughout and many workers ran into South Africa. I never followed suit, in fact I pretended as if I was sick and they actually believed my trick. They sent me back home to the north. The situation became tense when a couple of workers organized meetings and questioned the bosses on issues concerning contract workers. Low wages was topped the workers concerns. The meetings were chaired by Johannes Stephanus and Ambandi Festus. They were our leaders. The English man was not honest to himself and to the workers; he was cutting our overtime and instead only gave us *otiki* instead of a 5 cents that we were entitled to receive.

In most cases we differed because we disagreed with his steps. We even called the police to intervene, but the police insisted that we return to work. The police never played a fair card. They questioned us, and we told them that we were not going back to work. After the strike, our boss whom we used to call *Kandu*, came and confirmed the 5 cents, which was how we should have been paid, in line with our understanding. The matter was solved and we went back to work. I think this was

the first demonstration we ever carried out in our lifetime with the workers union; followed by that of Ludertz as a fishing industry.

The workers also refused to be paid *otiki* and the situation had annoyed the Englishmen. They all united, dressed up in police uniforms and attacked all fishing companies where blacks were working. They shot one employee to death, while one was shot in the stomach and got injured but was lucky to survive. One employee in the group was also arrested. That was one of the reasons why many employees ran away to South Africa, and so the case died a silent death. No one ever bothered to follow up despite the death of one of the workers and another having been injured. Nobody ever cared because it was a black man's life that was lost and a black man that injured.

Some people left to Oranjemund, still to work on an 18 month contract. But as time went by, the working conditions improved slightly, but it was still hard labour. Work started at 08h00 and ended at 14h00 without any rest. We were not allowed to stand unless the boss called you. There was also no lunch but we worked endlessly. When nature called we could go but we were given limited time, and if we exceeded the time, the employers came and got us themselves; and we were questioned why we took so long. Many people preferred to work for Oranjemund, because it was a compound, one did not have to pay for or buy anything. Everything was for free and the little we used to get, we saved and when we returned home eventually, we had some money to spend. My contract ended in 1958, when I was 20-years old.

One day, out of a sudden, I decided that school was more important than contract work. I went to enroll myself at Engela for Standard Five. I was fortunate because I could read and write Afrikaans. I schooled at Engela for 3 years and upon completion, the school asked me to stay for one more year for the preparation for polonium school. After that I got transferred to Otjimbingwe. While I was still at Engela, sometime in 1960, politics started. This was the time when Kaxumba Kandola, Mzee Kaukungwa and the current Head of State President Hifikepunye Pohamba they were one's organizing SWAPO meetings. By then I had already joined SWAPO at Ohangwena and was given an OP card.

Although we had joined SWAPO, we didn't really know much about the party, but when we went to school, we studied politics through a newspaper called *Suide Wes*. This was run by the Boers all what the paper wrote was negativity and criticism about the SWAPO party. We also learned politics through the SWAPO radio which was broadcasting from Tanzania. We listened and monitored the radio closely.

In 1964, I graduated and became a pastor, after having witnessed innocent people mistreated and abused by Boers. They were living in a compound with no hospital and no proper care; even if one was sick, he was not taken to the hospital, but he was only given medicine by our bosses, which sometimes did not take care of one's sickness.

I still recall a meeting held by Hipangelwa, when Patrick Lyambo sneaked into the country from Tanzania. We were told to change the way we lived, and that we shouldn't also allow Boers to take over our lives, and it was about time we stood up for

our rights, and fought for the freedom of our country. In 1966 I witnessed the arrival of people from Tanzania who used to hold meetings in Namibia. There was a betrayer among the group, when they were reported to the Boers; and before that he also wrote a letter to the other fellows to flee Onghulumbashe, but some soldiers refused to move. One of the members Lameck Ithete came seeking advice at Okahao during a meeting which was held for all pastors in the north. The betrayer was originally from Oshitayi. The Boers kidnapped him, but he was later released to spy on the party. He returned to the group claiming that he had escaped from prison but nobody bought his lies.

This was the very same year that the war started in the country. I was still at Elim when the Boers shot Patrick and the others at Oshakati. We kept hiding them and we supported them with food and the little money that we had. Well as to Patrick we had to keep him for a long time, until the time that the Namibians moved from Zambia and Angola. He was living in Oshikuku at Nangolo Mukwilongo Cucashop. The Boers were hunting for him. There was even a reward of one thousand dollar to any person who could bring Patrick to them.

However, the war had separated many families and friends as some people went to exile to fight. I was also a SWAPO leader in my area and worked closely with Luben Hauwanga, Salom Hatutale, Shamena and Sem Shivute. In 1975 the Boers realized that I was a SWAPO member during the death of Philemon Elifas. It happened that when some members were arrested by the Boers, they had a book containing names of Luben, Hatutale, and Hauwanga who were members; but there was a rumour speculating that Hauwanga fled the country to the United States because he did not want to be in a country where blacks were fighting. He is still in the States. Others were also arrested and were found with books containing our names and particulars. The names were as follow: Isaac Shomi, Johannes Muatala, Nangutuwala, Shamena, and Hilundu.

All the above mentioned people had information about the party. The Boers looked for us and detained us. They questioned us about Elifas' death, but we pretended we did not know what happened, and distanced ourselves. We told them that we lived very far from the late Elifas, and we only heard that he was no more. We were beaten up and the Boers divided us into groups, some were taken to Ondangwa, while I was held for two years, from 1975 to 1977. They only released us when they saw that they could not get the truth out of us. Some of my friends with whom we were held, ran to Angola, but I refused to migrate; I had decided to fight the war in the country.

While in the country, I directed and advised people who were going to exile, but the situation got worse when those people fell in the hands of the enemies. I remember directing three girls from Okahao and a certain guy called Katanga. I gave them transport to the border, but just as they were crossing over, the Boers saw them and arrested them. They were beaten up to tell the truth as to where they were heading to. Those who could not bear the pain like Katanga, vomited all the information, which led to my second arrest.

The Boers attacked my place and arrested my colleagues. I was not present when they got arrested but I was given a message that my colleagues had been arrested. I had to stay home and wait for the Boers to return to arrest me. I did not want to run away because they would have been suspicious if I had run away. They returned in the morning, with one of the guys I had directed not long ago. The guy was dressed up in their uniform and it quickly clicked and I got an idea to save myself. The Boers asked if I had any contacts with SWAPO, and whether I had seen any SWAPO member. I told them that I had seen two young guys who came to me earlier, but I left for work, and when I came back they were already gone. They looked at each other and thought I was telling the truth. Not long after they went to collect the two young guys from their *Caspeli* and brought them. I asked them, “Are you not the ones sent to me?” One of them responded, that it was him. So I asked them where they were heading to and they responded that they were going to exile. I again asked them, “To do what young man?” I pretended I did not know, and the Boers were on my side. I did not want to tell or show the Boers that I knew the children because one of their parents had also been arrested within that same week.

This time I was arrested and detained for two months. After my release it did not take long before I got arrested again, for the third time, because of three SWAPO soldiers who came looking for me. When I arrived home a certain person came to me and told me that there were some SWAPO soldiers looking for me. I went to them and spent the evening with them; they were looking for information about the situation in the north. I returned home and the three left on foot to Ogangjela, walking freely as if they were not on the run. They even visited bars the whole afternoon, where they happened to bump into the Boers. They were shocked and nervous, a situation which forced the Boers to be suspicious when they were seen hiding in the bushes. All three were arrested. The last time we saw these people was on Sunday, and on Tuesday our area including the church was surrounded by the Boers. They came to me and asked if I had seen any soldiers but I denied seeing any.

So the Boers said the three soldiers were sent by me, and they were going to take me along to Ombalantu, so that we can talk freely. I told them I could not go to Ombalantu but we could just talk in my place and their information would be sealed, but they refused. They told me to follow them, I took my bag and unfortunately that bag contained the names of all the people who were arrested, written in Oshiwambo.

The moment I got into the vehicle, I was shocked to see an undressed person that had been beaten brutally; she had a swollen face with blood all over her body. I knew the lady, her name is Hilda Iyambo. The Boers questioned if I knew the lady but I said no, and they also asked the lady if she knew me and she said yes she did. She even mentioned me by name. So the Boers went on like, “How come you are known by soldiers, tell us?” I told them that I was a pastor and I was known by many people because of my publicity; every Sunday I was preaching in church, and the lady might have known me on that back ground, but I did not know her. So we carried on; and on my way I kept thinking how I could get rid of Hilda, but nothing came to my mind, so they took me to prison, as usual; and this was for the third time. In prison

they forced me to talk. I told them I saw the three soldiers once, but I did not talk to them in details because it was late in the evening and I was scared of them. I only spoke to one who brought a letter from my child who was in exile, but I would not be able to remember them again. I even swore that I did not speak to them about issues pertaining to war. They further asked where the letter was, and I told them that I tore the letter up. They wanted proof of even a little piece of the letter, if I still had one, but I told them that I didn't have any. The other two soldiers were Levi and Kadhikwa. I had much trust in Levi that he wouldn't say a word. He suddenly disappeared and we did not see him until today. I believe he was killed for not telling the truth. Hilka and Kadhikwa were released and Kadhikwa joined the South African government, while I was detained for two months.

You also asked about Gabriel's death. I could recall his death, and that he and Prince Shimi were once heading to Oshakati from Ondangwa. The road was blocked so the Boers took out a soldier who was in Shimi's vehicle. On their way they stopped at a Cuca-shop near the post office for a drink and they left all their weapons in the car. While they were drinking a soldier crawled down to their vehicle and took out their weapons, and as they walked towards the car that soldier started shooting with the bows and arrows. He killed Gabriel at the scene, while the Boer survived, and run away.

So all started running, nobody could tell who was doing the shooting, the soldier run through Ukwambi, Ongandjela until he reached Ombalantu on foot. I don't know whether he ever got help on the way or not. Thus the death of Gabriel had led to many things, I was again involved. The Boers came to me and questioned how he died and who killed him? I was again punished; they took me to prison without water or food. I slept many nights on a hungry stomach and at the same time they were again asking me where some bombs were hidden. I told them I did not know where they were hidden. I could only help with the direction to Ukwambi, for example, which way was blocked and the safest route to take. I played a psychological game with them on that one. I asked them how I could know where the bombs were hidden while they were the ones who were planting them; my bomb was the Bible, and that they should have known better.

I suffered a lot, I was electrically chocked and I feel the pain to this moment. I was tied with thick ropes and heavy objectives were placed on my back, and as a result, one of my veins burst, and I was lucky to survive. I was arrested more than five times, I recall having my eyes closed such that I could not open them because they were swollen. I was beaten and sometimes I wished I was dead, because the pain I went through can never be experienced or expressed by a human being. But the suffering was for my country, and it was for the love of this nation. I clearly knew why I had to suffer; It was for the Independence of our country, and blood had to be shed and poured to achieve our liberation struggle. I was committed to help my country attain its freedom from the colonialists. I dedicated my life to the war and even if I had died in the struggle I knew I was fighting for freedom. I believed that even if I had died I

was going to provide miracles and strength to others to continue where I left. I could never give up on my country, each time I was arrested my hope, faith and strength kept going higher; the more I suffered the higher it got. In 1975 I thought the country would eventually be liberated and I felt that liberation was getting closer, and this was when I named my child Niita Tulimeyo. Meaning even though we were suffering we will soon have our freedom back, we are in our own land.

When the country got its independence I was in Ukwaludhi, welcoming all ex-combatants from that area. It was my duty to receive them. At that time the church had shifted to the city because the Boers wanted to kill me, and Halupe took over my obligations of receiving the ex-combatants.

The liberation struggle was never easy; people suffered, while others lost their lives. People would say anything once they were tortured; and if they could no longer handle the pain they vomited the truth and told the Boers where they were heading to, who helped them to escape from the country. They gave away all the information they had in the hope that they would be released; but all that was because of the pain they were put through.

## Kashupulwa, Clemens

*Mr Clemens Kashupulwa had actively participated in Namibian politics since his youth. He became conscious of his political surroundings due to his interaction with teachers, peers, and he also witnessed the actual apartheid treatment of Africans by the South African regime. After completing his teacher's training at Dobra, he moved to Oranjemund where he continued with political mobilization until 1975 when he went into exile to join the armed liberation struggle. He was a member of the SWAPO military wing PLAN and participated in several battles. He returned to Namibia during the repatriation period in 1989 and participated in the election process leading to independence in 1990. He is currently the Governor of the Oshana Region.*

My name is Clemens Kashupulwa. I was born at Hailulu near Katana Mission. I did my primary school at Ontanga and then moved to Okatana Roman Catholic. After my primary school, I proceeded to Dobra College in 1966 and it was there that I completed my teacher's training. In 1971 I moved to Oranjemund and worked at Namdeb. However, in 1975, I joined the Liberation struggle of Namibia because of the pressure of colonialism.

I started to be active in politics when I was still in Standard III at Okatana primary school. There were a number of meetings held at Okatana which were organised by the late Kahumba. Kandola, Leo Shoopala and Fidelis Laban. I do not remember exactly when I started attending such meetings because I was still quite young. I still remember that we were encouraged by Father Hans Klaaus to stand up for our country and even to go abroad to get better education. This priest tried to create political awareness among us.

Father Hans Klaaus was a missionary. As I have mentioned he brought about political awareness by teaching us a lot about independence. He helped us to take cover through colonial days. Father Klaaus was our link, and he helped to hide Herman Nambwadja when the Boers were looking for him; he hid him in his bedroom. In 1965 after seeing all this I took interest in politics although I was young. By that time I was at Dobra. David Shimwandi was communicating with Peter Tsheehama and Vitalis Ankama who were in Tanzania through the radio. Shimwandi encouraged us to take part in politics.

I was a friend to the priest so I used to go to his place with others and we would talk. It was done secretly. I was interested in my studies so he noticed that I might be the right one to understand politics because in order to fight colonialism you had to be educated.

My memorable meeting at Okatana was when we were told that people are going abroad in 1964 by Leo Shoopala I wanted to go abroad. Leo Shoopala mobilised us students to go and study abroad. He gave us an example of his brother Lucky Shoopala who was going to study abroad. Lucky went through the Kavango area but he was unfortunately arrested by the Boers twice and brought back. He eventually managed to go through. This whole thing motivated me. Even when I went to school at Dobra,

I woke up early in morning to listen to the radio with David Shimwandi and also in the evenings. He influenced us a lot.

After completing my high school I struggled to go abroad but Leo Shoopala was killed. The situation was tough. When we were going abroad it was for many reasons; it was about education but we knew we were under colonialism so we studied so that we could become leaders of our country. I went to Oranjemund where I became more aware learnt more about labour exploitation.

My experience was that ever since I was young, I was interested in school, till I did my teaching profession. As a teacher I wasn't really exposed to labour exploitation except the low wages. I had no boss but the inspectors who came occasionally. After the 1971 national youth strike I experienced labour exploitation. In Oranjemund, I worked as a clerk but never worked in close contact with the Boers. I was committed to my work so I was transferred to north hostel as a clerk. I did not work in the mine. I saw how my fellow colleagues suffered. The conditions were poor with extremely low wages. We were not allowed to leave before the contract was over. It was inhuman treatment. I was appointed by my colleagues to speak on their behalf. I spoke to Funny Coetzee who was the manager. I told him if they keep on working like that they would just encourage strike. He understood me.

I experienced many strikes but I did not participate. We started to form up labour organisations because if any person spoke, they got expelled. Oranjemund had its organisation for Namdeb workers, which Mbumba, Akwaake and YaToivo had established, but it was not formal. I realised I could not work there any longer because I was a professional teacher and there was no way I could go abroad, that was 1973.

In 1974 I got a chance to go abroad. We organised ourselves, Martin Mbwalu, Clemens and me. Martin Mbwalu left fist, Clemens followed and I had to go last. Everybody else wanted to terminate their contract so they could go abroad. We sneaked them in the planes. It was difficult because some people occupied important posts and they just could not leave without a replacement. The flight was just for those who finished their working contracts. It was a secret underground work. We had to sneak them out by terminating their contracts and putting someone in their places. I remained in Oranjemund till 1975. The system was later discovered because when the people that I managed to sneak out arrived in Zambia, they wrote letters to me. Early one morning of 1975 five detectives came looking for me. They had the letter with them. The letter was from Clemens and Mbwalu addressing me to go to exile through Kavango and not Angola. The manager Coetzee couldn't believe it.

I was in deep trouble. I denied it flat, the detectives wanted to arrest me that moment but my managers spoke for me. They kept a close eye on me and asked my uncle Amwelo, Moses who was the headman of Ondjodjo village and Nghixulifwa Imanuel to motivate the workers not go abroad to train as soldiers. I told them not to come, they refused to come, but the Boers forced them to come. They were in great danger because the people wanted to kill them. Andreas Amundjebo managed to calm the strikers. I terminated my contract. I didn't tell them I wasn't coming back. The Boers

kept a close eye on me. They looked for me all over at Okatana. I hid from them but I was seriously wanted because my fiancé and I decided to live to Angola that night. A friend helped us to leave. I went to Endola and then to Oshikango. UNITA and the Boers were already at the border before us.

I knew most of the Angolans working there though. One of them helped us go through the fence to Angola because that was the time of civil war. I went to Ondjiva where I found David Shimwino and Homateni who were taking care of the people coming into Angola from Namibia. I met a lot of Namibians there and they appointed me as the group leader. The truth is that our people were alias and associable to UNITA. People who were favourable to us were the UNITA people. They told us that they were starting a civil war and South Africa was preparing to come and fight against communism MPLA. They told us that they wanted to work with us but they were being supported by South Africa because MPLA were much stronger than them because they were being helped in the civil war by the communist countries.

Dimo Amaambo had guns and he came to our offices for preparation. When the civil war between MPLA and UNITA started, we were kept in the SWAPO office for five days because of the war. UNITA was defeated, and MPLA caught up with us because a UNITA car was parked at our office. We were attacked with rockets and AKs, and we did not have much to defend ourselves expect to lie down on the floor. David Shimwino and Homateni were the commanders. The MPLA came in and took David Shimwino and Tatekulu Homateni with them, and we were stuck in that town. Some of the MPLAs were my friends and they told us to evacuate the town immediately because the Boers were coming. I was not sure if we should go away because we were waiting for Dimo to take us to Efitu.

There was no other alternative but to go somewhere because the town was being destroyed. It was horrible, my friend. A lot of UNITA people were killed. We walked together to the west because the Boers were coming from the south. We survived death narrowly. We were being followed by a helicopter, and Meme Monica helped us to hide in a hollow trunk of a big tree. There were a lot of people in that tree; I found some of my colleagues I had worked with in Oranjemund. We were only three at that time, and I did not know where the others were; so I went by a bicycle to look for them the next day, and I was almost killed. I found some other people, but not Shimwino and Homateni. We marched on foot to join Dimo and Heita Nanjaba; some of the UNITA fighters joined us and we were over twenty five in number. We joined Dimo Amaambo, and we also found Ponele Ya Frans who I worked with at

CDM. I told them I had listened to the radio and heard that the Boers were coming to attack the following morning. They actually came and that was the 1st attack under Dimo. We moved to Akatali Kongwe.

In December 1975 the Boers were defeated by Cubans. My wife gave birth and I left her behind because she was not strong enough to move with the rest. I followed the other soldiers and found them in Efik. I joined the group of "Danger" Ashipala and went for training.

In 1976 we went to the Namibia border, where we had our first crucial battle under the command of “Danger”. We attacked the Boers and defeated that little group. We went to Onamishe village and kept on fighting. Another heavy battle came our way, in which I was wounded and I was left behind, but none of the soldiers died. I was bleeding heavily when the other soldiers left me behind, and for three days I was alone in the bush. I kept walking at night till I found a farm. My fellow soldiers came back for me and carried me to hospital. My leg was swollen so they transferred me to Cassinga in 1977, and from Cassinga to Ondjamba. I found my wife and kid there. I was in Ondjamba when Cassinga was attacked.

I was appointed as captain commander in Ondjamba, and Homateni came to be head of the settlement. On 4 May, I heard gun shots and commander Ndaitunga instructing people to move somewhere else. I also commanded the ambulance to go to Cassinga. The ambulance came back shot at and only one driver came back; the others had jumped out at Cassinga but they survived. That night I commanded everyone to move to the bushes because the Whites were on the way. On the next day the Boers came but they did not find us. The President and some of us went to Cassinga to bury the dead. We were in the bush and we had water shortage. I was alone I didn't know what to do. I decided to go to the Angolan Authorities. I asked them for a truck driver so we could go to Lubango. The first group left with soldiers and we were ready to fight those who came in our way.

Thereafter, I was sent to the USSR where I studied leadership. I came back and was sent to the Front where I was a political commissar of the northeast region. I became a member of the Military Council.

In 1983 I went to Zambia to study Development and Social Studies, and finished in 1985. I could not proceed with my degree in Public Administration because I had to go to Lubango. I was an editorial member of the *Combatant* with Jerry Munyama, Kanyemba, and others. In 1987 I went to study in Harare and completed. I did not come home in 1989; I went to Lubango, but when I finally came back I was sent to Grootfontein and then to the north. Mzee Kaukungwa sent me to Endola as an administrator. This was during the election campaign.

I think all this sacrifice was worth it. All I did I did it for my country. We won independence and this is all that is important. Political independence makes it is easy to fight for economic independence.

## Kaukungwa, Simon Hafeni “Mzee”

*Simon Hafeni Kaukungwa “aka” Mzee was born at Ohalushu in Ohangwena Region on 06 October 1919. He spent his youth as a cattle herder. He attended his early school at his home village, Ohalushu. From 1937 to 1940, he attended the Ongwediva Jongen School together with Andimba Toivo yaToivo. In 1940, Mzee joined the British Army in Tsumeb during the Second World War. He was later transferred to South Africa where he was trained and served as a Military Police. His main duties were to handle and escort prisoners of war. He served in that capacity until the end of the war. Mzee’s political awareness came during the Second World War when he met soldiers from Liberia and Ethiopia. Those soldiers sensitized him such that he realized the need for the Namibian people to be independent like other nations. Mzee fled to Tanzania and was ultimately appointed Military Training Officer at Kongwa Training Centre because of his experience during WWII. He was also appointed the first Chief Political Commissar of SWALA, the position he held up to 1966. In 1965 he attended a Political and Mobilization Course in China. In 1982, Mzee was appointed Treasurer of SWAPO in Dar-es- Salaam and was later transferred to Angola where he was appointed Director of all SWAPO centres in Angola, the position he held until 1989. Mzee was repatriated to Namibia in 1989. As a member of the Central Committee of SWAPO, he was given responsibility as the Election Director for the Northern Region. After independence, Mzee remained a member of the Central Committee. He was the Deputy Director of Veterans and became Director of Veterans to date. He is also the Special Advisor to the Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration since 2005.*

I am Simon Hafeni Kaukungwa, well known as Mzee. I was born and raised at Ohalushu village in Ohangwena Region. I grew up with both my parents, looking after my father’s cattle and working in the field. When the issue of contract work started I was too young. It all started when Namibians in the northern part of the country were sent to work on contract labour against their will. Contract work was not good for us; people were treated like prisoners, and they were exploited. They took people from the north and came to dump them in a compound. Contract workers were paid low wages; they experienced the hardship of contract labour.

I regard myself fortunate not to work as a contract labourer. I started my early childhood school in 1935, at my home village in Ohalushu. After completing my lower primary I was sent to Ongwediva boy’s school from 1937 to 1939.

My contemporaries at the boys school, were the likes of Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, Cleopas Johannes Itope, Sackeus Hambeko and many others. In 1940 I was still in Ongwediva training for carpentry, but before I could complete my training, Hitler’s world war started. I joined the British Army in Tsumeb, leaving my school behind. It was in Tsumeb that I got my first army uniform. I was impressed by the uniform, I remember taking a picture in it and sending it to my young brother Toivo ya Toivo whom I had left at school. When he saw me in my uniform he also left school and came to join the Second World War like I did. I was further sent to South Africa for training. I was put in military police, and my duties were to look after the camp, thereafter I got transferred to Alexandria (Egypt) where I was tasked to handle and

escort prisoners of war. I left by ship and it was through this trip that I first learned that the Boers were not the owners of our country. I heard the information from the Abyssinian, (Ethiopian) and Liberian soldiers. They were the ones who sensitized me on our country's political situation. The soldiers said to me, "Look, your country is supposed to be independent, your country is under the United Nations; the Boers are not your boss, and they were only put there by recognition to look after the land because you are still young."

The soldiers added that we could be free at any time because the Boers were not the rightful owners of the land. I kept that in mind and one good day I told Ya Toivo about what I heard and he said he had already read about such information but he just didn't know how to go about.

I served till the end of war. After the war, I went to Ovamboland, with the aim that I was going to come back with a better contract. I was employed by the Roman Catholic Church, working for a Convent school. My main duties were to wash student's dishes

and mopping floors. Accommodation was my main concern while working for the convent school, but the Sisters were good to me, they offered me a place to stay in the school. They said I could not stay at the compound because I had to wake up early in the morning for my duties. Having worked there for a year, the Sisters were impressed by my work, to the extent that they ended up asking me to recommend a person to assist me with my duties. I recommended my uncle Japheth Kaukungwa. I served at the school for a period of two years.

Thereafter I proceeded to the Cape whereby I was employed at a local hotel. It was not easy to get a job in the Cape, but after some time I got employed by a white man out of town who needed people to chop wood. Never mind the job, I took it. I worked out of town, but the white man was good to me, he would give me days off but because I did not have a place to stay I forced myself to work through out. One day I asked permission to go to town, I recall buying a newspaper which had a vacant post advertised for a police officer at the railway station in Port Elizabeth. I had so much hope for the post, that I took my army certificate, and I was recruited that very same day. The problem was accommodation. They called us German boys in Port Elizabeth because of serving in Hitler's war.

I remember my police uniform was black with a white stripe; I looked perfect in it. Again I took a picture in my uniform and sent it to my young brother Ya Toivo. He liked the uniform, the next step he left his teaching career in the north and took a train straight to Cape and made application for a police job. He was immediately recruited as a railway police.

He was stationed in Kimberly and I was in Port Elizabeth. He sent me a letter informing me of his new address. At that time South African PAC and ANC were already politically influenced because they wanted to liberate their country. So we thought we could also do the same as the South Africans. Following that, I decided to go to Cape Town to visit Ya Toivo, my younger brother Polly was also working in Cape Town at that time, as well as Tobias Hainyeko.

In Cape Town I met with the comrades of PAC, and they advised us how we could go about wining our country back. We also deliberated on many other issues that were useful for us to take action. So myself and Ya Toivo thought we were wasting time, we should go back home to start executing our plans. Meanwhile I had asked to be transferred to Windhoek, with a hidden agenda, my application was approved. By the time I came to Windhoek, I was already married to a Xhosa woman. We came together and lived in my relative's home, before we got our house. I met my wife in a Choir group, she was a friend of Miriam Makeba and they sang together. I worked for six months in Windhoek and got transferred to Mariental Railway, leaving my wife pregnant. I came to collect her to join me after giving birth, but she didn't like Mariental; she asked me to ask for a transfer back to Windhoek, of which I did, but when I arrived in Windhoek I was again promoted and given a rank of Chief CID in the country. This time I had to be stationed in Usakos. I was responsible for monitoring most of the railway stations in the country. And at that time black men were not allowed to drive government vehicles, I had to be given a white driver, who drove me around. Now it was my time to contact Tuhadeleni and Hamutumbangela. These people also wanted Namibia to be free; this idea of fleeing Namibia was called *Oghuwo yepongo Kalungateyi tondoka*. There was Nathaniel Nujoma working with the Commissioner of Ondangwa and Oshikango, he was the one who spoke about the people who wanted the country to be free.

In Windhoek there was a group of Mandume Ndemufayo, (King of Ovakwanyama tribe) movement this group existed around 1947-1948. The group included the likes of Hosea Kutako who was working in what we today call the Ministry of Home Affairs, Aaron Hamutenya, the Father of (Hidipo Hamutenya), Aaron Shivute and many others. These people wanted to end the exploitation of contract work.

Despite the fact that Kaxumba and I were related, we really never spoke about politics; the first time we ever discussed politics was when I called him informing him what I had learnt from the Abyssinian and the Liberian soldiers, as well as from the PAC people of South Africa. I briefed him on the matter. The founding President also used to travel to South Africa with the railway, and we met there. Since I was the Chief of the CID I did not have any restrictions and I could speak to anybody. The first time I met with Sam Nujoma he told me that people had organized Ovamboland People Organization, (OPO) in Windhoek. There was also a letter from Cape Town informing me that the people there have formed up OPC. That was around 1957. The Boers had received the information that Namibians wanted their land back, and they sent a stern warning for everybody working for the government to refrain from the two organizations formed, as well as the consequences to be faced once implicated in duo organizations.

I had to leave for Oshikango that same day, luckily the work was not done and we couldn't go back to Usakos, so we had to stay overnight in my home village with the driver, Van der Merve. Van der Merve was a good person, and we understood each other well. He did not have a problem sleeping in Ohalushu, and since that day

Ohalushu became our sleeping place whenever we were working in that area. That was a crucial time and I just needed an excuse to resign from my duty, but did not know how to go about it. One day we visited my home with Van der Merve and we found both my parents sick and they had been taken to the hospital. Their health was not good, and they were in and out of the hospital; so I used them as an excuse to resign from my work, citing that I was going to look after my parents, because there was no one to look after them.

Van der Merve was my witness, and my resignation was approved. After that I had the chance to organize meetings freely, because when I was a police officer I could not address people in our meetings because I was an official. Having left my job, I was free to attend meetings and motivate people to unite in fighting for our country.

During that time we had two organizations Ovamboland People's Organization, (OPO) in the country and Ovamboland People's Congress, (OPC) in Cape Town, we proposed not to have two names for the organization but rather one name representing all our interest. There were no membership cards, only an open letter with member's names. Towards the end of 1958 it was decided that we elect the president of OPO. Most people had targeted Sam Nujoma to be the president and there was also another man, called Jackson Kashikuka, who came from Cape Town and was also on the list of president of OPO. Nujoma defeated Kashikuka in the election. I recall Gabriel Mbidi, Aron Shivute, Aron Hamutenya and Titus were at the election. All I can say is that Nujoma was already the President of OPO, not SWAPO, when he left for exile. Some people also say that Nujoma was a member of SWANU; I doubt if he was a member, I could say he only communicated with them.

He was a friend to Clemence Kapuo and Kapuo was a Kutako who was a very important man.

When we elected Sam Nujoma to be the President of OPO, our main objective was for him to free Namibia from colonialism. We were two parties, SWANU for the Herero's and OPO for the Ovambo, we communicated very well because we were all fighting towards one common goal.

We received information came that we needed to send someone overseas to speak on our behalf. We said Nujoma should go and represent the people. First we sent Gideon Ndadi to be our representative, but he could not make it. We smuggled him into a ship at Walvis Bay, but he was caught and deported back. There after arrangements were made that Nujoma should go through Botswana, Zambia to Tanganyika; and once he arrived in Tanganyika they would see to it that he reached New York.

In Tanzania Nujoma was advised by Tanzanians, Kenyans and other countries that he should change the name of the party, because he could not have a party that only represent one tribal group. So he wrote a letter informing me that he needed to change the name of the organization.

He sent the name South West African People Organisation, (SWAPO) proposed by Kerina Mburumba. The name was circulated to everybody in the organization and we approved it. The meeting was held at Ohalushu, because we were scared of getting arrested by the Boers. The meeting was to elect the person going to represent the

organization in the north. Isaac Kashihome, Ithete and others were also mobilizing and organizing who was to be the leader in the north. This was some time in 1960.

Ya Toivo, who was the prominent leader of OPC in Cape Town, was arrested in the hand of the King of Ondonga Martin Ashikoto. Due to his arrest he could not attend the meeting, but he was elected as the organization's secretary in his absence, while I was the Chairman of the north and Kaxumba was elected the treasurer of the organization. I can recall that we accepted the name OPO to be changed into SWAPO, but we insisted that the date and the establishment of the organization will remain unchanged. OPO was established on the 19th April 1958 while SWAPO was established in 1960.

Thank You.

## Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Saara

*Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila left Namibia for exile at a very tender age. She was among the many young Namibians who were sent by SWAPO to study in different parts of the world. Upon graduating from high school in Sierra Leone she joined others on the military front as a PLAN combatant. She has held several portfolios in government, including Director General of National Planning and is currently serving as Minister of Finance.*

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Okay thank you very much for selecting me as one of the participants in this program. I think this is an exciting and very important topic, which we applaud the SADC region for making an initiative to document the history.

I became politically conscious, I should say, at a relatively early stage in my life and this consciousness was not aroused by any personal experiences that I could have had of the occupation and colonization of Namibia, but by virtue of information that I had. That is how I came to be aware of.

As early as the age of eight or nine years I was aware of the existence of SWAPO through mainly the freedom songs that were transmitted through the radio even though the transmission was not very good. I think there were deliberate interruptions by the South African Government. Nevertheless, some messages could still filter through despite the disturbances.

The songs got me thinking. In addition some members of my family disappeared, and I heard people whispering that they had gone to join SWAPO. At the time I knew that once these people disappear you would never see them or hear from them again. So at that young age I learnt that there was SWAPO and people joined SWAPO in exile, but those that went there never came back. There was some kind of a mystery.

Then for some years I had that information in the back of my consciousness but I never thought too much about it until one specific day. That day, I came back home from another place where I was attending school and, I found my older sister and another sister of mine quite excited. They were talking about SWAPO fighters that came into our area and how they told them that we could free Namibia from oppression; how those who were oppressing us were benefiting from our country and how we were not and how we could actually change the situation. They told them how we could have the opportunity to study and become doctors and anything that we wanted to change the system, and nobody would be ill treated again in our country. So I was also quite excited. That time I had only come for an Easter weekend and it was like 3 days. Within those three days my sisters actually worked on me thoroughly because by the time that I went back to school I was a completely different person.

I was attending school at Okahao at that time. The school that I attended was just a few meters from the soldiers' camp. We could actually see them from our school when they come out for whatever meetings they had and, we saw them. We could hear them singing. Sometimes they came to the school and harassed us every now. Though they were not beating us, they harassed us. Maybe it was to make us get scared but I started to see them in a different light after that day. Instead of maybe feeling very much

afraid and wanting to keep away from them, I started to feel some kind of resentment towards them, because I had become aware that they were a manifestation of the enemy that I had to deal with. Somehow I started to feel rebellious. I was prepared to challenge the teachers, for example, when they referred to Owamboland as the home of the so called Owambos. I wanted to be referred to as a Namibian; Namibia being my country beyond the borders of Owamboland, and I wanted to understand why I could not enjoy certain things in my country.

I remember at one time I asked the teacher, why if those people came from Europe and found us in the country, they were the ones to determine when we could go to Windhoek, how we stayed there, and in what part of Windhoek? I think the teacher was really scared especially given the proximity of the school to the camp. She just told me that She did not think they would refuse to move out of the country if they were told they should move out. Shortly after that my sister convinced me to join the struggle and leave the country. I agreed to do that. Then a month after she told me about the presence of the combatants was the last time that I ever got to see inside Namibia. In 1980 at the age of 12 I left Namibia.

When we left the country there were three of us. It was I, my eldest sister and a friend of hers. As I said, I was staying at Okahao at that time because the school at my village did not have grades higher than standard three at primary school. As a result my mother had to send me to stay with a family member at Okahao so that I could continue with my education.

So my sister came with a friend and picked me up from this home of a family friend and we hitch hiked to the border area. In fact when we left the place where we were staying we told them that we were going to visit my grandparents who stayed further west of Omusati Region. But we only went through that place and then moved on towards Omusati area up to Onawa. When we arrived at Onawa we then decided to ask for directions but we didn't know anyone. So we decided that we should look for the home of the village priest because at that time most of the members of the church were sympathizers and supporters of the struggle. We knew that the risk was very low that this person could betray us. So we basically took this church booklet that also had the names and members of the church on the back cover. We got that name and we went to the nearest cuca shop to ask for directions to the home of this priest. We arrived there in the evening and we introduced ourselves. We then told him that we are looking for SWAPO fighters to take us across the borders into Angola.

His name was Moses Shikongo. He is now deceased. He was a pastor for Onawa Evangelical Lutheran Parish. He posed for a while because did not expect that from us because he did not know us. He asked us, "You are looking for SWAPO fighters here and you were told that you will be told about their whereabouts in this house?" Then we said no we were not told that but we were just asking because you are very close to the border and you may know their movements. So he was a bit reluctant for some time but maybe he felt that because we were women and there was a small child in the group we could probably not be spies.

He decided to take that risk and told us a bit about their movement. He said well, they are seen here sometimes but we also see the koevoets here sometimes, and sometimes they engage with each other here. However, if you really like to get in touch with them, I could get you one of my sons to escort you in the morning to where you may be able to find them. So in the morning he let one of his sons escort us. Yet, what seemed to be a simple safe kind of exercise really demonstrated possible risks that could also have cost our lives. As we were going you could see that this guy was quite used to the situation in the area. He would climb the trees to just survey the place and to make sure that there were no movements of the enemy forces for example. At times he would say that he could see the koevoets on this side, so we should go another way. When they went this way went to the other side and if they were on the other side we went to a different side. He took us to another home where we got somebody who was to take us to another place and who would help us to cross the border. It was very interesting to know how these people who lived along the border assisted and helped people to cross the border safely.

We were taken to another place in Ombanja, very close to the border and this guy asked us to wait until it was very, very dark and late. I think it was around 10 pm. Then he led us to the border. We then crossed the Border into Angola in the middle of the night and, he led us right into a SWAPO camp inside Angola. Not only did they help people to cross the border they actually knew where our people were at any time, which actually shows their commitment by not betraying us. They took us to the centre of the camp and then immediately these SWAPO fighters started to come from what seemed like every corner. It appeared to be an ordinary place or ordinary bush without buildings or structures. All of a sudden they were coming from all directions. That was the first time ever that I came into contact with SWAPO fighters. I had always heard about them and I had heard them sing, but I had never seen any of them, nor had I at any time been subjected to any ill treatment or direct treatment by the South Africans. I had only heard about them and I had only read history and heard stories being told. It was only when that basic instinct from my sisters that I then decided to join SWAPO and to cross the border.

What was most interesting was the power of politics because two years before that, which was before I crossed in 1978, I was aware of the bombing at Kasinga. I had seen people that were captured from Kasinga, the ones that came from the Okahao area where I was attending school. They were brought back by the enemy in military trucks and paraded there and, they were humiliated. We were warned that if we were to dare join SWAPO that was what was going to happen to us. At that time when I first saw those people I was not fully conscious. I didn't imagine that one day I could also, go there where the Boers once went and killed a lot of people. But when my sister finally told me about the soldiers that came to our village, I forgot about all that and I thought I would go and they would never get me. Instead, I would come back and get them and, we were going to free our country.

My sister was nine years older than me. She was 21 years maybe going onto 22. So she was much older than me. She understood everything but, as we were going as a young one, there were many things that were going on in my mind. For example, when we spent a night at Onawa, before we were escorted by the son of this village man I thought for a moment. I thought we were going to get these combatants here in Namibia to help us cross. Then, we were going to cross there alone, were we really going to make it or should we go back home before anybody noticed that we were trying to sneak away? However, my sister wouldn't have any of that. She was determined that we were going and she didn't want to hear any other story. Anyway, after that I just started to think like that and to look forward. I had also made up my mind that we were going. I was able to endure the long distances of walking because it was a long distance that we had to cover before we could get some transport. They had to move us from one place to another centre.

In the settlements, that is in the camps all the way from Lubango to Kwanza Sul I knew other kids who had left the country. Following the Kassinga massacre, SWAPO had relocated the children to centres that were much further inside Angola. So around the area of Lubango there were not many children there. The place that we settled in while in Lubango actually was I would say a virgin area. I could say that it was a bush and we found other children say numbering maybe not more than 50 or maybe 20 children around there. There were no structures there. We actually had to put up temporary structures in a form of a shallow kind of trenches and we dug that ourselves. There were no logistics, no logistical goods because we did not have blankets or anything like that. So we dug this shallow hole and if we were lucky we got this heavy jacket because we depended on the solidarity of peace loving countries as I said. So I got one heavy coat. Two other kids also had coats. We used one to cover the ground and we would use the two to cover ourselves and just stare at the sky in the evening. Lucky enough it was not a rainy season. So we stayed there for a number of months. We had to walk something like three to four kilometers every day to get food at another camp. We also had to walk the same distance to the water stream to take a bath and, to get water to drink. Really, looking back now it was a difficult situation but the good thing is that children can adapt very easily. It was a very abnormal situation, but being together with other kids there, we could adapt and life went on.

After some time when the numbers started to increase with other kids arriving from Namibia, we established a settlement formally. We got tents and they were put up for shelter. We stayed there for a few months and, some adults came who then served as teachers. That is when we were first introduced to English. We stayed there for maybe three months or so before being moved to a bigger centre in Lubango. That one was a bit more built up. At least there were structures. There were corrugated iron buildings and staff, but we didn't stay there for long because the movement did not really want to have a big number of civilian population in that area which is probably known by the enemy and could be subject to an attack. Therefore, the camp was used more like a transit camp. Therefore, we were moved again northwards to Kanzazul

still in southern Angola. There we had a very large population. We had maybe eight to nine thousand children, mostly those who had not reached the age of 17.

It was a full-fledged educational centre surrounded by a number of other camps for old people, the disabled, pregnant women and, for those with small babies. It was a network of centres. In total we may have been twenty thousand or so. It was a complete community and, I think, that helped a lot because we could not feel the isolation. We could still see many other people of our age and, we were joined by people we knew from home.

Being still young I could not be initiated into the military. So I was in fact sent to an education centre that was run by the party. I stayed in that education centre which was located in the southern part of Angola. That was still in 1980. After two months I was transferred to another education centre of SWAPO at KwanzaSul, near Luanda, the capital. I was still in primary school doing standard 5. That is where I completed my primary school after which I was awarded a scholarship by the United Nations High Commission for refugees. I then went on to do the first year of my secondary school after which I got an award and a scholarship to go and further my studies in Sierra Leone, West Africa, where I stayed for 5 years and completed my secondary education. Upon completing my secondary education I returned to KwanzaSul at the education centre where I had a short stint in teaching because there we didn't really have qualified teachers. I taught for a month at primary school level, teaching mathematics.

Then I was sent to Southern Angola to undergo military training because I had turned 18. So I went to Lubango and I was trained as a Political Commissar. When I finished training I was deployed at the headquarters and that was the military headquarters of the Party in Lubango. I was there for some time before I was sent to Tanzania for further training. I returned from Tanzania to Namibia, to participate in the elections that brought us independence.

The period that I spent in the different settlements exposed me to many, many different experiences. In the first place I was introduced to the situation of war two days after crossing the border, before I could actually arrive at the centre where I was to stay. There were air bombings around the area where we were transiting near the border. I don't know whether they knew about our presence or it was just a routine bombing that they did in order maybe to clear the area of SWAPO fighters. It was a learning experience for me because before I left Namibia the only weapons that I had seen were these automatic rifles that the Koevoets carried around. So I thought actually that those were the only weapons that were used in war. I never knew that there were also jet fighters that could drop bombs and make the terrible sounds that they were making. So it was quite a reawakening to be subjected to that.

It also helped me to adjust to my new life because prior to crossing the border we had this perception that PLAN fighters were mystical people. They were a special group of people or had certain personality I don't know, something like that. They were not very easy to kill. I thought that when I leave my home I was going to go out

there, fight for my country and come back. I never really thought that I could face death there and could actually die. I thought it was like what we saw in the movies and read in the story books. However, that bombing actually taught me that, it was war and I could die there. I realized for the first time that I was also vulnerable; unlike in the situation that we had at home, where if I saw the Koevoets I was so afraid and the only thing that I could do was to pray.

I found myself among people that I could call my own; people that could face the enemy and fight back. So I realized that okay, there was a risk and I could die, but that risk was there for the enemy as well. I realized that freedom could come, but at a cost; but it could come if I persisted because those were people just like me. I think that was very important for me and it prepared me for the harsh realities of life in exile.

When I arrived in another camp deep into Angola, which was in Lubango, there was again another attack and this one I think was not an impromptu. I think they were quite aware of our presence. They were not accurate but they knew that there were a number of camps there. Some lives were lost during that attack on our side, but apart from that they also had casualties. Planes were also downed that day. That also reinforced my morale to start thinking that I was in a war situation. Yes, I could lose my life here, but those people were just people like me and they could lose their life like me in the process, and there was a possibility that we could prevail over them but only if we persisted. That reinforced me once again.

The camps that you came across as you got into Angola were mostly SWAPO military camps and, they used to have transit people who used to come from Namibia. We were in the children's transit camps.

Practically most of the bombing took place on the other side of the river which was where some adults were settled but not necessarily those that were trained and armed. They were just some of the many civilian camps that were inhabited by older people. That was where one or two people lost their lives during that day. But I think it was a tough fight really which sent a message across to the South Africans that they were not going to have things the easy way.

There was actually a determination to win the war on the part of SWAPO. So when we moved from that centre to go to Kwanza, the difficulties were more in the unpredictability and the inadequacy of food supplies. It was because there, we were dependant on the supply of peace loving nations and didn't have steady income as an organization. So there were times when we went for two to three days without food. Imagine at the age of 12 or 13. However, due to high morale we had come to build up, we could survive until things got better and again that there was something for us to eat. Despite these difficulties, we could still make it in school because when we went to Angola we were coming from an education system that we all knew. The medium of instruction was Afrikaans, the curriculum was not up to standard and, when we went to join SWAPO the medium of instruction was English and the curriculum was much improved.

These added together to the general difficult situation, made life very tough to cope with. Nevertheless we were determined as part of that political mobilization that was usually given to us. We did not need to fight the enemy on the military front only, but we also needed to be prepared to contribute to the building of the new nation. We could only be prepared if we participated effectively, if we learnt and absorbed all the information that was provided to us so that we could become experts that could contribute to Nation building. We were determined. Sometimes we went to school on an empty stomach and we went to bed on an empty stomach. During that same year, I together with many other children still managed to succeed in that primary school and we got promoted to go into secondary school. We then finished the first year successfully and qualified for the study grant to go and further our studies in different countries.

People kept coming and as the years went by. The groups grew in size. The groups that were arriving, for instance the time we arrived we could have groups of ten people arriving or so. Then they started to be fifty people arriving and then sometimes you could get a group of hundred people arriving in one day. I think the 1980s was the period of mass exodus of young people crossing the border to join SWAPO in exile. A number of these kids went to Nyango in Zambia around 1981 and 1982.

I almost went to Zambia myself. I was on the list to go at one time, but when I went to where people were boarding the buses, one of the administrators said I should come out because I was going to West Africa and not to Nyango. What they did was that those who were still in Primary school were sent to Nyango to go and do their secondary school there. Those who had completed primary school and were in Secondary school were separated so that they could be sent to other countries. But because of the uncertainties we never knew what tomorrow would bring; whatever opportunities came our way we would want to grab it and I wanted to grab that too, so I could have been very happy to go to Nyango.

Our camp in Lubango was very far from the nearest town and, we didn't have any interactions with the local communities except the few that passed through the centre or, when we went out as children. We always strayed. Even if we were told that we were not supposed to go out because we could run into UNITA and be captured, we still managed to sneak out of the camp. We would encounter the locals and pick up a few words in their local language. But for the most part we stayed in our own camps. As I mentioned earlier after completing secondary education in Sierra Leone we went for training and it was a completely different life there because it was a military life with its own discipline. It was quite an adjustment, requiring regular strict formations. We had to wake up at a certain hour in the morning, go for exercises and then after that we went for training followed by political classes.

In civilian life we used to go to civilian classes where we were introduced to politics. That also brought about a certain degree of transformation to our minds because of so many years in a civilian kind of environment. We had to refocus our attention from the military front as a front that we had to participate in. We concentrated on that

other front where we thought our contribution would be needed to acquire education and to help in the transformation of the country.

We were then introduced to political education, which was very important, I think, to help us to adjust and fit into the new life in a society, especially if we had to go to the front. Then, of course, we had to go for the actual military training to learn how to fire an arm, to know how to perform first aid if our colleague was wounded and, to understand the different political systems, for example why the system that we were fighting was wrong.

Probably the most important thing that has helped us a lot in nation building was political education that helped us to define and understand who the enemy was and what the target of the fight that we are fighting was. I think that was important. We no longer had that concept we had when we left the country the enemy was the white man. The white man was the one that I was going to fight and when independence came we would not only remove the white man from power, but that we would remove this white man from Namibia. Then I went to Angola. Then through this Political training I became aware of the fact that the enemy was not the white man. The enemy was the system of apartheid. It only happened that the system was sustained by persons that came from the group of which the whites formed the main part. But when I finished my military training I was well informed that I was going to fight the system.

Once I had brought the system down I was not going to have any fights with whoever you know, but with whomever that was operating that system. I think that was very important. That helped us also, I think to forgive, to reconcile and, to avoid what had happened in so many other countries; situations that had held back the efforts of nation building and economic reconstruction.

When I came back from my studies and returned to Lubango, I followed a different route from the one that I followed when I first joined SWAPO in Angola because coming in I was a child and, I was going through these mostly civilian camps within a military environment. I was exposed only to civilian aspects of the organization, except for a few instances for example where we would have bombings. When I came back from school I was now going through the military establishments of SWAPO. There I got another picture of SWAPO. I think I got the picture of the extent of the military might of the party. That was also important. It kept us assured that we could actually succeed with the war. Also we were exposed to much more education that prepared us for nation building in terms of forging a spirit of nationhood. At the military centre we actually met Namibians in all their diversity. They came from all communities and then the political education was to foster a spirit of nationhood and oneness for all Namibians of all backgrounds. The spirit of oneness was very strong and I think that was also very important. That was very important because nobody had the support of their own family. We started to see each other as one family and depended on the support of each other for our survival. That gave us consolation, especially in the war situation that we faced.

I think that once we were trained we became quite aware of the nature of the war with all the risks that were involved. We were no longer just told politics that we were just going to fight, no. We were told that when we went to the war we fired our arm like this and; if we did this our enemy could get us; if we are wounded, this is what we had to do; if our colleague died we had to do this, and so on. There were no stories about not dying, anymore. We were told this in advance that if we do this in a battle field and we are dead. It was a different ball game all together. However, it was just incredible. What politics does to the mind of a person is that you will become quite aware of the full risks that are in the war. However, we were not demoralized at all because when we got trained we also felt that we were in a better position to defend ourselves than we had been before training, even though we were aware that we were exposed to more risks.

Going through the training program all of us wished that after going through all that we were to have the opportunity to go to the front and participate in the real thing. Yet some of us had to take care of the administration. That was the case with me. After training I was instead deployed in the headquarters. At the same time a number of my colleagues went different ways. Some of them went to the battle field.

There was also another dimension because the enemy was becoming quite aware of the build-up of the military component of SWAPO. The enemy was then making efforts to penetrate in launching attacks in the SWAPO camps. Hence, the fights in these centres where we had a lot of military concentration were very fierce fights because of the distance. The South Africans would come by air most of the times but because they were now attacking military camps, the response from SWAPO was very fierce. I think they asserted all their might, and this boosted our morale.

During the last days of our training we had one bad experience. They attacked when we were being commissioned and we were at a parade as graduating military cadets. The planes came and they started to shower us with bombs and of course we responded and they took off; but they came back again the next day. They thought that they could get us better if they came early in the morning, at 6 o'clock. They were bombing everywhere, but they really got a shock of their lives. The fire from the ground to the air was incredible and two planes were downed at that time which really kind of boosted my morale. I was like, yes, we are pushing.

These camps were permanent and had permanent structures. I think that the enemy knew about these camps and also SWAPO probably knew that the enemy knew. However, SWAPO had decided that they were not going to spend their lives running around, so they were going to launch from there and if they dared attack us there we would also give it back to them. Nevertheless, as a military establishment it had to be camouflaged. They did not have to put up their structures in the open. They still made it difficult for the enemy to know exactly that was the office and that was the ammunition depot. At the same time the enemy knew when they came that they would drop the bombs in the camps or just a few meters outside the camps. The only reason they were not able to inflict casualties was because they were also scared. They

could not concentrate and they knew that if they were too slow they would be taken out. So it was a matter of coming and maybe running dropping and running back quickly before they were shot down.

To take you back to our studies in West Africa. Most of us were put into families, local families whom we stayed with. Others were in hostels but every time we had a school break we all converged in the capital city so that we could still stick together as a community. We made sure that we were in contact with each other by having periodic meetings during the school breaks. These meetings were held to update ourselves as to what was happening in Angola. They were designed to encourage each other and to correct each other and to keep track as to what everybody was doing.

We commemorated important days like the day of the launching of the liberation struggle 26th August. That was the day which we always looked forward to because it was more like Christmas for us. We all knew that during that holiday we had to go to the capital city where we participated in the 26th August commemorations. We had political activities on that day. It also helped us a lot because we went through hardships and some of our colleagues died there and they were buried there. Life was also not very easy because while we had a sponsorship it was very meagre as we could barely survive on that. There was therefore the need to support each other. There was need to have that emotional support. Therefore, we supported each other all the time, keeping each other focused on the most important issue which was to complete our education.

The experience also gave us exposure. It gave us an exposure of self-governance because we were now in the African countries which were run by the nationals themselves. This gave us hope, even though they didn't have to fight militarily like we were doing, they had to put up some efforts to rid themselves of the colonial oppression and they were now in charge of their destiny. That showed us that we could also manage our destiny. It also gave us the opportunity to know what could go wrong so that we could such situations when we went back to our country. That I think was one of the benefits of being one of the last countries to establish nationhood because we could build our experience from the experiences of other people and then we could learn from the mistakes of other people.

In addition to that and probably the most important, it gave us the educational foundation that we probably could not have had at home, especially if one took the education situation at the time. We did not have enough schools and they were not equipped even half as much as our own schools were, but they had qualified teachers and a solid disciplined system. That really enabled the children to absorb and really make it through the system. I think that helped us a lot. We could see that many of the people who hold positions of responsibility amongst our communities today were out one way or the other. Whether they left the country under the SWAPO leadership on their own, they are the ones taking up leadership today. It is only now that young people are graduating from Polytechnic and the University. That is why I think some of us have a lot to thank SWAPO for.

When I went to Tanzania, it was some kind of training with an introduction to customs administration and immigration. We were in two groups, one concentrated on immigration and the other one on customs administration and some sort of military training to it. It was a short but intensive course. It was the time we were there that we learnt of the event of 1st of April. I think that was one of the most devastating experiences that I had while in exile.

Throughout the years when there was an attack, I was never, never shaken. It was my belief that things would be fine again, but when April 1st came, I began to be afraid that maybe things could go very wrong and, that it could be very difficult for us to live with the consequences. In fact we thought that this whole thing of us returning probably would be out now because we were no longer going to go back home but we would go back to full scale war. We were out there in a foreign country and we were not in a SWAPO settlement. The consolation was that we received regular information that enabled us keep ourselves up to date with what was going on.

So we would wake up every day and be told that there were another fifty (50) SWAPO combatants killed and another fifty (50) captured. Each day we went there we expected another announcement from SWAPO leadership that the repatriation was off and we were going back to war. Thanks to the wisdom I think of the leadership. I think that they kept their focus on the price and they decided that despite the fact that we had lost some comrades, we would stick to those plans because they offered the best possibility for us to attain independence.

I think, because of that that we are here today.

Thanks.

## Matongo, Frederick

[Windhoek; 26 June 2008]

*Frederick Matongo left Namibia for exile during his early years. He is one of the young people from the Caprivi Region who left as members of CANU but joined SWAPO upon arrival in Zambia. He was one of the early pioneers of the liberation struggle and was an active guerrilla fighter inside the country in the early 1970's. He served SWAPO on the diplomatic front as a representative in a number of countries. He is currently advisor*

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*to the Minister of Veterans Affairs.*

First of all I would like to apologize for the cough because I do cough sometimes. I must say thank you very much for coming here and try to write the history of this country. As you are very much aware that in writing the history of Namibia there are a lot of things that are involved here.

First and foremost is that you require funds in order to do this. You require people who can put this story the way it is supposed to be written.

My name is Fredrick Matongo. I was born on the 10 October 1946 in Kabbe Village in Caprivi Region. I started my schooling at Kabbe School, and then I went to Southern Rhodesia which is now Zimbabwe. That is where I did my secondary school. I was in Hwange.

I came back home in 1963. In 1964 I went to school at the Catholic Mission at Katima Mulilo. At that time CANU (Caprivi African National Union) lead by the late comrade Brendan Simbwaye was formed. We were the first youth members of CANU while we were at school. We used to pay school fees in Pounds at that time, but the essential commodities were lacking at that school. Then we started to demand that we wanted those things. For example we had no mattresses, and the food that we were eating was very poor. We then started asking for that while at the same time comrade Simbwaye was also behind us, influencing us. It was the battle of the gun.

If I can recall, in 1963 Brendan Simbwaye was in Zimbabwe where I think he met Joshua Nkomo; we didn't know what was going on, but he knew what was going on. I can also remember a person called Muyongo. He was very effective at that time. I have forgotten the other comrade's name. That one was arrested together with the president Simbwaye. The comrade heard about our strike because he used to come to our school at night to encourage us.

When we decided to have a strike we were with Greenwell Matongo. I cannot remember all of the names now. There were those who supported the strike and those who did not. We then we went back to boarding school. Greenwell was on the side of those who were opposing the strike. The group of those who were opposing the strike was overpowered by the side which was supporting the strike, and it was so funny how it happened.

At the Catholic school every evening we used to go to church for the prayers. On that day when we went there we started asking some questions. We started talking

about our demands and then they couldn't answer our questions. After that we were supposed to go into the church for prayers but we refused to go in. Finally we were forced to go in so that we could pray.

So when we came out we were stopped because now there were some boys who were against the strike and they started beating the big boys. Fortunately I was one of the youngest in the group. What I did was that I went to one of them and told him that I didn't know why these guys were beating the other boys and I would like to know why I was also not beaten. The strike started after the youngest in the group was beaten. They called in the Police and then the South African forces to come and restore order. That evening it was terrible. We didn't sleep in the dorm that night. We ran away and we slept in the bush.

When we come back the next morning we continued demanding the things that we were demanding from them. That was on a Friday. On Monday we were called to the office so that those who wanted to leave could take their money leave. We were about 500 students at the school and 450 of us demanded our money. Only 50 remained and that was the end of my schooling. I never went to that school again.

Then we went back home. That was in 1964. When that happened the Government at that time in Katima deployed all the police in the villages to hunt for us and they were arresting us. As I said I am from Kabbe but we also used to move to some other places where people were cultivating their fields and it was there where they came looking for us.

I was with my friend who is late now and we saw some lights coming our way. We could see what was happening there because these were just temporary structures where we were staying. The police were coming to arrest us, so I told my colleagues that we should run away but they said no, if you run away they will shoot you. Then I started to move backwards little by little until I disappeared and they were arrested. Seeing that there was no other way out, I went to the nearby village and I told my other colleagues. After telling them we crossed into Zambia.

By that time CANU was already formed and, one of the comrades in our group was the branch secretary. We continued to Mambovaand while we were there we were grouped with other comrades who had crossed using different routes. There were about thirty of us.

And then the problem came. We were just starving and we did not have any means to take care of ourselves; there was no support from anywhere. Then 15 of us went back home and the other 15 remained in Zambia.

For those of us who remained behind we started working for the Zambians. We would plough from Monday to Friday and then on Saturday and Sunday they gave us ploughs and oxen so that we can plough for ourselves. We earned only two Kwacha, which was two dollars, but it was a lot of money then.

At that time Zambia was not yet independent. They only got independence on the 26th of October of 1964. So we stayed there and even on the Independence Day we were there but we were starving. Sometimes we used to survive on dry fish from the

open market. In the evening when the vendors went back home we would go there and pick those dry bones of fish and eat and drink some water and then we would say it was okay. We stayed there until January 1965 when Maxton came to collect us from Mambova. He picked us to go to Tanzania. On our way to Tanzania he left us somewhere, where we remained for two weeks before tickets were sent to take us to Dar es Salaam and some to Kongwa.

For us who were going to Kongwa we travelled by train to Dodoma. From Dodoma we were picked up by trucks to Kongwa camp where we did our training in 1965, 1966 and 1967. Then in the middle of 1967 we were sent to North Korea for further military training.

In that group, there were three of us from Caprivi. That was me, Martin Ndopu, and Raymond Kwalelo. This was the group of Lieutenant General Hawala. We were about 10 in that group. After completing our training towards the end of 1968 we came back to Africa. From there we went straight to the front which we called the Eastern Front which we know today as the Caprivi Region.

I stayed at the front until the end of 1972. I was sent again to Czech Republic by then it was Czechoslovakia. I stayed there from 1972 to 1973. After finishing my course I came back to the front again. We had attempted to open a front in the Kavango area but we had to go through Botswana. I remember it was on 21st December 1969, when we attempted to cross the Kavango River. When we were still operating from the Eastern Front we managed to cross the river to Mukwe and then to Shakaweb on the 21st in the evening. We slept there till the morning of the 25th December 1969.

When we came back our aim was to reach the people because we relied on them for food and information. By then we had spent 8 days without food. On the ninth day when we got to the other side of the river we divided ourselves. Some had to remain in the camp because we could not see some people. One of the comrades had climbed up the tree and he was watching. We were 7 in our group under commander Canissius, a deputy commander and I, as the secretary of the group. In fact from that group it is only me who is still alive.

While the colleague was still up the tree he said we had a problem because it was an open space and there was nothing else. The South Africans were already approaching and there was no other way we could avoid them or avoid confrontation. Now we were forced to fight but we didn't have heavy weapons at that time. We had only pepesha and carbine. These were short range weapons and they were effective from 20 meters.

So we had to let those people come closer and at first we did well because that group withdrew. I think they had already communicated with another group and the other group was now coming. So we had to withdraw. One of us was wounded in the head and now there were five of us because the other two were not with us.

Now what we had to do was to play the tempting tactic so that those people will not know where we were based. The three of us stopped firing while the other two continued firing to mislead the enemy. They followed those and for us we survived

and went back to the base. But now I cannot tell whether at that time the colleagues got lost or what ever I don't know what happened there. Since we had misled them, we knew they would find out and come back to our base. Therefore we had to leave that place immediately.

Then we were waiting for them in the evening around 8 o'clock we saw a car with the South Africans and the car was full of soldiers. We didn't shoot but we just lay in ambush. If we shot at them they would know where we were so we just watched as they passed and left us there. We waited until midnight and then went back because our aim was to reach one place near Rundu. That was the target now.

We were now five. The other two comrades were missing but we moved on. Now it was our tenth day without food. When we got to one place some people gave us directions to our target since they knew the area. We went to a certain area where they directed us but did so knowing that this was a big and thick forest. As we moved on the fellow who accompanied us knew where honey and water was. This guy had seen a place where there was honey but he kept quiet, and that day we slept without eating anything. Then the next day this guy walked up and said no, I cannot stay like this. I saw somewhere where there were some bees and I think we can find some honey because I cannot stay like this. We were excited, and we said that was our food and went there. It was me, Canissius and this bushman who went. We left some of our comrades at the base.

When we got there I saw some foot prints. They were these animal tracks. I said okay and then I started to follow the prints now. While we were still on that spot, it was on that day that I began to believe that there is God because I was supposed to die that day. What happened is that there were South African Troops in the area and they were with a group of bushmen (san people) but their work was just to track, because they didn't have guns. They were only checking and once they saw something they would report.

The Bushmen didn't see me and they just passed, but I was seen by the Boers. Now, why I said I believe that there is God is because this Boer started shouting at me but I pretended not to hear. I kept moving ahead and I was aiming at the tree that was in front of me. Once I reached the tree I was the one who opened fire first and, you know by that time the South Africans believed that we were having magic and we could change into somethings. We started shooting at each other and then I rolled over and I escaped. But then I could still hear that they were shooting at the same place and they didn't change.

Now that I had escaped I said what could I do; the others could not help and because I was the one who shot first they thought that I got the animal but then to their surprise they could hear that the sound of guns was becoming widely spread, the helicopters came. Now it was a problem for us to come together again. So I went alone because I saw that there was no other way. I also remembered one of our comrades, the one who was wounded in the first battle. At that time we had no shoes. In fact we had nothing. It was a terrible situation. I was alone and they were chasing me.

The time was now from 8 o'clock. They kept on chasing me until three o'clock. How I survived in that very small forest I don't know.

I was very hungry now. When the evening came they went away, then I decided to go back to Botswana. While I was going back to Botswana, I don't know how I came back to our first base. We had at our first base other bags that belonged to the comrades who didn't come back and my bag by then had gone with the Boers. So I remembered the place and I said this is the place. On the other side of the base was the Kavango River and a road along the river which the Boers used when patrolling. This road joins the other road that goes to Mukwe. That is the road that they used to transport those people who were going to become laborers in the South African Mines. So they were patrolling the road. Then I saw that my life was now in danger, and I had to hide in the bush. Another thought came to me that I should open fire but not to aim at anybody. So when they were this side in my direction, I pointed my gun east wards. They came and they passed me because they thought I was there, but had crossed the stream to the other side.

While I was on that side I saw this animal, you call it wild pig or a warthog. I saw this animal and I was hungry. So I shot it. I opened the inside and I took the liver, cut off one leg and went away. I saw an anthill and I decided that I make some fire thereby opening it at the top, put the fire and then close it again so that the smoke goes inside. At first there were two helicopters and then they become four.

While I was there my other thought was to leave the bush now and go to the river bed. I went there by the river bed where there was some grass under which one could hide. I hid myself there and then the helicopters bombed the whole area where I was at first and everything but I was safe there. They didn't think that anyone can go and hide there and I survived. Yes that is true. They thought it was just grass and that is how I managed to survive all this bombing by the helicopters and all that.

It started raining then. It was a heavy rain and it was around 3 o'clock, but you could think that it was maybe 1 o'clock or 2 o'clock midnight when there is no moon. How I crossed the stream so that I could go on the other side of the Botswana border, I cannot understand because there are a lot of crocodiles but nothing happened to me.

Also this place where I crossed was a camp for the South Africans. Between there up to the Kavango River the area is very small, and there were dogs there but I happened to cross and the dogs did not bark at me. I thought that I had gone very far because I was tired and hungry as I had not eaten anything. It was also raining. I just walked and I thought I was now very far and then I slept. The place where I slept was about 100 metres from the camp of the Boers and I didn't know. I just felt tired and then I had to sleep so I slept there.

In the morning I heard the dogs barking and they were the ones that woke me up. I then realized that I was close to the camp. I didn't know Shakawe so I just followed the road. When I got tired which was by then at night I slept again. In the morning I took my mattress and gun and hid them somewhere near the bush then I walked and I followed the road till Shakawe.

When I came to Shakawe, I was now alone and there was nobody I knew there. I was hungry and I had some Zambian Kwacha and then I went to a certain shop and I asked them where the post office was? They, asked me why I wanted the post office and that I had to be careful because I looked like a mad person. Then I told them if they wanted to know where I came from they should give me something to eat then I would tell you where I came from.

Then the man gave me 5 cents and told me to go to a place across and they would sell me scones and tea. After I finished I was supposed to come back to him and tell the story. I took the money and I thought he must be joking, me going back there. I didn't take the direction that he told me to and I took my own way.

I saw a group of people and I thought what was going on there; when I looked closely, it just crossed my mind that, they must be drinking beer. I could not drink beer because of the situation that I was in, but something in my mind was forcing me to go there. I went there and I found out there were many things which included meat and big containers of sour milk that cost only 5 cents, and I bought that one. But I could not drink it because it was painful when I tried to swallow the milk. I just went and sat on a stone somewhere, and as I was trying to drink this milk I saw two people coming. I thought they were Canissius and our new recruit. I called them and we started to talk.

Canissius asked me how I could start shooting when I knew very well that they were soldiers. I told him I was defending myself. He asked me how I survived and I told him the story. I took some more money and I bought some milk for him and for the recruit. From there we started to plan what to do, considering that some of our comrades were nowhere to be found, and this was the second time that we were losing each other. All together we were seven but these were the only ones that I was left with; the new guy was the one who was trying to show us where to find honey before I started shooting at the Boers.

I had not seen any sign of the other colleagues where I had come from. Then we thought that one person whom they could have killed could be the one who had been injured before. All of us believed it was him because he was badly injured and he couldn't fight for himself. Fortunately he was alive. He came to Botswana and he reported himself to the authorities and he was taken to hospital where he survived. When he had recovered they took him to prison. Then we said that we would meet with the others in Shakawe.

We were still in Shakawe when we were talking and planning, then we decided there was nothing we could do if we did not see the others. But the question was how we could go back. The colleagues suggested that our representative, Maxton was in Botswana. We thought we should just report there and then he would see what he could do with us; may be to transport us to Lusaka.

I disagreed with that as it was possible that some of our people could have been captured and it would give problems to our comrades we had left in Zambia. I said

we were supposed to go back the same way that we came into Botswana. Canissius thought I was mad, but I said I was not mad and that was what we had to do.

Canissius said in Shakawe we could not starve because there were so many Namibians around and they could help us. We tell them that we were looking for food and they would help us. I asked him if he had seen a tree that was at a certain road and he said yes. I said we should meet there at 5 o'clock.

He went and I went back and sat under the tree. It was then mid-day and we were supposed to meet at 5 o'clock. I took a nap and overslept and when I woke up it was already past five. I started walking towards the area where we were supposed to meet and I thought to myself, these people were probably drinking by now. If they were drinking, then the situation would change because it was very difficult to control the people who were drinking.

So I thought at that time I was going back to Shakawe but apparently I was going back to the Namibian border. The Botswana Para Military Vehicle drove by and passed me. Apparently they were looking for me. They went and came back again and they were looking but found no one.

Then they passed me and they came back again. By that time it was too late to know that they were back and I was walking on the road; and I was late to hide myself. As I was about to jump into the grass to hide myself they saw me and stopped the car and came to me and I was arrested. They asked me, where my gun was and I told them that I did not have a gun. They told me if I did not give them my gun they would send me to South Africa. I insisted that I did not have a gun, I came there for protection and my gun was in Namibia.

Then the big boss asked me, "You, where is your gun?" Then I don't know how the name "comrade" came out, but I just found myself saying, "Comrade, I have no gun and I have already told you that."

Then the problem came because I said comrade. He was angry, saying "The commander in chief to be your comrade! How can you call me comrade?"

Then I was arrested, taken to Shakawe Police Station. At that time my colleagues were already arrested and I didn't know. This man who had offered to buy me tea was also already there in prison and I didn't know. Then I was taken in to the prison and there was the commander of the military and the police.

I was thinking of what statement to give. I thought that I could do something and then I went around the prison and I gave each one a different statement. When they compared the statements everybody had his or her statement and then they asked me why I had given them different statements.

I told them that I did not have a simple story and because the story was long I started with this one and then when the other one came I continued where we left because I thought that if I started again the story was too long. I then said I did not know what the captain was saying but I thought that if I had to finish the story I should just continue from where I left off. That is why they are saying I have different statements because I was just continuing.

Because of that I happened to be arrested and then they took me to a very small cell. My hands and feet were tied in chains. Then they took a bucket of shit and they put it next to my head. Man it was terrible.

Then every 30 minutes they sent someone to come and check me and then early in the morning around 4 o'clock they took me to the police station and tried to convince me to give them the gun. I refused, and then they took me back. Then at 6 o'clock they came again to take me and I was there in chains and I could not even move because those things were very heavy and they took me to another cell. There I found some of my colleagues and they were now saying, why are you treating this person like this what did he do? Just because he is saying that he came here for protection? We are not fighting Botswana. Why are you treating us like this? Then there was the Chief of the Para Military who was a British white man. He was also very touched with the way in which they were treating me and he asked them, "Really, do you have to treat this man like this?" They said, "Yes, because he is a terrorist." He then spoke to the authorities there and he was given permission to take us and then together with Canissius and the other bushman we drove from there to Maun.

We continued with our journey from Maun to Francistown then we were put in the Para Military camp where we used to go for treatment. Our bodies were now like rotten bodies. We were having bodies which were like, if I press my figure here it goes in and would create a hole and it was like that for some time. It was bad. Our health was terrible and they thought we were dead but apparently we were not. That was the time when I discovered that my father is Niko. I found out about that because of one of the people who were working there and he asked me. Are you the son of so and so? Then I said you are telling me. Those people told me that my father was there in Botswana. I don't know what really happened that I was in Caprivi and my father was in Botswana. That was in 1969. We were there till early 1970. Now the information spread that we were at the camp and we were receiving medication. After two weeks

we were taken to prison but we were remanded.

When we were there I thought about our representative there. I went to the prison wardens and I asked for some paper and an envelope. When I was given I wrote a letter and I said please take this to the SWAPO representative here in Botswana because it is going to Lusaka. However, I asked him to read it first. The letter was confiscated and I was called. Did you write a letter? I said yes I wrote a letter. The envelope I used was for the Botswana government. The pen I used was the same even the paper I wrote on it was the same. They wanted me to explain and I told them that I asked the civil servant to give me a paper, pen and an envelope because I wanted to write a letter to my head office in Zambia.

Then they said you are not allowed to write a letter when you are in prison. So the letter was taken back. After two to three days they changed the people who were looking after us and new ones came and each and every two to three days they changed the men and others came. I went to them and I did the same and the letter

was also confiscated and I was called again. Then the same happened. The third time I was warned.

After the third time the man who was asking me now made a mistake and said, when he was in the Second World War and as a soldier he had obey the rules of being a soldier. He said, I was supposed to listen when I am told something. Then I replied and said, "I told you that I was not a soldier and you are mistaken. There is a difference between me and you. You were getting paid and I am not getting paid by anybody. You were employed and I am not employed by anybody and I know why I am employing myself so don't think that we are the same."

Before that talk my colleagues and I used to go to the special branch. We used to go there walking freely, but after that I was always chained on both legs and arms because I was regarded as a criminal.

Then they took me to another office and even if we went to the offices we didn't go to the same offices with my colleagues. In that office where they took me this time, I don't know if you know this, but I found this man seating there. Then the other guy who was there asked me if I knew the man. I said, "No, how am I supposed to know him?" He said he is the son of that man who drives the cars to Maun and I said, you are telling me that the man is my father?

Then they told me, "Look, we can release you on one condition. If you agree that you are going to behave we can give you a better position. Look how you are and also how sick you are. You just look like an animal. Then I told them that I didn't know that I would be arrested here in Botswana and when I came to Botswana I didn't come here looking for my father; I had a different mission. If God pleases we would meet when Namibia was independent. I did not want to meet my father at that time.

After that we were deported to Zambia and then they didn't even talk to the Zambian Authorities that there were people coming. They just put us on a plane. When we were in the plane I looked behind the seat, there was a map and I took it and found that the plane was going to land in Salisbury and at that time Zimbabwe was not independent.

Now I was seated next to the pilot, this was the pilot and I was seating here and it was me and my colleague. Our wounded comrade was sitting with another white person on the other seats. I spoke to my colleagues in Oshiwambo and told them, look this plane is going to land in Salisbury, what are we going to do? When we get there we are finished. Now they asked me what we should do and I said we should fight with the pilot and they said how? I said just wait I will tell you what to do.

Then I went to this white man and I said look, you can see that this man is having a bandage on his head, do you mind if we give you another seat so that I can sit with him? This man also didn't know what we were planning. He just said it was okay just come and sit with him, just come, come. So I moved to the seat which was next to our wounded soldier.

I was now sitting next to my three guys and then I said guys what will happen is that they cannot land in Salisbury before announcing that. So if they say that we

are going to land in Salisbury then we have to fight the pilot and let the plane crash that is all.

That was the decision that I took and it was a decision taken, that is it, finished. Then I asked them what they had to say. They said yes and that was all right, we all agreed. When we reached Salisbury the pilot said now we are flying to Lusaka and then ohh our hearts were relieved and we were so happy.

Now we were more settled that we were flying to Lusaka but all of us had no passports, no birth certificates, nothing. We were just traveling and we were putting on overalls. Upon landing in Lusaka, this other man asked where we were coming from. I said we were coming from Botswana and we were going to Zambia but we were SWAPO members and may be he heard from the radios that we were fighting.

He said all SWAPO members who came there had special arrangements made to receive them. We were then given 24 hours to go back to Botswana because we were not telling the truth. Then could not leave the airport and we had no money to call Lusaka.

Luckily a man came to the airport from ANC and I knew him as we were together in the training camp in Kongwa, Tanzania. I called him and he said Fredrick where are you coming from and then I told him the story. So I told him that leave everything that you were doing here and go to Lusaka and tell our SWAPO office that we are here and this is the situation.

When he got there President Sam Nujoma and Peter Nanyemba were there. So when he gave them the message our President went to Kaunda and then Muyongo and Nanyemba drove to the airport. When Nanyemba came to us he said we could not be taken back to Botswana. As events unfolded he told us to come out and get into the car and we were allowed to leave the airport. They took us to Kamwala Prison and we slept there till the next day when Muyongo came.

I was very angry because when he left us the previous day he had promised that he was coming at 9 but then now it was 10 o'clock and I was getting angry and I was planning something again. While I was planning something I saw him coming and he was telling our soldiers that the car was open, if they just open the gate just go straight into the car don't waste time just go.

Then he went to the other officers to negotiate our release and to be allowed to go out. Then the officers said no, they knew he was the Vice President of SWAPO but they could not allow him to take us out without making the necessary arrangements.

He said, yes I know but just let them go into the car. So those ones at the gate just saw Muyongo pointing at the gate and they didn't hear what he was saying there so he just opened the gate and we went into the car. When Muyongo saw that, he just came to the car and drove away. He took us to the immigration and he said, these people were at the war which was taking place a few days ago and these are the people who survived and the war is still going on and now the train is waiting for them as they are

expected to go to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania so please give them papers.

From there we were taken to Kamwala to our house there. This is now where we were told that Dimo Hamaambo was surrounded by the Portuguese and the South Africans at the front. Now there was a problem there. Volunteers should go there and reinforce our forces and there were a number of people present there. It was tough and everybody was quiet.

Then one man Justine, that time they used to call him Kamwela, said he was going. I, knowing that that man was once wounded at the battle where we were together; I also said I was going. Then Nanyemba said no Matongo you cannot go because you are just coming from the prison now. Then I told Nanyemba, I came from the house of my mother and he came from the house of his mother; so that was my own decision. Then Nanyemba said if I wanted to go would allow me to go. So I pleaded with him to allow me to go because this was the decision that I had taken.

Then we were called by Maxton the three of us. They asked for any other person there to volunteer and there was nobody. Nanyemba told us there were no guns just pistols, so we got our pistols and then we went and when we got to Senanga we found that there were other comrades there who were coming from the front. We left them there and we continued. When we got to the border, this was the border between Zambia and Angola. Our commander told us the story of what had happened there. Luckily our commander had an AK47.

When we came to a place which we thought was dangerous, we would go and ambush on the other side and wait for the guy with the carbine to come and then wait in case something came so we could defend ourselves. I think that God was guiding us. The very first target we decided on was where we found those people. We came to that place because we wanted to drink water but secondly we wanted to ambush those people who came to drink water. They were also doing the same thing there and when we came to that place we just came face to face. We looked at them and they looked at us.

Now if you can remember at that time we were not yet with MPLA but we were with UNITA. They wanted us to give a signal and then we gave our signals and they gave their signals and we saw their signals then we said okay.

So we got those comrades and when we got to them we found one of our commanders Mbereshu. We couldn't believe that, the man had survived. Apparently when they were attacked they spent two weeks without fighting back. You know he was shot in the leg and when they found him there were worms coming out of his body but the person was still alive. Fortunately we had brought some medicine and later we all crossed into Zambia. As we were going to Zambia there was a government car which was going there and then this man was taken to Hospital.

We crossed the Kwandu River to Imusho. I was not feeling well at the time and I didn't want to entertain the idea of crossing the river So when we were walking one guy realised that I was not okay. I was sitting under the tree dozing with my gun. I was still sitting under the tree you know with my gun and sleeping and then when I woke-up I found out that I was alone.

I followed Haiduwa and I realized that something happened there. When I followed them I saw them coming from the crossing point. Apparently there were those army vehicles that were coming from Divundu and we would hear them from a distance. It was like they were there at the Northern Industry and we could hear them.

It was dangerous and we were not used to such a situation. Now when they were crossing they heard that noise and it affected them and they started shivering and panicking. As a result the boat capsized and one of the people in the boat didn't know how to swim, and he died there. From there on we were trying to find out where he was and see if we could recover his body. We tried to recover his body but to no avail. Our boat was there and we could see the guns and everything. In fact we managed to take everybody across to the Zambian side. Afterwards, comrade Dimo went to report in Lusaka. A month later Dimo came back and he had instructions that we should find those Zambians who could dive and get out our comrade. We got the Zambians and they measured the water. They were using some kind of measuring equipment and they said no, nobody can go in there and come out alive. That really annoyed me. How could they say that because we could see the ground. Then I said I could go in there. Dimo thought I was mad.

When I insisted, they said there is one condition and that I had to obey. Then we decided that comrade Dimo should now go back to the shops and buy long ropes, 2 of them. I said to them, once he brings the ropes I will show you what to do. Dimo went and then the following day he came back. I showed them how to tie the rope and pull and then I was ready to go down. Then Mandume said if Matongo dies, I must also die. Then the others said no he will not die we will try to pull him back. Then they encouraged me and then I said okay give me those ropes and I said I will take this one and then the other one you have to tie me on the waist then I will go down.

And I told them not to worry about me because if anything happens they would tell my parents when Namibia is free after independence that this is where their son perished.

We went there with Mandume and I dived in and then I got the gun and I took it out. That is the day when I recognized an AK47. When we were at training the

Koreans told us that if you know how to swim just swim, don't allow yourself to be captured by the enemy. Don't think that this gun stops working when it gets in water, just go down and come out and shoot with it and go deep again; we thought that the guy was telling us lies, there is no gun that can do such a thing, but that day I believed. An AK spent a month and some weeks in water – when I took it out of the water I said I want to see if what the guy said was true. I just took it out and I opened

it and it became dry. Now I believe that AK47 can work in water and I am now speaking from experience and this is a thing that I saw with my own eyes. That gun can help you if

you are in water and you need to fire.

Thanks.

## Musialela, Ellen

*Ellen Musialela was born in the Caprivi region and went to exile on the 15th August 1968, when she was still very young. Her entry to politics was influenced by what was happening at that moment, such as the politics in Zambia where she was going to school. She started as a member of the Caprivi African National Union, CANU, and later became a very active member of the SWAPO youth league. She worked at the Lusaka City Council from 1969 to 1974; she was sent to school in Nairobi, where she did a secretarial course, and later went to Cairo; from there she came back to Lusaka and then went to Luanda. In 1980, she was chosen to organize the Congress of the SWAPO Women's Council at Kwanza-Zulu. She was elected assistant to the Finance Secretary, with the task of getting funds for Namibian women for projects and scholarships for girls. After coming back to Namibia she remained in the Party and was elected the Secretary General of SWAPO Women Council. She explains vividly, her memories of the liberation struggle and of her coming back to Namibia.*

My name is Ellen Musialela and my maiden name is Limbo, I was born in Caprivi region and I went to exile on the 15th August 1968. During that time the African continent was going through a lot of change and I was very young. I was influenced by what was happening at that moment, such as the politics in Zambia where I went to school; Kaunda and UNIP were very highly regarded, and the youth there influenced me a lot. When I came back to Caprivi for holidays; that was the time the Caprivi African National Union, CANU, was formed by Bredan Sibwaye, his colleague Mishake Muyongo, Sackaria Dopweze and others.

By that time I was hooked into politics, and I worked hand in hand with the late Greenwell Matongo, Patrick Mwinga, Vanaa Moonde, and Mubusisi who was the women's leader at that time. I was with them until the time I went back to Zambia. When I got back to Zambia, some of these people were arrested.

I left with the intention to liberate my country because the Boers were following us asking us why we were schooling in Zambia; what our problem was, and why we did not choose to attend schools in Namibia. When I came back the Boers were following us, so I had to go to Botswana with a colleague whose name was Albert Nkunkumo; we were trying to get some money, and when we came back things were not good, so I was forced to leave first and he had to follow later.

I was schooling at the Seventh Day Adventist, which was a mission school in Senanga, on the western part of Zambia. During that time it was CANU and UNIP influence; but when I went to Lusaka, I met Muyongo, Josef Nawa, the late Crispin, and Comrade Moses Garoeb.

That was also the time I met Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba, the former President Dr Sam Nujoma, and many other leaders within SWAPO. Our leaders had met, and by the time I went, I found that the parties had merged to form SWAPO, and eventually I became a member of SWAPO, and very active in the youth league.

At that time SWAPO was still very small and it was still finding its feet, so that was why most people had to work hard and I was one of them. Through Meme Putuse

Appolus I managed to get a clerical job at Lusaka City Council. I worked there from 1969 to 1974, and the party said it was time for us to work hard, because that was the time when the youth were leaving Namibia in large numbers, and most other people started crossing the border. We were required to help with some work at the liberation centre because there was demand from the international level.

Mrs Appolus left in 1972; she was assigned to the Pan-African Women office in Algeria, I was sent to Nairobi for school and I did secretarial course, and I later went to Cairo; from there I came back to Lusaka and then went to Luanda. In 1980, we started organising the congress of the SWAPO Women's Council at Kwanza-Zulu at a place called Localio Sosawo. I had served in the youth league, as a student leader in Nairobi, and at that time I was women's leader in Luanda. In 1980, the SWAPO president Comrade Sam Nujoma, called Dr Libertina Appolus, who was a deputy secretary of health by that time and a member of central committee, and I, and directed us to organize ourselves and other women, because the SWAPO Women's Council was going through a hard time. We did not have leadership, but we organized that congress; it was not easy, but we managed. Dr Libertina Appolus lead a group of women to Mozambique to learn what we could do and I led another group to Congo Brazzaville; after that we went to Zambia where we had workshops, and following that, we had our congress at Kwanza-Zulu, which was sponsored by the United Nations and our fellow friends and sisters in the Frontline States. Tanzania and Zambia attended our congress.

At our congress Comrade Pendukeni Ithana was elected the Secretary of SWAPO Women Council, and Mrs Shoombe was elected as Secretary of Information and we had to put up the women's council. By that time we were really exposed to active politics, we travelled worldwide, where we talked about the pride of Namibian women; we talked about the events in our country, in the camps, the problems of women and children. It was not easy. We had to provide leadership. It was very hard and I am happy that the team was formed and was able to perform.

We assigned Ms Susan Nghidinwa to Zambia to be our representative and Ms Ella Shikwambi was assigned to the Front (Lumbango) area, and we had to put our heads together. Sometimes we stayed in the camps and talked about things we needed to do and some times we go to the war zone. We also visited the UN and socialist countries like China. I remember very well when I first went to the UN. Before I left for New York, we travelled with the President to Paris, where for the first time I was really challenged. The President was called up to go for interview and he told me to go and sit at the conference on the liberation movements in Southern Africa. I sat there and I had to answer questions. Later I travelled to New York and when I arrived at the UN I was received by the Commissioner for Namibia and during that time Marti Artissari had taken over. The journalists came and interviewed me, I appeared before the Trusteeship Chamber and I had to petition the question of Namibia. It was such a challenge for me, to the extent that when I left the Chamber I really cried, and I was

thinking was I worth doing that? But I decided that I had been given that challenge and I had to accept it, with two hands.

The women council was initially formed in Dar es Salaam, at the Congress of SWAPO which was held in Tanga from the end of December 1969 to 1970. In that congress it was felt that the women of Namibia need to be encouraged to join other women in the world, as we were fighting in the liberation struggle. Also they should find their feet, politically, socially and economically and we also had to participate in the military. When it was formed, the women who were there were Comrade Putuse Appolus and Dr Libertina Amathila, who were our leaders. We were very happy and we honoured them, especially the late Comrade Putuse Appolus who had done a lot by encouraging us. After that Mekulu took over the leadership with Dr. Amathila; after that as people continued coming out from Namibia, young people took over and we had Peny Ashoongo who was appointed as the secretary of women, but unfortunately she did not live long, she died; then came Martha Ford and things didn't work out. And politics is politics, she left. That was when we were called up with Dr. Amathila to organise the Congress in Kwanza-Zulu.

I can assure you that Namibian women work really hard at the battle field, internationally and even inside the country. Most of the women inside the country were the ones who were giving shelter, water, and information to our freedom fighters, just to warn them where the enemy was. It was not only a struggle by those who went to exile, but even people inside the country, participated; We know how women like Idda Jimmy suffered; she went to jail and even gave birth in jail although she lost her son later. We know Comrades Kandanga, Magnaem Angula, Ellen Ndapuka together with all those whom we cannot mention here; these are all women who participated. Dr Libertina was a chairman of the congress and I was a deputy chairman, after we organized the congress and the structure was put in place, I was elected as assistant to the finance secretary; and my task was to make sure that I had to get funds for Namibian women for projects, and we also managed to get scholarships for many girls. If you go to one of our hospitals, you will see them; Dr Helen Muswewu, Dr Helena Ndume, Dr Amunime and many other doctors, are our product. Many nurses and dentists, and also those who went to study education, managing kindergarten schools, sewing and many other subjects, were trained under our project. When some of us go to offices and find our products there we are encouraged and we are very proud of them. When it comes to funds, SWAPO helped as a party; we helped to raise materials like cotton under wear for ladies, especially at the front, where the situation was very difficult for them; Vaseline for children and even food stuff for the babies. At the same time we had to make sure that we organized women's education within the SWAPO camps, in Kwanza- Zulu, and we almost succeed in Nyango. If you go to Zambia you will find we managed to raise funds from Norway and we built a women's centre there; but unfortunately when it was nearly completed, it was time we were coming back home; we never utilised it ,but it was donated to the Zambian government , because of the people who helped us. When we got home,

again we managed to get funds from Norway and build our SWAPO Women Centre in Okulyongava. If you go there you see the Namibian Women Centre. That is our centre which we built, as leaders who came from exile with the money we raised, which is open to all Namibian women. We do not discriminate against those from opposition; they can just go there. There are many activities and courses which are conducted there.

When we came back, we organised a congress because other people were assigned other duties; Comrade Pendukeni was appointed a Deputy Minister of Tourism and later appointed a Minister of Youth; we were requested to remain within the party and I was elected as Secretary General of SWAPO Women Council and after me there were other people who came like Erica Lamakutala, now is Eunice Ipinge. I served under Comrade Pendukeni; Comrade Eunice and the late Erica were my assistants. We are happy that the council is growing, and we are going to the congress next week. We hope we will continue to expand. We want to see Namibia women communicating with our sisters in the SADC region, countries like Mozambique, Angola, South Africa, Botswana and even Zambia. We need to find our feet and consolidate ourselves, especially through the pan-African women organisation which was formed in 1962 before the OAU was formed. We feel that through that organization we can come up with projects to help our women and also to encourage them to emerge and enter the economic zone, because we don't want our women to be pushed to needle work or kindergarten work. We want them to be businesswomen, professors and even scientists; we want to see women flying planes not only in Namibia but all over Africa. The struggle was very difficult and bitter as Comrade Ya Toivo said, it was not easy. Not everything was lousy, sometimes it was a blessing and sometimes we could even feel joy. After I came back from school in Nairobi, I was elected to go and train at Tobias Hainyeko for a period of six months, together with High Commissioner Nangula Kakena and other girls like Linea Jimmy, Nakashole and Sofia Nangombe, we had to be trained and feel how it was to be a soldier and to experience what the enemy was like.

That was the time I encountered the kind of difficulties the soldiers were experiencing, especially women soldiers; because when we were sleeping bombs were flying all over. There were times when we had to sleep underground to hide, and sometimes it was difficult even to get bathing soap or even lotion to apply on your body. But all these things were improved. Sometimes we witnessed death, you are with somebody today and tomorrow you find out that the person is dead, there were some ladies who came from the front to attend a seminar with us in Luanda, it was very joyful and emotional, after two weeks we heard that they had been attacked, during the time of smoke shell in southern Angola and most of them died. It was very painful, and it was not only women but even men; it was a headache, to find out that a person you knew was no longer with you; like when they announced that Comrade Matongo was no longer with us, it was very painful. Even when Kamilo Nafidi came from the Soviet Union party school, he came to my house and I cooked for them, and he even took a skip from me, which I got in America, where there was Malcolm X, and he

said I like this skip, it was a pick colour and I said this is women's colour, then he said, "Comrade give it to me this will be the best gift; I will appreciate to have it from you." I gave it to him and after few months I heard that he had been killed; these things were difficult! Sometimes there was no food; but I am happy that the Namibian women were very encouraging. I have a lot of respect for our people like the late Comrade Dimo Hamaambo, late Comrade Kamilo Nafidi, late Comrade Greenwell Matongo, and even for Jesus Hawala. There was a lot of negative talk about him, but for some of us Comrade Hawala was our leader he commanded us during difficult times.

I have a lot of respect, above everything, for Comrade President Sam Nujoma; he led us throughout. You could look at him, and even when things were hard, he always had that encouraging smile. Sometimes, even when we were feeling really bad and he will called a rally, we stood there and saw him with that wide smile; and with all our national leaders there, like our Secretary and other members of the Central Committee, they really encouraged us. Today we find that our country has grown stronger because of these people.

Even here, I mentioned Comrade Kandanga, Idda Jim, Magnaem Angula, Nashilongo-Shivute and Idda Hofman who is in parliament now; those were great women, women who can leave their place and come to talk with us. We need to discover each other and find each other because during those hard times we could hug each other and it was not easy, Nashilongo, Lidi Kazubawe, Magnaem Angula, and councillor Ndapuka, are people who I know that they have to come there and even Idda Hofman and Idda Jimmy I met her in Britain and I can tell you that I admired her a lot, she is a very courageous woman. Our women need to know their history because these women need to be respected and rewarded. We even call our leaders to give them medals; there is no need to wait until somebody is dead and then give them a medal, post-humously. They will appreciate more if they are called on the 26 August, because they provided leadership, as I have mentioned. Like Pendukeni and Netumbo who was our representative among men in East Africa, and e did a great job. Do you know what Dr Amathila did? She builds Nyango and even in Kwanza-Zulu she has did a lot. These are women we need to put in front of other women, so that we can tell their stories, so that even in years to come, everybody will know the Namibian women story.

There is nobody who can question the support the Zambia government gave us under UNIP, because some of us today, when we talk about home, part of our soul is with Zambia. We felt at home there, because they gave us a lot of support; and they did not only give us food on the table, but if somebody could go to the extent of giving up his life, what more do you want? They were really great people, who we need to respect. We should tell the story to our children, because without Angola, Tanzania and Zambia we would not be what we are today. Under very difficult circumstances, before Zimbabwe's independence, Zambia was being bombed left and right by Ian Smith, but Kaunda and his government said Zambia would never be really independent before Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, South Africa and

Zimbabwe attained their independence. We will always honour them because they really protected us; and the UNIP Women's League taught us a lot about leadership. They invited us to their meetings to see how they conducted themselves. If there was need to attend meetings or conferences abroad, they sponsor us. When we went to Nairobi in 1985, they gave us air travel tickets to take us there and brought us back, and these were not small things.

The Angolan government as well as their women's organisation also gave us a lot of support, including money, materials, air tickets and even gave us training in leadership.

Tanzania was also the same; the women's organisation there gave us a lot of support. Our dear mother Gertrude Mongella, who is now the President of the SADC Parliament, was a wonderful woman. I remember in 1985 when she refused to listen to the American delegation who were trying to demand that the agenda on liberation movements should be removed; she put her feet down and said that the meeting was not going to move. We had to talk, even if we had to sleep there for one month we would do so until they gave in. That was leadership and commitment! We need to make our children know those things. I am afraid that this history is just sleeping through our heads, and when Gertrude comes here these young women will not know who she is. They just ask, "Who is that one?" They will tell themselves, "Apparently she is President of the SADC Parliament." They will not know how great this woman is.

Eventually, in April or May 1989, I think, one day we were approached in our office. Moses told me that Mrs Shoombe and I were to report at the President's place around six; and we were wondering what it was about. We went and we were taken to the President's office where we found Dr Nicky Iyambo, Dr Shivute and Ngeyama. The President looked at us with a smile and said, "Comrades, the time has come now, as you have been listening to the news, we are going home and there is no question about that. Since we had signed, we have been trying to arrange things, so now we have to lead our people and go back home to participate in the election. We have talked to our people and they are scared; but as leaders we have to stand up and take that challenge." He said was assigning us on behalf of the politburo and the Central Committee of the party, as members of PLAN. We agreed because all of us we were trained and we knew we had to obey the rules. He said we were going back home, and we had to be on the first plane that was going to land, and we had to be seen leading the people so that when things were finalised it would not appear that we had abandoned them. When I came back, I told my late husband Sam and he was very nervous. He asked me what if something happened. I told him that I was a member of PLAN and a soldier could not say no, I had to take up my duty.

On the 12 June, we were first taken to see the body of President Neto, to pay homage; and after that we went to the airport, where we found Angolan women, the youth, MPLA leaders, led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bida, singing praising songs for us, because we were coming home. There were two planes, one was going to Luanda and the other one was going to Ondangwa; I walked into the plane which

was going to Luanda and the late Ithete lead the one which was going to Ondangwa. We were lead by Dr Iyambo. We talked and we hugged each other and our colleagues for some time and then we walked to the plane.

I remember the late Comrade Moses was walking side by side with me, he looked at me and he could see that I was worried because I didn't know what was going to happen. He told me that I should not worry, and if anything happened they would build a big school, name it after me, and put my big picture there. I looked down, because I wanted to cry, and I said, "Okay Comrade." Then he hugged me. All the colleagues, including Gerry Munyama were there. Then the plane took off. As we were crossing the border they announced that we were crossing the border from Angola to Namibia and if we looked on one side we would see Ondangwa airport. We were worried that they were going to shoot us, but luckily nothing happened. You know with me since I was born I had never been to Windhoek, so as we were landing at the airport, we were now holding ourselves to our sits; the UN staff opened some champaign and we drank a bit, and as we touched down there was complete silence. We were just holding each other wondering what was going to happen. When the door of the plane opened, Munyama was carrying the SWAPO flag which the President had given us, Dr Iyambo followed and I was next, as we were came to the stairs, Mbwakela from the UN was standing by. What made me more emotional was that while the plane landed, both the black people and whites working on the apron, stood quietly; then I knew we were home and dry, and nothing was going to happen. We greeted them and Mbwakela led us; we proceeded with entry procedures in, and there the was a lot of delay. We took almost two hours. There was also another plane from Zambia which landed and was bringing other people from there. When we were going out we did not know that they had refused people to come to the apron, but there were a lot of people lined up from Windhoek to the airport, and the Vice President, Witbooi, was with them. He was walking up and down and he was very emotional. When the door was opened everybody was shouting and they wanted to touch us, then we started singing Sam, where are you? (Sam ouli peni?) We were holding the flag, dancing and crying. From there we went to Dobra, where we registered, and we leaders were taken to the CCN guest house were we stayed.

After sometime we were given the task to receive the Director of Election, Dr. Hague Geigob, who arrived one week after us. We had to join them and put up the structure in the country. They told the late Comrade Richard Kapelwa that he should take us to Caprivi because there was a lot of propaganda that we had died long time ago. So the party got us a plane and we left; we were received by a lot of people and from there we went to the CCN centre. It was very emotional as we met our parents; it was tears of joy rolling! I remember Kapelwa's sister she even fainted! It was a very emotional and exciting time, which will always be in my memory. This was my coming back home.

After that I worked at the headquarters, under Dr Iyambo, in the logistics area. We used to travel extensively; we went to Caprivi to help with the elections there and after

the elections, when Comrade Pendukeni went to the ministry and we were told to remain there, I was appointed by the politburo to be the national coordinator of the women, to prepare for the congress, until I was elected as SWAPO Women Council Secretary General. This is the story of my life in the liberation struggle and coming back home.

## Namoloh, Charles

[Windhoek; 08 August 2007]

*Major Gen. Charles Namoloh was a SWAPO Youth League political activist in the early 1970s. He was imprisoned by the Apartheid regime and finally left for exile in 1974. He was among the many young men and women who filled the ranks file of SWAPO in the mid 1970s. In PLAN, he rose to the rank of Chief of Staff. Major Gen. Namoloh combines the life of a military person, a diplomat and a politician. After independence, he served in the Namibian Defence Force, served as Namibia's Ambassador to Angola and India and is currently the Minister of Defence.*

Let us start with my arrival in Namibia from exile. I arrived in Windhoek on the 8th August 1989.

So I will give you my card so that you write my name correctly because I can see you are writing it. My name is Ndaxu Namoloh. Those are my original names that I was given when I was born. When I was christened I got a name Charles Dickson then there is also Philip Namoloh.

I was born on the 28th of February 1950 at Odibo and, I grew up there. I was born in a family of three. I have two elder sisters and I am the only boy and the last born. My father worked in the school at Odibo. It is also interesting to look at our names. He named us that way because this was an Anglican school which has its roots in the UK.

My father went to school when he was a bit older. Then he got his name when he got baptized. He got his name Philip, and his young brother was called George. My father joined the Second World War and he came back in 1944 to get married. So he got married in uniform and he went back. His first daughter was named Elizabeth and that is our eldest sister. He then named the second daughter Victoria. Then when I came he named me Charles. It's a royal family name, type of British. Of course I grew up at Odibo and I went to school there. When I was growing up my father, being a former soldier and being politically aware of what was happening, I would sometimes listen to him. I think I was nine years at the time.

My father always carried a radio and he was always listening to either the BBC or the Voice of America or any other station. Then he would call us one by one and one day he called me and there was music playing. It was African music. I think he was listening to a Congolese station and, he said to me, "Do you hear these people singing, they are free people, they are free people. Yes, they are not like us, they are free, they are ruling themselves these Africans." That could have been in 1966 somewhere there. Now, what I did not understand, he explained to me and said that these were free people because they were not being ruled by white people. They were Africans who were ruling themselves. He went further to say, "You know, we must also rule ourselves. We should rule ourselves and not remain under these white people, you see." I said it was fine.

I listened and I learnt more from my father because in 1959 and 1960 my father was working in Tsumeb, and he was staying with my elder sister Elizabeth. Of course those days we didn't know what was happening because we were just staying with my mother at home. One my father came back with Elizabeth and all his belongings but we didn't know why. When we went to school that morning we saw police vans and were later told by the teacher that the police were looking for my father. She then told us to go home and we and we went.

When we got home we were informed that the police had just been there looking for my father and that they got into the house and opened everything which was there but he had run away. We did not know what was happening at that time, but we later found out that apparently from Tsumeb he had gone to hide in Luderitz and spent some time in hiding there because they were being hunted. I think that was the formation of OPO and SWAPO and that was why the police were looking for him. He was also dismissed from his job in Tsumeb. When I came back from exile he had already passed away. He died in 1987. I later discovered that he kept a very interesting diary and I found an application letter in this diary in which he was trying to reapply to Tsumeb Corporation. He was explaining that he had been dismissed from his job but had to provide for his family and so forth.

You see it's a very interesting diary and I still have it and I have laminated all the pages in it. I also found out that he even registered some events like that of Nelson Mandela when he was tried and sentenced to life imprisonment. He recorded all the famous people's names including that of Winston Churchill and the time when he died. He also recorded the deaths and names of Ondonga, Kwanyama and Kwambi kings when they died.

Well, I did not understand that man. However, now after coming back I could not ask him because he was dead. But it was only through this diary that I understood him. He was more than normal, even when you read it. It is in perfect English and I did not know that he could speak like that. He also recorded all our births and calamities, which are the droughts that happened some time back. To me this was very interesting and I did not understand it then, as I said earlier. He knew what he was doing and that is the reason why he knew all these things. This is basically what I learnt about my father. I think he sort of groomed me in a way. In 1960, when I was still ten years old, South Africa was declared a Republic. I remember my father telling me before I went to school that on that day they would distribute badges, flags and the like but I was not to take anything. He further told me not to come to his house if I took those things.

He said, "Don't come to my house." Reasons being that he did not want me to bring any South African Flag to his house. When I got to school, there were these flags and badges and they were being distributed but I did not take any as I was told not to. My father had said that it was something from the Boers and that it was not good. He warned me not to bring it. So I did not bring it, but other children were taking them.

We learnt something that day. I think most people were political, and they had told their children about this. As a result many children did not want to take them.

However, I was supposed to take the flag because if I had not done so, they would think that I was the one who mobilized the other children. So when the other two kids went to take I could not go and take because I was told by my father not to take those things and bring them to his house, otherwise I must find another house to go to. So you see these are the things that you were prepared for as a child and of course nature also has got its way through signs.

My mother told me that when I was born my grandmother, from my mother's side, was present and she told her that she had just given birth to a soldier but my mother did not understand it.

She said I was born with something that meant I was dressed like a soldier. That is why she said "Oh you gave birth to a soldier there is a sign here which means he is a soldier". My mother still didn't understand but that is also very interesting.

They are not small things but these are signs that have a meaning. We do not understand them but nature understands them and, our grandparents also read these signs. It is only when I came back and my mother related this story saying that she also did not understand these things that I would be a soldier. She told me that after giving birth to me there was something like a chain of bullets around me and that was a sign of becoming a soldier. My mother only came to understand this when I came back from exile as a soldier. She also told me that it was part of God's plans for me to be a General since most of my friends were also soldiers.

Of course after being told not to bring home the South African flags and so forth, my father also did not allow me to speak Afrikaans. He did not want me to go to an Afrikaans school and not even to come to Augustineum or Ongwediva. He wanted me to stay at Odibo but maybe later on to go somewhere else. Since there were no English schools in Tsumeb, I was forced to stay at Odibo and I only visited him in Tsumeb during school holidays. Every time when I came to visit, he would take me to his office and would give me work to do. He would later come and check the work I had done and told me that I should do it because he wanted me to understand and possibly take over from him. He also made me read to him a lot of numbers since there were no computers during that time. He had a mechanical something where he punched in the numbers to get the sum of the numbers. So I would give him the numbers and he would punch them in.

In our daily lives we cannot do without our laptops. For instance I do most of my work on my laptop including scanning my pictures. Some people think a computer is something very sophisticated but they fail to understand that when you are trained you are able to work on a computer. In 1982 when I was in the Soviet Union we were using computers already because you can never have training on missiles without learning about computers. So, as soldiers during the liberation struggle we were to a greater extent introduced to computers than our civilian counterparts. Sometimes people don't understand that there is science in war and they think as soldiers we just

fire these AK47 and that is all. Yet, there is science in these things. So, by teaching me my father just wanted me to follow what he was doing. Every time he would tell me to go to school and, every time he carried a radio. He would tell me that when the Vietnam War started he was always listening and followed how the Vietnamese were fighting the Americans.

My father's uncle came to visit us in 1973. That was the time when my father's friend had just passed away. At that time he began attacking me saying that I was a trouble maker and that I did not listen to elders. The reason for the attack was because I had told him that I was prepared to fight the white people because himself did not want to as he felt they were too strong. My father then told him to let me do it if it was my choice to fight for our country. His uncle then turned to him saying that the reason why I was like that was because my father was on my side. So that is what my father did because if you did not have permission from your parents it would be difficult to go and fight.

I attended school at Odibo as I said and never attended any other school until I completed. I went briefly to Ongwediva but I stayed there for about two months. In 1970 we had an incident at Odibo where we resolved to have a strike. We went ahead with that resolution and some of our colleagues were expelled. We had to sympathize with our colleagues and, demanded that our friends be readmitted or else we would not go back to school. Among the students affected were Peter, Andrew and Matthew Iyambo and who else. I think they were three.

They went to do theology in South Africa and when they came back, they told us that they had been expelled and that Bishop Winter had ordered them to come back as he did not want them to study theology and become Bishops. We then said that we would not go back to school if Bishop Winter did not want us to have our own African Bishops. Therefore, when we revolted, the whole school closed and many students were expelled. Once they had done so, we told them to expel all of us but they said that we did not have to come to school if we did not want and that we should go. So we all went to Ongwediva.

We briefly went to Ongwediva, and the reason why I say briefly is because when I was there at the school I hated Afrikaans. Whenever we were in class the teachers would not call us by name but instead would call us Odibo. For example, they called both Tuli and I Odibo. Towards the end of 1970 I could not take it anymore. So I told my friends that I could not stay there anymore. That is when I left Ongwediva and

went to Walvis Bay. Ndali Kamati was already in Walvis Bay. I stayed there until 1971 or so. That is where I started most of my political activities. There were very few of us at Walvis Bay but, that is where we started to develop political activities. It was in 1971 that we started organizing the strike.

I think I forgot to tell you that during my school years at Odibo I became friends with Nowas and Adeleni, Kaxumba's son. That was because my father knew Kaxumba. Adeleni and I always used to be together and this was because my father always told us to go to Kaxumba's house whenever we were in Tsumeb on holiday. In September

1966, with everyone arrested after the Omugulugwombashe battle, I, together with Kaxumba and Noah went to Manoshi.

At Manoshi we went to one meme's house and when she came out she asked Kaxumba who I was. When I told her she said she was my father's friend. Later on she told us that the soldiers had been there and had even left some of the bullet cartridges there. These were SWAPO PLAN guerrillas that came from Omugulugwombashe after the attack. She took us to the garden where she had buried them in a hole. So we took them from the hole and had a look at them. Kaxumba and I decided to take them with us to Odibo but we only wanted to keep them. Only the two of us knew that we had those bullets. To us those were the bullets that were used to kill the enemy and among them were the red ones which were the fire bullets. If they were fired they always burnt the object. So we wanted to use those bullets to burn the enemy because we hated them so much. So we kept those bullets. At that time we were only 16 years old, but we kept that secret. Remember there were those watch bands, I mean wrist watch bands which had these things like cartridges on them. There were the big ones which were very popular those days around 1966, 1967 and 1968. We substituted the fake ones with live ones on the wrist bands. Nobody knew what we had on and we even passed Oshivelo on our way to Tsumeb without being detected. Nobody knew that those were live bullets because nobody expected us to have them. Where would we get them from anyway? Later we decided to get rid of them because we felt somebody may know about them and report us.

You must also realize that from 1966 after the activities at Omugulugwombashe, SWAPO was dead and we were only listening to the radio and talking within ourselves. But also there was one thing that we did; Odibo was known for its political orientation. We started to play soccer between Odibo, Katana and Ongwediva. However, every time we were not in good terms with Ongwediva, as we were always at loggerheads. We were all forced to reconcile when the Ongwediva students came to Odibo and went to eat in the hall. Namhuya stood up and said, "Gentlemen we are all one and we must stand up to fight together. These in-fights based on the fact that you belong to Ongwediva and you belong to Odibo cannot work. We are all Namibians and we must fight for our rights." This was the beginning of a new era whereby whenever we played soccer we talked politics, and this was the time that the momentum in political consciousness started.

In soccer we always beat Okatana and we were beaten by Ongwediva and Ongwediva was beaten by Okatana. We never understood why it was like that (laughter). I should say that SWAPO had died, and because of that people were afraid. But after what we started at Odibo, our cooperation became part of a political revival. In addition to that the visit by Asher, the UN envoy, I think it was in 1970 or 1971, there were demonstrations to go and meet him. Students had to walk on foot from Ongwediva to Ondangwa.

When this was happening I was already in Walvis Bay and, a fight broke out to the extent that teargas was used. So those who were involved in the demonstration

were expelled from Ongwediva. All came to join us in Walvis Bay. That time Walvis Bay was the centre of all those who left school and could not find jobs. Those who went to Walvis Bay include the Kandindimas, the Nafidis, the Kalomos, I, and many other colleagues.

We thought Walvis Bay had a lot of opportunities and that it would be easy to get a job at the sea as a fisherman or in the industry since there were lots of industries there. There were more factories where we could be recruited in the industry in Walvis Bay than in any other part of the country. We could work in the factories without being a contract labourer. But if we wanted to go and work in Tsumeb or in CDM we had to go through all this contract labour procedures.

When we were in Walvis Bay we began questioning ourselves where the contract labour system would take us, since we were not contract labourers although we understood how the system worked. Thereafter, we decided to mobilize people. Fortunately we managed to get people and gained so much momentum but the only question was how we would address the issue.

We also did not know whom to address our concerns and grievances. So we decided to write a letter to John Vorster who was the South African Prime Minister at that time. The letter stated that we as a group of contract labourers did not want this system, but I do not know what we called ourselves. We were only an informal group. It was Kamati, I, Jerry Ekandjo and many others. So we decided to write a letter to John Vorster and to the Administrator of South West Africa at the time. We also wrote a letter to the administrator of the indigenous people of South West Africa and another letter to the Administrator of whites. I think altogether we wrote four letters. Since we were an informal group, no one was tasked with specific responsibilities.

Thomas Kamati was always in the newspapers because he was the most talkative among us. When we were at school we had to choose either typing, German or Agriculture. So I chose German and Typing. My choice was what enabled us to write the letters. Although I knew that my colleagues who had chosen agriculture would be able to produce food for us, I still teased them saying that I could speak German and could use it anywhere in the world but that they could not speak Agriculture anywhere.

Afterwards we sent all the letters but we found out that other people had also sent a letter to the Prime Minister. So these letters reached their destination even though we only used the P.O Box 1, because we did not know actually what the Prime Minister's address was. These letters should be in the archives.

We were busy telling the workers of the disadvantages of contract labour system and why whites were not working under the contract labour system. We told them that whites worked as they liked and could work where they wanted but we were being sold and being bought to come and work here. With such low salaries that we were getting it was a sin and inhuman and we should not tolerate it.

What we did not know was that our activities were having a big impact on the political environment. We were just talking to people and mobilizing them night by

night, but obviously there were informers around and eventually we were picked up by security forces. When that happened we were in a small meeting in Walvis Bay and Kamati was there and Kandindima was there, we anticipated that the police would come for us and they did come eventually with two blacks.

The security forces were looking for me as they had heard that I had organized other meetings but they did not know how I looked like. When they knocked on the door I told them to come in and when they did, they greeted me by my other name, which is Dickson. They said hello to me and they probably thought I would say hello but I just said yes. Thereafter they told me that they were looking for Dickson as they wanted to know what was going on. They asked me who Dickson was and where he was. The police further said that Dickson was a friend of mine and that they were told he was supposed to be in that house. So I said I did not know anyone by the name of Dickson and if somebody told them that there was a Dickson there, they were wrong. Possibly what we can say is that I and Kamati were seen to be the leaders of the group and that was why the police were looking for us. When we went to these meetings I was more vocal and organizing the people and that was why they were saying things about me like "This guy is more dangerous than the others."

It was only in December 1971 when I was actually arrested; the exact date can be found in the prison records in Walvis Bay since that is where I was detained. On that day, they came to the house and surrounded it when we were all sleeping there, including Kamati. They asked us for our identifications and I had a pass which I got from Tsumeb to come to Walvis Bay and it had my name Dickson Namolo. After I showed them my pass, they said that I was the person they were looking for, and the other one said that they were looking for Dickson Namolo and Thomas Kamati. Ndali had a pass which was not under his name. I think it was this guy Ndakalako who is a teacher at Ongwediva or Director of Education in that region.

That is what they used to do because they did not know us physically. So they only arrested me and since they all could not understand Oshiwambo, Kamati spoke to me in Oshiwambo saying that it would make me feel bad if I had to go alone and I told him no. I felt he had to stay and continue with what we had started. I further told him to inform the others about my arrest.

I got there very early in the morning and I was thrown in a cell. I was alone there. I thought it was a very good cell since there was a flush toilet and not a bucket; before that, I had been to one cell where there was only a bucket. So during the early hours they came in and they began interrogating the inmates. In my case they did not ask me anything. Instead they just started hitting me. One Boer came and said, "Don't hit him, he is a very good boy no, no, no, he is a very good boy." He then told me to come and he took me to another office. When we got to the other office he told me that those people could have killed me and that was why he had saved me. He then began asking me what I was doing in the location and he also said that he had heard that I had meetings and so on and so forth. I told him that I did not know about any meetings. Thereafter he said that he had heard that Thomas Kamati and I had

meetings and he also asked me where Thomas Kamati was. I told him that I knew Thomas Kamati because we went to the same school and that I had last seen him at Odibo.

He told me that they have heard that we were together. I told him that it was not true and, that I had just arrived and there was no way that I could have organized the meeting. To make matters worse, I did not know anyone here.

Since I was young, I was 21 years at that time and one would not expect anybody at that age to lie. However, he grabbed my hand and started hitting me. At the same time insisted on asking me about Thomas Kamati. One of the police officers tried to convince me by saying that these guys would kill me if I did not tell them what they want. Nevertheless, I just stuck to my word that I last saw Thomas Kamati at Odibo. “You see I had no meeting in here and I don’t know any meeting held here”. Then I started to suspect that somebody was in that meeting because they even mentioned the house where the meeting was held.

In any case I kept on saying I did not know anybody there and I was not there before, and did not know any place. I mentioned to them that maybe somebody might have misinformed them since I was only on holiday there. Although they hit me a lot I did not reveal where Kamati was even though I had seen him earlier before my arrest. They hit me until my lips got swollen. After this they decided to give up and they said “Maybe this guy is telling the truth”. Since my lips were swollen, I went back in the cell because I was not restricted and they only gave me food with a lot of salt so that my lips could heal. I think I stayed in there for three days until one morning when I found out that the strike had started throughout the whole country. I think it began that morning in Windhoek, then in Walvis Bay, then in Oranjemund and in other parts of the country.

We received this message from our colleagues who were going from one place to another delivering the message. These guys were contract labourers and were located in other centres. They refused to travel with us. They told us that they would go and deliver the message alone. The SWAPO fathers or the leaders who were inside the country were scared and they did not want to take part. I remember that not even Maxwilili allowed us to go to his house when I wanted to go talk to him alone. He was not arrested.

It was only after the strike when they wanted to claim leadership because even Bishop Auala came to Walvis Bay to try and convince them not to strike by saying that it would harm them. We told him that the strike would go on even though some of us were being hunted by the police but encouraged the people to strike. Therefore the Bishop left because he failed to convince the people not to go on strike even though he had said that striking would cause harm to them. The reason why people were not convinced is because they were afraid that they would not have jobs and would die of hunger if they went to Ovamboland. They told themselves that it would be better to die fighting than die as slaves.

While I was locked up is when the strike started. That morning the police came and opened the doors to the van and told me to get in. I began thinking where they would take me so they threw me in a police van and said that I had to take them to the house where I lived.

Okay, so we went there and when we got to the house, I went inside and when they opened the room that I shared with Kamati, they immediately said that we were SWAPO fighters because on the wall were flags of every African country that had gained independence. They had seen these flags in the newspaper. There were also photos of the Presidents and articles from the newspaper on the wall. So they started reading these instead of looking at me while I packed.

The two Boers who had brought me to the house said that I was a SWAPO kid. So I packed my things and they took me to the railway station and when we got there, they brought more people. There were a lot of police officers as well. So I was thrown in there. I then joined the other group and in that group there were people like Kalomo and many more and they started shouting saying "Our boy is very strong". I was thrown in there although I was not a contract labourer. I was taken together with those who were being escorted from Walvis Bay to Grootfontein and this train did not stop anywhere.

There were many people in this train. I think we were probably between eight hundred and one thousand people. When we got to Grootfontein there was another truck which looked like those cattle loaders. The moment we stepped out of the coach we had to get into that truck. Our luggage was loaded into another coach and we were not even allowed to touch it. We were taken to Ondangwa. The truck did not stop at any station, not even at Oshivelo. It went straight to Ondangwa. When we got there, there were already so many people. These people had arrived from Windhoek.

This was in December 1971. Although I did not have money when we arrived at Ondangwa, I managed to go to Odibo because those people that I had come with from Walvis Bay said that I was their boy. So they paid for me to go there. When I got home my mother was there and I told her that I was back. She asked me what had happened and I told her that I was on leave because I did not want her to find out that I had been arrested.

When the police put me on the train to Ondangwa, Kamati stayed behind in Walvis Bay. And one day while I was still at Odibo the police came to our house. It was my mother who told me that there was a car outside. She thought it was the police who were looking for me. When I went there, it was raining and it was George who was in the car. He then told me to get into the car but I told him that I did not mind standing in the rain.

He began asking me whether I had been in Walvis Bay. I said yes. He again asked me what I had been doing there. I told them that I had gone there on holiday. They said they had heard that I was part of those who were organizing the strike and so on and so forth. After they said that, I asked them who had told them that. I further said I had not organized any strike. He further asked me if I had been arrested for

nothing. I said yes and, that is why I was there. He immediately phoned the others saying that a dangerous guy was coming and that they should keep me in jail where it was safe. Thereafter they left and, that is when my colleagues and I started organizing everything. That is when I became a leader as well because people would come to my house saying that we had to organise and so the meetings and other things began.

When we were in Walvis Bay we did not attend certain meetings because we had put some conditions in place and we could only attend those meetings after those conditions had been met. The reason for this was because we did not want to be on contract and we also wanted our salaries as well as conditions in the compounds to be improved so that we could also go and live with families there. Although we could see that these people were treating us inhumanly they thought that we could not see it. We decided to tell them that these were our conditions and we were fed up with their treatment.

When we first got there, we told them that we did not want the contract labour system and that it had to go. However, it was only after we went to the North that we started to demand the abolishment of the compound system. We told them that we did not want these borders between the different ethnic groups as we did not want to be divided. We said that we did not want the border because it was not ours but was a white man's border. We also complained about the vaccinations that were taking place because some how people started dying and we thought it was due to the vaccination.

In Odibo I started organizing people. Every Sunday after church I had to brief them on what was happening. A lot of people, including those who had been expelled from work came to Odibo to listen to me. I would also go back to their places to inform others.

One day there was a meeting at headman Katanga's house. We went there because we were told that there was a meeting there. When we got there, we were not told that the Boers would also be there. As we were sitting, two helicopters came. These were the puma helicopters full of Boers. When they landed the Boers came out in full force and there was a Shimbudu there. What we did afterwards, was we went to Oshikango and questioned everyone who was Oshimbudu,. We also asked them for their identities. Those who did not have identities we arrested them and sent them back to Angola. We also hit them and said that if they came back here we would hit them because the Boers wanted to use them to replace us in factories. There is no specific person I can remember who was at that meeting.

Since the Boers were there I became one of the speakers. I stood up and spoke to the people and said, "Yahh, there is so much injustice, we Africans in our country are being discriminated against". I continued by saying that when we go for work we are subjected to all inhuman inspections and so forth. Why did that not happen to whites? Even when whites came to work in Ovamboland for instance, and this is Ovamboland, we did not check them. But when we went there they checked us; why? We did not want that to happen. We had all the conditions put down and, I mentioned all of them. The people at the meeting asked what could be done to put down the

conditions so that they could have them the following day. When this was happening all the other Boers were there.

Many people were agreeing with that idea and, they said many words of encouragement. So I was given a task to put down the conditions. I went home and did that. I also want to mention one wise man. Unfortunately he is now late. It is a certain Mwashindange. Before Mr Mwashindange died, I think it was three years ago, he told the people that when he dies the people who should bury him would be myself and one other person. This meant that I had to be told that he was dead so that I could come and bury him. So when he died I came and fulfilled his wishes.

The reason why Mr Mwashindange chose me and this other person was because he had gone with this man to Cape Town. As for me, it was because we started this strike together. This other person was also in exile but for some reason ran away during the liberation struggle because he was captured by UNITA and taken to Ndjamba. So when he came back in 1992, I was in Grootfontein. I brought him to Windhoek and even spoke to Home Affairs Permanent Secretary who was Kamati at that time. He was given his identity and I arranged everything and I reunited him with all the people.

So these were the guys who were in Cape Town in the 1950s. Let me say he was a wise guy because he understood what was going on. That evening he was the one who told me that I should start putting down the conditions and early in the morning at 6 o'clock he would pick them up and take the document to the Chief. He said, "If you go there at 10 the Boers will be there waiting for you to arrest you. So you don't want to go there, but I will go there myself."

I drafted the conditions, and, by 6 o'clock he was there on his bicycle. So I handed him the paper and he took it to the Chief. The headman was not happy because he expected me to bring the document to him. He said "Why are you bringing the document, are you Namolo? We said that Namolo should bring it here at 10 O'clock." The man said the document was the same paper from Namolo, who had gone away because he was not feeling well. In the meantime at around 10 there were two police vans on the road because our house was just next to the road. I saw them driving up and down maybe they thought they would meet me in the street or somewhere, but I was only in the house looking at them. I was with the man who dropped the paper. Then the man said to me, you see I told you that they were there to meet you and to arrest you. Fortunately, I was not arrested. These activities went on for a while.

One day we went to one big rally which was at Ohangwena. There were so many speakers there and some of the people advised that I should not speak at Ohangwena. They said "We will reserve you, just keep quiet and listen. Do not speak." That man, Hangula Kapitiya, is an old man now. During those days he was an energetic man. I think at that time he was in his late twenties or thirties and a very energetic man from Haulushu.

This Hangula man said a lot of things. He said "The headmen are asking why we want to fight against labour contract system. Yes, we must fight it. You must fight it

and then finish with it.” We also talked about independence and other things. Some speakers were saying if you have insects in your room, I mean if you have these bugs, do you say I will only buy one spray to kill only the bugs and leave the flees and other bugs? No, you kill all of them with one spray. This is what we want to do.”

He further said we were there to kill all the bugs, and people were cheering. As I said, we also started with the demands for independence. We said that we wanted our freedom and we said this at all our rallies. So around January or February 1972, I was still at home and all my former teachers were still teaching in the area and one of my teachers asked me to go and assist in teaching for a week at St Mary’s.

I think I went on to teach Arithmetic and English in Standard 3. So one day when I was coming from school I met my sister who was running away from the house and she told me not to go home because our house was surrounded by about 40 policemen. She insisted that I should not go there. She said “They are so many and they are everywhere looking for you and our mother has sent me to tell you not to go there.”

My sister Victoria insisted that I should rather go back to the mission. I was scared and she was crying and saying that if I went home they would kill me. At that time the South African government was using armed policeman, especially after the 1972 strike you know. So I went back to the mission and there were other people there and we began to discuss the options like if my mother comes and suggests that I should not stay there and that she would take me to some of her relatives in Angola because she would not allow her only son to be arrested.

The next day my mother came and took me cross the border into Angola. We went on foot. So we stayed there. However, matters were worsened when the government declared a state of emergency. With that law, no more than five people should be found together and I was now going to be arrested under that law which meant detention without trial. They could detain you for any period without trial and as long as they want.

They did not want to see five or more people walking together or they would just shoot you without warning. So when I went to Angola, my mother and other people including Tuli would come to visit me every weekend because it was not far. I think it was only twenty kilometres from the border. I stayed there for a year and I think this was from February 1972 to February 1973.

There was one time when I sneaked from there and went as far as Walvis Bay because there was a meeting that was to take place there. Kamati was already there. So I went with a friend of mine who was a business man in Odibo. He knew that the police were looking for me but he told me to just go with him since he had a car. I managed to get the information about the meeting because there was a telephone at Tuli’s house. By that time there were already telephones in Odibo which made it easy to find out what was happening.

When we had crossed the border, I got into a train from Tsumeb and went to Walvis Bay. This was very interesting! On the day I arrived, there was a youth meeting to be held and they told me that I had to deliver a speech. They promised to shield me

and thereafter I would disappear to Angola. So I went there and delivered a speech. I talked to them about how the organization of this strike was going on and so forth. After I had done so, they sneaked me out and I caught a train in Swakopmund and off I went to Tsumeb. I really felt good about this! I also think that when I got to Tsumeb, Festus was still there because he was still buying some goods in Otjiwarongo and he took me back to Angola. I only stayed for two days in Walvis Bay and then I left. When I got to Angola they began looking for me in Walvis Bay, Odibo and everywhere else but I was nowhere to be found. Later this notorious law was repealed as many people fought against it and eventually most people were released, and that is when I came back from Angola.

In April 1973, we organized a SWAPO Youth League meeting. Of course John Nangutwala senior played a very big role in the suspension of this AG issue. He did it by establishing a party. He wanted to organise meetings as well as mobilize people to support his party but it was not possible since there was this law that was an obstacle. Some people supported him so they had to repeal this law. After that, in April 1973, we wanted to hold a rally at Lulo but they got hold of the pamphlets we had made. These pamphlets were signed by Kamati and Nakidala junior who was also with SWAPO. After they got hold of the pamphlets they started looking for Kamati and Nakidala. Unfortunately they managed to find Kamati at Odibo. When they found him we were together and they arrested him together with Keshi. When they were asked how they got us they said they found us in a group and they wanted all those who were associated with Kamati and Nakidala.

We were arrested by Noshi and Boy who were the bosses of the Boers. Boy was a notorious policeman. I think these guys were still new on the job and young. So they wanted to show us that they had recently come from training. When they came, they wanted to arrest me. They said something but, I spoke in Oshiwambo saying "So you want to arrest me!" and they said yes. They told me to stand up because at the time I was busy reading a letter from Paulene Afrane. And you know they always had a problem with these things like Namibia and comrade. So these words were scratched on the address.

They wanted me to give them the letter and I told them it was mine and not theirs. Then I asked them why I had to give it to them. I tore it up and when this was happening it was at Tate Kalimba's house. I was then arrested together with Kamati, Shahiyo and Nangutwala. We were taken to Tsumeb but at that time we did not know where they were taking us because they waited until it was night. They also closed the police van so that we could not see where we were going. They drove on a tarred road so we thought that they were taking us to Oshakati or somewhere else. In the meantime we thought if they were taking us to Ruakana they were going to kill us. When we saw that we were in Tsumeb I said "It was alright," When we arrived they took us out of the van and there were policemen waiting in two lines with their pistols and machine guns ready.

We kept on moving and did not know what was going on. One of the Boer's children said something in Afrikaans which meant that we were terrorists. We were thrown in to jail without knowing why that happened. We only realized later that there was a battle in Katima where these Mbongolos (black South African policemen) were killed. So we were arrested on Good Friday in 1973. Those people thought we had been captured in Caprivi because they only said that they were bringing a group of SWAPO terrorists.

As a result of the fact that the place was guarded by policemen armed with machine guns, we were interrogated only a week after our arrest. They took us one by one. First to be taken was Nakidala. Three days went by without hearing from them. Thereafter, they came and took Kamati and, two days passed without any news about him. Now we started wondering what was happening to the others. When they interrogated them, they locked them up in cars and kept them in there and did not take them back to the cell. So psychologically you think they were killing them. Keshi was the third one to be taken but he only stayed there for a day. He was taken in the morning and brought back in the afternoon. I was taken on the same day but in the evening. So when they took you into this other room they would strip off your clothes and remain only in your underpants. Then they would bring a small brick as well as a small stick in that room and will tell you to stand on the brick and hold the stick in a certain way. It was difficult. I mean you are standing on a narrow brick and holding the stick so your blood would stop circulating to your feet. One can even faint because it was difficult. So when they took me there, I decided that I will not hold that thing and that they will just have to kill me if they wanted to. I threw the stick away and the Boer who was there told me to hold the thing but I said "No! I cannot hold it anymore because I am tired." They started beating me. They continued beating me and telling me to hold the stick but I told them I could not. However, I was so unlucky because there was this Boer who was a member of the security force and had just come from Katima where those people were killed. I should think so because according to them we were now SWAPO. Therefore, when he came into the interrogation room he asked whether I was also a SWAPO. He said "What is this? SWAPO what and SWAPO what." But he could not find something to beat me with. Eventually he found this cleaning thing with ostrich feathers and started beating me with it. He was from the battle and so he had collected a lot of them and he hit me with them. However, they just dropped off because they were very soft. Thereafter, he sent his guys to get him a hose pipe from his car which they used for refueling. When the hose pipe was brought, he beat the hell out of me.

While he was beating me he kept on saying "SWAPO" and I started to scream because I thought if I made noise he would think that it was hurting me, and would stop because there were other people who were working outside in those general buildings in Tsumeb at that time. So when he started beating me I cried loud, Whaaa!! Screaming on top of my voice until this other man who was outside said something in Afrikaans. After that they brought some rags and put them in my mouth. After that even if you cried whaaa!! nothing came out. He kept on hitting me until the other

Boer who was interrogating felt this guy was going to kill me and told him it was enough and to stop. When he stopped he gave me a chair and told me to hold it but I just threw it away and dropped it there on the floor.

During the interrogation he still wanted to beat me as they asked me many questions like what we were doing, and why we wanted to do it, as well as why we were writing letters to the United Nations, OAU, to Sam Nujoma and what we were doing at the house. Basically the information in all three letters was the same and we were asking the United Nations to make a mission to Namibia and investigate the problems.

The reason why we wrote the same letter to Sam Nujoma was because we wanted him to know what we were doing and that we had written this letter to the UN since he was the President of SWAPO. One comrade remained at the house which was still the centre of every activity when we were arrested. Since the letters were not yet finished, we thought that he would go in my room and finish them off. The place was the centre of activity because even Kamati came to stay with us. Keshi was also there. Therefore, it was the centre now. Now this comrade did not go in the room to take these papers away. So these guys came to search the house. The police came and took these letters. In the interrogation room they put these letters in front of me and asked what we were doing it for. He was asking, "So what is in these letters? You are saying that you are not being treated well." I asked, "Are we treated well? Yahh, the letter says it all." They continued saying, "You are also writing to SWAPO." I said yes we were SWAPO members and we were writing to SWAPO and that was what we were planning for the United Nations and OAU to complain about the way they were treating us. There was no violence, there was nothing and we were only saying what they were doing to us. They started beating me up again.

We were released after a month and I think people did not know where we were all that time. Before that, there was one policeman who came to interrogate us. I think he was from Oshakati because all those who came to interrogate us were from Oshakati. He knew that I was Nomolo's son. One day he went to visit my father and told him about my whereabouts but said he should not tell anyone that he told him so. Afterwards the news came out especially through the BBC Focus on Africa that we were arrested and were in jail in Tsumeb. So the information was released and then they started to let people to come and visit us. My sister Elizabeth brought food to us and she said that we have heard that you are here. But these guys unfortunately were eating up our food and all they gave us were bones.

So when we were released, we went back home. It was in 1973 and everything started again. We had one meeting after another and one rally after the other. I think the major rally that we had was in Engela. They did not want us to hold this meeting but I think even those who were in Lusaka heard about it because we were listening to Uncle Sam encouraging us boys for what we were doing. This all happened in August, because 17th August 1973 was the day when I got arrested again. I was taken to Grootfontein after the meeting at Engela. That meeting was very big because people

from all over Namibia including those from Windhoek in the South attended it. Some of us spearheaded it. Some might have come there because they were from Oshakati. People like Kalaye also came from Kalongo.

It was well attended indeed. We spoke about a lot of issues at this meeting. We talked about independence, all the inhuman conditions such as the contract labour system, the Bantustans, the Bantu education and many other issues. Each one of us was given a topic. Among the speakers were Keshi, Netumbo, Nangutwala, Shipanga Kandanga, Tuli Ivelwa and myself. We were also the ones who organized the rally.

So when we got to the meeting the crowd was already there. We went through the crowd to the stage. We were putting on red gowns which symbolized blood. It is because they had said they were going to kill us. We were also holding a lamp which was painted red. After the meeting we went into hiding at Engela and we overnighed there because they wanted to arrest us before the meeting. I think it was on a Sunday when we were arrested there and taken to Ondangwa. We were briefly tried but our case was postponed. We were then taken to Grootfontein. I think the others were given bail of N\$200 each which was then paid by SWAPO.

We were with two or three girls when we were taken to Grootfontein. They were Friedah Willams, Yohant and Nakundawa Shiluwa. Someone called me in Grootfontein and said that they had my documents but would first make copies. You see these documents had my charges. These documents were later sent to me. They were basically the ones that were taken from me and my parents. You see how they misspelled my names and all that.

I still have these documents as well as my files here with me. So we were kept in Grootfontein. They only took us back to Ondangwa on the day of our trial. A lot of people came to witness but we were told to disperse. Some people were hit. We were just sitting in the car whilst all this was happening but, we saw everything. We were then taken into court. I was asked to be Meme Ndakundana's witness. I had to testify that I saw her at Engela delivering a speech. I had to say the truth and nothing but the

truth. I said in Oshivhambo that *she said it*. They said contempt of court 30 days and so I was given 30 days.

Nathaniel and I were sentenced and were also taken to Grootfontein together with our colleagues. When we got there, we were taken from the group and put in our own cell and we spent thirty days there. So when our thirty days lapsed, we were taken back to court. When we were released we needed to plan.

The case continued until it was thrown away because bail had been paid. It was always postponed. Brian O'linn was our only lawyer. He had been paid by SWAPO. We were not found guilty of anything. I think a fine was paid but we had spent so many months in jail. We were then released and went back home. There we continued with our activities because we had a lot of meetings when we got to Windhoek. We also wanted to go to Rehoboth but the Boers were monitoring us. They did not allow us to go to Rehoboth but, we had been everywhere else where we had conducted meetings. There were a number of comrades that were working with me. These were Shikomba,

Inhia and, I think this boy who was very active but went missing, Taapopi, Kamati, Darionn, Keshi, Philip Nambuli and myself.

John Ya Otto was there as well but some of these people were afraid. He was also arrested together with Nukwawo and the rest of us in Ondangwa. Nakwawo was with Nangutwala when he said the AG had to be scrapped. Nangutwala was not known anywhere but because he was trying to popularize only the independence of Ovambo

and not the whole country, we did not support it. He was only concerned about Ovamboland because even his party only consisted of Owambos. The Secretary General of his party left the party I think, over National issues.

Several meetings took place. There was this meeting which took place at Holulo where people who attended, including Kamati, were arrested and sent to the Tribal Chiefs. The Chiefs sentenced them to flogging and so they were flogged. I was not arrested because I did not attend that meeting.

One day, I just do not remember when it was, I accompanied Kamati, George, Kandindima's wife and many other girls and boys and, I had something white and was written SWAPO of Namibia on one side. So, I was on a bicycle when we went there and these Kakunyas and Tribal police were there. They said something bad about the white thing I had with me. I was also very rude and said that they were mine and I could write whatever I liked on them. Thereafter, the other one said that he would have to take me to the headman. I responded by saying fine and, he took me there. When we got there, all the chiefs were there. They asked many questions and I responded that it was my democratic right to do what I did. Well I was beaten up and I was the first to be beaten that day.

When I was taken there, they got hold of me and gave me twenty lashes but, I did not cry at all. After five minutes my buttocks were swollen and I could not sit in my trousers anymore. I went and lay down in the mission car which brought us from Odibo. Kamati followed. He and this other guy were both given thirty-one lashes each. George Ngesheya was given eighteen. They wanted to give the girls six but, I think, SWAPO did not allow them to hit the girls since they were women. So they paid a fine in order for them not to be lashed.

They could also have paid for us but we said no because it was very expensive. We were also allowed to go to jail but for the ladies, they just paid bail for them. If you were a teacher or a nurse, they would pay bail for you. They did that so you could go back and continue teaching the children so that they would not have to suffer. We were so young you see, but they said that one of the guys was a criminal. They caught him and gave him six lashes. He was crying because they hit him for no reason, whereas for some of us they had a reason. They gave us lashes but we never cried. You can even ask Philip Nambuli. He was there with us.

So comrade this was how it was those days. Fighting for independence was not easy. There was a lot of suffering. Next time I will tell you about my journey into exile and, how we waged the armed liberation struggle in Zambia and Angola until the time we defeated the boers at Cuito Cuanavalle. Thanks.

## Nandenga, Amutenya (Zulu)

[13 December 2008]

*Born in 1943, at Mbulu ya Amubwenge, in Oshingambo district, Amutenya Nandenga joined politics at the age of 20. He was politically influenced by the populous late Nathaniel Maxwilili. He joined OPO in 1958. He left to exile in 1964. In exile, he was among the Swapo youth and served as a messenger for communication. He was trained in Lusaka and in 1967 he was posted to North Korea for further training. After completing his training he was tasked to train Major general Jonas Savimbi in Zambia. Nandenga who was rather known by his nick name Zulu also coordinated the movement of people into exile and trained soldiers. He established the first military base in Namibia.*

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My Name is Amutenya Nandenga. I was a cattle herder, before I completed my Primary school. In 1958 I went to Walvis Bay to work on a ship as a foreman.

Through the likes of Nathaniel Maxwilili, I saw myself joining OPO in 1964. It was the very same year that I crossed to exile via Rundu, were I met President Pohamba and Mzee Kaukungwah also on their way.

I met, President Pohamba returning to exile after he was released from detention. I also met with the group of Namungudho. They were six when we met. We teamed up and formed an army consisting of 15 soldiers.

Being among the SWAPO Youth, I was given the responsibility of messenger and communication together with Theofelus Kaakonda.

In exile I was nicknamed Zulu, those who never really knew me well wondered why I was called Zulu while others thought it was my real name. However, Mifima had a mission for me to go to North Korea for further training together with Jesus Auala Matongo in 1967.

The first leader to be trained was Nelengani. He was trained in Egypt. He was the only leader who was Luangwa's secretary. It however, didn't take long before conflicts started among the leadership caused by Andreas Shipanga. Shipanga was the one who claimed that Nelengani was educated. The other problem was between the west and east. There were accusations and counter accusations on who was a traitor. The other imperialist NNC Kaukungwa was among those in PAC who started OPC.

In 1957, OPC were Peter Mweshihange, Jacob Kuhangwa, Mufima, Maxton Mutongolume, Toivo ya Toivo and Kenneth Abraham OPC Andreas Shipanga. In 1958 OPO Congress 1959 – Sam Nujoma was president and Nelengani. There were people against Military Liberation Struggle, like JK Secretary General heading intellectual Shipanga, Uncle Paul Mifima and Jesaya Nyamu amongst other.

When people were being sent for training Jesaya Nyamu and others were sent to school by Jacob Kuhangwa. Thus they only favored intellectual such as Kuhangwa and Shipanga.

Kuhangwa, Sam Nelegani, Tobias Hainyeko, Peter Mweshihange, Peter Nanyemba current president Pohamba. Some went to school but others went for military training.

Nelengani, who was training soldiers, stabbed Kuhangwa. They were the ones who created conflicts and continued causing problems.

Kuhangwa who was seriously injured was to be sent to China for treatment, but he refused and instead chose to go to America. Thus in the process trained soldiers were secretly sneaked through. Upon my return from North Korea, in 1968 I was promoted to political commissioner in Unit A.

The units were divided into three categories, unit A, B, and C. I was the commander and commissioner of the A unit, Mbulunganaga headed the B unit while Mbandu Namundjembo was heading the C unit.

The Units were created after Tobias Hainyeko's death. Following the death of Tobias Hainyeko, Castro became Army Commander. The command was as follows: Hainyeko-Castro-Dimo-Ainghome- Haiduwa-Lunganda; It fell this way after the Tonga Congress and it was named PLAN from SWALA, with Hainyeko.

Operations in Caprivi and Okavango started in 1968. Started, these operations were known as Ruadenaka. The battle which gave SWAPO the recognition by OAU in 1971 took place at Kambengha, some 210 Km from Katima Mulilo; PLAN captured weapons and the radio and the returns were taken to Dr Sam Nujoma, who took them to the OAU for display. It was in this light that Russia decided to give guns to SWAPO. By then Dr Nujoma used to come to Namibia to monitor the situation in the country. Maxton Mutongolume was the one who used to drive him to Namibia. I

remember once he got lost because of heavy rain.

By then, the South African government had declared war against blacks in South Africa. In 1972 they declared the second attack which destroyed the base.

During the attack, Mbulunganga, Peter Shilumbu and I were the commanders in chief and we commanded.

We were fighting a combined force of Boers and Portuguese. The Portuguese army was weak and we beat them thoroughly. We also did not have any support in Caprivi except in Okavango where there was a little bit of support.

In total there were more than 100 units. A good number of trained Caprivians had run away; many of whom migrated into Zambia. However the new Zambia did not officially permit the fight from its territory. This led to the arrest of Haiduwa by the Zambian authorities. Our war of liberation was never easy; it was a tough road we took. In 1969 Namibians experienced tough time, because in the process we lost some of our comrades.

In 1973, we moved to Angola. I was a member of the Military Comate (PLAN with the Mbulunganga and Ankara). The Director of Intelligence, Kakwambi, was the first to come as a spy, and at the time he found the UNITA operating in the South East. What was interesting is that the first commander of UNITA was trained by the SWAPO authority.

In 1973 I left Zambia with Kapuleko Sacky and Eino Shaanika. We were armed with a pistol; apart from the pistol I also had an AK 47, a map, and two radios, which was a present from SWAPO to Savimbi. We arrived at Zone One, on the Zambia-

Angola border. That was the place I met Samuel Shiwala, who was a commander for UNITA. At that time Savimbi was only a major. I moved further to Zone Three. My mission was to prepare the arrival of SWAPO soldiers, who were expected to arrive and the leadership of Dimo Hamambo and Shongambela. I spend two months in Zone Three, awaiting the arrival of Dimo and other SWAPO members.

At one point the Zambians were getting suspicious; they would not allow me to be with other SWAPO comrades, but I rather concentrated on training Savimbi.

During that time I was waiting for 200 PLAN soldiers seconded by Dimo. It was agreed that Savimbi and UNITA would provide SWAPO with information about the situation at the Namibian border, but Savimbi never bothered to give information. I had to go to the border with some 200 UNITA soldiers as promised by Savimbi, but Dimo advised me to take 60 soldiers instead and move towards our border. In return, SWAPO gave guns to Savimbi.

We were all dressed in UNITA uniform. We moved, crossed the Okavango River, and headed to Oshimholo, which was the village where I used to herd cattle as a young boy before I joined the struggle. I established the first military base in Namibia. In 1974, it was clear that people were crossing to exile. SWAPO intelligence was working hard to coordinate the second exile. I was including volunteers. In 1975 he brought in volunteers from Oshatotwa. I also used to bring in crucial role players in the country to meet Meroro. Local business man like David Hamalwa and Eliakim Namundjembo met with Dimo and me at Oihole to receive briefing. These business men were requested to supply 4x4 vehicles to the movement.

In 1975 the Front was finally opened, and we established the biggest base in Omfitu. That was the year that we started carrying many attacks and ambushes. We also started sending intelligence, and planting bombs. We had about four units in that area, which were under the leadership of Mbulunganaga and I. (Kapuleko Martin, Kapewasha, Kambiwa Kashilongo, Shikuma Kamati)

Regions:

1. East Front- Kashupulua- Baby
2. North East between Okavango and some part of Oukwanyama.-Mbulunganaga
3. Northern Front -Zulu Ukwambi
4. North West-Ombadja

I commanded the Northern Front

Boers were guarding the river, but many of them were killed at Etundabase, which was one of our bases, while six were captured. However not all of the six captured Boers were willing to cooperate, it was only Johan van der Merve who cooperate with us the rest had to be shot. We captured the Boers in an effort to free our politicians.

When the founding father, Nujoma, wanted a cap, uniform, or a special made gun, I replied "I will bring him a white soldier" by then Martin Shali was the commander of Anti- Air Regional.

In 1979 we fought a battle at Eputu Lakandongo near Oshihedi. I still recall when our enemies gave us a shock by bringing in 16 helicopters; out of the sixteen we shot

down six. Following that battle, there was a bigger one that came, upon which we destroyed the Elundu base.

## Nashandi, Monica

*Ambassador Nashandi served as a diplomat to Britain and Sweden. She was a survivor of Cassinga attack, Vietnam and many other camps. She was in Vietnam. In 1987 she was appointed to go to New York to represent the SWAPO party. In New York City her duties were to mobilise, inform and educate people about the SWAPO party as well as the situation back home in Namibia. This was due to the fact that many people were misinformed and misled about the SWAPO party. Nashandi also took part in the negotiation on the cease-fire agreement between South Africa and Namibia, to participate in the election campaign. In 1989, she left New York to join the first group that was led by Dr. Hage Geingob to return to Namibia. Nashandi was amongst the group which set up the Foreign Affairs Ministry with the assistance of the retired Ghanaian diplomat who was sent by the Commonwealth to assist Namibia. She was also the Acting Deputy Chief of Protocol for a while and was later Under Secretary for Political and Economic Affairs and a Director in the office of the President.*

I am Monica Nashandi and I was born in a village called *Ompunja* in Oshana Region. Brought up by both my parents, my mother was a house wife while my father worked on contract labour. He was employed by an English foreman as a house keeper. Since my father spent most of his time working on contract jobs, we were basically just brought up by my mother together with my five brothers. We are a family of six, which makes me the first born and the only woman among the five siblings.

I attended my primary school at Omsimboti, *Ompunja* than Ongwediva primary school; whereby after completion I was sent to Oshigambo for high school. I only attended until form three, which is now transformed into grade 10.

Up to now I don't know if Oshigambo high school used to be run by the Finish missionaries or not. It was one of the few schools that offered lessons in English in the country, but the South African administration were against the idea of teaching English, and they threatened *Kanyeku* for allowing the school to offer lessons in English instead of Afrikaans.

Our school was about 500 meters away from the base, and as the activities of the combatants intensified in the area, they also intensified the presence of the South African Army. The base was enlarged as they moved towards the school and into the clinic, so what they used to do was to bring the Koevoet and the SADF around the school to terrorize us.

However the girls and the boys' hostel were far from each other. The girls lived across the river, while the boys' hostel was next to the classes. We girls were actually the victims because each time we crossed the river to our area we were terrorized.

It really got worse and I think we were just motivated by the presence of the combatants who used to come and visit us in private. They were the ones who explained to us the importance of going to exile to join other fighters to liberate the country and also to get the opportunities for further studies.

It was against this background that I decided to go into exile in 1978. First of all I was motivated by the prospects of liberating the country, although I was perhaps

very young to understand the details of what it involved. I went to exile with no fear, and it actually turned out to be better as we were enlightened more about the liberation struggle.

However the terrorism did not only start at Oshigambo High School; while still at home the South African whites came to my house and took away both my parents. At that time my dad had just arrived from his contract work. If I can remember well it was in 1972 when the whites landed with a helicopter in our field, at that time I was 13 years old. They did not explain why they took my parents. They were taken for the whole day whereby they spent the night in Ondangwa. They were released the following day. My parents also did not tell us why they were taken away, but they were

lucky that day because they were not beaten up, except the fact that they were harsh on them. They were questioned whether they were involved in the *FIFIO activities*.

My father has always been involved in politics; his SWAPO membership card even states that he joined SWAPO in the 1960's. Although I was young, I knew that things were not right, we did not know much about politics, but we heard so much about the Zambian people fighting for freedom and countries like Kenya, then of course Angola, who were involved in the war.

We were also informed that our country was under illegal occupation, but we did not talk about it freely, it was only when we left for high school that we openly spoke about the illegal occupation of the country.

Recalling 1974, Shoombe and Shamena were arrested by Vorster who was then the South African Prime Minister. When we heard that Vorster was coming to Namibia, we the students from Ongwediva blocked the road; we threw stones at cars that were passing by. We never feared for our lives as we were motivated by the likes of Nasara Nyamunya, a very short man who used to preach politics. He told us that we had to fight for our country.

Older boys who were in Form IV told us to join SWAPO in order to fight for the independence of our country. We used to meet in the dining room. We were also warned not to mention a word of what we discussed. However the combatants did not communicate with the girls, only with the boys, maybe they feared we would let out the information.

My journey to exile was very rough. I left sometime in April. There was no one to escort me, but when we crossed the border we were assisted. We were a group of 15 students. Among the group were the late Erick Panama, my class mate and best friend Merriam Hamunyela, and the late Paulus Ndakana who was a pilot. We left at night

Hamunyela who was my best friend was the only person I told that I was going to exile, I remembered she cried and she didn't want me to go, but I convinced her to come with me and she did. That was the time many students had the spirit of leaving the country. We didn't care less.

I loved my mom, because I was her elder child and the only daughter that she had, but I just had to leave the country. My friend reasoned that her mom was very old, so

by the time she came back she would find her dead. So she was really crying. We made sure that not too many people knew our plan because the area was highly militarized.

We took a lift from Oshigambo to Onandjokwe, then another lift to Oshakati. While in Oshakati we slept in about 2-3 different houses before we broke the chain. We couldn't move during the day, we had to wait until it was dark. From there we proceeded to Outapi Secondary school so that nobody detects that we were on our way to exile. We pretended that we had come for sport. By then the word was out, soldiers were well informed that there were students from Oshigambo on their way to exile but they just couldn't point us out.

In the evening we slept at pastor Shanghala's house. He prepared food and conducted some prayers for us. The next evening we proceeded to Okalongo on foot, and it was not easy as it was again a tough road. In Ombalantu we met PLAN soldiers who gave us instructions on how to move.

I did not have a good impression of the soldiers we met on our way, they were very different from the ones we knew at home, because they seemed harsh; but they were in fact friendly; it was only because we never knew them before. They told us guerrilla stories. They said guerrillas were *clucks* and they could disappear. They were serious people but friendly indeed, they even taught us how to sit. I remember they said,

“Now you have joined combatants and you have to listen to what we are telling you because the Boers are around and they are monitoring your movements; you have to listen carefully to what we are telling you and you have to follow instructions.”

We were not allowed to sit anyhow, we had to sit right and we were taught politics. They told us that we had joined the armed struggle and that we were going to fight with guns to liberate the country because the South Africans did not want to listen to what they said. They said that we were going to be trained and later be given a gun to fight. That was the scariest part, I was not ready for a gun and I actually never thought of that. What kept me going was that among the combatants there was one man from my village, Nujoma Elifas; we used to call him Kwena Kwena Elifas, and he was the one who kept me going.

We were also told that we were going to be in the bush, and that was not the place we were going to stay. So we started the journey. We were told not to carry loads of stuff. I only packed a little duvet and two jerseys and two dresses and the pictures of my family and some friends. We were told not to carry heavy stuff.

Well, we did not carry food and wherever we stopped we were given food by people. When we walked, there were some combatants in the back and some in the front and there were some you could only see for sometimes and then they disappeared and you could not see them because they were in the dark. We walked until our feet couldn't take it anymore; at some point I think they also realized that we were very tired.

Among the group, we were six girls, we walked all the way and we only stopped in Angola where we were given food and water to drink by combatants. We met other combatants in Angola. They told us not to move around. I think that was also very

useful because the moment we crossed the border we could see that there was a different situation altogether because we were no longer in the bush.

So the commander told us, “We are in a war situation and you don’t move about when you are not told to move.” So they also identified people who were responsible for us. We were also informed that once we fought for our freedom the country would be free and there would be schools and hospitals.

As we walked all night long, people were tired, but there was no turning back, we wanted to accomplish our mission, my second border post was Hay Mona. Each morning we woke up we were reminded that we had joined the war and we had to be alert at all time, we had to listen to the orders of the commanders. We continued with our journey and the situation started to get tough; there was a time I asked my god why I joined the army, because I was really tired. We had to sleep in trenches, the reason being that we were not trained, and so we could not sleep on beds. Sleeping in trenches was something else for me, it was my first experience. Despite the fact that we girls we were not isolated, we slept together. But I was a bit worried because I didn’t know if I could trust the man sleeping next to me, but we got used to it, they never misbehaved with us; maybe it was because they were in uniform.

These people were not necessarily sleeping, as they were on duty; they just lay down to rest. Later on we got used to them and we realized that they were in fact friendly people, only that they didn’t talk that much.

After spending three days in that place, we proceeded to Vietnam; that was sometime in April 1978. Vietnam is not really talked about maybe it is because of what happened.

Vietnam was the closest military base for people who came via Ambulant; they all had to pass Vietnam. Some stayed for days before proceeding to Cassinga, while others went to school. But I was unfortunate because I had to stay there for my military training, I thought I was going to school like others.

It was in Vietnam that we met with Philemon Malima, he was a commissar at that time.

Once we entered the post we were registered and given some instruction. We were also instructed to give ourselves new names that we were going to be called. I had named myself Daily Power.

There was actually not much work to be done in the first week we arrived, beside joining the parade and singing SWAPO songs. Sometimes we chopped trees to build huts. Each morning we exercised, and after that real military training started; we were taught how to handle guns and how to dismantle it.

The training was tough; we had strict commanders, like Kakwele. He was very tough, he took us to the bush, and although we saw some fruits, he would not allow us to eat or drink. He always stayed behind us.

The training did not take long, before Vietnam attack took place on the 4 May, but by then I could handle a gun. It was at 14h00 when Olivia and I were sitting under a tree waiting for lunch, out of a sudden we heard a disturbing sound, and very loud

indeed; it was louder than any thing I ever heard before. Olivia was the one who said lets run, but before we could do anything the planes were all over, I run into the trenches but I couldn't find Olivia. All I remember is that one of my colleagues died there, I heard him screaming, and it was terrible. While in the trench, there came men with guns and started shooting and blood was flowing all over; people were screaming and I just don't know how I survived.

My clothes were full of sand because of the helicopter when it was revving, these people were shooting, and it was a continuous sound of machine guns. Unfortunately I did not have a gun, because we were only given guns during training and upon completion we hand in the guns.

I saw people die and blood was flowing, people screaming, it was just terrible. When I saw I was fine I wanted to run across the camp toward the east, not knowing that was the direction they were coming from there were sounds of guns firing. When I stood up, my dress was soaked with blood and sands the same as my hair. This was blood of my colleagues. I run for about maybe a hundred meters, but the planes were still all over attacking, I heard them shout from the helicopters, I wanted to run toward a tree, and just before that tree I found myself in a ditch, which means they were aiming at me when I was running but by the time they got to the tree I was not there.

They bombed the place and the whole camp was on fire; people were screaming and the commanders were shouting maybe giving orders. There were places where we never used to go and I think there were guns of course we didn't see them but there were guns all over the place.

So I got up and I run towards the trenches in the east; the trenches were a part of the camp – they were deep because it is where they used to keep the guns, I found it very difficult to cross but I managed, I found some of the soldiers and other people with guns.

It was shocking that I saw, a mixture of South African soldiers and blacks, what we call Makakunya today, they were piloting people in the tranches. Some were shooting because they had guns. When I saw that I said no and continued to run.

I was not the only one running, there were also other people, and this was like a commotion. I ran into a Mahangu field belonging to a pastor who had a daughter at Oshigambo, his name am Date Shivinge.

It was very cold in the field. But I tried running as far as I could, while running I saw a military vehicle, I think it was the NPC with four men in military cam fresh heavily armed and they were shooting at me- now I am running towards them and they were driving and at the same time shooting I started falling because I couldn't run I was in a map zone.

Meanwhile I approached a tree and I just fell asleep for a few minutes and as I open my eyes it was the very same jeep that was shooting ahead me, I jumped and they started shooting again, I kept falling and running this time I didn't even know where I was heading too I panic and I was in shock.

As I ran toward a tree I saw my dress had holes but I didn't feel anything, meanwhile I was shot, I ran into a house I was just running to get out of the situation, I went into a room, I remember there was a bed with poles and I went under that bed.

I remembered seeing a number of dead bodies as I entered that house, but I didn't bother I just entered one of the rooms, under the bed I found a girl who just arrived a day before, and she was screaming.

She was screaming that she wanted to go home, she wanted to run away and I said, "You know what? You keep quiet or else they will kill us." Then I heard some voices – SWAPO what – what SWAPO move – you know they were now on foot, they were walking they even came into the homes. As I lay under that bed I remembered commissar Malima and the Zocks telling us every morning that a soldier should not allow himself or herself to be captured alive, whenever the enemies try to capture you, you should come up with an idea. So I was under that bed but at heart was thinking, and I could see the soldiers passing, Zimbabwe soldiers, and I was counting and I remember counting up to ten.

I looked around but I couldn't see a gun, I however never gave up, I continued searching hoping to bump into a gun; I saw an axe, hammer, bows and arrows with a wooden thing and that of an iron. I told myself I was not going to be captured alive, and I asked myself what I should do to myself with all that equipment without taking my life? I tried everything I could, that is why I have these scars. Meanwhile the girl was still screaming; she couldn't stop, I told her to stop screaming otherwise they were going to kill us, but she kept on, later she ran away. I have no idea where she ran to and whether she managed to escape or not? I told myself if they ever captured me I was just going to slit my throat, but none of them looked into the hut.

As I was leaving the homestead, I saw something that I will never forget. I told you, that day we ate rice, there was this man I remember well, he was still talking and his stomach was split open, I could see the rice – can you imagine? He was supposed to be dead but he was still screaming – alive, he was in pain crying for help, "Help me

– help me." I remembered but I could not do anything, I had to run for my life too. I continued running, I knew I was not the only one, but as I ran it were just voices of people screaming for help. As I ran there were some colourful balls, blue, yellow and orange all over the place, they looked like balloons, I really did not know much about them, but I could see they were exploding...

I ended up in front of a water pond; as I could swim, I jumped into the water, and I felt so much relieved as the dress was being washed; I managed to cross over as the water was not so deep. And as I was about to get out I heard a whistle and I said my god what is it again, you know? Then I stood up and I heard the whistle again, and I saw that they looked like our people, because they were wearing the Cuban uniform; I almost went back to the water but they called me and I went to them. There was a wounded girl and some other wounded people lying aside. They were seriously wounded.

As we were sited a Dr. Donkey-Denise came with Mariana, and said the situation was very bad. He told us to remain sited while he went to look for other people who were wounded. They left us in the company of three soldiers.

It was very cold, so the one of the soldiers told us to move to find a warmer place that we could keep the wounded people; meanwhile I discovered I had also been shot, but didn't feel it at that time, but afterwards the wound started paining. I had to carry the girl who was wounded, and I had to put her on my back. The problem now was that we had to walk in the field and you know the Mbadja people's fields are massive; I had to walk a long distance before we reached any home stead. As we walked my wound started paining and I was carrying her, as she was wounded in the leg, I felt like putting her down, but I couldn't. We arrived at one homestead and many wounded people started coming out, the owner of the house welcomed us, we were cold and hungry, we didn't eat anything.

The next morning the owner of the house came shoveling, he figured out that we were very hungry. Fortunately he had two wives and children so he had hidden them some were and he come back. He slaughtered a cow so that we could eat but I tell you I could not eat, and I did not want to look at meat at all and for a good two months, I never touched meat. Later that day we moved to another post because there were these helicopters around. Then we moved to another post, but there were so many people at this post. We met people who were coming from home and I think those people were coming from Odibo.

I started crying as I looked at them, there was no food and the situation was actually turning tense, at the time they came. There were about 50 school kids; they did not stay long as they were taken to Cassinga while we stayed. The problem was food, and so we went in masses and started mobilizing for food. The peanuts were not fresh, so a lot of people ended up with diarrhoea but we just ate them because there was nothing to eat.

Furthermore the Angolan government came to our rescue we were loaded into trucks and we were taken to Shangongo, which was the meeting place of people coming from Cassinga, it was cold but full of people. Mosquitoes were another problem; we were hungry and people continued to feed on the peanuts. Shangongo was a kind of town in Angola, so soldiers were now helping to transport people from Vietnam, Shangongo and Cassinga to Lubango. Commissars did their job, they told us not to be demoralized even if we were attacked and that we should have faith as we were going to attack too them too. So we started learning songs.

While in Lumbango, the founding President Sam Nujoma came to monitor the situation; he moved around the camps, visiting people touching those who were sick and wounded. He touched them but he did not stay for long. Most of the wounded told Nujoma that the enemy had attacked us, and they had killed women and children, but we are not giving up because we had to liberate our country; that was always the message. We used to sing songs and we sang every morning; we sang every night, which made us forget about other things. Then I it was back to business. We

were selected to go for training. There were others who were going to school and the mothers had to nurse the babies. Their place had to be ready because they were not going to stay at Lubango.

Some of us were selected for special training, we were three women among men, we were trained by the Cubans and the training was tough. First we had to dig our own trench; no body dug it for you but yourself. Every morning we woke up around four o'clock to start training. We ran, climbed mountains and set explosives called TNT. We were sent to go and get information and sometimes we had to carry things; literary I had a bag full of tinned food, and my gun and r magazines, and you had to walk long distances. At times we were sent to a military base to get information and bring it back, and it was very, very far. The training took four months. We were trained together with the current Minister of Transport and Communication, Kapanda. I remember some men used to complain because the food was not enough, but you see ladies could adjust to any situation, and we were fine. We did not have basic facilities such as soap, and at one point we applied engine oil to our body.

We were trained with AK47 and when we finished training, we saw ourselves posted to the front and Oshana region. We ended up in the commanding headquarters. My mission was to collect information and I reported back to my commander. Meanwhile I also underwent first aid training, and I was a nurse treating the wounded from the front.

It was also my responsibility to check the movements of our enemies, UNITA and South Africans. It was tough, I am telling you, as we were driving but the planes were just flying and the minute they go and made a turn we had stopped and we were under camouflage, with the bushes on top of the car. I used to be scared, but any way we completed the mission.

Whenever I found myself in a situation, I had to adjust. I was in the front until the end of 1979, and then I got posted to Luanda. The party wanted to train people to speak Portuguese; five of us were selected. So we were in a transit camp and we used to go to the National Institute of Languages in town from the transit camp. Now when I recall I laugh at myself because they used to call me an interpreter because I was better than the others, I was a fast learner. In fact I used to interpret when Nujoma met Dos Santos when we went to the hospital. We completed the language training in 1981, it was the very same year I started working with the youth league, and I was elected to the executive committee of the league.

I was Deputy Secretary, but at the same time I was responsible for finance and partly international relations; there were no specific designations so that was when the real work began; that was when I started a lot of traveling around the world. I was just a soldier, but I always stood out. I was privileged to speak English.

We were operating from Luanda at the SWAPO headquarters. We had the responsibilities of mobilizing and supporting the liberation struggle through campaigns at schools, as well as through conferences and seminars where we could send the message, and getting materials for the refugee camps.

Most of our support came from socialist countries; we were close to the Soviet Union, Hungary and Bulgaria. All those countries were supportive and we belonged to the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the Pan African Youth Movements as well as other organizations. Apart from that we went to different countries seeking help for students and young people in the refugee camps, as we needed the necessary materials for them to receive education. Apart from the education materials, we also needed food, in order for the children not to study on hungry stomachs.

I can still recall a meeting I went to in Hungary; it was organized by the World Organization of Democratic Youth, and it is where I met ANC youth. I worked for the youth for six years traveling from one country to another. Sometimes I returned with a check or money as a result of mobilization. Thus the parent body never wanted the youth league to have an account, although we were doing a lot of activities. So whenever we came back with money, we give it to the parent body, and each time we needed money we went to the office for it, but it was tough to get the money.

One day we had a Congolese delegation and I went to the office; they had come to see the situation of the refugees. I wanted to host a reception but when I went to the office to request for money, current President Pohamba asked me what I was going to do with the money. He looked at me and I started crying. He told me that there was no money to be wasted. I tried to explain to him, but he didn't understand me. Although I left the office crying, now as I am talking, I am happy that the money was in good hands, and it was used for basic necessities.

In 1987 I was posted to New York. I worked for the UN under the SWAPO Observer Mission as a Deputy Representative. It was not easy when they sent me to the UN; I was scared and didn't know what I was going to do.

At the UN, it is where I met people like the Americans who do not support the struggle, while other people had a perception that SWAPO was violating human rights. I was fighting alone for my country, I did not have support. I remember there was one lady who stood up and said, "You SWAPO, you are telling us nonsense, you are killing people." People thought the other way round because they did not understand the struggle we were going through.

We spent nights in the conference rooms at the UN. In 1988 we were working with the office of the high Commissioner for Namibia to produce a documentary based on Cassinga day. I attended the meeting and I had to provide reasons why we needed that much money. I said Cassinga was a day when our people were killed and we just wanted to mark it every, but it would be nice for the UN to fund the production of the document. I said we were ready to provide the materials, and that we had to do something. I remember the Deputy Head of Mission was from Egypt that young man, he said, "We thank the distinguished Representative of SWAPO for the information she gave us, but I think she is insisting on things that we as a Council cannot do. She cannot lecture us on the struggle because some of us were supporting the struggle before her." I got furious when he said that and maybe it was because I was not trained to behave as a diplomat but being at the UN you learn how to behave as a diplomat. I

almost lost my temper because this man who was from Egypt, and not from Namibia, thinks he had the right to tell me what to say and what not to say.

It was the Ambassador of Botswana and the Foreign Minister of Zimbabwe Dr Mundenge who fought on behalf of the Namibians. They spoke to the people in the meeting and explained the situation of people dying in the struggle, and how hard the country was fighting for freedom. They also told them to stop belittling me as if I had never experienced or fought in the war. As Mundenge took the floor, in the Forth Committee and in the General Assembly he spoke for Namibia and honestly I felt proud. However it was an experience for me.

The matter became personal and negotiating the budget was tough, remember SWAPO forces were demanding for a larger amount for Namibia and the Western countries were against that.

Thank You.

## Nashandi, Sackaria Zaa

Sackaria Zaa Nashandi got into politics in the 1960s while he was still in school. At the age of fifteen, his curiosity in politics grew with the popular radio programme called FIFO-O. He quickly learnt that people like Toivo ya Toivo were holding meetings within the country because they wanted independence, and from there on his passion for SWAPO continued to grow. In 1972, Nashandi moved to Windhoek, where he stayed until 1974 when he was deported back to Ovamboland. Back in Ovamboland he served both as an informer, transporter and advisor to SWAPO members and politicians. Nashandi transported people across the country, into Angola, and in 1975, he had the privilege of hosting Kanisius and Phillemon Nduuvu Nangolo at his residence at Onayena. It was after his arrest in 1975 that Nashandi discovered that some of the people that he referred to as comrades, and had closely associated with, in the highest confidentiality of his political career, had been nothing but snakes! Nashandi was then sent to Robben Island for incarceration after his trial.

My name is Sackaria, nicknamed Zaa, Nashandi. I grew up at Onayena, in a village called Ompugulu. I got into politics in the 1960s while at school. We were influenced by John ya Kanandjembo, who introduced us to a radio programme called FIFI-O, a political affairs programme broadcasted from Lusaka. Ya Kanandjembo liked this programme and never missed listening to it.

As days went by, we took notice of Tate Ya Toivo's Chevrolet that used to pass-by on his way to Tate Sheya ShaKakoto's place at Omulondoguuyoka village. Somehow we learnt that Tate Ya Toivo used to attend political meetings held at Sheya ShaKakoto's house. At the age of fifteen, we decided to start attending those FIFI-O meetings. We followed Tate YaToivo's car to where the meetings were held, but due to the long distance, we always found that the meetings had already ended. We learnt of the meetings because some elderly men from our village such as Andili Ya Shiindi and Aktofer Kuwa also used to attend those FIFI-O meetings. We heard that at those meetings they were discussing politics; and apparently they wanted independence.

I left for Windhoek in 1972, and stayed there until 1974 when we got deported back to Ovamboland. There I worked in a Bakery. In 1973 people who were living in compounds went on strike. It began with a meeting addressed by Jerry Ekandjo where we were all urged to burn our passes. Ekandjo managed to convince people that carrying passes was wrong, particularly because the people that demanded us to carry passes were foreigners. The campaign against passes went on up to the work places. At our company we decided not to go to work. There was a time when our houses at the Ovambo 12 location in Windhoek were attacked. That afternoon, the Boers surrounded the compound and begun beating us; we decided to organize ourselves and retaliate. We did not have weapons, but we had sticks. Other people escaped but unfortunately I did not get the chance to escape. The Boers for some reason alleged that I was responsible for the strike, so I was arrested along with some people from our house such as Pender, Ambassador and Martin. We were arrested simply because everyone in our house was involved in politics in one way or another. Political meetings

were even held at our house, addressed by Hifikepunye Pohamba and Martin Shalli. Apparently we were misleading Windhoek with our SWAPO affairs. They simply attacked us for being SWAPO puppets, and as such, we defended ourselves. At that time there was a mass search for SWAPO politicians by the Boers, and those that were found were arrested and tortured. It was during that same year, 1973, that Jerry Ekandjo convened his very last meeting as he got arrested. He was sent to Robben Island together with Kashea and others. So we returned to Ovamboland with a serious warning not to be seen back in Windhoek. In Ovamboland, I survived on my Indela, which I used to transport people from Ondangwa to Grootfontein and Windhoek, even though I was not allowed in to Windhoek. If they even suspected that I was in Windhoek, they would look for me and escort me back till beyond Otjiwarongo.

In 1974, many people started going into exile, crossing the border into Angola, so I committed myself to helping them cross into Angola. In Ovamboland I used to collaborate with Tate Jailus, who had also been deported from Windhoek for the same reason that I was. In Windhoek I used to collaborate with people like KaAsser Limene, John ya Kanandjembo, Eino Shikomba and one guy from Onamwandi. To get to the border, I went via Odibo; this was because I had used it in the past and felt that I knew it well enough. I used to travel to the border to spy on how the Boers patrolled, and at what time they were patrolling. I would park my car and walk a few meters into Angola, pretending to be buying something. I was an informer, an escort and advisor to others all at the same time.

It was not an easy task, mainly because everybody started thinking that everyone that crossed the border was assisted by me. Nevertheless, I never experienced major problems until the day the Boers came and surrounded my house. From that day on, I began moving with my luggage in order to escape should things get worse. In 1975, I received and hosted two SWAPO soldiers in my house. When they arrived, I was not at home, so I found them when I got home. I did not know who they were, but they informed me that they were instructed to come and once they had arrived in Onayena, they should contact me for assistance. They told me that they wanted to go to the Boers' bases in Ruacana and Grootfontein, and as such they needed my help. We held our meeting at Onayena and then I escorted them to where they could get transport to Ruacana. They came dressed in civilian clothing but they had their uniforms hidden somewhere in the bushes. They told us they could be back from Ruacana in a few days time, and from there, we should help them get to the Grootfontein base. After the soldiers left for Ruacana some comrades and I convened a small meeting to arrange how to get those soldiers to Grootfontein. One comrade amongst us informed us that he had plans to go to Windhoek, and volunteered himself to take the soldiers to Grootfontein on his way there, but on the day that he and the soldiers were to travel, the comrade cancelled his trip. I don't know why he decided to cancel the trip, perhaps there was something that we did not know about him, I thought he was one of the comrades. Anyway, the late Eino Shikomba and Tate Naftali Ndokosho borrowed a car from Tate Naftali's uncle to take the soldiers to Grootfontein.

We drove until a few kilometers from Oshivelo, than instructed the soldiers to continue on foot with their weapons so that they could cross Oshivelo on their own. They carried their AK-47 and kalubein and crossed Oshivelo through the bushes. After they had crossed Oshivelo, we were waiting for them a few kilometers from Oshivelo. This was around September, or maybe October of 1975. We dropped the soldiers in Grootfontein and proceeded to Otjiwarongo for a little shopping. While there, we heard that two white soldiers were killed in Grootfontein. A search started and then we heard rumours that those soldiers were encircled by the Boers at the Otavi Mountains. Did you know that the footmark at Otavi Mountains is for those two soldiers that I took to Grootfontein? Their names were Kanisius and Phillemon Nduuvu Nangolo. While they stayed at my house in Onayena, they slept in a little hut from which I would wake them each morning so they could go hide in the bush, I couldn't let my parents see them. Getting food for them was easy due to the fact that, although I stayed with my parents, I was married, so my wife and I had our own kitchen and there was a girl who used to cook for me. My wife was in Windhoek for maternity at the time, and she was there until the time I got arrested.

Those two soldiers were quite rather strange because whenever they approached you, you would never see where they emerged from and that was one tactic that they never revealed. They were very cool and polite though, one could learn a lot from them, especially about politics. They also advised me on what I should talk and what I should not talk if I was arrested one day. They said their plan was also to go to Windhoek and that if they made it there safely, they would mobilize the people and train them to join SWAPO.

It was also in 1975 that I got arrested and was sent to Robben Island. It happened that some of the people we worked with to help the soldiers were snakes, one of the people that we used to hold meetings with was behind my arrest. He was my teacher and he betrayed us by informing the Boers about my transportation services in assisting the soldiers. What got me suspicious were the questions I was asked when I got arrested. When we got to Oshakati, I was placed in an office where I was interrogated by three Boers. They asked me for my name, and when I told them that I was Sackaria Nashandi, they simply nodded and responded that they knew me because I was head of transport. There was a man there by the name of Sisande Gabriel, of whom I already knew because he was the brother to my father-in-law. Gabriel asked me if I recall the three times that he had come to my house offering me a job and I refused. I told him that I did indeed, then he told me that he had dealt with detainees for a long time, including those from OnguluOmbashe and those from Pretoria. He then told me that all he wanted was for me to tell the bosses the truth, so I asked him what truth they wanted to know.

First they asked me to tell them about the two guys that I transported from Onayena to Okamugongo ka Ambalantu. I admitted that it was true that on that day I transported many people from Onayena to different places such as Onuno, Ondangwa, Ongwediva and Oshakati, but I did not know who got off where because I did not

keep note of the passengers, it was purely a transport business. They even asked me about the two white men who died in Grootfontein. I responded that I knew nothing. They then said that they could call Lusaka so that I could speak with Sam Nujoma. They tied my arms behind my back and shocked me with electricity. Then they got more specific and told me that they are referring to the two guys that I escorted to Oshakati, who were going to hitchhike to Ruacana. This is when I got apprehensive about the old man that we travelled with to drop the soldiers in Oshakati. He was a teacher at Onambutu at the time, and is currently holding a high position. His name is Kanana Hishoono, the man that was arrested by SWAPO soldiers and taken into exile. The other man that had refused to take the soldiers to Grootfontein turned up at my trial as a state witness; he too was from Kanana's village and a former teacher of mine. This was the late Shackareta, who was eliminated for being a number 1 witness at my trial. In court, Shackareta testified that he advised me on several occasions not to transport SWAPO terrorists. He further testified that the terrorists wanted to destroy the government. He did this in collaboration with Tate Kanana.

Whenever I come across Hishoono, now, I just laugh with him as normal. We recently met at a bereavement, and we just laughed together, even though inside me I still remember what he did to me. I think he is not even aware that I know what he did to me; he thinks I am just a fool. During my interrogation in Oshakati, I was tortured the whole day and pressured to reveal the names of "terrorists". They told me that there was no point in hiding because Risto Nakanyala had already given them full names and details. In the afternoon I was taken to another room and told that they would continue with the torturing the next day. There I found Nakanyala amongst some other people who were also being held in the same room. I told him that I was interrogated but I did not say anything, then he confessed to me that he had indeed revealed the names of "terrorists", including the villages that they came from. He couldn't bear the pain.

The next day I went for tea and met Itoolwa, a police officer, and he said to me, "Oh! You are one of these stubborn Nashandies who had been striking even in Windhoek? You will see who I am." He started informing the Boers about me saying that I had five brothers in exile and that one of my brothers was the one who bombed two casspirs at Epembe. They took me back to the office and started punching me with fists, asking me to reveal the terrorists. This time I told them that the terrorists had gone to the south. They told me to reveal their names but I told them that I was not informed of their real names, however, their nicknames were Shigwana sha Mbanza, and the short one was Ndilimani Reinhold. It was getting tough, and besides, Nakanyala had already told them everything. I even ended up agreeing to it that I was the one who took the terrorists to Grootfontein. I never surrendered though, not even at that point. I told them that I did not know the two men where terrorist, I simply thought that they were ordinary people. They then told me that the men had committed crimes in the south, and if they were found, they would be sentenced to death.

From there they started shocking me with electricity, asking me to tell them about the terrorists' guns. I told them that I did not know much about the guns but saw them with one small gun and one big one. They forced me to reveal the village from which the terrorists were from, but I insisted that I was not aware of that information. The following morning Nakanyala was interrogated again, and he confessed that the villages he mentioned were false, adding that he only said them in fear. Somehow they became convinced that I was telling the truth, but from that day, torturing was just a daily routine.

One day I was tied with a black cloth over my eyes, and was beaten with huge sticks (iitago) until I became unconscious. After I fell, I was then taken to a corrugated iron shack at Ondangwa, where I stayed unconscious for three days. On the fourth day they came to check on me and when they realized I was not dead, they took me back to Oshakati and gave me some medicine. The beating was so severe that one of my eyes no longer looked like an eye, and my anal intestine hung outside due to the electric shocks. This was because when we were electrified, they would insert the electricity in the anus, at the stem of the private parts and inside the penis. This was done apparently so you would become infertile, and also around the ears. When the torture minimized, I started to recover very slowly. We were then transferred from Oshakati to Ondangwa to wait for trial that was around February / March of 1975.

Prior to my trial, the Boers approached Eino Shikomba and Naftali Elia Indongo to turn and testify against me. These were the two men that I had travelled with when we went to drop Kanisius and Nangolo at Grootfontein. Immediately after the Boers left, they got a chance to come and inform me about the Boers' plans and further informed me that they had decided to cross the border and go into exile three days before the court hearing. They advised me that in the court, I should just accuse them, knowing that they would be long gone by then.

During the hearing, I told the court that I knew nothing about transporting terrorists, as I was just invited by Shikomba and Indongo who were escorting their friends to the south (Windhoek). I further indicated that Shikomba and Indongo just requested me to help them with the driving. Shackareta objected and told the court that I was a liar, and that I was even the one that transported the terrorists to Ruacana. He insisted that I was just accusing the state witness. I then requested the court to call Indongo and Shikomba to testify, knowing that they had already left the country. Indongo was later arrested during the OnguluOmbashe attack and taken to Pretoria.

He was one of the first soldiers who had gone to OnguluOmbashe with Patrick

Lungada and Mesag Victor. After the trial, we were taken to Windhoek, after spending a night in the Otjiwarongo prison. The Boers were invited to come to have a look at us, and were informed that we were the terrorists. I still see Risto

Nakanyala, quite often now that he has become my brother-in-law. He married my sister after the

death of his first wife from a land mine.

Thank You.

## Ndapuka, Helena

*As a child growing up, Helena Ndapuka had always been exposed to SWAPO's political activities. She herself was mobilized as a school girl by the likes of Kaxumba KaNdola (Patrick Iyambo), Simon Mzee Kaukungwa, Maxwilili. It was however not until 1969, when she moved to Windhoek and joined the SWAPO Women's Council, pledging herself as a full SWAPO activist that her political career really picked up. During this period, she also served as a detective for the party under the Women's Council. Together with well known independence struggle veterans such as Hendrik Wetbooi and others, Ndapuka was part of the delegation that addressed SWAPO rallies such as the one at Oshakati in 1977, and several more in subsequent years. As a SWAPO activist, Ndapuka herself also experienced physical trauma at the hands of the enemy. In 1985, she had both her arms broken following a beating by the enemy as a result of a SWAPO meeting that she attended. During her political career, she experienced the aftermath of the assassination of Clemance Kapuo, which resulted from an attempt by the Boers to intensify a tribal war between the Ovambo and the Ovaherero people of Namibia. In her later years, Ndapuka continued serving as a SWAPO activist and mobilizer alongside others, collaborating with teachers, PLAN fighters and people like Shikongo Nuunyago to send young people into exile.*

My name is Helena Ndesihafela Lituneni Hamunyela; I was born in Ondobeyeno on August the 1st 1943. It is here that I was baptized by Pastor Vilho Kaulinge. At the age of seven (7), my family moved from Ondobeyeno to Okalongo, where I attended my first schooling at Onadjaba primary school, from standard one (1) to six (6). After that, I moved to Odibo School.

During my school years as a child, we used to celebrate South African Day on the 31st of May of each year. During this event, we received small South African paper flags and would sing songs like, "*Onse Blou Ei Van Eimer*". One year during these celebrations, two men by the names of Mzee Kaukungwa and Kaxumba kaNdola

came in to address us. The two gentlemen introduced themselves as representatives of SWAPO, the party of peace which would liberate the country from the colonial rule. The two continued by pointing out to us that the song "*Onse Blou Ei Van Eimer*" is actually a bad song for us to be singing because it is a colonial rule song. Although this was not the first time that I heard of SWAPO, it encouraged a deeper appreciation

within me for the party. News about SWAPO being formed in Ondangwa by the likes of Ya Toivo was already circulating by this time.

I remember when I was growing up, some young men used to come to our house; in particular, I remember one by the name of Simeon Shixungileni. Apparently they had come from Angola, but at the time, I was not aware of this, of course I would ask, but got very little answers as to who these men really were. We knew very little about their activities, let alone where such activities took place. As kids, all we saw was young men on bicycles in white shirts and the elders would speak to them. My mother would often take them to the storeroom to serve them with some food and oshikundu, and then they would leave. My mother always told us that the young men

are relatives of hers, something she would say to end our curiosity, and for a long time, it worked.

One day we decided to challenge my mother and we asked her where all these brothers of hers were coming from, because they used to finish all our porridge while we were at school. Actually, Simeon Shixungileni really was a relative of hers, but the others were not. Shixungileni would often come around the house with his late friend Mesag.

I didn't really notice anything peculiar about Shixungileni until 1966, when I was eighteen (18) years old, mainly because my mother had previously told us that Shixungileni was on the run because he had impregnated several girls at Ondobe, and as such the relatives of these girls were looking for him with the intention of killing him. She instructed us that, should Shixungileni come around the house while she is not around, we should make sure to give him some food. We took care of him as our uncle, and whenever mom was away, we took the responsibility of cooking for him, and after eating, he would always leave.

During his visits to our house, Shixungileni never once spoke to us about SWAPO or the South African colonial rule. What made me aware that we were being oppressed was the fact that my father worked as a contract labourer at Oranjemund and would be gone for 12 months at a time, but would never come back with anything significant except a piece of cloth called Ombwaka and little money, literally not enough to cater for all our school needs. At the time, if you wore Ombwaka, you were regarded as being rich because Ombwaka could not be afforded just by anyone, but despite the fact that our father worked in Oranjemund, we never had sufficient clothes, but we remained better off compared to other children at school because we had larger pieces of Ombwaka.

I can say that the contract system destroyed families, mainly because it kept contract workers away for large amounts of time, often up to a period of eighteen months, which meant leaving spouses behind and open to temptations. A husband would come home and find his wife with another man, or impregnated by somebody else. Some men that went to the south never returned and made new lives for themselves down there. Another negative factor which came as a result of the colonial system was that, at Okaholo (employment queue in Ondangwa), from what I heard, men were made to bend over and checked between the buttocks by the doctor as part of the recruitment process. These are some of the things that still make us feel bad when we imagine that our fathers used to be checked between the buttocks by the Boers.

Some of these contract workers would even make their way on foot to the south. I remember one man from my village, known by the name of Naikuva Kamutondokwa who was eaten-up by a lion at Onamutoni during such a trip, and there were others too. Another devastating allegation at the time was that a certain German farmer at Outjo used to cook black farm workers and feed them to his pigs. Some years later when I moved to Windhoek as a political activist, it was confirmed to me that the farm did indeed exist.

This system was particularly hard on parents who had to let their young men go off to Okaholo because they would say good-bye to them without knowing if they will ever see them alive again. When and if the contractors made it to Okaholo, they were faced with more difficulties, with hunger being number one on the list. The young men used to take with them some mahangu grain or flour for porridge, but because the waiting in Okaholo was indefinite, they would run out of food and would starve. Another threat faced by the workers at Okaholo was the rain during the rainy seasons. There were no form of shelters at Okaholo, and people suffered patiently with no guarantee that they will ever be recruited. Some would even wait for up to a period of one month without getting any recruitment. I also heard that black farm workers also took on 18 month contracts, but were only paid with meals and a ten cent, and at the end of the contract, they were then taken to a shop to choose a few meters of material/fabric to take home to their wives and children. Imagine working for eighteen months and your payment is a piece of cloth which in most cases was not enough to be shared between the wives and all the children. It was, for the most part, harder on those with many wives.

I can't really say definitely that these contract workers were forced to take on the jobs, but I can confirm that the Boers, including Swanla, used to request the traditional Chiefs to get them some people to join Okaholo. The Boers used to draw up a list indicating the vacancies at different farms. As compensation for their co-operation, the Chiefs received bags of sugar from the Boers.

Before we continue with the event of May 31st, I must mention to you that that day was not the first time for me to meet Kaxumba. I had previously seen them at a church service at Okalongo, during a service in which people were casting demons. At that time, religion was quite new and appeared to be indirect conflict with tradition. One could not even enter the church building wearing traditional necklaces or bangles, or else you would be seen as a pagan. I also noted that those who divorced their wedded partners and impregnated another woman or went on to cohabit with other women other than their wedded wives were regarded as pagans and had to be excommunicated till they were forgiven. In case of death before forgiveness, such people were buried outside the graveyard, but now that the graveyards have been extended, those who were initially buried outside are also now inside. After the introduction of Christianity, having more than one wife, brewing or drinking *omalodu* (traditional beverage), was all regarded as pagan. I recall it was the first day of the month when Kaxumba and Maxwilili came to our church. The church was particularly packed that day due to the type of service that was taking place. When people started repenting, the children were told to leave the church due to the extensive nature of the confessions. While we were waiting outside, Kaxumba and Maxwilili walked into the church and announced that they were convening a SWAPO rally outside the church.

So that afternoon was the second time that I had laid eyes on Kaxumba. Kaxumba and Mzee addressed us for a while, and informed us that we should be informed that

the Boers were colonizers. After hearing this, we all started tearing up the paper flags that had been given to us by the Boers. That day I attained my SWAPO membership card. They told us to throw away South African flags and asked us if we wanted to join SWAPO and we said we did. For one to get a membership card, a membership fee of twenty five cents (25c) was required, so I quickly rushed home to borrow money from my father so that I could secure my membership card, and being my father's favourite child and his mother's namesake, he did not hesitate to give me the money.

SWAPO membership cards had to be hidden at all times, more so following the OnguluOmbashe attack. After the OnguluOmbashe attack, things got bitter as houses were being raided by the Boers in search of the OnguluOmbashe PLAN escapees. It was also after the OnguluOmbashe battle that my mother finally confessed that the so-called uncles that passed through our house, such as Kambo ka Shixungeleni, Kaxumba and others were indeed PLAN fighters and not our uncles, and are now wanted by the Boers. Kambo ka Shixungeleni was wanted for bombing Oshikango sha Nguarada, where Kambatutu and his people had been based. Apparently the Boers realized it was him by a set of foot prints that he had left behind.

The war got bitter as time went on, and as SWAPO pioneers we began to mobilize ourselves, particularly at school, under the leadership of the Okalongo chairperson, John Kemanya. The main purpose of mobilization amongst the youth was mainly for them to understand that SWAPO is the only Organization that could take care of the people's future, and for them to join SWAPO. Although people were joining, they remained afraid, especially when we learned of the arrests of Kaxumba and Ya Toivo in Robin Island. Threats also began, and this made people afraid, but they also remained hopeful and never pulled back.

I must really commend the bravery of Kaxumba, Mzee and Maxwilili for standing up, informing and mobilizing under such risky circumstances, particularly because at that time only Chiefs had the power to do things, but they did it. Another man that belongs to the list of our war heroes is one PLAN fighter by the name of Patrick Lungada, also known as the "magician". It was alleged that Lungada could turn himself into a certain bird called epumumu. This breed of bird was almost extinct because the Boers started shooting them down, saying that Lungada could be one of the birds. Many of us believed this meth, but realized after the OnguluOmbashe attack that Lungada was just an ordinary man, and not a "ghost" as previously alleged. It was however not unusual for PLAN fighters to be labelled as Ghosts, but in reality it all comes down to the tactics that they had acquired during their trainings, footsteps were followed which appeared to come to a standstill, as though their owners had simply vanished into thin air.

In 1969 I moved to Windhoek and I became a full-fledged SWAPO member. I even became a member of SWAPO Women's Council, recruited by comrade Hileni Namalambo, Martha Porta who recently passed on, and Lucia Hamutenya. The membership for the SWAPO women's Council, which was formed in 1972, was very big by then. There were the likes of Bella Kupito, Idda Hoffman, Ouma Shikwambi,

Esther Shikongo, Margaret Moses and many others. Martha Porta, Lucia Hamutenya and a few others later went into exile while some of us remained inside the country, under the leadership of comrade Tjongarero who was mostly at the headquarters in Windhoek.

In 1977, we went to address a rally in Oshakati. The delegation consisted of Tjongarero, Tauno Hatuiikulipi, Hendrik Witbooi, Nambinga, and Marco Hausiku. We had our big flags and we convened our meeting. The Boers just waited until we were done with our rally, then we heard the voice of Mr Nghixulifwa, a teacher at Jonken, shouting at Tauno saying, "Tauno Hwatiikulipi! Those things you are doing are bad". Tauno responded, "Nghixulifwa my former teacher at Jonken! We can assure you that time will come!" I think somehow Nghixulifwa got embarrassed and thought it over, then he told us to leave the place. In his embarrassment he saved us a beating from the KOEVOETS who were being organized to attack us. We were further advised to cross the Namutoni before 6pm, and that we should not overnight in the place as we had done the night before. The previous night we had taken accommodation in Oshakati, at the ELCIN Church. After the rally, Nghixulifwa ordered that we be provided with fuel so that we could leave Ovamboland immediately, so we did. On our way back to Windhoek, we ran into a number of Boers who attempted to provoke us. For our drivers we had Silas Emvula, Gabriel Iithe, and Shikongo Nuunyang. The Boers drove in a funny way by overtaking us and getting back to the left side in front of us at a close range so we could bump into their vehicles. They did this all the way from Oshivelo to Otjiwarongo. Lucky enough we did not bump into any of their cars, God only knows what they had in store for us should this have happened. In Otjiwarongo, comrade Shileka was so furious that he confronted the Boers. He wanted to fight them but we stopped him because our mission in Ovamboland had been accomplished. From there the Boers left us and we proceeded to Windhoek.

During that same year of 1977, we organized another rally in Ondangwa. Unfortunately we were not so lucky this time. The rally had many tragedies, including a number of children being lost. Those that made it out with one of their shoes had been very lucky. They just waited for us to start our meeting, then they encircled us with a rope and released gas into the crowd, then they started hitting the people. The crowd was quite big as we had listeners who had travelled from Ongandjela, Uukwambi and Ohangwena. There was a lot of confusion. There wasn't even time to look at which car you came with, people simply jumped into whatever car was available. Some got into cars from Oshakati while they were from Ohangwena, and some jumped into cars from Oshikango while they were from Ongandjela and so on. Some people escaped but others, including Sam Shivute were arrested. Lucky enough no one was killed and we managed to find our way back to Windhoek.

It was at times like this that our leaders played a big role because they encouraged and motivated us to persist and persuade the dream for Freedom. One leader who we kept in contact with for such motivations was Maxwilili, who although was under house arrest at the time, remained psychologically active with the SWAPO movement.

Towards 1978, the war was gaining momentum and people were being tortured every day. The attacks increased and intensified to such an extent that some of the people captured during such attacks were executed, including the son of Set Linyoteni who was decapitated. By this time, we also now had to fight an extended war with the Hereroes. If you ran into a group of Hereroes on your own, and could not respond to them in their language, they could kill you. Unfortunately, not many Ovambo speaking people could speak Otjiherero. The South Africans had managed to create tribalism between the ovambo speaking people and the ovahereroes, but there remained a handful of Hereroes that supported SWAPO, such as Immanuel Ngatjizeko, Charles Tjienda, Philip Keriye, Tate Tjirimuye and Tate Kuaihe, a pastor then. Nambinga and Marco had to collect them from their homes as they were being attacked by fellow Heheroes of the DTA party. Following the death of Linyoteni's son, people got angry and the fighting between the Ovambo and Hereroes intensified. The Hereroes had the support of the Omakakunyas (SWATUF) and armed police force, all against the ovambo tribe who fought back with pangas, and sticks. I remember a group of Ovabandja people who left the compound, in which we stayed to go and buy some pangas in Grootfontein. This was because most of the white shop owners would not sell the pangas to us, because they knew what we wanted to use them for. The Hereroes had the habit of attacking during the night, so we would often be on high alert during that time. Some people died, others were disabled during these clashes. We had patrols at the roads leading into ovambo location and interviewed all those entering the location to make sure that they were truly Ovambo. We were afraid that Hereroes might pretend to be Ovambos arriving from their holidays in Ovamboland. We asked them questions of typical ovambo traditions and practices, and if their answers did not fail them, their accent would. We wanted to protect our people from the enemy, and this had to be done thoroughly. The clashes got bitter and we had to relocate SWAPO supporters, including some Hereroes to Ondjambo (Ovambo location).

It was also at this time that Clemance Kapuo was shot dead. During his burial, some Boers were tasked to climb on towers inside the ELCIN church; they plotted someone who pretended to be an Ovambo to throw stones at the crowd of Hereroes as they were taking Kapuo's body to the burial place in Okahanja; it was an act by the Boers to intensify the tension between the two groups, of course. When the Hereroes returned from the burial, they were not at peace with us at all. We heard gunshots and most of our people got injured, and that was how the Kapuo war started.

Myself, I worked as part of the detective team, whose job was to safeguard others. There was a time that they broke my arms, and I now have metals in both of them. The finger on one of my hand was also broken. It was on the 16th June, 1985 when we held a meeting at the Clemence Kapuo playground, which also happened to be the day of Inter-government, the middle government of Moses Katjuongua and others. We had our meeting with our lawyers, Anton Lubowski and Hartmut Ruppel, as well as our leader Hendrik Witbooi, our fearless Chief who fought with us all the way. Others

who attended are the likes of Moses Tjongarero, Nambinga and Marco Hausiku, who were also our SWAPO leaders. At this time, I myself served as a detective and leader of the SWAPO Women Council at the same time. I remember 15th June was on a Sunday, and all the churches got together, namely the ELCIN church, the Roman Catholic Church, Methodist Church, and the Evangelist Church, for a day of prayer, seeing that the next day we were to hold a very big meeting. Somehow the Boers picked up on this information and arranged for a reinforcement of Makakunyas from Ovamboland. This was mainly because KOEVOET operated from the north, and would only come to Windhoek on request.

The Makakunyas were organized and then they made their way to the venue of our meeting. Because we were so many, the church service was held in an open area. Someone came to warn us about the Boers' plan to attack us, and as the detectives, we immediately informed our head, Jeremiah Nambinga, and intern, he informed Pastor Ngeno Nakamela, who was conducting the church service. Upon receiving the message, Pastor Nakamela loudly announced, "South Africa! If there is something that you want to do, please do it now. You should not come here and beat these innocent people. We came here to pray. Do not wait long, just bomb us right away." He said all this in the presence of everybody, including Neil. For some reason the Boers did not attack us that day. After our church meeting ended, we all went home, just to find our streets filled with Boers (Makakunyas) who were swearing at us. We did not respond to their insults.

The next day we gathered for our meeting as arranged. It was addressed by comrade Tjongarero, Hendrik Witbooi, Anton Lubowski and Nico Bessinger who was also a member of the SWAPO Executive Committee. During the meeting, the Boers kept intimidating us with planes flying around the area. We encouraged one another not to be scared but proceed with the meeting. Around 17h00, our meeting came to an end, and then we all raised our flags to go to Nicky Ikela's house where we used to hold braais. While we were on our way to Nicky's house, the KOEVOET met us by Jan Jonker School. They encircled us against the fence, then they started attacking us with knobkerries and newly bought axes and hoe handles. Some of our people ran away but some were not able to. I and another boy turned around and faced KOEVOET. I then asked them why they were beating us and what it was that we had done to them, so they responded that it was me they were looking for. I am sure nobody identified me to them.

I was lucky because I had a petrol bomb and matches in my handbag. My dear, we meant to fight the Boers. We could not be caught like cowards, it was better to injure even just a single person from their side. Anyway, when I turned, a man hit me on my side, I think he wanted to hit me over the head but I moved. To tell you the truth, I fell. They threw a yellow bomb at us which blinded us. The bomb was so yellow that even your vomit came out yellow. They were beating me up so hard that the only way I could save my life was to pretend that I was dead. As I lay pretending to be dead, one of them came over to me and said to the other, "This filthy woman is dead, you should

now stab it with a knife in the ass”. Luckily they did not search my handbag, otherwise I would have died. That day I saw a miracle that is why I love God so much. The night before, I had a dream. I dreamed that I broke two of my ribs, and in reality, I ended up with both my arms broken. I had even told the people at the meeting about my dream. While I was laying down there, I saw a light from above. It felt as though someone was trying to lift me up but I could not see anybody, just the light, and despite the fact that both my arms were broken, I managed to rise up and made my way to Adrof Kaluvi’s house. When I got there, I found Kaluvi and Absalom Nghifitikeko standing outside. I ran straight past them and went to hide in the toilet. Both Kaluvi and Nghifitikeko served as Prison wardens at the time, but we knew that they were part of us. He also used to provide us with some information.

One of the Makakunyas followed me into the toilet but did not see me because I was standing up against the wall behind the toilet door. He just went to drag another person from one of the other toilets. By that time, more Makakunyas had reached Kaluvi’s house. They called for me to come out, and when I did not, they came in and dragged me outside. They wanted to beat me but Absalom intervened and told them that there is no way that he was going to allow them to beat me up in his yard, or else a fight would start, reasoning that he was just a man like them. They eventually left me alone. I was still laying down when I saw my arms swelling up, but I was not aware at this point that they were broken. Absalom offered to take me to the hospital, and I agreed on the condition that we would first pass by my house to find out what had transpired since the Makakunyas went in that direction.

They had beaten people up, and threw stones into the houses. They also threw a stone into a house where a certain woman by the name of Fiina was with her twin babies. The stone flew across the twins who were lying on the bed and landed right next to one of them. I was then taken to the hospital, just to discover that the Boers had made arrangements with the doctor was to treated me. They made a big issue out of the fact that I was requesting medical attention while wearing SWAPO attires. The doctor looked at me and said, “Jah, that’s how you will continue suffering due to the democracy that you are fighting for when you are even powerless.” This

agitated me so I said to him, “Jah, *jy praat kak*”, meaning you are talking shit. There no longer seemed to be any hope left for me at that point. I was expecting death, thus I told him nonsense. I told him that when we get independence, we will no longer need him because we will have our own black doctors. He replied that I was also talking nonsense, and then he left me. He instructed a certain man who also used to collaborate with Boers to take me away. Anyway, to cut a long story short, the doctor ended-up treating me in the end.

But the *getz* that were placed on my arms were very complicated. I believe it was done intentionally in order for my arms to rot and be amputated. Some time passed and I was re-admitted into the hospital. The second day of my admission, Katjiongua came in to interview me. I did not listen to him; instead I chased him away because it was because of his inter-governmental meeting that I was beaten up. He tried to

convince me saying now that I was injured they could help me, but I told him to leave me alone saying that I did not need any help from the inter-government. I was mistreated at the hospital but fortunately some of the nurses like Hileni Nambinga were our people. I remember that there was a Kakunya admitted during my stay at the hospital. He had been beaten by SWAPO members in retaliation. When I was asked to move from the hospital bed, I refused to move out, telling them that I would not move out unless they would also tell the Kakunya to move out of his bed since we were both under the same circumstances, but Marco, Nambinga and the nurses advised me to move out as there was a possibility for me to be injected with the wrong medication. During my misfortune, people like Pastor Dumeni, Tate Sheyavali and Tate Ngula came from Ovamboland to support me. Other people who were also beaten were Meme Taimi (Ice-cream) Joseph, Meme Christophina Nghitewamata, and the brother

to Meme Esther Shikomba. We were all severely injured.

I then went back home and the comrades organized a caretaker, Sofia Kakonda, to assist me in my daily routine, and the comrades were always there to give me moral support. My arms became rotten and the doctor told me, with great excitement I must say, to prepare myself for the amputation process, but the comrades refused for me to have it done. There was even a plan to smuggle me to Swakopmund to my sister-in-law, Tekkla Kodi, who was married to the late Kambwa, so that she could take care of me at home. I was in constant pain and my fingers started turning blue. Nambinga conducted Bishop Kauluma who was in Luanda at the time contacting the confirmations. Nambinga called to ask for advice regarding my health. The Bishop advised Nambinga to take me to Dr. Abrahams, the husband to Otilie Abrahams, at the Roman Catholic Hospital. Bishop promised that he would make all the necessary arrangements with Dr. Abrahams himself. Nambinga took me to Dr. Abrahams and Dr. Abrahams wrote us a referral letter to take to the Catholic hospital. At the hospital I was taken to the theater and I was operated on by Dr. Nelson. He inserted metals into my arms but he did not do it properly, maybe because he was operating on me as an enemy. The operation was very expensive and was fully paid by Bishop Kauluma. I was nearly kidnapped out of the Roman Catholic Hospital where I was together with a PLAN fighter known as John Imene (John Tuhadeleni). This is a fighter who really suffered. You can get his full story from Meme Rosallia Tuhadeleni. The Boers wanted to sneak me out of the hospital to have me killed, Nekondo and Nel to be specific. The Boers simply wanted to get rid of the leaders in SWAPO at that time. There was even a rule at the time that, if more than 20 people were found gathering they should be shot. So what we did is come up with a plan of carrying Bibles whenever we gathered. If we spotted the Boers approaching, we immediately picked up the Bibles and started saying things like, "John, Chapter 2 verse. . . . ." just for them to think we were busy with Church staff. Of course we were betrayed at times. I recall a one Maria Kamupikarara, and we normally held meetings at her house. She was having a love affair with one of the Makakunyas, a Tswana man who was also a Member of Parliament. One day we held a meeting at her house as we usually did and

it happened that her boyfriend was there. She took us to the garage for the meeting, while her boyfriend listened to our deliberation from another room. We being the SWAPO detectives that we were eventually discovered that this man was in the house. We were truly detectives trained by God, we did not get any training but we were intelligent.

We, the Women Council were also lucky because the SWAPO men were overprotective with us. They prevented us from having affairs with the enemy and as you know, the enemy mostly used women to get information. So the male comrades used to monitor us during night time pretending to be looking for information at night. They would just come and knock at your bedroom and then come inside. Mostly they monitored those who were single.

One day following one of our meetings, we rushed ahead of Maria and found her lover comfortably sited watching TV. We knew him, so we greeted him and asked where Maria was. He said he did not find her home but the children informed him that she had gone out for a meeting. Moments later, Maria arrived and to her surprise, there we were. Then she went, “Oh! My boss has caught me”. She confessed that the man was her boyfriend, and that we should not think that she has been sharing SWAPO information. She came about this confession all by herself. Of course we did not believe her. We later found out that the man had been present in the house during many of our meetings listening in. We left her and continued with our work.

We continued going for meetings to Ovamboland and Luderitz together with comrade Ithete our driver, Ida Hoffman and comrade Magnaem Hangula. I was the one who introduced the SWAPO Women’s Council at Oranjemund during a mobilization visit to the town. There I met people like Ezekiel Kalenga who organized women, including Linnea Shaetonhodi to meet with me so I could introduce them into the Council in 1984. One day we went to Ovamboland, there was a situation with the children crossing the border into Angola. The situation was quite critical because there were spies trying to kill those who wanted to go into exile. Some children were even killed at Odibo after an arrangement to send them over the border through Oshigambo.

We later started sending the children to the border under the supervision and transport by Shikongo Nuunyang, in collaboration with PLAN fighters. As for us women, our role was mainly mobilization. We addressed Onehale School where we met with the teachers and told them to encourage the children to be serious with school and that if there were those interested in crossing the border, we would arrange for them to cross when it was safe to do so. We also addressed nurses at Oshikuku where people were suffering due to Mupekaka’s Makakunya. There we mobilized the Makakunya to put more effort in treating our people especially the wounded PLAN fighters.

## Nekongo, Max

[Northern Namibia; 17 February 2007]

*Born in Northern Namibia in 1947, Max Nekongo completed his primary school at Onayena Junior School before moving to Windhoek in 1962 where he worked as a bus driver. He left for exile in 1974 and joined the liberation movement, SWAPO. While in exile he was sent for military training in the Soviet Union where he trained in infantry and artillery. Upon return to Angola he was given the rank of Platoon Commander and was involved in several battles against the occupation forces. He was among a group of SWAPO combatants who were dispatched to Namibia in order to wage the liberation war inside the country. His group engaged the South African forces on many occasions from the encounters where he got wounded but managed to return to Angola. In 1999 Nekongo was among the several heroes who were awarded a medal at Omugulugombashe.*

I was born at Onamungolo in Ohangwena Region in 1947. I was baptized at Epembe synagogue by priest Thomas Nakanyala. In 1959 I moved to Oniipa at Oniihwa village. It was where I attended my grade one. Despite having been enrolled for primary school, I clearly did not understand the importance of primary school; I was in between school and our cattle post. I was never promoted to the next grade as I kept repeating the grades. I was however among the first group to attend Onayena Junior School. It is where I completed my standard five (5), currently grade seven (7). In our days, once you complete standard five, you were required to join Okahola, meaning one was qualified to become a teacher. I did not join Okahola because I was a slow learner; I opted to go to Windhoek.

It was in 1962 when I migrated to Windhoek, and mind you I did not have a permit to enter the South so I had to come up with a plan that would eventually guarantee me a pass. This was done in a format of an invitation letter. Well I got one from one man in Ondangwa. During my visit I looked for a temporary job, and I was lucky to be employed in a supermarket. From my first salary I bought myself a bicycle to the tune of R40.

While in Windhoek, I did not face many problems because I didn't work for the farms. The only thing that I didn't like was the tight restrictions in the city. One needed permission in whatever you do, and this is what forced me to look for another job. In 1971 I joined the railway school to be trained on how to drive buses. I completed my training in 1971 and I became a qualified bus driver. I was employed by the *Bantu Bustisers* as a driver.

I joined politics in 1964. I was recruited by Andimba ya Toivo. And in June 1974 I went into exile together with John Kanandjebo, Erasy Nangolo, Shiliva sha Endjala and Lucia. On the day we left we pretended to be going on a tour to Walvisbay, meanwhile we knew we were on our way to exile. We used the Walvis Bay trip to acquire a permit. We went via Oshikango border post in the night. In the morning we walked to Onamakunde and it was where we met the group of Philemon Malima, Kaire Mbuende, Iindongo and Thomas Nashongo, coming from Otjimbingwe. We joined them to Huambo with Kalela's bus.

In Ondjiva we met Kandindima, who was just released from an underground jail in Angola. He served as SWAPO representative to receive and direct people from Namibia. It was he who directed us to Huambo and referred us to a church management for basic assistance.

We were heading for Kasosa. He had to catch a train, but we were picked up by a Portuguese truck full of soldiers and blood stains. It took us to the border to cross the river. On the other side of the border we were accommodated in a certain man's

house for the night and the next morning we continued walking, we were told that on our way we were going to be airlifted by a plane that will take us to Lusaka.

Meanwhile this was just rumours in Angola, saying that we will get a plane to take us where Sam Nujoma was. We kept walking but to no avail. At points we crossed the river and started exchanging our clothes for food because of hunger. We were a large group I think comprising of about 900 people. After crossing the river we were told to walk until Okarabo in Zambia the plane would be waiting for us.

None of us knew the way to Lusaka, we were just walking for the sake of longing for freedom, and we were determined. It was a long journey and some people had to throw away their belongings because they were tired. We were such a united group, we stuck together and we never wanted to leave any one behind. There was an incident whereby Thomas Nashongo was tired and wanted to pull out. We noticed that he was missing and we went back to look for him, but he decided not to go further.

However our aim of going into exile differed from the group of Ongwediva College of Education that those of Windhoek, whose aim was to receive better education. At least they knew the true meaning of education not like us, for us our purpose was to go collect guns and return home to fight the colonial regime in our country.

There was this river at the border of Zambia which could not be crossed at night, we had to stay overnight at the river banks until the elders came and greeted us in the morning. Actually one did not understand what the elders spoke to the river, they would shout words in their vernacular language, we did not understand but I assumed they were asking for permission for us to be able to cross the river.

We crossed with the canoe that was operated by six Mabone from Ombalantu, who claimed to have known how to sail a canoe but in a nutshell he knew nothing. People started falling off the canoe, Kanandjebo was first to fall and later we all fell, we nearly drowned but we were saved by the reeds. Ya Kanandjebo lost his watch and shoes in the process.

Many of the people went as couples to exile, but the relationship went sour on the journey due to the hardship, some even brought babysitters but all these went down the drain. There were those who brought foldable chairs and beds but they were all abandoned on the way because of the long and bitter journey. It took us two months to reach Kalabo.

In Kalabo we found comrades Maxton Mutongolume, Kafita, Kakwambi and others. There was food shortage at the time we arrived in Yuka. We were also not used to commands and orders, so people would go and buy food for themselves, although it was prohibited. They were going to restricted areas, but with time the commanders put us under control.

We had people like the Namalambos who went with different purposes from us; although we came together they later separated from the group. However their disappearance brought fear amongst our commanders who had to go and look for them, thinking they were maybe jailed. This was also the main reason why we were moved from Yuka to Oshatotwa. We were the first group to occupy Oshatotwa. We found commanders such as Mc Namara, Cde Haiduwa, Cde Nande Shafombabi, Tate Nambahu and the others.

It was the very same commanders that trained us. They took good care of us. Some even went out of their way to hunt for elephants and giraffes so that we could eat. Luckily the commanders had the authority to hunt from the Zambian government.

I enjoyed the training very much, they taught us how to kill a person, how to crawl and still capture a person, how to survive without food as well as how to kill a buck because we were told that on the way from Zambia to Katima one must survive on bucks as there was no food or water. We were also taught how to search for water from the tree holes and ground roots.

Well, there was a rumour circulated by the group of Moongo and the rest that the commanders were corrupt and they went to hunt just to feed themselves while people were starving; there is absolutely no truth in that statement. Moongo is talking nonsense and I never saw him in Oshatotwa as he claimed, he was in Mboloma.

However our revolution was never easy, we had contradictions like that of Moongo. And as I told you earlier people went with different agendas and aims. Some went for personal agendas and we knew them; they were the very same people who left us in exile, some were married in foreign countries while their relatives believe they had died in exile.

While in Oshatotwa, I was promoted to platoon Commander under Meme Pendukeni Iithana, who was the head of the detachment, we were together in the same detachment with the likes of Kanadjembo, James Aula and Eddy Amukongo. Kanadjembo and Amukongo were assigned to logistic.

After the training we were sent to the Soviet Union; we were a group of 75. We boarded a plane in Tanzania to Yemen, where we stayed overnight. We were prepared by Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba who was our representative in Tanzania; he told us that that he was sending us for training to acquire weapons to be able to join our comrades in the war zone.

The training was 14 months, and was more advanced than the one we first received, and each day we were updated on daily war situations of various countries. I should also state that most of the Russians that we found there were spies who had worked as pastors in Namibia, and we only learned after the training that they could speak

our language. We were shocked to hear them speak Oshiwambo on the last day of our training, I recall one said: “*Omuwete nee eshi....?*”

Some of us were embarrassed when we thought of the insults we said to them earlier when we came, thinking they didn't understand Oshiwambo. It was one of the colonels who told us that they were spies in the country monitoring the Boers behaviours and tactics so that they could use them for training. While in Namibia they were operating as priests, but back home they were colonels.

In Russia we found the group of Nicky Nashandi, Ben Ulenga, Dr. Kalumbi Shangula and Shoombe. Thus the group was divided into two division that of infantry and artillery.

I was trained as an instructor for Artillery GB- it is a gun that shoots up to 12 kilometers. We used to count components in the sky using aiming circles, deflection and barometers.

It was unfortunate that after the training, we did not use the acquired knowledge, because when we went back to the war zone there were no weapons/guns that we were trained for. It was pure guerrilla warfare.

The Russians trained us in solidarity; there was no jealousy or any reservation or what so ever. We were trained together with the people of ANC, Mugabe's people, Mozambicans, Angolans, people of Nkomo and people from Guinea Bissau. Namibians were the most disciplined and we won target shooting competitions every time.

We completed the training in 1975, and we went to Tanzania, then to Huambo in Angola. This is where we found UNITA and we were not armed. At that time UNITA and SWAPO were no longer in good terms, the relationship had gone sour. We found another group rounded up in the jungle by UNITA. The group consisted of the likes of Mbulunganaga, Hauliyondjaba, Nakada, Shikololo, Haiduwa, Lipenda and others. The group however joined us at a later stage, with a huge amount of weapons they confiscated from UNITA. We merged and established Cassinga.

The powerful group with guns proceeded further to areas in southern Angola, such as Efitu, Eheke, Ohamunime and Onalumono. The commanders were assigned as follows; Commander Zulu was for Efitu, Mbulunganaga was for Ohamunime, Hauliyondjaba was in Eheke, Kapuleko was for Onalumono. I became a platoon commander under commander Zulu. I was responsible for the north east region while Kambwa ka Shilongo was in Otofima. When the war gained momentum in 1976, I was then promoted to detachment commander and sent inside the country.

I thought many battles such as that of Onaimbungu, Otokote, Onamwandi up to Ohakafiya, were under my supervision. My group and Kambwa's merged later when the battles got bitter. At that time Denga Ndaitwah was in Onamishe while Mkolokolo wa Dishena was at Lingida. Martin Shali was at Omwandi wa Shikongo. Kukuva Kembele and Kalunga Kondjafa were in Oheyonge. All these people were detachment commanders and war was very stiff.

We used to assist one another; for instance if we heard Shali's area was under attack then we would deploy our troops. UNITA was always attacking our troops

and the general public. This was where most of our people got injured by landmines. It was even dangerous to drink from the wells because UNITA used to plant bombs at the entrance of the wells. It was a challenging situation which nearly demoralized our soldiers.

We fought the battles against UNITA in collaboration with FPLA. I was the commander in charge for both SWAPO and FPLA during the battle. We went from Uukwangali wa Hanyangha to Okafima via Oshihedi.

We were a group of 99 soldiers. On our way we found cattle slaughtered for zhota – youth league for UNITA and we captured people to prevent them from alerting UNITA's troops before we got there. The battle started at 07h00 and ended at 08h30; this was a funny battle which we both fought with guns and our hands. I was shot in the battle.

At Omatope, an elderly man stopped us and requested to see the commander of the group. I went to him and he asked if I was not scared of where I was heading to. I admitted and he instructed me to pick up some fresh leaves from certain tree, place them on my chest and point my gun to the chest till it touches the leaves. I refused and I told him I did not do such things. It turned out that he knew what sort of a place we were going to and how big the camp was.

We finally reached the camp and it was massive. There was a witch doctor that used to take care of UNITA injured soldiers. We engulfed the camp upon our arrival. Our plan was to trap them in the camp, but it was unfortunate that some people whom we captured and detained on our way managed to escape while we were sleeping and alerted UNITA. This was some time in 1976. Well the battle was tough and it ended long hours of killing one another. The civilians collaborated with UNITA. I lost four soldiers in the battle, but UNITA lost more soldiers than us, because we used machine guns.

Thus that was not the toughest battle I experienced; there was again the battle of Onaibungu water point. Our engineer was Kambala Nashandi, and we destroyed it. It was the only place with potable water. The taps were located at boundaries of different areas; there were no houses nearby and as such only soldiers (Boers) used that water. The tap was near my camp and as such it posed a threat to my people; that was the reason we had to destroy it.

We could drink dirty water from natural sources such as ponds and earth dams and in some cases the water was covered in algae, but we had no choice. We had to drink. We also wanted the Boers to drink in the dirty water as we do. We destroyed it in April, 1976. We killed the Boers that day too, while I lost one of my soldiers who was shot in the chest and died on the spot.

In 1977 Kakongo was sent off to Namibia with a group of gentlemen on a mission to look for a group of people who got lost and disappeared in Oushimba (South) including Kanisius. My destination was Otavi, with a group of 112 people; but unfortunately the situation did not permit me to get there. We split around Okankolo

area with comrades like Andrew Iitamba and Nakampala taking the Oshigambo route. Nakampala later died at Oshigambo where he was shot on 12 June 1977.

As a soldier, our mission was just to get inside Namibia, get the enemy defeated and liberate our country. We were empowered by the knowledge of fighting and killing them. However, our enemies also viewed us as enemies because they were prepared to attack us. So in the war it was just a win-win situation, today you kill your enemy and tomorrow you lose your comrade to the enemy. This did not demoralize us though, we continued fighting.

Well in Otavi we went as spies to look for information and to assess the situation. At that time SWAPO had informed us that there was no longer money and our determination was that if we found anything we needed, such as the Boers shoes or uniform, we would make a plan to get them.

We spent a month in Omutele, and during my stay in the area, there was never a day that passed by without clashing with our enemies; each and every day we were shooting at one another.

It was amazing to cross this area; we went to the side of Omuthiya via Omahenene and Omena. From there I came to Mr. Lihuhua Nampala at Omundunga and from there the next destination was Oluundje then Ontana.

At that time we were no longer 112 as it was in the beginning, we were only 24, as it was not possible to take the whole troupe. We were escorted by some men via Okashana Ka Benny. There was a cattle post that shocked us in Okashana. The whole time we thought it was the enemy camp site. We were together with Peter Ilonga, Erastus Negonga, Shipuluvi and Mazambane.

Erastus and Ilonga were responsible for landmines, but Ilonga was problematic because he could just plant landmines without being instructed. If he remained behind alone, and hears the sound of the Boers' war trucks, he would just plant a landmine, and just before you know it, you would just hear an explosion. That was Ilonga. We nicknamed him *broken heart*.

After we left the cattle post, little did we know that the Boers were following us. I guess Shipuluvi was eating Outushi, when the Boers shot him. We just heard a gunshot. We gathered and counted the group just to note we were only 23. We sent someone to follow but he only found his brains on the ground while the Boers had taken his body with them.

The next morning I had sent Mazambane and another comrade to get the land mines planted behind, and immediately after they packed the J&D and tried to run, the Boers followed and attacked them. They also started firing and Mazambane got injured on the leg, they captured him alive. While listening to radio that very same day in the afternoon, I heard him speak on Radio; he confessed that he was with the Shikongo group and that the rest of the group was at Onalusheshete.

We later met with the group of Shikuma; they were 20 while we were 22, so as to maintain the supply and smooth control, and it was easy to control a smaller group. We had to send some comrades back to Angola.

One day as we were busy making arrangements we saw a civilian Boeing flying low on top of a wild berry tree that grew on top of the anthill and it flew back. I guess it tipped off the Boers that we were in Oshalongo.

The Boers attacked us twice and after the fight eased, we walked in a small jungle heading to Nangolo Shimbongo's place. On our way, John Pandeni who was my Deputy Commander, told me that one of the comrades was injured, unfortunately the injured person was not part of our group, he was a Boer and when I realized it was too late, the Boer also fired and the bullet was already in my eye, my comrades also shot him.

This was terrible and painful, but I did not fall. I felt the pain and this was the third time we clashed with the Boers in a course of one day. It was terrible to the point that our people got scattered. The others left but Pandeni remained behind with me I tried to convince him to go but he would not leave me alone.

He wanted my big gun (AK). Now we were just arguing. he took the AK47 and left his Makarov, I told him that he couldn't leave me without any gun and I said to him, "If you are bothering me I will shoot you," Actually I was scared to be captured alive. He and another comrade took me and hid me in the bush; they tied me with a piece of cloth from my uniform and used it to stop the blood. in the afternoon I was given a medical treatment by Nanghonda from Shikuma's group.

I could not open my mouth and as a result I could also not eat. In the evening they carried me in stretcher but I did not want to, especially in the night. At that time the Boers had already made fire at Omena, and they were busy patrolling the surrounding areas. It was not easy for us, because in order to proceed with our journey we had to pass at that fire place, I crossed the area on my own out of the stubbornness.

The next day I was given a donkey by a certain local man, the Boers followed us till where I was given a donkey, it was easy for them they just followed the donkeys track. They found us at Othimbika. The Boers followed us with horses and helicopters; they arrived while people were still cooking for us.

It happened that one of our comrades was also in those Mahangu fields, as sunset they started chasing the comrade who was hiding in the Mahangu field. Eventually they also saw us. I jumped off the donkey, and they shot it. We walked till Onelenda; this is where I was given an ox by Kaxumba. The donkey took me up the border of Namibia/Angola, where the Boers were waiting for me.

I went up to Uufukalelo near Omulunga and it was where I got a horse which took me to Onalumono. I received medical treatment in that area, and thereafter I left for Oshana with a Wazza. I found the late Dimo in Oshana and he sent me to Cassinga. From there I was destined to Lumbango. We were with Teresia Mweshihange who was taking care of me. However the car we were traveling in overturned but we had already left it before the accident.

As I tell this story I shiver. The struggle of our country was not easy, it was not like this things we watch on TV, Parliamentarians pointing fingers at one another. It scares me to hear nonsense on the chat show programme, where people feel at ease to say

whatever they want. We had soldiers who fought for this country, who died in the process but they were not buried; there was just no time to do so and today people are at peace, our heroes and heroines deserve respect.

As PLAN fighters, we did not know that one day we shall return home and enjoy the peace. We were not looking forward to the reward; we all had one common goal which was to attain the independence of our country. It is by the grace of God that we are still alive today. And we are grateful that our country is free.

Well there is one thing that I am not happy with, the freedom of confusion that is currently going on in the country. We do not know how it came about, and this is not how we expected things to be. I expected the country to have peace and order but now it is the other way around.

Today people are killing one another; there is no respect for elders, there is simply just no order in Namibia. You even find cases where people are pointing fingers and insulting an old man. It is sad to note that after a long battle of the hard worn freedom, there are still people entrusted with leadership responsibilities but they are colonizing others.

Well I am happy with what I am doing and I don't need a reward for what I did. Being recognized as a commander is enough. In 1999 I was rewarded a Heroes Medal at Omugulugombashe. In 2003 at the railway line construction, I was again given a gun by the President as a token of appreciation. He instructed Erikki Ghimtina to give me a gun that will remind me of my work in exile.

When Cassinga was attacked I was in Germany receiving medical attention, I was to be sent to Dessau for holiday as per instruction of the President, and just the day before Cassinga got attacked, so I called off the holiday and demanded to see my comrades in Angola who survived the attack. I flew to Luanda and I was met by our President and that of Angola, Augustinho Neto. Thank You.

## Niikondo, Andrew

*Andrew Niikondo was born on 15 January 1962 at Onantsi Village near Ondangwa in the Oshana region. His formal education ended at Standard 7 (Grade 9). He joined the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) at the age of 17. He, then, received his military training in the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre (Lubango) as an Artillerist in 1979. In the struggle, he became a crew commander and later a platoon commander, a Political Advisor to the Battalion Commissar, and a Battalion Chairperson of the SWAPO Youth League at the age of 18. In combat, he was renowned for his prowess in operating all Artillery pieces ranging from 82mm Mortars, 82mm B-10, and 76mm Anti-tank Cannon, the 122mm Grad-Procket launchers and even BM-21 Katyusha Multiple Rocket Launchers. Andrew Niikondo was widely recognised as one of the skilled artillerists in the People's Liberation Army of Namibia. He then served in the Namibian Defence Force (NDF) where he rose to the rank of a major. Currently, he is the Head of Department of Public Management and the Deputy Dean of the School of Business and Management at the Polytechnic of Namibia.*

I am Andrew Niikondo but previously, Andreas. During the struggle I was known by the combat name Lenin drawn from the V.I. Lenin, the leader of the Great October Revolution in Russia and the initiator of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics. In 1989, when I was provided with a SWAPO membership card and registered by the United Nations for repatriation to Namibia, I changed my name Andreas into English spelling and thus, it became Andrew. This was important because English was more dominant at that time and it was to be the official language in an independent Namibia.

I was born on 15 January 1962 at Onantsi village in the Oshana Region. In short I was just born in the area of Ondangwa, at the place where you currently find the Oluno Rehabilitation Centre. My mother is Julia Ananias Mwatala and my father is Tomas Jesaya Niikondo, now the late.

One thing that I cannot forget is that maybe at the age of two years I was taken from my parents to go and stay with my mother's auntie. Life was very difficult for me in terms of treatment and, that is one thing that I cannot forget. The notorious treatment I hated was that the grand auntie's husband could beat all of us in the house for no evident reasons. That taught me to understand the problem of women and children abuse. That was the reason why my Master's Degree was on Gender and Development. The topic of my Thesis was: Women and Child Abuse in Namibia: A case Study of Oshana and Oshikoto Regions.

I started with my primary school at Olukolo Primary School in Ondangwa area in 1970. I then had to finish with my higher primary education at Etambo Higher Primary School, a few kilometres south-southeast of Ondangwa in 1977. I continued with my junior secondary school at Oluno Secondary (boarding) School in 1978 where I spent one and a half years because in 1979 was the year that we left that school to go abroad.

The first thing was that 1978 was the time when Martti Ahtisaary, the Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General, came to Namibia for the implementation of the UN Resolution 435. People were organized by the political parties to go and meet him at Ondangwa Airport. We were in SWAPO colours and there were also some other parties like the DTA. Since SWAPO was banned we were then blocked by the South African Army and the South African Police from entering the Airport. Only DTA supporters were allowed to be present at the airport when the envoy's plane landed, giving the impression that DTA was the only party and that it was the strongest in the country. The alternative for us SWAPO supporters was to meet him at Oniipa (The Headquarters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in northern Namibia). At Oniipa there were many people hoisting SWAPO flags and we were singing revolutionary songs.

Then the problem came when we returned to the hostel. That night we really suffered and we did not sleep. The South African Army came to our hostels at night to beat us for being SWAPO supporters. They protested that SWAPO was in Oluno Secondary School. This became a difficult time for us as students.

That harassment created another spirit in our hearts which was only to leave Namibia and join the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) and SWAPO abroad so that we could go and come back with our weapons to fight the South African Defence Force in Namibia.

We were assisted to go to Angola by one of our teachers at Oluno Secondary School who had all the connections with PLAN combatants in the country. This teacher was Mr Hosea Mbandeka. There was a group of other colleagues who were our friends whom he had already assisted to leave. These include: Festus Shilongo, Emmanuel Ibandulwa, Mateus Katondoka, Philemon Usizi, Albanus Kuutondokwa and Leonard Kandombo (Tindoli). They were in the first group. When they wrote to us saying that they were in Angola and they were enjoying it, that inspired us to follow them. So, we organised ourselves in a group: I, Andrew Niikondo, John Amutsilu, Canicius Shoopala, Jesaya Akwaake and Theophelus Namupala. Apart from Andrew Niikondo who resigned from the Namibian Defence Force in 2003, all these colleagues are still in NDF.

We left Oluno Secondary School on 21st July 1979. That day we also attended a funeral of one business man who was allegedly killed by the PLAN combatants. His name was Tomas Kashenye at Onamagongwa. He was allegedly killed because he had some connections with the Boers. After the funeral Mr Mbandeka came to us and briefed us about the long journey. Then he took us somewhere in the area of Oniipa and we spent the night there. On the 22nd July we moved from Oniipa to another village called Onalulago. We also spent a night there. We met with the PLAN combatants. It was the first time to see them and to see the AK47. When I left Oluno Secondary School I was just in Standard 7 (currently Grade 9); there were five of us. We were then joined by guys whose names I cannot recollect now. We walked on foot from 22 July till 24 July 1979 day and night through thick forests. It was on the

24th July that we set our feet on foreign land. That was in Angola. That means on the 24th July 1979 at 6 o'clock in the morning when we crossed the border into Angola. I can remember very well that place was called Omwandi. Up to that time we had not encountered anything although at times we were told that the South Africans were following us. We could hear some gun shots here and there but we had not come face to face with anything.

I attributed this fortune to what happened to us while we were at Onalulago village. I also remember that there was an old woman to whom we were taken to by PLAN combatants and village elders. She gave us something and she said drink this- the five of us and then all of us drank that substance maybe a traditional herb and she said – nothing will happen to you on your way to Angola. It was true. Nothing happened to us. Even in battles nothing happened to all five of us. We all came back to Namibia safely.

In Angola at Omwandi we were joined by many people who were coming from different parts of the country. Some were from Ombandja. Now it had become a large group, approximately 300 people. The situation was not that good. The soldiers kept telling us that the situation was not that good and, that we were not to move around. We were not allowed to go out in the open. We were not supposed to wear anything white or bright. We had to stay under cover. The experience that I had there was very good and I enjoyed it. The only problem was that there was not enough food. We got our food supply from local villagers and, it was very difficult for the villagers to give us enough food. We stayed there for a week then proceeded to Namakunde which was about 70km away, on foot. We came from Ondangwa on foot to Namakunde and the distance was approximately 100km. When we arrived in Namakunde, there were trucks to pick us up and take us to Ondjiva, where we remained for some time.

Ondjiva was like a jail. Maybe it was a jail. One day we were told that the enemy had attacked our base in Odjiva. It was bombed. It also was the time of the death of Greenwell Matongo. Greenwell Matongo was a PLAN Commissar and was also killed by the enemy in a bomb blast. We had to stay longer in Angola in a prison building for our safety. We stayed there for three weeks or so, and then we were taken to the bush and handed over to SWAPO.

Later we were taken to one place called Mongwa. The place was somewhere between Ondjiva and Xagogo, deep in the bushes where we had our military bases. There we started with training. They trained us how to march and the basics of politics. There I learnt the difference between socialism and capitalism. We were informed about SWAPO's enemies in African, Europe and other places.

A Political Commissar played a major role in the base in terms of political education among new arrivals. However, life at that camp was not easy because we had to fetch water every morning from a distance. It was also scary because the enemy was sometimes reported to be laying ambushes around the wells. We used big drums to fetch water from a distance of around seven kilometres. We had to carry these drums on our shoulders. However, for me, I simply went there on some days because

at the age of 17 I was regarded as a pioneer. Pioneers were considered to be not strong enough to carry big drums of water. We were at that base for two weeks.

One morning SWAPO Volvo trucks came to take us from Mongwa to Lubango. The journey was very long and, it was very hot those days. The roads were also not as good as they are now. We arrived there at around 9 o'clock in the evening.

In Lubango we were selected for military training. Everyone 17 years old or younger were not supposed to go for that training. However, sometimes the criteria used to select people for military training were height and strength of the body. Since I was tall I was selected to go for the military training despite my age. We were taken immediately to Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre where PLAN combatants received military training. We were informed that we had become soldiers. I remember when I was at secondary school I was beaten up by the Boers. So what I had in my mind was to go and fight the people who had beaten me up. So to me everything was like a play. I didn't take it seriously. I liked my gun very much. However, in Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre we experienced a problem of food shortage. We only had one meal a day and we just slept in the open – there were no shelters.

Some people were selected for various military fields. The selection was done on the basis of the level of education attained. They said those standard 1, standard 2 and standard 3 and so on, up to Form 5 or Standard 10. Education at that time in Namibia was very bad hence, no one in our group had standard 10. In our group, a standard 7 leaver was the one who was most educated and thus, I was selected to be trained in the field of artillery guns. This selection was based on the requirements that I could read and write, and also because of my height. In addition, artilleries needed someone with mathematical background.

The training was to be officially inaugurated by President Sam Nujoma. I can remember quite vividly that day was the 13th anniversary of the 26th of August. Back home when I was at Oluno Secondary School, there were flyers that South African propagandists distributed in communities depicting that President Sam Nujoma had a tail. There were also some photos showing him with horns and therefore I was very keen to see him with Peter Nanyemba. When I heard that they were coming I said to myself I want to see for myself whether these people really had tails and horns.

While we were at the parade the President came in the company of Peter Nanyemba. I had some fear and I was also curious to know about them. To my surprise, the President was not that old. He was a gentleman. He was a very clean young guy. I could not believe my eyes. Both the President and Peter Nanyemba were very good people to look at. They looked immaculate in their military Uniforms. We were told about them first and, then the President addressed us. He told us about the situation in general. Then he said, "Okay now you are all soldiers and you have to go back home and fight. So tomorrow you should go back home and fight and conquer the Boers." Ohh we were all happy and that was good.

We started with the training from that day. The first session was a show of all weapons used by the PLAN combatants. On the second day of training we went on a trip where we were shown all the guns that SWAPO had.

I was trained as an artillerist. Our training started in August 1979 and ended in January 1980. The only problem was that I was still under age at that time. So it was not that easy. At the beginning of the training my friend, Erick Angula and I were all under aged. We were used as messengers because we were regarded to be too young for the training. We were deployed as messengers of Nkandi Nehova, who was an instructor at Tobias Hainyeko for 76mm Anti Tank Guns. We attended political classes and, sometimes classes in Skills in Small Arms and Artillery weapons. However, for two months, from August to September we did these in conjunction with our messengers' role of fetching water and food from the kitchen for instructors. I surprised many because I was capable of grasping things. I was outstanding in politics although I was young. Then I was very good with guns. As a result I was automatically promoted to a rank of gun layer of the 76mm Anti Tank Cannon (gun layer is the person who fires the artillery gun). I was given that position because I could do calculations involved especially in measuring distances and direction to the target. The 76mm Anti Tank Canon had a maximum range of 13km – 15km and it was effective in destroying enemy infantry and armoured targets such as tanks, armoured personnel carriers, pillboxes and underground camps.

At the end of the training I was either to remain as instructor at the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre for Politics or be given a command position to go for further training at Jumbo Training Centre, still in Lubango. There was another guy and his name was Philemon Namwiha who was shot in the plane during the war in DRC in 1998 who swapped with me. He remained at Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre and I was sent to the Jumbo Training Centre. At the age of 18 was promoted to be a Crew Commander of the 76mm Anti Tank Gun. I had 8 soldiers in my crew.

From Tobias Hainyeko we had to walk on foot throughout the night to Jumbo Training Centre which was around 70km southwest of Lubango. We were commanded by Commissar Ashiyana. It took us almost 18 hours to reach that place since it was a mountainous area and we had to go up the mountain the whole night. It was in the Jumbo Training Centre that we formed a formidable regular force called the First Mechanized Infantry Brigade of SWAPO.

The base was newly established in the forest of Eucalyptus trees. There were no shelters and our rooms were these trees and, it was raining from sunrise to sunset. It was raining all over for the whole day. We had nowhere to hide. It was bad and maybe it happened for about three weeks. Then we dug dug-outs, which we would cover with logs and sand. But when the rain came, it rained today and tomorrow. This means that the water would remain in sand for two days. On the third day it would leak onto your bed in the dug-out.

The situation improved with time. However, we only had to be at Jumbo Training Centre for 8 months participating in various military manoeuvres as a motorised

formation. We practiced with our T-34 Tanks, Armoured Personnel Carriers, Reconnaissance vehicles along with Infantry Battalions and Combat Support Units. The Brigade Commander was Niilo Taapopi Kambwa-kaShilongo, Chief of Staff was Ngoya Yakayala and Political Commissar was Kmati-kaNanguwo. There was a host of Soviet Military Advisors who worked with us day and night.

At the end of 1980 we changed from the place and went to the old place of Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre to continue again with intensive military training, preparing to participate in modern warfare. But the subsequent year, 1981 was a terrible year to us. This was a year of hunger. There was no food in PLAN and we suffered terribly. I recall that was the first time in my life that I had to spend 7 days without any food in my mouth and we were surviving only on water. SWAPO attempted to get us Mahangu grains from the Kunene Province in southern Angola. These were cooked and mixed with sand. This means that we used to eat the Mahangu with sand inside. This was a strategy to control our eating capacity. It was said that when a person was very hungry, sand should put in the food so that you can manage his or her eating speed because he or she would otherwise overeat and die. What was happening was that if you eat today then you will eat two days later at the same time. We were not allowed to go out of the camp to seek food and, even if we went, there was nothing out there. It was not easy to just go out of the camp and get anything because it was too dangerous. There was UNITA and even the FAPLA who could arrest or kill you. There were a lot of people who tried to leave the camps and they died. The only country that sent us food for the first time was Zimbabwe, followed by the Soviet Union and China. Therefore, some of us regard Robert Mugabe as our genuine friend because he was our friend when we were in trouble. Some countries and individuals can be seen as friends to us as “*Johnnycomelately*.” This means those people who just became our friends after 1989 when all the problems were over.

The people of Zimbabwe sent us bags of maize meal. The material of these bags were also good to make our under panties. We cut the empty maize meal bags nicely we seamed them with rubbers from the tubes of the car wheels instead of elastic and then we made our underwear. If there was no Robert Mugabe we would have died because some of our comrades had already had their throats swollen because of hunger. That is the reason why we are friends with Robert Mugabe up to now.

The famine ended at the beginning of 1982. Before that the enemy (South Africa) attacked Cahama, a small town in southern Angola, under military fortification of the Cuban and Angolan forces. Actually, South Africa launched this attack from Kunene Province of Angola which she had been occupying since 1980. We were commanded to go and participate in this battle. Our first group went. When our group was on the way we were stopped by the Cubans. They said we should be where we could defend the town from the rear.

We were positioned between Cahama and Lubango because the enemy wanted to attack Cahama from the North; on the southern side they had suffered from the Angolan artillery fire. South African jetfighters were flying day and night dropping

bombs all over. However, we did not have any direct encounter with the enemy till we returned to our positions at Lubango.

Subsequently, 1982 was a defensive year because the enemy was keen to destroy our bases. They launched an air raid on our Jumbo Training Centre, but failed to cause any serious damage. Hence, the whole year of 1982, we had food, but we had to change combat positions after every six months by digging new trenches, especially the communication trenches and gun pits for artillery mounts. The gun pits were very big – a radius of ten metres. We had to dig six of them including two ammunition stores. We combined this with intensive training preparing to attack the strong targets of the South African army such as the, Okalongo base, Ondangwa Airport and Sector Ten Military Base in Oshakati.

However, in 1983 the enemy also intensified her combat operations in southern Angola and went deeper, and as close as Cassinga, Matala, Techamutete and, the area called Kushava, collaborating with UNITA insurgents. It was after that intensive training in 1983 that our first group went to Okushava. When they went there they fought with UNITA. We also experienced some air threats because the South Africans had made attempts to carry out air attacks on us almost every week. Many of our comrades were sacrificed in the battle of Kushava.

In 1983 the war situation between us and South Africa changed. It was no longer a battle between SWAPO and South Africa. It was now the cold war in practice. South Africa; UNITA and the Makakunyas or the Southwest Africa Territorial Force and Koevoet formed one camp against our side which comprised PLAN; FAPLA and the Cuban Internationalist Forces and to some extent the Mkondowesizwe of the ANC. That is how we fought the war in the last days.

I would say that 1983 was the beginning of the battle of Cuito Cuanavale. That is how I would put it, because that was when we started with that battle and then we continued with it up to victory. South Africa together with UNITA and other international mercenaries had occupied southern and eastern Angola and they intended to expand even to the far north of the country. Therefore, the order from the Angolan government was that every soldier in Angola should be physically involved in battles against South African and UNITA invasions.

At the end of August 1983 we flew from Lubango to Malanje to block the enemy. We encountered the first enemy in Malanje because when we arrived there, the enemy and UNITA approached us. They also captured one main bridge of Missende. Our Battery was stationed at the Malanje Airport and aside from defending it we loaded Cuban MIG 23 jetfighters for missions to bomb the enemy at the bridge. In Malanje we met our ANC comrades in uniform for the first time.

By then the enemy wanted to capture Kwanza-Sul targeting our Health and Education Centre. This was the place where our children and Namibian refugees were in a camp. One evening while we were in Malanje, we received an immediate order from the office of the president Comrade Sam Nujoma that we should move as swift as possible to Kwanza- Sul because the enemy was planning to attack the settlement

of Namibian refugees. We acted promptly and we had to travel the whole night. We had some Soviet experts and they were sleeping and then they all were tired. While they were driving at night the car overturned and they got injured. They were four in the car and then the young one who was driving was sleeping because we started that journey from Maranje at 6 o'clock in the evening and we drove the whole night. In Kwanza-sul we joined FAPLA. We were then with FAPLA. We received new FAPLA uniforms and we dressed like them. We did not have uniforms by then.

We were really SWAPO. In SWAPO we had no proper uniforms. Sometimes we mixed uniforms with civilian clothes.

Then we engaged with the enemies that were coming to capture Kwanza-zul. These were UNITA and the Boers. They came from the South. That was really my first encounter with the enemy. We fought from 6 o'clock in the morning because that is the time when we were attacked. For the whole day we were just fighting. It was on the 5th of September 1983 when this happened at a small town called Calulo.

I estimated the strength of the enemy that day to be brigade or two reinforced battalions. We were only artillerists since our two infantry battalions; one was commanded by Shilunga shoMungandera and the other one by Mbogolo IyaMahata, left us behind for patrol mission. Our overall Artillery commanders during the attack were late John Haufiku Murenga (commander), Asser Nanyeni (assistant), Samuel Nanyeni (Commissar) and late Moses Hangula (Mao) Battery Commander.

In this attack our comrades, I think three of them, who were put on the bridge to guard it were all killed, and one was captured alive by the enemy. I think that they killed him because he had not been seen since then. Only one guy ran back to us successfully and he informed us what had happened.

Also a truck of 11 comrades from the side of the settlement who were coming to reinforce us fell in an enemy ambush and all ten occupants were killed and, the 82mm Mortar was captured. It was a disadvantage because for that matter we suffered because we did not have a mortar. The only mortar we had was coming from there with our commander Ngoya-yaKayala and Soviet experts. The enemy even started hitting us with our mortar.

The fight was difficult because we only had the 76mm Anti Tank Guns, ZGU-23 Anti Air Guns, commanded by late Awene yaKambwa, and ZGU-1 Anti Air Guns by Jesay Akwaake and Penda yaNdakolo. All these guns could not destroy the enemy shelling you with a Mortar from behind a crest or hill. When I received the instruction to fire, I was just hitting in a hill and the enemy was showering us with mortar shells. Other guns commanded by Jesay Keendjele and Kesho Oscar were also hitting the hill but to little effect. At the beginning the enemy had only 2 mortars, but now he had 3 mortars.

The battle continued the next day and then on the third day the enemy made a serious mistake by deciding to come forward towards us. Then on the last day we said okay let them come. All the other days there was just one kilometre between us when we were fighting. On that day we just said let them come closer and stupid

enough they came close. This time they were hitting us with even 60mm mortar and they were getting close. When they were close enough – we opened fire using both 76mm Anti Tank, ZGU-23 and ZGU-1 guns. Our fire was formidable. We destroyed them and so many of their soldiers were killed. At that time I was young at 21. In less than 15 minutes the battle was over. It was over. There was nothing left. There was no UNITA, no Boer and it was cleaned. The town was now free. There was no longer any enemy. Our reconnaissance commander Manyami gaLugambo went through the Calulo town and came back to us from the other side and said it was over. It is only a clean-up now.

As we followed the enemy we found graves as they buried their dead soldiers and oozes of blood in their tracks. We exhumed some bodies and we found that some of them were white soldiers. From this battle we fought more battles for six years. Our Brigade was commanded by Ngoya yaKayala, Kamati Kananguwo (Commissar) and Shikuma shaKamati (Chief of Staff) fought in the Kwanza-sul, Kwanza-Norte and Bie provinces. We shifted to Quemba at the time of the Battle of Cuito Cuanavare to block the enemy from the north until the cease fire agreement was signed in 1989 for the implementation of the United Nations Resolution 435.

After cease fire I was transferred to Luanda to look after all weapons from the battle fields. And in 1990 I was transferred to Lubango to transport the weapons by road to Namibia. I finally came back to Namibia on June 1991 when all the guns were brought home.

In 1992 I enrolled for Grade 12 because I was eager to continue with schooling. I registered for all 6 subjects at distance because by that time I was employed as a corporal in the Namibian Defence Force based in Osona Base. Some of my colleagues, John Mbenzi, Willem Amwaama, Elia Amabi, Julius Nampweya, Daniel Ngeno and Phillemon Shaamwapeni also enrolled with me. John Mbenzi, Amwaama and I managed to pass all six subjects as required and Mbenzi and I enrolled for a National Diploma in Public Management at UNAM in 1993. I completed this in 1995 and in 1998 I enrolled for a B-Tech Degree in Public management with the Technikon South Africa which I obtained in 2000. And it was in this year that I got a bursary from UNAM and was admitted at the University of the Western Cape for a Master's Degree in Public management Majored in Gender and Development. I defended my thesis at the University of Uppsala in Sweden in 2001 and graduated in 2002. I resigned from NDF in March 2003 and was employed in the Polytechnic of Namibia. In 2003, I was admitted in UNAM to do a doctorate in Politics and Public Administration. I completed this in 2007 and graduated in 2008.

Thanks.

# Nujoma, Sam Shafiishuna

[Windhoek; 26 July 2007]

*Dr Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma is regarded as the father of the Namibian modern politics. Since his childhood he experienced the wrath of the apartheid regime in Namibia. His first violent encounter with the apartheid regime was on the 10th December 1959 at the Old Location in Windhoek. He left Namibia in 1960 to go and petition at the United Nations but ended up setting up the liberation movement, SWAPO, in exile. In his quest to liberate Namibia, he worked tirelessly in mobilizing Namibians and the international community. Sam Nujoma was the President of SWAPO since its inception and the commander of its military wing, the Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), till its demobilisation at the dawn of independence in 1989. During his life in exile, Nujoma participated in various fora where the case of Namibia's independence was advanced. He represented Namibia at the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Frontline States, the AU and SADC meetings. He mobilised financial and material resources for SWAPO and its military wing to the extent that the movement was a formidable force while confronting the apartheid army during the 23 years of armed liberation struggle. Upon return to Namibia in 1989, Dr Sam Nujoma participated in the United Nations supervised election and led SWAPO to victory. He became the first President of Namibia in 1990 and served for three five year terms (1990 -2004). Upon completion of his third term, he was conferred the status of the Founding President and Father of the Namibian Nation.*

Thank you very much, I am Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma, I was born in Namibia which was still under the apartheid regime on the 12 May 1929. I grew up in the north. As a young boy, one started looking after the goats and other small livestock and you go and look after cattle at the cattle post. Sometimes you could go for 12 or 30 km a day. Looking after cattle was the most important thing to us those days; it was not school because school to us was a second priority. Then I attended school run by the Finnish Missionary Society in Okahao in the Ongandjela district in Omusati Region. I completed my Standard Six there.

In December 1946 I moved to Walvis Bay where I stayed with my aunt. It was just at the end of the Second World War and at that time in Walvis Bay a lot of soldiers were seen there and were not yet demobilized; warships were calling in Walvis Bay all the time. Well, there were stories told that people had seen a jackal, and they said Hitler used to spy, changing to some of these invisible things like a jackal. But this was just a normal jackal looking for food along the ocean. So, what was more important while I was in Walvis Bay is that I worked at a Norwegian whaling station. It used to go to shoot the whales in the south, and they had a station at Walvis Bay where they repaired their small boat that normally went and shot the whales and pulled them to the factory ship. Immediately after the war started, Norway was captured by Nazi' Hitler and the manager of the Norwegian whaling station used to be a freedom fighter. But of course I didn't know anything, and it got interesting because I worked for him for some time. So later on they changed and they went back.

But what was important by referring to him is that during the course of our struggle I went to Norway and we met. He was telling me that he was the leader of the guerrilla fighters against Hitler. "As I was appointed as a manager of Norwegian station at Walvis Bay, we just liberated ourselves in 1945." In fact, the King of Norway was in exile in Britain so this is how I got interested when they were telling stories. But one day when they were celebrating in Walvis Bay, I asked what the celebration was all about? They said their king was returning to Norway, that Norway was free after it had been occupied by Nazi Hitler.

Then in 1949, I moved to Windhoek because my aunt, the one I stayed with had died, so I came and stayed with my uncle. My uncle told me that even though I was interested to get employment I could still go to a night school. I joined the St Barnabas night school which was the only school which taught English in the old location. I worked during the day at the railway, starting at six o'clock in the morning, and knocked off at 1pm; and started again at 2pm until 6pm; then immediately after 6pm, I would run to the old location on my bicycle to take my books and go to school until 10 o'clock in the evening.

I continued with school and we learnt English through that way, because that was the only way to learn at the time. At that time Chief Hosea Kutako used to petition at the United Nations, he mandated Reverend Michael Scott to go there on behalf of the people of South West Africa and that SWA should be put under the UN trusteeship system with the purpose to develop the people of Namibia toward self-determination and national independence. Of course when the Boers received the mandate from the League of Nations it clearly stated that the mandatory power should promote the social well-being of the indigenous people and assist them to move toward self-determination. They however, imposed their policy of apartheid national discrimination even in education, denying us better education, employed Namibia's slavery contract labour system through the so called South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA). So the Boers were just interested in enriching themselves. But at least the Rev Michael Scott was a great man in South Africa, within the Anglican Church in Johannesburg. He learnt that the Boers had a strategy of going to the UN and to request the USA to appeal to the UN for incorporation of SWA into South Africa. That was really a danger. Rev Scott came to Seretse Khama in Bechuanaland where Chief Maharero's brother Samuel Maharero was. Rev Scott came there and talked to Maharero, and Maharero directed him that it was better for him to go to SWA and speak to Chief Hosea Kutako." Chief Kutako had agreed and mandated Rev Scott to go and petition but at that time even Britain voted against him not to be heard before the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly. So while we were going to the night school, we always read newspapers about the petitioning of Chief Kutako and by that time we were just youth. So we decided to do something because we also read that Tanganyika as a former mandated territory was moving toward self-determination; and so were Cameroon and Togoland which were under the British and French mandate; both were German colonies and then became

mandatory territories under the League of Nations and were placed under the UN trusteeship system.

Since Tanganyika is so close to us, we said why were we not doing anything? We started petitioning at that time in 1948, with the late Fanuel Kozonguizi who was studying in South Africa. At that time he was the only student who could go to study at the university in South Africa; others were not allowed. So he used to go and come back, and as youth, used to go to Chief Kutako, and we here in Namibia established the Ovambo Peoples Organisation (OPO). Its aim and objective were to put an end to the slavery contract system and to join Chief Kutako, Chief Witbooi and to write a petition to the UN demanding that SWA should be placed under UN trusteeship system. This is how we started politics.

Now, at that time the Boers were campaigning that in the municipality of Windhoek, the old location was very close to the white residential areas. Apparently we were to be moved to Katutura which was 5 km away from the white residential areas. The Boers decided that there must be a buffer zone and that was the policy of Verwoerd who was the Minister of Native Affairs under the Malan government. That time, the National Party had just come to power in 1948, so we joined Chief Kutako on his rejection for the removal of the residents of the old location to Katutura.

Well, the Old Location was much closer to the white residential areas because people could walk from Old Location to town. So the Boers said we must move. We all joined together and became a united force irrespective of whether you were an Ovambo, Herero or Nama-Damara. So it was where Moses Garoeb came in. With the OPO, Chief Kutako and the Damara Council we launched a petition and we objected the removal of the people from Old Location to Katutura. We hired a vehicle mounted with a microphone. For the first time our people heard their own languages being spoken on the microphone because they never heard it before. I was speaking in Oshiwambo, Willy Kaukwetu and Nathanael Mbaeva who are all late now were speaking in Otjherero and Moses Garueb in Damara-Nama. We were saying that nobody should move from the Old Location, nobody should go and drink at the beer hall, because they had a special beer hall and indigenous people were not allowed to make their own beer or even to buy whisky or beer, because once you were found you were arrested and put in prison. This was how apartheid policies were.

Our people definitely never went to the bar since that day. The Boers got so angry and on the 9th December 1959 very early in the morning the Chief Native Commissioner, Blynaut, and the mayor of the town, Mayor Snyman, and the SA Chief of Police, Major Robert, came around 08:30 to the Old Location and they invited the advisory Boardman who were responsible for the Owambo, Damara and Herero sections to a meeting. We went there to hear what they were saying. They said "We are angry because of the native broadcast that your natives should not go and drink beer there." They said that we were interfering with the affairs of the municipality. Then we said there was no municipality because we did not vote "It is you the whites who are imposing your apartheid policies on us." Then this Boer Major Robert said "You Bantu," For the

first time we heard that we were being referred to as Bantus, they used those words to insult black people in SA. Then he said “I want to tell you a story, if there is a wounded lion in the area don’t go there otherwise you will be hurt” and the Boardman asked, “What do you mean by that?” He said “We didn’t come here to negotiate with you but just to warn you that don’t prevent those people that want to come and drink at the beer hall.” The boycott was so effective that nobody ever went there. Apparently they were organising themselves the same day. They organized themselves to come and shoot the people at night when the bar is open, we knew and everybody was just quiet that night and I even went to Box Dry at Ovambo compound to address them as a member of OPO, that we should unite and work together. I went with Clemens Kapuo’s niece Kurundiro. We went together because she was just curious to see how I will be addressing the workers. When we got there it was about 8 o’clock and we found that the police were there. They were training about 100 of them. The workers who were members of OPO came and warned us that there might be danger because the Boers were already there. We saw them training with the 303 guns of the Second World War. So we had to go back as there might be trouble and especially when we were accompanied by a young girl. When we came back we took her to the uncle’s house the late Kapuo. We stayed there reading newspapers and talking about politics until we were later joined by Ngavirue. He was a social worker at the municipality in the Old Location. There was a house which was built as an example as to how the houses in Katutura would look like, so me and Kapuo took him half way continuously talking until we reached the place. Just when we entered the house the Boers started firing at the people who were walking near the municipality hall. This was how they killed the people on the 10th December 1959. After the uprising 12 people were killed and also more than that and more than 50 people were killed. I remember people who were walking from Ovitoto native reserve, from the Herero native reserve, as they were referred then, were also shot down on their way to the old location. After the uprising we were arrested. Late Nathaniel Mbaeva was deported to Omaheke; Jacob Kuhangwa who was the Secretary General of OPO was deported to Ovamboland. I was also supposed to be deported to Ovamboland, but I had a lawyer who was defending my case. Whenever I appeared before the court the magistrate said your case is withdrawn. Then I walk out. So as I am walking out then I am arrested by the police who will take me to the police station for the same charge that we are the ones who organised the uprising. But I had to pay 10 pounds all the time as a bail and it happened several times. Finally we had a meeting where we felt we were paying too much money to the Boers for my bail. So, the executive committee of OPO decided that I should leave the country. We worked together with Chief Kutako because there were our people in Botswana who would help me. The night of 29th February 1960 I travelled in the late Johannes Karuaihe’s truck that was going to Otjinene and then dropped me in Gobabis; from there I got into another car which dropped me at the Namibia/Botswana border, at around midnight.

I was dropped at the border by Stanley; he was a coloured man who lived in Bechuanaland very close to the border. Then I went through the border into Botswana and proceeded to Omakunda where some of our Herero people lived. They helped me and we travelled on horseback deep into Botswana because we were afraid that the Boers might be following me once they realised that I had disappeared. From there we went to Sehitwa where Chief Munjuku used to live. The Chief used to come and visit us in Windhoek, with the late Daniel Munamava, so I knew him very well. I went to Sehitwa and they helped me to get into a truck coming from Rundu and Shakawe ferrying the contract workers who were going to work in the mines in South Africa. I went together with Munamava to Francistown and we stayed in Francistown for two weeks trying to find a way to leave Botswana for Southern Rhodesia then Northern Rhodesia, then to Tanganyika. In Francistown I met some Malawians and at that time Malawi was still called Nyasaland. The Malawians were coming back from the mines and were being transported by plane from Francistown to Broken Hill, now Kabwe in Zambia.

By that time President Kaunda and the late President Dr Hastings Banda were in prison. They were fighting against the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The federation comprised of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The whites wanted to consolidate, so UNIP under the leadership of Dr Kaunda were fighting against the federation and in Nyasaland, the Nyasaland African Congress was also fighting against this federation I met these comrades, the workers going back to Nyasaland and I asked them how I could get where they were going which was Broken Hill. They told me it was quite difficult. I then asked them of any popular name in that part of Zambia and they said Chipinga. Then I drafted a telegram for them which they were to send back to me upon arrival in Broken Hill with the message that “Your uncle Chipinga is very ill and there is no hope.” When I went to the post office I got the telegram because I had given them some money to pay for it. With that telegram, I passed through the border at Plumtree between Botswana and Southern Rhodesia, but I had to plan how to pass through. In Francis town I went to a very expensive shop where I bought some pyjamas, sleepers, a gown and I bought a first class reserved single compartment, because that time if you had money you can travel

in a first reserved class which was reserved for Indians, coloureds or even blacks if you had the money. I also bought some South Africa newspapers like *The Cape Argus*, *Cape Times*, *Daily Mail*, *The Star* and some magazines. I was now pretending to be a teacher who had received this telegram about an uncle who is very ill in Broken Hill. In the train, I put on pyjamas and dressed according to my plan. When the conductor

came and knocked at the door, I just kept quiet. He knocked again and I just kept quiet. Finally he started knocking forcefully and then I pretended as if he woke me up and opened the door. I said, “What kind of a person are you? Why are you knocking at the door as though you are mad?” Then he looked at the newspapers, the expensive gown I had on and he thought that this was a different native. He then said, “I am sorry I am the immigration officer, I want to know whether you have a visa or a

permit to enter the Southern Rhodesia British colony?" I said, "No," and produced the telegram and an explanation that I was a teacher in Botswana and I had just received the telegram that my uncle was very ill in Broken Hill. The immigration officer just said, "Ok, next time you must have a visa." This is how I passed through.

My companion the late Daniel Munamava was in a different compartment and I was confident that I could defend my case. Daniel Munamava had a British passport because he used to travel to Namibia from Botswana. We arrived in Bulawayo and the next day I sent him to find out if there was any flight to Mbeya in Tanzania. He found out that there was a flight of Central African Airways flying from Bulawayo to Salisbury (now Harare) and then from there to Ndola and every Sunday there was a flight from East Africa Airways between Mbeya and Ndola. I quickly bought a ticket to go that way. Now it happened that when I came to Salisbury, where I had never been before, I did not even know where the African residential area was. But luckily there were some African women who were cleaners at the airport. I went and talked to them but they spoke in Ndebele. I had learnt a bit of *lapalapaor fanakalo* which is similar to Ndebele. I greeted them and I asked them whether they knew any political leaders in the area. They said "Yes, we know Mwamuka who owns a general store in Salisbury in the African section." Of course, there was apartheid exactly like in Namibia. I asked them to take me there, but they said they could only take me there at 10<sup>o</sup>clock to which I agreed and offered to pay them if they took me there. I hired a taxi to take me to Mwamuka's store and after they had showed me the place, the women went back to the airport.

I had £500 which OPO had provided and it was a lot of money at that time. When I went to Mwamuka's store I discovered that at one point he worked in South Africa and had married a South African woman. So he knew about South West Africa and I asked him whether there were some politicians he knew. He had a name of one political party the Southern Rhodesia Democratic Party. There was a president and a vice-president; I then went to meet the president and the vice president at High Field. We had a long talk on how to liberate Africa and even forgot that my plane from Salisbury to Ndola was to take off at 5 O'clock. I missed the plane and I had to come back to Mwamuka's store and stayed there overnight. The next day I took a plane to Ndola with the Central Africa Airways but when I arrived in Ndola the Eastern African Airways had already left. I had never been in Ndola before so I walked around the streets until I came to an Indian store where I found some young kids. I was afraid to talk to anybody because definitely they could identify me as a foreigner.

During that time the local people also carried passes which they called *Situpa*. I went and talked to the kids who were playing in the street. I bought them sweets and asked them where their teacher was. They indicated to me where the teachers houses were and they took me there. Unfortunately I did not find the teacher there, but only his wife and kids were present. I talked to them and they told me that he just went to the shop and was to be back in one hour. I walked around and came back later. Luckily the teacher was very friendly and he had just returned from Accra

Ghana where he was attending the Commonwealth Teacher's Association. By that time Ghana was already independent. We talked for a while and asked if there was a hotel where I could stay. That time no blacks were allowed to stay in hotels. He told me that there was a guest house built by the federation for those Africans who were supporting the Boers. President Kaunda was in prison because they were fighting against the federation but there were some Africans who were members of the liberal party, led by whites who were supporting the federation. I went ahead and booked myself in there for a week. I had to wait that long because there was only one flight per week from Ndola to Mbeya. I stayed there and during that time, I met with some UNIP members, we talked and they asked me how I got there. I related to them how I escaped from SWA. The UNIP leader President Kaunda was in prison in Salisbury because they were fighting against that federation.

I met Fines Bulawayo and he told me that I couldn't continue to stay there because the place was built for the puppets that were supporting the federation. He then took me to the township where I stayed with UNIP members like Daniel Chitunda who was the UNIP youth league leader. I met with Bulawayo throughout the night and we even went to Katanga, by that time Moise Tshombe was the president of Conakat party. At that time they were also fighting against the Belgian colonialist in the Congo. The people in the area speak one language, Lunda, being spoken in Katanga DRC and in the Copper Belt of Zambia; the language even extends to some parts of Angola. We went in and he spoke in the local language and we were allowed through the immigration and later came back. We waited for the next Sunday for the comrades of UNIP to book me in.

I only had a briefcase and a kit bag and when it was time to depart they brought my boarding pass. Just the moment when the plane was about to take off, they made the last announcement about that the East African Airways departure for Mbeya and all passengers invited to embark. I waited until the last moment and then presented my boarding pass at the immigration. They tried to ask me where my passport was and I told them that I was just going to Mbeya and would be returning to Broken Hill by road. In the meanwhile I was walking towards the aircraft. The air hostess saw me coming and they knew that one passenger was not there. The immigration officer was still trying to ask me about my passport, but I said my plane was about to leave, so I got into the aircraft. When we were about 100 km from our destination, they brought us immigration and customs forms to fill in. I filled in and by then I had assumed a new name of David Chipinga because I could not write my real name. I then read the back of the emigration form it was written that anybody who entered the British mandated territory of Tanganyika without a visa or permit will be fined 3000 East African Shilling or three months in prison or both. I got so scared and I tore it up and threw it in the toilet.

When we arrived at Mbeya airport, I was the only African there and I could see the British passengers moving. Again I remained behind and as I looked through the window I could see that there was no fence around the airport. I decided either to

run into the bush or to follow the British. I had all these newspapers, so I decided to follow them as soon as they went inside the building. There were some spectators who were watching the airplane landing. Some were Africans and Indian kids. I quickly changed direction and moved towards them. I sat there pretending to be reading newspapers but in reality planning on how to get my luggage. Luckily, one Indian man came who was a bus driver for the East African Airways, he came and asked me, "Are you David Chipinga?" I said, "Yes." He then said, "Your luggage is here, can I go and fetch them or will you fetch them yourself?" I said, "Please bring them." and he brought them. He asked me if I knew of any hotels around and I said I did not. He then offered to take me to Mbeya Hotel, because all the British I was travelling with were met by their friends and there was nobody in the bus. That was in March 1960, and Tanganyika was about to have self-government and finally independence in 1961. Because of this they could admit Africans in some hotels. I then booked myself in Mbeya Hotel as David Chipinga and luckily enough they gave me a bungalow outside the main building so I was happy that no one could see me.

In the evening I had to think of how I was going to find out where President Nyerere's party, the Tanganyika African National Union, was. I didn't want to ask anybody, I just followed the street until I came to an Indian restaurant and there were many kids playing very close to the African section of the location in the residential area of Mbeya. Again I bought some sweets for the kids and asked them whether they knew where the town office was. They said they knew and agreed to take me there. It was around 8 o'clock in the evening so they said I should come back the next day at 8 o'clock. The next day I came back and found the regional secretary of the Tanganyika African National Union by the name of Ali Chande. By that time, the late President Nyerere was in New York petitioning at the UN for the British to finally agree for Tanganyika to move towards self-determination. Ali Chande understood that it was not good to stay in that hotel because the British Intelligence would find out, as normally no Africans stayed in that hotel. I went and stayed with him. At this stage I had a fever, because as it was during the rainy season, and I was sometimes bitten by mosquitoes when travelling through Botswana. He took me to the Catholic Hospital where his wife was working as a nurse. She gave me an injection and I lay down for a while.

While I was resting Ali Chande went to the post office and on his way there he met a British Police Officer who was just patrolling and the police said to him that he was looking for somebody with the name of Sam Nujoma. You see, we had earlier gone to the post office to send a telegram to the UN for me requesting for an oral hearing. Now the British wanted to find out how I entered Mbeya because I was now using my real name Sam Nujoma. He then realised that the police were going to issue a warrant to search the houses of TANU members including his. He came and told me what the situation was and suggested that we leave. According to his plan he knew the British habits that at 1 O'clock they all go for lunch. We then hired a taxi from Mbeya to Njombe which is about 100 km away. When we arrived in Njombe and we went to

the TANU district headquarters and later to the district secretary's residence where we had some lunch.

They left me there having lunch and went to the office. The police came to the house and asked whether there was a strange person. These were the police special investigators. There were only youth between the age of 10 and 12 years at the house, and they said there was none. But I could see that there was a strange person who came in. Meanwhile as Ali Chande and the district secretary were going to the office, they also saw the police coming to the house. They became worried that the police may find out about my presence. They came back and the police left. They suggested that I should move somewhere else because the police may come back to search the house. They took me to the hospital where I was admitted. Luckily enough there was an African Doctor on duty and after they spoke to him in Kiswahili I was admitted. But he had to discharge me before the end of his shift on the next day because he had to be replaced by a white Doctor. Ali Chande came to fetch me and he hid me at the chief's court. The court was closed as it could only open when there were some proceedings. I stayed there until 12 o'clock midnight, and then we took a taxi from Njombe to Dar-es-salaam. We arrived in Dar es Salaam around 10 o'clock in the morning. This is how I escaped when I came to Dar es Salaam.

When we arrived in Dar es Salaam, President Nyerere had just arrived from New York where he filed a petition on the independence of Tanganyika. We had a long talk and President Nyerere organised accommodation for me. I stayed very close to his house and there after we organised how I could travel from Dar-es-salaam to Accra. By that time Mau-Mau freedom fighters in Kenya were still fighting making travel arrangements through Kenya quite difficult. President Nyerere was a member of the Legislative Council of Tanganyika and therefore, wrote me a letter just saying,  
*"To Whom It May Concern; Sam Nujoma want to petition at the UN, please assist him where you can."*

I bought a ticket from Dar-es-Salaam to Khartoum and back to Dar-es-salaam, because the British Overseas Airways Corporation could not take me because I didn't have a passport. If the Khartoum government (Sudanese) sent me back then they will not be blamed. I spent about two hours at Nairobi airport waiting to take another plane from Nairobi to Khartoum. By that time it was DC 6 aircraft and it was very slow. We took off around 9 O'clock and we arrived around 7 O'clock in the morning. We arrived in Khartoum and I was the only African in the aircraft. I let everybody to go first and I went to the immigration officer. I met an elderly man and he was quite a stout man. I told him that "uncle I am from SWA and I am going to the UN to petition about Namibia's independence," he asked me weather I had some money, I said yes and I showed him, then he said ok, I will book a hotel for you. I had also told that I was going to Ghana. He told me that there is only Air Liban which flew every Thursday from Khartoum to Accra via Lagos but that time Nigeria was not independent as well, and only became independence by the end of 1960. I gave him the money and he gave me a slip then I went to stay at the hotel in Khartoum. I contacted the Ghana

embassy and the Ambassador sent a telegram to Accra that there was a Sam Nujoma who was going to New York to petition. I stayed at the hotel and the Ambassador sent the message. On a Thursday I took an early Air Liban to Lagos. After landing in Lagos, I waited for a while for another flight to Accra.

I was well received in Accra, and coincidentally, at that time, there was a conference organised by President Kwame Nkrumah protesting against the French government's testing of the atomic bomb in the Sahara desert. At that time the Algerians were also still busy fighting for their freedom and they had their office in Accra. I met again with Oliver Tambo whom I had met in Dar-es-Salaam and he had just escaped from South Africa. Tambo was then the president of ANC and we met at that conference. I also met Fanuel Kozonguizi and Reverend Michael Scot, and we reminisced about the uprising and its aftermath. I was fortunate to have fresh information from home. From Accra I went to Liberia and during that time Ethiopia and Liberia had taken the South African apartheid regime to the International Court of Justice on behalf of the African independent states. The two countries were already members of the League of Nations, and they stated that the South African apartheid regime actually failed to implement the League of Nations mandate, in promoting the social wellbeing of the Namibian people. I met Erens Gross, the American lawyer who represented these two countries. We had a meeting and I gave him fresh information and then the Liberian government assisted me throughout, and I had at this time obtained travelling documents from Ghana, at least now I had documents to travel with. While I was in Accra the telegram message I had sent from Mbeya came back and I was granted the oral hearing before the Sub Committee of the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly. With that telegram I went to the American Embassy and they put my visa on the telegram. This is how I travelled to United States in order to speak at the UN.

In June 1960, I petitioned before the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly and later on I was joined by Rev Michael Scot, Mburumba Kerina who was also petitioning there, and the late Kozonguizi. Then we become stronger and I remained in New York waiting for the next General Assembly meeting in September together, with Kerina and Kozonguizi. After the General Assembly ended I returned to Dar-es-Salaam.

I was the first Namibian to be in Tanzania, I established the SWAPO office there and I started to write to the comrades at home for them to come. The first group that arrived came from Cape Town, and among them were the late Peter Mweshihange and late Solomon Mifima. We started the SWAPO office there in 1960 and by 1961 Tanzania was independent. As freedom fighters, we had our offices under the Pan-African Freedom Movement of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (PAFMECSA). The ANC were there, ZANU, ZAPU, and even UNIP, because by that time Zambia was not yet independent and only became independent in 1964. We stayed there and started to be joined by hundreds of SWAPO members. We then adopted a three front strategy. One of them being to politically mobilised people inside the country.

It was for this reason that in 1962 we sent back His Excellency comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba and the late Eliader Mwatale to politically mobilise our people inside the country. The United National Independent Party (UNIP) assisted them to come back but unfortunately they were arrested at Plumtree on the border between Zimbabwe and Botswana. They were imprisoned there for a month and later on we put pressure that the British arrested our people in Southern Rhodesia because it was their colony. Now with the Michael Scot, the Africa Bureau and other movements we mounted pressure until comrade Pohamba and his colleague were released after spending about three months in prison, in Bulawayo.

The whole incident is that from Plumtree they were brought to Bulawayo and later sent to South Africa, and from South Africa they were sent home to Namibia where they were arrested by Blignaut and put in prison here again for three months. Since they were from the north, comrade President Pohamba was sent to Uukwanyama and Eliader Mwatale was sent to Uukwambi. They went and mobilized the people that side. Meanwhile, the SWAPO office continued to receive more people who came to join us. Some of them were young and we sent them to school to various countries while some were sent for military training in Egypt and other counties. On 25 May 1963, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was formed in Addis Ababa and President Nyerere offered the premises where OAU Liberation Committee could operate from, because the first task for those founding fathers of African unity was to establish a committee for the liberation of the continent of Africa, popularly known as OAU Liberation Committee. President Nyerere offered a building, free of charge, where they could operate from and also offered military camps for us, in places like Kongwa and Nachingwea; and this was for all national movements, that is, WAPO, ANC, MPLA, ZANU and ZAPU. We were trained there by the Chinese.

Comrade Nyerere played a very important role in the liberation struggle of this continent. Although Tanzania achieved independence without waging an armed struggle President Nyerere was a very visionary leader. He said, "Look, you must mobilise your people and make sure that those colonialists are not enjoying life there, when they go to the night clubs you attack and ambush them, plant land mines so that they live an unhappy life and so that they can leave or compromise and negotiate with you." For example, the Boers here did not want to negotiate for our independence, not even with the UN. So this is how we trained our freedom fighters and also in Algeria because the first weapons we launched the armed struggle on the 26 August 1966, in Omugulu-gOmbashe, I brought them with the late Mifima by plane. Algeria had achieved independence at the end of 1962 so we went there and opened our office. We asked for weapons and they said, "Yes we have weapons here, and we can help you, but how do we get them to Namibia?" That was the problem.

We took two pepesha sub-machine guns, and two TT pistols. We bought four black hand bags and we put one sub-machine gun in each bag and one of the pistols in another bag and the other pistol and the spare magazines in the other bag. We flew from Algiers to Cairo but luckily during that time, they didn't have the modern

electronic devices for detecting weapons, otherwise we could have been caught. We arrived in Cairo and waited in transit before we took the United Arab Airline now Egypt Air from Cairo to Dar-es-salaam via Nairobi. When we stopped in Nairobi we asked the pilot if we could remain in the plane. And that's how we came to Dar-es-Salaam with our weapons. This was how we ferried them. Then our freedom fighters took the weapons from Tanzania to Zambia, travelling through the Caprivi region and all the way to Omugulu-gOmbashe where the first shot was fired. It was not easy because we were still surrounded by colonially occupied territories such as Angola and Botswana. Only Zambia was free at that time. We only had access from Zambia through the Caprivi.

When the coup occurred in Portugal in 1974, Angola and Mozambique become independent we had a long border from the Atlantic Ocean to Katima Mulilo on the Zambezi River. We deployed our freedom fighters along the border so that they could attack the Boers from the border. The enemy started to deploy more troops, and that was why they went to an extent of creating the South West Africa Territorial Force and Koevoet, because the border became too long for them to be able to guard it. After Angola's independence we started receiving support from President Augustine Neto who was also a very visionary and revolutionary leader; although South Africa had attacked Angola and even occupied southern parts of Angola, President Neto started receiving the support from Cuba when President Fidel Castro sent thousands of troops to help the MPLA and also SWAPO. While in Angola, President Neto gave us a training camp at Lumbango where we had our training headquarter and it was where we trained most of our freedom fighters. Cassinga was just a transit camp for new arrivals from Namibia, it was never a military training camp as the Boers tried to make everybody believe. This is how the struggle started, but it took us a long time until the Western contact Group got involved by realising that South Africa was not in a position to defeat the freedom fighters, either here in Namibia, or by helping UNITA in Angola to over throw the MPLA.

The Cuban troops, supported by SWAPO combatants and the Angolan army, were enough to defeat the enemy. You could also see from the amount of money South Africa spent on the war by building the military base at Grootfontein. That was quite a lot because that base is very Modern. Even in South Africa itself there is no air base like that one. It was built specifically for the jet fighters of the South African Air Force to fly to Ondangwa, Ruacana, Rundu and Mpacha, near Katima Mulilo. You could see how SA really got bankrupt, we didn't know at the time, otherwise we could just have put pressure on them through the armed struggle. After they were defeated at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale in 1988, the South Africans finally agreed to sign a ceasefire agreement with SWAPO. It took us about 23 years. So it was a long struggle, we went into exile as youth and come back grey bearded.

The role played by the Frontline States and Nigeria in support of SWAPO and other liberation movements was vital. The OAU also supported liberation movements by offering scholarships. Other countries in Europe, the Soviet Union and even the

United States, offered us a lot of scholarships. Many of our students studied there. So that was how it was, it was not easy. When we finally defeated them at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, the Boers decided to sign a ceasefire agreement with SWAPO and then the process started for Namibia's independence. We were very happy that the Boers finally agreed because we got an opportunity to go back home. Once we were at home, we started campaigning and it was tough. We spent so much money with the DTA and other small parties financially supported by the apartheid government. But when the first election was held in November 1989, SWAPO won the elections and the independence was achieved on 21 March 1990.

In fact we were supposed to achieve independence before Zimbabwe, but then the Reagan Administration, which took over in the United States, adopted the policy of so-called *constructive engagement towards the Boers*. The Boers were sent to the US to be trained in anti-insurgency. The Reagan administration supported the Boers and delayed our independence for 10 years. But then we grew stronger and our freedom fighters could penetrate inside the country. But all in all it was not easy.

No! Demoralisation was out of the question. Even though Zimbabwe gained independence while our independence was delayed, we were assisted militarily by the Soviet Union and the Cuban internationalist forces who also came to support the Angolan government. The Angolan government and its people suffered a lot but they never gave up. When the Boers occupied the Kunene Province and Cuando Cubango Region, the Angolans were literally refugees in their own country, but they stayed with us throughout. We owe gratitude to President Neto and there after President Dos Santos who continued to follow the same policy. In retrospect the only thing we didn't know was that the Boers were bankrupt at the time.

After achieving our political freedom, we now have to embark upon the second phase of the struggle which is economic independence. Political freedom without economic independence will be meaningless. That is why we have to adopt the policy of volunteering, like the construction of the railway line from Tsumeb to Oshikango. We do it voluntarily and off course, we do it by buying the material i.e. the rail itself and train, but it makes a great difference by adopting this policy.

We are happy that we are in a position to decide our own future and destiny. We have our national parliament, we can decide which major project to undertake, for example immediately after independence we decided to spend more money on infrastructure such as tarred roads. We constructed roads from Namibia to neighbouring countries. This include the Trans Kalahari highway which now links us to Botswana, Gauteng Province of SA and even Mpumalanga and then to Maputo. Thus we have now concluded the Walvis Bay- Maputo corridor, so it is now easy to travel by road. I see a lot of traffic through this road than going through the southern route. Then there is the Trans Caprivi highway which links us with Zambia, Zimbabwe, and even Lubumbashi, in the DRC, and this route, completes what we call the Walvis bay- Ndola – Lubumbashi corridor. We now have to complete the extension of the railway line to join the Angolan railway line.

The Angolans are going to build theirs from the port of Namib to Lubango, Matara, Shamtete then Ondjiva; and then the two railway lines will meet at Oshikango. We have now deepened the port of Walvis bay to the level of Cape Town, so that all the shipping lines that never called at the port like the Queen Elizabeth II passenger liner which used to travel from England directly to Cape Town can now stop at Walvis Bay and proceed to Ascension Island just to refuel; and from there it goes directly to Cape Town.

I think we have made some achievements but we still have to educate our youth, especially in the field of Information Technology, Science and Engineering. Unam now is planning to establish a faculty of engineering, but you know in the whole SADC region we need about 6000 engineers of various kinds, that is electrical engineers, quantity surveyors, marine biologist and architects. We need to train more because Namibia has a lot of minerals which will enable us to develop if we have our own trained and educated engineers. This will enable us to provide employment to each and every Namibian citizen. The resources we have are just massive, but it takes time and I think we are moving in the right direction. We just need to discourage our youth from engaging in alcohol and drug abuse.

It is possible to establish a government of Africa, but we have to strengthen the regional integration of regional governments like SADC by creating more infrastructure. You can't talk about United States of Africa without infrastructure such as roads and railways. The continent is just too big, but we have the resources to make that possible in our life time. Thank very much.

## Pohamba, Hifikepunye

[03 December 2008]

*On 21st March 2005, Hifikepunye Pohamba was inaugurated as the second President of Namibia, after Sam Nujoma. Hifikepunye Pohamba was born on 18th August 1935 at Okanghudi in the Ohangwena Region of Namibia, in what was then known as Ovamboland. He was educated at the Holy Cross Mission in Onamunama (1947–1954) and then, while in exile, took a Social and Political Studies course in the USSR. He devoted most of his adult life working for the independence of Namibia, during the liberation struggle. Pohamba is one of the 'old guards' of the South West African People's Organization the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) and the liberation struggle. He left Namibia to go into exile as early as 1961 after he was beaten by tribal authorities, who accused him of engaging in subversive activities. In 1962 he returned to Namibia to become a SWAPO organizer, but left the country again after he was placed in internal exile under house arrest in Ovamboland. In 1966 he and Nujoma returned to Namibia to challenge the colonial authorities' claim that they and others were 'self-exiled'; they were deported from the country within a day of their arrival. Throughout the exile period, Pohamba was known as one of Nujoma's most trusted colleagues and confidantes. Between 1964 and 1978, Pohamba represented SWAPO in East Africa, North Africa, and Zambia, and then served as the SWAPO Secretary of Finance between 1977 and 1989. In that year, along with about 40 000 exiles, he returned to Namibia to fight the election campaign for a Constituent Assembly, the prelude to an independent Namibia. During this period, he served as Head of Administration for the SWAPO election campaign. After independence, Pohamba held four cabinet positions: Minister of Home Affairs (1990–1995); Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources (1995–1998); Minister Without Portfolio (1998–2001); Minister of Lands, Resettlement,*

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*and Rehabilitation (2001–2005).*

You know this is a history of many years and when I asked you about the time, it was because I feel that this will take a week if I am to talk about the history of the struggle that I have seen and in which I have participated.

This is a history starting as far back as in 1960. In 1960 here in Namibia, it started in a form of workers protesting against the system that exploited workers under the South West African Native Labor Association (SWANLA). When we started, we wanted the contract system to be brought to an end; we wanted people to move freely in the country without carrying passes. We wanted, for example, the women in the rural areas to be able to visit the urban areas at any time they wanted. We wanted equality between all the human beings in this country; these were the first demands that we put-up as workers.

In 1959 when we started, we were lead by Sam Nujoma under the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO). Anything had to start at a certain place or stage of the country. At the same time, in the central region, there was South West Africa National Union (SWANU).

Then at the beginning of 1960, we realized that if the people of Ghana got their independence, why couldn't the people of Namibia get independence? So

we mobilized ourselves and changed the course or the form of the struggle from Regional to National hence the formation of SWAPO in April 1960. Comrade Sam Nujoma was elected as the leader of SWAPO party. The meeting took place right here in Windhoek but I was not here at that meeting, I was in Tsumeb that time. I should say that he was elected in absentia because he left the country in March, as we had sent him out of the country to the United Nations to go and speak on our behalf, about the treatment we were receiving from the whites who were ruling our country illegally.

It was because we felt that the United Nations should come and take over. So we said go and speak on our behalf. Then there in New York Nujoma met with Mburumba Kerima who had gone to the United States for studies and they joined hands; of course they had been colleagues before he went there. We sent a message telling Nujoma that he was the President of SWAPO after the transformation from OPO to SWAPO. Nujoma went on with the petitioning to the United Nations, while we were at home struggling. People were arrested and people were moved from one place to another.

In 1961 some of us decided to follow where Nujoma had gone and I must say that, when we are talking about the history of the struggle, one should not leave out the people who participated in the struggle. We had people like Chief Hosiah Kutako and Handrik Vitboy, the father of our comrade. We also have people like Tyapilo Hambamandela, Handimba Yatoivo-Yatoivo, who is still alive; Simon Haikungwa, Magwilili, Frank Abrahams, Ben Amadhila and many others.

I left the country in 1961 with two colleagues, but they are all late now. They were Frans Daniel Kuhela and Vilio Natanya Natembu. We travelled to East Africa; and Tanganyika was preparing for its independence during that time. The struggle of the people of Southern Rhodesia, which is Zimbabwe today, Northern Rhodesia which is now Zambia, and Nyasaland which is now Malawi, was on.

We went to Dar es Salaam in Tanganyika, and I recall that I arrived in Dar es Salaam on 9th December 1961 the day Tanganyika got its independence, and when I arrived in the capital city people were celebrating the coming of independence.

I met comrade Sam Nujoma for the first time in Dar es Salaam. We then opened an office in Dar es Salaam; but we already had an office in Windhoek. It was a building where there were freedom fighters from South Africa, namely ANC and PAC; from Zimbabwe there was ZAPU, but ZANU was not yet formed at by that time; Then from Angola there was MPLA, from Zambia UNIP; from Nyasaland there was Malawi Congress Party; from Kenya KANU and from Uganda there was UPC something like that.

At that time there was war going on in Belgian Congo (Congo Leopoldville) what is today called the Democratic Republic of Congo, because Lumumba had been killed just about a year before. They killed him soon after the proclamation of the independence of Congo in 1960.

The situation was very bad at that time especially because Moise Tshombe wanted or was getting ready to secede as he wanted to cede Katanga Province, which was part of the Belgian Congo from the rest of the country.

In Tanzania we had liberation movements under the umbrella of PAFMECSA which was headed by Mbiu Koinange, a Kenyan; as I said earlier, Kenya was still struggling for independence from British colonial rule.

Now there came a gap caused by the decision of SWAPO to direct me to follow the events inside the country, because in 1962, Nujoma wanted some people to come back home and Leondra Katame and myself volunteered to come back. So we came back after some difficulties, because we were arrested in Southern Rhodesia and put in jail where we spent, I think more than two months before we were deported to South Africa, where we were again arrested, and flown to Jan Smuts Airport. They arrested us and kept us under arrest for several hours after which they released us. We came back home to join Andimba Yatoivo, John Yaoto and many others. It was something to remember when our colleagues saw that we were back, and we told them that indeed we were in Tanganyika and that Tanganyika was already an independent country. You can imagine how many questions we were confronted with from these people; one wanted to know if people in Tanganyika really looked like us. The question was, “How come they got independence? Do they look like us? I said, “They look like us and there is no difference.” There was a lot of explanation to do to the people here. But it was a great thing.

Of course, I am now talking about my own history but I want to deviate from my history but there are some important things. Say for example when we arrived here we spent a week before we were arrested. We were arrested and we were kept in the jail where there is NDC, opposite Kenya House; that is where the jail used to be. But the interesting part and this is what I want to say about myself is that, as prisoners we used to come in to this State House to work; and we used to come and go through that gate over there, putting on shorts and shoes made of vehicle tyres. I am saying this because now I am in the State House, not as a prisoner, but now I am here as the President, and I never thought that, that was ever going to happen

The leaders of Africa led by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Modibo Keita of Mali, King Mohammed V of Morocco, Ahmed Sekou Toure of Guinea, and Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika, came together. Kwame Nkrumah used to say that the independence of Ghana was meaningless if the rest of the continent was not yet free. That was the first black African country that got independence through protracted political struggle, in 1957.

The earlier independent countries were Liberia and Ethiopia followed by Egypt; but when it came to really aspiration for independence where people had to fight for their independence, Ghana was the first one. Ghana was followed by, and I am not saying this in chronological order; Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, and then Congo which got its independence in 1960 and was immediately engulfed in civil war, and then other countries followed.

Some of the countries which became independent were Sierra Leone and Cameroon followed by others. In East Africa, after Tanganyika, Uganda got independence in October 1962 and then Kenya followed and got their independence in December 1963. People like Jomo Kenyatta were in jail at that time because of the Mau-mau war for the liberation of Kenya that had started in the 1950s. Obote became the Prime Minister of Uganda and then Kenyatta became the Prime Minister of Kenya.

In 1963 the leaders of Africa decided to form an Organization of African Unity, OAU. The aim and the objective that was to be fulfilled by the OAU was to liberate Africa; to assist the liberation movements by all means so that they could liberate Africa. Hence they put up the Liberation Committee in Dar es Salaam, under the OAU. President Nyerere made an offer that Tanzania was going to train freedom fighters; and a place called Kongwa was made available by the government for training freedom fighters from Angola, Namibia, South Africa, Rhodesia, Mozambique and Lesotho. Lesotho did not go there but the place was also open to them.

When I came back to Tanganyika in 1964, I had stayed for more than a year inside the country. I left my village on the 1st of March 1964 together with Simon Kaunkungwa (Muzee), my brother Hangoto Pohamba, who is now late, as he got sacrificed in the war, and other colleagues, because I knew the way from Ovamboland to the Tswanaland; you know that there was no Botswana but it was the Tswanaland. So we came to Kazungula, in northern Botswana on the Zambezi River.

At that time in Zambia they had self-government, but the British were still in control. So you had Kaunda as Prime Minister, and Simon Kapwepwe was the Minister of Home Affairs; the independence date for Zambia was set for the 24th October, so we had to spend almost two months at Kazungula.

The immigration in Northern Rhodesia did not want us there, but finally they let us pass through Northern Rhodesia, to enter Tanganyika. By the way, while we were there at Kazungula, Zanzibar and Tanganyika formed a union and they changed the name of the country, hence Tanzania, which means the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar. That is why we now know it as the United Republic of Tanzania. So we were no longer travelling to Tanganyika but we were now travelling to Tanzania.

When we finally arrived in Tanzania, I knew Dar es Salaam because I was there before, but Mzee Kaunkungwa and the others were new, so I was the leader and I was showing them around. When we got back to Tanzania we found that our colleagues in 1963, had been sent to be trained in Ghana and Egypt; China also offered training later on, and not at that time.

While we were in Botswana and in Francistown, a man who was in-charge for the Namibian Refugees and I must say for all freedom fighters from South Africa, Lesotho Mozambique and Angola was Metstome Joseph Ndongolome. That man played a big role, even at that time when we were at Kazungula; he was the man in charge and the British wanted to arrest him when he crossed the river they wanted to arrest him in the Tswanaland as he had some problems, I must say he was a wanted man.

Now let me go back to Dar es Salaam. When we got there the colleagues that we found there were Sam Nujoma and Peter Nanyemba; when I left Tanganyika Peter Nanyemba had not arrived, but when we went back we found that he was the man in charge of SWAPO operations. He was our chief representative and his deputy was Professor Peter Kashavivi.

I think you all know Peter Kashavivi; some people went to him and they think that he was just an academic man. No, he is a freedom fighter. Professor Kashavivi came to Dar es Salaam on his way back from West Africa where he had gone to school. That was in 1964, and Kongwa was in the hands of the liberation movements.

I spoke about the OAU having put up the Liberation Committee, which had its headquarters in Dar es Salaam; the Executive Secretary was Mr. George Magombe.

Many young people had arrived in big numbers in Tanganyika in 1962, 1963 and 1964, when we joined them. Many of them were sent to school.

Another person that I think his name should also come in, is Dr Godfree Hague Gengeb. When I came back from Tanganyika, after I was released from this prison here I met Hague and Nekela Kanenga in Tsumeb to where I was deported. They came to the railway station where I met them because from Windhoek we travelled by train to Grootfontein; then from Grootfontein we travelled by bus to Oshokango, where I was deported. My colleague Elia Mwatara was deported to Ukwambi-Ukwamngula because he was from Ukwambi area.

So for the first time I saw these young men; one tall and slim and the other one was short. These were Godfree Hague Genkob and Nekela Kanenga. They were young teachers and at that time they were teaching. At the same time I saw Henekela Haikungu Kalenga. Kalenga is no more with us, because he died in Zambia in a car accident. I went back to Tanganyika which is Tanzania now.

Now at the training, they were training people like Mzee Simon Kaukungwa...

The people we met on the train were telling us what was happening out there, because we were just coming out of the cells and we did not know what was going on outside. They told us that Mburumba Sherina had skipped from SWAPO and I was amazed and thought what could have been happening to SWAPO. I thought that people were just not comfortable, so they must have sent a message to the people in Tsumeb that they were going to pass through there on such and such a date. So that is how they came to meet us there.

I always joke with Hague about this. In the current leadership of SWAPO, he is one of the men that I knew before I met many of the people that I see here now; apart from Sam Nujoma and Yatoivo-Yatoivo; those were the people I had been with before I went out side.

So Mzee Kaukungwa, Dimo Wamambo, and Maxton Joseph were now training others because they had received some training. Kaukungwa, Maxton and others had gone to China; I think they had spent about two or three months doing very quick training and they became instructors.

The OAU also provided instructors. In that camp there was FRELIMO, and the commander of FRELIMO at that time was Machel, who later became the President of Mozambique; he was the commander of the Mozambican cadres. Then we had SWAPO and MPLA; then we had ZAPU and ZANU, but they had some problems and they had to be given different places. Some were in Morogoro (Mkumbo) and the others were somewhere in Mbeya (Chunya).

At that time we had Jacob Pohamba as Secretary General of the party. Then in Dar es Salam they decided that I should go to Northern Rhodesia to open the SWAPO office there, when Northern Rhodesia become independent under the name Zambia. When we were there we received a message that Brian Chibwaye who was leading a regional party called Capriviian African Union had been arrested. When he was arrested, young people such as Albert Misheck Nuyombo, who was Vice President of CANU, and Christian Muronda who was Secretary General at that time, sent messages to us. I must say that at that time the majority of the people in Caprivi did not know that they were part of South West Africa. People in this part of the country did not know that there was a place called Caprivi which was part of this country.

When we met, SWAPO was represented by Nujoma as the President, Jacob Pohamba as the Secretary General and I as the person who was going to be the leading person of our party in Zambia. CANU was represented by its Vice President Albert Misheck Muyongo and Christian Mulonda and I know there was also Mubiani, who is now late. We discussed issues and many people talked;

I always say that I was there, and I tell people that we only discussed the merger between SWAPO and CANU.

I was there, Sam Nujoma was there; Jacob Pohamba and Mishek Kalonga are no more, but they were there; Misheck Muyongo, who was also there is somewhere in Europe. I know that there are still people who want to know what happened in that meeting, so let them come and see me and I will tell them.

Some young people left Caprivi, and one of these young men was Richard Kaperwa, the late Kabajani Kaperwa. He was one of the young people I met there.

Now that Zambia had attained its independence, and it was close, I used to travel from Lusaka to Mabone to collect these people who were crossing the river from Caprivi and bring them to Lusaka. The late Grennwell Matongo was one of these, so they were young men.

When we merged we agreed that Muyongo was to be the chief representative and I become his deputy; that was after we signed the documents at the meeting. So we worked together, and although Muyongo was reluctant all along, there was no other way, and we had to work together. Young people continued to leave the country, and they were coming through Zambia. I think some of them had come earlier; people like Nahas Hangula, Nangolo Mbumba, Mauno Mbamba and this gentleman you see here whom you refer to as old man!

When we were in Lusaka, Zambia, a school came up called African American Institute; there was one that had been established earlier in Dar es Salaam and people

like Moses Chitendero went to Kurasini in Dar es Salaam, and Nahas Hangulias went to Nkumbi.

We were there as leaders to do the selection because we wanted the young people to go to school and we wanted the young people to go and train as soldiers. So we checked those who could go to school and those who could go for military training. People like Kabajani Kaperwa, Grennwell Matongo, and many others were selected to go for military training. There were others that were sent to Nkumbi International School. Nkumbi, like Kurasini in Dar e Salaam, was run by the Americans and were meant for young people from Southern Africa whose countries were fighting to liberate themselves.

The school was not just a school for Namibians, they had other students from different countries such as Angola, South Africa, and even Botswana so we had some of those young people studying.

Then in 1965, because Muyongo was not very positive as the chief representative, we thought it was not good and so we avoided telling him what was happening. Nanyemba was in Dar es Salaam and I was here, and we had people being trained in Kongwa Tanzania, and Nujoma had gone to Algeria and in Algeria he was given 2 guns and 2 pistols.

Then he travelled with those guns from Algeria to Dar es Salaam because security on planes was not strict during those days so he brought the guns to Dar es Salaam.

Now the situation in Zambia was not yet one hundred percent in the hands of the blacks when it came to the security, so we got some UNIP colleagues who were in the government. For example there was Steven Chikombe, who was a Deputy Foreign Minister if my memory serves me well. So Nanyemba brought the guns to Lusaka from Dar es Salaam and then I had this friend Steven Chikombe and then he took the guns in his house and then something happened.

The guns were for the people to go home, a group of people were selected to use the guns and one of them was John Nankudu, we have him here he is still alive but he is a Counselor now. We also had Simeon Shikungileni, Nakanda, Lukanda who was the husband of Ndayengelwa; he is late now but he saw the independence. We also had Kavela and Messak, there were six of them. We had only one two-bedroom house in Lusaka for these people, and this is where we lived; we did not want Muyongo to know about these people because his attitude was negative. He did not like the Caprivians to go, and he kind of instigated from Lusaka, so that some of the people from Kaprivi living in Lusaka rejected the idea. Then there were some young men like Kasuwo, they run away to Kenya and some of them come back to the struggle and I don't want to mention the names because some of them are here.

So Nanyemba brought these six cadres, and it was difficult to find accommodation for them in Lusaka, and we did not want them to come to the house where we were, after all it was a tiny house. So went to look for some other place in the villages around Lusaka and we got one, but it was difficult because at that particular time Zambia was facing a lot of difficulties economically.

That was in 1965, when Ian Smith of Rhodesia declared UDI in Zimbabwe on the 11th of November and the situation was very difficult. A land locked Zambia was having problems and they were no good roads from Zambia to Tanzania and there was no railway between the two countries. Ian Smith was better off because they had Forster in South Africa and they were working together very well.

Petrol was being rationed in Zambia; we were given coupons and we used to get only 4 gallons per car in a month. That was the time we decided to buy some bicycles because we could not manage our operations.

How were we supposed to get those people to the border? We could not get some more guns because they were six and we only had 2 big guns the pepesa and 2 pistols. So Nujoma ordered that we get them panga and axes and then tell them that they had to go and get weapons from the enemy, inside the country; and so Namyemba brought them into the country and we were now trying to buy them this and that.

We had to take these people, and Nanyemba drove these people and by that time he was the commander of SWALA – the South West Africa Liberation Army. There was no Namibia at that time because the name was not there.

Now the commander was Tobias Hainyeko, he was the man at Kongwa commanding these people, and he gave us these six people, then Namyemba brought them into my hands in Lusaka.

I said that the situation was tough and we had no money and the little money that the OAU Liberation Committee gave us could not cover all our expense. We were in a terrible situation because we had no transport because we had no fuel and we had only one car. At that time Nanyemba come with another car from Dar es Salaam and the situation was very difficult, but then finally we succeeded.

Nanyemba took the colleagues to western Zambia, and dropped them near the Kwandu river and then he came back. He told them that it was Nujoma's order that they should go and get the weapons from the enemy inside the country, and he gave them the two weapons. Those colleagues under Nankudu, were the people who came to make the history of Ongulungombashe.

They travelled, they come to see the leadership and that time the Boers did not know what was happening and then they saw people like Kakumba Kandola Elias Kandeleni and they went to see people like Lameck Iithete, and they went to see people like Issack Tsume – he is still there and he is an old man now. Issack lived in Kwarudiso; he took them to select an appropriate area and he took them to Omulumumbashe and that is where they used to train other people.

Many people went to train there. Elias Kabaleni, was an old man but they went for training. So they were training until they were detected because some of them were arrested.

There was a man called Castrol, Castrol was arrested and he threw the towel in because he was being used. He denies it because he is somewhere in Europe now, but he went to tell the Boers. Yatoivo-Yatoivo, Kakumba Kandola and Issak Tsumen and the others they used to give assistance to these freedom fighters.

On the 26th August 1966, the South Africans were brought there and the first battle started at Ongulungombashe. This man here the counselor now, John Nankudu, led these people from Dar es Salaam, to Kongwa to Ongulungombashe. It was not an easy task if you look at the distance, when they were dropped at Kanu River, they had to walk up to Ongulungombashe.

When I see some of the young people, talking, talking, talking I say they were lucky because many of them were not even born at the time. But this is how things were; it was a revolution carried over. But there are those who started it – John Nankudu was the man in the history of the armed liberation struggle of this country; it starts with Nankudu.

Some people were arrested and some people were killed at Ongulungombashe, and Nankudu can tell the story on that; and that led to the arrest of people like Yatoivo-Yatoivo, Elias Hadleni and many others in 1966.

That led to these people to head to Robben Island as a home for them where they spent lots of years.

When in July 1966, the International Court of Justice passed a judgment that was in a way in favor of South Africa, Peter Nanyemba and Peter Kachavivi made a wonderful statement that the war had started. It was a statement that made the world to know the situation in South West Africa, then. I am not quoting their exact words here, but they said something to the effect that the International Court of Justice, that we had trusted, had passed judgment in favor of South Africa, so we were now going to pass through rivers of blood towards our independence. That was said on 18th July; and on 26th August, 1966, what they had said, in a way was implemented.

So slowly the liberation movement and SWAPO in particular was receiving assistance from countries such as the Soviet Union, The People's Republic of China amongst others. The assistance was in the form of guns, as well as food. There was also assistance that was coming from the member states of the OAU through the Liberation Committee. Some of these countries which were not members of the OAU, also channeled guns for the liberation movements through the Liberation channelled, and the Liberation Committee was giving these guns to serious organizations such as SWAPO.

After the 26th of August, people started realizing that SWAPO was serious and we started getting some vehicles and we started getting some guns and other equipment. We also intensified the training of our people at Kongwa, in Tanzania. Time went by, and Zambia, I must say, as a country, played a very important role when it came to issues of our liberation.

In 1974, I speak, under correction, the Portuguese empire collapsed in Angola and Mozambique, and that opened the gates for the young people who were now coming from Namibia. We started putting-up training as well as civilian camps in Zambia; that is why we had Nyango. Here again I want to mention the name of Nahas Hangula; I called him the father of education. He is the one who put –up the first school in Zambia after he graduated from the University of Zambia. He worked very

hard, and he started with the children from Caprivi. He is now the Prime Minister. Nahas started the school for the children, I think between 1966 and 1969.

There is a comrade, Mama George, in Caprivi. She was among the first groups of refugees that we had, and that was before the collapse of the Portuguese rule in Angola there.

In 1974, many people came and we established these camps as I have said and SWAPO was now getting powerful, you get powerful when you have people and the people were coming. The assistance was also now coming slowly but surely. The Nordic countries, Sweden in particular, played a very big role in supporting us, not with guns but with food and transport.

They did not like the vehicles to go for war but it was no longer a secret, that the Jeeps that they gave us found their way to the soldiers; even the food that they gave us also went to the soldiers. They kept quiet and the Norwegians the Finns and the Danish started giving us assistance; but Sweden was number one.

Then we had a problem; what is now known as Shipanga rebellion, Shipanga and the youth, lead by Magwilili, revolted and the situation became really bad at that time. Nanyemba who was really a strategist and very clever, was handling that situation well, but it almost went out of hand; finally a solution was found. The Zambian Tanzanian governments assisted, because they too did not like the liberation of Namibia to be interrupted, so they assisted in bringing the situation under control; we had training taking place there and at the same time we had to take care of the women and children. People like Kapofi and other comrades were in the bush but Nogonga and many others were at the front.

At that time I was removed from Tanzania where I was the Chief Representative, and transferred to Zambia, where the school had opened at the United Nations Institute for Namibia, UNIN. Hague was appointed to be the Head of the Institute, so we had some of the young people going for the Institute and some going for military training.

The women and children were kept at the camp at Nyango and we had to bring Kapofi to administer those camps, because he was good in administration. We needed a soldier; he came to put the situation in the camps in order.

We were expecting attack by South Africa all the time, and our colleagues of ZANU and ZAPU were used to being attacked, not only in the camps outside Lusaka, but Lusaka used to be attacked in many ways, as well. We had the liberation centre in Lusaka, and it used to be attacked; it was attacked and destroyed by Smith, during the war.

Smith's jets used to come flying very low, along the Cairo Road in Lusaka. One of our students who were at the Institute, and are now in leadership, is Pendukeni Iitana. I think she was among the first students to be enrolled at the Institute under Comrade Hague; there were also other Namibians teaching there.

Then on 25 June 1975, Mozambique got her independence under Comrade Samora Machel; on the 11th November, 1975, Angola got her independence under the leadership of MPLA led by Dr. Augustinho Neto.

PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) activities were also conducted from Zambia and particularly the fights in the Caprivi Region. So our military activities at that time were conducted from Zambia and Zambia remained a very important operational zone for SWAPO. Then, while in Lusaka as the head of our operations there, Mr. Muyongo decided to get his CANU out of SWAPO. In other words CANU was initially a regional political organization.

They were now deciding to split from SWAPO and were saying they were fighting to liberate what they used to call Itenge. To them Caprivi was not a part and parcel of Namibia. They wanted to have an independent state of Itenge.

I remember one day when I addressed the people at the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN), I said to them you can have a province or a region called Itenge in that area but you cannot have either a Republic or a Kingdom of Itenge.

In other words Caprivi cannot be separated from the rest of the country. That we could not allow. So, Muyongo and the others even lost the favour from the Liberation Committee and from the OAU and indeed from the African Countries and particularly Zambia. At that time Zambia decided that Muyongo leave Zambia. Where he went I don't know exactly but the last time I heard about him it was that he went home.

Then after the departure of Muyongo and his people the struggle continued. These are some of the problems that we encountered when we were struggling.

## Shikongo, Dalius “Mbolondodo”

*Dalius Shikongo was born and raised at Ontananga village in the Oshikoto region. He was a former student of the Onayena Boy's School. He was inspired and encouraged to join politics by his two late teachers. In 1966 he joined SWAPO as a community mobiliser. Not long after he joined the SWAPO party, Shikongo decided to cross the border into Angola to exile together with his friends. Although he went into exile not knowing much about politics, Shikongo was determined to fight the Boers by all means, politically, psychologically as well as militarily. After military training in Russia Shikongo soon became PLAN commander. He played a big role during the attack of the Cassinga SWAPO refugee camp by the South African forces inside Angola. He is remembered for rescuing many lives during the horrific incident, especially women and children, by directing them as to which direction to run and hide. He was commanding left and right how people could escape from the enemy-fire.*

I joined politics in 1966, when was I still a student at Onayena Boy's School. I was politically influenced by my two teachers, Eino Hango and Asser Munakapa, they are both deceased. It was our teachers who told us that our country was under colonialism and it should be free from colonialism in order to be free.

They wanted us to understand the situation we were facing in the country. They also explained why we were educated under the Bantu Education. They cared a lot about our education, and these were some of the factors that made me join SWAPO to liberate the country.

It was very easy to join SWAPO; all you needed was to attend the meetings to become a member. We were given membership cards. As a SWAPO member we were given the task of mobilizing others to join the party. There were so many people who had given up. They were made to understand that we would not achieve our liberation through a struggle. It was in 1966 when I attended my first SWAPO rally, and the demonstration organized by John ya Otto and John Nangutuala. The rally took place in Ondangwa. With the two men in charge of arranging meetings, everything went on smoothly.

The other one held in 1969 was the best of all that I ever attended; it was also held in Ondangwa and was organized by Nangutuala and Otto. This meeting focused on mobilizing and sensitizing our people. It explained to people that SWAPO was a political organization which was representing the interests of all Namibians. The message of that meeting was very clear, and it was passed across. The meeting was successful. The Boers and the South African government were also present. They surrounded the gathering. At first they allowed our speakers to convey their messages, and when they realized that the meeting was becoming an eye opener for all our people, they disrupted it. They started harassing our people, beating them with sticks and Zambok. People were kicked and some were injured. They also arrested a number of people.

Since that violence, I decided to go to Walvis Bay to work on contract labour. In Walvis Bay SWAPO meetings continued. They went on from 1970 to 1974, and the

mastermind behind the meetings was the late Nathaniel Maxwilili. I lived next door to Maxwilili's house. Several meetings were held on the coast; some were disrupted by the Boers while others were successful. With Maxwilili by my side, my political knowledge grew even stronger. I remember the time the Boers arrested Maxwilili and he had to report at the police station every day. I was fortunate that I owned a vehicle at that time and I was able to drive him to the station every day.

Maxwilili was however not a people's person; he was hated by the Boers and even some blacks hated him. The blacks were warned not to speak to terrorist like him. He was also not accepted in the communities especially by whites; and black people who did not understand used just to stare at him, as the unwanted person. Apart from the responsibility of taking Maxwilili to the station every day, it was also my duty to invite and inform people in the compound if there was a meeting underway. I spoke to them one by one, and from door to door. However people were happy to hear the message. The only challenges I had were with those that were already politically poisoned by the South Africans.

In 1974, I crossed the border into exile; I wanted to join SWAPO abroad. The very same year that I left was the year that the Portuguese government fell, and a transitional government was being formed. I left the country in the company of my colleagues, the late Cleopas Shimbuli and two other ladies from Swakopmund. They were our girlfriends. When we took the decision of joining SWAPO abroad, we never had that much knowledge of crossing the border or politics, in general. I guess we were not mature enough about politics. Our main aim was to receive better education in exile and be mature enough to be able to fight the Boers by all means, politically, psychologically as well as militarily. Before living the country, we knew through the radio stations, what was happening, because Namibians in exile used to talk on the radio.

Well my journey to exile was simple and dramatic. When we came to my home village, my colleague Mbudhi was a married man but I was not. As I told you we came with our girlfriends, Cleo's girlfriend could not come with him because he was married. He had to go home to his wife and children. I took his girlfriend with to my village. We came up with the plan that we were on our way to a wedding with the two girls. The problem was that we had two cars and there was no driver to drive back the cars, we had to leave one car behind. We took Mbudhi's younger brother; he was not a good driver at that time but we just took a chance. Without fear we just hiked young boys with one of my younger brother to accompany us. We therefore did not tell them where exactly we were heading to. As soon as we reached the border, we jumped off with our suitcases and ordered them to drive back home. We did not care what was going to happen to them; but according to the message we received, they arrived home safely.

We crossed the border, with our two girls. We made use of the Portuguese taxi's which were there ready, waiting for people to arrive. We took the cab to Ondjiva, where we arrived during school holidays and we were fortunate to get accommodation in

class room at a school. While in Ondjiva, our next destination was to go to Zambia on our own without any official. We spent three days in Ondjiva waiting for the bus to pick us up. We knew the Angolans were going to help us, but the problem was the language barrier. If the Portuguese people came and told us that there was a bus leaving but it could take only a certain number of people, we had to count ourselves and decide which group should go first.

I remember that when we left we went through Oshamtete, Cassinga itself, because I knew I passed the place before; I came to know it was going to be our new settlement. We also passed many towns before we reached Lubango. From there we proceeded to Novalisaboa, which was the former capital for UNITA, where we stayed overnight. The next morning they organized a train which took us to the border of Angola and Congo. We spent almost two days in that area, and on the third day another bus was organized to take us to the northern part of Angola, which is on the border of Angola and Zambia. We thought the bus would return the next morning, again as usual, but this time it was gone and did not return. The next morning the Portuguese people gave us some biscuits, which were so hard that we gave them back; we were advised to take them as we were going to travel a long distance, but some took them.

That was the time we were told that it was the end of us being assisted with transport by the Angolan authorities. They gave the reasons that they had helped us enough, and they also had to help other countries. They told us that we had to try our best to get our directions, as there was about ten to twelve kilometers, to get to our destination. They left us in the middle of nowhere, in the real bush. There was not even a single house. Well, we did not fear because we were many. The only problem I had was that my girlfriend was carrying a big suitcase. I had to exchange bags with her. Her suitcase was heavy I could feel it. After four hours of footing we approached a village next to the Zambezi River. I was quite impressed in the way we walked in the jungle; we did not see any animal, which had been our biggest fear. We found this man near the river with a canoe and he tried to help us but he could only take two people at a time. You can imagine how many we were to be transported in a group of twos. He was just helping, but later in the evening some people started black mailing the old man. The water was deep and some of us who walked in the water, it came to my chest. As we braved the water and the long journey into Zambia, we finally reached our destination. We were welcomed by many leaders, such as Tate Kakwambi, Philip, Andreas Shipanga, Mzee Kaukungwa and others.

Since we were the first group to cross that river, the SWAPO people were not aware of it. We informed them and that was when they started organizing canoes for the other people came later. The late Kakwambi was there himself to see where people were being dropped. When we arrived we had no food, but we were fortunate to receive food from the SWAPO government; they brought us food and water. We had to create kitchens to prepare meals. However this was not our final destination, it was only a transition point.

Our final destination was Oshatotwa. The place was over crowded we found people putting up their tents. My group was taken to the second settlement not really far from the first one. I was appointed commander in charge of the second settlement. My settlement consisted of 50 people. It was at the settlement that we started drilling exercises. Sometime in October 1974, I was fortunate to be chosen among the group of hundred's to receive basic training. In January, 1975 we discovered cassava east of Angola. These people's land was small; it could not feed hundreds of soldiers, but as of March our leaders started to organize some people to bring us some food. As time went by, more people were coming from home. Those people were mostly coordinated and organized by David Shimwino. He played a role in coordinating with the PLAN combatants.

Men were trained to become soldiers, while women, children and elder people were taken to Zambia to join the rest.

As the number of people increased, people had to walk for about one hundred kilometers to collect food; It took them about three days to go and three days to return. Considering the distance, the people also had to eat. So they cooked food on their way and by the time they arrived back, there some people sleeping on hungry stomach because the food was not enough. In April another camp was organized to be started because the other camps were full. We were with Ponele ya Frans in my camp. Well, this was never an easy journey we had few people who died of hunger, while few died when they were crossing the river. I know of one from Ontananga.

He was an old school mate. Since our camp was only for trained people, we were later given the responsibility to go ahead toward the border of Angola and Namibia to meet

Dimo Hamambo and the others.

Several times we came to Namibia and monitored the situation. We attacked the Boers camp that was in Oukwanyama; it was the first time we attacked them and they were not expecting us to attack. We came by surprise. I was injured in the attack at the border when I was shot and the bullet went through my shoulder. I was bleeding heavily and I got weak, but my comrades attended to me on time. I was taken to Cassinga in 1976, and later transferred to Huambo at the Portuguese hospital, where I was treated.

Upon recovery I went to Cassinga but Comrade Dimo Hamambo didn't want me to go back to the front, he wanted me to train the newcomers who were coming from home. I became the commissar of the camp. After three months, I was sent for military training in the USSR. The group was comprised of 70 commanders, such as Zulu, Patrick Lungada, Philemon Malima and many others. The training was quite informative, it was both theory and practicals and it prepared us to be strong and brave, without any fear. The training lasted for ten months. In December 1977 we returned to Cassinga, other commanders went back to the front, but I was left in charge of training soldiers in Cassinga.

On 4 May, that was when Cassinga got attacked by the Boers, in the night. We heard sounds of planes coming from the east to west; and as a trained soldier, suspicion

arose that this could only be enemies coming to our settlement. We started contacting each other if any of us knew the planes that were approaching our destination, but none of us knew. A week before we had captured a Boer, Johan Van der Mach, whom we brought to Cassinga. He was captured by the group led by Kakongo. Against that back ground we thought of moving the disabled, elders and younger children from the centre, because we were not so sure what was planned ahead, but the first thing on our mind was war. To be on the safe side we had to move them to a safer place far from the center. Meanwhile we were given a mandate to take Johan to Lubango.

However, enemies' movements started increasing day by day, they never stopped until the moment they attacked. Due to that all our extra ordinary members were on alert; they were warned of what might happen to us and we prepared them physically and emotionally. We had also strengthened the training process, and many of our people were hard at work, as they knew they were facing a serious war. We instructed them that when they heard the voice of the commander screaming directions, they were to run and hide. One morning while we were still training, the Boers attacked. They started attacking at 08h00, throwing bombs to the camp. That was the first attack, and it left many people injured while others were left dead. One of our commanders also died as a result of the bomb, he died in front of us; his head was cut off as the result of the bombs. Mind you, those bombs were dangerous obstacles consisting of sophisticated elements of smoke and they were rooting out trees from the ground. By the time they started the second attack, Cassinga was all dusty and dark; one could not see a thing, just dark smoke. People had to move to the west direction which was safer for us, according to the estimation of the situation, we were not using English words when directing; we used slangs so that the Boers would not be able to understand what we meant. It was dark and we could not see each other but that didn't stop me from giving directions to my people. They heard my voice. Many were injured while running and others lost their lives in the attack. Thereafter I had to run to the place where we had hidden the children, women, elders and the disabled. I found them observing, they heard the noise but did not know what was going on. I commanded them to go to the west direction were I had directed most of the other people.

On the other hand Cubans were not ready; they were just preparing themselves in Oshamtete. So they were challenging from Oshamtete, some 330 kilometers from Cassinga, they retreated. They started exactly at 08h00 and a few minutes after that I observed paratroops dropping again in numbers and I started shooting at them, I shot one of the Parachute on air. They were flying higher and higher when I started shooting. My target was their doors. Some fell down and some died in their planes. From there I came back to the centre, at the centre I saw the enemies dropping four Jet fighters and they started shooting at us. Most of them were coming from inside Angola. Parachutes started dropping them. I fired at them too. It wasn't easy fighting alone, most of our people died in the first and second attacks, while some of our commanders ran away. The situation was critical, beside me, were Pavo Max, and this young boy Iyambo, currently he is the driver of the former Minister of Information

while Pavo Max was the chef of the founding President but know he is retired. They were the only two I remember active, fighting and directing people during the attack. Unfortunately in the third attack, we saw Boers in large numbers coming in the east direction again, they were coming marching from the bushes. They were more than a hundred, while we were only a group of 15. Our people died in the course of the first and second attack. We also started shooting at them. Luckily we had organized trenches. It is where most injured were taken, it was in the trenches that many casualties were recorded.

Later on our colleagues, the Cuban troops, started to move from Oshamtete ready to fight. When the Boers saw the Cubans they started retreating. They captured some of our people and they ran away leaving behind their hospital beds which they were using to pick up their injured and dead bodies. The beds were helpful to us because we used them to remove our injured people too.

The Cubans were hard at work, they had all the necessary equipment that we needed. We worked all night and in the morning we were very tired and we could not do much more. The Angolan government sent troops to come and rescue us, but in fact they just came to watch as security; they did not do anything. I remember two determined ladies that I rescued in the attack. I found them already hit by rocket, one was Elizabeth Namundjembo and the other one is currently a medical practitioner at Engela Hospital, her name is Ndeyapo. These ladies were injured and very young indeed. Namundjembo was about 13 years old and her hand had been hit by a rocket; her bones were in pieces but she was just holding on to her pieces with the other hand. Her bones were scattered, so I picked them up and went to hide them near a river. The next morning I remembered that I had hidden them in the river, so I went to look for them. By the time I got there the wounds were getting infectious. I encouraged them to walk to the camp so that they could get transport to go to hospital; they were very weak, but they were strong and determined, so they did as I instructed. I was proud of them and today when I see them they lift up my spirit.

PLAN commanders also arranged to have some Namibian people from Lubango, but unfortunately we were not having enough transport to come and help at Cassinga. They arrived after two days, just to find most of the injured already removed from the centre to Oshamtete for further treatment. All they found were dead bodies lying around the settlement; more than three hundred bodies were found at Cassinga. We started removing their bodies in a traditional manner and buried them. Bodies were rotting and there were flies all over. Later on a message was sent that we should not touch the bodies because some people were coming to take pictures of the deceased. We had to open them up again for pictures. The way Cassinga was attacked, one cannot rule out that some of our members might have leaked information to the Boers.

From the Cassinga attack, I continued living in the settlement with the survivors, this time I was the head of the camp. But we shifted some kilometers away to avoid trauma for the survivors. We stayed for three months before moving to Ndjamba, then to Lubango. The disabled people were shifted to Kwanza-zulu. After ten months

in Lubango I was sent on a mission to Bulgaria, and upon returning to Lubango I got married to Aili Nangula from Oikokola village in Onayena. We had one daughter during the liberation struggle. We came back together but she died after independence. I am currently married to another woman with whom I have two children.

However, back to Namibia, I was working close to Mzee Kaukungwa as a right hand man during his supervision of the elections in Oshana region. I was a messenger for the old man. I was also among the organizers of Omugulugombashe, organizing parades entrusted by the party. After that I did voluntary work for the party without a salary. Other people were lucky to be employed by the government, living in government houses and driving government vehicles. They were appointing each other in positions while we were left to struggle for our families. Mind you, my wife was also unemployed, and the children had to go to school. I continued working as a political mobiliser, without a salary until 2004.

All I can say is that there are a lot of people who played major role in the liberation struggle of our country but they were not recognized after independence. I didn't even get a single medal for my leadership. Some time I wonder how they evaluated the leadership of commanders and soldiers in the war; some were recognized while others were not. It was not only me who was left out. There were a number of us. At some point I asked myself what went wrong. What they have done to us is not good it is betrayal of our Namibian soldiers who fought and risked their lives for the struggle of the liberation of this country. Today I am an ordinary person fighting for myself but they know me very well.

## Shikwambi, David

*David Shikwambi witnessed the Namibian revolution from its inception in the late 1950's. As a young man he witnessed the massacre at the old location and in later years he was arrested many times by the apartheid regime. He is one of those who waged the liberation struggle internally and in so doing kept the revolution alive inside the country. He still resides in Windhoek where he moved from the north in 1957.*

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I have resided here in Windhoek for quite some time. However I was born at Endola and I came to Windhoek in 1957. I found the late Namalambo here, but he later went to work at Luderitz as a Prison Warder. I knew him very well because I grew up in Namalambo's house. When I came to Windhoek I went to stay at their house at the Old Location. I will talk a little about Namalambo as you have indicated.

Namalambo has been a leader. I think if Maxwilili was not around, Namalambo could have become the Acting President. He was the head of SWAPO in Windhoek. Many people in Windhoek including the Herero speaking community joined SWAPO because of Namalambo.

I can remember in 1965 the Boers came up with a scheme of recruiting young men apparently to go and curb a "Back and Claw" disease at the borders. This was a cattle disease and Namalambo immediately convened a meeting at his house where he invited everybody including the youth. He clarified at the meeting that the story of curbing a disease at the borders was not true, and that the Boers were recruiting young men to use them fight their own brothers and sisters. He made it clear that no disease could be curbed with soldiers and guns at the borders. He clarified that the youth were going to be recruited as soldiers and police officers. I was present at that meeting and there were many people. Although they were not in hundreds, I think they were about one hundred.

Well we are talking about things which happened a long time ago I cannot remember the month but I am only able to tell you that it was in 1965. Only two Ndonga guys went for this recruitment. After these guys got recruited people realised that Namalambo was in fact telling the truth because these guys were recruited as police officers. These guys were Sisande Asser and Sisande Petrus. Sisande Petrus died later on. Namalambo succeeded in convincing the people not to join this recruitment campaign by the Boers; that was why many people were not recruited.

Namalambo talked about many things at that meeting because he was a political activist who used to advise people even at personal level. He was a good advisor and never misled anybody. We relied on him for many things. Even those in need of Pass/ Visa had to consult Namalambo. He was respected in the community. Namalambo was never a councillor or anything like that; he was just a politician in his own right, just like the late Maxwilili. When other Politicians such as late Maxwilili and Lea Shoopala visited Windhoek, they started at Namalambo's house.

During the Old location event we were around the location. When the Old Location event took place Cde Sam Nujoma was still around, he had not gone into

exile by then. I can recall that the incident took place on the 10th December 1959. The following day, 11th December 1959 we were gathered at the stadium when a certain Boer; I suppose he was a Municipal Mayor confessed to President Nujoma that they (the Boers) killed some of his people. Nujoma just reacted to say it was okay for them to have confessed to the killings. That was the last time I saw Nujoma. I believe he left the country in 1960, but I last saw him that day in 1959. We were young boys at that time; I think I was 20 years old.

About Namalambo's beatings, he had always been a wanted man. They were always looking for him. There was a time when he was arrested at Ondangwa. We were together with Namalambo, Philip Nambuli and many others went to Ondangwa for the trial of John ya Otto. We were arrested and beaten up. We stayed in Ondangwa detained in shacks for some time, but we got released later on. Namalambo later went into exile where he died. Was he not buried in Bulgaria? Have you not interviewed Henny? You can find out from the former Governor of Oshana Region, Cde Billy Mwaningange. I have seen a picture of Billy Mwaningange, Henny and late Moses Garoeb taken at Namalambo's grave.

When he was still inside the country, SWAPO meetings could be convened but one could not really say they were Namalambo's meetings although he was the organizer. Sometimes he could be present at the meeting although not as the main speaker, but the important part was that he was always the organizer. All meeting preparations and arrangements were conducted at his house. He did this work in the old location till he left the country. When he left, his wife took over. Even people who fled the Boers from the north used to come to Namalambo's house.

I don't know if you know Ruben Hauwangwa, Selu Shivute, Axel Johannes even Tully Hivelua when he was young, and many others; the list is long. All those used to pass through Namalambo's house.

We were very difficult to deal with. Even when the Police officers searched our houses they had to ensure that they came with Caspairs and in big numbers not just with two or three officers. Even the old location story, people were chased from there in 1959 but we resisted and remained there until 1966. Here I am referring to almost all those houses in Donkerhoek. Most of them are Wambos. Some Hereros of Chief Hosea Kutako's clan and the ones for Chief Kapuwo's clan also refused to leave the Old Location. The very last group left the Old Location in August 1966. We were finally forced to relocate amidst claims that there was a certain disease in that area. They urged people to leave that area and promised to build good houses for them somewhere else. That time around no blood was shed, they just decided we should move and those who owned houses would be compensated.

As far as my own story is concerned you will realize that if you lived in a house owned by a SWAPO member then you also belonged to SWAPO just like if you live with a priest then definitely you also have to be a Christian, there is no way you cannot be one of them, that is why I can say I suffered. I suffered even it terms of

securing employment. I was last employed in 1977. And this was due to many things such as continuous arrests and so on. I was always in and out of jail.

There were usually no valid reasons for being arrested. Sometimes you would just be arrested because you were seen at a SWAPO rally. I was arrested many times. One arrest that I will never forget was in 1978, the year Chief Kapuo was shot. Actually when Kapuo was shot I was in Owamboland, I just heard of it from the Oshiwambo radio station. I was on my way from Ongwediva to Oluno when I heard from the Radio that Kapuo was killed and some SWAPO members were arrested while some were still wanted in connection with Kapuo's death. It turned out that I was one of those wanted.

I still don't know how I was connected to that incident. I just learnt that I was wanted one day when I went to Oshikango. What alerted me was an army car that kept following me around. That day my friend and I were driving to Eliakim's place at Olunkono. This car started following me right from Onuno. When we went to Olunkono we did not find Eliakim at home, and we were informed that he had gone to Okelemba. We proceeded to Okelemba and the army car was still following us. I got suspicious and I told my friend of what I thought about that car. He was not convinced that the car was following us as he did not see any good reason for that car to follow us.

We found Eliakim and a certain man called Nambadi. We drove with them to Ondjodjo store at Oluno. Immediately when we stopped, our car got surrounded. Eliakim and others were ordered to get out of the car. The officers that surrounded my car started communicating to others on a two-way radio saying 'we got him, we found him at Ondjodjo store'. The other person instructed them that if I was in the town area they should leave me, however they should not let me go near the borders because I might go into exile.

Later that day I advised my friend John that because of what had transpired, it was better for us to go back home (Windhoek). We left for Windhoek that same day in the evening.

The next day while at a house braai in Windhoek, I was arrested and sent to Katutura prison. The following day I was taken to Osire. I was arrested on charges that I got Kapuo killed. I told them I didn't have anything to do with Kapuo's death. I asked them how it was possible for me to have got Kapuo murdered if I was not in Windhoek when he was killed.

Nevertheless, they started torturing and electrifying me insisting that I should tell them where the terrorists that killed Kapuo were. They further insisted that I was the one responsible for transporting the terrorists and that the car I drove was not mine but a SWAPO car that was bought to transport the terrorists.

I stayed at Osire for about two months. One night they came to take me from Osire and they just drove from Osire straight to Katutura cemetery. They told me that if I didn't tell them the truth they were going to bury me alive. I really think they meant to do it, but luckily there were some people crossing the cemetery. One of the passers-

by said to them that there was a municipal directive that people should no longer be buried in unmarked graves. This saved me. They removed me from the grave and took me to Katutura prison.

The following day I was transferred to Gobabis where I found many other people. I think I found about 30 people there. Amongst the people I found there included Nangolo, Kambangula, Axel and many others. Even Witbooi was brought there.

I spent two months in Gobabis and six months under the AG 26, so in total I stayed there for eight months. While we were there, we were told that if we wanted to be released we had to write a letter addressed to the AG stating that if we were released we would not go back and continue the kind work we had been doing. Well, some people wrote the letters but some of us refused and asked them what work they were referring to. Some were even saying that they could not write to someone they did not know. On the 6th month we went on a hunger strike. Just imagine thirty days not eating, just surviving on water. From there they decided to release us. That was in 1978.

I was again arrested in 1979 for a period of four months; in 1984 I was again arrested at Oshakati on charges that I was a terrorist. While I was in jail, a bomb exploded and many people died. The Boers alleged that the bomb was planted by terrorists who were not happy that I was in prison. I was made to pick and gather the dead bodies which were burnt. I loaded them into the police van. Those dead were three whites and one black man. I was released later that year I got arrested again at Dobra in 1985. I will never forget what happened during the liberation struggle. There was a time when I was arrested at Oniimwandi/ Oshakati when I was supposed to be killed. It is sad that today we, who remained inside the country, are not recognised. People don't even regard us as freedom fighters.

Now that the country is free I doubt the government will do anything for us who fought inside the country. Even if you initiate something nobody will listen to you, and it is us who remained inside the country that suffered more than those who went in exile. At least those in exile had guns to defend themselves and we were defenceless. I think people should be looked at equally. I am not saying I want to be a Minister or a permanent secretary or something like that but, there are those that did not partake in the liberation struggle, the people that fought alongside the enemy and they are living better lives at the expense of those who suffered. We have them here, some are employed, some are given farms and some were given farming animals but we are just overlooked. Some of us are now old, like myself I am over 60 years old and have no hope for securing a job.

Some of my children and grandchildren know a lot about this country's history. My first born was even in exile. As for the kids I used to tell them stories of the liberation struggle. In addition to that, I have my own book where I have written about the history of this country. But the kids of these days are not serious; they are not keen to know about the history.

As to how I feel that we are now independent, I am happy that we are free especially that we are no longer getting arrested or being tortured for nothing. But even though we don't get arrested any longer what difference does it make if we are just here being neglected while the people who were against the independence of this country are the ones living well while we are suffering? Some of them are even laughing at us, saying that we used to make noise but we are still wandering in the streets. This is embarrassing.

SWAPO is no longer the same as it was in the past. In the past if I called somebody comrade then I meant comrade. It didn't matter what tribe but nowadays things are different. People are now becoming tribalistic and if this situation continues then I do not know where this country is heading to.

## Shikwambi-Basson, Maria

*Maria Shikwambi-Basson, grew up in Katutura and witnessed the wrath of apartheid at a very young age. She participated in many demonstrations as a primary and secondary school pupil. Even at that young age the apartheid regime did not spare them the use of tear gas and police batons. She experienced apartheid in the work place and the clamp down on freedom of expression by the regime. During her adult years and at the height of the liberation struggle in the 1980's she participated in many demonstrations where people were tear gassed, beaten up and even killed. It was this group of Namibians who kept the flame of the liberation struggle burning inside the country.*

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My name is Maria Shikwambi married to Basson and I was born in Katutura on 25th January 1962. I was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran Church, and attended the Mandume Primary School in 1969. The principal at that time was Joseph Katangolo and my teacher was Mr. Benny; we used to call him old Benny. From there I went to Namutoni High School where the Principal was Mr. Itembu; we used to call him Tselele because when we were singing he could not pronounce some words properly. He used to say Tseole-tselele so we called him Tselele.

In 1974 when I was in Standard IV, I remember while we were at school we were told to take our school bags outside, and all of a sudden we were told to go back home. On our way home we were met by Police vans and we were chased back to school. When we reached the school, there were policemen who chased us to go back home. We were made to run up and down and then finally we managed to go home.

The problem was a boycott that had taken place in town. I don't know what had happened here but then I remember that something was happening here in Donkerhoek around where Tate Namalambo's house was. The house was situated where there is now a new playground. I cannot really remember what happened that day but then that day we went straight home because we were too young to understand what was happening but people were rioting and it was not safe. We didn't understand what really was going on but I remember very well that we did not go to school for about a week. All I knew then was that there was a problem between the Boers and the SWAPO Party and that there was a strike in town.

I did not finish my primary schooling at Namutoni School because of the political problems that were there. We were part of the liberation struggle. We used to go for meetings and when we attend these meetings we also used to play certain games. We also used to march in the streets and do whatever we were told to do.

These activities were organized by a Damara woman from SWAPO. She used to tell us that we had to stand together and fight the Boers because we were being oppressed by the Boers so we had to unite and work very hard together. She used to say that we must not allow the children of the Boers to oppress us and we must not allow anyone to oppress us because what they were doing to our parents was not right. She said we needed better housing, better schools and better education; we also needed better

health. In our education we were taught about things like lizards or about frogs and it did not seem to be proper education.

In the meetings we were told about people like Van Reebeck. The other problem was that we were not allowed to speak Oshiwambo in the schools, and we were told that Afrikaans was the best language. That made us really angry because I was a Vambo born from two Owambo parents, and I was told that I should not speak Oshiwambo. That is why most of the children now cannot speak fluent Oshiwambo. Even I had to learn my Oshiwambo when I was already grown up.

From there I went to Khorixas where I started Standard V. Although that school was better, our teachers were soldiers from the South African Defence Forces. When they came to classes they had their uniforms on, and they had guns with them, so we were not at ease. That was around 1975/ 1976. I moved to Khorixas because my grandfather whom I was living with, after he was retrenched he was refused to get a farm anywhere near here so he was sent to Khorixas. He was refused a farm around here because he was a black man; and a black man could not have a farm near town, so we had to move to Khorixas. I attended school there in 1975 and 1976.

In 1978 we commemorated Cassinga day. We were in a boarding school so we had to do such things underground. This meant that no one besides ourselves was supposed to know, but someone reported us to the Boers. When we were having this ceremony in a classroom and we didn't even put the lights on, it was dark, all of a sudden someone said the Boers are coming but we didn't believe it because the main gate was always locked. We went out and sat on the steps. We saw car lights and we knew there was a vehicle coming. The lights were so bright on the kitchen wall thought the lights were too big. Because I grew up in Windhoek and I knew tear gas and things like that I told the others to get some towels, put water inside to wet the towels so that when they throw the tear gas then we would know what to do. I knew tear gas because here in Windhoek when the Boers knew that there was a meeting, they would come and throw tear gas. Even on public rallies they used to do the same. It was on these rallies that I experienced the tear gas. When the Boers came they were looking for the boys because it was Cassinga Memorial Day. I remember that it was on a Thursday evening.

I took a bottle of Vaseline and then I started applying on everybody's face so that they would not be affected by the tear gas when the Boers start throwing them. The Boers came and they started to throw tear gas and forced the security gate open. I learnt those things when I was still in Katutura. There was Tate Namalambo, Tate Shikwambi, Tate Maxwilili and others who taught me about tear gas and the use of Vaseline in such situations. So I stated to put the Vaseline on everybody's face and then when the Boers came we had already gone into the boys dormitory and then the boys started to run behind the girls dormitories.

Those days there was nothing like being a boy or a girl; the police showed no mercy. They would beat you and set the dogs on you. They even used to have these rubber whips that they used to beat us with. Then what we did was that when the boys

came to the girl's rooms we gave them our clothes to wear so that they looked like girls. So when the Boers came they could not find the boys. In our rooms there was not enough space but then there was a hole in the girl's bathroom so what we did was we told the boys to lie down in that hole and then we covered them with old papers, and other rubbish and that is how they survived.

There were a lot of boys involved. Some of them were wanted by the Boers. After a week they were still hiding in the bush and we used to take food to them. They were wanted because the Boers were told that they were the ones that were organizing everything and they were the ones who were causing all the problems.

They were the leaders. There was also a woman who wanted she was killed in Swakopmund. She was murdered and we did not know whether it was the Boers or it was just someone else who killed her. She was one of the SWAPO activists we were working with during that time. I also witnessed some of these activities, as I was there on the day of Tate Shifidi. I decided to quit school in 1980 because every time I was at school I was taken away; and either I was taken to the Police station or somewhere else. The police used to take us and they were always interrogating me. During those interrogations we were made to stand in a line and made us sing.

We were frightened and could not sing properly; we could not sing the song as loudly as we could sing on the street. They wanted us to sing for them the same way that we sang the song on the street doing our toi-toi and jumping. All they wanted was to humiliate us because we had participated in the liberation struggle. They called us small terrorists and beat us. They used to beat us using shamboks. Some people got injured and it was really bad. No one died but many people were injured.

In 1980 when I came back to Windhoek, I got my first job at the Kalahari Sands.

That time apartheid was very, very bad. When we went to work we were not allowed to go in through a certain door. The blacks were using a different door to get in. We were working inside, cleaning the rooms but we were not allowed to eat or to go into the kitchens. We were not allowed to do a lot of things. I didn't work there for too long, maybe I worked there for only two months and then I quit.

Black people were not allowed to get in and eat there, yet the black people were cleaning the plates, the rooms, and preparing the food. Another thing that I encountered was that we were not allowed to buy white bread. There was a certain bread shop belonging to a white old lady. If we decided that we wanted to eat white bread when we were kids, we went to the shop and took two packets of buns and all the white bread from the shelves, and we would go to the till, but at the till this white lady would refuse to sell the white bread to us. So we simply walked out with the bread without paying because we also wanted to eat the white bread. They did not arrest us but they liked to chase at us away. The moment we got out of the shop we started eating the bread. I don't know why they didn't want to take the money. We did that often and during every school holiday until they decided to take the money and sold the white bread to us. They were only selling white bread to us in Khorixas because they were going to lose out if they didn't take the money.

There were times when they closed the door of the shop to stop us from going in. If someone saw us coming from afar they closed the doors. Sometimes they recognized the two guys who were leading us. If they closed the door we would all come in a big group and stand at the door. Then the white man would come out and chase us away saying “hamba – hamba – hamba” so would give him space. But the moment the white woman opened the door we would push the door and rush in. We would tell her that we did not want to do anything but we just wanted to buy bread. Finally we won and we started to buy white bread and then we become friends with the white lady because when we bought all the bread it was good business for her.

After I quit my job at the Kalahari I started working at the Katutura Hospital as a Dental Assistant and I was trained in my work. That was 1983. To be exact it was on my birthday on the 25th of January, 1983. I started to work there and worked with many doctors most of whom were in the army that time. That time Katutura Hospital was the biggest army hospital and all the Boers who were hurt in Owamboland during the conflicts between the Boers and SWAPO were brought there. I did not see them but then I knew that they were being brought there because sometimes a helicopter came and dropped the injured there; the doctor whom I would be working with would leave whatever he was doing in order to go and attend to the wounded soldiers.

During that time I had a handbag which had SWAPO colours. I also had a jersey which had blue, red, green and yellow colours. The jersey and handbag were a problem to the Boers and they wanted me to stop wearing the jersey or carrying the handbag. I said that was the only jersey that I had, but they are thinking that I just wanted to provoke them by showing them that I a SWAPO member. At that time we were not allowed to wear party colours to work but then I did it in such a way that it showed that it was just a jersey.

There was a time we were having a play with the late Thulani. The play was staged in the old compound but it was not published but it was known only to a few people. The play was about the Boers and I was part of the group that was acting. I was playing the part of a mother who hid her son who was wanted by the Boers. After this play, we were dismissed and went home. The next day there was a guy from South Africa and he was Thulani’s brother. Thulani was part and parcel of the SWAPO youth league and this guy was wanted because he was from South Africa and we were hiding him and moving him from one house to the next house. We hid him until the night when the leaders organized a truck which took him out of the country and I think they went through Gobabis.

He left the country safely and I don’t know whether he survived the war or not, but after that day we were wanted by the Boers. They were looking for us because of the play, and I think in our meetings there was somebody who was informing the Boers about what was happening. We knew there was always someone informing on us but we couldn’t really say who that person was.

In 1984 I was picked up from work and taken to Katutura Police Station. I cannot remember the actual date. The interrogation was only for three hours then they

released us. Sometimes we had to act stupid, because when they asked me a question I just replied that I did not know the answer, even if I knew I could not say that I knew. They asked, “Do you know Sam Nujoma?” I answered, “No, I don’t know him, I just know about the name and I see his pictures in the papers.” They asked, “So why are you singing those lyrics?” I answered, “I sing because others are singing.” They asked, “But why are you singing that song?” I answered, “We are singing that song because we are all black and we stay in Katutura.” So they used to ask us questions and we would give them any answer that we could think of. That is the reason I was said the answers we were giving could have sounded stupid, but the kind of responses that we gave them made them realise that they would not be able to get anything out of us, so finally they give up. They thought that the blacks were really stupid and they were just wasting their time asking them all those questions, while they could not get any sensible answers.

When I returned to work and the other Boers wanted to know why the police had taken me, I never gave them any positive answer. When they asked me why I was coming to work with my handbag which had SWAPO colours, I ask them, “Is this bag an AK47? Since you always say that SWAPO people have got AK47, is this an AK47? If my handbag has killed someone, then you can take me to jail because of that.” From that day onwards they didn’t ask me anything about the handbag.

There was this book which had something to do with the rally. In 1985 or 1986 we had this rally that was more of a youth rally, where we were doing the “toi-toi” and all those movements. I remember that I was wearing black trousers, a SWAPO T-shirt and a black military hat with the logo of the SWAPO Women Solidarity on it. I was in front of the crowd and someone took a picture and in the picture was this late Thulani and me and some of the people who were in front singing revolutionary songs. As we were singing and jumping, when I jumped they took a picture. This picture came out in the Drum or Pace magazine. I don’t have it now but it must be in the boxes somewhere, I can’t remember where it is.

At my place of work, the medical personnel were medical doctors but they were in the army. In those days everybody was in the army and they were wearing these khaki uniforms. I was called into the office and they asked me about what had happened in Katutura the previous weekend, and I answered that there was nothing! They asked me if there was a SWAPO rally, and I answered that there was none. They continued asking me if I was not at SWAPO rally, and I answered that I was not. Then the doctor just opened the drawer and then he took out a book, he opened the book and asked me who was the person in the picture. I looked at the picture and said to myself, “My God that is me.” Then I asked him in Afrikaans, “Who does this person look like?” I asked him because he had asked who the person in the picture was. Then he asked me if I knew that I was not supposed to be seen in public rallies while I was working for the government. I told him that from Monday to Friday I was a child of the government but from Friday afternoon until Sunday afternoon I was a child of my mother and a child of Katutura.

I knew that I was going to be punished by being made to do extra work but I thought that was not going to be a problem. I was punished like I had thought. They made me wash the utensils, sterilize the instruments and put everything in order; I had to work twice as hard while the others just sat there and rested. I had to serve that punishment for two weeks. The struggle went on and also we continued having SWAPO braais and youth meetings.

When we were having SWAPO braai, we had to get permission from the police to host such an event, indicating that we were going to have a SWAPO braai. At times we were given permission but at times we were not given permission. The SWAPO braai was like a cultural event, but it was also meant to raise money. The money raised was sent out to help people in the bush and in other liberation fora; some of the money was used to help people like Tate Namalambo who were in the internal leadership. However, most of the money went to the guerrillas fighting in the bush, including those who were fighting inside Namibia. We knew there were people who were somewhere here in the country but we were not allowed to talk about it.

The proceeds from the Braai were also used to help people who had been dismissed from their work because of SWAPO activities and those who were in prison. They got assistance in the form of food because their families would have lost their bread winners. It meant to help and support people like Tate Nangolo, Tjongarero and Lubowsky. The funds also assisted the leaders in case there was a problem somewhere and they were required to travel. With the SWAPO braais we did well but we were always alert we were always watching if the Boers were coming or not. But the Boers were also clever because they sometimes came in private cars and at times they sent their own spies with private cars to see what is happening. Whenever they saw a braai that was well attended, they threw tear gas to disrupt the party, and picked people like Ben, Tjongarero and others and took them to Okahandja Prison because they wanted to make a statement that what we are doing was wrong. The braais were a very good experience, and we really enjoyed them, and also to know where we were, why people went to war or why they went into exile fought for us.

Then in 1988 or 1989 Pandeni was brought from Robben Island to the prison here together with other two guys. It was Pandeni, Peter Ilonga and Ben Ulenga. When these three guys were brought from prison to this place, they came to the dental clinic. Maybe someone told them that there was an Owambo lady at the dental clinic. They came to the dental clinic speaking English and my doctor said he could not speak English so I became the interpreter.

Coming back to Tate Shifidi, it started with a SWAPO rally and as usual the police came to disrupt the rally. So during the commotion and shooting he was shot and fell down. Someone shouted and pointed at one car and said, "It was that car." and he was shot. At that moment we just turned around and started chasing the car. We followed it up to Goreangab School, at the shops and to the robots, before you go to Shoprite. When they saw us running they started driving back. But we had been chasing this car on foot and when we got to the first robot and the road that goes to the Peoples

Primary School, we looked up and saw all these Caspairs; they had passed that place where we go and pay the municipality, and they were almost at the police station. When we saw the military cars coming we started to run back to the place where the others were. When we got to the grounds I was asking where the car keys were because we wanted our things from the car that we came in. We had some bombs and we needed them, so that we could also attack them.

The guys were attacking us with green tear gas and yellow tear gas, so the whole sky was turning dark with the smoke. When we were running back, some of the comrades were standing on top of the platforms and then we started shouting, "Jump, jump, they are coming now." People were confused and they were running in different directions; there was now tear gas, the police and the dogs. People were running and they did not have anywhere to run to. People whose houses were near had locked their doors and gates because they were Darmara and they didn't want to be victimized because of the things we were doing.

We didn't succeed to throw the petrol bombs, although the one that was thrown only managed to hit the bumper of the Caspir and it did not have any impact. They drove straight to Donkerhoek and we were also running straight to Donkerhoek. I remember that day Tate Maxwilili was wearing a whitish-cream like suit. It became dusty and there was tear gas everywhere, which was now too much for Tate Maxwilili and when we jumped a wire at a certain house he fell face down and became unconscious.

While we were running with Andy, he was holding my hand, I was hit by something and I did not know that it was a rubber bullet but then it hit me hard, and it raised me up and then I fell down. When I saw what had hit me I crawled and tried to take it, but I didn't know that it was hot, and it burnt me. I remember that although it was hot I took it and kept it. I know that I still have it somewhere in my things. When you hear that there are rubber bullets you think maybe it's a small thing, but then a rubber bullet is not that small. Apparently it is pressured and when it comes out it spins out and hits its target.

That is how Tate Shifidi was killed and my mother was at the rally and she went to the hospital but they were not allowed to see the body. Some of the SWAPO people who were injured were taken to the hospital by the soldiers and the hospital was full with people because of the dogs, the tear gas and all that. But my mother and other women went to the hospital to identify the body of Tate Shifidi when he was killed. That was what was happening with SWAPO inside the country.

There was also a time in the late 1970's, but I cannot remember the exact year when Nduuvu and Kanisius came and we had some trees around the yard of the house. Someone had told the police that they were in one of the houses there, so when the police came they just jumped out and they took cover in the grass that was there and were just lying down there. Luckily the police did not look around in the grass to see if they were hiding there. My mother told me to stay quiet in my room and not to talk. It was very strange how the Boers came looking for Kanisius, and he was be

there sitting under the tree and they passed him. The Boers went inside the house and looked and searched around while he was just sitting under the tree, and that is how he managed to kill most of them. That part of Owambo 12 there, that is the place he was always hiding and at times his hiding place was that place where Coca Cola and those other companies are now. The Boers would go and look for him there but then when they got there he was here in Katutura. They would just hear a sound “toov” then he was back again. He became a mystery guy and those were the guys that I remember. I encountered a lot of guerrillas.

Among the things that I cannot forget is the day when Meme Elina was bitten by the police dogs. I think there was a rally and it was somewhere in Soweto. We running back home when meme Elina (Elina Ndapuka) broke her two arms, and another woman was bitten by the dogs and lost her two legs. It was bloody and people were hurt; they had serious wounds because the dogs were set on them and the blood was just too much! I cannot forget that day for whole of my life because it was very, very bad.

The other incident that I cannot forget is one June 16, I can't remember the year, when there were a lot of kids who were beaten by the Boers. I think when that happened I was at work. You know when I came from work it was something else! There was tear gas and some of the people were fainting, but the Boers did not have any mercy on them. The Boers were throwing tear gas even into the houses and in the streets and there were a lot of kids that were affected by that.

Now that we are independent I can see a lot of positive changes, in the way in which our government handles the independence and the democracy that we have. I think the struggle that we went through was worth it. We couldn't do a lot of things then. I remember that people wanted to sell ginger and other things but they were not allowed to do so. People were suffering and I don't even know how we managed to survive. In addition to that our parents received very low salaries. So the sacrifice was worth it as you can see now I am a business woman something I could not have done during the apartheid days.

Thanks.

## Shipanga, Andreas

[Northern Namibia; 17 January 2007]

*Born in 1931, at Onakandi village in OShikoto region, Shipanga was politically inspired by his late brother Simon Shipanga and the likes of Herman Andimba Toivo ya Toivo. Shipanga is a former student of Ongwediva Boy's school, together with Bishop Cleopas Dumeni, Johannes Nangutwala and Gerson Shipwata. He is a teacher by profession and taught at Ihongo School. Shipanga went to exile in 1953 with an aim to fight the colonial and racism system in the country. Before going to exile Shipanga used to organize teachers to go on strike to fight inequality, low wages and racism. He witnessed ANC rallies that aimed at getting rid of the whites. He became more politically empowered in 1957, when he went to South Rhodesia. He worked at a mine for not more than 10 hours. He was arrested in 1963. In 1969 he was appointed as SWAPO Secretary of Information and Publicity. He was also in charge of the SWAPO Radio in exile, together with Sacky Namugongo and Frida Shimbuli. Shipanga traveled the world with the SWAPO mission. He was among the group that betrayed the SWAPO people in what came to be known as the "Shipanga Rebellion." He was the first to challenge the SWAPO leadership and formed his own party "SWAPO D; his party died a silent death. Shipanga was also implicated in the Cassinga and Oshatotwa attacks. He is currently a retired veteran politician.*

My name is Andreas Shipanga; I was born in Onakandi, in the congregation of Ihongo on the 26th October 1931. I attended my primary school there before going to Onyanya and Ongwediva Boys School. My contemporaries included Bishop Cleophas Dumeni; there are others who have already passed away, like Johannes Nangutwala and Gerson Shipwata.

In 1953 I graduated from the Boys school, and in 1954 I started my first teaching career at Ihongo. I was inspired by my teacher, Gabriel Tapopi; he was a great teacher and an inspiration to me.

In 1956 I left for Angola in a company of my two good friends. One of them is now deceased. We went via Ondjiva with an aim of getting to Liberia through Lobito. However, when we got to Ondjiva, we were informed that we could not get to Lobito; we first had to work contract labour (Ombishi), so we had no option but to join the contract labour. We wanted to move and leave South West Africa because we were fed up with colonialism and racism. At that time we were informed that Liberia was a free republic, but I personally wanted to attend school in America.

From Lobito we failed to get on the ship to Liberia, so we returned to Novarisaboa. It was in Novarisaboa that we decided to go to Johannesburg. In Novarisoboa, we met a Kwanyama couple who took us in. The husband worked for the Casaingresa, a shop which used to sell British cars. They gave us a Shimbudu old man to guide us to

Biladaponte, and directions on how to get to South Africa.

We went on foot until the Angolan border; at Hompa there was a truck going to cut wood. They gave us a lift to Manongwe, where we found some Portuguese men who welcomed us. They asked us where we were coming from and we told them

that we are from Ukwanyama then one of them responded, “Kwanyama? Mandume killed my father.” Mandume Ndemufayo was the king of the Kwanyama speaking people. We realized that we had made a mistake; nonetheless they allowed us to stay overnight. The next day they told us that there were some officials who wanted to meet with us at their head office of Embonge. We met the officials who offered us jobs in the coffee plantation. That evening we made our escape with the help of one black man who was married to a mulatto woman. The man gave us his boy to lead us through to the border. As we took the camp in the forest that night, heavy rain came and washed away some of our belongings. We waited until sun set. The young boy escorted us some forty kilometers, near the Okavango River, and we crossed the River into Rundu.

On our way, one of my friends suffered from Malaria, his illness had affected our journey as we could not leave him behind. We proceeded until Nkurenkuru for his medical attention. We were at the hospital for two weeks before making our way back to Rundu. Upon return to Rundu, the three of us applied for Wendell labour. We were fortunate to be accepted for the job.

They put us on trucks to Shakier, and from Shakier we took a plane to Francistown, from there we took a train to Johannesburg. We arrived in Johannesburg around 06h30 the next morning.

This was in 1956, but we were amazed to see a city like Johannesburg, a city with tall buildings, the buildings were so tall that they blocked out the sun. It was like a whole new world. There were well dressed black people and exceptionally beautiful African women; it was indeed another world.

While in Johannesburg, we were dispatched to work in a gold mine, at the city deep; at the mine they made us use lifts, and it was our first time to see a lift, so we gazed at each other as we felt our stomachs go up and down.

There we found other Namibians who told us that they did not think we could cope with the work. They were right. They gave us drills, and oh my God, when we lay on your back and drilled, we thought the rocks were going to fall on us. Seeing the situation I had got myself into, I pleaded with God to save me. Our monthly salaries were approximately one pound and seventeen shillings per month, but we did not work until the end of the month.

We found out that there was one Lucky Peter, who was also Kwanyama speaking. He owned a grocery shop in the location. On our way to his shop, some guards questioned where we were heading to, and we told them that we were working on a nightshift and needed to buy bread. When we arrived at the location, we asked for Lucky Peter; he was a famous man in the location, known by almost everyone. It was in the location that we met a number of Kwanyama speaking people, Ndonga’s and Kwambis.

### **Interest in politics**

My interest in politics started some time back when my elder brother, along with Herman ya Toivo, told me about their stay in Ethiopia. Both of them were soldiers during the time of Hitler's war. They told me that in Ethiopia people did not differentiate between a black man and white man, and that they all lived alongside each other, like brothers.

Between 1949 and 1953 I almost got expelled from school due to politics. This was because we were running an organization with Laban Hamata, and Johannes Nangutuwala. The organization was aimed at fighting the racial regime of the Finish missionaries in the country.

I remember the daughter of Martin Lauthanen (Nakambale), who had a white mother, but was being discriminated. They would not eat food from the same plate with her. Black teachers were also paid less compared to the white teachers, and everything was just more superior for the whites than it was for the black people.

I was again on an edge of being expelled, reason being because I subscribed myself to Bona magazine and to the Suide West Afrikaner newspaper, a paper that spoke about South African politics to be more specific.

I was called a communist, when I was seen reading the magazines. I was particularly impressed with the South African communist system which I was reading from the magazines. I read about Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and many others.

We were prohibited from reading such magazines because the school was trying to discourage us from communism. They taught us that Russian nationals were terrible people and that they had horns like Satan. This was one of the reasons why I was very apprehensive about these satanic people in 1965 when I went to Russia; I looked for them at the airport but did not find them.

Our little organization began organizing strikes, and although we were not teachers ourselves, we went around Endola organizing teachers to go on strike because they were only getting two pounds a month. They were paid peanuts compared to what white teachers were getting.

When we returned from a school holiday, we were asked to write about what we did during our school break and in my essay, I wrote about how I met Justus Gadu, the South African communist party leader. The school took that as a serious offense and they wanted to expel me but fortunately, our principal was a kindhearted Finnish man; he pitied me and said I should not be expelled.

I got more political influence when I went to Johannesburg, and that was when I started getting involved in real politics. In Johannesburg, I was able to witness, first hand, how the ANC and others, during their rallies and so on, organized themselves in order to get rid of white domination in their country. I was particularly impressed when I got to meet Chief Luthuli in person.

In 1957, we went to Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia; I was more politically empowered in that town. In Rhodesia I found leaders like Muzerekazi, Stanley Square, Fire Prince,

James Sikerema, and George Nyandoro, the man that was moving thousands of people.

They urged people to fight for their land. So when I heard and saw all this, I asked myself if we could do the same for our country. I spoke to my two colleagues and we got the address of Toivo ya Toivo in Cape Town. We corresponded with ya Toivo and Salomon Mifima.

It was through this meeting that my colleagues and I decided to join ya Toivo in politics. In 1957 we moved to Cape Town where we found that ya Toivo had already formed the Ovambo People's Congress (OPC). Ya Toivo was the recognized leader, followed by Salomon Mifima, Jacob Kuhangwa, Apollo, Dr Frans Telmaha and then Abraham, among others.

From there I moved to the west where we formed a branch of OPC with Polly Kaukungwa and others. It was also in Cape Town that we found Tobias Hainyeko working at the filling station. He later joined us.

After the deportation of ya Toivo, we had to change the name OPC to OPO. This was toward the end of 1957.

In 1960, I was replaced by Mifima. I became second in charge. During that same year, Mifima left for Tanzania where he opened the office of OPO until Kerina Mburumba decided to change the party's name.

In 1963, Mifima opened another office in Cairo and in 1964 he opened a SWAPO office in Lusaka.

When I returned to Cape Town, in February, 1963 my colleagues delegated me to South West Africa to organize another office. While in Windhoek, I met some SWAPO executives, the likes of John ya Otto and others. I further proceeded to Walvis Bay to see my late brother, Simion Shipanga.

In Walvis Bay I had plans of opening a small business, but I received news that I was going to be arrested, so I saw no point going ahead with that. In June, I left for Windhoek. I remember buying a newspaper, The Sunday Times, where it was reported that a red chine's cell was found in Cape Town. Dr Neville Alexander and Elizabeth van Heiden had been arrested and the police were busy looking for Dr Kenneth Abrahams, and in Ovamboland, Andreas Shipanga. It is when I knew that the game was over.

The Bustels I took Abraham and literally hid him in the mountains. We then requested that Abraham join us, together with the old man Beukes and Paul Smiths. That night we decided to leave the country for Botswana.

We went through Gobabis, into Aminus, then crossed the border to Botswana land. In Botswana we got arrested by the Boers and we were locked up at Gobabis prison.

Abraham was taken by plane to Cape Town. Brain who was the only lawyer defending blacks represented us. We were charged for living the country without valid documents and for returning to cause trouble. But In the end the Boers released us and they took us back to Botswana. After we were released we proceeded to Francistown, and in October that same year, we travelled to Elizabeth Valley, where

I met Sam Nujoma. It was the first time the two of us met. The two of us left for Dar es Salaam.

At that time, SWAPO did not have an executive committee. It was in this light that we established the committee but then we were still faced with other problems of who was going to be the president of the party.

We had Sam Nujoma in Dar es Salaam as the president of the party, Louis Nelegani as the president based in Cairo, and back home we had Maxwilili as president.

This problem was not solved until 1966, following a meeting that was held in Dar es Salaam, where the decision was made to choose between Nujoma and Nelegani for presidency, it was clear that we could not have more than one president.

This was before Sam Nujoma and Hifikepunye Pohamba came to Windhoek. Nelengani opted to be the vice president of the party. The message was then sent back home for Maxwilili to become Acting President.

In Dar es Salaam, we had two secretaries, Kuhangwa and Ishmael, but the two did not want to come to terms, so Ishmael decided to leave the struggle and come back to South West Africa.

In October I got posted to Kinshasa for a period of one year. I served as a SWAPO representative. I found some Namibians who came from Angola and were working in coffee plantations there; they had come to Kinshasa as refugees and were suppose to be enrolled into guerilla training, but I had to write a letter to Dar es Salaam informing them that the place was full of CIA. We were supposed to set up a training camp there, in a place that had been given to us by the Congolese government, but we had to leave after the civil war broke out

The Swedish Ambassador provided a plane to air lift my people. I followed later in October 1964. Two weeks after returning to Dar es Salaam, I found myself posted to Accra together with Jacobs to ask for Dr Nkrumah to give us training facilities. Meeting President Nkrumah was an opportunity; because he told us that we could have 30 of our guerillas trained in his country.

I was then told that Nelengani should go to Dar es Salaam while I should go to Cairo to become a representative.

Having gone to Cairo, I traveled the world with the mission of SWAPO until December 1969. This was after the Etanga conference. I became the Secretary for Information and Publicity.

In 1971, I was sent to Lusaka to be in charge of the radio with Sacky Namugongo and Frida Shimbuli. It was during this time that things really started happening. We were suppose to have another congress, but Nujoma declined, saying that we are not going to carry a congress in exile and that there was no Constitution.

The treasurer was the late Joe Ithana, but Ithana who was the husband of the country's Justice Minister, Pendukeni Ithana was sent to America for further studies. Nujoma took over his responsibilities. Nujoma gave more money to Peter Mweshihange and Nanyemba but radio files were suffering due to sabotage.

In 1974, we were joined by a determined young woman and man; they were well educated and inspired. I was glad. They really wanted to do something but my colleagues did not agree with me. I told them to have a proper organization, let us have a congress. First it was the constitution, we could not fight in an organization with no constitution, no order, no structure, and we could also not send people to die with no constitution. The Youngsters started seeing it when they arrived, this was real, it was not propaganda. Number one, the money was coming from all over the place and it was only one man who had control over it. Only Nujoma knew what to do with the money. He only gave it to his associates, who were the likes of Nanyemba, Mweshiyange, and Muyongo.

People died of hunger, literally. The food that was donated and coming from all over the world was sold in the black market, in Lusaka, for people to get cash. These four people were living it up, and everyday there was a goat being slaughtered. With them it was the night clubs, while the women who were giving birth at Nyango and at the Old Farm could not get milk and medicine. I helped these people as they came to me. I took them to the chemist to get a proforma; the proforma would be taken by them to the Swedish Embassy to get check, food, blankets and books. I became enemy number one for helping those people.

Guns were sold to UNITA for cash, that was true; and those who wanted to fight were given sticks and branches of palm trees, (Omapokolo) to fight with.

Back to the issue of guns, Kaunda did not like ZANU; he was depriving them of guns, so ZANU bought guns. They came to Nanyemba with money to get AK 47s; these were guns which were brought in from China. This is true.

They did not want to provide for their own guerillas. People like Dimo Hamambo were real heroes; while others were really determined, there were those soldiers who just wanted to hang around. However the situation could not last.

When the SWAPO youth leagues came, they said they wanted to fight and that the situation could not be the way it was. There was no rebellion, it was only that people were critical and they were demanding for the first Congress so that the leadership could be changed or reorganized, but Nujoma said no. People were not mentioning names, they only wanted a complete reorganization and the leaders to be elected. The Guerillas did however reject Nujoma and Nanyemba when they went to see them; they were tired of fighting with sticks while Nanyemba buried the guns.

My house soon turned into something similar to a railway station; whenever people came to town, they passed by my house. Maybe it was because they were not welcomed to any other house in the area besides my house. It was not long before some people claimed I was sent by Boers; and apparently it happened that I had a

rebellion called *Shipanga Rebellion*. The next thing I remember was that I got arrested and while in prison, Nujoma held a press conference in Lusaka saying that Shipanga was a South African agent who misled the people. I apparently wanted to take over power and the SWAPO leadership was going to put me to trial, and if found guilty,

they would put me to a firing squad. I was in prison, so I could not reply, or defend myself.

We were arrested by the Zambian army. We were about two thousand people, and so they could not handle us all. Some people were taken somewhere else, others literally died of hunger. Some went to Angola and ended up in Casinga. We were together with Charles Namholo, and when I saw Nujoma's book, I was looking forward to learn what he wrote about me. He said that I was used by the Germans to mislead the youth league, not South African spies. I was waiting for him to say this but he did not. We were already three months in Tanzania when Oshatotwa was attacked, and they said it was Shipanga who sent the Boers to kill our people; even Casinga. One day I met the late Bishop Auala, who informed me that people were afraid because I was sending Boers to kill our people at Casinga. I told him, "Bishop we were arrested on the 21st April 1976 and Casinga was attacked on the 4th of May 1978, unless I was an owl."

From prison I left for London. My wife was having English citizenship, although she was a black South African. I still believe that Nujoma is an accident of history. Well that's my view, but others might think that he is a great leader. Look, I understand people, and when I came to organize, I knew that people would not really take more because they were tired of white South African rule. I guess that is why they followed him.

One thing I have to make clear is that, I have never been attacked by any SWAPO member, no one ever attacked me. I traveled to Windhoek, went to a braai, I had bodyguards with me, I visited my mother and met many guerillas but they never dared to do anything. To hell! I am fine and I am on my side, let him (Nujoma) stay where he is, but the majority in the cabinet, like Nahas, Nyamu, Helmut and the late Dimo are still friends of mine, they still used to come by.

I am now out of those party politics, I am out, and I left as I came. For as long as the generation of Vambos who worked on contract are still active, you can never have another political party besides SWAPO, until such a time that at least the young people are no more emotional about the Boers; and as soon as they start to think that the country could be lead other ways not only having an uncle Sam there as a leader. The problem is also the elections, because elections are not free and fair, especially in Ovamboland. I can say that the elections coming in 2009, SWAPO will win, but in 2014, SWAPO will win on condition that this congress of theirs changes; I don't think

SWAPO is going to be the same again.

The divisions are real, and you know these guys like the Hidipo Hamutenya, confessed and they saw it was true. We are lucky to be here in a liberated country today, thank God there were 435, otherwise if they were Angolan they could have been killed a long time ago, and this is because Nujoma never tolerated any decent people. Of course they won't say it, because for them it is their bread which counts, for as long as they are in cabinet.

The Nujoma gang will always win because he has money. People like Hidipo and Hage Geingob are mega millionaires but they are cowards. They can not stand up for principles, so they say wait for a minute but the time is over. Well I must say that I think my contribution was not in vain and I think the people of Namibia are very good people, although they are being led by psychos.

You asked if I was not suffering. Not at all! As far as I am concerned, I have got friends in Germany and England, and they have occasionally requested that I go over and give lectures in universities and colleges; maybe go and stay there.

It seems like Nujoma and I will never reconcile, when I met with Nujoma in Lusaka, I greeted Kaunda, then I moved on to Nujoma but he never received my hand, I didn't care less I just moved on to greet the next person.

The country is now liberated but it was not because of Nujoma, and the so called national reconciliation he is using, that is pure blackmail. Only the white man likes him and thinks that he is a good man. Look, this man was fighting everyone; I don't think he is a good man.

## Simon, Loide

*Loide Simon got into contact with PLAN fighters at an early age. Although her decision to go into exile was aborted she continued to assist PLAN fighters inside the country. She is among the many Namibians living in the northern part of the country who witnessed the liberation war as it was fought on the Namibian soil. She risked her life by harbouring guerrilla fighters and in the process endured harassment from the makakunyas. The support ordinary people like her gave to PLAN fighters enhanced their capability to further the armed liberation struggle.*

My name is Loide Simo. I was born in 1963. I was born at Onamafipa, Oshivanda sha Nghatanga. My father was married to fourteen wives, but towards the end there were only three and I only saw ten of them. We were thirty seven (37) children and we were four siblings from my mother. With regard to household activities, each day when the sun sets, the sons of the first wife had to set fire at our father's fire-place called Olupale in Oshiwambo. Some boys could milk the cows while the girls pounded mahangu. I was the youngest amongst my siblings and my mother was my father's senior wife. It was a good life and all the children had respect for my mother.

The senior wife called munyalombe in Oshiwambo was the one who made major decisions such as distributing mahangu to other wives when theirs was finished, and decisions such as which cows should be milked or should not be milked because the calves would get thin. At our house, all these decisions were made by my mother. My father was always away because he worked in Windhoek and in the absence of the man of the house, all decisions were made by the first wife. My father worked for the Railway. My mother was in charge of everything except the authority for opening the mahangu containers. For that, she had to get permission from the second wife. The hierarchy for the wives was arranged this way: There was the senior wife who was in charge of making decisions and supervising all household chores, instructing others to start ploughing and so on. She was the one responsible for distributing milk and milk-fat to others. There was also the second wife and she was the one who could instruct the senior wife to open the mahangu container and distribute it to others.

I think we had over one thousand herds of cattle and they used to be grazed at Ohaingu and at Oshivanda sha Nghatanga. Not all of the cattle were kept at the homestead but some were kept at some other people's homesteads.

Other duties of the senior wife included the responsibility for ensuring that the kids had set fire both at olupale and in her bedroom. In the absence of other wives she took care of their children. She further ensured that all other wives were home before sunset. After supper everyone would gather at olupale for the kids to be educated on how to behave in life, to respect the elders and to avoid fighting so that they would not bring debts in the family.

The second in charge is the second wife known as Mweehaka in Oshiwambo. Her responsibility merely ended at instructing the senior wife to open the mahangu container and distribute to others. There was also a third wife called memetotende.

She, like all other wives after her, did not have any power. They were all regarded as assistants of the first wife.

To me polygamy was good because one could have many siblings to turn to for support, especially when having problems. In those days we did not if there are illegitimate and legitimate children, all the children were seen as legitimate, including those born from unmarried women.

Currently I am still in contact with my other siblings. In 1990 one of my children passed away and during that difficult time all my father's sons and daughters that were alive came to support me. There were two men and four women who came. We are no longer many because most of them are now dead. The women helped me with kitchen logistics while one brother brought enough money to buy an ox for the funeral, but we spent it on other necessities since my husband had already slaughtered one.

We really have a good relationship with my siblings. Our father is now old and lives alone at his house, and we all look after him by taking turns to do so. If he is sick, one of us must go and stay with him at his house. Another thing you should note is that my father was born alone. At some point most of the women left him. I just realized that all of them divorced him except my mother. Perhaps they had problems or maybe he could no longer afford to support them financially and that is why they left him.

I was already in a polygamous marriage and had no problem with it. We should consider that women are many compared to men. At least a man should legally be married to two women but not more than three women. Nowadays death is so common and if one wife dies the remaining one would take care of the dead ones kid's. Like myself, I am taking care of my own six children and those of my husband with another woman but I don't regard them as illegitimate children. I think it is a good thing because even if you go to my house you won't be able to tell which ones are my children and which ones are not mine because I treat them equally and they love one another.

I became politically conscious in 1980, at the age of 18. That year we were told to meet the PLAN fighters from Zambia. We went to them at their hideout in nearby bushes. We met the PLAN fighters at our village Onamafipa. We were eight, five boys and three girls. One of the boys known as Kaima ka Sema, arranged food for them while we the girls provided them with Oshikundu. Before we met them, we heard rumours that guerrillas or PLAN fighters were "cooked", so we expected to see people very different from us, maybe looking like wild animals, but instead they were just normal people like us. After asking them questions we decided to join SWAPO.

We heard many things from the Boers. They used to spread it even in their songs. The guerrillas asked if we wanted to go to Angola. We told them that we wanted to go and myself I told them that I wanted to go because I wanted to be "cooked". Apparently when one was "cooked" he or she could kill the Boers without any problem. There after we started singing revolution songs and they promised to take us to Angola.

We did not see the guerrillas for the whole week till one Sunday while we were going to church at Etayi. They told us that the journey to Angola would be the following day (Monday). We gathered and on Monday morning we walked into Angola. Inside Angola the guerrillas and the boys we went with, came up with a decision that during the journey each girl should have a boyfriend. This scared us and we ran away. We were only three girls from our village but we were joined by many other boys and girls on the way. I think they were going to choose the big ones because some of us had attractive bodies.

We did not know whether they were joking or not, because when we heard of such a decision we pretended to go to pee behind the bushes and we ran back. There were nine of us who ran back. That night we came to sleep at Onheleiwa church. We did not want boyfriends; all we wanted was to go into exile not to get boyfriends; and besides, in our culture, for people to start dating, a man should propose to a woman first, and the woman should decide to accept or not to accept the proposal, not just that silly decision they made. Those who were comfortable with such an arrangement proceeded with the journey. From the church we went back to our houses and we were asked where we were but we did not reveal anything. After that I just continued cooking for the guerrillas but I did not get the feeling of going into exile.

We were cooking for different groups of PLAN fighters and not the ones we were supposed to go in exile with. Our mothers always instructed us to cook for them saying they were their children from Angola. All the women used to call the Plan fighters their children. The Boers troubled us often. I can remember of an incident when one PLAN fighter, a friend of my brother came to visit him at our house as my brother had recently arrived from Windhoek where he worked. The Boers came looking for the PLAN fighter and my mother managed to hide him in the mahangu container. She sealed the container with mud and throw ash on top of the seal so that it could look dry. The Boers searched for him everywhere especially in my brother's bedroom and did not find anything suspicious. Since they did not find anything, they decided to assault my brother in order for him to tell them where the PLAN fighter was hiding. My mother intervened and told them to leave her son alone saying there was no PLAN fighter in her house. They eventually left us and went to Oshalembe where they assaulted a man and took one boy hostage. It is alleged that the boy never returned back home to date.

In 1982 I got married traditionally and went to live with my husband at Okatana and in 1984 we moved to Omadiva, Omuthiyagwiipundi. I got married to Richard Shiponono. Within three months of our stay at Omadiva, some PLAN fighters came to our house and we started assisting them. During that time my husband had wounds on his hands from the handcuffs, because he was once arrested for transporting the PLAN fighters in a car belonging to the company he worked for. Some of the PLAN fighters we assisted are still alive such as Nekokolo and Festus Shimwiya. We hosted them for a long time. We kept them in our house. They used to go to the battles and

come back home. Sometimes they would go to Angola and come back to our house upon their arrival in Namibia.

One day we helped one of them called Kandali who was slightly injured by a land mine. He was planting the land mine and it accidentally exploded and hit him on top of the eye. We directed him to Mr. Nakaziko's house for Nakaziko to drive him to Angola while we remained with the rest of them such as Nekokolo, Angula, Shimbudu, Mehomato, Anani and others. In total they were about ten (10) but some of them did not like mentioning their names. We hosted many PLAN fighters but they never came together. They liked coming one by one except when they had to come and eat. In some weeks only five would come and the others would come a month later.

I kept on assisting them and one day, one of my neighbours reported me to the Boers, informing them that I was cooking for the PLAN fighters. That day the Boers came at night calling my name saying they were PLAN fighters so, I should wake up to cook for them. Fortunately, I was already aware of their presence in the village thus, I told them that I won't wake up and I do not cook for PLAN fighters. I further lied that I was a relative of Governor Kamanya Kalwenya, just to save my skin. It was the Makakunyas (Koevoet). The PLAN fighters were away at that time because during the day I had sent a boy to inform them not to come nearby because the Boers were around.

Governor Kalwenya was a certain Koevoet member from Oshakati but originally he was from Omungwelumbe. He and I were not related I just used his name to save myself. When their plan failed they started harassing my daughter by trying to take her with them. I did not allow them; I kept on pulling her back while they were also pulling her to them. My son was also yelling at them saying "I can see you, and I have taken note of you because you want to kill my mother."

Their commander ordered them to leave us alone. From there, they went to one old woman's house called Gwapeetu, kidnapped two girls and raped them. They put up a tent where they spent the night having sex with those girls. One of the girls really tried to resist although she was powerless but in the morning we could see the signs that she really tried to fight them back. They also raped the other girl but the other one really fought back because when we went to the place where the incident took place, we could see the signs that she was struggling to avoid the rape. She was gang raped by six men. She now works as a police officer in Windhoek and I only know her as Nandago. She later went into exile. The other girl's name was Kalumbe Amateta and she leaves at Onambeke in Ondonga. They raped all the girls and as I said they first wanted to rape my daughter but we pulled her off as they tried to put her under them. We pulled and bit them too. The next morning when I went to the Gwapeetu's house to inform them of what happened the previous night, they told me that they too did not sleep because her girls were raped. I saw the girls and Nandago looked terrible and she was also stabbed with a knife on the shoulder but the cut was not so deep. Actually the girls were five (5) in total but we don't know if they were all raped or not. You know kids are sometimes shy and cannot tell you everything.

The villagers gathered and we went to hitch-hike because we wanted to go and report the matter to their bosses at their base that was nearby. We got a lift from a certain man from Windhoek who was driving a microbus. At the base the man who took us there was the one who did the talking and he was very furious. He decided to take the raped girls to the hospital in Windhoek. They were treated and he returned them. After the girls returned from Windhoek, Nandago stayed for a little while and she went into exile with Nekokolo a (PLAN fighter). This was in 1987. In the same year, there was a battle at Okapuku village and Nehomato (also a PLAN fighter) was shot and severely injured on the foot. Tate Nandago from Okapuku brought him to us on a donkey. His foot was smashed so we stitched it.

We used needles and threads and of course with the assistance from our nurse, Meme Helena who worked at Omuthiya clinic. We put him on our donkey and took him to Nakaziko's house for safety. Meme Helena used to go to Nakaziko's house to treat him. Nakaziko's house was at Ekulo. Other PLAN fighters such Hangula and many others came to assist the injured comrade.

We don't know if the foot was fractured or not because we could not see it inside. He wanted us to amputate his leg but we refused since we did not have the knowledge in that field.

One day I sent my daughter to take fat cookies and Oshikundu to the PLAN fighter at Nakaziko's house. She went with Sister Helena and before they could get to the house where the PLAN fighter were, they heard loud gunshots. The Boers had started a battle against the PLAN fighter. It was terrible and they came back running. My daughter was so terrified that she lost the fat cookies.

After the battle ceased, one of the PLAN fighters by the name of Hangula came at mid-night to inform us that comrade Anani and other four had been killed in the battle. Only Hangula and Nakokolo survived. On the day they came to inform us, my husband had also arrived from Windhoek.

After two days the Boers showed up again dressed in black caps. That day we did not rest as another fight broke up between the Boers and the PLAN fighters. Some of the PLAN fighters died and those who survived captured sixteen (16) guns from the Boers and they gave them to us for safe keeping. We went to the battle field to see how many of the guerrillas were killed and we found only one corpse. We went back home to get tools so that we could bury the corpse but when we returned to the place the body was no longer there. We really don't know what happened to it we assumed the Boers came back and took it with them.

My husband was very much concerned about the guerrillas as they were dying too much so he came up with an idea of providing them with some walkie-talkies. Walkie-talkies are two-way-radios used by Boers for communication purposes. My husband wrote his proposal and sent Nekokolo and Tomas Shimwiya (all guerrillas) to Angola so as to get approval on the suggestion. They came back from Angola with a response letter written by Danger Ashipala in which he indicated that he was supporting that good initiative. My husband went back to work and started stealing walkie-talkies

from their factory in order to supply them to the guerrillas. The walkie-talkies really helped the guerrillas to survive as they could hear all the Boers' conversations such as the areas the PLAN fighters were to patrol and so on.

In some cases the PLAN fighters would also partake in the Boers conversations, pretending to be the Boers. If the Boers planned to patrol the area where the guerrillas were, the guerrillas would avoid it by lying to them over a walkie-talkie saying the guerrillas were at another place not the one the Boers had planned to patrol. Since my husband was employed and could not travel to the north whenever he felt like doing so, I used to go and collect the walkie-talkies from Windhoek and deliver them to the PLAN fighters.

At one time we brought one wounded guerrilla known as Kashako to our house to be treated, and he got captured by the Boers. That Kashako knew all the activities of our house and when he got arrested he informed the Boers that they (the Boers) were failing because someone from Omadiva had been supplying the guerrillas with walkie-talkies to listen to the Boers' plans. I was lucky because at that time I was in Windhoek. I went and collected the walkie-talkies and I received a telephone call from Oshakati informing me that someone had reported me and that the Police Officers would wait to arrest me at Oshivelo. I was carrying 20 walkie-talkies because they were small.

I thought very fast on how to get those walkie-talkies to Owamboland. What I did was I packed the walkie-talkies at the bottom of the bag and on top I packed all sanitary pads that I had used while I was on my menstrual period. At Oshivelo, all the bags were searched including mine. When the Male Officer opened my bag, all he could see was disgusting things full of blood. He did not search further, instead he just said sorry and told me to zip my bag and take it away. I actually came up with that plan because I knew that all police officers were male.

I used to give the walkie-talkies to my neighbour Tate Samuel Shivute since he had a car so that he delivered them to the PLAN fighters. He is still alive and lives in Omadiva. He was just assisting like we were doing. Towards independence, a certain Mr. Neweya from Onanona, Oshigambo brought one PLAN fighter to our house. Actually Mr. Neweya also used to do the same work as us. The work we were involved in was assisting SWAPO guerrillas. He brought this guy with his ford car. The purpose of the visit was for me to supply the guy with walkie-talkies. Since I did not know them and they also looked fat and clean, I was not convinced that they were SWAPO people. I was convinced that they were makakunya trying to play tricks on me. So, I told them that I had never distributed walkie-talkies to anyone and I never had them at all. They tried to convince me and requested me to call one of my neighbours for support since I was scared of them. We waited till school was out, and then we went to pick Tate Samuel Shivute from the school where he worked as a teacher. As you know that a man is just a man, Samuel interrogated this man till he was convinced. The guerrilla even showed him all the houses where he used to be assisted. I then got into their car and we drove to Windhoek so that we could buy the walkie-talkies. The

last walkie-talkies we gave were the ones used at Okahenge and were confiscated by the Boers, where some of the PLAN fighters were killed. Before the battle, the PLAN fighters came to collect the 16 guns that were captured from the Boers and then went to Okahenge. This was a relief for us at least that the burden of safe keeping the captured guns was off our shoulders.

The story of the walkie-talkies ended. The woman who reported me to the Boers tried to have me killed again, and this time around she wanted me to be killed by the PLAN fighters. She accused me of dealing with Boers. We had a solar power in our house, so, she accused us of having been given that solar power by the Boers. One day while at home with my children, some PLAN fighters came to me and asked me to cook for them. After they ate, they said to me that I had to die because they had heard that I used to assist the Boers and that we were supplied with electricity from Etenda by the Boers.

I asked why they were saying our power was from Etenda when there were no wires or poles from that place to my house. I told them straightforward that I knew they were not guilty but the guilty party here was Penchafo. They instructed me to send away my kids to the neighbours. My kids were very small but I just had to put the youngest one on the back of the elder one and I told them to go the neighbours' house myself as I was going to be killed. They made me carry a spade to where I was to be killed. We walked up to the middle of mahangu field, and I decided not to walk further. I told them that I have dealt with other PLAN fighters in the past but they had never treated me that way. They instructed me to dig a hole supposedly my grave and when it was at the knee length they ordered me to stop saying it was deep enough. One of them started asking me questions such as where I originally came from. I told them that I came from Oshivanda sha Nghatanga. He further asked me who my husband was and I told him that my husband was Vincent Richard well known as Shiponono. After that he ordered others to leave everything for a while and called two of them to come to him.

Maybe he was the commander, I am not sure but the point is that two of them went to him. I don't know what they discussed but I think he told the others not to go ahead with the plan of killing me because after their conversation they just took the spade from me and started covering the hole that I dug and told me to go back into the house with them. When we went inside the house I think my blood pressure was high so I started feeling cold. They injected me twice and I went to get back my kids who were still on their way to the neighbour's house. After that, three of them disappeared and only five of them remained with me. I am not sure where they went but I think they left completely because I never saw them again. The remaining five stayed with me the whole day because I was still weak and they were going away and coming back. In that process of them going and coming back, they came back with Nekokolo and he was the one who told me that I was lucky not to have been killed because among the PLAN fighters who came to eliminate me, two of them knew my husband. One of those two guys was a brother to Shiponono and the other one was

a brother to Gerhard Appele and they were the ones who realized that my husband could never work with the Boers. That was the moment I started shivering.

The woman who used to report people had also reported a certain Himba young man who resided at her house. As a result of that, the young man's arm was cut off by the PLAN fighters. That brother of Shiponono was Mika Anolte who was well known as Nyama ya Kaboy. He never returned back from exile because he died. My dear, that was how I survived death, but I continued assisting the PLAN fighters till independence.

As for the double informer woman; she is still alive and her name is Penehafo. She is a Wambo woman and she was in between. I think she started to get in contact with the PLAN fighters after they slapped her. I remember there was a time she was slapped by the PLAN fighters and that is when she started hanging in between, but the fact is that, initially she was for Kandove.

Well, now all that is over we are just happy our country is finally independent.

## Tshihome, Isaack

*Isaack Tshihome is a legendary in the Namibian independence struggle. During the 1950's and the early 1960's, he worked with the groups of Toivo Ya Toivo, Eliaser Tuhadeleni (Kaxumba Ka Ndola) and Simon Mzee Kaukungwa in mobilizing and recruiting people to join SWAPO. He was the key figure in the struggle and was the one who identified Omugulugombashe for the training of SWAPO fighters.*

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My name is Isaac Tshihome. Tshihome is just my father's nick name. His real name is Elago Ipinge. I would rather say my name is Isaac Elago but, now people are used to calling me Isaac Tshihome. My father acquired the nick name a long time ago even before I was born. Tshihome is an Oshimbadja name. My father named himself after a certain chief from Ombadja.

I was born at Onghilila, where I grew up. There were no schools in that area when I was born. I grew up just as a cattle herder. I only came to know about school and church after my father passed away in 1925. I was baptized in 1935 then I went to the South (Oushimba).

I started school at Tsandi. It was more like a literacy school because once one had learnt how to read and write that was the end. In the south I went to Windhoek. I worked at a certain shop owned by a German man called Huberfiet. My work was to travel with him to Swakopmund and to the farm, just to accompany him because there were already people responsible for cooking and washing the dishes at his house; and at his farm, there were workers for milking the cows and cutting the karakul.

I could not speak any German or Afrikaans. The only language I could speak was Oshiwambo and Otjiherero. I learnt Otjiherero from the Ovahimba people. This area from here up to Kaokoland was occupied by some of Ovahimba. Ovahimba are also Ovaherero. My boss could speak Otjiherero. He could even speak Damara>Nama language.

I never worked as a farm worker. At the beginning of Hitler's war, during 1937 to 1939, the Germans were arrested and taken to Pretoria. I stayed in Windhoek till 1940. In July 1941 I went home to visit. That year there was a terrible drought. So I decided to go back to the south in September. This time around I went to Oranjemund.

In 1942 while I was still at Oranjemund the Hitler's war gained momentum and many people at the North (Owamboland) were recruited to go to the war. As for the Ovakwaaludhi tribe, no one was recruited to go to the war because our king Mwaala gwa Nashilongo refused that his people should be taken to war. He said that he could not have any of his people forced to the war between the Boers and the Germans, especially since they were fighting for the land that did not belong to them. Our King died in 1965 due to old age. Now some of the Owambo people were interested to partake in this war, just to earn money. The king released those that wanted to go to war on their own free will.

In 1946 I came back from Oranjemund and never went back. This was also a drought year. Instead of going back to Oranjemund I went to Francis Town. I went via

Tsumeb, Grootfontein to Murorwani and crossed a small river between Namibia and Botswana. I was with Yemhoka and Kaxumba. I travelled with the same Kaxumba ka Ndola you know and the late Kalimusa, and Ya Toivo. Ya Toivo was by then a graduate from Ongwediva College of education and, he was fluent in both English and Afrikaans. From Francistown we went to Livingstone via Mafikeng. Before we went to Livingstone we stayed in Mafikeng for a year and some months. From Livingstone I went to Johannesburg.

Those days we only walked. Even to go to the south one had to walk. There was no alternative. We tied our stuff on sticks and carried them on the shoulders, as there were no roads or cars. To go to the south there were two alternatives to access the train. One could either walk from Uukwaludhi to Outjo railway station, or walk from Uukwaludhi till Tsumeb railway station.

We never experienced any problems like being attacked by wild animals or anything of the kind. Natural death could occur on the way due to sicknesses or exhaustion. For instance Mr. Abner Sackaria Tshikongo died on the way between Tsumeb and Grootfontein due to sickness. In such cases you just bury the body and proceed. Another man by the name of Tshimbakutu Iiyambo also got sick on the way and died, while his friend known as Johannes Eloolo also got sick and died later at Tsumeb hospital.

It took us about six days to walk from Uukwaludhi to Tsumeb. I think the distance from Uukwaludhi to Tsumeb is the same as the distance between Tsumeb to Kavango.

I worked to Johannesburg for a year and four months then I came back to Oranjemund. Ya Toivo and Kaxumba KaNdola went to Cape Town. Kaxumba came back home to Endola. He was very good at playing the piano. He used to play piano during church services and, that was how he acquired the name Kaxumba Kandola

because he was the only one who could play a piano (okaxumba) in the whole area.

His real name was Eliaser Tuhadeleni.

I met Herman Ya Toivo, Titus Ilonga and Sackaria Uukonga in 1938 here at Tsandi. As we travelled and worked in different places, I was lucky because I did not work on farms like others. The system was like this: people were employed on a 12 months contract and the salaries were paid in three different ways. The monthly salary for the first four (4) months was fifty five cents (R0.55), and middle four (4) months were paid at eighty cents (R0.80) per month and the last four (4) months were paid at one Rand (R1.00) per month and then the contract comes to an end. As I said, I was lucky I was earning R1.60 per month. It was even worse for those that worked for the government, especially those who were working at Tsumeb. They were earning R1.70 at the end of every fourth month.

So after coming in the 1950's I stayed here at my house and attended our monthly meetings at Ya Toivo's house. These were SWAPO meetings. These meetings started with political divisions. The Hereros formed SWANU, the Wambos had their Ovambo People's Organisation (OPO) and Caprivians belonged to CANU for Brendan Simbwaye although these divisions were wrong. The Boers took advantage of this and

ensured that we totally got divided. We used to meet at Ya Toivo's house at Ondonga and I had to report back to my people in my area. We discussed how to rebel against the colonial rule so that we could get freedom. We started with membership cards. I was at Uukwaludhi, Lameck at Ongandjela, Natanael Lotto for Okalongo, Kaxumba and Kaukungwa were at Uukwanyama and Ya Toivo was at Ondonga. The fact remained that all of us always met monthly at Ya Toivo's house.

I was responsible for recruiting new SWAPO members and convening awareness and information sharing meetings. I had to inform the people on the new developments after attending our monthly meetings at Ya Toivo's house. Ya Toivo was our Chairperson in the entire Owamboland. I later decided to concentrate on recruiting new members and as such, we appointed Lameck from Ongandjela to be our chairperson for our area. I introduced him to Ya Toivo. I concentrated on issuing membership cards. All the people issued with cards had to pay and I always kept record of both membership and the finance. I had to send all the records together with the money to Ya Toivo.

It was very easy to recruit. People joined in big numbers and there was no resting. I was assisted by Mr. Jonas Nhinda who volunteered to help me with the issuing of membership cards so that I could focus on addressing meetings. Some joined because King Mwaala was also for SWAPO. When I addressed the meetings I would be accompanied by some people from the royal family such as Tshithitu Mwaala and this encouraged many people to join. By the time the King died, most men and women had joined SWAPO. The King was against the whites and he was very wise. After Hitler's war, the whites came to ask him whether he wanted the former government or the current government.

He was very fast at thinking. He thought carefully and said to them: "A few days you were in war were you not?" They said "Yes we were". Then he said, "If the old government was defeated by the new government and vice versa, will it be possible for me to be led by the government that I want even if it was defeated?" They said, "You will get the government that you want." He said that he wanted the new government. But again they said to him that all the other people wanted the old government and he was the only one for the new government. To this he just responded that they should not provoke him because what had eaten King Iipumbu (King for the Kwambi tribe) was not satisfied yet. He added that they should not approach him the way they approached Iipumbu. He asked them why they asked for his opinion if the majority wanted the old government.

One mistake that he made, he asked what sort of people they were. He questioned them whether they really wanted to uplift this country or not, adding that he had heard about the existence of America and that he was of the opinion that America was worth discussing issues with, rather than them.

When they heard the King's opinion about America, they concluded that he already had the FIFI-O (United Nations) ideas. He did not even die here. In December 1959 after the Old location event his nephew got arrested while at the farms in the South.

From there the Boers came to the king's house and everyone from the house was moved out of the house including the king's wife. The wife was abducted and taken to another village and the king was left alone at home. All men were beaten up. The reason was because of his statement about America. They took him and killed him by starving him. He died on Sunday. We went to visit him that Sunday afternoon.

In the 1960's I was still there. When the United Nations sent Kalapio from Phillipine to South Africa, I was one of the Namibians who went to meet him at Ondangwa when he came to Ovamboland. All of us who used to meet at Ya Toivo's house went to meet him. That meeting never materialized though, because we boycotted it.

He was a UN Representative. After his mission failed he was replaced by Mr. Odendaal. He just advised them to convene a meeting at Owamboland. It was decided that the Ovakwanyama should have their meeting separately. So we were divided into two parts. Oukwanyama and Okalongo had their own Commissioner, Commissar Strydom. The Ndongas and the entire west starting from Uukwambi, Ongandjela, Ombalantu and Uukwaludhi were under the leadership of Commissioner Hans (nicknamed Shongola). They decided to hold meetings separately, one day at Uukwanyama and the following day at Ondonga? They wanted to keep us apart. They knew that if we attended the meeting together, the group will be too big and we could unite. That day when they held a meeting for Ovakwanyama, we also held our meeting at Ya Toivo's house. At that meeting we were preparing placards that we were to use the next day at the meeting. The placards were written: "Verwoerd jy is laat" meaning "Verwoerd you are late, we don't want your government"

Coincidentally it happened that SWAPO chairmen from Okalongo, Kahumba Kandola and Kaukungwa also planned like our group. They also boycotted their meeting, the one for Okalongo and Oukwanyama. Just to top the cake, the rain also started falling after a short while and people were no longer interested in the deliberations because they were convinced by Kaukungwa and his comrades. Most of the chiefs were disappointed and angry with Kaukungwa and his comrades. That was now in 1963. The chiefs were supporting the Boers and they wanted SWAPO supporters to be killed. After the Boers were boycotted at Oukwanayama they rushed to Ondonga. The King of Ondonga at that time was Martin Ashikoto. He was also a big supporter of SWAPO. Anyway, the Boers just went straight to the king to inform him that the meeting at Uukwanyama could not take place because it was boycotted by Kaxumba Kandola and Kaukungwa. They further said they were afraid that Kaxumba and others might come and disturb the meeting at Ondonga thus, they advised the King to deploy some of his gunmen at the Ondonga/Uukwanyama borders to ambush and kill Kaxumba and his group should they decided to come.

The King agreed but, he did not mean it. After the Boers had left, he sent one of his right men Mr Karel Israel to Ya Toivo about his discussion with the Boers and advised Ya Toivo to send a messenger to inform Kaxumba and Kaukungwa that if they were coming to the meeting at Ondonga they should come via Ondobe and Oshigambo but not the usual way as there would be gunmen ambushing them. The gunmen were

black people. They were not officers as such but these were just the King's people that worked for him. The gunmen were just deployed to trick the Boers, just to make them think he was supporting them.

The next morning people gathered and nominated three people to be spokespeople for the group. Ya Toivo, Lameck and I were the ones nominated to engage in discussions with the Boers on behalf of the group. The discussion was to request the Boers to allow us to talk with them. These were discussions about the Odendaal group consisting of five men. These discussions were taking place at Ondangwa. We went into the governor's office, then known as Comfara's office. I then requested Comfara Kambatutu to refer us to the Officer that could grant us permission to have a meeting with the Boers that were deployed at the borders to kill Kahumba. He asked why they wanted him killed. At that moment Kahumba was already pointing a finger to Kambatutu, ready to attack. The situation was getting chaotic but Ya Toivo intervened by standing in the middle of those two saying to Kambatutu that the land and country had owners. Kambatutu then granted us permission to talk to the Boers. Ya Toivo directed us to call the whole group and start the meeting. The group came with the placards. Some people raised their placards and some wore them around their necks and we started singing. We were singing SWAPO songs. Around 9h00, the youth and people who came to Ondangwa to look for jobs as contract workers joined us to boycott the meeting. The Kwanyamas also joined us and we started singing strongly. There was just no order as from 09h00 to 12h00. People just started moving away one by one.

After 12h00, we the leadership gathered near Ya Toivo's house and delegated someone to go and brief our comrades in Windhoek that we had boycotted the meeting. These comrades were Jason Mutumbulwa, John Ya Otto and others. After that we went back to our houses.

Later in 1963 the Boers sent another committee under De Wet to address the situation. Their plan was to firstly convene a meeting for Oukwanyama and Ombadja only, and then the second meeting at Ongandjela for Ngandjela, Kwaluudhi, Mbalautu, Kolonkadhi and some of the Kwambi that resided close to Ongandjela. The last meeting was to be held at Ondonga for the Ndonga and Kwambi. Fortunately God was on our side because we picked this information somehow somewhere. We were overwhelmed by the Boers' schedule of meetings, Lameck and I did not know what to do and Ya Toivo was far away at Ondonga. I also recall that in 1962 comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba and late Eliander came to us at Ondangwa and we went to hold a meeting at his house. This was Eliander Mwatara the Kwambi one. We met Pohamba when he came back. That time Pohamba came from Tanganyika to Windhoek. When he came to Owamboland we went to meet at his house. At the meeting we organized ourselves for those meetings scheduled at Uukwanyama, Ongandjela and Ondonga. Eliander went back while Pohamba remained behind for these meetings. At the meeting I took Kaxumba with me to Uukwaludhi to give me

support at Uukwaludhi because the Kwanyama at least had strong pillars such as Jackson Kashikuka, Kaukungwa and Pohomba and I was just with Lameck.

On the way, Kaxumba came up with an idea of not just sitting idle and be killed defencelessly but to go look for poisonous arrows from the Bushmen. That same day that we went to look for the poison the Kwanyamas boycotted the meeting. That was in 1963 and, the meetings were organized by De Wet. It turned out that the chiefs were provided with guns by the Boers to shoot Kaukungwa and others that would attempt to boycott the meeting. Immediately when Kaukungwa stood up to rebel, De Wet ordered the chief to shoot Kaukungwa and his clique apparently because they were disturbing the meeting. Kaukungwa and his clique ran. When the chiefs aimed to shoot at Kaukungwa who was running at that moment, the general public immediately blocked the chief by standing between the chief and Kaukungwa. This meeting was held somewhere in Ohangwena.

Our Bishop, Leonard Vilho Awala who was at Kavango for a church meeting, heard rumours that there was a meeting at Ohangwena and many people including Kaukungwa were killed by the Boers at that meeting. He also heard that the next meeting was to be held at Ongandjela. On the day of the meeting Kaxumba, Lameck and I went to Ongandjela for that meeting. The meeting was held at the King's house. The Boers also came in a big number. The Bishop also arrived from his trip just before the meeting. He arrived wearing his gown and walked straight to where De Wet was seated. I think the Boers were happy. They thought it was an achievement for them that even the Bishop was attending the meeting. When the Bishop stood in front of Mr. De Wet, he shouted three times "De Wet Nel! De Wet Nel! De Wet Nel! Tell me what you did at Uukwanyama yesterday!" He ordered me as well as Lameck to take our bicycles and go home to Ukwaluudhi. He also ordered Kaxumba to load his bicycle into his car so that he could drive him to Uukwanyama. That was the end of those meetings. The Boers never ever tried to call for meetings in Owamboland again. Those meeting were aimed at convincing people to accept the divide and rule system. It was Kalapio who sent the Boers to come and convince us to accept the divide and rule policy.

I think you are aware that the Boers had no power in Namibia till 1961. It was on 31 May 1961 when the Boers came to power. Still in 1963 before De Wet came here I invited my comrades. From Walvis Bay I invited the Late Maxwilili, comrade Ben Amathila and Abraham Frank. From Ondonga I invited comrade Ya Toivo and, from Uukwanyama I invited Kaxumba, Kaukungwa and Hifikepunye Pohamba. We all gathered at my house. From my house we went to Ipinge Mwaala's house before he was chased away from his house. From there I went to hold meetings at Uukolonkadhi at Onaabako and Eunda villages. We were just on the move. Later we went to hold a meeting at Ombalantu and then at Oshakati. We were still together with Hifikepunye Pohamba at all those meetings. After we had completed our schedule we departed. Those from Walvis Bay went to Walvis Bay and Hifikepunye also left. That was the last time I saw Hifikepunye till he came back from exile.

I called these meetings to introduce the crew to our members in the villages so that they could know whom to contact in each area. In 1964 I was here and there were no major activities apart from small meetings but I was still in contact with comrade Ya Toivo and others.

In August 1965, some men came. The Delegation consisted of John Ya Otto Nankudhu as group Commander, Simon Shihungileni as Deputy Commander, Patrick Shali Lunganda as Secretary General, Mesag as Deputy Secretary, Angula Shaanika general soldier and Nelson Kawela also a general soldier. In total they were six. Ya Toivo tipped us of the arrival of the delegation. Our delegation went to meet them. I represented Uukwaludhi; Lameck Ithete from Ongandjela, Ondonga was represented by Ya Toivo and Mateus Joseph Jubeka while Uukwanyama was represented by Kaxumba and Imaneul Shifidi. We met them at Uukwanyama at Kaxumba's residence. We discussed proposals on how to fight the Boers. One proposal was to see the possibility of elections between SWAPO and the Boers led government in Namibia. Another proposal was for us to take up arms should the Boers refuse the elections. We had a war plan in place, which was mainly to train the youngsters for the army and send them into exile afterwards. We also targeted men who came for holidays from their work in the south. I myself was trained. I got trained at our campsite in the forest. Our first camp was in the forest at Otamanzi village in Ongandjela. We went to camp there after we came from Uukwanyama with Kaxumba and others. We went to camp in the forest because we were being looked for. We did not stay long and we never camped at Uukwanyama. Initially we wanted to, but we realized that it was not safe enough for us. We also considered that once the Boers got us there, they would be in a good position to turn us against other tribes. We thought that they would easily convince other tribes that it was only us the Wambos fighting for the land.

We wanted to influence other tribes as well apart from the Wambos. Thus, we also solicited support from the Ovahimba from Kaokoland. At that time we were still wanted, even the general public was aware of the situation we were in. As I have said, we were in the forest at Ongandjela; we later decided to relocate to the area between Ongandjela and Uukwaludhi. This area was not so bushy like the one at Ongandjela. So we eventually got caught. I think the people heard that we were camping in the forest. Thus, they came to search the entire forest with rifles.

Even the Kings/Chiefs were looking for us, including King Uutshona. You people tend to think it was the Boers alone that were fighting SWAPO but it was not like that. Many people were not SWAPO supporters. It is only because of the reconciliation that we associate with them today.

The day we got caught John Ya Otto was the one caught first. He was away from the campsite strolling in the forest. He was caught on his way back to the camp site while he was busy eating some lily stems in a pond when he was found by a group of men with rifles. They spoke to him and I guess they could sense that they were talking to a soldier. He had a pistol. After chatting they left to Ongandjela maybe to go and

inform others. Meanwhile, Ya Otto also returned back to the camp to inform us what transpired and suggested that we move to Uuvudhiya.

Uuvudhiya was also not a good place to hide because it is a very clear area with few plants. Its vegetation is mostly grass. Even if we got attacked it would have been easy for the Boers because even their vehicles could easily reach there. I was not comfortable with the area at all. I went to my cattle post at Omugulugwombashe. At Omugulugwombashe I went to inform Iipenge Mwaala that I was camping with my group at Uuvudhiya but we wanted to relocate to Omugulugwombashe. I also went to Shikalepo to inform him and to send him to Kaokoland so that he could inform Joel Mandjendje that the situation has changed and we were on the run and, also to inform all my allies including the Ovahimba that our group was heading to Omugulugwombashe. I went back to Uuvudhiya and gave the order that we split and move to Omugulugwombashe. By that time the Boers had already camped between Uukwambi and Ongandjela at Iikango ya Namwandi area. They had set up their tents and they also had vehicles.

After we split, some of my people went to stay at Elondo village. Patrick, Mesag and I went to stay at my house for three days to rest and prepare our departure. The evening of the third day, I sent some of the group members to start moving to Omugulugwombashe. They had to go before us because they had to walk and we could follow later by bicycles. We used the bicycles to transport our ammunition. When we arrived at Omugulugwombashe we were received by Iipenge Ya Mwaala and then we went to camp. That evening Iipenge slaughtered a goat for us. That was still in 1965.

In 1966 we experienced difficulties because we lost contact with Ya Toivo. I was running up and down looking for some boys to be trained. We trained them at the camp basically on how to use the gun. Those trained could decide for themselves whether to go into exile or to go back to work at the south.

Those that went back to work in the south were given an assignment to plant objects on the railway lines to overturn the Danva train exclusively transporting the Boers from South Africa to different stations such as Mariental, Windhoek and Swakopmund. We also assigned them that should any of them find a gun they should take it and shoot the Boers quietly at night and, that they should do it so carefully that nobody should be suspicious. However, we urged them not to kill innocent Boers such as businessmen and the honest church leaders. We wanted them to target the Police, the magistrates and the Danva train.

The directive was passed by the commanders in exile. We were also directed to assist others. For instance, if I heard that a certain area was to be attacked by the Boers, I was obliged to go and assist those who were to be attacked. If I didn't, nobody would trust me again. I would be seen as sell-out. This implied that if ordinary citizens were attacked by the Boers, all those who were trained would come out and assist. Omugulugwombashe was located in my cattle post. It was me and Tshikalepo who

identified that area because it was near my cattle post. The area is just behind that house you are facing. That house belongs to my son Malakia.

Among the Ovahimbas we had Joel and Keleopas from Kaokoland first on a familiarization visit and then for further arrangements. They would arrange for at least one hundred (100) men from Kaokoland to come and join our group at Omugulugwombashe. The men from Kaokoland would be transported till Omakango and they would walk to the camp. We had our own food. The Ovahimba would pretend to be just ordinary people selling livestock. We had decided that once the group got big we would split into two groups. Let us say if Ovahimba were one hundred, fifty of them would join one group and the other fifty would join the second group. The commander in charge of a combined group of Ovawambo and Ovatshimba, the Secretary and one soldier would go to Kaoko Mountains. The second group consisting of the second commander, the deputy secretary, one soldier and another combined group of Owambo and Ovahimba were to remain at the campsite. The logic behind combining Owambo and Ovahimba was to maintain unity.

We couldn't get more Ovahimba involved because the arrangement got messed up by a group of ten (10) soldiers/messengers who were delegated to come and look for the group of soldiers that we were with at the camp. They were to go to Okaholo (labour contracts). They wished that three of them get contracted to go work at Tsumeb mine, two get contracted to go work at Swakopmund and Walvis Bay, two or three get contracted to work at Windhoek, two would see how to get to Owamboland and, one of them who was also multilingual would remain in Kavango for coordination between Namibia and Zambia. The Plan did not materialize as some of them including Castro Ronald Shuuya were arrested while at the recruitment point. Some of them including the one who was to remain in Kavango managed to run away but, he was arrested later. I really can't recall the name of the one who ran away but he is still in Windhoek. I think his name is Lazarus. He tried to escape into Zambia but did not succeed as he was sold out by the pastor. Actually he went to hide in the pastor's house. The pastor had pretended to sympathize with him while at the same time he informed the Boers to come and arrest him. The pastor betrayed Lazarus by persuading him to wait for the people at the house to cook for him. In the meantime he was going get a canoe to ferry him across. While Lazarus waited for the food the Boers were already all over the place. He was arrested and taken to the others.

The others that were to go to Owamboland escaped with their belongings and walked towards Uukwanyama via Nkurenkuru. On their way they were followed by two guys on bicycles. These were sent to spy on them. After spying, the guys on bicycles went back to get vehicles. The vehicles followed them and deployed a group of men ahead to surround and search the area while the vehicles were lighting the area. One of the two soldiers panicked when he saw the light and a troop of soldiers. He popped out of where he was hiding and they got arrested.

At our camp we were not aware of the situation on the other side even though we had radios on. After they got arrested, they were tortured and interrogated. These were the

guys that were sent to follow the group of John Ya Otto. It was Castro Ronald Shuuya and others. After the torturing and interrogations Castro Ronald Shuuya decided to reveal that they were sent to follow the group of John Ya Otto Nankudhu, while the other nine decided to seal their lips. None of those nine revealed any information. He gave this information to the Boers and as such he was taken to Windhoek to assist the Boers to search for John Ya Otto's group. He came up to Ya Toivo. The Boers brought him to Owamboland. You know that he was a commander back in exile? His position made it easier to spy on the whereabouts of John Ya Otto Nankudhu and his group. When he went to Ya Toivo, he informed Ya Toivo that he was sent to look for comrades. Somehow Ya Toivo was suspicious about Castro and pretended not to know where Nankudhu was. Ya Toivo wrote a letter to Lameck and me to inform us about Castro. The letter was just informing us that there is our comrade who wanted to join us at Omugulugwombashe. Since we were in the forest, the letter was received by my wife. Luckily my wife had seen him with Boers. Castro and the Boers would come together but he would leave the Boers in the field and go in the houses alone. He was always with Swanepoel but he would leave Swanepoel behind so that he could go in my house to ask my wife. My wife just told him that she did not know anything about the people he was looking for. Since Castro did not convince my wife he went to mislead the headman Mr. Paulus Shiyagaya. They sympathized with him and accommodated him thinking he was from exile and it was necessary for him to stay at their house till he found his comrades.

Castro kept on looking for us for about a month. One day he went to my house to ask my wife to lend him one of the bicycles apparently for him to go to Angola. My wife refused as she did not trust him at all. She pretended to be furious with him saying she wouldn't give him her bicycle since she was not the one who sent him to join SWAPO. We in our group with Kaxumba and others started asking ourselves questions. We couldn't figure out how possible it was for someone from exile like Castro to be walking around freely with no fear for the Boers. It was quite questionable. Castro walked back to his Boers. This I have to tell you straightforward. When he went to the Boers, they sat to arrange for an attack on Omugulugwombashe. They prepared in collaboration with Ongandjela King Uushona Shiimi together with Shikongo. Those two were at the centre of the arrangements. I am telling you about things that I know very well.

That was now in August 1966. We held a meeting on Wednesday 23 August here at our place and, on Thursday 24th another meeting was scheduled for Ongandjela. The Boers planned to attack Omugulugwombashe. We were lucky that Ya Toivo got this news on time and wrote us letters both to me and to Lameck to notify us that Omugulugwombashe will be attacked. He informed us so that we should vacate the area. We received Ya Toivo's note early on Wednesday and a short while after Ya Toivo notes we received another note informing us that there will be a meeting at our traditional authority office that day and another one on Thursday 24th at Ongandjela. On Wednesday I went home to attend the meeting just to get information while John

Ya Otto and Kaxumba cycled to Lameck's house at Ongandjela to get information about the deliberations of the Ongandjela meeting. They were not to attend the meeting though. They were to spend the day in Lameck's house and send Festus Kanangolo to listen on their behalf.

It was the Boers who were addressing the meeting. The day of the meeting I woke up early. I reached the traditional Authority exactly when the sun was rising. When I got there I found a white car driving off from the office. I then went to Malakia to ask him at what time the meeting was to be held. Malakia informed me that the meeting was scheduled for 15h00 in the afternoon because the organizers first had to address another meeting at Ongandjela scheduled for the morning hours. I went to rest at an anthill in the forest. I just wanted to sleep for a few hours before I could go for the meeting. I guess I was too tired so I over slept. When I woke up it was nearly 16h00 and the meeting had started at 15h00. I rushed to the meeting venue and I could see the white car from a distance. I could also see a few people such as our Pastor Haufiku and Abed Sheya.

When I got to the entrance I found Joseph Jeremiah with a bicycle loaded with boxes. Jeremiah came for holiday from his work at Orangjemund and he just came to the Office to collect his things that he had sent there while still at Oranjemund. He just coincided with the meeting, but he was refused to attend that meeting. Thus, he decided to wait till the meeting was over so as to hear what transpired in the meeting from those who attended.

I went inside the yard to Pastor Haufiku and Abed Shuuya who were seated outside. They all looked distressed and asked me where I was coming from. I asked them where everybody was and they informed me that the rest of the people were inside, in the meeting. Shuuya told me that the situation was worse than the one of 1959. There were many people at the meeting including some of my people. I can recall people like Imanuel Taapama, Siliva. I can't tell you many names or how big the attendance was as the meeting was held inside. Kambatutu and his secretary sat together. Kambatutu was one of the organizers. His secretary was Alpheus James and I think he is still at Ondangwa. Those that were seated outside were those chased out of the meeting but they decided to wait outside. Kambatutu's real name was Duuthurde.

The meeting came to an end. I was standing in front of the door when the door opened. People came out and they were murmuring asking one another: Where is Isaac coming from? It was those coming out of the meeting who were asking. When Kambatutu saw me, everybody including the blacks suddenly moved away from me and went to lean against the fence, watching me from a distance. Even Malakia went to stand together with the group but, Pastor Haufiku and Abed Shuuya remained where they were.

Everybody was watching me. I greeted Kambatutu and James while they walked past me. After we had greeted one another, Kambatutu and James went inside the office. The crowd was still watching me when Malakia came to where we were standing and Pastor Haufiku asked him what the meeting was all about. Malakia

did not tell us anything. Instead he just said he was going to go inside the office to ask what Kambatutu wanted. I then got on my bicycle and moved away from that place. It happened that Kambatutu was waiting for Castro to arrive as well as a certain Andreas Naupu from Ongandjela who were hiding somewhere in the bushes making arrangements for Omugulugwombashe attack. They arranged that on the day of the attack, the helicopters would fly alongside the pipeline from Uukwaludhi to Uukolonkadhi and the troops would be deployed around Okanyanga area to surround us. Anyway the plan did not work because Castro warned us. He was also a man on his other side. You know that the area near Omugulugwombashe was just a forest with no houses at all. There was just one isolated house near Omugulugwombashe forest located alongside the earth road that I made up for the donkey cart whenever I went to the cattle post.

Castro who was in the company of his colleague walked up to that isolated house. He left his colleague and went inside the house and found a girl pounding Mahangu. The house belonged to Matty Kandongo. Castro asked the girl if she knew the way to Omugulugwombashe and, if she knew a man called Ipinge Mwaala. When the girl indicated that she did, Castro directed the girl to rush to Ipinge Mwaala's house at Omugulugwombashe to inform Mwaala so that Mwaala could in turn inform us to vacate the forest as the Boers would attack us the next morning. The girl was quiet for the moment observing Castro as he was leaving. She noticed that Castro was with another man. After they disappeared the girl ran to deliver Castro's message to Ipinge Mwaala. Mwaala came to the forest to inform us.

Apparently the Boers were now boasting at Ongandjela that they would attack Omugulugwombashe on the following day, the 25th of August, and would wipe us all out because they had the support of Castro who knew a lot about us since he was our commander from exile. That day Lameck approached David Shikongo to assist us by moving us away with his car. Shikongo had no problem at all, that day at night he went to drop us somewhere. We decided that all our belongings would be shifted to another place in the bushes but we would set the fire first and go stand far and be on the alert. We knew that it was impossible for the Boer's vehicles to reach where we were. To make it worse, they would suffer more should they decide to walk. We were sure that their access to the forest was very limited unless they used helicopters but, helicopters were the least of the concern because the area was made up of deep sand. We were of the opinion that even if the helicopters dropped the shells, the explosion impact would not be severe because they would land on the deep sand.

Our concern was only if the Boers came with the war tanks but we were advised to remain calm and that if for instance the tank was coming to me facing me directly I should just aim at it and target the driver. The commanders were the ones who advised us that way. But we decided not to move. Nankundhu wanted to give us a ridiculous advice. He advised that it was better for us to leave the forest and go back to my house so that he could remain behind with the soldiers that is, John Ya Otto Nankudhu and his group.

Nunkudhu's proposal agitated the men very much. One of these men is still alive and his name is Kalola. Kalola rejected Nunkudhu's advice immediately stating that they (Kalola and other elderly men) were the ones who sent the soldiers in exile to go collect the guns in order to fight the colonial regime in Namibia. Kalola further concluded that maybe Nankudhu wanted to send them back home in order for him (Nankudhu) and the soldiers to surrender themselves to the Boers, something that he was not ready to accept.

Kalola further asked Lameck, Kaxumba and I whether we were prepared to go back home so that the Boers would come and drag us out of our wives' beds to kills us. The three of us decided that we would not move and that it was better for us to die so that the world could hear that we needed our land back.

The next morning we did not have a parade neither did we eat breakfast. We just went to prepare ourselves for the attack. We were advised that when the helicopters arrive we should not shoot them while they were up but rather wait till they had landed exactly as the passengers had thrown their items down and had all jumped off then we should start firing immediately before they sort their items. The idea was that if you shoot one of them before they sorted their weapons and other materials, they would definitely run away and then we would capture some of the items.

That Thursday nothing happened and our commander was just standing at the fire place at the campsite.

John Ya Otto Nankudhu was the commander. The whole day of that Thursday he had been waiting at the fire and nothing happened. We were very hungry and thirsty. Late in the afternoon, we couldn't contain the hunger anymore so we cooked. I think we were seventeen (17) people. After waiting for the Boers to show up and they didn't, we went to patrol around and when we were sure there were no threats we went on the parade.

It happened that on that Thursday the Boers had deployed vehicles around the area. They used the bridge to go to Omugulugwombashe but the general public did not see them. Those that saw the vehicles thought they were hunting for the elephants. That was the Thursday afternoon. On Thursday evening when it was quiet the Boers went to Nakatse Paula to direct them to an earth road that goes to the west. Nakatse referred them back to the bridge saying they would get the way to Uukolonkadhi once they were at the bridge. He unknowingly gave the information that they wanted when he said to them that the only way was only at the bridge since the earth road in the village was the one used by Isaack's donkey cart to his cattle post at Omugulugwombashe.

This was a big blunder but we would not blame him because he knew nothing. He insisted that the earth road was small and not fit for the Boers vehicles since it was just being used by Isaac's donkey carts. The Boers indicated that they would just use that small road and asked him if they could find that small road. They took him in their vehicles to take them to the road and after they reached the road they told him to go back home. He left the Boers without detecting anything. That night the Boers camped alongside the small road.

The next morning we were saved by Iipingee Shaanika who had arrived on Thursday from Windhoek for a holiday. On Friday Shaanika was going to Uunkolokadhi to drop his colleague's things when he suddenly saw the Boers camping. He cycled to where they were to find out what they were doing there. When the Boers saw him, they thought it was one of us spying on them.

They arrested him. He was very fluent in Afrikaans that the Boers were shocked and even asked him who taught him how to speak good Afrikaans. He explained that he was from Windhoek and that he just came for holiday. Despite the explanations, the Boers did not release him as they were convinced that he was a spy.

That Friday morning, I am sure it was around 6h30, when it was time to wake up we could hear the sounds of the Boers' vehicles. The Boers had awakened us. They came to this side of Uukolonkadhi's direction with Castro and Forster in the vehicle which was in front.

Apparently on Thursday, eight helicopters and two planes from Walvis Bay via Hentiesbay landed at Ruacana. The workers at the airport were shocked and terrified. It was also alleged that the Boers from those planes and helicopters had been practicing shooting the entire afternoon but we at the other side were just in the dark. We were not aware of all those things.

We prepared ourselves and we were cautioned that if the planes invaded our camp and they had red flags it meant that they were war planes. We should not wait for them to fire us first, and instead we should be the first ones to fire. When the plane came trying to photograph the camp the soldiers resisted so it flew a bit high and went to offload the Boers far from our camping area.

Our people started scattering and nine (9) captured including Sackeus Iipika and Kalola Niilege from Uukwaludhi, Ndjaula Mbabi Shaningwa from Uukolonkadhi, Ismael Shitilifa a brother to Mwailepeni from Uukwambi, Simeon Namuganga, Titus Shilonga Kashuku, Shilotola Hanyanya, Festus Heita, Angula Shoonyeka from Uukwanyama. Only two were killed in that attack and no one was injured. I was at Uukolonkadhi when the attack took place.

I think the Boers managed to escape. After the attack we were scattered and I did not see any of my people. Later that evening I met Nelson Kavela and we went to Shatilwe's house. Shatilwe's wife cooked a pumpkin for us. After we had eaten I sent him to Amuga Ekoto at Uukwambi then I went to the forest. At the forest, I bumped into our commander Nankudhu. I found him in the forest. You know that at that time we were scattered. Jerobean Olavi Nambinga and Patric Lungada prepared our pepeshas at night and walked to the offices where the Boers slept. Lunganda was injured on the leg and could hardly walk so we took him to Pastor Sebulon Ekandjo's house to recover. Pastor Sebulon is still alive and he is still there at Oniipa. For safety reasons, I eventually decided to send Nankudhu and Jerobean Nambinga to Okakundu at Pineas Kalomo's house. I urged them that the next morning they should take their belongings to Lameck's house at Ongandjela.

From there I came back to the forest and found Kaxumba and Paulus Shikolalye. It was tight as the Boers were busy patrolling the way to Omugulugwombashe as well as the boundaries of Omugulugwombashe and Uukolonkadhi.

This time I hid the bicycle so I had to walk. We managed to pass through to Ilyateko village. We spent the day under a tree at Ilyateko because it was not safe for us to walk freely. After sunset we walked till Uukwaludhi, then to our village. When we came to my house, I left Kaxumba and Shikolalye outside while I went to my wife Cornelia to prepare some food for us. After we had eaten I took Kaxumba and Shikolalye to Barakias Uusiku. Barakias advised us to spend only that night at his house and move to Ogongo village at Otto's house. Before we went to Ogongo, we went to check on Lungada who was still recovering at Sebulon's house. He could still not walk properly so I left him there and I took Kahumba and Shikolalye to Ogongo. I returned from Ogongo to go look for Shatilwe. It happened that Ipinge Shaanika who was arrested by the Boers thinking he was our spy, was not released. He was detained together with my people who were captured from Omugulugwombashe.

I had dropped Nankudhu and others at Okakundu village at Pineas Kalomo's house so that they could go to Lameck's house at Ongandjela and then Lameck could also drop them somewhere. They were being escorted to a safe place to hide and make proper arrangements to fight the Boers. How could they go back to Zambia or Tanzania when the war was not over? We all had to move from the forest and assemble. As it was the only way we could identify who was missing or dead.

While I was running around trying to gather the people, Ipinge was taken to Pretoria where many people were detained. As I told you that Ipinge was mistakenly arrested when he came for a holiday, he did not know some of our soldiers except those from our village such as Ndjaula and Kalola. He was a SWAPO supporter but not a soldier. He was just arrested as the Boers were convinced that he was a spy. He was arrested, taken to Ruacana and then to Pretoria.

He passed away some time back. He was taken to identify the soldiers who were captured at Omugulugwombashe and he could only identify a few who were from his area because truly he did not know the rest. The Boers were confused very much because when they asked the soldiers one by one if they knew Ipinge, only those known to Ipinge knew Ipinge as well.

The Boers then asked the detainees who sent them to the forest. Namunganga became stubborn and answered them straightforward that they were sent by Sam Nujoma and that they went there because they wanted to get Namibia back. He asked the Boers whether they did not know for sure what took the soldiers to the forest or they just wanted to waste time with silly questions.

On the other hand, Otto Hanyanya got scared. He told the Boers that he was misled by Isaac and Kaxumba who invited people to the forest apparently to teach them English. He changed the direction like Castro. He was then taken away from the group to assist the Boers and Ipinge was still being questioned. Ipinge explained that he worked in Windhoek and he only came for a holiday when he was arrested. The

Boers asked him whom he worked for. Ipinge provided them with documents and some of the documents had contact details for the German guys that he worked for. After the Boers acquired contact details for Ipinge's boss, they telephoned him to enquire if he had a Wambo worker by the name of Ipinge. The Boss said "Yes, Ipinge works for me but how did he get to Pretoria"? The Boers just called Ipinge to the telephone so that he could speak to his Boss and from there they realized that Ipinge was telling the truth. Ipinge and Hanyanya were then flown back to Windhoek. Ipinge was released so that he could go back to Owamboland and prepare himself to go back to his work while Hanyanya had joined the Boers. He worked for the South African army till independence. He was made a big commander and recruited all his sons such as Joseph Hanyanya in the army.

After independence he invited me and Maxwilili to his house to celebrate the 26th of August, and I was just wondering why he would invite us who are far from him, when he could not invite Kaxumba and others who lived at Uukwanya as him. I live far at Uukwaludhi while Maxwilili lived far at Walvis Bay but, Hanyanya invited us. I wonder why he did it. That was how it went.

I was not arrested but we were just on the run as the Boers were always looking for us. We were so scattered and did not do much. In 1967 we gathered ourselves and planned to attack Oshakati. We sent some people including Jerobeam to Onatshikutsha Raban and Otuwala area near Oshakati to go and spy on the Boers. We wanted our spies to find out where the Boers were sleeping so that we would attack at night. It happened that some people saw the spies and they knew they were our people who were involved at Omugulugwombashe. Lukas Utoni who worked at the traditional authority and others who saw the spies followed these guys to check which houses they went to. The spies went to ask in several houses at Oniimwandi, Otuwala and Onatshiku.

Lukas Utoni went to inform the Boers that he saw our people. Later that evening the Boers went straight to those houses where our messengers went. People fled their houses and we also ran.

I was with our group, the SWAPO group with the likes of Kaxumba, Nankudhu and others. None of us was arrested. The arrest only happened after we bombed Oshikango. It was just around that time. We wanted to make the attack severe. We were no longer sure how to attack in Uukwambi area but we specifically decided that Luckas Utoni be eliminated. We sent the young boys to go to his office before he knocked off.

We heard that the women were cautioned that whenever they saw strangers asking them for water or saying they were looking for their donkeys, it meant that those people were some of us who were at Omugulugwombashe. Nevertheless we told our boys to just go and beg for water and say they were looking for donkeys. When they went to his office, someone went to call him for them, a certain Mr. Ndjeke Ashipala who was the Head of the Office and was seated outside. Since he was told that the people that requested to see him were some strangers looking for donkeys, he

immediately took his rifle because he was sure it was our people. Our guys ran away before he got out of the office so that he could chase them. This was a tactic plotted, because we wanted him alone. When he asked where these people were that wanted to see him, he was shown that it was those guys running away. He chased after the boys a certain distance firing at them. Ndjeke Ashipala also came following his colleague. The boys started firing and Ndjeke threw away his gun and ran away. Lucas was just screaming begging the boys not to kill him saying: "please uncles don't kill me". The boys just responded saying "today you have to die". The women ran away, they did not even close their cuca-shops. The boys confiscated Ndjeke's gun and finished Luckas.

Then we later attacked Oshikango where Kambatutu ran away. Festus Nangolo was arrested at Oshikango. In 1967 was the year when John Ya Otto Nankudhu was arrested during the incident of Ongwediva. Eliaser Noah Tuhadeleni "Kahumba Kandola" was later arrested at Ondonga at Olukonda, Gaus Shikomba, Joseph Ipangelwa and Namunganga were also arrested but I am not sure which year it was; it was either 1967 or 1968. The last group which included Lameck was arrested in 1969. I was arrested on the 9th September 1969. I had spent three years in the forest.

So since 1965 I could not come home. How could I go home if we were in a war? None of us went back home. There was no turning back. We had to remain in the forest. Lameck and Nelson Kavela were arrested as well in June 1969. Ya Toivo was arrested before me. He was arrested on the 9th September 1966 and I was also arrested on the 9th September 1969. I was immediately taken to Ondangwa where they also brought Nujoma, the father to President Sam Nujoma and, we were later transferred to Kavango. At Kavango we were put on trial and, were sentenced to death. We were then sent to Pretoria. We were supposed to be killed there but we were very lucky because we got there a few days after someone had already been killed. His name was Nicolo Shivute from Onimwandi. I think he was killed in July. He was killed by the government. It was a government directive that all of us who were arrested had to be killed. We got lucky because the Boer that was tasked to kill us refused to kill us. He said the top officials should kill us themselves. Nujoma however left me there.

I should thank Samuel Kapapu from Oshakati. He was goodhearted. Even now when I go to Oshakati I do make a visit to his house to greet him. He had a high rank in the police. I was sent to Robben Island but I stayed in the Pretoria jail for six years. I was only released in 1978, before Cassinga was bombed, followed by the group from Cassinga and then the group of Ya Toivo and Eino Ekandjo and, then the group of John Ya Otto Nankudhu, as they were the last ones to be released.

Yes the country is now free, but it was made dirty by some of you. I mean some of you who are not honest, those aiming to be selfish and uplift yourselves forgetting that you were forgiven. Another issue is the path that you are pursuing hiding yourselves behind the culture. Yes, culture does exist but it does not imply sucking others blood. The danger is on the youth. They are very much into atheism and jealousy. If they see one of their peers progressing they would want to destroy that person or rob him of his wealth through traditional leadership.

I should tell you that it is not everybody that can be a leader. Leaders were born leaders. Today you will find a person who considered being a leader but at the same time that person is a liar, a traitor and a crook. What is the use of one being a leader if he/she poses those qualities? That is why I will never be tried or be tempted to take my case to traditional authorities. I can give you an example of how the traditional authorities operate. Their trials are not fair at all. They are very biased. For instance, if the disputes are between an ordinary person and a chief, it is the ordinary person who will be found guilty, even if the chief is the guilty party.

We were awarded medals in recognition the part we played as freedom fighters. I even have my uniform with me. During the commemorations of the 26th of August, I do wear my uniform if I feel like doing so. I was one of those who were awarded medals at Omugulugwombashe. We were each given a pepesha with its bullet.

I know Nankudhu. We once met at Kahumba's tomb, me Lameck, Ya Toivo, Malakia Shivute and Shihungileni, and we deliberated about the Omugulugwombashe area which is a party area. The issue here is that there are people who want to build their houses inside the historic area or plot reserved for the party. These people whom you call traditional leaders want to give away that area. They are fighting me indirectly.

We once proposed to Paulus Kapia, the former Secretary for Youth League for our pond where we used to drink to be fenced off, but up to now we have not received any response. We also want our Dig-out to be renovated so it can become something like a national monument. I want the area to be fenced off.

The assistants to the king or the traditional chiefs whatsoever are the ones messing up the things, as they are the ones trying to give away the historic area to those applying for mahangu field. These chiefs are bad and jealous of SWAPO Government. They want to see that area and SWAPO collapsing. As you can see that we are old now and about to die. I can guarantee you that if Nujoma dies as well as Pohamba, there will be trouble. You can just see that even when we hold SWAPO meetings, some people are still reluctant to attend because their conscious cannot allow them. They did not expect that one day things would be different.

## Tweya, Tjekero

*Tjekero Tweya is currently a deputy Minister of Trade and Industry. He is one of those young Namibians who kept the spirit of liberation alive inside the country during the 1980's. His political activism started when he and others decided to establish a NANSO branch at the Academy in the mid 1980's. He went on to be a founding member of the Namibian National Teachers Union and finally the head of the union federation in the country after independence. Due to his political activism he was appointed Deputy Minister of Finance prior to his current portfolio.*

Thank you very much comrade Tonchi. My name is Tjekero Tweya. Talking about the days of liberation struggle, the security forces' document that you find in Pretoria will have the colonial names like Velome Tjekero or Velem Tweya but this would be the same person.

I corrected or reversed what was unjust to me just before independence when I decided to change all that. I was born as Tjekero before I was forced to be Willem. So I reversed that so that in the apartheid documents from the security forces you will find that they still have that name that I referred to as comrade Velem, but Tjekero Tweya is my name.

I was born in the 1960's and fortunately that is when the liberation struggle started. I grew up in a small village in the Mukwe constituency. I attended school at Ndiyona Roman Catholic Mission and from there I went to Rundu Secondary School where I studied until 1980.

In 1975, three of us were about to leave to join the liberation struggle but unfortunately we had some hurdles so we couldn't go. We went as far as a village just opposite Mukuso on the other side of Angola and it was the year that Angola gained independence and we had Savimbi as a link.

We were told that we had to go to UNITA and they would take us over to SWAPO because they were apparently working together for the liberation struggle of Angola and Namibia. There was a holiday in March when we were preparing ourselves to leave. We went down and we got information as I said. We were told that we could come and had to bring our blankets and few clothes because we would spend some days there before the truck came from Zambia, which we were to board to go to Zambia and join the other comrades.

When we came back we did not know what excuses to give at home in order to get the blankets and secondly we were afraid that if the canoe which was the traditional boat that we were to take, did not come back our parents would be in trouble with the Boers. These two at the time were serious problems for us and we couldn't go but obviously we were hot in Politics. That was 1975 but then in 1980 I finished my Matric.

We were obviously as active as usual. We were taught by the military, you know SADF, the South African Defense Force. We had our own difficulties at school where

we were tagged as trouble makers, SWAPO communists and all kinds of names but we were determined.

In the village where I grew up and where I went to school, we were encouraged through the harassment by the South African Police at the time, because they were always looking for a certain gentleman called Mbambo. Mbambo used to appear at times on a very nice lawn next to a helicopter. He had an appearance of a baboon and another appearance of a gentleman and so we knew him. We were also with his children at the time. Mbambo was from the Royal Family. So, this in fact encouraged us to believe, he kept us motivated. You know he was our role model then when we were in Primary School. We were happy and I can mention here that we were growing up with that inspiration.

When they came back from exile, he came back alive. They also restored his dignity as a member of the Royal Family. I was a teacher at the time I was one of the think tanks that used to do the planning there and through the courts and all that.

I am happy that at least I could do that, but not many people knew about my small contribution to the preservation of traditional authorities. He left in the 1960s through Botswana and all those kinds of things, but he was always around and he used to come and visit his wife and his family, but I never met him. On that day when the Boers heard that he was around, we at the mission had a tough time because they were asking every one there to show them where he was, as they had heard that he was there. So we had the same harassment.

After finishing my Matric in 1980, I started working in Kavango region as an assistant youth organizer or cultural officer. Then in 1982 I got a job at Rossing Uranium and I worked there until 1984 as an assistant divisional personnel officer. What this position meant under the Rossing organizational structure was that, my responsibilities were like those of an industrial relations officer. I would act between the employer and the employees. Technically it was to serve as a buffer so that the employees didn't get too disorganized or to get too organized. We organized them to have employee representatives and we used to conduct their elections.

I left Rossing and then went to the then Academy for Higher Education. But there was one thing that motivated me to leave the nice package at Rossing. It was in 1983 and there was a very high failure rate in the Kavango Region. I think there was only one or two who passed their Matric, and so I asked myself that I was there in Swakopmund, having a nice life and a nice job but what was my contribution as an individual? There was a good reason why I had to ask myself all those questions. At school from say from Standard VII up to Matric I was a prefect. So I still had that leadership legacy that people would always look up to in me and ask where that prefect was. So I always had that link and that is why I had those questions in my mind.

So I left Rossing and came to the academy. But I must mention that in 1984 when NANSO was born I was also at Dobra, St Joseph and I was fortunate to be one of the founder members. I still have that photograph with all the founding members

of NANSO, its somewhere among my stuff. So I was a founder member of NANSO when it was launched at Debra.

But getting back to the then academy, the Regime did not allow us to establish a NANSO branch there. But as a mature student since I was already working, it was under my leadership that we put enough pressure to have a NANSO branch at the then academy. Now our rationale at that time was that we were preparing ourselves as teachers here at the academy and thereafter will be going back into schools where the students are organized but us as teachers we would be disorganized. I was not happy with that and that's why we had to push for NANSO to be launched as a branch. At the time the NANSO president who was still at the University of Western Cape assisted us in establishing the branch. While studying at the Academy, I was somebody who was committed to the liberation struggle and obviously we were members of the SWAPO Youth League. We certainly had to use the educational institution as a battle field and that was our motto. The PLAN combatants were out there in the field and we were here. We always felt that education came first then liberation followed, but after we deliberated on the issues involved, we said that they had to go hand in hand.

And because they went hand-in-hand we decided to use our education institution to fight the enemy. We had army teachers who were teaching us, and we thought we could fight them here and so we did not have to go all the way into the bush. We were aware that the struggle was waged at all fronts: diplomatically, militarily and everywhere possible.

We were aware of many Namibians who left the country for better education opportunities, so we said we would take advantage of the situation and would turn the institution around. For instance, we as students' leaders and activists we decided to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the UN Resolution 435. Basically what happened was that the students' leaders of the SRCs said we were going to celebrate but we were going to turn the country into an ungovernable situation. We started organizing from the Academy as the highest institution to the other schools in the country and we had a National school boycott. We challenged the policies or the laws of the regime. We challenged the then Minister of Justice, who was from the interim government, and we were charged with a very notorious law at the time because of instigating school boycotts and all the other strikes.

One incident that we experienced was that at the Academy they identified thirty nine (39) of us as trouble makers and we were detained under the known AG9 at the time. They locked us up without trial especially if we were taken from this place next to the airport called Seeis.

Obviously when you are detained there under that Act, they stripped you naked. You are only left with an under-pant whether it was winter or summer, they did not bother but we were there. This was the time we had the whole Academy, including the professors and everybody, united. There was that solidarity because our actions were peaceful and we could not understand why they treated us the way they did.

We ended up in jail because we had decided to have an awareness campaign and a strike for the whole week. As the organizers we were humiliated because the Koevoets came and looked at us as if we were small dogs locked up, but that did not discourage us.

We had a very strong lawyer who was also a wellknown human rights advocate. He and his other two colleagues decided to defend us and they did their best to get us out of there. But obviously because all the activities were seen as SWAPO, although they were really NANSO activities, despite of its affiliation to SWAPO, the lawyers could not get the necessary funding to defend us.

So services and studies at the Academy were disrupted, and that was the time the professors and many other staff joined us. Even our former Attorney General Ruppel was with us. It happened that most of us who were in the leadership were locked up. The regime could not take the pressure from students, the community and everybody so they were desperate. What happened later is that we got lucky because the judgment was not against us. I remember the then rector Professor Buitendof saying very clearly in court that, "Either you release these people or you charge them. As a rector of the institution I cannot contain the pressure, and there is no teaching taking place because the students want their leaders." I think that was the reason we were released us after a week or two.

But certainly I would like to emphasize that even though I did not go into exile, we worked very hard as student leaders to keep the fire burning in the country. Various people came to find out for themselves whether SWAPO was indeed alive inside the country. We kept SWAPO alive in the country; but we also had specific objectives and that was to target our own groups and that was the youth and the schools.

We used that as the battle field to advance our objections to the South African Defense Force camps or barracks that were located near the schools, especially in the Northern parts of the country. They would come and put up the military barracks next to the school so that if the PLAN combatants attack them then they would first attack the schools. So we rejected this and protested against all those tactics.

The other thing was that my movements were monitored especially when it was time for me to go for holidays to Rundu. For that reason I could never travel with other students, but fortunately coming from Rossing I had my own car and I would always travel during the night. So when everybody had left by bus, I would travel during the night because during the day they used to check. I would sneak out at night and in the morning I am in Rundu. But despite all these manoeuvres it did not help much. I remember one holiday which I spent in solitary confinement at the Mashare Military camp in the Kavango Region. The entire holiday just alone, one trousers and one everything and I never bathed. One unfortunate thing though was that the people who were guarding me were the small boys that I knew.

To them it was like, here you are, you are educated and we are not but we are in charge here. Sometimes I had death threats from those whom I knew who were in the Koevoets. They would come around here and they would say, "Look, you people

have come to school and are mixed with many other students so if we are in contact I will not tell which one is this or that I will just blast every one of you.” So that is partly what I experienced at the time but there are many other events that I can still remember. For instance, one such experience was when in 1985 four of us decided to go and see for ourselves what was happening in Zimbabwe. Since Zimbabwe had got its independence in 1980 the Boers had been spreading false rumours about the country. It was those kind of apartheid propaganda and we said well, we know it’s not true but we would like to see for ourselves. We went as tourists ourselves the four of us. George Mayumbelo was one of the four. I cannot remember the other comrades. So we were going to Zimbabwe via Katima Mulilo. But unfortunately that was where our experience comes in. If you are from Kavango, you must have a permit to travel to Katima, so we had to secure that. That in itself was a deliberate attempt to control movements of people so that they could know who moved where and who went where and why. I remember also going to Oshakati and we needed to get a permit to get into the white suburb and that was really for control purposes. It was also for apprehending suspects, as it made it easier to get hold of a particular person. We had to go through all that.

When we came back from Zimbabwe after such a good experience we came through Katima again. I think the place to get our papers was closed including the police station so we drove without that permit up to Kongola, but we were sent back just to get that permit, and that was some 120 km. We were lucky they did not know us, otherwise they would have locked us up. This was in 1985, five years before independence, so we had to do that because we did not want to be locked up..

After finishing my studies in 1988 at the Academy and with that entire struggle that we had we were still determined that the country would be free. When we got into the teaching profession we felt that the teaching fraternity was too fragmented. Because we had these various ethnic authorities, the teachers associations were also organized at that level. We had the Kavango Teachers Association, the Caprivi Teachers Association and the Owambo Teachers Association; then you had those under National Education which was here. These were the Hereros and the Nama / Damara and so on.

In 1989 I started to teach. Now with the spirit that we had as students from NANSO we had to transfer exactly the same attitude if not exactly the same zeal. So in 1989 we started to join our colleagues who had been talking about having one Teachers Union, just like the students Union. I went to teach in Rundu and that was where my first posting was as a young graduate. Around the 11th or 12th of March 1989 we managed to get all teachers in the country, Black, White and Coloured. We gathered at Shipena Secondary School in Windhoek and we said that we were not going to absorb the various teachers associations and form a federation; each individual who wanted to join us had to denounce their ethnic associations before being allowed to join.

Then we had that first congress on that 12th March 1989 which we named the *Namibian National Teachers Union* (NANTU) congress. We had come out with this

name and I am happy to confirm that I was one of those who coined the name. We had already brainstormed about it in Rundu and therefore the name NANTU originated from that side. We also had this Logo. We thought it was now time for the country to be free and it was our responsibility as teachers to decolonize the mind as Ngugi wa Thiongo had said. Also the literature from Ngugi, Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" and all other progressive literature gave us motivation that our role would be to decolonize the mind and to start working right away. That was where the NANTU motto "Educate to liberate" came from. That was how NANTU was born.

That was my first year of teaching and I was still teaching in Rundu, very far from Windhoek. I was informed that I was one of the founder members and elected to the position of National Chairman. Marco was the President. I got elected over there because some people knew me from the days of the Academy and from the days of NANSO and then some of the colleagues present said, "We want people who will lead the Union, no matter who they are, as long they are Namibians and we know they will deliver." So this is how fortunately I ended up being the first National Chairman and indeed I could not disappoint them. So NANTU became a giant. We confronted the regime at the time and our position was very clear that we were not there to be recognized by the colonial regime. We said whether we were recognized us or not, the people had given us the mandate; they had recognized us and we were going to meet their needs. That was how we challenged them.

Quite a good number of our members were fired from there, just for being active in politics. Some of them like our current deputy minister of Fisheries, Kirlus Nguvauva and others from other regions were dismissed from work. We had quite a number of them, in the Kavango region, Otjivarongo Tsumerb; they were all fired because of their involvement in NANTU. We were there to defend our members and therefore firing them did not deter us from building a strong NANTU. Obviously at that time the challenge was also to provide leadership. I had lost my Rossing car and I started to hitch hike. From Monday to Friday I was an ordinary teacher in Rundu but from Friday afternoon to Sunday I was doing a national duty. We had no car we used to hitch hike from Rundu. We used to come and chair some meetings either in Windhoek or in Tsumeb. Some comrades were kind enough so they would arrange the meetings to be held in Tsumeb or we would go to Oshakati. I used to hitch hike to come for the national meetings and this was part of the challenges that I have encountered

We started building NANTU in 1989, but within NANTU we said it was not enough for us just to be teachers and we wanted to play an active role in the politics of the country which we did during the election campaign for SWAPO Party. We assisted with Voter Education. We said that we were teachers and we needed to educate others, because that was our Motto. We also divided ourselves in the national executives as to who should go and campaign in which region. Fortunately I was assigned to go to Katima. Remember on 1st May 1989, which was the international workers day, was still not be celebrated by workers in Caprivi region but workers from other parts of the country could celebrate. So I went there because it was also my area of operation.

The others went up north and the others down south. That was our own strategy as NANTU to actively participate entirely in the liberation struggle, but we also assisted during the campaign. Voter education was one of the things we did and we also encouraged people to vote for SWAPO.

The year 1990 came and we had to make a sacrifice. I am using the word deliberately because some of our leadership had to form part of the government through the ticket of the SWAPO party. We were also mindful and we said that we all could not move into the government, because we still needed to build the Union and the party. Some of us decided to stay where we were and continue to give support so that when we talked to our government, we would talk with reasonable people. But we all could not go there and let down the Union structure because it would collapse and this was the strategy at the time. Personally, that is why it took me some fifteen (15) years before getting where I am today, it was a deliberate move because I just wanted to build up other structures and allow the others to contribute.

Our objective was to contribute in whatever way we can. After the late Ya Otto passed away my own Union proposed that I take the leadership of the federation because we were having a problem with NANTU. I had the background from Rossing, then from my Union, NANTU and from NANSO; that was why they decided that I should take up the position of Presidency. This is what happened in 1990.

If we can backtrack to the 1970's, I remember that in 1970 I was nearly ten (10) years. It was a year that was known as bantustanisation. It was the independence of Kavango, something like that, and we saw Botha as the Minister for Rural and Bantu Affairs. They said now you are going to have your independence with your own ministers and this was now self-government. But some of us were still young and we only understood this when we grew up; that was when we started saying that was nonsense.

At that time Erwin Mbambo was already known as a terrorist and was wanted by everybody. So fortunately for him belonging to a royal family it was not too difficult to appreciate and to believe that he had gone for a good cause. But one thing was for sure that with the current royal family at the time things were not right. You know the chief that time was the late Alfonse Mayavero, who at one point also became the Kavango Chief Minister, the one who was kicked out from the chieftaincy after independence. At the time he was like the Prime Minister for the Kavango Government. He immediately saw the threat which we didn't anticipate or understand at the time. So he never supported the struggle openly, but he was always on the side of the Boers. We realized later that he was just protecting his own position.

This also came out clearly when comrade Erwin Mbambo came back from exile because he was actually the uncle to Mayavero and he was the one who was supposed to be the chief if he had not left the country. So later we actually got him out of the chieftaincy to give room to Mbambo. So it seems he knew that if Mbambo was to come back he would not be able to retain that position because he was not the right man.

But generally the youth had different expectations. We did not support those Boers because they used to kick us around. That was also worsened by our dislike of the Bantu Education system.

In the mid 1970's there was a system whereby soldiers taught in schools. How this happened was that they created a situation that from Standard V, we could join the army, provided that you can read and write and understand Afrikaans. Then they created jobs where they said that if you wanted to go to the army you could go and you did not need to be in school. Because many of us could not do well in school, that was a better option for some kids. It was more attractive for them, they would move in there and the next thing they have an R1. They felt that they deserved to be recognized and that they were above those who were still in school. This is how they won the hearts and minds of some of the youth. It was a deliberate action to create jobs for the youngsters by saying that because they understood English and Afrikaans there was career for them. In doing that they also created and strengthened ethnic identities. Here I am referring to people from the Caprivi, Kanvango and even Bushmen after they were taken from Angola and relocated at Divundu and the other area of Mudumu Game Park. An army unit was deliberately created specifically for either of these tribe, region or ethnic group. But the Boers did this to enable them to manage each group and get adequate information from them. Of course you have heard of the 23 and 32 Battalion that were created for the Kavangos.

That was where they promoted the guy who was the DTA parliamentarian when he became a captain. This signified that he belonged to his own army and the army of his own people. Now if you get into Rundu you will see that the SADF camp was on the left and on the right the 32 Battalion for the Kavangos. That was how they wanted to create those divisions but also to show that the SADF soldiers were not the same as the local ones, meaning theirs was a professional force. There was not much difference but that was how they created that impression of superiority through the establishment of battalions. They showed that the whites were still in charge. They did the same in Katima, they did the same everywhere on the basis of ethnicity.

In the 1970s one could observe the intensity of the divide and rule policy in the Kavango. It was bad in the sense that the regime knew how to maintain the divide and rule policy. In the Kavango those who came from the East of Rundu had been dominant in leadership positions in the schools. One could see that, especially in Rundu area, which was the centre. As a result the majority of activists and leaders were from that side. However, West of Rundu had different interests. There were leaders but they did not rise to the level of becoming national leaders. Secondly, the regime created a situation where they gave the impression that some people were more important than others in the areas where they performed well. They created a situation in which they only worked with the chosen few they considered intelligent. They also considered the others who did not excel in school to be stupid. So that was the apartheid policy, and some of us became aware of its divisive nature.

We were aware of what was going on. That policy was spread to other social activities like sports and for that reason we had sports clubs divided accordingly. The majority of people in a particular club would come from the West of Kavango or East of Kavango. There were all kinds of things that tried to stifle leadership and required some level of intellectual faculties to raise above all that. This is why in terms of leadership only a few made it up there while others got stuck in low positions. They could not move up as they needed to balance the intellectual and other skills.

Then certainly it was only in the late 1970s and the 1980s that we started to see a few young people leaving the Kavango and went to exile. Some left for Angola. I know one guy who we wanted to go with and he left us behind, but afterwards we learnt that he was killed by UNITA so he never made it into exile. There were some of them that went out to prove a point to the colonial establishment; you know the type of propaganda that was here. So they went to join SWAPO because some people were saying that they were not represented there. So they went there without really appreciating the broader picture when they were there they stated making irrelevant demands. Due to ethnic and tribal kind of thinking, our colleagues from the Western side of Kavango still had this hang over.

Coincidentally this was also the time that we saw most of us making it in the employment world outside the Kavango Region. We started to interact with other Namibians here, while some of our colleagues never got the same exposure. They got stuck over there. But also the issue of using alcohol was another challenge. There were others joined politics but then the enemy snatched them. They would turn around say that they were being arrested for political activities and so they were more of SWAPO than us. But some of us knew that they would be leaving some information to the Boers. They would do that as if they were being interrogated.

So that was really what was happening in the Kavango even now there are some people who continue to strive over the years to prove that they are leaders, but not because they have a bigger vision than others. Unfortunately I have to mention these things, but you will realize that just immediately after independence, some of our people from Western Kavango Region always had this hang over. So in terms of the leadership this was also another challenge that I confronted me especially from that particular place because even though they had moved to the National level they were still stuck with the regional politics.

The last thing that I am remembering is that we had rally here in Namibia as I said that I was an activist under NANSO and NANTU. There was a pamphlet that the army distributed under my name, yes under my name and this was a campaign. The pamphlet was saying how poor SWAPO was and that its flag was tattered but at the same time I was still praising Sam Nujoma and his visionary leadership and you know that type of thing.

That was meant to disrupt the rally that was organized by SWAPO. But really, up to now I still don't understand what they wanted to say. They gave me a copy of that pamphlet and knew exactly that as a student I would not afford the facilities to print

that kind of colourful pamphlet. We handed the issue to my lawyers because it was part of the campaign. It was also the time when things were heating up politically, and a number people were being used to discredit us. So that was my small contribution.

Thanks.

# South Africa

Independent on 27 April 1994

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# 3.4

## The South African Liberation Struggle

by Sifiso Ndlovu, Gregory Houston,  
and Bernard Magubane

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## Introduction 1

This study of the South African liberation struggle draws heavily on the work of the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), a research organisation formed in 2000 to document the South African liberation struggle. SADET's primary tool has been life history interviews with the participants in the struggle, as well as a smaller number of interviews with members of the apartheid government – National Party (NP) leaders, and high ranking members of the security forces and the apartheid civil service. Use was also made of the interview collections of the Robben Island-Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape, and the South African Historical Archives (SAHA) and the Department of Historical Papers at the University of the Witwatersrand. These interviews have been supplemented by the extensive archival collections of the liberation movements at the Robben Island-Mayibuye Centre, SAHA, the Department of Historical Papers, and the Documentation Centre at the University of Fort Hare. From the beginning of 2005, the Hashim Mbita Project has been a partner with SADET in the documentation of the South African liberation struggle.

This chapter focuses on the key organisations, their activities, leaders and cadres, strategies and tactics in the period 1960-1994, from the time the liberation movements were banned, through their turn to armed struggle and experience of exile, to the first democratic election. After a brief background on the period prior to 1960, we consider the liberation struggle decade by decade. Consequently, the chapter is organised into five parts.

## Part 1: Historical Background

The first recorded war of resistance against colonial intruders took place in 1659, just seven years after the occupation of the Western Cape by the Dutch East India Company. Resistance by the Khoi and the San people was followed by 250 years of armed resistance by the African kingdoms and chiefdoms in the interior of the country, which ended in the Bambatha Rebellion of 1906. The defeat of the autonomous and poorly armed African kingdoms and chiefdoms was followed by a rapidly-growing national and political consciousness, especially by those who had acquired modern education in mission schools and those who had been recruited to work in the diamond and gold mines of Kimberly and the Rand. With the formation of the all-white Union of South Africa, various congresses that had been formed in various parts of the country came together, and a clarion call to fight narrow ethnic nationalism and for unity was issued by Dr. Pixley ka Seme. The result was the formation of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC – later to be named the African National Congress) in 1912. An organization of the indigenous peoples only, SANNC

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(1) The Research Team Leaders were Sifiso Ndlovu, Gregory Houston, and Bernard Magubane.

defended and promoted the rights of Africans against dispossession (the 1913 Land Act) and passes, and for equal rights.

The formation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) by Clements Kadalie in 1919 and of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) in 1921 put the class question into the centre of the national struggle in South Africa. From the late 1930s to the outbreak of World War II, the CPSA underwent a strategic reorientation and was fully Africanised in terms of its membership. The birth of a mass based African nationalist politics can be traced back to the Great Depression of the early 1930s, when hundreds of thousands of Africans were thrown out of work and were forced to eke out an existence by whatever means they could. At more or less the same time, the most severe and long lasting drought for a century struck most of South Africa, and hundreds of thousands of African labour tenants on white farms, and also on a lesser scale, from the African reserves, were thrown off the land, and streamed into small and large towns all over the Union. Conflict between urban masses and an increasingly coercive state helped crystallise a more rebellious popular culture, which burst upon the political stage, especially in the form of urban riots in which women and youth were very prominent.

A wave of strikes from 1941 to 1943 prompted the formation of the Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU) whose affiliated membership reached a claimed 158,000 in 1944. The ANC remained weak and ineffective in the early 1940s. It took the collective impact of a new President-General (Dr. A.B. Xuma), a resurgent CPSA (from 1942), and the ANC Youth League (from 1943-1944) to galvanise it into a new direction. The Youth League, which was established in 1944, advocated African self-determination, mass civil disobedience, and non-cooperation. Much of its policies were enshrined in the Programme of Action adopted at the ANC Conference in December 1949. Youth League policy was initially Africanist in complexion. The majority of its leaders were also initially strongly anti-communist, even though some key communists sat on its executive.

The Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) was founded by Trotskyites in Bloemfontein in December 1943 as an organisation for national liberation. Set up as a federal body, NEUM's main affiliates were the Anti-CAD (Coloured Affairs Department), almost entirely coloured and based mainly in the Western Cape, and the All-African Convention (AAC), almost wholly black and drawing its support largely from the Eastern Cape. The Anti-CAD had been formed in Cape Town ten months before the NEUM to mobilise opposition to the Smuts government's announcement the month before of its intention to set up a Coloured Affairs Department and a consultative body, the Coloured Advisory Council. The AAC was formed in 1935 to co-ordinate black opposition to the legislation to strip Cape Africans of their franchise rights. Besides seeking to build black political unity as an initial step in the overthrow of white supremacy, the NEUM implemented a policy of non-collaboration with state authorities, using the tactic of boycotting all racist institutions. The NEUM also placed the land question at the core of the liberation struggle in South Africa.

Accordingly, in the 'Ten Point Programme', a document adopted at its founding conference outlining its basic principles, the NEUM demanded redistribution of land in South Africa.<sup>2</sup>

### **The National Party in Power**

The National Party (NP) came to power after the general election of 1948 armed with the policy of apartheid. Policy guidelines committed the party to a future in which "the most important ethnic groups and sub-groups be segregated in their own areas where every sub-group will be enabled to develop into a self-sufficient unit," and that Africans in urban areas be regarded as migratory and not entitled to political and social rights. Among the first pieces of legislation to be piloted through by the Nationalist controlled Parliament were the Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, and then, in 1950, the Immorality Act, the Population Registration Act, and the Group Areas Act.

Although the 1950s were characterised by a relative capacity for mass mobilisation and opposition activity, and a judiciary with a legacy of liberal notions of independence', by 1959 key legislation had been introduced that would be used to constrain both organisations and individuals during the 1960s. The primary foundation for the growing circumscription of political activity was the 1950 Suppression of Communism Act. The 1950 Act banned the CPSA and allowed for the banning of any other organisation deemed to further the aims of communism. Various restrictions could also be imposed on persons, gatherings, or publications regarded as promoting communism or its aims. Other repressive laws were passed during the 1950s. The state also sought to confine individuals through measures that did not involve the courts. Individuals could be listed if they were members or supporters of any banned organisation. Banning orders usually prohibited individuals from being members of political organisations, attending gatherings, and leaving specific geographical areas or magisterial districts. Banishment orders were implemented in terms of the Native Administration Act of 1927, which gave the state president the power "to order any tribe, portion of a tribe, or individual African to move from one place to another and to remain in the area stated until permission to leave is granted."<sup>3</sup>

### **Popular Struggles of the 1950s**

In the post World War II era, the Xuma-Dadoo-Naicker Pact of 1947 laid a foundation for African and Indian co-operation. This unity was cemented in the 1952 Defiance Campaign conducted jointly by the ANC and the South African Indian Congress (SAIC). The Congress alliance enabled the ANC as an organisation (then open only to Africans) to co-operate with Indians and Coloureds as oppressed minorities.

(2) Davies, R., D. O'Meara, and S. Dlamini. *The Struggle for South Africa: A Reference Guide*. London: Zed Books, 1984: See pp.310-14; Kies, B.M. *Background of Segregation*. Cape Town: Anti-CAD, 1943; Tabata, I.B. *A Declaration to the People of South Africa from the Non-European Unity Movement*. Cape Town: NEUM, 1951: See pp.1-16.

(3) Horrell, M. *Action, Reaction and Counteraction: A brief Review of Non-white Political Movements in South Africa*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1971: See pp.71, 72.

The Freedom Charter adopted in 1955 at the Congress of the People for the first time led to ideological unity and the outlines of a future democratic society. The notion of “multi-racialism” was integrated into liberation politics, which resulted in the break-away of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) from the ANC. In 1956, 156 leaders of the Congress leadership were arrested and then tried for treason as a consequence largely of the Congress of the People. During the course of the Treason Trial, key leaders recruited into the ranks of the South African Communist Party (SACP) included Joe Matthews, Andrew Mlangeni, Thomas Nkobi, and Archie Sibeko.

The political struggles of the first half of the 1950s were in most instances reactions to the implementation of apartheid laws. The best organised of these, the Defiance Campaign of 1952, protested against six unjust laws – Pass Laws, cattle culling and Bantu Authorities in the countryside, Group Areas, Separate Representation of Voters, and the Suppression of Communism Act. The mode of challenge adopted was the flouting of segregationist petty apartheid legislation. By the end of the year, when the campaign eventually petered out (mainly due to even more draconian laws), 8,326 people had been arrested. John Nkadimeng has the following recollection about the Defiance Campaign.

In 1952, during the Defiance Campaign, we were going to defy curfew regulations on the 26th of June in Johannesburg. You were not supposed to be in the city after 9 p.m. without a permit. If you are doing overtime, or if you want to go to a function at the Bantu Men’s Social Centre, you must get a pass to show where you are going. So we were going to go about singing after 9 p.m. to court arrest. Now, our leader, Walter Sisulu, who had gone to observe other people defying during the day in Boksburg, had been arrested before our evening march. Then they appointed Flag Boshielo to lead the march and I became his second-in-command. Time came for us to leave the building where we had assembled. We were singing “*Asikhathali noma siyaboshwa, sizimisele inkululeko.*” When we looked through the window we saw people clapping hands. We walked into a police cordon; they put us in the van and we went to Marshall Square.<sup>4</sup>

ANC membership, in the course of the campaign, soared to over 100,000 people nationwide. Other campaigns followed: anti-removals campaigns, the anti-Bantu Education campaign, and the wave of strikes during the course of the pound-a-day campaign of 1957 and 1958.

Rural resistance flared in the 1950s and culminated in major uprisings in Zeerust, Sekhukhuniland, and Pondoland. Each of these revolts had its own complex and localised history, but they shared a number of similarities. Intensified state intervention in the reserves – particularly through policies of ‘betterment,’ passes for women, and Bantu Authorities – was seen as a threat to residual elements of economic, political, and cultural autonomy such as chieftainship and access to land and cattle, which enjoyed strong popular support. While the ANC, the Communist Party, and other political organisations were not in control of these events, their activists and members

(4) Interview with John Nkadimeng, by Sifiso Ndlovu, (Johannesburg) 27 May 2001.

were involved to varying degrees with migrant workers and thus played a critical role in linking organisations and spanning town and countryside. Growing resistance and heightened repression and state violence resulted in attacks on the person and properties of individuals – including chiefs – who were seen as collaborators.

‘Betterment schemes’ were introduced with the passage of the Land Act in 1936 in response to the widely reported deterioration of socio-economic conditions in the reserves. The schemes involved an assortment of measures to preserve the soil and contain the deterioration of the reserves, including stock culling, demarcation of land for grazing, cultivation, and residential use, and the grouping of homesteads into symmetrical grids.<sup>5</sup> Another major intrusion into the lives of black rural communities was the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, which sought to transform the traditional system of leadership by turning chiefs into government agents and providing them with greater administrative powers than they held during the segregation period. The objective was to establish a form of ‘indirect rule’, in which traditional leaders would hold sway in local and regional Bantu Authorities, as well as in Territorial Authorities (which were eventually to turn into ‘independent’ homeland authorities).

The implementation of Bantu Authorities in 1951, which both co-opted and subverted chiefly power, allied to rural rehabilitation schemes, which culled cattle and re-organised and reduced peasant/migrant land holdings (so-called ‘reclamations’ and ‘betterment’), whose effects were further compounded by the intensification of influx control in the mid 1950s, eventually triggered a sequence of rural explosions in Zeerust, Sekhukhuneland, Pondoland, and Natal. In Sekhukhuniland and Pondoland, organisations were invoked that opted for violent strategies. At the height of the revolt in Sekhukhuniland, for example, Pedi regiments were mobilised, while young militants decided to kill leading supporters of the Bantu Authorities. In Pondoland, the most sustained rebellion saw rebels burning down the houses of collaborating councillors, and murdering a number of them.<sup>6</sup>

It was this rising tide of rural discontent and rebellion which impelled the ANC towards the idea of armed struggle. The ANC in the late 1950s and early 1960s found itself facing demands not only for political support, but also for military assistance. First the Sekhukhuniland rebels and then their Pondoland counterparts asked the ANC leadership for guns so that they could pursue their struggles more effectively. For instance, Elias Motsoaledi began his account with the battle against ‘betterment’ and Bantu Authorities in the Northern Transvaal as follows:

They started to remove all the chiefs who did not agree with them. Now remember, they had touched a sore part of African culture. They introduced this promulgation of the law which says they must slaughter their cattle because there isn’t enough land for them ... they touched the wrong button. Then the resistance comes ... You remember

(5) Dubow, S. “Holding a Just Balance Between White and Black: The Native Affairs Department in South Africa, c 1920-1933.” *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 12.2 (1986): See pp.217-239.

(6) Delius, D. *The Lion Amongst the Cattle: Reconstruction and Resistance in the Northern Transvaal*. Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1996.

that towards the end of the 50s there was the Pondo Revolt and... in Sekhukhuniland there was that revolt also. These unpopular chiefs were being killed... . Then at the same time here is the organisation, the liberation movement that has been telling the people to resist. But they have a non-violent method of resistance which is passive. Now this is what was putting them at a disadvantage.<sup>7</sup>

Similar pressures built up in Natal, where a wave of protest surged through the countryside during 1959 and 1960, centred on ‘betterment’ schemes, new forestry regulations, the extension of passes and taxes to women and wives, the threat of forced removal from so-called black spots, control and culling of livestock and compulsory cattle dipping. These came to bear on the ANC leadership of this province far more directly than was the case with any of the rural uprisings elsewhere in the country, and a number of middle or junior ranking ANC leaders became involved.

It is not clear to what extent the local ANC were involved in inspiring or directing these protests. The close proximity of the reserve areas to Durban and the personal backgrounds of many ANC leaders facilitated such a connection. As Eric Mtshali remarks:

There is no doubt in my mind that we were successful because if you take comrades like David Ndawonde, Phungula, and many others whose roots were in the rural areas, and there were others like Mangethe, you realize that we had succeeded not only in transforming the ANC from the elitist movement it was during the 1940s and early 1950s, but we had transformed it to include both the urban and rural constituencies. This was made possible by the fact that we had successfully shown workers the dual nature of struggle, so that when they lost their jobs and were forced to return to the countryside they left the cities equipped with the working class theory. Moses Mabhida and Dorothy Nyembe – although Dorothy was not a trade unionist she became very close to SACTU (South African Congress of Trade Unions) – did a marvellous job in organizing workers with rural backgrounds. Moses Mabhida was very fond of organizing rural workers. Both he and Dorothy became very close when they organized workers. Their efforts produced tremendous results. If you look at the ANC delegates who attended the ANC conferences during the late 1950s, you will notice that they were mainly rural people, something that does not happen now. The influx of the rural people into the ranks of the ANC was not spontaneous. It was a result of the efforts of the dedicated cadres of the movement. When we went to the 1958 ANC conference that was held here in Durban, half of the delegates were from the rural areas. Some old men arrived wearing their *izicoco* (headrings), women were wearing *izidwaba* (women’s leather skirts), and young men were wearing *amabheshu* (men’s girdles). These were people with their roots in the countryside who were employed here in Durban.<sup>8</sup>

### **Formation of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)**

As early as 1944, when the Youth League was formed, there were signs of anti-communist elements within the ANC. Youth leader Anton Lembede contended at an

(7) Interview with Elias Motsolaedi, by Peter Delius, (Soweto) 19 May 1994.

(8) Interview with Eric Mtshali, by Jabulani Sithole, (Clerefont) 23 November 2001.

early stage that there was a need for “vigilance against communists and other groups who fostered non-African interests.”<sup>9</sup> Spearheaded by Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, Potlako Leballo, and Josias Madzunya, distrust of the white democrats became even more vocal within the ANCYL from the early 1950s. The divide between the Africanists and other ANC members became more pronounced with the adoption of the Freedom Charter at Kliptown in 1955. The multi-racial Congress of the People, and the multi-racial tenor of the Freedom Charter, antagonised this group. An added grievance was the constitution drafted by Oliver Tambo which the ANC adopted in 1957, and which conferred greater disciplinary and financial powers on the ANC national executive.

From 1957, Africanist criticism of the multi-racialism embodied in the Freedom Charter and the Congress Alliance grew increasingly louder. In addition, the influence of communists had in fact been growing steadily, if clandestinely, since the end of the Defiance Campaign in 1953. In 1957, the Transvaal provincial body suspended leadership elections in solidarity with those who were in the Treason Trial. Africanists who had been contemplating challenging mainstream incumbents found themselves preemptorily blocked. In the same year, the adoption of the new constitution further clipped the wings of the provinces and streamlined the powers of the centre, with the Johannesburg-based national executive assuming a dominant position.

The Africanists, mainly from the Orlando branch of the ANC led by Leballo, broke away after refusing to take part in a strike organised by the ANC in protest against the 1958 general election. In April 1959, the Africanist dissidents launched the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) under Sobukwe’s leadership. From the outset, the PAC called for government by Africans for Africans. Peter Molotsi recalls events as follows:

The *Africanist* was a bulletin that became the mouthpiece of the Africanist group within the ANC. I became the editor of the bulletin in 1955 and was succeeded three years later by Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe. The Africanist group was at loggerheads with the SACP, who, although members of the ANC, had their own newspaper. So, as members of the ANC, we also decided to have our own newspaper. The ANC was a large umbrella embracing everybody from left to right, from up and below, from within and without, moving in endless circles. The Africanist group became convinced that the struggle would not come to an end unless a decisive stand was taken. The Youth League, from which we came, reached the same conclusion: that unless there was a clear ideological line, we would always be moving in circles in the manner we had done from 1912 until Lembede, Mda, and the Youth League entered the fray. We were a generation that wanted to bring matters to a head, to a conclusion. We looked back at the history of the African people’s struggle from 1912. It was a struggle of petitions, begging, and appealing to the oppressor all those years. We didn’t think that we should continue to petition. We wanted to introduce a radical shift in thinking. We refused as children of the same God to pray to people who were not God themselves. We came to the conclusion that all along we had been appealing to the human side

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(9) See [www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/).

of the oppressor. But, in fact, the oppressor had no heart, no human feelings. So we wanted to adopt other methods. We felt that, although the ANC was making an effort to protect and advance the interests of African people, it needed to be strengthened. And the Youth League, of which all the Africanists at the time were members, was designed to strengthen the ANC. We wanted to raise the standard of political consciousness and turn the Youth League into a formidable arm of the liberation struggle. We didn't intend to stand up against or to break away from the ANC. We intended to appeal to the younger people, who were relatively better educated than their parents, to join and re-enforce the ANC. The aims of the Youth League, as represented by us during those days, were totally misunderstood, however, by docile people who were used to being kicked around by white people. To get them out of the 'Ja, baas!' [Yes, boss!] mentality was a difficult struggle that resulted in direct confrontations within the organisation itself. We spent time studying Africanism and Pan Africanism, so that when the thing developed, it developed as a result of serious study. First, Africanists upheld that this country belonged to the African people. Africa for the Africans! All other people who lived in Africa would have to recognise that this was a continent of Africans. If their loyalty was to Africa only, then they too would be accepted as Africans. But in those days, most white people had one foot in Europe. There were whites in this country whose loyalty was to Britain, or Germany, or Italy, or some other European country. They looked down on the indigenous people. We wanted respect. From the very beginning, therefore, we started from the premise that Africa was for Africans; that Africa had its own history, legends, and mysteries. People came from Asia to Africa. It doesn't matter how, but they came. And people also came to Africa from Europe. The indigenous people did not come from anywhere. The indigenous people were Africans. They were part and parcel of the great African continent. They were the children of the soil. Humanity in Africa was one. Everybody is an African who was born here and whose loyalty was only to Africa! ... The second point of departure was simply the idea that Africans had never had any part in drawing the boundaries that now separated them. They had the right to live anywhere in Africa. And we spelt it out, where they were supposed to live: from Cape to Cairo, Morocco to Malagasy. This was the area of the African people, their God-given land as natives of this continent. We looked beyond the borders of the so-called Union of South Africa. We stressed the concept of continental citizenship – not unlike the United States of America, made up of fifty-one states, or the USSR that stretched from Moscow to Vladivostok, with about fifteen different time zones. Africa stood out as a case of paralysed weak states and colonies. We did not like the weakness that we were identified with. We needed to turn that around and form the United States of Africa! ...<sup>10</sup>

## Part 2: The 1960s

### The Sharpeville Massacre:

At the ANC national conference in Durban in December 1959, delegates called on the movement for "bolder action." The conference decided that an anti-pass campaign

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(10) Interview with Peter Molotsi, by Brown Maaba, (Kroonstad) 7 January 2001.

would take place on 31 March 1960.<sup>11</sup> When the PAC's national executive committee convened in Bloemfontein a week after the ANC's conference, it proposed an anti-pass campaign. Robert Sobukwe's request for a mandate to launch the campaign was unanimously supported, and the date for the launch of the campaign was left for Sobukwe to set: he set the date for 21 March.<sup>12</sup> According to Peter Molotsi:

Plan one was that we would mobilise people to leave their passes at home, to fill the jails of the country, to remove the sense of fear and to break down the system of mass imprisonment. The only way by which the system could be broken down was to fill the jails with countless numbers of people so that the prison system would not work... As the jails began to fill up, the regime would move the imprisoned people to other areas. But wherever the prisoners were moved to, there too people would defy the system and the movement would spread like that from north to south. When all the country's jails were full, the regime would have no place to send the prisoners and would be compelled to come to terms.<sup>13</sup>

On 21 March, at Sharpeville, police fired on an angry crowd outside the location police station without warning, killing 67 people and wounding another 186. On the same day, after two people were shot in Langa, riots broke out. The situation was tense, and a three-week strike followed.

On 24 March, while regional secretary general Phillip Kgosana was in Cape Town, 101 PAC supporters left Langa for Caledon Square, where they handed themselves over to the police. The next day, between 2,000 and 5,000 people marched to Caledon Square, led by Kgosana and Clarence Makwetu. That night, the Minister of Justice suspended pass laws throughout the country.<sup>14</sup> Kgosana, who was at the helm of the Langa protests throughout, recalled:

By the weekend, a large number of people were not going to work, partly because they supported the strike, but partly because it was impossible to work. You see in an industrial area, if our factory is producing ink, and yours is producing cloth, if this one goes on strike, that one cannot work.<sup>15</sup>

According to Kgosana, the strike seriously disrupted commerce and industry in Cape Town, and was 95% successful.

In Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Duma Nokwe, and Joe Slovo held an all-night meeting to plan a response to the Sharpeville Massacre. Mandela wrote:

(11) Karis, Thomas and Gwendolen M. Carter. *From Protest to Challenge. A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964. Vol.3 Challenge and Violence 1953-1964*. San Francisco, CA: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1977: See pp.295-296, 329-330.

(12) Lodge, Tom. "'Izwe-Lethu' (The Land is Ours): Poqo, the Politics of Despair." Anne Akeroyd and Christopher Hill (eds). *Collected Papers*, Vol.3. York, UK: Centre for Southern African Studies, University of York: See p.100.

(13) Interview with Peter Molotsi.

(14) Lodge, Tom. *Black Politics since 1945*. London: Longmans, 1983: See p.163.

(15) Interview with Phillip Kgosana, by Brown Maaba, (Pretoria) 28 September 2001.

On March 26 in Pretoria, the chief [Luthuli] publicly burned his pass, calling on others to do the same. He announced a nationwide stay-at-home on March 28, a national day of mourning and protest for the atrocities at Sharpeville. In Orlando, Duma Nokwe and I then burned our passes before hundreds of people and dozens of press photographers.<sup>16</sup>

Huge numbers heeded the call to protest, which was accompanied by rioting and clashes with the police. On 30 March, the date on which the government declared a state of emergency, yet another march took place from Langa to Cape Town. According to Kgosana, “By the time we reached the city, about midday, the streets were already filled with about 20,000 people, because of curiosity and idleness.” On reaching Caledon Square, they demanded a meeting with the Minister of Justice. Kgosana said he spoke to Erasmus on the telephone and they agreed to meet later that afternoon. Meanwhile, he said, Erasmus asked him to “remove the crowd from the city.” Kgosana did as requested, but he had not taken into account that members of the regime would not meet with young ‘agitators’, and when he and a small group of comrades returned in the evening, they were arrested and charged with inciting public violence. The military cordoned off Langa and Nyanga, and by 7 April, the strike had been crushed and the pass laws were back in force.<sup>17</sup>

### **Banning and the ANC’s Move Underground**

Meanwhile, on 30 March, the government had declared a state of emergency and detained more than 2,000 political activists. Over the following days, outbreaks of violence and pass burning flared up in Durban, Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein, and other centres. On 8 April, the government announced the banning of the ANC and the PAC under the newly passed Unlawful Organisations Act. The transition from semi-legality to illegality was complete.

Three days before the three-day stay-away to mourn the Sharpeville victims, and shortly before the state of emergency was declared, the ANC’s national executive, anticipating that the regime would ban the organisation, drew up a new structure that would enable the organisation to operate in conditions of illegality. This involved the total dissolution of provincial structures, the replacement of elected branch executives with an appointed seven-member *ad hoc* committee and the dissolution of the Youth League and Women’s League and their replacement by five-person advisory committees working directly under the *ad hoc* branch committees. But the ANC had no opportunity to implement the new structure before the axe fell. Nondwe Mankahla, a young woman who worked closely with ANC National Executive Committee member Govan Mbeki in the early 1960s, recalls the effect of the ban:

(16) Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*. London: Abacus, 1995: See pp.281-2.

(17) Driver, C.J. *Patrick Duncan. South African and Pan-African*. New edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000: See p.181.

When the ANC was banned it became difficult to have meetings. There should be only five people in a house. If there were more than five they would get arrested. So the township was now zoned into streets. I was in Zone O. And the meetings had to minimise; there should be a person called a chief steward. This person would be responsible for the zone. And then there would be a meeting between the chief stewards, bringing the views of the zones to the meeting of the chief stewards. And then they would inform the person in-charge from the ANC. That person would also give the chief stewards work to be done by branches. And then the chief steward would take that information to the zones. So that process carried on, which is how the fires of the ANC kept on burning.<sup>18</sup>

### **The ANC's turn to Armed Struggle**

For some time before the banning, individual ANC and other congress members (as well as others outside its ranks) were arguing that some form of armed struggle might ultimately be necessary. From the mid-1950s a steady hardening of attitudes can be discerned in several leading ANC figures. Andrew Mlangeni remembered “pressures to move away from the non-violent struggle from the mid-1950s, especially after the government announced that it was going to introduce passes for women.”<sup>19</sup> Sisulu recalled youthful semi-gangster elements, such as Joe Modise, urging armed resistance on the ANC leaders during the Treason Trial that started in 1956.<sup>20</sup> With the declaration of the State of Emergency in 1960, mass detentions, and banning of organisations, little option was left to the liberation movement. A large number of those detained without trial during the Emergency were released in late June. But it was not until the end of August, when the state of emergency was lifted, that the rest of the detainees, including the most important members, were set free.

This six-month period offered a space for reflection and reappraisal and marked another defining phase in the move towards armed struggle. In the view of most leaders active at that time, the banning of the black political organisations rendered former methods of opposition both redundant and untenable. Once the detainees were released in late August 1960, energies were channelled in two directions: rebuilding the ANC underground and laying the foundation for mass mobilisation, and preparing for armed struggle. The ANC's national executive held its first formal underground meeting in September.

### **The All-In-Africa Conference**

At a consultative conference held on 16 and 17 December 1960 at Orlando, attended by members of the ANC and PAC, Jordan Ngubane of the Liberal Party, and a sprinkling of black professionals, a decision was taken to organise an All-In Conference of African People at Pietermaritzburg on 25 and 26 March 1961. The

(18) Interview with Nonwe Mankahla, by Brown Maaba, (New Brighton, Port Elizabeth) 24 September 2001.

(19) Interview with Andrew Mlangeni, by Philip Bonner, (Shell House) 2 March 1994.

(20) Interview with Walter Sisulu, by Phillip Bonner and Barbara Harmel, (Shell House, Johannesburg) 21 May 1993.

Conference was arranged with a view to cementing unity between black political organisations, and to demand that a national convention, representing all South Africans, be called. The highlight of the conference was an appearance by Nelson Mandela. In a dramatic speech, he demanded that the regime reverse its unilateral decision to declare South Africa a republic, and called for a national convention of all the people of South Africa armed with ‘sovereign powers’ to draw up a new constitution. If this demand was not met by 31 May 1961, the day South Africa was due to become a republic, militant counter-demonstrations would be staged.

Around the middle of May 1961, the National Action Council formed at the All-In-Africa Conference declared that the protest against South Africa leaving the Commonwealth would take the form of a three-day strike from Monday 29 May to Wednesday 31 May. The government responded by banning all meetings during this period, allowing for arrest without bail for 12 days, and arrested close to 10,000 people. When 29 May dawned, up to 50% of Johannesburg’s work force stayed at home. Port Elizabeth, which was the other major centre to observe the stay-away, was more patchy. From his safe house in Southend, Govan Mbeki

... started calling various points in the township, and was told it was good here, and not so good there, and so on. Alright, I sent a report to Jo’burg, and to this young woman ... I sent her to send the press telegrams. Then in the evening, about early evening, the National Executive in Johannesburg came with a press statement to say this is called off, because what did the Press do? All reports from the press came out to say the stay away is a flop, and the National Executive in Johannesburg took those reports from the media seriously. The stay away is a flop, then they called it off, and the people refused. Now what then is it that happened here? The bus owners said, the thing is called off, let the buses go to the roads and take people to work. And the employers said the thing is off. The National Executive has called it off. And then early in the morning, the buses were loading, and the volunteers who had petrol bombs – for the first time, our people used petrol bombs. Buses drove back into the terminals and people were afraid. That stopped it. The organisation here said this is going to last three days. Now in Johannesburg, Sophiatown, people were descending heavily on the National Executive: “Why did you call it off, because it was not a failure in Sophiatown?” Then Nelson, who had disappeared that day because we were sending him abroad earlier on, came out then with a statement that ... the government had not heeded what the ANC had said, the ANC was going to turn a new leaf of non-cooperation.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe**

The decision to turn to armed struggle was taken by the SACP before the ANC took the same decision. Eric Mtshali goes to some lengths to make the point that the SACP reached the decision first:

When the matter was first introduced to the Party cells by 1960, it had become very clear that we could not fight the apartheid regime with bare hands. You could not convince the Boers to change because they were not prepared to change. The matter

(21) Interview with Govan Mbeki, by Philip Bonner and Barbara Harmel, (Standard House, Port Elizabeth) 28 October 1993.

was then discussed at the upper echelons of the Party. It was subsequently agreed that there was a great need for the adoption of the armed struggle. The challenge was to introduce the matter to the ANC. This is one part of our history that is not known ... that is that the South African Communist Party arrived at the decision ahead of the ANC.<sup>22</sup>

Andrew Mlengeni placed this decision of the SACP at July 1961,<sup>23</sup> but Rusty Bernstein may have been more accurate in pinpointing December 1960.<sup>24</sup> Zolile Malindi attended this meeting:

In 1961, the ANC and SACP were meeting separately in Johannesburg. And the decision was taken to form MK. I was present in that meeting of the SACP. Then it was decided that there was no other way – the Boers had closed all the entrances so we better fight physically.<sup>25</sup>

Party military units were formed in July 1961.

The ANC decided to take up the armed struggle after a number of debates. Among the stages the debate passed through were those at a meeting of the National Executive Committee in Durban and the others at a meeting of the joint Congress executives, which was scheduled for the next day in July 1961. Addressing the national executive, Mandela argued that “it was wrong and immoral to subject our people to armed attacks by the state without offering some kind of alternative. I mentioned once again that people on their own had taken up arms – if we did not take the lead now, I said, we would become late-comers and followers in a movement we did not control.”<sup>26</sup> Eventually, after much heated discussion, Mandela and his group were given a qualified mandate – set up a military wing to engage in tightly controlled violence that avoids injury towards persons at all cost; and keep it strictly separate and distinct from the ANC. Joe Matthews recalls that:

The absurd thing happening in the country during the period 1956 to 1961 is that you had a trial, the Treason Trial, at which accused leaders were extolling the virtues of non-violence, when the movement outside of the trial was beginning to question the validity of the method of non-violence. Gradually you got an apparent divergence between what was being defended at the trial and what was being said outside the trial. And, of course, after the trial and after the Pietermaritzburg conference to protest against the establishment of a republic, Mandela eventually expressed the general view questioning the validity of the non-violence tactic that had been employed until then. This caused a lot of consternation naturally because, remember that the organisation is banned, but now people want a fundamental change of policy and anything done by the ANC is based on conference resolutions. How are you going to have a conference? The issue was discussed in detail at a meeting held on the farm of the Indian sugar magnate, Walter Singh, presided over by Chief Luthuli. Sisulu, Mandela, all these

(22) Interview with Eric Mtshali, by Jabulani Sithole.

(23) Interview with Andrew Mlengeni.

(24) Interview with Rusty Bernstein, by Peter Delius, (Oxford); Bernstein, Rusty. *Memory Against Forgetting*. London: Viking Press, 1999: See pp.225-7.

(25) Interview with Zolile Malindi, by Thozama April, (Cape Town) 20 March 2002.

(26) Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*: See p.342.

people were banned, but they attended this meeting. It was that meeting which took a very peculiar decision, which came to haunt us and still haunts us today. The meeting couldn't agree on whether to embark on the armed struggle. So the older leaders, like Z.K. and Chief Luthuli, said: "Alright, look, the ANC is not going to embark on an armed struggle. But if you chaps want to embark on an armed struggle, you can do so and we won't condemn your efforts." This resulted in a very dangerous situation, where you had the official policy that was not for an armed struggle and you then had an organisation established called *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, which embarked on an armed struggle. The haunting question then was: "Which political organisation established the military body?" The dilemma was not settled until Tambo took over the leadership outside the country. But the manner in which the decision was reached to embark on the armed struggle sowed considerable confusion because you had thousands of ANC members who did not know what the policy of the organisation was. Men were going around, such as Joe Modise, recruiting people on the authority of the "High Command" of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, in a situation in which the organisation itself had not taken a formal position to support an armed struggle. I remember the Reverend Calata asking my father: "*Yintoni le High Command?*" (What's this High Command?). And I think a lot of the mistakes, such as infiltration of *uMkhonto* in the beginning and other disasters that occurred are due to this dilemma.<sup>27</sup>

### The Formation of Poqo

In the aftermath of the bannings, the PAC decided to revive the Africanist Task Force, a para-military structure formed just prior to the 1960 anti-pass campaign. It was originally conceived as a contingency PAC structure that was supposed to function in the event of the immobilisation of the PAC leadership. It was also intended to assist in the organisation and conduct of the anti-pass campaign by providing protection to PAC members and local leaders. At a secret meeting in Langa in 1961, a decision was taken to form substructures and embark on a vigorous recruitment programme. A Task Force called *Lutsha* (Xhosa word for youth) was formed to act as a military and defence unit, accommodating members aged between 16 and 35. Each Task Force cell had 10 members.

The Task Force's initial duty was to eliminate those considered traitors, but members also provided security at PAC meetings, which were often disrupted by the police. Members of the Task Force patrolled the streets of Langa after 8 pm and had explicit orders to eliminate any policemen they might encounter. It was also their responsibility to "collect and manufacture weapons and explosives, and, in the event of an uprising, undertake the initial attacks".<sup>28</sup>

The National Working Committee of the PAC issued a directive to John Pokela to revive the task force nationally. Its revival in 1961 prepared the ground for the formation of *Poqo*. Mfanasekhaya Gqobose, a leading figure in the PAC from its formation in 1959, states the following:

(27) Interview with Joe Matthews, by Sifiso Ndlovu and Bernard Magubane, (Pretoria) 18 July 2001.

(28) Lodge, Tom. "The Poqo Insurrection, 1961-1968." In Tom Lodge (ed.). *Resistance and Ideology in Settler Societies Southern African Studies Volume 4*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986: See p.190.

In September 1961, the PAC had its first consultative conference in Maseru: the first organised meeting of the PAC after it was banned. And the significant thing there was that we had to formally recruit people now for *Pogo*. *Pogo* had not been [formally] established. [It was decided that] *Pogo* must go outside the country to train and they must come back.<sup>29</sup>

The name *Pogo* was derived from a Xhosa word for pure. Cadres called themselves *AmaAfrica Pogo*, meaning pure Africans, to express their opposition to the Congress's alliance with other races. In December 1962, P.K. Leballo, the secretary general, summoned branch leaders to a meeting in Basutoland. Leballo addressed this meeting with a revolver in his right hand, and "repeatedly made mention that he wanted every branch to have 1,000 men by the year 1963".<sup>30</sup>

### **MK Sabotage, 1961-62**

Once the decision was taken to form MK, an organisational structure had to be set up and various splinter groups consolidated into a single military body. A National High Command was formed consisting of Mandela, Sisulu, Joe Slovo, and Raymond Mhlaba. The National High Command determined tactics and targets, and was in charge of training and finance. Regional structures were responsible for directing local sabotage groups in their areas. Nelson Mandela, MK's first commander-in-chief, was assigned the important task of mobilising external support for the armed struggle, and he left South Africa in January 1962. MK's existence was formally acknowledged on 16 December 1961 with a series of explosions throughout the country.

Two initial ideas governed the formation of MK and the sabotage campaign. The first was that "this bit of sabotage would bring the government to its senses and then we will continue a normal political struggle not based on violence."<sup>31</sup> The second pillar of MK's foundation was that the military wing and the ANC underground would be kept strictly apart.

Besides undertaking intermittent acts of sabotage and training saboteurs from other regions, the Transvaal Regional Command was responsible for establishing and maintaining the routes used by MK members to leave South Africa secretly and go abroad for military training. Operatives were transported mainly to Botswana, and occasionally to Mozambique. Alfred Willie's group from Cape Town left in January 1963. He explains:

So we then sent somebody to go to Sisulu's place, and say: "We are here and how do we get up there now." So those guys they went... And then they gave us taxis and they took us up there. By then Sisulu was under house arrest. And it was not going to be easy for us to get into his house ... we were to sleep because Sisulu's house is just situated near the football ground. And it was the right time because it was Sunday and these guys were busy playing at the football ground. ... Then we went into it [the stadium].

(29) Interview with Mfanasekhaya Gqobose, by Brown Maaba, (New Brighton, Port Elizabeth) 19 August 2001.

(30) State v Isaac Mthimunya and 12 others, Witwatersrand Local Division, Criminal Case 234/63, National Archives, Pretoria, testimony of Keseth Spolani Mdluli/Mofokeng; NASA, TPB, file 325/63 and 233/63.

(31) Interview with Henry Makgothi, 6 May 1994.

Then he showed that his sons, that they will come when the football match is over. Then few of us will be taken and few of us will be going into his house. Then one of his boys, Zwelakhe, is going to take us home. But when the crowd is dispersing, then they do it because nobody could notice a group of people going in there. We must go as the crowd is moving out. So this is exactly what we did and we spent only one night there. In the middle of the night we left because ... the place was not safe for us to be there. So we were taken to a place, I think two weeks or so.... During that time the *kombis* [trucks] were organised, then we were taken away and crossed with the *kombis*. We rode through to Lorenzo Marques.<sup>32</sup>

Cape Town was the scene of thirty-five MK attacks in 1961 and 1962, the highest in the country after the Eastern Cape. Eleven separate MK units were formed in the Western Cape. At some point, probably in early 1962, Denis Goldberg hired a farm at Mamre on which the regional command could carry out various kinds of training. Christopher Mrabalala recalls:

Unfortunately, what happened during the time we were training, the owner of the farm knew about our presence there. It was agreed to Reggie September and other top leaders, Sachs and others and Goldberg. He left the farm for holidays. He went to Johannesburg. He left his workers there. Now we don't know whether he informed his workers about us or not. We don't know that, but the leadership knew. But what we discovered during the time we were in training [is that] the workers discovered that at the orchard next to the river, they've seen some fire, smoke. So they had to come down and they discovered that it's us. But we couldn't see them. They saw us. Then they were afraid or they didn't know what to do. They couldn't report to the owner first. They just called the police. So when the police came they found us there, with the leadership ... comrade Chris Hani, comrade Teddie Ngapayi, Alfred Willie, comrade Sachs, and Goldberg. Then the senior officer of Cape Town, which is a detective, asked Albie Sachs: "What do you want here being a European? And what [is the purpose of] your presence here?" Then he explained to them: "These people hired us to teach them skills about mechanics." And we did have engines there for other types of training. Maybe you have to go somewhere and there's a car. You should know how to connect that car through wires, whatever, and dash out. Now if it's broken you could fix it up. All those things. We were given that knowledge. But the CID refused: "No, Albie. I know you are a politician." He quoted all the guys, our leaders, all of them. He even mentioned to Chris Hani and [Archie] Sibeko, "You both are politicians. I know you. You know very well that I know. But you are not going to tell me that you are here also to come and train to be a mechanic." But they insisted: "No, we are here just for this. And these people are paying us." In other words, we are paying Dennis; we are paying Albie Sachs. ... So they said: "Now okay, if that is the case then why specifically Europeans? Why can't they be trained by other Africans? Why you Europeans? Why are there no other Europeans amongst these people who are being trained?" So he said: "Okay, I understand. But I need you all to report at Mamre police station right away." So a helicopter was there dropping off soldiers and cops. Now we had a river where we had to cross. Now when we were inside we shifted our bridge. So any person who comes wouldn't have a way to cross over. We shifted the bridge, a tree, and we put it there. Now

(32) Interview with Alfred Willie, by Thozama April, October 2000.

as we were crossing they were counting us. We were 36. They were counting us. Now I slipped because comrades Chris Hani and Sibeko said to me: “Chris, I wouldn’t like you to go to the police station because I know your position; you might be arrested. So please do something.” So as we were crossing I slipped into the river and I put my nose above the water. And I could see them at the end of the water. Now they were counting. They found that it’s 35. Now the senior person said: “These people were 36.” Then Albie said: “No, you made a mistake. We were 35. There has never been 36. Where do you get that number?” He said: “No, I counted you.” Albie said: “No, we are 35 and these are the people that I know who were here; that 35.” That guy counted more than ten times, arguing that we were 36. And in the end they had to go. They were loaded in the trucks and they went off. So I came out. I went back. I collected all the armaments; hid them. At about 7:30 pm, then they were brought back. They found me. Now before they released them to cross, the police had to come first to the camp. And that time I was already taking a cover where I could see them. Then they searched the place. They couldn’t find anything. They wanted to find any document of the ANC, or weapons; something like that.<sup>33</sup>

MK in Natal was divided into sections, with specific responsibility for the South Coast, North Coast, and Midlands. These expanded to a point where in 1962 there were between fifty and sixty units. In the period immediately following the formation of MK in 1961, the Natal region carried out more than thirty acts of sabotage in and around Durban. In his recollections of the first sabotage act he was involved in, Justice Mpanza recalls:

My first sabotage was conducted together with Ronnie’s wife, Eleanor [Kasrils]. She was our driver. We went to blow up a pylon in Westville. Durban was cast into total darkness – including KwaMashu Township. After the blast she drove and dropped me home at KwaMashu and returned to her home. She drove fast and police arrived at my place hardly minutes after her departure; probably they used different routes. The cops came to my place and knocked and they found me sleeping. They demanded to know what I was wearing during the day. I showed them the clothes that I was wearing. They thoroughly examined the shoes and soon gave up their search and left. I then sat up and my wife asked me: “What is happening?” I said to her: “The police are just suspecting me.” The special branch had been to my place on countless occasions. This went on until I got information that Zulu had told Charles Mpanza, the CID, that “your son (meaning Gizenga because they shared the same surname) is one of those responsible for all the troubles that are taking place here in Durban. We are going to arrest him when the 90 days law takes effect. He has no option but to confess when we arrest him.” This was one of the reasons that forced me to leave the country for military training in 1963.<sup>34</sup>

In the eighteen months from December 1961 to June 1963, attacks were launched on more than 200 state installations, with most activity (35%) in the Eastern Cape. Andrew Masondo was active in an MK unit in the region at the time. He recalls:

(33) Interview with Christopher Mrabalala.

(34) Interview with Justice Mpanza, by Ben Magubane and Jabulani Sithole, (Groutville) 10 November 2001.

As far as MK work was concerned, there was a time when we were running short of explosives in the Eastern Cape. But we had a lot of detonators. So I asked a certain chap, Molewa, who worked with me, to go on a reconnaissance at a quarry site. In quarry sites you have dynamite in boxes usually made of planks and, therefore, easy to break. So I sent this chap to go and look at the boxes. He goes there and comes back. He doesn't give me a report for a long time, until ultimately I say to the other chaps: "Let's go to this place." You see, when I became angry with him, he lied to us and said that the boxes were indeed made of planks. That night, we leave Alice; we are travelling to Debenek on foot. That's thirty-nine miles. We reach the place and find that the box is made of steel. I'm very unhappy but we can't do anything, so we come back. On our way back, we see a telephone wire, we cut it, so that we have done something that day. As we still have no explosives, every time I travel I look at these pylons. Some pylons are made of steel. Others are made of wood. I decide to target the wooden ones. The aim of blowing up the barn is that it should cut the wires. I decide we shall use cold demolition. We'll actually saw the wooden ones and push them. They will do exactly the same thing, except that there won't be any explosion and in some cases it is even safer. So I also look at the circuit. I choose a pole where I know it's a nodal point and if we break that one, it will affect various other circuits. The pole I target is not very far from Fort Hare. The rain starts to drizzle. Now for operations it's better when it's drizzling because traffic is less. I have a jersey on. As we are sawing, sawdust falls on my jersey. We blow up the pylon; the lights go off even at Fort Hare. Because it is raining, however, the footprints from our shoes remain. As misfortune would have it, on the same day we decide to strike, the Special Branch decides they are coming to my home. So I'm away when they get to my place. They don't find me. They ask my wife, who doesn't know where I am. They leave somebody around my house to keep watch. So once that thing has gone up, they begin to suspect that I'm involved. When I come back, my wife tells me that the police came. Some of these young people that were from Pretoria were staying in my back yard. I remove my shoes, because I suspect the shoes will be a problem. Instead of taking the shoes and going to throw them away, however, I give them to one of these chaps and say he must go and give them to another chap. The police intercept him. That is how we got arrested in March 1963. I had a lecture in the afternoon when they started searching. They already have my shoes and now the jersey with the chips of wood. I had asked my wife that she should wash my things, my trousers that had mud, but she did not realise the importance of washing that jersey as well because it's an old jersey. So, they took me first to Alice police station and then to Cambridge police station in East London, where they tortured me repeatedly. At a certain point I thought: "I don't know how long I'm going to last." They had started to use handcuffs to eat into my flesh. Then I decided that I would make a statement so that they don't hit me more than I could bear. So I make the statement in which I write: "I'm making this statement so that at no other time should the Special Branch force me to make a statement." Fortunately they don't see the trick. Then they brought my other three accomplices: Vakala, one of the chaps I used to train, McClaren Mdingi and Nelson Dick. They took us to Grahamstown and from there to Port Elizabeth – Rooihell. We were commuting between Rooihell and Grahamstown Supreme Court. I contested my statement and it was thrown out. But, you see, after we had cut the pylon and the cables, I hadn't bargained for the fact that we were dealing with about 3 000 – 6000 vaults. The air could not act as an insulator, so

when we tried to run away I found myself rolling and falling. I had a pistol in my back pocket which fell out. The hot cable got Nelson Dick on the thigh, but we were able to run away. When we came back to the scene, they had found my pistol and it had my finger prints. Again I had broken a cardinal MK rule: we were not allowed to be armed when we went for operations. The MK rule was that we were not to kill people; we were just to destroy the things that represented government power. The evidence clearly put me on the scene of the crime. I had no chance really of acquittal.<sup>35</sup>

Between 1961 and 1963, the state succeeded in infiltrating MK's underground networks. The sabotage campaign gave rise to a severe backlash by the state, which embarked on a massive crackdown against ANC and MK underground operatives between 1962 and 1964. Hundreds of individuals were arrested and charged with carrying out acts of sabotage and/or furthering the aims of a banned organisation.

### Poqo

Unlike MK, *Poqo* directed its activities at the white population in general. *Poqo*'s militant approach was reflected in a PAC pamphlet distributed in Langa in December 1961. It read: "We die once. Africa will be free on 1 January. The Whites will suffer – the Black people will rule. Freedom comes after bloodshed. *Poqo* has started. It needs a real man. The youth has weapons, so you need not be afraid. The PAC says this."<sup>36</sup> Mfanasekhaya Gqobose recalls that, after the banning of the PAC, they concentrated on underground work. Gqobose states that:

We as the PAC worked underground. Of course we recruited members. We were members of the youth. We recruited the youth, lectured them politically. We politicized the youth. And then the next thing of course was sending people outside the country to go and train. We had told ourselves that all this time we had been obeying these [white] people, we obeyed them. Now this time we are going to hit back at them.<sup>37</sup>

The PAC underground always intended to attack human targets rather than government buildings or installations. On 16 March 1962, a group of *Poqo* members had met in the bush near the township to discuss how they could engage the police. That night, armed with stones, petrol bombs, and bricks, they stormed two police vans on patrol. A policeman named Moyi was dragged from one of the vans by the mob of about 50, and killed. Five other policemen were injured, while the rest escaped unharmed.<sup>38</sup> This set the pace for a number of other attacks on policemen by *Poqo* members in the township.

A number of murders around Paarl in 1962 were attributed to *Poqo*, including that of Klaas Hoza, who was hacked to death with axes and other sharp instruments on the farm Rust-en-Werk on 27 January. Hoza, a cleaner and tea maker at the local

(35) Interview with Andrew Masondo.

(36) SA Institute for Race Relations. "Poqo – A Special Report from South Africa." Supplement to *Newsletter* (June 1963).

(37) Interview with Mfanasekhaya Gqobose, by Brown Maaba, (New Brighton) 18 August 2001.

(38) State Archives, CSC, Box 1/1/850, appeal by Donker Ntsabo, 5 June 1967: pp.1-5.

municipality's 'Bantu Office', had allegedly taken "information from *Poqo*" and given it to the police.<sup>39</sup> One of the accused, Johannes Notyawe, handed himself over to the police and made a confession in which he stated:

I was present when Klaas Hoza was killed by *Poqo*. Those present were myself, Koboka, Damane, Thengwa, Nkomonye, Masekwana, Monthikana, and other men. We followed Hoza from the single quarters to the farm. Klaas saw us, and then he ran. A certain man from Umtata shot at Klaas with a revolver. Klaas fell. Then we chopped him with axes. We killed Klaas Hoza because he worked for the white man's government. If he heard anything about us, he always told the Headman and the white people also.<sup>40</sup>

Another attack in Paarl attributed to *Poqo* was that of a white shopkeeper in Wellington. Police claimed that he was attacked "to show [the movement's] determination to kill whites."<sup>41</sup> In November, the *Poqo* members decided to launch a midnight attack on Paarl. They aimed to free those who had been arrested and to obtain weapons and ammunition. At the police station, police opened fire on the group, killing two of them. After being repulsed at the police station, the marchers split into smaller groups and attacked shops, petrol stations, houses, and cars at random. Two whites were hacked to death, while others were injured. Nearly 400 Paarl residents were arrested or detained and at least six separate trials involving 75 people resulted.

*Poqo* activities, mostly orchestrated from Cape Town, greatly affected the Transkei, and were aimed at disrupting the installation of 'Bantu Authorities' by attacking headmen and chiefs, and at resisting the implementation of land rehabilitation. *Poqo* members originally from the Transkei believed that Chief Kaizer Matanzima had to be killed. On 14 October 1962, *Poqo* members murdered one of the Chief's advisers, and, on 23 October, there was an attempt on the life of one of the chiefs in Cofimvaba. In the most widely publicised *Poqo* attack, two white road workers and the wife and daughters of one were hacked to death on the night of 4-5 February 1963 near the Bashee/Mbashe River Bridge in the Transkei. In other attacks, a number of whites were attacked with *pangas*, axes, and *assegais* [machete, axe, and spear], and their possessions burned.

### **The PAC's 1963 'Uprising'**

At the PAC's 1961 conference in Maseru, a decision had been taken that members should receive basic military training in preparation for a final insurrection, planned for 8 April 1963. The PAC plan was that each town would stage its own revolt, thus forcing the government to deploy its forces over a wide area, instead of focusing on one town or city. According to Zolile Hamilton Keke:

(39) State Archives, Box 1/1/1/820, court record: State v Advocate Mteteleli Ntuli and Leonard Zambodla, 1968, p.198; State v Johannes Notyawe and Vanele Matikinca, 193, p.111. See also Lodge, Tom. *Black Politics*: p.251; State Archives, Box 4/1/9/180, report on the commission appointed to inquire into the events on 20 to 22 November 1962 at Paarl, and the causes that gave rise thereto (Snyman Commission).

(40) Cape Town Supreme Court CSC 313/63, File 1/1/1/560.

(41) Lodge, Tom. *Black Politics since 1945*: See p.252.

What happened was that we were just going to use whatever we could lay our hands on. Some of us had sharpened irons called *pangas*. Some of us had been trying to do some petrol bombs and all those things. And what we were determined to do was to face the music. We thought – being people who had no experience – that once the action starts, the reaction from the white police and the white army would force everybody to join the uprising. And as this was supposed to be countrywide, the white man or the government won't be able to resist such a countrywide uprising. That was our thinking. We never thought of sophisticated things like if you don't win control of the army, there is no way you could take control of the state. What we thought was, once we heard that in East London, King Williams Town, in Johannesburg, in Cape Town, in Port Elizabeth, people have started attacking the whites, right, we knew the way the whites were going to react – the police and the army – would be such that everybody is going to find that we have no option, but we have to join. That was the thinking.<sup>42</sup>

*Pogo* cadres preparing for guerrilla warfare against the South African state were advised to stockpile whatever weaponry they could lay hands on. The fact that they had access to little other than *pangas* and axes seems not to have deterred the PAC at all. Anything, it was felt, could be used to wage war. It did not have to be the sophisticated weaponry at the regime's disposal. According to Mgaza:

You start a revolution with what you can manufacture around you. You start a revolution with a knife. The little thing you think cannot do anything against a machine gun. These things develop and that takes you from a knife to a *panga*, from a *panga* to something else. You go on stage by stage until you get to an AK-47. Our type of war was a war of surprise ... You start with guerrilla warfare. We knew that we would have to use guerrilla warfare to be able to fight a powerful system ...<sup>43</sup>

The shortcomings of the strategy were exposed soon after Potlako Leballo's press conference on 27 March 1963, when he claimed that the PAC had some 155,000 cadres who would ensure the final demise of apartheid. Following Leballo's public announcement, the PAC offices in Basutoland were raided and a list of 10,000 names ended up in the hands of the police. The PAC suffered a further blow on 29 March, when two young women were arrested in the Free State town of Ladybrand, where they had been sent by Leballo to post letters to PAC members.

In Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage, *Pogo* fell into disarray when key members were arrested and charged with sabotage in November 1962. Plans to attack Port Elizabeth collapsed, and ninety-four people were charged with furthering the aims of a banned organisation. In both Atteridgeville and Mamelodi, the PAC leaders were arrested on 21 March 1963. On the night of 8 April, scores of *Pogo* cadres were arrested as

they gathered in various areas to undertake operations. Zolile Hamilton Keke, a *Pogo* member from East London, recalls events at the time as follows:

The 8th of April came. In the forest we were addressed by the local leader, Washington Sixeshe, telling us that this is the day. And he was trying to administer an oath that following the spirits of Hintsá [and] Mkhanda – we were determined to pay the highest

(42) Interview with Zolile Hamilton Keke, by Sean Morrow, (East London) 21 October 2001.

(43) Interview with Vuyani Mgaza, by Brown Maaba, (East London) 30 November 2001.

price for our freedom. But thereafter, when we were being divided into groups of ten, we heard shots. There was confusion. One group started running away. One person started saying: “People, don’t run away.” And the person who was saying this was running; and we joined. These guys (police) came at the time when we were being sub- divided, and we were so disorganised that some of us were arrested on the scene and others were picked up later. We were picked up; we faced various charges. Some of the senior [leaders] were already arrested. Then people were charged with furthering the aims of a banned organisation. And those of us who were arrested after the 8th of April faced sabotage and conspiracy [charges]. Now, here we are awaiting trial; we are facing serious charges. The OAU had just been formed. Now we found [that] the South African government finds it difficult to fly their planes over the airspace of the African states. These were things which were encouraging at that time. We heard that the UN General Assembly [had] decided that there should be the release of political prisoners; 106 countries against one. That one country was Portugal, which was backing South Africa. But all other countries were saying South Africa must release the political prisoners. And there was everything which was encouraging us because of the mobilisation of the African states [and the states] of the world as a whole. And our view was: let the South African government do anything. But we are very sure we are going to be freed and we shall never finish the sentences. People like me were even freed before December. We were confident that something was going to happen. There came a delay by a few months, but surely something was going to happen. We were very confident. And the whole world was behind us, and South Africa was discredited everywhere. You could even hear the ambassador of the United States of America, [Adlai] Stevenson, attacking apartheid in South Africa. You could hear an opposition leader of Britain who would subsequently be elected the Prime Minister saying: “Stop selling arms to South Africa!” [I was still at school at the time.] Our parents organised defence [lawyers for our trial], and we stopped them. We had defence counsels to represent us, and the judges just gave us long prison terms. Even as they were sentencing us, we were laughing because we had convinced ourselves we were not going to finish the sentences. We appeared on the 26th in the Supreme Court in Butterworth in the Transkei before Judge President Jennet in a two week trial. We were always singing; whenever they were going for lunch or after that day’s trial [proceedings], we would go and sing. Our spirits were high.<sup>44</sup>

By June 1963, about 3,246 PAC members had been arrested nationally and 124 had been found guilty of murder. After *Poqo* was crushed, many members were sent to Robben Island. As a result of this unsuccessful attempt to bring the government to its knees, and the mass arrests before and after the 1963 uprising, the PAC was left in disarray. Imprisonment, and above all the execution of a whole layer of cadres, left the organisation rudderless. According to Malatsi,

When this thing happened, the PAC was by far the most revolutionary and the most radical organisation: and it delivered the most devastating blow to the organisation. The setback was for at least 10 to 15 years before we were able to recover properly. You

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(44) Interview with Zolile Hamilton Keke, by Sean Morrow, (New Brighton, Port Elizabeth) 21 October 2001.

must not forget that over 11,000 PAC members were arrested. The whole of 1963-1964 the majority of people on Robben Island were PAC members. That was why John Vorster was able to pride himself to say that they had broken the back of the PAC.<sup>45</sup>

### **The Rivonia Arrests**

In January 1962, Nelson Mandela departed clandestinely from South Africa and visited North and East Africa, where he met major African leaders, and made arrangements for MK cadres to undergo military training. Mandela returned to Johannesburg. But on the way, he was arrested and later charged with two counts; one of incitement to strike, the other of leaving the country without a passport. His trial attracted a great deal of attention, for during his period underground he had become something of a legend.

The ANC remained officially committed to non-violence. There was widespread confusion among ANC members as to what the organisation's official policy was. It was not until October 1962, when the ANC convened its first conference since 1959 in Lobatse, Bechuaunaland, that the ANC dispelled confusion on its stance towards armed struggle. The main objective was to "consider the measures required to give a new impetus to organisational work in pursuance of the decision to make preparations for armed revolutionary struggle".<sup>46</sup> However, it was not until April 1963 that the ANC issued an official statement arising from the Lobatse conference, the first document to connect the ANC to the armed wing.

In the meantime, members of MK's High Command, who had always viewed the sabotage campaign as the starting-point for proper armed struggle, also began to see it as counter-productive, leading simply to more repression and arrests without exerting significant pressure on the government. This gave rise to Operation Mayibuye. The proposed plan was that four groups of thirty people each would be simultaneously landed by sea or air in South Africa. The groups would then split up into platoons of ten each and they would establish base areas from which to attack and to which to retreat. Guerrilla units would already have been set up in the four regions identified by the plan. The strategy was based on the intention that the external forces would find at least 7,000 men in the four main areas ready to join the guerrilla army.<sup>47</sup> Despite not having been approved, the Mayibuye plan proved to be political dynamite.

On 11 July 1963, Lilliesleaf Farm, the underground headquarters of the ANC and its allied organisations, was raided by the police, who arrested the leadership of the Congress alliance who were present. In the subsequent trial, known as the Rivonia Trial, Nelson Mandela and seven others were adjudged guilty of sabotage and other offences against the state, and sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island. The trial, which ended on 12 June 1964, meant that virtually the entire National High

(45) Interview with M. Malatsi, by Thami ka Plaatjie, (Midrand) 24 October 1999.

(46) Mayibuye Centre, Simons Papers, p.13.3, African National Congress, *Directive on the Nature of the Forthcoming Conference*, March 1969.

(47) Karis and Carter. *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol 3: See pp.760-768.

Command of MK – and the most significant leaders of the Congress Alliance who were still in South Africa – were behind bars. It was one of the most severe blows that MK, the ANC, and the SACP underground would suffer.

### **The ANC/SACP Underground after Rivonia**

Shortly before the Lobatse Conference in late 1962, the ANC formed a National Secretariat to understudy its National Executive Committee (NEC).<sup>48</sup> After July 1963, the National Secretariat took over the functions of the NEC, including the task of reconstituting ANC structures depleted by the Rivonia arrests and subsequent detention, imprisonment, banning, and forced departure from the country of large numbers of members. At branch level, underground structures were instructed to implement the M-Plan, as well as to form underground ‘cells’, depending on the circumstances. The latter consisted of a group of four, with a cell leader who liaised with the seven-person branch committees. The M-Plan involved secret organisation of the streets, house by house, until the entire community was covered. However, under the prevailing repressive conditions from mid-1963, such successes were uncommon.

From the outset, the National Secretariat dealt with underground structures that were “disrupted almost every day.”<sup>49</sup> In addition, a climate of suspicion enveloped the ANC once it became clear that people in detention were being tortured into revealing information. This gave rise to “constant paranoia” and a reluctance to respond to overtures to organise underground. The arrests in mid-1963 further disrupted lines of communication with the leadership, as Pascal Ngakane explained: The terrible thing was that there was no message that was being given – there was no organising political message, because we also lost touch with the leadership. The leadership was leaving the country. The leadership was underground. Later on, I’m talking about much later when this Radio Freedom came about, at least you could listen to Radio Freedom and take back to the people that this is what is happening.

At that time you had to deal with the situation as it was at that time – and there was no real ideological mobilisation.<sup>50</sup>

In addition, by mid-1963 most of the legal Congresses, which had provided an important platform for communication with ANC members and sympathisers, had been rendered inoperative. In these most challenging of circumstances, the ANC leadership still inside the country concentrated on keeping “the organisation intact”.<sup>51</sup> Propaganda became a priority, and pamphlets and leaflets “were mainly produced to refute government claims that the ANC had been crushed.”<sup>52</sup>

(48) Dingake, Michael. *My Fight Against Apartheid*. London: Kliptown Books, 1987: See p.78.

(49) Interview with Michael Dingake, e-mail communication with the author, 16 October 2002.

(50) Interview with Dr. Pascal Ngakane, by Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, (Uitkyk) 23 November 2002.

(51) Interview with Dr. Pascal Ngakane.

(52) Michael Dingake, e-mail communication with the author, 16 October 2002.

No understudy structure had been created for MK. The Rivonia Trial was still in progress when the first steps were taken to reconstitute MK, and a new National High Command was appointed, with Wilton Mkwayi its leader. Despite innumerable difficulties, the new High Command was able to re-establish regional commands. Individuals were charged with leading the process of recruiting new members and setting up MK cells in the regions. By mid-1964, MK membership had risen to approximately 500, located in seven centres and a few rural areas. The bulk of the membership was African, but there were also some units made up of Indian and white members, based in Johannesburg.

In late 1964, the second High Command requested the External Mission of the ANC to provide it with trained cadres to impart military training and conduct 'political work' inside the country. Five cadres were sent separately into South Africa between August and October. Recruitment of cadres for MK training outside the country appears to have been the chief assignment given to the five guerrillas. This was a change in the role that the High Command expected these cadres to play, and many did not make it to the regions they had been assigned to.

Following an attack that was unconnected to MK, the state toughened its stand against the Congress Movement still further. Towards the end of July 1964, John Harris, a member of the African Resistance Movement, placed a suitcase containing a bomb at the Johannesburg railway station. The explosion killed a 77-year-old grandmother and injured 23 others.<sup>53</sup> A fresh wave of arrests ensued. Several members of MK's second High Command were apprehended in July and September. Wilton Mkwayi, David Kitson, Laloo Chiba, John Edward Matthews, and Mac Maharaj were later convicted of more than 50 acts of sabotage in what became known as the 'little Rivonia Trial'. The arrest of the members of the second High Command just a year after the Rivonia raid effectively destroyed the internal structures of MK. Evidence provided by state witnesses and a number of other accomplice witnesses further assisted the state's search for MK members, forcing many to go underground or flee the country. After the arrest of Mkwayi and the others, the position of commander in chief of MK fell to Joe Modise, who had left the country early in 1963 on the instructions of the first National High Command. His task had been to undergo training himself, oversee the training and safe return of recruits and arrange supplies of arms and ammunition from the socialist bloc for the liberation movement. After his appointment as commander in chief, Modise focused on establishing MK bases in Tanzania, Angola, and Uganda, and on overseeing training programmes in the Eastern Bloc, Cuba, Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, China, and the German Democratic Republic.

The wave of arrests in mid-1964 also gravely damaged the political structures of the liberation movement. However, even before the internal leadership structures of the ANC were destroyed, there was a growing awareness among the ANC leaders in

(53) Frankel, Glenn. *Rivonia's Children: Three Families and the Price of Freedom in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1999: See pp.266-7.

exile that the remaining internal leadership structure could not be maintained. Joe Matthews explained that “we took a decision outside that we should re-establish the ANC leadership in the External Mission. Thereafter, the External Mission virtually retained the leadership of the ANC and spoke in the name of the ANC.”<sup>54</sup>

### **The African People’s Democratic Union of Southern Africa (APDUSA)**

The ANC and PAC were not the only organisations to launch armed wings during the early 1960s. Among the first of these to be established was the African People’s Democratic Union of Southern Africa (APDUSA). The formation of APDUSA in January 1961 followed a reassessment of the South African situation by the NEUM leadership. The Mpondoland revolt of 1959–1960 and social unrest in the aftermath of the Sharpeville Massacre convinced them that the country was entering a pre-revolutionary phase, which meant that the time was ripe to resort to armed struggle.<sup>55</sup> The first step in the creation of APDUSA was taken soon after the Sharpeville Massacre when the Society of Young Africa (SOYA), a national youth organisation affiliated to the AAC in the Western Cape, accepted the idea of launching a new mass political organisation called the African People’s Democratic Union (APDU). In December 1960, Tabata, Jane Gool, and Ali Fataar called a public meeting in Cape Town, where the APDU was launched. Soon afterwards, branches were established in Cape Town and Paarl. In April 1962, APDUSA was formally constituted at its first national conference in Cape Town.

The organisation’s constitution assigned central revolutionary significance to both the peasantry and the urban proletariat. Through APDUSA, the NEUM leadership intended winning mass support among rural residents with demands for the lifting of restrictions on landholding and redistribution of land. Among the urban proletariat, support would rest on the demand for democratic rights, hence the slogan: *Land and Liberty!*

Recruitment of members began immediately, and by the end of 1961, several branches had been established. In the Eastern Cape, a branch was formed in Queenstown and house meetings were held in Port Elizabeth and East London. In the Transkei and Ciskei, APDUSA gained footholds in Kentani and Lady Frere and drew support from the Makhuluspan, a vigilante group formed to protect residents in the Qumbu, Tsolo, and Matatiele districts against criminals. Later, APDUSA would find widespread support in eastern Pondoland. In Natal, branches were formed in Pietermaritzburg, Durban, and Dundee. Towards the end of 1961, formation of the Johannesburg branch galvanised the NEUM on the Witwatersrand to new levels of political activism. The Johannesburg branch also played a crucial role in spreading the influence of APDUSA into the Sekhukhuniland area of the northern Transvaal.

(54) Interview with Joe Matthews, telephonically by Gregory Houston, (Pretoria and Cape Town) 5 November 2002.

(55) University of Cape Town Manuscripts and Archives Division, IB Tabata Collection, BC 925, (hereafter BC925), IB Tabata, *Notes for a discussion with Kwame Nkrumah*, April 1964.

### **National Committee for Liberation/the African Resistance Movement**

Another organisation to take up the armed struggle in the early 1960s was the National Committee for Liberation/the African Resistance Movement (NCL/ARM). The founders of the NCL were Monty Berman, an ex-communist, and John Lang, an active member of the Labour Party. Monty and Myrtle Berman were imprisoned during the post-Sharpeville state of emergency, and while imprisoned spoke to communists and non-communists alike about the need for a sabotage organisation that would be a broad umbrella group and would include “both communists and liberals, everyone coming in.” In the latter part of 1960, it was this small group that formed the nucleus of what they hoped would create sufficient economic dislocation to encourage the black masses to take similar but more widespread and effective actions. Eventually, they hoped that this military spearhead would assist the ANC to take power. On 22 December 1961, the NCL issued a press statement announcing its existence.

During 1962 a number of new recruits joined the NCL, including Neville Rubin, Adrian Leftwich, and Stephanie Kemp. By year’s end there were approximately thirty white members and at least seven active blacks. The Johannesburg cells made two successful attacks on pylons in August and November 1962. The first part of 1963 was devoted to recruitment and training, with acts of sabotage to follow later. The Johannesburg cells carried out two successful attacks, in September and November. In August, Cape Town cells made two attempts to sabotage the FM tower on Constantia Mountain. Co-ordinated attacks on signal cables at four Cape Town railway stations in September were highly successful, as was an attack on an electricity pylon in November. The Johannesburg cells made three attacks in January and February 1964, but the successful destruction of five pylons in the week of 18 June, three around Cape Town and two in the Johannesburg area, was both the high point and swan song of the NCL/ARM. Up to that point, there had been nine sabotage attacks (eight successful) in 1964, as against seven (six successful) in 1963, three (including the theft of dynamite) in 1962 and five (three pylons, damage to a Bantu Affairs office and theft of dynamite) in 1961.

From 4 July 1964, the state cracked down on ARM members. Ultimately, of the fifty-seven members of ARM known to the Security Police, twenty-nine were arrested. Of these, fourteen were charged with various criminal acts and ten were convicted. The rest fled. On 24 July, John Harris placed a petrol bomb in a locker on the concourse of the Johannesburg train station.

### **Repression in the 1960s**

Throughout the 1960s, membership of an illegal organisation would be the most common charge faced by thousands of ordinary members and supporters of the ANC and PAC. The adoption of sabotage and armed attacks precipitated the enactment of the General Law Amendment Act, the so-called ‘Sabotage Act’, in June 1962. It created the offence of sabotage, for which the penalties were the same as for

treason, including the death penalty. In May 1963, the General Law Amendment Act, commonly termed the ‘Ninety-Day Law’, was enacted. It authorised the detention of any person suspected of a political crime for a period of 90 days. The 90-day law was replaced in 1965 by the Criminal Procedure Amendment Act, which doubled the period of detention to 180 days, renewable on completion. The final and most extensive piece of repressive legislation passed was the Terrorism Act of 1967. This built upon the provisions of the Sabotage Act and the detention laws, and created the new offence of participation in terrorist activities.

The 1960s also saw rapid growth of the security establishment. The transformation was led by B.J.Vorster, who in 1961 became Minister of Justice and had responsibility for the police added to his portfolio. By 1963, he had catapulted Lieutenant General Hendrik van den Bergh to head of the Security Police. Both the size and powers of the security police were increased enormously, and, between 1960 and 1966, the staff complement increased six fold.<sup>56</sup> In 1963, Republican Intelligence (RI), a covert section of the Security Branch, and the forerunner of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS), was created. The decade culminated in the formation of the BOSS in 1969 as a separate structure, with Van den Bergh as its head.

By the end of 1966, the number of banned persons had increased to 675. In 1966, 236 new orders were imposed in addition to the renewal of those already issued. Legal repression by the state went hand in hand with extra-legal measures involving physical violence and torture. Of some 14,000 people detained under both the state of emergency and other security legislation such as the 90-day law, a significant number experienced assault and torture while in custody. The use of electric shocks and other physical forms of torture in criminal investigations appears to have been fairly widespread.<sup>57</sup> Several illegal cross-border abductions of people who had fled the country to seek refuge in neighbouring states also took place.

Among the consequences of the 90-day law and subsequent legislation were the deaths in detention of 20 men between 1960 and 1969. Records of incarceration on Robben Island indicate that 1,728 political offenders began serving sentences there between 1964 and 1969. At least 101 persons – all male and only one of them white – were hanged in the 1960s, the first execution taking place in 1961 and the last in 1968. The decade was characterised by ‘group hangings’, with between four and fifteen men being executed for the same offence: the Bashee River murders, the Cato Manor killings, the murder of a white shopkeeper in Paarl, and the Mpondoland Revolt.

### **The ANC in Exile, 1960-1965**

Following the banning of the ANC and PAC after the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, large numbers of their members and supporters left South Africa to receive military training in friendly African states and elsewhere. In virtually every case, exiles made

<sup>(56)</sup> Sachs, Albie. *South Africa: The Violence of Apartheid*. London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1970: See p.35.

<sup>(57)</sup> Moroney, Sean and Linda Ensor. *The Silenced: Bannings in South Africa*. Johannesburg: SAIRR, 1979: See p.1.

some personal sacrifice when they decided to go into exile. One of these was Ruth Mompoti, who explains:

I had two children, they were still very young. One was six years old; the other one was about three years. I just didn't know how I was going to do it. So I went home to see my mother. My mother was still alive. I told her that I'm going to school abroad for a year and I lied... So I left, through Botswana and then we went to Tanzania... [after a year in exile] I told them, "No, me I'm ready to go home." They said, "The people at home say it would be a waste of time for you to go ... as Bartholomew Hlapane has decided to sing." I said, "What about my children?" So they said, "Your children are better off without you; if you get there, they are going to be harassed by the police." I said, "Are they not being harassed now by my absence?" That's what happened, I stayed for another year, and in the end it was 27 years.... One time we were working in this office, I was supposed to go home – I got a letter ... I cried the whole day [thinking about the children].<sup>58</sup>

Many ANC and PAC leaders went into exile at the same time, and eventually established bases in the newly independent states of Tanganyika and Zambia, while some settled in other independent African countries, Europe (particularly Britain), and the United States. A number also went to, or spent time in, the Soviet Union, China, and the countries of Eastern Europe. The route taken by most of the exiles in the early 1960s was through neighbouring Bechuanaland (later known as Botswana) and Zambia.

In 1965, special anti-guerrilla 'Mobile Police Units' began patrolling the borders of South Africa and South West Africa, the Transkei, and other reserves. The security police established an Air Wing equipped with reconnaissance helicopters and in the course of a single year, arrested 113 people making their way northwards to receive military training, as well as eighty-five who were returning from foreign camps. Members of the Botswana security police, as well as civilians, were recruited as the apartheid regime's paid 'eyes and ears'. Most, however, refused to act as informers and did everything possible to assist and protect the freedom fighters.

In exile, it became crucial for the liberation movements to speak with one voice. The South Africa United Front (UF) was launched in London in May 1960 in the aftermath of the Sharpeville and Langa Massacres. Tambo and Dadoo represented the ANC and the SAIC respectively, while Nana Mahomo and Peter Molotsi represented the PAC, and Jarientundu Kozonguizi the South West African National Union (SWANU). The UF was formed, firstly, to provide a voluntary structure within which the potentially destructive political rivalry between the ANC and PAC could be healed. Secondly, as both organisations lacked adequate financial and human resources in exile, the UF would allow them to combine and raise funds jointly. Thirdly, the UF's intention of isolating South Africa politically, economically, and culturally from the international community would be better served by a single voice.

<sup>(58)</sup> Interview with Ruth Mompoti, by Sifiso Ndlovu and Bernard Magubane, (Vryburg) 15 August 2001, SADET Oral History Archives.

The UF soon established offices in Accra, Cairo, London, and New York to disseminate information about conditions in South Africa and to mobilize international public opinion against the apartheid regime. As the UF, they could secure support by the United Nations (UN) for economic sanctions against South Africa, and exert pressure on the UN to wrest control of South West Africa from the white minority regime. Inside South Africa, however, the working relationship between the Congress Alliance and the PAC remained strained. The reason the PAC gave for its withdrawal from the UF was the predominance of communists at the All-In-Africa Conference. On 15 March 1962, the UF was formally dissolved.

The initial experience of the ANC and its allies in exile was very difficult. Firstly, individual leaders and members were scattered throughout the world, and many ceased to be functional members of the organisation. Secondly, a large proportion of the ANC's leadership, as well as the leadership of MK, were in prison. Those that escaped or were directed to flee into exile constituted only a fragment of the support base they left behind. Thirdly, the relationship between the ANC and other Congresses perceptibly changed as the role and structure of the latter shrank appreciably. Fourthly, the SACP went through a period of realignment and stress, whereby the white and, to some extent, Indian and coloured sections of the Party remained in London, while the key components of African leadership, including Moses Kotane and J.B. Marks, became almost wholly absorbed in and indistinguishable from the ANC in Dar es Salaam and Morogoro.

Though factional fissures blunted the effectiveness of the ANC for a time, they neither paralysed nor fractured it in a manner characteristic of so many other exiled political organisations. Common features of most of these incipient divisions were ethnicity, regionalism, and race. The capacity of the ANC to bridge these divides is testimony to the exceptional character of the South African liberation struggle and the weight and power of the ANC's rich historical legacy. The ANC escaped the fate of the PAC because of Tambo's leadership qualities, above all his capacity to rise above the sterile, fratricidal quarrels of exile. Joe Matthews believes that,

we are going to lose the essence of Tambo before we can put it down in writing and this chap's contribution is so outstanding. It is totally unprecedented and yet he remains humble right up to the end, able to talk to anybody, able to communicate – he was a really extraordinary man, you see, democratic, you see this autocracy, you know of Africa and so on, when you here with Tambo there's no such, you can walk up to him and argue and say "no man I don't agree with you" and everybody had that to discuss and argue and complain and so on.<sup>59</sup>

In 1965, the ANC moved its provisional headquarters from Dar es Salaam to Morogoro after the Tanzanian government decided to allow only four members of each liberation movement to maintain an office in Dar es Salaam. The two most important bases for the ANC outside South Africa were now Tanzania and Zambia,

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<sup>(59)</sup> Interview with Joe Matthews.

where the ANC set up an office in 1965. Before the move to Morogoro, the ANC had to take several important strategic decisions. The first was that the destiny of the ANC would henceforth rest with the External Mission. The second concerned the leadership of the organisation. Chief Albert Luthuli was living under banishment in South Africa and it was obvious that the External Mission, led by Tambo, the deputy president of the ANC, could no longer function merely as a caretaker. Nor could the leaders imprisoned on Robben Island continue to take decisions. The decision to appoint Tambo as the acting president was taken at the first Morogoro consultative conference in June 1965.

The 1965 Morogoro resolution notwithstanding, numerous problems remained. Internal differences and misunderstandings characterised relations between ANC headquarters in Tanzania and offices manned by representatives in various countries. At a meeting of the ANC's Executive Committee on 27 February 1966, Tambo complained of ill-discipline and laxity. Resolutions adopted at this meeting, among other things, reasserted the authority of the deputy president as the commander, director, and controller of the ANC. Resolutions were taken about the lack of discipline and the negative attitudes and conduct of some executive members; drunkenness was forbidden.

### **Military Training and ANC Camps in Exile**

The first group of recruits from the Congress Alliance to undergo military training received it in China in the early 1960s. This group comprised Wilton Mkwayi, Joe Gqabi, Steven Naidoo, Patrick Mthembu, Andrew Mlangeni, and Raymond Mhlaba. Morocco offered military training to one of the largest group of MK cadres in 1962. Similarly, the leaders of newly independent Algeria offered military training to MK recruits. Egypt played a special role in African nationalist movements, offering both political and practical support, including military assistance and training. Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia also provided military training to members of MK.<sup>60</sup>

Those trained in Morocco were dissatisfied with the training they received and the ANC leadership arranged for them to proceed to the USSR for further specialised training in 1963. In Moscow, they were trained in sabotage, explosives, weapons, politics, intelligence work, organisation of guerrilla units, and various techniques of guerrilla warfare. Another group sent to Egypt for military training reported that their training there was suitable for special commando units and not for guerrilla warfare. The drop out rate was extremely high, but, according to both Simon Senna and Ralph Moagi, the group of twenty-eight ANC cadres survived the requirements of this rigorous and physically demanding course:

It was one of the toughest courses we went through. And fortunately during that training, if my memory serves me well, we were the only people who did not suffer any casualty. We were training in the (Sahara) desert because you could see miles and miles away in the desert where there are no trees, nothing but sand dunes, and we

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(60) Shubin, Vladimir. *ANC: A View from Moscow*. Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1999: See pp.30-1.

are moving in that heat, and we used to be fried by the sun and when you see an Egyptian collapsing [you begin to worry because this was their terrain]... We were trained together with qualified army colonels and other people, so the officers used to suspect that we are lying [when we said] that it was the first time that we could go through that type of military training, nobody died in our group. Other people from different countries suffered... It was a course, which takes about three months.<sup>61</sup>

They too went to the Soviet Union for further training. These trained cadres were able to return to Africa, to the ANC military base in Kongwa, Tanzania, established in 1964.

Among the first inhabitants of Kongwa were the MK cadres who had received military training in the Soviet Union and various African countries, but the numbers soon swelled with new arrivals from South Africa. The cadres had to work hard to make the environment habitable and self-sufficient in regard to food production. In due course, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) provided funds for insecticides and seeds. The first ANC group described Kongwa as extremely dry, hot, dusty, home to many diseases, especially eye problems. Many people suffered from foot fungus, making it difficult to walk. It was essential for morale that health care and medication be available. Isaac Makopo, one of the young cadres at Kongwa, remembers that:

We went back to Tanzania in 1964, around August. We were then transported to a place in southern Tanzania, called Kongwa, an old dilapidated railway station. Few people stayed in houses; the majority of us stayed in tents for two, three years at Kongwa. We were told that was where we were going to stay and we have to make that place habitable. We worked very hard to make it a habitable place and, in the end, it was really a place that you would envy. Other groups that had gone for training to other parts of the Soviet Union, like Odessa, also arrived late '64 and '65. Some groups that had gone to train in Egypt around '65 also came back, but they were redirected to the Soviet Union for further training. I stayed in Kongwa from 1964 to 1967. When we opened the camp, I was appointed Chief Logistics Officer responsible for all things that were necessary for the survival of the comrades – food supplies, uniforms, medical supplies, accommodation, etc. Kongwa was a very dry, hot, dusty place with lots of funny diseases, especially eye diseases. People couldn't walk. At the beginning, it was really tough, until we appointed a medical officer, Leslie Sondezi, who had some medical training and had worked as a medical orderly in one of the hospitals in Durban. He was not as effective, however, as his successor, Jackson Mbali, who had worked as a medical orderly in the mines.<sup>62</sup>

An official, handwritten MK report compiled on 23 April 1967 about conditions and problems in Kongwa identified corporal punishment and ethnicity as major concerns. Qualitatively, training at Kongwa was relatively poor when compared with that offered by the Chinese, North Africans, and Russians, because of the lack of military equipment and resources.

(61) Interview with Simon Senna, by Sifiso Ndlovu, (Mafikeng) 10 March 2002.

(62) Interview with Isaac Makopo, by Sifiso Ndlovu, (Pretoria) 24 November 2000.

## The PAC in Exile

The wave of arrests after the launch of the anti-pass campaign on 21 March 1960 removed layer upon layer of PAC leaders. Z.B. Molete was appointed acting president of the organisation on his release from prison in August 1960. In early 1961, however, Molete left for Basutoland with Joe Molefi to avoid imprisonment. By early 1964, the PAC had established exiled communities in four main centres: Basutoland (Lesotho), Swaziland, Bechuanaland, and Tanzania. It also had a small presence in London, New York, Cairo, Algiers, and Accra. From 1960 to 1965, the highest concentration of members was in Lesotho. Potlako Leballo arrived there with a letter from Sobukwe, stating that he had been appointed acting president. Maseru was designated the headquarters of the PAC and remained so until 1964.<sup>63</sup> The primary task of the external mission at this time was to prepare for the mass uprising scheduled for April 1963, which formed the basis of the PAC's military strategy. Preparations began in late 1962, when scores of PAC members descended on Lesotho. Most were young members of the PAC who were determined to receive military training and return to South Africa to participate in the armed struggle.

The PAC found that the authorities in Lesotho, then a British Protectorate, were closely allied with the South African government and it became difficult for the PAC to operate in that country. There were occasions when the Lesotho authorities handed PAC refugees over to South Africa. The PAC's immediate task was to

provide underground training for *Poqo* recruits, which was done in the mountains of Lesotho. Like other South African liberation movements of the time, the PAC had no experience of guerrilla warfare. During the uprising planned for 8 April 1963, large groups of untrained men were to set out, armed mainly with *pangas*, to attack white people in various city centres throughout the country. Small acts of sabotage were also planned.

By June 1963, however, the military wing was in disarray following mass arrests. The new conditions after the destruction of *Poqo* called for a reappraisal and the adoption of a new approach to guerrilla warfare. Armed resistance could not be a series of spontaneous acts. This recognition compelled the PAC to begin initiatives to obtain assistance for the military training of its cadres, and a sizeable number of PAC members were sent to various countries for military training, including the Congo, Egypt, Libya, and Algeria. In 1964, after the PAC had sent a delegation to China, it was invited by the Chinese government to use its facilities for military training. The Chinese had become impressed with the PAC during the *Poqo* uprisings that demonstrated the PAC was serious about waging a revolution. A group of PAC cadres were sent for military training in China in 1965.

Exile posed challenges to the PAC that the leadership under Leballo found difficult to respond to, and Leballo faced repeated tension with other leaders of the PAC over the years. The first recorded dissatisfaction with the state of the organisation was a

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(63) Lodge, Tom. *Black Politics since 1945*: See p.306.

memorandum in 1963 from some PAC members based in Botswana, calling for a special conference to discuss the state of the organisation and to make suggestions for future operations in the PAC.<sup>64</sup> In the same year, Leballo faced opposition from a group of refugees based in Francistown who complained that they had left South Africa on the understanding that they would receive scholarships. Leballo labelled its initiators communists bent on usurping his leadership, and expelled most of them.

Another major problem that plagued the organisation in exile was corruption. Many of the internal leadership conflicts were caused by competition for control over, and access to, resources, exacerbated by ill-defined organisational and administrative guidelines. Added to this situation was the problem of distance, which militated against streamlining operations. The treasurer-general was stationed in Dar es Salaam and had no access to monies that were raised by the various country representatives of the PAC, who had their own separate bank accounts to which they were the sole signatories.<sup>65</sup> One of the cadres in exile, Vuyani Mgaza, remembers that:

We were not being funded. That's why President Nyerere said he would give us a base in Tanzania. Even there we couldn't get funds. We were depending on the OAU Liberation Committee to give us something for food. Tanzania gave us the camp in Bagamoyo, and it was right in the tropical forest. And then we had another camp in Iringa, where we were training our army. We couldn't have anything ourselves because the African states didn't have money anyway. The African countries that were liberated also tended to side with the ANC because of their dependence on the west. Money speaks, and we had no money. We had to travel on foot from Tanzania, all the way. Well not on foot as such. Our APLA forces had to be infiltrated and we had difficulties even inside the country because nobody wanted us.<sup>66</sup>

### **Attempts to Resuscitate the ANC/SACP Underground**

Bram Fischer, a leader of the SACP, was elevated to the leadership of the internal Congress underground after the arrest of members of the second National High Command of MK between June and September 1964. Fischer was detained on 23 September and subsequently charged under the Suppression of Communism Act. He was indicted together with thirteen other Party members, and brought to trial on 16 November. However, while the trial was still in progress, Fischer skipped bail in January 1965 and went underground for some ten months.

Fischer's work underground during 1965 was vital to any plans the movement had to continue with its armed struggle: he was the only person inside the country who could lead the establishment of an underground network to provide support for returning guerrillas. Gertrude Shope was the link between Fischer and the activists in the townships. She explains:

(64) Nkoana, Mathew. *Crises in the Revolution*. London: Mafube, 1969: p.42.

(65) Driver, C.J. *Patrick Duncan: South African and Pan African*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000: See p.234.

(66) Interview with Vuyani Mgaza, by Brown Maaba, (East London) 30 November 2001.

After the banning of the movement I was also a courier for Albertina Sisulu. She used to send me to the white areas to take messages there and then the white people would give me messages to bring to her. Among other things, it was money for the operations for people who were our operatives, who were being sent to different places for different things. I would bring this money to her or bring the messages to her, or whatever, things that we needed to know. It was at the time, for instance, when Bram Fischer was arrested. It was a very crucial time. I had to go to the white areas and there I used to work with a lady called Violet Weinberg. So I used to pretend I'm working for her every Saturday. I would go to her house to do some sewing for her children or do something in the kitchen or clean, whatever, just to justify my having gone to her. The main thing I had gone there for is the one hour time when I would get together with Violet Weinberg, when she would give me all the messages that I must take to the African townships, or I would give her whatever messages Albertina had given me to give to her. So that is the type of work that we were doing. And messages would also go to a person like Bram Fischer because Violet was Bram Fischer's operative. And then she would use me to go to Albertina and then Albertina would take it to the different people in the townships.<sup>67</sup>

During the time he was underground, a provisional local committee of the central committee of the SACP was established, and communication with the remaining members of the Communist Party in Cape Town, Durban, and other parts of the country was maintained through encrypted correspondence. He re-established links with old cadres, and continued to work with MK and ANC members still inside the country. Fischer was also receiving reports about the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW), SACTU, and various other political activities. His correspondence with the London office of the Communist Party indicated the special role he played in providing funds to underground structures.

During the ten months he spent underground, his contacts were "ruthlessly followed by the security police until they arrested some (of his) older comrades, who were tortured into revealing where he was."<sup>68</sup> Violet Weinberg, one of the few who knew Fischer's whereabouts, was detained on 9 November, and may have revealed the location of his hideout under torture. Others claim he was not betrayed.<sup>69</sup> Fischer's capture in November 1965 cut short his work in reconstructing the SACP internally and building underground units in various parts of the country.

### **The 1966-1969 Internal ANC Underground Networks**

During the second half of the 1960s, political activity in South Africa was heavily shackled by state repression. The most significant leaders of the Congress Alliance were in prison, exile, or living under stringent restrictions such as 24-hour house

(67) Interview with Gertrude Shope, by Sifiso Ndlovu, (Johannesburg) 8 May 2001.

(68) Goldberg, Denis. "Impressions and Memories of Communism in South Africa." *African Communist*. Second Quarter, No 157, 2001.

(69) Vermaak, Chris. *Braam Fischer: The man with two faces*. Johannesburg: APB-Publishers, 1966: Seep.209.

arrest. Large numbers of Congress and MK members were similarly affected. Nevertheless, repeated efforts were made during this period to revive local, regional, and national underground networks.

One of the most significant of these was the establishment of an underground cell by Albertina Sisulu and John Nkadimeng “to facilitate the passage of ANC members who wanted to leave the country for education or military training.” The cell maintained contact with the ANC leadership in Botswana and also established links with people in other provinces.<sup>70</sup> It distributed ANC and SACP leaflets, recruiting people to carry out this task, and maintained underground structures. Contact was established with ANC members in Natal, the Free State, and the Western Cape by couriers. The cell would also receive reports about the situation on Robben Island from newly released political prisoners.

In May and June 1969, police in major South African cities and towns detained hundreds of people. In December, twenty-two of the detainees were charged under the Suppression of Communism Act. Among the twenty-one main charges against them were that they: established groups and committees within the ANC; inspected trains and railway installations with the object of finding suitable targets and methods for committing acts of sabotage; discussed, distributed or possessed publications of the ANC, SACP, and SAIC; and discussed the establishment of contact with guerrilla fighters in the event of their arrival within the Republic.

Winnie Mandela, one of the accused, initiated the first underground cell in the Soweto network in Johannesburg during 1966. The cells in Soweto alone drew hundreds of young people, Diepkloof having five cells, each consisting of approximately ten people. Alexandra had three, while cells were also established in the East Rand townships. Cells were also established in the Western and Eastern Cape, in particular in Port Elizabeth, King William’s Town, and Umtata, a process that began in earnest after structures had been set up in Soweto and surrounding areas in Johannesburg and elsewhere in the Transvaal in 1966. Samson Ndou was adamant that underground work had continued despite the crackdown and mass detentions in the first half of the year, saying:

I don’t remember us stopping work. I don’t remember ... that lull that people talk about. Those were difficult days for our organisation because of this clampdown that goes with the banning of the organisation, followed by the Rivonia Trial and the sentencing of leaders to life imprisonment. Those were difficult years. It was not really a lull, like people had stopped working. What had stopped (were) general meetings, open meetings, because we were not allowed to do so. Activists never stopped the work.<sup>71</sup>

(70) Sisulu, Elinor. *Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In Our Lifetime*. Claremont: David Philip, 2002: See pp.206-7.

(71) Interview with Samson Ndou, by Siphamandla Zondi, (Thoyandou) 21 May 2001.

### The PAC's Moshi Conference

The PAC in exile's most serious leadership crisis in the late 1960s was the conflict between Potlako Leballo, on the one hand, and Peter Raboroko and A.B. Ngcobo, on the other. The latter two called for more decisive intervention by the UN and other international bodies to pressure the South African government to bring about change. Leballo's group rejected this position, placing greater emphasis on self-reliance in the achievement of liberation. The OAU and the government of Tanzania were forced to intervene when supporters of Raboroko and Ngcobo occupied the PAC offices in July 1967. On 15 August, the Tanzanian army was called in to seal off the offices, which were temporarily closed. The OAU and the Tanzanian government then convened a meeting with PAC leaders in late August at the offices of the OAU Liberation Committee. Agreement was reached that the offices of the PAC would be re-opened and a meeting of the National Executive Committee convened at Moshi on 19 September, with all PAC members, including those who had been expelled or suspended, included.

The conference at Moshi represented the first broad leadership consultative forum outside South Africa after the Lesotho conference of the national executive in 1962. The meeting ruled against censuring Raboroko, lifted Ngcobo's suspension, revoked all other suspensions effected by Leballo, and voted to establish a revolutionary command to streamline the army and its functions. Leballo, the chairman of the Revolutionary Command, was made commander-in-chief. A High Command of the newly named armed wing, the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) was established, led by Templeton Ntantala. Peter Molotsi states the following about the conference:

In 1967 we had a consultative conference at Moshi, Tanzania. I travelled from the United States to that conference. From time to time the organisation needed to consult and to consolidate its strategies. This was the second consultative conference in exile after the one in Lesotho. The most important decision was to intensify the armed struggle. A number of decisions were taken, but the big one was to intensify the armed struggle, both inside the country and to enlarge our army – which steadily grew to become APLA. APLA was established after the Moshi conference in 1967. But it was a continuation of the *Pogo* activities. We had no experience then in the *Pogo* days. So APLA was not founded as a new organisation. It was just improved until it became an effective organ. The first bases of APLA were in Tanzania and then Lusaka. At first APLA's headquarters were in Dar es Salaam. ZANU [Zimbabwe African National Union] used to have camps in Tanzania and the PAC took those over. We were very close to the Mugabe group, even before they had an army of their own because they shifted their armies from there to Mozambique. So they left their camp to us.<sup>72</sup>

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(72) Interview with Peter Molotsi.

According to Zebulon Mokoena, one of the earliest APLA recruits:

The High Command was at the helm of what later became known as APLA. Leballo, as the leader of the PAC, was the overall supreme commander of APLA. The commander was Templeton Ntantala and he was deputised by Gasson Ndlovu, Gerald Kondlo, Theophilus Bidi, and George Rankoana as the Political Commissar. The group that came from China was the core in the constitution of APLA. It was after the arrival of this group from China that Leballo appointed them into the High Command of APLA

... The PAC camps were at a place called Morogoro in Tanzania. Leballo wanted a place near the border, near Livingstone, in a place called Senkobo, outside town. There we used to train alone and there was a camp commander. Siphon Ximba Kondlo came with a truckload of arms there at Senkobo to train whilst we were there.<sup>73</sup>

### **The ANC's Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns**

By the mid-1960s, MK was based almost entirely in exile, following the collapse of the second National High Command led by Wilton Mkwayi and the capture of Bram Fischer in 1965. At the time, South Africa had a *cordon sanitaire* of colonies and states ruled by white minority regimes – Southern Rhodesia, South West Africa, and the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique. Zambia became independent only in 1964, and Botswana in 1966.

During the second half of the decade, there was mounting pressure from MK cadres in military camps in Tanzania on the ANC leadership to send guerrillas back to South Africa to fight the apartheid regime. At Kongwa, the ANC's military base in Tanzania, MK cadres, especially those from the first two groups that had been trained in the early 1960s, began to complain about what they perceived to be the ANC leadership's hesitation to send them back to South Africa to fight. According to Mavuso Msimang, a young member of MK at the time:

There was always an expectation that we were not going to stay in these places for very long. Nobody even brought suitcases; it would be these duffle bags ... because the understanding was that the transit in Tanzania would be very, very brief. But we went to this camp at Kongwa – central Tanzania – and it became quite clear that transition was going to take a little longer. People wanted to go home, and they just did not want to sit in Kongwa.<sup>74</sup>

The idea of a military alliance between the ANC and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), first mooted in 1966, was supported by the governments of both Tanzania and Zambia, and in 1967 the leaders of the two movements agreed on a joint military campaign. The initial plan was that large numbers of MK cadres would join the forces of ZAPU's armed wing, the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), and, after passing through Rhodesia together, the MK soldiers would cross the Limpopo River into South Africa. For many MK cadres, this was the opportunity

(73) Interview with Zebulon Mokoena, by Thami ka Plaatjie with HMP [Hashim Mbita Project], (Grobelarsdal) 7 May 2005.

(74) Interview with Mavuso (Walter) Msimang, by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, (Midrand) 22 June 2003.

they had been waiting for. Once agreement had been reached, preparations for the campaign began. A joint political and military High Command was formed. Modise and Joe Matthews began to assemble the MK fighting units. Chris Hani was to be the commissar, while John Dube of ZIPRA would command the joint MK and ZIPRA units. In honour of the ANC president, Chief Albert Luthuli, who died in July 1967, the MK unit was called the Luthuli Detachment.

MK cadres volunteered to take part in the joint mission. In early 1967, they were moved from the camps in Tanzania to the ZAPU camp outside Lusaka. There was a relatively small contingent of thirty-three MK soldiers. On the night of 30-31 July 1967, a group numbering about eighty strong crossed at Kazangula, near Livingstone. The South African guerrillas were expected to move south and split into a number of smaller units of about eight members each, enter South Africa and base themselves in the Transvaal, Durban, Transkei, and Cape Town. Some MK units were to proceed eastwards with the ZIPRA forces, in order to establish an MK presence inside Rhodesia. It took the detachment two days of hard marching to reach the Wankie Game Reserve. Mpanza recalled:

Then they (ZAPU) led us from there and told us about camps in that vicinity and about camp guards who were protecting the game. They instructed us to avoid such places and not to make any noise. Smoking of cigarettes was also not allowed. The commander was the only person who gave people the necessary permission to smoke. Then Chris [Hani] was chosen to lead the reconnaissance. Mnqarwana [alias Mjojo, alias Lennox Lagu, real name Tshali] was the commander of the whole group. Then we proceeded together with our respective units until we reached the middle part of the game reserve. We managed to avoid some of the camps, using detours. I think it was on the fourteenth day inside the forest when we ran out of food and other things. It was only then that we decided to kill the game, and we ate the meat. We took what was left with us. We proceeded until we reached the far end of the forest. This was now open space. The forest was no longer thick with trees and vegetation. We then decided to take a rest. We sat down after taking a detour away from the forest. This place was very big. We therefore went around the forest; hence we now knew that there is an open space inside the forest. We proceeded and suddenly there was a place towards Tsholotsho where we found water. There was a sand river where you had to dig before you could access the water. Our Rhodesian comrades taught us how to drink this water. It was at that stage that we prepared ourselves for the war.<sup>75</sup>

When the detachment reached the Wankie Game Reserve around 2 August, it split into two units. One moved in a south-westerly direction towards Botswana, in accordance with instructions to make for South Africa and go underground. John Dube of ZIPRA was in command of the fifty-seven members and Chris Hani was the commissar. The rest of the detachment, about twenty-three MK/ZIPRA members under the command of ZIPRA's Madzimba Matho, with Andries Motsepe

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(75) Interview with Justice Mpanza.

of MK as his deputy, moved towards Lupane in north-eastern Matabeleland. Their orders were to remain in Rhodesia and set up a communications network between ANC members in exile and those based in South Africa, and map out a route for future MK cadres to use on their way to South Africa.

The first battle between the joint ANC/ZAPU unit and the Rhodesian security forces occurred on 13 August on the banks of the Nyatuwe River, between Wankie and Dete. After a battle lasting seven and a half hours, the Rhodesian forces fled, losing two African soldiers, two white BSAP (British Southern African Police) officers, and a white army officer, in addition to two African soldiers being wounded. When they returned that night to retrieve the bodies of their dead, the Rhodesian forces found five dead guerrillas.

The sophistication of the 13 August engagement took the Rhodesian forces by surprise, especially when they became aware of the presence of MK cadres in the unit. Smith's government called on the South Africans for assistance, which was followed by the deployment of a group of soldiers to assist with intelligence and information gathering. This led to the deployment of a contingent of South African policemen to reinforce the Rhodesian army.

The second and third major battles of the Wankie Campaign occurred on 21 and 22 August. These were the first and second clashes between the unit moving towards the south and the Rhodesian security forces. After these battles, the guerrilla unit was running low on ammunition. Re-supply from Lusaka was out of the question, and fearing that the Rhodesians would return with an even larger force, they decided to cross the border into northern Botswana after burying their dead. Many of the retreating guerrillas were captured by Botswana security forces. By the end of the month, thirteen guerrillas had been captured in Botswana. Mongameli Tshali recalls the campaign as follows:

We parted with another group which was going to Tsholotsho and later found out that we were too early to do that. We should have walked much further, deeper into the country, but people didn't know the area. That was the first group that got into contact with the enemy. And from there, those who were captured before being killed exposed the whole group, I think. The enemy got to know that there's a group going to some part of Zimbabwe and part of the group is going to South Africa. They mobilised even the Botswana police to patrol the area and watch for us. We moved as fast as possible. We got lost somehow, disturbed elephants, a whole herd of buffalos and all that kind of thing, until we approached a dam for animals to drink and then we sent two of our snipers to go and shoot something for us. Just at that time here comes the military. They are taking cover, so that was confirmation they knew we were there. Nobody moved. Meanwhile there was a spotter plane above us. It is in the morning. We hear shots. We were convinced it's the enemy shooting with machine guns. We didn't have enough ammunition and we were using it sparingly. We couldn't do anything. The whole day we took cover. We only moved when it became dark. We knew that they are waiting for us everywhere. We crossed a wire fence. We knew that we were going out of the reserve now. But our friends didn't know exactly where we were. That was our problem. We sent some guys to organise water. They did find water somewhere and also found a

cattle post around there. They came back with some milk. As we were trying to share the milk, the enemy caught up with us. We fought back and killed some of their people. We also captured some weapons and all that food they had been eating. We shot at the plane that flew away. I don't know how much damage was done. It never came back. We also suffered some casualties. We had two people who later died; we had to bury them in a shallow grave somewhere. And we moved on. In the evening we met the group we had earlier fought, who were still fleeing. They scattered. We also continued on our way. And then somebody heard talk next to where we were. John Dube, the commander of the ZIPRA forces, together with Chris and Ndaba – plus two/three other people – went to investigate. They found enemy soldiers, warming up food and apparently taking a rest. They couldn't get to their guns fast enough. Our people fired first. And then there was commotion. They wiped out the enemy. We learnt much later that we had killed a senior officer. I don't know whether he was a major or what, but that day was declared a day of mourning for that unit. The next day we moved on until we came to a place at sunrise. I don't know whether it was Plumtree; up to now, I still don't know what place it was. We saw that we were crossing a border into Botswana; we didn't know which border it was. The Botswana police were busy patrolling that side, waiting for us. Some of us were carrying more than one weapon that we had captured earlier and some radio equipment. Before we could go in, we had to have a small talk with our people to tell them we have now crossed into Botswana and the situation is such that politically it would be wrong for us to shoot it out with the Botswana police. We are the group that was ultimately captured in Botswana. By then we had quite a lot of casualties and some of us were sick or almost insane. So we as a command group had to come together to say: "What is our state now? Our people are completely exhausted and we have nowhere to go where we can replenish ammunition, food, and water. What do we do?" We said: "No, there's nothing you can do." So the mission failed. We were charged with possession of weapons. I think that was the major thing. Chris's group that had separated from us received the lightest sentence because they had hidden their weapons shortly before their arrest. So somehow they were grudgingly given the benefit of doubt. We were sentenced to four and half years. We ended up serving two. We were given some remission. We got a presidential pardon on Botswana Day. And then on OAU day we were also given something like that. The other group I think must have got two years.<sup>76</sup>

The Wankie battles lasted from 13 August to the middle of September 1967. When MK headquarters in Lusaka heard of the ongoing clashes, they decided to send another unit to Rhodesia to divert the enemy's attention. The plan was to attack the enemy from the east, towards Sipolilo, thereby opening up a second front that would place the Rhodesian forces under pressure from two sides. Msimang recalled:

It became very clear that we needed to reconsider the strategy. We couldn't send more people down the same route. I remember sitting with Oliver Tambo – I was in the High Command of MK, in charge of communications, and when we formed the Joint Command with the ZAPU people, ZIPRA, I also went into the Joint Command structure. We discussed a regrouping, and my own views were that we were only going

(76) Interview with Mongameli Johnson Tshali, by Nhanhla Ndebele and Moses Ralinanala, (Pretoria) 27 July 2001.

to go to South Africa through Zimbabwe. There was an armed struggle taking place there, conditions were okay, but we needed to prepare a lot better than we had done in Wankie. And the preparations started and we went to the east – to Sipolilo, the Eastern Front. That was prepared for a lot better than the Western Front, than the Wankie Campaign. The first reconnaissance was carried out by, I think, some ANC guys including myself, and ZIPRA people. And I remember us going across, going right into Zimbabwe, and it was a godforsaken place. There was just nothing, and we went in, came back and said, ‘Guys, it’s clear ... it’s clear’.<sup>77</sup>

The joint MK/ZIPRA operation that subsequently became known as the Sipolilo Campaign ran from December 1967 to July 1968. Three large groups of guerrillas crossed into Zimbabwe during this period.

The Pyramid Detachment was to confront the Rhodesian forces only three months after crossing the Zambezi River. But, like the Luthuli Detachment, the guerrillas had insufficient food supplies, and were both hungry and weary by the time the fighting began. The first contact between the guerrillas and the Rhodesian forces occurred on 18 March.<sup>78</sup> After the battle, the detachment abandoned their base. This first engagement with the Rhodesian security forces had shown how vulnerable the guerrillas were in a large group. The Pyramid Detachment had been 100 strong when it crossed into Rhodesia. Now the detachment split up into smaller groups of eighteen to twenty-four members each that began making their separate ways to a new assembly point, on top of a cliff.

In the days that followed, the security forces adopted ‘search and destroy’ tactics, gradually forcing the guerrillas to break up into even smaller groups, which were hampered by continuous harassment from the security forces, and by lack of food, communication, and military equipment. Morris claimed that these operations resulted in the deaths of a large number of guerrillas. Isaac Maphoto recounted events in an interview:

We crossed on 19 December 1967 and we were 100 in that detachment. The ANC had 26 people and ZAPU had 74. Joe Modise came with ZAPU’s Dumiso Dabengwa. They did reconnaissance for a week and then addressed us on the last day. Joe said: “If you want this detachment to survive, Ike must be one of the commanders and he must be in logistics.” That’s how I became a senior commander in the battlefield. The other South African commanders were Lenin Milan, a commissar whose home was in Port Elizabeth; Coral Ncuwa; [Ralph] Mzamo, chief of security; George Mthusi, whose real name is Mark Masisa from East London, who was chief of operations; Kenneth Mzadi from Port Elizabeth was chief of staff; Chimomo Peli from Sekhukhune was chief of reconnaissance; Zulani Mkhoza; Sikhakha. Commanders on the ZAPU side included Moffat Radebe, Raymond Chitapa, and Felix Gayiya. We were operating from the Sipolilo Game Reserve. Some time back there were people staying there. You could see some ruins, some poles, etc. We stayed for some time in the forest and then pushed ourselves gradually. On 14 March 1968, the enemy detected us. A group of our chaps

(77) Interview with Mavuso (Walter) Msimang.

(78) Lodge, Tom. *Black Politics since 1945*. London: Longmans, 1983: See p.299.

was returning to a place they used to call Maphoto Base, named after me. It was raining and the game rangers discovered their footprints. They noticed that the shoe prints were not similar to theirs and reported the matter immediately. When we were spotted, we decided to move forward. On 18 March, early in the morning, we assembled at Base 6. That day there were spotter planes going up and down. We knew the war is going to start very soon. We were ready for that. Then at 10:45, Hlengani, whose home was in Uitenhage and who was on outpost duty that day, saw them coming. They were about eleven. He had an LMG and he wiped them off and ran back to base. We fought from 10:45 until 19:00; it was the longest battle ever fought by the guerrillas. You at home were told that 36 guerrillas were killed. Believe me no one among us was killed in that battle. But they admitted that the guerrillas had killed 37 officers. They called themselves ‘officers’ and called us ‘terrorists’. They lost 37 ‘officers’ and killed 36 ‘terrorists’! In that battle we didn’t lose people; we started losing people later. On 21 March we fought a successful battle, but we lost three people. One was a BSc chap, Pencil Zele from Port Elizabeth; the second chap we used to call Phoko, he was from Sekhukhune; and the third one, Mike Phoko, was in the high command. We counted 24 people dead on the enemy side. Then our chaps started collecting their watches and so on. Goodwin Bandong, the son of the Rev Bandong in Uitenhage, was saying: “I shot that person, the watch is mine.” I said to him: “I am the commander and you take nothing here. Their watches have names; so do their socks, almost everything of theirs. So if you take this thing and they catch you, you will have to explain where you got it.” So we took their food instead. We now had enough food. I don’t think we will ever produce men like that anymore. We were physically weak, but no one ran away. We fought. We ambushed them. It took them up to November to round us up.<sup>79</sup>

One of the most serious consequences of the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns was the suspension of seven MK and ANC members, including Chris Hani, from the organisation. This occurred after they had compiled a memorandum spelling out their concerns about ANC policy and criticising certain leaders of the organisation. A military tribunal suspended the seven from the ANC on 25 March 1969, and the decision was confirmed by the ANC headquarters in Morogoro four days later.<sup>80</sup>

However, it is the broad sweep of complaints against the ANC’s failure to assume leadership of the liberation struggle inside South Africa, the “careerism of the ANC leadership abroad,” the perceived separation between the ANC and MK, the lifestyle of some ANC leaders, and the nepotism involving the children of ANC leaders that truly reflects the anger of the seven who signed what became known as the Hani Memorandum. The authors demanded that these problems “be resolved by a conference between the ANC leadership and member[s] of MK, and not just hand-picked individuals.”<sup>81</sup> After a brief period of suspension, Hani and his co-signatories were fully reinstated in their positions.

(79) Interview with Isaac Maphoto, by Siphamandal Zondi, (Pietersburg) 2 May 2001.

(80) Shubin, Vladimir. *ANC: A View from Moscow*. 1999: See p.86.

(81) Shubin, Vladimir. *ANC: A View from Moscow*. 1999: See pp.85-7.

### The PAC's Villa Peri Operation

The PAC High Command had set up its headquarters in Lusaka in December 1967 to direct the 'home-going programme', the infiltration of armed personnel into South Africa. It was argued that APLA would create conditions conducive for the populace to rise up against an oppressive and exploitative regime to attain their own freedom. Unlike the *Pogo* military phase, which was some kind of localised insurrection, APLA elevated training and ideology to become critical components of warfare.

In the aftermath of the ANC's Wankie Campaign in August 1967, the PAC conducted two missions to infiltrate APLA cadres into South Africa through Rhodesia in late 1967. The first group was arrested by Botswana police near the Wankie Reserve. The second group of four people who attempted to cross were arrested in a similar manner. They surrendered without fighting because they had been instructed not to confront the forces of member states of the OAU. The failure of these two attempts resulted in the search for an alternative route through Mozambique.

The PAC was in a desperate state after the OAU, at its February 1968 Council of Ministers meeting in Addis Ababa, warned the organisation that if there was no infiltration of soldiers into South Africa by June 1968, the PAC would risk losing its status as a recognised liberation movement and losing all OAU aid and support.<sup>82</sup> This prompted Leballo and Ntantala to plan a mission to justify the PAC's political existence. In April 1968, twelve cadres who had just graduated from military training in China and other African countries were selected to carry out this mission, under the command of Gerald Kondlo.

Operation Villa Peri was dubbed a Ho Chi Minh Trail operation, after a similar Vietnamese operation. Like the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the objective was to create a safe route into South Africa. The initial group was to make its way to Lesotho, where they were to be met by Gasson Ndlovu. If they succeeded, a route would be opened up to take more cadres to South Africa. Gasson Ndlovu recalls that:

They were coming to join me in Maseru and we were going to enter South African together. We had prepared the route: Qgobose and myself. They were going to go through Mozambique and it would be easy to get into the Kruger National Park. It was going to be very easy from the Kruger National Park to enter into Butha Buthe, in Lesotho, and they were to meet me ... and I would take them down to Maseru. The BCP was going to help us, and our courier, the person who was carrying our messages, was Ntsu Mokhehle. Our preparations were advanced when these people fell there after a terrible fight.<sup>83</sup>

It was not intended to be a combat operation, but to lay the basis for the conduct of the guerrilla struggle. The possibility of armed encounter with the Portuguese security forces was not ruled out, and the unit was prepared for this eventuality. Zondzi, the commander of the Mozambique Revolutionary Committee (COREMO),

<sup>(82)</sup> Lodge, Tom. *Black Politics since 1945*: See p.312.

<sup>(83)</sup> Interview with Gasson Ndlovu, by Brown Maaba, (Cape Town) 3 April 2002.

a Mozambican liberation movement, had informed the PAC that he had a base in Tete Province in Mozambique and he was willing to help the PAC. The operational plan was that members of COREMO would guide APLA forces through Mozambique. The APLA unit made their way through Mozambique for almost two months before the first encounter with enemy forces in June 1968.<sup>84</sup> It is necessary to quote at length from an interview with Zebulon Mokoena, one of the two survivors of the Operation:

We were originally twelve. We infiltrated into Mozambique in two groups. The first nine went in February 1968 and the group that had come from Botswana joined the last group of three. So it was myself, Gerald Khondlo, Marcus, Enoch Zulu Rankoane, Kholisile Guma, Sakkie Bele, Moffat Xhasane, Kholisile Menzeleli, John Twala, and (I just can't remember the name). There were three groups and the first one went in February. We were in the first group. We travelled to the border in a Land Rover and met with the COREMO comrades. They took us inside the country on foot. We were armed with AK-47s and others were carrying Siminofs, which is a Chinese rifle. We also had both offensive and defensive grenades. We also had bush knives and water bottles, which we called *Zam Zama*.<sup>85</sup> As a soldier you were told not to drink too much water, especially when you were moving. You would collapse. Later we had a water problem. We [were going] to the COREMO camp, and it took us three nights to reach it. It was near a town called Frankunku in the Tete Province. There were a lot of mountains. We stayed there for about three weeks. That was where Zondzi was staying with his forces. Zondzi volunteered to move along with us to explore a route in Villa Peri where he needed to meet with workers who were working on the railway line from Maputo to Zimbabwe, which is the Beira line. He brought five of his forces and they added to our twelve – we were now seventeen. Before we left Frankunku, a message came from Lusaka that Khondlo should send some men down to the border because Ntantala would be bringing more arms. Khondlo took ten men, including Marcus. These were our arms from the OAU's Liberation Committee. There were a lot of arms and two machine guns. So we were better armed and also had more grenades. Most of these arms were full of grease and were in boxes, and we had to clean them with petrol and test them. After that we left the COREMO camp on the 5th of May. We moved south on that route. We had to move during the day with our arms on our backs. We were prepared for anything as this was enemy territory; if it comes to a push we shall push. We had a lot of ammunition and we had to walk during the day. At night it was difficult to move, as the bush was very thick. The other thing was we had to avoid the main road. When we heard the sound of a car we knew that was the enemy since nobody else had cars there. If we saw somebody with a bicycle or a scooter [we knew that] it must be an enemy agent. Or if you see somebody wearing shoes, then that was an enemy agent. It would be strange to meet such people in the bush. We moved for one week and in the second week we realized that we had been detected – the enemy knew that we were there. But they did not know [exactly] where we were and what route we had taken. Even if we reached a village late we would go there – and the people of Mozambique were very hospitable. When we reached a village we went to the

(84) Lodge, Tom. *Black Politics since 1945*: See p.312.

(85) *Zama-zama* is slang for keep on trying; the word *zama* in isiZulu means to try; it is also the moniker for a very popular television show that offered prize money in thousands of rands.

chief and sat down with him and explained our situation. Because of the oppression in that country at the time, the chief would listen to us and call all the people in the village to come and listen. He would ask us to speak to the people and then he would speak at the end. He gave the people a chance to speak and we heard what they had to say. Afterwards the women would bring food and every woman would want us to eat her food. After that we passed and went out of the village and slept out in the bush. We did not sleep in the houses because we did not want the enemy to find us in the houses; if we were found it had to be in the bush. We realized that we had been detected. We were supposed to cross [a particular] road and there was a village. The road cut through the village and when we approached that village we heard the sound of a car and decided to stop. Finally those cars passed and we went to the village as usual and talked to the chief. We asked which cars were passing there. They told us: "It was the army and they were giving us instruction not to allow strangers." Then we realized that we [had been] detected. In the second week we met the enemy for the first time, and there was a clash at a place called Chioko. It is a small village. When we approached this village on a hillock we heard a car pulling out and realized that these were the same people. We decided to send a scouting group to the village and they told us these were soldiers. They had moved away. We went straight to the chief's place, and as usual we were accepted and we talked to the masses. Before we left the chief's place we heard car sounds again. When we tried to take cover in the bush the cars stopped and we immediately heard shots fired in our direction. Khondlo said we must not reply – they were fooling us and wanted us to show where we were. They wanted us to reply so that they could come to us. Fired, fired, and stopped. Fired, fired, and stopped. Then finally we realized that they were coming closer, and some [among us] were ready to shoot. There was some silence for a long time and Khondlo was consulting with Zondzi. He was suggesting that [the COREMO guerrillas] should go back and meet the chief. Finally Khondlo said that they should go. And they all left, [except] one who remained with us. Zondzi was supposed to come back. We heard Zondzi's forces firing on the other side. They were firing – pap, pap, pap – shouting "COREMO, COREMO" – papa, pap – "COREMO"! They had found a reason to mount their own propaganda. Then the enemy came and we retreated. When we retreated there was confusion. When we came to a certain point there were fields. It was winter and they had already harvested everything. When we arrived there we found that the place was fenced and we couldn't pass through. Either we go down or up along the fence. Most of our comrades preferred to move up. There was another group that went down and it got lost. They were four, with Kholisile Guma from Cape Town amongst them. We went up the hill and took positions there. Then we decided to move away from that area. That night we did not sleep and we moved the whole night so that by the time they came back the next day with helicopters we were very far away. We moved until somewhere in the dying hours of the night before we decided to rest. To sleep was not a difficult thing – you just throw yourself on the ground with your boots on and your gun next to you. In the morning we decided to move. We heard helicopters that were searching the area. They did not get anybody. Our problem was that we were missing four of our comrades and the four COREMO guys. We had no communication and no radios. We moved the whole day until we reached the Mazoya River area. It is known for its oranges. There was a village there. We asked the people and they told us the name of the river and they pointed that in that area there were white people. We were at the border with Rhodesia. This must

have been in the fifth week. We went to the chief [where we] were given food and rested. Thereafter we bought a pig and slaughtered it and ate fresh meat. We stayed two days there, resting. On the third day we decided to go and wash in the river in groups. This time we were nine. The first group that went to wash was of three people. I was in that group. We were escorted by (Enoch) Zulu. The other comrades remained in the bush watching us. This was the first time we had reached a big river after a long while. Usually in other places we found that there was no water and borrowed buckets and boiled water before we could wash. I heard one comrade say to me: "Now we have been arrested." I asked him how he could say that. He asked me to look up there, and I saw a man who was wearing a khaki uniform. He was coming straight to where we were. He passed us and also went into the river. He undressed and went into the water. Then we went up and joined Zulu and told them that we saw the man. And they said that they too had been watching him. We went back and reported to the commander and he went there to see him for himself. We knew that this was the border with Rhodesia and the people there were used to white people. We said that from here we must move east. We said that we can't move during the day because there were many cars during the day and decided to move at night. But before we started moving, we heard shots just near the river. We did not reply and moved in the opposite direction. We moved the whole night and in the early hours of the morning came to a small town called Shangari. We saw the town and decided to bypass it. We decided to cross the river and just before that we saw a car and took cover until it passed. It was the Portuguese army and they were going back to where we had come from. It was two military vehicles. We went down the Mazoya River and decided to have some food. We were still carrying that meat of the pig. We had some porridge and we ate and left. We met some African women right in the bush and they told us they were going to fetch the water. We crossed another bigger road that crosses the river from Kabhungu. As we were preparing to go up, there were army cars moving up and down. We decided to move toward the east to avoid this area. It was not very long when we saw fields and a village. We had a meeting in the fields and some comrades were complaining that they needed water. Khondlo was refusing, saying the area is not safe as there were car sounds and he wanted us to move away as soon as possible. Some were saying: "Let's go to the village and get water there." Finally, the Commander had to come down to democracy and asked that this issue be decided by a vote. He indicated that he had the powers to issue an order. The majority decided that we should get water. And the commander requested two volunteers, and Zulu and I volunteered to go to the village to get water. We had some calabashes from one village and used them and the *zam zama* [to collect water]. Khondlo told us that because the village was not reliable, we had to disguise ourselves. We did not have to carry arms and they promised to protect us from where they were. Zulu had just one pistol with seven bullets and I had a jungle knife. Fortunately, when we came there, there were people with shorts and khaki pants and they could speak Fanakalo. Then we told them our problem and they said: "There is no water here", but promised to fill our calabashes. They filled our calabashes. And when we returned the comrades said that we should go and fetch more water to fill our *zam zama*. We could not agree and Khondlo said: "Man, go back." It was Zulu and I who went back for more water. When we went back, the man in the khaki suit was no longer there. We were told to take a small way to go to the fountain. Before we could leave for the fountain we heard shots from where we had left our guys. Gaa gaa, gaa gaa, gaa gaa. There was

firing. From the sound we could tell that it was our comrades who opened fire first. We don't know until today why they were provoked to open fire. Zulu said to me: "What are we going to do?" He took out his pistol, looked at it, and said that this thing was useless. We agreed that we could not go back since our comrades were now wild and we did not know where the enemy was. We wondered what we should do. We decided to go back [to Lusaka] because we agreed that we were out of the action. We were no longer capable of fighting – we did not have guns. Our meeting took about three minutes. We did not know the way, but agreed that we were going back to Zambia. We were with one COREMO guy. We had already covered over three hundred miles. Now we must go back. Our first obstacle was the Zambezi River, as we knew that we could find the enemy waiting for us. We agreed that we should take the shortest possible time to reach that river. We had earlier taken about two weeks from the Zambezi to where we were, and we now took one week to reach it on our way back. The other reason why we were quick was that we were few in number. We reached the village next to the river where we found the boatman. And he told us that the enemy [had been there the previous day] and they were patrolling the river. We rested there and early in the morning the old man carried us through. When we were in a certain area, the COREMO guy told us that he knew the area since he had grown up there. That area was called Gabotch. He told us that his home was not far from there. We reached his family, and [while] we were talking to his parents we noticed that we [had been] encircled. But we soon realized that [it was] guerrillas [who had] encircled us. They called the old man and asked about us. These were the FRELIMO forces that were operating there. They summoned us. They were talking in Portuguese. They inquired about our whereabouts and asked about our guns. When [the FRELIMO commander] saw our pistol he took out his own. And they looked the same. He laughed and knew that we were guerrillas. But he did not know us. Our guns were the same since they were all from China and supplied to all liberation movements by the OAU. [They asked us which organization we belonged to.] The COREMO guy was interpreting for us. We told them that we came from the PAC. They said that they knew only the ANC. We reached a certain village and they gave us a place to sleep and food. We did not have blankets and we cut grass and slept under it. We were lucky not to contract pneumonia. The following day the commander told us that he was taking us to the FRELIMO Headquarters.<sup>86</sup>

The PAC faced a number of setbacks after the Villa Peri operation, in addition to persistent leadership problems. Among these setbacks was the removal of Kwame Nkrumah as leader of Ghana, the single African country that had been a major supporter of the PAC. In addition, the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation rejected the PAC as an authentic liberation movement and called on the OAU Liberation Committee to drop all support for the organisation in January 1969. By this time, the PAC had moved its headquarters to Zambia in order to facilitate the infiltration of cadres into South Africa.

Disenchantment in the military camps grew as a result of the failure of the Villa Peri Operation and the charge made by the survivors of the operation that the Zambian government and the PAC leadership had betrayed the guerrillas. This presented a

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(86) Interview with Zebulon Mokoena.

great opportunity for leaders who were unhappy with Leballo to air their views, among them T.T. Letlaka. Leballo, in turn, accused Letlaka of conniving against him with Nkoana, whom he portrayed as an archenemy of the PAC. Letlaka subsequently joined the anti-Leballo faction when Leballo dismissed him from his position in the Revolutionary Command and from his executive committee position.<sup>87</sup>

Letlaka, taking leadership of Leballo's opponents, called a meeting in Dar es Salaam and announced the expulsion of Leballo and his supporters from the PAC. Letlaka, Ngcobo, Molete, Nyaoso, and Raboroko subsequently travelled to Senkobo Camp in Zambia, hoping to obtain the support of the guerrillas. Instead, they were arrested and locked up. Only the intervention of the Kaunda government stopped Ntantala and his men from shooting them. The Zambian government closed down the PAC offices, however, rounded up all PAC members in the country, and deported them to Tanzania. PAC – and therefore APLA – activity in Zambia was effectively outlawed.<sup>88</sup> When the Senkobo Camp was closed in August 1968, the cadres were relocated to a camp in Tanzania and detained there for about two years. The OAU withdrew all aid, including financial assistance, from the PAC.

By the time that the Liberation Committee's commission began its investigations on the PAC, the Letlaka group had fizzled out. Most of them had left Tanzania and could not be contacted. This resulted in the recognition of Leballo as the genuine leader of the PAC by the OAU's Liberation Committee.

The Liberation Committee's recognition of Leballo did not end attempts to unseat him, however. Leballo began to use his relations and friendships with the host country against his critics in the PAC. He appeared as the key state witness in the trial of Oscar Kambona and others who were charged with attempting a coup against Nyerere. The PAC's standing as a liberation movement was badly affected by Leballo's participation in the trial. The PAC was seen as ingratiating itself with Nyerere, who had earlier discontinued the support that his government was giving to the PAC. Other African countries became sceptical of the PAC because they feared it could be used in the internal affairs and conflicts within their own countries.

### **The ANC's Morogoro Conference**

The Hani Memorandum and criticism of the ANC leadership in the aftermath of the Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns was among the reasons for the convening of the Morogoro Consultative Conference from 25 April to 1 May 1969. The conference was attended by more than seventy leaders and delegates representing ANC branches, units of MK, leaders of the Indian and coloured peoples, and SACTU. By the end of the conference, a number of resolutions had been passed on strategy and tactics, as well as on the structure of the ANC.

Matters that dominated the Morogoro conference had been festering within the ANC since it was banned: integration of diverse ethnic groups into the organisation;

(87) Nkoana. *Crises in the Revolution*: See p.64.

(88) Lodge, Tom. *Black Politics since 1945*: See p.312.

coordination of the political and military elements of the struggle; and building a new leadership echelon, not only to replace those who had been imprisoned, but also to deal with the internationalisation of the struggle. Foremost among the issues were the role of MK (which raised questions about the objectives of the armed struggle as well as the relationship between military and political strategy), the position of ‘non-Africans’ in the ANC (which posed the question of commitment to a non-racial struggle), and whether the leadership should be located in Africa or in Europe.

Politically, the Congress Movement continued to be ‘multi-racial’, comprising four separate ethnic organisations, and these structures were transplanted into exile. Joe Matthews recalled:

When the state of emergency ended in August 1960, then of course all the leaders, everybody, came out, and correspondence occurred between OR [Tambo] and the internal leadership of the ANC, which of course at that time was already underground. And the leadership said: “No. You must establish an External Mission of the ANC, and we are not in favour of the South African United Front idea. It must be an ANC External Mission.” Incidentally, Mandela was a leading figure in pressing for that approach – that the ANC must be projected internationally. Of course, there was some controversy, because some, like Yusuf Dadoo, said: “Then what happens to someone like me, who is in the Indian Congress, but not a member of the ANC?” Remember, at that time the ANC was an exclusively African organisation. But in spite of those misgivings, the decision taken was that, especially in the era of African independence, that was quite strong in 1960 – many countries were becoming independent, Nigeria became independent – it should be an ANC External Mission, headed by Tambo.<sup>89</sup>

However, only the ANC, the SACP, and MK were able to establish functioning structures in exile. Consequently, the Congress Alliance failed to build on the foundation laid in the 1950s and was rendered largely impotent, which placed enormous strains on the relationships between members. This caused considerable friction among both those who felt excluded and those within the organisation who believed that continued exclusion of non-Africans from the ANC was politically flawed.

Another issue considered at Morogoro was the fact that Africa-based party members were close to the ‘real’ struggle arena, whereas the London-based cadres were perceived as primarily garnering solidarity. Leaders based in Europe were often out of touch with what was happening at the forefront of the struggle, and could not make regular contributions to decision-making. Four factors were identified as reflecting the inadequacy of the existing organisational structure. First, the nucleus of the ANC leadership had been elected during 1959 in conditions of legality and under a general policy of non-violence. Second, that leadership appeared to have failed because of what was described as “an incorrect appraisal of the struggle for liberation.” Third, a significant number of non-African comrades, who had made an invaluable contribution to the struggle in the past, had been deliberately excluded

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(89) Interview with Joe Matthews.

from playing a meaningful role. Fourth, factionalism was undermining the effective functioning of the ANC's executive committee.<sup>90</sup>

Joe Slovo and Joe Matthews drafted two of the key documents at the conference, namely, *Strategy and Tactics* and *The Revolutionary Programme* (the Freedom Charter). *Strategy and Tactics* raised seizure of power by military means as a major objective of the struggle, and thus reaffirmed the decision to embark on the armed struggle. The initial concept drew inspiration from the Cuban Revolution and specifically Che

Guevara's seminal book on that struggle, *Guerrilla Warfare*. His so-called 'foco theory'

posited the notion that, through military confrontations with the ruling regime, small groups of armed guerrillas could spark a revolt among the oppressed and exploited masses.

At Morogoro, resolutions were adopted that introduced far-reaching organisational change to both the ANC and the Congress Alliance. The NEC was reduced in size and a Revolutionary Council was established. Traditionally, the NEC had consisted of twenty-three African members, and the conference reduced this to nine Africans.<sup>91</sup> The Revolutionary Council (RC) reflected the overall leadership of Africans, but also accommodated other ethnic groups. The RC's responsibility was to integrate political and military strategy for the struggle, and, unlike the NEC, it included Indian, white, and coloured members. Tambo was the chairman, Dadoo the vice-chairman, Matthews the secretary, and Slovo and September were members. Isaac Makopo attended this important conference, and explained that:

The ANC constitution was non-racial from the beginning, from the very first constitution. It never said ANC belongs to blacks only, to Africans; it said any South African who is above the age of thirteen has the right to join the African National Congress, take part in its activities, elect and be elected into any position in the ANC. But given the situation at the time, ANC leaders did not come from the other racial groups. This was strategic. It was tactical that we should not, for instance, say Slovo is the president of the ANC; you would be defeating your own ends. Joe Slovo at that time was associated with whites who, in turn, were associated with oppression and apartheid. He would not be able to organise and lead the black people because of existing divide-and-rule laws. The black people were better led by black leaders such as Sisulu, Mandela, and Govan Mbeki. Yes, it would have been a problem. In fact, a small group of whites consisting of the Slovos, Bram Fischer, and others came and said: "We want to join the ANC." Then they were advised and told: "But why don't you set up your own organisation of whites. Then form an alliance with us. Then we fight together? In that way, when you go to your white constituency, they will listen to you. Unlike when you send Walter Sisulu or Govan Mbeki to a white constituency." It was not about race, but a strategic decision. Now, up to 1969, they were still known as members of the Congress Alliance. Not as members of the ANC. Before, ANC membership was not open to all racial groups in South Africa. Another thing to remember was that

(90) Commission on Congress Alliance. *Report of the Meeting held on 23 March 1969*, BC 1081, Simons Collection, Department of Manuscripts and Archives, University of Cape Town, South Africa.

(91) Karis, Thomas and Gail Gerhart. *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990, Vol 5, Nadir and Resurgence, 1964-1979*. Pretoria: UNISA Press, 1997: See p.36.

the leadership of the ANC in exile had not been given a mandate to change ANC policies or the constitution. Their mandate was to campaign against racist South Africa; campaign for embargoes against South Africa, and organise material and financial support for the liberation struggle. So there was that technicality involving the constitution of the ANC. We had to respect the constitution. That is why, even in 1969, the Morogoro Consultative Conference was not called a national conference and that consultative conference could not take a decision, for instance, that we no longer want this president. Chief Luthuli had been elected inside the country, by a national conference. No other conference outside South Africa could remove him from that position. Oliver Tambo remained acting president in exile. One of the resolutions of the Morogoro Consultative Conference was to set up an organ of the National Executive Committee called the Revolutionary Council in order to include other races as part of the leadership. Oliver Tambo, acting president of the ANC, chaired the RC, deputised by Dr. Yusuf Dadoo, president of the South African Indian Congress and chairman of the SACP. Joe Matthews was appointed secretary. Joe Slovo, Moses Mabhida, Reggie September were among the other members elected to the RC. They were not members of the ANC National Executive Committee, because of the technicality that we have just discussed. But they took their instructions from the NEC. The RC was tasked with the responsibility to re-organise MK units in exile – to retrain cadres who needed retraining, prepare routes for infiltration, etc.<sup>92</sup>

## Part 3: The 1970s

### The Emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM)

During the 1960s, black students at tertiary institutions were organised into the African Students Association (ASA), an ANC-aligned student organisation formed during the early 1960s, the African Students Union of South Africa (ASUSA), a PAC-aligned student organisation also formed in the 1960s, and the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), a student organisation whose membership was drawn overwhelmingly from white English-medium universities. On the political front, NUSAS's campaigns against restrictions to academic and press freedom or in support of multiracial intervarsity sporting competitions, for example, were peripheral issues to African demands for fundamental social, economic, and political rights. While the majority in NUSAS loudly condemned apartheid laws, most NUSAS members drew the line at openly defying the law in defence of their principles.

As repression intensified in the 1960s, calling for open defiance and even armed insurrection against the state, NUSAS members were not prepared to put their necks on the block – leading to disillusionment and ultimate disaffiliation by African students. Moreover, its white membership was becoming less militant in the late 1960s.

Discontent with NUSAS among black students flared into the open at the July 1967 conference of NUSAS held at Rhodes University. Dave Hemson, a NUSAS leader at the time, recalls:

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(92) Interview with Isaac Makopo, by Sifiso Ndlovu, (Pretoria) 24 November 2000.

At the conference in Rhodes University, when I think back on it, there was a lot of energy; there was a lot of talk, engagement. But it was very humiliating for black students. Those guys were off campus, living in the townships. [They] had to be bussed in every day; that kind of thing. They were not on campus in the residences. Steve was insisting that if you're really serious, you've got to pull down one of these pillars [of apartheid]. And I agreed. The talk wasn't quite as I am putting it now. Everyone didn't know quite what the future was going to come to. But what we realised was that some change was in the air which meant that black students were not prepared to put up with all of that stuff, even though they could also see it as positive to have white students polarised against the regime. Remember that NUSAS was not popular. There were headlines all the time condemning the security police. It was not as though we were just white liberals. It was a bit of an opposition to the white regime, and if you went to exile the ANC had headlines: "White students in opposition". I was even surprised they took it so seriously – then I could understand Steve's position. He didn't feel this was a polarised racial issue as such. But he was saying to the white students: "You're not prepared to be serious." So he was saying that: "If you're really serious you come on board with us and you deal with us on our terms. We are the majority, although among the students we are a tiny minority. But we represent the majority." So, all of that was not quite well understood at that time.<sup>93</sup>

At the next NUSAS congress in July 1968, the crisis reached boiling point. 'Non-white' members could not remain in the white town of Stutterheim, where the conference was taking place, for longer than seventy-two hours. The solution was to leave town once their 'permits' expired and to return for a fresh 72-hour stay. Steve Biko moved a resolution at the conference calling on NUSAS to challenge the legitimacy of the South African government. When the resolution was defeated, Biko left for a conference of the University Christian Movement (UCM) meeting nearby to canvass his colleagues, who responded enthusiastically to his request to explore the possible formation of an organisation that would represent the interests of African, coloured, and Indian South Africans.

About thirty black student leaders, drawn from various Student Representative Councils, met in December 1968 in Mariannhill, near Durban. The Mariannhill meeting resolved to form a new organisation to be known as the South African Student Organisation (SASO). The inaugural conference of SASO took place at Turfloop in July 1969. Biko was elected the organisation's first president.

The first SASO General Students' Council, held at Wentworth in July 1970, voted to de-recognise NUSAS as "the national organisation of this country," with the right to speak for all students, black and white. This would pave the way to self-determination, another SASO resolution stated, "in accordance with its belief that the emancipation of the black people of this country depends entirely on the role black people themselves are prepared to play". This doctrine of self-emancipation was defined as 'Black Consciousness'. The Wentworth conference amended the SASO Constitution

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(93) Interview with Dave Hemson, by Brown Maaba with HMP, (Durban) 24 March 2005.

and dropped the term non-white in preference for black to refer collectively to groups officially designated Bantu, Coloured, and Indian.

The SASO Policy Manifesto, adopted at the second General Students' Council in July 1971, spelt out that SASO was a *black* student organisation “working for the liberation of the black man, first from psychological oppression” – inflicted upon themselves through an inferiority complex – and secondly from physical oppression accruing from living in a white racist society. Black Consciousness was defined as “an

attitude of mind, a way of life”, by which black people could see themselves “as self-defined and not as defined by others”, needing “group cohesion and solidarity” to be self-propelling and thereby become aware of their collective economic and political power.<sup>94</sup> The primary contribution of the BCM, when all the organisations were formed, was to inculcate in the minds of the oppressed a psychological orientation that they were the people best able to determine the direction and pace of the struggle for liberation.

### *The Black People's Convention (BPC)*

By 1970, there was growing realisation of SASO's limitations, as an organisation operating among students, in reaching a wider and adult audience. Most students who had been founder members of SASO had by that time either been expelled or graduated from their respective universities. Highly politicised, they began to look for a new political home. SASO leaders started to ponder the possibility of launching an ‘adult’ wing. In 1971, a call was made to black organisations for a convention to discuss the formation of a national structure. Representatives of six organisations met in Bloemfontein in April 1971 to discuss the idea.

A consultative meeting in Pietermaritzburg at the Edendale Lay Ecumenical Centre from 8-10 July 1972, attended by more than 100 delegates, endorsed the idea of forming an ‘umbrella’ organisation to provide a political home for all black people who could not reconcile themselves to the idea of working within the framework of separate development. The meeting also agreed to summon a national convention within six months and elected an executive committee composed of the Reverend Mashwabada Mayathula (President), with Mthuli ka Shezi (Deputy), Drake Koka (Secretary General), Saths Cooper (Public Relations Officer), and Mvezwa Dlamini (National Organiser).

The first national conference of the organisation that became the Black People's Convention (BPC) took place at Hammanskraal from 16-17 December 1972, with 1,400 delegates in attendance representing 145 groups. The 1972 Hammanskraal Conference defined the principal aim of the BPC as being to “unite all South African blacks into a political movement, which would seek liberation and emancipation of black people from both psychological and physical oppression.”

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(94) Karis and Gerhart. *Nadir and Resurgence*: See p.481-82.

### *BCM Community Projects*

SASO was engaged in a number of community projects, which “ranged in type from assisting the impoverished squatters of New Farm, near Phoenix settlement, building more durable dwelling structures and providing clean water, to health work carried out on weekends at the Mahatma Gandhi Clinic in Phoenix.”<sup>95</sup> SASO was taking a leaf from the book of NUSAS, which sent students during vacation time to undertake similar community projects. Baba Jordan remembers:

I joined the BPC in 1972 – Central Branch in Johannesburg. We had a labour project and this is where I featured. It was a joint effort between SASO and the BPC: educating people that time in the absence of trade unions. And then later on BAWU [Black and Allied Workers’ Union] came into being. BAWU was also formed out of the politics of BPC by Drake Koka. Before BAWU was formed as a union, we had a labour project. We were going from factory to factory in Johannesburg, conscientising people with Black Consciousness. There was sports; there was arts; there were cultural groups. The cultural groups were mainly busy with theatre and SASO was rather strong with that, although these things were always done collectively between the BPC and SASO. When it comes to arts and culture, theatre groups were formed. After Mhloti in Alexandra, you had TECON in Durban [formed] by Strini Moodley. And then there was another group in Soweto of the late Yvonne, Nomsisi Kraai, [and] John Masokwane. Nora Hlophe in Jo’burg. Jonnie Motate was with theatre. Justice [Moloto] was [in the] UCM [University Christian Movement] with Tom Manthata and the late Sabelo. They came into the Black Consciousness circles through the UCM and represented the UCM in SASO in that way. So there were a number of projects. BPC had projects on the ground with the communities. It was influential even in the formation of other institutions. For example, how did the UBJ (Union of Black Journalists) come into being? It was through us going to the journalists and saying: “You better get yourself organised.” Then they started the Union of Black Journalists. It was pure Black Consciousness.<sup>96</sup>

The BCM also penetrated the black high schools. This was largely through the South African Students Movement (SASM). SASM (initially called the African Students’ Movement) was formed in Soweto in 1968, without any direct role being played by ideological orientation towards, or affiliation with, the ANC, PAC, or the BCM.<sup>97</sup> The founding members of the organisation were consequently drawn to diverse and often contradictory political traditions, while the organisation had no “clear ideological framework.” Nozipho Diseko argues that SASM only came to adopt the BC philosophy in 1972, following the mass walkouts at black universities in that year. Tom Manthata, who served as SASO President in 1974, recalls that:

(95) Ramphela, Mamphela. “Empowerment and Symbols of Hope: Black Consciousness and Community Development.” in Pityana, Barney, Ramphela, Mamphela, Mpumlwana, Malusi and Wilson, Lindy (eds), *Bounds of Possibility: The legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness*. Cape Town: David Philip and London: Zed Books, 1991: See pp.154-178.

(96) Interview with Baba Jordan, by Brown Maaba with HMP, (Kroonstad) 3 March 2005.

(97) Diseko, Nozipho. “The origins and development of the South African Student’s Movement (SASM): 1968-1976.” *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 18.1 (March 1991): See pp.40-62.

SASM and [the] African Youth Movement got taken over by SASO. I was at that time with Justice Moloto. Justice Moloto was an organiser of UCM and it was under [the] UCM that Justice Moloto, Barney Pityana, Steve, and quite a number – Chris Mokoditso, Soldier, Bokau, Kenneth Rachidi, [and] the two Vundla sons – gave a greater push to some of us. When these people came out – and then later, people like Onkgopotse Tiro – they offered to teach high school children whatever subjects they felt competent in. I still remember people like Kenny Rachidi offering commercial subjects.<sup>98</sup>

At the 1972 graduation ceremony at the University of the North, Onkgopotse Tiro delivered a scathing speech that was characterised by its sharp criticism of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. He described the paradoxical nature of the fact that family members of black graduates were not allowed to attend the ceremony, while the families of white academic staff members were present. This speech precipitated his expulsion from the University. Despite demonstrations by the student body, Tiro was not readmitted. At universities throughout the country where there was a black presence, students went on boycott in sympathy with the Turfloop students. According to Saths Cooper:

This leads to SASO's conference in July 1972 at Hammanskraal and the decision taken there to organise the nationwide students' strike. So we started to get the ball rolling. Steve was in Hammanskraal at the conference – he sends a message to me saying: "You need to mobilise all the campuses. And I require you to start the work already." So we start with that, and the result was [the University of] Zululand goes on strike, Fort Hare, you name them. In fact all the black campuses go on strike: every single one. NUSAS then comes out with its own solidarity.<sup>99</sup>

Many of the striking students, already steeped in BC philosophy, were to take up posts as unqualified teachers at schools in different parts of the country. BC's impact thus became most pronounced in the age-group next in line behind the founders of SASO.

SASO/BPC activists banned in March 1973 included Biko and Pityana, while many more suffered constant detention or went into exile, leading to the fragmentation of BCM structures. A steady trickle into exile began in 1973 and gathered momentum in 1974. The haemorrhage continued even beyond South Africa's borders when Abraham Onkgopotse Tiro, who had gone into exile in Botswana, died in January 1974 from a letter bomb.

Events in the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique had a radicalising effect on the BCM. In 1974, the Salazar government in Portugal fell, ushering in the independence of Angola under the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and Mozambique, led by the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO). To the students in South Africa, in particular, the independence of these territories heralded a new dawn. If Portuguese colonialism could be defeated, so could apartheid in South Africa. An idea was conceived by the SASO president at the

(98) Interview with Tom Manthata, by Brown Maaba with HMP, (Johannesburg) 16 February 2005.

(99) Interview with Saths Cooper, by Brown Maaba and Xolela Mangcu, (Johannesburg) 21 August 2004.

time, Muntu Myeza, to celebrate with the victors in Mozambique; hence the idea of a Viva FRELIMO Rally. Saths Cooper remembers that:

...when it becomes apparent that the Portuguese regime is on its way out, and there's a vacuum being created in Mozambique, I meet with Muntu again. ... We talk about what we were going to do and Muntu and I agree. We can't leave this. We must do something. So we hatch the plan to organise solidarity rallies with FRELIMO. We do that, and it creates a stir. I mean, this is a terrorist group that has been fighting the Portuguese in Mozambique – Angola is beginning to see a change as well – right on the border with South Africa. And we share a common language. So we do this. We plan it and we say we know they're going to ban this thing. How do we do it? So I say: "Let's make the announcement in the *Sunday Press* because it's gonna be for Wednesday. We don't give them too much of a chance. But prior to that we need to find out from FRELIMO what the story was. If we could get somebody to be a FRELIMO spokesman at these rallies, that would be great. But we knew it was unlikely. But we can't say FRELIMO is coming without us having somebody going to speak to them." So that's how Nkwenkwe gets sent to Mozambique and Harry Singh says: "I will drive you." That's how they end up with Haro Naziz. They end up skipping the borders, getting in. ... [They] end up there; they meet with the Mozambican representative and he gives them a message of solidarity. They come back. We were advertising "FRELIMO speaker". Obviously this is *mau mau*ing the system. It's really throwing them into chaos and terrorising them. Here is the might of the apartheid state and we [are] in the bosom. We're saying we're holding a rally. There's going to be a FRELIMO speaker. We knew what we were facing. We were facing the might of the state. Plus the media would be exposing us if we didn't do that. So that's why we sent these guys. As it turned out, they pitch up on Wednesday afternoon. It's about lunch time that they return and the rally is that afternoon. I think it's scheduled for just after 5. On the Monday morning there was a Koekemoer from Northern Natal who is mad. He says to Kruger: "If you are not prepared to stop this, I and other Boers will." So Kruger announces on Tuesday the rallies are banned. We check the gazette: it is not banned. So we issue a statement saying that we are not aware of any banning. Even if there were we couldn't care less. The will of the people shall not be suppressed by a foreign settler minority regime. Muntu issues the statement. So the statement is issued on Wednesday. The swines gazette it Wednesday morning. Now we've got a crisis. We know the stuff is banned. Meanwhile, people are organising the same thing in Turfloop, in Johannesburg, in Cape Town, in the Eastern Cape. All our people are organising it, and in Jo'burg some of the guys' mothers and parents are worried now – "this is getting radical. You are students. You can't." A press report starts emerging on the Tuesday that there are rifts in the camp. The people dissociate [themselves from the rallies]. But they don't quote any names. It's part of the destabilising. But now we've shot our boat. "The will of the people shall not be suppressed by a foreign settler minority regime." We can't go back. So we have a crisis meeting and we meet in King Edward Hospital in Aubrey Mokoape's room. These guys from Mozambique arrive there. It's Aubrey; it's Muntu; myself; it's these three guys from Mozambique; it's [Terror] Lekota – I think he's there – one or two others. Now the meeting is banned and we know people are going to pitch up in their thousands. So I say: "Guys, we need to call this thing off otherwise there's going to be problems. People are going to get hurt and these guys are going to shoot." There was silence. So then I say: "I will go and speak to the police about this thing. I will go there."

That's what opened it up because then people said: "You are banned. They will...." I didn't want to jeopardise anybody. I was prepared to do that: to tell them this thing is banned. We can get somebody to speak to the people and tell them to go. Then a guy said: "Muntu has been the spokesman. Maybe Muntu should go?" So that's how Muntu got pushed into that thing; to go there, approach the cops, tell them: "I want to address the crowd to ask them to disperse." Muntu didn't say no or yes. But that was it. He got stuck with it. What actually happened is that by the time they ended up there (Curries Fountain), Muntu and them realised they couldn't get in. The place was full of people and these guys were late coming from the SASO office. So they arrive there. People are chanting already, singing freedom songs. So Muntu attempts to go towards the cops, and there's the section of the crowd that sees him, recognises him. And they say Muntu is here. So Muntu then veers towards them and he joins them, singing. So that's when the cops attack and disperse the crowd and teargas and everything else. Dogs are set on the people. People are arrested. When these things were happening, Mamphela was still in Durban. And I met with her and gave her an idea of what was happening. And she came back and said there's an understanding of it and there's support for it. I don't think anybody understood where it will go – I did. I think others probably thought: "Well, it would be a rally and it would be the end of it." But in a sense the movement was facing a stasis. There was a height of Black Consciousness activity. And then the bannings and their aftermath were taking their toll. And you were getting people in leadership – I don't want to name names – [who] were simply not up to it. 1974 was one of the low points. Accession of FRELIMO to power in Mozambique provided us with an opportunity to resuscitate the movement into life, if you like; because it was eating away at itself. There were people who were banned, and there were people who were leaving the country; just going off on their own and a few ending up joining the ANC or PAC. But most of them remained in exile. In a sense this had to turn things around, and lead to the rejuvenation culminating in 1976.<sup>100</sup>

Thenceforth wave after wave of campus unrest became the order of the day, followed by the hounding of BCM leaders, some of whom, including Harry Nengwekhulu and Siphso Buthelezi, left for exile; while others were arrested.

The Trial under the Terrorism Act of the 'SASO Nine', who were members of SASO and BPC, for instigating disturbances by organising the Viva FRELIMO rallies dragged on for seventeen months. Far from suppressing black opposition, however, the trial offered BCM leaders a national platform. The nine were convicted in December 1976 and given sentences ranging from five to ten years.

### **The Trade Union Movement, 1970-1976**

In 1970, the two main trade union federations were the South African Confederation of Labour (SACLA), formed in 1958 with its origins dating back to 1947, and the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA), formed in 1954. SACLA, with a white membership of some 190,000 in twenty-five racially exclusive unions, looked to the government to promote job colour bars. TUCSA, with a membership of some 186,000, was conservative and bureaucratic, despite the fact that a majority of its members

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(100) Interview with Saths Cooper.

(107,000) were coloured and Indian. TUCSA's attitude to African workers was to ignore them or else try to control their organization in the interests of preserving the privileges of its own members. To counter the Congress-aligned SACTU, TUCSA had worked with 'parallel' African unions in the 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>101</sup> In 1962, TUCSA admitted these unions to membership, and by 1966, thirteen had joined. Under pressure from the government, it passed a resolution excluding them in 1969.

The repression of SACTU in the early 1960s had led to a decline in the organization of African workers. But by 1970 there were a number of 'moderate' and 'non-political' African trade unions in existence, 'parallel' to their registered counterparts, most of them recently excluded from TUCSA. Their membership totalled some 29,000 in 1975. In 1970 the National Union of Clothing Workers (formed in 1962) was the largest of these, with 18,000-23,000 members in the mid-1970s.<sup>102</sup> The orientation of NUCW was strictly around 'bread and butter' politics, that is a concentration on industrial negotiations and worker complaints.

In the 1970s, however, through mechanization and the fragmentation of the skilled trades, employers were able to increase their output by employing more and more African workers in semi-skilled and machine operative tasks, while advancing white workers into top semi-skilled jobs and the skilled trades. Such semi-skilled machine operators were to be the core of the black workers' movement which developed in the 1970s. During the early part of the decade, this layer of workers was hard hit by the impact of rising inflation, which meant decline in their real wages. This group launched themselves into collective action in the movement catalysed by the Durban strikes.

Initiating the rebuilding of trade unions was undertaken by those SACTU members who, first of all, had chosen to remain in the country, rather than seek military training in exile, and, secondly, those released from imprisonment on Robben Island or with banning orders expiring in the early 1970s, such as Harry Gwala in Natal, Elijah Loza in Cape Town, and Miriam Sithole and others in Johannesburg. The role of students came through the NUSAS Wages Commissions, founded initially by Dave Hemson at the University of Natal, and then spread to Cape Town, Wits, and Rhodes University by NUSAS.

In 1971, Eric Tyacke and Loet Douwes-Dekker, two former TUCSA employees, established the Urban Training Project (UTP). The UTP served as an education project, and it helped service a number of existing unions expelled from TUCSA and from 1972 encouraged the formation of new unions of African workers. In 1972, a BPC activist, Drake Koka, an ex-Liberal Party member formerly employed by the UTP, launched the Black and Allied Workers' Union (BAWU). Despite a militant rhetoric, it paid little attention to organising workers, training leadership, or organising strikes. BAWU played little role during the decade.

(101) Ensor, L. "TUCSA's relationship with African trade unions: an attempt at control, 1954-1962." *SALB*. III.4 (January-February 1977).

(102) Friedman, S. *Building Tomorrow Today*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987: See pp.73-78.

In December 1971, ex-students and student activists launched the idea of NUSAS students researching the wages of black workers as a means of organising them. The Wages Commissions spread to other campuses through a resolution at NUSAS Congress in July 1971. These Wages Commissions were soon involved in the task of organising black workers. For instance, in Durban at a meeting gathered to address a Wage Board organised by the Wages Commission, workers supported the establishment of a benefit fund. The General Factory Workers Benefit Fund (GFWBF) was officially launched on 9 September 1972 with 1,000 members.<sup>103</sup> It also served as a complaint service and for education, but its primary aim was organisation.

In the Western Cape, the revival of organisation grew initially from the activities of the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau. This body came together out of initiatives from SACTU activists and those of the Wages Commission at UCT. Launched on 9 March 1973, it had been in preparation since 1972.<sup>104</sup> Though it was conceived before them, undoubtedly the Durban strikes in January 1973 were a strong impetus towards its launch.

### *The 1973 Durban Strike*

The 1973 strikes were preceded by less momentous but equally significant industrial action in Durban, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Ovamboland in northern Namibia. In 1969, about 1,000 casual dockworkers embarked on a wildcat strike in Durban which led to their dismissal.<sup>105</sup> In 1971, dockworkers in Durban and Cape Town threatened to go on strike demanding wage increases. They repeated these threats during the Wage Board hearings in July 1972. In October that year, they staged a strike that virtually brought the two harbours to a standstill. In June 1972, bus drivers at the Public Utility Transport Corporation (PUTCO) in Johannesburg went on a strike that left over 120,000 commuters stranded.

Industrial action by African mine workers from Ovamboland in northern Namibia erupted in the middle of December 1971 and continued until January 1972. The strike reached its climax in January 1972 when up to 13,000 workers downed tools. Although the workers' demands were economically driven, they also used their organisation and black muscle power to make political demands.

The Durban strikes began early in January 1973, when 1,200 night watchmen downed tools, demanding a wage increase of R10 a month. Shortly thereafter, 2,000 Coronation Brick & Tile workers also went on strike, demanding a minimum wage of R30 a week. A short-lived strike broke out at A.J. Keeler Transport Company on 10 January 1973. Another strike broke out at a tea company. After a few scattered strikes in central Durban, the movement spread rapidly to the two main industrial centres,

(103) Webster, E. *Cast in a Racial Mould*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985: See p.132.

(104) Maree, J. "The General Workers' Union, 1973-1986." James, W.G. and M. Simons (eds). *The Angry Divide*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1989: See p.129.

(105) Freund, B. "Confrontation and Social Change: Natal and the Forging of Apartheid 1949-1972." R. Morrell, et al. (eds). *Political Economy and Identities in KwaZulu-Natal: Historical and Social Perspectives*. Durban: Indicator Press, 1996: See p.131.

including the Pinetown-New Germany and Jacobs-Mobeni complexes, and even to other parts of Natal.

A strike involving the largest number of workers thus far broke out at the Frame Group of Companies at the New Germany industrial complex where more than 7,000 workers downed tools demanding an increase in their basic wages. Soon thereafter, the strike spread to other plants of the Frame Group in New Germany and Jacobs.

At the end of January 1973, more than 10,000 Durban City Corporation workers also joined the strike. During the next few weeks, factories as far away as Hammarsdale, Pietermaritzburg, Tongaat, and Charlestown were also hit by industrial action. By April 1973, industrial strikes had erupted at the Mandini and Richard's Bay industrial areas. Between January and the end of March there were more than 160 strikes involving 61,410 workers. The strike wave rolled from factory to factory, with workers pouring into the streets, mounting mass pickets outside factories, and climbing onto factory roofs. Police stood by, helpless to intervene. They were far too few to crush this mass resistance. Saths Cooper draws attention to the role of the BCM in the strikes:

It began as a dockworkers' strike towards the end of 1972. And we were involved in that. Steve, myself and a few others decided we need to show solidarity – but the Wages Commission was also involved. We showed solidarity. The Wages Commission were there. T.W. Beckett was the tea and coffee company – Ellis Brown coffee and those kinds of thing. There was a strike there. There was a strike of the municipal workers, Coronation Brick and Tile in Redhill, and after that the Durban strike began. So, January of 1973 was the big Durban strike. December, January 1973 it reached its climax; lots of demonstrations. And we as the BPC guys got involved in this.106

The wave of strikes spread to Johannesburg and other industrial centres in the country. There were approximately 246 strikes involving African workers in various sectors of the economy during 1973.

The strikes were implicitly political: "The level of wages demanded by the workers could only be brought about by a transformation of apartheid society."<sup>107</sup> The immediate consequence was that workers won increased wages. The main result of the Durban strikes, however, was a transformation of the mood of workers, who now sensed their potential power. June Rose Nala, who participated in the 1973 strikes as a worker at Afritex, has the following recollection:

It was a euphoria that we got, as it is put in the title of the book on the ICU: a taste of freedom. It was absolutely incredible and you can see why people say 'I've tasted freedom'. In the rural areas, in the farms, everywhere, there was the same euphoria. It was like freedom was here. So the strikes brought that, even though we knew there was no freedom yet as such.... Everything was exciting.108

The consequence was the formation of the Central Administrative Services (CAS) in March with the aim of drawing the registered trade unions in Bolton Hall as well as

(106) Interview with Saths Cooper.

(107) Hemson, "Trade unionism...": See pp.21-22.

(108) Interview with June Rose Nala Hartley, by Dave Hemson, (Durban) 27 November 2004.

the UTP in Johannesburg into a drive to organise African workers, and to provide a nucleus of administrative strength for this.

At a benefit fund meeting in Pietermaritzburg, ALCAN (Aluminium Cans) and Scottish Cables workers called for the formation of a union, leading to the formation of a steering committee of the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) on 28 April. MAWU had 1,444 signed-up members and employed two full-time organisers in Pietermaritzburg alone.<sup>109</sup> Although in 1975 it expanded to the Transvaal, it remained weak countrywide throughout the 1970s and only experienced a membership spurt after 1980.

The National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) was launched at a meeting of 500 workers on 23 September. After a strike in November 1973, management at textile company Smith and Nephew granted workers the *de facto* right to elect shop stewards, thus opening the way to the first recognition agreement with one of the newly emerging unions in July 1974. In November 1973, workers at AE and CI began

organising themselves, thus laying the basis for the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU), launched with 1,000 members on 24 November 1974.

On 6 January 1974, a new coordinating body was formed for the Natal unions – the Trade Union Advisory Coordinating Council (TUACC). One of the most distinctive of its policies was that only trade unions that allowed all workers to join, “regardless of race, religion, or sex” would be allowed to affiliate. TUACC thus challenged the racial segregation within the trade union movement that had long been promoted by the government. TUACC also aimed to promote the formation of industrial trade unions and saw itself as representing the first steps towards the formation of a national federation. Democratic trade union practices and structures were encouraged as a priority and increasing emphasis was placed on electing factory-based shop stewards to represent workers on the shop floor. CAS was the administrative hub to provide support to each union, including keeping the books of trade unions as well as providing secretarial services. TUACC was structured to ensure that the elected representatives of workers dominated the organization.

In the Cape, the Western Province Workers’ Advice Bureau (WPWAB) opened on 5 March 1973. African workers who joined in large numbers from particular companies were encouraged to elect factory committees and have them registered as works committees under the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act. By August 1973 there were eleven works committees, and by October the WPWAB had 2,000 members and fourteen works committees with another six being organised. Johan Maree recalls that:

...we established, here in Cape Town, an organisation we called the Western Province Workers’ Advice Bureau. And I was the first and only Chairperson of the Board of the Western Province Workers’ Advice Bureau – to give it a bit of academic respectability. And our strategy was to actually use the government’s legislation against itself because

(109) Randall, E. “Directory of Trade Unions.” *South African Labour Bulletin*. 11.3 (January 1986).

the government had amended a previously existing Act in 1973 that it then called the Bantu Labour Regulations Act.<sup>110</sup> And in that law it gave workers slightly more rights to form works committee than it had given before. Workers could actually elect their own works committees. Management didn't appoint members. Workers could say we want a meeting and [the] Department of Labour official had to be present. And then they could proceed to elect a works committee that had very limited rights, but still gave them certain legal protection and the right to meet and start airing the grievances at work. And so our strategy was to start forming works committees at factories where our organisers could get access. We had linked with Zora Mhlemokhulu who had been a young SACTU organiser. At the time SACTU was banned. [Zora] had been lying low in the meantime and had now rejoined us full-time, working as our organiser. Besides that there were some other historic figures in SACTU like Elijah Loza working in the background, secretly.<sup>111</sup>

By 1975, the UTP had also helped organise and establish the Sweets, Food, and Allied Workers Union (SFAWU), Paper Wood and Allied Workers' Union (PWAU), the Building Construction and Allied Workers' Union (BCAWU), the South African Chemical Workers' Union (SACWU), the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers' Union (CCAWUSA), and the Glass and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU). The number of UTP-assisted trade unions grew until, by the end of 1975, it was servicing ten different African unions.<sup>112</sup> In 1977, it set up a Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions (CCOBTU), a precursor to the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) that was formally constituted in September 1980.

Former SACTU members, Mirriam Sithole and Phindile Mfeti, and NUSAS members, Steven Friedman and Jeanette Curtis, formed the Industrial Aid Society (IAS) on the Witwatersrand in 1973. IAS aimed to disseminate information, provide training and information service for workers and organisers, provide the complaints and advice service, and certain material benefits to members. Later on, it established a Benefit Society and a Legal Advice Clinic. It established the Transvaal branch of MAWU in 1975. Although by 1976 the IAS had only succeeded in forming one union on the Witwatersrand, it saw the need to set up a coordinating body, the Council of Industrial Workers of the Witwatersrand (CIWW), to coordinate the activities of MAWU and the IAS and of any other unions that might be formed.

SACTU was also secretly involved in the revival of the labour movement within South Africa. One step it took, from exile, was to step up communication with the people of South Africa through Radio Freedom. Its members who were based in

(110) The Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act to transcend the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1973 was enacted in direct response to the Durban strikes. It allowed for the introduction of works and liaison committees. The 1973, legislation also provided for Africans to have direct representation (without the vote) in Industrial Council proceedings, although the actual person(s) had to be approved by the Minister of Labour and the (white) Bantu labour officer. Also, for the first time in industrial relations legislation, the African workers were not totally denied the right to strike. The path to a legal strike was, however, most circuitous.

(111) Interview with Johan Maree, by Thozama April, (Cape Town) 15 June 2004.

(112) LACOM. *Freedom From Below: The Struggle for Trade Unions in South Africa*. Braamfontein: Skotaville Publishers, 1989: See p.173.

the frontline states were also involved in efforts to establish the external machinery that would coordinate links with activists at home. They planned to send potential organisers out of the country to receive training. Upon their return, these cadres would be deployed in various industrial areas in Natal. In Natal, the revival of SACTU structures was further boosted by the release of trade unionists who had been incarcerated during the 1960s, including David Mkhize from Mpolweni and Stephen Dlamini from Bulwer. Harry Gwala, who was credited with remoulding the Howick Rubber Workers Union into an inclusive and powerful union at BTR Sarmcol, was released in June 1972.

SACTU operatives established offices in Durban in 1972. They appointed organisers paid through funds received from the Swaziland-based SACTU machinery to recruit workers into a general workers union. They envisaged a situation in which they could form sector based unions once workers in sufficient numbers had been recruited. Most workers were reluctant to take up SACTU membership, however, because they still remembered how SACTU members had suffered at the hands of the security police in the 1960s.

SACTU found fertile soil in the Eastern Cape, where leading political figures were invariably trade union organisers as well. A close examination of the organisational dynamics of the Eastern Cape underground indicates that worker organisations supported the underground, building SACTU and MK structures simultaneously.

## **The ANC Political Underground, 1970-1975**

### *Internal Networks*

The rise of the BCM, the 1973 Durban strikes and subsequent events, and the independence of Mozambique and Angola in 1975 were among the factors which facilitated the growth of the ANC political underground inside the country in the first half of the decade. The initiatives for internal underground political work came mainly from people who remained inside South Africa. Joe Matthews put it as follows:

...we always make a terrible mistake of thinking that the ANC is those who were visible in exile. But we left hundreds of thousands of people, ANC members, here in South Africa. The number of people arrested in the Eastern Cape in the '50s was 9,000 members – in the Eastern Cape alone. Not the people on Robben Island. You see, we focus and analyse Robben Island, or Morogoro, or London and we forget that all the activists of the movement were basically in the country and they are the ones who were active in responding to the calls that were being made from outside through Radio Freedom, through pamphlets.... So there were people ready, always, to serve.<sup>113</sup>

For instance, Joyce Sikakane, Samson Ndou, Elliot Shabangu, Rita and Lawrence Ndzanga, and other members of the network initiated by Winnie Mandela in the late 1960s continued with their underground work after their release from detention. Despite being banned, Ndou recalls that his main task was to recruit people to the

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(113) Interview with Joe Matthews.

ANC underground and provide them with political education, particularly on the Freedom Charter. The emphasis at this stage was on political work to keep the ANC name alive by addressing meetings of youth structures, having discussions with select groups of youth, and recruiting youth for the ANC underground.<sup>114</sup>

Another group of older activists who continued working underground in the Johannesburg region included John Nkadimeng and Robert Manci. This network was not uncovered until the second half of the 1970s. John Nkadimeng recalls that they formed a committee, which used to meet “twice a month at most” in flats in the city centre and in houses in Soweto.<sup>115</sup> There were separate committees for each province.

A number of young political activists became involved in underground networks without any links to the externally-based political organisations. This was the predominant form of political involvement in the underground in the early 1970s.

Many of these networks consisted of youth who were active in the BCM, and became involved in underground activities because of a perceived limitation in the methods of resistance of the BCM. For these activists, Black Consciousness offered only a limited form of political opposition, and they sought more direct opposition to the apartheid regime. In consequence, they began to form small networks that distributed literature, held political discussions, and recruited other youth for involvement in these activities. Some of these groups were to later establish links with externally-based individuals who were members of the ANC, or with internally-based ANC members working underground. Many of these initiatives stemmed from people who were active in two BCM-aligned youth organisations, SASO and SASM. Emphasis was placed on political education. Older members of the ANC and other political organisations were invited to address the youth networks on a variety of issues. There were, of course, other youth outside student circles who were recruited into the ANC underground.

Towards the middle of the decade, a series of major underground networks were set up inside the country by older members of the ANC to coordinate internal activity. Many of those who took the lead in the initiatives of the time were newly released political prisoners. Mac Maharaj recalls that political prisoners who were nearing the end of their sentences on Robben Island were given a set of instructions when they were released:

... to reach amongst the people, begin to understand what is happening, and that they should begin to build people’s forces, not necessarily MK; but that the practical measures would depend on their linking up with the movement and getting the movement’s advice from Lusaka.<sup>116</sup>

For instance, following the release of Harry Gwala in 1972, Jacob Zuma in 1973, Judson Khuzwayo in 1974, and Shadrack Maphumulo in 1974, a network of underground cells emerged in Natal. An extensive underground network also emerged in the Johannesburg and Sekhukhuneland areas (including links with Pretoria). Elias

(114) Interview with Samson Ndou.

(115) Interviews with John Nkadimeng, by Sifiso Ndlovu, (Kew, Johannesburg) 13 and 18 March and 27 May 2001.

(116) Interview with Mac Maharaj, by Howard Barrell, (Johannesburg) 19 November 1990.

Masinga recalls that the network reached into high schools in the area, and linked with cells in high schools (in youth clubs and SASM branches) across the country.<sup>117</sup> This network played a significant role in recruiting and transporting youth out of the country after the Soweto uprising. Some members of the network were also responsible for providing limited military training to recruits inside the country. This network also had extensive contact with the Swaziland-based members of the ANC.

By the mid-1970s, then, there were a number of internal underground networks. The main networks were Natal, led by Harry Gwala, Jacob Zuma and others, and the two Transvaal networks led by John Nkadimeng, Joe Gqabi, and others, and the smaller network led by Elliot Shabangu and Lawrence and Rita Ndzanga. The Natal and Transvaal leadership maintained contact with each other, while the Transvaal networks used the Natal underground's links to the external mission in Swaziland, and also maintained contacts in Botswana. The Natal group had a link with the eastern Cape-Border regions, which were led by a number of former political prisoners. The latter maintained contact with the ANC in Lesotho.<sup>118</sup> Finally, Elijah Loza, Mountain Qumbela, and Lumko Huna led a Western Cape underground network that had links with the networks in East London and Port Elizabeth, as well as the ANC in Lesotho.

The initial contact between the Nkadimeng/Gqabi network and the Swaziland machinery of the ANC occurred in 1975, when the internal network was told to recruit youth for military training. What this represented was a break from the earlier emphasis on political work, and a change in the primary function of the internal networks. This change in emphasis followed a meeting of the Revolutionary Council in March 1975, after which the RC issued "a general directive to all its [MK] units to go into action." Later in the year the RC created a special Sub-Committee on recruitment and training.<sup>119</sup> Internal underground cells were charged with recruiting young people for military training and transporting them out of the country. In time, the Johannesburg network began to ferry weapons and guerrillas into South Africa. A number of members of the network were also provided with limited training in the use of weapons. However, the climax of the Johannesburg underground network's activities occurred when it was called upon to 'service' an MK unit, led by Tokyo Sexwale and Naledi Tsiki, which entered the country in late 1976. Besides being instrumental in bringing the unit's members, together with their weapons and ammunition, into the country, the network was charged with providing them with safe accommodation and assisting them with securing recruits.

In the early 1970s, a larger contingent of Natal ANC and MK leaders and cadres were released and this led to a revival of the underground in the region. This political recovery occurred in two broad phases. The first ran from 1972 to 1976 and

(117) Interview with Elias Masinga by Bernard Magubane and Greg Houston, (Johannesburg) 12 November 2003.

(118) Barrell, Howard. "Conscripts to the Age": African National Congress Operational Strategy, 1976-1986." D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1993: See p.94-5.

(119) Shubin, Vladimir. *ANC: A View from Moscow*: See p.159.

the second from 1977 to 1980. The better known underground network led by Harry Gwala, which operated from the Midlands from 1972 to 1975, did so alongside two other underground networks which had either survived during the 1960s or had regrouped between the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s. The release of other leading cadres in the late 1960s strengthened the ANC underground in Natal. The re-establishment of underground networks in Natal gained greater momentum after the release of another, larger contingent of political prisoners between 1972 and 1976. A well coordinated underground operated throughout the province with commands in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Jacob Zuma, who had returned from Robben Island in December 1973 after serving a ten year prison sentence, became the roving coordinator.

By the mid 1970s, the Natal underground operated from the following three areas: Pietermaritzburg, involving Gwala's outfit; Durban, with Joseph Mdluli as a central figure; and south-western Natal with Phungula and Henry Chiliza among its prominent members. The three commands had different lines of communication with the Swaziland machinery of the ANC headed by Thabo Mbeki, who arrived in Swaziland in December 1974, and with Stanley Mabizela from Port Elizabeth. This illegal, clandestine traffic opened up a route between the Natal and eastern Transvaal regions of South Africa via Swaziland to Mozambique, which subsequently became the main conduit for the ANC's resumption of the armed struggle.

Between 1974 and 1976, many young men and a few women were recruited and sent abroad through Swaziland and Mozambique for military training. Approximately 200 recruits were smuggled out of the country during the three years up to June 1976. But the police smashed the Midlands-based command after obtaining information in November 1975 from recruits arrested at the Swaziland border area, and they rounded up a number of the members of the underground. The police managed to obtain information from detainees that led them to the Durban network. There were more arrests in 1976. Zuma slipped quietly out of the country.

*Efforts of the ANC External Mission to establish an internal political underground* One of the key decisions taken at the Morogoro Conference was to establish a Revolutionary Council (RC). One of the RC's three tasks was that of developing internal structures. One way of rebuilding the underground was to deploy trained cadres inside the country to form underground cells.

James April, a 31-year old veteran of the Wankie Campaign who had received military training in Czechoslovakia, managed to make his way to Natal after entering South Africa in December 1970. April returned to South Africa through Jan Smuts Airport to recruit and train other guerrillas and establish communication with leaders outside. April was arrested about two months later. Chris Hani returned to South Africa in 1974, "the first successful step in creating a permanent underground

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(120) Karis and Gerhart. *Nadir and Resurgence*: See p.53.

structure within the country.”<sup>121</sup> He spent four months in South Africa, during which time “he made contact with a few former ANC members.”<sup>122</sup> He then crossed to Lesotho, where he remained for almost eight years. However, the underground cells Hani had managed to establish during his short stay inside the country “began to collapse because the cell members were afraid of being caught by the South African security forces.”<sup>123</sup>

Even before these efforts to revive the internal underground, the RC had looked at the notion of establishing structures inside the states bordering South Africa to facilitate the establishment of an ANC influence inside the country. During the first half of the decade, ANC cadres with experience in underground mobilisation were deployed in the states bordering South Africa. These include Thabo Mbeki, who was deployed to Botswana in 1973, and Chris Hani, who operated in Lesotho from 1974. These ANC members were centrally involved in establishing contacts with individuals based inside the country, providing them with ANC propaganda material, requesting their support in forming underground cells, holding discussions with leaders and members of Black Consciousness organisations, and so on. These tasks were aimed primarily at keeping “the ANC alive inside the country.” Pallo Jordan characterised these activities as follows:

Now, during that time, from about '73 onwards to '76, one of the most important dimensions of the reconstitution of the underground inside the country was work, very quiet, dialogue with various people in the Black Consciousness Movement. ... But, at the same time, too, the self-mobilisation [during and after the 1973 strikes] of the working class made possible the establishment of core groups in various parts of the country to do trade union work, which assisted in the whole process. Many of these were experienced unionists and that in turn, of course, fed the underground with working class cadre. But the core group were, I think, the important seedbeds for the future wave of underground recruits, activists, and others, and played, I think, a very important role in this period in terms of providing political training and experience to the sort of cadreship who, I think, came into their own in the period after 1976....<sup>124</sup>

In 1970, Joe Matthews was sent to Botswana to strengthen the ANC presence there. Among the leading members of the ANC in the country at the time were Peter Ntithe, Dan Tloome, and Sparepare Maropeng. Thabo Mbeki and other leading members of the ANC moved regularly between centres in Botswana and Swaziland from 1973 onwards. Mbeki spent much of 1973-74 in Botswana, where he established contact with the early Black Consciousness exiles and youth inside the country. By the beginning of 1975, the small ANC machinery in Botswana was able to receive recruits from South Africa who were seeking training in the establishment of

(121) Shubin, Vladimir. “People of a Special Mould – Four SACP Leaders in Exile.” *African Communist*. no.158, Third/Fourth Quarter, 2001.

(122) Barrell. “Conscripts to the Age.” See p.110.

(123) Berger, Michelle. *They Fought for Freedom: Chris Hani*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1994: See p.26.

(124) Interview with Pallo Jordan, by Howard Barrell, (Lusaka) 4 July 1989; (MCA 12 – 1314) Robben Island Museum-Mayibuye Centre, University of the Western Cape.

underground cells. They began buying “underground secret houses”, and “also started using local Botswanas to allow our people who have come to visit us at night, where they can spend the night.”<sup>125</sup>

When Hani arrived in Lesotho, he and his comrades started “to turn Lesotho into a temporary base from which to carry out our activities. We would cross into the country and meet with comrades to build units. By this time we had structures in the Free State, Transkei, Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and Border.”<sup>126</sup> ANC members inside the country also crossed into Lesotho at night, and they spent the evenings discussing “strategies for building the underground and then” they drove back to South Africa. “Now,” Hani adds, “we’re actually building a number of units from Lesotho into the country.” A “network of structures” was built inside Lesotho and people were trained “in guerrilla affairs, in politics, in intelligence, and everything else.”<sup>127</sup> By the middle of the decade, however, the internal ANC underground structures created by the Lesotho-based machinery of the ANC were, according to Hani, “rather limited ... and were controlled from outside, particularly from Maseru.”<sup>128</sup>

By the early 1970s, the leading members of the Swaziland machinery included Joseph Nduli, Stanley Mabizela, Ablon ‘Bafana’ Duma, and Albert Dhlomo, a former Natal trade unionist. This group was joined by Thabo Mbeki in 1974, and by Jacob Zuma in 1975. The Swaziland machinery was in contact with underground networks in Natal and the Transvaal during the early 1970s. These networks were involved in recruiting people for the ANC; creating underground cells of the ANC; distributing ANC propaganda material; recruiting youth to go for military training; and transporting them to Swaziland to undergo the military training.

After Mozambican independence in 1975, the ANC was permitted to establish a presence in that country, provided that clandestine operations were directed from elsewhere – in particular Swaziland – and not from Mozambique. The country soon became what Barrell called the ANC’s “operational bridgehead.”<sup>129</sup> Lennox Tshali was deployed to lead the ANC machinery in Mozambique in late 1975, and their initial tasks were to provide support to the Swaziland machinery and give limited military training courses to new ANC recruits. Tshali was joined by Jacob Zuma following the latter’s arrest in Swaziland and deportation from that country in June 1976. Zuma recalls that, prior to the Soweto uprising, links had been established which stretched from Maputo through the Swaziland machinery to people in underground networks in Natal and the Transvaal in particular.<sup>130</sup>

From the beginning of 1975, the ANC machinery in Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland combined both the work of political mobilisation and organisation underground; they also undertook the military tasks of infiltration, recruitment,

(125) Cited in Barrell. “Conscripts to the Age”: See p.110.

(126) Cited in Shubin. “People of a Special Mould.”

(127) Interview with Chris Hani, by Wolfie Kodesh, (Mayibuye Centre, University of Western Cape) 18 August 1989.

(128) *Ibid.*, p.169.

(129) Barrell. “Conscripts to the Age.” See p.174.

(130) Interview with Jacob Zuma, by Howard Barrell, (Mayibuye Centre, University of Western Cape) 18 August 1989.

and training for MK. The latter endeavour became more pronounced from late 1976, following the Soweto student uprising.

### **The ANC's Armed Struggle, 1970-1976**

Guerrilla activity in the 1970s began with attempts by the ANC to return small bands of MK cadres home. One of the first attempts to infiltrate MK cadres was made when Flag Boshielo led a group of MK fighters on a mission to South Africa. This group ran into an ambush in the Caprivi Strip because of a local *agent provocateur*. The idea for such actions had also taken root in the SACP. At a meeting in 1970, the

SACP decided to “plan for the organised beginnings of armed activity in selected regions.” Politico-military guerrillas would be infiltrated and base themselves in the rural areas and have the primary task of raising “the level of popular participation to the point at which revolutionary aims become general.”<sup>131</sup> These small guerrilla units would continuously harass the enemy by carrying “out sabotage and other special actions”; “obtain supplies and money”; “recruit cadres for the guerrilla struggle”; and “organise and encourage civilian resistance to enemy actions.”

Meanwhile, the ANC had already begun preparing MK cadres for new tasks. In 1969 a large contingent of MK soldiers went to the Soviet Union for training in urban guerrilla warfare, returning to Africa towards the end of 1970. The training included survival in the urban townships and training that prepared the guerrillas for both political and military work. Cletus Mzimela, a Wankie veteran, was in this group and in late 1970 was instructed by Moses Mabhida and Joe Slovo to return to South Africa to set up an underground network in rural Zululand. However, Mzimela found that, when he entered the country, internal ANC networks feared that he could have become a police informer. Ironically, a former MK colleague, Derrick Nkosi, who had become a policeman, eventually arrested him in September 1972.

The most notable attempt to infiltrate politico-military cadres into the country after the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns was Operation ‘J’ to infiltrate MK cadres by ship along the Indian Ocean coastline of South Africa, an idea first mooted in January 1963 by Arthur Goldreich. The project was re-introduced by Joe Slovo in July-August 1967. After persistent requests from the ANC and SACP, the Soviet Union agreed to

support the plan. Fifty guerrillas were picked up by the ship *Aventura* at the seaport town of Kismaayo, south of Mogadishu and, with its crew of Greek communists and cargo of arms, explosives, and communications equipment, left for South Africa from Somalia. Lennox Tshali recalls that:

We were flown to Mogadishu. ... Moses Mabhida, ... Chris Hani, Joe Slovo, [and Yusuf] Dadoo came time and again and we also had, time and again, O.R. [Tambo], to supervise the proceedings there. We were briefed. ... A boat was organised for us, and

(131) Slovo, Joe. “Southern Africa: Problems of armed struggle.” *Socialist Register*, (1973): See p.339.

we took the *Aventura*, and went with all our ... weaponry, money, and so on, so that when we came into the country we could become independent.... So we went there, took the boat. On the third day, something wrong happened.<sup>132</sup>

A day-and-a-half after the *Aventura* left the Somali port, the captain reported that the radar equipment was out of order. The ship returned and the equipment was replaced within a week. Another crew was recruited from Britain within two weeks and, after repairing one of the engines, left port. Sixteen hours after leaving port, however, the engine collapsed. A Somali tug towed the ship back.<sup>133</sup>

A second operation was initiated, 'Operation Chelsea'; fifteen guerrillas divided into six groups travelled via Nairobi to Botswana and Swaziland where Alexander Moumbaris and his team of internal underground operatives were to meet them. Moumbaris and five others were arrested two days after the first guerrilla entered South Africa, and the mission ended in failure.<sup>134</sup>

The area of operations of the Botswana MK machinery was the Eastern and Northern Transvaal and Bophuthatswana. The task assigned to ANC machineries in the countries bordering South Africa was to re-establish communications, and re-activate or establish new ANC cells inside the country with the intention of preparing them for the reception of MK cadres. The Botswana committee established contacts and cells in the Northern Transvaal, Johannesburg, and Cape Town. Couriers were used to maintain contact with the cells and to provide intelligence. They also transported weapons, ammunition, and explosives into South Africa. By the middle of the decade, the Botswana machinery was also providing short military training courses to people from inside South Africa. Trained cadres were also infiltrated through Botswana. The independence of Mozambique provided tremendous momentum to the armed struggle in South Africa. Throughout "1975 and the first half of 1976 there were indications of an increasing number of people leaving South Africa, mainly under the auspices of the ANC, for military training."<sup>135</sup>

By the middle of the decade, the ANC had reached the conclusion that the large black townships presented real opportunities for guerrilla warfare because, according to Slovo, "the urban guerrilla could operate" in a terrain that "conformed to the more classic conditions in which the fighter was surrounded by a population which could become his "mountain" and his "jungle". Here he could "act and then immediately melt into his haven among the people who would "see nothing" and "hear nothing". In addition, the urban townships were a "potentially hostile environment" for the enemy, in which the urban guerrilla could harass the enemy endlessly, attacking the "odd

(132) Interview with Lennox Tshali, by Nhlanhla Ndebele and Moses Ralinala, (Pretoria) 27 July 2001.

(133) Slovo, Joe. *Dawn* 25th anniversary souvenir issue. December 1986, pp.33-4. Cited in Vladimir Shubin, 1999: See p.104.

(134) See Ronnie Kasrils. *Armed and Dangerous: From undercover struggle to freedom*. Johannesburg: Mayibuye Books, Bellville and Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1998: See pp.112-113.

(135) International Defence and Aid Fund (hereafter IDAF). "Developments in South Africa since the uprising of 1976." Report submitted by the Research Department of IDAF to the United Nations General Assembly International Conference on sanctions against South Africa. Paris: UN, 20-27 May 1981: See p.10.

flying squad car, the policeman on patrol, the administrative office, the isolated police station.”<sup>136</sup> This was a major shift from the earlier concentration on the rural areas.

An ANC National Executive Committee meeting in December 1975 discussed plans to re-launch MK operations. Oliver Tambo “exhorted the military structures to carry the struggle forward” and “underlined the need to start military operations in the heart of South African territory.”<sup>137</sup> The first military operations were carried out towards the end of the year and early in 1976. To facilitate military activity, the RC transformed its military administration, which also served as an operations and planning department. The new structure became known as the central operations headquarters (COH), with Joe Modise as its commander.

At the beginning of 1976, MK began giving young recruits crash courses in Swaziland and sending them back to strengthen the underground structures. However, it was only after the June 1976 uprising that MK was able to begin with regular infiltration of the country, and there were no MK actions of significance during the first half of the decade.

### **The Revival of the PAC Underground in the mid 1970s**

Although a critical mass of PAC members were released from Robben Island in the late 1960s, the actual efforts towards the revival of the PAC underground were made around 1974 and 1975. The main reason given for the lull in PAC internal political activity until 1974 was the brutality of the regime. As John Ganya indicated, “The other critical factor was the execution of PAC members in 1963 and 1966. This sent some very shocking signals in the PAC and Zeph Mothopeng advised that we couldn’t subject our people to such a slaughter. We had to find other ways to advance the struggle.”<sup>138</sup>

A number of factors in the mid 1970s accounted for a favourable climate for the revival of the underground. Perhaps the most important of these was the formation of student, youth, and community organisations from 1968 that adopted ideologies that bore some resemblance to the Africanism of the PAC. These were the Black Consciousness organisations that made their debut with the formation of SASO in 1968. PAC leader Zeph Mothopeng was the keynote speaker at the inaugural conference of SASO in Pietermaritzburg.<sup>139</sup> John Ganya also recalls that:

Zeph Mothopeng was also invited to address the formation of the BPC [Black People’s Convention] at Turfloop [in 1972] and this gave the PAC operatives, i.e. myself and Naoboth Ntshunsha, a perfect guise from which to operate. We told the BPC that we wanted to use their organisation as a base from which to recruit members of the PAC and this request was supported. They even alerted us to those members of the BPC who were too close to the ANC in their ideological thinking. For example, Steve Biko’s brother was a PAC member. Some of the BPC leaders had their relatives who

(136) *Ibid.*

(137) Shubin, Vladimir. 1999: See pp.163-4.

(138) Interview with John Ganya, by Thami ka Plaatjie, (Soweto) 1 September 1999.

(139) Interview with John Ganya.

were ANC members. So the BPC leaders and its members were divided between us and the ANC. Abraham Tiro's expulsion from Turfloop created a further impetus in our efforts to get more recruits. The activities of SASO in the schools also made it very easy for us to recruit students from the schools. Zeph Mothopeng was also helpful in ensuring that Tiro gets a teaching position at Morris Isaacson [School] in Soweto. So, we became very close to SASO people as a result. We went to talk to Tsietso Mashinini and he was not so welcoming. The meeting we had with Tsepo Seathlolo was very fruitful. Even Collen Nkutu was also one such student leader that we had a very good relation with.<sup>140</sup>

The revival of the PAC underground was initially centred largely on Johannesburg and Pretoria. This was largely because Zephania Mothopeng, the most senior member of the PAC National Executive Committee (after Robert Sobukwe) who was still inside the country, was based in Johannesburg after his release from prison. Most imprisoned PAC members in and around Johannesburg were released around the same time and thus provided the nucleus from which the revival of the PAC could be initiated.

A particular process led to the revival of the PAC's underground. First, the old PAC members met to discuss their prison experiences. The initial group was made up of the former Robben Island prisoners who returned to Johannesburg. These leaders would then recruit new members to the PAC and form cells. The members of the new cells were then charged with forming other cells, until large numbers of people had been drawn into the underground. This was followed by efforts to establish contact with PAC members in other parts of the country, who were similarly charged with the revival of the underground in their areas. Efforts were then made to make contact with PAC leaders in exile, particularly in Botswana and Swaziland, and recruits were sent out of the country for military training. Finally, the Soweto uprising raised the intensity of activities of the internal underground.

Support from the external wing of the PAC for the revival of the internal underground came when an agent was despatched from abroad to go "on a nationwide tour of PAC contacts, ordering them immediately to reassemble their clandestine cells"; in the process, two lead units were established, one in Pretoria to coordinate operations in the Transvaal and the other in East London to cover the Eastern Cape.<sup>141</sup> The PAC's external mission needed recruits for military training abroad in countries such as Libya, China, and Egypt. In 1974, Libya had provided the PAC with training facilities, but the PAC was unable to provide enough recruits. Most of its guerrillas had been abroad for a long time and it urgently needed new recruits. These were sent from South Africa through Swaziland and Botswana. Isaac Mafatshe recalls that the decision to revive the internal underground was taken whilst he was in prison on Robben Island.

(140) Interview with John Ganya.

(141) Davis, Stephen M. *Apartheid's Rebels: Inside South Africa's Hidden War*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987: See pp.31-2.

I was given a mandate ... by the leadership of the PAC [on Robben Island] which was led by Pokela to go and link [up] with [the] exile [leadership] because we were worried about what was happening in exile because whatever we heard about exile was depressing. There was infighting, expulsions, even people who we knew were activists were scattered in Kenya and other places and there was nothing good or inspiring about the PAC that was coming from abroad. The only good thing we heard was this Villa Peri Operation that there was an effort to come back into the country. But besides [that] it was just people firing and expelling each other and this was not good at all. One, I was sent to link up with the [the PAC members inside the] country and see to the revival of the PAC within the country, and two, a conscious effort to take people out of the country abroad.<sup>142</sup>

The Johannesburg leadership also made efforts to revive the underground in other parts of the country, including the Transkei; Witbank; East London and King William's Town; Durban; Cape Town, East London, and Witsieshoek in the Free State. Towards the end of 1976, members of the internal underground were requested to make preparations for the return of trained cadres from abroad. However, the work of the internal underground was being undermined by events taking place between the leaders abroad. Ganya recalls that:

I was asked to go and give a report to the external leadership of the PAC in Tanzania. It was there where I realised that there were divisions between Leballo and Ntantala. I was disheartened by these developments in the PAC as each group wanted to win my support against their side. Each group was accusing the other of all sorts of things. The Ntantala group was accusing the Leballo group of being agents of the CIA. Some of the students that I had brought to exile had joined the ANC because of the internal leadership instability in the PAC.<sup>143</sup>

The PAC underground was smashed when the police began to arrest scores of people from early 1976. Part of the problem was that the leaders of the internal underground were known to the security police from the lists of PAC members seized in Maseru by the British Colonial Police and handed over to the South African government in 1963. In addition, many were former political prisoners who had been released and it was normal practice for such people to be under constant surveillance for some time. The organisation was also rife with informers. The security police used surveillance and informants to arrest nearly the entire leadership of the reconstituted internal PAC. Eighteen people were brought to trial in Bethal in January 1978, while eighty-six others were named as co-conspirators.

### **The PAC in Exile during the 1970s**

In 1974, APLA had only about seventy trained guerrillas, most of whom had been in the camps since the mid-1960s. The Villa Peri Operation convinced countries such as Libya and Uganda to assist the PAC militarily, while support from Libya followed

(142) Interview with Sakki Mafatshe, by Thami ka Plaatjie with HMP, (Pretoria) 20 May 2005.

(143) Interview with John Ganya.

a visit to that country by the PAC leadership in 1970. The Libyans offered the PAC training facilities in 1974, but the PAC was only able to get a small number of recruits to undergo training in Libya. In the same year, the Basotho Congress Party (BCP), the exiled Lesotho opposition, agreed to a PAC offer to use the training facilities to solve its manpower crisis and restore its waning international credibility. The BCP recruits were to pretend to be PAC, receive APLA weapons, but return to Lesotho as the Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA), the armed wing of the BCP. From that year on, APLA and LLA recruits were sent to Libya to train jointly. The first group sent in July 1974 was made up of eleven LLA recruits and one APLA recruit. In August 1976, a group of 120 trained guerrillas, of whom only twenty-four were PAC, were taken by plane from Libya to Dar es Salaam to Chunya Military Camp. Timothy Williams, at the time a member of the BCM based in Botswana, was part of this group.

In '75 there was some negotiations with the PAC; people saying let's train this group and don't formalise a relationship with them until later. And the PAC agreed to that. These negotiations were carried out by people like Bokwe Mafuna, who was very influential in Botswana: Bokwe Mafuna, Welile Nhlapo, and Tebogo Mafule. So I was one of those people who went to Libya for training and later to Syria. For a young person, the ANC was too measured. I'm talking as a young person then. If you spoke to them, you knew everything was too neatly planned. They were too careful about things. And we were just hot [and] wanted action, action, action! But we were very naïve in many ways. I think to an extent very reckless. Young people are. So we went for training and I was exposed to the PAC. And that group, to a large extent, who trained in the PAC in 1975/76 is actually the group from the BCM who joined the ANC first. We were living with the PAC [for] some eight months. So what we saw there drove us to the ANC, even faster than we would have [otherwise] gone to the ANC. The PAC unfortunately is an organisation that is rife with splits. There's leadership tension all the time. And if I compare them to the ANC, they didn't have the basic discipline that was there within the ANC. And there's no depth also to the politics that you find in the PAC. But people will always be contesting for leadership – Leballo, Ntantala, and so on; there was always this. Even in the camps, there would be a Ntantala group and Leballo group. And people from Lesotho who trained with us that time were more Leballo-inclined. But at least we established a comparison because we had been exposed to ANC people. There was more of an ANC presence in Botswana than there was a PAC presence. So although we were not members of the ANC there was a lot of interaction and discussions with people in the ANC. We kept a communication [link], and whatever interaction we had with the PAC we would compare to people in the ANC. And when we came back [after] being exposed to military training and spoke to people in the ANC we found that the ANC was actually doing a lot of things; but in a more responsible manner than we expected of them. We were more militant. They were gaining a lot of ground in a very quiet way; ensuring the safety of the people inside the county. So that, basically, was the decider that [made us go] to the ANC eventually; most of us who were trained in Libya.<sup>144</sup>

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(144) Interview with Timothy Williams, by Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, (Pretoria) 20 January 2004.

From 1975 the PAC was able to conduct military training in a part of Swaziland close to the South African border. The APLA cadres training there would have a shorter distance to travel to South Africa. From October 1975, three APLA members began training in Mkalampere, a territory disputed by the South African and Swaziland governments. Members of the local community and dissident members of the MgomeZulu chiefdom of South Africa who had fled to Swaziland after a chieftaincy succession dispute were also trained at this camp. The training ended after the arrest of some of the MgomeZulu people in April and the three PAC cadres in May 1976.<sup>145</sup>

On completion of their training, cadres trained in Libya, Syria, and China were keen to return to the home front. Instead, they were sent to the camps in Tanzania where they joined the cadres who had been in exile from the 1960s. Bobo Moerane, a June 16th recruit who underwent military training in China and Kampuchea, recalls that life in the camp was dull and the cadres lacked clear activities.

There was no activity in the camp when we arrived. We started some poultry projects and because of the health conditions there, no poultry survived. We started a piggery and it was also not going well. We whiled away time by doing fitness training. Each time the High Command members came to the camp, we would always put pressure on them now that we had finished training. There was one answer that P.Z. Mboko would give us. He would say ‘hang in there, I am still preparing’. There was a programme to train as pilots in Nigeria and Ireland. We felt that we needed to start implementing our training before we could do the specialized training and we refused.<sup>146</sup>

This group was unarmed and most were virtually living with their families in the camp at Chunya, which was run by the LLA until large numbers of APLA cadres arrived from Libya. The camp commander, Enoch Zulu, the deputy commander of APLA under Templeton Ntantala, says: “The difficulty was commanding an army far away from home. We were confronted with concerns of people who wanted to be sent back home and those who were arguing that they were getting old in exile. Instead we put pressure on the OAU to give us arms to wage the struggle.”<sup>147</sup>

### **The Soweto Uprising**

The process of enforcing Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in African schools was accelerated during the early 1970s by the Department of Bantu Education. In 1973, the Department issued a policy document in which it argued that the medium of instruction should be either exclusively Afrikaans or exclusively English in all secondary schools. The medium of instruction in primary schools prior to the implementation of this circular in 1975 was the students’ mother tongue. But for practical reasons, in most Higher Primary and Secondary Schools, English was the sole medium of instruction in 1975. This language policy was officially changed in 1976 when some of the higher primary and secondary schools in Soweto were

(145) Lodge, Tom. *Black Politics since 1945*. See p.315.

(146) Interview with Bobo Moerane, by Thami ka Plaatjie, (Pretoria) 26 August 2004.

(147) Interview with Enoch Zulu, by Thami ka Plaatjie, (Vanderbijlpark) 20 June 2002.

instructed by the then Secretary for Bantu Education to implement Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.

There were other factors, besides the rejection of Bantu education and Afrikaans, which were behind the uprising in Soweto that soon engulfed the whole country. These included inadequate education facilities; the refusal to grant urban Africans permanent residential status; poor housing; restrictions on African trading rights in the urban areas; and laws requiring all urban Africans to become citizens of one bantustan or the other. Each of these issues by itself would have been enough to spark a revolt; taken together, they were the stuff of protracted civil wars.

In March 1976, at Phefeni Junior Secondary, one of the pilot schools chosen to implement the language policy, students in Forms One and Two commenced passive resistance in the classroom. Ultimately, the students decided to forsake passive resistance and to go public by going on strike on 17 May 1976. Billy Masetlha recalls that SASM took up the issue at an early stage.

... I became the national secretary general [of SASM] in 1975, at which time we started programmes around this Afrikaans because Afrikaans had become a big issue, 1974, 1975. ...And we resisted for almost two years at high school and made sure that it does not come up because they kept on insisting. And so they decided no, put it on a blanket. They want to start up with a new entrance and then gradually moving through with all the other standards. And because now we were already senior students, we said no we will hammer this one. So we organised SASM – and I was then the national secretary general of the South African Students Movement – and we organised throughout the whole country. And we started small pockets of resistance....148

On 20 May, the students of Phefeni Junior Secondary were joined by their counterparts from nearby Belle Higher Primary School. The following day, pupils from Emthonjeni and Thulasizwe Higher Primary Schools in Orlando East joined the class boycotts. On 24 May 1976, the striking students were joined by students from Pimville Higher Primary School and Khulangelwazi Higher Primary School in Diepkloof, and on 1 June 1976 the seventh school, Senoane Junior Secondary School, joined. The strike was spreading to different regions in Soweto. The affected schools formed a co-ordinating committee, which sought help from students at senior high schools that were not affected by the Afrikaans directive such as Naledi, Orlando West, Morris Isaacson, and Orlando High.

SASM held its national conference at Roodepoort in May 1976. Delegates passed a resolution against the use of Afrikaans and expressed support for students boycotting classes. A committee was formed to start action against the language policy, to begin in Soweto before rolling out nationally. The co-ordinating committee of leaders from junior secondary and secondary schools met on 13 June. The committee decided to establish an “action committee which was then to go out and mobilise all the high schools and secondary schools into this march [scheduled] for the 16th. We chose the 16th of June [because] we did not want to give this idea a long gestation period

(148) Interview with Billy Masetlha, by Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, (Pretoria) 22 January 2004.

because the police might wake up to it and intervene.”<sup>149</sup> Student leader Murphy Morobe recalls the student march as follows:

The idea was that we were just going to congregate there, sing and pledge our solidarity with Orlando West Secondary School and then disperse. Once we were there at Orlando West, then the police came.

The idea was that we were going to be at Orlando High School by about 11 or so that morning. [We were to set off from our schools after] assembly [at] 8 am. We had to wait for the furthest school, Naledi High. It was most likely they were going to be last to arrive. And indeed they were the last to arrive because we were already at the vicinity, in front of the Orlando West High School gates, the road to the right [is on] an incline. So, if you were at the gate you could see all the way up towards Dube. And it was at that time – we had hardly been there for a long time – when the huge police vans came from behind us, and parked at the top under a huge tree and faced us. And at that time we all turned and also faced the police at the top of the road. And of course we were singing and chanting slogans and so on. At that time the cops came out and stood in front of their vans – and most of them were black policemen commanded by a white officer. I think one had a dog or something. They charged at us and the dog was let loose. And the poor dog got killed because it then got into the crowd, biting people, and then it just got stoned immediately. And then the police reacted at that point. And that’s when they started shooting from their vehicles – teargas and we don’t know what. For many of us, it was the first time we experienced teargas. I’d been caught up in riots in soccer matches involving Orlando Pirates at the stadium. But never had I experienced teargas. That was the first time we experienced teargas. But then the shooting began and the students reacted. We turned and faced the police, and then we charged towards them in reaction to the shooting that took place. Now, the police actually panicked at some point; because from where they were, they hadn’t anticipated that the last column of students was still coming, and they were coming from behind them – from the Dube side. They were caught right in the middle. That is why when they had to leave they had nowhere else to go, but to drive through the crowd. And it’s at that point that Hector Peterson was shot, when the police were actually driving out. It was not even as if he was shot when the cops were still standing there. It was when they were driving out and shooting their way out of that situation and retreated back to Orlando Police Station. And it was then that we realised that Hector was actually shot. In fact, I think the other person who was shot almost at the same time, if not before Hector, was Hastings Ndlovu who died also at the same spot. The cops then retreated and went on to the Orlando East Police Station, and from then all hell broke loose. A

journalist at the time was there in a car. He reported for the *World* newspaper. He took some of the students that were injured. And then after that Zweli [and I] got into one of the journalists’ car and we were on our way driving to Baragwanath Hospital to go and see some of the kids who had been shot. But we couldn’t reach the hospital, because just as we got towards Orlando power station there was a huge collage of police and armed reinforcements that were coming in. So we then decided to turn back. We went back to Orlando West to try to see if we could get people to disperse because we just saw what was coming from the other side. So we got into one of the vehicles and tried to get people to disperse. But it was really to no avail at the time. And then the rioting

(149) Interview with Murphy Morobe, by Ben Magubane and Gregory Houston, (Midrand) 4 March 2004.

started, and people started attacking anything that resembled authority, government, etc. And by then it was going towards the afternoon and the news of the shootings got into the city. The workers couldn't stay at work. Parents started coming back. And when they came into the township and found the way things were, it just got worse and worse. Everybody just joined in the fight. The police were all over the scene, shooting, etc. So that was the precursor to all the chaos that subsequently followed from June 16, from that march.<sup>150</sup>

The first two marchers shot and killed by the police that day were Hastings Ndlovu and Hector Peterson. After these murders, unarmed and furious students continued pitched battles with the police, who were using live ammunition and teargas. From the official records, the para-military police who had arrived in Soweto during the day were given orders to shoot to kill; law and order was to be maintained 'at any cost'. The police shot dead another eleven people before the end of that day. Ninety-three more people were shot dead by police over the next two days.

The Soweto uprising soon spread to urban centres, rural areas, and homelands throughout the country when students went on strike in solidarity with the Soweto students. By the end of February 1977, the official death toll, as recorded by the Cillie Commission, stood at 575: seventy-five Coloured, two white, two Indian, and 496 African people. Many areas were affected, including twenty-two townships in the Transvaal, sixteen areas around Cape Town, four townships in Port Elizabeth, and nine other towns.<sup>151</sup> The brutal response by the police to the students' peaceful march ignited a general revolt across the country. After 16 June, one township after another engaged in open revolt.

On 2 August, the Students' Action Committee held an emergency meeting. The Soweto Students' Representative Council (SSRC) was formed on the same day, with each high and secondary school represented by two members. The SSRC enjoyed wide support. Alerting fellow students through the *World* newspaper to meet up in classrooms, the SSRC mobilised large numbers of students to organise boycotts and

stay-away campaigns amongst Soweto's workers. From 2 to 4 August 1976, the SSRC convinced two-thirds of Soweto's work force to stay away from work in Johannesburg. A period of mourning was declared over Christmas, when all of Soweto wore black for one week and spent no money on gifts and celebrations.

### **The Trade Union Movement, 1976-1980**

The period immediately after the Soweto uprising in 1976 saw the resurgence of industrial strikes. The most significant developments of the Soweto era were the three successful stay-away or general strikes called by the SSRC – the first general strikes since 1961 and more prolonged than any others in the 1950s. The police

(150) Interview with Murphy Morobe.

(151) Bonner, P. "The Soweto Uprisings of June 1976." In South African History Project and Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (eds). *Turning Points in History: People, Places and Apartheid- Book 5*. Johannesburg: STE Publishers, 2004; S.M. Ndlovu, *The Soweto Uprisings: Counter-Memories of June 1976*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1998

were summoned to intervene in sixty strikes that broke out in 1976. 521 men and twenty-one women appeared in court charged with illegal industrial action. In May 1977, thirty employees of the Witbank Coal Agency (Pty) were each fined R100 or three months imprisonment for refusing to work because of a pay dispute on 11 April 1976. In August 1977, 186 workers of Scottford Mills in Ladysmith in Natal appeared in court also charged with refusing to work after a wage dispute.

Confronted with this growing labour crisis, the apartheid regime responded in three ways. First, it clamped down on most trade unionists by banning them. Ninety-five blacks and eighteen whites were served with banning orders in July 1976, partly in response to the youth uprisings of June 1976 and the supportive role that workers played, but also in reaction to the growing confidence of the labour movement. Second, the regime reacted by detaining many activists. These bannings and detentions, together with general police repression in the townships, meant that TUACC and WPWAB ceased to function for a while. “On a national level, MAWU lay shattered at the end of 1976,” as did the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) that did not really revive again until the end of 1979.<sup>152</sup>

The third response of the apartheid regime was top-down reform. The Minister of Labour appointed Nicolaas Wiehahn to head a Commission of Inquiry into South Africa’s labour legislation. Its aims were to investigate the system for regulating labour in South Africa and other problems in the field of labour relations. On 18 August 1977 the Prime Minister also appointed a one-person commission, headed by his economic advisor, P. Riekert, to inquire into, report on, and make recommendations in connection with a wide range of laws that dated back to 1936. In May 1979, the two commissions tabled their reports, which recommended opening up trade union membership to Africans on condition that they registered their unions. This recommendation revived debates over the issue of recognition, registration, and non-registration of black trade unions in the country.

Apart from Smith & Nephew in Pinetown that had recognised a non-parallel union, employers in general continued to favour parallel unions and to call in the police whenever there were labour disputes. Though momentarily thrown into disarray, workers regrouped and more industrial action was undertaken from 1977 to the end of the decade.<sup>153</sup> Regrouping and consolidation of independent ‘factory-floor’ unions occurred between 1977 and 1979. In August 1977, MAWU became a national union when the Natal and Transvaal branches amalgamated. The IAS formed a Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU). The establishment of national unions brought the relationship between TUACC and CIWW into question and it was suggested that they should unite. On 30 July 1978, CIWW was reconstituted as the Transvaal branch of TUACC.

(152) Maree. “The General Workers Union”: See p.134.

(153) Bonner, P. “Independent Trade Unions since Wiehahn.” in *SALB*, 8.4 (February 1983): See pp.24-9.

The old SACTU registered union, the Food and Canning Workers' Union (FCWU), was revived in the Western Cape in the mid-1970s. The revival of the union was associated with the election of Jan Theron as general secretary in October 1976. Theron recalls:

I knew Oscar Mpetha was around and he had been a General Secretary of the African Food and Canning until he was banned. Now I went to find Oscar. He was working somewhere as a security guard in an ice cream factory. This must have been around 1979. And so I found this very charming old man. I invited him to come as a guest speaker at one of our annual conferences. He came and there were a lot of these people from the West Coast, from the African Fishing Factories. And of course he [was] from the Mount Fletcher district. He had come as a migrant before there was a proper migrant system. That's when he came to Cape Town and obviously he was impressed with the fact that there was organisation and there was life in the union. He came to me afterwards and said: "I'm working as a security guard in the ice cream factory. I don't want to be doing this. Why don't I come back and work for the union?" And so he came back. I think it was late 1978. So, 1979 and 1980 Oscar was in the union. We appointed him as the national organiser. [We were] able to do that from the money from other subscriptions – important point; no donation, no funding, it was all workers money.<sup>154</sup>

Meanwhile in 1977, inside the country the first moves had been taken towards the establishment of a new national federation of trade unions. A group of 'insurgents' managed to take over the leadership of the National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers of South Africa (NUMARWOSA), a TUCSA registered union, in 1967. The union disaffiliated from TUCSA in 1976 to investigate the possibility of forming a rival national federation. The UTP, TUACC, CWIU, FCWU, WPWAB, and the WPMWU endorsed the proposal. They all met in Johannesburg on 23 March 1977, and agreed in principle that a federation of registered and non-registered unions should be formed.

But different trade unions had developed very distinct approaches. In spite of this difference, most of the CCOBTU unions, barring the NUCW and the Transvaal Textile Workers Union (TTWU) (which later affiliated to TUCSA), endorsed a resolution to establish a feasibility committee to investigate the establishment of a new federation. The feasibility committee met for the first time in April 1977. TUACC and the CIWW dominated the talks from the outset. The feasibility committee agreed that the new federation should be called the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). The first interim structures of the federation were established in November 1978. The draft policies and constitution of FOSATU, largely based on those of TUACC, were circulated and discussion ensued around four key principles: a commitment to non-racial organising; promoting the formation of industrial trade unions; building a federation based on common policies and sharing resources; and ensuring that the federation was controlled by workers at all levels. FOSATU was launched in April

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(154) Interview with Jan Theron, by Thozama April, (Cape Town) 2 July 2004.

1979, with 45,000 signed-up members (of whom 20,000 were paid-up). By the end of 1981, it had 95,000 signed-up members in 387 factories.

New kinds of trade unions, generally known as community-based unions, also emerged during the second half of the 1970s. They were mainly regional and they were structured as general unions. These trade unions were more focused on direct involvement in broader political struggles than those that came together to form FOSATU. They stressed the inseparability of the shop-floor struggles from broader political campaigns against apartheid. Prominent among these community-based unions were the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU) that became dominant in Durban and East London and later expanded to Johannesburg. Samson Ndou recalled that there were ideological divisions amongst various trade unions in the Transvaal (and in the country):

We were linked to the Congress Alliance, and there was a new type of trade unions, which we regarded as sweetheart unions, because we did not regard it as part of the struggle for liberation. ... They knew that we were appointed by the ANC Alliance. We knew that, but they decided to call us controllists. They said the [focus should be on] workers on the factory level. We said that after the factory [work] there is oppression. The functions of the trade union should be extended to the community.... Yes, so they cannot wage a struggle by focusing on the workers, at factory level only. The struggle is here. It must be waged at all levels of the society. And then the pressure is not only felt at the factory level. So, that is why they referred to us as these community-based unions. And they called us controllists.<sup>155</sup>

Within days of FOSATU's formation, ten members of the FCWU, one of the unions which had not joined FOSATU, were dismissed at the Fattis & Monis factory in Bellville South after demanding union recognition to negotiate wage increases, a minimum wage of R40 a week, an eight hour day with fixed tea and lunch breaks, and three weeks annual leave. The strike lasted for seven months, during which Coloured-African worker unity held solid. It was won, owing a great deal to community solidarity. It was the herald of a rolling wave of strikes that swept the country in the following years. At the same time, it mobilised youth and communities, stimulating them into organisation and action.

Strikes also hit car manufacturers in Port Elizabeth. At the Ford Cortina plant, the Union of Automobile Workers (UAW) was bypassed when workers struck initially in November 1979, under what became the leadership of an in-house Ford Workers' Committee, to protest the firing of Port Elizabeth Black Community Organisation (PEBCO) leader Thozamile Botha. They struck a second time over work hours and then a third, fourth, and fifth time after white workers intervened against blacks. The conflict spread to a nearby General Tyre plant and a paper mill. Ford fired the strikers, who began to campaign for reinstatement. The problems for the UAW arose from the fact that leaders on the liaison committee had become detached from their membership. The strikes led to the formation in October 1980 of the

(155) Interview with Samson Ndou, by Siphamandla Zondi with HMP, (Thohoyandou) 21 May 2005.

Motor and Component Workers' Union of South Africa (MACWUSA) as a rival to NUMARWOSA-UAW.

### **The ANC's Political Underground, 1976-1980**

After the smashing of the internal underground networks in the middle of the decade, the focus of underground political work shifted to the external mission. Steps were taken to separate the political and military tasks of the machineries inside the frontline states by establishing regional Internal Political Reconstruction Committees (IPRCs) in each of the forward areas. These committees were under their own sub-structure within the Revolutionary Council, the Internal Political Reconstruction Committee.

In December 1978, the Revolutionary Council and the ANC's National Executive Committee met in Luanda, Angola, to review the Alliance's strategy and tactics. The meeting was charged with reviewing a report prepared by a delegation of senior members of the ANC, led by Oliver Tambo, to Vietnam in October of that year. A Politico-Military Strategy Commission was appointed and subsequently reported to the ANC National Executive Committee. The report (also known as The Green Book or Theses on our Strategic Line), was completed in March 1979 and led to a new strategic emphasis which laid down "that ANC operatives should link up with different forms of popular members from the generation of activists in youth and student bodies in the trade unions, in township civics whose protest campaigns were redefining anti-apartheid politics." The 'armed propaganda' of MK attacks would serve as a secondary means to deepen mass mobilisation.

Towards the end of the decade, then, the ANC emphasised political work among established political and community organisations, and the establishment of new ones. At this stage of the struggle, new ANC structures were formed in the countries bordering South Africa, 'the senior organs', which consisted of senior leaders and specialists in the building of the political underground and mass mobilisation, and commanders of armed units.

In Botswana, Marius and Jenny Schoon were tasked with the mobilisation of people in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal (PWV) area, and to a limited extent in the present Limpopo and North West Provinces. They had to recruit comrades to send regular reports to them about strategic happenings in the areas where they had networks. Jenny also had the task of propagating the ideas of the ANC to SACTU units inside the country and to unite trade unions. Pitso Tolo was tasked with resuscitating and establishing "new units inside the country (among) some of the comrades who had remained."<sup>156</sup>

Lesotho became a destination of choice for many youths leaving the country during the course of the Soweto uprising. Lambert Moloji recalls that the ANC was:

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(156) Interviews with Zachariah Pitso Tolo, by Bernard Mbenga, (Mmabatho) 24 May and 9 June 2004.

...a big organisation which could consume anything that was coming. And then with the opening – firstly, we channelled them back into South Africa through Botswana to go and join the ANC outside – because Lesotho was surrounded. But, we used to move them from Maseru to Swaziland under that oppressive period. We used to move them from Lesotho to Botswana through documentation. We got documents from the Lesotho government – of course, without them knowing. We did bring up lots of documents and we utilised a lot of Marenas there who gave us rights to documents. And then we would go to the documents office and get documents. We had acquired officials who were our friends who were there. Some of them were very good. Some of them were not good. Those of them who were good really did a wonderful work.... Until we had a plane to Maputo. Immediately we had a plane to Maputo it was easy – we used to buy tickets for people, and then they could move there. ... Some of them we used to train them and send them back, and go and work underground. And lots of young people ... went underground – because they were fresh from the situation, and they understood reactionaries, spies, and all those things. It was easy for them to live better inside the country than just to go abroad. ... We offered them lots of training, and all of them, and trained them inside the country. A lot of youths were trained inside. And a lot of youths were trained in Botswana, and a lot of youths were trained in Swaziland.<sup>157</sup>

The Lesotho machinery also provided crash-training military courses to people, and sneaked them back into the country thereafter.

By 1979, according to Chris Hani, the ANC had about 200 members and an additional 800 sympathisers in Lesotho.<sup>158</sup> The Lesotho machinery pointed out that in “all the areas” it “had tackled,” it had “made it a point to begin by establishing an underground presence of the ANC.”<sup>159</sup> To this end, it was made “compulsory for all MK members to start with political organisation before carrying out any military tasks.” “Regular political classes” were established to ensure that all the local MK cadres were “self-sufficient in the task of political mobilisation.” The Lesotho machinery also “established political and military training facilities for comrades” that were sent from South Africa. The training course laid “special emphasis on trade unionism, underground political organisation, conspiracy, and secrecy.” Finally, the Lesotho machinery had its own “production and propaganda unit,” which produced a regular news sheet.

In 1977, John Nkadameng, together with Judson Khuzwayo, became leader of the Swaziland regional Internal Political Reconstruction Committee, which was the largest of the regional IPRCs, and had two sub-sectors in Natal and the Transvaal. Billy Whitehead says that the development of an internal political underground became very critical at this stage because MK cadres were being arrested inside

(157) Interview with General Lambert Moloi, by Nhlanhla Ndebele and Moses Ralinala, (Pretoria) 5 August 2001.

(158) Cited in Sellstrom, Tor. *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa, Volume 2: Solidarity and Resistance 1970-1994*, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002: See 633n.

(159) Refer to Annexure D, “Memorandum to the Politico-Military Strategy Commission [from Lesotho].” In African National Congress. *The Green Book – August 1979*. ANC website: [www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mk/green-book.html](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mk/green-book.html).

South Africa in large numbers.<sup>160</sup> The objective was to develop a “popular base for insurrection.” It was decided then that what was needed was the creation of conditions for insurrection by deploying people with a military background to create political structures. Another important task at the time was to establish front organisations inside the country, a process that escalated in the 1980s.

After the Soweto uprising, the Mozambique machinery concentrated on receiving and transporting youth that had come into exile to join the ANC. Leading members of the various underground networks such as Zuma, Robert Manci, John Nkadimeng, Judson Khuzwayo, and Joe Gqabi, who were forced into exile, still had contacts inside the country that could be used to bring young people out of the country. The influx of recruits – particularly when the initial agreement with the Mozambican government was that only four people a week could be transported through the country to Tanzania and elsewhere – also enabled the machinery there to grow. Accommodation was required, as were officials, to provide for the needs of the new recruits, and the ANC community in Mozambique expanded dramatically. As the machinery expanded, so did its ability to provide support to underground political work. This work had to be done clandestinely, and in the process an intensive and extensive underground network was established in Mozambique itself.

From 1977 onwards, the focus of the structures responsible for facilitating the development of internal underground political structures, the IPRC and regional IPRCs, was on establishing contacts inside the country. Shubin adds that underground structures had been created in almost all areas inside the country by the end of 1977.<sup>161</sup>

In 1976, the size of the underground carrying out political work inside the country was between 100 and 150 people, constituted into about 50 units.<sup>162</sup> Units were to be divided into those specialising in propaganda, border crossings, internal reception, and trade union or ‘mass work’ in emergent popular organisations. By the end of 1978, however, it had become clear that the ANC had failed to establish a ‘mass political base’ inside the country, despite the work of underground political cadres in forming underground cells of the ANC and distributing propaganda material. In consequence, after the strategic review of 1978/1979, underground activists were directed to continue to work in strict illegality and conspiracy, and to relate to these mass organisations by providing them with guidance and leadership. According to Tolo:

Now these structures had to be assisted in understanding and contextualising our struggle. They had to understand the tactics of mass mobilization, broadening the mass base of our struggle, assisting them in interpreting enemy political manoeuvres like establishing the Bantustans, the ‘sweetheart’ unions, as they were called, and of course, the tactics of divide-and-rule; the tri-cameral parliament. The political units and

(160) Interview with Billy ‘Archie’ Whitehead, by Gregory Houston with HMP, (Midrand) 29 January 2005.

(161) Shubin. *View from Moscow*: See p.71.

(162) Barrell. “Conscripts to the Age”: See p.172.

leadership that was inside the country had to act in sync with the political directives of the ANC, as influenced by the political leadership, the National Executive Committee that was in exile, linking up, of course, with the leadership on Robben Island. ... So we were ... basically receiving information, capturing it, processing it, taking it to the National Working Committee and then the National Executive Committee in exile. Take back those instructions through what we called the 'Forward Areas'. ... Now, out of the political structures in the country, we would then instruct those structures to recruit for military training ..., who would come and train militarily, recruit young people who would come and go to school, because we were mindful that in the womb of our struggle, we had conceived the future young South African who needs to be educated, who will participate effectively in the governance of our country and the socio-economic running of the country. So these political units will then also be assigned the task [of] recruiting for the ANC, so that young people could be trained militarily and also in terms of education.<sup>163</sup>

In October 1977, one month after Steve Biko was killed in detention, the authorities banned most of the Black Consciousness political and cultural organisations. This included SASO and SASM, and in 1979 the RC began to focus on the establishment of new student organisations. The key people who were charged with this responsibility were former leaders of the banned organisations who had been conducting underground work for the ANC in the early seventies. Members of the ANC underground played a major role in the formation of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) in May 1979, and the Azanian Students Organisation (AZASO) later in the same year. Underground ANC and SACTU operatives were also active in PEBCO in the last years of the decade.

In fact, the ANC had begun to make a concerted effort to influence the direction of internal organisations through the reassertion of the Freedom Charter as a common platform, combined with the revival of Congress symbols. In 1980, the campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela combined with the distribution of thousands of copies of the Freedom Charter. Former Robben Island prisoners also made their influence felt in the input they gave to the formation of new civic organisations. At the same time, the young leaders of COSAS were also furthering the 'Congress movement' through their programmes, their links with the Lesotho underground, and the distribution of ANC pamphlets.

### **The ANC's Armed Struggle, 1976-1980**

The post 1976 period saw the rebuilding of underground networks and the flight into exile of many hundreds of youth, whose education and lives were profoundly disrupted by the events of 1976-1978. The post-Soweto period also saw an increase in sabotage attacks, with 112 reported attacks and explosions between October 1976 and May 1981, and an average of one small bomb exploding each week for the five months after November 1977.<sup>164</sup> From 1978, the ANC embarked on guerrilla warfare

(163) Interview with Zachariah Pitso Tolo.

(164) Klug, H. and G. Seidmann. "South Africa: Amandla Ngawethu!" *Socialist Review*. No.84 (1985): See pp.19-20.

in both the urban and rural areas. There was also a marked increase in clashes with the security forces. Not only was there “an increase in the number of incidents but actions” also became “increasingly sophisticated; using more sophisticated armaments, employing more sophisticated tactics, by highly-trained guerrilla fighters.”<sup>165</sup>

The post-Soweto phase of the armed struggle was initially characterised by small units, armed with explosives and sophisticated weapons, entering the country to carry out military operations. The primary objective was to raise and sustain the level of morale and militancy among the masses inside the country. One effect these efforts had on the South African population was to make people aware of the activities of the ANC, largely through reports of the attacks and political trials that resulted from the capture of cadres. Armed actions were directed (or resulted in) a number of other objectives besides the primary one of stimulating popular participation – including attacks that were directed at showing the weakness of the apartheid regime, and thereby destroying the myth of the invulnerability of the apartheid security machine. The first infiltration of this kind was by a small unit of MK cadres led by Naledi Tsiki in October 1976. Their objective was to blow up the rail in the vicinity of Dikgale. The unit installed the explosives to cut the rail and then drove back to Johannesburg. Tsiki explains that such acts of sabotage were “firstly intended to show specifically the police and the army how we could penetrate if we were forced to do so and what our capabilities were.”<sup>166</sup> After placing the explosives, they returned to Swaziland.

Shortly thereafter Tsiki was deployed to assist with recruitment and training in South Africa, which became the second significant feature of this phase of the armed struggle. At the time the ANC had been receiving large numbers of young people in Swaziland eager to get military training. Initially cadres were sent to Mozambique, then on to Tanzania and Angola, and other sympathetic countries in the Eastern bloc for military training. In time, it was decided to provide new recruits with short training courses in Mozambique. The ANC then decided to provide military training inside South Africa.

Tsiki’s unit was reinforced by Tokyo Sexwale and Charles Ramusi. After operating inside the country for just under two months, members of the unit, who were working closely with the underground network led by Robert Manci and Joe Gqabi, among others, were arrested one after the other. Members of both groups – twelve accused in total – were brought to trial in 1977. Prior to their arrest, however, the guerrillas had carried out activities in Alexandra, Soweto, Hammanskraal (near Pretoria), and the Sekhukhuniland District. Their primary task was to establish trained MK units inside the country, and for this purpose they focused on recruitment and training of young people.

(165) IDAF. Report submitted by the Research Department of IDAF to the United Nations General Assembly International Conference on sanctions against South Africa. Paris: UN, 20-27 May 1981: See p.11.

(166) Benson, Mary (ed). *The sun will rise: Statements from the dock by Southern African political prisoners*. London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1981: See p.71.

The arrest of members of the MK unit, as well as leading figures in the Joe Gqabi underground network, brought this phase of the military struggle that emphasised training of new recruits inside the country to an abrupt end. From 1977 onward, a new phase was implemented, which, as Lodge points out, initially involved infiltration largely from Mozambique and Swaziland (the Eastern Front), the setting up of arms caches, and the formation of underground structures inside the country based on cells.<sup>167</sup> The MK machinery in Botswana (the Western Front) began to launch its own operations from early 1978.

The upsurge in MK military operations after the Soweto uprising was a consequence of the influx of new recruits and the ability of the ANC to provide military training and weapons to the thousands of young people that joined its military wing. The independence of Angola in 1975 provided the ANC with the opportunity to seek out assistance from the Angolans for sites to set up military training camps. By the end of 1976, the ANC had set up its first military camp. The first group of MK soldiers to arrive in Angola was sent to a camp in the south of Luanda called Gabela, in the province of Kwanza Sul.

Soon thereafter, groups of new recruits were brought from Tanzania and other forward areas and sent to camps in Luanda, near Benguela City in the south of Angola, near Nova Katengue, south of Benguela City, Quibaxe, Funda, Fazenda at Villa Rosa, near Quibaxe, Viana, and Caxito camp, located about fifty kilometres north of Luanda.

The first detachment to graduate from training in Angola during this period was the June 16 Detachment, made up of the first set of recruits to join MK following the outbreak of the Soweto uprising. This was followed by the graduation of the Moncada detachment in 1978, so-named in recognition of Cuban support for MK.<sup>168</sup> This group was followed by the Madinoga detachment, a tribute to the women who fought against apartheid. Madinoga was a woman from Zeerust who, during the peasant revolts in the late 1950s and early 1960s, was arrested and sentenced to death.<sup>169</sup> The next detachment to graduate in Angola was the Isandlwana detachment, so named after the heroes of the wars of resistance in the struggle against colonialism and the heroic feat of King Cetshwayo who defeated one of the biggest and best-equipped armies in the world.<sup>170</sup>

During 1977 and 1978, about a hundred guerrillas were infiltrated into the country: about ninety in small combat groups to one of five selected areas and others in smaller groups to other areas; they were all expected to operate for a long time. Small combat groups of two to three guerrillas armed with grenade launchers were sent to the

(167) Lodge, Tom. *Black Politics since 1945*. London: Longmans, 1983: See p.340.

(168) The name was taken from the Cuban struggle against the Batista regime and the storming of the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba by the July 26 Movement.

(169) See Zondi, Siphamandla. "Peasant struggles in the 1950s: gaMatlala and Zeerust." SADET (eds). Chapter 3, South African Democracy Education Trust. *Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1(1960-1970)*. Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004: See p.147ff.

(170) Ngunu, Lincoln. *The Honour to Serve: Recollections of an Umkhonto Soldier*. Unpublished manuscript.

urban areas to carry out attacks under the direction of the internal leadership. Special combat units were sent in to conduct ‘special operations’, including attacks on police stations, after which they immediately retreated to the forward areas.<sup>171</sup> A number of cadres were also deployed in reconnaissance or ordinance work inside or outside the country and in various regional Central Operational Headquarters.<sup>172</sup>

In 1977, Mozambique became the key launching pad for military operations. The MK Central Operational Headquarters established the Transvaal Urban Machinery (TUM) in Maputo in the same year. TUM’s operational zone was primarily the Transvaal, with a focus on the major urban areas. Infiltration of cadres from Mozambique began in earnest in 1977. After the arrest of the Sexwale unit, Jabu Moleketi and Wandile Dlamini, both from the Soweto generation, were among the first group of cadres to be returned to South Africa after a four-month stay in Mozambique. They entered the country in April 1977 and became part of the TUM. Dlamini went to stay with relatives in Soweto, while Moleketi stayed with relatives in Evaton, in the Vaal area. Moleketi and Dlamini functioned from April 1977 to 1980. The unit’s mission was restricted to sabotage and intelligence gathering. Its first mission took place on 16 June 1977, the first anniversary of the Soweto uprising. They sabotaged the rail lines in support of calls for a stay away. The unit was also charged with assessing the internal political situation, information that was used to determine possible action to stir up “defiance and also to generate that mass movement that ultimately would be key in the destruction of the regime.”<sup>173</sup>

One of the units sent into the country in mid-1977, during the period of the first anniversary of the Soweto uprising, got involved in an incident that could have had disastrous consequences for the armed struggle. One cadre was so brutally beaten that he was unable to stand trial; while the other arrested with him was sentenced to death and hanged almost two years later. Nineteen-year old Solomon Mahlangu, George ‘Lucky’ Mazibuko, and Monty Motlounge were sent on a mission to South Africa. Their mission, according to Johannes Rasegatla, was not, as is generally asserted, to commemorate June 1976, but to divert police attention from the stone-throwing youths in Soweto. The unit entered South Africa on 13 June 1977. However, they decided to go to Soweto. On their way, they were accosted by a policeman in the centre of Johannesburg, who requested their passbooks. Mahlangu and Motlounge took hold of their sub-machine guns and the policeman darted off. The two sought refuge in the John Orr’s warehouse in Goch Street. Four men were enjoying a tea break when they heard an explosion inside. When they went to investigate, two of them were shot dead by Motlounge. The two cadres then split. Motlounge was caught and beaten up by the police as he lay on the ground. Mahlangu, who had not fired a shot during the incident, requested the police to stop beating Motlounge and gave up his weapon in return for their promise not to beat them both. Motlounge was later

(171) Shubin, Vladimir. 1999: See p.198.

(172) Barrell, Howard. 1991: See p.75.

(173) *Ibid.*

declared unfit to stand trial and Mahlangu faced the murder charge alone. He was convicted on the legal principle of ‘common purpose’ and sentenced to death.

Security police estimated the number of young people being trained in Angola, Libya, and Tanzania, mainly under the auspices of the ANC, in mid-1978 at 4,000. A notable proportion of the 2,500 people prosecuted for sabotage activities between 16 June 1976 and April 1978 were trained MK members. The ANC listed eleven military actions in 1977, two of which were attacks on police stations and three were ‘economic’, mainly attacks on railway lines. The ANC listed four skirmishes with the police during 1977, including the Goch Street shooting. The other two operations in 1977 in the ANC list were attacks on SAP personnel, carried out by former MK cadres such as Leonard Nkosi (killed on 9 September). In the course of these operations, six MK cadres were killed, while one (Solomon Mahlangu) was subsequently hanged. The eleven listed operations in 1977 indicate that MK cadres were most active in Soweto, Daveyton, Vosloorus, Dobsonville, and Germiston in the Transvaal; in Umlazi/Durban and Pongola in the former Natal province; and in the Bophuthatswana homeland.

The TUM leadership also took a decision in 1977 that MK must announce its “presence inside the country in a very big way.” A special unit was prepared for this. Johannes Rasegatla further explains:

General Nyanda was responsible for that. And we thoroughly prepared that unit, every day. They were from military training [in Angola]. They were trained, but we made sure that every day we wake up at four, do exercises, run, and come and discuss. Every day for about two months. They were a unit of five people. That’s why we called them the G5. And just on the eve of them leaving one of them committed suicide. ... He locked himself in the toilet ... and shot himself.<sup>174</sup>

Founding members of the G5 unit, Solly ‘Jabu’ Shoke and Mteleki Nsizwa (real name Nicky Hlongwane) returned through Swaziland in 1977 to “recruit and train people in Soweto and the East Rand.” The G5 carried out its first full-scale assault on the Moroka Police Station in Soweto on 3 May 1979. Three policemen were killed and two injured, while the police records were completely destroyed. On 2 November 1979, the unit carried out a similar operation at a police station in Orlando. One of the wounded died later in hospital. Two policemen died in the attack. Leaflets calling for the release of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and other political prisoners were left at the police station and others distributed in the townships.

This unit was based in Soweto, and pioneered the use of underground dug-outs as their bases. Shoke recalls that:

We used to dig at night. ... We used to preserve that top soil and put it somewhere safe and then after we have removed about maybe half a metre layer, you put it safe somewhere on a plastic and then you start digging. And the soil that you dig here you have to throw it somewhere in a river. ... But then after you have done that, you will take support pillars that you normally use for roofing, but the round ones, poles,

<sup>(174)</sup> Interview with Johannes Rasegatla, by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, (Pretoria) 15 July 2004.

and zinc that they use for roofing. You put it in because we used to dig our base in this fashion [illustrating]. First I go down this way and then create where pillars are going to overlap and then go further down and that's where our base was. And then after that you put back the pillars and the soil that you preserved, back on top. And then you bring back what you call camouflage. And normally camouflage would be the leaves that you got from the trees. You try to make the place as original as possible. And then once you have dug the place that is enough to accommodate 5/6 people and equipment, and then we used to do what we called ventilation. So you will take a pipe where you put a chimney, then put it next to a tree, then you put a sail as if a net ... that would prevent snakes and other reptiles to come in. Then you put your camouflage, leaves and so forth. And you make in fact that little hole where the chimney comes out to be as concealed as possible, next to a tree and what have you, and then there must be a cross ventilation as well. ... And then your entrance – you will dig it round, in fact the size of a dustbin lid. Actually you first make it square, then you put support pillars, planks. You make them cross, across it should be a square there, but then take sheets, the ones that we make, not drums, *igogogo*, you cut it correctly. In fact you shape it according to the dustbin lid shape and then you put soil back ... once we have made the shape of a dustbin we then take the soil, put on the dustbin lid and plant grass on that dustbin lid to hide the round shape of the dustbin. And then when you go out, you lift it up, put it on the side then you are out and then you put it back and you camouflage it properly. But you must also be able to do it in fact when you come in because there won't be anybody now to look after you, to check as to whether you've properly done the camouflage. So what we normally used to do then, during the day, we used to go and practice, to see if each of us will be able to do it properly when you come in, when you are going. And if it can survive, camouflage during the day, the better. And then, actually, I think we did it in such a manner that some people at some point in time came and ... *braaied* [grilled] meat on top of us while we were sitting underneath, without even noticing that there's anything unbecoming here.<sup>175</sup>

The attack carried out by a TUM unit on the Soekmekaar Police Station in Soutspansberg in the Northern Transvaal on 4 January 1980 was in support of a local community that was resisting forced removals. In an attack on the Booyens Police Station in a white Johannesburg suburb in the early hours of 4 June 1980 a rocket was launched, followed by grenades and automatic weapon fire on the barracks of the police station. After the arrest of Motaung and other members of the Pretoria-based unit, a number of cadres felt that the situation had become too dangerous, and many retreated to Mozambique.

This period also saw the renewal of sabotage actions in the Eastern Cape. Although few in number, the explosions in 1978 and 1979 were an indication that MK was beginning to infiltrate saboteurs, explosives, and weapons back into the country. In Botswana, the influx of new recruits after the Soweto uprising made it necessary to build MK structures in Botswana itself. Trained cadres, including Joe Gqabi, were brought in from Angola and elsewhere and set up in 'secret houses' because Botswana did not permit MK to operate from its territory. Such structures trained recruits who

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(175) Interview with General Solly Shoke, by Bernard Magubane, (Pretoria) 2 June 2004.

were to be sent back immediately to South Africa. The Botswana machinery soon started receiving trained MK cadres from Zambia and Angola and began infiltrating them into South Africa.

In 1979, a Special Operations Unit was established to carry out high impact attacks on strategically placed military and economic targets that supported the apartheid regime. These attacks would serve to improve the morale of the oppressed and at the same time adversely affect the economic viability of apartheid. The most significant 'special operations' were the attacks on SASOL, the strategic oil-from-coal plants, on the night of 31 May/1 June 1980 to coincide with Republic Day celebrations. The attacks resulted in damage estimated at R6-million. Special limpet mines with thermite were placed on fuel tanks. The limpet mines exploded and eight fuel tanks in all were destroyed. Nobody was killed in the attacks and the only casualty was a security guard at SASOL I, who was shot in his left shoulder.

### **The PAC in Exile, 1976-1980**

The impatience and frustration of cadres in the PAC camps who wanted to return to South Africa to engage the apartheid regime, personality differences, and the endemic conflicts between Leballo and his supporters on the one hand, and Ntantala and his supporters on the other, constituted the backdrop to the PAC's Arusha Conference.

In early 1977, Lebakeng, an APLA cadre, called a meeting of the cadres in the camps. He had earlier spent a brief time at the PAC headquarters while recovering from a bout of malaria and had become convinced that the members of the High Command were not committed to the launching of the armed struggle. Following the meetings in the camps, Justice Nkonyeni and seven others convened a meeting with the High Command. This meeting resolved to send a group of cadres into South Africa. Most managed to survive inside the country for twenty months before they were arrested.

By this time, there was a heightened sense of dissatisfaction among cadres of the Soweto generation in the camps. The promise that the political commissar had made to cadres who had returned from military training in 1977 that preparations were being made for the commencement of the armed struggle had not come to fruition. These unfulfilled promises annoyed the young cadres, who decided to raise their concerns directly with Leballo. At a meeting between the political leadership and the cadres in 1978, the political leaders were accused of extravagant lifestyles while the cadres starved in the camps. The cadres also voiced their frustration with the slow pace of the High Command in mounting meaningful military operations.

The political conflicts between Leballo and a number of members of the National Executive Committee of the PAC – which eventually led to the Arusha Conference – also had an effect on the morale in the camps. The detention of Raboroko and his group in the camps (dealt with below) reflected the impatience of the cadres who were determined to return home and were convinced of the lack of seriousness among the leadership faction led by Leballo.

Leballo accused Ntantala of delaying the infiltration of cadres into the country. The differences between them soon began to take on an ideological shape. Ntantala's group was in favour of a Marxist approach that was adapted to South African conditions and Leballo's was rabidly Africanist. Bennie Bunsie states:

The Sino-Soviet dispute took place. The ANC under the influence of the Soviet Union took a very pro-Soviet line and the Chinese began to court the PAC and they did a very good job. They built the PAC into a very good Marxist movement. In fact, the people who were the Marxists were T.M. Ntantala, Sakkie Mafathse, Glen Mpukane, Qgobose. They were steering the PAC along the proper path, although I heard Sobukwe was a bit disturbed by the pro-Chinese position of the PAC.<sup>176</sup>

The young recruits from the Soweto uprising were somewhat perplexed by the leadership divide, and unimpressed with the failure of the organisation to provide them with military training and to send trained cadres back to South Africa. The arrival of the new recruits had bolstered the standing of the High Command and, in consequence, Ntantala's position in the PAC. Leballo felt threatened by this, and in particular was afraid that the upsurge in new recruits would enable the High Command to become so powerful that it would be able to wrest power from him. Ntantala says that, in order to prevent this from happening, Leballo won over to his side a group of new recruits whom he used against the High Command and encouraged to flout military procedures.<sup>177</sup>

A meeting of some cadres in the camps was held in November 1977 to "review the situation and mend their relationships." Here, it was resolved to call members of the Central Committee and the High Command to a meeting. At the meeting, more tensions emerged and it ended unceremoniously. Later in the night, Leballo's supporters attacked members of the Central Committee and the High Command at their residence. After terrorising the leadership in search of a revolver that was supposedly to be used to assassinate Leballo, the group took Raboroko and a few others hostage. The hostages were released after members of the OAU's Liberation Committee intervened.

Attacks became a common feature and the number of victims of stabbings increased. Some members of the military command relinquished their offices in fear for their lives after Raboroko was taken hostage. A group in the Central Committee and High Command that supported Ntantala staged an attempted coup by trying to take control of the PAC offices in Dar es Salaam. The Tanzanian police intervened in the ensuing clash between Ntantala's and Leballo's supporters. Ntantala's group were confined to the PAC houses in Dar es Salaam and the Leballo group were imprisoned.

At a meeting of the Central Committee in January 1978, those new recruits who had initiated the attacks against members of the army command refused to allow those

(176) Interview with Benny Bunsie, by Thami ka Plaatjie, (Cape Town) 4 August 2004.

(177) Ntantala, T.M. "The Crises in the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania." Unpublished document, 5. (SADET collection).

whom they had deposed to return to their offices. The meeting also called for proper punishment of Ntantala, following which Ntantala and six of his supporters walked out of the meeting. The group of deposed officers then requested the intervention of the OAU. The Tanzanian government and the OAU responded by asking the PAC to call an urgent consultative conference of all members of the organisation.<sup>178</sup>

Against the backdrop of these internal disturbances, a consultative conference was held at Arusha in Tanzania in September 1978. It was used by Leballo, however, to legitimise his control over the army and to bring to a logical conclusion his differences with Ntantala. By the time of the Arusha Conference, the Ntantala group had already left the leadership of APLA. The outcome of the conference was the expulsion of seven members of this group, who were seen to be at the centre of the divisions within the movement. A further sixty members were given seven days to dissociate themselves from the expelled leaders. Those expelled with Ntantala were long-standing members of the PAC, including its secretary-general, Gqobose. Thirty-five expelled members formed a splinter group, the African People's Revolutionary Party (APRP), in May 1979.

The Arusha Consultative Conference, which had been called to bring to an end the internecine differences between the Ntantala and the Leballo group, succeeded only in achieving the opposite. The divisions widened even further after the formation of the APRP in May 1979. According to Vusi Make, there were now two well-armed factions waging open war against each other. In the same month that the APRP was formed, Leballo resigned from the PAC (or was pushed out) and a three-man presidential council made up of David Sibeko, Vusi Make, and Elias Ntloedibe took over leadership of the organisation. Less than a month later, on 14 June 1979, a group of young members of APLA attacked Sibeko and Make; they killed Sibeko and seriously wounded Make. Eighteen young South Africans were charged for Sibeko's murder. Vuyani Mgaza describes these events in the following words:

There were quite a lot of students who came to join the PAC. They corrupted them, David Sibeko and Leballo. They organised a conference and they bribed them to vote us out as the army; to be voted out in the conference in Arusha in Tanzania. It didn't work as such for the people who organised it. It worked just for a short time because they got the leadership of a group of radical army people out. Then we were divided in Tanzania to a point where we had to be given a place in Tabora, within Tanzania. The government decided to give us another place because Leballo and David Sibeko were in charge of the PAC office and they said the expelled group is not going to get anything from the office. And I was [dismissed] immediately from the conference, [and sent] back to London to try and get food for the expelled comrades. And the PAC office was held by the president, Leballo. We were in Tabora, the bulk of the army, and the Tanzanians knew the leadership of the army. That's why they gave us a special place. They knew that the PAC office in Tanzania was the office that they had to deal with; it was the office that they knew [was] not going to do any revolution in South

(178) Pan Africanist Congress of Azania. Consultative Conference held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, 27 June – 2 July 1978: See pp.6-7.

Africa. So they kept us nicely there and they helped us. It was not even a year [when] P.K. Leballo was expelled by David Sibeko, Vusi Make, and Ntloedile. They formed what was called the triumvirate. And that didn't last. David Sibeko was killed in that situation. And thereafter Make and others were also gunning for presidency and they expelled Potlako Leballo from the central committee. And when that happened, then there was no leadership in the PAC. Potlako Leballo landed [up] in London, expelled, where I was. I ignored him because he was the man that brought all the problems to the PAC. In London there is what we call a bed-sitter; it is a kitchen, a bedroom, [and] a sitting room. The man died sitting on his chair there alone. He died alone. Potlako Leballo died in the '80s. Nobody bothered about him. His body was taken to Lesotho. So that was the end of Leballo. He didn't die a hero.<sup>179</sup>

**The BCM's Attempts to form a 'New United Front' and the Death of Steve Biko** Many BCM leaders entertained a desire to link with the exile-based liberation movement. They proposed a united front, similar to the short-lived South Africa United Front between the PAC and the Congress Alliance formed in London in May 1960 and dissolved in March 1962. This New Front would encompass the ANC, PAC, NEUM, BCM, and other anti-apartheid formations. The idea of opening lines of communication with other liberation movements was first mooted towards the end of 1974 and pursued at the beginning of 1975. Malusi Mpumlwana, a close associate of Biko's, first discussed the notion of holding unity talks with the other organisations with Mohapi Mapetla. The two took up the issue with Biko. The 1975 BPC conference in King Williams Town provided an ideal opportunity to discuss the matter further. Sobukwe had a court case in East London and arranged to travel through King Williams Town to meet Biko. That was to be the last time the two leaders met, as they died within a few months of each other.

In February 1977, the BPC held an extraordinary congress in Durban at which it established a secretariat for external affairs, whose main purpose was to house and educate refugees of school-going age from South Africa. The BPC also hoped to forge diplomatic ties through the secretariat with all major capitals in the world and to establish links with the exiled liberation movement. Thereafter it was largely left to the BCM leaders in exile to consummate the union.

The establishment of the New Front became an even more pressing matter after the outbreak of the Soweto uprising, when it became equally clear to the ANC and the PAC that they would have to move expeditiously to accommodate and utilise the avalanche of youth fleeing into exile. Most of these 'young lions' had been raised under the influence of Black Consciousness. Even before the flood of these youths into exile, however, there had been talk of arranging a meeting between Biko and O.R. Tambo. There was no end of obstacles, however, to holding such talks and forging ties – from state interference and sabotage, to objections in principle by die-hard Black Consciousness adherents, and logistical problems.

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(179) Interview with Vuyani Mgaza, by Brown Maaba, (East London) 30 November 2001.

There had been other plans in the pipe line to smuggle Biko to meet Tambo. An idea had been hatched to invite Biko to the Netherlands to address a right-wing organisation, a ploy designed to allay the fears of the apartheid regime and make it easier for Biko to travel to the Netherlands. The Swedes, too, had been just as keen as the Dutch to facilitate such a meeting. Craig Williamson got wind of the plan to have Biko and Tambo meet in Botswana, however, and played a part in the arrest outside Grahamstown of Biko, who with Peter Jones had driven to Cape Town for unity talks with the NEUM's Neville Alexander. But the meeting had failed to materialise. On the night of 17 August 1977, as they were driving back from Cape Town, they were stopped at a police block and arrested. The police tried, without success, to extract information from Biko about the plan for him to meet Tambo in Botswana.

In October 1977, the night before the nineteen Black Consciousness-oriented organisations were banned, Barney Pityana and Thenjiwe Mthintso visited Cedric Mayson to arrange to send someone, in place of the murdered Biko, to Botswana to meet the ANC. Mayson's son attended school in Botswana with the son of Botswana's police chief, whose sympathies lay with the ANC. The following day, the Christian Institute, its newspaper, and Mayson himself were banned.

On 12 September 1977, Steve Biko died in police custody as a result of brain injury, after being beaten and tortured and then driven naked in a state of unconsciousness from Port Elizabeth to Pretoria. He had been in detention since 17 August. On 19 October, the government outlawed all BCM organisations. Following the banning of SASO and the BCP, the flagship organisations of the BCM, a meeting was held in May 1978 in Roodepoort attended by sixty delegates from different parts of the country. The meeting resolved to form the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO). Amidst detention and intimidation, the inaugural conference of AZAPO eventually took place in Roodepoort on 30 and 31 September 1979, attended by 200 delegates.

In the meantime, Oliver Tambo's office set up meetings with representatives of the BPC in exile, notably Harry Nengwekhulu. There were logistical problems, however, that made it difficult for these meetings to take place. On 10 May 1978, Thabo Mbeki wrote to Nengwekhulu apologising for delays caused by other commitments. On 12 March 1979, Mbeki reiterated to Nengwekhulu Tambo's commitment to a joint meeting. He made a proposal to Nengwekhulu to meet with the ANC delegation at the end of June. There was further communication with Nengwekhulu promising to bring, on 26 June 1979, Ben Khoapa and Barney Pityana. The June 1979 meeting went ahead without Nengwekhulu. Pityana and Khoapa represented the BCM; the ANC delegation was led by Tambo. Many within the ranks of the BCM saw the whole process as an attempt by the ANC to swallow the BCM. On his part, Pityana left the meeting convinced that there was no need to form a separate organisation.

## Part 4: The 1980s

### The Crisis of the Garrison State, 1980-1985

After assuming power in 1978, Prime Minister P.W. Botha conceptualized the threat to white minority rule as a total onslaught directed from Moscow. “Total Strategy” was premised on the fact that South Africa was the object of a “total onslaught” by the SACP and its “surrogate” the ANC, supported or even coordinated by the Soviet Union. Pik Botha, the foreign minister, picked up the idea of a “family of moderate nations” south of the Cunene-Zambezi line, first formulated by Vorster in 1974 following the collapse of Portuguese colonialism. This implied a primarily diplomatic approach to guaranteeing the apartheid regime’s security. It would incorporate Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Rhodesia, Namibia, South Africa, the ‘independent’ homelands, and perhaps Zambia and Mozambique. Whether Mozambique was inside or outside a formal constellation, its economic links would ensure its vulnerability to Pretoria’s pressure. A Defence White Paper published in April 1979 referred to a “geo-economic community of interests” in Southern Africa, and to the “concept of a mutual defence against a common enemy.” This idea was launched when P.W. Botha addressed a meeting of 250 top business leaders in the Carlton Hotel, Johannesburg, on 22 November 1979.

P.W. Botha was as much attempting to thwart the intensifying movement for international sanctions as he was seeking to defuse the local insurrection now without doubt spear-headed by the ANC.<sup>180</sup> He tried several strategies to contain the situation: he extended the reach of his coercive powers to Angola, Zambia, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, and to the former Protectorates of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland – where the ANC had received sanctuary. Inside South Africa, he fought the revolutionary insurgency unleashed since the Soweto revolt. In August 1979, the National Security Management System was created as a parallel government. By the end of 1985, there were twelve Joint Management Centres (JMCs) in the major centres around the country. A year later, the number of sub-JMCs had grown to sixty and “mini-JMCs” to 448 – an extensive network of evaluating and co-ordinating points that covered all the major cities. Their function was to challenge the ANC and its internal allies’ emergent street and block committee system by identifying and eliminating opponents and grounds for civil dissatisfaction.

The regional strategy devised by Botha’s securocrats was a no-nonsense soft-hard approach as Allister Sparks put it: offer the carrot of economic assistance to states that accept *Pax Pretoriana*, and use a big stick on those who disobeyed your orders by giving sanctuary to your mortal enemy the ANC and/or SWAPO. There was to be no mercy; they had to be bludgeoned back to submission in order to re-establish once again the *status quo ante* of the *cordon sanitaire* they had provided

(180) Price, Robert M. *The Apartheid State in Crisis: Political Transformation in South Africa, 1975-1990*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991: See p.250.

as colonies – hence the growing role of the military in all spheres of South African life. For the apartheid regime, it was important that the guerrilla insurgency was not perceived by the international community as being directed against the apartheid system, for it then gave the liberation movement a greater legitimacy. Large-scale black participation in the South African Defence Force (SADF) would reinforce the idea that the guerrillas were not inspired by anti-racist sentiments, but by a foreign ‘Marxist, imperialist’ doctrine.

In the first half of the 1980s, the combination of a worldwide economic downturn and the unravelling of the specific features that had sustained the logic and growth of the apartheid economic model produced structural problems in the economy that resulted in a generalized economic crisis. For the Botha regime, the worsening economic situation exacerbated the political malaise. The production of gold had for a century served as the barometer of the well being of the South African racist state. In 1980, the news from the Chicago International Monetary Market had reverberated around the world financial centres when an ounce of gold for the first time in the history of the metal broke through the \$1,000 mark.<sup>181</sup> After this exaggerated gold boom, the world price of gold suffered a sustained decline. Persistently high rates of inflation coupled with the decline of the relative value of the rand caused the price of imported commodities to double during the early 1980s. By mid-1985, the rate of corporate bankruptcies had reached the level of ten insolvencies per day.

From 1984 the ranging battles in the townships were being beamed to world audiences through massive television coverage. In Britain and the United States, the brutality of the police had particular resonance where the divestment movement was given a new lease of life and started gaining momentum. It called on investors in American corporations with interests in the apartheid economy to withdraw their investments and on the banks to stop lending to the apartheid state. One of the biggest lenders was Chase Manhattan Bank of New York, with loans of \$500 million. But on 31 July 1985, eleven days after Botha proclaimed the first partial state of emergency, the Chase quietly decided to “pull the plug” – it stopped rolling over its loans, and started to recall its credit as they became due.

The first major explosion of revolutionary violence occurred on 3 September 1984 and continued until July 1985 when the first state of emergency was declared. The cycle of insurrection and repression in the townships, schools, universities, and factories exposed the contradictions at the heart of the much-touted reforms: the stability necessary for reform was impossible without repression, while repressive measures deepened the crisis to which reform was a response.

### **The ANC’s Internal Political Underground, 1980-1985**

The 1979 report of the Politico-Military Strategy Commission identified the following key tasks for underground political work: building up the underground inside the

(181) Pallister, David, Sarah Stewart, and Ian Lepper. *South Africa: The Oppenheimer Empire*. Johannesburg: Lowry Publishers, 1987: See p.122.

country by recruiting the most committed and advanced militants; mobilising and organising the masses into active struggle by attracting all potential forces; establishing the broadest possible unity of all forces; creating mass organisations and assisting and guiding existing organisations; directing all internal struggles by providing slogans and issues around which people could be mobilised; and working to strengthen the trade union movement and ensuring the participation of workers in the struggle for national liberation.

The Commission's recommendations were formally adopted by the ANC in August 1979. The ANC now focused on the establishment of an internal revolutionary base by carving open and occupying legal and semi-legal political space inside South Africa. This involved five objectives: to build a united front of anti-apartheid organisations operating legally and semi-legally inside South Africa; to win members of the front's affiliates and the affiliates themselves politically to positions aligned to the ANC; to recruit from promising members of the front's affiliates new cadres for

the ANC underground; to deploy armed activity in the interim as a *secondary* means of stimulating political consciousness, combativity, and organisation, and; to build a revolutionary political base inside South Africa enabling engagement in a protracted people's war punctuated by insurrectionary activity.<sup>182</sup>

The mobilisation of the masses was preceded by a four-year propaganda and organisational campaign. The campaign was directed at laying the ideological and organisational support base for the ANC's revolutionary strategy.

During the early 1980s, the external structures responsible for underground political work underwent some significant changes. In the early part of the 1980s, the Revolutionary Council was still the organ in overall charge of the political struggle. Under the RC was the Internal Political Reconstruction Department (IPRD), which was in charge of Regional IPRCs in the Frontline States. Under the regional IPRCs were various individuals based in neighbouring countries responsible for internal mobilisation and political work, and units and individuals based inside the country. Indeed, throughout the decade, the hundreds of isolated political units inside the country – made up of individuals and small groups – were run by the regional IRPCs and successive structures in the forward areas.

The ANC was able to get its message into South Africa throughout the decade by various means, in particular through broadcasts of Radio Freedom, the distribution of taped messages, leaflets, pamphlets, *Sechaba*, *Mayibuye*, and other literature, and directly through its cadres deployed inside the country. Many people were drawn into the struggle after listening to broadcasts of Radio Freedom and after gaining

access to documents and literature of the ANC, while throughout the 1980s the activities of many others – who may not have been in the formal underground – were guided by broadcasts on Radio Freedom and literature, pamphlets, organisational leaflets, etc. smuggled into the country throughout the decade.

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(182) Barrell, Howard. 1990: See p.70.

During the late 1970s, and throughout the 1980s, cadres trained outside the country were deployed in small numbers to conduct underground political work inside the country. Their tasks (as well as those of underground operatives recruited inside the country) were defined by the range of underground political tasks set out in the Green Book. The internal political underground in the late 1970s was made up of ANC cadres infiltrated into the country from abroad or recruited internally, a larger group of individuals working in legal and semi-legal organisations who had no contact with the ANC, and the large number of activists who executed underground tasks in collaboration with individuals they knew to be part of the underground, but who never formally joined the ANC or were constituted as members of ANC units.

The various categories of underground activists make it impossible to quantify how many people were involved in underground political work. However, in 1979 between 300 and 500 individuals were directly constituted into ANC political units inside the country. Individuals who had been active since the 1960s continued with their underground work in the 1980s. Others had joined the ANC underground during the late 1970s, and during the first half of the 1980s scores of individuals were drawn into the ANC underground. According to the ANC's Internal Political Reconstruction Department (IPRD), in early 1979 the total number of ANC operatives infiltrated into the country from abroad amounted to around seventy. By 1980, the ANC put the numerical strength of the political underground inside the country at approximately

200. In 1982, it had reached 650, out of which 300 were active in the Transvaal, 200 in the Cape, 100 in the Orange Free State, and 50 in Natal. This increase is probably due to the recruitment efforts of underground operatives, rather than increases in deployment of cadres from outside the country.

In the early 1980s, the ANC made an effort to restructure the internal underground by attempting to introduce Area Political Committees, which were basically underground structures responsible for mainly five areas of political work: propaganda, reception, work in the mass democratic movement, work in the labour movement as a specialised function, and political information gathering. According to Garth Strachan, "The APCs actually never worked. Some were set up in the Transkei, in Durban and, as far as I know, in the Eastern and Western Capes."<sup>183</sup>

The initial propaganda campaign took four main forms. In the first place, the ANC encouraged a resurgence of its popularity in the late 1970s and early 1980s by drawing attention to itself through appeals to symbolic loyalties. During the early 1980s, organisations inside the country took up the Freedom Charter Campaign and high school and university students distributed thousands of copies of the Charter to the masses of South Africans. Perhaps the most significant indication of the success of the campaign was the adoption of the Charter by the largest legal mass-based organisation inside the country, COSAS, in the year the campaign was launched. Initially, COSAS was a BC-oriented organisation. However, in 1980, the

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(183) Interview with Garth Strachan, by Howard Barrell, (Mayibuye Centre, University of Western Cape) nd.

student organisation declared its support for the Freedom Charter. Biks Ndoni put it as follows:

... we were conscientised around the Black Consciousness Movement. It was when we established COSAS that we learnt that the move to establish COSAS was ANC sanctioned. We learnt about that in Johannesburg because all the guys that were instrumental in that conference ... skipped the country ... and went to join the ANC. ... [W]e later learnt that they were ANC operatives. ... [T]he COSAS thing was an ANC initiative, because even the big debate about the name, whether it should be Congress of South African Students, and some were saying that ... if it has to do with congress, it will be seen as ANC. ... [E]ven the policy, if you look at COSAS, we were breaking from the whole era of Black Consciousness.<sup>184</sup>

AZASO was another major youth organisation to adopt the Freedom Charter. At the inaugural conference of the student organisation, a preamble was adopted endorsing the philosophy of Black Consciousness. However, at an annual General Council Conference held at Wilgespruit in 1981, the organisation committed itself to the Freedom Charter.

Secondly, the ANC encouraged a renewed interest in its jailed leaders, in particular Nelson Mandela and others who were jailed for life in 1964.<sup>185</sup> In 1980, the ANC called on its structures and supporters inside the country to embark on a Release Mandela Campaign. Percy Qoboza, editor of the *Sunday Post* in Johannesburg, launched the

campaign in an editorial on 9 March 1980. Qoboza called on *Sunday Post* readers to sign a petition, which led to over 86,000 signatures and drew in the support of many organisations and prominent leaders. A Release Nelson Mandela Committee was formed in the same month.

Thirdly, elder statesmen of the movement serving lengthy prison sentences, particularly those on Robben Island, also extended the ideological appeal of the ANC. In the wake of the Soweto revolt, hundreds of BC activists were detained and imprisoned where they came into contact with members of the ANC. Through discussions with older prisoners and in their readings, many BC adherents altered their political allegiance and, on their release from prison, were ardent supporters of the ANC. Some of them became leaders of the new organisations which were emerging throughout the country. They took with them the ideas they had generated while in prison and subsequently affected the direction taken by these organisations. In addition, ANC activists resurfaced at various times during the early 1980s to play a prominent role in the formation of new organisations, the revival of others, and in leading and directing the activities of established organisations.

Finally, the armed struggle became an important propaganda tool during the early 1980s. The ANC had agreed in August 1979 to deploy armed activity in the interim as a *secondary* means of stimulating political consciousness, combativity, and

(184) Interview with Biks Ndoni, by Pat Gibbs, (Port Elizabeth) 16 July 2004.

(185) Marx, Anthony. *Lessons of the Struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1992: See p.95.

organisation. During this phase of *armed propaganda*, military actions, seen as one facet of political struggle, were used to attract popular support for the ANC.

ANC underground political work also involved the creation of new legal and semi-legal organisations. Pallo Jordan notes that “the underground was instructed to assist as far as possible and to participate and encourage the creation of unions, civics.”<sup>186</sup> Such work had begun in earnest in the second half of the seventies, and was stepped up following the introduction of the new revolutionary strategy in 1979.

Underground ANC operatives participated in meetings leading to the formation of the Soweto Action Committee in late 1977 and early 1978. ANC activists also played an important role in the creation of AZAPO, COSAS, and AZASO. A number of other organisations emerged during this period in response to local struggles over a wide range of grievances. In some instances, these organisations emerged as a result of the conscious efforts of underground political cadres of the ANC, and include civic organisations, and youth and women’s organisations. Underground ANC activists increasingly began to focus on bread-and-butter issues as a mobilising and organising tool. In other instances, ANC underground activists were charged with joining existing organisations in order to strengthen them and to provide direction.

During the early 1980s, a host of civic organisations, trade unions, women’s organisations, and student/youth organisations were established. Many of these were led by underground operatives of the ANC. In addition, a number of existing organisations, such as the Soweto Civic Association, were taken over by ANC-inclined leaders. Joel Netshitenze, a member of the ANC working in the political underground machinery in exile, put the ANC strategy as follows:

In the first instance, what would need to be noted is the fact that the period prior to ’83 was characterised by an intensification on the part of the ANC of the campaign of mass mobilisation and organisation within the country. Having put forward the slogan, ‘Confront the enemy on All Fronts’, the ANC worked on a programme for first and foremost organisation of various sectors of the population in true democratic structures. It has the ultimate purpose that sectoral organisation should lead finally to the emergence of a broad antiapartheid movement, which would unite all forces which were opposed to the racist regime. The ANC evolved that kind of approach, believing that if there is to be a victory over the regime, it is fundamental that the overwhelming majority of the people are not only activated on issues that affect them directly as sectors of the population, but in unity on the fundamental question of political power; that all local and sectoral struggles must lead to the issue of political power.<sup>187</sup>

(186) Interview with Pallo Jordan, by Howard Barrell.

(187) Interview with Joel Netshitenze, by Howard Barrell, (Lusaka, Robben Island-Mayibuye Centre, University of the Western Cape) 11 July 1989.

An activist in Port Elizabeth described his experiences of this period as follows:

So we were a group of activists, highly disciplined and committed activists, and accordingly decided what had to be done. So we had these meetings on a fortnightly basis and appropriately evolved strategy: how to engage our community in so far as organisation and mobilisation, and also how to engage the state.<sup>188</sup>

The impetus for mobilisation and organisation in the first four years of the 1980s also emerged in national campaigns such as the Anti-Republic Day campaign, the Anti-South African Indian Council campaign, and the campaign against the new constitutional proposals.

Over fifty-five organisations joined in the countrywide campaign to boycott the festivities celebrating the 20th anniversary of the declaration of the South African Republic in May 1981. The ANC claimed direct responsibility for the planning and execution of this campaign. It stated:

The Anti-Republic campaign of 1981 is a good example of a campaign which we planned for from outside. In our planning, we mapped out its main directions, continuously monitoring its development, making all the necessary adjustments and giving guidance as the campaign developed.<sup>189</sup>

Underground political units of the ANC played a crucial role in the Anti-South African Indian Congress (Anti-SAIC) campaign. Anti-SAIC committees were established, especially in Natal and the Transvaal, and opted to boycott the elections. The Transvaal committee was formed in June 1981 when 150 representatives of political, religious, and community organisations elected a thirteen-member committee. 3,000 people attended a mass meeting in Lenasia organised by the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee (TASC) to launch the boycott campaign.

African local government was reformed in 1983 and elections for the new local authorities were held countrywide in November and December 1983, prompting widespread resistance and mobilisation. Prior to the elections, an Anti-Community Councils' Election Committee was formed by a number of ANC-aligned organisations. Various meetings and rallies were organised by the Committee, where people were called upon to boycott the elections. The overall poll in the election was 21%, compared to 30% in the previous elections for community councils in 1978.

One of the fundamental objectives of underground political work was to draw more and more people into anti-apartheid political campaigns and other popular struggles. In these activities, the ANC was to mobilise and organise the masses into active struggle and to direct all internal struggles by providing slogans and issues around which people could be mobilised. In particular, ANC underground political cadres were tasked with identifying issues around which popular struggles could be waged as a way of mobilising and organising communities. The central question here,

<sup>(188)</sup> Interview with Ronald Niegaard, by Pat Gibbs with HMP, (Port Elizabeth) 1 June 2007, October 2007, and 11 December 2007.

<sup>(189)</sup> PHQ. "Organisational report from PHQ, 21 June 1985." University of the Witwatersrand: Karis-Gerhart Collection.

in evaluating the ANC's underground political work, is, to what extent did the ANC achieve these objectives?

Campaigns were conducted at national and more local levels during this period, while there were a number of local popular struggles. Some of the national campaigns, such as the Freedom Charter, Anti-SAIC, Release Mandela, and Anti-Community Councils campaigns discussed above were initiated by and/or were campaigns in which the ANC underground played a major role. There were a whole range of issues during the first years of the decade (as well as the rest of the decade) that provided opportunities for mass mobilisation and organisation into active struggle, and some of the struggles waged around these issues during the period under discussion were initiated and conducted by organisations in which ANC underground operatives were quite influential. Among these were issues around rent increases and increases in service charges, housing, increases in food prices, education and schooling, transport, wages, local government, state reforms, repression, forced removals and relocation into the homeland, etc. Some of these have been discussed above.

By the end of 1983, the ANC had succeeded in establishing itself as a leading force for liberation inside the country, largely as a result of its ideological and organisational campaigns. In part, the movement played a role in initiating, directing, and providing guidance to the activities of a large number of organisations and individuals inside the country. This can be attributed to the role played by the External Mission, as well as underground operatives of the movement. Many of the leaders of the UDF at the national level were veterans of the ANC, and some were seen to be members of the ANC underground. Bhizana Ngesi, a youth activist in the Free State in the 1980s, put it as follows:

... the leadership of the UDF, most of them surely were active in the underground structures of the movement. ... Most of them were the leaders of the ANC even before they went into prison. You check comrades like the late Christmas Tinto, immediately when he came out of prison he became one of the leaders of the UDF. Look at Comrade Oscar Mpetha, Comrade Albertina Sisulu, [and] Archie Gumede. The list is so long. These were comrades who were from the structures of the ANC.190

In addition, by the end of 1983, one of the strategic objectives of the ANC had been achieved – the formation of a united front (see below) – while in the process other objectives had reached a relatively advanced stage. These objectives included building up the underground inside the country by recruiting the most committed and advanced militants; mobilising and organising the masses into active struggle by attracting all potential forces (in such campaigns as the Freedom Charter campaign, Anti-SAIC campaign, etc.); and creating mass organisations and assisting and guiding existing organisations. In addition, it is clear that the ANC and its underground did play some role in providing slogans and issues around which people could be mobilised in its strategic objective of directing all internal struggles. It cannot be

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(190) Interview with Bhizana Ngesi, by B.M. Makhubalo with HMP, (Bloemfontein) 28 March 2006.

argued, however, that the ANC and its underground were solely responsible for many of these developments. Credit for mass mobilisation and organisation, for drawing the masses into the struggle, etc. must also be given to the development of a mature and committed internal leadership, many without any links to the ANC.

In May 1983, the ANC disbanded the Revolutionary Council and replaced it by the Politico-Military Council (PMC) with the intention of improving co-ordination of political and military activities. Regional Politico-Military Committees (RPMCs), which were similar to the PMC structure on a smaller scale, were to service specific regions of South Africa. External RPMCs were created in Swaziland, Mozambique, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and London, while internal RPMCs were envisaged for the Western Cape, the Border region, the Northern Transvaal, and so on. Beneath the RPMCs were the local Area Politico-Military Councils (APMCs), which were structured along the lines of the RPMCs, but smaller in size. These APMCs were set up in major towns such as Durban and Pretoria, and in some cases local PMCs were set up in smaller towns and villages.

In 1983, the ANC acknowledged that there was a need to raise the issue of a change in tactics after its three-year ideological and organisational campaign to lay the basis for a people's revolutionary war. The emphasis now lay on expanding the people's war, which meant involving more and more people in the liberation struggle. In consequence, the new structure created to direct military and political action, the PMC, produced a discussion document, "Planning for People's War", to stimulate discussion.

In the document, the PMC argued that various developments had taken place that justified a new approach. These included the widening of the political base in support of the ANC's revolutionary aims; increasing mass acceptance of armed struggle as the only answer; the dramatic advance in the growth of mass organisations at the regional and national levels; growing resistance to apartheid as indicated by the rejection of community councils and the numerous rent struggles and bus boycotts; an expansion of unity in action that reached a climax with the formation of the UDF; and the growth within South Africa and abroad in the credibility of the ANC as the potential replacement for the apartheid regime. In consequence, as far as the organisation's political tasks were concerned, the PMC argued, it was necessary: to continue pursuing the task of building underground political revolutionary bases, including ensuring that the growth of the internal underground leadership network kept pace with the flowering of mass support for ANC policies; to increase the sophistication and frequency of armed propaganda to stimulate political activity and organisation; and to create and strengthen mass organisations in the rural areas (and especially the Bantustans) so that urban and rural action could be drawn together at the crucial moment.

The main task of the externally-led political machinery, therefore, was to continue the process of establishing an internal revolutionary base by establishing legal and semi-legal organisations. This included some of the more general tasks of the political

machinery identified in the *Green Book*, such as winning organisations and their membership politically to positions aligned to the ANC, recruiting from among the membership of such organisations, and promoting mass political struggles and providing the campaigns and slogans around which such struggles were organised. This was a process that was to continue throughout the decade.

The period from 1983 also saw heightened resistance to reform initiatives and to state repression. The ANC had to use this opportunity to draw more and more people into the struggle through their activities as members and supporters of organisations that took the lead in confronting and challenging the apartheid regime. During this phase of the struggle, the ANC'S primary strategic objective was to firmly establish the primary conditions for an all-out people's war by initiating, encouraging, and guiding numerous mass political struggles.

From 1983 the ANC had an increasing number of full-time underground political operatives within the country. Included among this group were, of course, those individuals who were operating in the earlier period. In addition, from the end of 1983, according to Keith Gottschalk, the UDF "provided a political home for all those who were supporters of the ANC."<sup>191</sup> People like Archie Gumede, Oscar Mpetha, Zolile Malindi, and larger numbers of ANC supporters became active in the UDF and its affiliates. In addition, a whole range of activists of UDF-aligned organisations were drawn into the ANC political underground. Some activists in the UDF actually viewed it as a front for the ANC. Ms. T.E. Jamangile, for instance, states that the UDF:

...was an organization based on the ANC principles. I can say it was actually the ANC. Because the ANC was banned, we then formed the UDF like all the MK organizations which were formed. It was based on the ANC, but we couldn't say it was the ANC because it was banned. If you could talk about the ANC, you would be detained. So, the UDF was actually the ANC. It was the organization which was teaching and informing the people. It was also telling the people how oppressed they were and what could be done to get out of that oppression. It was the way of keeping awake and telling them about the oppression during that time. ... [E]ven if I was not an ANC member, but I was because I was oppressed. I fought not to be oppressed. So, I was the member of the ANC underground. Before the UDF was formed, we had formed already the Mangaung Youth Cultural Club; so it was the ANC. We couldn't say it was the ANC, but we named it with the name that the system couldn't recognize. It was the ANC based organization.<sup>192</sup>

Numerous UDF activists also began to carry out activities in line with the ANC's strategy and tactics without formally joining any ANC underground structures.

The central task of the ANC underground during this period was to build and consolidate the mass democratic form of struggle, and to create legal and semi-legal forms of struggle that would enable the involvement of the masses of the people who could not be involved at the underground level. A second significant task was to create

(191) Interview with Keith Gottschalk, by Martin Legassick, (Cape Town) 3 April 2003.

(192) Interview with T.E. Jamangile, by B.M. Makhubalo with HMP, (Bloemfontein) 19 January 2006.

an internal underground political leadership at every level, from the local, regional, provincial to the national. Nevertheless, other tasks outlined above remained central throughout the 1980s.

### **The ANC's Armed Struggle, 1980-1985**

After its strategic review in 1978/79, the ANC identified armed struggle as secondary. The role of the armed struggle during this phase was to be two-fold: to stimulate political activity and organisation; and to keep alive the idea of armed struggle as the ultimate weapon for the seizure of power. In April 1980, the Revolutionary Council adopted a document drafted by Joe Slovo titled *Our Military Perspective and some special problems*. Slovo identified two forms of armed activity: armed propaganda; and the development of a sustained armed struggle inside South Africa. The latter was directed at creating a "national liberation army with popularly-rooted internal rear bases."<sup>193</sup>

In 1980, the ANC engaged in its first restructuring exercise after the strategic review in 1979. The RC remained the organ in charge of the armed struggle. The structure under the RC responsible for the armed struggle was the Central Operational Headquarters (COH). Joe Modise led the COH in Lusaka, from where he was responsible for operations via Botswana. Joe Slovo, based in Maputo, was responsible for operations via Swaziland. The various machineries and/or military structures under the Maputo Senior Organ's Military Command had their own structures in Swaziland. The Lesotho machinery serviced the Free State, providing political education and crash military training courses to young recruits. Max Makhubalo, a UDF leader and underground ANC member in Bloemfontein, recalls that: "We had close ties with the ANC in Lesotho, with people like Hani who were assigned for this area for the underground work, especially on the question of arms and things like that."<sup>194</sup>

On the other hand, Bophuthatswana continued to be significant as a corridor between Botswana and the rest of South Africa. It also continued to be a site of MK activity, and interest was shown in political developments in Bophuthatswana by the ANC based in Botswana. As an ANC operative based in Mmabatho-Mafikeng explains, his work for the ANC:

...was essentially in two areas. One was in intelligence. I was asked [i.e. by the ANC] about the Bophuthatswana government, levels of support for Mangope. They wanted a political analysis and information about people who were politically active and to judge the potential for political activism in Bop. This was just purely information which could be used for their political advantage. Of course, neither myself nor the ANC treated Bop differently from the rest of South Africa at that time. It would just fall within the apartheid regime. ... The other side of it I suppose was to offer logistical support in some way. For example, they asked me to get hold of train timetables, bus

(193) Slovo, Joe. *Our Military Perspective and some special problems*. Revolutionary Council: 1980. [www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/).

(194) Interview with Max Makhubalo, by M. Masooa with HMP, (Bloemfontein) 15 January 2006.

timetables. At one stage I provided them with aerial photos of the border between South Africa, Bop as it was and Botswana which I suppose they thought could help in getting MK people across. ... I had no contact with any people coming from Botswana, though I was asked several times to recruit or form a cell, but I was unable to do that.<sup>195</sup>

One of the objectives of the regional military command structures was to infiltrate small groups of cadres into South Africa, who would establish themselves inside the country and prepare for a sustained popular armed struggle. The aim was to build an army rooted inside the country. These activities were complemented by hit-and-run operations carried out by units entering the country for a specific operation, such as the 1980 attack on SASOL. Assisting these external and internal structures were a whole range of other smaller structures, units, and individuals, based both inside South Africa and abroad. These included structures that were responsible for couriering *materiel* into the country, assisting with the infiltration of cadres, providing safe houses, providing intelligence about the local situation, identifying new recruits, and assisting with their departure, etc.

One of the first steps the ANC took to implement armed propaganda operations was to establish a Special Operations Unit in 1979 to carry out high impact attacks on strategically placed military and economic targets that supported the apartheid regime. The second key feature of military policy during this period, the development of a sustained armed struggle inside South Africa, was facilitated in a number of ways. Firstly, the attempt to establish popularly-rooted internal bases led to the deployment of small groups of cadres into the country. Charles Setsubi, who worked directly under Joe Modise and Lehlonolo Moloi at the Military Headquarters from 1980 to 1990 in the MK Department of Operations, recalls that:

The whole Transvaal had four military zones; Free State, three military zones; Cape, four military zones; something like that... So we deployed our forces according to the allocation of SADF, to count them and had guerrillas that were rural and urban.

Setsubi adds: "...the Eastern Cape had about four military zones." Inside the country, there were several veterans of the struggle (about seven in all) who were in command of MK units in the military zones. <sup>196</sup> Then, according to Setsubi, the command would

...select combat (units) from Angola suitable for a specific mission in a specific area, with specific skills; and then transfer them from Angola to Lusaka. So from Lusaka they go either to Botswana or to Mozambique, and subsequently to Swaziland.

Secondly, MK cadres were recruited inside the country and provided with military training by cadres deployed from abroad. Setsubi, who travelled in and out of the country from Lesotho to recruit for, train, and set up MK units in the late 1970s, claims credit for the establishment of:

(195) Interview with Andrew Manson, by Bernard Mbenga with HMP, (Mmabatho) 6 February 2006.

(196) Interview with Charles Setsubi, (Johannesburg) 19 July 2001.

several of them. (In) Cape Town I had close to five units. (In) the whole (of the) Transkei, I can at least easily talk about ten units.... We were laying the foundation for

(a) long underground campaign which bore fruit in the 1980s.197

Thirdly, the ANC also began providing short courses to internally based MK recruits in the neighbouring states. The UDF served as a major recruitment base for MK during this period. Zakes Molekane, a UDF organiser in Potchefstroom at the time, states:

In between doing UDF work, I also met guys in the DIS, Department of Intelligence, MK. So I was also doing underground work. I was recruiting, identifying – talent spotting for MK around the area – and arranging for people to go out.198

Fourth, MK infiltrated a lot of small arms and ammunition into the country during this period. Winston Ngcayiya, who was in charge of MK ordinance in Mozambique, notes that:

I pushed a lot of weapons through Lesotho, when Chris was hiding there. I was feeding him with armaments – using various methods, even furniture; convert a wardrobe, convert this, that. I would convert anything – what is more suitable – pushing arms for Chris when he was in Lesotho.199

### *MK Operations, 1980-1985*

In 1980, MK combatants carried out a number of major operations in both urban and rural areas of the country, although the bulk of operations were in the major urban centres. They were not meant to induce fear in the white population, or to challenge the might of the apartheid security forces, but to demonstrate MK's technical expertise and existence inside the country, and to generate support for the actions among the black population. Indeed, Lodge points out that these acts "began to excite admiration amongst black people."<sup>200</sup> However, police captured or killed twenty-eight MK cadres during the course of the year, with three guerrillas being neutralised for every two attacks.<sup>201</sup>

According to the South African security forces, fifty-five acts of insurgency occurred during 1981. MK targets in that year included police stations, electrical substations, railway lines, government buildings, and SADF buildings and personnel. Attacks against strategic targets included the cutting of power lines in Vrede in the Orange Free State, the placing of a limpet mine at a fuel storage depot in Alberton, and the attack on the SASOL III water pipeline; collaborators and people assisting the police; and for propaganda purposes.

The year began, however, with a cross-border raid by the SADF that led to the death of twelve ANC members. The Matola Raid, which took place on 30 January

(197) Interview with Charles Setsubi.

(198) Interview with Zakes Molekane, by Andrew Manson with HMP, (Potchefstroom) July 2006.

(199) Interview with Winston Ngcayiya, by Sifiso Ndlovu, (Orlando West Extension, Soweto) 11 January 2001.

(200) Lodge, Tom. 1984: See p.169.

(201) Barrel, Howard. 1993: See pp.253-4.

1981, was an attack conducted by members of the South African security forces on three ANC houses in a suburb in Maputo. Fifteen people died, including a number of senior MK cadres, while two South African commandos were killed.

One example of a major operation mounted by MK's Special Operations Unit during 1981 occurred on 12 August. MK combatants using 122mm rocket launchers attacked the SADF's military headquarters, Voortrekkerhoogte. South Africa's security forces responded to the attack with two operations of their own. These were a bomb attack on the London offices of the ANC, carried out on 14 March 1982, and the attempt to bomb the London offices of the SACP later in the same month. According to the then head of the Security Branch of the SAP, General Petrus Coetzee, the attack was a response to MK's Voortrekkerhoogte operation, and "to demonstrate to the ANC and to the SACP that they were vulnerable in the United Kingdom" and that they "cannot feel safe to plan and orchestrate acts of terrorism against the Republic from foreign countries."<sup>202</sup>

MK also targeted the Bantustans during the year, ending an unofficial moratorium on such attacks. Attacks were carried out on three occasions on Ciskei security forces living in Mdantsane. MK guerrillas destroyed a police station in Sibasa in Venda in October, leading to the deaths of two constables.

A number of attacks occurred in the Evander-Secunda-Witwank area in the eastern Transvaal in October. On the 21st an explosion rocked an electrical sub-station in Evander, causing damage to the transformer. On the same night, an explosion occurred at the Secunda plant of SASOL 3. Patrick Thebedi (MK name 'Patrick Chamusso') carried out the attack on SASOL in October 1981. Thebedi had been employed at SASOL during the attack in 1980, and was arrested by the police on suspicion of being one of the saboteurs. He was not linked to any organisation at the time, and his torture at the hands of the police so angered him that he decided to leave for exile to join the ANC. After entering Mozambique, he met Joe Slovo who requested him to undertake a mission to attack SASOL. Thebedi was subsequently taken to Angola to undergo a crash military training course, before entering South Africa through Swaziland in a car with limpet mines and a pistol. He managed to gain entry to the SASOL plant after stealing an employee's entrance card. Thebedi describes what happens thereafter as follows:

It was around half past eight, and I still had time. Where was I going? I was going to the reactors. I had five limpet mines. I found that no, it was very difficult. The reactors were surrounded by a fence. ... But I realized that if I blast one reactor all of them are going to be affected because the petrol was pumped from the machines to this reactor. This was the reactor that supplies the others. So, that was the one I was looking for, the main reactor, you see. Upon arrival I cut through the fence and entered. I put my limpet mine there. I then realized that, no, man, if ... I blast this reactor many people are going to be killed there. But what if I put another bomb that would alert that there is something (seriously wrong) so that these people would move out (of the plant)?

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(202) Interview with General Petrus Coetzee, by Hennie Serfontein, December 2001.

Then, when they are out this one would explode and when it explodes it will hit the right target. So, this bomb would be placed on the water pipe so that they would not have water to put off the explosion. The plan with Slovo was ... that I would work like that. ... So, I put it there. Eh, I then moved on to go and put a limpet mine on the second reactor. I was left now with about two limpet mines on my person. I thought about putting all of them there. But I abandoned the idea in the hope of observing those that I had already installed. I left to look at the belt, until I came out. My missions were all complete inside (the plant). But the only thing that I hoped for (was) that they could start exploding with that of a (water) pump, so that, immediately it exploded, they would then tell everybody to evacuate the place. They would remove everybody inside. ... I also didn't want people to die there. ... I went to stay where I parked the car. I waited to see what was going to happen. ... At quarter past nine, the one at the water pipe went off. ... There was confusion. The lights went on and off. ... I then decided that that was enough. I started the car and moved slowly. ... That was the 21st October 1981.<sup>203</sup>

The water pipe had been destroyed in the explosion. The limpet mine on the reactor was discovered by the police and disarmed before it could explode. Thebedi adds: "Those at the reactor never went off; those that exploded were those at the water pipe."<sup>204</sup>

In 1982, the number of MK attacks dropped dramatically from an estimated fifty-five in 1981 to about thirty-nine. Nevertheless, the locality of MK operations was expanded to include an increased number in the Western Cape, such as the bombing of the Langa commissioner's court on 20 March to hamper the application of influx control by destroying records. MK also mounted attacks against symbols of reform, such as the bombing of the office block accommodating the President's Council in Cape Town during a period of nation-wide discussion of constitutional reform. In the same year, Oliver Tambo announced that the ANC was "moving from sabotage acts to" attacking "the enemy face to face."

In November 1982, a large contingent of seventeen MK cadres attacked an SADF counter-insurgency unit in Tonga, Natal, near the Swaziland border. Tlokwe Maserumule, a member of this unit, testified at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission about the attack. According to Maserumule,

...we were given a mission to go and clear a route from Swaziland into Tonga. There was a military base of anti-insurgent units in Tonga. According to information we were given, when the unit was being grouped. ... Our senior commander then responsible for Northern Province, Asiti, was Northern Transvaal. Durban was Comrade Manchek[er] and the commander for the actual operation was Comrade Peter Malada. ... The operation was planned in Mozambique, in Matola, after information was made available to us. But there was an anti-insurgency unit which established a temporary base in Tonga. Actually it was from Namibia then, that unit. So after that information, the unit was grouped and I was responsible for preparing the unit physically, to prepare them physically for the operation. ... After the preparations we moved into Swaziland in Matzapa, Manzini, to wait for further instructions because a reconnaissance was

(203) Interview with Patrick Thebedi, by Lesetja Marepo, (Nelspruit) 2002.

(204) Interview with Patrick Thebedi.

supposed to be made ... before we could move in for the attack. ... Thereafter a date was set, a date and time was set and then six *bakkies* [trucks] were made available for us to get into South Africa. ... [T]he information that was made available to us, on our way to Tonga, was that there was also a police station next to the camp. Then we arrived on the spot we were divided into two groups. A group of three people went into the police station, the rest of us ... went into the camp and then the operation started. It was in the early hours of the morning ... between one and two.

The unit was armed with a Bazooka with six shells, one light machine gun, and AK-47s. The Bazooka was used in the attack on the SADF camp. Maserumule fired all six shells into the temporary camp. Maserumule adds: “By the time we left the spot the camp was flat to the ground.” The unit apparently had information that there were forty-five people in the camp, but according to the SADF no one was killed in the incident.<sup>205</sup>

On the morning of 10 December 1982, between 50 and 100 commandos of the SADF attacked twelve houses in Maseru, the capital of Lesotho, killing forty-two people in the process. Thirty-three South Africans were killed, including six trained MK cadres. The rest were Lesotho nationals. Lesotho, like Botswana, was repeatedly pressured by the Pretoria regime to sign a ‘Pact of Non-aggression’. The Lesotho government subsequently requested the ANC to remove some of its members from the country, and about 120 members of the ANC were forced to leave the country. A week after the raid between twenty-five and 100 ANC members were arrested in Swaziland, seemingly as a consequence of the Matola raid, or fear of a similar type raid in that country. Clearly, the intention of deterring neighbouring countries from allowing ANC combatants to operate from their territories was having some effect. In response to the cross-border attack, Special Operations used an internally based unit to mount an attack on the Koeberg Nuclear Power station in Cape Town on 19 December 1982.

By the end of the year, it was becoming clear to the ANC that it had achieved the goals set out in the ideological and organisational campaign it had embarked on in 1979. According to Lodge, “ANC strategists believed that the growth in mass organisations – and particularly trade unions – had created ‘enormous potential for the advance of the revolutionary movement’.”<sup>206</sup> The next question was: how to put this potential into effect? One of the first acts of the PMC was to produce a discussion document titled “Planning for a People’s War” in mid 1983. The main issues raised in the document related to: the issue of arming the people; the possibility of a transition from ‘pot-boiling’ (armed propaganda) operations to a people’s war; the creation of guerrilla zones, that is, some partial liberated zones inside the country where MK combatants could survive and launch operations from; and, the question of insurrection.

(205) Truth and Reconciliation Commission Amnesty Hearing. Amnesty application of Frans Tlokwe Maserumule, AM6217/97, 17 April 2000, Pretoria, [www.doj.gov/trc/trc\\_frameset.htm](http://www.doj.gov/trc/trc_frameset.htm).

(206) Lodge, Tom. “People’s war or negotiation? African National Congress strategies in the 1980s.” in South African Research Services (eds). *South African Review* 5. Johannesburg: Ravan Press 1989: See pp.42-3.

The document noted firstly that the policy of arming the people could not mean that the ANC begins to distribute arms to whosoever wishes to receive them among the oppressed. Secondly, the PMC argued, the ANC should continue carrying out, and even escalating those actions which had played an important role in stimulating political activity, mass resistance, and mass organisation ('armed propaganda' or 'pot-boiling' operations), but that there should be more concentration on destroying enemy personnel and engaging the enemy directly. Thirdly, the document called for the establishment of potential future guerrilla zones inside the country where trained armed cadres would recruit, train, establish, and ensure the survival of guerrilla units. The starting point for such a long-term programme was to infiltrate small numbers of trained cadres that would avoid military activities until they had become entrenched among the people. Finally, the document argued that, because of increasing numbers of blacks being drawn into combat roles in the regime's security forces, an insurrectionary takeover of power, through partial or general uprising, was now possible.

Armed attacks increased from nineteen in the first half of 1983 to thirty-seven in the second half. The overwhelming majority of targets were economic installations, with only six directed at security forces, including the spectacular attack on the headquarters of the South African Air Force (SAAF) in Pretoria. About forty-three ANC guerrillas were killed or captured during the year. A new feature of the armed struggle introduced in 1983, according to Barrell, was the establishment of 'grenade squads' inside the country. These were groups of militants who were provided with limited training in the use of light explosives and petrol bombs that were charged with attacking state and state-related targets.

Special Operations carried out a major operation in 1983: the attack on the SAAF Headquarters in Church Street, Pretoria, on 20 May 1983. The Church Street bombing took place shortly after a parliamentary debate on the Tri-Cameral constitution, the December 1982 SADF raid into Maseru, and the assassination of Ruth First in Maputo. Nineteen people were killed – at least eleven were SAAF officers – and 217 people were injured, including more than seventy who were members or employees of the armed forces.

The South African regime drew attention to the dangers inherent in an ANC presence in Mozambique when it sent members of its security forces to carry out a revenge raid for the Church Street bombing on 23 May 1983. Seven houses in Maputo were targeted in this raid, resulting in the deaths of six people, including one member of the ANC, and injury to forty others. It was later proved that the targets were not ANC bases. However, in the aftermath of the attack, the Mozambican authorities halted the issuing of visas to ANC cadres, demanded the registration of all ANC members based in the country, and began to confiscate weapons from ANC members.

MK also began actions in support of ANC opposition to the elections for new local authorities for African communities in 1983. For instance, a unit targeted the home of

the Soweto mayor, Mr. Tsabalala, the business property of another councillor, Donald Mmesi, and a vehicle belonging to a policeman, Tsabalala, at Emndeni in Soweto. At the time, all the other policemen had fled from the area and the attack was carried out to force Tsabalala to leave.

Other units carried out attacks in August to mark the formation of the UDF, a coalition of anti-apartheid organisations formed in Cape Town on 20 August. Among these was an explosion that destroyed a power pylon in Cato Manor, Durban, just prior to the launch of the new organisation, and a similar attack on a power pylon in Mamelodi during the weekend the UDF was launched.

In October, the SADF mounted an operation to attack ANC installations in Maputo, Mozambique. The target of the small commando force was ‘an ANC planning office’ in the Mozambican capital. A cross-border raid by SADF forces on 22 November targeting a house in Manzini, Swaziland, left two ANC members dead, while a third managed to escape.

The more than forty attacks for 1984 carried out by MK can be divided as follows: thirteen attacks on and skirmishes with the security forces; six attacks on SADF or police buildings (including railway police); ten attacks on other government (including bantustan) buildings; and fourteen attacks on economic targets, including railway lines, power stations, and fuel depots. Limpet mines were used extensively in sabotage actions during the year.

April saw an MK attempt to mount a spectacular operation in the Durban area when a unit of four cadres attacked the Mobil Oil Refinery in Durban on the 13th. The guerrillas fired several rockets at the massive complex in the Merebank area of Durban from a bluff overlooking the refinery. The rockets cut three fuel lines and one hit a fuel tank. The fleeing guerrillas managed to make their way from the site of the attack by car, but were cornered at a paint factory in Jacobs. In the ensuing gun battle the four guerrillas and three civilians caught in the crossfire were killed.

### **The PAC in Exile, 1980-1986**

An extraordinary meeting of the Central Committee of the PAC, held on 20 February 1981, resolved to appoint John Nyathi Pokela as the Chairperson of the Central Committee. One of the members of the Central Committee who attended that crucial meeting, Alias Ntloadibe, wrote that Pokela was perceived as a unifying figure and an appropriate candidate for the chairperson of the Central Committee.<sup>207</sup> According to Lesoane Makhanda, Pokela brought much respectability in the PAC:

Pokela was a very good teacher. He was methodical and worked quite similarly to Robert Sobukwe. He was not talkative and would listen and pick up the essence of the issues and what was relevant.<sup>208</sup>

(207) Ntloadibe, E.L. *Here is a tree: Political biography of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe*. Botswana: Century-turn Publishers, 1995: See p.138.

(208) Interview with Lesoane Makhanda, by Thami ka Plaatjie with HMP, (Walkerville) 8 May 2007.

Upon arrival in exile, Pokela was seized with the critical challenge of uniting the various conflicting factions of the PAC. The members of the APRP were outside the fold. The second challenge that he faced was to provide ideological direction to the organisation. Lastly, Pokela was confronted with the difficulty of gaining back the PAC's credibility in international circles. However, soon after Pokela took over, the PAC faced a crisis. Henry Isaacs resigned from his position in the Central Committee as Director of Foreign Affairs. In addition, the PAC's military wing was divided by the APRP walkout and a number of leading cadres had gone to study at universities abroad. Pokela needed a young commander who was untainted by the internal conflicts in the PAC. The first meeting of the Central Committee Pokela chaired took a resolution to appoint a new Central High Command to execute the armed struggle. Sabelo Phama was recalled from Lesotho to undertake the challenge of reactivating APLA.

One of the very serious challenges that Pokela faced as the new leader of the PAC was to bring about unity with the disaffected members of the PAC who had formed themselves into the APRP. This disaffection also created factions within the organisation. According to Ndoda Ngcanga, there were occasions where there was a breakout of physical clashes between various factions within the PAC. The extent of the division within the PAC was so intense that there were three different groups that were resident in separate areas. As Ngcanga explains,

There was a PAC group and there was group that was in Mbeya, which paid its loyalty to Potlako Leballo. There was also a group that was in Tabora that was aligned to the APRP group and there were many scattered members of the PAC, including the founding members of the first executive such as Peter Molotsi and Peter Raboroko.<sup>209</sup>

Prior to Pokela's arrival, there was a general acceptance of the inevitability of such unity; but not much was done to bring it about.

Pokela also conceived his mission to be to work towards the establishment of broader unity beyond the PAC. This unity would, in his view, take the shape of a Patriotic Front with those organizations that had a contradiction with the apartheid regime. Speaking to a journalist, Pokela argued that:

...we feel that the climate is much ripe now since all organizations have accepted in principle the idea of unity. And we of the PAC argue that it is high time that we move from mere acceptance of unity in principle to the actual implementation of that principle.<sup>210</sup>

He also stated in the same interview that "the unity of more than one organization as a front does not necessarily imply absolute unanimity on all things. In this sense the unity we call for suggests that there are more points of agreement than disagreement." This envisaged Front did not include the ANC.

<sup>(209)</sup> Interview with Ndoda Ngcanga, by Thami ka Plaatjie with HMP, (Engcobo, Eastern Cape)20 May2007.

<sup>(210)</sup> Interview with John Nyathi Pokela, by John Ngai, *Sub Sharan*, 19 May 1981, 14. National Heritage and Cultural Studies Center, University of Fort Hare, Pan Africanist Congress, Zimbabwean Mission.

In a Central Committee meeting of the PAC held from the 21-25 August 1982, a decision was taken to establish a Unity Committee whose responsibility was the finalization of unity with the APRP. It was also resolved that all other PAC members who had been expelled must also be brought back into the fold. Pokela set his sight at wooing back the APRP and invested considerable effort towards their reintegration into the organization. In his New Year message to members of the PAC two years after taking over leadership, Pokela claimed the PAC had “built up a sizeable nucleus of reliable activists” and “established reliable operational links with our people.” In his New Year message for 1985, entitled “Land Wars are Labour Wars: Unite, Mobilise, Educate, and Consolidate”, he called for greater unity with the various sections of the liberation struggle inside South Africa. These groups included the student, youth, worker, peasant, and religious groupings.<sup>211</sup>

Though the UN, OAU, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Commonwealth had accorded diplomatic recognition to both the PAC and the ANC, the internal contradictions within the PAC had an adverse affect on its standing in the eyes of the diplomatic community. The death of David Sibeko, who was an accomplished diplomat and whose illustrious role in the UN and the OAU was well known, further diminished the political fortunes of the PAC, bringing about an immense strain on the PAC’s diplomatic standing in Africa and internationally. The international diplomatic struggle was, for the PAC, a critical third pillar of struggle after the armed struggle and internal mass-based resistance. The PAC had to defend itself and its very existence from time to time from those diplomatic challenges that were brought about either through its own doing or the actions of its rivals.

After Pokela died in June 1985, Johnson Mlambo took over the leadership of the PAC in 1986. Mlambo had served twenty years on Robben Island and then, as Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mlambo had worked hard to restore the PAC’s relations with the international community.

APLA, like MK, was reinforced with the arrival of large numbers of new recruits from the Soweto student uprisings, but the actions of the cadres in the camp that resulted in the murder of Sibeko adversely affected the stability of the organisation. The arrest of the alleged killers and the subsequent lengthy trial further exposed the PAC to negative headlines and antipathy from its friends and supporters. This exposure had serious consequences for its ability to conduct the armed struggle. The internal leadership conflicts also affected the situation in the military camps. In the Ithumbi Camp, a number of cadres refused to accept the leadership of Pokela. Junior Ntabeni, a cadre in this camp, recalls:

For instance, in the Ithumbi Camp, there were forces who were still loyal to Leballo who were occupying the main building within the camp. We had to remove them by force. There were a lot of fights and there were casualties and we lost some comrades

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(211) Pokela, John Nyathi. New Year Message of 1984. University of Fort Hare, South Africa: National Heritage and Cultural Studies Center, Pan Africanist Congress, Tanzanian Mission, 1984: See p.5.

in that battle. These people wanted to stay in the camp, while there were people who were honest to the party and wanted a place to stay so that we could continue with the programmes of the organizations.<sup>212</sup>

Under Sabelo Phama, who was very popular with the cadres in the camp because of his experience after being infiltrated into the country in 1978, his arrest, and subsequent escape, the High Command of APLA was comprised of young people. Most of them were stationed in the Frontline States, where they were tasked with opening up routes for infiltration into South Africa. Thapelo Maseko, who left the country in 1978 through Botswana, was one of the fifteen youths who went to Tanzania for military training. He was in a group sent to Guinea Conakry, and, upon completion of their basic training, they were taken to Mgagawa in Tanzania. Herecalls:

There was a home-going programme to facilitate the entry of cadres into South Africa. The home-going programme was not taking off the ground and the excuse was that the PAC did not have money. What was strange was that people were undertaking repeated training trips to the north of Africa, but not going home. I had to make a scene demanding that I be infiltrated homewards.<sup>213</sup>

At the end of 1981 and early 1982, cadres were infiltrated into the country. Their task was to open military pockets in the Northern Transvaal, but they were arrested a few days after entering the country. One of the units arrested consisted of Abel ‘Sgubhu’ Dube, Erick Sefadi, and another cadre known only as Eric, who entered the country on 21 April 1982, and subsequently found accommodation in a village in the Northern Transvaal. Dube recalls their arrest:

We left our bags inside the house and I was not free. People were passing not very far from the house. When we jumped the fence getting inside the country we saw one guy on a bicycle, and his tyres I still remember very well. The bike had two colour fenders; one was white and another was red. I saw the same guy passing as we were seated outside and I told Erick. I said: ‘You see this guy. He was the guy we saw yesterday. It was him bypassing there.’ He wanted to make sure that we were still there and he went to call the owner of the farm. And as we were seated there, we heard the helicopter. These guys (police) were not far away. When I heard the helicopter sound, I stood up and did not want to show that I was suspicious of something. The old lady had some friends or neighbour with her in the house. They were surprised that these guys could come here and buy this old lady food and also gave her some R300 in cash. In those days it was too much money.<sup>214</sup>

The danger of opening up military pockets in areas where there was no prior testing of the receptiveness of the local populace was a critical shortcoming. Also, the fact that there were no local contacts that could properly apprise the cadres of the suitability of the terrain and provide critical logistical support, such as accommodation and the provision of food, proved detrimental. It was because of these shortcomings that

(212) Interview with Junior Ntabeni, by Thami ka Plaatjie with HMP, (Johannesburg) 8 October 2004.

(213) Interview with Thapelo Maseko, by Thami ka Plaatjie with HMP, (Airforce Base, Pretoria) 12 May 2007.

(214) Interview with Abel “Sgubhu” Dube, by Thami ka Plaatjie, (Pretoria) 26 September 2004.

cadres who were subsequently infiltrated into the country were sent to areas that they were familiar with.

### **Formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF)**

In May 1983, an Ad-hoc Transvaal Anti-President's Council Committee (TASC) was established in the coloured areas in Johannesburg at a meeting attended by 500 people in Coronationville to oppose the President's Council's constitutional proposals for a tri-cameral parliament that would exclude Africans. The first congress of the TASC was held in January 1983, and it was noted that the organisation had been established with a limited and prescribed role: its campaign against the SAIC elections had been a success. A motion was adopted to revive the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) in order to mobilise the Indian community against apartheid. The congress also accepted a call by the Reverend Allan Boesak to form a broad front of organisations throughout the country to oppose the constitutional proposals and the 'Koornhof Bills'.

Some ANC members claim that the ANC played a key role in the formation of the UDF. Patrick Fitzgerald recalls that the Botswana ANC machinery had been told "a good six or nine months before" the launch of the UDF that the ANC was going to start a "mass internal democratic movement." He argues that, although the UDF had its own momentum and people inside the country had their own initiatives, the ANC had earlier taken a conscious decision to form the UDF.<sup>215</sup> In addition, ANC veterans played a leading role in encouraging existing organisations to join the UDF and in the formation of new organisations. Oupa Khoabane from Thabong (Welkom) recalls the time immediately after the formation of the UDF:

At that time the only organization which was in existence in our area was COSAS. We also agitated for the formation of the Thabong Youth Congress. Then those two organizations were the only ones in existence, even though the Youth Congress was not active. We tried to organize the civic organization, but we failed because of the environment in our township, we could not have the older people joining the organizations. It was difficult; they were not in a position to join and we tried for many years without success. ... Most of our activities in COSAS at that time were to hold meetings, holding workshops about the formation of the UDF. Those former Robben Islanders at that time were key in terms of mobilizing for the formation of the UDF.<sup>216</sup>

Among these former Robben Islanders was Terror Lekota. Dennis Bloem recalls meeting with Lekota for the first time in Kroonstad.

In 1982, Terror Lekota was released from Robben Island. At first I didn't know who this Terror was. He was transferred from Robben Island to his home town, Kroonstad. He was brought here for three weeks. Whilst he was here, he asked one of the prison warders to organize somebody for him to share information with ... This prison warder told me about Terror and organized for me to meet him on the 15th December 1982.

(215) Interview with Patrick Fitzgerald, Jenny Evans, and Jean de la Harpe, by Andrew Manson with HMP, (Pretoria) 16 July 2005.

(216) Interview with Oupa Khoabane, by M. Masooa with HMP, (Bloemfontein) 26 March 2006.

I went there at the prison, met his wife Cynthia to pick him up. I went there as one of his relatives. Since that time I got much involved in politics because I used to visit him regularly at his mother's place here in Kroonstad. I can tell you that he has planted in me a seed that nobody can remove. From there, one got involved in politics... You see our first meeting with Comrade Terror was to organize the students here in Kroonstad. I remember George Daniels was one of such people. The meeting was in my house. I remember Comrade Terror addressed them on the formation of student organization. After that meeting two or three days later, the whole of Kroonstad was burning. From there on, things started moving.<sup>217</sup>

Gordon Africa had this to say:

I was involved in the UDF in the Kimberley area. That started while I was a teacher in the 1980s. As the 'Young Lions', as we were affectionately known, we came as teachers with a political agenda; that of conscientising our students about the political situation in our country. We were very active in the Kimberley area. Our influence went as far as Warrenton and Vryburg to establish the UDF and for political consciousness. We went there to organise rallies and marches. We used the stage and such platforms to voice our political policies.<sup>218</sup>

The UDF comprised a federation of regional structures to which organizations could affiliate. By August 1983, only three regions had been launched – in the Transvaal, Natal, and Western Cape. These provinces contained substantial numbers of coloured and/or Indian activists who took the lead in opposing the government's constitutional reforms. In the Eastern Cape and Border, efforts to form regional UDF structures were delayed by the absence of coloured and Indian activists.<sup>219</sup> However, the UDF had spread throughout the country by the mid 1980s.

The UDF's first major public campaign, the Million Signatures Campaign, had the dual objectives of publicizing opposition to the government's reforms and building organization within the UDF. This campaign, launched on 21 January 1984, involved large numbers of UDF members who were charged with collecting signatures throughout South Africa indicating the rejection of the new constitution and the Koornhof Bills and demanding a non-racial, unitary, and democratic South Africa. The campaign presented an opportunity to educate South Africans about the aims and objectives of the UDF and the implications of the constitution, to establish grassroots support, and inform the international community of the mass rejection of apartheid. In Bloemfontein, recalls Kganare:

One of our main tasks was to launch the 'One Million Signature Campaign'. We were few, including Ronnie Peterson from Heidedal. And it was Terror who introduced Ronnie to us. We were about ten or fifteen when we launched the campaign and every Saturday and Sunday we wore the UDF T-shirts and walked the streets. We used to go

(217) Interview with Dennis Bloem, by C.M. Twala, BM Makhubalo, and M Masooa with HMP, (Kroonstad) 25 March 2006.

(218) Interview with G. Africa, by John Dyker with HMP, (Kimberley) 9 April 2006.

(219) Seekings, Jeremy. *The UDF: The United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-1991*. Ohio U.P.: James Currey and David Philip, 2000: See Chapter 4.

house to house and talk to people. When we started, the police never cared about us. But to us it was a chance to mobilize people because we started to tell them as to why was the UDF formed. The campaign was really professionally done. ... Their reception was very good. Sometimes we were scared that people would be afraid and they would think about going to prison and all that. But we were surprised when we visited their houses. Also, what we used to do was is that we attracted people's attention by hitting house-to-house on Saturdays. We would target about twenty or thirty houses and we would all be wearing UDF T-shirts. People knew about UDF because they read about UDF because it made statements and held demonstrations around the country. The reception was very interesting because we used to rotate our visits in all the townships in Mangaung. We were targeting certain parts of Bloemfontein. When we moved to Phahameng, it was then when the police started following us.<sup>220</sup>

One Port Elizabeth activist recalls the campaign in the following words:

But one of the things we did which was actually really good was that we worked together. So we said on principle we weren't going to have whites going to white areas and blacks going to black areas. I remember one particular occasion where we collected signatures in Korsten which was a partially coloured residential area, but was also, as you know, now, a commercial industrial area. So I think I remember going next to the Firestone factory, at the intersection of Harrower Road and Kempston Road. There were some of the comrades from the Northern Areas and from the townships. So we all collected signatures together.<sup>221</sup>

By October, just under 400,000 signatures had been collected. The UDF claimed that police harassment of UDF supporters was largely responsible for the shortfall. The campaign had also been overtaken by the campaign against the elections for the Indian and coloured houses of the tri-cameral parliament.

The results of the elections indicate the widespread opposition to the new dispensation: the official percentage poll in the coloured election was 30 per cent and in the Indian election 20 per cent. The UDF put the figures at 17.5 per cent and 15.5 per cent, respectively.

The elections for the coloured and Indian Houses of Parliament in August 1984 sparked the boycott of up to 800,000 students in the coloured and Indian schools, with limited support from African students. In August, Lekota and almost all of the national leadership were detained. The Vaal Triangle uprising, which began on 3 September 1984, was a popular response to the reforms as well as school-related grievances. In particular, residents of the African townships of the Vaal triangle resented the new town councils and the rent increases they proposed towards the end of 1984. Anger was directed against police action which resulted in a number of deaths, while the deployment of the SADF in this area transformed school boycotts into a leading component of a regional revolt. Amidst calls on town

(220) Interview with Diratsagae Alfred 'Papi' Kganare, by B.M. Makhubalo with HMP, (Bloemfontein) 3 February 2006.

(221) Interview with Janet Cherry, by Pat Gibbs with HMP, (Port Elizabeth) 3 May 2007, 4 May 2007, and 25 October 2007.

councillors to resign, township youth attacked their houses and businesses and a number of councillors were murdered, while others were subjected to continuing physical and psychological pressure to resign. The uprising soon spread to the Pretoria-Witwatersrand area and was taken up in the Eastern Cape, resulting in a virtual collapse of the town councils.

The invasion of the townships by the security forces – an estimated 35,000 troops in ninety-three townships – provoked widespread clashes between the security forces and township youth. During the first half of 1985, popular resistance to local government spread to small rural communities and, by June, only two African townships still had functioning councils. In the same year, the school boycott at African schools spread countrywide: at one point some 650,000 students and hundreds of schools were involved. The government proclaimed a partial state of emergency in July 1985 in response to the school boycott and other popular struggles in the country, and banned COSAS in August 1985. Within a week of the declaration of emergency, coloured students at schools in the Western Cape began boycotting in protest against it. They were soon joined by African students in the area, leading to three months of street fighting between students and the police, mass rallies, and consumer boycotts.

The characteristic features of the countrywide revolt soon involved school boycotts and mass stay aways, attacks on town councillors and collaborators, and street fighting with the security forces. Although the UDF officially opposed violence

– any attempt to officially support violence would have resulted in a swift crackdown on the organisation and possibly its banning – violence became an integral element of the revolt. Violent clashes with the security forces, barricading of streets, attacks on town councillors and their property, and destruction of government property became a characteristic feature of township struggles. Consumer boycotts – i.e. boycotts of businesses in the ‘white’ parts of town – were widely initiated after calls were made in July 1985 at the funeral of Matthew Goniwe and his three murdered comrades in Cradock. One Port Elizabeth activist recalls the consumer boycotts in the following words:

The consumer boycott was called by the UDF. The leadership was Mkhuseleli Jack then. .... They told everybody in the location that there was going to be a boycott. There was a meeting at Dan Qeqe, all the community were there, so the boycott committee was there at the stadium, and called the boycott, and told the *amabutho* [militias] they must monitor the boycott. Before the boycott started, they met with the *amabutho*, the generals.... That’s where they detained them, because of the consumer boycott. That’s also why they detained us, one by one, because we were looking at the people who were going from the location and going to buy in town.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>(222)</sup> Interviews with Port Elizabeth *Amabutho* Mbuyiseli Jam, Sicelo Nyungula, Xolani Kota, and Miki Qakamfana, by Janet Cherry with HMP, (Port Elizabeth) 16 October 2007.

Sometimes attempts to launch consumer boycotts failed, or prompted a backlash from conservative township residents. For instance, a Northern Cape activist, Nyaniso Plaatjies, points out that:

All purchases had to be made in the townships and everything bought in a white area was summarily destroyed. Sometimes people were forced to eat or drink whatever they had bought from the shops in town. Civic members in particular were very strict about the enforcement of consumer boycotts. AZAPO was opposed to the overly strict measures and believed that people should be educated and not harmed. NAFCOG [National African Federated Chamber of Commerce], with whom AZAPO had a good relationship, supported them in this regard.<sup>223</sup>

However, activists also took up other initiatives. According to Lerato Khechane:

I think we were very much successful. Some of the key issues that we were focusing on were the commemoration of days like June 16 and March 21. On these days, we would go and barricade the road to town to prevent people from going to work. We would have consumer boycotts and prevent people from buying in town, particularly from a shop which was owned by a racist white guy called Hennenman. Although some of us were arrested for these actions, but at the end we were successful.<sup>224</sup>

Another activist from the Northern Cape, Rev. A.J. Willems, recalls that:

In parts of the Northern Cape, these boycotts were so successful that white businesses were forced to close down. In Warrenton, dissatisfaction was so rife, that more than 100 complaints were submitted to the local authorities at one stage. The white municipality was forced to negotiate with the organisers of the boycott – a hopeful sign, some felt. In De Aar, activists forced the inhabitants of the township to use only one filling station, BP, and to boycott the others.<sup>225</sup>

### **The Azanian People's Organisation, 1977-1985**

After the death of Steve Biko and the banning of BC organisations on 19 October 1977, BC activists refused to be cowed by the government's draconian measures. Five days later in Soweto, the Soweto Action Committee was formed. At a "delegates' convention" in May 1978 in Roodepoort, west of Johannesburg, a new umbrella organisation was formed, AZAPO, which would operate within the framework of Black Consciousness and replace the BPC. Individuals and organisations had to subscribe to the tenets of Black Consciousness, including rejection of white participation in the affairs of the organisation. Despite detention and intimidation, the inaugural conference of AZAPO took place in Roodepoort on 30 and 31 September 1979, attended by 200 delegates. The conference spelt out the objectives of the new organisation as being to, among other things: conscientise, politicise, and mobilise black workers through the philosophy of Black Consciousness to strive for their legitimate rights; expose the oppressive exploitative system in which black

(223) Interview with Nyaniso Plaatjies, by Thabo Thobeli with HMP, (Kimberley) 30 April 2006.

(224) Interview with Lerato Khechane, by C.M. Twala with HMP, (Edenburg) 17 May 2006.

(225) Interview with Rev. A.J. Willems, by D. Syners with HMP, (Warrenton) 14 April 2006.

people are denied basic human rights; and work towards the unity of the oppressed for the just distribution of wealth and power to all the people of Azania.

The conference roundly condemned participation in ethnic politics at the behest of government as divisive. The motion proposed by Curtis Nkondo and seconded by Letsatsi Mosala stated: “that this Congress rejects the forthcoming ethnic elections for the South African Indian Council and such related bodies and AZAPO therefore pledges active support for the Solidarity Front and all other bodies campaigning against the elections; and that AZAPO, recognising that all black people are one, wishes to remind blacks within the reserves of Venda, Bophuthatswana, and Transkei that the struggle continues with them.”<sup>226</sup>

AZAPO rejected plans for a national convention that were being touted by the Progressive Reform Party, the official opposition party in the all-white parliament. AZAPO set out its conditions for attending such a convention in terms that became standard refrain from the liberation movement outside the framework of government created institutions: the convention would have to discuss the transfer of power to the indigenous owners of the country; all political prisoners would have to be freed, all banning orders lifted, and an amnesty granted to all exiled political leaders; structural violence, such as influx control, detention without trial, migratory labour and resettlement would have to be abolished; the historical political organisations, such as the ANC, PAC, and BPC would have to attend the convention; military attacks against exiles in neighbouring countries would have to stop; and there could be no negotiations between non-equals.

1983 was dominated by opposition to the new constitution. At its February 1983 annual conference, AZAPO denounced government moves “to incorporate sections of the oppressed and exploited to reinforce the obsolete strategy of divide-and-rule with the imposition and fostering of divisions within the oppressed ranks such as dividing ‘urban’ blacks against ‘rural’ blacks, and various other manifestations of sectional, ethnic, and tribal interests.” As a consequence, delegates supported the formation of a broad front to resist the constitutional proposals.

800 people from about 100 organisations met in Hammanskraal, north of Pretoria, to form the National Front (NF) in June, 1983. At its inaugural conference, Saths Cooper said it was launched in response to “individuals and groups being co-opted by the government for its new ‘constitutional deal’.” He called for “principled unity and closer alliance of all relevant organisations” (excluding elements of the “ruling class”—read“whites”). He said there were no preconditions to participation in the NF and that divisive elements were exaggerating ideological differences. The AZAPO president, Lybon Mabasa, told the meeting, however, that “the basic premise of unity was the rejection of liberal [white] involvement and ethnic organisations.”<sup>227</sup>

(226) Karis and Gerhart. *From Protest to Challenge*. Vol.5, p.762.

(227) *Survey: 1983*, 57; Minutes of the National Forum, Hammanskraal, June 1983; AZAPO Archives, Meetings and Records, National Heritage and Cultural Studies Center, University of Fort Hare, Box 9.

Despite the call from AZAPO for solidarity, in practice there was no escaping the BC tendency to beckon with one hand and shoo away with the other. There was little acknowledgement that not all whites supported apartheid anymore than it could be said that all blacks opposed it – and to act pragmatically on that reality. Across the spectrum of left-wing politics, there was little acknowledgement, in fact, that there were fewer differences in substance, and that there was more in common, among them. The UDF and NF continued to pass for “rival” organisations and to engage in a macabre dance with death. Yet both organisations accepted that “the politics of refusal” needed a united front; and both agreed about the desirability of maximum unity, but not with those who worked within the system. The only insignificant point of difference was over white participation – and not over the *raison d’être* for the struggle, black liberation – and for that the organisations became more vicious towards one another than towards their common enemy.

The NF decided to campaign against the constitution through door-to-door campaigns, workshops and pamphlets. At its October 1983 national council meeting in Cape Town, AZAPO decided to intensify its campaign against the forthcoming elections for local authorities. In November 1983, AZAPO held meetings in various centres in Soweto to encourage people to boycott the local community council elections.

During 1984, South Africa experienced the most widespread black civil unrest since 1976-77, particularly during the course of the Vaal uprising. Most disquieting was the escalating conflict between supporters of Inkatha (IFP), on the one hand, and the UDF and AZAPO, on the other hand. In 1985, it became a conflict between supporters of AZAPO and the UDF. The main scene of this conflict at the time was the Eastern Cape. A UDF member at the time states the following:

These groupings would move at night, which time they would see as the ideal time for attack on whoever is targeted. We would be woken up early in the morning. We armed ourselves with all sorts of weapons. And at that time the idea was that let’s go to Maqina and let’s just attack these guys just once and for all. But what was interesting was that as we were approaching that place, the SADF military vehicle was actually protecting Maqina’s house, the house where most of these guys were residing.<sup>228</sup>

The media was later to characterise the spate of violence unleashed as “black-on-black” violence. Conflict within the black community continued to escalate in 1985. Within communities, savage treatment was often meted to any black person suspected of being a government *impimpi* (informer). However, Obakeng Willy Lencoe recalls the following about the collaborators in the Northern Cape:

In most cases, people who were referred to as collaborators were initially political activists. You would know that people are not the same and they don’t have the same political resistance. When people were detained, the police would use all methods to extract information. I still remember when we were actually arrested in Kuruman, what they did was to separate all of us in order to interrogate us separately. Because

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(228) Interview with Mandla Madwarha, by Janet Cherry and Pat Gibbs with HMP, (Port Elizabeth) 21 June 2007.

they had informers right in our communities, the informers operated as if they were comrades like us, but taking information to the police. They knew everything what we did. The police would come to us with full information as to what we did. Sometimes one would find himself in solitary confinement for almost the whole month. You know, if you are in a solitary confinement for only a week, you became disoriented. After that you would be taken out and claimed that you had confessed, and let you sign a statement.<sup>229</sup>

Black Policemen were also targeted. In his interview, Msolisi Dyasi said,

I remember in 1985 during the feud between AZAPO and UDF, there were three boys who were killed, three policemen, at a *shebeen* called M's Tavern... they were hunted high and low by the special branch, because of those three murders. They were terrible, apparently, because they cut those guys' heads off their bodies; they decapitated them. They killed them very badly, somewhere in Swartkops, with their hands, and knives. They beheaded them. It was so nasty. They were *amabutho*. They killed three black policemen, those policemen from KwaZulu Natal, the *amaTshaka*.<sup>230</sup>

Apart from “necklacing” informers and assassinating black policemen and local councillors, raging battles between members of various black organisations continued. The most vicious were those between Inkatha and UDF supporters in Natal, and between UDF and AZAPO supporters in the Eastern Cape and in the East Rand.

In Tembisa on the East Rand, an AZAPO official was killed in January 1985. On 3 February, “a meeting of the Tembisa branch was disrupted by a mob purporting to belong to the UDF. Frans Pale, the branch chairperson, was beaten up, his AZAPO T-shirt torn, and he was forced to chant UDF slogans. He was persistently harassed such that he skipped the country in fear of his life.”<sup>231</sup> The East London *Daily Dispatch* of 22 October reported that forty-three UDF members had been arrested as a result of the petrol-bombing of an Eastern Cape house frequented by members of AZAPO. Listing more atrocities that he claims the UDF committed against members of AZAPO, George Wauchope writes: “In May [1985] at least four AZAPO people were killed by the UDF... Thirty-three houses of AZAPO members were stoned and petrol-bombed... Nineteen AZAPO members were brutally attacked and sustained serious injuries. Mrs. Ketye, a mother of an AZAPO member who is old and blind, was assaulted and burnt.”<sup>232</sup>

Accusations and counter-accusations between AZAPO and the UDF ignored *agents provocateurs*. In the Eastern Cape, police blamed the disappearance in August 1985 of three leading members of PEBCO – Siphso Hashe, Mqhawuli Godolozzi, and Champion Galela – on the feud between the two organisations. Similarly, when the homes of UDF activists in the Vaal Triangle were petrol-bombed in February 1985,

(229) Interview with O.W. Lencoe, by Thabo Thobeli with HMP, (Kimberley) 2 May 2006.

(230) Interview with Msolisi Dyasi, by Janet Cherry with HMP, (Port Elizabeth) 23 October 2007. The word *amaTshaka* is used mainly in the Eastern Cape to refer to isiZulu speaking migrant workers.

(231) Wauchope, George (Secretary General). “Attacks on the Azanian People’s Organisation by the United Democratic Front.” 24 September 1986, AZAPO Archives, NAHECS, University of Fort Hare, Box 72.

(232) *Ibid.*

AZAPO pamphlets were left at the scene of the crime. In May 1985 in the Eastern Cape, people alleged to be UDF supporters attacked the homes of five AZAPO members and also killed an AZAPO member – incidents the president of AZAPO blamed on UDF supporters. In the middle of May, however, AZAPO and the UDF in the Eastern Cape called a truce and blamed the media and the government for fuelling violence in the black communities. One week later the abduction of an AZAPO leader broke the truce. At the end of May, security forces dispersed clashing AZAPO and UDF members in KwaZakhele Township outside Port Elizabeth. In mid-August, again security forces separated feuding AZAPO and UDF supporters in KwaNobuhle Township, near Uitenhage. In December, AZAPO and the UDF had a second peace meeting, after three people had died in “inter-organisational” clashes. In the Paarl township of Mbekweni, UDF members and members of the Azanian Youth Unity (AZANYU) killed each other in “faction” fighting. The UDF claimed that AZANYU had received support from the police. AZANYU strenuously denied the allegations.

From its formation, AZAPO became most active in enforcing boycotts to isolate South Africa from the international community, in as many fields as possible, as long as apartheid remained in force. The organisation was active in a variety of campaigns to dismantle apartheid, but in none more effectively than in the boycott movement inside South Africa. Thus, one of its most important contributions to liberation was in keeping out international guests who would give some measure of credibility to the apartheid regime. On the sporting front, AZAPO considers as one of its most successful campaigns, together with other community and student organisations, the boycott of the 1982 tour by British soccer “stars”. It flopped when Kaiser Chiefs, Orlando Pirates, and Moroka Swallows, three of South Africa’s premier soccer teams, withdrew from participation. AZAPO met with the British players and dissuaded them from playing. The South African teams were similarly dissuaded from participating.

Other campaigns, however, against the Sri Lankan, the British, and the West Indian cricket teams were unsuccessful. On the entertainment front, in 1981 AZAPO contacted the British actors’ union, Equity, “in an effort to organise an international blacklist of overseas artists who had visited SA”. The boycott of overseas artists from performing in South Africa achieved most success in Soweto, where tours by a number of African American artists had to be cancelled or cut short. In 1982, for example, AZAPO called for a boycott of Brook Benton and a boycott of entertainment venues in white areas like Ellis Park, where a musical festival expected to draw 20,000 people only drew 8,000.

Talks to form a new labour federation in tune with the liberation movement began in 1979. BC aligned unions congealed around the Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions (AZACTU), that had eight affiliates and a signed up membership of 75,000 in 1985. The federation withdrew from unity talks that led to the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in November 1985. They disagreed with COSATU that unions should be open to all races; they also

objected to whites occupying leadership positions. AZACTU subscribed instead to the “concept of anti-racism, which leaves open the possibility of blacks-only constitutions for unions affiliated to the federation.”<sup>233</sup> After their decision to withdraw, closer ties developed between AZACTU and CUSA, who took a similar stance towards COSATU and decided not to join. CUSA, too, believed that leadership positions within unions should be reserved for blacks.

### **The KwaZulu Bantustan: Zulu Nationalism and Low Intensity Warfare**

Inkatha and its leadership drifted away from the ANC soon after P.W.Botha’s ascension to power on 20 September 1978. This change in attitude was underlined by Buthelezi’s shift away from the principle of one-person-one-vote, which he had espoused until his meeting with Jimmy Kruger in 1977, to support for a multi-racial confederation made up of white, African, and multi-racial states in 1978. Buthelezi consequently used the October 1979 meeting with the leadership of the ANC in London to call upon the ANC to seriously consider entering into negotiations with P.W.Botha’s government. The leadership of the two organisations failed to agree on a range of issues. They consequently ended their relations eight months later. Soon thereafter, Buthelezi and Inkatha shifted more to the right in their political outlook.

Inkatha became increasingly intolerant of opposing views after it severed political ties with the ANC in June 1980. Inkatha began to train its members along para-military lines at the Mandleni Camp. The Inkatha militias were first deployed at the KwaMashu Township during the 1980 school boycotts. Inkatha supporters invaded the University of Zululand during the night of 29 October 1983. The students had probably annoyed Inkatha and its leadership because they had pleaded with the University Rector, Professor A.C. Nkabinde, not to allow Inkatha to hold a meeting on campus because it rendered students vulnerable to vigilante attacks.

Inkatha members scared off delegates to an Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa (ABRECSA) Conference at kwaNzimela in Melmoth in November 1983. Delegates were frightened when two bus-loads of Inkatha supporters burst into the Conference venue uninvited soon after the Ongoye killings. By the mid 1980s, Inkatha had moved closer to the apartheid state’s intelligence and police forces. Buthelezi received regular security briefings from a senior member of the South African Security Branch and General Jac Büchner, who had distinguished himself as a notorious Security Branch member in Pietermaritzburg, was appointed the KwaZulu Police Commissioner in the late 1980s.

### **The ANC and Negotiations, 1980-1985**

In an address to ANC students at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania in May 1984, Oliver Tambo proclaimed that “in the meantime we would like our people to know that there are attempts to bring the ANC into discussions with

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(233) Conversation with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, (Kingston, Jamaica) May 2006.

the Pretoria racists; the ANC must talk to Botha and Botha must talk to the ANC.”<sup>234</sup> Tambo confirmed that the campaign on ‘talks about talks’ in South Africa was gaining momentum internationally as some influential opinion makers genuinely thought this was the natural thing to do. However, P.W. Botha stated at the time: “We have no objections in talking to the ANC, but the ANC must throw away its weapons first, and surrender. Then we can talk to them.”<sup>235</sup>

The ANC took concrete steps to formally address the question of negotiations in 1985 when it appointed a four-member sub-committee to analyse the question of substantive negotiations in South Africa. This sub-committee produced two incisive papers on the question of negotiations. The content of both papers is similar: “A Submission on the Question of Negotiations” was a concise summarised version of the lengthy paper about “Submissions on Negotiations.” These submissions laid the framework for the ANC’s first official statement on negotiations released into the public domain in October 1987 (see below).

The submissions by the ANC sub-committee pointed out that the frequency with which the offers of holding dialogue had descended on the ANC betrayed anxieties within the regime, which was desperate to find solutions concerning the problems bedevilling the country. There were soundings from the Reagan administration, the Commonwealth countries and the European Economic Community (EEC), all indicative of actual shifts and degrees of uncertainty that stalked P.W. Botha, his cabinet, and external allies. Moreover, the failure of the tri-cameral parliament increased pressure on President Botha, which manifested itself in various ways among white South Africans who ironically had earlier been warned by Botha to “adapt or die.”<sup>236</sup>

The sub-committee on negotiations iterated the view that talks with the apartheid regime were, in and of themselves, not harmful. Its rationale was that if talks were viewed as providing another relevant terrain for national liberation, rather than being a means of drawing the struggle to a close, the ANC had no convincing reason to reject negotiations. However, adversaries could press for talks in South Africa to use the process as a means to buy time and force the ANC to wind down the

struggle through a *de facto* moratorium. Indeed, through its dependence on the Frontline States, including the diplomatic and moral support of African countries, the liberation movement had to face the prospect of being forced into negotiations. The sub-committee therefore advised the ANC to approach proposed talks as a means of winning the battle at the negotiating table, and in the process the organisation would be consolidating what MK had not won on the battlefield. In other words, the ANC would enter into talks with the apartheid regime as a means of pursuing its political objectives by supplementing the liberation movement’s conventional means. The sub-

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(234) Tambo, O.R. “We are a Force.” Speech given at Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania, May 1984:

(235) *Ibid.*

(236) ANC Archives. O.R. Tambo Papers, ‘Submission on Negotiations’.

committee articulated the position that the ANC must persist and put to the forefront preconditions before negotiations took place.

By the mid-1980s the ANC had identified three levels whereby exploratory talks focusing on negotiations could take place. First, linked to the ANC's strategic perspective, exploratory consultations had to be held with internally based organisations defined by the ANC as either basic or explicit allies – for example, the progressive trade unions, and student, community, religious, political, and women's organisations. There was need to build maximum unity between all sections and formations representing the oppressed majority, other democrats, and to bring these important forces together for a common good. Second, the ANC deemed it necessary to hold consultations with representatives of non-government elements representing the white bloc – for example, big business and opposition parties in parliament. The tactic was to weaken the ranks of the enemy by winning over the hearts and minds of potentially amenable white South Africans. Third, consultations and holding exploratory talks with the NP as a ruling party was not inconceivable. Here, the guiding principle informing the ANC's tactics was influenced by the fact that a liberation movement must always be willing, even as the battle rages, to engage in discussions with the enemy. This approach might create a situation which could offer a reasonable prospect of reducing the extent of suffering on the road to achieving state power.

From Tambo's speeches and various articles published in *Sechaba* and the *African Communist*, as well as the report of the ANC Sub-committee on Negotiations, we can deduce that the main principle underpinning the ANC's view on negotiations was that the liberation movement must always protect its moral leadership, its political superiority, and its ultimate commitment to peace. Negotiations were one tactic alongside the gathering of forces involved in mass political mobilisation and armed struggle. For instance, when Tambo opened the Kabwe Consultative Conference in June 1985, he stated that “the NEC is of the view that revolutionary movements cannot be seen to be rejecting a negotiated settlement in principle. In any case, no revolutionary movements can be against negotiations in principle.”<sup>237</sup>

Tambo, in an interview published in *Africa Report* (July-August 1985), stated that the ANC's struggle had never been a struggle for negotiations, but a struggle to end apartheid. The release of political prisoners would give the ANC some indication that the apartheid regime was serious about negotiations. The ANC believed that the question of whether or not to negotiate, and on what conditions, should be put to its entire leadership, including those who were imprisoned, who should be released from jail unconditionally. In the meantime, the ANC's military struggle would proceed and intensify because, for the ANC, the pursuit of a negotiated settlement and the promotion of guerrilla warfare were interlinked processes. The organisation's

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(237) Tambo, O.R. Opening speech. Kabwe Consultative Conference. June 1985. [www: anc.org.za/ ancdocs/history/](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/).

military capacity represented a crucial source of leverage in any future bargaining for power. Expanding further on preconditions for negotiations, Tambo stated that the apartheid regime was also expected to create a conducive atmosphere in which the ANC leadership would be free to consult with their supporters and the majority of the oppressed people without fear, intimidation or hindrance. One MK cadre stated his perception of negotiations at the time in the following words:

The question of seizure of state power as a strategy – it was always clear in our minds that for sure, that was not the only option. Theoretically, yes, the intention of any revolution is to capture state power. But in the context of South Africa, we were able to understand the ability of the enemy in different levels. Therefore the role of MK was never overemphasized over the political objectives and political strategy...of the ANC; hence the four pillars of the struggle, the building of the underground, the role of Umkhonto we Sizwe, mobilization of the community...now we understand those. The theoretical emphasis in our political programme, it was able to clarify our minds. In our case, we knew really that we will still defeat our enemy, but that will happen because of a combination of those four elements, not because one is going to be emphasized more than others, you see. I'm saying, negotiation was never seen as an act of betrayal. Even under those abnormal conditions, we knew that we had to negotiate.<sup>238</sup>

### *The Apartheid Regime's Official Position on Negotiations*

The offer to release Nelson Mandela, first made public by P.W. Botha during a parliamentary session early in 1985, stipulated preconditions necessary for Mandela's release. Mandela's immediate response was in the form of a statement read in public on 10 February 1985 by his daughter Zinzi at a rally held in Soweto. In his response, Mandela mentioned that he was surprised by the conditions that the apartheid regime wanted to impose on him. He maintained that, essentially, he was not a violent person. Mandela emphasized the obvious fact that only free people could negotiate. P.W. Botha's response was that since January 1985, and on several subsequent occasions, he had made concrete offers which could have led to Mandela's release from prison.

On 15 August 1985, at a National Party congress in Durban, Botha delivered the famous Rubicon speech. On this day the State President was expected to announce major reforms to break the log-jam. His opening remarks were that it was of course a well-known tactic in negotiations to limit your opponent's freedom of expression about possible decisions, thus forcing the rival in a direction where options are extremely restricted. He dismissed as unfortunate attempts from various quarters to compromise him and his government, and articulated the view that this was a dangerous game which did not serve the interest of negotiation and reform in South Africa. Botha inferred that there existed a direct relationship linking negotiations, self-determination, and the protection of minority rights. He repeated that the apartheid regime could not ignore the fact that South Africa was a country of

(238) Interview with Thobile Mhlahlo, by Janet Cherry and Pat Gibbs with HMP, (Port Elizabeth) 11 February 2007; Mzala, 'Negotiations and People's Power', *Sechaba*, August 1989, 20-26.

minorities –“white minorities as well as Black minorities.”Accordingly, the NP was not prepared to accept the “antiquated, simplistic, and racist approach that South Africa consisted of a White minority and a Black majority.” Botha was dismissive of those pressuring him to pronounce a statement of intent on negotiations. Nevertheless, he expressed his hope that any future constitutional dispensation providing participation of all South African citizens should be through negotiations.

*The ANC Meets Big Business, the PFP, and other Opinion Makers in 1985*

The closure of South Africa’s stock market for three days during the last week of August 1985 was bad news for South African big business and foreign investors. The state of emergency continued in force, producing yet further demands for economic sanctions against the apartheid regime. South Africa was heading towards a siege economy. Barend du Plessis, the Minister of Finance, and Gerhard de Kock, the Governor of the Reserve Bank, were forced to seek a rescheduling of South Africa’s foreign debt repayments.

In September 1985, after P.W. Botha had delivered his disastrous Rubicon speech, a small party of influential South African businessmen and journalists led by Gavin Relly (the chairman of Anglo American) travelled to Lusaka for a meeting with the ANC leadership. The ANC and their guests agreed that the coming together of the two parties was not intended to serve as ‘talk about talks’ with the apartheid regime. The basic purpose was to meet as patriotic South Africans to enable participants to get to know each other, and to analyse problems facing South Africa with a view of understanding the different positions with due regard to the urgency with which the complete destruction of apartheid needed to be effected.

The ANC position was that negotiations could only be conducted with those who held political power, and not with interest groups, academics, power-brokers, organizations, or individuals. Therefore, these meetings were part of the process initiated by the ANC to narrow Botha’s support base and also to expose the white community to its policies. The whole exercise called attention to the ANC as an organization worthy of approach by all forces interested in the ending of apartheid. The ANC rejoinder aimed, firstly, at disabusing big business and its allies of some of the major misconceptions they had about the nature of the national struggle for liberation and other sacrosanct policy positions of the ANC, and, secondly, persuading big business and other opinion makers that whilst the ANC welcomed some of the commendable positions they adopted against apartheid, the ANC was not supportive of the role that big business played in reinforcing the apartheid regime.<sup>239</sup>

On 12 October 1985 the ANC held a meeting in Lusaka with the PFP (Progressive Federal Party), the opposition party representing big business interests in South

(239) Wits University Department of Historical Papers, Karis–Gerhart Catalogue, Part 3, Political Documents, File A2675, ‘Summary of Discussions between certain representatives of big business and opinion-makers in South Africa and the ANC, held 13 September 1985 in Zambia’.

Africa. This meeting was initiated by the PFP and lasted approximately seven hours. The PFP delegation was led by Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, and the six member ANC delegation was led by Alfred Nzo. A somewhat flexible agenda was agreed upon and was intended to cover the following; the strategy and goals of the two organizations within the context of the existing socio-political environment in South Africa; specific issues such as the SADF, the Convention Alliance, and the tri-cameral parliament.<sup>240</sup>

### **The Final Collapse of the Garrison State, 1986-1990**

By 1986, P.W. Botha's regime was caught between the 'rock and the hard place': it was embattled and bereft of national and international credibility, and the *volk* (the people), fearful of black rule, were now wrecked by deep dissent as to the way forward. What alarmed the regime, according to Murray, was the way in which the sustained popular insurgency not only spawned a radicalized mass movement, but also undermined the administrative structures of white minority rule in the townships.<sup>241</sup>

On 12 June, the most draconian state of emergency had been imposed. The signs of the deepening crisis were everywhere: the continued elimination of black "collaborators," particularly the policemen, who, like township councillors, were now forced to live in protected compounds; the escalating conflict between the ANC block and Buthelezi's Inkatha movement in the township that resulted in the emergence of "death squads," who in fact were the agents of the regime; the emergence in the townships of a new generation of young activists who faced death "recklessly" and who ignored the moderation counselled by their parents; and the recognition of this by the ANC and its allies as the single most important development in the maturing revolutionary situation in South Africa.

Within days of the second emergency, the security police detained over a thousand people. The principal targets of the police dragnet were trade unionists, students and members of educational organizations, clergy and church-workers, and the media. COSATU and the UDF were the two chief organizations most affected by detentions. The arrests and orgy of killings that followed destroyed any chance of negotiations. The sharp divide between the powerful and the powerless was no more evident than on the question of 'one-person-one-vote' in a unitary South Africa. The National Party insisted *ad nauseam* that the democratic formula of universal franchise was not acceptable to the white minority – it would be tantamount to political suicide.

De Klerk says that: "During the anarchic months before June 1986, many of them [revolutionaries] believed that the tide of internal unrest was irresistible and that further action would soon lead to the revolutionary destruction of the government."<sup>242</sup>

(240) Wits University Department of Historical Papers. "Report on meeting held between PFP and ANC in Lusaka on 12 October 1985, File A 2675."

(241) Murray, Martin. *South Africa: Time of Agony Time of Destiny*. London: Verso: See p.307.

(242) de Klerk, F.W. *The Autobiography: The Last Trek, A New Beginning*. London: Pan Books, 1999: See p.120.

Though the regime had a formidable army at its disposal, it could use it up to a certain limit. They could not bomb Soweto, and, short of that, all they could do was to kill and detain people. And that they were already doing without success: 1,400 deaths and 10,000 detained by 1986. So the revolution would not be halted on the killing fields.

### *The Eminent Persons' Group*

The appointment of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) was rich in historic irony in that it forced P.W. Botha to agree to receive a racially "integrated" Commonwealth delegation. The impact of the EPG's consultations derived from the even-handed manner in which it went about its business. They visited South Africa in February and May – their mission being to work out the modalities of negotiation that might resolve the impasse the country now found itself in. They held meetings with many interested parties, including two with Nelson Mandela.

The Group's report set out what it termed a 'Possible Negotiating Concept' that it put to the regime and other parties, which outlined a framework for negotiations. It called on the regime to take "meaningful steps" to end apartheid: remove the military from the townships and provide for free assembly; release Mr. Mandela and other detainees; and lift the ban on the ANC, PAC, and other political parties. The ANC and others were expected to enter into negotiations with the government and suspend violence. The EPG report said that they were "struck by the overwhelming desire in the country for a non-violent negotiated settlement." But the regime's position "defies succinct summary. It has perfected a specialised political vocabulary which, while saying one thing, means quite another."<sup>243</sup>

The EPG said that at one stage in their visit, they believed that "the ground existed on the basis of which a negotiated solution to SA's problems could be attempted." In mid-March the "negotiating concept" was submitted to the government. On 24 April, Mr. Pik Botha, the Foreign Minister, formally replied in what seemed positive terms, shifting it seemed from a demand that violence be "renounced" as a pre-condition to talks to an apparent willingness to accept "suspension" of violence. When the group resumed discussions in mid-May on their second visit to South Africa, the regime's position appeared to have hardened and a range of objections were raised. At a meeting in Lusaka on 17 May, the group was encouraged by the ANC's willingness to give the negotiating concept further consideration.

Even though the regime continued to insist that it would not negotiate with the ANC while it advocated violence, the EPG report was struck by "the open identification with the ANC through banners and songs, in funerals and in churches throughout the country, despite risks involved." This "supports the widely-held belief that if an election were held today on the basis of universal franchise, the ANC would win it."<sup>244</sup>

(243) EPG Report. 1986. See [www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history).

(244) EPG Report: p.135.

The EPG returned to Johannesburg for further consultation with internal groups. Then on the morning of 19 May, shortly before the group was to meet the Cabinet Constitutional Committee in Cape Town, news came of SADF raids on alleged ANC targets in Zambia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. “The attacks confirmed the worst forebodings of the many organizations and individuals who had warned us not to put faith in the word of the SA government. It was all too plain that, while talking to the group about negotiations and peaceful solutions, the regime had been planning these armed attacks.” The Commonwealth EPG promptly succumbed to these provocations and called off its mediation exercise – blasting Pretoria as the obstacle to negotiations and letting the Lusaka-based ANC and the imprisoned Nelson Mandela completely off the hook.

### **The ANC’s Armed Struggle, 1985-1990**

In April 1985, the ANC issued a statement, widely distributed in pamphlet form inside the country, in which it called, among other things, on MK units, as the “organised advanced detachment” of the “revolutionary army,” to “intensify the armed struggle with all means at its disposal and concentrate more and more on actions against the armed forces and police.” It had become clear that the moment of insurrection, partial or general, had come, and the idea of a protracted guerrilla war was shelved and insurrection adopted as a tactic. This meant “broadening the social base of the armed struggle,”<sup>245</sup> and setting up the immediate conditions for insurrection.

The ANC held its second Consultative Conference at Kabwe, Tanzania, in June 1985, two days after an SADF cross-border raid into Botswana on 14 June that led to the death of twelve people, including civilians. One consequence of the civilian casualties in this attack was an immediate hardening of attitudes within the ANC towards the distinction between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ targets.

The Conference rejected the decision taken at Morogoro which placed emphasis on classical guerrilla warfare in the rural areas and designated a supporting role for urban warfare. The ANC was to now “step up the all-round political and military offensive sharply, while general insurrection was seen as the logical culmination of this struggle, necessitating preparation to take decisive action at the right moment in order to seize power. This would entail building combat forces inside the country, ensuring that they link up at all times with the people and draw the masses into people’s war. It was decided that as many cadres as possible should be trained inside and outside the country.”<sup>246</sup> A decision was taken in 1985 to implement Operation Zikomo, which involved small units of MK merging with the people and acting in defence of the people. During the course of Operation Zikomo, cadres were infiltrated into the country to recruit, train, establish units, and carry out military operations.

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(245) ANC. “ANC Call to the Nation: The Future is Within Our Grasp.” Refer to Tom Lodge. 1986: See p.230.

(246) *Ibid.*

At Kabwe, the ANC decided that “the risk of civilians being caught in the crossfire when such operations took place could no longer be allowed to prevent the urgently needed, all-round intensification of the armed struggle. The focus of armed operations had to shift towards striking directly at enemy personnel, and the struggle had to move out of the townships to the ‘white’ areas.”<sup>247</sup> The Kabwe Conference also noted that MK operations were focused on the urban areas. In consequence, the second operation launched in 1985, dubbed Operation Hurricane, was a landmine campaign in the northern parts of the country. Siphwe Nyanda recalls that the operation was mounted because:

...the areas around the borders of the country were used by the South African Defence Force and the South African Police to patrol as well as accost and arrest cadres of the African National Congress who used these routes to infiltrate the country. The areas around the borders were also used by farmers who were part of the network of the Security establishment of the country, to assist the police to patrol and report all the activities and movements through those areas; so far as our thinking was concerned, those farmers constituted part of the Security network of the regime of that time, to frustrate our endeavours to intensify our military campaign.<sup>248</sup>

Between thirty and fifty-seven anti-tank (as opposed to anti-personnel) landmine explosions occurred during this period, resulting in the death of between twenty-three and twenty-five people.

The Kabwe Conference brought to an end the phase of struggle of selective and inspirational “armed propaganda” in favour of “an insurrectionary ‘people’s war’.” The emphasis placed on attacking major economic and strategic installations such as SASOL in the previous phase was to be replaced by an emphasis on attacks which directly undermined the government’s administrative capacity and permitted mass participation. The aim was to build an organised revolutionary people’s army “out of the spontaneous insurrectionary movement which had evolved since the 1984 Vaal uprising.”<sup>249</sup>

After the proclamation of a partial state of emergency in June 1985, and shortly after the Kabwe Conference, O.R. Tambo issued a call on the people of South Africa to take the struggle into the white areas. The pamphlet was widely distributed inside South Africa, and the objective was, as Sisa Majola put it, to ensure that “White South Africans can never be at peace while the Black townships are in flames.”<sup>250</sup>

Siphwe Nyanda headed Transvaal structures of the Swaziland Military Committee and Thami Zulu headed Natal structures. Charles Nqakula chaired the Lesotho RPMC during this period, while Skenjana Roji served as chair of the military

(247) *Ibid.*

(248) TRC Amnesty Hearings. Application of General Siphwe Nyanda, AM 6231/97, 2 May 1999, White River, [www.doj.gov.za/trc/amntrans/2000/200502wr.htm](http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/amntrans/2000/200502wr.htm).

(249) Lodge, Tom. 1986: See p.239; Tom Lodge. “The African National Congress after the Kabwe Conference.” in Southern African Research Service (eds). *South African Review 4*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987: See p.6.

(250) Majola, Sisa. “The beginnings of people’s power: Discussion of the theory of state and revolution in South Africa.” *The African Communist*. No. 106, Third Quarter, 1986: See p.62.

committee until 1987, when James Ngculu took over. The Head of Special Operations based in Lesotho was Edwin Mabitsela. After the Kabwe Conference in mid 1985, an RPMC was established in Botswana to replace the Co-ordinating Committee. In 1985, a Regional Politico-Military Committee was set up in Zimbabwe for the first time. The military structure under the Zimbabwe RPMC was chaired by Julius Maliba and later by Jabulani Nkabinde, with 'Ali', 'Oliver', and Benjamin Mongalo as additional members. The Zimbabwe Military Committee played a central role in the landmine campaign.

In the period 1985-86, about 150 cadres were sent into the country to assist street and defence committees. According to Ivan Pillay, cadres were given R1,000 to R2,000, about twelve hand grenades, and an AK and put across the border fence "and sent home to integrate themselves with the defence committees, street committees, etc."<sup>251</sup> During the same period, violent clashes in the Natal Midlands between Inkatha and ANC-aligned organizations, the UDF and COSATU in particular, forced the youth to independently establish Self-Defence Units (SDUs). The ANC political underground and MK units in the Natal Midlands were active in mobilizing and providing support to the SDUs. The latter included the provision of crash military courses and political education, as well as the supplying of arms.

In the Eastern Cape, MK responded to the upsurge in resistance and repression during 1985 and 1986 by providing crash courses inside and outside the country for township activists. This effort included forming and training youth militia into what later became known as Self-Defence Units as early as 1985 in Port Elizabeth. Some MK cadres were specially trained so that they could train the youth militia and other recruits inside the country how to make homemade weapons. These units were most active during the feud between UDF/ANC supporters and AZAPO supporters in the city in that year, and were formed independently of the ANC, MK, and the UDF by unemployed youth in response to increasing repression and the rise of state-sponsored vigilantism. The youth militia had links to both MK and the leadership of aboveground organizations in the area. The MK underground in the area also provided the youth militia with weapons, while the militia often reported on their activities to the MK underground. The militia also linked up with the ANC political underground to ensure the passage of many young people wanting to go into exile for training.

MK also played a role in the resistance to the incorporation of various regions into the homelands in the mid 1980s. MK units in this area were responsible both for carrying out sabotage actions and training and arming the youth "for the self-defence of communities against the state and vigilante forces." A youth activist in the UDF and ANC underground in Worcester in the Western Cape recalls that MK provided them with arms and ammunition to defend the community during a funeral of one of their comrades in 1985. Naledi Nana Khohlokoane, who had been provided with

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(251) Interview with Ivan Pillay, by Howard Barrell, (Mayibuye Centre, University of Western Cape) nd.

a crash military training course inside the country by MK cadres that same year, recalls that:

...comrades went there prepared. We knew that the police were going to shoot at us. So tactically people were put in strategic positions. There was an exchange of fire. There were casualties on both sides.<sup>252</sup>

The ANC also stepped up its training of recruits in neighbouring countries. Watson Sibidla recalls that in June 1985 he was among a group of newly recruited young people who went to Lesotho for military training. The group, from Heschel in the Eastern Cape, travelled to Lesotho at night, and on arrival were sent to a mountain area for training with a number of others already undergoing training. Sibidla adds that “there were more than 200 people who were trained at that particular time.” Four months after his group began training, about 120 were deployed inside the country, while the remainder continued for another few months. The course lasted from June to early January the next year, when the group returned to South Africa. Sibidla recalls: “...our first target ... was to kill the police, ... to burn the offices of the government, the magistrates’ court, the post office, the police station; damage electricity cables, telephone cables; plant bombs on motorcars, the state cars; and all those kind of things.”<sup>253</sup>

After the 1986 coup in Lesotho, the ANC was ordered out of the country. Before the departure of ANC members, however, cadres in Lesotho had decided that a certain number of them would go inside the country and a small number remain “in Lesotho underground.” Tony Yengeni was “one of those that were sent inside the country to join” the “underground structures in Cape Town.” Yengeni entered the country in January 1986, travelling by car from Lesotho to Cape Town. His instructions were, among other things, to form an Area Politico-Military Committee. He became chairman of this committee and also served as the regional political commissar. Yengeni joined other MK units constituted by cadres brought in from outside the country. A month after he had entered the country the regional commander was arrested and he took over as MK regional commander. These structures operated for close to two years before they were uncovered in September 1987. Yengeni recalls:

...we trained lots of people in the use of fire arms, explosives, grenades, and we put those people in small units of three people and we appointed commanders of those units to communicate with other comrades who would command them. ... We used also to train them in politics, instruct them in politics of the ANC and political strategies, and put them into political units to work with the youth groups, training, etc.<sup>254</sup>

By the middle of the decade, scores of young people active in structures of the UDF were being drawn into the military underground inside the country. Naledi Khohlokoane became active in student politics as a member of COSAS in 1982,

(252) Interview with Naledi Nana Khohlokoane, (Worcester) 7 December 2001; interview by Thozama April.

(253) Interview with Watson Sibidla, 11 April 2004.

(254) Interview with Tony Yengeni, by Wolfie Kodesh, (Mayibuye Centre, University of Western Cape) nd.

rising to the leadership of its structures in Worcester by the middle of the decade. Khohlokoane stipulates that the African township in Worcester had played a leading role in the ANC in the Western Cape region during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, and that during the 1980s a “Comrade Mpoza” living in Worcester served as the link between the ANC the local community. “And one knew that he was the ANC leader and so the ANC used to contact local people through him. And also he played a pivotal role in establishing the UDF; also recruiting the Worcester delegate who went to attend the establishment of UDF in 1983.”

In the mid 1980s, Khohlokoane suggested the formation of a youth organization in Worcester, later giving rise to the Zwelethemba Youth Organisation (ZWEYO) around about the time COSAS was banned by the regime in August 1985. ZWEYO affiliated to the UDF after its formation. In the same year, Khohlokoane and others in the leadership of ZWEYO came into contact with the ANC underground.

We received some training and propaganda and all other things. We got training inside the country on how to monitor the enemy, analyse situations, [and] pass information on potential targets for the cadres that were infiltrated back into the country. Create a safe haven for guerrillas who had been infiltrated, assist materially or otherwise for ANC guerrillas who were infiltrated. Worcester is on the way towards Cape Town. We had to create a safe haven and we had to create a safe route for them to reach their destination. And we had to assist if need be. So that’s why some of us we had crash military kind of training inside the country, so that we can play a role. So we later became part of the cell of the ANC that was operating in the Boland. I later became the deputy commander of that cell. When the commander was moved out of that area, I later become a commander.<sup>255</sup>

Khohlokoane’s cell played an important role in recruiting a number of individuals who rose in prominence in the structures of MK in exile.

Another such activist was Zakes Molekane, who was active in the Ikakeng Civic Association in Potchefstroom. He was a UDF organiser in the region around Potchefstroom, organising civics and youth organisations in Vryheid, Huhudi, and so on. In the late 1980s, he was recruited into the ANC underground, and put the processes occurring at the time as follows:

... most of the people who joined MK, they went to MK because they were involved in [the] UDF, or they were recruited during the uprisings. ... And in the midst of organizing you also do talent-spotting. You realize that this guy is not a guy who will stand and *toyi-toyi*<sup>256</sup> necessarily; but he is a guy who will go and train and be given political education and be an MK.... This guy is very bright. I am taking him out and sending him to school. All those preparations we would do. ... I was highly involved with the intelligence structure of the ANC, so they even started identifying me when

(255) Interview with Naledi Khohlokoane.

(256) *Toyi-toyi* is a 1980s image of resistance which embodies the ultimate physical, aural, visual and theatrical battle over body, mind, and space between activists and the authorities.

I was in Nelspruit. That's where I started with this work of recruitment. And I even recruited within the state apparatus, some police and all those types of things; very difficult; risky as well.<sup>257</sup>

Rich Pharephare Mathube, a veteran from the 1960s, was active in the ANC underground in KwaNdebele during the mid to late 1980s. Mathube recalls travelling from KwaNdebele, through Botswana to Zimbabwe, where he was provided with a short military training course sometime in the late 1980s. Besides playing a central role in taking people out of the country, Mathube's main role was receiving and providing safe houses to MK cadres coming into the country.<sup>258</sup>

By the end of 1986, however, the ANC recognised that a number of factors accounted for what Barrell calls "a strategic hiatus."<sup>259</sup> It consequently decided to mount Operation Vula, that is, to create a national underground political and military leadership inside South Africa. The idea was for senior and middle-ranking political and military leaders of the movement to infiltrate the country, and to create and develop the internal underground structures within the country. Operation Vula was directed at strengthening the underground inside the country. Trained cadres and weapons were brought into South Africa from July 1988 when Mac Maharaj and Sphiwe Nyanda infiltrated the country.

Over the next two years, Operation Vula succeeded in building an underground intelligence structure. Vula activities are said to have included: 'propaganda', meetings with the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) leaders, plans to set up a reception committee for Mandela upon his release, and the stockpiling of weapons, as well as recruitment and training of cadres.<sup>260</sup> Jabu Moleketi recalls:

My responsibility, in Vula, was to ensure the movement of arms, from outside into the country, using internal couriers that were organised by our comrades inside the country. So that took me to Botswana, going there, the arms and all that. And in Vula we operated differently; arms were moved from Botswana. I was responsible for movement of arms and also personnel. Personnel was [sic] moved from Swaziland. Whenever I had to move personnel I had to move to Swaziland using different documents. Amongst the people who went through, it's General Shoke.<sup>261</sup>

Stan Mathabatha, an MK cadre based in the Northern Transvaal, recalls that:

...we had established a unit in 1986. We were instructed by Lusaka to establish a unit; a unit which was supposed to connect with Operation Vula. But that unit was supposed to come from ... the then Northern Transvaal and fitting in with those in Pretoria and the East Rand and again Pretoria and East Rand meet with Vula from the side of

(257) Interview with Zakes Molekane.

(258) Interview with Rich Pharephare Mathube, by Siphamandla Zondi, (Duiwelskloof) 3 May 2001.

(259) Barrell, Howard. 1993: See p.442.

(260) Sanders, James. *Apartheid's Friends: The rise and fall of South Africa's Secret Service*. London: John Murray, 2006: See pp.293-7.

(261) Interview with Jabu Moleketi, by Bernard Magubane, (Johannesburg) 2 April 2004.

Kwa-Zulu Natal, you know. That was a military strategy that was designed by ... Oliver Tambo. So, we established that unit. We had established that unit and that unit had stockpiled....262

By 1989, MK cadres based in Natal were also instrumental in recruiting cadres inside the country for Operation Vula. New recruits were given crash military courses. Between mid-1988 and mid-1990, as part of Operation Vula, tons of military equipment were brought into the country.

*MK Operations, 1985-1990:*

In 1985, MK's operations increased to 136, more than double the previous year, with a total of eighty-eight attacks occurring in the second half of the year.<sup>263</sup> The latter was largely a consequence of the infiltration of a large contingent of MK cadres during Operation Zikomo. Thirty-one attacks occurred in June alone, and more than seventy-five between July and December, compared to only forty-four attacks the year before. The ratio of three guerrillas captured or killed for each thirteen attacks was MK's most favourable casualty rate ever. 264

The ANC launched Operation Zikomo from mid-1985. Large numbers of combatants were sent into the country with hand grenades and other small weapons to participate as "shock troops" in township uprisings and to provide township militias with leadership and training. For instance, Makhandula claims that during the mid 1980s, certain parts of the Northern Cape Province were infiltrated by MK activists:

I remember an instance where people received training in how to use an AK-forty-seven and the police needed this information. They brought in *askaris* [Swahili for guards]. By that time we didn't know about the *askaris* and they sat in one house, Friedman's house, a general's house ... They had this AK-47 and these young people were excited to see these things. They said they must go so that they could also train. They had to go out of the township, going to Hanover Road. The police came out and arrested them. Seemingly they had [received] information about an MK cadre that was here doing some of the training. Those arrested were detained in Middelburg in the Cape ... and then ... this MK soldier was sentenced, I should think at Middelburg or Grahamstown

... He had training also in Noupoot. Things were happening, but we wouldn't know because it was underground things. The leadership wouldn't know that these things were happening. 265

Stan Mathabatha, an MK operative in the Northern Transvaal, gives confirmation of the clandestine activities of the ANC's military wing in the area in the mid 1980s

(262) Interview with Stan Mathabatha, by Lesetja Marepo, (Polokwane) 2 August 2002.

(263) Barrell, Howard. 1993: See pp.388-92, 440; Tom Lodge. "The African National Congress after the Kabwe Conference." in Southern African Research Service (eds). *South African review* 4. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987: See p.7.

(264) Barrell, Howard. 1993: See p.391.

(265) Interview with S. Makhandula, by Leo Barnard, (De Aar) 9 September 2006, SADET Oral History Project.

and alludes to the urban connections and the central role played by activists from the University of the North:

*Ja, ja*, we had a lot of underground cells in the Northern Province. We had a cell in Moutse. We had a cell in Kanyamazane. Emm, we had a cell here eh... here in Seshego. We had a cell.... a cell in the East Rand in Vosloorus and Katlehong. We had cells in Mamelodi belonging to Stanza Bopape. All of them, because Stanza was just an ordinary student here at Turfloop. But we conscientised them about the underground, the need to form an underground ...revolutionary core at Turfloop. We had cells at Turfloop. That's why you had people like Ray Maake.... We organised a lot of cells at that time. We organised a lot of cells because Tlokwe had his cells around gaMasemola, and ... Tito was deployed in Dennilton and Turfloop. He was based in Turfloop and those areas around Dennilton.... I remember in Moutse also during the time of Mbokotho, we were very daring at that time. We would take ammunition from Thotwane to Moteti to, what is that area of Eph Mogale? Uitvlugt, to Uitvlugt, to comrades there and train them on the spot in the operation of using AK-47s. They would use the ammunition. They would use them and keep them very safely because there was not even a single one of them who was arrested with ammunition in that area at that time. But they used those ammunitions against Mbokotho. We defended their people against Mbokotho until such time that it was then bad. We decided that they should leave and we deployed by then, comrade Jerome Maake, full time in Moutse to assist in training those comrades there.<sup>266</sup>

One member of MK based in Port Elizabeth at the time recalls how the township militia operated:

There was *amabutho* (militias) then. Those people, it was amazing to see. There was a scarcity of arms or ammunition. One AK-47 would circulate throughout the area; operate in Kwazakele, then taken to New Brighton, then taken to Soweto. So even those weapons! I remember when Sky came back, he came with about seven AK-47s or ten hand grenades. Those weapons were circulating all over the area, because there were few guns. And we had to have a presence all over the show. So the structures would operate independently, with one person knowing the sources where you could get... and others avoiding that; so that if one was arrested, he wouldn't talk.<sup>267</sup>

Lodge claims that guerrillas struck 228 times (Barrell claims 231 MK actions)<sup>268</sup> in 1986, making this the most active year of the insurgency organisation up to that time. At the same time, the number of guerrillas captured or killed by the security forces during the course of the year reached 160, more than one third of ANC casualties since 1977. By September 1986, 500 MK combatants had been killed or captured since 1976, with approximately forty-two percent of these killed or captured between September 1984 and September 1986. In addition, the security forces discovered about fifty-five arms caches in 1985 and 1986. Lodge adds that there might also have been an increase in the distribution of weapons, including arming youth groups that

<sup>(266)</sup> Interview with Stan Mathabatha.

<sup>(267)</sup> Interview with Mtiwabo Ndube, by Janet Cherry with HMP, (Port Elizabeth) 11 October 2007.

<sup>(268)</sup> Barrell, Howard. 1993: See pp.326-30.

were loosely under MK guidance. Most of the guerrilla activity took place in the Transvaal and Natal, while a number of attacks took place in small rural towns.<sup>269</sup>

The majority of attacks were attacks on the security forces, including those targeting farmers who assisted the security forces in the border areas and skirmishes with the security forces at roadblocks and safe houses. MK carried out sixty-one attacks on the security forces in the year, with twenty-three of them (nearly one third) being attacks on the homes of police officers. Four people died in these attacks, while nine others were injured. There were also a number of skirmishes with the police in which MK suffered casualties. The proportion of attacks on economic targets declined in 1986 from about twenty-three percent of all acts carried out the previous year to just over ten percent of all attacks for 1986. Some attacks were carried out against government collaborators, while there was a significant decrease in attacks mounted against government buildings such as railway stations, administration offices, and post offices.

Another area of activity was linked to the organisation's landmine campaign in the border areas. According to police reports, twenty-six landmines exploded during the course of the year, and the police discovered another thirty-seven.<sup>270</sup> Finally, more of the attacks were directed at military and police personnel than ever before.

By 1986, MK units had "spread armed activities to the whole of the Cape Province as well as to the Orange Free State." More importantly, however, during 1986 there was a merging of the armed struggle and the activities of thousands of activists inside the country who initially confronted the security forces with stones and petrol bombs. The activities of MK "introduced an armed element to the militancy" of these activists, who were increasingly using the skills imparted to them by MK to "deal with the police, community councillors, and various collaborationist elements." By 1986, also, the ANC had begun to reap the benefits of its second major wave of new recruits to MK following the outbreak of the Vaal uprising in September 1984. As the resistance escalated inside the country, and SADF deployment in the townships increased, MK introduced a new form of assault. This was the placing of landmines on the roads in the townships.

MK operations increased steadily from 228 incidents in 1986 to 242 in 1987. There appears to have been a continuation of a trend begun in 1985: i.e. a focus on attacking security force personnel and/or buildings. More than fifty per cent of the incidents for 1987 were such attacks. These include hand grenade attacks on the homes of policemen and on police and SADF personnel on patrol, and attacks on police and SADF buildings. There were also a large number of skirmishes with the police (and, in a limited number of cases, the SADF or homeland security forces). These were largely shootouts that occurred at security force roadblocks, security force raids on safe houses of suspected guerrillas, or security force ambushes of

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(269) Lodge, Tom. 1987: See pp.7-8.

(270) Barrell, Howard. 1993: See pp.422 and 422n.

suspected guerrillas. There were also a number of attacks on government buildings and apartheid collaborators. Attacks on economic targets also declined in number.

Official statistics put the number of 'terror incidents' during 1988 at 262 (excluding the Bantustans), while police documents put the total figure at 300. The overwhelming majority were attacks on SAP personnel or buildings, and skirmishes with policemen. MK attacks on policemen included placing limpet mines or other explosives at buildings frequented by or occupied by SAP personnel, ambushes of police patrols, and attacks on the homes of policemen. SADF personnel or buildings were attacked and SADF members were involved in skirmishes with MK cadres on several occasions during the year. There was a marked rise in attacks on government personnel or people linked with the apartheid administration – urban municipal councillors, employees of Administration Boards, members of the tri-cameral parliament and administrations

– and government buildings – municipal offices, offices of government departments – including one botched attack at a cinema complex in Pretoria during the year. MK mounted a number of attacks on government personnel and on government buildings. There were very few economic targets.

The number of incidents of guerrilla activity decreased by almost a third from 300 in 1988 to 216 in 1989. In large part this was because of the closure of many MK camps in Angola following agreements reached during discussions over the independence of Namibia. The majority of the attacks were attacks on SAP personnel or buildings. The second major category of operations was economic, including attacks on railway lines and railway stations; electrical sub-stations; post offices; and an attack on an aircraft factory. The rest of the targets were SADF buildings or installations; government collaborators and institutions; and government buildings.

### **The ANC's Internal Political Underground, 1985-1990**

Among the Commissions that were established to discuss issues at the Kabwe Conference was one on Internal Mobilisation. In the *Report on the Main Decisions and Recommendations*, the relevant decisions taken by conference were as follows: to create combined political/military structures to attend to the all-round activity

– political and military as well as the tasks of SACTU and Security and Intelligence – within the sphere of their operational zone; organisers of the movement must be active inside all democratic mass organisations such as the UDF, civic organisations, COSAS, the United Women's Organisation, trade unions, etc. and reactionary mass organisations such as Inkatha, Bantustan opposition parties, the Coloured Labour Party, etc. in order to expose the reactionary leadership, radicalise the organisations, and draw their base into active struggle; rural machineries should be reactivated and armed propaganda in these areas stepped up; special attention must be paid to create mass organisations and the movement must assist in their country-wide co-ordination and participation in all political struggles; and increasingly full-time organisers must be deployed in the ANC underground.

A number of changes were made in structures and personnel. In response to the sharp increase in mass struggle inside the country, the Political HQ was replaced with a strengthened Internal Political Committee (IPC) in 1987. The Political HQ was tasked with: mobilising the masses inside the country into struggle; establishing underground units of the ANC throughout South Africa; establishing underground units of MK throughout South Africa in conjunction with the Military Headquarters; maintaining contact with legal organisations within South Africa with the aim of influencing them towards acceptance of the programme of the ANC's Strategy and Tactics; and setting up legal organisations, where necessary, within South Africa for the purpose of mass mobilisation and mass action.

The Swaziland RPMC between 1985 and 1990 had a Political Committee under it: with a Natal structure chaired by 'Ivan', while Billy Whitehead ('Archie') chaired the Transvaal structure. The Lesotho RPMC during this period was chaired by Charles Nqakula, with Mzukisi Gaba chairing the Political Committee. After the Kabwe Conference in mid 1985, an RPMC was established in Botswana to replace the Co-ordinating Committee. Structures resorting under the 1985 RPMC in Botswana included a Political Committee chaired by Thabang Makwetla. The Zimbabwe RPMC was only set up in 1985, and was chaired by Ngoako Ramatlhodi.

The regional IPRCs were responsible for overseeing units and individuals inside the country. Barrell claims that in 1985 the formal underground still numbered about 350 to 500 individuals. However, he adds, the informal underground was growing rapidly, but the ANC had "no programme to bring this latter, expanding body of people into a closer relationship with it."<sup>271</sup> Tor Sellstrom, basing his estimate on figures provided by the ANC, put the number of formal ANC underground operatives inside the country in 1985 at 780. By May 1989 the ANC had 1,225 full-time organisers. Of these, 420 were based in the Transvaal, 230 in the Orange Free State, 225 in the Western Cape, 200 in the Eastern Cape, and 150 in Natal.<sup>272</sup>

Throughout this period, the ANC continued to send in cadres to conduct underground political work. In addition, during the second half of the decade, in particular, more and more UDF and other activists were drawn into the ANC underground. UDF activists increasingly began to see their work within the UDF as ANC work, whether it was establishing organizations, mobilizing during campaigns, operating in street or defence committees, or spreading propaganda. For instance, Rev. Ivan Beukes of Upington described some issues that were on the ANC's agenda during the mid 1980s, when he stated the following about the UDF in the area:

The UDF worked on three fronts, namely, isolation from (sic) the apartheid regime, making the country ungovernable and mobilising the internal forces on the road to freedom and democracy. With this the aspirations of the Freedom Charter were stressed. Armed resistance was not on the agenda of the UDF.<sup>273</sup>

(271) Barrell, Howard. 1993.

(272) Sellstrom, Tor. See p.617.

(273) Interview with I. Beukes, by Leo Barnard with HMP, (Upington) 2 May 2006.

The ANC underground also continued with its efforts to draw internal legal organisations towards the positions of the liberation movement. Mbulelo Jolingana, a UDF leader in Bloemfontein in the 1980s, recalls that:

We were linked of course with structures underground so that we could be able to understand what was happening. ...I would be lying if I say we were taking instructions from the headquarters of the ANC. As the UDF we were conscious of the issues that we were faced with. Therefore, our struggle was never in our minds divergent from what the ANC wanted. In a way we had one struggle.<sup>274</sup>

Another indication of its success in this regard can be found in the way in which many of the most significant organisations of this period adopted the ANC's Freedom Charter.

Perhaps the most significant ANC-aligned affiliate of the UDF formed after the latter had been established was the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO). SAYCO was established as a national youth co-ordinating body for non-student youth on the 28 March 1987, bringing together over 600 youth congresses from virtually every corner of the country. Another significant development during this period was the formation of the UDF's Women's Congress in Cape Town on 27 April 1987. The launch was attended by delegates of eight regional women's organisations. Both organizations adopted the Freedom Charter from the outset.

Policy decisions made at a UDF National Working Committee in 1987 included a call on all affiliates to discuss the adoption of the Freedom Charter by the Front. It was noted that a large number of key affiliates had already adopted the Charter. The UDF officially adopted the Charter in August of the same year.

Soon after the formation of COSATU in 1985, its leadership displayed their ideological preferences in public statements and in discussions with the ANC and SACTU in Lusaka in March 1986. Pressure from the federation's membership to define its political direction mounted in the first half of 1987.<sup>275</sup> Abraham Masabalala, a shop steward and union organiser for the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) recalls that "because we were members of COSATU we were much more leaning towards the ANC, but being afraid of coming out that we support the ANC. It only came out later."<sup>276</sup> In March 1987, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) adopted the Freedom Charter at its annual congress. Two months later the NUMSA endorsed the Freedom Charter as "a good foundation stone on which to start building our working-class programme." At COSATU's second national conference, held in July 1987, a resolution put forward by NUM was adopted, endorsing the Charter as "a guiding document which reflects the views and aspirations of the majority of the oppressed and exploited in our struggle against

(274) Interview with Mbulelo Jolingana, by B.M. Makhubalo and M. Masooa with HMP, (Bloemfontein) 4 February 2006.

(275) Baskin, Jeremy. *Striking Back: A History of COSATU*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1991: See pp.215-7 for the Freedom Charter 'debate'.

(276) Interview with Abraham Masabalala, by Simon Zwane, (Soweto) 9 December 2004.

national oppression and economic exploitation.” The political resolution represented a “firm decision to adopt a higher political profile, and to strengthen alliances with organisations within the national democratic tradition.” COSATU affirmed its ties with the ANC-SACTU-SACP alliance in exile and the UDF internally.<sup>277</sup>

Barrell adds that COSATU’s formation represented a considerable advance for the ANC and SACP. Its leadership was dominated by individuals who either were, or shortly became, supporters of the ANC alliance or members of its underground. Elijah Barayi, COSATU’s first President, was a “very big supporter of the ANC,” while Chris Dlamini became vice-president. COSATU’s first general secretary, Jay Naidoo, considered himself inspired by Lenin’s works. Sydney Mufamadi, the federation’s assistant general secretary, had been a member of the ANC’s underground since 1978 and joined the SACP in the 1980s. Cyril Ramaphosa, the leader of the National Union of Mineworkers, COSATU’s largest affiliate, was by general reputation a supporter of the ANC in 1985, and joined the ANC underground in 1986. COSATU also had the potential to deliver organised working class power for revolutionary objectives on a scale unprecedented in South Africa.<sup>278</sup> Many union members were drawn into the UDF, and subsequently into the ANC underground. Thandiwe Ellen Gulwa, a member of the Commercial, Catering, and Allied Workers’ Union (CCAWU) in Bloemfontein affiliated to COSATU in the mid 1980s, states that “as a COSATU member I was bound to be part of the UDF.” When the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) was formed in 1988, the COSATU education programme for shop stewards included training on ANC policies as well as classes in Marxism-Leninism. According to Gulwa:

We were taken every Friday until Sunday to be trained on issues of the ANC outside. And the material was really up to standard. You would ask yourself during that time as to how did these people manage to sneak that valuable material inside the country. Most of that material was Marxism and Leninism, which really changed our thinking.<sup>279</sup>

However, the impact of the ANC’s underground work on the black population in general is encapsulated by the events in the Western Cape. In that region, besides the BCM, the dominant political movement at the beginning of the decade was the Unity Movement. Johnny Issel recalls that: “Whoever went to school here and got affected by politics got influenced by the Unity Movement. They were hegemonic. They were dominant.” He pointed out, however, that by 1989 many “people who were associated with the Unity Movement” had become “part and parcel of UDF formations.” Such people could be found in women’s organisations, civic organisations, youth organisations, and student organisations. Issel points out that people who were opposed to the ANC in the Western Cape were quite active in youth groups, trade unions, and civic organisations during the early 1980s. “But as the support for

(277) COSATU Resolutions. Cited in “COSATU Second National Congress.” *South African Labour Bulletin*. 12.6-7 (August-September 1987): See pp.3-4.

(278) Barrell, Howard. 1993.

(279) Interview with Thandiwe Ellen Gulwa, by B.M. Makhabulo with HMP, (Bloemfontein) 13 January 2006.

the UDF increased, and the UDF was able to organise and bring together people's resistance, these people's influence declined."<sup>280</sup>

A number of people active in the UDF were also drawn into ANC structures during this period. Itumeleng Edwin Segalo, a UDF activist in the Free State during the period, recalls that:

Both Ntate Motshabi and myself after our release we were restricted. I was restricted to Number 1974 D-Section in Botshabelo in my mother's house. He was also restricted to his home in Botshabelo. But we continued with political activities. He recruited me into the underground and I became part of his underground unit. ... I was working with information. I had to gather information and distribute it through those channels given by Ntate Motshabi. I had also to give direction in terms of the aboveground activities. I had to identify places that would be used by people who would skip the country. We used to call them transit. We had to identify safe places for cadres.<sup>281</sup>

However, it would be incorrect to argue that the UDF blindly followed ANC strategies and policy. Stone Sizani of the Eastern Cape regional UDF states the following:

There is a slight difference between what the UDF was doing at the time and what the ANC was talking about; also in the minds of people who were inside the country. To openly deal with those things was not going to be possible. As you know, we didn't possess the means to topple the government. It was never even the intention of the UDF to try and do that. In some way the UDF, although it contained people who were angry enough to use whatever means possible at their disposal at the time, but it did not have the intention nor the inclination to start that kind of activity, a protracted war.<sup>282</sup>

The period from 1985 to the end of the decade was also marked by an escalation in state repression. By the middle of the decade, internal legal and semi-legal organisations, their leaders and members, as well as the ANC underground, experienced harassment from the security forces that took a variety of forms – these included constant surveillance, repeated detentions, political trials, torture, deaths in detention, and assassinations. The SADF was deployed in the townships. Security forces carried out assassinations of many activists, such as the PEBCO Three (Champion Galela, Siphon Hashe, and Qaqawuli Godolozzi) in May; and the UDF regional leader Matthew Goniwe, together with Sparrow Mkhonto, Fort Calata, and Sicelo Mhlauli (the Cradock Four) in June. Many others were to follow. The declaration of the first state of emergency for the decade in July 1985 exacerbated the situation of activists and organisations. For instance, one activist had the following to say:

And then when came 1985, even though we did not understand the meaning of the State of Emergency, its implication on us, what was clear, what they made very clear to us, was that the UDF as proxy of the ANC was responsible for un-governability. For me, that statement meant one thing, and one thing only; that we were going to be arrested and charged. Because already, that statement of saying UDF is promoting the aims of

<sup>(280)</sup> Interview with Johnny Issel, by Tom Karis, (Cape Town) 1 December 1989, A2675, Karis-Gerhart Collection, University of the Witwatersrand.

<sup>(281)</sup> Interview with Itumeleng Edwin Segalo, by C.M. Twala with HMP, (Bloemfontein) 22 June 2006.

<sup>(282)</sup> Interview with Stone Sizani, by Janet Cherry and Pat Gibbs with HMP, (Port Elizabeth) 11 May 2007.

the ANC, it became very clear that they are not just going to take you – meaning they are removing you from society, but actually they are going to go further and charge you for promoting the activities....all they needed now was what do they have on you, and on the other one, and the other one. And because we were already involved in resuscitating those underground cells that were uprooted, I was not so sure to what extent these guys knew about us.<sup>283</sup>

COSAS was the first organisation to be banned. One activist in the Northern Cape has the following to say about the effect of the banning and the response by the youth in the region:

In 1985 that is when things started to shift. In 1984 we were students at Monwabisi. We attempted to form an organisation called the Monwabisi Students' Organization. But thereafter, nothing really happened. In 1985 that was when again we attempted to form this Monwabisi Students' Organisation ... We were actually against what we called 'Viljoen's SRC'. We wanted an SRC that was elected by the students themselves. This organisation was COSAS in disguise. But because of the repressive laws we were afraid to come out openly to say it was COSAS because we knew that we were going to be victimised.<sup>284</sup>

Ben Sidisho remembers:

During the 1985 riots, all township schools became under the guard of the SADF. Indeed, as students we protested against that. We spent a lot of time being outside the classrooms protesting. We mainly boycotted classes ... As students in the township because of anger we targeted the houses of the police as well as those of the Black Local Authorities (BLA). We also had the Central Executive Committee which was in charge of coordinating the street committees and providing leadership to the whole community ... Sakile Makame and Papa Olifant were shot dead by members of the SADF when we had a protest march. It was an attack on the Ikhutseng beer hall. One of them was shot right in the yard of the beer hall and the second one was shot in the neighbouring houses in the next street. I did attend the funerals of these comrades. To me it was very much exciting. The masses there were very much defiant. One started to experience the power of the group. Once one was within that group, the issue of panicking faded away. That was when I really started to recognise that the liberation movement, the ANC and the UDF were alive. People in the community were defiant and fighting for their rights. The funerals were very emotional. We had the leadership which came from Kimberley to address the mourners.<sup>285</sup>

According to Zamani Saul, an activist from De Aar in the Northern Cape:

The impact of the state of emergency – there were lots of youngsters who were arrested. Lots of them were arrested. Even if I look at some of them today, you see most of these guys when you go to Petrusville [in the] early hours of the morning, when you drive through Petrusville around 7:30, they will be standing at a corner there begging for jobs. You ask some of them; most of them were arrested during the state of emergency.

(283) Interview with Mandla Madwara, by Janet Cherry and Pat Gibbs with HMP, (Port Elizabeth) 21 June 2007.

(284) Interview with S. Makhandula, by Leo Barnard with HMP, (De Aar) 9 September 2006.

(285) Interview with Ben Sidisho, by John Dyker with HMP, (Warrenton) 1 May 2006.

It destroyed families. Police could just come and arrest you for three months, without any charge. And then after three months, they say you still pose a danger to the society and then holding you to be arrested.<sup>286</sup>

### **The PAC in Exile, 1986-1990**

In August 1986, new PAC Chairman Johnson Mlambo convened a consultative meeting where a number of decisions were taken. One of these was to elect Zephania Mothopeng as the President of the PAC. It was in the same plenary that a decision was made to declare “1986 the year of defeating Pretoria.” Of critical importance was the solemn call that the plenary made:

Arm yourself by all means necessary or possible. Seize every available opportunity to get combat training from APLA fighters. Defend yourselves against the oppressors’ brutality by every means at your disposal, both modern and primitive weapons and both modern and traditional methods and tactics of combat. Help APLA to develop our war of national liberation with everything you have. Unite all our actions, and do not allow anyone to divide your ranks. Defeat all manoeuvres or tactics of the enemy and false friends of our struggle. Help each other in all your difficulties and problems of the revolution.<sup>287</sup>

Mlambo’s era witnessed a greater cohesion between the internal PAC and the external mission. Joint planning meetings were held and strategies for growth and development were ironed out. Internal PAC leaders used their trade union meetings outside the country to meet with the PAC leadership and the Central Committee. The struggle soon shifted to the internal front, eventually culminating in the formation of the Pan Africanist Movement in 1990 which soon overshadowed the external mission, which became increasingly a coordinating structure.

Mlambo was not faced with the same challenges that Pokela had to contend with. The problem of the APRP was somewhat resolved; and those cadres who were loyal to Leballo had been re-integrated into the PAC. The army was restructured with a young, determined High Command. The home-going programme was implemented and cadres were being infiltrated into the country.

The main challenge that Mlambo had to deal with was the profile of the PAC in international platforms and bodies such as the UN, the OAU, and the Commonwealth. In 1988, the PAC made a significant inroad which could be regarded as a diplomatic coup. The PAC had tried from the mid 1960s to use Mozambique as an entry point into South Africa without much success, including the interception of a PAC guerrilla force by Mozambican colonial forces at Villa Peri in the late 1960s. When Mozambique became independent in 1975, the rivalry between the PAC and the ANC, as well as the latter’s close links with the ruling FRELIMO in Mozambique,

(286) Interview with Zamani Saul, by Leo Barnard with HMP, (De Aar) 19 September 2006.

(287) Plenary session of the Central Committee of the Pan African Congress of Azania, held in Iringa, United Republic of Tanzania, 09-20 August 1986. Iringa Communique, p.2. National Heritage and Cultural Studies Center, University of Fort Hare, Pan Africanist Congress, Tanzanian Mission., p.3.

made it almost impossible for the PAC to use that country as a transit route through to South Africa.

In July 1988, Johnson Mlambo held talks with the Mozambican government.<sup>288</sup> However, although the meeting was seen as a diplomatic coup for the PAC, it did not lead to any meaningful change because from then on most of the training of PAC cadres was done inside South Africa. The importance of the neighbouring countries for the liberation movements decreased to that of providing supplies and harbouring a section of the army that was still based in exile. Thus, even if Mozambique had provided access to its territory to the PAC it would have made very little difference in its execution of the struggle.

The release of Zeph Mothopeng in 1988 was hailed as a critical step by the exile PAC leadership, which used his release to validate its decision to appoint him President of the organization. The campaign for the release of Zephania Mothopeng had started in earnest when he was made the President of the PAC in 1986. From that time on international attention was put on Mothopeng, and the PAC used every opportunity that presented itself to draw attention to its imprisoned president. Prior to his release, Mothopeng was transferred from Robben Island to Diepkloof prison in 1984. Zephania Mothopeng was finally released in 1988. His release came after he had repeatedly refused to accede to offers of conditional release made by the regime. The South African regime demanded that Mothopeng renounce violence as one of the conditions of his release.

Mothopeng came out of prison ill. Political reporter Patrick Laurence made the following assessment after the press conference Mothopeng addressed following his release from prison:

The scene was joyful but poignant. Mr. Mothopeng, president of the outlawed PAC, was free having being released from prison less than two years early. But the 75-year-old Africanist was clearly ailing. Even if he were not suffering from cancer, time would be running out for him.<sup>289</sup>

The release of Zephania Mothopeng gave the PAC a much needed public profile. Mothopeng soon undertook a number of speaking engagements inside and outside the country. The reorganization of the PAC inside the country became one of the critical assignments that he undertook. Khoisan X recalls:

I became the chairperson of the press conference when Uncle Zeph was released. There onwards I became his spokesperson. We discussed with lawyers in the PAC how to handle it (his new role). They said that I must make it clear that I am speaking for Uncle Zeph and not for the PAC. I saw my protection in Zeph Mothopeng. I became known as his spokesperson and administrator. When we went abroad for his medical treatment from time to time, we then discussed the question of unity in the PAC.

(288) Mlambo, Johnson. "Address to the Plenary Meeting." 7-15 December 1988, Mgagao, Iringa, Tanzania, p.3. National Heritage and Cultural Studies Center, University of Fort Hare, Pan Africanist Congress, Tanzanian Mission.

(289) Laurence, Patrick. *Star*. 3 December 1988.

People from abroad in Dar es Salaam saying that people like Vusi Nkumane, other such as the Sobukwe Forum, and those in New York who were accused of killing David Sibeko, were supposed to remain expelled. They again referred to people in Dar es Salaam as appointees of the appointees and therefore lacking legitimacy. We had to deal with all these issues with Uncle Zeph.<sup>290</sup>

Mothopeng forged close relations between the PAC and the internal trade union movement, working closely with the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) and its affiliates. He identified the students and the youth as sections of society that were critical in the execution of the struggle. It was to this effect that Mothopeng was instrumental in the formation of the Pan Africanist Student Organisation (PASO) in December 1989 at the Wilgespruit Centre.

It was also in 1990 that the Pan Africanist Movement was formed with Clarence Makwethu as its first president. The latter was one of the founder members of the PAC, and also its regional chairperson in the Western Cape.

### **AZAPO, 1987-1990**

The state of emergency imposed in June 1986 was renewed in June 1987. A year later, in June 1988, the state of emergency was again renewed. There was little success in curtailing black-on-black violence, particularly the scourge of “necklacing”. Critics of BC in general, and AZAPO in particular, saw in the movement “tripping” by an “intellectual class” of blacks with no groundswell support among workers – no working class base for socialist reconstruction.<sup>291</sup> The country’s largest labour federation, COSATU, was firmly in the “Charterist” camp and, as we shall see below, the smaller BC-aligned federation, NACTU, began to be contested with resurgent “Africanist” elements that were loyal to the PAC. As it moved towards its tenth annual congress, however, AZAPO held steadfast to its socialist colours.

In December 1987, AZAPO held its annual congress in Soweto under the theme “10 Years of Resistance – Consolidate for a Socialist Azania”. Nkosi Molala was elected president for a third term; he told the more than 1,000 delegates that to achieve a society “free of exploitation of any kind, we will have to engage the regime at the level at which it engages us.” He added: “The time has come for us to be on the offensive. We have to change qualitatively our approach to our struggle. All that has been happening should be no more than curtain-raisers in the preparation for the real struggle.”<sup>292</sup>

In June 1987, AZAPO, the UDF, and COSATU called for rolling mass action and protest to commemorate a series of anniversaries. These included the state of emergency that was declared on 12 June 1986; the students’ uprising that broke out in Soweto on 16 June 1976; and, in the case of the UDF, the adoption of the Freedom Charter on 26 June 1955. This jerked government to take sterner measures,

(290) Interview with Khoisan X, by Thami ka Plaatjie with HMP, (Johannesburg) 2006.

(291) Conversation with Cyril Ramaphosa (former general secretary of National Union of Mineworkers), (Johannesburg) 19 February 2006.

(292) Conference Papers. *10 Years of Resistance: Consolidate towards a Socialist Azania*. December 1987, NAHECS, Box 15, University of Fort Hare.

among them the banning of the AZAPO Manifesto. That proved only to be a prelude, however, to more drastic measures against extra-parliamentary opposition.

On 24 February 1988, the government banned seventeen extra-parliamentary opposition groups, including AZAPO and the UDF. But the exercise was as futile as putting a stopper after all the water has run out. The real reason for banning AZAPO was fear of extra-parliamentary opposition from whatever quarters. The government's central, but bankrupt strategy was to legitimise black groups that were willing to work within structures set up for them by the government.

Shortly after they were outlawed, both AZAPO and the UDF metamorphosed into the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), respectively, and continued to operate as before. Detention of activists, including children of school-going age, continued unabated. The Detainees' Parents Support Committee (DPSC) estimated that 25,000 people were detained between 12 June 1986 and 11 June 1987.

AZAPO continued with its campaign to isolate South Africa during the second half of the decade. In targeting high profile dignitaries, AZAPO hoped to embarrass the South African government. In January 1985, for instance, AZAPO and its NF allies staged demonstrations against US Senator Edward Kennedy's visit to South Africa. In January 1986, AZAPO refused to meet six members of the US congress visiting South Africa. In March 1988, the Central Transvaal branch of AZAPO condemned an American opera singer, Joy Simpson, for her tour of the country.

AZAPO-aligned trade union federations AZACTU and CUSA formed a sub-committee in 1985 to discuss a possible merger. In October 1986, they merged to form CUSA-AZACTU (later NACTU) with 500,000 signed-up members from twenty-two member unions. In its drive to win hearts and minds within liberation circles, NACTU courted both the PAC and the ANC in exile. In September 1987, a five-man NACTU delegation met with PAC leaders in Tanzania. In May 1988, NACTU met with the ANC in Harare, Zimbabwe. On its return to South Africa, NACTU disclosed, in a separate statement, that they had reached agreement with the ANC on several issues. They were in agreement that acceptance of the Freedom Charter was not "a prerequisite for the quick defeat of apartheid"; that all "legitimate organisations had a role to play in the liberation struggle"; that such a role had to evolve on "a democratic and principled" basis; that unity within opposition forces, including the trade union movement, was essential; that NACTU remained committed to building a "unified working class"; and that there was more that united the parties than what separated them.<sup>293</sup> While in Harare, NACTU also participated in a joint workshop with, among others, COSATU and SACTU, an alliance partner of the ANC.

In July 1988, NACTU returned to Harare to meet with the exiled Black Consciousness Movement of Azania (BCM-A). Following the meeting, the

<sup>(293)</sup> NACTU. Press Statement. May 1988. Rpt. ANC Department of Political Education. *The Road to Peace: Resource Material on Negotiations*. June 1990.

organisations issued a joint communiqué in which they said that “division within the liberation organisations and the labour movement is a luxury that the oppressed and exploited masses of Azania cannot afford.” Both organisations said they had agreed to work in solidarity and tirelessly towards unifying the masses.

During elections at the August 1988 congress, Africanists strengthened their position within the leadership of NACTU, giving rise to expectations that this would allow the leaders more freedom to pursue a policy of cooperation with COSATU on specific campaigns. Before the congress, the Africanists had published a pamphlet in which, echoing Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, they argued that whites who identified with the future of the continent could be included in a fight for a new nation. The BC group, on the other hand, placed more emphasis on racism by whites as the cause of South Africa’s problems and continued to oppose participation by whites in the liberation struggle.

The diplomatic shuttle undertaken by NACTU officials between various political formations enticed COSATU to write to NACTU in 1988 calling for merger talks. This accord led to the joint campaign against proposals for a law to amend the Labour Relations Act that both organisations embarked upon. In June 1989, representatives of NACTU and COSATU finalised plans for a campaign against the Act. The Act thus had the unintended consequence of cementing bonds between the two federations. What continued to stand in the way of effecting unity was the adoption by COSATU of the Freedom Charter, eschewing the non-sectarian approach, and planting its flagpole firmly in the ANC camp.

On 4 and 5 March 1989, a workers’ summit took place that was attended by “fifteen COSATU affiliates, eleven NACTU affiliates (representing only part of NACTU), and at least fourteen independent unions.” The summit was convened to discuss, among other things, worker unity, the Labour Relations Amendment Act, and state repression. COSATU seemed to have made certain concessions to eliminate obstacles over the holding of the summit that also seemed to augur well for future cooperation, even if it was not going to lead to unity as such. COSATU accepted a number of changes that NACTU proposed to the conference agenda. In addition, COSATU agreed that delegations from each of the federations be limited to 250 participants, despite the fact that the membership of COSATU was “about seven times that of NACTU.”<sup>294</sup>

### **Inkatha and Violence in Natal, 1985-1990**

In the second half of the decade, the state simultaneously stepped up secret military and financial support for Inkatha to enable it to crush the UDF through a campaign of violence. The state-sponsored vigilante violence intensified in communities which had embarked on militant community struggles earlier in the decade. Inkatha established a network of semi-clandestine warlord and hit-squad machineries which

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(294) Conversation with Cyril Ramaphosa, (Johannesburg) 19 February 2006.

operated in various parts of the Natal Midlands. These warlords unleashed a reign of terror on various Natal Midlands communities.

Attacks on members of the UDF carried out by Inkatha supporters and members of the security forces, and on members of Inkatha by members of UDF aligned organisations increased from the end of December 1985 to March 1986. Violence continued unabated in Natal in general and in the Natal Midlands in particular. Little effective police action was taken to check vigilante violence. The youth, who were bearing the brunt of the violent attacks, began to set up SDUs. Retaliation against vigilantes became frequent and the numbers of the dead increased dramatically. In spite of the virtual absence of UDF structures capable of organising adequate responses to attacks, many people who previously knew nothing about the UDF began to perceive it as a symbol of resistance to Inkatha and the apartheid system. By March 1988, the violence in the Pietermaritzburg townships was diminishing. Unlike the main Durban townships in 1985, the state-backed vigilantes had been unable to destroy organised popular resistance. In effect, young men and boys who called themselves the ‘comrades’ had fought off the state-backed vigilantes, though to horrific cost to the former. The ‘violent equilibrium’, in which neither the state nor its opponents emerged victorious, prevailed between 1988 and 1989. It was maintained only through the deployment of a large security force contingent in the Natal Midlands townships towards the end of the decade.

### **The ANC’s Official Statement on Negotiations and other Political Dynamics: 1985-1990**

Addressing Parliament on 17 April 1987, P.W. Botha declared that “negotiations will not be conducted with the SACP, international, or national terrorist groups (MK) or other fanatics (ANC).”<sup>295</sup> And, on 15 May 1987, Botha elaborated for the umpteenth time the apartheid regime’s preconditions for negotiations, insisting for the first time that this was strictly an internal matter to be resolved by South Africans – including the liberation movements:

As far as the Government is concerned, it remains adamant that it is prepared to negotiate with citizens of South Africa, provided they do not resort to violence as a means of attaining their political and other goals, or call in foreign agencies to support them. Negotiations of necessity imply that participants should accept that not all their requirements are likely to be met; it implies willingness to listen, to discuss, to seek solutions. But these solutions will result from deliberations by South Africans in the interests of South Africans. It is in this spirit that the Government approaches the process of negotiation and I want to appeal to all who have made the change for peaceful and constitutional change, to display similar disposition.<sup>296</sup>

Responding to P.W. Botha, the ANC issued an official statement on negotiations in October 1987, in which it reiterated the point that the liberation movement had never

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(295) South African Bureau of Information. “Talking with the ANC.” Johannesburg, 1986: See p.33.

(296) *Ibid.*

been opposed to a negotiated settlement. On various occasions the ANC had, in vain, called on the apartheid regime to cease violence perpetuated through its racist policies. The statement on negotiations clarified the main objective of any negotiating process in South Africa. Fully conscious of how the apartheid regime had, in the past, deliberately dragged out the question of exploratory negotiations and ‘talks about talks’ to buy time for itself, the ANC maintained that any negotiations would have to take place within a definite timeframe. This would meet the urgent necessity to “lift the yoke of tyranny from the masses of our people who have already suffered for too long.” Furthermore, the ANC’s statement on negotiations clearly rejected any secret negotiations (or secret deals) behind the backs of the oppressed majority.<sup>297</sup>

The ANC official statement on negotiations proposed the implementation of universal suffrage and the adoption of a Bill of Rights in South Africa. The statement expressed the viewpoint that to end apartheid meant, among other things, all South Africans, irrespective of race, colour or creed, would be treated equally as citizens. The proposed Bill of Rights would include provisions on freedom of association, for example, for any citizen to become a member of the SACP. To guarantee this, a new constitution should be brokered, one that should include an entrenched Bill of Rights. The implications were that repressive legislation and all laws empowering the apartheid regime to limit freedom of assembly, speech, the press, and other freedoms had to be repealed for majority rule to take effect in South Africa. The repulsive laws included, among others, the Riotous Assemblies Act, the Native Administration Act, the General Laws Amendment Act, the Unlawful Organisations Act, the Internal Security Act, and other similar acts and regulations.<sup>298</sup>

Botha believed that the general election of white MPs for the House of Assembly on 6 May 1987 conferred on him a mandate to protect white minority rights. He was adamant that any future dispensation for South Africa and its diverse population on every level of government would have to meet the following demands: the protection of minority rights and the self-determination of groups; the prevention of domination by any groups of others; and the division of power among the groups in respect of decision making concerning their own community interests and sharing of power among groups in respect of general and common interests.

Challenging the ANC’s proposal on the Bill of Rights, Botha insisted that his regime would proceed with negotiations that included homeland leaders with an aim of instituting the National Council of State whose joint deliberations would focus on various constitutional proposals. Such a joint Council of State would consist of leaders from racially defined groups expected to participate in the formulation of government policy on the basis of consensus on matters of common interest. Each minority group would be represented in this proposed structure and Africans would be further divided according to ethnic groups.

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(297) ANC. “Statement on Negotiations.” 9 October 1987. *Sechaba*. December 1987: See p.5

(298) ANC. “Statement on Negotiations 9 October 1987.” *Sechaba*. December 1987: See p.4.

The ANC ignored P.W. Botha's preoccupation with the protection of minority group rights and pursued the important exercise of drawing up its own constitutional guidelines.<sup>299</sup>

Two months before the ANC issued its official statement on negotiations, a group of more than fifty, mainly Afrikaans-speaking white and Coloured intellectuals, met with a seventeen-person ANC delegation in Dakar from 9-12 July 1987. The group from South Africa was organised by Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, the Director of the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA), and the French Socialist Party, but was funded by Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries. The ANC delegation was led by Thabo Mbeki. The ANC delegation used the event to explain their organisation's policies and to demolish prevalent stereotypes about the liberation movement.

Though there were many contentious points, the ANC claimed that the prevailing atmosphere throughout the talks was "calm, peaceful and polite." They defined the Afrikaans-speaking delegation in the following terms: "not homogeneous as they were not unanimous on anything and accordingly, they represented nobody." Their politics ranged from right-wing to UDF positions and were not in total agreement with ANC positions. Notwithstanding the differences and difficulties, the ANC had the opportunity to talk to very influential Afrikaner opinion-makers, many of whom were well situated within the bastions of Afrikaner nationalism such as Stellenbosch University.

One of the most contentious questions raised by the group from South Africa was that of the armed struggle, which the majority of delegates did not support. However, in the end, all participants recognised that state sponsored violence was central to the pursuit of apartheid policies and the practice of racial domination. This led to an understanding of conditions which generated widespread revolt by the oppressed as well as the importance of the ANC as a factor in resolving the conflict in South Africa. In the end, and through a joint declaration, delegates accepted the historical reality of the armed struggle. Although not all within the Afrikaans-speaking group could support this position, everyone was deeply concerned about the proliferation of uncontrolled violence. The communiqué also expressed that conference delegates unanimously supported a negotiated settlement of the South African question. It was accepted that the unconditional release of all political prisoners and the unbanning of all organisations were fundamental prerequisites for negotiations to take effect. The majority of the conference delegates acknowledged that the NP government was the principal obstacle to meaningful negotiations taking place.

P.W. Botha was contemptuous of the Dakar initiative. On 13 August 1987, he sarcastically noted that the ANC was laughing "up their sleeves at the naivety

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(299) Asmal, Kader. "Our Lodestar." in *Oliver Tambo Remembered*: See pp.33-49.

of useful idiots who, as Lenin put it, can be used to further the aims of the first phase of revolution.”<sup>300</sup>

On the same day Botha announced that the grounds for the release of political prisoners would now be the same as for ordinary criminals. The renunciation of violence, he spelled out, would be just *one* of the factors considered by the authorities when deciding whether or not a political prisoner should be freed. Botha announced that the first person likely to benefit from the ‘new deal’ was Govan Mbeki, who was sentenced to life imprisonment alongside Mandela. Thereafter, the apartheid regime was expected to direct its attention towards the release of Sisulu, Mandela, and other long-term political prisoners.<sup>301</sup>

After 13 August 1987, the apartheid regime’s relations with the ANC appeared to have moved into what we can refer to as the first phase – whereby the recognition that the struggle for liberation, like the incarceration of Mandela and other political prisoners, would not go away and therefore had to be addressed. The second phase regarding relations with the ANC, as far as the NP-led government was concerned, was two-fold in that it involved not only the acceptance of the fact that the ANC was at best going to suspend violence while talks were under way, but also that it would no longer be the sole prerogative of the NP to determine the constitutional future of South Africa. In retrospect, the first phase might not have been hard, but the second phase essentially involved the NP relinquishing power, and this was, as Patrick Cull observed, “a Rubicon the National Party is not ready to cross at this stage.”<sup>302</sup> Regardless, P.W. Botha alluded to the possibility of relinquishing power by reaching a political compromise:

The Government will, however, not go sit at the negotiation table at the point of a gun, with the handing over of power to the revolutionaries as the main item on the agenda! This is not only in the interest of White South Africa; it is also in the interests of Black South Africa. Most of them want peace and negotiation. It will certainly be in the best interests of anyone if the conflicting parties in the country can reach a compromise....<sup>303</sup>

The ANC’s response to Botha’s 13 August 1987 speech, occurred two months later when it released its first official statement on negotiations.

In July 1988, the liberation movement tabled its Constitutional Guidelines document for comment by South African citizens. The ANC was at pains to stress the fact that the proposed Constitutional Guidelines were not a constitution for a new South Africa, as some critics suggested. The document laid down a broad framework and general principles of proposed government structures, powers, fundamental rights and liberties for the people of South Africa. The 1988 guidelines

(300) South African Parliamentary Debates (*Hansard*), 13 August 1987, col. 3753.

(301) *Hansard*, 13 August 1987, columns 3759 -3760. See also “Breath of realism.” *Eastern Cape Herald*. 15 August 1987.

(302) “Breath of realism.” *Eastern Cape Herald*. 15 August 1987.

(303) *Hansard*. 13 August 1987: See column 3755.

were divided into two main sections, the *Preamble* which underlined strong links with the Freedom Charter, and the *main principles* composed of twenty-five clauses that included, among other items, the role of the personality and the individual, the Bill of Rights, human rights and democracy, the land question and workers' rights, foreign policy, and the gender question in a democratic, post-apartheid South Africa. These clauses specified a non-racial form of sovereignty based on universal suffrage to be represented in a central legislature, executive, judiciary, and administration.<sup>304</sup>

In January 1989, a meeting was convened between the ANC and Afrikaner lawyers and academics in order to discuss the proposed Constitutional Guidelines in Harare. Later, in June 1989, the ANC and the Five Freedoms Forum organised a conference whose main theme was “Whites in a Changing Society” in Lusaka, which was attended by 115 white South Africans and a fifty-strong delegation from the ANC. The constitutional guidelines proposed by the ANC formed part of the deliberations. The response of the apartheid regime to these important initiatives was negative – this period was characterised by an increase in the number of political prisoners and detainees rather than their reduction. The government also banned a number of non-governmental organisations. To consolidate its racially based constitutional plans, the state conducted local government elections on a racial basis in October 1988. Rather than abolish the tri-cameral parliament, it considered holding elections late in 1989 to renew this institution. Through the proposed 1989 parliamentary elections, the apartheid regime would proceed further with its constitutional plans designed to entrench apartheid.

Despite their efforts to understand the plight of white South Africans, there existed ANC members vehemently opposed to ‘talks about talks’ with big business, white academics, and other interest groups, including the apartheid regime. These critics believed that exploratory talks were an antithesis to the revolutionary objectives of the ANC. As a result, many questions were raised: Was the liberation movement now opting for a soft option? Was the ANC now abandoning hundreds of comrades, who had died in the name of the struggle for liberation, and others, who were still detained and jailed for long sentences? Was this a betrayal of those who had fought in Wankie and Sipolilo, or those who were in military camps since 1961? Was the liberation movement preparing for elections in the Lancaster House style? Immediate answers were needed, giving rise to invigorating polemical debates that took place in various

ANC camps and the pages of both the *African Communist* and *Sechaba*.

### **Exploratory Negotiations during the late 1980s**

By the late 1980s, the ANC had recognised that, because of the dynamics of the Cold War and changing economic and social conditions in South Africa, the question of whether or not it could participate in a negotiated settlement might depend not only on its strategic perspective, but also on various external factors that could be brought

(304) Skweyiya, Z. “Constitutional Guidelines of the ANC: A vital contribution to the struggle against apartheid.” *Sechaba*. June 1989: See pp.2-10; Lodge, Tom. “Peoples War or Negotiation?” 1989: See p.48.

to bear on the organisation. These factors might force the ANC to adopt a position other than the one it had chosen. When Thabo Mbeki addressed anti-apartheid activists in Switzerland in September 1989, he articulated the viewpoint that it had become necessary for the ANC to avoid the Namibian scenario, where the major western powers had gotten together and produced Resolution 435 and all its elements. He insisted this resolution was essentially a western-inspired plan, and among its consequences were the challenging problems facing SWAPO.<sup>305</sup>

Mbeki believed that each political scenario was unique and had its own specifics, and it would be wrong to suggest that the ANC would, under South African conditions, be in the position of other liberation movements in Southern Africa – either the Patriotic Front in Zimbabwe or SWAPO in Namibia. What was different with the South African case was the fact that the warring factions had taken a principled decision that they would resolve their own problem without the help of outsiders, particularly western powers. Niel Barnard, who was also involved in the Namibian negotiations, concurred with Mbeki:

Obviously governments from overseas were equally interested in finding the final solution to apartheid and to South Africa's problems, and the British government played a very important role and the French government did try to influence us and the so-called Eminent Persons Group of the Commonwealth did play an important role and Washington tried their best and so did Bonn and Paris and I can mention others.... That's the one basic fundamental issue which I think you would do history an *onreg*, an injustice, you would do history an injustice if you don't clearly indicate that from the very first process in which the NIS was involved we took a very strong line, that the future through negotiations will be negotiated by South Africans alone and between South Africans alone.<sup>306</sup>

Throughout the late 1980s, the apartheid regime, together with the National Intelligence Services (NIS), had been deliberating the issue on consolidating the role of the ANC in resolving the national question. As Barnard recalls:

At the time also we had to involve, but that's also another story which would take quite some time to explain, bringing in Thabo Mbeki and the so-called external wing of the ANC and whatever.... Talks have started in Europe to bring in Thabo Mbeki and the others.<sup>307</sup>

While the NIS was conducting secret talks with the ANC, the apartheid regime's secret service strongly objected to academics, business people, and opposition politicians involving themselves in matters reserved for the South African state. They voiced their protest to the ANC, particularly about the talks that took place at Lusaka and Dakar. Barnard explains:

(305) Mbeki, Thabo. "The Harare Document and the International Community." *Sechaba*. December 1989: See p.13.

(306) Interview with Niel Barnard, by Pdraig O'Malley, (Mayibuye Centre, University of Western Cape) 7 September 1998.

(307) Interview with Niel Barnard, by Pdraig O'Malley, (Mayibuye Centre) 7 September 1998.

... we never thought we could find answers to the country's problems without the ANC, but we did not want the other groups and governments from outside to act as facilitators; our view was that, unlike Zimbabwe and Namibia, there should be no middlemen to bring us together. NIS took a strong stand over the years that it should be the one to contact the ANC because the minute there is a middleman, he wants something out of it.... Besides, academics, (journalists) and businessmen do not rule the country.<sup>308</sup>

By June 1989, the ANC was convinced that there were clear signs that the South African government would adopt positive steps towards substantive negotiations and towards meeting the preconditions the organisation had publicised through its 1987 statement on negotiations. On 16 June 1989, the ANC held a joint meeting with the UDF and COSATU in Lusaka. The Alliance standpoint was that they had to take control of the process and ensure that substantive negotiations, should they come about, were genuine and serious. For this reason, it was important that the Alliance should adopt a common position both inside and outside South Africa. The Alliance was expected to present proposals to the masses in South Africa before predatory international power brokers entered the scene. The argument was, "the world must deal with our proposal (first), rather than we having to deal with another (foreign) initiative." Such a tactical move would place the Tripartite Alliance at an advantage and give it the ability to control and direct the process.

They proposed, among other things, holding negotiations for the establishment of a constituent assembly, which would be empowered to draw up the new constitution, an important and strategic point that had been raised in 1961 by the All-in-Africa Conference and in 1985 by the ANC's sub-committee on negotiations. The following questions were critical: Who would run the country while such a constituent assembly met? What would be the composition of such an assembly? How would the Tripartite Alliance negotiate about the establishment of a grouping that would include the enemy? The alliance meeting noted that there were no ready-made solutions to these fundamental questions. There existed another idea interlocked to the establishment of the constituent assembly – that parliament should be suspended and an interim government established to fill the void. This idea would need detailed elaboration and could be part of a negotiation proposal. Another issue to be addressed was the demand for the suspension of the armed struggle and how the ANC could respond to this call in the context of substantive negotiations. Yet another issue to be considered was whether a 'neutral umpire' was needed. The meeting noted that a forthcoming OAU summit meeting on 21-31 July 1989 was of strategic importance in terms of formulating an All-African position on substantive negotiations in South Africa. It was therefore crucial for the Alliance to work out its position by that date if the ANC needed to win support of both the OAU and the UN.

(308) "Dr. Niel Barnard vertel van Gesprek met Mandela in tronk." *Beeld*. 18 February 1992; "The role of superspy in Mandela's release." *The Star*. 19 February 1992.

Consequently, the ANC was tasked by its alliance partners to develop a position paper to be presented to the multi-lateral organisations. Based on recommendations suggested by its subcommittee in 1985, the ANC issued an elaborate position paper on the issue of substantive negotiations on 16 June 1989. This paper raised the question of whether, as a result of increasing pressure being placed on the apartheid regime from all quarters involved in the international campaign, it was necessary for the ANC to review and amend its 1987 official statement on negotiations?<sup>309</sup> The answer was in the negative, and such discussions and deliberations were later to play a constructive role in the formulation of the Harare Declaration in 1987.

Whilst these deliberations were continuing outside the country, Nelson Mandela was also involved in a concerted battle of the minds between himself and P.W. Botha on the question of substantive negotiations. Barnard acknowledged the fact that he was one of those, among other important role players representing the government, who had played an instrumental role in setting up informal talks between P.W. Botha and Mandela, while he was incarcerated. He recorded forty-eight meetings between himself and Mandela in 1987 and 1988. The government realised more strongly that it had to turn its focus to Mandela and other influential members of the Rivonia group. The NIS was thus sanctioned by the government to establish whether Mandela was able to play a role in finding a political solution. Barnard and three other officials – the Commissioner of Prisons, General Willie Willemsse, Mike Louw and Fanie van der Merwe of the Department of Constitutional Development – were assigned to the task by P.W. Botha. From May 1988, they held numerous discussions with Mandela at Pollsmoor and Victor Verster prisons. Three issues had to be determined. First, what was Mandela's view on the role of violence? How did he see the struggle and the future of the struggle? Was he prepared to accept a kind of cease-fire agreement before the government of the day could move into a period of discussion or negotiation? Second, what kind of political future did Mandela see for the country? Was it a democratic one? Broadly speaking, what kind of constitutional model was applicable in post-apartheid South Africa? Third, the critical and most fundamental point, what was Mandela's ideological position, and what role did communist ideology play in his mind-set?<sup>310</sup>

Mandela repeatedly asked to meet P.W. Botha personally. Barnard recalled that Botha “struggled with the question of whether to accede to the request or not.” His viewpoint, which he passed on to Botha, was that the State President could not lose anything by agreeing to a meeting with Mandela. Should the meeting fail, Botha could always say he tried to reach an understanding. If it succeeded, he would be honoured by history.<sup>311</sup> As Botha delayed his response, the impatient Mandela wrote an official letter addressed to Botha before the latter agreed to a meeting subsequently held on 5

(309) ANC. Discussion paper on the issue of negotiations. 16 June 1989: [www.anc.org.za](http://www.anc.org.za).

(310) Interview with Niel Barnard, (Mayibuye Centre) 7 September 1998.

(311) Interview with Niel Barnard, (Mayibuye Centre) 7 September 1998.

July 1989.<sup>312</sup> In this letter, Mandela called for an urgent discussion between the ANC and the government to negotiate an effective political settlement. He acknowledged that his was a challenging task trying to bring the country's two major political bodies to the negotiating table.

The three main demands and preconditions on substantive negotiations set by the apartheid regime were addressed in Mandela's letter. First, that the ANC must renounce violence; second, it must break with the SACP; and third, it must abandon its demand for majority rule. In his reply, Mandela stuck to the official ANC position by re-iterating the point that the organisation had no vested interest in promoting violence. The ANC considered the armed struggle as a legitimate form of self-defence against a morally repugnant apartheid regime, which did not allow peaceful forms of protest. Mandela described as nonsensical the accusation propagated by the regime that the ANC leadership were lackeys of the USSR. The truth was that the ANC was a non-aligned organisation which welcomed support from the East and the West. He asserted that the key to the whole situation was a negotiated settlement. A meeting between the regime and the ANC leadership would be a first major step towards lasting peace and majority rule in South Africa. The end results would lead to better relations with neighbouring countries, admission to the OAU, readmission to the UN and other international bodies, and to international markets leading to improved international relations generally. An accord with the ANC and the establishment of a non-racial democracy in South Africa was the only way forward, Mandela concluded. Just as secretly as Mandela was smuggled into Tuynhuys for the historic meeting with P.W. Botha, the NIS set about a plan to meet the ANC leaders in exile. On one occasion the apartheid regime's contact group that included Barnard and the Commissioner of Prisons informed Mandela that discussions were now in progress and that there were other ANC leaders whom the South African government would like to talk to. Barnard recalled that Mandela was suspicious and opposed to the idea and they argued this matter at length. Mandela's view was that talks with the ANC should not be conducted through two channels because this was a divisive tactic pursued by the apartheid regime. Mandela argued that he should be released first; then he would personally deal with outstanding issues and consult his exiled colleagues. The NIS, with permission from the apartheid regime, decided to go ahead and the first exploratory talks were conducted in Switzerland. On 12 September 1989, Mike Louw (Michael James) and Maritz Spaarwater (John Campbell) met Thabo Mbeki (John Simelane) and Jacob Zuma (Jack Simelane) at the Palace Hotel in Lucerne.

Contacts between the South African government and ANC intelligence structures subsequently increased during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

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<sup>312</sup> The Mandela Document: The Full Text of the Document Presented by Rolihlahla Mandela to P.W. Botha before their meeting on 5 July 1989: [www.anc.org.za](http://www.anc.org.za); See also A. Simpson. *Mandela: The Authorised Biography*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1999: See Chapter 27.

### Formulating Negotiation Strategies through the OAU

On 1-4 December 1987, two months after publicising its official statement on negotiations, the liberation movement organised a conference under the theme "People of the World Unite against Apartheid for a Democratic South Africa," which was held in Arusha, Tanzania. More than sixty countries were represented and there were more than five hundred delegates from the west, the socialist world, the non-aligned movement, OAU members, leaders and activists of the anti-apartheid forces and social movements. The conference delegates also included representatives from the MDM in South Africa.

Tambo, in his address, reiterated the fact that the ANC could never deliberately seek the path of war in the organisation's quest for liberation if an alternative, non-violent path was available. The conference subsequently adopted the Arusha Declaration, which contained sixteen points. The ninth point was specifically about negotiations:

The Botha regime is not interested in entering into genuine negotiations to end the inhuman system of racism and apartheid. Any negotiations would have to address the central question of political power and not how to give apartheid a more acceptable face. Such negotiations must have as their objective the transformation of South Africa into a united, democratic and non-racial country.<sup>313</sup>

The process of consultation within South Africa was consolidated after the Arusha Declaration was publicised. It involved the ANC underground, the trade unions, the UDF, the churches, and other relevant democratic circles who were eager to discuss and adopt a common position on negotiations after the positive gains made at Arusha.

On 21 August 1989, the OAU ad-hoc committee on Southern Africa met in Harare, Zimbabwe. Apart from other member states of the OAU that constituted this committee, there were also delegations of the ANC, the PAC, and representatives of the MDM and the religious community from South Africa. This historic meeting adopted the Harare Declaration on South Africa. Subsequently, the Non-Aligned Summit adopted the document, and later the OAU submitted the same document to the UN General Assembly for approval late in 1989.<sup>314</sup> Eventually, the Harare Declaration on Southern Africa was adopted by the 16th Special Session of the UN as the United Nations Declaration on South Africa.

In 1989, the west, unashamedly spearheaded by Margaret Thatcher's government, invited F.W. de Klerk for talks after P.W. Botha fell from grace. De Klerk immediately undertook a sojourn to Europe to campaign against international sanctions. His other brief was to persuade international bankers to implement the most favourable terms for rescheduling South Africa's foreign debt. During his overseas excursion, De Klerk encouraged the notion that the ANC and his government were nearing

(313) Declaration adopted at the conference, "People of the world against apartheid for a democratic South Africa." Arusha. 1-4 December 1987. *Sechaba*. February 1998.

(314) Mbeki, Thabo. "The Harare document and the international community."

a negotiated resolution of the South African question and was, on the basis of this incorrect statement, warmly received in western capitals. Western countries had the impression that De Klerk would be given a chance by the oppressed majority to implement his programme. But through some kind of a “representative forum” of all race groups, akin to P.W. Botha’s proposed National Council of State, the South African President was fine-tuning a proposal to have negotiations without the ANC.

The Frontline States supported the drive to negotiations. Their approach was underlined by the fact that Zambia had a predisposition towards negotiations and had already stated its desire, should South Africa establish its *bona fides*, to invite South Africa to a Frontline States meeting. The Mozambican and Swaziland governments already had a great deal of contact with the apartheid regime as a result of the Nkomati Accord, and Angola’s Eduardo Dos Santos had argued that the ANC “may not have time to develop a [favourable] position of strength,” and therefore must immediately commit itself to holding talks with the South African government.

He was responding to the ANC’s view that it must be in a position of strength before substantive negotiations commenced in South Africa.<sup>315</sup>

The Harare Declaration’s main call was for apartheid to be abolished and to be replaced by a non-racial, democratic South Africa. It restated the preconditions for negotiations to take place – the call for the unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees; lifting of all bans and restrictions on all proscribed and restricted organisations and individuals; removal of all troops from the townships; abandoning the State of Emergency and repealing all legislation designed to circumscribe political activity, for example, the Internal Security Act; and cessation of all political trials and political executions.

## Part 5: 1990-1994

### Substantive Negotiations and the Road to the First Democratic Elections, 1990-1994:

By the late 1980s, the apartheid regime had negotiated peace with Angola and Namibia’s independence with Cuba and the Soviet Union. During the same period, Angola’s President Dos Santos had shaken the hand of his enemy, UNITA’s Jonas Savimbi, and FRELIMO had offered to speak to the MNR bandits. And there was more to come. Margaret Thatcher and George Bush senior predicted that Nelson Mandela would be released after September 1989, and that negotiations between the apartheid regime and its opponents would begin in earnest. “Negotiations” had also become a key part of National Party policy. The ANC and the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) began preparing for a new phase of struggle in which issues connected to negotiations became the terrain for a national democratic revolution.

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(315) “Cosatu, UDF, ANC detail problems of their struggle.” *The Star*. 20 July 1989.

In South Africa, the Nationalist Party government was not prepared to surrender power. Nor had it been pushed to a point where it could be forced to do so by the late 1980s. Nonetheless, the State of Emergency had failed to achieve its political objectives. The MDM was not eliminated, and the Black Local Authorities failed to win support, while the apartheid regime struggled to find a sustainable political direction as it insisted that it would only negotiate with the ANC if it renounced 'violence' and broke its alliance with the SACP. At this point the apartheid regime's objectives were to: (a) relieve international pressure, (b) confuse and demobilise the liberation movements and other democratic organisations, and (c) to infiltrate and divide the forces presently ranged against apartheid.<sup>316</sup>

The apartheid regime's objectives of considering negotiations as an option were linked to regaining the strategic initiative by defusing international pressure; demobilising the majority of the oppressed people from continuing with their struggle and winning new allies. According to Adriaan Vlok, talking to the ANC "was a way of fighting them with another instrument." He continued, "we want to be able to say in future that we not only won on the battlefield, but also around the negotiating table." If the ANC and its allies stalled on negotiations, such a move would hand a victory to the apartheid regime and its supporters. For the ANC, serious negotiations involved a transfer of power from the apartheid regime to a democratically elected government. What Vlok failed to mention was that the Nationalist government was not prepared to surrender power. The regime's position always hinged on the idea that it would only negotiate with the ANC if it renounced 'violence' and its ties with the SACP. The five year plan adopted at an NP Congress in late 1989 used the word 'negotiations' fourteen times. The other important word in this two-page document was 'group' rights which was repeated thirty-nine times. The combination of these two words highlighted the fact that the apartheid regime was committed to minority rule. But it recognised that the only manner it could regain the strategic initiative was through opening 'negotiations'.

For the ANC, a political solution still depended on all-round pressure to weaken the Nationalist government to the point where it was prepared to hand over power. As a result, the ANC emphasised that its objective was underpinned by the transfer of power to the majority of the people of South Africa. It was committed to achieving its goal through the combination of its four pillars of struggle: mass mobilisation, political underground, armed struggle, and international solidarity. The question whether there were negotiations in South Africa or not depended on the attitude of the government, not the ANC which supported majority rule and genuine negotiations for a non-racial democratic South Africa.

The ANC insisted that only a sovereign elected body could draw up a new constitution for the country. This action would involve all South Africans voting on the basis of one person-one vote for a sovereign constituent assembly. The ANC was

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(316) ANC Department of Political Education. *The Road to Peace*. June 1990.

not prepared to suspend its struggle on the basis of promises about negotiations. The experience of Namibia, where the apartheid regime only began implementing UN Resolution 435 twelve years after accepting it, served as a warning. The liberation movement also recognised the importance of negotiations because of the dangers which might arise if it was left to the apartheid regime and the western superpowers to define the process. Hence, on the international front, the Soviet Union sought to reduce international tension and the danger of nuclear war by promoting dialogue and political solutions to global and regional conflicts. It was therefore not surprising that they were promoting a political solution for South Africa too. Nonetheless, the Soviet Union recognised that a political solution in South Africa involved a transfer of power, and that the apartheid regime was not yet ready to do this. Perestroika emphasised the right of different Soviet allies to pursue their own strategies. For example, in Eastern Europe, Poland and Hungary pursued a set of reforms even more dramatic than those of Russia, while the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, and Romania remained opposed to perestroika. Cuba pursued a completely different course, and, in this spirit, the Soviets acknowledged that the ANC had a right to choose its own strategies. The ‘new thinking’ pursued by the Soviets had a great effect on the regime. The increasing breakdown of the Cold War meant Pretoria could no longer appeal to the west on the basis of the ‘communist threat’.

Since F.W. de Klerk’s accession to the NP leadership in 1989, the broad outlines of the party’s political strategy emerged. Public evidence of this was offered in his parliamentary speech on 8 February 1989. De Klerk committed the NP to “a non-racialistic country...free of racism, hatred, negative discrimination on the basis of race.” He called on the black leadership to negotiate a new “non-discriminatory” constitution. Subsequently, speeches by the then Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, Chris Heunis, confirmed a new approach. He proposed an ‘open group’ comprising of people who rejected racial group identity; suggested that discriminatory laws such as the Group Areas Act, Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, and Population Registration Act, be reviewed; and in May 1989, urged the establishment of a single legislature and executive in which all races would take part. An equally significant, if less politicised, change in government goals was announced in May 1989 when Deputy Minister of Law and Order, Leon Wessels, informed a press conference that its security strategy was now a lesser priority than political reform. The NP government’s priority, he emphasised, would now be to seek reform “through persuasion” rather than security. The task of achieving stability was now “in the hands of the politicians,” rather than security planners; the chief goal of the National Security Management System, now renamed the National Management System, was to co-ordinate material upgrading of black townships rather than to impose “law and order.”<sup>317</sup> For the NP, the May 1989 whites-only elections had given

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(317) Friedman, S. “Negotiation Prospects in the post P.W. Botha Era.” Paper presented at Wits University Political Studies Seminar, 18 August 1989.

the government “a clear mandate” to institute change. According to the NP leader at the time, F.W. de Klerk: “Again when I was, as the leader-elect, when the National Party won the white part of the election in 1989, our platform was even clearer.”<sup>318</sup>

Pik Botha, then Foreign Minister, recalls:

Originally the idea was to try and persuade the ANC into agreeing to a deal which would more or less, in broad terms, have made it possible for what was called “Group Rights” to be preserved, guaranteed, and to allow for the government to, at least, on the lower levels be based on group affiliations. I knew that it was not possible, however much that would have been the wish of the Whites and the National Party, because at an early stage it was clear to me from reports I had from my Ambassadors abroad and others that there was no way that the ANC would ever give in on the issue of universal adult suffrage; nothing beyond it. They might be willing to be accommodating on a number of other issues. But on that one, there was no way that the leaders of the ANC could survive the general expectation of the vast majority of Black people of this country that once you’re in power we want from you to have a Constitution which will place no hindrance, no qualification, on the voting right of all the people of this country. Not only the Black - all the people. So, originally, I think, you would find in the propaganda of the National Party in the last election before the Referendum we had, the Referendum against the Conservatives, after we lost the Potchefstroom Constituency, we got a very great fright, that we might lose some White votes completely. And then you have in power these people. And then you’re heading again for disaster. But you will find the concept of power-sharing an interesting one. Power-sharing was a dream. It started with the Tri-Chamber Parliament where the Coloureds had a Chamber, the Whites, and Indians. Of course that was no danger. Because even together the two could not form a majority, you see. So the Whites were still firmly in power. ... But no Black is there. The vast majority, the people are not there. So this lingering sword, ... it’s not been removed. But the hope was there, their power-sharing. It was at least a form of power-sharing. They are sharing now in the decision-making processes, although they can’t change it. There was a dream, I think, at the beginning of the negotiations to test to see to what extent would the ANC be prepared to have a measure of power-sharing built into a new Constitution. That was the hope at the beginning.<sup>319</sup>

Political changes substantially began on 2 February 1990 when, in a landmark parliamentary speech, F.W. de Klerk announced the unbanning of the ANC along with a number of other organisations, lifted a number of the state of emergency restrictions, and decreed a new dispensation that would include a democratic constitution based on a universal franchise. Fanie van der Merwe, then a senior civil servant in the Department of Constitutional Development that was to play a significant role in the negotiation process, recalls some of the key events leading up to De Klerk’s February speech:

...the De Klerk government took over and they then immediately started politically, amongst themselves, ... to work on a political solution. What was it that they would aim for? And that’s where all these things like group rights came on the table – group

(318) Interview with F.W. de Klerk, by Chris Saunders and Gregory Houston, (Cape Town) 10 February 2003.

(319) Interview with Pik Botha, by Sifiso Ndlovu, (Johannesburg) 18 September 2001.

rights, and government by consensus, and all these things came into being; model of a political solution. Then from our side, in Constitutional Development, also advising them, we had a section which dealt with these models. But then, we drew up a document which said that the aim should be to turn a situation of violent ... political competition into one of peaceful political competition. And to get there you would have to make it possible for all parties to participate in this peaceful competition. To do that ... the prisoners will have to be released; the exiles will have to be, it would have to be made possible for them to come back to participate; the people underground would have to be able to surface. And, only in that way could you really start a peaceful political competition. And, the process could go forward, negotiate.... Then it came on the table

– now what can we do? You remember that the first prisoner really that was released was Mr. Mbeki. I think that was about April or May. And that was more or less done sort of as a flyer; ... can it be managed in a peaceful way? And then the next group was the October group. ... And that was also a further effort to see how people can be released without causing a big problem outside. And with the help of Madiba, they were then released. I think it was four ANC, and two PAC prisoners. But then it went well. Then also, in terms of this planning document, we started ... making street politics possible. I think the first one was a rally in Cape Town in about November. We opened up that there. There was permission; they had to ask for the rally, and permission was just given. And everybody advised against it. All the security forces advised against it. And so you opened up street politics. And that was given. And it went well ... because it was well monitored. And then, internally, the debate started on how can you make it possible for other parties like the ANC, the PAC, whoever, to participate peacefully in politics. You had to unban the banned parties. ... [R]estrictions on meetings had to be lifted. It had to be opened up. And that had to be evaluated by the security forces.

... Eventually, when, leading up to the 2nd of February speech, in the drafting of that speech – it was drafted over a long period. ... All the organisations had to be unbanned. And the one thing I remember that was very troublesome was the unbanning of the Communist Party. That was really – it was too horrible to contemplate. But then we got past that by pointing out that most people, or many of the leaders, are members of the Communist Party as well as of the ANC. So if you go and unban the ANC and PAC alone it would not make it possible for those leaders to participate. And on that argument, the whole lot was unbanned. ... [T]hen that led to the 2nd of February speech where it was announced that all parties would be unbanned; any restrictions on meetings and those kinds of things would be lifted. If there were people who were still under restrictions – I don't know whether there were – those restrictions would be lifted. And then, of course, that Madiba would be released as soon as possible. Eventually he was released on the eleventh, I think. Then, to facilitate his release, he was brought to see the President on a Friday night; the President, and I think Viljoen, and some other people – the four of us that was talking to him. And the idea was then that he would be released the next day. But he would be released in Johannesburg. He said, “No you'll have to put me in chains to take me to Johannesburg. I'm going to be released here in Cape Town. That's where I lived for the last 27 years. I'm going to walk out of prison here in Cape Town.” He wanted it to be about a month, fourteen days or three weeks – to prepare people for it. From the government side, they wanted him to be let out immediately, so that there couldn't be all kinds of violent action that could have been arranged. ... So, the eventual compromise or agreement was that he was to

be released from Pollsmoor, as he wanted to be, but that it would happen on a Sunday. And a group of people were put together to speak to the ANC. So, I joined them to do this. Myself and Willem [inaudible] in this group met the people from the ANC. I only remember Valli Moosa was one of them because he was so thin at the time. ... So, on a Saturday we met these people and the announcement was made and all the warrants and things, all the technical things were done. And it happened on Sunday. Also, with people holding thumbs that nothing would go wrong.<sup>320</sup>

De Klerk's speech on 2 February also acknowledged that South Africa was caught in a "cycle of violence." In its most acute, and noticeable form, this was manifested in Natal/KwaZulu beginning in 1985-1986. Similar patterns of violence appeared in the townships of the Witwatersrand in 1990. This violence spread to the townships in the Vaal region. By 16 August 1990, however, the death toll in the Reef townships of Katlehong, Vosloorus, Thokoza, and Soweto rose and thousands of residents fled their homes looking for sanctuary, while the armed attacks continued unabated. The violence cost many hundreds of lives.<sup>321</sup>

On 11 February 1990, Nelson Mandela was released after twenty seven years of imprisonment. An ANC veteran, Hlengane Jackson Mahlaule, recalls the excitement he felt when Mandela was released:

Now, they released Mandela in February. We were so happy that day we didn't even go to work. They said he was going to be released that day and he would come to his house in Orlando. There were t-shirts with his picture. ... We were waiting for Mandela to come to Orlando. Later on, around eleven, they told us he was going to go to [the] FNB [stadium], not Orlando. Now we walked to FNB from Orlando. ... They were singing and running. But we were old, so we were walking slow. Before we got there we heard that he was no longer coming to the FNB [stadium]. We didn't go to work and Mandela didn't come. And I said I was going to work tomorrow. ... Now they said Mandela was coming out. My foreman was not there. I don't know where he was. And I went to the boss. I told him I wanted to go see the man who was jailed for twenty-seven years. He asked who was that? I told him Mandela. He said he heard about that. He asked when he was released and I said yesterday. I told him that he didn't arrive here in Johannesburg yesterday. Now he will arrive today. He said I can go, and I said thank you. There were taxis going to the FNB. I went to FNB. It was full. There were school kids and everyone. They wanted to see this man. He arrived at 2pm. He entered the stadium. He walked ... hand in hand with his wife Winnie. People were saying slogans, and the old man saw how it was outside. Everyone was on their feet, male or female, doing *toyi toyi*. And it was very hot outside. He waved at people and spoke.<sup>322</sup>

This marked the starting point for the NP government's overt strategy of engaging the ANC and other organisations in discussions about the shape of the 'new South Africa' and the transitional mechanism through the so-called 'talks about talks'.

(320) Interview with Fanie van der Merwe, by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, (Pretoria) 10 January 2002.

(321) Wardrop, J. "The State, Politics and Violence 1989-1991." in N. Etherington (ed.). *Peace, Politics and Violence in the New South Africa*. London: Hans Zell Publishers, 1992: See pp.55-72.

(322) Interview with Hlengane Jackson Mahlaule, (Malamule) 6 June 2001.

Further, the apartheid regime began to move towards the dismantling of apartheid legislation, with the first step being the repeal in June 1990 of the Separate Amenities Act, which for thirty-seven years had provided the legislative underpinning for the separate and unequal provision of public amenities according to racial group. The ANC's multi-pronged strategy to liberate the oppressed compelled the government to accept substantive negotiations as a way forward in resolving the national question in South Africa. The ANC claimed the acceptance as a victory and argued that the challenge facing the organisation was how to skilfully employ negotiations to expedite the transfer of power to the oppressed majority. Jeremy Cronin recalls:

I think that there was a tendency to pursue an elite pact negotiated outcome and to see the mass movement, the trade union movement, the civics, that UDF pluralistic reality, as having played its role. Now that the struggle was basically over, the idea was that things needed to be stabilised and kept quiet, so that the negotiations could get on with it. Any mass mobilisation could upset the apple cart and could play into the hands of reactionary forces and so [on]. The [Communist] party, and the party were not alone, there was this tradition coming out of the '80s, which found its place inside the ANC, where large numbers of the key leadership came into the party or the ANC, who agreed with the perspective that mass protest, mass organisations, mass mobilisations were essential for the negotiations to succeed. It was our critical weapon, so the party made a lot of inputs into the ANC and into trade union movement in this direction, around this particular conception of negotiations. This was opposed to Harry Gwala, who was saying that negotiations were finally finishing the sell-out and that insurrection was what we should be headed for. To oppose that, to say negotiations were serious, it was a key strategic path we needed to pursue, but it was not. It could become a sell-out, but what would prevent it, was that we sustain and maintain popular involvement, mobilisation, and so forth right through.<sup>323</sup>

Understood in this sense, negotiations were regarded as another phase of the struggle arrived at by the liberation movement. The actual process was characterised by an ebb and flow, forwards and backwards, as defined by, among other important events, the Groote Schuur Minute agreed on 4 May 1990, the Pretoria Minute later in August, the D.F. Malan Minute, and the spread of the violence to the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal (PWV) area.

Fanie van der Merwe recalls that immediately prior to the signing of the Groote Schuur Minute, a delegation from the government and the ANC "met and there was a steering committee. It was Jacob Zuma, ANC side – many people were brought in from time to time – and I was on the other side with Mike Louw from NI [National Intelligence] and Bassie Smith from the Police, because they were all needed. We had to bring in people under cover – so the police was needed for that. We had this meeting and this group was formed – steering committee."<sup>324</sup> This steering committee met in

(323) Interview with Jeremy Cronin, by Helena Sheehan, (Cape Town) 17 April 2001 and 24 January 2002. [Webpages.dcu.ie/~sheehan/za/cronin-aah01.html](http://Webpages.dcu.ie/~sheehan/za/cronin-aah01.html).

(324) Interview with Fanie van der Merwe.

secret on several occasions, including once in a city in Switzerland whose name Van der Merwe could not recall. He added:

... the steering group had to report to the ANC and we had to report to government. And we had to make all the arrangements for the people to come in – we had to get acts in parliament to allow people to come in so that they couldn't be prosecuted ... indemnity, in preparation for this meeting. And I can remember very well, this Indemnity Act, ... Kobie Coetzee didn't push it through parliament. There were all kinds of problems. Every time I had to come back to the steering committee to report that the blooming Indemnity Act is not through yet. And they came from Lusaka and they were also under cover. And they would really...because they had been told now: "Hey, you just watch. You go there and they'll just clamp you and put you in jail".<sup>325</sup>

Eventually the ANC delegation was brought into the country in a plane provided by Kenneth Kaunda, and the meeting was held at Groote Schuur. Matthews Phosa recalls:

Everyone prepared for the Groote Schuur [meeting]. Then, we prepared, agenda, items. We fought about each item. They wanted to discuss arms struggle only. We said we are discussing the state of emergency, how do you implement the Harare Declaration, that whole thing, the removal of the obstacles, levelling the playing field for negotiations; these must be discussed. ... We said the political prisoners must come out. You must stop hanging people.... These are the issues. These are our briefs from Lusaka. You must stop the hanging. Stop these things. Release political prisoners. Those are the issues at play. And we forced them on that agenda. But they insisted that they want the armed struggle. MK was the number one for them. They had to stop. Mass action must stop. Those things.... After the talks, our leadership went to address the people. They said: "You mean, Slovo must go and address people in Mitchell's Plain? *Dit sal die dag wees.*" We said you would not prescribe to the African National Congress who must speak to which constituency. We had those fights. ... They had to call Gerrit Viljoen.

De Klerk was out of the country. He was an acting president. He came and mediated about that dispute about Slovo having to address people at Mitchell's Plain. It was a big issue. They said Nzo can speak about it (and not) Slovo; not communists. It was a State issue, you know.<sup>326</sup>

"In the meantime," Van der Merwe adds, "before we got to CODESA, we had now, with the support of Constitutional Development, been having talks about talks with all the various parties – the PAC, the ANC, Inkatha, parties in the homeland governments – to get them to the table. And, you know, you had to – that's now after Groote Schuur. Groote Schuur was actually part of this whole thing – how to get the people together, to the table. That was the ANC one. For the ANC, also followed the Pretoria Minute and then followed the D.F. Malan Minute."<sup>327</sup> The PAC, on its part, initially resisted all overtures from the government.

Despite the uncertainty that characterised the aftermath of the unbanning of the ANC in February 1990, foundations had already been laid inside the country that

(325) *Ibid.*

(326) Interview with Matthews Phosa, by Lesetja Marepo, (Nelspruit) 30 January 2004.

(327) Interview with Fanie van der Merwe.

eased the formal return of the exiled ANC leadership and cadres. During the weeks that preceded the release of Walter Sisulu and other political prisoners in 1989, a National Reception Committee (NRC) was formed, comprising leaders such as Cyril Ramaphosa, Mohammed Valli Moosa, and Murphy Morobe, to prepare the re-integration of ex-prisoners into their families and the existing political situation. A few days after their release, a new structure, the Internal Leadership Core (ILC) of the ANC was formed, consisting of five core leaders: Nelson Mandela (in Pollsmoor), Walter Sisulu (chairperson of the ILC and the Internal head of the ANC), Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba as well as Mac Maharaj, who operated from underground. Sanctioned by the exile leadership, the main task of the ILC was to establish the legal structures of the ANC inside the country – particularly the headquarters, regions, and branches. The NRC operated until March 1990, when it was disbanded after Mandela was released. The ILC operated up until June 1990, when most NEC members of the ANC had established a permanent presence inside the country following the unbanning of the organisation. A special meeting of the NEC was convened, which extended the NEC to include ILC leaders. The position of deputy-president was also created to accommodate Nelson Mandela.<sup>328</sup>

The first ANC department to create a presence inside the country was the Department of Information and Publicity (DIP), formally reconstituted in June 1990 through the efforts of Pallo Jordan, Gill Marcus, and Joel Netshitenzhe. Its focus was to deal with the media and information which were becoming crucial with the unbanning of the ANC. By the end of 1990, the ANC had all its departments operating in South Africa. There were to be three main categories of departments, namely, political, policy, and service. The Political Departments consisted of the Negotiations Commission convened by Cyril Ramaphosa. Other members of the Commission were Thabo Mbeki, Joe Slovo, Mohammed Valli Moosa, and Jacob Zuma. Under the Political Department there was also the Organising Department convened by Steve Tshwete, and comprising John Nkadimeng, Ronnie Kasrils, Sydney Mufamadi, Popo Molefe, Netshitenzhe, and Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim. Included also was the Army Division convened by Joe Modise, the Department of International Affairs convened by Thabo Mbeki, and the Department of Security and Intelligence headed by Joe Nhlanhla; the latter also included Terror Lekota.

The Policy Departments comprised Economic Planning which was headed by Trevor Manuel; Constitutional Development convened by Zola Skweyiya; and Health, Welfare, and Human Resources convened by Cheryl Carolus. The Service Departments comprised the Legal Department convened by Zola Skweyiya; the Evaluation Commission headed by O.R. Tambo, and it included Alfred Nzo and Barbara Masekela.

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(328) Ratente, R. "Facing the challenges of transition: A critical analysis of the African National Congress in the 1990s." MA dissertation. University of the Witwatersrand, 1994: See Chapter 1.

The initial agreement with the government of the day provided the relevant space for the various ANC committees to address challenging problems on the ground. For example, the Groote Schuur Minute included an agreement between both the ANC and the government towards the resolution of violence and intimidation. Both parties agreed upon the establishment of a Working Group to deal with, among other things, advising on mechanisms dealing with the release of political prisoners and the granting of immunity in respect of political offences to those inside and outside South Africa. The working group was advised to bear in mind what happened in Namibia and elsewhere and was instructed to complete its task before 21 May 1990. The proceedings of the Working Group were deemed to be confidential. The South African government undertook to review existing security legislation to align it with the new dynamics developing in South Africa in order to ensure normal and free political activities. It also reiterated its commitment to work towards the lifting of the state of emergency. In this context the ANC was expected to exert itself regarding conflict resolution. Therefore, the Groote Schuur agreement was an important breakthrough for the ANC in that it was able, for the first time, to force the apartheid regime to clear obstacles confronting constitutional development. However, within three months, it became clear that the government did not always act in good faith. It failed to implement the Groote Schuur agreements. The question of indemnity was effectively paralysed by administrative bureaucracy.

Also, the ANC and its alliance partners continued to insist on the intensification of the armed struggle. Almost at the same time of its announcement of its negotiation position in October 1987, the ANC embarked on a strategy later known as Operation Vula to strengthen its underground network inside South Africa. ANC strategists firmly believed that if the underground structure was consolidated and supported by a strong contingent of MK cadres with a military arsenal based inside the country, a decisive mass insurrection involving the people could be launched. For almost two years before its discovery in July 1990, the operation established structures, made widespread contacts, and smuggled into the country large quantities of arms and sophisticated military hardware. Thus, by the early 1990s, the ANC had a sophisticated military network inside the country, that was available to support the organisation in the negotiation process. This was supplemented during the latter period by recruitment for MK. For instance, Cyril Groep recalls that after a huge ANC rally in Umtata in 1989, he was requested by the ANC underground to recruit for MK. According to Groep, he was among a group of people that was informed that “there is going to be some political changes in the country and all that. But we have to intensify the struggle. We should increase our numbers, especially combat units within the country.” And then:

So 1990 came, there was black on black violence. There were threats left, right, and centre. ... There was this mad guy Gqosa there up in Bisho. ... He was with us and then Pik Botha came and then changed things. And then there was a lot of harassment in Ciskei. And then I was even told to identify and go on the recruitment. So then I

recruited 100 MKs at one time. One hundred MKs around Duncan Village. ... Then there was the friendly guy Holomisa you see. Chris Hanu at the time was in Umtata. ... So that means we had camps that we had established, you see, to train from these people. So a sizable number was sent ... and [for] the others we established a farm right in East London. ... [A]nd that is where hundreds of these internally trained members were trained, from 1990 up to 1994, just before elections. Because we knew there were threats from the right-wingers, we had to be prepared. We had to make sure that ... the revolution had to be protected. And we were preparing in case of any eventuality. So that means in Duncan Village alone, there were +/- 600 trained combat units who were ready, just for the order, you see.<sup>329</sup>

The final report of the Groote Schuur Working Group on political offences dated 21 May 1990, as amended, was accepted by both the ANC and the government. It was agreed that the guidelines which would be formulated in terms of the report would be applied in a phased manner. Hence it was not surprising that within a month after Operation Vula operatives were discovered, the ANC decided at the Pretoria Summit of 6 August 1990 to suspend the armed struggle with immediate effect.<sup>330</sup> Fanie van der Merwe adds: "After the Groote Schuur meeting there was now an agreement that the arms caches will be lifted, and that the people from underground would be allowed to come into the open, and there was an agreement that we would go for a national, for a peace convention."<sup>331</sup> According to Matthews Phosa:

... we went to the Pretoria Minute. The worst thing about the Pretoria discussions were that the day before we went there ... in the morning there was a headline saying ANC suspend the armed struggle. There was nothing as bad as going to the negotiations with the enemy knowing what you are going to concede. There was nothing as psychological as that, you know. That was killing us when we were in those negotiations. But we went as disciplined cadres of the movement and engaged in a dignified way. The talks ended the following morning at one am. Press conference was at two am and we had done exactly what the press said that we would do: suspend the armed struggle.<sup>332</sup>

As a result of the suspension of the armed struggle, no further action and related activities by the ANC and its military wing would take place. It was further agreed that a working group would be established to resolve all outstanding questions arising out of the Pretoria Minute to report by 15 September 1990. Both sides again committed themselves to do everything in their power to bring about a peaceful solution as quickly as possible. Both delegations representing the apartheid regime and the ANC expressed serious concern about the general level of violence, intimidation, and unrest in the country, particularly in Natal. The two sides agreed that in the context of the common search for peace and stability, it was vital that problems be solved through negotiation and peaceful means and that these should be fostered throughout South Africa. This message was to be aimed at all communities regardless of race, colour,

(329) Interview with Cyril Groep, by Brown Maaba, (Duncan Village, East London) 11 May 2002.

(330) Ratente, R. "Facing the challenges of transition." See p.123.

(331) Interview with Fanie van der Merwe.

(332) Interview with Matthews Phosa.

or creed. The apartheid regime committed itself to consider the lifting of the State of Emergency in Natal as early as possible in the light of positive consequences that were expected to result from the accord. The Pretoria Minute stipulated that the government was also expected to give immediate consideration to repealing all provisions of the Internal Security Act that:

- Refer to communism or the furthering thereof;
- Provide for a consolidated list;
- Provide for a prohibition on the publication of statements or writings of certain persons; and
- Provide for an amount to be deposited before a newspaper may be registered.<sup>333</sup>

The government was also expected to continue reviewing security legislation and its application in order to ensure free political activity and with the view to introducing amending legislation. But the decision to suspend the armed struggle was controversial as some MK members were disgruntled and, furthermore, the precise meaning of “suspension of armed struggle and related activities” in the Pretoria Minute created misunderstanding between the ANC and the apartheid regime. This misunderstanding led to bitter arguments, and although a Working Group was established to analyse this phrase, the regime insisted that the ANC should stop all other forms of the struggle, except substantive negotiations. But Mandela countered that the suspension of the armed struggle did not include mass action and added that it did not mean any change to the status quo of MK, except that it would stop engaging in armed combat. The government on its part understood the suspension to include an end to mass action, as well as dismantling of MK and the handing over of arms caches. These issues bedevilled the functioning of the Pretoria Minute Working Group, originally set to report on 15 September 1990, but it was only able to do so in early 1991.<sup>334</sup>

Mandela and De Klerk headed delegations to a meeting at DF Malan Airport, Cape Town, on 15 February 1991 in order to resolve outstanding issues. Matthews Phosa recalls that: “The armed struggle continued. The armed smuggling continued or infiltration. And they said let us have a meeting at DF Malan to talk about the armed struggle. Mass action continued. They said let us talk. That was the discussion. De Klerk spent hours talking why mass action.... it is affecting the economy. Why are we not lifting the sanctions?” This meeting took place in order to finalise the report of the Working Group convened under paragraph three of the Pretoria Minute. With reference to the term ‘suspension’, the Working Group reiterated that ‘suspension’ occurred as a step in the process of finding peaceful solutions, with the presumption that the process would lead to the situation where there would be no armed action.

(333) For the Pretoria Minute, see M. Hough and A. Du Plessis. “Selected Documents and Commentaries on Negotiations and Constitutional Development in the RSA: 1989-1994.” Pretoria: Institute for Strategic Studies, University of Pretoria, 1994.

(334) Ratente, R. “Facing the challenges of transition”: See p.123.

Under the terms of suspension of ‘armed action’ and ‘related activities’ by the ANC, with specific reference to the MK, it was agreed in the DF Malan Accord that the following would not take place: attacks by means of armaments, firearms, explosives, or incendiary devices; infiltration of men and material; creation of underground structures; statements inciting violence; threats of armed action; and training inside South Africa.

Hence, according to the DF Malan Accord, the ANC agreed to abandon military training inside South Africa, end the infiltration of armed combatants, and halt the creation of underground structures in exchange for the return of exiles to South Africa. It was agreed that membership of MK did not constitute a violation of any of the provisions of paragraph three of the Pretoria Minute, and that the population at large had a right to express its views through peaceful demonstrations. The security forces were to be directed to take cognisance of the suspension of armed action and related activities and that both parties would remain in close liaison with one another to ensure prompt and efficient reporting, investigation, and redressing of all allegations of unlawful activities by the security forces. A liaison committee comprising members of both parties was to be created to monitor the implementation and to give attention to further matters that might arise from the implementation of the Accord, such as proposed self-defence units.

Despite these agreements, many exiles experienced difficulties when they returned from abroad. Snuki Zikalala, who returned to South Africa with a United Nations passport in 1991, recalls that:

Then came the time when I was supposed to, because at the border gate they’ve given my kids something like fourteen days, fourteen days elapsed. Then I said to my wife I’m going to Pretoria Head office, Home Affairs, I’m going to apply for South African passports for my kids. ... We went to Home Affairs, next to Compol building. ... We were filling the forms with my wife and then two heavy guys just came and pushed my wife this side and surrounded us. They said: “*Kom met ons*”, ... Compol building, questioning me. They said: “Snuki Zikalala, you have arrived”, I said: “Who are you?”, ... They said you are Snuki Zikalala. They showed me my picture. I said: “Yes”. “Then Chris Hani’s top command of the ANC’s coming back. And if you don’t settle in negotiations this country will be in flames. So you are the top commands.” And I said: “Ja, I was before I went to school”. “But you are still.” I said: “Well yes, I still belong to MK.” They said: “Okay, *vat hom*.” I said to them: “Where to now?” ... For three months they put me into solitary confinement, three full months.<sup>335</sup>

The unilateral suspension of the armed struggle against the background of escalating conflict in which the IFP and right wing organisations were consolidating their military capabilities and the state still maintained the apparatus of repression raised serious questions within the ANC about the implications and timing of this decision. Violence continued unabated, leading to increasing disillusionment among both ANC supporters and the victimised communities. The ANC and Inkatha leadership

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(335) Interview with Snuki Zikalala, by Gregory Houston, (Johannesburg) 13 October 2004.

met for the first time on 29 January 1991 to discuss the violence between the two organisations. Curnick Ndlovu, a UDF leader from Natal, recalls:

But then the talks were going on. And they came to a point where, after the release of Madiba, ... when Inkatha was not wanting to go into the elections and what not, ... the first talks between the ANC and the IFP. We saw the ANC leadership arriving. In fact, we went to a meeting they called there; comrade Mandela, Sisulu, the rest of them. And they were informing us, that tomorrow they are having talks with the IFP. There was anger amongst the comrades. ... Okay, comrade Harry Gwala was there. He arrived, I think, with Chris Hani. ... Gwala was ... to say that he does not support the initiative that the comrades were taking, [because], in the first place, they were not told ... that they are going to have talks with the IFP. One comrade from Pietermaritzburg actually said: "You will actually hurt us, you know. But because we are here, we will let you go to the meeting. There is war here. We are still fighting. And if you think the stability is there, it's there. But we are allowing that there must be talks. But at least leadership must not come from the top." ... And one ... very popular Chief, Mhlabonzima, ... stood up and said: "Comrades, I know that what you are trying to do is not going to work. I've been there. You go there, you won't be surprised that by the time that those talks [take place] tomorrow, people will be killed by *impisi* [hyena- word used symbolically]; tomorrow while you are talking." And exactly that day, sometimes in Port Shepstone or Mbumbulu, sixteen were killed; on that very same day when they were having talks. ... So, we were supporting the talks anyway. But it was very difficult to convince our own members. People were dying everyday here or being harassed, not only by IFP, but by the forces who were behind [the violence]. Because the people who were very dangerous were these police who used to monitor us, and go all over the place, and go to our funerals. And you get our people burying say about four comrades in one day over the weekend. When they come back, two others will be killed – would have been shot there – either by *amabutho* or by anyone.<sup>336</sup>

Contrary to expectations that 1990 would see the removal of obstacles and the paving of the way for constitutional talks by 1991, the question of violence significantly disrupted both the ANC's efforts to rebuild its structures and its commitment to setting the terrain for negotiations. After the adoption of the Harare Declaration of 1989 by the international community, calls for an interim government and election of a constituent assembly were raised repeatedly by the ANC. For example, on 3 May 1990, Mandela called for national elections to a constituent assembly; in December 1990 an ANC document, *Programme of mass action to destroy apartheid and transfer power to the people*, stressed the demand for a constituent assembly and an interim government; this was reiterated at the ANC's December 1990, National Consultative Conference. This conference provided a medium for self-criticism and proper planning for the ANC. The adoption of the theme "1991: the year of mass action for the transfer of power," reflected an attempt by the ANC to bring mass struggle into the theatre of negotiations. All these issues were emphasized in the 8 January 1991

<sup>336</sup> Interview with Curnick Ndlovu, by Jabulani Sithole, (KwaMashu, Durban) 9 October 2001: SADET Oral History Project.

annual statement released by Mandela. The call for a constituent assembly was also endorsed by the ANC's National Conference in July 1991.<sup>337</sup>

More than four thousand delegates assembled at the historic Conference for a Democratic Future convened by the broad anti-apartheid liberation forces on 8 January 1991. The following are some of the resolutions on negotiations and the constituent assembly:

- To adopt the Harare Declaration on how the conflict in South Africa could be resolved and the solidarity and support of the Organisation of African Unity and the Frontline States in particular.
- To call for the constituent assembly established on a non-racial basis representing all the people of South Africa to draw up a New Constitution for our country.
- Only the constituent assembly has the right and duty to define a new constitution as well as the form and social content of a new and just society.<sup>338</sup>

Towards the end of 1991, proposals for three optional forms of interim government were circulated within the ANC for discussion. First was an Interim Government vested with sovereignty, which implied the transfer of legislative and executive powers from the existing parliament and cabinet. This transfer would provide for the dissolution of the existing structures, define the composition and tasks of the interim government, as well as pronounce on various aspects such as the administration of the country during the interim period, the role of the existing state departments, provincial and local government administrations, and the procedure in decision making. The second option considered was an Interim Governing Council. This body would leave the existing legislative and executive structures intact, but would have the power to veto bills passed by parliament and decisions taken by cabinet. It would be empowered to amend and make new laws by proclamation. A third option comprised an Independent Council composed either of representatives of political parties or of people of acknowledged integrity. This structure would only deal with certain functions that would be taken away from the present government, such as the holding of free and fair elections and the creation of a conducive climate for elections. It would be given the power to assume control over the security forces, to regulate and control access to the public media, to place a moratorium on controversial projects, and to require the government to take or refrain from taking particular actions.<sup>339</sup>

The different options of an interim government proposed by the ANC during the early 1990s had limitations and there was a lively debate within the ANC on this question. It involved Thabo Mbeki, Raymond Suttner, and Maria Van Driel. Most

(337) Ratente, R. "Room for Compromise: The African National Congress and Transitional Mechanism." Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies, February 1992: See p.3.

(338) For 1991 conference resolutions, see M. Hough and A. Du Plessis. "Selected Documents and Commentaries on Negotiations and Constitutional Development in the RSA: 1989-1994." Pretoria: Institute for Strategic Studies, University of Pretoria, 1994.

(339) Pahad, A. "Interim Government." Paper presented at the ANC's PWV Regional Conference. 5, 6 and 10 October 1991. See also "Government in the interim." *Mayibuye*, 1.2 (September 1990): See pp.30-31.

of the debates were carried out in *Mayibuye* and *Sechaba*, the ANC newsletters. In May 1991, *Mayibuye* editorialised, “life will not stop simply because society is in a state of transition.” It suggested that an interim government would have to manage and resolve structural problems caused by apartheid policies: “this will require the involvement of all the parties concerned, in the running of ministries, departments, and the public corporations.”<sup>340</sup>

Notwithstanding the latent problems within its proposals for an interim government and a constituent assembly, the ANC maintained the moral high ground over the question of transitional mechanisms towards a democratic South Africa. Its proposal for the holding of an all party conference to discuss details of these matters was translated into practice with the convening of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) in December 1991.

But what were the views of the other stakeholders during the early 1990s?

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the PAC noted that just like the ANC, it subscribed to the principle of one person one vote in a unitary state. It was also committed to the demand for the establishment of a constituent assembly where representatives of the people elected by universal adult suffrage would deliberate and enact a new constitution. Initially, the PAC refused to negotiate with the government and their stance was “we refuse to negotiate...for to do so will make us accomplices in our own oppression; to negotiate now is to capitulate now.” The PAC further asserted that it “was for peace, but not for appeasement,” and its “struggle for self-determination continues until victory is assured.”<sup>341</sup>

Politically, the PAC emphasized that it stood “for government of the Africans, for the Africans, by the Africans, with everybody who owes his allegiance and loyalty only to Africa and accepts democratic rule of an African majority being regarded as an African.” The following are preconditions the PAC set for any negotiations to take place:

- The abolition of the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts which reserve 90% of the land to the white settler.
- The 1950 Population Registration Act must be scrapped.
- The abolition of the 1953 Bantu Education Act.
- The abolition of the 1959 Promotion of the Bantu Self-Government Act.
- The South Africa Constitution Act must be scrapped.
- The abolition of all security laws which restrict our freedom of speech and of assembly, and the right for fair trial. We demand the lifting of the state of emergency.
- The total overthrow of white domination in all its forms—political, social, economic, and cultural, and the restoration of the African people of their inalienable right to land, and their right to self-determination.

(340) “Interim government: ideas form the ground.” *Mayibuye*. 2.4 (May 1991).

(341) Pan Africanist Congress of Azania. “Discussion document on negotiated settlement.” 7-8 July 1990. See also Z.L. Mothopeng. “The method of obtaining reforms brought about by negotiations rather than revolution.” n.d;

- The national emancipation of the nationally oppressed minorities – the Asians and so-called coloureds. In the view of the vocabulary of the PAC, coloureds are Africans.
- The complete emancipation of our European (white) nationals from the bondage of fear, of arrogance, of racism, and Herrenvolkism (the doctrine that whites are the chosen people of God).
- Politically, African majority rule, with all those who identify with the interests and aspirations of Africans being regarded as Africans.
- The guarantee of individual liberties as opposed to minority group rights. We are fighting precisely that group exclusiveness that the privileged want us to guarantee in the new order.
- Economically, a planned socialist economy, or equitable distribution of wealth, and the end of exploitation of man by man.<sup>342</sup>

The PAC further posed the following questions: can there be consensus between master and servant? Can we reconcile the irreconcilable? Can there be any doubt these talks (between the ANC and the apartheid regime) are yet another attempt to secure group privilege and to frustrate the majority of the oppressed? It was believed that De Klerk's proposals (or ruse!) were an attempt to ensure that the majority vote did not mean majority rule. In essence the baseline set by the apartheid regime was, according to the PAC, simply stated: "Votes for all, but whites rule, ok!" The organisation rejected negotiations for it believed that what has not been won on the battlefield will never be won at the negotiating table. Hence its main argument was that negotiating from a position of weakness opens the way to unacceptable compromise. Criticising the ANC, it argued that it did not see negotiations as another form of struggle, nor did it wish to "engage in the futile exercise of building castles in the air about a post-apartheid society."

The PAC's attitude towards negotiations was tested on 18 August 1990 when the government wrote to Zephania Mothopeng, one of its leaders, inviting the organisation to join negotiations. It took the PAC some time to decide on a response, after which it replied indicating its willingness to negotiate only the modalities of a constituent assembly. Addressing the 4th session of the OAU Ad-Hoc Committee meeting on southern Africa, held in Harare, Mothopeng argued that it would be foolhardy to talk of negotiations when the Pretoria regime still held an upper hand:

We still have an arrogant apartheid government which is determined to exploit the oppressed and dispossessed people of Azania (South Africa)... At present the question of negotiations is out... the answer is straight and simple but painful. It means

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(342) See speech by Johnson Mlambo at the consultative meeting between PAC and Pan Africanist movement delegates from inside (South Africa) at Harare, 24-26 November 1989, and also the Harare Communique adopted at this meeting. These documents are published in *Izwe Lethu*, a PAC publication.

therefore, we must have the people of Azania on par with the oppressors so that they can negotiate on equal ground. It means the position of the oppressor must be brought to the level or even lower than that of the (oppressed) people of Azania.<sup>343</sup>

Mothopeng informed the meeting attended by several heads of State and governments from Africa, the ANC, and SWAPO that negotiations actually began in 1910 after the formation of the Union of South Africa. Hence Bantustans and the tri-cameral parliament were a result of talks between the “Boers and a section of the oppressed who always pushed for short-cut solutions for selfish reasons.” He believed that negotiations that would bring positive results would “come when our people shall have increased their strength and the fire-power of the oppressor shall have been reduced significantly.” He was also of the view that when the OAU formed the Liberation Committee in 1963, it pledged itself to ceaselessly fight against colonialism throughout Africa. Now that most of Africa had been liberated, with Namibia about to become independent, Africa should not be retreating from South Africa by supporting substantive negotiations; hence his assertion that “Africa should not be intimidated by the myth of South African invincibility.”

The new president of the organisation, Clarence Makwetu, who succeeded Mothopeng after the latter’s death in October 1990, stated at the PAC’s national conference in late 1990 that a minimum condition for negotiation was that the assembly should be elected on a one person one vote basis defined by a common voter’s roll.<sup>344</sup> This account therefore highlighted a partial shift towards negotiations by the PAC, hence attempts by some of its strategists to introduce the idea that compromise was not necessarily a betrayal of PAC ideals. Makwetu, whilst addressing the Frontline Heads of State Summit held in Harare on 6 February 1991, and the Tanzania Press Club in Dar es Salaam on 2-6 March 1991, reminded his audience that both the PAC and ANC were prepared to accept the apartheid regime’s invitation for exploratory talks. This was on condition that De Klerk was prepared to discuss modalities for setting up an elected constituent assembly. It would be based on one person one vote and its main function would be to draw up the new Constitution. But De Klerk rejected this proposal and instead proposed an all Party Conference – inclusive of those who had no democratic mandate – to work out a new Constitution. According to Makwetu, the purpose of De Klerk’s strategy was to protect white privilege through the device of vetoes, thus depriving the oppressed majority of the right to unfettered self-determination. This conclusion resulted from De Klerk’s assertion that whatever dispensation is agreed, the package will be subject to the approval of the white minority electorate.<sup>345</sup>

Makwetu further argued that his organisation rejected this process because his organisation would not be prepared to make unacceptable compromises. He fully concurred with the OAU decision that the liberation movements must first form

(343) “Not Yet Time for Negotiations: says PAC President.” *Azania News*. 26.4 and 5: See p.28.

(344) *Southern Africa Report*. 8.50 (14 December 1990).

(345) *Azania News*. 26.7 (January- March 1991): See pp.24 -25 and pp.30-31.

a United Patriotic Front (PF) prior to any other conference called or organised by the apartheid regime. Makwetu emphasized that the PAC's disagreement with the ANC centred around his organisation's rejection of an Interim Government. This was because "in all circumstances, the PAC cannot be co-managers of Apartheid for that in essence is what an Interim Government will be." A PAC member, Mr. S. Qhina, put the PAC view of events as follows:

Between 1992 and 1993 when we had our last conference in Durban, trying to unite the ANC and PAC, to form a patriotic front. The purpose was to unite the executives in order to tackle the government together. We had no other way except this. The organisations had been unbanned and we had to find a way to make sure when voting comes we would win the elections. So there was agreement and both organisations signed. That is what was so painful to me. After we had signed ... the ANC pulled out. We had already called the government to the World Trade Centre and we were going to tell them about the constituent assembly, where we were all going to meet and build a new constitution that will bind everyone. There would be a delegation nominated from all the organisations, including the government, and [we would] sit in a neutral place and find a neutral chairperson where everyone would voice out their views. The government made a plan to sit down with the ANC and discuss on the side. They wanted to chair this meeting, but we didn't want that the government chairs the meeting. We told them to send a delegation like all of us. The PAC's purpose in this meeting was to make sure that everyone was involved, even the white people. ... We wanted to get back our land and that is why we wanted this constituent assembly.<sup>346</sup>

According to the PAC, "negotiations would be a futile exercise because they were nothing but a call for the liberation movement to surrender. Negotiations were just a passing phase and the PAC, as a principal organisation, would never sell out to them." In short, the PAC was ambivalent about substantive negotiation; the organisation called for a constituent assembly to discuss one person one vote at a particular moment only to turn against this viewpoint by declaring that negotiations were a futile exercise whenever its leadership addressed a different audience.

Aca Mgxashe, a leading member of the PAC who returned to the country only in 1994, recalls that PAC members were

...involved in the US, both as PAC and also as SAASMO, Southern Africa Azanian Student Movement .... to kind of oppose the settlement process itself, because we were convinced that we couldn't negotiate on any bases of strength but of weakness, because we hadn't done much in the liberation war, for both subjective as well as objective reasons.<sup>347</sup>

The Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) condemned the talks between the ANC and the government that resulted in the Groote Schuur minutes and other agreements as "delaying the struggle." AZAPO's publicity secretary, Strini Moodley, said "the De Klerk regime has succeeded in tying up the ANC in the perennial structures designed to delay the struggle, and to water down solutions to our problems in this country."

(346) Interview with Mr. S. Qhina, 1 July 2002.

(347) Interview with Mxolisi Ace Mgxashe, by Brown Maaba, (Cape Town) 26 January 2002.

AZAPO further noted that nothing substantive had emerged from the Groote Schuur Minute document except for a series of platitudes which had only legitimised the apartheid regime. It reckoned that the ANC had been trapped in a well-laid plan designed by De Klerk, Thatcher, and Bush Sr. with the connivance of Gorbachev and several African heads of state. The organisation posed the following questions: “Why must a working group be set up to investigate the release of political prisoners? Why must the De Klerk regime be given the opportunity to review security?” According to AZAPO, these were not matters for discussion: “Why must there be a committee to make recommendations on a definition of political offences in South Africa?” Leaders of this organisation believed that the ANC was set on a path of selling out by forging an alliance with the National Party – an alliance that had the South African people in perplexity. As a result, AZAPO’s position paper on substantive negotiations proposed the following guidelines as pre-conditions in “occupied Azania.”

To consolidate their position against substantive negotiations, AZAPO peddled the view that negotiations or negotiated settlements are by their very nature a compromise. The organisation highlighted the point that imperialists initiated or hijacked liberation movements for their own ulterior motives. These imperialists always succeeded in neutralising revolutionary elements within the liberation movements, while at the same time choosing their “crown princes” whom they spared no effort at enhancing their status and images. According to AZAPO, understanding the nature of the struggle, through study and intelligence services, imperialist are always able to capture ethos and pathos of the struggle for national liberation. To conclude, the leadership of AZAPO contended that a negotiated settlement during the late 1980s and early 1990s in occupied Azania (South Africa) did not bode well for the country. As in 1985-1986, when such language was common even to the ranks of the oppressed and exploited, AZAPO emphasised a slogan that read, “Death to Negotiated Settlements.”<sup>348</sup>

The view of the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania (BCMA), AZAPO’s sister organisation, was that Black people should not be fooled by the whirlwind of talks by liberal whites and their lackeys that white oppressors were about to hand over power to the majority of the people. This view was expressed by Mosibudi Mangena, the

leader of the BCMA, in an interview in Harare during the late 1980s with Mathatha Tsedu of the *Sowetan* newspaper. Mangena was of the view that the BCMA would only go into negotiations if the government accepted one person one vote and the redistribution of wealth as a solution. He noted that “freedom without distribution would simply make us free beggars in our own country.” He was also of the view that

moves to force blacks into premature negotiations were the result of the change in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Mangena elaborated that a ploy was in place whereby the negotiation process might begin with a variation of actors, so as to split the broad liberation movement. Such a move, spearheaded by the apartheid

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(348) AZAPO. “On a negotiated settlement.” nd.

regime, would seek to exclude, isolate, and marginalise, in its entirety, the PAC and any section of the Charterist camp which, in Mangena's words, "is not amenable to shameful compromises." Hence he emphasised, "a process may start in which all the three main tendencies of the liberation movement are involved. It is an unlikely scenario but even if this scenario comes about, the regime, believing in its strength, at the present time, is likely to be most intransigent." Moreover, Mangena believed that talks with the ruling party were likely to collapse without achieving anything.<sup>349</sup>

The IFP stand on negotiations was reflected in document issued by the organisation in 1989.<sup>350</sup> Its preface was a statement attributed to Oscar Dhlomo, the IFP's Secretary General, who boasted that his party 'championed' negotiation politics in South Africa:

Negotiations politics and non-violent political change, which Inkatha has confidently championed since its founding in 1975, now occupy the centre stage of South Africa. All other strategies are becoming increasingly unrealistic and unworkable. As the author of negotiation politics and non violent change in black politics, Inkatha is destined to play an even more prominent role in the political developments that are unfolding.<sup>351</sup>

The IFP's document identified the following as obstacles impeding substantive negotiations:

- Exclusive as opposed to inclusive negotiations. [The IFP believed that the South African government favoured exclusive negotiations, that is, negotiations that exclude certain groups and individuals, who, for one reason or the other, are not acceptable to it as negotiating partners.] Inkatha favours inclusive negotiations, that is, negotiations that include all groups and individuals without any pre-conditions. Inkatha believes that inclusive negotiations would entail the acceptance of the following measures by the South African government:
- The immediate and unconditional release of Mr. Nelson Mandela and other Rivonia trialists as well as the release of all those political prisoners that have already served over 15 years. Other political prisoners may also be considered for release;
- Declaration of an amnesty which would enable all political exiles to return to South Africa and participate in negotiations. The amnesty would have to be adequately guaranteed and returning exiles would need to be assured of immunity from prosecution;
- Unbanning organisations so that leaders might freely consult with their followers before and during negotiations;
- The lifting of the State of Emergency, the release of political detainees and the restoration of press freedom. This should be done to facilitate free debate and assembly;

(349) "Talks will split liberation movement." *Sowetan*, nd.

(350) Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe. "This is where we stand."

(351) Dhlomo, O. Address to the IFP's annual conference. uLundi, 8 July 1989.

- The Group Areas Act, the Population Registration Act, and the Separation Amenities Act must be removed; and
- The existence of a Tri-Cameral Parliament and the government's Homeland policy was also an obstacle to negotiations.

Joe Matthews, a former leader of Inkatha, years later summarised Inkatha's position on negotiations as follows:

The IFP was not negotiating with the ANC over national problems; basically it was over the destiny of KwaZulu-Natal, and therefore the IFP putting forward the concept of federalism, even in the national negotiations, supporting a federal, instead of a unitary state. But that was because under a federal system, KwaZulu-Natal would have more authority than in a unitary state, you see.<sup>352</sup>

He adds that none of the homeland leaders who adopted a similar position to that of Inkatha "pushed the idea of something separate from South Africa. They pushed for federalism, you see. They pushed for more authority, in other words, a weaker central government, and stronger provincial governments. That's what they were pushing. ... Mangope was thinking that the Batswana would support him so he would at least have the authority in that part of South Africa." An ordinary supporter of the Mangope's United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP) has the following impression of their leader's view of the negotiations:

You know, as a member of the UCDP, I don't know whether Mangope could see that things were not going to go right. I don't know. I am not trying to judge. But when we had our ordinary conference here, Mangope said I want to work with these people. But I still want to see what they want to do. I don't know what the negotiation up there, how were they and how did they approach Mangope. Mangope said I want to see first what these people want to do; it is after that that I will join. But he cautioned us that: "You must be very careful. These people are coming to take your things."<sup>353</sup>

The white controlled Conservative Party's (CP) election manifesto of 1989 alluded to the fact that the CP was prepared to negotiate with the democratically elected leaders of other communities, but regarded the white community's right to self-determination as non-negotiable. The CP argued that it would not negotiate with the ANC or any 'terrorist' organisation which practiced or promoted violence and communism, nor would it allow any such negotiations to take place. Its manifesto further accentuated the fact that it was not prepared to share power with the so-called urban black and was prepared to point out to them the success of partition and separate development. In any negotiations over the exercising of what the CP termed non-white political rights, the white community's right to self-determination was deemed to be always non-negotiable.<sup>354</sup>

(352) Interview with Joe Matthews, by Sifiso Ndlovu, (Pretoria) 18 July 2001.

(353) Interview with Angelita Bloem, by Chitja Twala and BM Makhubalo, (Thaba Nchu) 31 May 2004.

(354) The Conservative Party of South Africa Election Manifesto, 6 September 1989.

The Democratic Party (DP) was not to be left behind, and in 1989 it published a document on negotiations that explained its constitutional vision. In a section titled “Real negotiation is the Key,” the DP implored that it will change the constitution should it happen that it won the 1989 whites only elections. It was of the view that “our new constitution must be the result of negotiation between the true leaders of all South Africa’s groups and communities.” However, real negotiations could not take place while many of the leaders and organisations were banned, the state of emergency was still in force, and apartheid laws were on the statute book. It also believed that successful negotiations could only take place in a stable climate and therefore the party would ensure the maintenance of law and order during substantive negotiations.<sup>355</sup>

By September 1990, the National Executive Committee of the ANC was considering breaking off all talks with the apartheid regime because of the escalating political violence. In April 1991, the ANC sent an ultimatum to the government threatening to break off preliminary negotiations if, by 9 May, the government had not heeded its demand to ban the public display of dangerous weapons and also had not taken measures against the Ministers of Law and Order and Defence and security officials implicated in perpetuating the horrendous violence engulfing the country. The tensions and hostilities that ensued between the ANC and the NP over the issue of violence paved the way for a vigorous search for ways to stop the violence.

On 27 June 1991, in partial fulfilment of his pledge to remove the legislation underpinning apartheid, De Klerk signed eight Acts of Parliament, repealing many of the pillars of apartheid, including the Group Areas Act of 1966, the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, and the Population Registration Act of 1950. At least twenty-two Acts of Parliament and literally hundreds of by-laws and provincial ordinances which were part of apartheid legislation remained on the statute books, however, including: the Electoral Act of 1979, which created separate franchises for Whites, Coloureds, and Indians, but no franchise at all for Africans; the General Pensions Act of 1979, which provided differential allocation of pensions according to racial group; and the Defence Act of 1957 which provided for whites-only compulsory military service.<sup>356</sup> This development led to preparation by the church and business leaders for the signing of the National Peace Accord in September 1991. The momentum for negotiations that included signing of this accord was fast tracked at the ANC’s National Conference held in Durban on 5 and 6 July 1991. While the ANC leadership came under scathing attack for the compromises they had already made on suspending the armed struggle, they were nevertheless given a mandate to pursue negotiations.

The revelations of the Inkathagate scandal on 9 July 1991 pointed to massive government financial support for the IFP and strengthened the ANC’s call for the installation of an interim government. For the first time, and after deviating from its delaying tactics, the apartheid regime agreed to the creation of some sort of

(355) The Democratic Party: A Government in the making, (political party pamphlet) nd.

(356) Wardrop, J. “The State, Politics and Violence.” See pp.51-2.

transitional arrangement which would govern during the period of transition. Fanie van der Merwe recalls the following events immediately preceding the signing of the Accord.

The morning we had agreement on the text, eleven o'clock. That was by changing a word on the ... bearing of arms; got the agreement. Everybody agreed; Inkatha agreed. Then, six o'clock that evening, here in the Union Building, when the government side now also had to agree, Madiba phoned De Klerk, and he said: "You know what, I've just been told by my people, and Inkatha people said that they agreed to this but they're not going to stick to this bearing of arms. They're not going to implement it. And I've turned it down plain. So that's the thing. Then I'm not coming". So De Klerk says to me: "Now, you go. You go and talk to him". So I went. He was staying there at the Carlton [Hotel]. ... I went back there and eventually I found Uncle Frank (Madlose) and I said to him: "But, how can you now?" So he said: "No, no, no. Of course, let me speak to Madiba". And I was sitting in his room with him. Now he picks up the phone, and I got Madiba and Frank speaks with him. And he says to Madiba: "But Madiba, how do you now think we will enter into an agreement like that and not carry it out? Of course we will carry it out. Of course we will ... abide by it, not to carry arms at meetings in the street. Of course we will do it". And ... then Madiba ... talked to me, and he says: "Okay, I'll come there. You can tell De Klerk I'll be there". And I phoned De Klerk and I said Madiba will be there – the next day. That morning, seven o'clock I woke up and I heard this noise in the street outside. And went there, and what did you have; phalanx upon phalanx of Zulu *impis*. The whole street full, and in battle order. ... It was a frightening sight. All of them fully armed. Whole street full of them. And I went to look for Oom Frank. I said: "Oom Frank, but look now". And he says: "But they've come to honour their King". Now, there we sit again. Eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock, the King went out onto the balcony, and the people they dispersed; they went back to the hostels, I presume.<sup>357</sup>

The coming together of various parties on 14 September 1991 to sign the Peace Accord also added momentum to the cordial relations developing between the chief negotiating parties. The Accord was signed in order to signify a common purpose to bring the political violence to an end and set out the codes of conduct, procedures, and mechanisms to achieve this goal. The signatories recognised the fact that the prevalence of political violence in South Africa caused untold hardship to all its citizens, disruption, loss of life, and property. It also jeopardised the very process of peaceful political transformation and threatened to leave a legacy of insurmountable divisions and deep bitterness. Moreover, the dehumanising fact fostered by the festering violence had to be eliminated at all costs. In order to achieve some measure of stability and consolidate the peace process, priority had to be about addressing the broader socio-economic and development issues that fanned the flames of political violence.

The police force, which was by definition included those from all self-governing territories, were accorded a central role to play in terminating the escalating violence

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(357) Interview with Fanie van der Merwe.

and preventing possible perpetration of such violence. This role was despite the fact that past, questionable action of the police force sowed the seeds of distrust between them and the affected communities. It was therefore recommended that sound policing practices and a co-operative relationship between the police and the communities were necessary. Chapter 1 of the Peace Accord defined the principles informed by the fact that the establishment of a multi-party democracy in South Africa was impossible in a climate of violence, intimidation, and fear. In order to ensure democratic political activity, all signatories of the National Peace Accord were expected to recognise and uphold fundamental rights and corresponding responsibilities informing those rights. These fundamental rights included the right of every individual to: freedom of conscience and belief; freedom of speech and expression; freedom of association with others; peaceful assembly; freedom of movement; and freedom to participate in peaceful political activity.

All signatories had to be cognisant of the fact that these rights and responsibilities were derived from established democratic principles, namely:

- Democratic sovereignty derives from the people, whose right is to elect their government and hold it accountable at the polls for its conduct of their affairs;
- The citizens must therefore be informed and aware that political parties and the media must be free to impart information and opinion;
- There should be an active civil society with different interest groups freely participating therein;
- Political parties and organisations, as well as leaders and other citizens, have an obligation to refrain from incitement to violence and hatred.<sup>358</sup>

The National Peace Accord therefore made it easier for participants to sign the Declaration of Intent at CODESA, which convened on 20 and 21 December 1991 at the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park. But the withdrawal of the PAC from the CODESA preparatory meeting on 29 November, the glaring absence of the right wing Conservative Party, and the insistence by Buthelezi on a separate delegation for KwaZulu and the king at the talks, created a set of problems that were to hound CODESA.<sup>359</sup>

The pre-CODESA era was marked by intense political posturing. In October 1991, the PAC joined the ANC and other organisations in a Patriotic Front (PF) conference convened in Durban; this meeting adopted a set of objectives which formulated a framework for talks with the government and other parties. It endorsed, for example, an all party conference and interim government, although the PAC chose to call these a “pre-constituent assembly conference” and a “transitional authority.” The PAC’s presence and its endorsement of the resolutions suggested that it was prepared to

(358) For Peace Accord of 14 September 1991, see Chapter One. M. Hough and A. Du Plessis. “Selected Documents and Commentaries on Negotiations and Constitutional Development in the RSA: 1989-1994.” Pretoria: Institute for Strategic Studies, University of Pretoria, 1994.

(359) Ratente, R. “Facing challenges of transition.”

join the negotiations in alliance with the ANC and other Patriotic Front participants. This endorsement seemed to be confirmed when the PAC joined preparatory meetings with the government and other parties to discuss an all-party conference, which was to become known as CODESA. On 29 November 1991, however, the PAC withdrew from the preparatory meeting after its demand for a neutral chair and venue were rejected. It said it had not necessarily left the process permanently, but was to consult its constituency on this issue. It convened a conference in December to discuss participation in CODESA, but, while the leadership seemed willing to consider participation, it arrived at the conference to find delegates vociferously and, apparently unanimously, opposed to CODESA. Inevitably the conference became an anti-CODESA rally, and the PAC remained outside the process. Its leadership then argued that its withdrawal was informed by three factors: the supposed flouting of the Patriotic Front agreement by the ANC and other parties, the undemocratic way in which CODESA was composed, and the belief that CODESA would not deliver any goods that would meet the expectations of the people.<sup>360</sup>

The PAC leaders contended, firstly, that the Patriotic Front meeting had agreed that both the PAC and ANC would present a united front at negotiations. They found out that this was not the case when the ANC and other parties challenged the PAC's objection to the selection of judges to chair the conference on the grounds that they were state employees. According to Gora Ebrahim, the PAC discovered that there were prior agreements between the ANC and the government on the functioning of CODESA. The PAC further argued that the principle of "sufficient consensus" adopted at CODESA meant that decisions required the consent of the ANC and the government, rather than a majority vote. This confirmed an agreement between the two to direct the CODESA process. PAC leaders also insisted that they rejected the forum because delegates were not elected. Barney Desai, the PAC's Information Secretary, argued that negotiators should have a mandate to negotiate on behalf of their perceived constituency. Count Petersen, the then PAC representative at the UN, claimed that the Indian community was represented at CODESA by four parties and the African majority was represented by only two parties, the ANC and SACP.

The PAC also rejected the participation of homeland groups and those parties that formed part of the Tri-Cameral Parliament as independent entities. While it accepted the presence of some of these groups at the PF conference, the PAC claimed that it was agreed that these groups would not enjoy independent representation. According to the PAC's campaign officer, Ntsundeni Madzunya, CODESA discussed constitutional principles which were meant to be discussed at an elected assembly. He implied that many of the fundamental decisions would be taken by an unelected body, which would limit the scope of an elected assembly. Barney Desai joined him and suggested that this will inevitably produce a constitution tailored to the needs

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(360) Ratente, R. "Liberation and Negotiation: The Pan Africanist Congress in the South African Transition." Centre for Policy Studies, 5.2 (August 1992).

of the white minority. Notwithstanding all these claims by the PAC, it is obvious that a few feathers were ruffled during the pre-CODESA meeting of the Patriotic Front. The PAC realised that it was not going to influence major decision makers for it had very little to offer in the all-party negotiations that were proposed. Its vision of the transition was rejected by all the other players, and it lacked strategic foresight within the negotiation process to extract concessions from its opponents. Given this situation, the PAC had no options but to withdraw from the CODESA talks. The Conservative Party also did not participate in the talks.

The CODESA Declaration of Intent had as its primary objective the bringing about of a united and democratic South Africa, and it further intended to set in motion the process of drawing up a new constitution. It lucidly specified that decisions at CODESA should be taken by sufficient consensus of all parties represented, and not only by the ANC and the government. CODESA was given the power to draft legislation, but lacked legal authority to transform decisions into law. However, the government undertook to endorse CODESA resolutions using its majority in parliament. Consisting of nineteen parties, CODESA became the negotiating forum until 1992. Regardless of size, existing political groupings were all given the same status, powers, and representation. Among participants were the political parties in the various houses of the Tri-Cameral Parliament, political parties formed in the homelands, and ‘the governments’ of the Bantustans. According to F.W. de Klerk:

I for a long time believed, and went into, really into, the negotiations with a concept that they [the Bantustans] should have a role to play. And therefore we insisted also that they be given a place at the table in CODESA, and that their voices be heard.<sup>361</sup>

The participants were, in alphabetical order, the: African National Congress; Bophuthatswana Government; Democratic Party; Dikwankwetla Party; Inkatha Freedom Party; Inyandza National Movement; Intando Yesizwe Party; Labour Party of South Africa; National People’s Party; Natal/Transvaal Indian Congress; National Party; National People’s Party; Solidarity; South African Communist Party; Transkei Government; United People’s Front; Venda Government; and Ximoko Progressive Party. These parties declared their solemn commitment to:

1. To bring about an undivided South Africa with one nation sharing a common citizenship, patriotism, and loyalty, pursuing, amidst diversity, freedom, equality and security for all irrespective of race, colour, sex, or creed, a country free from apartheid or any other form of discrimination or domination;
2. to work to heal the divisions of the past, to secure the advancement of all, and to establish a free and open society based on democratic values where the dignity, worth, and rights of every South African are protected by law;

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<sup>361</sup>) Interview with F.W. de Klerk, by Chris Saunders and Gregory Houston, (Cape Town) 10 February 2003.

3. to strive to improve the quality of life of South Africans through policies that will promote economic growth and human development and ensure equal opportunities and social justice for all South Africans;
4. to create a climate conducive to peaceful constitutional change by eliminating violence and destabilisation and by promoting free political participation, discussion, and debate;
5. to set in motion the process of drawing up and establishing a constitution that will ensure, inter alia:
  - a) that South Africa will be a united, democratic, non-racial, and non-sexist state in which sovereign authority is exercised over the whole of its territory;
  - b) that the Constitution will be the supreme law and that it will be guarded over by an independent, non-racial, and impartial judiciary;
  - c) that there will be a multi-party democracy with the right to form and join political parties and with regular elections on the basis of universal adult suffrage on a common voters' roll; in general the basic electoral system shall be that of proportional representation;
  - d) that there shall be a separation of powers between the legislature, executive, and judiciary with appropriate checks and balances;
  - e) that the diversity of languages, cultures, and religions of the people of South Africa shall be acknowledged;
  - f) that all shall enjoy universally accepted human rights, freedoms, and civil liberties including freedom of religion, speech, and assembly protected by an entrenched and justiciable Bill of Rights and a legal system that guaranteed equality of all before the law.<sup>362</sup>

Each of the nineteen participants were entitled to field ten delegates and ten advisors for the Working Groups, representations on the Management Committee and the Gender Advisory Committee, plus a number of support staff. CODESA was divided into five Working Groups, and these were: (1) creating of a climate for free political activity; (2) constitutional principles; (3) transitional arrangements; (4) the future of the TBVC states; and (5) timeframes and implementation. Working Group 1 had three sub-committees dealing with the completion of the reconciliation process, continuation of the security and socio-economic process, and the creation of a climate and opportunity for political organising. Working Group 4 had four subcommittees focussing on testing the will of the people; citizenship; administrative, financial, and practical implications; as well as political, constitutional, and legal implications. A management committee was comprised of a secretariat with Mac Maharaj and Fanie van der Merwe as chairpersons of the negotiation forum. All parties had the freedom

(362) Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA 1). "Declaration of Intent," 20 December 1991. See also F. Ginwala. "Into and Out of Codesa Negotiations." in N. Etherington (ed). *Peace, Politics and Violence in the New South Africa*. London: Hans Zell Publishers, 1992: See Chapter 1.

of appointing their own representatives expected to participate without fear in each working group. As an example, the spread of the ANC representatives in the working groups was as follows: Working Group 1: Joe Modise, Jacob Zuma, Penuel Maduna, and Kadar Asmal (advisor); Working Group 2: Cyril Ramaphosa, Mohammed Valli Moosa, Frene Ginwala, and an advisor, Arthur Chakalson; Working Group 3: Thabo Mbeki, Joe Nhlanhla, Joel Netshitenzhe, and Dullar Omar (advisor); Working Group 4: Alfred Nzo, Matthews Phosa, Barbara Masekela, and Pius Langa; and Working Group 5: Pallo Jordan, Zola Skweyiya, Lucille Meyer, and George Bizos. Some of the parties were so weak that they had considerable difficulty in mustering and sustaining such large delegations over months of negotiations. Many featured civil servants seconded by Pretoria, non-South African academic advisers, lawyers, and others. On 31 March 1992, the CODESA Management Committee agreed to establish a Gender Advisory Committee to Working Groups on the gender implications of decisions taken by the Convention.

But the ANC's position within the talks was strengthened by the fact that, according to F.W. de Klerk:

The ANC then, if I look back and analyse now with hindsight, really succeeded in co-opting most of the Bantustan leaders, except for Buthelezi and Mangope.<sup>363</sup>

Indeed, as Andries Mahlangu points out, an ANC aligned organisation had taken over power in the KwaNdebele homeland by 1989.<sup>364</sup> Similar shifts had occurred earlier in the Transkei, while the Ciskei's military leader, Oupa Gqoza, rejected all overtures from the ANC. Nor was the organisation opposed, in principle, to the participation of the Bantustans. George Madoda, an ANC activist in Bophuthatswana in the early 1990s that vigorously campaigned to restrict Bophuthatswana from the negotiations, states that he "won't forget the day we were sitting at Klerkdorp discussing these things and I sort of robustly argued with Joe Modise sitting there. And he looks at me and says: 'You know a struggle is? We cannot afford to get Mangope out of the negotiations at this point. We need to have that balance that shows that we just move through these negotiations so that he can die naturally.' And he was right."<sup>365</sup>

Shifts and compromises by the two major parties at CODESA were apparent during deliberations. The ANC compromised on the legitimacy of the South African parliament. Insistence that all matters pertaining to the constitution be deliberated within an elected forum was dropped. The call for all deliberations to be open to public scrutiny and the earlier insistence that the party that won the majority of the votes should have an uncontested discretion to write the constitution were discarded. These strategic shifts and compromises allowed the negotiation process to proceed. Despite major hurdles that impeded the process, the fact that an agreement was finally reached in CODESA to install an interim government and hold elections to

(363) Interview with F.W. de Klerk.

(364) Interview with Andries Mahlangu, by Lestja Marepo, September 2003: SADET Oral History Project.

(365) Interview with George Madoda, by Refiloe Motswenyane, (Mmabath) 8 April 2004.

a constituent assembly as demanded by the ANC gave the liberation movement the moral high ground in determining the course of transition.<sup>366</sup>

Compromises did not come only from the ANC. The NP government, too, shifted from a paradigm of sole, legal control of the transition period to accommodation. The NP at first embraced options that were regarded as impracticable and unacceptable. For example, in November 1990 the NP had publicly rejected the ANC's proposals

for an interim government and a constituent assembly. In an interview in the *Star* newspaper, Minister Gerrit Viljoen argued that "the government had made it clear all along that it is not in favour of either a constituent assembly or an interim government."<sup>367</sup> Opposing parties strongly challenged the plan that the apartheid regime govern the country during the transition period and that its security forces would maintain law and order. However, the vicissitudes of the transition process, its indeterminacy and its vulnerability to influence also forced the NP to shift positions and accommodate opposite viewpoints and proposals through compromise. Revelations of its funding of Inkatha compelled it to embrace the ANC's proposal for an interim government.

Negotiations at CODESA also influenced the apartheid regime to accept the notion of an elected constituent assembly which would draft the final constitution. On 24 January 1992, the government outlined its plans to hand over power to a power-sharing administration. In his speech at the opening of parliament, De Klerk reaffirmed the government's commitment to the establishment of a transitional government and the creation of a new parliament, but argued that the constitutional changes had to be approved by a referendum. De Klerk was desperate to appease the white electorate, and in consequence told parliament that "the institutions of any transitional government will have to take place constitutionally and be based on power-sharing." But the situation was different outside the negotiations with the growth of the white right-wing and the Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB) posing serious threat to the transition process. Thus, a decision was then taken to call this whites-only referendum on 17 March 1992. The following questions were posed: "Do you support continuation of the reform process which the State President began on February 2, 1990, and which is aimed at a new constitution through negotiation?" Eventually, 68.6% of white voters responded positively on the question.<sup>368</sup> While the results of the referendum were a resounding 'yes', which logically implied a speedy move towards a negotiated settlement, the NP interpreted the results to mean that it was untouchable and could dictate the terms. The government began to slow down the negotiations and also showed contempt to existing protocol by arriving late at meetings. They also appointed Tertius Delport, a young junior minister, as the head

(366) Ratente, R. "Facing the challenges of transition." See p.155.

(367) *Star* newspaper, Minister Gerrit Viljoen. 3 November, 1990.

(368) Hough, M. and A. Du Plessis. "Selected Documents and Commentaries on Negotiations and Constitutional Development in the RSA: 1989-1994." Institute for Strategic Studies, University of Pretoria, 1994: See p.13.

of the government negotiating team, attending talks without a full mandate.<sup>369</sup> F.W. de Klerk recalls that:

On the one hand, it [the referendum] liberated me from constantly having to worry about the conservative element because I now had even clearer guidelines, which we spelt out in that referendum. And as long as I stayed within it, I was within my mandate. But within those guidelines were a number of important issues which made also some people make the choice for “yes” rather than “no”. I didn’t say we will go for this, this, and this; they might have voted no. So I was honour bound to do that. But I felt, yes, I now have a clear, clear mandate and I can really move forward. And, I mean my choice not to do things piece-meal, but to complete it within one term was a choice which I made before I made the speech on the 2nd of February 1990. Because, I felt, and believed, and with hindsight I still believe, that if we tried to stretch it out, and make it a slow change process and therefore for one side more acceptable, it would have floundered as the negotiation process in Israel and Palestine has floundered, and wherever you take too long, new forces come to the fore and you lose your way. And I sincerely, since my election as leader of the National Party, believed we have to do it in an orderly way without ever creating a constitutional vacuum; we have to move fast....<sup>370</sup>

But with incessant pressure applied by the ANC, on 23 March 1992, the government tabled a two-phase constitutional proposal. The first phase entailed the appointment by CODESA of multi-party transitional councils to oversee elections, with ultimate responsibility remaining with the NP government. The second phase provided for elections for a transitional administration which would remain in power for up to ten years, and would include a multi-person presidency and a constitutional drafting parliament. These proposals were met with opposition. The ANC welcomed the plan for an elected constitutional drafting body, but rejected the other aspects on the ground that it believed the government wanted to be both ‘player and referee’ during the first phase of transition. On 30 March, Gerrit Viljoen provided further details of the plans for the constitution-making body. The ANC rejected the proposals and made counter-proposals which called for the new constitution to be drafted and adopted by a 400 member assembly elected on the basis of universal suffrage, using a system of proportional representation. This assembly should allow the widest possible representation, with decisions taken by a two-thirds majority.<sup>371</sup>

Most disturbing to other parties was the tabling of a string of new constitutional proposals, including one calling for a troika or presidential council, which deviated from earlier positions and were rejected by a majority of the delegates. These were made by De Klerk during a budget debate in parliament on 23 April 1992. The apartheid regime also called upon the ANC to disband MK and to terminate the armed struggle despite the fact that agreements were reached in both the Pretoria and D.F. Malan Minutes. Through its newly-found confidence, the government also called upon political parties to end calls for international sanctions and the isolation of

(369) Ratente, R. “Facing the challenges of transition”: See p.156.

(370) Interview with F.W. de Klerk.

(371) Hough, M. and A. Du Plessis. “Selected Documents”: See pp.14-15.

South Africa. It also insisted that it had nothing to do with the violence engulfing the country, and that black leaders should themselves solve the issue of violence. Despite the broader consensus in CODESA around a number of issues, government stalling continued and these sessions ended in deadlock and the failure of the delegates to adopt the reports of the Working Groups. This accounted to a considerable extent for a lack of consensus in Working Group 2 on Constitutional Principles. Even last minute efforts were made on the eve and on the morning of the two plenary sessions of CODESA 2 on 15 and 16 May 1992 to break the logjam, but there were no indications of serious will on the part of government.

Except for the deadlock in Working Group 2, CODESA 1 had made significant agreements in other Working Groups. For example, Working Group 1 agreed upon the speeding up of the release of political prisoners and the return of exiles and their families. There was consensus that the interim government could impose emergency regulations and detention without trial on the advice of the multi-party executive council. There was agreement that discriminatory laws should be repealed. It was also agreed that the use of military means to pursue political objectives would end. It was agreed that the political neutrality of and fair access to state controlled media, including the SABC and television as well those in the TBVC states, would be established. The deadlock in Working Group 2 that led to the collapse of CODESA 1 revolved around the percentage needed to take decisions on a final constitution. The government and the IFP insisted on 75%, while the ANC and its allies argued that a two thirds majority should ratify a new constitution. With the failure of CODESA, a Management Committee was mandated to carry forward the work of the five working groups, examine all agreements to explore ways of their speedy implementation, and establish technical committees to assist it when necessary. Finally, it was to convene a CODESA 2 plenary session by the end of June 1992 to adopt these agreements, and was empowered to constitute a mechanism to draft all legislation required as a result of these agreements.<sup>372</sup>

Following a series of incidents, the Tripartite Alliance – the ANC, COSATU, and SACP – decided to break the logjam through mass action, and on 17 June 1992, after the launch of the mass action, the Boipatong Massacre took place. Having begun with the perception that the NP was led by a man of integrity and was genuinely seeking a negotiated solution, the feeling grew that in fact the levers of state power were being manipulated in order to weaken the ANC and to force it in whatever direction desired in the negotiations. There was considerable anger within the ANC leadership and at grassroots level. It was fuelled by the ever-escalating violence and by the failure of the security forces to control that violence. Instead of the normal process of the police investigations and finding the evidence, people were told that evidence had to be supplied by the victims. It is not by coincidence that there was

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(372) Ratente, R. "Facing the challenges of transition": See p.158. See also M. Hough and A. Du Plessis. "Selected Documents." p.15; Ginwala, "Into and Out of Codesa Negotiations."

a low intensity warfare waged by those who were opposed to fundamental political changes taking place in South Africa during the early 1990s.

It also important to note that South Africa was not an exception in this regard: for example, similar occurrences took place in Nicaragua and Grenada when fundamental political changes and transition to democracy took root in South America during the late 20th century. Similarly, in the southern Africa region, in Namibia, Kovoet, and in Mozambique, RENAMO, sowed the seeds of destruction through violent covert warfare; which, in the case RENAMO, later became a large scale open civil war. In the 1990s, a pattern in South African history had developed in as far as low intensity warfare is concerned. This low intensity warfare was marked by a March 1990 raid by thousands of IFP supporters in Edendale and Imbali townships in the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg. As a result, a total of eighty people were killed. In September 1990, eighty people were killed in two days at Phola Park squatter camp near Johannesburg. Masked white gunmen led by IFP members, according to Amnesty International, carried out these raids. In short, the CODESA talks were accompanied by violence and destabilisation in the PWV area and in Natal.

CODESA became a lame duck during the middle of 1992 when the government ignored its status and existence by unilaterally forcing a clutch of Bills through Parliament which directly impinged on issues still due to be negotiated. These included detention, private armies, illegal arms, military conscription, secret services, and surveillance powers. In order to break the deadlock, the Tripartite Alliance (the ANC, SACP, and COSATU) embarked on a national programme of rolling mass action. A series of mass activities were planned, beginning with rallies and marches on 16 June 1992 and the convening of the People's Parliament in Kliptown on 27 June. The ANC's resort to mass action, which began in earnest on 16 June, soured relations with the government. On 17 June, immediately after launching its mass action programme and after a concerted negative media campaign, twenty three innocent women and children out of the total of forty-nine people were killed in their sleep in Boipatong in the Vaal Triangle. Through eyewitness accounts, it was alleged that IFP supporters from the nearby KwaMadala Hostel were responsible. The ANC claimed that the killings were part of the government strategy as they took place immediately after President F.W. de Klerk had warned of a counter strategy against mass action. De Klerk's visit to Ulundi and his meeting with Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi on 16 June also gave weight to the ANC claims. Both sides (the ANC and government) were convinced the other had lost the will to negotiate. ANC secretary-general Cyril Ramaphosa accused President de Klerk's government of massacring people to browbeat them into submission. Senior Government spokesmen argued that the government was alarmed at the developments as the ANC had decided to make maximum capital out of the massacre. A government spokesperson said "they are

using Boipatong as a moral basis for mass action.” The Boipatong Massacre led to the ANC’s withdrawal from CODESA.<sup>373</sup>

CODESA I also saw the ANC’s leader, Nelson Mandela, publicly explode in anger at a statement made by F.W. de Klerk. The incident was broadcast on public television. Matthews Phosa recalls this incident in the following words:

We had seen him explode before in private, in all those talks. They were not frightened. But the country was frightened. We thought that everything was coming to an end. We were used to him. ... We had been arguing the day before – CODESA – about how the two leaders should deal with armed struggle and MK. But De Klerk was continuing to bring it up. We said leave out that issue and it was agreed that he would not raise the issue. But because Mandela spoke before him, ... he took advantage of the fact that Mandela wouldn’t come and speak again. He spoke about MK and condemned the armed violence of MK. And that’s when Mandela decided to do what he did. He asked Judge Mohamed: “May I make a statement in the national interest?”, because De Klerk had violated an agreement that we would not talk about the armed struggle there. And Mandela went for him.<sup>374</sup>

Subsequently, Essop Pahad remembers:

He, Madiba, called some of them to a meeting, including Chris, who at that time was the general secretary of the party and we were meeting, I think, somewhere in Soweto. The internal leadership group and Chris came to the meeting and said: “Look, just being in the meeting with Madiba and Madiba is insisting that we call off the negotiations – mainly because you had to send a message to the National Party that there was no way in which this kind of violence could be condoned, and there’s no way the ANC and its allies could continue to negotiate within that climate because we also had to take into account the responses of our own people.” We had, if I recall quite an extensive discussion.<sup>375</sup>

On 22 June 1992, the National Executive Committee of the ANC formally announced its withdrawal from substantive negotiations with the apartheid regime. Earlier, Mandela told 20,000 people at a rally in Evaton that he had called an emergency meeting of the NEC so as to “examine our options in the light of what happened.”<sup>376</sup> Mandela continued, “I can no longer explain to our people why we continue to talk to a government which is murdering our people. The negotiations process is completely in tatters.” He warned De Klerk, who, earlier, was chased out of Boipatong by the residents: “Let me warn him, the introduction of anti-democratic measures today will result with defiance campaign with me leading it.” This followed threats by De Klerk that he was considering introducing the State of Emergency after he was chased away from Boipatong. During the rally, Mandela pointed out that South Africa is back “in the Sharpeville days and the gulf between the oppressed and the oppressor

(373) See S.M. Ndlovu, “The Boipatong Massacre: A Microcosm of Apartheid, Repression, and State Sponsored Violence in South Africa.” Forthcoming.

(374) Interview with Matthews Phosa.

(375) Interview with Essop Pahad, by Sifiso Ndlovu with HMP, (Johannesburg) 25 October 2005.

(376) Mandela, Nelson. Speech to a rally at Evaton. June 1992. See [anc.org.za/ancdocs/history](http://anc.org.za/ancdocs/history).

had become unbreachable. Mr. De Klerk owes his loyalty not to the people of South Africa but to the NP. He wants to keep it in power by brute force.” Mandela added that the ANC would continue its campaign of peaceful mass action. On the international front, Mandela announced that the ANC would request the United Nations to call a special session of its Security Council that would address the morass in apartheid South Africa.

Both the ANC and the PAC appealed to both the OAU and the United Nations. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, meeting in Dakar from 29 June to 1 July, adopted a resolution condemning the escalation of violence in South Africa, especially the violence perpetrated against the population of Boipatong, and demanding a full and public investigation of that incident as well as other acts of violence. It called for the convening of an urgent meeting of the Security Council to consider the situation. It suggested that the United Nations become involved in exploring and creating conditions conducive to the resumption of negotiations.

The crisis posed a challenge that the United Nations was prepared to face. On a visit to the OAU session in Nigeria during June, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, had discussions with the Foreign Minister of South Africa, the Presidents of the ANC and the PAC, and the Chairman of the IFP on the situation in South Africa and the constructive role the United Nations could play in facilitating an end to the violence and the resumption of negotiations. In response to domestic and international pressure, the South African government took some positive steps. Justice P.N. Bhagwati, former Chief Justice of India, was appointed to join the Goldstone Commission as an assessor. Mr. P.A. Waddington, Director of Criminal Justice Studies at Reading University in the United Kingdom, was appointed to evaluate the police investigation of the Boipatong Massacre. On 2 July 1992, President De Klerk offered to lower the majority needed for changes in the constitution from 75% to 70%.

Nevertheless, the situation remained grave, and the UN Security Council met on 15 and 16 July 1992, at the request of African states, to consider “the question of South Africa,” in particular the violence and the breakdown of negotiations. It heard representatives of the South African government, the ANC and the PAC, and several other CODESA participants, including several representatives of homeland governments: M. Buthelezi, L. Mangope, O.J. Gqozo, J.N. Reddy, E. Joosab, M. Andrew, and E. Ngobeni at the request of the representative of South Africa; and B. Holomisa, E. Pahad, P. Mahlangu, and M. Zitha at the request of the representative of India. After two days of deliberations, in which forty-eight Member States addressed the gathering, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 765 (1992), in which the UN Security Council emphasized the responsibility of the South African authorities to stop the violence and protect the life and property of all South Africans, and stressed the need for all parties to exercise restraint and cooperate in combating violence. It also underlined the importance of having all parties cooperate to resume the negotiating process as speedily as possible. In the same resolution the Security

Council invited Boutros Boutros-Ghali to appoint a Special Representative to assist parties in South Africa to discuss measures to end the violence and to create conditions for negotiations for a peaceful transition to a democratic, non-racial, and united South Africa. Finally, the UN Security Council decided to “remain seized of the matter until a democratic, non-racial, and united South Africa is established.” In the final analysis, the UN insisted that only South African parties had the capacity to resolve their differences and offered sending Cyrus Vance to assist parties to resume negotiations.<sup>377</sup>

After the Boipatong Massacre, the ANC presented the government with fourteen demands that called for an end of the violence as a prerequisite for the resumption of substantive negotiations. The ultimatum to the government gave birth to a new form of negotiation as the parties exchanged bitterly worded memoranda containing accusations and counter-accusations. The ANC pursued rolling mass action and a successful stay-away was called on 3 and 4 August 1992 with more than 90% of people staying away from work and schools countrywide. Marches, demonstrations, and strikes by unions culminated in an unprecedented “march to Pretoria with Mandela” on 5 August. In September 1992, the rolling mass action was extended to the Bantustans in demand of free political activity. Targeted at the Bophuthatswana, KwaZulu, and Ciskei homelands, a 100,000 strong march to Bisho in the Ciskei was fired upon by Ciskei homeland soldiers on 7 September. Essop Pahad states that:

I don't think we expected after all the discussions we had, after everything else had happened that those people would actually dare to open fire. And it really was totally uncalled for.... Ronnie [Kasrils] and them came with a kind of whole plan about how there is a stadium and through that particular hole in the fence, we can move to the hole in the fence. Because the idea was to enter Bisho and then perhaps just stage a sitting for some time too. ... [I]n my view what we needed to do was to allow people to march, move into Bisho. Nobody was going to stay there for a day or two. In any case, I don't know what they would have done.<sup>378</sup>

Subsequent marches to other homelands were halted in order to avoid the unnecessary bloodbath as evidenced at the Bisho Massacre. Nevertheless, the massacre had an important effect on the negotiation process, according to Essop Pahad:

Now again, I think that spelled the death knell for those people. That was the end of them. There was no way they were ever going to be able to survive that shooting. And that also meant that the NP now was put in an even more difficult situation with respect to the Bantustans. We just had to say to them they now had to exercise greater control over these people because we didn't recognise the independence. We saw them as being part of the apartheid war machine.<sup>379</sup>

(377) United Nations. *The United Nations and Apartheid, 1948-1994*. New York: United Nations Dept. of Public Information, 1994. Introduction by B. Boutros-Ghali.

(378) Interview with Essop Pahad.

(379) United Nations. *The United Nations and Apartheid*. See introduction by B. Boutros-Ghali.

The hard-pressed apartheid regime proposed a two-day summit to discuss the fourteen demands made by the ANC. Addressing a press conference in Pretoria, President De Klerk said obstacles, which had been identified by the government, would be placed on the agenda of the discussions. He identified the obstacles as the consequences of the ANC's programme of mass action, violence, inflammatory and unacceptable rhetoric, and defamatory and false accusations against political leaders. According to him, the suggested talks "should have as their purpose the resumption of negotiations to bring about a united, non-racial, and democratic South Africa, as soon as possible." In addition, De Klerk was of the view that the government was opposed to international interference, but also welcomed the international community's interest in the developments in South Africa.

Intensified bilateral meetings between Cyril Ramaphosa, the ANC's secretary general, and Roelf Meyer, the Minister of Constitutional Development, took place during the aftermath of the Bisho incident. According to Fanie van der Merwe: "The channel was Roelf Meyer, myself, Neil Barnard, more or less, and Cyril Ramaphosa on the other side, with his people."<sup>380</sup> These meetings bridged major differences between the ANC and the government, and on 26 September 1992, Mandela and De Klerk met at the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park. They ratified the agreement negotiated between Meyer and Ramaphosa, and thus this meeting led to the signing of the Record of Understanding – an important hallmark in that for the first time the government acceded to a major demand of the liberation movement. It committed itself firmer than before to the installation of an interim government, an elected constituent assembly, the release of the remaining political prisoners, the banning of public display of dangerous weapons (including cultural weapons often wielded by IFP members), the fencing of hostels, and the right of all parties and organisations to participate in peaceful mass action. Mandela and De Klerk also agreed to resume negotiations, suspended since June, and committed themselves to the election of a constituent assembly and the inauguration of a transitional government as soon as possible.<sup>381</sup>

But a major problem at the time was that, apart from the government and the ANC, several political parties and organisations refused to participate in negotiations. Chief Buthelezi withdrew the IFP from constitutional talks after the signing the Record of Understanding. The CP refused to participate in full negotiations. The leaders of Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, the CP, and the Afrikaner Volksunie organised themselves as the Conference of Concerned South Africans (COSAG), and called for the scrapping of CODESA and condemned the Record of Understanding. In contrast, the meeting between the ANC and PAC held in Gaborone on 23-24 October ended on a positive note concerning negotiations. Years later, former PAC leader Peter Molotsi had the following to say about the PAC leadership's conduct during the negotiations process:

(380) Interview with Fanie van der Merwe.

(381) Hough, M. and A. Du Plessis. "Selected Documents": See pp.18-19.

I think they were caught with their pants down because they were not ready even to negotiate. They were not ready. People like [Gora] Ebrahim, that was the leadership; Ebrahim and this [Clarence] Makwetu and so on. We in the United States warned them against the possibility of being left behind by fast moving events. And the events were moved faster than themselves. I say this as a PAC man. I feel grieved about it, but finally whom do I have to blame? ... They sat back and they were spectators instead of participating, instead of making propositions. They were not prepared. ... The PAC was diddering just as the AZAPO was. They didn't know whether to go or not to go. They were in a diddering state. The events were moving faster than themselves. This is the viewpoint of somebody watching at a distance because I was not here.<sup>382</sup>

On 26 November, De Klerk proposed a time table for further negotiations and the implementation of agreements. Provision was made for multi-party talks to be resumed by March 1993, either in the context of a restructured CODESA or a completely new multi-lateral negotiation forum; that legislation be passed through parliament by June 1993 for the establishment of a Transitional Executive Council (TEC)/Interim Cabinet, and for an Election Commission whose aim would be to create conditions for free and fair elections; that a transitional constitution with provision for the creation of a constitution making body be enacted by September 1994; that election rules and regulations be promulgated before the end of October 1993; that elections be held in March or April 1994; and that an interim government of national unity be instituted during the first half of 1994. At the end of a three day meeting between government and the ANC on 4 December 1992, optimism was expressed that multi-party talks would resume by February 1993, and that joint responsibility was accepted for moving the transition process forward.<sup>383</sup>

According to Fanie van der Merwe:

Now that interim constitution, the departing point of the ANC, and the parties that supported the ANC, was that we must first appoint ... an interim government; then we must have a constitutional convention, or a national convention that will decide on a ... final constitution; then we must have an election under the final constitution. From the government side at the time, they said, no we must have this meeting CODESA. This forum must agree on the final constitution; then we must have an election. Now those two points were ... merged [when] ... it was agreed that we would agree on a provisional constitution, with constitutional principles built into this provisional constitutional. Then we must have an election under this provisional constitution, and the elected parties, the elected representatives will then form a constitutional assembly to decide on the final form of the constitution in which these principles will have to be included and have to be certified by the Constitutional Court. So that is how these two various pieces, opposing points of view, was actually.... It's easier said than done. But it took a long time. But that is how it was resolved.<sup>384</sup>

(382) Interview with Peter Molotsi.

(383) Hough, M. and A. Du Plesis. "Selected Documents": See pp.18-19.

(384) Interview with Fanie van der Merwe.

Negotiations in 1993 began on a positive note. Accordingly, on 8 January the ANC set out five steps crucial to the process. These were the resumption of multi-lateral talks; ensuring a climate for free political activity in all parts of the country; the establishment of the TEC and its sub-structures, as well as the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and an Independent Media Commission (IMC) to ensure free and fair elections; elections for a constituent assembly and an interim government of national unity; and the reincorporation of the homelands to a united South Africa. At a meeting on 9 January with government, COSAG agreed to join multi-party negotiations before the end of February, despite both the Ciskei and KwaZulu homeland authorities procrastinating.

During bilateral constitutional talks that ended in mid-February, negotiators from the government and the ANC reached an important agreement. The two parties had agreed to hold elections in April 1994, with any party securing 10-15% of the votes to be represented in a coalition government. The agreement included acceptance that the new constitution would be drafted by an elected sovereign constituent assembly where all decisions would require a two-thirds, instead of 75%, majority; and that the NP government proposal for a rotating presidency be discarded in favour of a single President. Unresolved issues were left for discussion at renewed multi-party talks to be held on 5 March. The PAC at this time also opted to join the negotiations. According to Johnson Mlambo, who had served as President of the movement in the 1980s:

I came back in 1993 and I would say that the negotiations were still on. PAC had just started to become involved. Now, I would say then that we were in a state of transition. It was clear that we could never go back to a situation that had prevailed previously. One of my fears at the time, and that's one of the reasons why perhaps we took long even to suspend the armed struggle, was the fact that the Boers had broken their promise once in the past. ... [I]f you remember the massacres of Sharpeville and Langa in 1960.... So, we were concerned with that element. We eventually, of course, got into the talks when they resumed now at Kempton Park. And there had been also some discussion that had taken place on a bi-lateral basis between the PAC and the then racist regime. So those were some of the things that were uppermost in our minds. ... [P]ersonally I was concerned that some of the less experienced members of the PAC thought of only a military solution. They thought that APLA is everything and we thought ... that was a wrong approach.<sup>385</sup>

Hence after a nine months hiatus, multi-lateral constitutional negotiations were resumed on 5-6 March 1993 at Kempton Park in the form of a Multi-Party Planning Conference (MPC). Attended by twenty-six political parties, organisations, and groups, including the government, the ANC, PAC, CP, and IFP, as well as observers from eleven other organisations, the Planning Conference was the most comprehensive and inclusive political gathering since the beginning of negotiations. The only political formations not present were AZAPO and the AWB. This forum adopted "A Resolution

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(385) Interview with Johnson Mlambo.

on the Need for the Resumption/Commencement of Multi-Party Negotiations.” The participants resolved to commit themselves to the resumption of negotiations in order to move towards the drafting and adoption of a new constitution for South Africa.<sup>386</sup>

The Multi Party Negotiating Forum (MPF) also decided upon a four tier structure, comprising a Plenary Session (ten delegates each, including leaders of parties); a Negotiating Forum (three delegates and two advisers each, including leaders of delegations); a Negotiations Council (the delegation leader and one advisor); and a Planning Committee (ten members appointed for their expertise, but with no political affiliation). Provision was made for Technical Committees appointed by the Negotiating Council.

This progress on constitutional reform was nearly torpedoed by the assassination of Chris Hani on 1 April 1993. He was murdered by white right-wingers. General Lambert Moloi, who was MK’s Chief of Operations until he returned to the country in 1992, recalls the anger of the youth at the time when they were demanding retaliation: “They confronted me, and I told them they can’t, with the military training they had they can’t. They’re just playing into the hands of the enemy and the enemy was ready for us; they were waiting for it.”<sup>387</sup> Nick Frangos, who was close to De Klerk and Roelf Meyer and an advisor to the government on several occasions, recalls the effect of Hani’s murder on the negotiation process:

...another very sad event, which I think had a huge impact on the National Party and on Mr. De Klerk, and that was the assassination of Chris Hani. If you remember on the Sunday night after the assassination, Cyril Ramaphosa went on television and spoke most eloquently and Mr. De Klerk went on television – I thought he made a mistake talking in Afrikaans because there was such a huge number of blacks who were also watching the programme that night. What the assassination triggered, which was the opposite of what the right wing were trying to achieve, is that, the way I saw it, is that there was actually, that was the change in power. Power shifted from the National Party to the ANC that week, because there was a week of mourning that took place and Archbishop Tutu and many others spoke at the funeral and spoke throughout the country and there was a huge ground swell of feeling about the situation.<sup>388</sup>

However, the Negotiating Council held its full meeting on 26 April and focused on procedural matters until 30 April. The multiparty talks began on 6 May, and on 30 June 1993 the government and the ANC declared a major advance after a constitutional deal was reached. The deal provided that the boundaries, functions, duties, powers, and structures of the regions would be finalised by the Negotiations Council and would be legally binding on a constituent assembly which would draft the final constitution. On 2 July 1993, delegates of the MPF confirmed the 27th of April 1994 as the election date. The move was opposed by COSAG and the IFP, who indicated that

(386) Hough, M. and A. Du Plessis. “Selected Documents”: See pp.18-19.

(387) Interview with General Lambert Moloi, by Nhlanhla Ndebele and Moses Ralinala, (Pretoria).

(388) Interview with Nick Frangos, by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, (Sandton) 9 December 2003.

they would not participate. However, the chairperson of the MPF, Pravin Gordhan, declared that there was sufficient consensus to confirm the date. As a result the CP and IFP suspended their participation in the talks. After the election date was determined, parliament proceeded with the passing of the Independent Electoral Commission Act of 1993. Essop Pahad, then a delegate of the SACP in the negotiations recalls that:

So, during the course of the negotiations we eventually got into a situation in which we were able to determine the election date for 1994. Once that was done, “what would we do”? First of all, to ensure a relatively free and fair election, relatively free of violence. You will recall that leading up to that, during that whole period, the violence that took place here in Gauteng and in Kwa-Zulu Natal, the train violence here, the violence in the East Rand, the eruptions in many of the hostels, the fact that quite a number of areas in KwaZulu-Natal, they were no-go areas. I can also claim that there were areas in which the ANC was a dominant element in KwaZulu-Natal and there were also no-go areas for IFP. In that context we had to work for this election. It was then agreed that we should set up, by all the parties concerned, an Electoral Independent Commission. We then asked Judge Kriegler to head the Independent Electoral Commission and Judge Dikgang Moseneke. You will recall that Dikgang Moseneke at that time was still a leading member of the PAC. In my view that’s about the best decision we took, leading to the elections. ... Kriegler is a very independent minded Judge, and a very fair judge too. And I think without him, we would not have been able to conduct the elections.<sup>389</sup>

In addition, after details had been agreed upon by delegates, parliament passed a Bill on 28 September, the Transitional Executive Council Act of 1993, which provided for the establishment of a Transitional Executive Council (TEC). This development led to the disenfranchised African majority having a legal role in central government for the first time in their lives. On 18 November 1993, delegates to the MPF finally endorsed the Transition (or Interim) Constitution.<sup>390</sup>

But the final stages of negotiations remained deadlocked until 17 November 1993, when the government abandoned its demand that Cabinet decisions be taken by a two-thirds majority, agreeing instead that they should be ratified within the consensus seeking spirit of negotiation. For its part, the ANC agreed to a fixed five year term for the transition to majority rule. It also accepted a new formulation for breaking any deadlock relating to the adoption of the Final Constitution, which could thereby be delayed until after the 1999 general election. The adoption of the Transitional Constitution effectively brought to an end the negotiation stage. The post negotiation stage was marked by, first, the installation of the TEC on 7 September 1993, whereby representatives of various groups and parties took their seats in a parliamentary building in Cape Town. COSAG and the PAC did not attend. Meanwhile, right-wing organisations entered into an alliance in October 1993 with Inkatha and other homeland leaders opposed to the ANC position under retired General Constand Viljoen known as the Freedom Alliance. According to Viljoen:

(389) Interview with Essop Pahad.

(390) Hough, M. and A. Du Plessis. “Selected Documents”: See pp.21-23.

...we first had an organisation in 1993, it was established called COSAG – concerned South African Group. COSAG consisted of, from the Blacks of Buthelezi and his people, Mangope and his people, a chap in the Ciskei Ngozo, Afrikaner Volks Front, which was my organisation and the Conservative Party which was Ferdie Hartzenberg.<sup>391</sup>

The Freedom Alliance sought separate negotiations with the government and threatened to disrupt agreements reached at the negotiation forum in June. On 22 December 1993, the Tri-Cameral Parliament passed the Transitional (Interim) Constitution that was earlier endorsed by the MPF in November. This was the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1993. Third, the ANC and the government made concerted effort to persuade rightwing organisations and the IFP to accept the Interim Constitution and to participate in the TEC. The Interim Constitution contained a set of immutable principles agreed upon by all the parties “with which any final constitution would have to comply.”<sup>392</sup> Fourth, on 2 February 1994, De Klerk formally proclaimed the elections in the government gazette and announced that voting would take place over three days from 26-28 April 1994.<sup>393</sup>

The threat of a widespread boycott of the election was reduced after the effective collapse of the Freedom Alliance, prompted by the crisis and disastrous military intervention by right-wing elements in Bophuthatswana and the decision by Mangope to participate in the elections. In his recollection of these events, Constand Viljoen states that:

The Bophuthatswana ... fiasco – the impact of this was that it had convinced me that a military solution in South Africa would not work, mainly because of the AWB. Remember in the Volksfront we had many different groups participating. We had the Agricultural Unions participating; we had some cultural organisations; we had the AWB organisation; we had the Orde Boerevolk; we had etc., etc. a whole lot of them. I would say about 25 different organisations. The AWB saw themselves as a very important military part of it. But they were undisciplined, and they wouldn't listen to me. But I was sitting with them. What could I do? And then the first problem was not that it was the storming of the negotiating centre, World Trade Centre, when they acted completely in contradiction to our plans. They acted entirely on their own initiative causing great embarrassment to all of us – especially to me. You must remember I was a military man and people would obey my orders, they wouldn't do this kind of thing. And then, there happened exactly the same thing. I got involved in Bophuthatswana because of the organisation called firstly COSAG, and thereafter the Freedom Alliance. One of the partners of the Freedom Alliance was Mangope of the Christian Democratic Party. And Mangope had said to me one day: “Why don't you please come to Bophuthatswana. We would like ... to have your advice on the security situation.” I was then asked ... by Mangope to assist him over one weekend in which he had information and intelligence that the ANC would come in and by force remove

(391) Interview with General Constand Viljoen, by Prof. Ben Magubane and Dr. Greg Houston, (Pretoria) 3 August 2002.

(392) Interview with F.W. de Klerk. In this interview De Klerk states that it was these immutable principles that made the Interim Constitution acceptable to the National Party.

(393) Hough, M. and A. Du Plessis. “Selected Documents”: See pp.24-25.

him from his position. I gave them three days in order to confirm this. At the end of the three days, which was a Thursday, Rowan Cronje came back to me and said it has been confirmed. “The ANC would move in with a lot of cadres and they will cause havoc, and please would you give some assistance.” Now I had my military force. ... When I discussed this with Mangope, he said to me please don’t bring the AWB. He said if you bring the AWB it will not be acceptable to the people of Bophuthatswana. So I said: “Fine.” And I came back here and I called [Eugene] Terreblanche and I called Ferdie Hartzenberg, who was the President of the Volks Front, and I said: “Look here, this is the request. I am prepared to move farmers, my part of the military training which is farmers. I’m prepared to move from there, and I promise you they will be able to help Mangope. But, the AWB must not go.” Hartzenberg agreed and we then called Terreblanche and we said: “Look here, we’re going to do this, but hands off – no AWB member inside Bophuthatswana.” But he wouldn’t accept this. I remember it was a Thursday evening. Thursday evening I moved in my forces from all over South Africa.

... Yes – 8,000 farmers, without the Defence Force and Intelligence, and without the Police Intelligence... We were very well organised, there’s no doubt about it. But, the farmer’s part of my military potential was very well disciplined, and they would obey me to ... the last word. But the AWB part was completely ill-disciplined. That evening 11 o’clock, when my farmers started moving in, and the first had already arrived inside Bophuthatswana to come under command of Mangope’s Forces; not to be a Force by our own, but to become under command of their Forces in order to help them to face the ANC over that weekend. I got information that the AWB is mobilising at Rooigrond, which is a farm.... And they’re going to move in. ... I phoned Terreblanche and I said: “Look, you’re not going to go.” I also sent Bophuthatswana Officers, some of Mangope’s Officers, to brief with him, and say stay out of it. But he wouldn’t listen and.... My first forces deployed that morning and they immediately brought calmness to the whole of Mmabatho, and then came the AWB and they came running in, throwing hand grenades, killing people indiscriminately, etc., etc. This was my dilemma. You said: What was the impact? The impact was I then realised that with the burden of the AWB, I will never be able to really have a successful military operation inside South Africa. And then I switched over ... to political strategy.<sup>394</sup>

The impact of the events in Bophuthatswana on the negotiation process, and the Freedom Alliance in particular, are found in the following words of Constand Viljoen:

...such a grouping could politically have meant for the country quite a lot. But the AWB destroyed it. That was the impact of Bophuthatswana. I had to change my strategy altogether. In fact, when I boarded a light aircraft that evening inside Mmabatho coming back here, I had with me some advisors; amongst others Jan Breytenbach, and some members of the Afrikaners Volks Front. And it was in that flight that I finally decided that when I come back to Pretoria, I will come and register for the election. Then I decided to go for the election.

On 4 March 1994, the IFP also registered for the election after elaborate discussions with both the ANC and the government of the day. Nevertheless:

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(394) Interview with General Constand Viljoen.

...the day before the elections, the white right wing blew up a car outside our ANC office in Plein Street. At the same time, the IFP were holding quite huge demonstrations, here for example in the city centre of Johannesburg, and people were closing their shops.<sup>395</sup>

The ANC had taken its own precautions in this regard. Nceba Ndlela, a senior MK commander who had returned to the country in late 1991, states that:

1994 on the 24th April, I was told to go to Johannesburg. They said you are going to Lusaka. How many were we? 500. The ANC said whatever happens inside we must have people outside who are going to be able to respond immediately and effectively.

... Because we had AWB and things like that, you see. We had this tension.<sup>396</sup>

The actual election was held from 26-29 April 1994. This period included a day for the casting of special votes and the extension of the voting period due to logistical and administrative problems experienced in certain areas. Consequently, the IEC was able to declare free and fair elections on 6 May 1994.

In the election for the National Assembly, with a turnout of approximately 86%, the distribution of support and seats were: ANC 62.7% and 252 seats; NP 20.4% and 82 seats; IFP 10.5% and 43 seats; Freedom Front 2.2% and nine seats; DP 1.7% and seven seats; PAC 1.2 % and five seats; and ACDP 0.5% and two seats. In the elections for the provincial legislatures, the ANC secured a majority in seven of the nine provinces, the NP having won in the Western Cape and the IFP in KwaZulu/Natal. As a final step, the Constitution came into operation on 27 April 1994, and, following the election, the establishment of a Government of National Unity. This process included the announcement of a Cabinet, on 6 May 1994, comprising a majority of ANC, as well as NP and IFP, ministers; the inauguration, on 10 May, of Nelson Mandela as President, and Thabo Mbeki and F.W. de Klerk as Executive Deputy Presidents; and the convening of parliament and the provincial legislatures during May. The inaugural session of the first democratically elected parliament was officially opened by President Mandela on 24 May 1994. This act concluded the process of substantive negotiations culminating in the establishment of a non-racial democratic South Africa.<sup>397</sup>

(395) Interview with Essop Pahad.

(396) Interview with Nceba Ndlela, by Brown Maaba, (King Williamstown) 12 May 2002.

(397) Hough, M. and A. Du Plessis. "Selected Documents": See pp.27.

## Abbreviations

AAC:	All-African Convention
ABRECSA:	Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern
Africa ANC:	African National Congress
ANCYL:	African National Congress Youth
League Anti-CAD:	Anti-Coloured Affairs Department
APDUSA:	African People's Democratic Union of Southern
Africa APLA:	Azanian People's Liberation Army
APRP:	African People's Revolutionary Party
ASA:	African Students Association
ASUSA:	African Students Union of South Africa
AWB:	Afrikaner Resistance Movement (Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging)
AZACTU:	Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions
AZANYU:	Azanian Youth Unity
AZAPO:	Azanian People's Organisation
AZASO:	Azanian Students Organisation
BAWU:	Black and Allied Workers' Union
BCAWU:	Building Construction and Allied Workers' Union
BCM:	Black Consciousness Movement (formerly
AZAPO) BCP:	Basotho Congress Party
BPC:	Black People's Convention
BOSS:	Bureau of State Security
BSAP:	British Southern African Police
CAS:	Central Administrative Services
CCAWUSA:	Commercial Catering and Allied Workers' Union
CCOBTU:	Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions
CIWW:	Council of Industrial Workers of the Witwatersrand
CNETU:	Council of Non-European Trade Unions
CODESA:	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COH:	Central Operational Headquarters
COREMO:	Mozambique Revolutionary Committee
COSAG:	Conference of Concerned South Africans
COSAS:	Congress of South African Students
COSATU:	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CP:	Conservative Party
CPSA:	Communist Party of South Africa
CUSA:	Council of Unions of South Africa
CWIU:	Chemical Workers Industrial Union
DIP:	Department of Information and Publicity (ANC)
DP:	Democratic Party
EEC:	European Economic Community

EPG:	Eminent Persons Group
FEDSAW:	Federation of South African Women
FCWU:	Food and Canning Workers' Union
FOSATU:	Federation of South African Trade Unions
FRELIMO:	Mozambique National Liberation Front
GAWU:	Glass and Allied Workers' Union
GFWBF:	General Factory Workers Benefit Fund
HMP:	Hashim Mbita Project
IAS:	Industrial Aid Society
ICU:	Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union
IDAF:	International Defence and Aid Fund
IDASA:	Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa
IEC:	Independent Electoral Commission
IFP:	Inkatha Freedom Party
ILC:	Internal Leadership Core (ANC)
IMC:	Independent Media Commission
IPRC:	Regional Internal Political Reconstruction Committees (ANC)
IPRD:	Internal Political Reconstruction Department
JMCs:	Joint Management Centres
LLA:	Lesotho Liberation Army
MACWUSA:	Motor and Component Workers' Union of South Africa
MAWU:	Metal and Allied Workers Union
MDM:	Mass Democratic Movement (formerly UDF)
MK:	<i>Umkhonto we Sizwe</i> (Military arm of the
ANC)	
MPC:	Multi-Party Planning Conference
MPF:	Multi Party Negotiating Forum
MPLA:	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NACTU:	National Council of Trade Unions (CUSA-AZACTU)
NAFCOC:	National African Federated Chamber of Commerce
NCL:	National Committee for Liberation
NEUM:	Non-European Unity Movement
NF:	National Front
NIS:	National Intelligence Services
NP:	National Party
NUCW:	National Union of Clothing Workers
NUM:	National Union of Mineworkers
NUMARWOSA:	National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers of South
	Africa
NUMSA:	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
NUTW:	National Union of Textile Workers
NUSAS:	National Union of South African Students
PAC:	Pan-Africanist Congress

PAM:	Pan Africanist Movement
PASO:	Pan Africanist Student Organisation
PEBCO:	Port Elizabeth Black Community Organisation
PF:	Patriotic Front
PFP:	Progressive Federal Party
PMC:	Politico-Military Council and Regional Politico-Military Committees (RPMCs) and Area Politico-Military Councils (APMCs) (ANC)
PUTCO:	Public Utility Transport Corporation
PWAWU:	Paper Wood and Allied Workers' Union
RI:	Republican Intelligence
SAASMO:	Southern Africa Azanian Student Movement
SAAWU:	South African Allied Workers' Union
SACLA:	South African Confederation of Labour
SACP:	South African Communist Party
SACWU:	South African Chemical Workers' Union
SACTU:	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADET:	South African Democracy Education Trust
SADF:	South African Defence Force
SAHA:	South African Historical Archives
SAIC:	South African Indian Congress
SANNC:	South African Native National Congress (later the ANC)
SASM:	South African Students Movement (originally the ASM)
SASO:	South African Student Organisation
SAYCO:	South African Youth Congress
SDUs:	Self-Defence Units
SOYA:	Society of Young Africa
SSRC:	Soweto Students' Representative Council
SWANU:	South West African National Union
TASC:	Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee
TEC:	Transitional Executive Council
TGWU:	Transport and General Workers Union
TTWU:	Transvaal Textile Workers Union
TUACC:	Trade Union Advisory Coordinating Council
TUCSA:	Trade Union Council of South Africa
TUM:	Transvaal Urban Machinery
UAW:	Union of Automobile Workers
UBJ:	Union of Black Journalists
UCDP:	United Christian Democratic Party
UCM:	University Christian Movement
UF:	South Africa United Front
UN:	United Nations

UTP: Urban Training Project  
WPMWU: Western Province Motor Assembly Workers Union  
WPWAB: Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau  
ZANU: Zimbabwe African National Union  
ZAPU: Zimbabwe African People's Union  
ZIPRA: Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary  
Army

