

Omugulu-gOmbashe

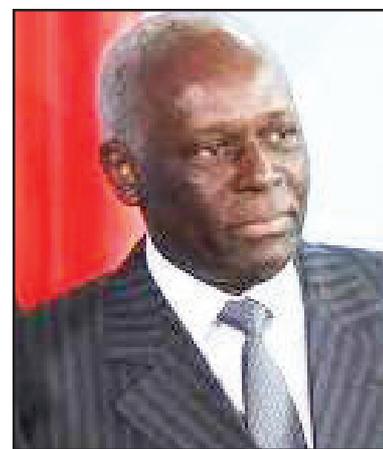
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Messah Victory Namuandi (Shiuajanga) went to work with Naftali Iyambo Lungada [not related to Patrick Iyambo Lungada] at Ukualumbe in Ongandjera district. Later on, James Hamukuaja went to Festus Heita at Omundudu, while John Nankudhu stayed at Eliaser Tuhadeleni Kaxumba's house as a group commander, with Comrade Kaxumba as a political mobiliser. In January 1966, Comrade John Nankudhu called a reconnaissance meeting at Ontamanzi in Ongandjera district with Comrades Simeon Shixungileni, Victory Namuandi, Patrick Iyambo, Nelson Kavela and James Hamukuaja to inform them that the next phase would be the military training of young local activists.

In March 1966, these men established their first military training camp, known as 'Ondaadhi', meaning reconnaissance, at Ontamanzi. Among the first trainees were Comrades Eliaser Tuhadeleni Kaxumba, Immanuel Shifidi, Festus Heita, Johannes Musheko, Paulus Shikolalje, Simeon Namuganga, Henok Jacob 'Malila', Festus Nanjolo, Kornelius Shelungu, Thomas Haimbodi, Isak Shoome and Festus Muaala. Due to the movements of enemy agents in the area, they decided to shift from Ondaadhi, and established a new military training base called Oondjokwe, at Uuvudhija between Uukuambi and Ongandjera districts. At the same time, they continued to recruit and train local activists. However, the enemy also came to establish a base within this area under the pretext of being road constructors.

As part of the military strategy, Comrade Patrick Lungada spied on these so-called road constructors. Later on, Comrade Rehabeam Nambinga was assigned a reconnaissance mission, under the pretext of searching for employment at such construction sites. Mr. Swanepoel, the so-called owner of the road construction company, refused to employ him. In fact, Swanepoel was a captain in the South African Security Police who was used as a State witness against those who were later on detained (captured) and imprisoned in Pretoria.

In June 1966, this group went to Omugulu-gOmbashe, aiming to reach the Oshiwandu mountain which is situated between Kaokoveld and Uukualudhi. However, due to the road construction, they decided to remain there and establish a military base in Omugulu-gOmbashe. They settled at Otunganga in the Omugulu-gOmbashe area. At that stage, Commander Nakundhu's group had trained between 80 and 90 SWAPO activists. At the same time, they also started to dig dungeons and trenches for defensive purposes and for storing their



Key players in the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale and the victors. Cuba's first President Fidel Castro, PLAN's Commander-in-Chief, Dr Sam Nujoma, and Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos.

ammunition. While at Omugulu-gOmbashe, they also made contact with the local people. They sent Mr. Shikalepo Iileka, one of the local activists, to Kaokoveld to mobilise the masses in support of SWAPO. After Iileka returned from Kaokoveld, he informed them that the people in the area were ready to join the SWAPO guerillas — 'Eendume Domomufitu', as they were popularly called at that time.

They received a message from Comrade Ya Toivo informing them that one of the members of G2, Leonard

Nankudhu was still under treatment, so he ordered Castro to return to Omugulu-gOmbashe and stay there until his return. Castro proceeded to Omugulu-gOmbashe as instructed. However, he left the base before Commander Nankudhu's arrival there, under the pretext of going to find whether the money was available at Ya Toivo in Ondonga district. On 25 August 1966, due to reports of movements of strangers in the Omugulu-gOmbashe area and the disappearance of Castro from the base, Commander Nankudhu decided to return to Omugulu-gOmbashe.



The late SWAPO Secretary for Defence, Peter Nanyemba, and Johan van der Mescht, SADF soldier captured by PLAN

Phillemon Shuuya ('Castro'), had arrived there. Comrades Nankudhu and Tuhadeleni went to meet Castro at Comrade Isak Shoome's house, located a few miles from Omugulu-gOmbashe. They interrogated Castro as to whether he had been detained by the South African Security Police, which he denied completely. After questioning him, they took him to the base where he was further interrogated for the whole day by members of the reconnaissance. During the second interrogation, Castro again denied having been captured and recruited by the enemy. However, he mentioned that the SWAPO leadership in exile had sent money through Comrade Ya Toivo's postal address. Commander Nankudhu then decided to accompany Castro to Comrade Ya Toivo in order to collect the said money. Comrade Ya Toivo was unaware of any such money and cautioned Commander Nankudhu to be extra-vigilant with Castro.

Commander Nankudhu headed back to base, but fell ill while in Ongandjera district. Castro, who failed to turn up at the assembling point he had agreed with Nankudhu, found him later on in Ongandjera district in Comrade Lamek Iithete's house. Commander

26 August 1966, attack at Omugulu-gOmbashe

The following day, 26 August 1966, at about 5 a.m. the South African Security Police led by Captain Swanepoel, and guided by Castro, attacked the military base at Omugulu-gOmbashe. During this surprise attack, the South Africans used eight helicopter gunships, accompanied by personnel carriers. Commander Nakundhu ordered his fellow combatants to return fire. After a brief exchange, Commander Nankudhu realised they could not continue to counter the enemy fire power, and ordered his unit to retreat. But Comrades Lungada, Rehabeam Nambinga and Jonas Nakale insisted on fighting. Two Comrades, Akapeke Hipangelua and Jonas Nakale, sacrificed their lives in this battle. Later that day, Comrades Lungada and Nambinga also retreated and went to inform Mr. Shipaleko Iileka about the attack.

Shipaleko then went on horseback to the area where the battle had taken place, under the pretext of searching for his cattle. At the scene, he was summarily arrested by the South African Security Police. Mr. Iileka was released, and he returned to inform Comrades Lungada and Nambinga of those who had been either captured or injured or had

died during the attack.

The names of the freedom fighters who were captured during the Omugulu-gOmbashe battle are as follows:

1. Julius Shilongo 'Kashuku'
2. Phillemon Shitilifa
3. Shinima Niilenge 'Harakati'
4. Ndjaula Shaningua 'Mankono' (died after Independence)
5. Sakeus Philipus Itika (died after his release from Pretoria prison)
6. Petrus Simon Niilenge (died in detention at Robben Island prison)
7. James Amukuaja (died in Pretoria prison under suspicious circumstances), and
8. Thomas Haimbodi.

The next day, 27 August 1966, Comrade Nankudhu went back to the spot to find comrades who were injured during the battle. After Commander Nankudhu inspected the area, he went to the house of Mr. Kamanja, who had supported them some time before when they met with Comrades Lungada and Nambinga. The three guerrillas then proceeded to Uukualudhi, and then later on to Ongandjera. They arrived at Comrade Lamek Iithete's house, and were informed that Castro had just left there.

Those who fought at Omugulu-gOmbashe on 26 August 1966 numbered many more than the early group of 10 which had spearheaded the re-entry of our guerrilla fighters in 1965 and 1966. At this stage, many more SWAPO activists had been recruited and trained, and had scattered into the countryside around Ovamboland area before the South African security police launched the 26 August attack at Omugulu-gOmbashe. However, the political mass mobilisation was completed.

Through an underground network, the SWAPO guerilla fighters communicated with one another and assembled at Iiti jee Holo area, north-east of Oshakati, to devise a new military strategy, particularly identifying the South African military bases as their prime targets. The reconnaissance group was then sent to Oshakati, Ondagwa and Oshikango to reconnoitre the South African Security Police stations.

After they returned and submitted their findings, they decided to carry out a retaliatory action, and on 27 September 1966, they attacked and burnt down Oshikango police station

and the government administrative building. During the same attack on that evening, the Portuguese army post on the Angolan side, north of Oshikango, was also targeted. This attack was successful because the enemy, on both sides of the borders, had run away, leaving the whole area ablaze. The Portuguese army post was complemented by a fuelling station, which also was burnt down. No casualties were suffered on our side, but three Portuguese soldiers were killed and a number of South African security police were injured. After they attacked Oshikango, the group then returned to their base at Iiti jee Holo, and later on moved to Okalonga ka Nepaya, south of Onguediva.

On 16 November 1966, Comrade John Nankudhu was captured at Ohakueenjanga area while on a mission to re-group his unit to attack Ondangwa police station. He was taken to Oshakati Security Police Station, and later on transferred to Pretoria Central Prison. In the absence of Comrade Nankudhu, Comrade Simeon Shixungileni (Kambo) was appointed as the Commander of their Group. Comrade Simeon Shixungileni was also wounded and then captured during a battle which took place north of the Okatana Roman Catholic Church.

Final Days of the Struggle for Independence

Since 1987 publicly, and privately long before that, I had been convinced that we had won the war and would soon be returning home to carry out economic reconstruction and the rebuilding of a new Namibian nation based on social justice.

But as the time drew nearer we still had to consolidate our victory. In June 1988 while South Africa was still manoeuvring to delay our victory, SWAPO worked to mobilize its support inside the country through the SWAPO Youth League, SWAPO Elders Council, SWAPO Women's Council, SWAPO Pioneer Movement, the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), other progressive organizations and Chiefs and Headmen. At the final stage of the military effort, PLAN combatants with the FAPLA forces and Cuban internationalist forces launched the final assault and Cuban MiG 23s bombed Calueque Dam where South Africa built its military bunker. Now the enemy realized that its war machinery was bro-

ken and its soldiers demoralized — they had neither capacity nor stamina to match the well-prepared combined forces of PLAN, FAPLA and the Cuban, internationalist forces. It was obvious that the enemy was defeated both militarily and politically, and diplomatically totally isolated, despite the Reagan Administration's financial package to DTA and the South African regime's continuing efforts through bogus organizations such as Ezuva, Etango and Koevoet which aimed to create the impression that they had won the hearts and minds of the Namibian people.

Some top military brass trained by the CIA in counter insurgency techniques were more trusted by P. W. Botha, and they were really the rulers and decision-makers while Cabinet members were simply 'rubber stamps'. Major decisions were made by army generals like Minister of Defence Magnus Malan, Van der Westhuizen, Van Tonder and Herman who were authorized by P. W. Botha to expend the resources of both South Africa and Namibia in order to strengthen their military intelligence and propaganda war machinery against SWAPO. Even though a huge amount of money had been spent in order to defeat SWAPO, it was obvious by now that no success could follow from it. The fact of the matter was that the defeat of the South African army at Cuito Guanavale, Chipa and at Calueque had great psychological effect and was a severe shock to the South African white settlers.

In February 1989, P. W. Botha suffered a stroke and after that his political demise was inevitable.

The end of P. W. Botha did not mean the end of the South African regime's manoeuvres to block the implementation of Resolution 435 and stop SWAPO coming home to participate in a free and fair democratic election. The Generals were still determined to wreck Resolution 435 and they made detailed plans to achieve this diabolical aim. 'Pik' Botha, pleaded with the Reagan administration, which was following the same line at this time. To him must go some blame for persuading the Western Security Council members to downgrade the UN peace-keeping force from the original 7,500 to 4,000. At the very same time he was funding the DTA and other puppets to the tune of over 100 million South African rand to support their manipulation of the election against SWAPO.

On 16 January 1989, the Security Council passed enabling Resolution 628, endorsing the Tripartite Agreement signed at the UN on 22 December 1988, and setting down 1st April 1989 for the commencement of the implementation of Resolution 435. By that date, UNTAG forces were to be in place including, of course, those to man the reception points at which PLAN

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