

THE END OF MUYONGO'S LONG DANCING ON THE EDGE OF A VOLCANO

By Hidipo Hamutenya

For nearly three decades now, the character known as Mishake Muyongo has been dangerously playing some sort of poker game with the destiny of the people of the Caprivi Region. The essence of this game has been to treat that region as his personal bargaining chip which he could use, at will, to gain favour or position of political influence and material benefit. Having convinced himself that the region was his gambling casino, he became a pathological gambler. Accordingly, he thought it wise to repeatedly threaten to tear off the Caprivi Region from the rest of Namibia and to keep that spectre of secession hanging, like the proverbial sword of Damocles, over the heads of the Namibian people, whenever his own political fortunes were waning.

What is amazing, however, is that the man from the Linyanti village has been able, more than once, to confuse and, indeed, drag along quite a good number of persons from that region to his dancing on the edge of a volcano (taking an incalculable risk).

In the wake of the current national disgust about the recent secessionist events in the Caprivi and the painful sense of betrayal among those who thought that they were close enough to Muyongo to know his moves, it is relevant to take a closer look at the person of Muyongo and the historic events which catapulted him to national prominence and his present circumstances of being a tragic figure.

One of Muyongo's characteristics is that he is a deeply duplicitous and self-centered person. His adult life has been punctuated by incredibly good fortune, on one hand, and an impetuous drift towards disaster, on the other. It was, indeed, good fortune that propelled the treacherous and highly ego-centric Muyongo to climb the ladder to national leadership, such as, being the Vice-President of SWAPO, the President of the DTA and the honoured leader of the official opposition in Parliament. Similarly, it was his propensity towards brinkmanship that has driven him to his recent panic-stricken flight into un-lamentable exile. Though not a charismatic person or an inspiring figure, Muyongo was, quite often, in the right place at the right time. Good luck has, in so many instances, been on his side.

At a fairly early stage in his youth, Mishake Albert Muyongo, who claims to come from the Mafwe tribal royal



The fictitious hand-clenched fist that never revealed Hidipo Hamutenya's unrestrained lust for political power.

blood, was fortunate enough to become the confidante and protP•gP• of two of the heroes of Namibia's glorious struggle for liberation, namely, Brendan Simbawaye and Sam Nujoma. When, in the tempest of the wind of change that was by then sweeping across Africa, Simbawaye formed what was

bent. Indeed, even though the overall development of Namibia's independence movement during the first half of the 1960s took place within the general context of the anti-colonial ferment on the continent, its initial organizational formation was, to a certain extent, distorted by the pernicious impact of the

doing. Thus, when CANU was formed, there was virtually no personal contact between those agitating for independence in the Caprivi Region and those who were doing the same in other parts of the country, even though the region had by then been part and parcel of Namibia for about a century.

However, upon learning about the birth of CANU, the President of SWAPO took the initiative to contact Simbawaye with a proposal that CANU and SWAPO should join forces in their common cause against colonialism.

The proposal was positively received; and, in response, Simbawaye dispatched Muyongo, accompanied by several other young militants of CANU, including Richard Kapelwa Kabajani, to go to Zambia in order to meet the SWAPO leadership for follow-up discussions on Nujoma's proposal to bring together the two organizations.



Mishake Muyongo

part of that leadership, he was pushed to the centre stage of an historic process, namely, of forging, in the crucible of the struggle, a common national identity out of a diversity of ethnic and cultural particularities. The rally slogan in that great drive to foster a sense of Namibianness or national consciousness was: One Namibia, One Nation.

At the SWAPO Congress held in January 1970 in Tanga, Tanzania, Muyongo was elected Acting Vice-President of SWAPO in the place of

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ern Angola. This decision called for the entire top leadership to move to Angola. Nujoma and some of his lieutenants were already in that country, as from 1975, thereby leaving Muyongo in charge of all SWAPO activities in Zambia. People like Andreas Shipanga, and his followers would remember very well how firmly supervised was the quelling of their rebellion in 1975.

In the course of those years, he got married to a Zambian woman from a well-to-do family. He also managed to acquire some ill-gotten business interests in that country. As such, he found the decision to move to Angola quite unpalatable. It was at that point that he started to kick up his secessionist dust, by announcing, without shame or fear of contradiction, that the Caprivi Region was not part of Namibia, but a separate country to be known as "Itenge" upon the achievement of its own independence.

In the face of such treachery, the SWAPO Central Committee met in the Angolan town of Kamabatela in 1980 and decided to expel Muyongo and all those who sympathized with his secessionist idea. He stayed on in Zambia, for a while, as a businessman. But aware of the secessionist ambitions of some elements in Zambia's Western Province (former Barotseland), which is adjacent to the Caprivi Region, the authorities in that country told Muyongo that he had come to their country as a freedom fighter and not as a businessman. Accordingly, they ordered him to leave; and since none of the Frontline States would have him, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had to find him another country of asylum far way from the region. He was thus taken to Senegal where he spent barely one year before deciding to beg the South African colonialists in Namibia for mercy and permission for him to come back home as a repentant former SWAPO "terrorist".

Pretoria was naturally elated, thinking they had caught a big fish from the SWAPO ranks.



This Rally for Democracy and Progress, RDP's tent in Hakahana has been empty since it was put up last weekend. Photo by Levi Upula.

known as the Caprivi African National Union (CANU) in Katima Mulilo, in 1964, to fight against colonialism, he made Muyongo, then a lower primary school teacher, as his vice-president.

The fact that Muyongo was initiated into political activism through what was a regional organization, CANU, does not explain his later secessionist

apartheid policy of "separate development" that was designed to foster ethnic and regional isolation. The colonial regime imposed this policy as part of its effort to perpetuate white domination. The consequence of this policy was that the anti-colonial activists in one corner of the country did not always know what like-minded Namibians in other parts of the country were

Thus, in that very same year, 1964, Muyongo met Nujoma and Hifikepunye Pohamba, for the first time, in the Zambian town of Livingstone. It was there that a decision was taken for CANU and SWAPO to merge.

Following the merger, Muyongo joined the SWAPO leadership structure as Secretary for Education. By being

Simbawaye, who was by then in South African captivity. He occupied that position for a full decade and enjoyed the power and prestige that went with it. Nujoma held him by the hand, took him around the globe and taught him the art of building a network of international solidarity with the Namibian people in their struggle against colonialism. Muyongo was no doubt quite happy to have that rare opportunity to broaden his world view beyond the confines of the Linyanti village. He spoke to the exiled compatriots and PLAN fighters like a true Namibian nationalist and addressed international audiences as if he were a genuine Namibian patriot. And as long as he was safe and secure in that position, he abstained from secessionist utterances.

Early in 1980, the Central Committee of SWAPO took a decision to relocate the movement's headquarters from Lusaka to Luanda in order to direct and supply the battle-front more effectively through south-



"Are you sure you are SWAPO?" Jerry Ekanjo, left, seems to be asking Hidipo Hamutenya.

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