

MY LIFE, MY STORY

By Solomon Hawala

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My name is Hangula Dumeni Solomon ya Dumeni Mateus ya Hawala born on the 19 August 1935 at Efidilomulunga near Ongwediva in what is today Oshana Region, Northern Namibia. Before anyone asks where I got the name Jesus from, let me explain. In Lusaka Kanyama township we shared a room with Jesaya Nyamu and Nestory Iyambo. One day in the dead of night, I jumped and out of nowhere screamed like "OOH JESUS GWANDJE". The two being characters they were began scolding and calling me Jesus. I used to get angry and annoyed at first, but overtime got stuck with it. I did not choose it, nor does it form part of my name, officially at least.

My parents are Dumeni Mateus Hawala, originally from the Handa, Quipungu and Ombadja tribes of Southern Angola and Monica Kaapanda from Uukwambi tribe with origins from Onghumbi(Angola) and Ongandjera, Omusati Region.

10 children were born, six boys and four girls out of which only 3 remain, Maria, Johannes and me. The rest of my siblings were Naemi, Simeon, Emmy, Lineekela, Johannes, Martin, Maria, Martha, and Immanuel. I was baptized in the Luthern Church at Ongwediva by a Finnish Pastor Koivo on the 15 September 1935 and later confirmed in the same church by another Finnish missionary Martinen on the 11 November 1954.

As a boy, I had to attend to household chores such as tending to family animals, collecting water, cultivating mahangu field, gathering firewood, and so forth. In 1940, our homestead moved to Ohakwenyanga village. Reason, my father was hired by Hugo Hahn Shongola the Native Commissioner in Ovamboland, to set up a vegetable garden there for the administration and with the aim to supply the small white community in Ovamboland. My father being originally from Angola had the necessary skills and knowledge to grow fresh produces. As a result, we also as a family benefited a lot from this garden.

Education. I was fortunate enough to have been born and raised near a Luthern Mission Station at Ongwediva where I had the opportunity to attend school from kindergarten to standard six in 1953. Some of my teachers were Gerhardt Shaketange and Abraham Nyambali. After leaving school, I assumed temporary employment with a company called Damelion in Ovamboland in 1955. In 1956, I decided to seek a job through South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA) at Ondjondjo in the general area of Ondangwa. The recruitment process required that you were to be tagged to indicate your job category and placement. Transport was arranged from Ondangwa to Grootfontein and from there depending on your destination by train to your destination where your employer would collect you. Some farm workers were collected at Grootfontein and various railway stations across Namibia. At the time you had no choice where to be deployed so I ended up being posted to Okahandja. Here I worked at a hotel (Wernelshof) as a general worker for 18 months earning 80 shillings a

month before I returned home at the end of my 18 month contract in 1958, aged 23 years. In 1959, and through SWANLA, I got a clerical job at Pupkewitz in Walvis Bay. One of my main functions was book and stock keeping and ensuring that anti-theft measures were enforced. At the end of my contract in 1962, I returned to Ovamboland.

In 1963, I travelled to Windhoek in search of better work opportunities and landed a job at a hotel (Harnehof) doing general upkeep work such as cleaning and gardening. This time the contract period was reduced from 18 to 12 months.

Between 1953 and 1964, I spent time doing odd work such as looking after our livestock ,collecting water and firewood, pounding mahangu and so forth and so forth. Between 1962 and 1964, at the time of the construction of the Ondangwa -Oshakati Road, I was one of those hired as a casual worker and helped build Okanjengedi and Ongwediva bridges and two or so earth dams.

As a contract laborer and like many others, I endured hardships at the hands of the regime and its segregation system of apartheid and colonialism. I felt at first hand that we as Namibians had to do something to end it once and for all. While working in the south, I had the opportunity to attend political mass mobilization meetings organized and addressed by SWAPO leaders and activists. Their preaching of the gospel of liberation opened my conscience and greatly helped me to understand the harsh realities and conditions imposed on the indigenous natives of South West Africa.

In 1964, my friends Veshitile from Ohalushu, Peter Shitongeni and I decided to join SWAPO and the liberation struggle abroad. None of us were card carrying members of SWAPO then. Our journey from Ohalushu on foot took us through Omundaungilo, Omboloka unto Nkurenkuru from whence we travelled by road on WENELA trucks to Shakawe, in Botswana pretending to be recruits for the mines in Johannesburg. From Shakawe we were flown by WENELA to Fancistown, Botswana. To be on an aeroplane for the first time was and remains the most memorable moment of my journey into the unknown. Since our real intention was to join SWAPO in Tanzania we escaped before we could be taken to WENELA compound. In the process of finding our way to Northern Rhodesia we stumbled upon a funny character whom we at first did not trust. The short gentleman was talkative and instructive. He was Cde Maxton Joseph Mutongolome. He took us to a place called White House where we found other Namibians and South Africans also on their way to Tanzania to join SWAPO and ANC respectively. Our trip to Northern Rhodesia took about seven months to organize such that we only arrived in Lusaka on the 12th of Oct 1964, 2 days after independence. Cde Lucas Pohamba, then SWAPO Chief Rep in Zambia organized our trip by train to Mbeya, Tanzania.

In Mbeya we were received by Cde Peter Nanyamba, Cde Jonas Haiduwa, Cde Tobias Hainyeko and Cde Filemon Shuuya Castrolli who later drove us to Kongwa Training Centre. Both Castrolli and Hainyeko were the opposite of Maxton Joseph, quiet and soft spoken and seemed always in deep thought. Cde Tobias Hainyeko apparently was there escorting Cde John Otto Nankudhu' s group enroute to Namibia something we only learnt about after the battle of Omugulugombashe. Among the comrades we found at Kongwa were Titus Mwailepeni, Peter Hambiya, David Ushona and Peter Shinyafa. Our basic military training started at Kongwa

Training Centre. Our training included political education, skills at arms, guerrilla warfare tactics, communication, reconnaissance, security, first aid and office administration among others. In the interim some comrades were sent for further training to countries such as China, the USSR, Algeria and Egypt.

In December 1968, I was in the group of ten which was sent to North Korea for military training. The group leader was Cde Alpheus Veshitile, deputized by Cde Raimond Busiwalelo. For records purpose, the other members of the group were Fredrick Matongo, Martin Ndopu, Job Tobias, Andreas Uushona, Phillipus Nandenga, Gilbert Kaxuxwena, and Lucius Kambangula and me, Dumeni Hawala. The training was both mentally and physically demanding. It lasted for one year or ten academic months. We specialized in combined combat skills at company or detachment level.

On return in 1969, I was assigned to the office of SWAPO Chief Rep in Lusaka, Zambia as assistant representative to Cde Solomon Mufima at the SWAPO Head Office in Lusaka.

The Tanga Consultative Conference made very crucial and important decisions which helped to reorganize and restructure the Movement in conformity with its aims and objectives. Wings were established and these included the Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia, the successor of the South West Africa Liberation Army (SWALA) with clear lines of command and control. Appointments to key positions were also made.

In 1970, I was appointed assistant to Cde Solomon Mifima, SWAPO Chief Representative in Zambia and later as Deputy to Comrade Sackaria Shikomba, the Chief Representative in Zambia and served in this position until end of 1971. When Cde Jesaya Nyamu became Chief Representative, I was made Chief Administrator in the Head Office.

Between 1970 and 1971, the Eastern Region was under the command of Cde Abisai Hanghome assisted by Cde Jonas Haiduwa. These great patriots of our nation while in charge conducted a very successful guerrilla campaign in the Caprivi Strip by way of raids, ambushes, sabotage, laying mines and by doing so inflicted losses and damage on enemy equipment, personnel and morale. Various types of enemy equipment were also captured and displayed later to the international community. It is because of these bold actions by the gallant combatants of PLAN that our people in Namibia were motivated to rally behind SWAPO of Namibia.

At the fall of the Portuguese Empire in 1974, thousands of mainly young Namibians began to flee Namibia to join the armed liberation struggle that SWAPO was waging. It was a just cause. In view of the dynamics, I was then assigned to Senanga to relieve Cde Hamutenya wa Ndadi who was the most senior commander at the front in the absence of Dimo Hamaambo who was already leading operations in Namibia from Southern Angola

In 1975, the Secretary for Defence and Transport, Cde Peter Nanyemba appointed three Assistant Commanders of the Armed Forces (ACAF) to Cde Dimo Hamaambo, the Commander of the Armed Forces (CAF) These were Jonas Haiduwa, Solomon Hawala and Patrick Iyambo Lungada.

To effectively plan, coordinate and execute the military campaign against the enemy, ACAFs were assigned as follows. Jonas Haiduwa was sent to Angola to directly work with CAF, Dimo Hamaambo. Lungada and I were assigned to take care of the operations of the Eastern Military Region whose area of responsibility included Caprivi Strip and for geographical reasons some parts of Angola.

Under my command and supervision many successful operations were conducted during which heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy. I have also personally participated in the planning and actual execution of many battles, and I choose to highlight but just a few.

THE BATTLE OF LUANA

In an attempt to stop SWAPO fighters from infiltrating into Namibia using that strategic corridor, the enemy established a base at Shindjebela. This base was a staging post for incursions into Zambia to attack PLAN bases and conduct search and destroy operations in Angola. I ordered my forces to take care of the area and not allow the enemy to dictate terms on us. So, several successful operations were carried out in that general area.

As is a practice in war the enemy decided to reinforce the base instead of abandoning it. This made them an ideal target. I gathered my troops with all the necessary equipment and launched an attack resulting in so many enemy soldiers being killed and the bulk of their war materiel being destroyed. It was a great success on the part of SWAPO. Cde Patrick Lungada, the ACAF sustained serious injuries in this historic battle in 1976. Verify date.

After the battle, I felt it was necessary to regroup at Kaunga Mashu for rest and recuperation. Not only that we needed time to refresh, analyze the situation and come up with new ideas and as to how best we can wage the war against the racist regime thereby speeding up the process of attaining independence. Mind you this was at the time when diplomatic initiatives were at their highest peak.

KATIMA MULILO BASE

This base for obvious reasons was the largest base in the region and coordinated all anti insurgency operations in the entire Caprivi and parts of Angola Zambia borders. After the heinous and barbaric attack on Cassinga on 4 May 1978, the High Command of PLAN issued a directive to all military regions to plan and attack enemy in revenge for the massacre that claimed innocent lives of fellow compatriots mainly women and children. Upon receiving such a directive, I instructed my staff to start to plan for a major attack on Katima Mulilo, a target I have chosen because of its strategic importance and impact on the morale of the enemy and the local populace.

Preparations included things such as intelligence gathering, determining exact enemy weaknesses and strength, enemy morale, routines, exact location, fortifications, weapons and equipment and best approaches for attack. After sizing up the mission I ordered that an operation order be drafted for my approval. Before approval, a rehearsal must be done for every fighter to understand his or her role, but without compromising the operation. By mid Aug 1978, it was all systems go. I set 23 Aug as D-Day. I took charge of the operation by leading from the front. On 23 Aug 1978, Katima was successfully attacked causing death to the enemy

and massive destruction to equipment and base infrastructure. Enemy announced 11 of their men killed and an unspecified number of others injured. Own intelligence assessment told a different story and put the number higher, but all the same it was a mission well accomplished. This event was broadcast worldwide.

This battle will remain with me up to the last breath of my life. I hope it is the case with the comrades with whom I fought in this battle.

BATTLE OF SINGALAMWE

This base has been for a while a nuisance and a great obstacle to SWAPO and therefore its complete removal was overdue. Few options were available such as increasing pressure on the enemy by hit and run tactics, harassing fire, laying mines and ambushes. I chose the ambush option. I ordered that a major ambush be laid on the Singalamwe-Katima Mulilo road with the aim of inflicting as much as possible and send clear message that SWAPO means serious business. On the 19 Feb 1978 an ambush lay in waiting for the unsuspecting enemy. As enemy approached and entered the killing area they were met with a hail of fire, death and destruction. The most senior commander in the convoy was one of the first to die. During a fierce fight, Cde Heinrick Shikongo was killed in action but not before he destroyed enemy command vehicle and one or two more. We salute and remember him still. Later more and more ambushes occurred on this road to the extent that enemy dumped it as road of death and I agree. That is exactly what we intended it to be, hell on earth.

QUANTO CAMP BATTLE.

For some strange reason the enemy designated this base as a camp. To me it was still the same enemy, camp or base or not. On the 30 March 1978 this camp was attacked and destroyed completely. I remain glad that I was there. In 1978 the Zambian Government ordered SWAPO to seize military ops from Zambia until further notice, a notice that never came. The rest is history.

In 1979 a military Council meeting was convened with the aim to critically look at the political and military situation obtaining in Namibia. Very important and crucial resolutions were taken among others that the positions of ACDs be abolished and instead elected to have only one position of DAC. I was appointed as DAC a position I held until the end of the war in 1989.

(reorganization , restructuring, military needs, logistics, general staff, departments, transfer troops from Zambia, operational readiness, doctrine, etc)

In 1979 I was transferred to Angola as part of the restructuring and reorganization program. Understandably I had to be at the OP HQ to carry out my duties as AC. I handed over the command of the region to cde Baby.

POSITIONS HELD IN SWAPO

In 1977 I was elected as a member of the CC. In 1981 I was elected to the Executive Committee now Political Bureau. These appointments effectively made me both a senior national and military leader.

While in Angola, I physically took part in several battles and amongst the major ones was what the enemy coined as Operation Smoke Shell launched on the 10 June 1980 against PLAN HQs at Shilubamba situated in Cunene Province of Angola at the time. This was the largest operation, according to available data, that South Africa has ever carried out after World War 2. Break PLAN backbone and render it a devastating blow was the mission intent. Alas, that was not to be. On the contrary the enemy suffered heavily at the hands of our fighters. Yes, there were heavy casualties on both sides and great losses of equipment. This battle lasted for about ten days which explains the ferocity and scale. I remain proud to have been part of it and salute all those who were there with me.

In 1981, I and 9 other comrades were sent for further specialized training in the U

This training was about military combat work and special security services, counter intelligence, information collection and analysis, counter revolutionary activities, VIP protection, guerrilla warfare operations and many others.

On my return in 1982, the leadership of SWAPO put me in charge of General Security Services of SWAPO while at the same time retaining me as Deputy Army Commander. My terms, conditions and responsibilities were cle

After 25 years, I was repatriated to Namibia in Oct 1989 together with my family. This was two years after I had tied knots with my dear wife Laimi Pamekeni Pauvaneko Niimpuku Remember on the 4th of July 1987 in Lubango. The groomsmen were Jonas Kapapu Mumbwelawemadi and Alfons Ngeyama. The braidmaids were Johanna Intamba and Hileni Amwaalwa .Our marriage is blessed with 7 children, 4 girls and 3 boys . One of the boys, Elago Konghola has passed on. They are Tuyeni Emmy, Elago Konghola, Naambo Sophia, Linekela-Kalunga Hawala Amutenya, Taapopi- Nokokule Taapopi Taawewaana Taawelesenge Taaningilenayi, Neemuno Naufiku and Pamekeni Pauvaneko Niimpuku Laimi. I ma also blessed with 9 lovely grandchildren, Ugwanga Ananias, Namwenjo Tonateni Hilda, Jessica Yvonne, Junior Nelo, Sandra, Mauro Dominic Jose, Shishani Candy, Tangeni Omwene Ezra, and Panduleni Omwene David. My three geat grand children are Josua Mutong, Abel Nambalo and Abed Niilenge.

After 23 years of a protracted armed struggle a diplomatic solution was reached, the details of which are contained in various accords and agreements chief among them was the UNSCR 435. The conflicting parties agreed to implement the UNSCR 435 which entailed a ceasefire, demobilization, disarmament, confinement followed by a UN supervised elections in Namiba. Elections were held in November 1989. SWAPO of Namibia emerged victorious and was asked to form a new government. On the 21 March 1990 Namibia became a free and independent country with Cde Sam Nujoma as President.

In 1990, I was appointed as the first Army Commander by Cde President Sam Nujoma and Commander in Chief and was conferred the rank of Major General.

When Gen Dimo, the 1 CDF retired in Nov 2000, I was appointed to replace him with effect from 1 Dec 2000. I was promoted to the rank of Lt Gen. Major General Martin Shalli replaced

me as AC. I served in this capacity until my retirement from active service in 2004. Gen Marin Shalli replaced me as CDF in 2004.

NB. Four paragraphs still sanctioned. We talk tomorrow

MEDALS AND AWARDS

Omuguluwombashe Medal

Namibia Cross for Bravery

NDF Ten Years Medal

(extract from the birthday speech)

When I die like I shall one day, I want to die in peace. I will die a happy man knowing that Namibia is free forever and is at peace with itself. For too long the Namibian people have made supreme sacrifices. For too long our people have waged a just struggle against the enemy. For too long people have yearned for genuine freedom and independence.

My story cannot be complete if I don't pay special tribute to so many heroes and heroines of this great land, past and living. To all my fellow warriors for freedom, to all Namibian patriots who together have borne the brunt of apartheid and ruthless oppression, to the world progressive nations and individuals for their solidarity and all-round support during the bitter struggle.

I want to express my gratitude to the leadership of SWAPO for unwavering dedication and commitment to the just cause during and after the war for liberation. I also extend a special word of thanks and appreciation to all the men and women in uniform for their support during the time we served together and for their commitment and dedication to duty and ensuring that Namibia remains the best place to live in.

I also want to thank my parents for the love and care they have shown me and my siblings. In the same vein I must admit that I owe my dear wife and my children a great debt of gratitude for their support. I am still here because of your care, love and dedication. I owe my life to you. I have not much time left to live.

Lastly and most importantly I thank the Almighty God for carrying and protecting me throughout my long-life journey. Glory to Thee. Amen!

