

**LIVING MEMORY IN A FORGOTTEN WAR ZONE:
THE UKWANGALI DISTRICT OF KAVANGO AND THE
NAMIBIAN LIBERATION STRUGGLE, 1966-1989**

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The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building facade with columns and a pediment, rendered in a light blue color.

**UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE**

**A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Magister Artium in the Department of History, University of the Western Cape.**

Supervisor: Professor Patricia Hayes

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DECLARATION

I declare that *Living memory in a forgotten war zone: the uKwangali district of Kavango and the Namibian liberation struggle, 1966—1989*, is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete reference.

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Date: July 2008

Signed.....



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To my children Robert Chamane Karapo, Veronika Nkenda Karapo, Flory Dadaky Karapo and Milk Ethuhole Karapo, and my beloved wife Saima Ndahangwapo Tunga Karapo thanks for your love, support and for shouldering the responsibility of our family during my absence. Without your support it could have not been possible.

ABSTRACT

Ukwangali district is located in the western part of the Kavango region approximately 70 kilometers west of the regional town Rundu. This thesis explores and documents the local political dimensions which prevailed in the uKwangali district of Namibia between 1966-1989. The study seeks to find out why the uKwangali district became a war zone outside of the main theatre of war in nearby Ovamboland, and how its residents became part of the Namibian armed liberation struggle. In 1964 the Odendaal Commission led to the division of South West Africa into ten designated areas, including Kavango. The region was implicated in the armed struggle from 1966, right through to the most intense phase of the struggle in the late 1980s. The South African regime's strategies in uKwangali district were part of its military campaign to break down the influence of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO). This included Administration General Proclamation AG 9 Act of 1977 which allowed arrest and detention without any warrant or offence. Through the (Recce) Reconnaissance Unit the South African Defence Force (SADF) also used to disguise themselves as People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) cadres in order to deceive the local civilians in Namibia.

The strategy of using secret informers 'spies' created additional tension, mistrust and misunderstanding among civilians themselves and with PLAN cadres. Thus the social and political impact of the South African military occupation and colonial administration on the life of the local inhabitants is central to this enquiry, especially in the context of conventional and unconventional warfare.

Though PLAN cadres did commit occasional targeted assassinations, their primary mode of gaining support was through political education among villagers which addressed the

inequalities of the racist South African regime in Namibia. Against this background, civilians were caught between the two military forces which operated in uKwangali district; during the day civilians had to deal with the SADF and Koevoet looking for PLAN combatants, while at night PLAN cadres would visit for food and logistical support.

The cease-fire agreement of 1984 in Lusaka Zambia marked the beginning of the transition period which led to Namibia's first democratic elections in 1989. United Nations' Resolution 435 of 1988 established UNTAG to supervise the withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia and the repatriation of refugees and the assembly of PLAN combatants prior to elections. During this transition period, SWAPO campaigned successfully in Ukwangali district as a political party and the election results for Kavango show the support which the liberation movement had gained during the war years, despite South African pressures on the civilian population. My research therefore examines the social and political impact of the armed liberation struggle against the South African regime had, and the contributions of the inhabitants of Ukwangali during the war years and the decisive elections of 1989, which has hitherto been neglected in the national historiography. In this context, the study looks at what it means to be a forgotten war zone in the Namibian liberation struggle.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAN	Aksie Christelik Nasionaal
CDA	Christian Democratic Action
CDM	Consolidated Diamond Mines
DTA	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
DSA	District Security Assistance
ELCIN	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia
FCN	Federal Convention of Namibia
FNLA	National Front for the Liberation of Angola
IDAF	International Defence and Aid Fund
MPLA	Movimento Popular pela Liberacao de Angola
NNF	Namibia National Front
NPF	National Patriotic Front
NNDP	Namibia National Democratic Party
NANSO	Namibian National Student Organization
OPC	Ovamboland People's Congress
OPO	Ovamboland People's Organisation
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia.
RECCE	Reconnaissance

SWAPO-D	SWAPO-Democrats
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAPOL	South African Police
SA	South African
SWATF	South West African Territory Forces
SAAF	South African Air Force
UNTAG	United Nations Transition Assistance Group
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UN	United Nations
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army



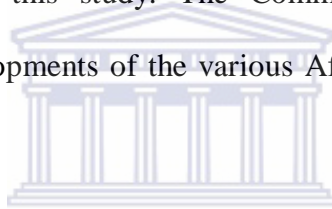
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INTRODUCTION

Historical background

South West Africa (Namibia) was a mandated territory under South Africa from 1921, up to Namibia's first democratic election in November 1989. Under the mandate system, South Africa was expected to promote the material and moral wellbeing of the inhabitants of the territory. The Odendaal Plan of 1962 was aimed at separate development on ethnic grounds. It was one of the colonial strategies used to control the local inhabitants in each region, which affected the Kavango region and the uKwangali district as well, the site of this study. The Commission was required to make recommendation for the developments of the various African people inside and outside their designated areas.



The outcome of the Commission was the division of South West Africa (Namibia) into ten designated areas for the various 'native nations'.¹ These areas later became the homelands for the Africans in South West Africa (Namibia). After 1970, three northern homelands were granted self-government.² The Kavango Legislative Council was one of the Legislative Councils established by the Development of Self-Government for Native Nations of South West Africa Act No 54 of 1968, to administer one of the 'native nations', the Kavango. The Kavango legislative structure under the apartheid regime of

¹ The Act set the following areas for the exclusive occupations of the different native nations, Damaraland (Damaras), Hereroland (Hereros), Kaokoland (Himbos), Kavangoland (Kavango) Eastern Caprivi (Caprivians), Ovamboland (Ovambo) and any other area reserved and set apart for the exclusive use of and occupation by natives as recognized by the South African State President, See the Development of Self-Government for Native Nations of South West Africa Act No 54 of 1968, pp 831-832, National Library of Namibia, Windhoek.

² The three northern homelands were Ovamboland, Kavangoland and Eastern Caprivi.

South Africa had a political impact where the local people were used to serve the interests of South Africa.

The uKwangali district is situated in the western part of the Kavango region, approximately 70 kilometers west of the regional town Rundu. This study is limited to one specific area in Kavango region, that of uKwangali district. The focus on one specific area allows the researcher to closely document and analyse the micro-political role of individuals in the selected area, in the independence struggle between 1966-1989. The selection of the western part of the region was due to the fact that uKwangali district shares a regional border with Ovamboland in the west of the district, which was the main war theatre during the selected period.³ Another motive for selecting this area was the increasing concentration of South African military bases in the area.

The mini-thesis aims to explore how and why the uKwangali district became involved in the armed liberation struggle. The study aims to trace the political dimensions of the main struggle period (1976-89), but including the 1960s in Kavango and in uKwangali in particular. This is a significant omission in the historiography of Namibia, because the liberation struggle in Namibia was mainly fought in the northern and northeastern parts of the country where uKwangali district is situated geographically, and yet the latter has to date not been sufficiently researched. Thus the documentation and the unpacking of the living memories of the inhabitants of uKwangali district in this context is aimed at filling the gap in the national historiography of Namibia, so as to include the

³ J.B. Diescho, 'A critical evaluation of the Odendaal commission of enquiry into South West Africa affairs 1962-63' (MA dissertation, University Fort Hare, 1983), p.12.

previously unexplored micro-politics, experiences and contributions of the people of this area during the Namibian armed struggle for independence.

1966 marked the beginning of the People's Liberation of Namibia (PLAN) infiltration in Kavango region. The declaration of Ovamboland, Kavango and Caprivi in the 1970s as "security districts" under the control of the SADF (South African Defence Force) military rule resulted in the clearance of a 1000 metre wide "no man's land" intended to prevent SWAPO infiltration from Angola into Namibia.⁴ The inclusion of the selected research area in the border war zone from the 1970s therefore means that there is a need to document and analyse what happened not only in the Kavango region, but the uKwangali district in particular.⁵ The independence of Angola in 1975 offered SWAPO the chance to establish military bases in southern Angola. The opening of the Angolan border allowed many Namibians to flee the oppression of the South African regime and a number of Namibians including those in the research area of the study went into exile in Angola during this period to join the armed struggle.⁶

Scholtz indicates that because they were able to utilize Southern Angola, PLAN cadres were in a position to infiltrate large bands of guerillas into Kavango as well as in the geographical centre of Ovamboland, thereby stretching the operational area to a great extent and threatening to overstretch the security forces deployed to counter them.⁷ Cliffe and his co-authors argued that uKwangali district was one area in which PLAN guerillas

⁴ International Defence Aid fund (IDAF), *Apartheid Army in Namibia: South Africa illegal military occupation* (London, IDAF, 1982), p.41.

⁵ The South African military force had four bases in the UKwangali area, namely Musese (905 Battalion), Nepara (55 SAI), Nkure-Nkuru Base and Maun (906 Battalion).

⁶ P.H. Katjavivi, *A history of resistance in Namibia* (London: UNESCO Press, 1988), p.87.

⁷ S. Brown, "Diplomacy by other means", in Leys and Saul: *Namibia Liberation struggle*, p.23.

were active coming into Kavango from the Ovambo region, and engaged in political education as well as in guerilla activities.⁸ It is therefore clear that PLAN cadres who came into Kavango entered the region via uKwangali district before spreading across the entire region.⁹ The infiltration of PLAN cadres into Kavango via uKwangali made the district the most influential area in Kavango in terms of the liberation movement, and undermined the spheres of South African influence in uKwangali.

Research objectives

This thesis aims to examine why uKwangali district in the Kavango became one of the declared war zones in Namibia, and how this came about. The role of the traditional authorities within the Legislative Council body, and the legislation passed by the Council will give an indication of the position of the traditional leaders in Kavango as to whether they resisted or co-operated with the South African regime. The study covers the period 1966 to 1989, 23 years of the armed struggle of Namibia. The study ends in 1989-90 when the country gained independence.

This part of the country's history has received little attention especially when it comes to the liberation struggle of Namibia. Thus the study seeks to explore and document the local political dimensions which prevailed in the selected area and the

⁸ L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.295.

⁹ S. Brown, "Diplomacy by other means", in Leys and Saul: *Namibia Liberation struggle*, p.23.

military strategies implemented by the South African regime in uKwangali district as part of their broader war effort.

The central research question which will be addressed by this study is: did the South African authorities succeed in imposing their control over uKwangali district during the liberation war, and if so, how? The mini-thesis will give an historical overview of the selected research area, and portray the political activities which took place in the area, with special attention to the fact that the district dealt with two military forces: that of SWAPO (PLAN) and the South African Defence Force (SADF) with its surrogate named the South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF). The impact of the South African Police (SAP) counter-insurgency unit, Koevoet, on the lives of civilians will also be looked at in this thesis.

The mini-thesis aims to provide an in-depth study of the strategies which were imposed by the South African regime on the communities to try and break off contact with SWAPO. An in-depth analysis of the conventional and unconventional strategies used by the South African security forces will be addressed in the chapters of this thesis. The formation of the South West African people's Organization (SWAPO) a political movement which represented the interests of the Namibian people in the 1960s sparked decades of guerilla warfare, mostly armed, against the South African military regime.

The South African system of apartheid and colonial oppression which spread significantly into South West Africa (Namibia), forced thousands of Namibians to desert the country into neighboring countries such as Angola, Zambia, Botswana and Tanzania for safety and better security, during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Though hundreds of

young men and women from the Kavango region left the country especially in the 1980s, little is known about their fate and personal experience in Namibian historiography.¹⁰ Whilst it is undeniable that the armed struggle in Namibia was launched by SWAPO in 1966 after the attack of Omgulumbashe in Ovamboland by the SAP force,¹¹ different parts of the country were affected militarily and politically by the guerilla warfare. The uKwangali district of the Kavango region was one of the areas most affected by the liberation struggle outside of Ovamboland.

The chapters in this mini-thesis will critically examine the social and political impacts of the South African colonial administration and its military buildup between 1966-1989 in uKwangali district of the Kavango region. The political changes which prevailed in the uKwangali district of Kavango region, the military strategies implemented by the South African regime in uKwangali area as a measure to breakdown the influence of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) in the district are the key issues which will be addressed in the chapters.

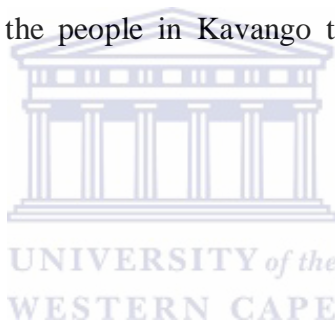
The structural intimidation embedded in the social and the ethnic political structure set up by the South African administration, which patronized its political relationship which existed with certain chiefs in the Kavango region will be examined.¹² Thus people who got jobs from the Kavango ethnic administration were caught up in a

¹⁰ © hnmilk "Kavango during the Namibian war of liberation," <http://kavango.info/Voito.htm>, accessed on 2007/08/07.

¹¹M. Wallace and T Cleaver, *Namibian women in war* (London: Zed Books Ltd), p.14-15.

¹²L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.295.

patron-client relationship indebted to officials, chiefs and headmen. The work of this mini-thesis is to explore the original contributions and involvements of the inhabitants of uKwangali district of the Kavango during the Namibian armed liberation struggle. My inspiration for this study has been instigated by my personal experience of the activities of the armed liberation struggle and the guerilla warfare in uKwangali as from 1980-1989, and the inadequate representation of this area in the Namibian historiography. This motivated me to take up the challenge of addressing a lacuna in the published history of Namibia's liberation struggle. The transition period and the United Nations supervised election of 1989, the political activities of SWAPO during 1989 campaign, will be looked at to highlight the support of the people in Kavango towards the cause of Namibian Independence.



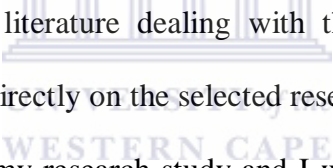
Research methodology

Two complementary methods will be used in this research study, namely archival research and fieldwork interviews. Apart from using the relevant literature dealing with the armed struggle of Namibia in general, a total of twenty-four individuals mainly in uKwangali area will be interviewed. The categories of informants in the study ranged from former PLAN combatants, former members of the Kavango Legislative Council, ordinary members of the communities and former SADF and Koevoet members.

The fact that very little written documentation exists on the area under research, means that the personal experiences of the interviewees on the Namibian armed liberation struggle and its impact on the district will serve as the main sources of the mini-thesis.

Investigating these previously undocumented living memories will enable the researcher to explore the involvement of the people of uKwangali district in the often hidden micro-politics of the Namibian armed struggle. The political dangers that the civilians of uKwangali district of the Kavango region were exposed to on a daily basis will form the basis of my argument as to why the selected district became a war zone in the 1970s and 1980s. Daily harassment, assaults and atrocities committed by the South African forces in particular Koevoet make the district a war zone, but unfortunately a forgotten one.

Literature review



While there is a quantity of literature dealing with the Namibian armed liberation struggle, little literature exists directly on the selected research area, thus oral history will form the major component of my research study and I will collect first hand data from various individuals concerning their personal experiences and involvement. A variety of secondary sources which deals with the liberation struggle of Namibia, are to be consulted in this research to support the oral data collected. Publications about the Namibian armed struggle and elsewhere in Southern Africa which will be useful in contextualizing the study in a regional framework will be consulted.

The book by Helao Shityuwete entitled *Never follow the wolf* provides a historical background of PLAN fighters' infiltration into Namibia across the Kavango River. His work provides a study of the specific period when PLAN fighters first entered the Kavango region in the 1960s, for surveillance purposes on the political situation in

Namibia. The book describes the routes PLAN fighters used to infiltrate in Kavango and the type of assistance given by the local contact person in Rundu. This will help the study to evaluate the type of difficulties experienced by PLAN cadres and the type of assistance rendered by the local people in Kavango, at this time.¹³ Shityuwete's book is useful as it integrates Kavango into the history of the armed liberation struggle.

The MA thesis by Joseph Diescho on the Odendaal Commission's findings, recommendations and implementation with respect to Kavango will be useful to the study.¹⁴ His thesis sheds light on the formation of a political party by a Kavango SWAPO supporter David Ausiku called "Muzogumwe" meaning "One way forward" in Kavango in the sixties.¹⁵ His thesis is helpful as it reveals the earlier activities of SWAPO in Kavango. Thus it helps in understanding the earlier activities of SWAPO in Kavango.

J.P. Serfontein's book entitled *Namibia* is useful to the study, as it provides a historical account of SWAPO activities inside Namibia and abroad. However his work implies that the struggle was fought by a single ethnic group, which does not reflect the complex reality of Namibia's armed struggle. This is the main argument which the mini-thesis is intending to address, by looking at the position of the uKwangali district during the struggle.

¹³ H. Shityuwete, *Never follow the wolf: The autobiography of a Namibian freedom fighter* (London: Kliptown Books, 1999), p.119-127.

¹⁴J. B. Diescho, 'A critical Evaluation of the Odendaal Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa Affairs 1962-1963' (MA Dissertation, University of Fort Hare, 1983), p.48.

¹⁵J. B. Diescho, 'A critical Evaluation of the Odendaal Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs 1962-1963 (MA dissertation, University of Forte Hare, 1983), p.48.

Serfontein's work is also useful as he talks of the military operation of the PLAN during the above period where Namibia was divided into four military regions i.e. North and northeastern region that of Ovamboland and Kavango, Northwest region Kaokoland, Grootfontein district in the central region, Northern eastern region that of the Caprivi Strip. This in fact contradicts his own narrative where he claims that the struggle was fought by one ethnic group and this therefore needs clarification. This will help to understand as to why the selected area became a forgotten war zone in Namibia. His work also noted that although intimidation was applied throughout the country, it was mainly concentrated in Ovamboland, a point with which I disagree personally.¹⁶ Thus the study aims at correcting and filling the lacuna in the existing literatures.

The book by A.T. Moleah, entitled *Namibia: the struggle for liberation*, also gives the study an historical background of the struggle in Namibia and its developments over time. It helps in creating an understanding of the evolution of the Ovambo People's Organization (OPO) which later changed to South West African People Organization (SWAPO). It discusses the diverse strategies which the South African regime used to try and destroy SWAPO such as intimidating people from supporting the liberation movement.¹⁷

The book also talks of the most notorious special force named Koevoet which was extremely brutal to the local people in Namibia. These units also operated within the western part of Kavango, the area where my research study is based. It is thus helpful to

¹⁶ J.H.P. Serfontein, *Namibia* (London: Rex collings, 1976), p.155-223.

¹⁷ A.T. Moleah, *Namibia: the struggle for liberation* (Wilmington: Dissa press, 1983), p.270.

understand as how the South African security forces intended to impose control over uKwangali district. His book also talks of people who were abducted within the selected area whose whereabouts are not known, even today.¹⁸ Thus Moleah's work helps towards an understanding of why this area is a forgotten war zone.

The book by Denis Herbstein and John Evenson entitled *The devils are among us: The war for Namibia* is useful as it provides the study with much detail on the forms of violence, assault and atrocity committed by the Koevoet unit across the north-eastern war zone, including uKwangali.¹⁹

Ngavirue's book *Political parties and interest groups in South West Africa (Namibia)* provides this study with an idea of the political debates during the selected period in Namibia. The book is helpful in understanding the aspects of the liberation struggle within the Kavango context. His work gives a clear perspective of the agenda of various political parties formed by that time in Namibia, their purposes, policies and principles. This provides the study with a clear picture of the Nationalist movements formed at that time in Namibia, how they operated countrywide, what they stood for and their political ideology towards various Namibian citizens.²⁰

Tony Emmet book's entitled *Popular resistance and the roots of Nationalism in Namibia* will be relevant to the study as it gives an insight into the early development of nationalism in Namibia. The book talks of the resistance in Namibia and the growth of

¹⁸ Ibid, p.270

¹⁹ D. Herbstein and J. Evenson, *The devils are among us: The war for Namibia* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1989), p.92.

²⁰ Z. Ngavirue, *Political parties and interested groups in South West Africa (Namibia) a study of a plural society*, (Basel Switzerland: Schletwein publisher, 1997), p.89.

nationalism and how the people started to develop a sense of nationalism for their own nation. Economic factors which were possible influences on the development of nationalism and anti-colonial resistance are also described in this book.²¹

To Be Born a Nation by the SWAPO Information Department will be relevant here as it explains the colonial oppression, racial discrimination, impoverishment, and the contract labour system which the Namibian people experienced during the above mentioned period, including the Kavango.²²

Chronology of Namibian History by Klaus Dierks gives the chronological order of various historical and political events which took place in Namibia. The formation of the Kavango Alliance Party (KAP) which was renamed later as the National Democratic Unity Party (NDUP) in 1984 under the presidency of Alfons Majavero is one example. Other political organizations which were formed were the Kavango Action Group (KAG) and the Namibia National Independence Party (NNIP) under the presidency of Rudolf Ngondo. The NNIP was formed in 1983, aimed to oppose the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) which was supported by the South African regime. His work provides the study with the exact dates in which different events took place in Namibia and in Kavango in particular.²³

²¹T. Emmet, *Popular resistance and the roots of nationalism in Namibia* (Basel Switzerland: Schletwein publisher, 1991), p.102.

²² SWAPO information Department, *To Be Born a Nation: The liberation struggle for Namibia* (London: Zed Press, 1981), p.57-66.

²³ K. Dierks, *Chronology of Namibian history: from the pre-historical times to independence* (Namibian Scientific Society, 1999), p.285.

Gerhard Totemeyer's book *Elections in Namibia* describes the election process of 1989 with all the political parties which participated in that election. His study is helpful as it provides a detailed summary of all the districts which participated in the election, despite not providing specific reference as to how each constituency performed. In analyzing this result it can be seen how the selected area contributed towards Namibia's first democratic election. The political parties which participated in the 1989 election are also listed in the book e.g. CAN, CDA, DTA, FCN, NNDP, NNF, NPF, SWAPO-D, SWAPO, and UDF.²⁴ The book will assist in the analysis of the extent of SWAPO support in Kavango, as compared to voting support for other parties.

Multiparty democracy in Namibia by Deborah Lebeau provides the study with the political developments which led to the cease-fire agreements, the implementation of Resolution 435 and the transition period which culminated in the United Nations supervised elections in 1989.

Lionel Cliffe's book, *The transition to Independence in Namibia*, also helps the study with the political activities of the 1980s. His work provides an insight into the political conflicts which prevailed between the two main parties SWAPO and DTA during the 1989 general elections. His book also helps the study in understanding the forms of violence and intimidation orchestrated by the DTA during the election campaign. In addition his work provides an understanding as to how the traditional leaders were embedded in the patron-client relationships with the South African colonial

²⁴ G. K. H. Totemeyer et al, *Elections in Namibia* (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan Publisher, 1996), p.208-209.

administration. This will help to understand the complications of the position of the traditional leader during the political turmoil of 1980s.

The IDAF book entitled *Apartheid's Army in Namibia: South African's illegal military occupation*, gives an overview of the South African military operations and the military strategies they used to control the activities of the People Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) in Namibia and in particular in the north-eastern part of Namibia. The book gives detailed features of the military bases which were established in the area of my research study, which will assist me in analyzing the impact of the South African militarization in uKwangali.²⁵

The Kavango local newspapers, *Kavangudi*, and *Mupukuruli*, which used to give the media coverage of all the political and military activities in Kavango, will be relevant as well. The newspaper will be useful simply because it was one of the strategies used by the South Africans to propagate the negative ideology against the nationalist movements e.g. SWAPO, that they will not serve the interest of the local people.²⁶ It is therefore relevant to the study because it mainly presented state-sponsored activities in the region. These printed media provide an understanding of what issues were reported on and how these were perceived by individuals.

The SWAPO information bulletins published in the 1980s will be relevant to the study as they give an insight into the nationalist movement, with its critique of the

²⁵ IDAF, *Apartheid's Army in Namibia: South Africa illegal military occupation movements* (London: IDAF, 1982), p.41.

²⁶ *Kavangudi*, No. 1. January 1975 (National Archive of Namibia), p.2-8.

various South African political ideologies of Apartheid and segregation between Namibian ethnic-groups, based on skin color, race, creed and religion. These publications will provide an understanding as how the nationalist movement SWAPO used its own arguments to oppose South Africa military rule.²⁷

Besides books and newspapers, legislation itself requires analysis. Act No.54 of 1968. The Development of Self-Government for Natives in South West Africa which declared self rule, gives an insight into how the South African regime used its power to co-opt traditional leaders to serve the interests of the interim government through “Bantu self-rule”. The Act was one of the strategies which the South Africa regime used to indirectly destroy the local community in supporting the nationalist movement namely SWAPO during the selected period.

While the above literature deals specifically with Namibia, a set literature dealing with the guerilla warfare and government counter-insurgency forces in Southern Africa, in particular of Zimbabwe, will be referred to in the thesis to make a comparative study on the strategies used by guerillas fighters and the government forces.

Norma Kriger’s book *Zimbabwe’s guerilla war. Peasant Voices* provide an insight into the types of logistic and other support given by civilians.²⁸ The book gives a detailed analysis of the interactions which existed between the civilians and guerilla fighters in the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. Her work helps the study to compare with

²⁷ SWAPO Information Bulletin of September 1987, SWAPO Department of Information and publicity (Luanda: Angola), p.5.

²⁸N. J. Kriger, *Zimbabwe Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices – African Studies Series 70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.118.

the different types of logistic support provided by the civilians and the impacts such assistance had on the civilians caused by the government's forces.

The strategies used by guerilla fighters to win the mind and hearts of the civilians through political education lectures, singing liberation songs and by politicizing the community members are described in Kriger's book. Her work will help the study to compare the mode of operation of the Zimbabwe People Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and civilians in Zimbabwe and that of the People Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) who operated in Namibia and in uKwangali district in particular.

Jocelyn Alexander and her co-authored book entitled, *Violence and memory: one hundred years in the dark forest of Matabeleland*, provides the study with a useful comparative analysis of the unconventional strategies used by the counter insurgency unit the District Security Assistance (DSA) which operated in Zimbabwe.²⁹ This helps the study to assess the types of unconventional strategies used by the government forces in Namibia and the Koevoet unit in particular, to instill fear and confusion among the civilians. This work also sheds light on the strategies used by the Rhodesian forces like exhibiting photographs of atrocities said to be committed by the guerillas. This will help to understand that all these strategies were meant to discredit the guerillas' credibility among the civilians who were the main source of their support. In this way the research study thus hopes to contribute to the existing body of literature on the Namibian armed liberation struggle.

²⁹J. Alexander et al, *Violence and memory: one hundred years in the dark forest of Matabeleland*.-Social history of Africa (Oxford: James Curry Ltd, 2000), p.148.

In addition to the written sources and the oral data collected during my field research, my personal experience during the armed liberation struggle and the guerilla warfare in the district will form part of my thesis. Living in uKwangali district during the 1980s when the struggle was very tense up until today, I can argue that the majority of the civilians who supported the PLAN fighters immensely are sharing the same experience of unhappiness and mistrust of the new dispensation for not acknowledging their input. The lack of recognition and acknowledgement of the civilian contribution has culminated in a new political shift where citizens are not participating fully in political activities as they did during the 1989 election campaign. A recent political party formed in Kavango this year 2008, eighteen years after independence, reflects that a sense of marginalization has been growing among the civilians of the Kavango region.

Throughout my fieldwork, I noticed a sense of silence, disbelief, and mistrust developing among certain individuals interviewed. Inadequate redistribution of state resources are among the key aspects lacking in the district. The promised infrastructural development which was the gospel during the 1989 political campaign, has not yet been implemented and achieved. For example, the tarred road linking Rundu and Nkure-nkuru is the current key aspect used by political figures during the election campaign in uKwangali claiming that once they are voted in the office, the road will be constructed which has been the case since independence. These are tangible gains which some individuals are expecting from the state to reward their tireless contribution.

Thus one must not forget that uKwangali was one of SWAPO's strongholds (more details on this later in the chapters). As one informant said, we were well known and were visited on a regular basis by PLAN cadres for food and other logistic needs

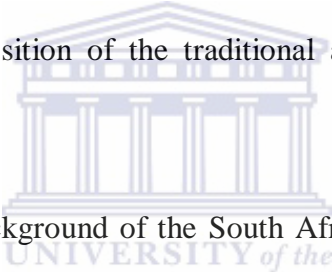
during the period of the armed struggle. Thus he claims that their assistance was just needed during the difficult days. People used to sacrifice their goods and put their lives at risk to provide food and other basic needs, which was very dangerous. People's lives were put at stake by the South African forces, some lost their property, their belongings and loved ones, or they were abused physically and verbally by the repressive forces in the process. The same informant further stated that now that "they" got what they wanted (Independence), we are completely forgotten.

This revelation implies that the contribution of the inhabitants in the district during the selected period of the armed struggle is not rewarded. I can contend that the above revelation is correct simply because the district under research, though deeply affected by the war, has been one of the most marginalized areas in Namibia since Independence. Eighteen years after independence the area still uses gravel roads with few amenities or facilities. It can be argued that civilians in the research area are being denied their postcolonial citizenship rights. Thus civilians are still living with their fate of unrewarded deeds and memories about the warfare which took place in the district.

Though most of the interviewees boast of their tremendous contribution throughout their narratives, a sense of marginalization by the SWAPO led government does not heal the fate of the affected civilians of uKwangali. The striking element in most of the accounts is that the inhabitants have been forgotten, which is why the research topic reads as 'a forgotten war zone' in the historiography of Namibia. Thus the notion of memory as a source of information will be relevant to this study to help fill the lacuna prevailing in the existing literature of the Namibian liberation struggle.

Chapter outline

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One concerning the reactions of the Traditional Authorities towards SWAPO and the South African regime, provides the geographical position of the research study. The chapter looks at the historical background of the Odendaal Commission that was launched on 11 September 1964, and outlines its recommendations in respect of Kavango. The chapter examines the administrative activities of the South African regime in the Kavango region as from the 1970s, and how it aimed to impose control over the uKwangali district. The Kavango Legislative Council borne out of the Odendaal Commission's recommendations will be looked at to determine the position of the traditional authorities of Kavango and of uKwangali district.



Given the historical background of the South African colonial administration of Kavango, this chapter will also analyse the reactions of the Traditional Authorities towards SWAPO and the South African regime which imposed its colonial administration. The social and political impact of the South African regime and administration on the life of the inhabitants in Kavango will be examined in this chapter.

While Chapter One deals with Odendaal Plan with its recommendations and implications in respect of Kavango, Chapter Two provides a historical background of SWAPO activities in Kavango in the late 1960s and late 1970s. A detailed analysis of the political dynamics between the civilians of uKwangali district and the South African authorities during the liberation war in the eighties, seeks to address the specific problems

which the local VaKwangali communities had to deal with in relation to the South African authorities during the liberation struggle. The security and safety of the civilians in the district will be looked at and how the struggle affected the inhabitants politically, socially and economically. Specific references will be devoted to the impact the political struggle had on the inhabitants, and the political conflicts which prevailed in the district since the people were exposed to various political and military groupings which were fighting for the common goal of independence.

Chapter Three provides an account of the militarization of Namibia under South African rule from the 1970s, and of the Kavango and uKwangali in particular. The chapter looks at the military situation which led to the declaration of the area as a war zone by the South Africans, with the intensification of activities of the South West African Territory Forces (SWATF) and Koevoet units until 1989. The impact of the South African conventional and unconventional military strategy on the lives of the civilians will be analyzed with reference to the liberation struggle.

The effects of the establishment of military bases namely Musese (905 Battalion), Nepara (55 Battalion) Nkure-Nkuru and Mauni (Battalion 906), in their attempt to combat SWAPO activities will be discussed in this chapter. The question of sexual violence in relation with the South African military forces towards women will be addressed. In conclusion the chapter will look at both the success and failures of the South Africa's military occupation of the selected territory.

While Chapter Three discussed more conventional military tactics in Kavango, this chapter explores the unconventional tactics of the SADF in particular, and the dynamics of the daily relationship between civilians and the security forces and civilians and SWAPO. This chapter seeks to analyze the political relationship which existed between the inhabitants of uKwangali district toward the South African military forces (SADF and Koevoet) and the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) with its military wing PLAN.

The chapter looks at how the selected area was affected by individuals who collaborated with these different military forces. It describes how the people in uKwangali district coped with the challenges from each side and how this changed over time. The unconventional strategies imposed on the civilians, especially by the South African military forces to destroy the positive image of SWAPO, will be examined in detail. Chapter Four will assess the effectiveness of SWAPO's strategies to maintain and extend its support base among civilians. A section dealing with the radio interviews of the three chiefs in Kavango on the political turmoil of 1989 will show just how complicated their position was in relation to the interim regime during the final period of the liberation struggle, as the situation intensified.

Chapter Five looks at the transition period and the United Nations supervised election of 1989. The activities of SWAPO as a political party in Kavango and in uKwangali district will be analyzed. The chapter sheds light on the political activities between SWAPO, DTA and other political parties prior to the 1989 elections. A section

dealing with photographs and posters as the sources of mobilization and campaign by the political parties form part of Chapter Five. The role of the students militants group NANSO which was the backbone of SWAPO during the 1989 election campaign will be looked at here. This chapter provides an insight into the election process of 1989 with the political parties which participated in the election. The final part of the chapter provides an analysis of the election results obtained by each political party in Kavango.

Despite outlining the critical analysis of the main arguments of the mini-thesis, it is important in the conclusion of the study to assess the historical memories left behind by the Odendaal Commission. The complexities of the position of the Traditional Authorities, the body within the Kavango legislative structure, will determine the direction taken by the five oxen in Kavango. The proverb of five oxen refers to the inability of the five chiefs of Kavango (created by the Legislative Council) to unite together or take a collective stand to oppose new laws imposed on them as the situation intensified as the 1989 elections drew near.

Finally, the impact of the armed liberation struggle and the South African military forces on the life of the civilians will be summarized. Conclusions will be drawn about their contribution towards Namibian independence, the violence imposed on them and their unrewarded contributions to the country's independence, in order to highlight the psychological and emotional grievances of the inhabitants concerning their hitherto undocumented and largely unacknowledged living memories of the war.

CHAPTER ONE

THE REACTION OF THE TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES TOWARDS SWAPO AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN REGIME

Introduction

Chapter One starts by sketching out the geographical position of the uKwangali district of the Kavango, a 'forgotten war zone'. The chapter then looks at the administrative activities of the South African regime in Kavango as from the 1970s, and how it aimed to impose control over the uKwangali district. Given the historical background of the colonial administration of Kavango, Chapter One examines the position of the Traditional Authorities who were integrated into the Kavango Legislative Council as councilors and ministers. The Traditional Authorities were the chiefs, headmen and individuals who were co-opted on an ethnic basis between 1966-1989 to promote and serve the interest of the interim government in South West Africa (Namibia) in the northern declared homelands of Ovamboland, Kavangoland and Caprivi.

The chapter sheds light on the social and political implications of the Odendaal Plan, through which the Traditional Authorities co-opted into the Kavango Legislative Council were used to implement the envisaged laws and policies set by South Africa. It provides an in-depth analysis of the Kavango Legislative Assembly structure where Traditional Authorities were caught in between the South African military regime and the nationalist pressure, spearheaded by SWAPO, both inside and outside Kavango. The strategies introduced by the South African regime to counter attack PLAN guerillas operations in uKwangali district will be assessed. The reaction of the Traditional

Authorities towards the South African regime and PLAN will be analyzed as well. The chapter also looks at the interactions between the inhabitants of uKwangali and both the South African Defence Force (SADF) and PLAN. The analysis of this interaction will allow us to draw some conclusions concerning the political position of the Traditional Authority of uKwangali district.

Geographical position of uKwangali district

Geographically uKwangali³⁰ district is situated approximately seventy 70 kilometers west of Rundu along the Kavango River. From the east the district shares a boundary with the Mbunza district. From Ntara the boundary stretches southwards up to Mururani and from Mururani the boundary stretches northwest up to Bravo.³¹ In the west, the district shares a regional boundary with the former Ovamboland from where the boundary stretched northwards up to Katwitwi, linking the district with the Kavango River which forms the national border dividing Namibia from Angola (see Appendix 1: Map of uKwangali).

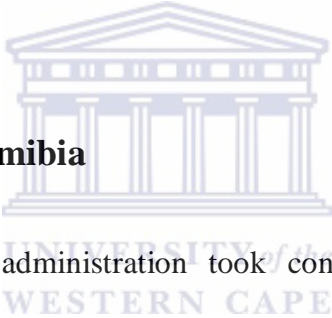
The inland areas of uKwangali were less populated during the early 1970s. This was due to the shortage of water for human consumption. Consequently most of the inhabitants in uKwangali district settled along the Kavango River. During the early seventies there was only one sandy road network which connected the inland of

³⁰ Ukwangali is a district located in the western part of the Kavango region which shares the Kavango river in the north as a national border with Angola and a regional boundary in the west with the former Ovamboland which was the main war zone as from 1966-1989.

³¹ Bravo is a name of a settlement area for the San (Bushman) community in uKwangali.

uKwangali from Nkure-nkuru via Thinsabiz to Tsumeb. The main highway was a gravel road which linked Rundu and Mpungu mission station in the western Kavango. The infiltration of PLAN combatants in the late 1970 and early 1980s gave the impetus to some form of infrastructural developments like roads which linked the area with the former Ovamboland, enabling the South African military forces to move between Kavango and Ovamboland during the 1980s to execute their military operations. The geographical position, where Kwangali district and Kavango region are close to the main theatre of war without being the main centre, helps to explain why this is a ‘forgotten war’ in the bigger national historiography.

The Odendaal Plan in Namibia



The South African colonial administration took control over South West Africa (Namibia) after World War 1 in 1918. After the 1948 election victory by the National Party, the South African government started plans to try and annex South West Africa as a fifth province, but subject to the conditions of the mandate. Under the terms of the League of Nations mandate, the South African mandatory administration was expected to prepare the territory for self-determination and to promote the material well-being and social progress of the inhabitants.³²

The victory of the National Party in South Africa in 1948 led to the introduction of the homeland policy which had at its core the separation of Africans from non-

³²IDAF, *Apartheids Army in Namibia: South Africa illegal military occupation* (London, IDAF, 1982), p.5.

Africans, and Africans from Africans on ethnic lines. After the National Party election triumph in 1948, South Africa changed its political agenda and this saw new measures introduced by the elected government which were extended into South West Africa (Namibia). This led to the introduction of the Bantustan or homeland system for black inhabitants of South Africa and South West Africa (Namibia) as part of the policy of Apartheid.³³ These territories were established for the purpose of concentrating members of designated ethnic groups, attempting to make each one of these territories ethnically homogenous as the basis for creating autonomous nation states for the different black ethnic groups.³⁴ This period experienced major changes in legislation to facilitate the management of issues pertaining to land, political control, forced removal, segregation and economic control in South West Africa (Namibia).

It should be noted that during the late 1950s traditional and national leaders in Namibia were sending petitions to the United Nations lobbying for the end of South African colonial rule. For example in 1958 Toivo Ya Toivo sent a tape recorded petition to Mburumba Kerina who was based in the United States, this petition caused quite a sensation at the United Nations.³⁵ This was followed by the visit of Sam Nuyoma to the UN in 1960 to petition on the increased harassment and acts of intimidation by South African rule. The Ovambo People Congress (OPC) which was a labor organization formed by Toivo ya Toivo in 1957 was later change to the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO) in 1958. On 19 April 1966, OPO was renamed to the South West

³³H.A. Nambadi, *The Kavango Legislative Council 1970-1979: A critical analysis* (MA thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2007), p.32.

³⁴H. A. Nambadi, *The Kavango Legislative Council 1970-1979: A critical analysis* (MA thesis University of the Western Cape, 2007), p.32.

³⁵A.T. Moleah, *Namibia: the struggle for liberation* (Wilmington: Dissa press, 1983), p.98.

African People's Organization (SWAPO) which then launched the armed struggle.³⁶ The central objective was that of liberating all the Namibian people from colonial oppression and exploitation and to that end the organization was broadened into a national united front.³⁷

The evolution of the Odendaal Commission coincided with political developments and tensions around SWAPO in Namibia in the 1960s, which led to international pressure on South African colonial rule over Namibia.³⁸ In line with its policy of segregation, the South African authorities went ahead to implement their racially segregated policies in which a much more intensified system of indirect rule and migrant labour was introduced to exploit the local inhabitants for the benefit of the white settlers of South African and German origin in South West Africa. The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 made provision for the extension of considerable powers to the different Bantustan territorial authorities of each of the African homelands.³⁹ In addition, the government used the Bantustans to cater for the commuter migrants from the Bantustans to the working places and back. The government used the Bantustans as a mechanism to control and direct labour supplies.⁴⁰

In September 1962 the State President of South Africa appointed a Commission of Enquiry into South West African affairs. The Commission was specifically tasked to

³⁶A.T. Moleah, *Namibia: the struggle for liberation* (Wilmington: Dissa press, 1983), p.100.

³⁷*Ibid*, p.100.

³⁸ K.M. Likuwa, 'Rundu, Kavango: A case study of forced relocation in Namibia, 1954-1972' (unpublished MA thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2005), p. 29.

³⁹*Ibid*, p.33.

⁴⁰*Ibid*, p.33.

‘investigate the economic, social, political and moral well beings of the South West Africans and to make recommendations for implementations’.⁴¹ The terms of reference of the Commission clearly stipulated that whatever was envisaged in the recommendations was in line with the South African government planned Bantustans.⁴²

The commission had two important terms of reference:

1. Having regard to what has already been planned and put into practice, to enquire thoroughly into further promoting the material and moral welfare and the social progress of the inhabitants of South West Africa, and more particularly its non-white inhabitants, and to submit a report with recommendations on a comprehensive five-year plan for the accelerated development of the various non-white groups of South West Africa, inside as well as outside their own territories, and for the further development and building up of such native territories in South West Africa.
2. With a view to this investigation, the attention of the Commission is particularly directed to the task of ascertaining—while fully taking into consideration the background, traditions, and habits of the Native inhabitants—how further provision should be made for the social and economic advancement, effective health services, suitable education and training, sufficient training, sufficient opportunities for employment, proper agricultural, industrial and mining

⁴¹J. B. Diescho, ‘A critical Evaluation of the Odendaal Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs’ 1962-1963’ (MA dissertation, University of Fort Hare, 1983), p.54.

⁴²J.B. Diescho, ‘A critical Evaluation of the Odendaal Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs’ 1962-1963’ (MA dissertation, University of Fort Hare, 1983), p.56.

development in respect of their territories, and for the best form of participation by the Natives in the administration and management of their own interests.

3. The Commission is empowered to investigate any other matter which in its opinion maybe of importance in this connection, including the financial implications and the manner in which any appropriation of funds should take place.⁴³

The Commission in its report recommended that the local people be divided and administered into ten (10) designated areas, whilst one homeland was to be allocated to the Rehoboth Basters, a coloured population respectively.⁴⁴ These areas later became homelands for the Africans in South West Africa. As from 1970 onwards, three northern homelands were granted self-government.⁴⁵ In the report, the Commission also stated that the Africans (excluding the whites) were initially and culturally divided into indigenous groups. The creation of the homelands cordoned Namibians into ethnic groups and was meant to prevent any unauthorized contacts with other ethnic groups.⁴⁶ The division of the local people into ten homelands served to suit the South African policy of 'divide and rule.'

⁴³ J.B. Diescho, 'A critical Evaluation of the Odendaal Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs' 1962-1963' (MA dissertation, University of Fort Hare, 1983), p.57.

⁴⁴The Act set the following areas for the exclusive occupation of the different native nations: Damaraland (Damaras), Hereroland (Hereros), Kaokoland (Himbos), Kavangoland (Kavango) Eastern Caprivi (Caprivians), Ovamboland (Ovambo) and any other area reserved and set apart for the exclusive use of and occupation by natives as recognized by the South African State President, See the National Library of Namibia, Windhoek, the Development of Self-Government for Native Nations of South West Africa Act No 54 of 1968, pp 831-832.

⁴⁵ These were Ovamboland, Kavangoland and Eastern Caprivi.

⁴⁶H. K. Angula, *The two thousand days of Haimbodi Ya Haufiku* (Namibia: Gamsberg MacMillan Publisher, 1990), p.61.

The Commission also recommended that an executive council be constituted which would consist of all the Chiefs in the Kavango and members elected by the Legislative Council.⁴⁷ The creation of the Legislative Council was therefore seen as a tool through which the South African regime would implement all the Odendaal Commission plans.⁴⁸ In accordance with the Native Nations of South West Africa Act No 54 of 1968, different homelands were set up for the different native nations of South West Africa.

In respect to the Kavango, the Odendaal Plan created five separate ethnic units namely vaKwangali, Mbunza, Sambyu, Gciriku, and Hambukushu. Each ethnic group had a hereditary chief in whom authority over his people was vested.⁴⁹ The power of the five authorities in the Kavango territory was therefore vested in the five Chiefs, and in the reserve area in the headmen.⁵⁰ The Kavango Legislative structure under the apartheid regime of South Africa had a political impact whereby the local people were used to serve the interests of South Africa. The government endorsement of the Odendaal Commission recommendation indicated that South Africa intended to implement its 'divide and rule' policy in South West Africa.

⁴⁷ The recommendation as summarized from the thesis of Diescho, 'The Odendaal Commission in respect of Kavango', p. 57.

⁴⁸ K.M. Likuwa, Rundu, Kavango: A case study of forced relocation in Namibia, 1954-1972 (unpublished MA thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2005), p. 32.

⁴⁹ Recommendations of the Odendaal Commission in respect of the Kavango territory report of 1963, p.77.

⁵⁰ In 1962, The South African government appointed the Odendaal Commission to investigate the welfare of the South West African inhabitants. The Development of Self-Government for Native Nations in South West Africa Act No.54 of 1968 was based on the Commission's Report and it set up the various Bantustans for the different 'native peoples' in South West Africa. The Act set up different homelands for the various population groups in South West Africa. The homelands were to be administered by Legislative Councils and all enactments made by these Legislative Councils required the approval of the State President of South Africa.

The Kavango Legislative Council

The Kavango Legislative Council was one of the Legislative Councils established in accordance with the Development of Self-Government for Native Nations of South West Africa Act No 54 of 1968, to administer one of the 'native nations', in South West Africa.⁵¹ Thus Kavango Homeland was declared a self-governing territory in 1970 as stipulated in the Act 54 of 1968. The legislative structures which sought self-government in the declared homelands in particular the former Ovamboland, Caprivi and Okavangoland (as Kavango was previously named), had social and political implications where the Traditional Authorities in the homelands were used as administrators to implement the Acts and policies of the South African regime.

A clause in the Odendaal Commission recommendation which legitimized South Africa power to incorporate Namibia as its fifth province and reaffirmed South Africa's right to administer the territory as an integral part of South Africa, aimed to prepare its way to apply and intensify its controversial policy of separate development in Namibia.⁵²

In order to legitimize these objectives, the colonial administration started to pave the way, establishing Legislative Councils countrywide which were pre-dominantly administered by the local traditional leaders who were government-paid councilors and ministers. The question which one needs to ask is: were the traditional leaders who were co-opted to serve as councilors and ministers capable of understanding and comprehending the content and clauses of the Acts which were passed and discussed

⁵¹H. A. Nambadi, *The Kavango Legislative Council 1970-1979: A critical analysis* (MA thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2007), p. 32.

⁵²J. B. Diescho, *A critical Evaluation of the Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs' 1962-1963*(MA dissertation, University of Forte Hare, 1983), p. 54.

during their legislative proceedings? The incorporation of South West Africa (Namibia) into South Africa was aimed at minimizing the influence of SWAPO within the Kavango population as much as possible.

Apart from the Ovambo Homeland which was set up in 1968 and attained its self governing status in May, 1, 1973, the Kavango Homeland set up in 1970 attained self-governing status on May 9, 1973.⁵³ This was the first step towards the territory's self governance in 1973. It must also be noted that all the motions and Acts which were tabled and discussed during the legislative proceedings were dictated and approved by the South African regime in Pretoria (South Africa). The first cabinet of the Kavango Legislative Council comprised five ministries, for which each member was representing the interests of the five ethnic groups in Kavango.⁵⁴ The members of the Legislative Council were drawn mainly from the ranks of the traditional leaders, Chiefs, and headmen, religious figures, ministers from the Roman Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran Church alike.⁵⁵

The influence of SWAPO's activities such as recruiting people from the region, spreading the gospel of liberating the country which started expanding nation wide are among the main reasons why traditional leaders who were the backbone of each indigenous community were co-opted preferably to serve in the interim government

⁵³ H.A. Nambadi, 'The Kavango Legislative Council 1970-1979: A critical analysis' (MA thesis University of the Western Cape, 2007), p. 32.

⁵⁴ M. Fumanti, 'Youth, Elites and Distinction in a Northern Namibia Town' (Unpublished PhD thesis submitted to the University of Manchester, 2003), p. 67.

⁵⁵ M. Fumanti, 'Youth, Elites and Distinction in a Northern Namibia Town' (Unpublished PhD thesis submitted to the University of Manchester, 2003), p. 67.

under the Kavango Legislative structure, with the hope of destroying the political impact of SWAPO within Kavango region. The interim government was an effort by the South African regime to construct an internal, ethnically-based, moderate political grouping led in succession by the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (1978-1980), the Council of Ministers (1980-1983) the Multi-Party Conference (1983-1985) and finally the Transitional Government of National Unity (1985- 1989).⁵⁶ Thus the traditional leaders of the three northern declared homelands and in particular of the Kavango served in the above interim regime structures.

As a political strategy to break down unity among the local inhabitants, the local traditional leaders co-opted on an ethnic basis were used as administrators to promote the South African interim government in Namibia. Traditional Authorities were thus used as colonial tools to administer and implement developmental programs within their respective tribal areas. Most of the laws and Acts which were passed only served the interest of South African colonial rule. An example is the Group Areas Acts of 1950 that was meant to ensure that the different racial areas were easy to control and seal off in case of riot eruption.⁵⁷ The Amenities Acts of 1953 was established to enforce social and ethnic segregation in public amenities such as transport, cinemas, restaurants and sport facilities.

As part of the South Africa ideology of divide and rule, the implementation of the Native Nations Act, No. 54 of 1968 was the creation of an ethnic entity whose people

⁵⁶ L. Dobell, *SWAPO's struggle for Namibia, 1960-1991: war by other means* (Switzerland: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 2000), p.69.

⁵⁷ H. A. Nambadi, 'The Kavango Legislative Council 1970-1979: A critical analysis' (MA thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2007), p. 32.

would advance from ‘simple tribal administrative structure’ to self-government.⁵⁸ The level of the political understanding of the traditional leaders which prevailed during this period can be one factor why the traditional leaders in the region were unable to take a stand as to whether to disobey the orders given by the authorities or to implement them. This can be attributed to the level of education among some of the traditional leaders who were co-opted and the structure of the proceedings which only empowered them to endorse and approve whatever was given to them. The most important factor was the Native Nations Act, No. 54 of 1968 which prohibited them from engaging in any politically-related matters.

The social and political implications of the government based on the Odendaal Commission

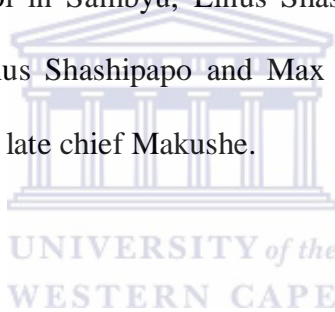


The social implications of the governmental decision on the Odendaal Plan were the separation of all the Namibian people on ethnic and racial lines. These implications also emerge in the development of infrastructures and agricultural sector which were developed on ethnic bases. Tribal Offices and secondary schools were built in every tribal area of the region, and the tribal offices served as the main centre where tribal matters were discussed and settled. The tribal offices had a hall, court room and a cell where all those convicted of committing crimes were tried, punished and sentenced according to their offences. In each ethnic group an agricultural sector was set up which

⁵⁸D. Soggot, *Namibia: The Violent Heritage* (London: Rex Collings, 1986), p. 35.

was the backbone of the inhabitants' economy. This led to the establishment of the Agricultural Projects at Musese in uKwangali, Kapako and Sia in Mbunza, Vhundu-Vhundu in Sambyu, Shitemo in Gciriku and Shadikongoro in Mbukushu.

In every ethnic group a secondary school was built and named after a tribal chief. For example Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School in uKwangali, was named after the late chief Kandjimi Murangi. Leevi Hakusembe School in Mbunza was named after the late Leevi Hakusembe, Maria Mwendere of Sambyu gave her name to a cultural centre and later the Secondary school in Sambyu, Linus Shashipapo School in Gciriku was named after the late chief Linus Shashipapo and Max Makushe Secondary School in Mbukushu was named after the late chief Makushe.



Although interactions among these ethnic groups used to take place, the motives behind these developments were that of separating ethnic groupings from interacting with each other and to maintain their ethnic status. Apart from Afrikaans which was a medium of instruction in schools, each ethnic group was encouraged to practice their culture and languages. This was one of the strategies to break down communication between ethnic groupings which were confined in their respective homelands.

In the Kavango region, the implications of the Odendaal Plan had ethnic hallmarks which can be witnessed even today. If one visits the region a sense of division on ethnic lines created by the Odendaal plan can be detected. This means that people in

uKwangali speak ruKwangali and people in Mbunza speak ruMbunza which is similar to ruKwangali, the Sambyu speak ruSambyu and the Gciriku speak ruGciriku while the Hambukushu speak Thimbukushu. These legacies of the Odendaal Plan also developed to an extent that even inter-marriages between these five ethnic groups to a certain degree were not encouraged. It was rare to get a Thimbushu speaking person who lived in uKwangali before independence. This means that freedom of movement and association were not allowed even at the ethnic level. In most cases people were encouraged upon completion of their school to work in their respective tribal areas. These were all in line with the South African ideology of apartheid and divide and rule.

Apart from tribal offices and secondary schools which were built in each designated ethnic area, agricultural extension offices were built in each ethnic group which served as the centre where the inhabitants obtained information regarding agricultural developments. The tribal offices were used as centers where tribal leaders met regularly to discuss issues of tribal concern. Under this pretext tribal leaders in each established homeland were used as tools to apply and implement the South African system of administration similar to the one which was used in South Africa.

The reaction of Traditional Authorities toward the South African regime

Before 1970, Traditional Authorities in Kavango mainly rested with the five hereditary chiefs of the five ethnic units. From the data collected during my oral interviews,

informants narrated different accounts about the relationship which prevailed between the Traditional Authorities and the South African regime. Gabriel Munguya stated that some traditional leaders who did not have any political knowledge of South African ideology tended to passively implement the South African colonial rule.⁵⁹ In addition because they were co-opted in according to the Act No.54 of 1968 to serve in the different ethnic Legislative Councils, some individual members of the community claimed that it was a means of making a living or source of income (employment) for those that were in the Councils, as indicated by Nathanael Sirongo.

The position or reaction of the traditional leaders towards the South African regime has to be understood in context. Firstly, the Act 54 of 1968 clearly stipulated that the chiefs of the different tribes were to be members of the Legislative Councils.⁶⁰ Secondly, the fact that they were members of the council had a direct impact on their legitimacy and self-governance. Thirdly the Legislative Councils were not allowed to discuss issues related to SWAPO as indicated by Kalipa:

That issue related to SWAPO activities were not allowed to be discussed during our proceedings. Though some individuals had knowledge about it, there was not any forum where it can be discussed. Moreover it was not part of the council task to discuss political matters. Their task was that of setting new laws and plans as

⁵⁹ Interview with Gabriel Munguya, Nepara village, uKwangali district, 27July2007.

⁶⁰ For discussion see also the Development of Self-Government for Native Nations in South West Africa Act No.54 of 1968 was based on the Commission's Report and it set up the various Bantustans for the different 'native peoples' in South West Africa.

how Kavango should be governed and developed. This included the construction of schools, hospitals and nature conservation⁶¹

The quote by Kalipa is a clear indication that the Acts that were implemented did not allow them to discuss any politically related issues especially regarding SWAPO. Nathanael Sirongo a retired reverend of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) and a member of the Council in 1973 explained that:

The political doctrine in the council was that of creating a complex division among ethnic group. No political agenda/motions were allowed in all our proceedings. Though members of the council were aware of the impacts of the system of administration in the legislative councils which was in line with South Africa policy of apartheid, they did not have any forum to raise these issues.⁶²

The above quotations prompted members of the council not to react negatively towards the South African colonial administration in the established Legislative Councils. Thus the nature of the proceedings forced Nathanael Sirongo to quit the council and concentrate on his calling as a Church leader until his retirement as a pastor. It can be argued that the motions which were tabled prohibited any politically related matters being discussed during the proceedings.⁶³

Those who attempted to raise political issues were expelled from the Legislative Councils for reasons known to the South African representative. A practical example of

⁶¹ Interview with Lourenz Kalipa Haupindi, a former member of the Kavango Legislative Council Rundu, Safari Location, 27 December 2007.

⁶² Interview with Nathanael Sirongo, Mpungu village, Ukwangali district, 29 July 2007.

⁶³ Interview with Nathanael Sirongo, Mpungu village, uKwangali district, 29 July 2007.

the South African control over the Legislative Council was in 1973 when Chief Alfons Majavero of the Hambukushu tribe was expelled from the Legislative Council after being suspected of having connections with SWAPO. In addition all the proceedings were attended by a representative who used to fly from South Africa (Pretoria) to attend the proceedings.

However this did not stop the individual members of the Traditional Authorities interacting and/or assisting the SWAPO political movement. Though the traditional leaders in Kavango did not take a collective decision or motion against the South African regime, their reactions were taken according to individual capacity and decision. The expulsion of Alfons Majavero of the Hambukushu ethnic group from the council in 1973, the meeting between Kalomoh and the two traditional leaders of uKwangali, the visit of the chief of uKwangali abroad to meet the former head of state and the resignation of Nathanael Sirongo from the Legislative Council are practical examples of indirect reactions of the traditional leaders.

The reactions of the above figures demonstrate that although the law stated one thing, some people did react in opposition towards the government wishes in their individual capacity. Thus the decision of the chief of uKwangali to visit the former head of state clearly indicates that he violated the Act that was in place prohibiting the traditional leaders or chiefs from participating in SWAPO political activities.

Kasoma Paulus a former Koevoet member indicated that though the traditional leaders in Kavango were co-opted to serve in the Legislative Council it was difficult to

tell their political affiliation. Koevoet (“crowbar”), was a special unit officially operating as part of the South African Police, engaged in counter-insurgency operations and acting as an assassination squad against suspected SWAPO supporters.⁶⁴ In uKwangali Kasoma noted that if one analyzes the position of the chief, one can accuse him as a collaborator of SWAPO. This was due to the fact that if he was not exemplary, the civilians of uKwangali could not have rendered the necessary support to SWAPO fighters.

This was unlike the traditional Queen of the Sambyu, the late Maria Mwendere, who used to pronounce herself on the local Kavango radio urging her people not to support SWAPO freedom fighters and to report their movements in her district to the South African Defence Force (SADF) and Koevoet, the counter-insurgency unit.⁶⁵ The remarks by the Queen of Sambyu according to Karora Erastus prompted Kalomoh the PLAN commander designated in Kavango, with some PLAN cadres to visit her at her Palace at Sambyu where she was warned to stop destroying the image of SWAPO.⁶⁶ The accounts by the former Koevoet member and a PLAN cadre commander suggest that the chief of uKwangali was a SWAPO collaborator.

Kasoma further asserts that considering the political situation which prevailed in uKwangali which was a concentrated war zone, it was difficult for him (the chief) of

⁶⁴ IDAF, *Apartheids Army in Namibia: South Africa illegal military occupation* (London: IDAF, 1982), p.24.

⁶⁵ Archive for Anti-Colonial Resistance and Liberations Struggle (AACRLS) Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Tutungeni, Rundu, 13 May 2005.

⁶⁶ Interview wit Karora Erastus former PLAN combatants born in uKwangali, Tutungeni, Rundu, 28 October 2007.

uKwangali to publicly show his political affiliation. This can be attributed to the fact that as the chief of an ethnic group in a designated homeland, he was expected by the South African colonial administration to enforce the South African apartheid policy and rules as required by law. Thus to avoid political instability in his district, the chief conducted himself in his capacity as the Chief for which power was vested in him to ensure the safety and security of the inhabitants of his territory.⁶⁷

The same applies if he (the chief) could have dedicated himself to the South African authorities, a negative relationship could have developed between the chief and the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). This according to Kasoma made him act neutral. As a chief of a designated ethnic group he was not expected by the South African regime to become involved in political matters, but entrusted to lead his people to exercise moral and social political authority and maintain civic and social order.

The political interaction between SWAPO, Traditional Authorities and the civilians of uKwangali district

As the struggle for independence gained momentum in the early 1980s the uKwangali district became one of the most heavily infiltrated areas both by the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) and the South African military forces in South West Africa. This resulted in South African Defence Forces (SADF) armoured vehicles and personnel

⁶⁷ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Donkerhoek Location, Rundu, 24 July 2007.

presence in uKwangali increasing tremendously in search of PLAN combatants. The presence of these two military forces that of the South African regime and PLAN combatants in uKwangali district created a situation in which the inhabitants of the district lived in fear every day and night. The forces created a situation where individual families in uKwangali had to work out ways to deal with these forces which operated in the same district.

The relationships between PLAN, traditional leaders and the inhabitants in uKwangali were complicated by the presence of the espionage unit called the Reconnaissance unit (Recce) which was trained by the South African regime as an intelligence services unit which operated as and pretended to be PLAN cadres. This unit used AK-47 rifles and uniforms similar to SWAPO's PLAN.⁶⁸ The members of this unit spoke Oshiwambo languages including Oshikwanyama which was a language mostly spoken by the People's Liberation Army of Namibia.

The operation of this unit implicated the inhabitants in uKwangali because people were frequently unable to differentiate between the South African forces and PLAN cadres. Through this unit the South African army used to disguise themselves as PLAN cadres in order to deceive the local people in Namibia.⁶⁹ Although the strategy created confusion among the people it was addressed by PLAN cadres who changed their strategy of operation and used combat names which were not known by the South

⁶⁸ SWAPO Information Bulletin of December 1987, SWAPO Department of Information and publicity (Luanda: Angola), p.18.

⁶⁹ SWAPO Information Bulletin of December 1987, SWAPO Department of Information and publicity (Luanda: Angola), p.19.

African forces in most cases. This made it later easier for the villagers to distinguish between the real PLAN fighters and South African reconnaissance units (Recce).

During this period it was rare that villagers in uKwangali could spend a day or two without being visited by PLAN, SADF or the Koevoet units. This was simply because these homesteads were considered to be the only places where PLAN combatants were assisted with food and other logistic needs. Apart from the presence of the South African military forces in the district in search of their enemies the PLAN fighters, the relationship which existed between SWAPO, the traditional leaders and the civilians of the uKwangali district at large was good, although it was characterized by a number of factors.

Kalomoh Ndeulitufa the PLAN combatant who was designated with his men to operate in Kavango region and in uKwangali district explains that the first time they entered uKwangali district was in 1980 via Wiwi, a village in Mpungu. From district Wiwi they proceeded to Katope Komugoro where they split up into smaller units of four to five each. A sense of fear could be detected within the homesteads they visited throughout their way. He further claims because the people in Kavango region were told that PLAN cadres were Terrorists who came to kill them and loot all their belongings, this resulted in most peasants in Kavango deserting their villages and fields of mahangu (millet) to settle along the riverside.⁷⁰

Kalomoh the PLAN cadres' designated commander in Kavango region noted that when he arrived in uKwangali with his men, people lived in fear as they were affected by

⁷⁰ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Tutungeni, Rundu, 13 May 2005.

South African propaganda that SWAPO were terrorists who came to kill civilians. This prompted Kalomoh to schedule a meeting with the senior headman Muranda and Chief Sitemu Mipasi in 1983 at Namungundo. At this meeting Kalomoh told the two traditional leaders to tell the people that they must not live in fear and to return to their fields and livestock. He emphasized that they did not come to kill innocent civilians but rather they had come to fight the oppressors (whites).⁷¹ The acceptance of the former members to attend the meeting is a clear indication that though Muranda was a member of the Legislative Council he collaborated with SWAPO.

Among the issues discussed with the two 'traditional leaders' was that of urging the inhabitants not to live in fear, but to return to their villages and homesteads as PLAN cadres did not come with the intention of killing innocent civilians. The statement included in the blue print of SWAPO signed by the 'Chief in Commander, Namibia Liberation Army, Dar-es-Salaam' read: 'Freedom Fighters must not attack missionaries or burn churches in particularly given areas unless they act in self-defence. Freedom fighters are strictly forbidden to attack women, children and elderly people and civilians, unless the situation constitutes danger and the freedom fighters have to act in self-defence.'⁷² The outcome of the meeting saw the people of uKwangali returning to their villages and starting to co-operate with PLAN cadres. Thus their support in terms of food and logistical support was needed for the PLAN cadres to wage their guerrilla warfare.

The input by the two traditional leaders of uKwangali to motivate the civilians clearly suggests that though some of them served in the council, the relationship which

⁷¹ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Tutungeni, Rundu, 13 May 2005.

⁷² P. Stiff, *The Covert War, Koevoet Operations Namibia 1979-1989* (South Africa: Galago, 1991), p.21.

developed between PLAN and the traditional leaders of uKwangali was positive. According to Kalomoh the traditional leaders of uKwangali especially the two above mentioned were helpful and they had sacrificed their lives in the course of Namibia independence. He further explains that one has to understand that the political situation during this period was strictly dominated by the South African authorities and any one who was considering collaborating with SWAPO was arrested and subject to detention and torture. Despite all the political threats to which the civilians and some leaders of uKwangali were exposed, he (Kalomoh) claimed that these people were most helpful in the sense that the tribal Chief Daniel Sientu Mipasi urged the local people to give logistical support.

The PLAN commander also noted that if the chief of uKwangali did not encourage his people to provide support, it would have been difficult for them (PLAN cadres) to execute their guerilla warfare activities in uKwangali.⁷³ It should be understood that in waging guerilla warfare, guerilla fighters depended on the local support in terms of food and logistical needs. He noted that if the chief of uKwangali was in a position of collaborating with the repressive forces it would have been impossible for the civilians of his district to render support and would have made it difficult for the guerilla warfare to be effective.

Thus he reiterated that his men did not experience any problems with the civilians in uKwangali and were helped most importantly with food.⁷⁴ Kalomoh, known by the

⁷³ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Tutungeni, Rundu, 13 May 2005.

⁷⁴ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Tutungeni, Rundu, 13 May 2005.

combat name Hakushida explains that the people of uKwangali maintained a good relationship with PLAN cadres who operated in the district. Though some misunderstanding prevailed between certain individuals and PLAN cadres, this was addressed in good faith. The relationship which developed with the civilians helps him (Kalomoh) during his operation in uKwangali district to execute his plans as a commander. It also helped him as a commander to deploy and redeploy his guerilla fighters in and out of uKwangali and to execute their combat activities.

While Kalomoh acknowledged the support and contribution of the traditional leaders of uKwangali, Hilka Leevi a survivor of Cassinga massacre argued that as from the early sixties up to the late eighties most of the chiefs in Kavango did not associate themselves with political activities. She noted that only certain individual or leaders with political knowledge about the armed struggle were able to carry out political activities in secrecy. Hilka Leevi recalls that prominent SWAPO activists in the region in the sixties were Markus Ihemba and David Ausiku known as Lyangurungunda.⁷⁵ She noted that it was not easy for the traditional leaders in particular the chiefs to be involved in political affairs because they were used by the South African colonial administration to serves as councilors. This made it difficult for them to collaborate with the PLAN cadres.

As noted earlier by Kalomoh, it should be understood that the political situation during this period was strictly dominated by the South African authorities and any one who was considering collaborating with SWAPO was arrested and subjected to detention and torture. Thus the account by Leevi does not mean that all the chiefs in the region

⁷⁵ Interview with Hilka Leevi, a survivor of Cassinga massacre, Tutungeni, Rundu, 16 December 2007.

were unable to associate and help PLAN cadres. The decision of the chief of uKwangali who left the country to visit the former head of state in London and later to Zambia clearly indicates that some traditional leaders were able to demonstrate their political affiliation against the South African government wishes.

The decision of the chief of uKwangali who left the country during this period as noted above suggests that though the chiefs were used to serve in the Legislative Councils, some were not stooges. Thus the political order of the day during this era also influenced the relationship of the traditional leader towards SWAPO as a movement and its military wing PLAN. As indicated above, the South African forces used the reconnaissance counter-insurgency units as an intelligence service, and it must be noted that as from 1980, the South African military forces used different strategies to spread suspicion amongst and between civilians and against the PLAN combatants.

For example local inhabitants in the region were bribed with money, and recruited to the Army and the Koevoet units to serve as soldiers. The recruitment of the local civilians in the above mentioned forces was aimed to create hatred among the civilians themselves and to pave the way so that the South African forces could destroy their relationship with the PLAN combatants.⁷⁶ The South African security forces, especially the Koevoet members, recruited individual informers in the villages who provided them with information about PLAN combatants' operations and movements in the district, with names of individuals who collaborated with PLAN cadres.

⁷⁶ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

According to Kasoma, the South African military strategy of using secret informants who were known as 'spies' or 'informers' who received allowances from their employers created tension, mistrust and misunderstanding between PLAN cadres, the civilians and the traditional leaders. In most cases those identified as spies were discouraged by the PLAN cadres from engaging in such practices and those who did not co-operate were assassinated by the PLAN cadres. This led to the assassination of Olavi Munango in 1984 at Mpungu village who worked for the Kavango Radio which broadcast anti-SWAPO propaganda.⁷⁷

As with the spies, individuals who got involved in this practice did not know the impact it had on individual lives or the family at large. Those who associated themselves were enticed with money by the South African forces to provide information. In most cases some individuals got involved to achieve their personal motives and gains. Some informers acted in a dual role, whenever the PLAN cadres were within the village they connived with PLAN cadres accusing other people of collaborating with South African forces. If the SADF forces were in the villages the same individuals were victims of daily arrest and detention. In some instances these individuals were apprehended for a day or two to give a certain impression to the villagers, while they were in fact informers (spies).

The implication of being a spy was that once the PLAN cadres learned that one is involved in these activities, the possibility of assassination was high. This created fear among individuals and pressure to refrain from this service. With children, the Koevoet forces used to entice them with sweets, chocolates and biscuits in exchange for

⁷⁷ © hnmilk "Kavango during the Namibian war of liberation," <http://kavango.info/Voito.htm>, accessed on 2008/03/09.

information. This practice is something I experienced and those who did not provide information were not given anything. On this basis parents used to know that those who were given sweets and biscuits were involved in spying on the PLAN cadres' movements and were discouraged by the parents from engaging in these activities.

The main implication of informers was that they confined PLAN combatants' collaborators in a difficult situation, making it hard to provide help to PLAN guerillas at their own risk. To the Koevoet forces the informers enabled them to crack down on all SWAPO supporters and collaborators in the district. Since the informers were well trained to execute these dirty practices, when visited by the PLAN fighters they pretended to be sympathizers and accused others of being collaborators of the South African forces.⁷⁸ This strategy used by the South African security forces encouraged the PLAN combatants to assassinate those caught collaborating with the South African forces.

Hence Kasoma known as "Njege" explains that the relationship between the traditional leaders of uKwangali and the PLAN combatants who operated in uKwangali was good.⁷⁹ Thus he claims that the influence of the traditional leaders of uKwangali over the civilians enabled the PLAN cadres' presence in the area till the late eighties. For the fifteen years Kasoma serve in the Koevoet forces most of their military contacts were carried out in uKwangali. On this basis the former Koevoet man argues that though some individuals connived with South African forces as spies, the civilians of uKwangali and their leaders collaborated with PLAN cadres he believes.

⁷⁸ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Donkerhoek Location, Rundu, 24 July 2007.

⁷⁹ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Donkerhoek Location, Rundu, 24 July 2007.

In addition Kasoma noted that although the chief of uKwangali acted neutrally, one could tell that the chief and his followers in uKwangali were pro-SWAPO collaborators. The chief of uKwangali according to Kasoma really sacrificed his life for his people. For example if a person was beaten or his/her crops were destroyed by the Koevoet forces, he was not afraid to confront the Koevoet forces and tell them to refrain from abusing and mistreating the ordinary civilians.⁸⁰ The reaction of the traditional leaders of uKwangali district clearly suggests that although they were co-opted to serve the South African interest, they were not collaborators of the South African regime. The chief used to convene meetings at the tribal office at Kahenge with the senior South African military forces telling them to stop harassing and intimidating civilians.

Though the traditional leaders in Kavango region fell directly under the Bantu administration in South Africa, the Chief of uKwangali district demonstrated his political status towards SWAPO during this period of the armed struggle. During this period the chief of uKwangali took a stand to mobilize the inhabitants in his district to provide support of any kind to the PLAN fighters. This support included food, information, shelter, medication and any related basic needs.

Gabriel Munguya, a nurse at Nepara, noted that the political relationship which developed between the traditional leaders of uKwangali and PLAN cadres was in his view what motivated the chief of uKwangali to visit the former head of state of Namibia, Dr. Sam Nuyoma, to brief him about the political developments in uKwangali and the problems his people were experiencing from the South African military forces especially

⁸⁰Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

the Koevoet units.⁸¹ The decision of the chief to leave the country during the period of the armed struggle for Namibia independence demonstrated his political will and loyalty towards SWAPO as a political movement.⁸²

The visit of Chief Daniel Sientu Mpasi to Nuyoma abroad contributed to the extensive military control of the South African regime in uKwangali. The increased infiltration of PLAN combatants in uKwangali in the early eighties had led to the establishment of temporary and mobile military bases, apart from the two major bases Musese and Nepara, to crack down on PLAN combatants' infiltration from southern Angola into the district.

The account by Kalomoh shows that though the people in the Kavango region were influenced by the South African propaganda, the people were very helpful and cooperated with the PLAN combatants. The revelation by the PLAN commander, who operated in the area, reflects that the people of uKwangali district under the leadership of Chiefs Daniel Sientu Mpasi conducted themselves in a positive way towards the nationalist movement during this period. In this time of hardship some civilians lost their lives and property, and some even resigned from teaching for example Eric Hausiku a teacher at Gava resigned after being accused by the South African forces of helping SWAPO fighters.

Kalomoh stated that the visit of the Chief of uKwangali to London and then to Zambia defined his position and loyalty to SWAPO.⁸³ The resignation of Reverend

⁸¹ Interview with Gabriel Munguya, Nepara village, uKwangali district, 27 July 2007.

⁸² Interview with Gabriel Munguya, Nepara village, uKwangali district, 27 July 2007.

Nathanael Sirongo from the Legislative Council who was the vice chairperson of the proceedings in 1973 suggests that though the position of the members of the Council was complicated, some traditional leaders reacted differently and established a good relationship with PLAN cadres who operated in the district. The PLAN cadres were treated and perceived as the sons and daughters of the country, as many youths who went in exile were mainly from the Mpungu, Simanya and Nkure-nkuru areas in uKwangali.

Conclusion

South West Africa (Namibia) was a mandated territory under South Africa from 1921, up to Namibia's first democratic election in November 1989. The Odendaal Plan of 1962 was aimed at separate development on ethnic grounds. The Odendaal Commission was one of the colonial strategies used to control the local inhabitants in each region, which affected the uKwangali district as well. Though the Odendaal Plan was developmental programme, the Commission did not achieve its intended objective as envisaged by the South African colonial administration. The Kavango legislative structure established under the apartheid regime in accordance with the Native Act No 54 of 1968 of South Africa had a political impact where the local people were used to serve the interest of South Africa.


⁸³Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Tutungeni, Rundu, 13 May 2005.

The power invested in the elected and nominated traditional leaders to run the political affairs in their territories under the guidance of the South African State President and the government was meant to impose direct control over the Legislative Council. The rules and laws which were instituted by the Union of South Africa to avoid unauthorized matters in the Legislative Council which were deemed to destabilize peace and stability were used to neutralize the relationship between the traditional leaders and South African regime in the designated homeland. The reactions of the traditional leaders were affected by the power of the Native Act 54 of 1968. The act prohibited the traditional leaders from discussing any SWAPO related matters.

The political developments of the late seventies and eighties in Kavango created a vacuum in which the traditional leaders were caught up in between of the two military forces, that of SADF and SWAPO in uKwangali district. The infiltration of PLAN cadres in uKwangali in the eighties made the district one of the most heavily concentrated areas of militarization by the South African forces.

The operation of the recce unit complicated the relationship between PLAN cadres and the civilians. This resulted in the presence of these two military forces in uKwangali district and created a situation in which the inhabitants of the district lived in fear every day and night. Though some traditional leaders were passively persuaded to promote the interests of the South African interim government, some leaders reacted radically towards the South African envisaged pseudo political agenda. The vulnerability of some traditional leaders however meant that their reaction towards the SADF and SWAPO varied.

CHAPTER TWO



**THE POLITICAL DYNAMICS BETWEEN THE CIVILIANS OF UKWANGALI
DISTRICT, SWAPO AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTHORITIES DURING
THE EARLY STAGES OF THE LIBERATION WAR**

Introduction

While Chapter One deals with the Odendaal Plan, with its recommendations and implications in respect of Kavango, Chapter Two provides a historical background of SWAPO activities in Kavango in the 1960s and late 1970s. A detailed analysis of the political dynamics of SWAPO which prevailed in Kavango region in general and in uKwangali district in particular during the 1980s will be looked in this chapter. The impact of the Namibian armed liberation struggle on the district will be analyzed in close detail in this chapter. The precarious situation and safety of the inhabitants will be

explored to determine the extent to which the struggle affected them socially and politically.

The political dimensions in Kavango region and in uKwangali district 1966-1989

From the oral data collected, Nestor Mufenda explains that the activities of the South West African People Organization (SWAPO) in Kavango started in the sixties and during this period the majority of the people who left the country to join the armed liberation struggle were from Ovamboland via Kavango by foot.⁸⁴ It should be understood that this route via uKwangali in Kavango into exile was very long. Thus these people used to pass through some community members' homesteads where they used to be helped with food and water, even to stay over until it was safe to travel. During this period contract labor used to be recruited at Nkure-nkuru.

The migrant labour centre at Nkure-nkuru was the route through which many job seekers from Ovambo and Kavango were recruited to work as laborers in the mines in Johannesburg.⁸⁵ This was an opportunity which most of those leaving for exile used. In some instances it used to take them a month and days before they went through the Nkure-nkuru recruitment centre. It should be understood that during this period the South African police were aware of SWAPO activities of recruiting people into exile.

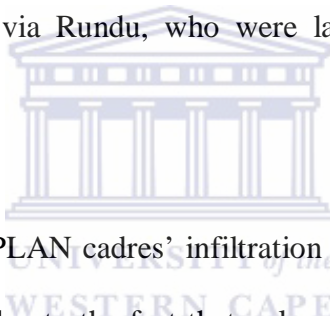
Thus Mufenda noted that many of the people who left for exile used this route. Among those who left the country via this routes whom Mufenda can recall is the late Dr. Alpo Mauno Mbamba, in his group he was with Nangolo Mbumba, Nahas Angula the

⁸⁴ Interview with Nestor Mufenda, Rundu, Kavango Regional Council, 28 December 2007.

⁸⁵ Interview with Nestor Mufenda, Rundu, Kavango Regional Council, 28 December 2007.

current Prime Minister with others who were from Oshigambo High School in Ovamboland. From Rundu this group travelled with migrant labour transport via Francistown in Botswana but instead of going to work as migrant workers these people opted for exile in neighbouring Zambia and Tanzania.⁸⁶ The account by Mufenda suggests that Kavango area had been a springboard for people journeying to exile during the sixties.

Reading the autobiography of Shityuwete, 1966 marked the beginning of the People's Liberation of Namibia (PLAN) infiltration in Kavango region.⁸⁷ The lack of political knowledge of SWAPO among some civilians in Kavango led to the arrest of the PLAN cadres who entered Kavango via Rundu, who were later taken to Robben Island as political prisoners.



During this period the PLAN cadres' infiltration in the Kavango took place on a secret basis. This was merely due to the fact that only a few people in the district knew them, and most did not have any broader political knowledge of SWAPO and its military wing PLAN. In addition the thesis by Diescho indicates that in the late sixties a Kavango SWAPO supporter and a business man, David Ausiku, nicknamed Lyangurungunda, started organizing a political party called "Muzogumwe" meaning "One way forward".⁸⁸ Though the movement was clamped down by the South African police, this marked the beginning of political activities of SWAPO in the Kavango.

⁸⁶ Interview with Nestor Mufenda, Rundu, Kavango Regional Council, 28 December 2007.

⁸⁷ H. Shityuwete, *Never follow the wolf: The autobiography of a Namibian freedom fighter* (London: Kriptown Books, 1990), p.119-127.

⁸⁸ J.B. Diescho, 'A critical Evaluation of the Odendaal Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs' 1962-1963' (MA dissertation, University of Fort Hare, 1983), p.48.

The question which seeks clarity is why did SWAPO activities in Kavango emerge at a smaller scale during the 1960s? In answering this question, the following aspects need to be considered. Though 1966 mark the beginning of PLAN cadres' infiltration into Kavango their activities were not effective due to the presence of the South African security forces in Kavango, the Bantustan homeland policy and the Pass Law system operating in Namibia during the period of study.⁸⁹

The pass laws created a division where people in the Kavango region were unable to interact with other people from different ethnic homelands in particular of the North and the South where people were highly politically conscious concerning their rights and independence. Thus the tight measures of the South African security forces during the sixties made it initially difficult for PLAN cadres to penetrate and execute the guerilla warfare activities effectively in Kavango. With the Independence of Angola in 1975, this resulted in PLAN cadres changing to a new route and starting to infiltrate into the Kavango region from Ovambo.

The political movements which started the civil war in Angola in 1975 in which the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), SWAPO's military wing, the Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), complicated by the involvement of South Africa and Cuba in the civil war in

⁸⁹J.B. Diescho, 'A critical Evaluation of the Odendaal Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs' 1962-1963' (MA dissertation, University of Fort Hare, 1983), p.45.

Angola, were among the factors which made it difficult for the local people of Kavango to differentiate between SWAPO and the various military forces.⁹⁰

The influence of the South African regime's propaganda about the social consequences of communism also contributed to this mistrust towards SWAPO. The propaganda by the South African regime referring to SWAPO as a movement not representing the entire nation but only that of one ethnic group, the Ovambo, was one of the major factors used by the South African regime to influence the inhabitants of Kavango.

The most effective strategy used by the South African regime to spread their propaganda to the local people was that of circulating leaflets and cartoons at schools, portraying the military inability and weakness of SWAPO leaders in exile to wage successful military warfare. The anti-SWAPO, pro-Turnahalle propaganda cartoons and images, circulated by the apartheid regime in Namibia during the mid 1980s, were meant to destroy the image of SWAPO and its military wing PLAN amongst civilians.⁹¹

Karangane Florry, military Force No.87819900,⁹² explains that the distribution of anti-SWAPO leaflets was a measure taken by the South African forces and intelligence services to influence the perception of civilians against SWAPO. The former SADF member said that this strategy was effective in the sense that it broke down individuals'

⁹⁰ M. Fumanti, 'Youth, Elites and Distinction in a Northern Namibia Town' (Unpublished PhD thesis, submitted to the University of Manchester, 2003), p.68.

⁹¹ S. Nuyoma, *Where others wavered: The Autobiography of Sam Nuyoma* (London: Panaf Books, 2001), p.301-303.

⁹² Force No. 8781900, was the identification number which was given to every soldier recruited by the South African military regime for identification if one is missing in the battle.

hope and morale towards SWAPO.⁹³ A glance at these propaganda leaflets shows how SWAPO leaders in exile are portrayed as struggling to get help and war material support from the international community, namely Cuba. The most common leaflets which were circulated were the ones which show how the former president of SWAPO was begging for war materials from Cuba. It can be argued that the politics behind the cartoons was that creating confusion among the local civilians to believe that SWAPO was not recognized world-wide and did not have any support.

Selima Kadiva, a teacher at Gava, vividly recalls that at first most of the people thought that PLAN cadres were FNL forces from Southern Angola who infiltrated into Namibia due to the war which broke out in 1975.⁹⁴ This was in line with the period when the Portuguese deserted Fort Cuangar in Southern Angola opposite Nkure-nkuru in uKwangali, when the Portuguese government was toppled by a coup in Lisbon (Portugal).⁹⁵ The arrival of PLAN cadres brought a new political atmosphere among the inhabitants of uKwangali district.

During this period the first group of PLAN combatants entered the uKwangali district in an unprecedented number in 1978, on a familiarization tour to see the geographical location of the region and whether it was suitable for guerilla warfare. The second group which entered the district the same year came to inform people who

⁹³ Interview with Flory Karangane, a former member of the South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF), Force No. 87879900, Otjomuise, Windhoek, 25 January 2008.

⁹⁴ Interview with Selima Wayera Kadiva, Gava village, uKwangali district, 24 July 2007.

⁹⁵ IDAF, *Apartheids Army in Namibia: South Africa illegal military occupation* (London: IDAF, 1982), p. 64.

SWAPO was and the aim of the PLAN combatants, which was that of liberating the country from South African colonial occupation, before returning to their military bases in southern Angola.⁹⁶

One must not forget that SWAPO was regarded as a communist movement and some local people in the region were influenced by the South African propaganda about the impacts of communism. As mentioned earlier, it must be noted that during this period very few people knew about the political objectives of SWAPO in the region, and that the movement was formed to represent the masses of the Namibian people.⁹⁷ Karapo Robert who lived at Muparara village since 1973 explains that:

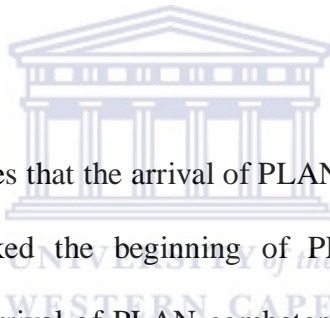
The first PLAN cadres who come in uKwangali came in February 1978, on this day I was at my field of crops cultivating with my family, Bushmen and community members who came to help me. Upon learning from Leena Katumbu Mipasi who also deserted her house out of fear that there were unknown soldiers at my homestead, I left all the people at the field and went back home with one bushman called Kahenge to see them.⁹⁸ Karapo said that upon arriving at my homestead we found a group of 80 unknown armed men, who were scattered around the water point near my homestead. When I arrived at the armed man I was welcome with a question where they asked me whether I know them, and I told them that I think they were SWAPO. Among them one asked me that people referred to us as having tails, and asked 'can you see it?' Out of fear I did not respond to the question. After talking to them they

⁹⁶ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Tutungeni, Rundu, 13 May 2005.

⁹⁷ IDAF, *Apartheids Army in Namibia: South Africa illegal military occupation* (London: IDAF, 1982), p.92.

⁹⁸ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Karapo Robert, Muparara village, uKwangali district, 21 May 2003.

asked me to give them something to eat for which I gave them (Sikundu) the vaKwangali traditional soft drink. Among them was one tall man who claims that when they used to come at the village with the church youth activities the structure of the dam was incomplete. While they were busy chatting, we heard a SADF soldier on a motor bike coming. This led the PLAN cadres to disperse for cover in the nearby bushes. When PLAN cadres left the scene, I also left to inform the people I had left at the field to come back home, upon our arrival, the whole area near my homestead was occupied by the SADF armed forces and this left me with no choice but to pronounce myself for identification. This saved our lives otherwise they would have shot us.⁹⁹



The account by Karapo indicates that the arrival of PLAN cadres in uKwangali started as early as 1978 and this marked the beginning of PLAN combatant infiltration in uKwangali district. With the arrival of PLAN combatants in the region since 1978, the first thing was that of mobilizing and educating the local people about the aims and objectives of SWAPO as a nationalist movement and the tasks of the PLAN combatants.¹⁰⁰

Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the PLAN commander who operated in the Kavango region, explains that the inhabitants of uKwangali district showed a positive attitude towards SWAPO as a movement and contributed to the struggle for independence in many

⁹⁹Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Karapo Robert, Muparara village, uKwangali district, 21 May 2003.

¹⁰⁰Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

ways.¹⁰¹ Moreover the political education which they conducted amongst the local people helped them to get support from members of the communities, as well as civil servants for example teachers, nurses, church leaders especially of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) which had three main church stations in uKwangali at Rupara, Nkure-nkuru, and Mpungu.

The support provided by these people ranged from food, medication, transport and logistical assistance.¹⁰² This clearly suggests that though the people were influenced by the South African propaganda, SWAPO cadres penetrated and established a good relationship and interaction. The intensive political relationship and co-operation which developed between SWAPO cadres and the inhabitants of the uKwangali during the eighties led to the introduction of curfew by South African security forces as a measure to control people's movements because they were regarded as harbouring PLAN combatants.

Curfew is a regulation restricting or forbidding the public circulation of the people especially requiring people to remain indoors between specific hours usually at night.¹⁰³ The implementation of the curfew system had serious social and political implications because everyone who was caught travelling after six o'clock p.m. especially those with vehicles, were arrested and detained for violating the curfew law. The aim of curfew was

¹⁰¹ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

¹⁰² Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

¹⁰³ R. E. Allen, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of current English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.284.

that of cracking down on individuals who were suspected of collaborating with PLAN cadres. For those who owned vehicles, once caught travelling after six o'clock, everybody in the car was searched and were not allowed to travel until the next day. Even when someone was sick people were not allowed to travel after six. If found travelling after six such individuals were regarded as PLAN and liable to be shot by the South African forces.

Thus those who owned vehicles were always suspected of transporting and supplying PLAN combatants with logistical support and basic needs like food, information, money, clothes and batteries for their Radio for communication.¹⁰⁴ Moreover teachers who lived in the interior of uKwangali and owned vehicles became victims of the curfew law and were accused of supplying PLAN combatants with batteries to enable them to communicate with their military bases in southern Angola.

In practice, curfew meant that no movement of people was allowed in the region after six p.m. For those who resided on the Kavango river banks, they were ordered to take their canoes off shore as this was the only mode of transport that was used by the PLAN cadres coming into Namibia, and for those leaving the country into exile in Angola. The political propaganda used by the South African regime, and the introduction of the curfew regulations, clearly illustrate the political dimensions existing in uKwangali district during the late 1978 and 1980s with the arrival of PLAN cadres in uKwangali.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Kandjimi Willem, Gava village, uKwangali district, 26 December 2007.

The social and political impact of the armed liberation struggle on civilians

The most traumatic memories the struggle had on the civilians were the atrocities and brutalities committed by the South Africa Defence Force (SADF) and Koevoet members who operated in the district. The death of Jonas Hamukwaya a teacher at Namutuntu in uKwangali district who was interrogated by the Koevoet members before he died for hosting and collaborating with PLAN cadres signifies the worst impact that the struggle had on civilians.¹⁰⁵ From the oral data collected, inhabitants of uKwangali explain that in terms of harassment and brutality the Koevoet members were very harsh on civilians using much verbal and physical abuse against civilians as compared with SADF. Naingwendje Isack an 80 year-old man who lives at Simanya vividly recalls:

PLAN combatants used to visit our homestead during the night to avoid being seen by their enemies (the SADF and Koevoet forces). They used to tell us (civilians) that they come to liberate the country and we must not tell their enemies their whereabouts. This resulted that we have dual ways of dealing with these forces for example whomever come it was expected that civilians have to co-operate, and we always pretended to be a non-supporters of either forces.¹⁰⁶

The quote by Naingwendje suggests that civilians were left without any choice about what to do but they had to live with the nature of the situation either during the day or night. This resulted that most of the people who collaborated with SWAPO and provided

¹⁰⁵ D. Herbstein and J. Evenson, *The devils are among us: The war for Namibia* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1989), p.92.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Naingwendje Isack, Simanya, uKwangali district, 25 June 2007.

assistance to the PLAN combatants then experienced harsh security measures and were under strict surveillance and threats. Reading the account by Naingwendje an 80 year old man, a sense of fear is highlighted in his narration. This suggests that individuals are still living with their traumatic unexplored experience based on the armed struggle which prevailed in the district.

As explained in Chapter One, those individuals caught by the PLAN cadres for collaborating with South African forces were assassinated. Though PLAN cadres established a good relationship and interaction with some civilians, the indifference which prevailed between certain individuals and PLAN cadres led to PLAN cadres committing atrocities amongst individual civilians. Although the action of the PLAN cadres can be justified in that it was possibly used for self defence purpose only, their brutal reaction had greater impacts on the lives of some individuals. These atrocities committed by PLAN cadres affected family members mentally and psychologically.

For example the death of Haingura Surevi Hausiku, who was tied and stabbed with bayonets by SWAPO fighters before he died in front of his wife and children at Gava, portrays a more brutal strategy use by PLAN insurgents.¹⁰⁷ This form of targeted violence committed by PLAN cadres was more traumatic in the sense that the victim throat was cut with a bayonet knife while the relatives were ordered to see how the act was committed. It can be argued that those individuals or next of kin who were exposed to these atrocities were traumatized and are still living with this violence exposed to

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Flory Karangane, former member of the South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF), Force No. 87879900, Otjomuise, Windhoek, 25 January 2008.

them. Thus individual families especially women were left with all the household responsibilities of looking after the family.

The armed struggle had a social and political impact on the lives of the civilians of uKwangali district. The most frequent problems were the beating, harassments and interrogation of ordinary civilians. This led to many people to desert their homesteads, leaving their food, livestock, and belongings behind. It should be noted that every Koevoet unit which operated in uKwangali had a skilled interrogator and specialist exterminators for those who refused to reveal the whereabouts of PLAN fighters.¹⁰⁸ The situation was that if the civilians supported SWAPO against Koevoet, they got into trouble with the Koevoet, and if they supported Koevoet against SWAPO, they got into trouble from PLAN fighters.

Thus those who did not co-operate were subject to the threat of severe brutality and even physical abuse orchestrated by the Koevoet units. A sense of pain is articulated across all the individuals' accounts recorded about their experience of the armed struggle in uKwangali. For some individuals interviewed, a glance at the photos of Koevoet armoured vehicles and dead corpses of PLAN combatants tied on the Casspir in the publication by Peter Stiff, evoked a sense of fear among civilians.¹⁰⁹ This is in line with the arguments by Brison where she says that trauma always takes the person back through his/her past experience which was horrible, terrible, very bad or violent.¹¹⁰ In

¹⁰⁸ D. Herbstein, & J. Evenson, *The devils are among us: The war for Namibia* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1989), p.73.

¹⁰⁹ P. Stiff, *The Covert War, Koevoet Operations Namibia 1979-1989* (South Africa: Galago, 1999), p.138 & 357.

¹¹⁰ S. J. Brison, *Trauma narratives and the remaking of the self, Acts of memory cultural recall in the present* (Hanover & London, Dartmouth college press, 1999), p.39.

these contexts the testimonies of the civilians of uKwangali give us not only a sense of the micro-politics of the time, but also serves as the basis upon which their voices will start to be integrated within the national narratives of the Namibian armed liberation struggle.

Hausiku Johanna who lived at Zigizi whose daughter left the country into exile explains that all those suspected of collaborating with SWAPO cadres were arrested, blindfolded and kept in the Casspir. While blindfolded, the victim was kept in the Casspir, driven around wherever they were operating to disorientate him/her the whole day, beaten with a rifle butt and threatened to be killed if they were not co-operating.¹¹¹ Once he/she has the blindfold removed they would be interrogated by an unknown officer who acted very roughly.

The strategies imposed against suspected SWAPO collaborators were very harsh and affected civilians' social lives. Beatings by Koevoet were at times fatal especially if/when (the soldiers) discovered that PLAN guerillas had been in the vicinity of the village. This was a common practice by the Koevoet forces. One can conclude that they used to enjoy beating civilians. Intimidation, assaults and detention were the major strategies the Koevoet units used to extract information among civilians.

Hausiku Johanna recalls that one day she was visited by the South African Police (SWAPOL) and she was told that her daughter who went into exile died in a military contact between South African forces and SWAPO fighters (which was not true), for

¹¹¹ Interview with Hausiku Johanna, Zigizi village, uKwangali district, 25 July 2007.

which they declared a mourning ceremony.¹¹² The Koevoet and army units regularly patrolled villages around uKwangali visiting each homestead with their armoured vehicles and personnel especially during searches and raids.¹¹³ During their searches and raids, civilians were threatened with being shot, beaten and detained. Threats of using explosive devices and other forms of violence were the common practice during questioning of the supposed SWAPO supporters, or were just used at random.¹¹⁴ I can contend that the cruel behaviors of the Koevoet forces are something of which I have direct experience. As mentioned earlier civilians live with tension, fear and anxiety every day.

One day I was slapped by one Koevoet member who looked drunk. On this day my parents were not around. Firstly when they (the Koevoet) arrived I ran to hide at the San (Bushman) huts nearby our homestead but I was singled out in the hut by one Koevoet member and taken back home where I was given some slaps before they departed.¹¹⁵ Thus most of the people who lived in the operational areas, of which uKwangali was one, suffered from brutal attacks and other forms of traumatic violence which were inflicted upon them. The most degrading and traumatic form of violence was that of exhibiting dead corpses of PLAN cadres to civilians by the Koevoet forces.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Interview with Hausiku Johanna, Zigizi village, uKwangali district, 25 July 2007.

¹¹³M.O. Hinz & N. Gevers, 'Koevoet versus the people in Namibia' in *Journal fur Entwicklungspolitik* 4, 1989.p.42.

¹¹⁴M.O. Hinz & N. Gevers, 'Koevoet versus the people in Namibia' in *Journal fur Entwicklungspolitik* 4, 1989.p.42.

¹¹⁵ Personal experience on the assaults inflicted on civilians in uKwangali district during the years 1983-1988.

¹¹⁶M.O. Hinz & N. Gevers, 'Koevoet versus the people in Namibia' in *Journal fur Entwicklungspolitik* 4, 1989.p.45.

Bodies of PLAN insurgents killed during operations, were tied to the sides of the wheels and at the back of a Casspir and people were invited to “see their SWAPOs”.¹¹⁷

In 1983 one PLAN cadre was killed at Ngururasi 10km east of Muparara village, and upon the arrival of the Koevoet at our homestead, everybody in the house was ordered to view the corpse. This was my first time to see a dead person, while I was still 11years of age.¹¹⁸ This signifies that the way the Koevoet conducted their operations affected everyone irrespective of gender and age. The spectacle of exhibiting the corpse of a PLAN cadre killed during operations certainly had a traumatic effect on civilians. This event is still fresh in my memory though it happened 25 years ago when I was 11 years of age. This exhibiting of the corpses of PLAN combatants to civilians was a common practice by the Koevoet forces.

The most common assaults were beatings where a young white Koevoet member was typically seen humiliating an old man in front of his wife and children. These ruthless acts of the Koevoet forces were such that even the mere sound of an armoured vehicle in the vicinity of the village would scare the people with a fear of assault.

During the Koevoet operations, these units used to drive their military vehicles through the fields, crushing crops and causing a loss of agricultural production.¹¹⁹ In some cases, after arriving with their armoured vehicles, the Koevoet forces would enter a house shouting and slapping people and referring them as collaborators of SWAPO. In

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 46.

¹¹⁸ Personal experience of viewing a corpse of a PLAN cadres killed by the Koevoet units at Muparara village, 1983.

¹¹⁹ M.O. Hinz & N. Gevers, ‘Koevoet versus the people in Namibia’ in *Journal fur Entwicklungspolitik* 4, 1989.p.50.

this case there would be no exceptions, the young, old, pregnant and the sick were all subject to these beatings.¹²⁰ In some instances, a Casspir was occupied by white officers and one indigenous officer to ensure effective communication and identification.¹²¹ These acts of harassment by the Koevoet units represent some important aspects of the impact the struggle had on the civilians of uKwangali area.

Logistical support was one of the most important forms of assistance needed by the PLAN cadres. Karapo said that the arrival of Kalomoh in uKwangali district in the early eighties, created a situation where (he) Kalomoh used individuals who owned vehicles to help him to charge his batteries which Kalomoh used to communicate with to Luanda (Angola). The assistance of batteries provided by car owners led to the arrest of Karapo Robert in September 1983.¹²² A lack of sufficient power from the battery that was taken from Karapo's homestead by the SADF saved his life and he was released from his detention.¹²³ The incident of Karapo clearly demonstrated that the South African forces had informers or espionage who provided them with reliable information. In some instances PLAN cadres who were captured by the SADF or Koevoet after severe interrogation, used to reveal names of individuals who supported them with logistical and other basic needs. As a result all these collaborators were easily apprehended.

Apart from intimidation, harassment, assaults and other forms of violence conducted by the South African security forces, Munguya Gabriel, a nurse at Nepara

¹²⁰D. Herbstein, & J. Evenson, *The devils are among us: The war for Namibia* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1989), p 1989), p.84.

¹²¹D. Herbstein, & J. Evenson, *The devils are among us: The war for Namibia* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1989), p.84.

¹²² Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Karapo Robert, Muparara village, uKwangali district, 21 May 2003.

¹²³ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Karapo Robert, Muparara village, uKwangali district, 21 May 2003.

clinic, explains that from 1980 onwards the inland road from Nepara up to Muparara was not safe to travel because of landmines. During this time one must not forget that this road was used by both civilians travelling to their villages and the South African military forces executing their daily military operations.

Landmines were planted in the road by either PLAN combatants targeting their enemies or the SADF targeting suspected SWAPO collaborators who owned vehicles. This led to incidents where landmines planted in the road were detonated by the civilians who were on their way to their respective villages.¹²⁴ The main road from Nepara village up to Muparara village had four landmine explosion sites. As indicated above by Munguya, in some instances the South African forces would plant a landmine in the road deliberately and once detonated by the civilians, the South Africa forces would accuse the PLAN combatants of planting landmines aimed at killing the innocent civilians.

Hence Munguya asserted that the landmine which exploded near Nepara clinic was planted by the SADF in the main road, which was meant for the Chief of uKwangali who was regarded as the main SWAPO collaborator. Fortunately on the day of the incident, he (the chief) did not travel to his village but instead those who travelled with his car on that day were two of his brother's sons, Moses Kandjimi and Pius Kandjimi, who landed on the landmine and it exploded.¹²⁵ The explosion of the land mine saw Pius Kandjimi sustaining serious injury which led to the amputation of his leg.¹²⁶ During the

¹²⁴ Interview with Gabriel Munguya, Nepara village, uKwangali district.27 July 2007.

¹²⁵ Interview with Gabriel Munguya, Nepara village, uKwangali district.27 July 2007.

¹²⁶ Interview with Gabriel Munguya, Nepara village, uKwangali district.27 July 2007.

eighties, the Nepara-Muparara road became very unsafe to travel especially for those whose children were schooling at secondary schools across the region.

Politically those who were SWAPO activists were subjected to frequent arrest, detention, beating and torture. Section 30 of the 1957 South African Defence Act granted absolute immunity to the members of its security forces to murder, assault and commit other criminal behavior for the purposes of prevention and suppression of terrorism in any operational area.¹²⁷ This Act had a huge impact on the inhabitants of the Kavango region and in uKwangali district in particular. In all the declared war zones, the security forces used the Administrator General proclamation AG 9 Act of 1977. The detention without trial which was inflicted under AG 9 of 1977, gave the South African forces the power to detain people suspected of helping SWAPO and hold them incommunicado for thirty days.¹²⁸

The AG 9 allowed South African officers to arrest people without any warrant and interrogate them without committing any offence.¹²⁹ The proclamation AG 9, 26 of 1977/8 (Detention for the Prevention of Political Violence and Intimidation) was used by the security police for putting SWAPO activists/ leaders out of their way for an indefinite period.¹³⁰ The above Acts used by the South African forces affected civilians socially and politically. Apart from the anxiety and harassment suffered by civilians, schools were

¹²⁷ D. Herbstein, & J. Evenson, *The devils are among us: The war for Namibia* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1989), p.80.

¹²⁸ M.O. Hinz & N. Gevers, 'Koevoet versus the people in Namibia' in *Journal fur Entwicklungspolitik* 4, 1989.p.52.

¹²⁹ D. Herbstein, & J. Evenson, *The devils are among us: The war for Namibia* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1989), p.77.

¹³⁰ D. Herbstein, & J. Evenson, *The devils are among us: The war for Namibia* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1989), p.77.

also affected by the armed struggle in uKwangali district. Thadeus Nakare a former learner at Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School explains that the struggle had tremendous social impact in schools. He noted that in 1983 the SADF military base which was located close to Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School was attacked by the PLAN cadres, and consequently the base was moved into the school premises where the soldiers acted as vigilantes to protect the life of the learners and teaching personnel who were white South African soldiers.¹³¹ The same year a white teacher who resided in the school premises was killed by the PLAN combatants who threw a hand grenade in his bedroom. The house of Mr. W. Johnson, the principal, was also attacked the same night by the PLAN combatants but he just sustained minor injuries.

Thadeus noted that during that week teaching did not take place and the situation in the school was very chaotic.¹³² He recalls that the entire school was under strict military control and learners were not allowed to leave the premises. Josef Kandjimi the first black principal in the Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School recalls that the situation was complicated in the sense that the control in the schools was both military and academic.¹³³ He emphasises that especially in 1983, the secondary school was guarded by the South African soldiers who stayed in the school premises day and night.

During the night the soldiers used to shoot throughout the night under the pretext of guarding learners so they would not be influenced by the PLAN combatants who wanted to recruit them to join the armed struggle in exile.¹³⁴ The motive behind the

¹³¹Interview with Thaddeus Nekaro, Tutungeni, Rundu, 10 December 2007.

¹³²Interview with Thaddeus Nekaro, Tutungeni, Rundu, 10 December 2007.

¹³³Interview with Joseph Kandjimi, Tutungeni, Rundu, 11 December 2007.

¹³⁴Interview with Joseph Kandjimi, Tutungeni, Rundu, 11 December 2007.

shootings was that the South African forces, based in the school, learned through their informers that PLAN combatants were planning to abduct all the learners in the school into Angola to join the armed struggle in exile. The presence of the SADF forces in the school premises disrupted learning as learners lived in fear most of the time. The result was that some learners quit school due to the situation which prevailed in the school during that year.

A truck from the Department of Water Affairs that was en route to Rundu were attacked by PLAN cadres at Rupara in which two South African soldiers (white teachers) were seriously injured and one girl from Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School Hermine Sadwere died in this ambush.¹³⁵ Immanuel Shikukumwa the first black inspector of education in Kavango region explains that the presence of the Koevoet units and its operations disrupted school activities in the region. This was due to the fact that the Koevoet members accused the children of clearing the PLAN combatants' footsteps in the morning when they were going to school and this was against the curfew law. Thus out of fear some pupils used to tell false information, to avoid being beaten and this resulted in many parents being arrested. The retired inspector explains that though he was the Inspector of Education, his power was not respected at all.¹³⁶ Thus he recalls vividly that the Koevoet disrupted teaching process, learners were taken out of classes for questions and their teachers were the main victims as they were accused of teaching their learners communist ideology.

¹³⁵ Interview with Thaddeus Nekaro, Tutungeni, Rundu, 10 December 2007.

¹³⁶ Interview with Immanuel Shikukumwa a retired Inspector of Education, Cassava village, uKwangali district, 13 December 2006.

Echoing the same sentiments, Wellem Kandjimi a retired principal noted that teaching was disrupted. This was due to the fact that the Koevoet normally visited schools in the early hours of the day during which they used to spend an hour questioning learners and teachers. He asserted that teaching did not take place as it was supposed to because every day the periods were disrupted. Especially in the mid eighties, some inland schools closed down for example the schools at Gava, Sikarosompo, Ncungu, Ncancana and Kamupupu.¹³⁷ The liberation war which took place in the district affected schools in the sense that some learners deserted their homesteads with their parents to settle along the Kavango River while some crossed into Angola which for some was the end of their school career.

The chief of uKwangali district Daniel Sientu Mipasi explains that the struggle had serious social and political impacts on the inhabitants of his territory. He noted that within the entire Kavango region, his tribal territory experienced many problems as compared to the other territories in the region. Mipasi claims that the South African regime knew that the majority of PLAN combatants were originally from Ovamboland infiltrating in Kavango region via uKwangali district. Against this military background the people of uKwangali district were considered as being SWAPO collaborators and were responsible for providing them with food. As indicated earlier in Chapter One, it should be understood that during this period the position of the chiefs in Kavango was precarious. It must be noted that during this periods, all the chiefs were members of the Legislative Council and were expected to serve the interest of the interim regime. Though

¹³⁷ Interview with Wellem Kandjimi, Gava, uKwangali district, 26 December 2007.

the struggle affected the chiefs, they were accorded some administrative protection. This was not in the case of the civilians who were affected more directly by the liberation war.

The result was that the people in uKwangali area were subjected to daily assaults, arrest and taken to jail by the SADF and Koevoet forces to be detained.¹³⁸ Hence the chief noted that while the civilians in his district were ill-treated he was very protective and urged the South African forces to stop mistreating innocent people. The same sentiment was echoed by Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member who stated that the Chief of uKwangali and his people were affected by the armed liberation struggle.¹³⁹ The corroboration by the Koevoet member suggests that the inhabitants of uKwangali were really exposed to harsh security measures.

Kasoma reiterated that in some instances the chief used to convene a meeting with the senior South African military personnel in the region at the Kahenge tribal office to tell them about their evil deeds (assaults and harassments) against the inhabitants of uKwangali.¹⁴⁰ The major problems caused by the South African security forces especially the Koevoet were that of raiding in the fields of mahangu, destroying their crops, and burning their mahangu grains stores.

Muzimba, a Nyemba who emigrated from Angola hopeful of escaping war, settled at Ngururasi in 1983. He was assaulted by the Koevoet members with his wife and children, who accused them of providing SWAPO cadres with food.¹⁴¹ His mahangu

¹³⁸ Interview with Daniel Sientu Mipasi, Mayara village, uKwangali district, 25 July 2007.

¹³⁹ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Donkerhoek location, Rundu, 24 July 2007.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Donkerhoek location, Rundu, 24 July 2007.

¹⁴¹ Personal experience of assaults and destruction of people's properties conducted by the Koevoet forces on civilians, 1983-1989.

grain stores were put on fire while he was watching. This led Muzimba and his family to return back into Angola. Thus many civilians were destitute during the armed struggle period in uKwangali. The act of destroying the inhabitants' crops and food was instituted to force the people to desert their homestead as this would leave the PLAN combatants without any support such as food to eat, according to the former Koevoet member.

As the Chief of uKwangali explained, his homestead (palace) went through many difficulties during this period. He noted that his palace was attacked several times by the South African forces. The South Africa forces would approach his house with the intention of surveillance of the PLAN combatants' visits to his palace. In some instances the SADF would be stationed at the road side and shoot at his palace. He alluded to an incident where close to six bombs were shot at his homestead over a long range but fortunately none of the shells hit his palace or injured people in the house, all the shells landed far away. One can deduce that all these attacks by the SADF forces were because of his visit to the SWAPO leader abroad.

The main reason for the strict control over the Chief's palace, according to Kasoma, was that he allowed PLAN combatants to infiltrate and operate in his tribal territory.¹⁴² Though this might have nothing to do with the permission of the chief, I believe that it was an attempt to retaliate against the chief's relationship with PLAN cadres in uKwangali. Considering the safety and security of his life and the inhabitants of uKwangali people at large, this prompted the chief to seek help outside the country for

¹⁴² Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

which journalists from the different parts of the world came to his palace in uKwangali to investigate the allegation that he (the chief) laid against the South African regime.

This resulted in journalists from England, Geneva, and France coming to Mayara to his residence in uKwangali to witness what was taking place in his territory.¹⁴³ He also mentioned that his action in inviting foreign journalists was not supported by the South African regime and the chief was accused of exposing internal matters to the international community. Thus the invitation to foreign observers indicates that the lives of the people in this area were at stake.

He related that his invitation to foreign journalists also prompted a South African senior military officer who was based in Rundu to visit his palace to investigate the allegations the chief was making against the SADF who were operating in Kavango. Thus to legitimize this accusation, the South African military personnel based at Rundu were dispatched to the palace of the chief at Mayara to investigate all the allegations he made against the South African security forces. The military officer from Rundu whose task was to investigate stayed a full week at the Chief's palace to investigate the accusations made against the SADF.¹⁴⁴ The findings of the military officer which were similar to that of foreign journalists' report saved him (the chief) from being accused of sabotage.

The chief also explains that his personal life was at stake during this period. Every day once it is six o'clock he had to enter his bedroom and lock himself in, but he always

¹⁴³ Interview with Daniel Sientu Mipasi, the chief of uKwangali district, Mayara village, 25 July 2007.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Daniel Sientu Mipasi, the chief of uKwangali district, Mayara village, 25 July 2007.

used to sleep with his pistol in his hand in case of emergency to protect his life. Fortunately what used to guard him were the dogs he owned which were very harsh and intimidated everyone coming to his palace. All the incidents which took place at his palace gave him sleepless nights during the armed liberation struggle of Namibia. Despite all these challenges the chief acknowledged that the inhabitants of uKwangali immensely supported SWAPO and its military wing PLAN. Chief Sientu Mpasi concluded that recalling what his people and he himself experienced during the armed liberation struggle of this country is a nightmare for him, but he just gives thanks to God who protected him and all the inhabitants of his territory.¹⁴⁵

The account by Kasoma Paulus 'Njege', sharing the same sentiments as the chief, is a clear indication that the area was affected by the armed struggle intensively. As noted above, these according to Kasoma are not mere stories because he was among those Koevoet members who operated in the area, assaulting and harassing the vaKwangali civilians when extracting information. As a former Koevoet member, he says that what is disturbing even him is that though these people often sacrificed their lives to help the PLAN combatants, after independence the people in uKwangali district are marginalized and their effort during the armed struggle is not recognised.

The Koevoet man also indicated that the increased infiltration of PLAN combatants in uKwangali district especially in the 1980s made the area one of particular concentration for the Koevoet operation. As a result the inhabitants of uKwangali were

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Daniel Sientu Mpasi, the chief of uKwangali district, Mayara village, 25 July 2007.

exposed to daily intimidation, assaults and beatings.¹⁴⁶ Though it was a concentrated security area, Kasoma recalls that it was difficult to extract information from the civilians of uKwangali and only certain individuals who were bribed and enticed with goods were providing them with information. Therefore the only means to glean information was to apply force. The basic strategy used was that of using batteries that were used for their radio for communication.¹⁴⁷ Once the terminals of the batteries wires are clipped on to the victim's ears, and the handle turned as if one is ringing the phone, it gave an electric shock. This according to Kasoma helped with many civilians who were interrogated to reveal information. For the children it was just a matter of giving them some slashes, but yet there were some children who were very stubborn and did not co-operate.

Politically, many prominent figures in uKwangali became victims of frequent arrest and detention. Among them were a prominent businessman, Severinus Siteketa, the late Jaakko Kangayi the principal of Nkure-nkuru combined school, Jonas Hamukwaya, a teacher at Namutuntu who died after being interrogated and tortured by the Koevoet forces, and a number of principals, teachers and civilians who owned vehicles and were activists in the uKwangali district who were also subject to regular arrest and detention.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Daniel Sientu Mipasi, the chief of uKwangali district, Mayara village, 25 July 2007.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Nestor Mufenda, Rundu, Tutungeni location, 28 December 2007.

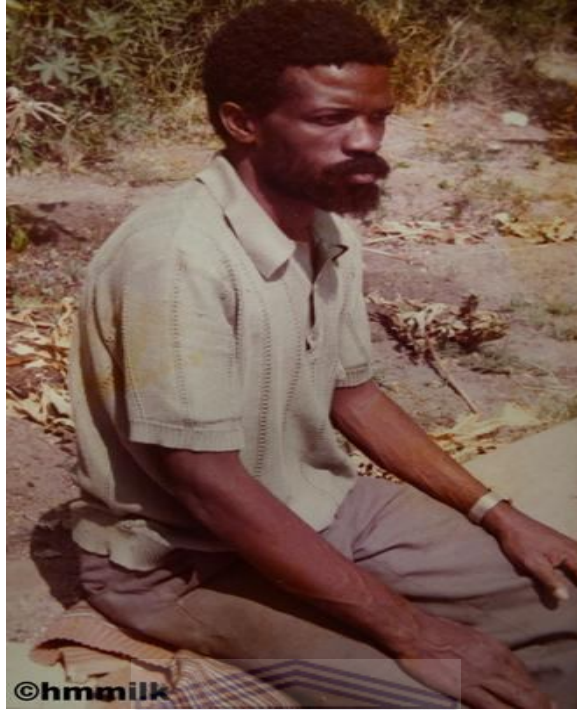


Figure 1

A photograph of Severinus Siteketa, a political activist in uKwangali district detained in accordance with the AG 9 Act for violating peace and security. (Source: © hmmilk “Kavango during the Namibian war of liberation,” <http://kavango.info/Voito.htm>, accessed on 2008/15/02).



The physical conditions in which political detainees were kept were very inhuman. The above image reflects the physical appearance of one of the political activists who was detained through AG 9.¹⁴⁹ The treatment given to suspected SWAPO activists arrested was very bad. Nestor Mufenda noted the main problems was that once the SADF forces learned that one is collaborating with PLAN, such individuals were arrested for cross-

¹⁴⁹ hmmilk “Kavango during the Namibian war of liberation,” <http://kavango.info/Voito.htm>, accessed on 2008/15/02.

questioning and detention.¹⁵⁰ In most cases those who were detained were kept at military bases. Therefore most of all those arrested in uKwangali were detained at Nepara.

With AG 9 in place, suspected collaborators were arrested and detained for 30 days without any trial.¹⁵¹ An extension of extra 30 days can be requested if the first 30 days lapses and if a proper investigation was not conducted but it was just a measure to keep people in detention. The most prominent activists in uKwangali who were victims of AG 9 Act of 1977 were the late Jaakko Kangayi, Severinus Siteketa, and Remigius Siyave, Nimrod Muremi, Silas and Mufenda Nestor.¹⁵² Mufenda recalls that all those who were arrested were taken to Osire at the time AG 9 was in full operation.

Economically though the inhabitants of uKwangali paid a heavy price in terms of providing food. Inside Namibia, civilians were the only means through which PLAN combatants' could obtain what they needed in terms of food, money, information and clothing. The PLAN combatants also used to come to homesteads which they knew well could be the house of the Chief, headman, or a teacher to provide the desired logistical support. This meant that some people's economic status became depleted in the process, since PLAN combatants operated for a long period in the uKwangali district.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Nestor Mufenda, Rundu, Kavango Regional Council, 28 December 2007.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Nestor Mufenda, Rundu, Kavango Regional Council, 28 December 2007.

¹⁵² Interview with Nestor Mufenda, Rundu, Kavango Regional Council, 28 December 2007.

The safety and security of the inhabitants of uKwangali during the armed liberation struggle

The political changes which took place during the eighties brought many social and political changes. The security and safety of the inhabitants of the uKwangali district was one of the big challenges the people had to deal with during this period. Untraceable disappearance of civilians was one thing to which the inhabitants of uKwangali were exposed. Jonathan Liu and Jonathan Shushe, both elder men from Kakuwa village in uKwangali in the western part of Kavango region, were abducted by security forces and were never seen again.¹⁵³

It should be noted that “the police were under no obligation to release information on detainees held under AG 9”.¹⁵⁴ The AG 9 Act was a tool which the South African security forces used to impose all these abuses inflicted on civilians. The AG 9 Act created a situation where up to date some individual’s whereabouts are not known by their family members or what has happened to them. As mentioned in Chapter One the South African regime’s strategy of using the Reconnaissance “Recce” unit who operated as PLAN combatants in most cases during the night, dressed in the same uniform as PLAN combatants, walking barefoot, speaking Oshiwambo languages and carrying AK-47 automatic rifle made matters worse for the inhabitants of uKwangali district.

¹⁵³ SWAPO Information Bulletin of October 1987, SWAPO Department of Information and publicity (Luanda Angola), p.17.

¹⁵⁴ SWAPO Information Bulletin of December 1987, SWAPO Department of Information and publicity (Luanda Angola), p.17.

Growing up in uKwangali my experience of the Reconnaissance “Recce” unit is that these units used to visit people’s homestead during the night under the pretext of being PLAN combatants, while they were in fact SADF. Under the pretext of being PLAN cadres, community members provided food and other related assistance at all costs to help them to sustain their guerilla warfare.

In most cases, the next morning the same forces who visited the homestead would come and harass and assault people in the homestead because they were hosting PLAN cadres and provided them with food. The South African forces would even say everything which happened a fortnight ago including the type of guns they carried, the type of help that was given and the total number of PLAN combatants who came the previous night, including everything discussed by them (PLAN cadres). This left civilians filled with doubt and mistrust as to what might happen to them. As Munguya stated, it was very bad during the day when one had to deal with the South African forces, and at night one had to provide food to PLAN cadres. This was very unsafe considering the fact that South African forces had their spies within the communities.¹⁵⁵ The question which confused every inhabitant at the beginning was who was reporting them and how it happened. This situation led to most of parents in uKwangali district to teach their children not to tell their friends any information about the PLAN combatants’ visit to their homestead.

The operation of the “Recce” unit complicated the life of the civilians. Selma Kadiva a resident at Gava explains that people were caught in between: if you are not

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Gabriel Munguya, Nepara village, uKwangali district. 27 July 2007.

rendering any support to the PLAN combatants you are considered to be a South African security forces collaborator. To the contrary if one provides support to PLAN combatants, and the information reached the SADF or the Koevoet unit through their informants, the next morning these forces would come to interrogate, beat and abuse every member of the household.¹⁵⁶

In this context the safety and security of the civilians was at stake every day. Thus the nature of the day was characterized by daily assaults and interrogations of people by the South African security forces. It was also unlikely that the Koevoet unit would visit a homestead without assaulting and abusing innocent civilians verbally and physically. Consequently this situation led to some schools in uKwangali district especially those in the remote bush area to be deserted since both parents and pupils deserted their villages for safety and security reasons. The situation also made some teachers to resign from teaching, fearing being implicated by the South African security forces for being the main suppliers of logistical and basic needs to PLAN combatants. Eric Hausiku a teacher at Gava resigned due to the insecure situation created by the armed struggle.

Marital relationships were destroyed simply because those who were suspected as collaborators deserted their families for better security in township settlements such as Rundu. Some fled to look for employment on farms within the areas close to towns like Grootfontein, Otjiwarongo, Outjo and Windhoek. This was simply because the insecurity in the inland towns across the country was better as these areas were not heavily

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Selma Kadiva, uKwangali district, Gava village, 25 July 2007.

controlled by the South African security forces. Families broke up due to the fact that many of the men were victims of daily assaults and arrest and in saving their life some deserted their homesteads, leaving their livestock and family behind, and some crossed the border into exile to join the armed struggle.

The presence of the Koevoet units which established mobile stations in Kavango region and in uKwangali district in particular created insecurity in the daily life of the inhabitants. Unexplained disappearances, beating, torturing of civilians especially in the North and North Eastern part of Namibia in which uKwangali is located were common practices of the Koevoet unit for a decade in the Kavango region.¹⁵⁷ All these were strategies the Koevoet unit used to instill fear among the local inhabitants.

In fact the people in uKwangali were regarded as SWAPO collaborators. Kasoma Paulus a former Koevoet member stated that it was difficult to get information about PLAN combatant whereabouts from the civilians in uKwangali. This left them with no choice but to apply force to get information. He concluded that it was difficult to get information even from young children because they were taught by their parents not to say anything about the whereabouts of PLAN combatants in the area and were taught to keep quiet whenever being questioned. Thus the documentation of such local experiences and the unpacking of the micro-politics of the area is aimed at filling the gap in the national historiography of Namibia, so as to include the previously unexplored experiences and contribution of the uKwangali people of Kavango during the Namibian armed struggle.

¹⁵⁷ D. Herbststein, & J. Evenson, *The devils are among us: The war for Namibia* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1989), p.63.

Conclusion

The presence of the South African security forces in Kavango, the Bantustan homeland policy and the Pass Law system operating in Namibia during the period of study hampered PLAN activities in Kavango during the sixties. The geographical location of the region and the pass laws system which operated in Namibia during the selected period created a division where people in the Kavango region were unable to interact with other people from different ethnic homelands in particular between the North and the South. The independence of Angola in 1975 marked the beginning of PLAN infiltration in Kavango region and in uKwangali district in particular PLAN cadre's infiltration started in 1978.

The propaganda of the South African military regime was meant to create disbelief and destroy the morale and image of SWAPO with its military wing PLAN. The operation of the South African military regime and its strategy of using terror tactics such as killing, torture and destruction of properties when seeking information and searching for PLAN fighters especially by the Koevoet unit created insecurity, mistrust and fear among the civilians.

The arrival of PLAN cadres in Kavango during the 1980s brought a new political atmosphere among the inhabitants of uKwangali. The armed liberation struggle had a social and political impact on the life of civilians. The most frequent sign of this was beatings, assaults and interrogation. The implementation of curfew in Kavango during the eighties was part of the South African strategy of cracking down on suspected SWAPO collaborators in Kavango and in uKwangali. The atrocities and brutalities which took

place are among the features which characterized uKwangali as a war zone in the Kavango region, which will be looked at in more detail in Chapter Three.



CHAPTER THREE

THE IMPOSITION OF SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY CONTROL IN KAVANGO AND UKWANGALI DISTRICT 1975-1989

Introduction

Chapter Three provides an account of the militarization of Namibia under South African rule from the 1970s, and of the Kavango and Ukwangali in particular. The chapter looks at the military situation which led to the declaration of the area as a war zone by the South Africans, with the intensification of activities of the South West African Territory Forces (S.W.A.T.F) and Koevoet units until 1989. The impact of the South African conventional and unconventional military strategies on the lives of the civilians will be analyzed with reference to the liberation struggle. The effects of the establishment of military bases namely Musese (905 Battalion), Nepara (55 Battalion) Nkure-Nkuru and Mauni (Battalion 906), in their attempt to combat SWAPO activities will be discussed in this chapter. The question of sexual violence by the South African military forces towards women will be look at in this chapter. In conclusion the chapter will looked at both the success and failures of the South Africa's military forces in the selected territory.

The militarization of uKwangali district

Ukwangali district is geographically located in the western part of the Kavango region, 70 km west of the regional town Rundu. Historically the South Africa military presence

started in 1915 in Namibia.¹⁵⁸ Despite the prohibition by the United Nations (UN) not to establish military bases in the mandatory territory, South Africa violated the terms and conditions of the mandate and built major military infrastructures and bases country wide in Namibia in the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁵⁹ The declaration of Ovamboland, Kavango and Caprivi in the 1970s as “security districts” under the control of the South African Defence Force (SADF) military rule resulted in the clearance of a 1000 metre wide “no man’s land” intended to prevent SWAPO infiltrations from Angola into Namibia.¹⁶⁰ The declaration of these areas justifies calling uKwangali district a war zone during the 1970s.

The massive military build-up embarked upon by South Africa in Namibia during the 1970s, turned the territory (Kavango) into one of the most heavily occupied areas in the world in terms of the number of foreign troops relative to the local population.¹⁶¹ In terms of the South African Defence Force structure, Namibia was treated as an integral part of South Africa. In 1975 military battalions were formed in Namibia and among them were Ovambo (101Battlion) and Kavango (202 Battalion).¹⁶²

In May 1979, martial law under Administrator General AG 9 Act was extended further from the northern “homeland” of Ovamboland, Kavangoland and Caprivi.¹⁶³ The practical operation of this proclamation affected the inhabitants of the Kavango region.

¹⁵⁸IDAF, *Apartheids Army in Namibia: South Africa illegal military occupation* (London: IDAF, 1982),p.5.

¹⁵⁹IDAF, *Apartheids Army in Namibia: South Africa illegal military occupation* (London: IDAF, 1982), p.5.

¹⁶⁰ IDAF, *Apartheids Army in Namibia: South Africa illegal military occupation* (London: IDAF, 1982), p.5.

¹⁶¹Ibid, p.9.

¹⁶²Ibid, p.30.

¹⁶³Ibid, p.9.

The proclamation give police and any law enforcement agents and members of the SADF wider powers to arrest, search and detain people without trial and a numbers of restrictions which were imposed on the people included curfew and the banning of public meetings.¹⁶⁴ This means that people in the declared operational areas were affected in very direct ways by the presence of South African militarization.

Militarily, Namibia was divided into three military zones. The operational areas were also divided into three military sectors namely Sector 10 (Kaokoland, Ovamboland), Sector 20 (Kavangoland, West Caprivi, Bushmanland) and Sector 70 (East Caprivi). The military headquarters were at Oshakati in Ovamboland, Rundu in Kavangoland and Katima in Caprivi.¹⁶⁵ The pressure of SWAPO guerilla warfare that was taking root along the Kavango River in the 1960s, become a great concern for the colonial authorities.¹⁶⁶ This led to the establishment of the military bases along the Kavango River, for example 202 Battalion and Sector 20 which were the two military headquarters in the Kavango region, were based 5km away from the administrative town of Rundu.¹⁶⁷

In the east of the region, two of the bases were located at Mashare and Bagani, 60 km and 200km respectively along the river east of Rundu. In February 1983 Musese military base located 90 km west of Rundu in uKwangali started with its full military operations.¹⁶⁸ The base had a checkpoint, a fuel filling station, and a military watch tower

¹⁶⁴Ibid, p.11.

¹⁶⁵Ibid, p.19.

¹⁶⁶ K.M. Likuwa, 'Rundu, Kavango: A case study of forced relocation in Namibia, 1954-1972' (MA thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2005), p32.

¹⁶⁷SWAPO Information Bulletin of December 1987, SWAPO Department of Information and publicity (Luanda: Angola), p.19.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Alloys Gende, Sambyu district, Kayengona 27 December 2007.

which was occupied by soldiers with binoculars all the time to monitor the regular movements of people coming to the base both from inside Angola and inside Namibia.

A former Captain in the SADF from Kavango, Alloys Gende, explains that the first military bases in uKwangali were at Nkure-nkuru, Simanya, Mpungu, Nepara and Musese.¹⁶⁹ He acknowledges that the biggest base in uKwangali was Nepara. This was because of its strategic location in uKwangali where the base had a borehole for water, a filling station supplying diesel fuel for helicopters and armoured military vehicles, for example Casspirs and Buffels. Nepara base also had an airfield strip and a radio which facilitated communication for the SADF military operation in the region, even to receive military orders from Pretoria (South Africa).

As from the mid eighties, Rundu the administrative town of Kavango was gradually transformed into one of the most heavily militarised places in Namibia.¹⁷⁰ For example in 1986, the South Africa logistical capacity at Rundu went through an extensive reconstruction. Its airfield and runways were extended.¹⁷¹ This extension enabled the airfield to allow bigger helicopters which carried up to 20 soldiers to land and take off. The helicopters used to fly from Rundu to conduct military operations within the region and across in Angola. It should be noted that whenever the Koevoet members were tracking a PLAN guerilla fighter in the region, reinforcement by the South African Air Force (SAAF) Alouette helicopter gunship and a spotter plane was needed. The use of the helicopter gunships enabled the Koevoet trackers to track down PLAN insurgents easily.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Alloys Gende, Sambyu district, Kayengona 27 December 2007.

¹⁷⁰ SWAPO Information Bulletin of December 1987, SWAPO Department of Information and publicity (Luanda: Angola), p.15.

¹⁷¹ SWAPO Information Bulletin of December 1987, SWAPO Department of Information and publicity (Luanda Angola), p.15.

A helicopter called the Puma was only called in whenever the South African forces had experienced some heavy casualties. Apart from the Alouette helicopters, Mirage jets also used to be stationed at Rundu airfield on standby mode waiting for military orders. The extensive build-up of the South Africa forces in Rundu suggests that the region was heavily infiltrated by SWAPO fighters. By the middle of 1986, the SADF installed huge guns, radar controlled and anti-aircraft guns around the whole perimeter of the Rundu military airfield¹⁷² (see Figure 3 of the airfield image).



Figure. 3.3.1

Figure 3 Airfield image at Rundu military bases (Sector 20) used by the South African military regime during the 1980s. (Source: A photograph taken during my field work research at Rundu military base 19 December 2007). The airfield was used as a launching pad by South African Air Force.

This made Rundu military bases the launching pad of all the South African operations in the Kavango region, including those in Angola. The South African military build-up around Rundu was further reinforced with a big array of Casspirs, Buffels and

¹⁷² SWAPO Information Bulletin of December 1987, SWAPO Department of Information and publicity (Luanda: Angola), p.16.

other types of armoured vehicles.¹⁷³ In September 1986, over 1, 000 military trucks arrived at Rundu carrying military equipments, hardware and other logistical supplies. Thus the extensive military build-up which was taking place at Rundu clearly signifies the military capacity of the South African forces which was based in Kavango and extended into uKwangali district to counter-attack infiltration by PLAN fighters.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Nepara was a strategic base in which all SADF military platoons assembled together before being dispatched to their military operations to smaller bases like Mauni and Kongo located west of the district between Kavango and the Ovamboland border. Infantry units used Nepara as a reinforcement base to recuperate when conducting their infantry patrols in uKwangali.¹⁷⁴

The influx of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) into the interior of uKwangali in the 1980s was the main reason behind the establishment of the Nepara base which was located in the heart of the uKwangali district.¹⁷⁵ To ensure successful military operations a new road was constructed in 1987 to link Nkure-nkuru, Nepara and Mpungu. The construction of the new road was to open a new operational zone between Nkure-nkuru, Simanya and Mpungu since that area was an open zone for the PLAN guerrillas to conduct their guerilla activities. This included holding meetings with civilians, recruiting the local people from the district and planning their guerilla attacks.

Apart from their military functions, the military bases were used as places where SWAPO collaborators were detained and tortured. According to Wellem Kandjimi who

¹⁷³SWAPO Information Bulletin of December 1987, SWAPO Department of Information and publicity (Luanda: Angola), p.1.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Alloys Gende, Sambyu district, Kayengona 27 December 2007.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Alloys Gende, Sambyu district, Kayengona 27 December 2007.

was detained at Nepara, the treatment given to SWAPO collaborators was harsh and unbearable. He noted that every detainee arrested was tied and locked up in a room where a generator which provided power (electricity) to the base was kept. When he was arrested, Kandjimi was detained in the same room while his hands and legs were tied. He was seated on a chair and faced the exhaust of the generator. This punishment according to Kandjimi lasted for the whole night and it was terrible as he was tied up and was unable to move.¹⁷⁶ All this treatment given to SWAPO collaborators was instituted just to break down PLAN's influence and civilian support for PLAN combatants. Thus beside the military purpose, the bases were used to serve many other functions.

Unlike Nepara which was a strategic base, Musese military base had a road block which was the main checkpoint in uKwangali where every person travelling to Rundu was screened. Kasoma Paulus noted strict military controls were conducted by the SADF at Musese checkpoint to ensure that PLAN combatants were not infiltrating into the interior of Rundu.

At Musese road block, every vehicle and passengers passing through the checkpoint were searched.¹⁷⁷ The targets were those people in possession of SWAPO politically-related documents. According to Kasoma, the main identification demanded at the checkpoint was an identity card, and those who were not in a position to produce identity cards were suspected as PLAN combatants.¹⁷⁸ The suspected individuals used to be interrogated and accused of being among those who left the country for exile to join

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Wellem Kandjimi, Gava, uKwangali district, 26 December 2007.

¹⁷⁷ The presence of the South African Defence Force (SADF) in the district indicates that it was a war zone.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

the liberation war. For these reasons they were therefore allegedly not in a position to have South West African identity cards.

The checkpoint at Musese base was used to screen individuals and SWAPO collaborators coming to buy fuel and agricultural products like maize meal. For intelligence purposes, the SADF informers (spies) also used to report PLAN combatants' related activities and operations at Musese military base.¹⁷⁹ The strategy used was that those informers would come with the ostensible purpose of buying agricultural products and fuel but were coming to convey information to the South African forces, concluded Kasoma the Koevoet man.

The increasing presence of the PLAN cadres in uKwangali also led to the establishment of temporary military bases and military personnel at every South African administrative institution such as schools, tribal offices and agriculture extension offices. This was a measure taken to protect state property and the white staff members who worked at these institutions.¹⁸⁰ Consequently temporary military bases and personnel were established at Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School and Kahenge tribal office in uKwangali.

As indicated at the beginning of the chapter, Kasoma Paulus a Koevoet member echoed the same sentiment that the concentration of the SADF and Koevoet units in the western part of the Kavango was due to the development of the war in Angola between the Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) the Angolan government forces and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebels under the

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Alloys Gende, Sambyu district, Kayengona village, 27 December 2007.

leadership of Dr. Jonas Malheiro Savimbi.¹⁸¹ The war in Angola in which the MPLA forces collaborated with PLAN, enabled SWAPO and its military wing PLAN to established military bases in Southern Angola since 1975.¹⁸² Against this military background PLAN combatants were able to operate from their military bases in southern Angola into Ovamboland and into western Kavango. This makes uKwangali district the most infiltrated area of the Kavango with unprecedented numbers of PLAN cadres as compared to the other districts in the region.

Hilka Leevi, a survivor of Cassinga, noted that militarily the eastern part of the Kavango region was not heavily infiltrated by PLAN combatants as compared to the western part of the region especially during the 1980s. This she argued was due to the military developments in Angola in which the eastern part of Angola was occupied by UNITA with its military headquarters at Jamba and Kakuchi, while the Western part of Angola was occupied by the MPLA forces.¹⁸³

It should be noted that though the first war front which the PLAN fighters used to enter Namibia was through Caprivi, this front was later heavily controlled and this led to the strengthening of the Mpacha military base in Katima by the South African military regime. Thus the geographical occupation by the Angolan political movements enabled SWAPO which had political ties with MPLA to establish military bases in Southern

¹⁸¹ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

¹⁸² Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

¹⁸³ Interview with Hilka Leevi, a survivor of Cassinga massacre, Rundu, Tutungeni, 16 December 2007.

Angola and set up its bases as a springboard to enter Namibia.¹⁸⁴ Thus uKwangali district in the west of Kavango become a close destination where PLAN cadres could easily infiltrate into the Kavango region.

The impact of the South African security forces in uKwangali district

The complexities of the South African military occupation and the presence of PLAN had a tremendous impact on the life of the civilians of uKwangali district. The operations of the SADF and Koevoet and the military strategies used created a situation where hatred developed among the civilians in uKwangali. Consequently the presence of the two military forces created a division in the community where some individuals whose relatives left the country to join the armed struggle collaborated with PLAN combatants, while those whose relatives were recruited in the South African forces supported the SADF.

The South African military forces used different conventional and unconventional strategies to create division and conflicts among the local people. While Chapter Three focuses more on conventional strategy, detailed analysis of the unconventional strategy used by the South African forces will be looked at in detail in Chapter Four. The use of terror tactics made the matter worse. As indicated in Chapter Two, the SADF had a special unit called the “Recce” which operated like PLAN cadres. The unit operated during the night, visiting villagers’ homesteads looking for food and other logistical needs in the guise of PLAN cadres, they wore the same uniform, spoke Oshiwambo

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Hilka Leevi, a survivor of Cassinga massacre, Rundu, Tutungeni, 16 December 2007.

languages like Oshikwanyama. Under the pretence of being PLAN combatants, civilians who were the main SWAPO supporters were found out.

In most cases this unit used to threaten to kill the civilians if they did not provide food. All these strategies were used to implicate PLAN fighters in a relationship with community members. The other strategy was that of recruiting the local young boys 25 years of age in the SADF. According to Alloys Gende this recruitment used to take place at every Tribal Office.¹⁸⁵ This means that even in uKwangali district some were recruited into the SADF.

The former SADF instructor Alloys Gende noted that in 1976 and 1977 a total of fifty (50) able-bodied boys and especially school dropouts from every ethnic group were recruited into the SADF.¹⁸⁶ We should not forget that within the same communities some youth left the country to join the armed struggle in exile. Thus the factions created conflicts of interest among the family members of those who joined the two different military forces namely SADF and PLAN.

The South African Defence Force used the differences which emerged between the people as a strategy to segregate them politically and militarily to detect SWAPO collaborators. On this basis, civilians with personal motives used to report each other to the two forces which sometimes led to atrocities and death. The atrocities and brutal activities that were committed by the South African security forces form part of its unconventional military strategies which had a tremendous impact on the life of the

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Alloys Gende, Sambyu district, Kayengona, 27 December 2007.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Alloys Gende, Sambyu district, Kayengona, 27 December 2007.

inhabitants.¹⁸⁷ Veronika Shillinge who lived at Mukekete village in Mpungu constituency since the 1970s recalls that the arrival of the PLAN cadres in the region in 1978 complicated the life of the civilians. This was especially the case in 1978 when PLAN combatants took a truck from the workers from the Department of Water Affairs who were fixing a water pump at Mukekete. The presence of SADF at Mukekete village gave the villagers sleepless nights and they were unable to live their normal life.¹⁸⁸ Daily harassment and beatings by the South African forces were the order of the day.

During this year, people's life within the vicinity of Mukekete was not stable. This was simply because of the truck that was stolen by the PLAN cadres. She mentioned even during the night the SADF would visit villagers' homesteads asking them how the truck was stolen and accusing them of having knowledge of the incident.¹⁸⁹ The theft of the truck led to the establishment of the SADF military base at Mpungu. As from 1978 the main problems experienced by the inhabitants of Mukekete by the SADF were that of raiding their property, assaults and beatings. The beatings were not exclusively for the young, old people and women were equally beaten.¹⁹⁰ The insecure situation which prevailed in Mukekete led to some homesteads (families) deserting Mukekete village in 1983. The same year Joseph Haindongo and his wife Hillia Haindongo were assassinated by an unidentified armed man. This incident forced some villagers to desert Mukekete, leaving their livestock and properties behind for better security and safety.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Shillinge Veronika, Ncancana, uKwangali district, 14 December 2007.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Shillinge Veronika, Ncancana, uKwangali district, 14 December 2007.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Shillinge Veronika, Ncancana, uKwangali district, 14 December 2007.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Shillinge Veronika, Ncancana, uKwangali district, 14 December 2007.

The question raised by the interviewees was why did this atrocity take place within one homestead? In her revelation Shillinge suspected that these atrocities were committed by the SADF members simply because the son of Josef Haindongo and Hillia Haindongo (the couple which was assassinated) had left the country to join the armed liberation struggle.¹⁹² She speculates that it was for this reason that their homestead was targeted by the SADF forces in Mukekete village. It can be argued that this incident was executed by the SADF as a strategy to instill fear among the villagers to make them refrain from collaborating with PLAN combatants.

Shillinge also claimed that though the armed men who committed these terror acts and atrocities used to wear PLAN combatants' uniform, she maintains that they were SADF forces who used to pretend to be PLAN combatants to execute all these 'evil deeds'.¹⁹³ As noted above this was one of the strategies used by the SADF soldiers to achieve their military goals and to influence the local people to refrain from supporting SWAPO and its military wing PLAN. As from this date Mukekete was one of the villages in uKwangali district which was most heavily concentrated by both Koevoet and the SADF presence.¹⁹⁴ The geographical location of the village which is closer to the former Ovamboland border is among the reasons which made it a nearer destination for PLAN combatants coming into the Kavango region.

Apart from the married couple who were brutally killed, Phillip Kanguma, a senior member within the same family, was killed by an unidentified gunman at Mukekete.

¹⁹²Interview with Shillinge Veronika, Ncancana, uKwangali district, 14 December 2007.

¹⁹³Interview with Shillinge Veronika, Ncancana, uKwangali district, 14 December 2007.

¹⁹⁴Interview with Shillinge Veronika, Ncancana, uKwangali district, 14 December 2007.

Shillinge, the daughter of the late Kanguma household, explains that the death of Kanguma left a psychological effect on the entire family. What she can recall was that the incident took place at night, they just heard dogs barking and later they heard the sound of a gunshot. That was the shot which killed him from the unknown armed man.¹⁹⁵ What troubled people was why were all these atrocities committed at night, which left civilians with uncertainty as to who was responsible for committing the atrocities.

The atrocities which were committed by the unknown armed man, forced the entire family to desert Mukekete village and to settle at Mpungu village in November 1983.¹⁹⁶ Being a teacher, Veronika noted that when the entire family deserted Mukekete she stopped teaching and relocated with her family at Mpungu. The situation resulted that the school was later closed down as people were living in fear and were unable to go to school. She also noted that her colleagues whom she left behind also deserted the school and moved to Rundu. The school at Mpoto completely closed down during in 1983.¹⁹⁷ Teaching did not take place throughout the whole year at school and this led to some pupils dropping out completely from school.

The presence of the South African forces had tremendous effects on the civilians. Kasoma a former Koevoet member explains that: 'The inhabitants of uKwangali district experienced many problems during the late 1970s and early 1980s up to 1989 and during the first general election campaign'.¹⁹⁸ For him being a Koevoet member he acknowledged that the inhabitants of uKwangali really experienced many problems from

¹⁹⁵Interview with Shillinge Veronika, Ncancana, uKwangali district, 14 December 2007.

¹⁹⁶Interview with Shillinge Veronika, Ncancana, uKwangali district, 14 December 2007.

¹⁹⁷Interview with Shillinge Veronika, Ncancana, uKwangali district, 14 December 2007.

¹⁹⁸Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

the South African military forces.¹⁹⁹ He refers to the geographical location of the district which shares a regional boundary with Ovamboland, and the national border with Angola in the north. Because PLAN cadres operated from their nearer military bases in southern Angola to enter Ovambo and Kavango via uKwangali district, this led to the increased presence of Koevoet forces in Ovamboland and western Kavango with the aim to crack down on the infiltration of PLAN cadres.

The problems noted by Kasoma were the instability in people's daily life. This was because people were not aware what the future for the next day or night held for them. They lived in doubts and fear of being brutalized or killed by the SADF and Koevoet.²⁰⁰ Kasoma also emphasizes that especially at night the situation was very bad.

In most cases villagers were not aware as who was coming to the house, whether it was PLAN cadres, SADF members or Koevoet, because all these forces also used to operate during the night.²⁰¹ In some instances the PLAN combatants might give an advance notification that they were coming but instead of the PLAN combatants coming to the homestead, the SADF who were normally on infantry patrol would approach the house and this was very dangerous.²⁰²

In 1983 a terrible incident took place at Gava where the SADF infantry unit ambushed a house, which was suspected of harboring PLAN combatants. Heavy military shooting took place, most of the people in the house were injured and five died on the

¹⁹⁹Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

²⁰⁰Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

²⁰¹Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

²⁰²Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

spot.²⁰³ This means that civilian's life in uKwangali was put at risk by the presence of the South African forces in the district.²⁰⁴ Cattle herders were accused of deliberately destroying the foot prints of PLAN cadres. This means that villagers were not allowed to release their livestock for grazing in the field before 9H00 a.m. People's fields of Mahangu crops (millet) were destroyed by Koevoet under the pretext that PLAN combatants were hiding in those fields. Fences and hedges of the fields were destroyed as well.²⁰⁵ All these acts were conducted to frustrate the civilians and make them refrain from collaborating with SWAPO fighters and to force them to desert their houses which was the only means of food for PLAN insurgents.

During the above period under discussion, many people in the district lost their lives, their belongings and employment. This resulted in some children dropping out of school especially those who deserted their villages with their parents to live along the river bank. Those severely affected crossed the border to live in Angola where the situation was more conducive and returned to Namibia from Angola during the later UNITA war against MPLA forces.

Wellem Kandjimi who lived at Gava in 1983 explains that one day PLAN cadres requested him to charge their battery as usual. The time when the PLAN cadres came to collect their battery, was also the same time the "Recce" unit who used to pretend to be PLAN cadres came to his house. A serious military contact took place and one boy 'David' who ran out of the house for safety was shot dead.²⁰⁶ It should be noted that

²⁰³ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

²⁰⁵ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

²⁰⁶ Interview with Wellem Kandjimi, Gava, uKwangali district, 26 December 2007.

especially from 1980, very few individuals had vehicles in the inland uKwangali villages whom PLAN fighters could use to charge their batteries, and this resulted in everyone who had a car being arrested for the services they used to provide to PLAN fighters.

It should be understood that in terms of operations, SADF used more of conventional strategies and were a well-trained disciplined force. Although unconventional strategies were applied by the SADF, this was used by the recce unit in certain circumstances. This was to the contrary with the counter insurgency unit Koevoet which relied heavily on unconventional strategies whereby civilians were assaulted and harassed whenever the units were executing their operations. Thus the Koevoet unit was a militarized unit trained to eliminate guerilla insurgents. Against this background it can be argued that the two forces differed in their mode of operation. Thus the SADF operated under a regulated military code, unlike the Koevoet unit which had total control over of the law and committed all sorts of violence without being liable for it.

The insecurity created by the South African forces resulted in many people deserting their villages to live permanently in Angola.²⁰⁷ Thus Kasoma relates that those individuals who deserted their villages were regarded by PLAN combatants as South African collaborators, while the SADF and Koevoet also regarded them as SWAPO collaborators. The situation was unbearable because people were caught in between and if one person within the family left the village, this created a problem in which the entire

²⁰⁷ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

village or family would be held accountable for the absence of such a person by the SADF forces and Koevoet alike.²⁰⁸

For those who lived in the inland villages, it was a must that they had to be around their villages all the time. Kasoma explains that once any member of the family in particular males left the village for a month or three he was regarded by the South African forces as planning to leave the country into exile to join the liberation struggle. To the contrary the PLAN combatants also regarded them as South Africa security forces intelligence informers. The result was that local civilians were arrested and detained by the South African security forces.

The presence of South African forces in Kavango had serious political implications for the life of SWAPO political activists. As from the beginning of 1980 arrests of prominent political figures in Kavango region by the South African security forces became public. In December 1983 a group of more than 20 detainees were released amongst them were Rev. Heikki Hausiku, and Gideon Nestor.²⁰⁹ Among those released from uKwangali were Heikki Hausiku and Nestor Mufenda.

The fate of suspected political activists was very bad and inhuman. In June 1984 Severinus Siteketa a political activist in uKwangali was arrested at Mukekete and taken to Mururani control post along the Rundu-Grootfontein tarred road. At Mururani the Special Forces used the police station with its neglected four cells to keep detainees in solitary confinement, tortured them with electric shocks, denied them food or gave them

²⁰⁸ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

²⁰⁹ © hmmmilk “Kavango during the Namibian war of liberation,” <http://kavango.info/Voito.htm>, accessed on 02/02/24.

bad food.²¹⁰ This treatment nearly killed Severinus Siteketa. After six months of this treatment Siteketa was released and returned together with Mipasi Hausiku and his brother. The second arrest of Severinus Siteketa was in accordance with the notorious Administrator General proclamation Act AG 27. Under this proclamation the Administrator-General, all commissioned and non-commissioned members of the South African security force, the military and the police were empowered to detain any person uncharged and incommunicado for up to thirty days for interrogation and the detainees had no right to know the reason for their arrest.²¹¹

In spite of these regulations which contravened all civilised rules of law, the conditions of the second arrest of Siteketa were more tolerable than the first one. This time Siteketa was arrested while he was doing shopping at the ENOK shop in Rundu and was taken to Osire 600 km away from the Kavango. At Osire he was detained for four months before the security forces transferred him to Bethanie further in the South of Namibia. During this time he was with 40 other detainees from Kavango, including Jaakko Kangayi, Kaoko Nairenge and Gideon Mipasi. At Bethanie Siteketa was kept with 12–15 other political detainees in the cell.²¹² Two weeks after his release in January 1986 he was taken again by the Koevoet to the notorious torturing camp called “Bitter Soet” near Nepemba. This camp was hidden in the thick forest about 2 km east of the tarred road to Grootfontein, 30 km south of Rundu. Even amongst the military it was disguised

²¹⁰© hmmmilk “Kavango during the Namibian war of liberation,” <http://kavango.info/Voito.htm>, accessed on 02/03/2008.

²¹¹© hmmmilk “Kavango during the Namibian war of liberation,” <http://kavango.info/Voito.htm>, accessed on 02/03/2008.

²¹²©hmmmilk “Kavango during the Namibian war of liberation,” <http://kavango.info/Voito.htm>, accessed on 02/03/2008.

as a police training camp, sometimes referred to as “Malan`s Camp”²¹³ In reality it was used as a detention camp by Koevoet and was equipped with torture facilities and far away from inhabited areas to safeguard undisturbed surroundings for the Koevoet henchmen. Kept in extremely harsh conditions, Siteketa suffered in the small cell made completely out of corrugated iron during the incredible heat of the days and under the exposure of the nights.²¹⁴ Every detainee arrested in the region went through Bitter Soet for interrogation and torture, and some used to confess all their activities with PLAN cadres.

Torture and mistreatment was part of the daily routine of the Koevoet soldiers who kept themselves unidentifiable. Siteketa even had to turn away towards the corrugated iron sheet when they opened the cell door to push in food. After another six month he was set free. After this systematic mistreatment the 43-year old Siteketa looked like an old, broken man, unrecognizable even to his family. The fate of Severinus Siteketa clearly projects the scale and the impact South African military forces and its intelligence had on individual political activists in uKwangali during the liberation struggle of Namibia and the Kavango region at large.

Haindongo Risto from Mbandja in Southern Angola, who migrated and lived in Mpungu since 1959, explains that the presence of South African forces was a nightmare if he recalls what happened in Mukekete village. The South African forces used to take people`s properties and loot them without their permission. For example one day his

²¹³© hmmmilk “Kavango during the Namibian war of liberation,” <http://kavango.info/Voito.htm>. accessed on 02/03/2008.

²¹⁴© hmmmilk “Kavango during the Namibian war of liberation,” <http://kavango.info/Voito.htm>. accessed on 02/03/2008.

goats were killed by the South African forces without his consent.²¹⁵ Looting people's goods was a common practice by the South African forces, for example whenever they wanted meat, people's livestock found in the field or road sides were shot.

The negative part of this practice was that even five cattle from one kraal found on the road side would be shot and left on the road side. Some cattle were just heavily injured which forced the owners to kill them. This affected the social economy of the villagers since most depended on subsistence farming where livestock are important assets in terms of family resources.²¹⁶ This was one strategy to frustrate villagers and instill fear among them.

Haindongo further reiterated that the way they used to conduct themselves towards civilians was not good. They usually entered villagers homestead at any time, if they so wished. This could be during the day or at night, and they could enter people's huts without any consent and this was very dangerous.²¹⁷ He stated that this practice was carried out as a strategy to crackdown on PLAN and their collaborators and that they were looking for their enemies. The complexities of the presence of South African military forces in uKwangali had a diverse social and economical impact. Socially people lost their lives, properties, livestock and Mahangu grain. In some instances Mahangu grain was taken by the indigenous SADF members and some was burned in the Mahangu grain thatch huts.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Interview with Haindongo Risto, Mukekete village, uKwangali district, 26 June 2007.

²¹⁶ Interview with Haindongo Risto, Mukekete village, uKwangali district, 26 June 2007.

²¹⁷ Interview with Haindongo Risto, Mukekete village, uKwangali district, 26 June 2007.

²¹⁸ Interview with Haindongo Risto, Mukekete village, uKwangali district, 26 June 2007.

Sexual violence on women in Kavango by the South African forces during the armed liberation struggle

Kavango was one area that was declared as a “security district” under the South African Defence Force (SADF) military rule in the 1970s.²¹⁹ The martial law under AG 9 which was extended to the northern “homelands” of Ovamboland, Kavangoland and Caprivi affected civilians in all spheres of life.²²⁰ This proclamation empowered any law enforcement agents and members of the SADF with wider powers to commit and conduct various forms of abuse and violence. Sexual violence was a common practice by the South African forces in Namibia during the armed liberation struggle. In respect of uKwangali, prevalence of rape cases hardly features in the existing literature of the Namibian armed struggle, or they had simply not been reported by the victims who were raped by the SADF and Koevoet forces during this period.

Reading the journal article by Hinz, it is reported that rape cases were so prevalent in Ovamboland which was one of the declared war zone areas.²²¹ The question one might ask is if this was the case in Ovamboland, why not in uKwangali if the same military forces who operated in Ovamboland were the same forces who operated in Kavango, or does it mean that these kinds of violence were not committed by the South African forces operating in Kavango? If yes, why is this not recorded? This leaves one with no option but to speculate that it might be that the victims were not capable of laying

²¹⁹ IDAF, *Apartheids Army in Namibia: South Africa illegal military occupation* (London: IDAF, 1982), p.9.

²²⁰ Ibid, p.9.

²²¹ O.M. Hinz & N. Gevers, Koevoet versus the people in Namibia, *Journal fur Entwicklungspolitik* 4, 1989, p.49.

charges against the perpetrators. This means that the victims were unable to share their experience with their friends or next of kin.

It can be argued that many cases of rape in uKwangali might have not been reported or made known by victims out of fear or shame of being raped by the Koevoet or SADF soldiers. Thus the absence of data related to rape cases in uKwangali gives a different picture of the forces who operated in uKwangali as to those operated in neighbouring Ovamboland. It can be concluded that the findings of this study might create a forum for which victims who are still living with their traumatic experience of sexual violence during the armed liberation struggle, might identify themselves.

However, Lourenz Haupindi Kalipa who was a chairperson of the Kavango Legislative Council in 1974 explains that the South African forces used to rape people's wives. He noted that this practice was very bad since the women were raped in the presence of their husbands and mostly by the infantry forces who used to patrol in the communities.²²² Kalipa noted that an incident of this nature took place at Bunya a village in Mbunza district whereby the South African forces entered a household and ordered a woman to have sex with soldiers, while her husband was watching them and one armed soldier pointed a gun to the husband. The former council member stated that this was a very bad practice by the soldiers, but these culprits were convicted and punished according to the South African military rules which Kalipa claims were very harsh.²²³ This signifies that the SADF was a well-trained force which operated under a defined

²²²Interview with Lourenz Haupindi Kalipa, a former member of the Kavango Legislative Council, Rundu, Safari Location, 24December 2007.

²²³ Interview with Lourenz Haupindi Kalipa, a former member of the Kavango Legislative Council, Rundu, Safari Location, 24 December 2007.

military code unlike the Koevoet units. Though uKwangali district of the Kavango become a heavily concentrated militarized area in Kavango, the South African military forces did not impose total control over the district in the sense that PLAN cadres penetrated in the district and established relationship with civilians and some traditional leaders. The presence of the unprecedented number of PLAN guerillas in the district suggests that it was a fully-fledged war zone.

Conclusion

The massive build up by the South African military forces in Namibia in the late seventies led to the declaration of Kavango as a security district. This included the establishment of military basis in uKwangali namely Nepara, Musese, Mpungu, Nkurenkuru and at Kahenge and at Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School. The complexities of the South African military forces in uKwangali had a diverse social and economic impact on the inhabitants.

The extension of the martial law by the South African regime in Kavango which empowered the South African forces with wider power to commit and conducted all sorts of violence including sexual violence especially on woman had adverse effect on civilians. The presence of the South African military forces and the use of conventional and unconventional strategies among the civilians created insecurity, fear and mistrust among themselves.

The influx of PLAN cadres into the interior of uKwangali in the 1980s made it an area of concentration by the South African forces who imposed their diverse conventional and unconventional strategies on civilians. The atrocities and brutal activities that were orchestrated by the South African forces, in particular the Koevoet unit, was part of its wider unconventional strategy which had tremendous and adverse impact on the life of the inhabitants. Though the presence of the South African forces had this serious impact on the lives of the inhabitants, the operations of the South African forces failed to halt the increased collaboration of the inhabitants with PLAN.

Militarily, the presence of the South African military forces in uKwangali left memories characterized by atrocities and brutality. Though Kavango region was heavily militarized by the South African military regime, the regime did not impose total military control over the region and in uKwangali district in particular. Whilst highlighting the conventional and unconventional strategies used by the South African forces in Kavango in Chapter Three, detailed analysis of the impacts of unconventional strategy on civilians and the micro-politics between civilians, South African forces and SWAPO will be dealt with in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

WINNING THE HEART AND MINDS? THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CIVILIANS OF UKWANGALI DISTRICT OF KAVANGO WITH BOTH SWAPO AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN REGIME DURING THE 1980s

Introduction

While Chapter Three discussed more conventional military tactics in Kavango, this chapter explores the unconventional tactics of the South African security forces in particular, and the micro-politics of the daily relationship between civilians and the SADF, and civilians and SWAPO. This chapter thus seeks to analyze the dynamics of the relationships which existed between the inhabitants of uKwangali district and both the South African military forces (SADF and Koevoet), and the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) with its military wing PLAN. The chapter looks particularly at how the selected area was affected by individuals who collaborated with these different military forces.

This chapter describes how the people in uKwangali district coped with the challenges from each side and how this changed over time. The unconventional strategies imposed on the civilians, especially by the South African military forces to destroy the positive image of SWAPO, will be examined in detail. Chapter Four will also assess the effectiveness of SWAPO's strategies to maintain and extend its support base among

civilians. A section dealing with the radio interviews of the three chiefs in Kavango on the political turmoil of 1989 will show just how complicated their position in relation to the interim regime remained during the final period of the liberation struggle, as the situation intensified.

The civilian perception of the South African military regime

The perception of the civilians in uKwangali district towards the South African regime was determined by the nature of the military strategies imposed by its regime. The propaganda used by the South African military forces and its intelligence service, was the most important aspect which influenced the perceptions of civilians of uKwangali during the 1980s. Anti-SWAPO pamphlets, papers and pictures portraying a negative representation of SWAPO used to be circulated by the South African intelligence services at night at schools and communities to deceive villagers against SWAPO and its military wing PLAN. Thus in return villagers were expected to co-operate and report PLAN cadres' presence to the South African military forces.

In order to win the minds and hearts of the civilians, the South African military forces embarked upon a number of conventional and unconventional strategies to transform the perception of the civilians of Kavango and of uKwangali district in particular. Thus local young boys twenty five years of age in every ethnic group were recruited to serve in the South African military forces (SADF and Koevoet). This strategy I believe was meant to implicate civilians whose relatives were recruited into these forces, and turn them against PLAN fighters.

Gende Alloys a former Captain in the South African Defence Force (SADF) in Kavango stated that in 1977 they (the SADF) recruited twice in the year and this was in line with the South African military strategy to recruit more army in Kavango.²²⁴ This he (Gende) said that militarily a platoon consists of two hundred and fifty men. This means that fifty recruits from each ethnic unit in Kavango will make up a platoon. This was also to give a balance in the representation of the people recruited from each ethnic district.

It can be argued that the strategy was intended to create an impression that all traditional leaders in Kavango were loyal and collaborated with the South African military regime. The propaganda by the South African regime about the negative ideologies of communism with which SWAPO was associated, was one conventional strategy used by the South African forces to influence the civilian's perception.

The use of Reconnaissance (Recce) who pretended to be PLAN cadres who committed atrocities was thus meant to give civilians a negative image of PLAN insurgents. It must be noted that during this period all the military forces the South African Defence Force (SADF), Koevoet and the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) which operated in uKwangali district were competing in influencing and gaining support among the residents of the district. Therefore every military force embarked upon different strategies to influence and maintain its relationship with the civilians. For example, some individuals were bribed and recruited as informers (spies) who provided the South African forces with information regarding individuals who collaborated with SWAPO insurgents. The spies who received allowances helped the military regime with

²²⁴Interview with Alloys Gende, Sambyu district, Kayengona, 27 December 2007.

information which enabled them to crack down on suspected individual SWAPO collaborators.

Though some individuals had little knowledge about the impact of the South African military regime, I believe that the residents of uKwangali district perceived the South African regime in both a positive and negative light. This was merely from the fact that the inhabitants were caught in the middle of the operational forces. Although the South African forces used to claim to maintain peace and stability in the district, they used to harass and assault civilians especially Koevoet. In this context ordinary civilians were unable to resist against the South African armed forces. This means that whenever SADF and Koevoet in particular visited villages, individuals were expected to co-operate and to provide the (South African forces) with information through conventional and unconventional strategies.²²⁵ It was against these developments that the people of uKwangali perceived the South African forces in a negative context.

As a measure to suppress the civilian's support and influence the perception of PLAN guerrillas, Koevoet used to exhibit photographs of atrocities allegedly committed by PLAN combatants and publicly show corpses of PLAN guerillas killed in battle as anti-SWAPO scare tactics.²²⁶ The unconventional terror tactics used by the South African military forces were meant to create fear, tension, trauma and confusion among ordinary civilians during the 1980s.

²²⁵ Personal experience on the presence and relationship which prevailed between the civilians and the South African military forces, 1980-1989.

²²⁶ Nuyoma, S, *Where others wavered: The Autobiography of Sam Nuyoma* (London: Panaf Books, 2001), p.357.

Alexander and her co- authors McGregor and Ranger indicate that to counter-attack guerrilla insurgents, unconventional tactics like poisoning campaign were used in Shangani (Zimbabwe) by the Rhodesian forces launched in 1976 as a source of fear, trauma and confusion.²²⁷ Thus to win the hearts and minds of the civilians in Rhodesia, the District Commissioner and the army held meetings around the district warning civilians against the brutality of terrorists and exhibiting photographs of atrocities said to be committed by the guerillas.²²⁸ This was meant to discredit the guerillas' credibility among the civilians who were the main source of their support.

The common unconventional strategy imposed on civilians of uKwangali by the Koevoet units was that of exhibiting dead corpses of PLAN combatants killed during operations. This strategy I believe was used to demonstrate the military strength of Koevoet to the civilians, hoping for the civilians to develop a positive perception of the unit. The counter insurgency unit (Koevoet) also resorted to intimidation, assaults, and destruction of property. Threatening civilians with military devices like a hand grenade was quite common.²²⁹ This meant that even the sound of a Casspir coming created fear among the civilians of uKwangali.

Reading the literature on the armed struggle on Namibia and that of Zimbabwe, I can argue that the unconventional strategies used by the Rhodesian forces to counter guerilla insurgents in Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe) have similar features to that of

²²⁷ J. Alexander et al, *Violence and Memory: one hundred years inn the dark forest of Matabeleland*.-Social history of Africa (Oxford: James Curry Ltd, 2000), p.148.

²²⁸ J. Alexander et al, *Violence and Memory: one hundred years inn the dark forest of Matabeleland*.-Social history of Africa (Oxford: James Curry Ltd, 2000), p.148.

²²⁹ M.O. Hinz & N. Gevers, 'Koevoet versus the people in Namibia' in *journal fur Entwicklungspolitik* 4, 1989.p.42.

Koevoet, the counter insurgency unit which operated in Namibia in the 1980s. According to Alexander, civilians indicate that government forces in Rhodesia depended on a degree of violence.²³⁰ This can be related to the lack of professional training. In terms of brutalities, the paramilitary unit the District Security Assistance (DSA) in Zimbabwe was very rough and they were untrained in most cases.²³¹ The paramilitary unit attacked civilians and their property, a trend similar to that of the Koevoet unit which operated in Namibia whenever they carried out raids or searched for SWAPO insurgents.

Unlike in Namibia the recruitment of the DSA was largely voluntary and the majority of the recruits were locals who were deployed within their home district where they operated among people they knew.²³² Community development officers, dip tank attendants and forestry rangers were prominent members of the DSA in Zimbabwe.²³³ Highly reputable whites were involved in the DSA command, the same structure which existed in the Koevoet force in Namibia whereby each Koevoet unit had white officers who gave orders to their black subordinates to abuse civilians. Hence the work by Alexander indicates that the primary motivation for joining DSA was financial gain. Thus I would contend that the cruelty of the DSA in Zimbabwe and Koevoet in Namibia had similar maniacal behavior in the sense that the same strategies of assaults and brutality were used in extracting information. This can be attributed to the level of the inadequate training given to them which was just that of handling a gun only. Thus means that they were not well trained to use conventional warfare strategies, but rather trained to

²³⁰ J. Alexander et al, *Violence and Memory: one hundred years in the dark forest of Matabeleland*.-Social history of Africa (Oxford: James Curry Ltd, 2000), p.150.

²³¹ J. Alexander et al, *Violence and Memory: one hundred years in the dark forest of Matabeleland*.-Social history of Africa (Oxford: James Curry Ltd, 2000), p.151.

²³² Ibid, p.152.

²³³ Ibid, p.152.

eliminate freedom fighters and gather intelligence. Therefore these paramilitary were not having any mercy with guerilla sympathizers and used violence and force at all costs to eliminate guerilla insurgents and collaborators.

It should be understood that Col Hans Dreyer the co-founder of the Koevoet unit in Namibia also operated in southern Rhodesia, today called Zimbabwe. The anti-guerilla combat techniques used in Rhodesia in 1967 by Dreyer (and Selous Scouts) which are similar to the techniques of Flechas used in Mozambique trained for the total elimination of guerilla fighters and gathering of information show similarities with the techniques used by Dreyer in Namibia.²³⁴ Thus the strategies of assaults directed against civilians in Namibia by Koevoet units are similar to those used by Selous Scouts in Zimbabwe, as well as the use of informers 'spies'. Thus all these strategies imposed on civilians were intended to instill fear and transform the civilian's perception towards guerrilla fighters.

As indicated at the beginning of the chapter, leaflets containing propaganda information used to be dropped by the South African airplanes around the villages in the district. This method was used to portray the incapacity of PLAN combatants' military strength toward the South African forces. Beating was a strategy used to instill fear and frustration among civilians to develop a negative perception towards SWAPO guerillas. Thus in return, civilians were expected to develop a negative perception accusing the PLAN combatants' presence in their villages as being the cause of all the assaults, beatings and atrocities inflicted upon them by Koevoet.²³⁵ The propaganda by the South

²³⁴D. Herbstein and J. Evenson, *The devils are among us: The war for Namibia* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1989), p.64.

²³⁵ Personal experience based on the relationship which prevailed between the civilians of Kavango and the South African military forces.1980-1989.

African forces created a situation where the inhabitants of uKwangali felt insecure at their first encounter with PLAN. Militarily, civilians were indoctrinated through posters, cartoons, to develop a negative perception towards SWAPO.²³⁶ Though the South Africa regime used different military strategy to mislead the local people, the perceptions of the people towards the South African forces were characterized by fear, helplessness and resentment. This means that civilians especially those living in inland villages of uKwangali did not have any choice but were subject to all these strategies imposed upon them.

In order to achieve all these military and political objectives, different methodologies were used by the South African military structure. The occupation army also used the pseudo-cultural organizations such as Etango in Oshiwambo or Ezuva in Kwangali and conducted shows for children in which they were indoctrinated with debased and anti-patriotic ideas through lectures, decadent videos and films as well as other immoral and anti-social activities.²³⁷

The anti-patriotic ideas through lecturers were thus meant to transform children's perception towards the South African regime. Thus I can confess that when I watched the film of the famine which hit Ethiopia, a sense of the inability of a black-led government was conveyed to school-going children which is incorrect. It can be argued that the film

²³⁶ Personal experience based on observation during the South African occupation.1980-1989.

²³⁷ SWAPO Information Bulletin of October 1987, SWAPO Department of Information and publicity (Luanda Angola), p.10.

was instrumental in shaping the understanding of school-going children to a certain degree.²³⁸

The used of pseudo organizations like Ezuva (the Sun) and Mpungu Youth Organization which operated under the umbrella political party the Democratic Turnrhalle Alliance (DTA) helped to an extent to transform the perception of some civilians towards the South African regime into a more positive light.²³⁹ Alloys Gende a former SADF member who worked for this section of information and publicity in Kavango stated that they used to travel throughout the region showing video films and informing people on social issues.²⁴⁰

Under Ezuva pseudo programs, Youth Camps were set up across the region where school pupils came together to compete in cultural dance and church songs. The Youth Camps were equipped with facilities such as a hall, accommodation for learners, a kraal for livestock e.g. cattle and goats which were slaughtered during the cultural festival days.²⁴¹ During these festivals some learners use to be transported in the South African military trucks. All these attempts were done just to indirectly win the hearts and mind of the learners and for the learners to develop a positive attitude towards the South African regime. Among the activities run by the Ezuva organization to indoctrinate the youth, was that of showing learners video films about sport like boxing and social political transformation in Africa. The video programs used to draw huge numbers of the learners.

²³⁸ Personal experience based on the videos which were shown by the SADF at school in Kavango in the region in the mid eighties.1984-1987.

²³⁹ Interview with Nestor Mufenda, Rundu, Kavango Regional Council, 28 December 2007.

²⁴⁰ Interview with Alloys Gende, a former captain in the South West African Territory Force (SWATF), Sambyu district, Kayengona, 27 December 2007.

²⁴¹ Interview with Kamati Damasius, A district leader of the Leevi Hakusembe youth camp in Mbunza, Karangana, Mbunza district, 29.January 2008.

This was simply because very few learners had access to these facilities during this period and this offered the South African officials showing the videos the opportunity to influence them and indoctrinate them with anti- SWAPO ideologies.

The most known video which was showed to the learners was the economic turmoil and hunger which took place in Ethiopia.²⁴² The video film was influential in the sense that after viewing the film a lecture used to be presented by the South African army (a white soldier) asserting that every black led government was not capable of governing its own country.²⁴³ Thus he (the white soldier) emphasized that if the local people of Kavangoland (as it used to be called) were collaborating with SWAPO and its military wing PLAN it was possible that the same situation could happen in Kavango.²⁴⁴

Under the pretext of Ezuva activities, the South African military section for information and publicity managed to brainwash the perception of the youth especially school-going learners. This video film even created a joke where learners used to refer to someone who was very thin as Ethiopia.²⁴⁵ This meant that the video had a strong impact on the understanding of the learners who were led to believe that SWAPO was incapable of governing the country.

The activities of Ezuva were instrumental in influencing school-going pupils and school dropouts to develop an interest to join the South African Army. The other programme of Ezuva was that of training the youth with semi-military skills. Johannes

²⁴² Personal experience based on the videos which were shown at schools by the SADF forces, 1984-1987.

²⁴³ Personal experience based on the videos which were shown at schools by the SADF forces, 1984-1987.

²⁴⁴ Personal experience based on the videos which were shown by the SADF at school in Kavango in the region in the mid eighties, 1984-1987.

²⁴⁵ Personal experience based on the videos which were shows by the SADF at school in Kavango in the region in the mid eighties, 1984-1987.

Songora a former learner at Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School recalls that every holiday all the boys who were ready for military conscription were selected in schools across the Kavango region to attend the semi-military training at Frans Dimbare, a Youth Camp.²⁴⁶ Frans Dimbare Youth Camp was located in Mbukushu district 200km east of Rundu. Thus the operation of this organization was not really cultural as it sounded, but was used as a strategy to achieve the South African army's political-military agenda.

Songora stated that the training which was given to the learners was similar to the one given to the recruited South Africans soldiers. During the week of the training, each learner was given a bag with all the first aid military training kit items.²⁴⁷ These included a map, foodstuffs, and a box of match, teabags and a compass. Most of the youth in the region who join the South African Army (SADF and Koevoet) were graduates from this semi-military training at Frans Dimbare.²⁴⁸ This strategy influenced the youth to develop a positive perception towards the South African military regime without knowing the political and military motive behind the Ezuva programme.

Given the strategies of the South African military forces which used both conventional and unconventional methods, some people in the Kavango region become collaborators of the South African regime. Consequently some people became prominent members of the opposition political party DTA.²⁴⁹ In uKwangali district however the perception of the inhabitants towards the South African Army was not as satisfactory as envisaged. This was due to the unprecedented number of PLAN combatants who

²⁴⁶ Interview with Johannes Songora, Rundu, Engen new houses complex Location, 29 January 2008.

²⁴⁷ Interview with Kamati Maurus, Rundu, Tutungeni Location, 28 January 2008.

²⁴⁸ Interview with Kamati Maurus, Rundu, Tutungeni Location, 28.01.2008.

²⁴⁹ DTA The first official opposition party after Namibia first democratic election.

operated in the district who were able to educate the inhabitants of uKwangali about the negative impact of South African colonialism. Even the youth camp which was supposed to be established in uKwangali at Katara did not materialize due to the threats posed by the presence of PLAN cadres in the district. The presence of the PLAN cadres in the district accorded them the opportunity to mobilize the inhabitants of uKwangali to develop a sense of nationalism and loyalty to their own country and fostered the desire to gain independence.²⁵⁰ It should be understood that during the 1980s if one was regarded as a collaborator of SWAPO, who were regarded as bringing instability in the region, it was bad news. Thus the support for SWAPO came at a price.

The establishment of the Kavango Legislative Council in which the local traditional leaders were co-opted to serve as councilors and ministers was a tool intended to indirectly transform the perception of the local leaders into a more positive view of the South African regime. Thus the political developments of the 1970s for which traditional leaders served as members of the Kavango Legislative Council as stipulated by Act 54 of 1968, influenced some traditional leaders in Kavango to have a favourable view of the South African regime.²⁵¹

The Legislative Council's structure created a local political vacuum where the traditional leaders in the Kavango were unable to unite and act against any laws which were passed for endorsement. In this context, the South African administration had fostered its political relationship with certain chiefs in the Kavango region.²⁵² Thus the

²⁵⁰ Personal experience based on the PLAN cadre's operation in uKwangali district spreading the gospel of liberation to civilians in the villages, 1980-1989.

²⁵¹ For discussion of the Odendaal Commission see Chapter One.

²⁵² L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.95.

chiefs and headmen in the Kavango Legislative were caught up in patron-client relationship in which they did not wish to jeopardize their financial position and dependency.²⁵³

The strategy created by the Legislative Council to win over and isolate the chiefs will be described later in the chapter. The remuneration paid to the member of the Legislative Council motivated some members to have a positive perception to the military regime. In this context it is arguable that the above strategies implemented by the South African regime were aimed at gaining support from the local leaders and the civilians in order to turn their support away from SWAPO and its military wing PLAN.

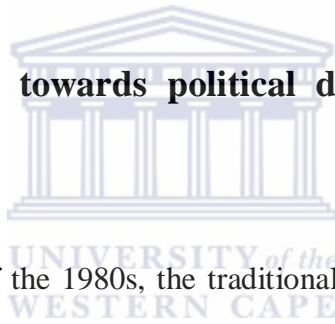
It should be understood that while the South African regime was implementing all its military strategies in uKwangali, PLAN combatants used a different methodology to win the support of the inhabitants of uKwangali. Looking at the strategies used by the South African forces and the PLAN combatants on the other hand, political maturity was then needed by the civilians in uKwangali to deal with these two forces which were operating in the same area.

Growing up in uKwangali during this period I can contend that especially for the civilians who lived in the inland villages of uKwangali, people did not have many choices as to how to deal with these forces (SADF, Koevoet and PLAN) which operated in uKwangali. As indicated in the previous chapters the main problem was the insecurity. The South African forces used to ambush civilian homesteads targeting PLAN cadres who depended on civilians for food. The danger was that if the two forces came into

²⁵³L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.95.

contact with each other in the same homestead and fighting broke out, the exchange of fire put the civilian's life at risk. Munguya Gabriel stated that civilian life was very difficult. For example during the day one can say it was better because you could see who was coming to one's house, unlike at night where one did not know who was coming and was only alerted by the barking of dogs that people are coming to the homestead.²⁵⁴ This left civilians with uncertainty about who was coming and what to expect from their visit. In most cases, people had to deal with the South African forces during the day and at night with the PLAN cadres. This was the nature of day and night in this war.

Perception of the chiefs towards political developments in Kavango during the 1980s



During the political conflict of the 1980s, the traditional leaders in the Kavango region were caught in between. Thus under the Kavango Legislative Council, the traditional leaders especially the chiefs were expected to make laws and implement them as envisaged by the South African regime. In 1989, three chiefs in Kavango were interviewed over the Kavango Radio with regard to the political turmoil which prevailed in the region.²⁵⁵ The chiefs were that of Gciriku (Sebastian Kamwanga), Sambyu (Gothard Haininga) and of uKwangali (Sitentu Mpasi).

²⁵⁴ Interview with Gabriel Munguya, uKwangali district, Nepara village, 24 July 2007.

²⁵⁵ Interview programme presented on the Kavango Radio in 1989 where three chiefs in Kavango were asked with regard to the decision taken by the Council which mandated the South African forces to arrest and assault civilians wearing T-shirts written SWAPO and NANSO.

During the interview, the three chiefs were asked whether they had taken a decision which gave the South African forces the mandate to assault and arrest people wearing T-shirts bearing SWAPO and NANSO slogans. In response, three different accounts were presented by the leaders of Kavango over the Radio. Chief Kamwanga of vaGciriku district explained that it was not legal according to the customary law of the Gciriku to prohibit people to wear T-shirts, irrespective of what has been written on it.²⁵⁶ Kamwanga stated that as the chief of the tribe he did not have any power to intervene in any military and political related activities.

Chief Kamwanga said that those who were alleging that the chiefs have mandated the South African forces to arrest and assault people were not correct. He stated that for those who were wearing T-shirts let it be of DTA, Ezuva or any political party striving for the peace in South West Africa (Namibia), it was not a problem according to Kamwanga. The chief reiterated that what people must bear in mind is that as a chief, it was not in his capacity to intervene in any military activities of the soldiers. The power was vested within the soldiers themselves to act accordingly, if they realized that the situation was not favourable for security reasons.²⁵⁷ Thus people must not think that they (the chiefs) mandated the South Africa forces to assault and arrest people wearing SWAPO and the Namibian National Student Organisation (NANSO) T-shirts.

While the chief of the Gciriku denied having any knowledge about the decision, Gothard Haininga of Sambyu acknowledged that the claim was true according to the

²⁵⁶Tape recording interview of Sebastian Kamwanga, the chief of the vaGciriku tribe presented on Kavango Radio during the 1989 political unrest in Kavango.

²⁵⁷Tape recording interview of Sebastian Kamwanga, the chief of the vaGciriku tribe presented on Kavango Radio during the 1989 political unrest in Kavango.

decision taken during their Council meeting. From the recording on the Radio, the chiefs of Sambyu said that whoever found wearing T-shirt bearing SWAPO and NANSO slogans, must be brought to his palace to be punished accordingly. In addition the chief would ask those individuals who gave them the permission to wear T-shirt of this nature in his tribal territory. Thus he (Haininga) asserted that even the parents of those children would have caution about why their children were wearing T-shirts with writings which were not allowed and did not belong to the Kavango area.²⁵⁸ The chief of Sambyu concluded that any one in his tribal territory found wearing SWAPO and NANSO T-shirts, must be brought to his palace to be tried and punished according to the Sambyu customary law.

Though the account by Haininga suggests that the decision was taken during the council meeting, the chief of uKwangali, Sientu Mpasi, responded in a defensive and opposing way to the question which was asked to him. The chief of uKwangali claimed that he was not present at the Council meeting when the decision was taken. Thus he was not well informed and was unable to give proper feedback to the question. Responding to the question, the chief noted that for those who were trying to implement the decision, he did not see any problems of people wearing T-shirts of that nature. This meant that every chief who implemented such a decision (that people must not wear those shirts) would land him/herself in a problem.

Returning to the question, Sientu Mpasi indicated that even those seeking clarity or those who wanted the chiefs to decide on the T-shirt issues, they must consider that

²⁵⁸Tape recording interview with Gothard Haininga, the chief of the vaSambyu tribe presented on Kavango Radio during the 1989 political unrest in Kavango.

they were the ones in power (the SA military regime). Therefore as a chief, even if he refused to adhere to their order or instruction or allowed people to wear those shirts, it could still lead him into a big problem.²⁵⁹ Mipasi noted that as mentioned earlier when the decision was taken he was not present, he was not part of that decision. He also stated that it was not part of his responsibility as a chief to tell people what to wear and what not to wear. These were the responsibilities of the soldiers, he emphasized. He noted that though they wanted the chiefs to enforce the decision, the soldiers or the military regime were the ones who were behind people wearing the SWAPO or NANSO T-shirts.²⁶⁰

Mipasi reiterated that it seems where these T-shirts were produced, people were allowed to wear them. If the people in Windhoek and the other parts of the country were wearing it, why should people in the Kavango not be allowed to wear these shirts he asked? This is not allowed according to Mipasi and yet the people are being assaulted. The chief of uKwangali noted that this law was only applicable in Kavango but for him, he can say that the five oxen²⁶¹ of Kavango do not pull together in one direction. The proverb of the five oxen refers to the inability which existed among the five chiefs of Kavango to unite together or take a collective stand to oppose new laws imposed on them. Thus it is evident in the accounts presented by the three chiefs over the radio that unity did not prevail in the council. Mipasi stated that in his district if people were arrested because of wearing SWAPO and NANSO T-shirts, let those who arrested them

²⁵⁹ Tape recording interview with Sientu Mipasi, the chief of uKwangali presented on Kavango Radio during the 1989 political unrest in Kavango.

²⁶⁰ Tape recording interview with Sientu Mipasi the chief of uKwangali presented on Kavango Radio during the 1989 political unrest in Kavango.

²⁶¹ The five oxen the chief refers to the five tribal chief in the Kavango region who does not co-operate tighter.

deal with it and punish them as he did not have the power to punish individuals wearing T-shirts with SWAPO and NANSO slogans.

He suggested that the military personnel must take care of those problems. Thus he argued that if in Windhoek people were wearing these T-shirts, this meant that it was approved even by the court of law. The chief of uKwangali contended that even those who were being assaulted might not know the legal proceedings to take against those assaulting them. This he related that even if the chief happen to punish an individual who knew the legal proceedings and had a broader political knowledge, legal action could be laid against the chief. Thus he alluded to the fact that even the chief who is implementing this law in his territory can become a victim of this legal action. Thus Sientu Mipasi believed that even a chief would be in a big problem.

The chief of uKwangali asserted that he would not punish anyone. If such a case happened in his territory he would rather refer them to those who are behind it, the soldiers. The chief reiterated that what people should know is that these are political parties' T-shirts. All those political parties are legally allowed and are approved to conduct their political activities, be it that of SWAPO, DTA or which ever organization. Lastly he cautioned that if people in Windhoek were wearing it but were not being arrested or assaulted, why should the people in Kavango be arrested and assaulted?

Hearing the accounts by the three chiefs, one can conclude that the subject was discussed during the Legislative Council proceedings. It should be understood that in June 1985 a Transitional Government of National Unity excluding (SWAPO) was set up

in Windhoek, although the United Nations (UN) refused to recognise it.²⁶² Though the interim government was not recognised by the United Nations (UN), its power was exercised in all the declared homelands.

The question which needs clarity is whether the chiefs took a collective decision to implement the decision or to reject it. Thus under the interim government, the traditional leaders were expected to endorse and implement the laws from the central government. However if one listens the accounts of the chiefs, individual reactions towards the subject can be detected in their responses.

The riddle mentioned by the chief of uKwangali that the five oxen in Kavango do not pull in one direction, simply suggests that under the Kavango Legislative Council, the chiefs were not in a position to unite under one forum to react to whatever laws which were imposed on them by the interim regime let it be politically or militarily. In this context, the Legislative Council was used by the South African administration as a tool intended to achieve their political and military objectives.

Listening to the recorded version, Chief Kamwanga of Gciriku and Sientu of uKwangali, a sense of diplomacy can be observed in their response to the question they were asked. This was unlike the account of Haininga of Sambyu who stated that the subject was discussed by the chiefs during their council meeting. Against these political developments it is not correct to generalize that all the chiefs in Kavango cooperated as the South African regime perceived the matter. Thus the responses of the chiefs clearly

²⁶² <http://www.iss.co.za/Af/profile/Namibia/politics.html>, accessed on 09.05.2008.

demonstrate that every chief in Kavango reacted in his /her individual capacity against South African rule during the 1989 transition period.

The perception of the civilians of uKwangali district towards SWAPO

In order to analyse and contextualize the armed liberation struggle in uKwangali district of the Kavango, select literature concerning guerilla warfare and government counter-insurgency elsewhere in Southern Africa will be referred to here. Reading the work by Kriger on peasants and the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, I can contend that the interaction between the guerilla fighters such as the Zimbabwe People Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and civilians in Zimbabwe did not differ from that of the People Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) who operated in Namibia and in uKwangali district in particular.

Scholtz argues that because of their proximity in Southern Angola, PLAN cadres were in a position to infiltrate large bands of guerillas into Kavango as well as into the geographical centre of Ovamboland, thereby stretching the operational area to a great extent and threatening to overstretch the South African security forces deployed to counter them.²⁶³ Therefore PLAN cadres who came into Kavango entered the region via uKwangali district before spreading across the entire region.²⁶⁴ This system of infiltration in the region made uKwangali district the most influential area by the PLAN combatants

²⁶³S. Brown, "Diplomacy by other means", in Leys and Saul: *Namibia Liberation struggle: The two-edge sword* (London: Ohio University Press, 1995).p.23.

²⁶⁴S. Brown, "Diplomacy by other means", in Leys and Saul: *Namibia Liberation struggle: The two-edge sword* (London: Ohio University Press, 1995).p.23.

and consequently undermined the spheres of South African influence in uKwangali. The arrival of PLAN in uKwangali district which was the main entrance of the PLAN combatants in the late 1970s was perceived with mixed feelings at the beginning. This was due to the propaganda disseminated by the South African intelligence services and the inhabitants' lack of political knowledge about SWAPO and its military wing PLAN.

As indicated in Chapter Two, Ndeulitufa Kalomoh well known by the combat name Hakushinda and who was also called by the local name Kambare Kanazendeke,²⁶⁵ explained that PLAN combatants' infiltration in Kavango region started in 1978.²⁶⁶ Kolomoh the PLAN commander who was designated to start a new military front in Kavango region said that the first group which came into the region was for reconnaissance. The first group was under the leadership of Commander Frans Hikunde Kapoko and Michael Cleo Hainyeko. This group came to see the geographical landscape of the region and to assess the attitude of the local people towards SWAPO.

The group which came in November 1978 led by Hausiku entered the region via Wiwi a village close to Ovamboland in the Mpungu constituency.²⁶⁷ The reception at Abraham Nghilundilwa homestead was good and they were welcomed without any problems. From Wiwi this group of combatants proceeded to Katope Komugoro where they split into small units of four and five men each. Kalomoh noted that at their first appearance amongst the inhabitants of the uKwangali district, villagers perceived them

²⁶⁵ A ruKwangali description which means a hat dressed on the head one side like a soldier,

²⁶⁶ Archive for Anti-Colonial Resistance and Liberations Struggle (AACRLS) Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁶⁷ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

with uncertainty. Most of the civilians were afraid of them and some deserted their homesteads claiming that the unidentified soldiers had come with the intention to kill civilians, civil servants and to confiscate their goods. This was in line with the South African regime's propaganda.²⁶⁸ A practical example of this uncertainty was in February 1978 when PLAN cadres came to Muparara village. On this day, the late Leena Katumbu Mpasi deserted her homestead out of fear of being killed by unknown forces when she saw them (PLAN) at Kasimba a village 5km north of Muparara.²⁶⁹ Mpasi Leena was the one who informed us (children at Karapo's homestead) to desert the house for fear of being killed. The mother in-law of Mpasi Leena who deserted her house also out of fear and was later found by PLAN cadres at Karapo's homestead hiding in a thatched house with her child clearly indicates that the people were very frightened.²⁷⁰

Kalomoh stated that because of the uncertainty which emerged among the local people, the group did not proceed further throughout the region but instead went up to Muparara and Mpungu villages in uKwangali district and returned into the interior of Ovamboland.²⁷¹

Considering the political understanding of the people in Kavango especially in the late 1970s, it was difficult for them (PLAN cadres) to continue with their guerilla warfare operations. The PLAN commander said that at these homesteads they visited, a sense of fear could be detected on people's faces. However, Kalomoh indicated that those who

²⁶⁸ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁶⁹ Personal memory on the first arrival of PLAN combatants at Muparara villages in uKwangali February 1978.

²⁷⁰ Personal memory on the first arrival of PLAN combatants at Muparara villages in uKwangali February 1978.

²⁷¹ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

knew some political background of SWAPO and PLAN, and especially those whose children had left the country into exile, were able to communicate with them and ask the whereabouts of their children abroad.²⁷² For example the late Matjayi (a headman) at Gava whose son Mipasi went into exile was in a position to help the PLAN cadres, and even help them to influence other civilians not to fear but to help them as liberators. But those misled by the South African regime deserted their homesteads and settled along the Kavango river, fearing to be killed by the PLAN combatants.²⁷³

The former PLAN commander asserts that though they stayed three days at Gava, giving political education lectures at the night, a sense of fear could be detected in the faces of these people showing that they were affected by the propaganda of South Africa. Thus the belief that SWAPO came with the intention to kill all the Headmen including all civil servants working in the South West Africa (Namibia) colonial government could be seen among some villagers. The insecurity, tension and fear which were detected within the villages prompted the commander to convene a meeting with Chief Sientu Mipasi and his senior headman Alex Muranda.²⁷⁴

The aim of the meeting was to brief the two senior traditional leaders about the political ideology of SWAPO. The two leaders of uKwangali were urged to tell villagers not to live in fear and to returning to their villages, homestead, fields and livestock since the PLAN combatants did not come to kill ordinary civilians.

²⁷² Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁷³ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁷⁴ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

The deliberation with the two leaders according to Kalomoh helped transformed the perception of the some civilians of uKwangali towards SWAPO and PLAN combatants. Kalomoh asserts that as from that time the perception of the people towards PLAN cadres changed and most people started returning to their villages and the PLAN cadres did not experience any problem with the inhabitants of uKwangali apart from exceptional cases.²⁷⁵ These are common features in a liberation war zone area where civilian support is shared across the operational forces. The meeting with the two leaders transformed uKwangali district into an area accessible for PLAN cadres operation and its inhabitants started to co-operate with PLAN combatants.

The complexities of the South African propaganda also prompted Kalomoh and his men to embark upon holding secret meetings at every household they visited during the night to educate the people about the main aims and objectives of SWAPO. Through this political education civilians were told that the aim of PLAN was not that of killing the ordinary citizens, but to liberate the country from the South African illegal military occupation.²⁷⁶

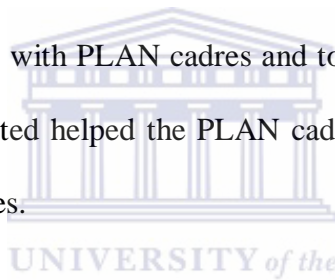
The political education campaigns which they conducted enabled some people of uKwangali to render the necessary support. The other important aspect which convinced the people of uKwangali was the presence of the PLAN combatants who came from the district who had gone into exile and returned as PLAN cadres. Among them were Olli Kazungura, Voitto Jasson and Josef Shanyengana known as Himba who were from

²⁷⁵Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁷⁶Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

Mpungu.²⁷⁷ The assistance provided by the inhabitants of uKwangali included medicine, information and accommodation. One can conclude that PLAN combatants felt to some degree at home when they operated in uKwangali echoed Kalomoh.

Medication and medical treatment were given by individuals like Sister Rosalia Nghidhinwa (the current Minister of Home Affairs in Namibia) and secretly given to the PLAN combatant's medical officer to treat their fellow PLAN patients.²⁷⁸ The complexities of South African propaganda resulted in many PLAN combatants being deployed to operate in the Kavango region with the aim to educate and explain the objectives of SWAPO to the people. Thus the inhabitants of the region were urged to cooperate and work hand in hand with PLAN cadres and to provide the necessary support. The political education conducted helped the PLAN cadres to contain the operations of the South African military forces.



Kruger argues that in terms of logistics guerilla fighters organized peasants, youth and the elite to meet their logistical needs for resources - food, money clothing and intelligence about the regime's forces and informers.²⁷⁹ Like in Zimbabwe, the livelihood of PLAN cadres in uKwangali depended on the civilians offering help on an individual basis as compared with Zimbabwe where an effective system existed in the Tribal Trust Land. As in uKwangali, Kruger also argues that guerrillas used to contact selected individuals –those with nationalist histories or chiefs and headman for food and

²⁷⁷ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁷⁸ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁷⁹ J. N. Kriger, *Zimbabwe Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices –African Studies Series 70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.116.

information, the trend similar to the one used by the PLAN cadres who operated in uKwangali. Moreover, the use of conventional and unconventional strategies by the government forces seems to have similar features in any guerrilla warfare country or district.

Contrary to the South African regime which used the pseudo-strategies, and unconventional strategy to gain support, PLAN cadres relied on political education using pamphlets and pictures to give civilians a progressive positive image of SWAPO in its military bases in exile.²⁸⁰ The political lectures which were conducted at night helped transform the perception of the civilians to render an effective support toward PLAN fighters.²⁸¹ In order to gain support, the PLAN cadres relied mainly on enlightening people about the politics to liberate and fight for their rights and independence.

This political education, according to Kalomoh who operated in the region, was spread by singing liberation songs to civilians after the meeting and by giving them SWAPO badges.²⁸² This motivated people to develop a sense of loyalty towards SWAPO as a political movement. The mode of singing liberation songs, learning slogans and the use of a political campaign reflects the similarity to the methodology used by ZIPRA the armed wing of ZAPU in Zimbabwe.

Political education was one of the most important tasks of the guerilla fighters in any warfare area to gain support and popularity. Kriger argues that the most important

²⁸⁰ Personal experience on PLAN cadres operation and interaction with villages conducting political education to civilians which took place during the night, 1980-1987.

²⁸¹ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁸² Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

interaction between guerillas and civilians took place at ‘Moraris’, usually held after dusk at a spot close to the guerrilla base and to protect them from easy access by security forces. The direct contact with civilians was an opportunity for guerillas to offer political education.²⁸³ Kriger also argues that at times a guerrilla would step into the centre of the circle formed by villagers, introduce himself, repeat slogans and lead a song glorifying the past. The strategy commonly used by guerrillas in any liberation war zone of singing slogans was an indication of solidarity.

In uKwangali the political education was conducted by PLAN cadres who operated in small units of four to five per group.²⁸⁴ Though this used to take place at night this form of political education was given to adults only who were told to tell children not to disclose any information about their whereabouts to the enemy. These interactions or gatherings used to take place outside the household to avoid being attacked by the enemies who used to ambush civilian homesteads. The nature of this type of interaction was due to the fact that the inland villagers’ homesteads were less populated as compared with Zimbabwe where community structures with committees were established in the Tribal Trust Lands to control the activities of the guerilla fighters.

Logistic and other support from the local civilians

In uKwangali communication (logistic support) was one important aspect needed for the success of the guerilla warfare on the ground. The need for batteries to enable the commander to communicate to their military bases to Luanda and in southern Angola

²⁸³ J. N. Kriger, *Zimbabwe Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices* –African Studies Series 70 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.118.

²⁸⁴ Personal experience on PLAN cadres operation and interaction with villages conducting political education to civilians which took place during the night, 1983-1987.

was a very important logistic need. The problem which confronted Kalomoh was where to get this help? According to Kalomoh teachers like Mr. Ngoma 'Disco' from Insu village, Wellem Kandjimi from Gava and Robert Karapo from Muparara who owned vehicles, with whom Kalomoh established a good relationship, were the ones he (Kalomoh) used to send to Rundu to recharge and buy new batteries. The same people were sent even when goods such as food rations were needed.²⁸⁵ In this way the problem of batteries was attended to by the above teacher.

The PLAN commander also noted that during this period few people had cars. Among them were a man who used to work at Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM) called Odja John, then Mr. Karapo, Mr. Ngoma known as Disco and Mr. Wellem Kandjimi. The logistical support given by the local civilians helped Kalomoh to establish his operational headquarters at a village called Nculi (see Appendix.1.the map of uKwangali district). This place was use as a meeting point where the PLAN commander met with all his men to discuss their operations. It was also used as a warehouse where all ammunitions, food, money and the radio were kept. Thus all the radio he (Kalomoh) used for communication was gathered at the centre point at Nculi where it was easy to get this logistical assistance from those with cars.²⁸⁶ The headquarters at Nculi (see the attached Appendix.1.of the of uKwangali) were also an assembly point where PLAN combatants within the vicinity met regularly to brief themselves about the progress made, about which Kalomoh used to compile a report and communicate it to Luanda.

²⁸⁵ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁸⁶ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

This means that as a commander his operation was just in a triangle from Nculi to Ncaucau and from Ncaucau to Kasimba and from Kasimba to Muparara with the aim to have easy access of water and logistical help whenever his battery was flat and needed to be recharged. The PLAN commander also asserted that if the inhabitants of uKwangali were not having a positive perception towards PLAN cadres, the guerilla warfare could have failed and could have not even lasted for a year.²⁸⁷ Thus he believes that the meeting with the chief at Namungundo was instrumental because if the people resented rendering support, the PLAN cadres could have died of hunger and sickness.

In terms of logistics, it was not easy for Kalomoh to operate far from those who had cars to help him charging his batteries. He asserted that even some of the military materials which they used during the armed struggle were still within the vicinity of Nculi. This headquarters at Nculi was well demarcated under a huge big tree. It was in general a good site. In some cases to avoid being trapped at one place by the enemies, Kalomoh used to transfer his moveable headquarters from Namungundo to Muparara and Ncaucau, and if he was leaving the vicinity of Nculi his headquarters were relocated to Tondoro at Kapumburu's area at Kambumbu, a village in the inland of uKwangali.

This kind of logistical support of providing batteries was in fact dangerous. This resulted in some individual teachers being arrested by the South African military forces. In 1983 for example Wellem Kandjimi and Robert Karapo both teachers were arrested because of this logistical support given to PLAN combatants.²⁸⁸ However, the PLAN

²⁸⁷ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁸⁸ Karapo Robert and Wellem Kandjimi were among the individuals arrested for providing logistical support to the PLAN commander Kalomoh who operated in uKwangali.

commander asserted that they never encountered any problems from the above teachers collaborating with the South African regime. Thus he can claim that despite all the problems they were exposed to they were reliable SWAPO supporters.²⁸⁹ All the assistance they got from the inhabitants of uKwangali demonstrated the positive perception they developed during their stay and through the operations of the PLAN cadres in uKwangali.

The assistance provided by the above teachers such as food, information and batteries enabled them to operate effectively and communicate with Luanda and nearby bases in Southern Angola.²⁹⁰ Water and food shortages were experienced, mainly during the spring season. Moreover the local people assisted PLAN in this regard and due to this support, it was difficult for the South African military forces to easily track down the guerrillas.²⁹¹ The vegetation of uKwangali was one factor which affected the operations of the South African military forces, because the area is subtropical and was suitable for guerilla tactics. This forced the military regime to destroy the area with veld fire and as a result the whole area from Mangetti was cleared and most wild fruits which were also a source of livelihood were destroyed.

Kalomoh hence indicated that one major problem which affected the PLAN combatants operation was hunger. He recalls that in 1983 there was a great drought which hit the Kavango region, and life was very difficult during this year. Thus he asserts

²⁸⁹ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁹⁰ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁹¹ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

that as soldiers they only relied on eating the Mangetti nuts supplied by some villagers who had insufficient food. This became a burden as they always visited those homestead for a meal. However, with the help of a successful business man, Rudolf Ngondo, they were provided food through his shops at Tondoro, Kahenge and Nzinze which were all in uKwangali area.²⁹²

In most cases a reliable individual was entrusted with the task to load foodstuffs on a sledge from the above shops. The person who was entrusted would collect the food as if it was for personal consumption while in fact it was meant for PLAN cadres. Kalomoh also noted that the same foodstuffs which were given to them were partly used to supply other PLAN combatants who operated in inland places like Mangetti, Grootfontein, Otavi and other places within the country.²⁹³ The revelation by Kalomoh reveals that the problem of food shortage was solved collectively and with the input by Rudolf Ngondo. This is a clear indication that it was because of the good will of the civilians of uKwangali that the armed struggle a success.

Kasoma Paulus a former Koevoet member, well known as ‘Njege’ asserts that the perception of the vaKwangali people towards PLAN fighters was very good.²⁹⁴ He stated that the vaKwangali people assisted the PLAN combatants as family members and liberators. The former Koevoet member noted that the relationship which existed between the inhabitants of uKwangali with PLAN cannot be compared with the rest of

²⁹² Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁹³ Interview by Aaron Nambadi with Kalomoh Ndeulitufa, the former PLAN commander designated to operate in Kavango, Rundu, Tutungeni, 13 May 2005.

²⁹⁴ Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

the people in the Kavango region, though PLAN cadres operated in the whole region.²⁹⁵ This he claims made uKwangali a concentrated war zone area in the whole Kavango region.

The former Koevoet member also acknowledged that for the period of fifteen years he served in Koevoet, most of his major operations or military contacts with PLAN cadres were conducted in uKwangali unlike in the eastern part of the region. The account by the former Koevoet member demonstrates the scale of the South African military concentration in uKwangali as compared to other parts of the region.

It is against this warfare background that Kasoma claimed that the perceptions of the people in the eastern part of the region were not similar to those in the western part in uKwangali. The vulnerability of the inhabitants of uKwangali made the area conducive for operations by PLAN cadres and also enabled PLAN combatants to plant landmines and ambush South African military bases.²⁹⁶ The positive perception of the some civilians in uKwangali towards PLAN combatants helped them to sustain the Koevoet pressure. This was necessary because they were not having enough food and in most cases their food got finished on the way from the military camps in Angola.²⁹⁷

As stated by the former commander above, the former Koevoet member concluded that if the inhabitants of uKwangali could have developed a negative perception towards the PLAN, the guerilla warfare of the PLAN combatants could have

²⁹⁵Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

²⁹⁶Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

²⁹⁷Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

not lasted even for a year in uKwangali district.²⁹⁸ The support provided by the villagers was vital to the PLAN combatants' daily operations since their livelihood depended on the people. He hence indicated that as from 1981 when the armed struggle intensified most of the people who lived in the hinterland deserted their homesteads and only very few individuals were able to stick it out in this situation. This was mainly due to the harsh unconventional methods of Koevoet used in extracting information. This included assaults, intimidation, destruction of property and military action, while beating was a daily exercise.

Among those who did not desert their villages were Wellem Kandjimi, Karapo Robert, Dipi and Mafuta. Kasoma describes Mafuta as one man who was not afraid of the white Koevoet officials. This Kasoma stated that at times Mafuta used to retaliate physically against the Koevoet unit leader's beatings and harassment, especially with Constable Le Roux nickname "Reru".²⁹⁹ The above-mentioned individuals were prepared to sacrifice their lives and provided the necessary support while most villagers deserted their houses in the hinterland of uKwangali. The situation indeed forced some to cross over into Angola because of the situation which prevailed in uKwangali. Although some individuals deserted their villages, their interaction with PLAN suggests that the inhabitants of uKwangali developed a positive perception towards SWAPO and its military wing PLAN.³⁰⁰

Karora Erastus a former PLAN combatant born in uKwangali district at Simanya also stated that the perception of the local people in uKwangali district was very good.

²⁹⁸Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

²⁹⁹Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

³⁰⁰Interview with Kasoma Paulus, a former Koevoet member, Rundu, Donkerhoek Location, 24 July 2007.

This was simply because the majority of those who went into exile during the 1970s were from the uKwangali district. This he claims made it easy for the local people to perceive them as sons and daughters and provide any assistance needed by the PLAN combatants.³⁰¹

Food was a necessary basic need for PLAN combatants because in the guerilla warfare soldiers did not have time to cook food. The fact that the guerilla warfare is normally conducted on an infantry basis made it impossible for the PLAN cadres to carry food. This made the local civilians their main source of providing food.³⁰² It should be noted that this food was only provided at night thus it was very difficult for them to cook as they were pursued by their enemies. Given this support, Munguya noted that the interaction between PLAN cadres and the majority of the civilians of uKwangali was good. This Munguya claims that it can be confirmed with the former PLAN cadres who operated in uKwangali.

Apart from the food which was provided on a daily basis, medication was also given by the staff members who worked at Mpungu and Nepara clinics.³⁰³ Hence Munguya echoed that those who owned vehicles played a significant role in supporting the PLAN combatants. This meant that those having vehicles were not even allowed by the South African forces to have a cuca-shop. This was due to the fact that these cuca-shops were regarded as the place for food storage for the PLAN combatants.³⁰⁴ In cases where a PLAN combatant got injured during combat, people used to provide the different

³⁰¹Interview with Karora Erastus former PLAN combatants born in uKwangali, Rundu, Tutungeni, 28 October 2007.

³⁰²Interview with Gabriel Munguya, uKwangali district, Nepara village, 24 July 2007.

³⁰³Interview with Gabriel Munguya, uKwangali district, Nepara village, 24 July 2007.

³⁰⁴Interview with Gabriel Munguya, uKwangali district, Nepara village, 24 July 2007.

modes of transport this included the use of horses or donkeys. This was due to the fact that using vehicles was not safe due to mobile roadblocks staged by the South African (SA) forces whenever they got information about PLAN insurgent's movements and operations.

One indication of the positive perception of the vaKwangali people can be inferred from the total number of youths who left the district to join the armed struggle in exile. Elina Hausiku from Zigizi recalls that among those who went in exile were the late Fiina Hausiku, Linna Nakale, Esthera Nakare, the late Voitto Jasson, Lucia Nghilundilwa, Shati, Sikwetepo Haindongo, Olli Kazungura from Mpungu, Erastus Karora (Simanya), Mfana boy (Namungundo), Petrus Siyepo from Kasimba, Elina Sikongo, Likuwa, Wellem Mpasi, Namporo (Nepara), Regina Zakamungwa (Nepara), Timo, Abraham, Gerson Nghilundilwa, Jackson Nzamene Karupu, Olga from Mpungu, and George Mutakati.³⁰⁵ All were from uKwangali.

The majority of these youths who left for exile were learners at the Mpungu mission station, a Lutheran Church hostel in uKwangali district. Looking at the total number of the youth who left the district, it can be argued that PLAN cadres established a good relationship with the civilians in uKwangali and this enabled the PLAN cadres to recruit the youth into exile to join the armed struggle.

³⁰⁵Interview with Elina Hausiku, Rundu, Sauyemwa settlement, 24 January 2008.

Conclusion

Chapter Four critically highlighted the unconventional military tactics, pseudo military programm and the micro-politics of the relationship which existed between the civilians of uKwangali and the South African regime. The propaganda used by the South African forces and its intelligence service was instrumental in influencing the perception of civilians. The anti-patriotic ideas conducted through lecturers under the South African pseudo-cultural political organization transformed the perception of school-going children towards the South African regime. The pseudo-cultural organizations used by the South African regime motivated many of the youths and school dropouts to join the South African army.

In addition even the majority of those who joined the South African forces (SADF and Koevoet) were graduates from the Ezuva pseudo cultural programs. Thus it can be argued that all the unconventional strategies used by the South African forces were an attempt meant to win the hearts and minds of the civilians and help transform the perception of the youth in particular. In addition the use of unconventional and conventional methods by the South African regime demonstrated that the district constituted a severe threat to the South African forces. Thus the pseudo-cultural political organizations like Ezuva used by the South African regime was aimed to achieve their political and military objective.

The Kavango Legislative Council created a vacuum where traditional leaders in Kavango were unable to unite and act collectively. Chiefs and headmen under the Kavango Legislative Council were caught up in a patron-client relationship. The accounts

by the three chiefs presented over the radio during the 1989 political turmoil shows that though the Kavango Legislative Council was a colonial tool which the regime used to create differences among the chiefs, its strategy as it was envisaged failed. The proverb uttered by the chief of uKwangali district shows that unity did not exist between the five ethnic leaders. Thus the structure's purpose was to prevent them (chiefs) from reacting collectively against the interim regime. Though the South African regime used different strategies to mislead people, the sentiments of the local people of Kavango towards South African forces were mostly characterized by fear, helplessness and resentment.

The infiltration of PLAN cadres in uKwangali for the first time in 1978 created fear and insecurity. For SWAPO to gain support, PLAN cadres relied on political education politicizing the civilians about the politics of liberation and to fight for their rights. The political education conducted by PLAN cadres helped motivate some civilians in Kavango and in uKwangali in particular to provide enormous support and develop a sense of loyalty to SWAPO with its military wing PLAN. The mode of political education used by the PLAN cadres destroyed the spheres of South African influence in uKwangali and made it in some senses a liberated zone. The logistical and other support provided by the inhabitants of uKwangali assisted PLAN to sustain their struggle and contain the South African military forces.

The accounts by the former PLAN combatant, a Koevoet member and civilians, which are echoing the same sentiments, bear testimony to the positive image that the inhabitants of uKwangali had towards the PLAN cadres. Thus it can be concluded that if the civilians of Kavango in general and in uKwangali in particular were conniving with the South African military regime to render support, the armed struggle could have not

lasted for a long period in Kavango. This would have given the South African forces a greater opportunity to take full military control. The presence of the two military forces made the district one of the war zones, but with its own characteristics. Despite all the military and political developments outlined above, the district has been largely excluded in the main nationalist narratives of Namibia's historiography.



CHAPTER FIVE

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND NAMIBIA'S FIRST DEMOCRATIC ELECTION (1989)

Introduction

Chapter Five looks at the transition period and the United Nations supervised election of 1989. The activities of SWAPO as a political party in Kavango and in uKwangali district will be analyzed. The chapter sheds light on the political activities between SWAPO, DTA and other political parties prior to the 1989 elections. A section dealing with photographs and posters as sources of mobilization and campaign material by the political parties form part of Chapter Five. The role of the student militant group NANSO which was the backbone of SWAPO's campaign during the 1989 election will be assessed in this chapter. The chapter provides an insight into the election process of 1989 and the political parties which participated in the election. The election results obtained by each political party in Kavango will be analyzed to highlight the nature of the support of the people of Kavango for the different approaches to Namibia Independence.

The transition period and the United Nations supervised election of 1989

In February 1984 a cease-fire was agreed in Lusaka, Zambia and a joint commission was established to monitor the withdrawal of South African forces from Angola.³⁰⁶ In return, the Angolan government promised not to permit SWAPO or Cuban forces to move into the vacated areas although SWAPO indicated that it would continue its armed struggle.³⁰⁷ The cease-fire agreement of 1984 marked the beginning of the transition period which led to Namibia's first democratic election.

Though the cease-fire agreement was signed, South Africa continued to explore the option of independence without South West African People Organisation (SWAPO). In June 1985 a Transitional Government of National Unity excluding (SWAPO) was set up in the capital city Windhoek, although the United Nations (UN) refused to recognise it. In 1986 the South African troops violated the ceasefire agreement and penetrated deep into Angola to counter attack the SWAPO fighters.³⁰⁸ This means that though the cease-fire deal was agreed upon the South African regime did not support the idea and still wanted to occupy the territory for its economic and security benefits.

The intensive diplomatic and political campaign by SWAPO of 1987 convinced the United Nations (UN) Security Council to initiate negotiations between SWAPO and

³⁰⁶ D. Lebeau and E. Dima, *Multiparty Democracy and Election in Namibia* (Johannesburg: EISA, 2005), p.2.

³⁰⁷ <http://www.iss.co.za/Af/profile/Namibia/politics.html>, accessed on 24.03.2008.

³⁰⁸ <http://www.iss.co.za/Af/profile/Namibia/politics.html>, accessed on 24.03.2008.

South Africa to end South African illegal occupation of Namibia.³⁰⁹ On 29 September 1988, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 435 which established the United Nation Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) to supervise a cease-fire and monitor the decolonisation of Namibia.³¹⁰ The resolution provided a phase of decolonization based on a ceasefire, the demobilization of SWAPO and the South African armed forces, and a free and fair election.

The implementation of Resolution 435 was meant to provide a grace period for the withdrawal of the South African troops from Namibia by 1 April 1989 before the general election. In addition the resolution was to ensure that PLAN combatants report to their respective assembly points and for the repatriation of refugees into Namibia be completed. The Resolution also made provision to deploy 7 500 UNTAG troops into the country but 'this was reduced to 4 650'.³¹¹ The deployment of the UNTAG troops was then in line with the UN Security Council's task of facilitating the peace process in Namibia. This saw the arrival of UNTAG in the country as from February 1989.

On 1 April 1989 large numbers of PLAN fighters unexpectedly swept across the northern border from their bases in Angola.³¹² The reaction of the PLAN fighters prompted the United Nation (UN) Special Representative, Martti Ahtisaari to authorize the South African forces to hunt them down and at least 300 PLAN fighters were killed in the operation plus dozens of the South African Defence Force (SADF) and Koevoet.

³⁰⁹D. Lebeau and E. Dima, *Multiparty Democracy and Election in Namibia* (Johannesburg: EISA, 2005), p.2.

³¹⁰D. Lebeau and E. Dima, *Multiparty Democracy and Election in Namibia* (Johannesburg: EISA, 2005), p.2.

³¹¹<http://www.iss.co.za/Af/profile/Namibia/politics.html>, accessed on 24.03.2008.

³¹²<http://www.iss.co.za/Af/profile/Namibia/politics.html>, accessed on 24.03.2008.

After this, however, the situation was brought under control and the transition process went relatively smoothly. The elections were held peacefully in November.

While many predicted a SWAPO landslide victory, it gained only 57% of the votes, in part because of voting along ethnic lines, and in part also because it may have been weakened by revelations of human rights abuses in the camps SWAPO controlled in Angola.³¹³ With the withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia, SWAPO bases in Angola were dismantled and the elected constituent assembly duly drew up a constitution for a multi-party democracy, with an executive president who could serve only two five-year terms. In November 1989 SWAPO won the majority of the seats to the assembly and was charged with writing of a constitution for an independent Namibia.³¹⁴ SWAPO's main opponent in the constituent assembly was the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA). In February 1990 the constituent assembly, under the presidency of Sam Nuyoma, unanimously adopted a draft constitution.

In uKwangali, Nkure-nkuru area was one of the UNTAG regional major monitoring bases which was responsible for monitoring the transition period in the district up to the general election of 1989. The establishment of the UNTAG centre at Nkure-nkuru was necessitated by the degree of political instability which prevailed in the district mainly between SWAPO and DTA supporters. During the transition period, Namibia was characterized by a number of political activities ranging from meetings, rallies, campaigns and voters' education. The political activities prior to the 1989 general election will be presented later in the chapter.

³¹³ <http://www.iss.co.za/Af/profile/Namibia/politics.html>, accessed on 24.03.2008.

³¹⁴ <http://www.iss.co.za/Af/profile/Namibia/politics.html>, accessed on 24.03.2008.

SWAPO party in Kavango and uKwangali during the 1989 election

‘The challenge for SWAPO in 1989 was to build up a viable machine in a very short period and also to weld together its very disparate memberships with their radical experiences and styles of work and with little knowledge of each other’.³¹⁵ It should be understood that during this period SWAPO as a political party embarked on strategies to integrate the two separate sections of its party. One section represented those returning from exile and the other those emerging from the internal repression.³¹⁶ The quote by Cliffe and his co-authors suggest that the strategy implemented by SWAPO as a party to unite its membership was based on the impact of the South African propaganda which divided people in all the declared war zone areas in Namibia on an ethnic basis.

In order to gain the majority of the inhabitants in Kavango, SWAPO party made use of its manifesto with its blueprint based on three principles, that of solidarity, freedom and justice.³¹⁷ Using the rationale behind its manifesto, SWAPO party was able to mobilise and conduct its political campaign based on the said principles within a short period of time. In Kavango SWAPO organization had begun growing stronger in the mid-1980s and the school boycotts of 1988 heightened the political awareness which was initiated by teachers and the Namibian National Students Organization (NANSO).³¹⁸ In this context, the popularity of SWAPO spread widely in Namibia during the transition period up to the 1989 general election.

³¹⁵L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.146.

³¹⁶L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.146.

³¹⁷ O. M. Hinz, “SWAPO election manifesto” in *Journal fur Entwicklungspolitik* 4, 1989, p.1-3.

³¹⁸ Ibid, p.259.

As noted by Cliffe, the arrival of 500 returnees at Kafuma on the 3 August 1989 in the western part of Kavango at Nkuru-nkuru strengthened the image and support of SWAPO in uKwangali district.³¹⁹ (See figure 5.5.1 below). It was against this background that SWAPO cadres and returnees were thus able to build upon the existing internal political structure during their campaign notably in the western side of Kavango.³²⁰ Cliffe thus argues that SWAPO support was thought to be stronger in the Kwangali area of the western Kavango around Nkure-nkuru known as the 'red area.'³²¹ This was the centre of sphere of SWAPO activities in uKwangali district.



Figure 5.5.1

The image above is a gathering of people at a welcoming celebration of 500 returnees at Kafuma near the SWAPO office at Nkure-nkuru in the western Kavango (Sources: ©hmmilk "Kavango during the Namibian war of liberation," <http://kavango.info/Voito.htm>, accessed on 2008/02/24).

³¹⁹ © hmmilk "Kavango during the Namibian war of liberation," <http://kavango.info/Voito.htm>, accessed on 2008/02/24.

³²⁰ Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.146.

³²¹ *Ibid*, p.259.

Figure 5.5.1 shows a crowd of approximately 2000-3000 people which was addressed by Severinus Siteketa 'standing on the pick-up' during the welcoming celebration for returnees at Kafuma, in western Kavango which strengthened the influence of SWAPO party in uKwangali.³²² In front of the car seated were the late Jaakko Kangayi, Heiki Ausiku, the chief 'Hompa' Daniel Sitentu Mpasi and the late Alex Muranda.

Looking at the crowd in figure 5.5.1 above, the mass of the people at the occasion portray the popularity of SWAPO in uKwangali. These suggest that uKwangali was one of SWAPO strongholds in the Kavango region. The backdrop of the pictures indicates that the people of uKwangali were jubilant during the occasion. Cliffe argued that the chief of uKwangali supported SWAPO. Hence he noted that this was the district in which PLAN guerrillas were active in coming into Kavango from the Ovambo region and engaged in political education as well as in guerrilla activities.³²³ Following Cliffe's argument it can be added that the majority of the inhabitants of uKwangali under Chief Sitentu Mpasi supported SWAPO during the armed liberation struggle for Namibian independence. Thus the legacy of the armed struggle in uKwangali created a strong influence of SWAPO in the district

During the 1989 campaign, political parties produced posters, placards, T-shirts, flags and banners in their respective party colours that were worn and flown on houses, rooftops, trees and cuca shops.³²⁴ The production of these political materials was used by political parties for mobilization purposes. It can be argue that posters and placards were

³²² © hnmilk "Kavango during the Namibian war of liberation," <http://kavango.info/Voito.htm>, accessed on 2008/02/24.

³²³ Ibid, p.259.

³²⁴ L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.159.

used to popularize the party among the masses. T-shirts worn by individuals were a sign of declaring one's political identity. In Kavango, the use of posters by political parties was a psychological approach in the sense that it was a way to appeal and influence the minds of the masses so as to direct the political support to their parties.³²⁵ Posters and placards were used by DTA and SWAPO as a useful tool in promoting their party candidates during election. It helps to display images of the political party candidates during the election because visual images were more powerful than words which can be forgotten.³²⁶

Though SWAPO struggled more in the production and distribution of posters and placards as compared to the DTA, SWAPO enjoyed an enormous majority of support compared with the DTA in Kavango. It is arguable that its support among the youths and teachers during the 1980s seemed to have been reinforced partially by the patronage politics enforced by DTA party. Some supporters had special outfits in party colours which were worn at rallies and political occasions. These ranged from umbrellas, scarves, caps, decorated beads, etc. Yet visible signs of party allegiance led to unpleasant incidents such as beatings especially by Koevoet members.³²⁷

The work by Cliffe indicates that in Kavango for example a SWAPO supporter was detained for six days for burning a DTA flag to replace it with a SWAPO flag

³²⁵ K. M. Likuwa and B.N. Dinyando, 'Poster, T-shirts and placards: Images and popular mobilization in Rundu during the liberation struggle' paper presented at the workshop on poster in action (Windhoek, 16 November-17 November 2007), p.4.

³²⁶ K. M. Likuwa and B.N. Dinyando, 'Poster, T-shirts and placards: Images and popular mobilization in Rundu during the liberation struggle' paper presented at the workshop on poster in action (Windhoek, 16 November-17 November 2007), p.3.

³²⁷ L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.159.

outside his house in October 1989.³²⁸ Tension was very high between the two political contenders DTA and SWAPO. This resulted that in cases were even refusing to respond to a party salute of the DTA supporters, could lead to trouble.

As a political organization SWAPO was able to conduct its political rallies and meetings to inform its supporters using its political manifesto. During this period the regional branch of SWAPO in Rundu organized rallies throughout the region. Every rally of SWAPO was accompanied by its music band known as “Ndilimani” performing liberation song lyrics. The most common song sang was “Sema Ou li peni” with its chorus “Otse aakwiita Ya Sema Nujoma kondjeni inamu sholola sigo twa sindana.”³²⁹ This was the most common song performed by the Ndilimani cultural troupe. This music band added powerful vibes to all SWAPO rallies and drew masses of people to attend and listen to the speech given by SWAPO leaders who most people used to hear over the radio. The rallies of SWAPO were different from those of DTA which was accompanied by a free braai and drink, yet each rally of SWAPO was attended by a huge number of people.

The campaign of SWAPO during the late 1980’s enabled the party to gain considerable support in Kavango. In order to mobilise the masses, a section in the SWAPO election manifesto based on the draft Constitution of 1975, was highlighted. It makes provision for a bill of fundamental rights, the structure of state organs, citizenship requirements and the fundamental characteristics of the future Namibian state under the

³²⁸ L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.159.

³²⁹ Personal experience of attending SWAPO rallies during the 1989 political campaign in uKwangali at Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School.

principle of “justice and equality for all”.³³⁰ The use of this section in the draft constitution of 1975 enabled the party to gain support and recognition. The use of the constitution was meant to correct the South African propaganda against SWAPO and to redefine the image of SWAPO. This was necessary in the sense that it would remedy the anti-SWAPO propaganda spread by the South African regime among its supporters.

The 1989 general election was characterized by political rallies and campaigns. UKwangali district which was one of SWAPO’s strong holds in Kavango had fully-fledged political rallies and campaigns with the opposition DTA. Apart from the interim political alliance the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, other political organizations which competed in the 1989 general election were the United Democratic Front (UDF), SWAPO–Democrats (SWAPO-D), Federal Convention of Namibia (FCN), National Patriotic Front (NPF), Namibia National Front (NNF), Christian Democratic Action (CDA) and Namibian National Democratic Party (NNDP) which competed against the South West African People Organisation (SWAPO).³³¹

The increased number of political organizations created tension among the inhabitants of uKwangali. Physical fighting between SWAPO supporters and its main opposition DTA was a common thing whenever these people came together. Violence and intimidation were prominent during campaigns in Kavango as in Owambo.³³² It is arguable that the types of physical and verbal abuses, violence, assaults, beatings and insecurity inflicted by the Koevoet on civilians during the 1980s might have been the

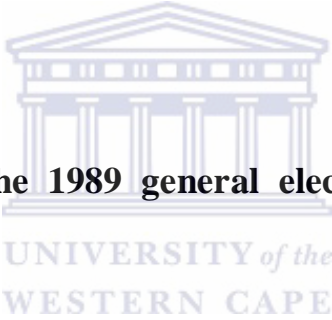
³³⁰K. Dierks, *Chronology of Namibian History: from the pre-historical times to independence Namibia* (Windhoek: Namibia Scientific Society, 1988), p. 88.

³³¹ L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.156.

³³² L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.259.

main reason which created the hatred between the two major political opponents SWAPO and DTA.

The political transformation of the late 1980 created a situation in which learners used to add to daily political unrest in the region. Especially in 1988, daily closure of schools was the order of the day and almost every week learners deserted schools and classes. During the late 1980s while I was in grade 8 at Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School, the struggle was extremely tense. It should be understood that during this period people started wearing their T-shirts publicly and this accorded the Koevoet thugs the opportunity to use their defensive strategy to assault the student militant group NANSO.



Political activities and the 1989 general election in Kavango and in uKwangali

In the history of Namibia, the 1980s marks the peak of national resistance and the final stage towards independence. The same period 1984 witnessed the launching of the students militant organization, the Namibian National Student Organization (NANSO).³³³

It should be understood that all the political activities which emerge during the 1980s were part of the broader struggle for national independence.

In the case of SWAPO, local activists distributed posters and other SWAPO materials to its supporters during meetings which were considered an illegal act

³³³ M. Kudumo, 'The role of teachers in the political activities of students in Kavango in the late 1980's' (paper presented at a conference colonial resistance and liberation struggle in Kavango, Rundu College of Education, 23 July 2005), p.3.

according to the colonial authority.³³⁴ Thus organizing political activities of SWAPO in Kavango during the 1980s was not an easy task. This was simply because the area was heavily militarized by the South African forces. Thus under such restrictive circumstances SWAPO images were hardly displayed in the public arena. A little bit of freedom by SWAPO party and its supporters in Rundu was only seen beginning 1987 to 1989 during the political campaign leading to the independence of Namibia on the 21 of March 1990.³³⁵ It should be understood that during the earlier 1980s, almost every secondary school in the Kavango region had teachers who were soldiers working within the state security apparatus.³³⁶ The presence of the soldiers in secondary schools made it possible for students and teacher activists in SWAPO to be easily apprehended.

Against this background, the social and political atmosphere of the 1989 general election was characterized by tension and hostilities as from April 1989 up to the Independence Day 21 March 1990. The political campaigns and activities of SWAPO and DTA which were the two main political contenders were characterized with violence and intimidation.³³⁷ The climate of violence certainly haunted the election process. Assaults, throwing of hand grenades, beatings and even assassination fueled the political campaign of 1989.³³⁸ Detailed examples of the events of the 1989 will be presented below in this chapter. It is therefore important to explore how far this violence was a

³³⁴ K. M. Likuwa and B.N. Dinyando, 'Poster, T-shirts and placards: Images and popular mobilization in Rundu during the liberation struggle' paper presented at the workshop on poster in action (Windhoek: 16 November-17 November 2007), p.8.

³³⁵ K. M. Likuwa and B.N. Dinyando, 'Poster, T-shirts and placards: Images and popular mobilization in Rundu during the liberation struggle' paper presented at the workshop on poster in action (Windhoek, 16 November-17 November 2007), p.8.

³³⁶ M. Kudumo, "The role of teachers in the political activities of students in Kavango in the late 1980's" (paper presented at a conference on colonial resistance and liberation struggle in Kavango, Rundu College of Education, 23 July 2005), p.3.

³³⁷ L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.94.

³³⁸ L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.95.

matter of excess in the political campaign by supporters of different political parties,³³⁹ which can be attributed to the long years of the previous tension and mistrust.

As indicated in Chapter Four, structural intimidation was one strategy the South African security forces used to patronize the political relationship which existed between the regime and the traditional chiefs.³⁴⁰ Structural intimidation imbedded in the social and the ethnic political structure set up by the South African administration, had fostered its political relationship which existed with certain chiefs in the Kavango region.³⁴¹ Thus people who got jobs from a particular ethnic administration were caught up in a patron-client relationship indebted to officials, chiefs and headman in various ways who might not wish to vote in any way that would jeopardized their situation.³⁴² In this context certain members who were employed in the South African forces, police, the chiefs, and headman and former members of the Kavango Legislative Council voted for the DTA to secure their employment.

As indicated by Cliffe earlier in the chapter, the challenge experienced by SWAPO in 1989 was that of welding its membership together, this was to the contrary with the DTA which was in a better position and had experience in contesting elections.³⁴³ DTA had very considerable resources in terms of funds, vehicles and supplies. Almost all its meetings, activities and offices were characterized by free food, elaborate publicity material and music.³⁴⁴ Its personnel, finance, equipments and

³³⁹ L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.95.

³⁴⁰ Ibid, p.95.

³⁴¹ Ibid, p.95.

³⁴² Ibid, p.95.

³⁴³ Ibid, p.147.

³⁴⁴ Ibid, p.147.

transport were supplemented by the inputs obtained from South Africa and its security forces.

DTA carried out its activities openly with full protection of its activities by the colonial authorities but this was not the case with SWAPO.³⁴⁵ In this way the system allowed the DTA party to continuously encourage voters to vote for the DTA party during the election of 1989. The work by Cliffe indicates that in Kavango, one of their team noted two jeeps with young white occupants providing support to the local DTA cadres.³⁴⁶ His work also indicates that there was almost open conflicts in Kavango for instance between the thug elements that had increasingly built up the constituent ethnic parties which were dependent more on patronage and on status.³⁴⁷

Being a learner at Kandjimi Murangi secondary school in 1988, I can contend that learners under their militant organization NANSO were used as the main tool to mobilise the masses and carry out the gospel of SWAPO towards their parents and members of the communities. It should be understood that SWAPO also used certain strategies to influence school-going children promising them free education, and free hospital medical treatments which is not the case in the post independence Namibia.³⁴⁸ These promises by SWAPO motivated school-going children to influence their parents to vote for the party.

Growing up and attending my school in uKwangali, daily political meetings and rallies were the main activities of the day by all the political parties which participated in

³⁴⁵ K. M. Likuwa and B.N. Dinyando, 'Poster, T-shirts and placards: Images and popular mobilization in Rundu during the liberation struggle' paper presented at the workshop on poster in action (Windhoek: 16 November-17 November 2007), p.8.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, p.147.

³⁴⁷ Ibid, p.148.

³⁴⁸ Personal experience of the political activities and campaign prior to the 1989 general election.

the 1989 general election. During this period under discussion, intimidation and different forms of violence by the Koevoet were thus the order of the day.³⁴⁹ Physical fighting between the NANSO members and South African soldiers were common activities in the region especially in secondary schools which were NANSO's powerhouses.

The most effective protest staged by NANSO in the region was the one organized at Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School whose impact ended up at Rundu technical college.³⁵⁰ In this context NANSO was used by SWAPO to stage protests, boycotts and marches. Moreover NANSO branches were established throughout the secondary schools in the region. The student's organization was instrumental in destabilizing the effect of the Transitional Government of National Unity through staging peaceful demonstrations and organizing stay-aways from schools due to the presence of the Koevoet forces who raided and harassed learners in the school premises. In order to counter attack the South African security forces NANSO the student organ was then instrumental in organizing protest and boycotts in schools across the region.

As mentioned above, the political activities of 1989 in uKwangali district were characterized by violence and fighting. During this period, it was not safe for school-going children to move freely outside the school premises.³⁵¹ This was similar even if the South African forces came in to the school premises. The result was that every student found wearing a NANSO T-shirt, even refusing to salute an opposition sign, was beaten or chased with a Casspir.

³⁴⁹ Personal experience of the political activities and campaign prior to the 1989 general election.

³⁵⁰ M. Kudumo, 'The role of teachers in the political activities of students in Kavango in the late 1980's' (paper presented on colonial resistance and liberation struggle in Kavango, Rundu, 23 July 2005), p.3.

³⁵¹ Personal experience of the political activities and campaign prior to the 1989 general election.

In 1989, a former member of the South African Defence Forces (SADF) Reginald Ndara offered a lift to one female teacher Elizabeth Shako Ngondo who was teaching at Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School. Considering the political atmosphere of the late 1980s, learners were always on the lookout for unknown visitors. During this year I was in standard six the current grade 8.³⁵² What created tension and fear among the learners at the school was the prior notification information which reached the school that the South African forces were planning to bomb the school. Thus while the learners were still living in expectation of the event according to this, it was the same time Reginald Ndara, a former SADF member, came to the school.

When students learned that a SADF member was on the school premises, this prompted all the learners to circle the teacher's house under the pretext that maybe he was one of those whom the learners believed were coming to bomb the school. This incident took place around 8h00 o'clock in the evening. It should be understood that within the structure of NANSO the student organization which was launched in 1984 it had a unit called the "Namibian Police". The Namibian police under NANSO was tasked to maintain law and order and was instrumental in updating learners with the daily developments and information from other branches across others secondary schools in the region.³⁵³ At the teacher's house, the "Namibian Police" under the auspices of NANSO impounded the house where the Namibian police insisted to find out about the visits of the SADF member. The sudden meeting between the female teacher, and the

³⁵² Personal experience during the political activities and campaign prior to the 1989 general election.

³⁵³ Personal experience based on the incidents which took place at Kandjimi Murangi secondary school, 1989.

“Namibian police”,³⁵⁴ almost resulted in chaos where learners who were impatient wanted to attack the man’s vehicle which was parked in front of the house with stones and clubs. When the SADF member left the teacher’s house, he opened the boot of his car. Out of fear, all the learners who surrounded his car dispersed, thinking that he was taking a gun. Many learners sustained injuries when they dispersed for safety.³⁵⁵ This accorded him the opportunity to leave the scene and he drove out of the school premises.

Teaching at school was disrupted on a daily basis whenever a boycott was staged by learners. In this context, learners were used as the tools to disorganize the interim government administration. This situation meant that some learners even quit school due to the insecure situations which prevailed in schools especially in the late 1980s.

One should not forget that by this time the South African police were in charge of maintaining law and order in the region. This situation created anxiety in school-going pupils who might desert school whenever they heard that the South African forces were planning to visit such a school. In 1988 I can recall three times where we deserted the school when we heard that Koevoet was planning to bomb the school. The reaction of the Koevoet and the police I believe was part of the South African regime’s strategies to intimidate learners for supporting SWAPO. This was unlike the general reason used by the South African forces that learners were involved in political activities which had nothing to do with their education.

³⁵⁴ This was a committee selected among the students community which serve as vigilante for learners for any possible threats from the South African security forces especially the Koevoet.

³⁵⁵ Personal experience based on the incidents which took place at Kandjimi Murangi secondary school, 1989.

The rationale behind the 1989 political campaign was that of winning the support of people at all cost. As indicated above, the main competition in uKwangali was between SWAPO and DTA. In uKwangali district, the main competition between the two rivals was supplemented by the number of individuals who served in the SADF and Koevoet alike. Thus though other political parties conducted their campaign in the Kavango region, the main competition was between SWAPO and DTA. This can be seen by the pictures elsewhere in this chapter.

The demobilization of the South African forces was not the end of the atrocities, assaults and brutalities by the South African security forces. During this period the South African security forces still had the power to arrest and detain SWAPO activists. Those caught accused of destabilizing peace were subject to assault and interrogation by the SA forces. In 1988 a former SWATF known by the local name Sibungo Matheus went by a secondary school in Rundu called Dr. Romanus Kampungu Secondary School to visit his girlfriend. When learners heard that he was around the school, Sibungo was beaten by SWAPO supporters just because of being a former SADF soldier.³⁵⁶ Being severely beaten, Sibungo reported the incident to the sector 20 military base which is 5km along the tarred road to Grootfontein.

In retaliation, the next morning Sibungo was dropped by the Military Police (MP) vehicle armed at around six o'clock. While learners were busy having their breakfast, Sibungo out of anger started firing towards the hostel and out of fear learners started to run out of their dormitories afraid of being shot at.

³⁵⁶ Interview with Flory Karangane, former member of the South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF), Force No. 87879900, Otjomuise, Windhoek, 25 January 2008.

When learners started running out of the hostel, this granted Sibungo the opportunity to do some damage where some school-going children were hurt by the bullets.³⁵⁷ After the shooting spree, Sibungo was picked up by the Military Police car which dropped him before and he was taken to the Sector 20 military base. No charges were laid against Sibungo.³⁵⁸ Thus the SADF enjoyed continued impunity regarding their treatment of SWAPO supporters during the late eighties.

In 1989, there were over 40 active political parties in Namibia. While many of the parties were tribal or ethnic based, having been sponsored by South Africa in an attempt to create internal settlement, to sideline SWAPO, others were set up specifically to participate in the election.³⁵⁹ However the registration requirements of the 1989 election reduced the number of the political parties to six alliance and four parties. And out of the 40 parties, only seven made it to the constitutional assembly.³⁶⁰ These were the Aksie Christelik Nasionaal (ACN), Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), Federal Convention of Namibia (FCN), Namibia National Front (NNF), National Patriotic Front (NPF), South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and United Democratic Front (UDF).³⁶¹

The campaign of the 1989 general election was characterized by political tension and fighting between supporters of different political parties.³⁶² Thus in order to gain

³⁵⁷ Interview with Flory Karangane, former member of the South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF), Force No. 87879900, Otjomuise, Windhoek, 25 January 2008.

³⁵⁸ Interview with Flory Karangane, former member of the South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF), Force No. 87879900, Otjomuise, Windhoek, 25 January 2008.

³⁵⁹ D. Lebeau and E. Dima, *Multiparty Democracy and Election in Namibia* (Johannesburg: EISA, 2005), p.6.

³⁶⁰ D. Lebeau and E. Dima, *Multiparty Democracy and Election in Namibia* (Johannesburg: EISA, 2005), p.6.

³⁶¹ Ibid, p.6.

³⁶² Personal experience on the political campaign of the 1989 general election which took place in Kavango region.

support political movements embarked upon a massive political campaign country wide to mobilize people and to encourage them to vote for their respective political parties. Apart from DTA and SWAPO, other political parties which participated in the 1989 general election were UDF, SWAPO-D, FCN, NPF, NNF, CDA and NNDP.³⁶³

Though other parties participated in the election, the main rivalry was between DTA and SWAPO who were the main contenders during the election which was scheduled for 7-11 November 1989. During the 1989 political campaign, different political parties which participated in the election operated throughout the Kavango area conducting their political campaign and mobilizing people to vote for their parties. The pictures underneath portray the state of the political campaign and rallies in Rundu which was the regional centre of all the political parties.



Figure 5.5.2

The picture above is the march of the SWAPO youth organization NANSO, celebrating the 1989 independence victory of SWAPO at Rundu, 1989 (Source: Courtesy of Faustinus Wakudumo, one of the activists of the SWAPO youth league in Kavango during the 1989 political campaign).

³⁶³D. Lebeau and E. Dima, *Multiparty Democracy and Election in Namibia* (Johannesburg: EISA, 2005), p.6.



Figure 5.5.3

The picture above shows one of the marches conducted by the student youth group under the leadership of NANSO during the 1989 transition period. (Source: Courtesy of Faustinus Wakudumo).

With a close look at the above pictures, the role of NANSO the student's organization during the 1989 political activities can be witnessed. Thus the student's organization was very instrumental in mobilizing the masses in the region during the 1989 campaign. A look at the picture gives one a sense of political will among the NANSO supporters in the Kavango. If one looks closely at the Figure 5.5.2, students can be seen holding a big flag of SWAPO party, with its main colour which is red, blue and green. The other students hold a white banner with the portrait of the former head of state Dr. Sam Nuyoma. A placard written "viva comrade president" written with red pen can be seen. In the picture students are seen wearing T-shirts, scarves, and caps in SWAPO colours.

For SWAPO the use of English on the posters and placards was a strategic ideology. The party makes use of English by convincing its supporters especially

NANSO that English was the language recognised globally and not Afrikaans, which is accurate. This enabled the party to gain support as well.



Figure 5.5.4

Figure 5.5.4 shows one of the biggest DTA street marsh rallies which took places in Rundu in Kavango on the 27 May 1989. (Source: Poster collected during field research work in Rundu).

Apart from SWAPO, DTA was one of the political parties which had huge support in Kavango. This can be seen in the images above. The use of Afrikaans on posters by the DTA I believe was meant to communicate its messages to its audience especially the Afrikaans speaking communities who live in the south of Namibia in places like Rehoboth, Mariental, and Keetmanshoop and at the coastal area. It should be

noted that Afrikaans was the medium of communication during this period. As noted by Cliffe DTA scored more votes in the south of the country.³⁶⁴

However Karangane Flory a DTA mobiliser who was designated with his team to operate in uKwangali during the 1989 general election campaign explains that it was a great challenge for political parties other than SWAPO to gain support in western part of Kavango. This perception started from school-going children to elderly people.

Karangane stated that though their party was well funded by the South African regime to hold well sponsored campaigns and rallies it was not easy for them to gain huge support in uKwangali district. He asserts that though DTA party gained support in uKwangali, this can not be compared with the support DTA gained in Rundu (see figure 5.5.4 above) and in the eastern part of Kavango. Karangane noted that during their campaign it was difficult for them (the DTA) to convene a rally which was attended by more than 100-200 people. Thus he asserts that DTA rallies in uKwangali were mostly attended by those whose relatives were employed in SADF and Koevoet alike.³⁶⁵ The former SADF member explains that the political campaign of 1989 was very challenging and tough. He emphasized that it was not that easy to convince the inhabitants of the uKwangali district to support DTA.

Karangane claims that for his team which was designated to campaign in uKwangali district one can tell that the majority of the people were SWAPO

³⁶⁴ L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.194.

³⁶⁵ Interview with Flory Karangane, former member of the South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF) Force No. 87879900, Otjomuise, Windhoek, 25 January 2008.

supporters.³⁶⁶ This sense of support might have been instigated by the hatred developed by civilians during the late 1980s due to assaults and harassments inflicted by the South African military forces on civilians. He stated that especially in the vicinity of Mpungu it was very difficult for the DTA to convene meetings to be attended by more than fifty people and this made it impossible to conduct their political campaign in these areas.³⁶⁷ The trend developed by the inhabitants of uKwangali district for not attending DTA rallies in big masses, meant that the DTA changed their strategy of campaign.

Thus he 'Karangane' state that whenever they were having a rally, people were brought from Rundu to attend the rally especially if the rally was in uKwangali district.

This strategy was part of its broader campaign to deceive people and the international community that DTA was really representing the masses of the Namibian people.³⁶⁸ This was not the case in reality Karangane concluded. The former mobiliser reiterated that in the eastern part of the Kavango it was easy for the DTA to campaign and hold mass meetings. In this context the eastern part of the region was the main area where DTA had its mass. Thus Karangane argued that his claim can be verified by looking at the statistics of the 1989 general election in Kavango region.

Haindongo Risto who lives at Mukekete in Mpungu district explains that the people of uKwangali supported SWAPO. Thus he related that the people supported SWAPO simply because of the assaults and beatings they experienced from the South

³⁶⁶ Interview with Flory Karangane, former member of the South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF) Force No. 87879900, Otjomuise Windhoek, 25 January 2008.

³⁶⁷ Interview with Flory Karangane, former member of the South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF) Force No. 87879900, Windhoek, Otjomuise, 25 January 2008.

³⁶⁸ Interview with Flory Karangane, former member of the South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF) Force No. 87879900, Windhoek, Otjomuise, 25 January 2008.

African security force especially Koevoet.³⁶⁹ Haindongo also noted that the presence of PLAN cadres in uKwangali who used to give political education to the civilians might be one reason which enlightened the inhabitants of uKwangali to have a broader understanding of SWAPO as a political organization representing the interests of the Namibian people.

The account by a former SADF member and community member indicates that the people of uKwangali district supported SWAPO during the 1989 general election. Haindongo stated that during the first general election the majority of inhabitants of uKwangali area voted for SWAPO. He also claims that during the 1989 general election DTA scored more votes in the eastern part of the region as compared to the western part of the Kavango region.³⁷⁰

Haindongo argued that the people in the eastern part might have voted for the opposition party due to the fact that the presence of PLAN cadres was less intensive in the eastern part of Kavango as compared to those PLAN cadres who operated in uKwangali.³⁷¹ This meant that the majority of the inhabitants of the eastern part of the region did not receive adequate political education as compared to the residents of uKwangali. He also strongly emphasized that there were very few DTA collaborators in the uKwangali district. This means that uKwangali district contributed immensely during the 1989 general election. In this context the claim by Haindongo might be correct, but what should be understood is that in every district in Kavango, there were certain individuals who served in the South African forces SADF and Koevoet. Thus regarding

³⁶⁹ Interview with Haindongo Risto, Mukekete, uKwangali district, 26 June 2007.

³⁷⁰ Interview with Haindongo Risto, Mukekete, uKwangali district, 26 June 2007.

³⁷¹ Interview with Haindongo Risto, Mukekete, uKwangali district, 26 June 2007.

the question of supporting political parties, one can argue that it was based on each individual's perceptions and understanding. Thus to claim that the whole uKwangali supported SWAPO does not reflect the states of the election of 1989.

The 1989 General Election in Namibia

After a lengthy period of the armed liberation struggle, Namibia conducted its first general election under UN supervision from 7-11 November 1989. From 701 483 registered voters, a total of 670 830 valid votes were cast countrywide.³⁷² The 1989 general election was the first of its kind which gave Namibians an opportunity to exercise their democratic right by participating in a free and fair election supervised by UNTAG. During this year the inhabitants of Kavango witnessed the transition in which different political organizations were competing in a general election to take control of the country aiming for the common goal which is independence.

Prior to the 1989 general election, different political parties embarked on the process of voter education. Thus if the voters' education is not properly conducted it can have significant impact on the election integrity.³⁷³ The voters' education addressed the voters motivation and preparedness to take part in the electoral process, as voters need to know as which political parties were participating in the election in order for them to exercise their right to vote.³⁷⁴ The days, time, venues of the polling days needed to be communicate to voters in advance. The voters needed to know about the offices that were

³⁷², G.K.H. Totemeyer et al, *Elections in Namibia* (Windhoek: Gamsberg MacMillan Publisher, 1996), p.81.

³⁷³NSHR, *Namibia disputed elections 2004. Monitoring National and presidential election* (Windhoek: 15 December 2004), p.13

³⁷⁴NSHR, *Namibia disputed elections 2004. Monitoring National and presidential election* (Windhoek, 15 December 2004), p.14.

being contested and how to mark valid ballot papers as well as where to register and to vote.³⁷⁵ It was also important for the potential voters to be aware of the type of the documents they will have to bring and so forth to register to vote. This is why the dissemination of neutral, impartial, credible, balanced and objective voters' information was indispensable.

In total ten political organizations participated in the 1989 general election. Among the ten were the DTA, SWAPO, UDF, SWAPO-D, FCN, CAN, NPF, NNF, CDA and NNDP. In order to determine the input of the people of Kavango region the summary of the electoral district result statistics of 1989 will be used to portray the input of the region. (see table 1.A. below). Thus out of the 670 830 valid votes casted nation wide, the Kavango region performed as follows. Looking at the results, one can see that SWAPO won against other parties which contested against it in the Kavango electoral district.



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³⁷⁵ NSHR, *Namibia disputed elections 2004. Monitoring National and presidential election* (Windhoek, 15 December 2004), p.14.



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Table 1.A. Summary results by the Electoral district

Electoral district No.	Name of district	ACN	CDA	DTA	FCN	NNDP	NNF	NPF	SWAPO-D	SWAPO	UDF	Rejects	Total votes cast	Total valid votes
1	Bethanie	301	32	1314	55	4	8	15	16	461	87	44	2337	2293
2	Damaraland	175	28	2579	34	9	109	62	25	4204	7838	152	15215	15063
3	Gobabis	1940	158	11684	173	50	391	377	59	2458	442	379	18111	17732
4	Grootfontein	1606	115	8818	236	32	66	376	51	6417	1319	566	19602	19036
5	Hereroland	68	89	9880	193	33	705	1935	40	2353	100	209	15605	15396
6	Kaokoland	64	91	8180	120	70	48	2480	24	1330	71	316	12794	12478
7	Karasburg	4820	54	10068	367	30	40	152	39	2378	739	126	18813	18687
8	Karibib	406	24	1989	67	2	56	161	14	2244	1533	86	6582	6496
9	Kavango	527	449	24817	401	179	151	497	319	30755	1336	1995	61426	59431
10	Keetmanshoop	1458	100	9249	335	58	432	209	113	5496	1518	301	19269	18968
11	Luderitz	521	17	2138	89	14	218	67	26	7753	390	45	11278	11233
12	Maltahohe	388	15	668	161	13	8	14	9	848	383	71	2578	2507
13	Mariental	1467	85	7665	403	26	77	101	29	3024	1036	169	14082	13913
14	Okahandja	672	42	3295	56	9	81	334	23	3718	1142	30	10380	10350
15	Omaruru	213	40	2959	48	5	206	318	24	1281	589	89	5772	5683
16	Oos-caprivi	104	168	13786	436	44	44	687	93	10415	556	673	27006	26333
17	Otjiwarongo	699	49	5213	81	12	134	114	19	4020	1835	142	12318	12176
18	Outjo	765	37	3072	88	3	31	52	13	1197	1483	163	6904	6741
19	Owambo	465	489	10745	150	214	95	505	1706	225621	5167	3014	248171	245157
20	Rehoboth	127	66	7746	5010	84	304	243	48	3015	462	251	17356	17105
21	Swakopmund	1271	32	5931	395	5	241	145	64	14123	1736	140	24083	23943
22	Tsumeb	922	36	4028	96	11	46	72	57	7254	1202	148	13872	13724
23	Windhoek	4749	279	34730	1458	77	1853	1777	350	44202	6910	749	97134	96385
	Grand totals	23728	2495	191532	10452	984	5344	10693	3161	384567	37874	9858	680688	670830

Table.1.A Represents the electoral district of Kavango district highlight in bold in the table will differentiates between SWAPO and DAT. P. 64

In order to determine the contributions and input of the people of Kavango in general and in uKwangali district. The above table providing the summary of the electoral districts of 1989 will be used to examine the position of Kavango district. It should be understood that during the 1989 general election, Namibia was not divided into regions; instead the country was divided into 23 electoral districts. Kavango district was one of the twenty three electoral districts created during the 1989 election.

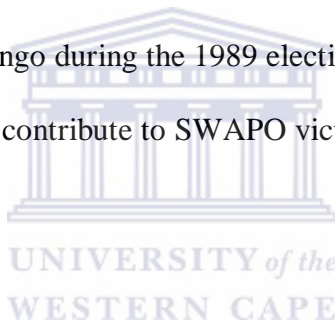
Looking at the 1989 general election statistic, it can be argued that the main competition in Kavango was between DTA and SWAPO based on the votes each party obtained. The total number of votes cast in Kavango district was 61 426. Out of the 61 426, a total of 30 755 valid voters voted for SWAPO while 24 817 voted DTA.³⁷⁶ Against the above statistic it can be seen that the people in the Kavango district responded positively towards SWAPO as compared to other parties. As noted above that during the 1989 election the country was not yet divided into regions and constituencies. This makes it impossible in my studies to distinguish the election results scored by SWAPO in uKwangali as compared to the rest of the areas in Kavango during the 1989 election. Thus the above table projects overall results of all the inhabitants of Kavango who fall under the Kavango district.

Munguya Gabriel claimed that the inhabitants of uKwangali strongly supported SWAPO as a party during the political campaign. Thus he asserts that even those who run the political campaign in uKwangali will agree with him that uKwangali area did not give them any problems or produced a situation where people refused to attend their organized

³⁷⁶G.K.H. Totemeyer et al, *Elections in Namibia* (Windhoek: Gamsberg MacMillan Publisher, 1996), p.208.

meeting and rallies.³⁷⁷ The claim by Munguya suggests that the inhabitants of uKwangali district supported SWAPO.

The claim by Munguya can be correct as indicated by Cliffe that ‘SWAPO support was thought to be strongest in Kwangali area of the western Kavango around Nkure-nkuru, known as the “red area”’.³⁷⁸ This was the main centre of SWAPO activities. Cliffe also argues that the chief of uKwangali supported SWAPO. Thus this was the area in which PLAN guerillas were actively coming into Kavango from Ovambo region, and engaged in political education as well as in guerilla activities. The arguments by Cliffe supplemented by the interviewees testimonies, indicates that the district was one of SWAPO’s strongholds in Kavango during the 1989 election. It is against this background I can argue that uKwangali did contribute to SWAPO victory immensely during the 1989 general election.



Conclusion

The cease-fire agreement of 1984 in Lusaka Zambia marked the beginning of the transition period which led to Namibia first democratic election. The adoption of Resolution 435 in 1988 was meant to establish UNTAG to supervise and monitor the decolonization of Namibia. In addition the Resolution was set to provide a grace period for the withdrawal of the South African troops from Namibia before the election, the assembling of PLAN combatants at their respective assembly points, the repatriation of

³⁷⁷ Interview with Gabriel Munguya, Nepara village, uKwangali district, 24 July 2007.

³⁷⁸ L. Cliffe et al, *The transition to independence in Namibia* (London: Lynne Reiner, 1994), p.295.

refugees and the deployment of the UNTAG troops in Namibia. 1989 marks the beginning of the transition period which culminated in Namibia's first democratic elections supervised by the United Nations Security Council through UNTAG. The 1989 election witnessed different political parties using their political manifestos as a blueprint to politicise the inhabitants of Kavango to vote for their parties.

Tension between SWAPO and DTA was very high during the 1989 political campaign. During the 1989 campaign, political parties produced posters, placards, T-shirts, flags, scarves, badges and banners in their different parties' colors which were worn by supporters. The political materials were used for mobilization and to promote the identity of the party and its candidates during the election process. Posters and placards were a psychological tool used in the sense that it was a way to appeal to and influence the minds of the masses so as to direct the political support to their parties.

For pensioners and the illiterate, the images on posters and placards, helped to communicate and display the party candidates to the voters. Visual images were more powerful as many people could easily identify the message more easily than as the written texts which were mostly in English. The visuality of the party colors enabled supporters to differentiate between different parties. In this context the posters and placard were meant to popularize the party among the voting masses through the display of the party colors, sign and slogans on posters and banners.

Political activities prior to the 1989 election mark the peak of national resistance and the final stage towards independence. In Kavango the political activities of SWAPO were heightened by the political awareness initiated by teachers and NANSO the student

organization. The student organization NANSO was used by SWAPO as its backbone to mobilise and spread the gospel of SWAPO to the masses. The political transformation of the late 1989 created a situation in which learners were used to disrupt the daily political unrest in the region. The political strategy used by SWAPO promising school-going children free education, free hospital medical treatment motivated the pupils and their parents to vote for SWAPO.

Unlike SWAPO, DTA carried out its activities openly with full protection and elaborate publicity. Thus the DTA party enjoyed continued impunity over SWAPO during the political campaign of the 1980s. Political violence and intimidation orchestrated by the DTA supporters resulted in daily physical fighting between SWAPO and DTA supporters in Kavango. The failure of the South African military propaganda aimed at winning the hearts and minds of civilians contributed to the DTA inability to gain overwhelming victory over SWAPO. The geographical proximity of UKwangali where the district shares a regional boundary with the former Ovamboland, the presence of the unprecedented number of PLAN cadres during the 1980s, and the return of 500 returnees at Kafuma on 3 August 1989 and the form of assaults and violence committed by Koevoet units led to increase votes for SWAPO party in uKwangali district.

The results that SWAPO party obtained in Kavango during the 1989 election testify that the district was one of the SWAPO strongholds in Namibia. Thus out of the total of 61 426 votes cast in Kavango, 30 755 voters voted for SWAPO while 24 817 voters voted for the DTA, while the remaining voters were shared by the remaining parties. It can be concluded that despite being exposed to different forms of violence, assaults and atrocities, the people of Kavango stood firm and had a tenacious support for

SWAPO as a political party. Against these political developments and the election result of 1989, it can be concluded that although the people of Kavango were caught in the middle, they had loyalty to SWAPO and were instrumental in politicizing the ideology of the party.

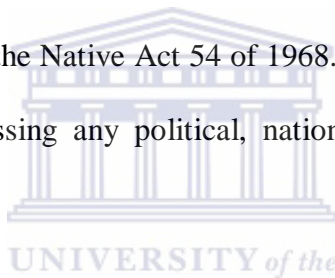
CONCLUSION

South West Africa (Namibia) was a mandated territory under South Africa from 1921, up to Namibia's first democratic election in November 1989. The Odendaal plan of 1962 was aimed at separate development on ethnic grounds. In respect to Kavango the Odendaal Plan created five separate ethnic units namely vaKwangali, Mbunza, Sambyu, Gciriku, and Hambukushu. Politically, the creation of the legislative council was therefore seen as a pertinent pretext through which the South Africa regime would implement all the Odendaal Commission plans. Though the Odendaal Plan was a developmental programme, the Commission did not achieve its intended objective as envisaged by the South African colonial administration. It can be concluded the Odendaal Commission did however have social and political impacts on the lives of the inhabitants of Kavango.

The Kavango legislative structure established under the apartheid regime in accordance with the Native Act No 54 of 1968 of South Africa had a political impact where the local people were used to serve the interest of South Africa. The power invested in the elected and nominated traditional leaders to run the political affairs in their territories under the guidance of the South African State President and the

government was meant to impose control over the Legislative Council. The study argues that though the Kavango Legislative Council gained its self-governance, it never got its real independence from the South African colonial administration. The acts passed during the Legislative Council proceedings were passed on condition that it was in line with the apartheid ideology.

The rules and laws which were instituted by the Union of South Africa to avoid unauthorized matters in the legislative council which were deemed to destabilize peace and stability were used to neutralize the relationship between the traditional leaders and South African regime in the designated homeland. The reactions of the traditional leaders were affected by the power of the Native Act 54 of 1968. Thus all the acts prohibited the traditional leaders from discussing any political, nationalist and specifically SWAPO related matters.



The political developments of the late seventies and eighties in Kavango created a vacuum in which the traditional leaders were caught between the two military forces of SADF and SWAPO in uKwangali district. The infiltration of PLAN cadres in uKwangali in the eighties made the district one of the most heavily concentrated military areas by the South African forces. The operation of the recce unit complicated the relationship between PLAN cadres and the civilians. The operation of the recce unit in uKwangali district created a situation in which the inhabitants of the district lived in fear and insecurity day and night. Though some traditional leaders were passively persuaded to promote the interest of the South African interim government, some leaders reacted more radically towards the South African envisaged pseudo-political agenda. The vulnerability

of some traditional leaders meant that their reactions towards the SADF and SWAPO varied.

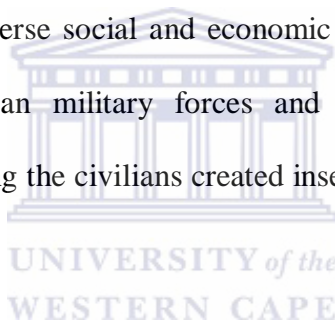
The presence of the South African security forces in Kavango, the Bantustan homeland policy and the Pass Law system which operated in Namibia during the 1960s affected PLAN cadres' activities in Kavango. The geographical location of the region and the pass laws system which operated in Namibia during the selected period created a division where people in the Kavango region were unable to interact with other people from different ethnic homelands in particular between the North and the South.

The independence of Angola in 1975 marked the beginning of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) infiltration in Kavango region and in uKwangali district in particular. The propaganda of the South African military regime was meant to create disbelief and destroy morale and the image of SWAPO with its military wing PLAN among the inhabitants of Kavango. The operation of the South African military forces, using terror tactics such as interrogation, torture and destruction of property when extracting information and searching for PLAN guerillas especially by the Koevoet unit created insecurity, mistrust and fear among the civilians.

The armed liberation struggle had social and political impacts of the life of civilians. The most frequent impact was beatings, assaults and interrogation from the South African forces. The implementation of curfew in Kavango during the eighties was part of the South African military force strategy of cracking down on suspected SWAPO sympathisers in Kavango and in uKwangali. The martial law under the Administrator General AG 9 was extended to the northern "homeland" of Ovamboland, Kavangoland and Caprivi, and affected political activists in Kavango. The proclamation gave police

and any law enforcement agents and members of the South African Defence Force (SADF) wider powers to arrest, search and detain people without trial.

The massive build up by the South African military forces in Namibia in the late seventies led to the declaration of Kavango as a security district. The extension of the martial law in Kavango which empowered the South African forces with a wider mandate to commit and conduct all sorts of violence including sexual violence on women had adverse effects. The establishment of military bases in uKwangali namely Nepara, Musese, Mpungu, and Nkure-nkuru and at Kahenge and at Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School suggests that it was a war zone. The complexities of the South African military forces in uKwangali had a diverse social and economic impact on the inhabitants. The presence of the South African military forces and the use of conventional and unconventional strategies among the civilians created insecurity, fear and mistrust among civilians themselves.



The influx of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) into the interior of uKwangali in the 1980s made it a concentration area by the South African forces who imposed their diverse conventional and unconventional strategies on civilians. The atrocities and brutal activities that were orchestrated by the South African forces in particular the Koevoet unit was part of its wider unconventional strategy which had tremendous impacts on the lives of the inhabitants. Though the presence of the South African forces had a tremendous impact on the lives of the inhabitants, the operations of the South African forces failed to halt the increased collaboration of the inhabitants with the People Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN).

Militarily, the presence of the South African military forces in uKwangali left memories characterized by atrocities and brutality. Though Kavango region was heavily militarized by the South African military regime, the regime did not impose total military control over the region and in uKwangali district in particular. It can be argued that though the area was heavily militarized, SWAPO cadres penetrated and establish communication links and relationships.

The propaganda used by the South African forces and its intelligence service was instrumental in influencing the perception of civilians. The anti-patriotic ideas conducted through lecturers under the South African pseudo-cultural political organization transformed the perception of school-going children towards the South African regime. The pseudo-cultural organization used by the South African regime motivated many youths and school dropouts to join the South African army. It can be concluded that the majority who joined the South African forces were graduates of the Ezuva programs.

The unconventional strategy used by South African forces was an attempt meant to win the hearts and mind of the civilians and help to transform the perception of the youth in particular. The use of unconventional and conventional methods by the South African regime shows that the district constituted a severe threat to the South African forces. Thus the pseudo-cultural political organization like Ezuva used by the South African regime was aimed to achieve the political and military objective of the regime.

The Kavango Legislative Council created a vacuum where traditional leaders in Kavango were unable to unite and act collectively. Chiefs and headmen under the Kavango Legislative Council were caught up in a patron-client relationship. The

Kavango Legislative Council was a colonial tool which the regime used to create division among the chiefs, though its strategy failed as it was envisaged. The proverb made by the chief of uKwangali where he say that the five oxen³⁷⁹ of Kavango do not pull together in one direction, shows that unity did not existed among the five ethnic leaders. Thus the aim was to prevent them (chiefs) from reacting collectively against the interim regime. Though the South African regime used different strategies to mislead people, the perceptions of the local people of Kavango towards South African forces were predominantly characterized by fear, helplessness and resentment.

1978 marked the beginning of PLAN cadre's infiltration in uKwangali district for the first time. For SWAPO to gain support, PLAN cadres relied on political education politicizing the civilians about the politics of liberation and to fight for their rights. The political education conducted by PLAN cadres helped to motivate some civilians in Kavango and uKwangali in particular to provide enormous support and develop a sense of loyalty to SWAPO with its military wing PLAN. The mode of political education used by the PLAN cadres helped to destroy the spheres of South African influence in uKwangali and made significant PLAN operations possible. The logistical and other support provided by the inhabitants of uKwangali assisted PLAN to sustain and contained the South African military forces.

It can be argued that if the civilians of Kavango in general and in uKwangali in particular were conniving with the South African military regime to render support, the armed struggle for the PLAN cadres could have not lasted for a long period in Kavango.

³⁷⁹ The five oxen the chief mentions refer to the five tribal chiefs in the Kavango region who did not co-operate more tightly with each other.

This would have given the South African forces a greater opportunity to take full military control.

In 1984 the cease-fire agreement was signed in Lusaka Zambia which marked the beginning of the transition period which led to Namibia's first democratic election supervised by the United Nations Security Council UNTAG. The diplomatic and political campaign by SWAPO of the 1980s led to the end of the South African illegal occupation of Namibia. The adoption of the Resolution 435 in 1988 was meant to establish the UNTAG to supervise and monitor the decolonization of Namibia.

The implementation of the Resolution 435 provided the phase for the withdrawal of the South African troops from Namibia from 1 April 1989, the assembling of PLAN combatants to their respective assembly points, the repatriation of refugees and the deployment of the UNTAG troops in Namibia. The 1989 election witnessed different political parties using their political manifestos as a blueprint to politicise the inhabitants of Kavango to vote for their parties. Tension between SWAPO and DTA was very high during the 1989 political campaign.

During the 1989 campaign, political parties produced posters, placards, T-shirts, flags, scarves, badges and banners in their different parties' colours which were worn by supporters. The political materials were used to mobilize and promote the identity of the party and its candidates during the election. Posters and placards were used as psychological tools in the sense that it was a way to appeal to and control the minds of the masses so as to direct the political support to their parties. Posters help voters to identify party candidates during the election process. This was important to voters in the

sense that visual images were more powerful and many people could easily identify as the written words were mostly in English. The visuality of the party colours enabled supporters to differentiate between different parties.

Political activities prior to the 1989 election marked the peak of national resistance and the final stage towards independence. In Kavango the political activities of SWAPO were heightened by the political awareness initiated by teachers and NANSO the student organization. The student organization NANSO was used by SWAPO as its backbone to mobilise and spread the gospel of SWAPO to the masses. The political transformation of late 1989 created a situation in which learners were used to contribute to the daily political unrest in the region. The political strategy used by SWAPO promising school-going children free education, free hospital medical treatment motivated the pupils and their parents to vote for SWAPO.

Unlike SWAPO, DTA carried out its political campaign activities openly with full protection and elaborate publicity. Thus the DTA party enjoyed a continued advantage over SWAPO during the political campaign of the 1980s. Political violence and intimidation orchestrated by the DTA supporters resulted in daily physical fighting between SWAPO and DTA supporters in Kavango, with impunity for DTA supporters. The failure of the South African military propaganda aimed at winning the hearts and minds of civilians contributed to DTA inability to gain an overwhelming victory over SWAPO.

The geographical proximity of the UKwangali district, the infiltration of the unprecedented number of PLAN cadres during the 1980s in the district, the return of 500

returnees at Kafuma on 3 August 1989 and the assaults and violence committed by Koevoet units on civilians led to the increase of votes for SWAPO party in uKwangali district.

Thus out of the total of 61 426 votes cast in Kavango, 30 755 voters voted for SWAPO while 24 817 voters voted for the DTA and the remaining votes were shared by the remaining parties. The election result shows that the area was one of the SWAPO strongholds during the 1989 elections. It can be concluded that despite the being exposed the different forms of violence, assaults and atrocities, many people in Kavango stood firm and had a tenacious loyalty to SWAPO as a political party. Against these political developments and the election result of 1989 it can be concluded that although the people of Kavango were caught in the middle, they had fidelity towards SWAPO and were instrumental in politicizing the ideology of the party which culminated in the party winning more votes as compared to the main opposition DTA.

In conclusion I want to argue that the used of unconventional and conventional strategies embarked upon by the south African military regime shows that the district constituted a severe threat to the south African military forces. Against this background it is undeniable to argue that uKwangali district is one of the forgotten war zones in the Namibian liberation struggle, the central question the study has addressed in the thesis. It is important to highlight my personal observation during my field research. Among all the participants interviewed I can confess that everyone wanted his/her voice to be heard. Some even made remarks saying that our district suffered the expense of the war though we are completely forgotten after Independence. The question one now asks is, how are these people forgotten? Is it politically or socially?

Though some respondents boast of their tremendous contribution, elements of silence can be detected throughout their responses. The elements of silence were noted in some informants especially those who lost their relatives, loved ones and property during the period, who were not in a position to elaborate in more detail. This means that the sense of losing their loved ones is still engraved in their memory which I believe has affected them psychologically, socially and politically. Thus some individuals were not in a position to narrate aspects of their experience which affected them emotional or politically.

One can conclude that their oral narratives might be shaped by the nature of the current post independence political developments in the country. For example a sense of being forgotten by the government is articulated by most of the respondents. As pointed out by one informant, eighteen years after independence the western part of Kavango lacks proper infrastructure like tarred roads, inland villages do not have schools, clinics and water which are the basic human needs. These are social and political rights which some of the informants have articulated.

An old Mukwangali-speaking proverb says: 'A tree dies, a tree sprouts again!' The proverb simply makes a metaphoric example of the lifespan of the tree with that of the state. Though we are now eighteen years after independence many seem not to have lost hope that their tireless contribution and participation will be recognized and still hope that righteous life will be rewarded for their input during the armed liberation struggle. But this looks not forthcoming.

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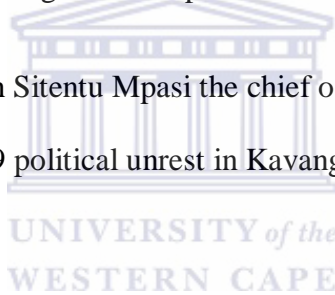
A total of twenty-four interviews were conducted and recorded with a tape recorder in ruKwangali, which I translated and transcribed into English. In some instances written notes were taken during interviews. During my field work I did not experience problems of informants turning down my appointments or refusing to be interviewed. All the informants co-operated and were willing to share their experiences and contributions. This was due to the fact that most of the inhabitants know me well as I am from the same district and an agreed consent form was adhered to in all my oral interviews. During the interviews I learned that every individual interviewed wants his/her story be heard nationally and to be documented for future reference.

Name of informant	Date of interview	Place
1. Lourenz Kalipa Haupindi	27 December 2007	Rundu
2. Nathanael Sirongo	29 July 2007	Mpungu
3. Kalomoh Ndeulitufa	13 May 2005	Rundu

4. Kasoma Paulus	24 July 2007	Rundu
5. Gabriel Munguya	27 July 2007	Nepara
6. Nestor Mufenda	28 December2007	Rundu
7. Flory Karangane	25 January 2008	Windhoek
8. Selima Wayera Kadiva	24 July 2007	Gava
9. Karapo Robert	21 May 2003	Muparara
10. Kandjimi Willem	26 December 2007	Gava
11. Naingwendje Isack	25 December 2007	Simanya
12. Hausiku Johanna	25 July 2007	Zigizi
13. Thaddeus Nekaro	10 December2007	Rundu
14. Joseph Kandjimi	11 December 2007	Rundu
15. Immanuel Shikukumwa	13 December 2006	Cassava
16. Daniel Sientu Mipasi	25 July 2007	Mayara
17. Alloys Gende	27 December 2007	Kayengona
18. Hilka Leevi	16 December 2007	Rundu
19. Shillinge Veronika	14 December 2007	Ncancana
20. Haindongo Risto	26 December 2007	Mukekete
21. Johannes Songora	29 January 2008	Rundu
22. Kamati Maurus	28 January 2008	Rundu
23. Karora Erastus	28 October 2007	Rundu
24. Hausiku Elina	14 January 2008	Mupini

2. RADIO INTERVIEW RECORDINGS

1. Tape recorded interview of Sebastian Kamwanga, the chief of the vaGciriku tribe presented on Kavango Radio during the 1989 political unrest in Kavango.
2. Tape recorded interview with Gothard Haininga, the chief of the vaSambyu tribe presented on Kavango Radio during the 1989 political unrest in Kavango.
3. Tape recorded interview with Sientu Mipasi the chief of uKwangali presented on Kavango Radio during the 1989 political unrest in Kavango.



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8. APPENDIX

