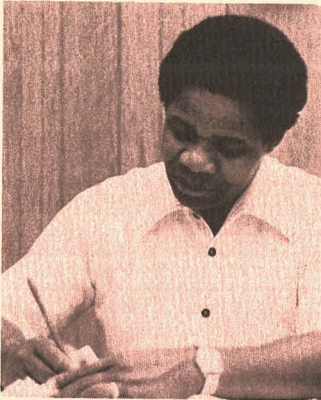


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by J. Kamusikiri



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by Colleen Hendrik

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C O R R E C T I O N

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...who served as Prime Minister Muzorewa's
Private Secretary...

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MUGABE'S ZIMBABWE:
LESSONS AND PROBLEMS

J. Kamusikiri

SAM NUJOMA: PORTRAIT
OF A SWAPO LEADER

Colleen Hendrik

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INTRODUCTION: ZIMBABWE/NAMIBIA

For the second time, these notes present two separate topics by different authors in a single issue. Although the articles are distinctly different—one being a personal profile and the other an analysis—they do link two territories whose evolution suggests comparison.

For example, Dr. Kamusikiri, looking back at the ontogeny of Zimbabwean independence, sees the achievement of internal government by the Muzorewa regime as a necessary condition for breaking the negotiating deadlock. At the unsuccessful Geneva talks (January 4-14, 1981) one unresolved issue was the status of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA). This internal Namibian party was careful to distinguish itself from the South African government team at the talks. Although its presence was reluctantly accepted by the South West People's Organization (SWAPO) team, it did not achieve status as the internal government. Thus the Kamusikiri stage of two indigenous forces, one internal and one external, in direct confrontation was not quite achieved.

Another factor in the Zimbabwean case was the election of the conservative Thatcher government in Great Britain. While Dr. Kamusikiri does comment on this, one must emphasize the impact of that election on Ian Smith's predominantly white government. Against all the violence and cost of the struggle against the growing guerilla forces, the Rhodesian Front leaders could blame the governing Labor Party in Britain for many of its problems, going back to a favorite "devil" in the personage of Harold Wilson. But when as right-wing a government as could be hoped for came to power in Great Britain, and it still refused to recognize the Unilateral Declaration of Independence and kept pressing for a settlement, the heart went out of the Smith resistance.

The obvious analogue for Namibia is the election of the conservative Reagan administration. Indeed, once its election was known in November, few observers expected South Africa to try to come to terms in Geneva. Its delaying tactics while waiting for the new administration to function were transparently evident. As in the Thatcher case, it is not likely that a more conservative administration in Washington will appear in the foreseeable future. Thus South Africa, playing something of the Smith role, would seem to be well advised to strike the best bargain it can. Some people argue that the most propitious time in the Reagan administration may be in the first year, and not too close to the November 1982 election, when the Republicans hope to capture a majority in the House and when one-third of the almost evenly divided Senate is up for reelection.

A third Kamusikiri factor was the pressure exerted on the external Zimbabwean leaders by the Front Line States to end the war. Pressure on SWAPO by the Front Line States has also begun to build. But until the South African government appears ready actually to reduce its military presence in Namibia, there

will be continued encouragement of SWAPO's guerilla campaign.

On the surface, the SWAPO leadership is not divided as were the Zimbabweans between Robert Mugabe on the one hand and Joshua Nkomo on the other hand. However the exigencies of the SWAPO struggle may mask deep divisions within SWAPO. Its leader, Sam Nujoma, for years has avoided any free elections within the leadership, and there are SWAPO dissidents who seek to replace him. The record of President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia in jailing those SWAPO Freedom Fighters who opposed Nujoma is not the brightest chapter in his doctrine of Humanism. A few of the former SWAPO leaders, who broke with Nujoma, were not only jailed but have told me that they were literally in chains in Tanzania, have returned to Namibia and oppose both SWAPO and the DTA, the latter because it is built on an ethnic coalition in which race dictates membership in the parties to the Alliance.

I first met Sam Nujoma in 1955, when he came to see me at the Continental Hotel in Windhoek. He has subsequently visited the Munger Africana Library and we have met abroad. Colleen Hendrik is an intrepid (and I use the word advisedly) reporter and was the only woman military correspondent in Namibia, which she covered for three years on behalf of the Argus newspapers. In 1978, I went with her to the Ovambo compound at Katatura, evading the police blockade, to talk with the angry Ovambo leaders. Hereros had used rifles to kill several Ovambos following the assassination of Clemens Kapuuu, the leader of the DTA and a Herero.

The gathering of some 3,000 Ovambos was angry-sounding to the ear and threatening to the eye, but Ms. Hendrik never missed a step as she sought out the ringleaders inside the barracks and examined the evidence of the shootings.

One background factor promoting a Namibian settlement is President Reagan's campaign statements concerning the leader of UNITA, Jonas Savimbi, and his fight against the MPLA ruling Angola. In 1977, I was briefly with UNITA troops inside Angola, and they clearly lacked only firepower to make advances against the MPLA and the Cuban forces.

Savimbi's appeal to the Reagan administration is that he analyzes the problems facing the West in much the same terms. For example, in an interview in the *National-Catholic-Register* (), he said: "The great drama of the West in the modern era is its own guilt. Guilt is devouring the values of the West, and it is a tragedy to watch. Colonialism was an historical fact; you cannot deny it. But it is now in the past, and while it is true that colonialism brought with it a form of domination that tried to destroy our values, we learned ideas through colonialism and methods of resistance, and we did resist, and we succeeded in gaining our independence.

"But now, this new form of colonialism is something alien. The Russians and the Cubans, who were supposed to be our friends, and who did give us help in our struggle against the Portuguese, are now bringing us a new style of slavery."

Mr. Kamusikiri does not emphasize the hectoring role of Lord Carrington in driving the Lancaster House participants to an agreement. But he does underline the pressures for a settlement by the leaders of the Front Line States. However,

who will play the Carrington role, if such a role is to be played in a Namibian settlement, is not yet clear. Secretary of State Haig could well be the man. Rhodesia was primarily a British responsibility. This may be one reason why the Kissinger initiative in the Ford administration did not succeed. Namibia is more a joint responsibility of the Western Five, but American leadership is crucial. Paradoxically, the South Africans perceived the American role among the Five, played by Ambassador Donald McHenry, as the most inimical to their interest. They now perceive the Americans as being the most sympathetic, whether or not such optimism is well-founded.

Dr. James Kamusikiri, who served as Prime Minister Mugabe's Private Secretary for the first year of independence, is currently Professor of History at Cal Poly in Pomona, California. His pungent views on Presidents Kaunda and Nyerere are obviously his own, just as Ms. Hendrik's evaluation of Sam Nujoma is her own, and neither author is responsible for the views expressed by this editor.

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NED MUNGER

Mugabe's Zimbabwe: Lessons and Problems

J. Kamusikiri

WHAT LESSONS can be drawn from the final achievement of independence in Zimbabwe and what can we learn about Prime Minister Mugabe? To begin with we must examine why the Lancaster House constitutional conference succeeded. There are four reasons.

It was critical to have first the internal settlement of March, 1978. This removed racially discriminatory laws and brought about the first ever universal suffrage and a black government in Zimbabwe.

Next in sequence was the desire and commitment of both the Muzorewa government and the leaders of the Patriotic Front to try once again for a peaceful settlement. There was a genuine desire for compromise, precisely because both the internal and external contenders for political power were now black Africans. None of the black leaders wanted to be responsible for the failure of the conference and an extension of the war.

The third related development was the election of the Conservative government in Great Britain under Margaret Thatcher. Mrs. Thatcher was determined to bring about a comprehensive settlement without accepting a veto from any of the contending factions.

The final factor was the Lusaka Accord of 1979, which accepted the dramatically changed situation inside Zimbabwe. Now pressure could be applied to the guerrilla leaders to try for a negotiated settlement with Bishop Muzorewa as long as it was within an internationally accepted framework. The Commonwealth of Nations, led by Britain, fulfilled this condition.

Why Did Muzorewa Lose?

Given the rivalry of those "inside" and "outside," why did Muzorewa lose?

For one thing, the Lancaster agreement came too late for Muzorewa. Guerrilla leaders had gained a hold on large segments of society in which intimidation and not free choice was the rule.

Secondly, the British could not and did not enforce provisions of the Lancaster agreement concerning the election. The sanction of proscribing any party that violated election guidelines was not applied.

Another consideration was that Muzorewa had not been able in a short time to satisfy a crisis of expectations that was widespread among the people of Zimbabwe. There was a great longing to end the war, to have sanctions lifted, to create jobs, to curb inflation, and to resettle the homeless. It appeared to the ordinary Zimbabwean that Muzorewa did not have the power to accomplish these ends; at least the guerrillas could stop the war.

A fourth factor that worked against the Bishop was the "Blocking Mechan-

ism," which was perceived as giving the white majority excessive power under majority rule. Thus the internal settlement of March 3 was an asset for Muzorewa in moving the country toward broader band elections, but it was a liability in terms of the election itself. In the arena of world opinion, the Patriotic Front was viewed as the underdog and Muzorewa was seen as a puppet—an unfortunate assumption.

Finally, there was the intangible but overwhelming euphoria created by the arrival of the leaders of the patriotic front, who portrayed themselves as the true saviors of the black masses. The election was held before this euphoria had subsided. The election had such obvious goals as ending the war, ratifying the new constitution, removing the blocking mechanism, and lifting economic sanctions.

But in fact, the historical significance of the election does not lie in the number of seats gained by the parties who were contesting the election. Rather, I believe, it lies in the removal of minority rule. The democratic process was established. Interfactional hostilities were largely ended. The dream of freedom, equality, and justice for Zimbabwe was consummated.

In retrospect, therefore, the Muzorewa interregnum, though short-lived and unavoidably stained by the white blocking mechanism, served both as a catalyst for change and as a launching pad for a new Zimbabwe.

Post Independence

The March 1980 election was an exalted event in Zimbabwe's history, and charted the future course of a truly independent nation. One cannot forecast specific political and socioeconomic developments during the next crucial period. But one can identify and clarify the issues and make some logical assumptions in the face of the enormous challenges that face us.

To most political observers, the vital question is: Will the Mugabe government provide genuine majority rule, in which the confidence of all Zimbabweans is solidified and the protection of minorities is fully encompassed?

In other words: Will the new government of Zimbabwe be on the side of peace, compromise, and reconciliation? Or alternatively, will it engage in terror, obduracy, and ideological ranting? Will it translate into practice the aims for which the masses have struggled and ensure the creative participation of all Zimbabweans? Or will it see the masses only as objects for mobilization? Lastly, what are the ingredients of a strong, prosperous Zimbabwe?

In answering these fundamental questions, it is useful to turn first to the lessons we may learn from the independence of Zambia, Mozambique, and Tanzania.

None of these neighboring countries is, in my opinion, a genuine democracy. All three are miserable, tyrannical dictatorships. Two of them never had an election to ratify their presidents. The third, Zambia, did have an election, but President Kenneth Kaunda won his 1973 election by outlawing the opposition party. Five years later, when again he went before the people, he was challenged

from within his own party—the only legal party. He then changed the rules of the party to disallow other candidates and won his hollow election.

This trend is evident also in Tanzania, where there is a persistent tendency toward oligarchy and authoritarian rule. Tanzania is a one-party state. The government owns all media outlets. Strikes are illegal. There are thousands of political prisoners and, according to the authoritative report "Freedom in the World," torture and killing by security forces appear to be common.

It is peculiarly paradoxical that, for the last two years, Tanzania, the country which takes credit for overthrowing Amin, has been placed in the second lowest category, from the standpoint of human rights, in a survey published by the widely respected Freedom House. It is ranked just a shade above Angola and Mozambique but substantially *below* Rhodesia as it was under Smith.

Socialist rhetoric is popular in Africa. Among its several varieties are: African socialism, Arab socialism, traditional tribal socialism, and Marxist-Leninist "scientific" socialism. Yet experience has shown that all these species of socialism are based on an unrealistic hypothesis designed to disguise dictatorship over, and exploitation of, the people.

In Tanzania, for example, the institutional socialism which Nyerere launched at independence in 1962 has proved to be inappropriate for a society whose national integration was not firmly based. It is also unsuitable for the closely integrated society to which Nyerere aspires.

Similarly, in Zambia, critics assert that the country has been turned into an "economic desert" because of the government's unrealistic socialist approach. Zambia has been forced to shelve its national development plan four times because of economic turmoil. The country lacks both money and personnel and has been plagued by poor management on the part of parastatal boards and quasi-governmental bodies.

Similarly, Mozambique is faced with enormous problems in its frantic but so far disastrous efforts to implement the Marxist-Leninist brand of socialism. The masses have not fully accepted the Marxist-Leninist revolution, and in 1974-1975 the economy virtually collapsed, with both agricultural and industrial production plummeting by more than 75 percent.

It is true that part of the collapse was due to the wholesale disengagement of the Portuguese, who took with them everything they could carry. Their dramatic withdrawal added to the trauma of independence. In the port of Maputo the situation was so desperate that the South Africans had to be brought in to make the harbor work at all. The Frelimo government has nationalized land, rental properties, the legal profession, banking, health and education. The Portuguese withdrawal left industry to the state by default.

Frelimo is now concentrating on the formation of commercial villages and collective farms. But in 1979 there was a widespread food shortage. Although the export of cotton, sugar and tea offer hope for the future, the present situation is grim, with imports exceeding exports by about \$400 million. Ironically, Mozambique continued "exporting" some 100,000 workers to South African mines until June of 1977, despite Frelimo critics of such expediency. The pro-

gram is being phased out, but Mozambique was being paid 50 percent of the miners' wage in gold at \$42 an ounce, which was then sold on the open market for many times that amount. The loss of this foreign exchange will cut deeply.

In common with many developing countries, the infrastructure of Mozambique has not been developed to allow for growth. Expansion of the money economy has not been able to match subsistence economy, and employment is virtually stagnant.

Given that nearby states are less than shining examples for Zimbabwe, either in their political freedoms or in their economic growth, what does this observer see for Zimbabwe?

Zimbabwe's Future

The key in the new government's approach to development is its ability to utilize Zimbabwe's natural advantages of soil and climate for agricultural production. Zimbabwe is already one of the half-dozen food-exporting states in the world. A strong agricultural base that both feeds the country and produces export surpluses will lay the foundation for further industrialization. Together agricultural development and industrial growth will allow the government to combat poverty and to remedy the present inequality of opportunity.

The new government must take immediate steps to implement a radical land resettlement scheme. Thousands of hectares of unused or underutilized land can be made into productive farms. Virgin lands can be opened up with due regard to agricultural problems. Agriculture already employs 38 percent of Zimbabwean workers, more than 5.5 million people. It is the single largest source of livelihood and accounts for half of foreign currency earnings.

In urban areas the government must tackle the dual problem of unemployment and underemployment. The greatest physical need is more housing. Existing factories need to be expanded and those closed by the war reopened. This in turn will require more skilled manpower. Higher education is needed to provide a large pool of indigenous engineers and technicians who will in time reduce the dependence on expatriate sources of such personnel. They will also be needed in the existing mines and new mineral exploitation.

The historical concentration on rural employment can be spread out by establishing new urban centers in which factories can be based on local resources. These would, hopefully, relieve some of the present urban unemployment and rural underemployment. The potential for economic growth is excellent, and the destiny of Zimbabwe could be replete with economic achievements.

A negative legacy of colonial rule that all citizens must strive to correct is the racialism and intergroup hostility from cultural antagonisms, exacerbated by ninety years of discriminatory legislation.

For decades, both *de jure* and *de facto*, race has been the criterion of a person's position in Zimbabwean society. The color of one's skin determined where one could reside, attend school, farm, or enter into business. With the era of nondiscrimination, the government is under great pressure to let all citizens

see the functioning of a nonracial society, and to narrow the gap between white and black living standards.

By deracializing Zimbabwe, I do not mean the transformation of all cultures into an artificial nonculture of white Anglo-Saxon antecedents. The new society must give equality both to individuals and to the ethnic groups.

But the government cannot legislate instant racial harmony. Laws don't change attitudes. The existing pattern of privilege and underprivilege persist tenaciously from one generation to another. This makes many blacks vaguely uncomfortable, unsure whether or not the new era of equal opportunity has, in fact, arrived.

Conversely, whites grapple with the uneasy premonition that the new era will reverse racialism to leave blacks on the top, and whites on the bottom. White apprehension is increased by the need for the new government abruptly to change the symbols and idioms of the past to demonstrate to its constituency that chance has really arrived. New terminology and new methods of operation are innovations that whites must just accept as part of the new cultural context in which they will share.

On the other hand, the new leaders and the black masses need to heed the words of former Prime Minister Muzorewa: "Whites are important to this society for a number of reasons, not the least of which are their skills and experience."

This circumstance is both a strength and a weakness. It is a strength in that these qualities make the whites an important asset for the new nation—a better insurance for fair treatment of whites than any number of constitutional guarantees. It is a weakness only if the whites constantly parade their relatively superior skills and refuse to share these skills by training. This would obviously cause resentment and hostility. To the extent to which whites continue to contrast themselves with blacks in terms of skills, or to stress their constitutional rights, so they will increase their own vulnerability.

On balance, both blacks and whites can be grateful that Prime Minister Mugabe is pragmatic in practice and conciliatory in spirit. He wants rapid development. To be able to push aside the temptation to indulge in revolutionary rhetoric in favor of pragmatism is a hallmark of statesmanship in the circumstances.

Mugabe wants to pull Zimbabwe together to attain a national integrity, a sense of mutual responsibility, and to do so in a foresighted fashion. The years of conflict cannot be forgotten. But the spirit of cooperation that Mugabe is trying to engender can bridge the differences of the past. There are myths rooted in the past which scare potential investors away. These the government must disclaim. Foreign capital is needed to spur growth.

Given the factors I have outlined, I am confident that Zimbabwe has a bright future.

Sam Nujoma: Portrait of a SWAPO Leader

Colleen Hendrik

IT WAS AN ODD PLACE to meet, outside the men's toilet at number 7 Place de Fortenoy, UNESCO'S headquarters in Paris. But that's where I eventually intercepted the Namibian guerrilla leader, Sam Nujoma, following a tip-off from an acquaintance in the anti-apartheid movement.

Peter Manning, SWAPO'S press spokesman, had positioned himself outside the toilet door. He was clearly irritated when he saw me scurrying down the passage toward him. He'd be in touch, he said, if "the President" had time to see me. I didn't believe him. The conference, designed to consolidate SWAPO support, was drawing to a close and I suspected that he had not even passed on my request for an interview to Nujoma.

Suddenly the door opened and Nujoma emerged. Manning, a political dropout from South Africa, put his arm around him and started to walk away. I announced, rather loudly, that I wanted to meet the SWAPO president. The big black man turned around slowly to face me.

As I introduced myself, a thousand thoughts crowded my mind. Would he grant the interview? Would he speak freely or treat me with suspicion? After all, I was a white South African. He could have no way of knowing my political persuasions or journalistic ethics. Even if he had, he would probably not be impressed. There was no place, SWAPO had told me before, for such concepts as objectivity and neutrality in the drawn-out bush war that had already claimed the lives of thousands of people.

Then I remembered the photographs. What had I done with the photographs? Were they at the pension, or had I brought them with me? I started rummaging through my handbag. I had intended to give the pictures to Nujoma after the interview, if I got the interview. But I gave them to him there and then, in the passage outside the men's room. I was determined to get the interview, at all costs.

Nujoma was somewhat taken aback. Then he looked at the photographs, one by one. "My Daddy," he said, "my Daddy looks so old. Do you know that he is dead now?" I nodded. I had taken the pictures of his parents at Ongandjera, in Owamboland, three years before. It had been my first visit to the war-torn province. I remember it well; all previous applications for a permit to visit the area had been turned down without explanation.

The old folk lived far off the beaten track, in a little village in northwestern Owambo. Nujoma had not seen them since 1958, about 18 months before he went into exile on a mission that has brought SWAPO international recognition. When he joined it, the movement he now heads was known as the Owambo People's Organization—the Owambos being the largest population

group in South West Africa/Namibia. Nujoma was instrumental in turning it into a nationalist movement with an ambition, at least, to embrace all ethnic groups in the country. He doggedly pursued that aim from one world capital and international conference to the next. His own residence has shifted from Dar es Salaam to Lusaka, to Luanda, where he now appears to spend most of his time.

"Was the beer for you?" Nujoma asked as he studied a picture of his mother carrying a pot of beer. I said that it was. "She must have thought highly of you, otherwise she would have given you Coke."

Then Nujoma inquired whether I would like to join him for dinner the following day. I accepted without hesitation, even though it meant spending two more days in Paris, which I could barely afford. I was staying in a pension near the conference center, the cheapest lodging I could find. I had taken a standby flight from Washington to London, and from there a special British Airways excursion flight to Paris. Having reported on events in the territory for three years, I felt I had to hear the other side of the story.

At seven o'clock the next evening, Kapuka Nauyala, Nujoma's secretary, met me in the lounge at the Hilton Hotel, where both the SWAPO and Angolan delegations were staying. I remember thinking how much he resembled the guerrilla leader: same build and beard, always polite and always a perfect gentleman. Nauyala escorted me to Nujoma's suite where we were to have dinner. The door was opened by a young man whom I presumed to be a bodyguard. He offered me a drink, which I declined. He gave me a whiskey—double, with ice. About 20 minutes later, Nujoma entered. He greeted me warmly before sitting down. During the course of the evening several SWAPO office bearers popped in to see him. They were curious to find me in the lion's den. Nicky Nashadi, who runs the SWAPO office in Tripoli, demanded to know what my background was, why I refused to join SWAPO if I was not a supporter of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, a South African backed multiracial group. Nashadi was aloof, sceptical. In his position, I might have been too. Nashadi and the SWAPO representatives in Algeria and Nigeria joined us for dinner.

Nujoma was the perfect host. He answered my questions, or sidestepped them if he pleased. Always courteous, always smiling. We spoke English, which for him was a third language, after an Owambo dialect and Afrikaans. His command of the language was imperfect though quite adequate. He seldom coined a phrase, though, but rather spliced together political formulas he had used many times in the past. This, of course, has led some who have negotiated with him to reflect adversely on his mental quickness. In conversation it became evident, however, that Nujoma was a man who was not at all slow in calculating his political interest and in keeping the discussion focused on what for him is a single, important issue in the dispute that has gone on for more than three decades—that of ending South African rule in the territory.

When he fled from Namibia 21 years ago, most of Africa was still colonized. Unlike more recent exiles, he did not have an easy passage as he made his way through Bechuanaland, Rhodesia, Tanganyika, Kenya, Ghana, and Liberia.

The young exile crossed Bechuanaland undetected but at Plumtree, in

Southern Rhodesia, he was stopped by an eager immigration officer who asked to see a passport or permit entitling him to enter the country. Nujoma indicated that he was on his way to Northern Rhodesia to visit a sick uncle. The official appeared to be satisfied when Nujoma showed him a telegram from one Shipinga.

The next stop was Bulawayo, where he spent a night with a friend. Then on to Ndola, where he held talks with UNIP (United National Independence Party) before flying to Tanganyika.

“On the aircraft I was given a form to fill in. It said that any person who entered Tanganyikan territory without a permit or visa would be punished—fined or sentenced to three months imprisonment, or both. I was scared.

“The British with their long moustaches went directly to immigration. I hung around the plane hoping I’d be taken for one of the locals. As the airport was not fenced off at the time, a number of locals had gathered round to look at the plane. Then an Indian chap walked up to me. He was the driver of the East African Airways bus. He inquired whether I was David Shipinga, then collected the luggage and took me to the hotel.”

“Yes, yes,” Nujoma said in reply to a question, “I had enough money. SWAPO had given me money.”

In the evening he went to the TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) office in the black township. It was closed until morning. When he returned the next day he met Ali Chanda, regional secretary of TANU.

“When Tanganyika became independent, Ali was chief of protocol in Dar es Salaam. I don’t know what’s happened to him since.”

Chanda suggested that Nujoma stay at his home, in case the police made inquiries at the hotel. So Nujoma, who at the time was suffering from malaria, immediately checked out of the hotel.

“While I was there, I sent a telegram to the UN asking the then SWA Committee to grant me a hearing. Apparently the telegram fell into the hands of the British police. They did not know what Sam Nujoma looked like but they knew my name.”

Nujoma then hired a taxi which took him 500 miles to Dar es Salaam. There he was received by Julius Nyerere, then a member of the Legislative Council in Tanganyika and president of TANU. Nujoma was given permission to stay in the colony after Nyerere approached the governor on his behalf.

Three weeks later he moved on to Nairobi, where he caught a plane to Khartoum.

“It was during the Mau Mau uprisings in Kenya. There were no jets in those days. The aircraft was propeller-driven and took nine hours to get from Nairobi to Khartoum.”

There he was told that he had been granted a hearing by the United Nations. After obtaining the necessary travel documents, he flew to New York via Ghana and Liberia.

Nujoma arrived in New York on June 12, 1960, and shortly afterwards petitioned the world body. He spent six months in New York and then set about establishing offices in various parts of the world.

He was the second black exile from Namibia, he said, preceded only by Fanuel Kozonguizi, who is now a senior official in the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance.

"Although preparations for the military struggle had already started in 1961, it was not until 1966 that the first contact took place in Namibia. And you must remember that SWAPO only took up arms when we realized that there was no possibility of a negotiated settlement."

Initial training took place in Ghana under Nkrumah, in Egypt under Nasser, and in Algeria after it gained independence. When SWAPO decided to prepare for a military struggle, Tanzania was not yet independent.

"As the countries in Southern Africa became independent, you moved your operation closer to home?" I asked.

"That's right, yes."

"How did you become involved in politics?"

"I was born under the ruthless oppression of the minority white regime, in northwestern Owambo, there where you visited my parents. As youths we often used to talk about what we ought to do about the situation in the country. We felt that something had to be done.

"We were greatly inspired, of course, by political developments after World War II: the independence of Indonesia, followed by India, Ghana, Mali, Tunisia, and Sudan.

"We started organizing underground. Before SWAPO was formed, even before the Owambo People's Organization was established, I campaigned underground throughout the country. The Native Commissioner probably thought, these kids are dreaming. Of course, we were arrested; put in prison."

Nujoma is one of a family of eight—five brothers and three sisters. He is the eldest son. Two of his brothers also went into exile and are members of SWAPO.

A few years ago, Nujoma's wife joined him in exile.

"My wife is with me in Luanda now. We were separated for 18 years."

"Why did she not join you sooner?"

"She's a typical Namibian woman. She wanted to stay at home. She left when she became ill. It meant going to hospital under a false name. The name Nujoma only means trouble.

"All three of my sons are in exile. All three in SWAPO's guerrilla army, fighting in the field. They are young. They have a role to play."

The majority of SWAPO forces, Nujoma claimed, were inside Namibia and not in neighboring Angola.

"Even Geldenhuys knows this," he said of the former South African defense chief in the territory.

"Would you talk to Geldenhuys if you had the opportunity?"

"Talk about what? Talk about the weather?"

Asked whether SWAPO had big bases inside the disputed territory, Nujoma said: "A guerrilla army is not like a standing army. We don't have soldiers in a barracks. Ours is a people's army."

"How many guerrillas do you have in SWAPO? How many trained guerrillas?"

"The whole of SWAPO is an army. There is no internal and external wing. SWAPO is one. The only difference between the political and military wing is that the latter has a specific task to liberate Namibia. SWAPO is a political liberation movement."

It is structured to include legal affairs, defense, information, education and so on. The secretary for legal affairs, Lucia Hamutenya, is presently studying in the German Democratic Republic. Some years ago she was kicked out of a South African university where she was studying law.

"The duty of the movement's defense secretary is to see that our soldiers are equipped to counter the racist South African troops."

"Who is your secretary for defense?"

"I don't have to tell you who all my secretaries are."

SWAPO'S secretary for information, who is based in Luanda, is responsible for radio broadcasts from the Angolan capital. And there are various other secretaries with specific tasks to perform in the party.

"If you were to look into the future, would you say SWAPO has a better chance of coming to power through the ballot box or the barrel of a gun?"

"SWAPO will take power, either way."

"Do you envisage a one-party or a multi-party democracy in Namibia?"

"It will be a decision of the people."

Asked about the position of whites in the territory after independence, Nujoma said: "SWAPO is fighting against the illegal South African administration of the territory. It is not fighting against individual whites. It is unfortunate that the whites are part and parcel of the illegal administration in Namibia and therefore part and parcel of the repressive machinery. We are also fighting to liberate the whites from racial oppression. Once we get rid of the illegal South African occupation, it will mean the end of oppression. Each and every citizen will be treated as equal before the law, irrespective of color, race, or status in society."

"Is there anything you would like to add at this stage?"

"Yes. I want you to tell the whites in Namibia that they must identify themselves with the struggle for the liberation of the country. They must not take an opportunistic line; support the enemy and then later on want to benefit from the struggle which is taking the lives of many people, particularly black Africans. The whites must identify themselves with the country. The country is at war. One cannot be neutral in such a case. The country is occupied. Our struggle is against a system of oppression of men by men and not against individual white settlers."

"If you were to win an election in the territory, would you allow Mr. Mudge [leader of the conservative DTA alliance] to remain in Namibia? Or would you try him before a people's court?"

"If he is suspected of having committed a crime, he will be brought to trial. If he has stolen his neighbor's cattle, for instance. If he has committed no crime, why should he be tried? I am in no position to judge him."

"Have you been back to Namibia since you left in 1960?"

"Yes, several times. I returned to Windhoek in 1966 for the first time. I challenged the South African lawyers at The Hague when they claimed that we were self-exiled and could return at any time.

"We returned on the 20th of March, 1966. We were arrested at the airport and put in prison. The next day we were deported. We left on the same aircraft that brought us to the country. That's proof that South Africa was telling lies at The Hague."

Nujoma reiterated claims that he had been in and out of Namibia several times with his guerrillas. Quite recently, in fact.

"I went in the bush, of course. I didn't walk down the main street of Ondangwa," he said, referring to Owambo's administrative capital.

"We take off those things [his stylish dark suit]. We only put on those things when we are in town."

"South Africa has time and time again claimed that SWAPO is a communist organization. What do you say to this?"

"SWAPO is a political liberation movement. SWAPO is an African liberation movement. It is not a communist organization.

"SWAPO was founded inside Namibia before we met with anybody from outside, with the exception of the Reverend Michael Scott. That's the only foreigner I knew who was sympathetic toward the Namibian struggle. There were no communists in Namibia then. There were some in South Africa, but not in Namibia.

"But we do want to create a new society in Namibia; a society which will utilize the wealth of the country for the benefit of all its people. For too long we have been the victims of a system of capitalist exploitation. The Europeans invaded Africa searching for wealth. We who have been the victims of this capitalism cannot support the exploitation of men by men.

"The socialist countries, or what you call communist countries, we have gratefully accepted their assistance [arms and ammunition] to fight against the enemy. If the West offered us assistance we would take it too.

"It must be remembered that South Africa was an ally of the Soviet Union in the war against Nazi Germany. It was the red Army which first smashed into Berlin in 1945, into the Nazi headquarters. But the victory was shared by all the allies."

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