

06 July 2021

The Widow, Mrs Juliane Tjiriange, the Children and the Entire Bereaved Family;

Allow me to bid farewell to one of the drafters of our Constitution and a founding member of the Namibian Parliament as well as the first Cabinet in an independent Namibia, Honourable Dr. Ngarikutuke Ernest Tjiriange.

Even though consumed with grief, we celebrate the profound meaning of his life, as a former Secretary General of the SWAPO Party and a lawyer who forged a rich legacy and left indelible marks that will define our country's Judicial System for generations to come.

I was saddened to learn that Dr. Tjiriange passed on Wednesday 23 June 2021 in Windhoek, followed by two of the first petitioners of our country at the United Nations, the Late Professor Mburumba Kerina and Ambassador Dr. Zedekia Ngavirue as well as the Paramount Chief of ovaHerero-people, Advocate Vekuii Rukoro and the ovaMbanderu Chief Kilus Munjuku III Nguvauva, whose death followed the passing of Gaob Eduardo Afrikaner of the Afrikaner Traditional Authority.

To lose them all in such quick succession is indeed a huge loss for our country. Against this background, the month of June and July will be recorded as one of the darkest months which have robbed us of many precious souls, when wells of despair and what seems to be insurmountable mountains engulfed our nation.

I am sure much has been said about Dr. Tjiriange in the eulogy and the many tributes delivered so far. Allow me therefore to just highlight a few things on how I remember him. For this, I will make use of his memoir titled; "To Hell and Back: My Experience under Difficult Colonial Rule".

I remember Dr. Tjiriange as a young man who was working with OPO in the late 50's with Erasmus Nganjone at the time of the Windhoek Uprising. Together with Comrades Peter Katjavivi, the Late Mose Tjitendero, Karumburumbu Kahimise, Erasmus Nganjone, Zebulon Tjondaura, Luther Zaire, Alphons Ngeama and others, he joined SWAPO at its inception in 1960.

At that time, it was expected that the young Otjiherero-speaking people were to either join SWANU as the first option or work in the ranks of Chief Hosea Kutako's Council. But these young men decided to join SWAPO against all odds. Dr. Tjiriange was then appointed as the SWAPO Secretary for the Windhoek Branch, taking over from the Late Comrade Joseph Ithana.

For this reason, when we changed the name of OPO to SWAPO in April 1960, Comrade Dr. Tjiriange, together with the SWAPO leadership at the National Headquarters such as Comrades Jason Mutumbulwa, Levi Nganjone, David Merero, Aaron Hamutenya, Brian Bessingweith, John Ya Otto, Engelhardt Festus Karita, Benjamin Namalambo, Mitiri Karuhumba, including the Late Comrade Immanuel Ndemulungila Nathaniel Maxuillili, were aware of this decision when they were informed at a meeting that was held at the old man Gabriel Mbidi's place in the Old Location.

In 1962, when the UN Representatives Victor Carpio, a Philippino and Salvador Martinez de Alva, a Brazillian came to Windhoek, Dr. Tjiriange was part of the SWAPO's delegation that met them together with Comrades Maxuillili, Mutumbulwa, Ya Otto and Levi Nganjone.

In January 1964, Dr. Tjiriange fled the country for exile in a group called "12 White Coats" to symbolize that they would leave the country in white coats and come back in black academic gowns as graduates with degrees.

They went through Sehitwa driven to Daniel Munamava's house by Ludwig Stanley. After spending some weeks in jail, they went to Francistown, where they met the Late Comrade Maxton Joseph Mutongolume who was working hard to recruit Namibian people who were passing through Francistown to work on the mines in South Africa.

In Northern Rhodesia now Zamibia, they were helped by Comrade Oliver Tambo of the ANC and some UNIP leaders to proceed to Mbeya, Tanganyika, where I met them on my way to Francistown together with Jacob Kuhangua who was the Secretary General of SWAPO.

In Dar-es-Salaam they were staying at a place called Kurasini attending an American School which was preparing them for studies at high level educational institutions. While at Kurasini, the Late Comrade Dr. Tjiriange was taken to Tanganyika Broadcasting Corporation (TBC) to broadcast in Otjiherero from Dar-es-Salaam while the Late Comrade Nangolo lthete was broadcasting in Oshiwambo language.

One day I called a meeting to address our people at Kurasini and asked those who were ready and willing to go and fight at the battle front, to stand up. They all stood up and I told some of them, including Dr. Tjiriange, to sit down as they were too young and promised to send them for further studies.

He got his scholarship when the Late Comrade Peter Nanyemba, who was SWAPO's Chief Representative in East Africa, got two scholarships to Finland and gave one scholarship to the Late Comrade Dr. Nickey Iyambo and the other one to Dr. Tjiriange.

However, one day Nanyemba called him and told him that the next day there was a Russian plane going to the USSR when SWAPO got three scholarships to the USSR. This is how Dr. Tjiriange got his scholarship to study law in the former Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and obtained a Doctorate Degree in Law from Kiev University in 1973.

While as a student, he was chosen as SWAPO's Deputy Secretary for Legal and Economic Affairs at the Tanga Consultative Conference that took place from December 1969 to January 1970.

At that time, SWAPO adopted a three-pronged strategy which comprised of the armed struggle; mobilizing our people as well as the international community to support our cause and isolate the apartheid regime.

It is for this reason that I sent Former President Pohamba and the Late Comrade Eliader Muatale back to Namibia from Dar-es-Salaam to mobilize our people. I also appointed President Geingob as our Chief Representative to the UN and the Americas deputized by the Late Comrades Theo-Ben Gurirab and Hidipo Hamutenya. In Western Europe, we had Comrades Peter Katjavivi in London, Ben Amathila in Nordic countries and the Late Dr. Nickey Iyambo in Finland.

On the military front, in July 1962, we sent seven cadres to Egypt for Military training and in January 1963, we sent others to the Nanjing Military Academy in the People's Republic of China. This is how we implemented our three-pronged strategy.

Dr. Tjiriange, upon completion of his studies, was appointed as SWAPO's Secretary for Legal Affairs in 1976. He then became an Assistant Lecturer at the United Nations Institute for Namibia in Lusaka from 1977 to 1982 and SWAPO's Principal Legal Advisor until independence.

In 1977, together with the Late Comrades Theo-Ben Gurirab, Hidipo Hamutenya and Kapuka Nauyala, Dr. Tjiriange formed part of the SWAPO's delegation which I led to the negotiations with the Western Contact Group until the adoption of Resolution 435 by the UN Security Council.

In all the tasks that were given to him, he made a huge impact and undertook his responsibilities with purpose. It is against this background that I appointed him as our country's first Minister of Justice in 1990 and he is credited with the establishment of Namibia's post-independence justice system, and of the Faculty of Law at UNAM.

In 2002, I nominated Dr. Tjiriange to be elected as the Secretary General of the SWAPO Party because he was unwavering in his principles. Always faithful to the principles of the SWAPO Party and true to its revolutionary discipline, he undertook his responsibility with dedication.

In recognition of his contribution to Namibia's Liberation Struggle, he was conferred with the Most Brilliant Order of the Sun 2<sup>nd</sup> Class on 26 August 2010 and it is therefore befitting that the Government has bestowed on him a solemn and dignified State Funeral.

To his family, our hearts go out to you as you go through the grief so overwhelming. May you find solace in the knowledge that he lived to see the independence of Namibia for which he spent his youthful life. As you walk through these dark clouds, may the tears of your grief wash away your pain and may it be that others step forward to follow in his footsteps and take up his mantle.

As Dr. Tjiriange's name is been written in golden letters in the annals of our country's history, allow me, on behalf of the Veterans of our National Liberation Struggle, my family and indeed on my own behalf, to extend our deepest condolences and sincere sympathies to the Widow, Mrs Juliane Tjiriange and the entire family as well as to all Comrades and the nation at large for this irreparable loss.

We bow down to pay homage to his immortal memory.

May His Soul Rest in Eternal Peace!



Sam Nujoma  
**FOUNDING PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**