

20 July 2023

The Children and the Entire Bereaved Family
of the Late Comrade Johannes Paulus Katanga
Katutura East Constituency
KHOMAS REGION

The Children and the Entire Bereaved Family

It is with great sadness that I write to bid farewell to one of the veterans of our National Liberation Struggle, a beloved father, grandfather and great-grandfather as well as a fine dedicated and committed SWAPO Party cadre, the Late Comrade Johannes Paulus Katanga, who passed on Saturday, 8th July 2023.

The news of his passing struck a deep and solemn note as the Late Comrade Johannes Paulus Katanga succumbed to illness and reminds us of the passing of the Late Comrade Matheus Shikongo, the former of Mayor of Windhoek, with whom he worked underground before independence, when a consignment of weapons of different calibres was sneaked into Windhoek from the war zone and given to the Late Comrade Katanga and Comrade Matthew Shikongo.

The remaining weapons were collected from them after independence by Brigadier General Sunnyherubi Amwaalwa “Shikololo”, the Late Lt General John Mutwa, Retired Brigadier General Progress Heita and Colonel Matty Heiky Amadhila, affectionately known as “Kamox”.

It therefore pains us that, once again, the stroke of death has taken one of the Veterans of our National Liberation Struggle who has been a tower of strength to his family which has looked up to him for reassurance and for certainty.

The Late Comrade Katanga was greatly respected and loved by his family, by his community, by his comrades in the SWAPO Party and by his friends with whom he had longstanding and cordial relations. Thus, we have lost not just a dependable colleague and a comrade. We have also lost a dear friend, who had many virtues. In this regard, I would like to join the community in paying tribute to his acts of bravery and gallantry for the total liberation of Namibia.

Indeed, the Late Comrade Katanga was part of a generation that fought fiercely for the attainment of our freedom and genuine independence. Like many of his generation, he was conscientised during the late 1959 when he joined Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO), the forerunner of SWAPO, in Windhoek.

He was part of the generation that kept alive the flames of liberation that the apartheid regime sought to extinguish by imprisoning our leaders or forcing them into exile. His political grounding in the workers' compounds and hostels in Windhoek, Swakopmund and in fish factories in Walvisbay was to establish in him a life-long commitment to fighting for the improvement of the conditions of the Namibian people.

This led to many arrests and tortures due to his political involvement. Firstly, in Outjo in 1968, and again in Swakopmund in 1969 and was later deported to Windhoek. In addition, he was banned from visiting the northern communal areas for fear that he will recruit many people to join the liberation struggle and mount resistance against the white minority South African colonial regime.

In 1974, in the aftermath of the Portuguese coup and the violence after the boycotted Ovamboland Bantustan elections of 1973, a large number of young Namibians joined us in exile to reinforce the fighting capabilities of the Combatants of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), SWAPO's Military Wing. Many of this youth were recruited by the Late Comrade Katanga in Kunene and Erongo Regions respectively.

Among those he mobilized to join the liberation struggle were people such as Israel Taapopi, Karl //Gowaseb, Johannes Konjore, Comrade Silas, James Tjivikua, Jones Boois, Charles Tjirare, Otniel Kaakunga and many others. These Comrades went on many missions driving to Buitepos to drop off recruits who were eager to join PLAN from high schools such as Petrus !Ganeb and Cornelius Goreseb.

One day, a group he led with Comrade Karl //Gowaseb was arrested near the border in Bophuthatswana, South Africa. But before the Police arrived, he hid all the evidence in the ground, including IDs and money of about 24 students who were in two combis. After being tortured for two weeks he was transferred back to Windhoek and released.

In October 1978, together with Kakune Kandjavera, Benny Petrus, the Secretary of the SWAPO YOUTH League (SYL) at the time, and Comrade Ithete, having arranged to transport over 36 young people, mainly from Uis and Khorixas Secondary schools, under the pretence of going to Vergenoeg to play in a Concert, he was one of the drivers who were arrested and spent 3 months in prison. They were represented by the Late Comrade Anton Lubowski in the Gobabis Court following their arrest.

The Late Comrade Katanga conducted many trips during the 70s into Angola to meet with the leadership of SWAPO as well as taking people into exile. His knowledge of Southern Angola was formidable and gave reassurance to many would-be freedom fighters.

In addition, he was one of those transporting many youths into exile, which included Willem Goeieman, current Judge President Petrus Damaseb, Kahijoro Kahuure, August Gaeb, a certain Kavari and many others.

It is for this reason that the Late Comrade Katanga was tasked by his team of Comrades Axel Johannes, Frans Kambangula, Ngeno Mushimba, and Sissie Kahewa Mushimba in 1976 to transport the Late Comrade Aaron Mushimba, his wife and seven children into Botswana because they were targeted by the apartheid regime, a task which he carried out diligently with flying colours.

When the apartheid regime intensified its repression, the Late Comrade Katanga worked tirelessly in the underground as he was trained by PLAN combatants inside Namibia as an Intelligence Operator. He was trained by renowned Commanders of PLAN such as Brigadier General Sunnyherubi Amwaalwa "Shikololo", the Late Lt. General John Mutwa, Retired Brigadier General Peter Heita "Progress" under instructions from Retired Lieutenant General Martin Shalli, who was PLAN's Chief of Operations at that time.

He was also trained for Military and Combat Work (MCW) under the auspices of the Late Lt. General John Mutwa and later under Comrade Hadibo in the general area of Techamutete. Furthermore, he was trained to work as an Independent Intelligence Officer (IIO) providing intelligence on the enemy to the leadership of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) at the Operational Commanding Headquarters (OCHQ), reporting directly to Retired Colonel Lameka Kalenga.

His training included the handling of weapons and ammunition and their proper storage, collection of information about the enemy as well as protection and concealment of combatants.

After the completion of his training, the Late Comrade Katanga was given operational directives by the Late Brigadier General Sunnyherubi Amwaalwa, the then PLAN Chief of Intelligence and his Deputy, Retired Brigadier General Progress Heita, before he was sent back to Namibia to continue with his revolutionary work.

His main activities also included providing the necessary amenities such as food, clothing, shelter and transport to the combatants of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) and infiltrating combatants and war materials from the Northern Communal Area through Oshivelo Gate into the Commercial Area.

In 1989, Comrade Katanga and four others almost lost their lives after falling into the enemy's hands. Their contingent that included the Late Lt. General John Mutwa, Colonel Andreas Shitilitha Ashikudhike, Comrade Mwenyo (the driver), and the Late Comrade Daniel Pohamba were caught in the area of Olupale in the Okongo Constituency. Only Comrade Mwenyo managed to escape but his direction and near-by bushes were rained with helicopter bullets. The rest of the Comrades were severely beaten. Their cash for food and fuel was confiscated. Fortunately, the group was later released.

After independence, the Late Comrade Katanga was one of the dependable comrades and supportive person as he helped to accommodate many repatriated Comrades and ex-plan fighters from exile who needed a place to stay in his house at Shandubala suburb in Windhoek.

As we pay homage to him today, let us remember him for what he was, a dedicated and committed SWAPO Party cadre who loved his people and put them above love of self. It is not enough to eulogise our departed comrade. We must complete what he was not able to finish in his lifetime, that is, building our nation and an ethical state led by selfless men and women of integrity and of conviction such as those who belonged to the glorious generation of freedom fighters who with a majestic sense of purpose and through their endurance and selfless sacrifices saw us through to final victory.

To the family and all those who knew him closely, our hearts go out to you as you go through the grief of a loss so overwhelming. It is our wish that you are consoled by the knowledge that the formidable and enduring legacy of the Late Comrade Johannes Paulus Katanga will live on.

As you lay him to rest, allow me therefore on behalf of the Veterans of our National Liberation Struggle, the Nujoma family, and indeed on my own behalf, to convey our deepest condolences and heartfelt sympathies for this loss. It is also my sincere wish that we may all be comforted and granted fortitude during this difficult time of mourning.

May the revolutionary spirit of the Late Comrade Johannes Paulus Katanga continue to guide us as we chart the future destiny of our country.

May His Soul Rest In Eternal Peace!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sam Nujoma', written over a horizontal line.

Sam Nujoma
FOUNDING PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA