

*An interview used in "Attacking the Heart of Apartheid: The ANC's MK Special Operations Unit" (Penguin, 2025), Yunus Carrim*

## **MK Special Operations Unit Project**

### **Interviews**

**Phillip Makwale Nyalunga (Mkhululi)**

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#### **Tell us a bit about your political history? How did you become politically aware and why?**

When I was doing my Form 1 schooling at a boarding school in Vryheid in Natal in 1975, we had a big library, so we used to read a lot, and I started questioning a lot of things. It was a Catholic school. I would see that the white man and the black man were not staying in the same convent. Then I started asking why if they were saying we are all Christians, were we staying separately. I became discontent that they were saying we are all people of God but they allow this discrimination.

After finishing my GEC (General Education Certificate) I went to another boarding school in Empangeni in KZN. The IFP was still called Inkatha yeSizwe and they wanted to recruit us. I challenged them – this doesn't work, why would a former member of the ANC Youth League, Buthelezi, still be preaching peaceful ways because the ANC is in the armed struggle, and why is he opposing sanctions? Buthelezi was just like the other Bantustan leaders, it's just that KwaZulu didn't celebrate its own Independence, but they even had their own police and so on.

To my surprise in June 1978 when I was doing Form Four and came back home for holidays in Daveyton, I was told there was a special branch guy who came by my house looking for me, but he didn't know me. I didn't have an idea why he was looking for me and how he knew where I lived. After some days he came again and I was at home. He said 'what are these things that you are doing in KwaZulu', and I said, no, I'm doing nothing. He said, 'no, we know about you', he knew that I had been expelled from school before I received the letter that I was expelled and that I was not wanted in all schools of KwaZulu. It was signed by Oscar Dhlomo (Inkatha leader and KwaZulu Legislative Assembly member). He was the responsible for education in KwaZulu.

When the schools opened I went to fetch my trunk and my other belongings. I didn't go home but went to stay with my cousins in Pretoria for six months. I decided I am no longer going to attend school in South Africa but leave the country, and I recruited my elder brother, Julius, my cousin, Isaac Sibeko and two friends, Steven Sibeko and Happy Bhengu. That was 1979. We went to Swaziland.

### **How did you get there?**

We had no contact with the ANC. There was a just an old guy that used to transport people across the country whether you've got a passport or not. He was not linked to the ANC. When we went across, the guy left us at the border because we had no passports and he had other passengers with passports. We had to jump over the fence and he was going to meet us on the other side but, unfortunately, before he could come, there was a Swazi patrol that spotted us and the five of us got arrested. They asked us and we said the transport was supposed to pick us up so when that guy arrived they stopped him but didn't arrest him, but they took our bags and then went to the police station. We said we want political asylum and they took us to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) to apply, and then to the Mawelawela refugee camp. There were a lot of us from South Africa there. We then made contact with the ANC and were taken across to Mozambique.

We met a Comrade Maseko – I can't remember his first name – who left the country in the 60's and Stanley Mabizela (ANC representative in Swaziland) and others.

We arrived at Matola and stayed with other ANC comrades who'd also just arrived from South Africa.

### **So did you jump over the border fence into Mozambique?**

No we crossed legally. The ANC arranged that.

The ANC asked if we want to join MK or go to school. Steven and I decided to join MK and my brother, cousin and my other friend decided to go to school. We were taken to Angola for military training. First, I was at the transit camp in Viana, then to Quibaxe for about six months. I was chosen to leave for East Germany in 1980 for a six months course. We were trained in military engineering and explosives and we came back to Fazenda in Angola. I then went to Quibaxe, then Funda, which is the transit camp to come back into the country. I was taken to Mozambique where I joined Special Operations in 1981.



**Makwale Nyalunga when he joined the ANC**

**Let's come back to East Germany, can you tell me a bit more about your training?**

Mostly it was about urban warfare, operating underground, and political knowledge, but then out of the group of about 40 we had to specialise. I was chosen to specialise in engineering relating to explosives, and you had to be good at mathematics to do that.

**Who did the political education?**

A German professor through interpreters.

**What was life in East Germany like?**

I was in Teterow. Clifford Brown was also with me and Able who died with Clifford Brown in that operation.

We had no contact with the local community. Some of them were cooking for us, but otherwise we didn't meet local people. We only mixed with our instructors and lecturers. But they did take us out to the former concentration camps, Auschwitz and others, and a few other places of interest, but we didn't do much sight-seeing.

**When you get back to Maputo who approached you to join Special Ops?**

George Douglas who was killed in Swaziland. At that time I think he was working with Rashid, who was working with Obadi (Montso Mokgabudi), (the first Commander of Special Ops, who was killed in the Matola raid). After Obadi was killed, Douglas became responsible for the groups that went to East Germany for training and I was with him there. He was in charge of us, so when he became the Commander of Special Operations I was called to join it.

**So he was the Commander after Obadi?**

Yes, Rashid was his second, then Rashid took over.

### **What did Comrade Douglas tell you about the role of Special Ops?**

When I joined Special Ops I knew that it operated as a separate entity with a direct command from OR (Tambo) and JS (Joe Slovo). We did not operate like other units. When I was in Maputo, JS used to come to our residence and brief us about our operations but there were also other units, like Gebuza's, and we knew some of those guys but we didn't know their operations.

### **What were your activities in Special Ops?**

In 1981, I was tasked with the late Johannes Mnisi (MK Victor Molefe) to do reconnaissance of the power stations in eastern Transvaal, like Arnot, Camden and others, with the intention of sabotaging them.

We jumped over the border and went to Mamelodi. Victor is from there, we arrived at his brother's place before doing the reconnaissance. We had to arrange transport and all that to go to those areas but unfortunately for me it was Victor who had to go as malaria got me. I was from the Kashito camp in Angola where malaria was very bad. That camp had to be closed.

I fainted and I don't know what happened – and I only woke up in Swaziland. I was confused about how I came to be in Swaziland. And I woke up in a residence that was not a Special Ops one. (John) Nkadimeng (ANC, SACP and SACTU leader) and Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma were there when I woke up. They asked me what I needed and whether I was feeling okay. I said I am fine, I can't remember anything, where is Victor (Mnisi)? He had already gone to Maputo, they took me there, and I met Victor. I said, Hey, what happened there, Chief? 'I had to carry you over the border,' he said. Hey, you saved me, I said, because if I was taken to hospital I would be in trouble without any papers.

### **So you didn't do any reconnaissance?**

I didn't participate in that reconnaissance. After Victor brought me back to Swaziland, he went back and did the reconnaissance.

I was knocked out for a few days.

Victor did that operation with other MK members. I was in Maputo by then. Then we had to go back to Funda in Angola because JS said there was nothing serious for us to do. In 1982 or '83 I was taken to a camp in Nampula in Northern Mozambique. There were also guys there from ZIPRA (Zimbabwean People's Revolutionary Army). Our guys were sent there – it was a port – to be

smuggled inside the country through the sea, but that was just a failure, and nothing was happening there. We complained big time to (MK Commander Andrew) Masondo.

There were more than 100 of us, including Zimbabweans, there for more than a year.

### **Doing nothing?**

Bugger all!

### **You must have been immensely frustrated?**

There were no logistics. We had to barter with the local people.

The Commander was Puguchwe. He was from the 60's but they moved him after our complaints and they brought in Livingston Gaza. He kept saying, 'guys, we are closing this place, but to protest in an army is a mutiny'. Anyway, there was a guy with a truck we asked to come fetch us, as if he was coming to fetch water, but we already packed our belongings, and we had 4 AK's. When that guy arrived we put our belongings in and told him we are leaving.

The leaders tried to negotiate with us. We said, no, we are tired of this. We rather go back to Angola to our camps, it's better there, and then we wanted to leave for Maputo. Before that we had sent a message that we are not going to speak to anyone else except Joe Slovo and (Moses) Mabhida (ANC, MK and SACP leader). We were tired of Masondo telling us lies – and Joe Slovo came to Nampula. We said, comrade Joe, you can call it whatever, but this is not a mutiny, this is a failure, that's all, we wanted to go back to our camps, we couldn't sit there and rot. He told the other leaders that he tried to convince us that it was a mutiny but we would not agree, so he gave up. They ended up closing that place and everybody was flown to Maputo and then back to Angola. That was before 1984.

### **Was Slovo empathetic with you or not?**

He was empathetic but he had to talk like a leader...

### **What happens when you're back in Angola?**

We could see that in the Viana transit camp in Luanda, the security guys had got the wrong information that there was a mutiny in Nampula so there was tension. (Joe) Modise told them that. I think the Commander there was

comrade Mahlangu. OR Tambo was in Luanda by then. So, he came to Viana. We had told Masondo in Nampula that we wanted to see the President.

### **How many of you from Nampula had flown back to Angola?**

More than 40. I don't know where the others from Nampula went. In Viana, Masondo came to see us. We told him no we don't want to discuss anything with you, you have been there to Nampula many times with promises, we are not impressed, we want to see the President. 'Never ever in the organisation had people demanded to see the President,' he said. When OR Tambo came, he apologised. The Nampula issue was just a mess, he said, I salute you Commanders. From there on we were respected (laughter), no one was suspicious of us. I went back to special Ops and was sent to a refresher course on explosives in Russia.

From there we went to Maputo again for Special Operations, we were supposed to come into the country. Victor came into the country to do reconnaissance and arrange transport. There's a guy that I had met with him when we came into the country earlier, his friend Mike (Philemon Malefo), he hadn't joined the ANC outside but was a person who we got help from inside - and he got arrested because he had a Makarov and it was found out. Victor phoned Mike to meet him at the border when he was going to cross, but that guy didn't tell Victor he was arrested and when Victor crossed he was arrested also. Then we were also arrested in Swaziland trying to go to Mbabane.

Rashid and this guy who took over from Obadi, Douglas, were supposed to meet Victor at the Swazi border. It was not known that Victor was arrested, but when he was communicating with our guys Victor used the special way to convey that things were bad, he used the word *kutswembu* - which is a signal, a warning, it means things are bad, I've been arrested, it's tsotsi taal (a type of township slang). But our guys didn't pick that up and they still went to the border. When Rashid and Douglas went there, Victor didn't point the security police to their car and so they went back and Victor thought he had warned them - which means they shouldn't come.

When the police saw that Rashid and them were not there at the border, they told Victor phone them again. So Victor phoned George Ndlovu. He was an auxiliary staff guy, he was working with (George) Nene, so Ndlovu and Douglas went to the border. And they were shot very badly and the car burnt and the comrades were later only recognized by their rings. ( According to the TRC records, "MK Brown" and "MK George" were killed. They were actually Chris Nungu and George Ndlovu).

That is how we knew that Victor had been arrested. The two comrades who died didn't go and fetch Rashid. I think if they went to fetch Rashid, he was going to say I'm not going there for the second time. I went there the first time and we didn't make any contact, there must be something wrong.

Anyway, so we who got arrested in Swaziland, about seven or eight from Special Ops, were deported to Maputo.

### **The names of the others?**

They had MK names. I can't remember all. There was Danny Boy and Derrick. Most of them passed away.

When we were in Maputo Slovo told us Victor and his brother, whose MK name was Jackson, had been arrested. His brother was arrested earlier. He had agreed to work with the police. Now Victor was also there. Victor's brother was in another MK unit, not Special Ops.

Victor's suitcase was in the residence in Maputo, and if you were arrested, to us, it means we'll see you the other side of the revolution. Victor was huge, none of us could fit into his clothes or his shoes (laughter). We told Joe Slovo 'Comrade Joe we have decided to share Victor's clothes among ourselves'. But in actual fact we sold them. Now what if he comes back (laughter)? And to our surprise Victor came back (laughter) – but now he couldn't ask us about his clothes!...

1984, Mozambique signed the Nkomati Accord, and we all had to cross to Swaziland. The organisation was not prepared for that. We were 12 in one residence in Ngwane Park (in Manzini), and the Swazis raided it. And there were only five guys who were armed with one AK and four pistols, and the Swazis had surrounded the house. They said, hey you come out, and I told our guys with those arms, hey, don't shoot because if you shoot they'll shoot back. They tried to get in through the windows and we pushed them until ultimately we decided that those of us that didn't have weapons will go out first, then when we were outside, the others must shoot into the air just to disturb the Swazis so that we can run away.

Desert, who was in Special Ops, came out first. I followed Desert. I was just standing in front of this tall Swazi guy with a cap. Our guys fired – and this Swazi guy fell. Shit, now we are in trouble, we tried to run away, we were captured. At Manzini police station, the Swazis were angry. That Swazi guy, Dlamini, died.

### **Why didn't the Swazis shoot back from outside the house?**

I don't know. I thought the Swazi guy fell because he was scared. I didn't at first realise he was killed. At Manzini police station, hey, they were very mad.

**Rightly. Why shouldn't they be mad at you?**

Yes. In siSwati they said 'you are shooting under a tree' - meaning a tree is supposed to give you shelter. They were trying to say that we were staying there as refugees, they are giving us shelter, but we are shooting at them.

They said deport these guys. We were in the passage. The cells were full. There were other comrades arrested. Desert, Cooper, Tebogo, Ndongeni and me and three others were there.

**Were all of you in Special Ops?**

Yes. And after some time in the cells, the police came in. The first two were Tebogo and Ndongeni – they put them into leg irons, though they were still in handcuffs.

Then the next two Cleopas and More. Cooper, Desert and I were cuffed together. There were no more leg irons. They took those four away from us and we thought that maybe they were separating us for further interrogation to know what happened, who did the actual shooting, only to find that those guys, the very same day, were taken to Bhunya police station and handed over to the Boers. The Boers came to the police station and took them away literally.

**Why did they choose those four?**

No, they were not chosen. That's what I'm saying - when we were sitting in the passage, they were sitting in front...

**So, it was just coincidental that the three of you got saved?**

Yes, because they ran short of leg irons (laughter); there was nothing specific about it (laughter). Because if you look at the four of them, only two really operated, the other two were new in the organization. They did nothing yet. But then the police took them and turned them into *Askaris*. They were kept for six months without anyone knowing, without any communication, and they agreed to work with the police. But the only one that knew something was Tebogo. When I read his confessions there later, he was singing like a canary, he just got desperate. But, you see, your organisation, they do nothing for you,

they don't care, they tell you a lot of stories about what they'll do when you are arrested, but nothing happens.

**So, what happens to the three of you after your arrest in Swaziland?**

We went to court for illegal possession of arms, illegal aims and so on, but on the murder part, they couldn't touch us. We were sentenced to three months, which we served at Matsapha Prison and then deported to Tanzania.

**Did the ANC arrange legal assistance for you during the court process?**

When we appeared in court there was no lawyer there. The movement was disorganised by then.

Then we were deported with a large group.

**So, what happens in Tanzania?**

We were in Dakawa in Morogoro, where the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College was. It was a new place there. Barney (Molokoane), Faku (Velaphi Msane) and all of us were there. I was sent to Camp 22, then to 18. There were new recruits there, and we had to prepare them before they went for training in Angola. Kofifi was the Commander and I was the Commissar.

I also went with some of the guys who came with me from Swaziland to train with the Tanzanians for six months, and after that I was back to Zambia, where I was back with Special Ops. Valdez (Xolile Sam), Pule (not from Ernest Pule's family), Vicks (Velaphi Mbele) and I were sent back into South Africa to operate from inside. Vicks was in the Voortrekkerhoogte operation with Barney. This Pule was not Ernest Pule.

**Were you given specific targets?**

No, not specific targets. We came from Lusaka into Botswana across the Zambezi River. Vicks and Pule left first for the country and went to Soweto. Valdez and I remained in Botswana waiting for them to establish themselves and then communicate with Ernest Pule and Tommy (Lester Dumakude), who later passed away.

Tommy was in charge by then. After some time, they sent a message that Valdez and I must come in. But then Vicks and Pule had a quarrel and they were trying to come back to Botswana. But they got into a confrontation with

the police and were killed. I'm not sure which area, but they were buried by their families while we were still in Botswana.

We were staying in a house with Kali (Anton Christopher) a few doors away from the house of the president of Botswana. He was in Special Operations. I think he's now living in Randburg. Kali was working at the university in Botswana and his friend had left for the December holidays, so he was looking after the house, but he put us there so we were like garden boys. Valdez would be the one who would go out, I would not, until we infiltrated the country. This was in 1986.

We came through Botswana with a guy who was working on a farm in Bophuthatswana. He has since passed away.

We caught a bus to Johannesburg. Valdez is from the Eastern Cape, I'm from the East Rand. We arrived at Park Station. When I left the country, there was no train from Johannesburg straight to Daveyton, we had to change in Germiston, but now there was a direct train. I checked the lady in front of me bought a ticket for R2 to Daveyton so I paid R4 for the two of us. At Daveyton station the buses had mesh wire so we decided to get a local taxi. I knew my brother's place opposite the main street. Then we walked through the bazaar. We didn't carry any luggage but we had our Makarovs and grenades.

Anyway, I knew the address as 5173 Kensani Street. When I left the country my brother, John, didn't have a car. But now there was a gate for the car. So, I thought he'd moved. But when I knocked, we were met by my brother's child. He said 'come in' and he looked at me and smiled, and said 'do you know who I am?' I am your nephew' – and I thought if this one can recognise me, then it's bad news (laughter). Where's your father? 'He's at work'. And your mother? 'At work'.

When they came back they found us there.

**When you suddenly appeared at your brother's house was he surprised to see you?**

Yes. The police used to come to my parent's house with stories that they've killed me.

**How did his son, your nephew, recognise you? How old was your nephew when you knocked on the door?**

I think he was high school level. Maybe he saw photos or whatever, but we also look alike.

So anyway I introduced my brother and his wife to Valdez as Thabang, my friend, but they knew I was in the ANC and didn't ask too many questions. I told them we will be around for some time. We stayed with my brother while we were trying to establish communication with Botswana. But now the problem was with me. Valdez is from the Eastern Cape. No one knows him in this area but I am known.

One day my brother had a function and a guy called me by my nickname that was used at home – Glen. And I said, don't call me Glen, I'm not Glen, that's my cousin, everybody thinks I'm that person, I'm not that person. Later I told this guy, Listen here, I'm Glen but if I hear you said this to anybody, you are a dead man. And then from that day I decided to leave.

I went to Vosloorus and stayed with my cousin in Mailula. I established myself and then I invited Valdez to come. Valdez was staying in Mabuya Park with a lady called Thandi. There were new houses in Mailula Park. I presented myself as a teacher. We recruited two guys who were real teachers, and my cover was that I was a teacher in Thokoza. So, I wake up in the morning, put on a suit and a tie, and go to the side where Valdez was staying. In that area they knew us as high profile criminals (laughter). And if I woke up late I didn't go out, only after school with a loose tie, like a teacher at work.

We made contact with (Ernest) Pule and them in Botswana. We told them that we had had recruited two guys. Most of the time we would send one of them, Gabriel, to Botswana. Gabriel would meet Pule and Tommy there and would come back with messages and DLB (Dead Letter Boxes) sketches and so on. Gabriel was a born-again Christian so when he was going to Botswana he was being absent from church. So the church asked him why are you being absent so much? So, Gabriel was not that available.

Once we sent Gabriel to Botswana and we're sitting in my cousin's place in Vosloorus. There was this guy, Sicelo, who was owning an undertakers in Vosloorus but he was driving for SAB (South African Breweries). He said he had a passport and travelled to Botswana for SAB deliveries. I said to Valdez, here's our chance, let's send this guy across because Gabriel can't go there. We told this guy we are diamond dealers, go and meet our contacts there. This guy likes money and he agreed. We phoned those guys in Botswana and said don't talk any politics with him, he knows us as diamond dealers (laughter). We gave him Gabriel's car. He met Pule and they took the car from him. They booked him into a hotel. He came back without a car and he had to go and fetch it the following weekend.

The following weekend when he came back to us he said it was fine, they entertained him in a nice hotel but those guys are also South African. I said, no, they are Tswanas, they are black because they stayed there a long time. I asked him if he was prepared to go back and fetch the car. When he arrived at the other side they told him the deal had failed. So, he came back to us. He knew where Valdez was staying, not where I was staying. He said those guys said the deal had failed, but he was not convinced, he thought maybe we were robbing him. So, we gave him R200 from the money we'd hidden, but he was not satisfied.

He was not aware that we were political. But now it became a problem. All the time he kept asking 'you guys, you have nothing now?' We said, no! We told ourselves we are not going to send this guy again. I became fed up. I said I'm tired of running away from this guy. When he came again, I said, no, let's go to my house and talk. When we got there, I said, Chief, in actual fact we are not diamond dealers. We are here on a mission. I took a pistol and grenade and put it on top of the table. I said: 'This is who we are!'

### **Was he shocked?**

He said, 'You should have told me!' He said he went across with the car, he could have been killed. I said if we told you, you were not going to do that. Anyway, he stopped troubling us.

### **So, you never saw him again?**

We used to see him but he never asked us for anything.

### **Why you were so confident he wouldn't go to the police and hand you over?**

We were prepared for anything, but he knew we knew where he stayed. Although we didn't bother him, he came to us and said we can send him, he would use the hearse from his family business. We said, no, it's fine. We decided we had to do our first operation because they had supplied us with limpet mines from Botswana.

### **What did the comrades put in the car from Botswana that Sicelo brought back?**

When the car came back there was nothing there, only a sketch. The limpet mines were sent with a guy from Botswana with a Ford Grenada who didn't know South Africa, and he only got up to Krugersdorp. They told him to bring the car to us for repairs, we were mechanics. But then they phoned us to say

that we must meet him at Krugersdorp Hotel. But we didn't know him and he didn't know us, but we were given his name. Gabriel, Valdez and I drove to Krugersdorp Hotel. The guy was not there. We told Botswana but they said he had arrived. We drove around in Kagiso to see if we can find him – and then we did.

The car with Botswana registration was parked there, and we went into the house and told that guy from Botswana to follow our Colt Gallant - and we drove to Vosloorus. We were playing safe because if they stopped the car and they searched it, we would not get caught too.

In Vosloorus, we put that car in my brother's place and removed the registration. The following day we sent that guy from Botswana with another cousin of mine to go to a shebeen while we were still organizing jacks and other things to open out the tank and take out the materiel. We told him that the car is fine, you can leave tomorrow morning. I had to take the materiel to my house, my girlfriend was at work, but now the house had a smell of petrol. I put this materiel into the speaker. I told my girlfriend that the smell of petrol in the house was because I was helping another guy with a car, but then we had to move this materiel

### **She didn't know you were In MK?**

She knew.

### **But she didn't know what you were really up to?**

No. We had to move that materiel back to Witbank and then organise extra materiel from Botswana. There was a DLB and Valdez went there with Mandla (Mandlenkosi Vilakazi) and Steve (Ramoepi Maboja) to pick up the materiel but when they went to my sister's place in Witbank, they did not find my sister there but a lady who was her friend, who was also helping us. Valdez decided to take this materiel to the place where this woman's sister was staying and when he left it there he told the husband there not to interfere with it. But when they told me what they had done, I said that you can't keep the materiel there because we haven't recruited those people. I then took it from that place to my sister's place.

We had already done reconnaissance of the NBS (National Building Society) building where the Special Branch were working from in Witbank. It was going to be a car bomb. We couldn't use a car that belonged to somebody we know. We had to steal a car so it can't be traced to us. A guy from Daveyton I knew organised us a Ford Cortina, which he stole in Dawn Park, a white area. But then we didn't know it's a black man's car (laughter). They drove it to my

sister's place, then they phoned me to say the car is there. I checked in the cubby to see if I can get some information about the owner and I find the owner is not staying far from my parents place, but now we can't take the car back (laughter)! Once it's done, it's done. We had to assemble the whole materiel there but we had to enlist the help of John Dube who lived in Mamelodi, who was also in MK. We hadn't been trained in the remote control mechanisms to trigger the bomb and he had to assist us in assembling it.

That morning we took the car. Ahead was the car with the explosives, we followed behind. They parked the car and came to our getaway car. Then as we are about to leave Witbank, about a kilometre away, we detonated it and drove back to Vosloorus. We used a two-way radio system, then at a certain wavelength, you can detonate the bomb. We then celebrated. Botswana knew already that the mission was accomplished.

### **Did it go according to plan? You hit the target?**

Yes. There were not only security police offices in that building, there were also businesses there. The security police did that deliberately to prevent us attacking them. But we parked the car where the parking was reserved for the Security Police only. The police came there every morning to report to work, then most of them left to different areas. They were mainly working in the Eastern Transvaal.

### **How many people were killed or injured and how many were police?**

I can't remember that. It was just before the municipal elections, in 1998.

I've got even the court case of these guys (Maboa and Vilakazi) that were arrested – the documents...



**Witbank Security Police offices operation  
24 October 1988, Beeld/ News24**

### **After the operation?...**

Well, you remember Valdez took the materiel to my sister's friend's sister's house, and he met her husband there? After the operation, when there were intensive investigations by the police, that guy began boasting that he knows the people who did it and

that we were in his house, and that got to the ears of the police, and they arrested him, and beat him up. He didn't know us but he pointed at his sister-in-law and they went to her. And she pointed to my sister.

We in Vosloorus didn't know about all this. We sent Steve to Botswana and he got money and sketches for DLBs. They were communicating with Valdez because I didn't have a landline where I was staying. On the morning of 7 November I started at my uncle's place and then went to check Valdez to ask when is Mandla coming back. Valdez said he'd left from Botswana with his wife.

I had only R5 and I went to a place nearby to drink a beer. When I was just about to turn into Valdez's street again I heard shooting. I thought it's a Guy Fawkes thing. But then I realised it can't be, and it was not the criminals also. I decided to turn back and I asked a boy what had happened. He said he doesn't know – maybe criminals. So, I went to see Gabriel and we went back to near Valdez's street but from another direction. We asked a guy to go and check what was happening there. He knew Valdez as a neighbour. But he didn't get close enough, he was scared, there were so many police there and he sent his wife. His wife came back and said the Germiston Special Forces had raided the house and Valdez had been killed.

We were going to leave for Botswana anyway. I saw the police moving in the direction of Mailula Park where I was staying. I said I'm not going there. I said to this guy, let's go to one of your friends who we've never met before because we can't leave Vosloorus. So, this guy told his friend we are going to church together, can we stay for the night here? That guy said fine, he was going to work night shift. When he came back in the morning he bought the paper which had news about a highly trained terrorist. Then he didn't want to hear anything and said you guys must leave. How are we going to leave, I said? But I told Gabriel, let's leave this guy, we can't trust him, and we took a taxi to Whiteville.

We stayed in Whiteville until the afternoon, then we went to Daveyton to the relatives of Gabriel Mthetwa. We had to establish contact with Botswana. We found another contact of ours, Herbert Mabuza, and I asked my elder brother to drop us in Johannesburg. We met with Herbert and he organised us a base with a white lady who was a journalist in Braamfontein. We stayed at that flat until we had established full contact with Botswana.

### **Did the journalist know that you were MK?**

Ya. Sally Sealy.

We went to Botswana and met Pule and them.

### **How did you get the money to get to the border?**

Herbert Mabuza went to Botswana to collect the money. We then went to Zambia. Chris (Hani) decided that you guys must go and cool off and I was sent to the Soviet Union for a course on counter-surveillance. I came back to Zambia, then to Botswana. We were given another operation towards the 'talks about talks' in 1990. It was on the Bophuthatswana Defense Force in North West.

### **With Pule and others?**

Yes. The only thing was that when we were supposed to disembark from our car and take on the Defence Force there were lights coming. It was two police cars following each other coming close to us, so we decided to start shooting at them. The element of surprise was gone and we couldn't go and attack the barrack and drive back. So, we left the car at the border and jumped over the fence into Botswana.

The armed struggle was then suspended and we had to go to Zambia to apply for amnesty. (Hein) Grosskopf (Special Ops member) used to laugh and say do you think they'll give us amnesty? We'll never get it. I said if Joe Slovo and OR Tambo are inside the country, how can they not give me amnesty? But I got it and came back in 1990.



**Makwale Nyalunga**

### **Briefly, after you came back in 1990 what happens?**

I was employed as the Head of the Exiles Reception Centre in the Vaal. Some comrades couldn't find their families when they came back. I then worked in Shell House in 1994 and 1995, and after the amalgamation of the security forces, I was deployed in the National Intelligence Agency.

### **So, where are those four cadres who became Askaris now?**

When I came back in 1990, I met one. We were still getting allowances, money from Khotso House and I met More. He said I hope you not like these others who say we sold out. He said, you know, we were betrayed by Swazis. I

reported to Shell House that he was carrying a police issued pistol. He even gave me his business card. I could see that this is a front company of his.

Tebogo was staying in Daveyton but he's from Duduza, I met him in the township. I just say hello. I don't discuss anything, I don't want to ask him what happened. He's still alive. The other two are in the North West and KZN. I know More died.

### **Did they continue to work for the police after 1994?**

No, they were given packages to leave.

### **Looking back now, who would you say stands out in Special Ops?**

Most of them were brave, I wouldn't single out any particular person. I wouldn't say it's Barney or Faku because we worked as a team, it's only that Barney was a Rambo-type. Many comrades died. But it was a very nice group to work with. I respect all of them. They were brave except those that sold out. Those four that I was talking about, but most of them never sold out. Most of them died.



Makwale Nyalunga post-1990

### **So what do you think of where the country is now?**

Well, after a revolution things change. We did what we had to for our liberation and that was right.

### **Why did you take to the armed struggle, why not participate instead in other aspects of the struggle, for example, the civics or trade unions or the political underground?**

When I went out of the country the unions were still young and political organisations weak. I felt they can protest and make a lot of noise but it was not so fruitful. People had tried it before but it didn't work. The only thing that'll bring some change would be the armed struggle.

### **I think it's really unfortunate that you comrades who did so much in Special Ops have not been sufficiently acknowledged ...**

Yes, we know that.