Namibians in Cangamba

A story of brotherhood between the peoples of Cuba, Angola and Namibia that was forged in the fight for independence and against Apartheid.

By JORGE MARTIN BLANDINO

Between 1975 and 1989, a crucial and bloody battle was waged in Southern Africa against the forces of racism and reaction which were determined to drown in blood the aspirations for freedom and independence of two nations in that continent: Angola and Namibia. During those tough years, the friendship between the peoples of these two nations and the Cuban people, who went to aid their brothers and sisters victims of an aggression, became as solid as steel.

A LONG AND JUST STRUGGLE

In 1840, Namibia was occupied by Germany. After Germany was defeated during the First World War, the League of Nations gave South African rulers the authority over the Namibian territory on which they imposed the Apartheid and where they tried to perpetuate their dominance. The resistance to the oppressors was lead by SWAPO (South West Africa People’s Organization) recognized by the United Nations as the legitimate representative of the Namibian people. Having tried every peaceful way, Namibians engaged in the armed struggle. In 1975, the struggle intensified after the independence of Angola that provided a decisive support for the patriots.

The South African regime response was to invade the Angolan territory again. On May 4, 1978, the racist troops massacred hundreds of Namibian senior citizens, women and children who had taken refuge in the Angolan village of Kassinga.

Cuban internationalist fighters who went to assist them also died near that place as a result of the attacks by the enemy air force. By that time, and for many years ahead, the aggressor had air supremacy in Southern Angola. With some ups and downs, this was the situation prevailing during the 70’s and 80’s. In 1980, with the extreme right takeover in the United States, the situation worsened. Angolan, Namibian and Cuban internationalist combattants faced together a long-standing stage of continuing aggressions. In this context, on August 2, 1983 a powerful group of the South African Army and UNITA attacked the Angolan village of Canguamba that was defended by an inexperienced unit with scarce armaments and munitions under the advice of 82 Cuban internationalist fighters.

The attack was defeated, first and foremost, thanks to the tenacious resistance of the defending unit, but also as a result of the decisive actions taken by the internationalist aviation and the hellish landsadings at the enemy’s rearguard. Here are the testimonies given, almost 26 years later, by two officers—one Cuban and the other one Namibian—who were key actors of that heroic deed.

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