



16 June 1960-1970

THE MASSACRE OF MUEDA

Exactly 10 years ago, the Portuguese colonialists perpetrated one more criminal act against our people, massacring several hundred Mozambican patriots in the township of Mueda. To a certain extent, that even marked an important point in the awakening of the Mozambican nationalism, and brought about real awareness of the impracticability of negotiating with the Portuguese, and therefore the inevitability of the armed struggle for national independence. Comrade Alberto Joaquim Chipande, who is today the Deputy Chief-Commander of the Mozambique People's Armed Forces and member of the Central Committee of FRELIMO, was in the front ranks of the people of Mueda, on that 16th of June. He was then a school teacher. This is what he tells of his experience:

"That event of the 16th of June had antecedents during the several preceding months. It began with the sending of a delegation by the Mozambican nationalists exiled in Tanzania to Mueda, at the beginning of 1960, a time when Tanganyika was in the process of achieving her Independence. The Mozambicans who, through political circumstances had been forced to leave Mozambique and seek refuge in Tanganyika, had formed here nationalist organisations—the Mozambique African National Union (MANU), from the Makonde African Union. Those organisations, encouraged by the approaching independence of Tanganyika, decided to enter into negotiations with the Portuguese authorities for the independence of Mozambique. They sent a first delegation, headed by Faustino Vanomba, to

present to the Portuguese Administrator of Mueda the demand of the Mozambican people. The meeting with the Administrator, Alves Delgado, took place, the demand was presented, but the Administrator refused to take it into consideration and sent the delegation away.

About one month later, MANU sent another delegation, now headed by Tiago Mula. The reaction of the Administrator this time was different: he arrested our comrades and sent them to Porto Amelia, from where they were taken to the prisons of Lourenco Marques. In April 1960, another delegation of seven arrived in Mueda, headed by Simao Mchusa and Modesta. They went to the Administrator, and explained the reason for their presentation: to negotiate with the Por-

tuguese authorities the independence of Mozambique. They were also arrested and taken to Porto Amelia.

Faced with this situation, the two nationalist organizations decided to send a joint delegation, composed of the top leaders of both organizations. They believed that in this way they would succeed in convincing the Portuguese authorities to attend to their demand. The Administrator again agreed to listen to them, but declined to give an immediate answer. Instead, he informed the Governor of the District in Porto Amelia about the situation and asked for instructions. The instructions came: the Governor himself would come to Mueda, to "address the people" and this meeting would take place on the 16th. This information was transmitted to our comrades Kibiriti and Vanomba, who went to stay with their friends waiting for that day.

Meanwhile the Administrator of Mueda was sending messengers to all villages of his area, telling the people that they should be in Mueda on the 16th, to listen to the words of the Governor. Nothing was said about the subject on which the Governor would speak—but as the people knew that his visit was related to the demand made by Vanomba and Kibiriti, everybody believed there would be discussion of the problems of the nation, independence would be negotiated—and the people prepared enthusiastically for that day. From all parts of the area of Mueda people began to move towards the administrative headquarters. Some walked for three days. Already on the day before the meeting, the 15th, Mueda Headquarters was full of people. It was an immense crowd. Early in the morning of June 16th, everybody began emerging from the houses and proceeding to the Administration Headquarters. Assembling for the meeting lasted the whole morning. By noon the whole place around the Administration building was packed with people.

At about 2.00 p.m. the Governor of the District arrived, accompanied by other members of the Government, administrative and ecclesiastic personnel as well as businessmen. The excitement of the people grew. The idea of independence had entered every mind—in fact we were convinced that the Governor had just come to announce when and where the transfer of power to the representatives of the Mozambican people would take place. When the Governor arrived, the ceremony of hoisting the flag and singing the Portuguese anthem took place. The Governor ordered silence, and that everybody should stand up. Nobody obeyed, the noise increased and everybody continued to remain seated. Portuguese police

men played their cornets, ordering to stand at attention, but nobody obeyed. The Governor ordered that the flag be lowered and hoisted again. Again nobody took notice of the orders given.

After that "ceremony", the Governor addressed the people, saying: "I am satisfied with the work of the people, and for this year the Government has plans to increase the economic development of our country. The most important thing will be the increase of the price of your products—cashewnuts will be bought a X escudos, maize at Y escudos..... (and he went on listing the prices).

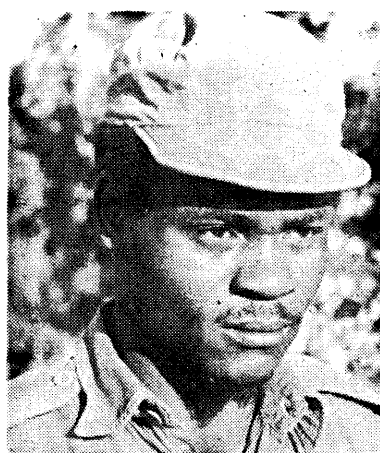
The people, feeling deceived, reacted against this speech by interrupting him and saying: "It is not your function to talk about these things, those subjects are dealt with by the Administrator. You must talk with Kibiriti and Faustino, who are your colleagues and our representatives. You must discuss with them the matters that interest us all." Unable to continue his speech, the Governor withdrew into the Administration building and sent for our comrades Vanomba and Kibiriti. Those entered the building. The people waited impatiently. About 15 minutes lasted the talk of the Governor with our comrades. Then they emerged from the offices and the Governor told the people: "I was talking to Kibiriti and Vanomba, and was informed on what you want. Is there anyone who wants to come here and repeat the demand made by those two?". Immediately hundreds of us stood up—but the Governor selected only 10 who were allowed to enter the building. Some policemen approached and put hand-cuffs on Kibiriti and Vanomba. Other policemen were ordered to beat the 10 Mozambicans. All this was done before the eyes of the assembled crowd. When they

saw this, the people reacted. When those who had been arrested were being taken to the Jeep, the people advanced. Armed policemen placed themselves in front, forming a barrier. They had guns, with fixed bayonets. The people did not care and continued to move forward, some towards the Jeep that was supposed to take the arrested people away, and others towards the Governor himself. Afraid, the Governor tried to run away, but was caught by us. We started beating him up. At that moment the police fired on us. They did not shoot into the air—but directly on us. I saw my comrades falling down at my side. The people started retreating and running away. The firing did not stop, on the contrary, it increased. The policemen shot the people who were running away. At that moment troops arrived, who had come from Porto Amelia escorting the Governor. They took positions on the northwest side of the Administration building and also started shooting. We were caught between two lines of fire, hundreds of people fell, I don't know exactly how many. I escaped by pure chance. I saw myself running over dead bodies until I arrived near a grave, about 50 metres away from the Administration. It was the grave of a Major who was killed in Negomano in the Second World War. I camouflaged behind it and looked at what was going on. I could see the whole scene. The shooting lasted for about five minutes. I saw things I shall never be able to forget. For example, under the Jeep there were some people who had taken refuge there. I saw the Portuguese police putting their guns under the vehicle and shoot and kill them all—one by one. Also, I saw the troops throwing grenades into the middle of the crowd.

Only when all Mozambicans had either fallen or run away out of sight, did the shooting stop. I remained behind the grave, hiding. I saw the priests who accompanied the Governor come forward and baptize the dying and assist the wounded.

Then a lorry arrived, some policemen climbed into it, taking with them as prisoners Kibiriti, Vanomba and the other 10 nationalists. I took advantage of that moment when they were getting into the lorry and ran away. When I arrived at the shopping area further away, I saw the people gathered again. Many were talking about returning and settling accounts with the Governor. But we were also aware that we would not have more success this time; we still had no weapons. Meanwhile we saw four Jeeps passing on the main road, with the prisoners: Kibiriti and Vanomba were taken to Mocimboa da Praia, the other ten to Montepuez.

The following days, during many days, heavy army and police patrols



Comrade Alberto Joaquim Chipande

continued in the area—nobody was allowed to go to the Administration.

Two weeks later a "Commission of Inquiry" arrived. It was composed only of whites. They questioned some people, and went away."

This series of events which culminated in the massacre of several hundreds of Mozambican patriots in Mueda, revealed the will and determination of our

people to be free and independent, and their fighting spirit. At the same time, these events also showed the falsity of the argument the Portuguese use to justify their domination of us: that they are "civilising" our people, that we are "happy" to be ruled by them, that we are "part of the Portuguese nation". The opposition of our people to that conception is well evident in the attack against the Governor.

That attitude of our people against

the highest representative of the Portuguese Government is symbolic. It is that very sentiment that inspires today the FRELIMO guerrillas who ambush enemy units and destroy Portuguese posts.

Thus, the 10th of June ceased to be a day when the dead of Mueda are mourned—to become instead a day when opposition and fight without truce against the system that killed them is reaffirmed.



Portuguese fulfilling his civilising mission