

Portuguese massacre TT reported by priests 10/7/73

By Father Adrian Hastings

Father Adrian, of the College of the Ascension, Birmingham, based this article on reports received from Spanish missionaries working in Mozambique.

Western Central Mozambique has for the past few years been in a state of continual conflict between the Portuguese Army and Frelimo (the Mozambique Liberation Front). Many Africans in the area, as elsewhere in Mozambique, sympathize with the Frelimo guerrillas, and give them food and shelter from time to time, partly doubtless under coercion.

The principal reason why they support the guerrillas is the brutal treatment they frequently receive from government representatives. This was true of the past but it is even more true of today. Faced with the growth of guerrilla activity, the Portuguese forces have grown ever more brutal, carrying out the systematic genocidal massacre of people in villages thought to have helped Frelimo.

There was a whole series of such massacres in the Mucumbura area between May and November, 1971, for ghastliness each rivalling that of My Lai, in Vietnam. The security forces feel free in the knowledge that there are no journalists for hundreds of miles and the victims know no European language; but the Spanish missionaries in the area obtained detailed information and themselves buried many of the victims.

As a result of their attempts to protest and bring what was happening to public notice the two Fathers, Martin Hernandez and Alfonso Valverde, were arrested and have now been in prison, untried, for 18 months in Lourenço Marques. Since their arrest early in 1972 many further massacres have taken place, the latest of which we know being that of several hundred people at the village of Wiriyamu last December. Hitherto no news of it has reached the rest of the world.

Since then all the missions in the country areas of that part have been closed by the Government so that it is hardly possible to obtain information of more recent atrocities.

The full account of the Wiriyamu massacre, carefully and secretly compiled by missionaries in the area, is as follows:

In spite of the difficulties which have arisen in making a complete list of the names of the victims of the massacre in the village of Wiriyamu, the sources of the detailed information we have collected give us the right to maintain the affirmation that there were more than 400 victims.

From our search we can vouch for the following facts: On the afternoon of December 16, 1972, the village of Wiriyamu was the victim of a military attack on the part of the armed forces.

Following a bombardment, the soldiers who had been transported here by helicopter and had already surrounded the village invaded it with ferocity, increasing the terror of the inhabitants already terrorized by the bombs. Once inside the village the soldiers started ransacking the huts, and this was followed immediately by the massacre of the people.

Continued on page 5, col 1

Continued from page 1

One group of soldiers got together a part of the people in a courtyard to shoot them. The villagers were forced to sit in two groups, the men on one side and the women on the other, so that they could more easily see those who were being shot. By means of a signal a soldier indicated whom he wished, either man or woman.

The indicated person stood up, separating himself from the group. The soldier shot him. The victim fell dead. This procedure brought about the largest number of victims. Many children at the breast and on the backs of their mothers were shot at the same time as their mothers.

Among others the following 86 people were shot:

Dzedzereke (adult man), Mafita (adult woman), Kuguniwa (adolescent), Birista (adult woman), Lwa (child of two years), Lekerani (adult), Sinoria (wife of Lekerani), Chandidi (son of Lekerani, five years old), Nguniya (adult woman), Tangucradzulo (adult man).

Zerista (adult woman), Tinta (girl aged seven), Aqueria (adult woman), Filipe (adult man), Bziyeze (wife of Filipe), Feta (son of Filipe, aged four), Meza (son of Filipe, aged one), Bwezani (adult man), Kapitoni (adult man), Bunito (wife of Kapitoni), Mamaria (wife of Kapitoni), Chaguene (son of Kapitoni, aged two), Chinai (son of Kapitoni, aged four), Kuoniwa (son of Kapitoni, aged 12).

Lianola (adult woman), Djemuse (adult man), Julina (adult woman), Adjipi (aged seven), Alista (adult woman), Misipho (girl aged 10), Nsemberembe (aged nine), Vira (adult woman), Tomasi (adult man), Artensia (girl aged 13), Duahnia (adult woman), Dzaisi (adult man), Maviranti (adult woman), Domingos (boy aged five).

Malodze (adult woman), Sederia (adult woman), Mboy (girl aged six), Guaninfua (boy aged four), Kachigamba (boy aged four), Kuchupike (adult man), Manani (wife of Kuchupike), Mapalata (wife of Kuchupike), Sirio (son of Kuchupike), Kutonguiwa (adult man), Maria (daughter of Kutonguiwa, aged three).

Sadista (adult woman), Florinda (adult woman), Sijia (adult woman), Kupensar (adult man), Olinda (girl aged 10), Laina (adult woman), Luina (adult woman), Aluviana (adult woman), Kuitenti (adult man), Caetano (boy aged five), Kuchepa (boy aged 12), Bziwenani (adult man), Njinga (adult man), Aluffinti (adult man).

Dzabere (girl aged 14), Aesta (girl aged 16), Rosa (girl aged 15), Zaberia (girl aged 16), Alista (adult woman), Mbiriandende (adult man),

Guideria (adult woman), Kembo (adult man), Kamusi (boy aged two), Chiteya (girl aged four), Suntutal (adult man), Adziwani (boy aged 12), Zeca (boy aged 12).

Magreta (adult woman), Dino (son of Magreta, aged two), Hortensia (adult woman, sister of Magreta), Mario (brother of Magreta, aged 10), Chuva (adult man), Kirina (wife of Chuva), Fuguete (adult man), Rita (girl aged four), Eduardo (boy aged seven), Tembo (boy aged three).

One woman called Vaina was invited to stand up. She had her child in her arms, a boy of nine months. The woman fell dead with a bullet shot. The child fell with his mother and sat by her. He cried desperately and a soldier advanced to stop him crying. He kicked the boy violently, destroying his head. "Shut up, dog", the soldier said.

The prostrate child cried no more and the soldier returned with his boot covered with blood. His fellow soldiers acclaimed the deed with a round of applause. "Well done, you are a brave man." It was the beginning of a macabre football match. His companions followed his example.

Other soldiers, wandering about, forced people into their huts which they then set alight and the people were burnt to death inside them. Sometimes, before setting fire to the huts, they threw hand grenades inside which exploded over the victims. In this manner, among others, the following 34 people died:

Chakupondeka (adult man), Bwambuluka (wife of Chakupondeka), Kulinga (adult man), Naderia (wife of Kulinga), Luwa (daughter of Kulinga, aged two), Maria Helena (daughter of Kulinga, aged four), Tembo (son of Kulinga), Keresiya (adult woman), Joaozino (son of Keresiya, aged two), Malota (daughter of Keresiya, two months old), Kanchembere (girl aged one month), Masanlambani (boy aged six), Chinai (boy aged five).

Domingos (boy aged five), Mboy (girl of 10 months), Chiposi (girl aged three), Augusto (boy aged one), Farau (boy, aged two months), Antonio (boy aged six), Anguina (adult woman), Jantar (adult man), Luisa (girl aged four).

Matias (boy aged two), Nchonde (boy aged one), Xanu (boy aged seven), Djone (adult man), Chawene (boy aged three), Lodia (adult woman), Mario (boy aged five), Fostina (girl aged 11), Rosa (girl aged four), Maria (girl aged two), Alista (adult woman), Boy (girl aged three).

Wandering about the village the soldiers found a woman named Zostina who was pregnant. They asked her the sex of

the child inside her. "I don't know", she replied. "You soon will", they said. Immediately they opened her stomach with knives, violently extracting her entrails. Showing her the foetus, which throbbed convulsively, they said: "Look, now you know." Afterwards the woman and child were consumed in the flames.

Other soldiers amused themselves by grasping children by their feet and striking them on the ground. Among many others the following died in this way:

Domingas (girl aged one month), Chanu (boy aged one year), Kulewa (boy aged three), Chipiri (boy aged two), Chuma (girl aged four), Maconda (boy aged two), Marco (boy aged one), Luisa (girl aged five), Mario (boy aged five), Raul (boy aged five).

Several officers of the Directorate-General of Security (DGS) accompanied the soldiers and were also involved in the killing. One of them before killing, began sometimes by attacking the victims with his fists until they were exhausted. Then he gave them the finishing shot. Among those who died in this way were Kupesa, a boy, and Chakupa and Djone, adult men.

Many people were taken outside the village and killed. On the following day many corpses of adolescents and children from 11 to 15 years were found at the Nyantawatawa river. They could be counted by tens. The bodies were totally mutilated.

Some of them had been decapitated and others had had their heads smashed. The corpses were lying about in different positions. Some were piled up in mounds, others thrown aside, some side by side, the greater number scattered along the river. There were indications that there had been some ghastly game before the victims were massacred. There were no survivors to explain what happened.

A voice with authority had kept on shouting: "Kill them all that no one be left." One witness said that an Army officer had suggested a policy of clemency, with the idea of taking these people to a fortified village, but the voice was heard to say: "These are the orders of our chief, kill them all. Those who remain alive will denounce us."

Two children found by accident after the end of the massacre were burnt inside a hut by the same officer of the DGS. These scenes continued until nightfall. Taking advantage of the darkness, which fell rapidly, some victims managed to escape death by flight.

There is no comparable episode on record in the history of twentieth century colonialism in Africa.