

Our friends have never doubted our accounts, based on the grim personal experience of the mass of our people, of the horrors of Portuguese colonialism. Others look for more «unimpeachable» and «objective» sources, however. Since such efforts to devalue our own testimony generally spring from a fundamental lack of sympathy with our struggle, rather than from some fastidious pursuit of the «truth» of the matter, we are not too concerned to convince the uncon-

vincable. Nonetheless, when documents do become available which bear out the evidence of our own eyes there is some point in giving them as wide a circulation as possible so that they may be used in various ways by our friends in the course of our joint struggle against the Portuguese. The documents on the next page represent just this kind of material. In the paragraphs below we provide a perspective from which the documents themselves can be viewed.

END OF A MISSION

On 15th May, 1971, Portuguese colonialism again came under international attack, but this time from an unexpected source and with implications reaching far beyond the specific incident itself. For when the General Superintendent of the White Fathers announced that, after 25 years in Mozambique, the order would be withdrawing from the country, the Portuguese were being assailed from within their own system, as it were, and by a powerful body which they could neither silence nor persecute in retaliation.

What is the story behind the White Father's withdrawal? More important, what are its implications for our liberation struggle?

This issue is a long-standing one. It began when the White Fathers first arrived in Mozambique and received, among other instructions, this one from the Portuguese authorities: «Don't forget that your first duty is to make good Portuguese, and then good Catholics. . . it is for that that we pay you.» That meant, concretely, that in their work among the people the White Fathers (as well as all other missionaries) should act as agents of Portuguese colonialism. Yet such an injunction inevitably created inner conflict among those honest missionaries who could not easily accept to be agents of an unjust, inhuman, backward, despotic — in short, colonial and fascist — regime. «This problem has been felt by us for a long time; it was not born overnight.

Why the White Fathers left Mozambique in despair

From the very first we became aware that the authorities considered us, wanted us to be their collaborators in the 'Portuguesisation' of the zone.» So commented one of the White Fathers, Father Mayte Barriain, who continued: «We tried our best to maintain a balanced approach, one which would allow us to continue in Mozambique, because we were concerned about the future of indigenous Christianity there. For that reason we delayed our decision to leave up to a point where we were left with absolutely no alternative.»

In their official statements on the reasons for their leaving Mozambique, the White Fathers point out the dangerous confusion which had come to exist between the Church and the State in Mozambique, the ambiguity of a situation in which their presence had become a negative

witness, and in which there was a collaboration between the hierarchy and colonial authorities offensive to basic principles of honesty as they interpreted them. These were in fact the basic reasons for their decision. But the immediate reason, that which hastened their decision is also important, though not contained in the official documents nor as yet given adequate publicity. Quite simply, this factor was the intensification of the repressive action of the Portuguese Political Police (PIDE-DSG) and the troops against the villagers, directly witnessed by these fathers in Mozambique, especially after FRELIMO started the armed struggle in the southern part of Tete province. Thus they saw ruthless acts of brutality, massacres of populations, destruction of entire villages; it is such horrors which parts of their report, reprinted below, reveal. The missionaries tried to protest, but were told by the colonial authorities to «shut up and not mix in politics». And it was precisely the demoralisation caused by their impotence in the face of the arbitrary terrorism of the Portuguese police and military that convinced the White Fathers that their only effective protest would be to leave Mozambique, hoping, in that way, to call the attention of world public opinion to the evils of Portuguese colonialism. «We do not have any means of putting things right on the spot, so our presence only creates a regrettable confusion among the people with whom we work», they concluded.

While appreciating the inevitable limitations of their action, we welcome the stand taken by the White Fathers, both as a contribution to the international effort to counter Portuguese propaganda concerning the colonies, and as an effective attack on the Portuguese regime — all the more effective just because it attacks Portugal on her own ground. Here is a segment of the church (itself one of the mainstays of the colonial regime up to the present day) which not only criticises the regime's physical brutality (as many have done before) but which dares to challenge, on the grounds of basic Christian principles, the very foundations of Portugal's «Estado Novo» and of her colonial empire: the «civilising mission», the «multiracial society», and indeed the fact of «Portugal in Africa» itself.

The full repercussions of the «White Fathers incident» are probably yet to be felt, but it has certainly posed many new problems for the Portuguese government. Increased repression to control dissidents within the Catholic Church based on the presumed existence of a «red threat» there might prove to be stretching credibility a little too far. Yet the Pope receives «terrorist» leaders, the World Council of Churches gives them money, and

now the White Fathers also turn traitor. At home, two of this year's major political trials centred around the stand taken by priests concerning the colonial wars; one openly declared the wars to be wrong and a second was accused of actually aiding the liberation movements! Small wonder that there exists growing consternation and even confusion in the Portuguese camp.

Of course, there have been one or two moves to placate the restless. The exiled Bishop of Oporto was allowed to return and more recently the old hard-line Salazarist, Patriarch of Lisbon and Primate of Portugal, Cardinal Cerejeira has been replaced by a younger person reputed to represent 'a much more liberal faction in the church hierarchy.' But this is little more than window-dressing; the powers that control Portugal cannot permit any drastic changes that would open the flood gates of revolt. Moreover, precisely because the church does on balance remain such an integral part of the present system, we must be wary of overestimating its own capacity for internal change. Thus we must not be taken in even when the window-dressing referred to above is extended to the colonies as seems likely to be the case: already one hears ru-

mours that Portugal is willing to consider the appointment of African bishops to the two vacant sees in Mozambique, for example. But note that this «requires guarantees that the men proposed will have the right attitude toward her presence in the overseas territories.» Here in this latter phrase we return to the real problem. Welcome as the initiatives of the White Fathers are, tempting as certain marginal reforms within the Church or outside it, may appear, one fundamental fact remains paramount: there can be no really effective opposition to the Portuguese regime, at home or abroad, which is not based on a political analysis and organised political action. In the short run, the action of the Church may, as could be the case in Portugal during the next year or so, reveal cracks in the edifice and compound the regimes' mounting problems, but it is not such action which will bring that edifice crashing down.

It is on such a premise, of course, that we in FRELIMO continue to intensify our own revolutionary efforts; and on such a premise that we also call upon all individuals and organisations genuinely concerned to redress the situation in the Portuguese colonies to provide us with full and effective support.

The White Fathers' Testimony

1. 27th April, 1971: A mine exploded near river Mukumbura. One car was blown up. In the car were Rhodesian soldiers. Three were killed and two wounded.

2. **Portuguese Reprisals.** On 4th May the troops caught 2 African farmers. They were physically tortured until they confessed about their relations with FRELIMO. They said that they had sometimes seen FRELIMO guerrillas, and one confessed that his son had run away to join FRELIMO. The farmers were kept prisoners and forced to sleep in the bush. The next day, again under torture, one of them revealed that another man from the village named Aroni, had a nephew in FRELIMO. Aroni was arrested and interrogated. He denied ever having seen or contacted FRELIMO. Even while under brutal torture he continued to deny this, until he discovered that the other villagers had betrayed him and then he confessed that his nephew had in fact joined FRELIMO. He was killed immediately by three shots in the head. The aim of this murder, the Portuguese explained, was to frighten the other vil-

lagers so that no one else would deny having seen FRELIMO fighters. Aroni's body was buried three days later by the priests from the mission as all the people from the village (Changwa) had fled when they heard that the Portuguese troops were coming to finish them all off.

3. 7th May, 1971: Portuguese troops killed 14 peasants in the villages of Kapinga and Catacha. The names of those killed were: Guidilo, Miriano, Grizi, Zeze, Tapureta, Caropora, Fungurane, Pitroce, Maizi, Matias, Kenete, Diquissoni, Langisse and Jona. Very few men remained alive in those two villages. When we arrived there we found the villages completely deserted: everybody had joined the widows and children of the 14 murdered men who had fled into the bush. We saw a hole near the river Dak where 5 of the murdered men from Kapinga had been buried — badly buried. Six meters away from the grave we saw a human head, ribs, fingers and leg bones. The people from the village of Mahanda told us that the men had not been shot, but had been tortured and



This picture shows a Mozambican badly beaten by a Portuguese DGS agent in Tete Province.

It was a DGS agent who told the White Fathers in Mukumbura: "The negroes only speak when they are beaten".

slaughtered. They showed us several heavy sticks stained with blood which had certainly been used to slaughter the victims. About 20 meters from the grave we found many empty Portuguese army ration tins.

4. On the same day, 7th May, the Portuguese soldiers killed 7 Mozambicans in the village of Mahanda. The names of those killed were: Chimuchamu, (he had a wife and 6 children), Ringuitioni (with a wife and 6 children), Pensura, (wife and 4 children), Wacheni, (wife and 6 children), Joane, (wife and 4 children), Gomo, (wife and 1 child), Eanhadza Saimoni, (wife and 4 children). We were given these details by the wife of one of the dead men. We also questioned many people from the village of Mahanda who, through fear of the Portuguese troops, are now living in the bush: all the names and other details coincide with those given by the first woman.

5. 8th May, 1971: Portuguese soldiers killed four people near the shop of a Mr. Gabriel in the village of Antonio. The bodies were not buried since the villagers were afraid that the Portuguese would kill them, too, if they caught them burying the dead. On Sunday, 9th when the priests went to Antonio village to celebrate mass, as was usual, they found the village deserted. However, after waiting for a long time, a man appeared and explained to the priests what had happened the day before. They went down to the shop, and with the help of some people who, encouraged by the presence of the priests, came forward, they buried the four men whose names were: Januario, Charedzera, Kaswaswaira, and Chirega. One had been killed by 3 bullet shots in the head, another by several shots in the chest, the third decapitated and the fourth had had his stomach cut open.

It must be noted that all the dead – 26 – were local peasants. Some of them very old with grandchildren. The troops were not successful in catching any FRELIMO member – this we were told by the agent of the Secret Police (DSG-PIDE).

6. Talks between the Priests and the Portuguese authorities at Mukumbura.

(a) with the agent of the DGS.

The priests told him that the massacres carried out by the soldiers and the DGS were inhuman, cruel and contrary to all human rights because the villagers were innocent. The DGS agent replied (in the first discussion after the death of Aroni):

«Terrorism must be fought with terrorism. If you priests have no stomach for these things, then it is better for you to leave Mukumbura. In a guerrilla war there are no trials: one death in time can save many lives. Listen, my friends, don't concern yourselves in politics. Your role is to preach the Gospel. And I can assure you of one thing, it is now that you will really start hearing the complaints of the Africans, because our measures will be more harsh and drastic. The situation in this zone is extremely explosive and politicised by FRELIMO. The human rights admitted by Portugal at the UNO about which you are telling me, are «books» (sic) and here we do not care about books».

(b) with the Captain – Company Commander.

He said, «Believe me, fathers, I do not know anything about that Aroni: you may ask the DGS agent. But you must think also about the 5 men of my company who were killed by the first mine, and the 3 Rhodesians who were killed by the second mine». The priests replied that one cannot answer an unjust act with another unjust act, that people should be brought to trial and not murdered that way. The captain answered, «The villagers are guilty, because they are to terrorism what water is to fish». Thus we, the priests, concluded that the troops intend to finish off with the water – the villagers – so that the fish will die.

7. Those talks took place after the first death. Next Sunday, 9th May, after burying the four Mozambicans from Antonio, the priests had another talk with the Captain and the DGS agent. The latter said that the answers he had given at the last meeting had been the result of the state of his nerves (but the priests believe that this new attitude was due to a talk he had had that very day with his chief, Inspector Sabino, from Tete). The agent tried to justify the deaths in Antonio, alleging that the men had been killed while trying to escape from an ambush organised by FRELIMO — he said — in the shop of Mr. Gabriel. The priests knew from many witnesses that this was not true. The ambush took place three or four kilometers from the shop. When the six soldiers and the DGS agent, who had remained in the shop to guard the prisoners, heard the shooting, they fired on the prisoners, killing the four of them. They then shot at the huts, threatening to kill also the women and children.

We have reported here only the deaths of which we are absolutely certain. But added to this there is the inhuman and barbaric way of the manner in which the 'natives' are treated (tortured) to extract confessions out of them about FRELIMO. The DGS agent said: «The negroes speak only when they are beaten.»

8. All the people from Changwa, Zambeze, Antonio, Mahanda and Catacha have run away to the bush or to Rhodesia. The fields, ready for harvesting, are being eaten by animals; the people escaped with empty hands to save their lives. The villages of Caponda and Canhembanhemba no longer exist. All the men who had returned to Chanhembanhemba were taken to Mague: the troops arrived one night and carried all of them off. Their wives and children escaped to the bush for the second time.

9. 7th June, 1971: A brigadier arrived, member of the Justice Court of Mozambique, sent by General Kaulza de Arriaga, (Portuguese) military commander of Mozambique, to explain the situation. This envoy asked for a private interview with the Mission Priests. The interview lasted about 2 hours. In short, the brigadier's position was this: «If you priests arrived at the site of the deaths the following day, that is, Sunday, 9th May, I cannot believe what you are saying because your information came from the blacks and the blacks are liars by their very nature. If you want to know what I think, it is even very probable that FRELIMO, on the night of Saturday to Sunday, made that massacre in order to incriminate the Portuguese troops to the villagers». The Priests replied: «Mr. Brigadier, what you say goes against the most elementary logic. How can the people of FRELIMO kill their own brothers if, according to your own information, the local people for seven years are giving them food?» The Brigadier said: «You Priests must know for sure that for them there are no brothers! Do you know there are still among the blacks, tribes who are cannibals?» The priests understood that it was useless to continue the discussion. They thought better to invite the Brigadier to go and see for himself the places where the massacres had occurred for him to be able to confirm all that the priests had told him.

The priests's report concludes in this way: «May be because it was very uncomfortable for him, the Brigadier left shortly after, by plane, to Nampula. Before departing, he did not forget to recommend us not to waste our energies in political matters, but to reserve them for the preaching of the Gospel, thus imitating Christ who had never been a politician. He gave us other lessons as well, about the Gospel and Christianity courses.»

LA VERITA

Excerpts from The Truth (La Verita) a statement by Father Cesar Bertulli, former Regional Superior of the White Fathers Congregation in Mozambique.

«There exists in Mozambique a situation of injustice in which the Africans, who are unilaterally declared 'Portuguese' without any previous consultation, cannot exercise their fundamental human rights as regards their freedom, self-determination, development of their language and their culture. . .

«The regime maintains this situation of injustice through total control of the means of communication, illegal scrutiny of private correspondence, indiscriminate raids, illegal and prolonged detentions, threats and torture adopted as a system by government in order to frighten all those who do not accept the official policy, or are suspected of having relations with the patriotic liberation movement.

«This is the prevailing situation of injustice for anyone who has eyes to see. But

those who actually see it and oppose it, or who are not openly aligned with the oppressive government, who doubt the 'unique, aeternal and indivisible motherland', who preach the Gospel and its justice, are silenced, calumniated, tortured or reduced to a condition in which they cannot tell the truth: they are even invited to become informers of the DGS. The missionaries often are expelled after interrogations where the most absurd and stupid accusations are levelled against them by informers and prisoners who had been infamously tortured to 'convince' them of what they must say.

«. . . If the bishops doubt the treatment reserved for political prisoners and for those arrested for purely political suspicions, they must examine the photographs and documents which were given to them: through them they can become

acquainted with the 'cavalo marinho' (whip made of hippopotamus skin), 'palmatoria' on the hands and soles of the feet, piercing pieces of wood under the knees, brutal beatings which normally result in the fracture of arms and skull, and often death, untold brutality in the genital organs until the victim loses his senses.

«And what if the shepherds experienced in their own flesh what so generously is reserved for their sheep? May be their view would be clearer and they would change their minds and would denounce the state of injustice that is the primary cause of all other injustices. For what is the use of denouncing privately one or the other of the innumerable injustices, if the cause from which they spring is not denounced? . . .»