MASSACRE AT MUEDA

On June 16, 1960, more than 500 Mozambican villagers attending a meeting with Portuguese officials were shot and killed by Portuguese police and soldiers. This event, passing unnoticed by the rest of the world, acted as a catalyst on the region (Cabo Delgado, which is now one of the liberated provinces) in convincing many Mozambicans that peaceful resistance was futile and armed struggle the only and necessary alternative to confront Portuguese oppression. Alberto Joaquim Chipande, now Deputy Chief-Commander of the Mozambique People's Armed Forces, was there and gives the following account:

"Some of these men(Mozambican leaders)had made contact with the authorities(Portuguese) and asked for more liberty and more pay... After a while, when people were giving support to these leaders, the Portuguese sent police through the villages inviting people to a meeting at Mueda. Several thousand people came to hear what the Portuguese would say. The Administrator had asked the Governor of Delgado province to come from Porto Amelia and bring a company of troops. These were hidden...we didn't see them at first.

Then the Governor invited our leaders into the Administrator's office. I was waiting outside. They were in there for four hours. When they came out on the verandah, the Governor asked the crowd who wanted to speak...Immediately hundreds of us stood up - but the Governor selected only 10 who were asked to stand aside. Then without another word he ordered the police to handcuff them and our leaders, and then to beat them. All this was done before the eyes of the assembled crowd. When they saw what was happening, they began to demonstrate against the Portuguese, and the Portuguese simply ordered the police trucks to come and collect these arrested persons. When (they) were 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 and others towards the Governor himself...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 in 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. At that moment, the Governor called the (hidden) troops to come out and open fire. We were caught between two lines of fire, hundreds of people fell...They killed about 600 people. I escaped by pure chance. I saw myself running over dead bodies until I arrived near a grave about 50 metres away...which I camouflaged behind and looked at what was going on. I could see the whole scene. The shooting lasted about 5 minutes. I saw things I shall never be able to forget. For example, under the jeep, some people had taken refuge, some policemen put their guns under the jeep and shot and killed them all, one by one. I also saw the troops throw grenades into the middle of the

crowd. Only when all Mozambicans had either fallen or run away
out of sight did the shooting stop."

Later, Chipande remarked that the 16th 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."

The experience of Teresinha Mblale, now a FRELIMO militante, illustrates
and supports this commitment to armed struggle: "I saw how the colonialists
massacred the people at Mueda. That was when I lost my uncle. Our people
were unarmed when they began to shoot." As President Eduardo Mondlane added
in his book, "she was one of the thousands who determined never again to be
unarmed in the face of Portuguese violence."

(Chipande's account was excerpted from The Struggle for Mozambique by
 Eduardo Mondlane, pp.117-18 and Mozambique: Stages in the Struggle by
 Bill Minter, published in "2...3...Many", a Committee of Returned Vol-
 unteers National Publication, Winter 1970)

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