

"THE SITUATION IS EXCELLENT"

Sharfudine Khan, the representative of FRELIMO in the United States, who just returned from Tanzania and Mozambique, spoke to the Committee for a Free Mozambique on Saturday, May 15. He told us of FRELIMO's progress and talked about the current situation in Southern Africa.

The latest Portuguese offensive was, according to Khan, in many important ways, beneficial to the growth of FRELIMO. In the fall of 1970, after the beginning of the offensive in June, General Kaulza de Arriaga announced that Portugal was convinced it could liquidate FRELIMO in three weeks. During the two month period of the fall offensive, the Portuguese destroyed crops and bombed villages. Napalm was dropped from jets and 50,000 Portuguese troops led the onslaught. But the people of Mozambique fought with determination, refusing to leave the hardship and responsibility. The FRELIMO militants fought with such expertise that they began to refer to the Portuguese troops as "waltzing" as they attempted to skip from place to place in order to engage the Mozambican people in combat. FRELIMO learned an important lesson from the Portuguese offensive--that FRELIMO's strength was far stronger than they had ever hoped.

Sharfudine reported that when General de Arriaga was recalled to Lisbon to explain the failure of the offensive, he admitted that he saw only Mozambicans fighting, that he saw no foreigners. Khan also pointed out that the Portuguese have begun to refer to the Mozambicans as "the enemy" rather than as "terrorists," thus finally admitting to the fact that the war is serious. That its colonial wars are crippling Portugal must be obvious to the Portuguese people, Khan said; there are, for example, 20,000 disabled veterans in Portugal.

"The current situation is excellent," said Sharfudine. "We have gained experience and have a firm belief in final victory." Khan said that FRELIMO continues to operate in three provinces--Cabo Delgado, Niassa, and Tete, and that we would soon be hearing that FRELIMO is pushing even further south.

Sharfudine reported that the Cabora Bassa dam has both Rhodesian police and South African troops protecting it (Rhodesians have already been killed inside Mozambique). The Portuguese have cleaned an area eleven miles around the dam site. But FRELIMO is not deterred. FRELIMO now operates within 25 miles of the dam site, as well as in other ways nearer to the dam. Since the beginning of December, 1970, four bridges on the Portuguese supply route have been destroyed.

Khan referred several times to the situation in the whole area of Southern Africa, pointing to signs that the area might soon explode in a holocaust. Yet however the Revolution comes, he asserted, the people would be ready and determined to win. He indicated that South Africa's increased armament, including weapons coming from the Western powers, is a sign that South Africa is becoming more and more aggressive. Khan felt confident that those countries which advocate "dialogue" with South Africa would be adequately dealt with by the OAU and that other African countries would also come to realize that South Africa's maneuvers are designed to divide and weaken Black Africa.

From his recent visit to Mozambique Khan reported that life in the liberated zones is normal except that the schools had to move around quite a bit during the Portuguese offensive.

Khan talked briefly of the horror of the armed struggle, reminding us that the Portuguese young men are forced to fight against their will, and that Portugal is encouraged in its colonial wars by the Western powers. There was no doubt in his mind that the Mozambican people, led by FRELIMO, would fight as long as necessary to win the final victory.

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

MASSACRE AT MUEDA, continued

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 Volunteers National Publication, Winter 1970)
