Wiriyamu 'is marked on Tete mission maps'

From Harry Debelius
Madrid, July 15 16/7/73

A Spanish missionary has confirmed the existence of the village of Wiriyamu in Mozambique, where a massacre by Portuguese troops is reported to have taken place.

In a statement released in Madrid on Saturday by the Spanish Foreign Missions Institute, Father Vicente Berenguer Llopis, aged 36, said that a Spanish nun and at least one male nurse from the Tete regional hospital, accompanied by a Portuguese public health official, saw the bodies of the Wiriyamu victims a few days after the alleged massacre. He did not name the observers.

The priest, who spent more than five years in Mozambique before leaving on April 16 this year to return to Spain on leave, was the pastor of the parish at Changara. He said that Wiriyamu "was a village near the mission".

Referring to official Portuguese denials of the existence of the village, he said: "This village definitely exists; at least, it existed until some months ago. It is about 25 to 30 kilometres (15 to 20 miles) from the city of Tete, in the triangle formed by the Zambezi river, the Luenha river, and the road which goes from Tete to Changara.

"It is not right beside the road, but a little way into the interior", he said. "Wiriyamu lies to the left of the road as you go from Tete to Changara."

He added that the village appears on the maps used by the Roman Catholic Church in Tete province and also on the maps at the San Pedro mission in Tete city. This remark apparently conflicted with Portuguese official statements that no such village appeared on maps of the region.

Father Berenguer also said: "I know that the Bishop of Tete, after being informed about what had happened, made an energetic protest to the Governor, and that some of the missionaries asked for permission to investigate what had happened and permission was refused." This remark implies that both the Governor and the bishop were aware of reports of the massacre, and it conflicts with reports from Mozambique to the effect that the Governor had no knowledge of such an incident. [A Portuguese priest visiting Britain, who also left Mozambique earlier this year but who wishes not to be named, confirms this. "We asked the bishop for permission to go to bury the

Continued on page 4, col 3

Conducted press tour finds no evidence of atrocities

Continued from page 1

dead, but he refused", he said. "The bishop said he would tell the Portuguese authorities and the Portuguese Red Cross."]

Father Berenguer said that the nun and other members of the group which saw the destruction at Wiriyamu flew over the region in a helicopter several days after the massacre. He added: "They informed the authorities about the corpses, which could still be seen at the place."

The statement was released by Father Jenaro Artazcoz, the Director-General of the Spanish Foreign Missions Institute. Father Berenguer himself was not available for further comment.

Our Salisbury Correspondent writes: A party of British and South African journalists are reported to have found the village where the alleged massacre took place which they refer to as "Wiliamo". They were taken to the area over the weekend by the Portuguese authorities who are anxious to prove to the world that the atrocities alleged by Father Adrian Hastings and other priests could not and did not take place.

One of the journalists, Mr Wilf Nussey, editor of the Argus company's Africa news service, says in a report published here today in the *Sunday Mail* that, after an inspection of the village site, a case for the atrocities had not been proved and was highly improbable.

He did say in his report however that he met a Spanish priest who was too frightened to say anything about what may or may not have happened in the area.

The village site, identified by Portuguese soldiers as being "Wiliamo" was a collection of burnt-out mud and thatched huts. The people who lived in the village had been moved and resettled in big protected villages called *aldeamentos*, which the Portuguese were building to protect people from the guerrillas. The occupants had left of their own free will—albeit in a hurry—and several other such scattered villages were to be seen in the area.

A Staff Reporter writes: Father Hastings said in London yesterday that he was extremely angry about the doubts cast on his story by a *Sunday Telegraph* report.

"I am still absolutely convinced of the truth of my account, and I am prepared to bet any amount of money that it was the truth", he said. "It seems that the newspaper is making every possible attempt to discredit me with this extremely rubbishy report, but I remain certain that this massacre did take place last year."

Father Hastings pointed out that the writer, Mr Bruce Loudon, said he went searching for Wiriyamu with a military escort.

"It is ridiculous to think that the villagers would speak openly about the massacre when the very people—soldiers—who perpetrated it, were acting as interpreters and guides."

Letter, page 13