

MOZAMBIQUE

MNR's Fernandes Discusses Foreign Troop Presence

*MB170600 London BBC World Service in English*

*1709 GMT 16 Aug 85*

[From the "Focus on Africa" program]

[Text] For some time now guerrillas of the MNR, otherwise known as Renamo, claim to have been tightening the screw on the Frelimo government in Maputo, the Mozambique capital. Certainly in June a meeting in Harare of heads of state of Mozambique's neighbors agreed to increase military support for Samora Machel's government. There are Tanzanian and Zambian troops in Mozambique, and Zimbabwe troops have been guarding the vital transport link with the port of Beira. But the MNR claims that foreign troops are now going on the offensive and that a lot more have been moved into Mozambique. The MNR's secretary general, Eyo Fernandes, is in London. Julian Marshall asked him how many foreign troops they claimed were active in Mozambique.

[Begin recording] [Fernandes] Today we have almost around 15,000 Zimbabwean forces in Mozambique. And we estimate that almost 7,000 Tanzanian forces are also deployed in Mozambique, and at least 3,000 Zambian soldiers who are deployed in Tete Province.

[Marshall] And have these troops gone on the offensive against the MNR?

[Fernandes] They are trying to start this offensive. This offensive has been very many times announced by Frelimo, because this is the period to launch offensive, we are in the dry season. Anyway, we are also launching our offensive at the same time, and we have been very successful to disrupt the logistical lines that supply for these international forces.

[Marshall] Is their presence in Mozambique, these foreign forces, going to make any difference to the war? I mean, surely, it is going to impede the MNR's activities.

[Fernandes] That's impossible, because Renamo is the Mozambican people and only by killing every Mozambican they could be successful in Mozambique. Sooner or later, they will be forced to leave the country, because we continue our activities, and as you know Renamo has not reduced the level of war in Mozambique till today, even with the presence of international forces in the country.

[Marshall] So if they (?are not going to) make any difference to the war, why do you object to them being there?

[Fernandes] Because first we think that this is a problem that should be solved among Mozambicans and not with foreign intervention. We think that when foreign forces are present in the country, they don't respect the people and this is what has been done till today. People have been killed by the Zimbabweans. Women have been raped and tortured. They are planting land mines on the small road where the villagers walk. Many people have been wounded because of this, and they die because of this. Of course, we object, and on the other side, if we think that the Tanzanians are controlling directly Cabo Delgado and Niassa Province; the Zambians are preparing to control Tete Province; and the Zimbabweans, the Manica and Sofala Provinces, and also in the southern provinces of Mozambique. We are facing the real division of the country, and Machel is giving to Zimbabwe, to Zambia, to Tanzania, the right to control and to (?achieve parts) of our country, and we must object.

[Marshall] Frelimo could of course argue that they are justified in calling for this foreign assistance because your own movement has had South African assistance.

[Fernandes] The problems is today, what happens today. The South African Government, and even the Maputo government, were forced to accept that since the Nkomati Accord we had not recieved any supply form the South Africans. Therefore today there is no reason for foreign intervention. This is the reason why Machel is announcing that we have Portuguese mercenaries in our forces. We challenge Mr Machel to show and to present these so-called white Portuguese mercenaries to the international press. And if Renamo doesn't have any foreigner in its forces, why the foreign forces are coming to Mozambique? We object to them (?there). Mozambique is for Mozambicans and not for the Zimbabweans or Tanzanians. This is the meaning of independence.