

Spanish priest confirms atrocities report Times 12/7/73

From Harry Debelius
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A Spanish priest who saw the bodies of victims of Portuguese troops in Mozambique said in Madrid today that the report of massacres there, published by *The Times*, was totally accurate to the best of his knowledge.

Father Enrique Ferrando, aged 38, who spent 14 years in Mozambique before being expelled from his mission in Mukumbura, said that he had personal knowledge of killings and tortures in the Tete area where the Wiriyamu massacre took place last December 16, although he did not witness that particular massacre.

He added, however, that he was convinced that the details of the Wiriyamu massacre, as published, were correct, because they coincided with reliable secret reports he received from Mozambique.

Commenting on a Portuguese Government spokesman's statement which cast doubt upon the existence of the village of Wiriyamu, Father Ferrando said: "They are right. It does not exist—not any more."

But the village, where 400 people are alleged to have been killed, was located in the district of Tete, three miles from the San Pedro mission in the African quarter of the city of Tete, between Reglo Marambo and Fumo Chimatsu, near the Caroeira mountains.

Father Ferrando said that he knew the area well because he personally founded the Mukumbura mission and spent eight years there. He spoke not of one attack by Portuguese soldiers on African villages in the area but of at least 19, carried out within Mozambique by both Portuguese and Rhodesian troops.

He added that at least one of these brutal punishment

attacks, on September 3, 1971, was carried out in Mozambique, exclusively by Rhodesian soldiers.

This attack, he said, was witnessed by two Spanish priests. He himself saw three Rhodesian helicopters and two Portuguese helicopters taking part in a military operation in Mozambique 15 miles from the Rhodesian border.

Father Ferrando, a member of a Roman Catholic Missionaries group, known as the Spanish Foreign Missions seminary (formerly with headquarters in Burgos and now in Madrid), said that the Portuguese authorities could not say in good conscience that they had no knowledge of a series of massacres.

He wrote personally to Dr Marcello Caetano, the Portuguese Prime Minister, and to other Portuguese government officials in the autumn of 1970, denouncing the first massacres at Mukumbura. Dr Caetano did not reply, but another government official did.

Guerrilla activity had been increasing in Mozambique over the past three years, in spite of the "punishment raids" carried out by government troops on villages suspected of sheltering or aiding guerrillas.

Father Ferrando said the Africans often gave shelter to the guerrillas, but sometimes it was because they were coerced. The Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) had about 6,000 trained and equipped guerrillas.

Father Ferrando was one of the priests who contributed to a controversial report signed by Father Luis da Costa, a Portuguese missionary, denouncing tortures and atrocities. The report was rejected by the Portuguese Government which

said that the incidents had never occurred.

One of the alleged incidents included the burning alive of 16 people on November 4, 1971. A survivor was reported to have told his story at a Spanish mission, where he was helped by two Spanish priests who were later jailed.

Father Ferrando said that the two priests who had been jailed without trial in Lourenco Marques since January, 1972, witnessed a massacre carried out by Rhodesian troops in Mozambique at Mandue near Mukumbura. The two priests even spoke to the Rhodesians in English and the priests had buried some of the bodies.

These were the two priests mentioned in Father Hastings's account, Father Martin Hernandez and Father Alfonso Valverde. Four other Spanish missionaries were expelled from Mozambique early this year, presumably for criticizing Government policies with regard to the Africans.

Shortly before Father Ferrando was expelled himself from his mission, he saw, he said, more results of Portuguese repression carried out in three raids at Mukumbura on March 16, 18, and 20, 1972. They were "one of the biggest military offensives carried out by the Portuguese army in that zone."

Because of his enforced departure from the region, he was able to gather only partial information on the results of the attacks, but he said he saw the bullet-ridden bodies of two villagers.

He also saw the body of Macaza, an old man who died from torture at the hands of Portuguese police. "In March, 1972", he said, "I saw Macaza arrive at Mukumbura. I knew him personally. He was brought

by helicopter and handed over to the police.

"That same day he was tortured by the DGS (Directorate-General of Security) and by the army. The next day he died as a result of the tortures. I went to his funeral."

In that same month, in the Mukumbura region, there were other incidents, he said. "When the Portuguese could not find any people, they shot down the cattle and goats which were grazing from helicopters, in order to deprive the people of this already poverty-stricken area of food," he said. "I counted more than 200 dead cattle and about 50 dead goats.

"I also went to a village where they had killed two old people and slaughtered all of the cattle in the corral. And I saw a woman whose hands were crushed by the Portuguese torturers. But, according to a Portuguese official inquest, these things did not happen."

News of the inhuman treatment of residents of Mozambique were kept from the world by Portugal's policy of allowing foreign journalists to enter Mozambique only on Government-sponsored guided tours, and by not allowing them to leave the official, established route except in unusual cases, and then only in the company of official escorts.

Referring to official denials of massacres and maltreatment in the jungle villages of Mozambique, Father Ferrando said: "We missionaries of Tete and Beira do not have enough imagination to invent all of the names, the dates, and the places. I wish that all of these incidents really were non-existent."