

Communist newspaper claims further atrocities. AFP Aug. 23, '73

Rome - The Italian Communist Party newspaper "Unita" claimed yesterday that South African and Rhodesian troops are carrying out a major anti-guerrilla operation in "liberated areas" of Mozambique, at the request of the Portuguese government, and have committed atrocities "without pity". Under the title "Direct evidence of massacres in Mozambique", the paper's special reporter "in zones liberated by Frelimo" said the "Boer" troops crossed the Zambezi on July 22, and ravaged every village in their path through Tete province. In an attempt to gain control of areas under Frelimo control for more than two years, the "Boers" carried out widespread massacres, the paper said. A few survivors are now making their way across mountains and forests, and were "on the point of reaching Zambia". The operation was the Portuguese government's reaction to the "worldwide horror and indignation" caused by the reported Portuguese massacre of Wiriyamu last December, Unita said. It described the operation as "not just repression", claiming that it had a "more complex" political motive. Unita's correspondent quoted the testimony of a 43-year old man, named Simon Ciaola, who had escaped the alleged massacres and who claimed that "the Boers crossed the Zambezi in Portuguese boats during the night", and that Fiat G-91 planes "bombed the region". They burned the huts, destroyed maize stores, killed chickens, goats, and cows", and occupied the springs, so as to prevent the villagers getting water and carrying on with their work, the witness claimed. "But that was nothing", he added. "They killed, massacred, without pity". He said that when he returned to his village of Pangoula he found that 50 people "at least" had been massacred, and other massacres had been carried out in the nearby villages of Lichela and Katandola. "The Portuguese cannot say that these villages do not exist", Mr. Ciaola reportedly told the Unita correspondent. He said he had seen "with my own eyes" a "Boer" soldier split open the head of an old man with his gun. During their flight from the soldiers, he told the newspaper, numbers of children had died from starvation. He said that, since the time of the attack on their village, he had lost his wife and 14 of his 16 children, but he concluded: "At present, we are here safe, and Frelimo feed us, thanks also to the brotherly collaboration of Zambia".