

50 die in MNR attack

GURUE — MNR bandits have massacred about 50 people and sabotaged five tea-processing factories in the district of Gurue, in the central Mozambican province of Zambezia.

The factories belong to the Mozambican state tea company, Emocha, and the damage runs into millions of dollars.

At first the death toll in the raid on February 12, was estimated at 30, but more bodies were found as troops, supported by local people, combed the ruins of burnt-out houses.

The bandits, on arrival, immediately began to murder and kidnap local people.

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and loot their homes. A tractor was ambushed as it carried three patients from the village of In'uba to Gurue Hospital. The three were killed.

Shortly afterwards the bandits split into smaller groups to take control of each of the five factories.

An Indian engineer said two of the five factories were damaged beyond repair. The five plants had just been rehabilitated at a cost of about Z\$50 million.

As well as the factories, dozens of tonnes of tea, vehicles and agricultural machinery were destroyed.

Emocha has thousands of tonnes of tea in its warehouses, harvested from 1983 onwards, which it has not been able to transport because of bandit attacks on the Zambezia roads.

Witnesses said that three white men led the bandits and organised the sabotage of the factories, showing the bandits how to cause maximum destruction. The three whites were dressed like priests, one witness said.

The bandits disguised themselves as Mozambican soldiers.

"They deceived the people by saying that they were

our forces from Nauela," one villager said.

"They said they were taking the sick and wounded to Gurue where they would pick up fresh supplies. We believed them because we knew that our forces were now in Nauela."

Nauela is in nearby Alto-Molocue district which the Mozambican army repossessed from the MNR last month.

Three priests (two Italians and one Mozambican) and a Portuguese nun were freed from the bandits.

An Indian technician working for Emocha, Mr A. S. Solomon, was kidnapped by the bandits and held prisoner for three days. — Ziana-AIM.