

Massacre allegations

From Mr D. G. Galvin

Sir, Whatever Fr Adrian Hastings may say (*The Times*, August 2)—although the Communist and black African worlds, and leftist opinion generally, have avidly accepted the assertions of the Wiriyamu massacre report, the consensus of the remainder of Western opinion may be said to regard the allegations as “possible” but as yet unproven.

Perhaps that is why Fr Hastings is now resorting to the mention of other “atrocities” by the Portuguese said to have taken place in the Tete area about the same time as the Wiriyamu happenings. Again missionaries appear to have received reports of these smaller “massacres” at second or third-hand in the middle of a fast-moving and confusing war where hit-and-run, terrorist behaviour by the Frelimo is a matter of daily occurrence.

But let us stick to the Wiriyamu massacre allegations. The onus is on the accusers to produce tangible physical evidence and personal witness of the “massacre”—and this they have not done. One would have thought that at least one black soldier (Africans make up over half the Portuguese Army in Mozambique) who took part in such an allegedly large-scale and horrific action would have blurted out the

truth by now via the “bush telegraph”.

As regards the physical evidence, Fr Hastings says that by now the Portuguese and natural causes could have removed any traces of a massacre at the site. What does he expect when the originators of the report wait seven months for the “facts” to emerge so as to time it with Dr Caetano’s visit to this country? In any case, the Portuguese Army in Mozambique razes all uninhabited villages so that they do not provide cover for the Frelimo.

It is also surprising that, in a confusing war where villagers are being continuously moved about by the Portuguese for their own safety, the Wiriyamu “massacre” report contains such a wealth of detail of the names of the “victims” and the types of mutilations inflicted. In this connexion one should recall the statement issued on July 17 by the Anglican Bishop in Mozambique, Dr Cabral, when he said that he was “deeply convinced” that the alleged massacre did not in fact take place and that the report itself read like a “surrealistic literary composition”.

Yours truly,
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