

Intimidation Is Rebels' Aim

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Raiders Cut Off Sugar Workers' Ears

BUZI, Mozambique—After spending some time at the Buzi sugar plantation, the first thing a visitor does when he meets someone is to look at his ears—to see if the person still has any.

A number of workers at this third largest sugar plantation in Mozambique have had their ears cut off by members of the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR).

Gore Samuel Moiana, 24, a production control official at the plantation near Beira, told how a group of terrorists came to his house a year ago and tied him up.

"They ordered my wife, who was eight months pregnant, to beat me with sticks but she refused," Moiana said. "So they beat her instead and three days later she lost the baby. Then they cut off my ear with a bayonet."

As the raiders left they made clear their political objective was to overthrow President Samora Machel.

"Go to Maputo [the capital] to get a new ear," Moiana said they told him. "Comrade Machel sells ears there."

Majorge Fernando Zembe, 33, wears a neckerchief around his head and ears. Without it, he said, he has difficulty hearing. The neckerchief also hides the fact that he has hardly any right ear and only half of his left ear.

His family, he said, was attacked by the MNR a year ago while they were sleeping.

"I don't work in the fields anymore. If they cut off my ears last time they could do worse next time," Zembe said. "So I don't go anywhere near where I think the bandits might be."

Some of the conversations were labored because they required double translation from Ndaui, the local language, to Portuguese to English, but the point was made over and over again by four victims who were interviewed: for two years the South African-backed MNR terrorized the local people.

The purpose of the attacks, they said, was to close down the government-owned enterprise.

Some of those interviewed told gruesome second-hand stories about mutilation of victims' noses, lips, breasts or sexual organs, but none of these reports could be confirmed first-hand.

Dr. Lars Salemark, a Swedish surgeon in Beira who is the only doctor practicing plastic surgery in the country, said he had repaired noses, as did a European doctor in Chibuto, in Gaza Province, who declined to be named.

"Few places in the world have plastic surgical problems like in Mozambique," Dr. Salemark said.

Both doctors told of hearing stories about terrorists slashing open pregnant women to kill the fetus and mother, a story that is also common these days in Zimbabwe's violence-plagued Matabeleland. But, as in Zimbabwe, no-

body claims to have seen such horrors himself.

For Buzi, it would appear that perhaps the worst is over. All the cases of ear-cuttings took place a year ago or more.

Brig. Paulo Nchumali, a former guerrilla fighter in Mozambique's independence war who is now director of Buzi, said attacks by the MNR have dropped off in the last year since the plantation formed its own militia.

Two years ago the MNR had six or seven "bases" in the Buzi district, Nchumali said. One had about 500 guerrillas. Trucks, tractors and the narrow-gauge railway line were attacked regularly. Now, he added, there are probably about 500 rebels in the whole area.

That is enough, however, to make many workers refuse to go to outlying cane fields. Several hundred live in temporary huts around the plantation headquarters.

The plantation produces about 25,000 tons of sugar a year. Without a war, Nchumali estimates that output could be 40,000 tons.

The war also has a longer-term impact on the people. Two years ago the MNR killed three teachers on the plantation, the director said. Since then there have been no schools for the 7,500 workers and their dependents.

"We can't reopen the schools until the security situation is better," Nchumali said.

— Jay Ross