

H. 4/2/89 MAPUTO.  
IN December, the town of Gurue, in the central Mozambican province of Zambezia, faced a dramatic shortage of foodstuffs, clothing and medicines, following a raid on the town by bandits of the South African-backed MNR.

The shops and the hospital in the town were thoroughly looted when bandits swept into Gurue in force in the early morning of November 27.

The goods stolen or destroyed by the bandits are valued at about 600 million meticals (a little less than US\$1 million, at current exchange rates), according to estimates made by local businessmen.

"All the shops here were full of goods. We never thought this would happen," a worker at the warehouse of the Gurue Commercial Company said.

Gurue is the most important tea-growing centre in

# Bandits leave trail of hunger and destruction

## Town in central tea-growing area shattered for second time

Mozambique, and tea used to be one of the country's most important exports. But the tea-processing plants and the plantations (which lie outside the town itself) were destroyed by the bandits in February 1987.

Despite the latest attack, life was slowly beginning to return to normal in Gurue by mid-December. Workers had returned to their jobs, after fleeing from the town during the bandit raid, and the shopkeepers were looking for ways of repairing their damaged property — the shattered doors, the looted shopfronts, the wrecked refrigerators.

The streets of Gurue are now strongly patrolled by special units of the Mozambican army. On the street corners, as people gather and chat, shock at what happened, and the

suffering the townspeople experienced during the three days they spent hiding in the nearby mountains, is the dominant theme of conversation.

Gurue is surrounded by impressive mountains. They may be good to hide in, but temperatures can drop very low at night. According to the district authorities, six children and one adult died of hunger and thirst in this inhospitable refuge.

The bandits abducted an unknown number of people, including one foreign

citizen, a man of Indian nationality who worked for the Mozambican state tea company, Emocha.

Eyewitnesses said that the attack began in the early hours of Sunday November 27. A bandit unit, estimated to be 1 000 strong, infiltrated Gurue in three sub-groups. After a prolonged shoot-out with the small garrison stationed there, the bandits took control of the town.

A white man, presumed to be a mercenary, who led one of the three bandit groups, was killed during the clashes with Mozambican troops.

The body of this mercenary, described by eyewitnesses as "white, tall and big, with long brown hair", was discovered the following day, half-buried outside the house of Hilario Alexandre, a 23-year-old carpenter who lives on the outskirts of Gurue.

"When the shooting had died down on Monday, I thought that our forces had the situation under control," Cde Alexandre said. "So I came down from the mountains where I had hidden and went home.

When I arrived there I saw that something had been buried. When I got close, I realised it was a person because I could see a boot and one of his hands."

Cde Alexandre then scraped away the earth with a hoe, and found him-

self staring at the body of a dead white man, who had received several bullet wounds in the chest.

"When I was trying to alert our forces about this, I heard renewed shooting," he said. "So I realised that the situation was far from under control, and I went back to the mountains."

After the Mozambican

**MUTARE. — South African-backed MNR bandits last week brutally murdered five people and seriously injured nine others at Mabee village in Chief Garabwa's area in Chisumbanje, a police spokesman confirmed yesterday. The bandits killed four people, including a two-year-old baby. The fifth victim later died of injuries at Chiredzi Hospital. — Zlana.**

special units had reoccupied Gurue on the Wednesday morning, the body of the supposed mercenary was buried again.

Cde Artur Varela, a worker at Emocha, was kidnapped from his house on the Sunday morning, and witnessed the atrocities carried out by the bandits in the town. These included the rape of his 12-year-old niece, who was also abducted.

Cde Varela told how the bandits had beaten him for not carrying enough of

their looted goods on his head. They had ordered him to carry more than 100 kg. When he could not manage this load, "their chief said I was playing about, and ordered his men to give me 25 lashes".

"The same happened to several others, mainly old people, who could not carry great quantities," said Cde Varela.

The bandits also stole a tractor to drive some of their loot to the banks of the Licungo River, added Cde Varela. The stolen property was then carried on foot towards Makiringue, about 20 km south-west of Gurue.

Cde Varela managed to escape under cover of night, while the bandits were resting on the banks of the Loze River, which is about halfway between the Licungo and Makiringue.

Apparently, the bandits were guided into Gurue by a former Emocha worker, and a second man who, according to Cde Varela, used to be a domestic servant for an Indian citizen who had worked in the town.

Humanitarian organisations have started to send assistance, particularly medicines, to Gurue. But transport problems mean that it is far from easy to resupply the town.

The Zambezia provincial director for the emergency programme, Cde Omar Francisco, said: "We are

very worried at the situation in Gurue, and we are waiting for the management of LAM (Mozambique Airlines) to authorise the use of its planes for emergency purposes."

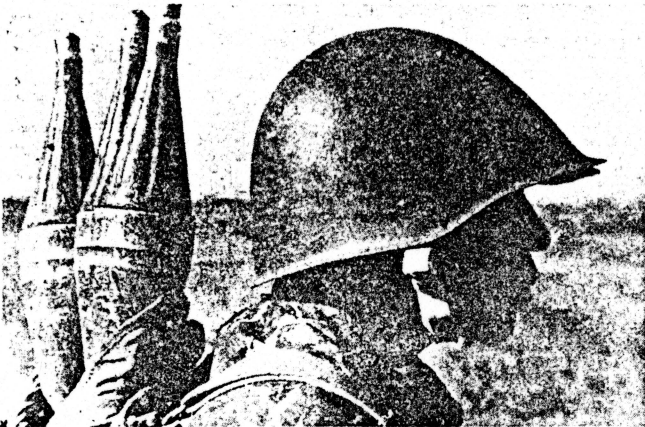
But the LAM office in Quelimane, the Zambezia provincial capital, says that the management has not authorised LAM planes to fly to Gurue for "reasons of security". — Zlana-AIM.



ADMINISTRATION headquarters in Lunbo district, Zambezia province, destroyed by bandits.



CHAJUNJA CHIVACA JOAO, former MNR bandit representative in Lisbon, during a Press conference in Maputo after taking advantage of the amnesty law.



A SOLDIER of the Mozambican armed forces, the FPLM.