

Mozambique & MNR

Jose Matussene, 17, explained to a crowd of four or five thousand Mozambicans why he had joined the MNR and become an 'armed bandit'. 'They came to my house and asked if I wanted to live or die. I said I wanted to live.' He told the rally, organised by Frelimo to raise the level of public vigilance in Maputo, that he had been sent to reconnoitre the town of Resano Garcia on the SA border where he had taken part in an attack on a car and killed two people.

Minutes later a group of men armed with rubber truncheons burst out of the crowd and attacked Jose and the two other prisoners on display with him. Soldiers intervened to protect the captives. A few days after the meeting, the Mozambican authorities announced an amnesty for all bandits who gave themselves up and promised they would be helped to re-enter civilian life. The amnesty differs in some respects from previous offers of pardon. The stipulation that bandits who surrendered must bring their weapons with them was absent. And the offer was directly linked to a statement the previous night by SA's PM, Mr PW Botha that his government would respect to the letter the Nkomati Accord, intended to cut support to the MNR.

Observers here consider that the amnesty may be intended to include members of the MNR still in training camps in the Transvaal who are thought to number several thousand. It is known that up to 1,000 were hastily put into Mozambique days before the signing, but there has been little information about the others.

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