

Mozambican war hots up

By PAUL FAUVET: Maputo

AS delegations from the Mozambican government and Renamo rebels prepared to meet yesterday in Rome, the war inside Mozambique showed no sign of slackening.

Last Saturday, at a village in the southern province of Gaza, Renamo massacred 40 peasants. They started burning down houses in the Seventh of April village, and were only prevented from destroying the whole settlement by the arrival of Mozambican troops, who shot dead two of the raiders.

In April Renamo stepped up its activity in another strongly pro-Frelimo area, the northern province of Cabo Delgado, which was where the war for independence from Portuguese rule started. On April 23 Renamo attacked the small town of Muidumbue and occupied it for two days, wrecking the town hall and looting all the shops and every other sizeable building.

Five days later, Renamo attacked a convey of civilian trucks in Cabo Delgado, and murdered at least 16 people. Most of the vehicles belonged to the state agricultural mar-

keting board, and the attack signalled Renamo's determination to disrupt the purchase of surplus peasant crops in a province which has traditionally provided food to other parts of the country.

On Tuesday Renamo launched a major attack against the town of Ressano Garcia on the South African frontier, and many Mozambican civilians fled in panic over the border.

However, according to sources on Mozambique Railways, the rebels were unable to capture the town.

There is little doubt that Renamo deliberately stepped up its activity in the last fortnight of April, presumably in an attempt to strengthen its hand at the negotiating table in Rome.

Despite this, President Joachim Chissano struck a conciliatory tone in his speech to the May Day parade and rally in Maputo on Wednesday. He said that the Mozambican government delegation had gone to Rome with instructions "to do everything possible to ensure that the dialogue results in success for all the Mozambican people".

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