

How death came while filming a dawn attack

● **ALMERIGO GRILZ**, an Italian reporter of bush wars who has worked for *The Sunday Times*, was killed two weeks ago while filming a battle in Mozambique. A friend who was with him, **LORD MICHAEL CECIL**, describes Grilz's death and the guerrilla war

THE TIME was 4am. In the starlight, the silhouettes of the Renamo guerrillas were just visible, padding barefoot in single file along the narrow path. The bush was thick, but the 300 soldiers moved in virtual silence, broken only by the clank of weaponry.

Fearful of anti-personnel mines, I hurried forward among the rebels with Almerigo Grilz. We were approaching Caia, a town on the Zambezi river in the Sofala province of Mozambique. The plan was to attack at dawn.

The Renamo commander, General Intomo Elias, split off 50 men to make a diversionary assault on the west side of the town. We stayed with the remaining soldiers to advance through abandoned fields and houses. With dawn breaking, the sound of automatic fire reached us in the still air.

Our line began to advance, the men half-running as NCOs chivvied them like terriers, trying to keep them well spread out. Grilz and I followed behind, filming and photographing. The area in front of us erupted, under



One of the last photographs of Almerigo Grilz shows him with a Renamo rebel before the fatal attack two weeks ago. The guerrilla with a bazooka was among the last pictures he took

heavy automatic fire and a mortar barrage.

The houses on the eastern edge of the town came into full view about 100 yards away. I took cover behind an ant-hill. Grilz was out of my sight about 50 yards to my left. Heavy firing continued. A few moments later, six men struggled towards me with a body. As they got closer, I saw who it was.

"He is dead," said one of them. I ran to them, and a quick look was enough to confirm it. Grilz had been struck by a single bullet in the back of the head as he filmed the fighting. He was 34. Minutes later the force was retreating fast into the bush before the expected arrival of government jets.

Grilz was killed reporting a war which has largely destroyed Mozambique's economy, many of its towns and much of its infrastructure.

The Renamo (Mozambique National Resistance movement) rebels are led in large part by veterans of the colonial war against Portugal, disenchanted with the marxist policies of their former comrades-in-arms in Frelimo (Mozambique Liberation Front), which has governed the country since 1975.

After a year of increasingly severe fighting, Renamo now controls perhaps 50% of the country and the government only 30%; the rest is disputed no-man's-land, an area of abandoned villages and wandering refugees.

The government relies for its own defence on Zimbabwean troops who support its demoralised army. It cannot even protect the remaining road and rail links effectively.

The war is becoming a stalemate. Government forces are increasingly isolated in the towns, low in morale and supplied only by air; but the rebels do not have the strength or military skill to dislodge them.

The conflict follows a repetitive pattern. Renamo units capture an isolated town, destroy all installations which might be of use to the government, and then fall back into the bush. Zimbabwean paratroops recapture the undefended position and are replaced by Frelimo, who

sit waiting for the next attack.

Yet the government receives military aid from the Eastern bloc, Britain, Cuba, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Malawi. So how has it got itself in so desperate a military situation against a ragged enemy?

Until the Nkomati accord of 1984, which Mozambique signed with South Africa, Pretoria equipped Renamo. It is widely believed to have gone on doing so since; but whatever aid Renamo may still get is extremely limited, for the rebels are badly trained and badly equipped.

Some wear captured government or Zimbabwean combat clothing and boots, but most are barefoot and in rags. They have limited

ammunition and damaged rifles. The only visible evidence of outside help is a number of high-frequency radio sets and a few Sam-7 anti-aircraft missiles.

The reason for Renamo's success must lie in the deep unpopularity of the government. When the former Frelimo guerrillas who had been fighting the long colonial war against Portugal came to power in 1975, they began putting peasants into supervised collective villages.

Renamo has taken advantage of Frelimo's heavy-handed mistakes, by disbanding all the villages in the territory it controls, allowing the inhabitants to go back to their old homesteads.

The government side has adopted tough policies, witnessed the random bombing of villages in Renamo areas — and Zimbabwean troops are blamed for atrocities.

On April 28, Zimbabweans who reoccupied the undefended town of Morrumbala allegedly rounded up suspects and beheaded them.

The likely route to peace lies through negotiation. But Afonso Dhlakama, the leader of Renamo, lays down conditions that Frelimo rejects: "All foreign troops must leave Mozambique; a joint council of national reconciliation must be formed; there must be free and international supervised elections."

