

# British aid for Marxist army wins applause

By Stephen Robinson

THE YOUNG Mozambican soldier levelled his RPG7 anti-tank rocket at a pile of oil drums some 200 yards away. A deafening report, a puff of smoke, and the barrels exploded.

"Great shot," yelled Mr Kinnock, as his wife staggered around claspings her ears.

"A round of applause for that man," ordered Brigadier John Baskervyle-Glegg, commander of the British Military Advisory and Training Team at Nyanga, eastern Zimbabwe.

The Labour leader yesterday went to see how the British were teaching the Mozambican army to come to terms with anti-Communist Renamo guerrillas.

The civil war between the Marxist Frelimo government and the rebels — allegedly backed by Pretoria — has torn the country apart. Frelimo controls Maputo, but not much else.

British troops have been training Zimbabwean soldiers for 10 years. But in response to the worsening crisis in neighbouring Mozambique, Britain sent 12 more instructors to help in 1985.

Since then, around 800 troops have undergone British training. Most are now deployed guarding the Beira corridor and the Limpopo line, strategic transport routes to the Indian Ocean. Sabotage attacks have been considerably reduced in the past year.

The instructors, all volunteers on six months' detachment, face a difficult task. They train a company of 120 men in 16 weeks, covering ground which would normally take as many months.

Moreover, many of the rural Mozambicans speak only obscure dialects, and some are bewildered by military hardware when they arrive.

As Mr Kinnock watched a training class yesterday, the language difficulties were at once apparent. The instructor explained, while a Frelimo interpreter translated into Portuguese. All the men's questions had to be translated into English and the answers translated back.

"By and large, they're tremendous," said Brig Baskervyle-Glegg. "They have a very positive attitude, probably because they know they will be going from here right into the thick of things."

Some critics of the British training effort say it is merely a political gesture to counter criticism of the Government's failure to impose sanctions against South Africa.

But if it is a political gesture, it is one the Mozambicans appreciate. They see it as a material, albeit limited, response to Pretoria's efforts to destabilise the frontline states.