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DATELINE: MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE

MEMO: Mozambique is an African nation rushing headlong into collapse as Marxism, famine and guerrilla warfare combine to bring social, political and economic chaos. This is the first of three articles.

BESET BY CRISIS, MARXIST MOZAMBIQUE ASKS WEST FOR HELP

A massive international relief operation is being mounted to meet the deepening crisis in Mozambique, a black-ruled neighbor of South Africa that in 12 years of independence has been driven steadily toward total economic and social breakdown.

Mozambique's key position in southern Africa sets this tragedy apart from the recent famine in Ethiopia, which shocked the West with grotesque scenes of mass starvation.

Here, only part of the story is the unremitting series of natural disasters since 1980; the latest was a drought this year that wiped out most crops in the southern half of the country. On top of this, wholesale bungling by a government that rushed to create Africa's first truly Marxist state has combined with one of the world's nastiest proxy wars to bring chaos.

Mozambique is looking to the West not only for emergency aid but also for investment, for military assistance and for diplomatic pressure on South Africa.

In response to an urgent appeal from United Nations Sec. Gen. Javier Perez de Cuellar, donor countries, chiefly from the West, last month pledged \$209 million in emergency assistance, including promises of 500,000 tons of food, 200,000 tons more than last year. The United States alone will supply 194,000 tons of grain. But Prime Minister Mario Machungo says still more help is needed.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization last week estimated that 4 million Mozambicans, nearly one-third of the population, are short of food, and that extensive airlifts may be needed to deliver supplies to them because of armed banditry.

"This is not a country to be saved from communism; it is a country to be saved from collapse," said Onesimo Silveira, representative of the UN High Commission for Refugees. The agency has agreed to help resettle some of the estimated 260,000 Mozambicans driven into neighboring countries and an even greater number of the dispossessed still in Mozambique.

The emergency is especially jarring because this remains a country for dreamers, bursting with untapped economic potential in agriculture, transportation, minerals, fisheries and tourism.

Western nations are supporting a multimillion-dollar scheme to restore the country's shattered rail network, once a chief source of foreign exchange and the main hope of Africa's land-locked "front-line" states for lessening their economic dependence on South Africa.

Since 1983, the government has liberalized the economy, imposed a financial austerity plan and invited investment and even military aid from

Europe and the U.S. In his first trip outside Africa, President Joaquim Chissano next month will visit England and Italy, a slight to this nation's Soviet supporters.

But "who is going to invest in this country?" one diplomat here asked. "Here is a country that has been systematically destroyed."

Today, the capital city of Maputo is a mere shell of a once-grand Portuguese colonial port. The spacious Continental Cafe on its main avenue serves only water; an empty dress shop displays vintage cardboard posters of miniskirts.

Refineries sit idle and rusting, broken machinery is everywhere, and residents struggle by on salaries as low as \$5 a month. The average annual per capita income is \$121. The privileged few who own cars won't go more than a few miles from the capital for fear of attack by bandits.

To the north, along most of Mozambique's 1,500-mile Indian Ocean coastline, and in the vast hinterlands, where more than 80 percent of the people practice subsistence farming, government control largely is confined to urban areas.

Most towns, even provincial capitals, are accessible only by air or armed convoy. Infant mortality is among the highest in the world--one-third of all children die before age 5. Guerrilla warfare has cut off health care for 2 million people, according to Health Minister Fernando Vaz.

The guerrillas "may never attack the city, but they're making our lives an absolute misery," said Karen Sylvester, a British nutritionist who works with refugees in the northern provincial capital of Tete.

The People's Republic of Mozambique, like Angola, was born out of guerrilla war and the collapse of the Portuguese colonial empire. Portugal, which had seized two rich Arab trading posts along the coast in 1525, declared Mozambique a colony in 1752. A left-wing coup in 1974 in Lisbon led the way to a quickly negotiated political settlement with the Soviet-supported Mozambican Liberation Front (Frelimo) rebels and the establishment of Mozambican independence in June, 1975.

The poorest of the Western colonial powers, Portugal had milked Mozambique systematically. Using a system of forced labor called chibalo, it built a lucrative railway network linking the country to inland Africa and developed an export trade in sugar, cotton, cashews, tea, coal--and labor. South Africa paid Lisbon in gold for the right to employ Mozambicans as miners; at independence this accounted for half of Mozambique's earnings.

Mass flight of the 200,000 Portuguese in Mozambique at independence was accelerated by Frelimo's rapid nationalization of virtually all land, transport and communications, along with private medicine, schools and law practices. Of the Portuguese who fled, many were the country's most skilled technocrats.

Only 20,000 Portuguese remained, along with a Mozambican population that was 97 percent illiterate. Many Portuguese wrecked what they had built before leaving, Mozambicans say.

Frelimo also moved quickly to impose sanctions against then white-ruled Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) to the west, which was fighting its own guerrilla war.

In return, Rhodesian intelligence officers created the Mozambican National Resistance, a guerrilla movement composed partly of former Portuguese commandos and disaffected Mozambicans, including ex-Frelimo officers and escapees from wretched Frelimo "re-education" camps. Rich Portuguese ex-colonials are believed to have bankrolled the guerrillas.

Rhodesian planes and troops hit repeatedly in Mozambique. The damage and loss of trade cost \$500 million, according to the government. Meanwhile, South

Africa reduced the quota of Mozambican mine workers by two-thirds.

Mozambique urged its guerrilla allies in Rhodesia to join British-brokered peace negotiations, which culminated in the 1979 Lancaster House agreement to create the state of Zimbabwe. Open elections there in 1980 brought black rule under former guerrilla leader Robert Mugabe.

South Africa, which had been surprised by Mugabe's victory, then moved to back the Mozambican National Resistance, and the guerrilla tactics shifted to outright economic destruction, particularly of railways. Without articulating a political program or seeking to take and hold a "state within a state," guerrillas destroyed the remnants of the social and commercial infrastructure: shops, factories, clinics, hospitals, schools and almost anything else of value.

By 1982, there had been intensive damage in the country's three central provinces, its traditional breadbasket. By 1984, the violence had spread to all 10 provinces, and the government said about 800 clinics, 600 schools, 1,200 shops and major agricultural and industrial plants had been destroyed, with damage in the billions of dollars.

Meanwhile, Frelimo, coached by East bloc advisers, embarked on a calamitous economic program. Planners in Maputo poured huge sums into inefficient state enterprises, and tens of thousands of people were encouraged or forced to move from their homes to work in these ventures.

"They destroyed a country," one Western diplomat said. "They should celebrate the feast of nationalization the way we celebrate the feast of the dead. . . . The question is whether these mistakes were forced on them by a completely strange ideology that is foreign to Africa."

Some military analysts say the government also helped the guerrillas along by wholesale distribution of weapons to local militias. As the economy collapsed, arms became tools for survival. Now much of the violence, especially rapes and mutilation of Mozambican peasants, stems from sheer banditry rather than a centralized rebel command, Mozambicans and military analysts say.

In 1984, Maputo signed a nonaggression pact with Pretoria. Mozambique promised to limit the presence here of the radical, antiapartheid African National Congress to a nominal diplomatic mission in return for South African assurances that it would not support the Mozambican National Resistance.

Hundreds of the South African rebels in Mozambique were rounded up, but the Mozambican guerrilla war goes on unabated.

Mozambican officials insist that South Africa still sustains the movement, and they categorically rule out negotiating with the rebels, an option favored by Pretoria. The Mozambicans also say they suspect South African complicity in the plane crash there last Oct. 19 that killed Mozambican President Samora Machel. South Africa denies any role in the incident, but it has conceded "technical" violations of the 1984 nonaggression pact.

"The bandits are an instrument of South Africa," Prime Minister Machungo said in an interview. "They are trained and supplied by South Africa. We have spoken to South Africa and we have signed an agreement with South Africa.

"So the next step is that the international community has got to pressure their (the bandits') creator, their father. The only way to resolve the situation politically is to go to the source, which is apartheid."

Last fall, the Mozambican rebels overran at least six towns in the central provinces of Tete, Zambezia and Sofala. The guerrillas seized a key bridge across the Zambezi River, effectively cutting the country in half, and

tried unsuccessfully to push to the sea.

The attacks drove tens of thousands of Mozambicans across the border into neighboring Malawi, a nation that maintains relations with South Africa and has been accused by Mozambique of sheltering the rebels.

This year, government troops, backed by Zimbabwean and Tanzanian forces, announced that most of the overrun areas had been retaken. President Chissano said this month that 2,200 'bandits' had been killed. But the towns are said to be wrecked, and it is too soon to say whether the government can hold on to its gains.

Most of the casualties in the conflict have been noncombatants, Western diplomats and aid workers say. Refugees describe slaughters and mass abductions by the rebels. And Machungo conceded that in ferreting out re

bel collaborators in recaptured areas, 'the work is not always 100 percent correctly carried out.'

'The people are caught between two fires,' one diplomat said. 'That is the reality for millions.'

TUESDAY: How successful is the relief effort?

CAPTION: MAP: Mozambique

GRAPHIC: Mozambique

-- Area: 309,494 sq. mi., slightly larger than California

-- Population: 14 million

-- Government: Socialist one-party state

-- Languages: Portuguese, Bantu dialects

-- Per capita income: \$121

-- Land under cultivation: 4%

-- Labor force: 85% in agriculture, 9% industry and commerce, 2% services

Chicago Tribune Graphic; Sources: World Almanac, World Factbook

PHOTO: (color) Photo by A. Aarhus/SIPA Press. Wearing a sack once used to hold food, a Mozambican awaits treatment at a makeshift clinic in Mutarara in the northern province of Tete. An expected shipment of medical supplies never arrived. The area is nearly cut off from the rest of Mozambique by guerrilla warfare.

PHOTO: Agence France Presse photo. Mozambique President Joaquim Chissano (left) and Zimbabwe Prime Minister Robert Mugabe participate in a rally last month.

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