

Seemingly Endless War Is Strangling Mozambique

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INHAMINGA, Mozambique, Jan. 18

— This desperately poor nation on the southeastern coast of Africa is playing out a tragic drama whose chapters are scrawled in blood. A 12-year-old conflict is strangling Mozambique.

War with no foreseeable end has affected at least 115 of the country's 140 or so districts. It has no front line but ebbs and flows through the countryside like an ocean's tide. With neither side scoring decisive military successes, relief officials expect the suffering to continue in a country whose rich soil and mineral wealth once offered great promise.

The war, which pits the anti-Communist

Mozambique National Resistance against the Marxist Government of President Joaquim A. Chissano, has made survival tenuous for millions of Mozambicans, whose levels of malnutrition and infant mortality are among the highest in the world. The situation, in the country, which has also been the victim of economic decay brought on partly by failed Marxist policies, is made worse by armed renegades who roam the countryside.

A group of foreign reporters, traveling by chartered plane, four-wheel-drive vehicles and on foot, saw some of Mozambique's usually inaccessible sites of despair during a two-day visit to the central provinces of Zambézia and Sofala.

The trip, arranged by CARE Interna-

tional, the relief agency, revealed a calamity that seemed even worse than reports indicated. Hundreds of thousands of people are on the move, fleeing the conflict, and just as many are threatened by starvation because the war has disrupted their subsistence farming.

Scenes of devastation and accounts of blood-stained inhumanity abound. A 14-year-old boy, speaking barely above a whisper, recalled how he had been kidnapped by rebels, held for four years and forced to kill two people to show that he could use a gun.

Relief workers described the ordeal of another child whom rebels coerced into killing his father. The boy's refusal

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