

Mozambique's self-inflicted harm

IT would be surprising if the United States did not have members of its CIA in Mozambique. That is the way of the world: most nations have intelligence operatives working out of their diplomatic missions in other countries. For Mozambique to pretend to astonishment and to wax so indignant about it is either naive or silly.

The existence of intelligence operatives is usually tacitly ignored. The only occasions when the issue surfaces is if their activities exceed the bounds of propriety — or if the host country has some ulterior motive in flushing them into the open.

The latter rather than the former seems to be determining Mozambique's present actions. The question is: Why?

It could be that President Samora Machel is facing even greater internal difficulties than have hitherto been believed, in respect of economic problems and domestic opposition. Uncovering foreign spies, and also arresting local people, is a useful and traditional government means of creating a diversion and of rallying the people.

Pretoria has done the same sort of thing: remember the last general election when John Vorster campaigned, successfully, for votes against Jimmy Carter? And

the Colin Eglin-Don McHenry telephone brouhaha?

At a more serious level, there is also the upsurge in the Russian and Cuban connections in Mozambique. These countries are likely to be playing a hand in events, seeking perhaps to divert attention from that other area of their controversial current involvement, El Salvador, where the Reagan Administration is displaying increasing toughness.

By lending itself to all the noise and the fury, the Mozambique government could, however, do itself immense harm. There must now be faint chance of the American Congress being willing to remove its self-imposed prohibition on direct aid to Mozambique. What also could be in jeopardy is America's food aid: last year, given both directly and through international agencies, it amounted to about \$50-million.

Russia and Cuba can be counted upon to supply arms, military training and ideology. But their record in Africa of providing money and technical assistance for developing nations is a poor one. Mozambique, desperate for aid in overcoming the past, will gain little from them.

But that President Machel is going along with their machinations is again a reminder of the spiralling, and worrying, consequences of the Matola raid.