

Fleeing refugees bring in planes

FAMILIES are fleeing from Mozambique to Rhodesia in daring clandestine flights by light aircraft.

Escapes by Portuguese have increased in the past few days with about eight aircraft slipping out of Mozambique to reach Rhodesia. In one flight to freedom a once wealthy tea plantation owner who lost his property to the Mozambique Government brought in a formation of three aircraft.

They are using their own aircraft for the one-way sky-dash.

Flights of twin-engined aircraft seen yesterday included three Cessna 402s in orange, red and white colours, seating up to eight.

Other aircraft that have flown in are also twin-engined and capable of carrying 10 people.

The registration numbers of all the aircraft have been masked with brown paper to prevent identification.

An executive with a Rhodesian air firm said: "We knew nothing of their coming until they reached the border.

Tricked

"Then they established radio contact to tell us who they were."

He said all the aircraft were privately owned.

They belonged to businessmen and charter firms fearing harsh new measures by Frelimo.

They trick the Mozambique authorities into believing they were taking off on local flights. Once in the air they turned for the Rhodesian border in a desperate race for freedom.

The executive said: "I understand some of the aircraft will be taken by their owners out of Rhodesia but others want to sell them."

The former tea planta-

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tion owner brought three aircraft, with his family and another man.

The executive said: "I met him the day after he arrived and he seemed very nervous about the affair."

The refugee has now taken his family out of Rhodesia but, according to a friend, he intends to return and may try to settle here.

"He will be back in a few days' time," he said.

But there are signs of a Frelimo crackdown on sky-dash escapes.

The Portuguese newspaper *A Voz* (The Voice), published in Salisbury, says because of the escapes a flight by American tea buyers — accompanied by Mozambique bank officials — was escorted by armed guards in the north of the country.

Aboard the light aircraft they ordered the pilot to fly in a straight line — "not left and not right".

When the plane veered in cloud, the guards warned the pilot at gun point to get back on course.