

THE CITIZEN 10/7/81
COMMENT

Defector

WE cannot regard the defection of a Black Frelimo pilot to South Africa as a major triumph.

The MiG 17 he flew across the border is obsolete and will be returned to Mozambique if it wants it back.

We doubt whether it had any armaments that we do not know about.

One discontented pilot in Mozambique does not suggest that others are ready to fly across the border to seek asylum in South Africa.

Nevertheless, it is possible that the defector may be able to give South Africa valuable information about the training of pilots in Russia (where he was taught).

He certainly can give valuable information about the strength of the Mozambique Air Force (it is said to have 36 fighter-planes, all dating from the early '60s), its preparedness, and the morale of its airmen.

He will also be able to tell us of the Russian, Cuban and East German airmen stationed in Mozambique, ostensibly as instructors. He may also have information about the estimated 400 Soviet military personnel in Mozambique, including teachers at the military school in Nampula, and about Soviet military strategy in Southern Africa.

In the sense, then, that we have a defector who may have classified information that will be of use to us, we are pleased that he has put himself in South Africa's hands.

Note the reason

Black radicals here, who think that ousting or evicting the Whites is the solution to the country's problems, should also note the reason why the pilot left Mozambique.

He declared: "I came to South Africa because I don't agree with Frelimo's policy. In Mozambique, after six years' independence, I can't see progress.

"The way of life in Mozambique is getting worse and worse and I'm tired of this."

What he said confirms reports over a long period that Mozambique's economy is in a mess, that there are extreme food shortages, that shops are denuded of goods, and that the people of the country are miserable under Marxist dictatorship.

Even President Samora Machel has had to admit that the worst thing that could have happened was the exodus of Portuguese farmers, businessmen, technicians and other experts after he won control of the country and declared its independence.

There is one further point to the MiG drama and that is the efficiency of the South African Air Force, which had been monitoring the flight apparently from the time the plane was over Mozambican territory.

Two South African supersonic fighters, returning from a routine exercise, were ordered to lock on to the intruder.

"We were in a position to shoot him down and had decided to do so when we realised that the pilot had no aggressive intentions," said one of the South African interceptors.

It's good to know that our borders are so efficiently monitored and that the SAAF so effectively controls our air space.

The MiG affair should be a warning to Mozambique or any other Black country that it shouldn't try any nonsense with South Africa.

We have the air defences and strike capability to make short shrift of any planes that cross our borders with aggressive intent.