

# The MiG from Mozambique

THE INTERCEPTION of a Mozambique MiG fighter aircraft minutes within entering South African airspace on Wednesday was, in the first place, reassuring evidence of the SAAF's alertness. Encountering a Russian-built jet was the last thing Major Frans Pretorius and Captain Hennie Louw probably expected when they took off for a routine exercise in the Eastern Transvaal. Yet they instantly adopted copybook procedures and could, at any time, have shot down the intruder had it shown any signs of aggression. The fact that they did not and, instead, escorted it to their air base emphasized their control over the situation.

What began thus as a good military procedure was allowed to develop into something of a diplomatic *coup*. It is not every day that a black foreigner, especially one

with a fighter pilot's licence, seeks political asylum in South Africa. It is even more of a catch than Cuban prisoners-of-war. Yet not too much should be read into his defection, if that is indeed what his crossing of the border constitutes. Many thousands of black South Africans have defected in the opposite direction, as political refugees. They disagreed at least as violently with the South African government's political policy as Lieutenant Francisco Bomba apparently disagrees with Frelimo's. And while Lieutenant Bomba criticizes the deterioration in Mozambique's way of life, it should be remembered that whatever its undoubted defects, it allowed a black man to become a fighter pilot. That could not have happened in this country. This is not to detract from Wednesday's military achievement, only to bring some perspective to political conclusions that may be drawn from it.

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