

10/7/81

A flight into history

How frustrating it must be to anti-South African propagandists who tell the world that whites with a herrenvolk mentality hold unhappy blacks in subjugation in this country.

How confusing it must be to gullible people who believe these tales.

And how aggravating it must be to the communist powers who try to exploit South Africa's bad image in pursuance of their own sinister plans for this land.

How can any of these elements explain away a Russian-trained black Mozambiquan pilot's defection to South Africa because he believes life will be better for him here?

To make the whole situation more embarrassing to the communists, in particular, the pilot made his exit from Mozambique in grand style, flying a Russian MiG jet fighter out of that country and landing it at a South African base.

Lieutenant Adriano Francisco Bomba flew himself into history, escorted all the way after his aircraft crossed the South African border by two of this country's own jet fighter pilots who could have shot him down at will if his intentions had been aggressive.

Happily for him, his real purpose was recognised and he was shepherd-ed to a safe landing at the Hoedspruit base.

And the first thing he did after leaving his aircraft was to ask for political asylum because he did not agree with his government's policy, because he could see no progress in independent Mozambique and because he felt he would be "all right here."

What a revealing incident it has been.

It has shown that communist-backed independence in Africa does not breed confidence in the system.

It has shown that the arms the communists hand over to Africa to further communist purposes are not always the best. The MiG Lt Bomba flew was obsolete, was badly serviced and would have been no match against South African fighters.

It has shown that South African early warning methods of detecting intrusions across its borders are superb.

And it has shown that South Africans are not trigger-happy. Otherwise Lt Bomba would have been a dead hero instead of a live one.

There is something else. Arms-embargoed South Africa has decided Mozambique can have its MiG back. South Africa doesn't need it, not even as a museum piece.

That in itself should give South Africa's enemies something to think about.