

Defection of the Frelimo flyer

THE defection and asylum call of a Frelimo air force pilot from Mozambique must bring down to earth much of the high-flown propaganda concerning South Africa. It shows there are worse places in the world — in spite of apartheid. It also confirms the continuing dismal economic straits of Mozambique under Marxist rule.

The MiG-17 fighter plane South Africa has acquired through the defection of Lieutenant Adriano Bomba is more or less obsolete in terms of modern warfare. We see no reason why it should not be returned to Mozambique.

On the other hand, we would not expect the South African Government to repatriate Lieutenant Bomba, who would probably be dealt with mercilessly by the Frelimo authorities.

The question of asylum poses awkward problems for the Govern-

ment in relation to its racial policies, but Lieutenant Bomba is not the first refugee from the former Portuguese territories to seek South African protection.

We have no doubt the defection will have some propaganda value for South Africa and that Lieutenant Bomba may also be of some interest to military intelligence, but this must be seen against the Government's sensible present policies of encouraging co-operation with Mozambique rather than dwelling on the considerable political differences that exist.

The MiG incident has served one other useful purpose. It tested the South African Defence Force's border preparedness — a test from which the Air Force emerges with flying colours. The MiG was intercepted almost immediately, even though the defection was totally unexpected. It is a tribute to SADF vigilance.

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