

Costa branded as torturer

VENGEANCE THREAT TO 'DEATH EYES'

By NEIL HOOPER

THE man called "Death Eyes" who defected from Mozambique to South Africa this week, is in danger of his life.

Vengeful former prisoners claim that Mr Jorge Costa, the runaway Director of Security in Maputo, brutally tortured them in Mozambican jails.

They have implicated him in death-squad killings and many other outrages inside his country's prisons.

Leaders of the 600 000-strong Portuguese community in South Africa will demand that he be returned to Mozambique.

While security authorities in Pretoria were contemplating their coup in acquiring the custodian of so many communist and ANC secrets, a public storm was brewing as more details emerged about his activities as head of Mozambique's secret police.

Mr Costa, 30, the slightly built and bearded white Mozambican who was the number three man in Mozambique's security hierarchy, is seeking political asylum in South Africa.

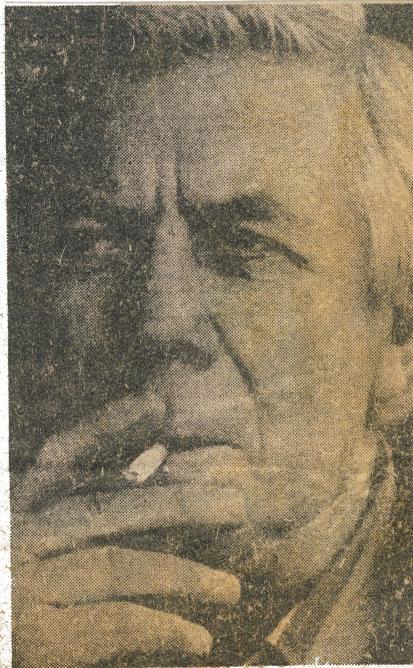
He declined to return to Maputo at the end of an official visit to South Africa this week and is now in police custody.

Mr Al Botes, a Johannesburg businessman who spent 20 months in a prison where Mr Costa was in charge of interrogations, has sent a telegram of protest to Prime Minister P. W. Botha.

"The man's record as an oppressor and sadist as well as an executioner is too well known to too many people like myself who had to suffer under him in prison in Mozambique," Mr Botes told Mr Botha.

And in an interview, Mr Botes said: "There are hundreds of people living in South Africa who have personal knowledge of that man; I don't rate his chances of survival here very high."

Mrs Alex Heyns, mother of Mr Nic Heyns, another of Mr Costa's former prisoners, said from her home at Robertson, in the Cape, that it



Mr Al Botes — telegram of protest

would be "shocking" if South Africa granted him asylum.

"My husband and I know that man very well ... we know the stuff he is made of."

Expulsion

A Johannesburg Portuguese-language newspaper has called for Mr Costa's immediate expulsion from South Africa.

As uproar about "Death Eyes" swept through the Portuguese community, Costa himself could not be reached.

Since his brief appearance at a Press conference in Pretoria last Monday, when he was flanked by Lieutenant-General Johann Coetzee, head of the Security Branch of the SAP, he has been incommunicado.

He is believed to be undergoing intensive "debriefing" by South African intelligence authorities.

As the Sunday Times reports elsewhere today, security sources in Pretoria believe Mr Costa is a "big, big catch" since he has intimate knowledge of the workings of the security and defence apparatus in Mozambique.

Most important, he was

chairman of a joint committee of Mozambicans and representatives of the banned African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa.

However these considerations weigh little with former prisoners in Mozambique who accuse Mr Costa of horrifying excesses since Mozambique became independent.

Mr Botes claims Mr Costa knew about, or sanctioned:

● "Death-squad" executions carried out at a nursery

near the beach at Costa do Sol, Maputo.

● The disappearance of prisoners "transferred" to Cabo Delgado District in Northern Mozambique.

● The confinement of up to 13 people in a 3m by 4m cell for periods of up to a year — with virtually no toilet or washing facilities.

● Prisoners forced to spend 14 days naked in solitary confinement in empty cells.

● Prisoners being strung up by their thumbs.

● Prisoners having their elbows tied together behind their backs.

● The blackmailing of people under surveillance.

● Freedom for prisoners whose wives agreed to extramarital sex.

● Personal use of goods confiscated from prisoners, including a car which he drove to work every day.

"I first met Costa on January 10, 1975," Mr Botes said.

"I nicknamed him 'Death Eyes' because he has the most terrifying eyes — he doesn't blink when he questions you.

"I had been arrested for allegedly contravening the country's currency-exchange control regulations, although I had done nothing wrong.

"I eventually spent 20 months in jail before I was finally released without any charges ever having been brought against me."

In jail, Mr Botes befriended Mr Nico Heyns and Mr Bernard Allison, both South Africans, Mr Hans Blumentritt, a German, and Mr David Adams, a Briton.

He agreed to finance an escape attempt.

One night in April, 1975,



"GINGER JOE"

Alias criminal Carlos Rocha

they made the break and cleared the prison walls, during which Mr Botes broke his ankle.

They managed to reach the getaway boat and put out to sea in a southerly direction on automatic compass, but were recaptured.

"They took us to Ponto do Ouro where Costa came up to me and drew a chrome-plated Wild West-type pistol.

"Then Costa ordered the Frelimo soldiers to beat us up while we were still handcuffed.

"Some of them used their rifle butts and others their belts with heavy buckles.

"Then we were taken to prison where Costa refused to let me wash the blood off my face.

"My eye, which had been giving me trouble, was damaged during the beating and I later developed a cataract, and now have a plastic lens.

"On Costa's instructions we were stripped naked and put in single cells after the cots and bedding had been removed.

"We stayed like that for two weeks. Then we were put in solitary confinement for six months.

"Costa put the man who helped us escape in a 3m by 4m cell in Machava Prison with 12 other people.

"Henry was kept there on Costa's instructions for 12 months with no toilet or washing facilities.

"On at least three occasions Costa arrived at our prison at about 2am and took away black and white prisoners.

"Everybody was terrified when he made these visits.

"Costa told me that they were taking the prisoners to the Cabo Delgado province in the North and that we would never see them again.

"Among those that were taken away while I was there were two Portuguese military captains who were opposed to Frelimo, and Dr Joana Simiao, former leader of the Fumo opposition in Mozambique."

"In May, 1975, a month before Frelimo took over the government in Mozambique, one of Costa's men, Lucas Mamsawebi, took over as commandant of the prison and prisoners were from then on punished for the slightest infringement.

"They would take a thin 6mm rope and tie a prisoner's elbows tightly together behind his back.

"With only one exception I did not see anyone last this treatment for more than five minutes. One man held out and he was later executed.

"Jorge Costa would stand and watch while the prisoners had their elbows tied and started screaming.

"One prisoner called Andries, who said he was a member of Swapo and a refugee from South West Africa, couldn't use his arms when I first met him in prison.

"He told me that Costa and his lieutenants 'Zeca Russo' ('Ginger Joe' the nickname given to South African criminal Carlos Rocha), a black called Batista, and a coloured known as Veiga, had taken him out into the bush, beaten him to a pulp and then strung him up by his thumbs from a tree," he said.