

A better life

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FOR Lieutenant Adriano Bomba, only time will tell whether he made the right decision this week to forsake socialist Mozambique and fly his MiG fighter to a better life in South Africa. And after the exposure to the world's media at the Hoedspruit airbase where he briefly expressed his disenchantment with six years of Frelimo rule, he now has all the time in the world to reflect on his defection and request for political asylum.

On the face of it, it would seem illogical for a black Mozambican to want to exchange the privileged life of an air force officer for an uncertain future in a colour-conscious South Africa. But while closer interrogation will almost certainly give sharper definition to his motivation, we must accept Lt Bomba's explanation that he was tired of the way of life in Mozambique where the picture is clearly not as rosy as President Samora Machel would have the outside

world believe.

It is reasonable to assume that he was not swayed in his decision to defect by political ideology or the belief that he could expect special treatment or status by flying his ageing fighter across the border. What is more likely is that he took careful stock of his lifestyle in Mozambique, weighed that against the tangible benefits which many of his countrymen, migrant workers in South Africa, were enjoying and decided that creature comforts over-rode ideological deprivation.

South Africa, of course, will be grateful for her first-ever defector and his method of bringing it off. If Lt Bomba is granted political asylum it will be tangible evidence to her detractors in Africa and elsewhere that she can be accommodating, while the promptness with which an intruder was apprehended in the country's airspace will also not have gone unnoticed.