

Ponto do Ouro

THERE is a crucial distinction between South African strikes at Swapo and ANC bases in adjacent countries and the incident in which a young national serviceman died on the Natal-Mozambique border. The former are based on military necessity, they avoid contact with the forces of the "host" country and they are deliberately and efficiently executed. The Ponto do Ouro incident involved direct contact between South African and Mozambican forces and it appears to have happened not as a result of any military necessity at all and accidentally as far as South African forces were concerned. The circumstances are curious, to say the least. How was a South Afri-

can party "lured" across the border into an ambush? But whatever the full story, it remains a fact that there was a contact with the forces of the Mozambique Government, something which had been avoided during a difficult and tense five years. It points to a deterioration in relations with a country whose economic interests have so far outweighed ideological commitment.

However it does seem that the incident was inspired at a relatively low level of the Mozambique military command. As tensions rise, South African soldiers have to be doubly alert and wary at unmarked borders.