

Pik's indaba for peace

19/8/84 Sunday Times

THE South African Government has launched a delicately balanced strategy to eliminate an obstacle to the full implementation of the Nkomati Accord.

The spirit of the accord is as strong as it ever was, but in both Maputo and Pretoria it has been recognised that scant progress can be made while Mozambique is torn by an internal conflict which has virtually reached the level of a civil war.

The rebel Renamo movement has displayed a tenacity and an ability to conduct guerrilla war that has rendered much of Mozambique ungovernable and is frightening off foreign investors.

Instead of melting away after the Nkomati ceremonies, as was expected, Renamo has intensified its attacks.

No power is getting through to South Africa from Cahora Bassa, vital convoys from Harare to Beira are attacked almost at will, and it is too dangerous for trains to travel from Nkomati to Maputo at night.

After months of sensitive, clandestine negotiations, the first moves towards Renamo-Frelimo talks emerged into the open this week. It is apparent that the South African Foreign Minister Mr Pik Botha has been enlisted as intermediary.

Department of Foreign Affairs sources confirmed that the "proximity talks" this week were likely to be only the first stage in a series of negotiations aimed at restoring stability in Mozambique.

It is understood Mr Botha is aiming for round table talks between the factions that could lead to a political re-integration of the rebels into Mozambican life.

The high-level discussions are the culmination of months of lower-level negotiations between Mozambican and South African security personnel about the exploits of the rebel Renamo forces and the delaying effect they were having on stabilisation in Mozambique.

The resilience and strength of Renamo -- and the comparable weakness of the Frelimo forces -- have apparently taken both Maputo and Pretoria by surprise.