

Russia wants diplomatic ties with SA

By Sandy Baer

RUSSIAN Foreign Minister, Mr Andrei Kozyrev, said last night at Jan Smuts Airport, he would discuss establishing diplomatic ties with South Africa after talks today.

"We are only at the beginning of the road. We will hold discussions, and after that we will be in a better position to give more answers," he told the Press at a short conference after his arrival.

"We are talking about two teams being deeply committed to reform. We share difficulties and are doing everything in our power to overcome roadblocks. We intend to see this process reach its completion and this is what makes us closer together," Mr Kozyrev said.

He said the more the transition, the more potential for co-operation and closer relations.

"We came with an open heart. We want everyone to know we are friends.

He said the two countries shared the same aim — human rights and freedoms — and both faced tremendous difficulties.

"We will work together for these shared areas and goals, we need each other."

Foreign Minister Pik Botha, who was at the airport to meet Mr Kozyrev, said that at the moment, it was premature to dis-



Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr ANDREI KOZYREV.

cuss the signing of full diplomatic ties between the two countries.

"The two of us will discuss our relations in many ways, what form they should take, trade relations, the field of sport — we will endeavour to normalise relations."

He said it was a historic moment for South Africa to welcome Mr Kozyrev to the country.

"If anyone asked me four or five years ago if I would see this day, I would have said it was a

joke. The arrival of Mr Kozyrev is a striking summary of the changes that have occurred, not only in South Africa, but worldwide."

The Russians had an understanding of the obstacles and risks faced in South Africa.

"We both find ourselves in a process of transfer and change. We can assist and help each other. Apartheid has gone and communism is gone — we can assist each other."