

Pik hints at ^{Star} links with Soviets ^{15/2/89 1.9}

The Star Bureau

LONDON — South African Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Pik Botha has hinted that Pretoria is exploring the possibility of restoring diplomatic links with the Soviet Union.

A report in the *Financial Times* said the subject came up during a meeting with media correspondents.

Mr Botha is reported to have told journalists that the issue of restoring diplomatic relations, broken off in 1956, was "a delicate matter which I would rather not reply to today — maybe at a later date".

"If I say one thing it will be a lie, if I say a different thing, it might damage what I hope to achieve."

This was interpreted as the first oblique confirmation that Moscow's "positive role" during the recent Angolan peace negotiations could lead to closer.

The *Financial Times* said Pretoria had followed closely the recent evolution of Soviet diplomacy in Africa, and pointed out that in De-



Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Pik Botha.

cember Mr Botha had met Mr Anatoly Adamishin, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister in charge of African affairs, during the closing stages of the Angola peace talks.

Mr Botha, the report said, suggested to the correspondents that in future Moscow could play a similar diplomatic role — with the United States — in helping to bring peace and stability to war-torn Mozambique.

Mr Botha had also revealed that in recent

months the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), once supported by South Africa, had destroyed 1 400 electricity pylons along the powerline from the Cahora Bassa Dam to Pretoria.

The report added: "He strongly rejected accusations ... that South Africa was guilty of destabilising its neighbours."

"He pointed to the recent Angolan agreement, and co-operation with Mozambique as examples of Pretoria's constructive role."