

SA Judge at conference in Maputo

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- By Etienne Garnett-Bennett

ANOTHER door was opened for South Africa when the vice-chairman of the SA Law Commission, Judge Pierre Olivier, recently attended a conference, with the theme: 'Human rights and democracy in Africa' in Maputo.

About 50 jurists and academics from Mozambique, Zambia, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Sweden and Germany attended the conference. Judge Olivier and Mrs Brigitte Mabandla of the ANC were the only South Africans.

'At first the other conference goers were a bit surprised to see me. But after I started participating in the discussions I was gradually accepted and in the end we were good friends,' he says.

According to Judge Olivier there was a realisation among the delegates that the liberation from colonial bonds did not really lead to more freedom and democracy in Africa. The conference aimed at generating proposals to protect human rights in Africa.

Aspects that were dis-

cussed include the constitutionalisation of democracy, political education to educate the masses in the principles of democracy, the role of art, theatre and drama in the propagation of democracy, and the rights of women in Africa.

'South Africans often see Africa's jurists as naive and ignorant of human rights. The most of these people come out of liberation movements, whose ideology is based on human rights. They really have a deep understanding for the problems Africa is facing with regard to individual and group liberties,' he says.

Judge Olivier says there is a real struggle currently in progress in Africa to establish true democracy and human rights at grassroots level. Socialism and Communism are crumbling and the Uhuru battle cries of the sixties are slowly being replaced by more realistic, sobering viewpoints. Judge Olivier thinks that the ideological conversion in Africa will also play an important part in the future of South Africa.

Although the South African judicial system was

not under discussion at the conference, there is an awareness that the country can play an important role in the training of jurists from Africa. 'Especially Mozambicans want to get to know our judicial system, to improve the mutual trade between the two countries.' Negotiations in this regard are currently being discussed.

Judge Olivier also visited Maputo in December last year where he

met several jurists from Mozambique.

★ The Law Commission's final report on human and group rights in South Africa will soon be handed to the minister of Justice, Mr Koble Coetzee. Judge Olivier said the conference in Maputo had brought several useful papers and inputs to the fore which would also be mentioned in the report.

(BUREAU FOR INFORMATION - PRETORIA)