

Pretoria and Maputo look like friends

By CHRISTOPHER MUNNION in Pretoria

SOUTH Africa and Mozambique were last night close to a broad agreement to reduce subversion and violence between the two countries which in recent years has brought them near to an undeclared state of war.

Goodwill and an apparent mood of compromise seeped from all aspects of the bilateral negotiations between officials of the two nations taking place simultaneously in Pretoria and Maputo.

The prospect of arch-conservative South Africa achieving an entente cordiale with Marxist, pro-Soviet Mozambique seemed realistic.

The talks on mutual economic problems, tourism, the supply of electrical power from Mozambique's giant hydro-electrical scheme at Cabora Bassa and, most important, security, result from mediation by Portugal.

As a result, Mr Pik Botha, South Africa's Foreign Minister, met Maj-Gen. Jacinto Veloso, Mozambique's Minister of Economic Affairs, in Swaziland last month.

All depends now on the outcome of the most pressing topic—cross-border security. South Africa has mounted at least three military operations into Mozambique in retaliation against sabotage attacks by the

banned African National Congress which is supported by President Samora Machel's government.

At the same time, Mozambique has repeatedly accused South Africa of backing the rebel anti-Machel movement, Renamo, whose guerrilla activities have destroyed the sparse infrastructure in most of Mozambique's far-flung provinces.

First day agreement

After the first day of talks in Pretoria diplomatic observers believe the two countries have agreed in principle not to allow any subversive activity against the other to be planned from its own territory.

The economic benefits for Mozambique of a rapprochement with South Africa would be considerable. In turn, Pretoria would have cast iron guarantees that Mozambique would not be harbouring guerrillas or urban terrorists who at present are able to cross the border easily.

As a gesture of goodwill, the Mozambique authorities yesterday allowed Mr Hans Van Dalsen, Pretoria's Director-General of Foreign Affairs, to lay a wreath at the grave in Maputo of the Afrikaner folk hero, Louis Trichardt, the Voortrekker leader who died in what was then Lorenzo Marques.