

SA 'not behind MNR bandit atrocities'

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Herald Reporter

THE British Prime Minister Mrs Margaret Thatcher, said in Harare yesterday that she did not believe that South Africa sponsored the MNR bandits.

Despite many reports that noted that the South African regime did not honour the Nkomati accord and the assurances it gave last year about support to MNR, Mrs Thatcher said she believed that it had never aided the bandits.

Questioned on how she and her government hoped to end South African support for the MNR, she said: "The South African government does not support officially or unofficially Renamo. That is what they have told me. I have tackled them and most recently I tackled Pik Botha when he came to London and he said the South African government does not support Renamo in any way."

She said Pik Botha said his government wanted to see peace in Mozambique so that it could develop its resources.

In reply to another question on whether her recent meeting with Mr Pik Botha had shown that his government was ready to meet with

the authentic black leaders of South Africa, Mrs Thatcher said she thought that they wished to bring apartheid to an end.

"I think they know it has to be brought to an end by negotiations with several representatives of black Africa."

She had told the South African regime that negotiations were possible in the future.

On her relationship with the Soviet leader Cde Mikhail Gorbachev, Mrs Thatcher said he was a man she could do business with, a man who was bold and had courage. She added that peace in Angola would not have been possible without the active co-operation of the Soviet Union.

"I believe that perestroika was working externally in that way and I believe the Soviet Union is seeking to solve some of the world's other problems through negotiations," she said.

On defence matters between Zimbabwe and Britain, Mrs Thatcher said the two had not discussed them in great detail. She said the issue of the £100 million Harrier jets had not been brought up.