

Mozambique in secret talks with Pretoria

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clipping.
Possibly
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A SECRET mission from Mozambique visited Pretoria recently to negotiate a long-term trade and economic agreement with South Africa.

The visit which, it is believed, took place in September was kept secret by both South Africa and its marxist neighbour.

The Department of Foreign Affairs refused this week to discuss the talks.

Nevertheless, it is believed that the Mozambicans sought a "long-term" commitment from South Africa on economic and trade issues.

Broad base

Informed sources claimed this week that the Mozambicans were attempting to negotiate a 10-year pact with South Africa.

"Substantive discussions" had been held, they said. The possible economic agreement flowed from South African-Mozambican co-operation in the transport field — but was "much broader than that".

News of the delegation comes hot on the heels of a Sunday Times report last week that representatives of 11 African countries, including Zambia and Zaire, held talks in Pretoria recently on the constellations of states.

The report, which it is believed caused a stir in Western diplomatic and political circles, was not denied by the South African Government.

By FLEUR DE VILLIERS

Questioned at the international Press conference which followed his one-day meeting with top South African businessmen in Johannesburg this week, the Prime Minister, Mr Botha, refused to be drawn on the meeting.

He said that when a conference was of a secret nature it would be kept secret; when delegates decided that a conference should be public it would be made public.

Asked about South African co-operation with Mozambique, Mr Botha said that it was not South Africa's duty to prescribe to a country what form of government it should have.

Political circles in South Africa this week said that the Mozambique Government "agerness to conclude an economic pact with South Africa flowed from growing Maputo disenchantment with the economic aid it has been receiving from its Eastern bloc allies who, it is understood, take Mozambican products at knock-down prices.

In sharp contrast, South African Railways has helped to keep the Mozambique transport system and Maputo harbour functioning smoothly.

Dr Kobus Loubser, the general manager of SAR, has played a key role in insisting that a major proportion of South Africa's exports continues to be exported through Maputo.