

Ex-Rand Daily Mail man keen to return

FORMER deputy editor of the Rand Daily Mail, Benjamin Pogrund, left South Africa for Britain four years ago — in deep despair about the political situation here — after the closure of his newspaper.

Last night, after a month-long visit to South Africa, he returned to London.

But this time he had witnessed the start of the new Daily Mail here and his spirits were high in the hope of returning here "to contribute to the more optimistic changes in this country".

"I have been following the changes in the South African political situation with deep interest," said the former South African Liberal Party member, who now resides in West Hampstead, London.

Mr Pogrund (57) is currently the editorial director of the Panos Institute which disseminates information on Third World issues.

He appears frequently on London television and radio as an expert on South African affairs.

"Coincidentally my visit here was in-

PAT DEVEREAUX

fluenced by three factors. First, I plan to get a Panos project off the ground, which concerns the effect of apartheid on the country's environment.

"Second, there was the launch this week of the South African edition of my book on Pan Africanist Congress leader, Robert Sobukwe, titled 'Sobukwe and Apartheid'.

"And third, the start of a new Daily Mail coincided with these two projects," said Mr Pogrund in an interview this week.

Discussing the writing of his book on the PAC leader, Mr Pogrund said: "I met Robert Sobukwe when I was a political journalist in the 1950s. It was a painful book to write.

"We were close friends for 20 years and the book contains letters exchanged between us while he was banned and jailed. It explains Sobukwe's role in the context of black resistance in this country."

Asked about his perceptions of the current political situation here, Mr Pogrund

said: "Seen close up, the South African situation is a lot more heartening because white rule is going out at an even faster rate, and this is cause for my being optimistic.

"On the other hand there is cause for greater alarm concerning the poverty, the education crisis and the housing and hospital problems which the Government has perpetrated through its policies.

"It is clearly beyond this country's resources to repair the economic damage that apartheid policies have wreaked. And unfortunately there is now a shortage of world aid to Third World countries . . .

"There is also an enormous sense of unreality among whites here. They have to adjust to the fact that white rule has gone."

Mr Pogrund said during his visit here he had spent time with political leaders, including those from the PAC, the African National Congress and the National Party.

"I have been looking at how whites perceive the situation here and I think the leadership is far in advance of them."



BENJAMIN POGRUND: In SA for the launch of his book on PAC leader Robert Sobukwe.

Robert Sobukwe Papers

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