

BOOK REVIEWS

Banned. The Story of the African Daily News, Southern Rhodesia, 1964
By E. Wason. London, Hamish Hamilton, 1976, 161 pp., £4.50.

I was surprised to be asked to review this book because I figure in it quite frequently, and must therefore declare an interest.

Eugene Wason was a colleague and a friend of mine. When I took over the editorship of *The Sunday Mail* in 1962 he became my assistant editor. And a very good assistant editor he was, too. So he should have been. He had held important editorships of newspapers in England and Scotland before he came to Rhodesia. He was of a calibre Rhodesia seldom gets in journalists who leave Britain for this country. He proved that when, perforce, he had to return to Britain. Thomson Newspapers again made him an editor — finally in Belfast where he once more had to walk the tightrope of producing a newspaper in a community torn apart by group conflict and dissension. He did it so successfully that he gained a prestigious newspaper award.

Banned. The Story of the African Daily News, as one would expect, is an emotional account of the banning of that newspaper by the Rhodesian Front Government in 1964. One might comment at this point that the banning did not stop the march of events to the situation we have in Rhodesia today, but that the lesson has not been learnt.

Wason gives his account of what happened during the eight months that he was managing editor of the *African Daily News* in Salisbury with strong feeling, but reasonably factually for all that. Knowing his enthusiasm as a journalist, his skills in producing an attractive, readable newspaper and putting his finger (or should I say pen?) on what it was his readers wanted, I have a fairly clear idea of the gusto with which he went about converting the *African Daily News* from a drab, characterless little journal to a lively daily that, in no time at all, Africans scrambled to buy.

He made mistakes. He admits that. As he puts it: 'I learned much on the *Daily News* . . . I learned that in a country where there is civil strife it does not do to be too provocative' (p.158). He was, up to a point (but only up to a point) a victim of his own unbridled enthusiasm.

Wason was right to put his account of what happened into print. It is a contribution to the history of Rhodesia in a turbulent period that has not yet ended — an episode which required to be written.

I do not question the accuracy of his telling of the story of the *African Daily News*. Indeed, he quotes extensively from Hansard. But his memory — on which he obviously relies for much else in the book — lets him down a number of times when he writes of other issues and of people.

For instance John Parker (who was my news editor on *The Sunday Mail* when he ran foul of the authorities) was not deported. After a strenuous and unpleasant battle to get him released from gaol and cleared of the charge against him, we sent him and his family back to Britain. He might have been deported had he stayed on here; but the fact is, we sent him home before anything like that could happen.

Wason also makes silly little mistakes, which he should not have made. To mention just two. He says that I succeeded Malcolm Smith as editor of *The Rhodesia Herald*. I did not. Swadel succeeded Smith and I succeeded

Swadel. And he refers to Pat Bashford's 'Rhodesia Central Party' — which was, of course, the Centre Party.

Finally, a clarification of that famous (or infamous) Victoria Falls conference that sealed the fate of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Sir Roy Welensky and Sir Albert Robinson (the High Commissioner in London) urged Winston Field not to agree to attend any such conference without a guarantee that Southern Rhodesia, like Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, would come away from the conference an independent country. He had a strong hand, he was told. The conference could not be held without the participation of the Government of Southern Rhodesia. Their consternation was great when, to their surprise, Winston Field agreed to attend without this guarantee being given. He was, as he told me himself, persuaded by Butler. He was, of course, outmanoeuvred.

Eugene Wason's book revived for me many memories of people and events, some of them pleasant and some of them not. I enjoyed reading it.

University of Rhodesia

R. G. MEIER

Mucheke: Race, Status and Politics in a Rhodesian Community By A. K. H. Weinrich. Paris, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1976, 278 pp., no price indicated.

The publication of this book might have been a minor event. There is as yet only a handful of community studies set in African towns or cities. *Mucheke* is the first work of this genre to come out of Rhodesia. It is the fourth major book to be published by Dr Weinrich (often better known as Sr Mary Aquina), and the first since she left the country precipitately in 1975, although the manuscript was completed before her departure. Dr Weinrich who now teaches Sociology at the University of Dar es Salaam, was a controversial figure among White Rhodesians and occasionally among her colleagues as well. Readers, other than those maintaining some of the biases she mentions, are, however, not likely to find much that is controversial in this book, even if it is true that the author allows her personal judgement to intrude more than once.

As it is the appearance of the work has passed unheralded in this country. It has been issued by UNESCO as one of a series of three studies, the others being *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa, Part II: Rhodesia* by R. Austin and *Southern Rhodesia: The Effects of a Conquest Society on Education, Culture and Informal* by M. O'Callaghan. The advertising and distribution of books published under the auspices of UNESCO has never been good anywhere, let alone in the illegal and unrecognized state of Rhodesia. In addition they are rarely cheap, even in paperback form. I very much doubt that anybody actually concerned with the administration of Mucheke has seen this book or is likely to. Neither am I sure that the future policy makers of Zimbabwe would draw any particular lessons from it.

Dr Weinrich's work is focused on the African township of the provincial centre of Fort Victoria and does not deal directly with the non-African population of the rest of the town other than employers of a sample of domestic servants in the White (and Indian and Coloured) parts of town. Yet the lives of Mucheke's residents are directly and intimately affected by

the rest of the town, not simply because that is where many of them work in shops, industries and offices, but also because that is where many of the major decisions affecting them are shaped. Her book is not quite the conventional kind of community study, for, although it contains sections dealing with work and economic conditions, recreation and voluntary associations, politics and frequent references to conditions within the homes, there is no systematic treatment of the family, of township administration as such, of church and religious life, or of the organization and impact of schools. Dr Weinrich herself also did not live for a protracted period in Mucheke as would normally be expected of an anthropologist (and as C. and P. Kileff did in Westwood and Marimba Park in Salisbury; see 'Black suburbanites: An African elite in Salisbury, Rhodesia', in C. Kileff and W. C. Pendleton, *Urban Man in Southern Africa* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1975), reviewed *ante* (1975), IV, i, 151-3). Given the state of 'race relations' in Rhodesia and her identity as a nun, it would, at any rate, have been difficult enough for her to carve out, and be accepted in, a role of a relatively disinterested observer. Much of the credit for the illuminating quality of data and richness of detail in many places must no doubt go to her able African research assistant who spent nearly two full years in Mucheke. But Dr Weinrich also drew on official statistics and information from no less than three sample surveys, whilst using the opportunity to compare this data with several other studies outside Rhodesia, but particularly Stopforth's study of Highfield township in Salisbury. This gives her present book a significantly broader data base than any of her earlier studies.

Mucheke conveys a vivid picture of the physical conditions of life in the various neighbourhoods of the township (to which the photographs in the text also contribute). The author succeeds particularly well in sketching the subtleties of the status graduations characterizing the community, and as can be expected shows a special sensitivity for the problems and changing position of women. A variety of interesting sidelights also emerge in the course of her account regarding the response of the population to a new political party (the National Peoples' Union), the behaviour and position of the police, and the operation of some clubs and trade unions.

Yet it remains very predominantly a descriptive account throughout, with only an occasional speculative hypothesis thrown in (such as the reason for the more urban outlook of women). Numerous analytical possibilities are left unexploited. The subtitle ('Race, Status and Politics') accurately indicates the three major themes which run through the text, but the absence of a sustained analytical argument does detract both from the interest and readability of the book. Especially in the earlier chapters a welter of empirical detail and survey frequency distributions are presented first, from which a few conclusions or generalizations are then drawn inductively. But even in the factual account problems occur. Dr Weinrich herself points out the deficiencies in her samples. She is careful in her qualitative descriptions to indicate the full range of variations which occur, but then, falls prone to laying too much emphasis on a typical case or example. Thus at the end of the book one is better informed on the activities and position of the Black M.P. and school inspectors' households than on anybody else in the township. Sometimes she is in danger of losing a sense of proportion. Prostitutes (which category is never clearly defined or differentiated) seem to abound in Mucheke until one learns that the majority of them live in the female hostel which contains only eleven double rooms. Later one is told that there are 'many' Coloured prostitutes in a small housing scheme of

sixteen units in the Indian and Coloured neighbourhood on the other side of town.

Finally, there are simply too many unnecessary errors. I mention only a few. The author of a pilot P.D.L. survey is given as Roger instead of Rogers (fn., p. 235). Dr Weinrich claims (p. 29) that employment figures cannot be released under the Emergency Regulations. It is true that unemployment statistics are hard to come by and where they are available (such as from the Labour Exchanges) they are so unreliable as to be useless. But national employment figures are routinely published by industry in the Central Statistical Office's bulletin every quarter. Where she refers to a new 'comprehensive' secondary school, she probably means an F2 (practically oriented) school (p. 30). Her claim that railway employees in other major centres, unlike in Fort Victoria, are accommodated in six-roomed houses would hold only for very few (p. 112). Later she indicates that the five hundred people who were detained during the 1959 Emergency were not released until 1962 (p. 184); this, again, is only true for a few, since the vast majority were released within the first three months after the Emergency. This, of course, is not to say that it was necessary or should be condoned.

Nonetheless, in an area in which little has been published in Rhodesia, this book, due to its wealth of detail, is an important and useful contribution. For those who would wish to understand change, or absence of change, in the urban Zimbabwe of tomorrow, *Mucheke* would provide a valuable background.

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C. M. BRAND

A Bibliography of the Birds of Rhodesia, 1873-1977 By M. P. Stuart Irwin.
Salisbury, The Rhodesian Ornithological Society, 1978, 241pp., Rh\$5.00.

This is definitely a book for the specialist worker in ornithology, and cannot, therefore, be expected to have a wide popular appeal. It is, however, one of the most comprehensive works of its kind ever produced. Even in a greatly condensed form, it runs to over 200 pages, with another seventeen blank pages at the end (presumably for the user to make his own additions). It covers 636 species, most of which have one or more major and several minor references, amounting to something like 5000 all told. Truly a *magnum opus!*

While it could under no circumstances be called a book to take up and browse through, I found a number of comments under various species which intrigued me and made me want to read further. For example, 'The reference in Ostrich 169 was originally listed under *Gallinago nigripennis*, but is a misidentification of the present species' (Great Snipe); 'The reference in *Ibis* 25 to a bird perhaps near *M. olivaceus* is probably an allusion to the present species and is included on this presumption' (Orange-breasted Bush Shrike); 'The occurrence of this recently proposed species within Rhodesia still requires confirmation as does its specific status' (Brown Firefinch Indigobird).

Having said that this book is one for the specialist in ornithology, it is certainly one that nobody seriously interested in Rhodesian ornithology can afford to be without. In the Introduction, the author says, 'It was the original intention that this bibliography would form part of an updated book on the birds of Rhodesia, a work which at present remains in manuscript'; it is to be hoped that the latter work will not be long in appearing.

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R. M. HARWIN

Prominent African Personalities of Rhodesia Salisbury Cover Publicity Services, 1978, illustrated, xi, 196 pp. no price indicated.

This is the second edition of this publication. It contains some 500 African personalities (nearly half the book being in fact taken up by advertisements, which, however, give an interesting glimpse of the African market in Rhodesia). The potential value of such a work of reference is negated by the apparent lack of clear criteria by which entries are chosen for inclusion; the result is, therefore, something of a 'rag-bag'. It is particularly noticeable that the better educated and the more political members of the African community are either left out or given a write-up that is misleading by its omissions.

R.S.R.

Rebel People By *D. Hills*. London, George Allen & Unwin, 1978, 248 pp., £5.50.

The first sixty pages of this book carry on from *The White Pumpkin* and the author's imprisonment in Uganda. Thereafter, the book concerns Rhodesia, where the author came (for reasons never really explained) and spent part of the years 1976-8 in teaching at the Teachers' College, Gwelo. The survey of the Rhodesian situation is little more than journalism; but, at a time when the professional journalists in Rhodesia rarely venture beyond Salisbury's bars and Government press-releases, this has a refreshing touch of immediacy, of contact with Africans, and indeed Europeans, outside Salisbury. It is interesting to see how an uncommitted, sceptical traveller, who knows other parts of Africa and its literature, finds little that is praiseworthy in Rhodesia of today — whether the guerillas, the silent African majority, or the Europeans. The picture is depressing but accurate (except in spelling of proper names — the publishers apparently no longer employ editors); no-one it is to be feared, will come well out of the 'Rhodesian problem'.

R.S.R.