

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.

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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 Information* 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