objectivity; and one of these forms is the principle of substance'. The poet's meditation on the making of stones—on 'lithogenesis'—leads back to Aristotle's doctrine of substance—but also to Aristotle's doctrine of God: 'Aristotle's first mover, whose activity is defined as *noesis noeseos*, is too lightly dismissed by Christian theists as too coldly indifferent an ultimate to be bearable; this because to recall Aristotle's theology in the light of this poem is to be reminded that at least it honestly faced the question of what ultimately is, without prejudging the answer, that it must be an ultimate concerned with the human scene'.

There will be no future for metaphysics unless the ontology of the theist can face the facts about the nature of what is with as much fidelity as the ontology of the atheist. Professor MacKinnon's final shaft is to wish that he had the gift of pastiche to be able to write as Lenin might have done about a great deal of modern theology. No one would call Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* philosophy, he tells us; 'yet it is the sort of work that the philosopher who is concerned with the problem of metaphysics would do well to remember'.

FERGUS KERR, O.P.

BANDA, Philip Short, London and Boston. *Routledge & Kegan Paul,* 1974. pp. 316 + Bibliography 4 + Notes 27 + Index 8. Price £3·50.

Since this is the first full-length biography of Dr Hastings Banda, Life-President of Malawi, Philip Short's main concern is clearly not so much to gather comment on this extraordinary man as to document in detail the facts of his life and confirm them with as much evidence as possible. Such an approach is necessary, given the tendency of successful political leaders to obscure, reinterpret or even rewrite history, particularly their own. Certain facts invite suppression. We learn, for example, that when Banda moved from his medical practice in London to Ghana in 1953 it was primarily to escape the publicity from divorce proceedings in which he had been named as co-respondent, and when Short adds that 'Mrs French joined him (Banda, in Ghana), and there they lived together as man and wife' (p. 79) he is careful to quote as his sources 'Chiume, Matinga and unattributable interviews'. The frequency with which the rubric 'unattributable interviews' occurs is itself a heavy hint that Malawi is not yet ready for an objective description of its leaders. There is entertaining anecdote: Banda is renowned for his fastidiousness, and in England 'When he (Banda) took meals in a restaurant, he carried with him a small hand-towel which he used in preference to that provided in the washroom' (p. 37).

However, the aim of recounting anecdote and detail of Banda's private life is not to mock him or accuse him of hypocrisy but rather to establish the complex nature of his personality, 'his facility for maintaining unintegrated an array of conflicting ideas' (p. 316). This is vital, because while such inconsistency is absent at the moments of Banda's greatest triumphs, the secession of Malawi from the Federation and the attainment of full independence from Britain, it characterises his important pronouncements about policy towards white-ruled southern Africa. Short argues convincingly in his conclusion that Banda's promotion of contact between black and white and the fear which Banda believed to be basic to apartheid stand logically in contradiction to each other. (Incidentally, one could go on from there and ask how such illogicality compares with that of current British policy in southern Africa, where firms like Lonrho are encouraged to exploit the economies and yet where the Government disclaims all political responsibility, and further whether it surpasses the illogicality of the O.A.U. which fulminates against apartheid while failing to condemn genocide within its own member states.)

Radical changes have taken place in nearly all African countries in the decade or so since independence. The European parliamentary system of government and opposition has yielded to the supremacy of the executive and a single state party; the European legal system with its emphasis on the protection of the innocent has been replaced by less cumbersome judicial procedures—and some procedures that are not even judicial but merely military; and, most important, the leader soars above those comrades who fought with him for independence. Banda is Kamuzu, Messiah, hence the knock-about description of Malawi as a 'one-man Banda'. An appealing characteristic of Banda is the candour with which he justifies such changes. First, the irrelevance of democracy in Africa today:

> 'The people in Britain today take everything for granted—trade unionism, free assembly, and freedom of the press—but I can quote instances after instances to prove that it was

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not so in Britain at one time. . . . Therefore we have to do things here which in Britain and America, (at) the stage they have arrived at in their own history, (are) repugnant to their idea of freedom and justice, but (to us), (at) our stage of development, are the normal thing to do' (p. 255-6).

Second, the need to suspend the niceties of judicial procedures:

'According to the English or British law, you cannot accuse anyone of murder unless you have clear evidence. . . . But here . . . (under African) law, you don't always need to have clear evidence to accuse anyone. . . . Under Chewa law, if you threaten a man (by saying), 'If you don't do so and so you are going to be killed', and that man is killed the next day, you are guilty . . .' (p. 286).

Banda is equally explicit about his own unique authority: 'I am not just another African. I am Kamuzu' (p. 316). In fact, he had never been a mere first among equals. He was elected President-General of the Nyasaland African Congress less than a month after his return to Malawi from a voluntary exile in America and Britain that had lasted some 30 years. He demanded and received the exclusive right to nominate all officers of the Congress. When he later became Life-President, the 'Discipline Regulations' that were passed gave him absolute powers over his 'boys':

'So what does a leader do? (he asked). When I was negotiating a constitution before my men knew what I was doing I had finished everything. I said: 'Well, boys, I've done this, that and that, finished. . . . The Malawi system, the Malawi style is that Kamuzu says it's just *that,* and then its finished' (p. 202-3).

The departure from his cabinet of Chipembere and several others and the subsequent armed revolt were the direct result of Banda's refusal to take seriously any independence of thought.

While imprisoned in Rhodesia in 1959 with Banda during the emergency Dunduzu Chisiza wrote very prophetic words about the problems of leadership in independent Africa:

'If a nationalist movement is to achieve the goal of independence, it is vitally important that one of the leaders should be elevated well above the others; that his former equals should look upon themselves as his juniors. . . . But once independence has been achieved, the problem arises of reconciling submissiveness to the top leader and individual initiative on the part of second-level leaders. . . . The real problem is posed by those leaders who lapse into dictatorial tendencies because their countrymen trust them . . . too much. . . . When too much trust is reposed in a leader (sometimes) the thing goes to his head and makes him believe he is infallible. Such a man is not likely to brook criticism or to welcome alternative suggestions. It is his idea or nothing. . . . The task of leadership involves following as well as leading' (p. 201-2).

Exactly. However, reaction to the 'problem' posed by the 'leaders who lapse into dictatorial tendencies' depends on what sort of 'countryman' is trusting them. Malawi's neighbours recognise grudgingly that Banda's economic and agricultural policies have raised standards of living for the peasant farmer, and so his gratitude to Banda for this improvement may well outweigh his distaste at seeing his particular local language and culture squashed in favour of Cewa. Similarly, the educated élite in Malawi who hold relatively highly paid jobs may well feel that submissive loyalty to the executive is preferable to expressing independent thought and inviting detention.

In deciding to publish his book on Malawi, Philip Short has also made a personal choice. According to Niesewand (*Guardian,* 7 Feb. 74) Banda made strenuous efforts to prevent publication, and Short has presumably no immediate plans to visit Malawi. The Malawi he describes, although a dictatorship, seems a more benevolent place than others in Africa one could name. What is sad is that where descriptions of such countries and their rulers exist, descriptions often as objective and well-documented as Short's portrait of President Banda, they rarely get into print. The author slips quietly out of the country with his notes and transcripts, but his associates remain, their humanitarian work and possibly their lives at risk, should their friend be rash enough to publish. JEREMY GREENSLADE

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