"Malawi–Central African Paradox."
American Universities Field Staff Reports 2 (1979):

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1979/No. 2
Africa

by Norman N. Miller
[NNM-1-'79]

Malawi - Central African Paradox

Malawi is a land of contradictions. At independence in 1964 it was by all standards too small, too isolated, and too poor to be given any hope of prosperity. Yet today the nation bubbles with optimism. Bumper crops for the past two years, brisk trade, an infusion of capital from the West, and the stern "faith, hope, and charity" doctrine preached by the finger-wagging President Hastings Kamazu Banda have put Malawi on the map as a nation that is stable and growing. In contemporary Africa that means membership in a select group.

The pathway to this relative prosperity has not been easy, nor was it achieved without the sacrifice of a great many human rights. Detention without trial continues, press freedom does not exist, censorship of incoming periodicals is routine, and dissent on any sensitive issue is a perilous undertaking. In fact, Malawi is an autocracy, run by "President for Life" Hastings Banda and a group of aging loyalists who are conservative, pragmatic, often ruthless, and excessively preachy.

The President's personal style is enigmatic and paradoxical. He advocates an austere, no-smoking, no-drinking life, yet surrounds himself with luxurious residences and elaborate finery. He extols the rural farm life, yet embodies the urban man in the finest pin-striped suits; he preaches self-sufficiency on modest incomes, yet has amassed a huge personal fortune which he makes little attempt to conceal.

Unquestionably he has made wise developmental decisions and led the economy to impressive growth. But at the same time he has controlled and ostracized the press and the academic community. In a freer society each could have helped to make the country's accomplishments known and helped to sustain them.

Politically, 1978 will probably be seen as a watershed year for Malawi. After 14 stern years Banda has lessened the government's tight grip on the country and promised greater democratic freedom. Promises made before the June 29 general elections were in the face of continued opposition to Banda's brand of governing, expressed largely by the three exile groups outside Malawi and, far more cautiously, by critics at home. Several measures signaled the loosening of controls:

- Some 1,000 Malawians were released from detention in late 1977 and early 1978.

- A parliamentary general election occurred for the first time since Independence.

- The Western press, strictly controlled in the past, was allowed back to see Malawi's impressive economic progress.

- A new Vice-Chancellor, Dr. David Kimble, was appointed to head the University of Malawi, a move that many feel represented a more relaxed attitude toward academics.[1]

To comprehend modern Malawi it is important to understand two things: first, the geographic and political vise in which the landlocked country is held, and, second, the way the intriguing President Banda has managed to remain the veritable King of his country.

A Geo-Political Vise

Surrounded by socialists or socialist-Marxist states on three sides and the seething Rhodesian-Zimbabwe confrontation on the west, Hastings Banda has had to play an adept game of international squeeze and countersqueeze. Alternately cool or very cool to his immediate neighbors, and cordial or very cordial to South Africa and the West, Banda's foreign policy is basically one of appeasement and rapprochement. As an unabashed pragmatist he periodically enrages his socialist neighbors by dealing with the "devils" of southern Africa. As an unrepentant capitalist Banda's trade and aid lines are clear-cut: British, American, European, Japanese interests are in;

1. For years research clearances have been exceptionally difficult to obtain and academic dissent from government proclamations was tantamount to dismissal. This could mean detention for Malawian faculty, or an air ticket home for foreign instructors.

Russian, Chinese, Cuban, East European interests are out.

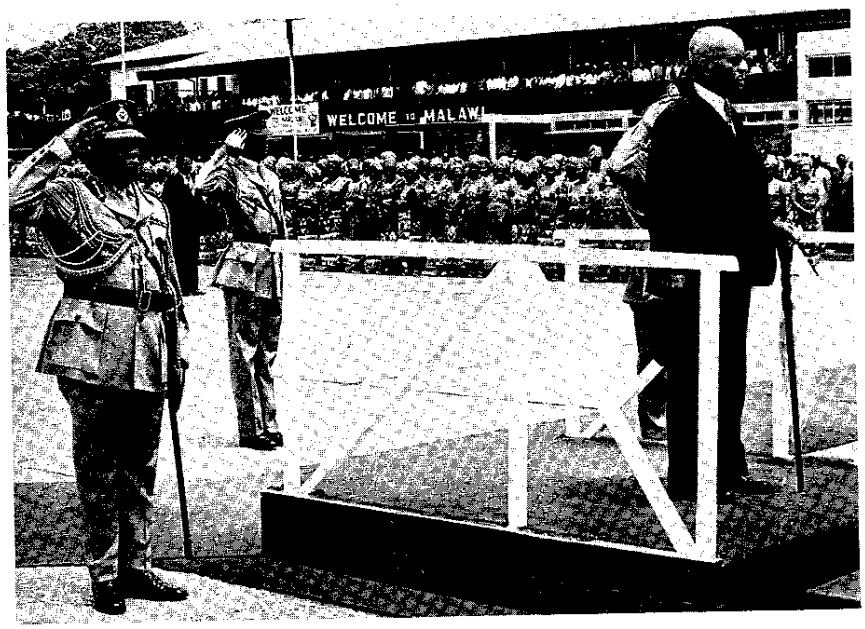
Indeed, Banda uses his relations with the West adroitly to help keep the nearest neighbors in some kind of working relationship with Malawi. It is no easy task, as pressures on Malawi come from three sides.

Squeeze from the South and East. Mozambique is Malawi's greatest worry. The two ports of Beira and Nacala on the Indian Ocean are Malawi's shortest lifeline to the sea. The Frelimo government is cool to Malawi and openly criticizes Banda's capitalist policies. Banda, on the other hand, has accused Mozambique-based exiles of planning an armed invasion of his country and of smuggling antigovernment literature into Malawi. According to writer John Borrell, Banda has also accused Mozambique-based exiles indirectly of trying to recruit young Malawians either to leave the country in order to join the exile forces, or to set up party cells within the country. In the past similar encouragement to organize internal party cells has also come from Tanzania.

Occasional incidents aggravate the tension, as when Mozambique seized a Malawian lake tanker and its oil at gunpoint in late 1977. Perhaps more serious, Mozambique has recently granted political asylum to Dr. Attati Mpakati, leader of the Soviet and Cuban-supported Socialist League of Malawi, a group embracing a Marxist philosophy.

Squeeze from the North. Tanzania, Malawi's northeastern neighbor, is the base for Malawi's two other exile parties, the Congress for the Second Republic, headed by Kanyama Chiume, and the Malawi Freedom Movement, headed by Orton Chirwa. Both have been accused by Banda of trying to undermine and take over his government.

Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere has been outspoken in his criticism of Banda as a lackey of South Africa and black handmaiden to white South African interests. Nyerere's statement in early 1978 that Africans have the right to overthrow corrupt and unpopular regimes was taken as being aimed at Malawi as well as at Uganda. The northern border with Tanzania has long been a pathway for dissidents moving arms and materials to and from Malawi.[2]

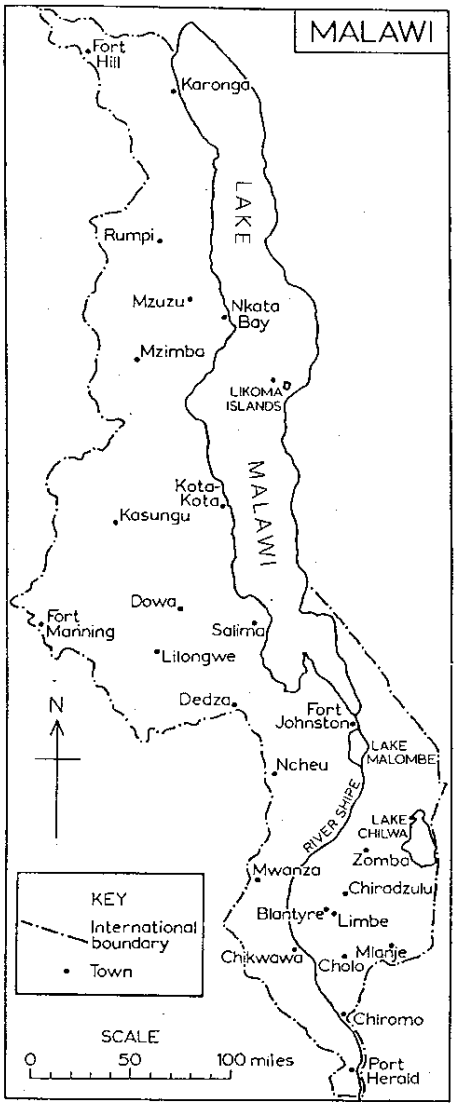


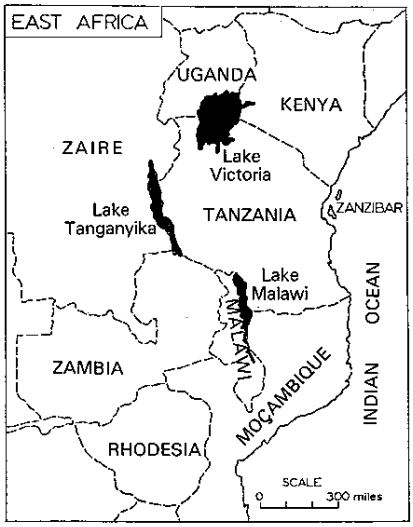
President Banda departs for Kenya to pay tribute at Kenyatta's grave site.

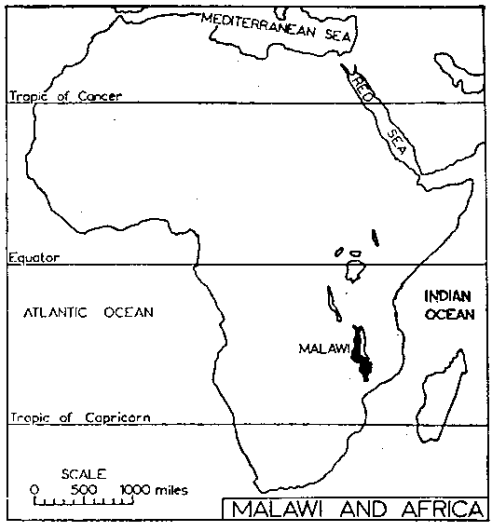
One example of the smuggling that is believed to come out of Tanzania is of what Banda calls "subversive cloth." Cotton print material, of the sort commonly found in eastern Africa bearing artistic designs and occasionally popular slogans, has been found in Malawi overprinted with the words "Ten" and "Hang." The "Hang" means, presumably, the Malawi regime. The "Ten" probably stands for the *Kumi na Kumi* or ten-X-ten house-cell system founded in Tanzania in the 1960s. Under this adaptation of the Chinese cell model, villagers were organized according to contiguous blocks of ten houses, each household leader assuming a special responsibility within the cell. Designations of, for example, chairmen of health, water, pathways, education, agricultural development, and a chairman and vice-chairman of the cell were common. The cell chairman in turn represented his neighbors to the political party. The Tanzanians employed the system mainly for economic development and to raise political consciousness. Malawian attempts to organize such a cell system are seen by Banda as "subversive" and antigovernment.

Squeeze from the West. Zambia and white-dominated Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) have been somewhat more cordial to Malawi over the years, although both represent pressures of a different nature. Zambia's brand of liberal socialism is less shrill than that of Tanzania or Mozambique, but is nevertheless ideologically far to the left of Banda's Malawi. Some exiles from Malawi in fact are in Lusaka, including spokesmen for the Socialists League of Malawi, who advocate the violent overthrow of Banda's government. These men

2. Since the same ethnic group lives on both sides of the mountainous, rugged border area, crossings have been difficult to stop. A great number of people know the region and have kinship or tribal affinities on both sides of the border. Identity papers can be exchanged between cousins, who can act as guides and informants while posing as either Malawians or Tanzanians.







Maps after A.D. Young

MALAWI PROFILE

Population: 5.6 million (1978 estimate), growth rate 2.7%, density approximately 113 per square mile, main ethnic groups: Chewa, Nyanja, Yao, Lomwe, Sena, Tumbuka.

Religion: Traditional faiths 40%; Christian 40%; Islam 15%; other or mixed 5%.

Geography: size 46,747 square miles, approximately the size of Pennsylvania. Capital: Lilongwe (90,000); commercial center: Blantyre-Limbe (170,000).

Government: Presidential Republic, Member of the Commonwealth. Independence: July 6, 1964; Constitution: July 6, 1966. Head of State: President for Life Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda.
Branches: 1. Executive, President (Head of Government, Chief of State), plus Cabinet.
2. Legislative, unicameral Parliament (78-member National Assembly, 5-year term).
3. Judicial, Magisterial Courts, Traditional Courts.
Political Party: Malawi Congress Party.
Suffrage: Universal adult.
Political Subdivisions: 24 Districts, 3 subdistricts.

Economy: GDP: $640 .6 million (1974 prices). Annual Growth Rate: 6.5%. Per Capita Income: $129 (1974 prices).
Agriculture: Land 32%. Labor 90%. Key products: tobacco, tea, coffee, sugar, peanuts, cotton.
Industry: Labor 10%. Products: food, beverages, tobacco, footwear, clothing, textiles.

Flag: Black, red, and green horizontal stripes with half a red sun in the center of the black stripe.

Banda's picture adorns dresses of dancers at Independence Celebration July 6, 1978.

One woman's dress reproduces the national motto, "Unity, Loyalty, Obedience, and Discipline."

have stated that the SLM has indeed recruited young Malawians for military training and that they plan to seize Malawi and form a state like Tanzania and Mozambique.

Caught near the Rhodesian-Zimbabwian struggle, Malawi has essentially elected to "sit this one out," as a Malawi politician noted. It is an uncomfortable position, and shockwaves from the struggle in Rhodesia are felt in Malawi. The need to accommodate South Africa, and the need to have access to South African ports via Rhodesia, particularly if the Mozambique border closes, have all led to Banda's temporizing stance.

Similarly, if Zambia did not need to ship goods through Malawi to Mozambique, it would exert more pressure on Malawi to support the liberation of Rhodesia. Zambia's rapprochement with Malawi, and the fact that Zambia itself has recently reopened its border with "white" Rhodesia, keep these pressures in check. Nevertheless, Banda's stance enrages the freedom fighters.

The Countersqueeze. Malawi offsets the ill will surrounding it with overt counterpressures. The state has simply opted to seek a kind of economic and political asylum in the combined support of South Africa, the United Kingdom, and to a lesser degree other Western states. The fundamental assumption is that these states are its benefactors and will help Malawi in any way necessary to maintain its independence.

This view is coupled with the belief that as long as Malawi is economically healthy, both the dissidents at home and the foreign critics will be kept at bay. At the moment business booms and the assumption seems to be working. There are several reasons behind the boom.

- A flourishing agricultural base underlies Malawi's economic well-being. It is a nation of small farmers. Some 93 percent of the population work in agriculture, and in recent years they have produced 92-94 percent of Malawi's exports.[3] The two leading cash crops are tobacco and tea, although coffee, rice, maize, groundnuts, and cotton are also important. Beyond the cash crops, there is even greater diversity in the agricultural sector, including everything from sunflowers, beans, sorghum, millet, and wheat to bananas, citrus fruit, pineapples, Irish potatoes, and beeswax. Cassava is a subsistence, antifamine crop. Other important income derives from livestock, fishing, and forestry.

- Malawi is a businessman's paradise compared to much of Africa. Unlike copper-rich Zambia, for example, where the wait to get currency out of the country is now 20 months long, the prompt and efficient payments Malawi provides investors encourages brisk trade and confidence.

- Foreign loans and capital inflow continue. The United Kingdom, with numerous major loans for development, has kept a presence here; South Africa gave enormous help in building the new capital at Lilongwe, including an airstrip that can accommodate South African fighter aircraft if necessary, a move that gives Pretoria at least the possibility of a friendly airstrip far north in black Africa. Japanese, American, German, and

3. See Agnew, Swanzie and Michael Stubbs, *Malawi in Maps*, London, University of London Press, 1972, p. 78.

President Banda admires the corn crop at Chizenge Estate, Mchinje District.

Scandinavian aid and capital are also flowing.

- Trade is good and expanding. Although the Malawi market is not large, it is significant enough to attract European and American companies. United States firms such as Caterpiller, Case, Firestone, and others are exploring and investing. Forming a trade corporation in collaboration with the government is the common pattern. Carlsberg, for example, is now the national beer, and, like Blantyre Printing, the conglomerate that publishes the two key papers in the country, the government is a part owner of the enterprise.

- Malawi's multiracial atmosphere protects European and Asian interests. The encouragement and reassurance given Europeans by Banda, and the profits that have been made, are unprecedented in Africa. Asian middle-class traders and artisans, largely of Indian or Pakistani origin, remain in Malawi with the blessing of the government, although a recent caveat requires Asians to move to one of the three urban areas, Blantyre, Zomba, or Lilongwe, and leave the rural areas to African traders. The rationale stated by Banda was to "give Africans a chance to learn business."

The "Born Free" (children born after independence, 1964) demonstrate their dedication to agriculture.

- There is a healthy willingness to find alternative answers to sticky problems. The need for access to the sea is a good example. Mozambique's strict, unflinching socialist-Marxist line would rankle less if it were not for Malawi's dependence on the ports of Beira and Nacala. Even with the ports open to Malawi, port delays are excessive and many goods are airlifted to Malawi. In fact, port congestion has become legendary. Ship back-ups, warehouse blockages, shortage of freight cars, slow turn-around times of existing rolling stock, all lead to delivery delays expressed in terms of months. For emergency replacements, including very large parts, air freight is used increasingly. Harbors in South Africa, particularly Durban, are also used for Malawi goods, but the unpredictable

military situation in Rhodesia makes this overland passage uncertain.[4]

Another economic practice that exemplifies a willingness to make hard decisions in the face of criticism is that of supplying labor for South African mines. (The supply was temporarily halted after an air crash killed 77 miners in 1974, but soon resumed.) The extent of the present labor flow is not known, but the obvious advantage to both the migrating miner and the Malawi government is common knowledge.

The King of Central Africa

Much of the economic success, as well as the political oppression, that characterizes Malawi today turns on the curious personality of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Depending on one's political persuasion, Banda is seen as anything from autocratic and ruthless to a god king and messiah who has led the country to prosperity.

The life of the remarkable Banda has been well-documented. As an able student he was schooled both in the United States and the United Kingdom. After receiving an M.D. degree first in the United States, then in England, he remained in the latter country for a long period practicing medicine. In 1953 he left the United Kingdom to settle in Ghana, again practicing as a physician. In 1958, shortly after Ghana had attained its independence, Banda returned to Malawi as a leader and founding father of the Nyasaland African Congress Party. Jailed by the British for fomenting unrest, he was released in 1960 after 13 months in detention. Thereafter he was supported by the British as they groomed Nyasaland for what amounted to a peaceful transition to self-rule.

4. Among some of the business community there are jokes about the Blantyre airlift, comparing it to the Berlin airlift where the beleaguered good folks were saved from the hostile bad folks by the heroic airplane.

Jet-Age Migrants

An Air Malawi jet unloads Malawian men who have been to the South African mines for a one-year contract, and immediately loads their replacements. The incoming workers are well-dressed, with mod shirts, bright jackets, and shiny shoes, each carrying a neatly tied bundle of four or five woolen blankets purchased inexpensively near the mines. Happy to be home safely, they are an exuberant group. All are now comparatively wealthy men, as the paternal Malawi government has insisted on collecting 80 percent of their salaries, to be held in Malawi bank accounts in their own names. Reportedly, Malawi also gets additional direct payments from South Africa for making the project possible.

The men who are to be their replacements wait apprehensively in the departure lounge. They are a quiet group, some barefooted, most in tattered and patched clothes, drab in contrast to their returning countrymen. Unceremoniously they are ushered into the plane. The jet has not shut down its engines in the 15 minutes since it arrived, and soon it is screaming down the runway, airborne and heading south. One can only imagine what the young barefoot men must be thinking on their first plane trip as they watch their familiar farmlands grow smaller and disappear through the clouds below.

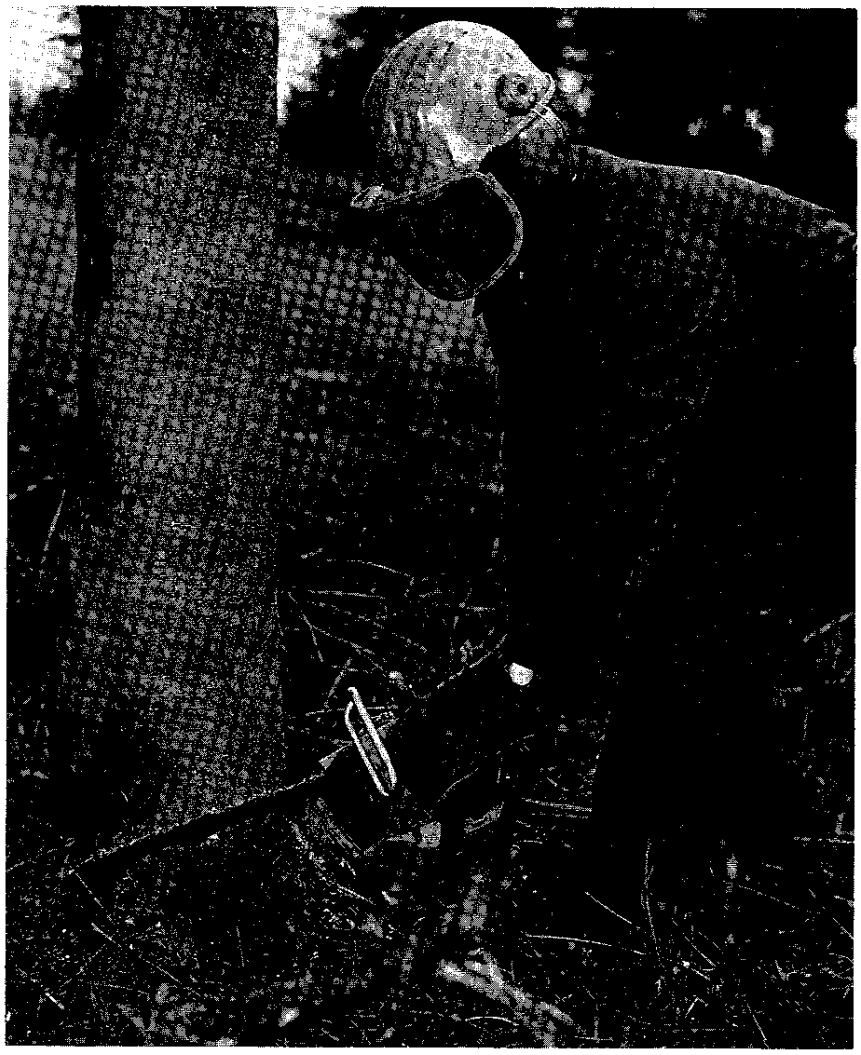
With independence in 1964, Banda quickly consolidated his power and within a few years was able to exercise jurisdiction over every aspect of Malawian life. Today there is little of significance that is done without Banda's approval, whether it is a decision on the architectural style of a new building or the details of a minor trade agreement.

Lessons in How To Be King. Much of Malawi's history as an independent nation is related to the fascinating story of how Hastings Banda has managed to stay in power. He is virtually a king in his own lush kingdom. His methods are a superb lesson in Machievellian politics.

Lesson One. Start Small. It is wise to commandeer a small country, preferably one that has been dominated in the past by conservative, religious overseers. Malawi is about the size of Pennsylvania and has a colonial history which includes widespread Christian missionary activity. Extensive proselytizing persists today, as does conversion, hiving-off of small sects, and ongoing formation of independent churches. Because of this religiosity, the national character of Malawi is probably more inhibited and less freewheeling than any other place in Africa. Banda has intertwined this conservatism with his own puritanical value system to create an atmosphere of extreme political reserve. In a small society these values can be maintained by a combination of restrictions, regulations, and moral indignation. Films and music, for example, are heavily censored, disco dancing is banned as degenerate, and the state has decreed a national dress code. Exteme politeness is advocated, and curtesying by women is a standard greeting. The Lesson: small is beautiful, and controllable.

Lesson Two. Destroy the Opposition. After independence Banda ran into immediate opposition within the younger African ranks, including a group of disenchanted ministers. An open rebellion developed in northern Malawi by followers of Henry Masuako Chipembere, the most effective opposition leader. Banda dealt with the rebellion with ruthless dispatch. White-officered troops

City Center, Lilongwe.



Malawi Dress Code

"There are certain dress limitations which apply to residents and visitors alike; ladies may not wear slacks (except in game parks) and must wear dresses/skirts that completely cover the knee. These regulations do not apply to the lakeshore resorts. Gentlemen must not wear trousers of the 'bell bottom' variety and long hair (defined as hair in bulk falling to the collar) is illegal. To avoid embarrassment on arrival, visitors are requested to ensure that they conform to these requirements."

(Air Malawi brochure for incoming travelers)

quickly regained order at Fort Johnson, and Banda forced the younger opponents into exile. Regrouping his forces around older conservatives, including loyal traditional chiefs, Banda began a harangue against young "radicals" that continues to the present. In the years since 1965 opposition to his regime has surfaced on several occasions, the most serious occurring in 1969-70 when personal attacks on Banda and his government were coupled with a series of gruesome hatchet murders. Some 30 seemingly random killings were apparently a part of an effort to unseat Banda by creating mass fear and lack of confidence in the government. The attempt nearly succeeded, and Banda suffered a number of indignities, including public denunciation by angry women, before the police were able to crack the ring of assassins. Since the death in exile of Chipembere there has been no serious threat to Banda's rule. The Lesson: establish early rules that discourage all opposition.

Malawian forest worker.

Lesson Three: Own the Country. Hastings Banda is a very rich man who controls a large part of the country's wealth. His personal hold on his nation's economy as the country's chief executive is probably unparalleled anywhere in the world. To understand this it is important to know that Malawi business laws allow public and private enterprises to be mixed. Parastatal government organizations, such as the Malawi Development Corporation, cooperate with large private companies to form powerful economic networks. Press Holdings Ltd., for example, is a large conglomerate connected to both the Malawi Development Corporation and the Malawi Congress Party. Ninety-nine percent of its shares are owned by Hastings Banda. Moreover, the Commercial Bank of Malawi, which influences every sector of the economy, is owned by Press Holdings Ltd. (40%), the Bank of America (30%), the Malawi Development Corporation (20%), and the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (10%). "In short, through his influence in Press Holdings Ltd., and the government bodies, Banda exerts a control over all the major sectors of the economy."[5] The Lesson: what you own, you control.

Lesson Four: Tinker the Bureaucracy. It is important that a king create a totally supportive government structure. This Banda has ably done. The government of Malawi is a dramatically tinkered version of the British Parliamentary system. By the Constitution of 1966 the President is to be chosen by the ruling party and traditional chiefs every five years. In 1970 Banda had this constitutional requirement waived and himself acclaimed "President for Life." The question of his heir has also become moot since Banda has abolished the Vice-Presidency and Prime Ministership.[6] He also appoints the entire Cabinet which, unlike other east African systems, need not be elected members of Parliament. No one is allowed to wait in the wings.

"President for Life" Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda.

A second major element in Banda's bureaucratic control is his check on the judiciary. To accomplish this Malawi has been saddled with two judicial systems: the magisterial court, which includes a three-member supreme court, and a unique traditional court system created in 1970. The traditional courts are based on the colonial local court structure, or chief's court, but today have enormously expanded powers. Most dramatically, they can hear any type of criminal case and mete out death penalties. There is no appeal to the magisterial line. Tragedies have occurred. Reliable sources in Blantyre report that the very Member of Parliament who tabled the motion to set up these traditional courts has himself become one of its recent victims. He was sentenced to death and executed after a trial in a traditional court, apparently without Banda's knowledge. The repercussions led to the arrest of several independent political strongmen and in effect probably triggered some of the more lenient measures instituted by Banda in 1978.

A third structural element that gives the President inordinate powers is the single party system. The Malawi Congress Party is the only authorized party, and is headed by Banda. The Young Pioneers, the party's youth wing, is a highly propagandized, national corps of young loyalists that is used for everything from manning roadblocks to instilling new political messages.

The lesson is clear: control the bureaucracy, allow no heirs, divide the judiciary to forestall legal opposition, and keep a tight control on the party apparatus.

Lesson Five: Hire Trusted Strangers. David Kimble's appointment as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malawi is a recent example of the President's long-time practice of using trusted Europeans in high-level posts. In Banda's early years whenever he left the country the reins of government were turned over not to a Malawian but to high-ranking Europeans, usually in

5. See *African Guide 1978*, African Guide Co. Ltd., London, 1978, p. B88.

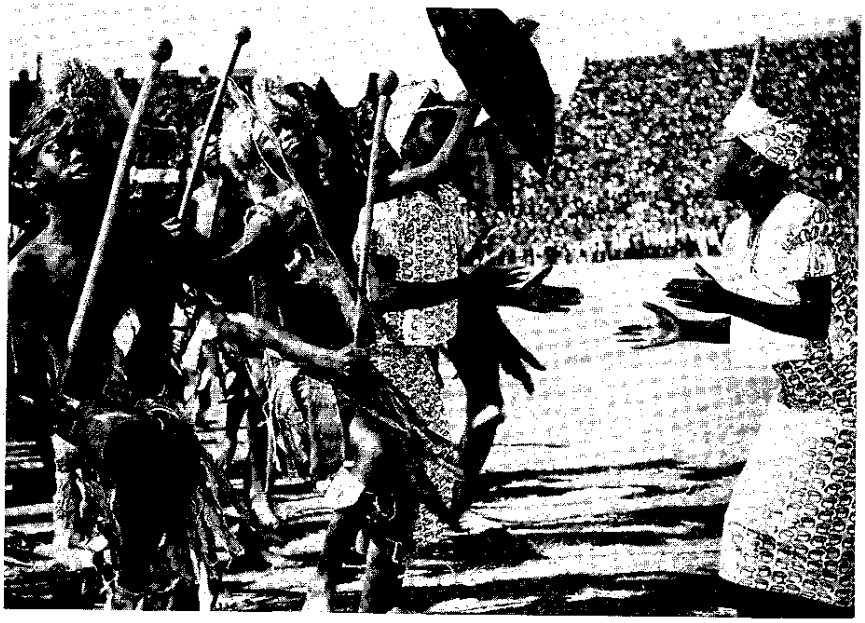
6. In the event of Banda's death a commission of three men would rule the country until a new president was chosen by an electoral college of party officials, thereafter approved by the electorate.

the judiciary. Long after independence white officers were permanent in the ranks of police and security forces. Today European and American advisers are omnipresent and business executives are among Banda's closest confidantes. No one criticizes the urbane President for having close European associates; in fact, the multiracialism is applauded in most quarters. What is disturbing is the practice of barring Malawians from top levels of confidence and power. As kings over time have known, it is extremely easy and safe to break off with a trusted stranger and to usher him ceremoniously out of the country with appropriate expressions of gratitude. It is much more difficult to control and ultimately oust those citizens who are black Malawians with strong kinship ties within the country who might also build intricate political networks of personal support. Of course, the practice of hiring trusted strangers does not escape comment among Malawians, both within and outside the government. The more vocal among them liken the strangers to the mercenaries periodically found in Africa.

The Lesson: trusted strangers are safe and expendable.

Lesson Six: Keep Scapegoats Ready. Two scapegoats have served Hastings Banda very well: the Jehovah's Witnesses and the "young boys" who make up the opposition in exile. The Jehovah's Witnesses have been proselytizing in Malawi since well before World War II. They were banned in 1967 as a subversive group partly because they preach noninvolvement in any other organization and nonsupport of any government.

Periodically Banda has railed against these Malawians, calling them "the Devil's Witnesses." His condemnations have been such that in the 1970s thousands of believers fled to Mozambique. Later, in 1972, another 12,000 were driven, or fled, to Zambia. With Mozambique's independence, however, several thousands were sent back to Malawi to again become the object of Banda's wrath. The Witnesses have by all accounts been so verbally mistreated by Banda that he essentially encourages public attacks on them by anyone desirous of doing so. The unruly Young Pioneers, and occasionally the security forces, have accepted the challenge with relish. Political observers point out that these bloodlettings usually come at a time of political unrest and serve Banda as very effective diversions from the problems at hand.



Traditional dances by young Malawians welcoming the President.

Youth display at the Kamuzu Institute.

Scapegoating has also been commonly used against what Banda calls the "young boys," those government ministers and supporters who provided a younger opposition to Banda in the early years and who were essentially forced into exile. They are painted either as callow youth who are

simply too silly to be trusted, or as sinister, subversive people who in fact are hard-core Marxists waiting to take over the country. One exile party, the Socialist League of Malawi, lends slight credence to this view by articulating a takeover of the government, but as their recruits at the moment number around 100 (in a country of some 5.6 million) they do not represent a major threat.

The Lesson: good scapegoats keep the people loyal to the king and an occasional crisis, if it is well-managed, can underscore what a good idea it is to have a king.

Lesson Seven: Control Information. Information is power. Banda knows this very well and has restricted and curtailed the free flow of information with exceptional skill. The state completely controls broadcasting, to the point that commentary, unfiltered news, or editorializing do not exist. Films are closely screened and censored before being shown publicly. The press (two national papers) is now an organ of the state except for missionary periodicals. Eight of Malawi's brightest journalists have been jailed or kept from writing. Local news, except for the perambulations of Banda, is very poorly reported. The papers are filled with uncontroversial releases from international press services. International news, in fact, is relatively prominent, receiving far more ink than local and regional coverage.[7]

The government also censors all incoming periodicals, its censorship board inspecting each periodical and thereafter making it the responsibility of the seller to obliterate offensive articles or pictures. This is done either by blacking a photo with marker pens

Censored Time *Magazine.*

or by clipping out an offending article. To sell periodicals, such as *Time*, that have not been passed by the board, or that have not been accordingly blackened or clipped, is a serious offense.

Censorship is both moral and ideological. Nudity, impropriety, pornography would be immediately clipped; anything suggesting anti-Christian thinking would be censored, as would any reference to Malawi that was uncomplimentary. Reports on the activities of Malawians in exile are forbidden, as are any hostile political statements about the country.

The Lesson: information is power. Don't share it.

Lesson Eight: create a Messiah Image. Once complete control of the information channels is obtained, it is important to solidify one's power base, and a place in history, by creating a messiah image around oneself. Some of the methods Banda has used include:

- Underscoring his role in the early political history of the country wherein he returns as a savior to lead the people to independence. (His long absence from the country during the early nationalistic period is not mentioned.)

- Assuring the President's face is seen everywhere, on Malawi coins and bills, on cloth dresses, on posters, in office buildings, and at all public gatherings.

- Creating an adoration cult by elaborately staging public gatherings and building monuments, stadiums, archways, and plaques that carry his name.

- Taking a nickname, "Ngwazi," which is variously translated as "unconquerable," "undefeatable," "victorious," "good fellow," or "David in the Face of Goliath," and making sure it is used constantly as a term of endearment.

-Using the press to provide ongoing tribute and adoration.

Newspaper files over the years reveal literally hundreds of articles that pay tribute to Ngwazi. Groups of people are constantly "taking his leave," "bidding farewell," "offering tumultuous welcome," or doing such things as paying him tribute for improving the status of women, or thanking him for his excellent work. Government officers constantly implore citizens in Ngwazi's name to "work hard," "be courteous," "serve people with respect," or "support the party."

7. The fact that there is not much regional reporting is not unique to Malawi. The lack of information about happenings in nearby states is partially a function of poor news services, and partially a measure of the suspicion many of the states hold for their neighbors.

How much of this propagandizing washes over the minds of the people and how much helps to entrench the regime is hard to know. If nothing else, it does build a sense of Banda's presence, authority, and control.

The Lesson: a messiah image can do no harm, and can be useful when confidence in the regime is strained.

A King's Rejoinder: A King's Future

Hastings Banda would have a rejoinder to most criticisms of his regime. From his speeches and writings we can imagine how the King would answer concerning a few pressing issues:

- *On Press Censorship:* The press, both the local "bright boys," as he calls them, and foreign journalists do not understand the potentially explosive nature of their words. It is far better to fetter the press and save the state than to let "irresponsible" journalists wreak havoc.

- *On Opposition:* There is no such thing as a loyal opposition. These people are flagrantly disloyal to the nation. They would recklessly try to bring down the "house," and not act at all like gentlemen. For this reason it is better to purge dissenters and curtail political freedoms than to allow the opposition to wreck the state.

Stadium in Blantyre.

-*On South Africa:* If it is for the good of its people, Malawi would trade with the Devil. A pragmatic view of politics is best, and, in any case, Malawi will sleep better under the South African guns than it would by lining up in front of them. A frontal attack on South Africa would fail and make cannon fodder out of those who try to institute change by violence.

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Given the contradictions in Malawi, what might we expect of its future? Like Kenya's Kenyatta in his last years, Banda must submit to widespread conjecture about his health. His age is about eighty. Persistent rumors suggest that his senility is leading to confusion, indecisiveness, and at times brash, impetuous actions. The main speculation centers on what will happen when Banda passes from the scene.

Predictions are dangerous, but in Malawi's case the transition will probably be peaceful. The disaffection that now exists is not strong enough to give the exile movements the muscle they need for a serious challenge of the government. A prosperous African trading and managerial class is developing. Most farmers are doing well enough to be content. With this degree of security it is unlikely that a major radical change would be supported by the middle class rank and file. Like Kenya, Malawi has a great many people committed to profit-making. They simply will avoid jeopardizing their new material gains.

In short, Banda can be described as eccentric, overbearing, and oppressive, but the country can also be described as stable, one of the few in black Africa. The overall lesson from the King is undoubtedly that some degree of oppression is the price of economic development, at least in the early transition years. This is not a happy lesson in the eyes of onlookers who would hope for more basic freedoms. But, in perspective, such freedoms have been even more ruthlessly denied in other dictatorial regimes, Uganda, South Africa, and the Central African Empire to name but a few.

(January 1979)

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