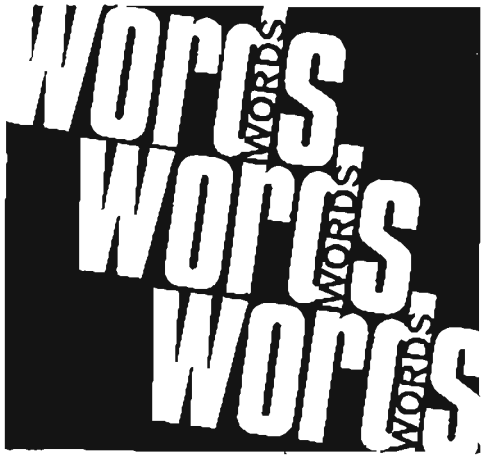

" SOME PEOPLE fear that a one-party state will come about here," said an economics minister in an African state recently. " To prevent this they said they would vote for the other party. . . . To those people I wish to say that my party does not need an opposition to tell it what its duties and responsibilities are. Even if it should happen that my party wins all the seats in Parliament it will not be less sensible of its responsibilities than now." In this case the State concerned cannot be said to be threatening the end of the Westminster system — they have never had it anyway as they deny the vote to four-fifths of the citizens, and only grant it on a racial basis: membership of the minister's own " ethnic group ". Dr. Diederich's words are quoted in a South African news item in the Port Elizabeth *Evening Post*, 19 February 1966.

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IT SEEMS to have attracted no more attention than some other press items gathered by JOHN BOURNE in Johannesburg. On 8 February, the *Rand Daily Mail* reported a Government reply in parliament to the effect that of some £5 million of Government printing contracts in the Transvaal from 1963 to 1965, nearly 90% had been awarded to companies headed by the Prime Minister, Dr. H. F. Verwoerd. The same month most local newspapers quoted Dr. Verwoerd's bland announcement that the great Orange River Scheme scandal had been investigated — by a police officer whose name he refused to supply. There had been accusations that certain very profitable contracts had been gained by firms whose experience and ability were doubtful but whose close contacts in Government quarters were not. Dr. Verwoerd simply stated that any apparent irregularities were dle to " normal errors and miscalculations ".

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JOHN BOURNE calls these disclosures " the tip of the iceberg ". " What may lie underneath is suggested by those bright glimpses of the real South Africa which we get when the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* manages to lay its hands on and publish some of the secret documents of the exclusively Afrikaner society, the Broederbond," he writes. This 8,000-strong secret society, runs South Africa, in ways this feature will quote next month. ●

Books & the Arts

After the coup

Martin Legassick

African Tightrope: my two years as Nkrumah's Chief of Staff by Major-General H. T. Alexander, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O. (Pall Mall, London)

THE COUP in Ghana has not altered my impressions of Alexander's superficial, patronising and stereotyped book: it changes only the perspective from which the book should be viewed. Thus I shall not deal with the only compensating feature in the book, the central third dealing with the Ghanaian forces in the Congo. This section may well come to be useful (though biased in favour of the West), primary documentation and provides an account, for example, of the expulsion of Ghanaian ambassador Welbeck from the Congo which is highly entertaining. Alexander's views on United Nations peace-keeping operations are also worth reading.

But all this does not make up for the appalling list of absurd or meaningless stereotypes that permeate the book: " Life to the African is of much less value than to the European," " the vast majority of black Africans are natural gentlemen ", " many of the whites living in Africa today are better 'Africans' than the black Africans ", " the average Ghanaian is a peace-loving person who abhors violence and loves pomp ". Perhaps these are just typical and relatively harmless expatriate views. But — especially when they are compounded with Alexander's military mentality — they go far to answer the crux question posed by Alexander, " whether it is possible under present circumstances for a senior expatriate to hold a high post in a newly independent country in Africa without finding himself in an impossible position " (p. 104).

Alexander tells us that just before his Ghanaian service he took a course at the Imperial Defence College, designed to " broaden " the outlook " from the purely military field to that of world problems ". One wonders if that is where he learnt that all persons trained in Russia come back as " good little communists " (p. 107); or if it is here that he was told to train the Ghanaian army as " anti-Russian " (p. 107). And when Alexander implicitly attacks the freedom of the press (p. 122) and concludes by telling us that the Cold War is " as intense as it has ever been " (p. 128) we are entitled to be worried. Nor can we feel more comfortable with his repeated statements of contempt for the " masses " who are uneducated and misled — this sort of elitism does not match well with African populism.

ALEXANDER'S ASSESSMENT of Nkrumah is shrewd — his difficulty in saying no to anyone, his natural gregariousness, his shortage of good advisers, his freedom from colour prejudice. In fact one might go farther than Alexander and say that it was not Nkrumah's ruthlessness nor his single-minded ambition that led to the *coup* — it was rather his equivocation and his lack of ruthlessness, his inability in the last resort to tie a consistent set of goals closely enough to the political realities of Ghana, to combine his skill as ideologist with his skill as politician. His non-violent " revolutionary reformism " spoke too loud and made too many mistakes. Socialists of whatever kind should not be happy at the downfall of Nkrumah (and the vulgar crowing of the Western press is disgraceful): one can only hope that his failures in attempting a new road to socialism can be blamed on bad advice and his refusal to accept unpalatable good advice, and that it does not mean that the only way to socialism in the Third World is the hard, autarchic, masochistic way of China.

I had hoped that Alexander might say something useful about the Ghanaian military. He does not. I cannot agree with his (traditionally British) thesis that in Africa the army should be " kept out of politics " — by which he means the tradition of impartial civil service. In fact, paradoxically, it seems that the African armies now least likely to attempt to seize power are those that *are* in politics, or at least politicised. This has been true in Guinea since 1958, and in the reorganised Tanzanian army since 1964: the military are encouraged to identify themselves with party and with state. The Ghanaian intervention could in fact be blamed on the isolation of the army — it was a professional force, and, like the civil service and the judiciary, the most " Westernised " in Africa at the time of independence. All these three institutions acted as counterweights to Nkrumah's plans in a greater degree than in other African states.

THIS IS NOT TO SAY that the seizure of power by the Ghanaian military was unjustified. It was tragic, but probably unavoidable, that it should happen. Ghana had sufficient resources to be able to " make haste more slowly " with progress towards socialism. The CPP failed to make it do so. This could not be said for the non-viable states, starved even of aid by the French, where other *coups* have occurred recently — the ultimate blame there, as in Nigeria, lies with the corrupt, self-seeking indigenous managers of neo-colonialist economies. One can be sorry for Nkrumah but not for them. And one can hope that, now the military have brought the politics of independent Africa into a new era, the genuinely progressive states and parties will see the need for closer contact among themselves and more coordinated action.

Pan-Africanism, as Nkrumah maintained, and fanciful as it may seem, is still the most hopeful answer for the stable and socialist development of independent Africa and for the liberation of southern Africa. As yet the ideal has found only inadequate expression in concrete realities. Alexander, of course, does not even entertain this as a possibility — which is just another of the reasons why he became redundant and was dismissed from his Ghanaian post. ●