JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN CENTRAL AFRICA

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**Article 1**
All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

**Article 2**
Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

**Article 10**
Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

**Article 19**
Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

**Article 20**
(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.
JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN CENTRAL AFRICA
by Tony Hodges

Jehovah's Witnesses — the members of an American-based millenarian religious sect known as the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (WTBTS) — have been harassed and persecuted by governments the world over. In Nazi Germany they were rounded up and sent to concentration camps. During the Second World War, the Society was banned in Australia and Canada because of its pacifist teachings. Now the Jehovah's Witnesses are being hounded in Africa, where some 250,000 of the world's two million Witnesses live.

In white-ruled South Africa the WTBTS has frequently incurred the displeasure of government authorities. Jehovah's Witnesses refuse to join the South African armed forces, even in non-combatant service, and face terms in prison for disobeying the draft. African Watch Tower children have been expelled from school for their refusal to sing the South African national anthem, and in white schools students face expulsion for refusing to join the compulsory Youth Preparedness Programme, salute the South African flag and sing the national anthem.

The Witnesses' refusal on religious grounds to participate in politics or to honour national symbols like flags and anthems has also prompted numerous black-run governments to clamp down on the sect. The movement is proscribed in 19 countries in Africa, where some 250,000 of the world's two million Witnesses live.

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Table 1

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<th>African countries with large communities of Jehovah's Witnesses¹</th>
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<td><strong>Average Number of Publishers 1975³</strong></td>
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¹ Table does not include Malawi since the overwhelming majority of active Malawian Jehovah's Witnesses were in exile in 1975. The table also does not include members of independent African Watch Tower sects.
² ‘Publishers’ are active Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Watchman Healing Society, an independent offshoot of the WTBTS, was outlawed in Tanzania in 1964. President Amin banned the Witnesses in Uganda in June 1973.² In Kenya, where the WTBTS was proscribed by the colonial authorities until 1962, the sect was again placed on the list of banned organizations in April 1973. Though the ban was lifted the following August, the Society's expatriate missionaries were deported.³ But it is in Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique that the Witnesses’ plight is gravest.

MALAWI

The conflict between the Malawi government and the Jehovah's Witnesses was sparked off by the Witnesses' refusal to buy membership cards of the ruling Malawi Congress Party (MCP), the country's sole legal political organization, which has carried out repeated card-checking campaigns across the country in a bid to force party membership on the entire population. The Witnesses have refused to buy MCP cards because their religious convictions prohibit them from joining political groupings.

The government's drive against the sect began on a serious scale in 1967, when the WTBTS claimed a membership of about 18,000 in the country.⁴ That September, the delegates to the MCP's annual convention voted to 'recommend strongly that the Jehovah's Witnesses denomination be declared illegal in this country at the attitude of its adherents is not only inimical to the progress of this country, but also so negative in every way that it endangers the stability and peace and calm which is essential for the smooth running of our State.'⁵ The resolution was endorsed by President Kamuzu Banda. Charging that the Jehovah's Witnesses were 'causing trouble everywhere', he warned that 'the Government may pass a law in such a way that every area or district can decide for itself whether it wants Jehovah's Witnesses or not. If the people in any area say "No", then there would be no Jehovah's Witness there. Any area would have the right to decide for itself and if the Jehovah's Witnesses did not pack up they would go to prison.'⁶

Just one month later, the Government Gazette pronounced the WTBTS an 'unlawful society' on the grounds that it was 'dangerous to the good government of Malawi'. Witnesses who tried to keep the organization functioning risked a 14-year jail sentence.⁷ A few days later, on 7 November, the Malawi government ordered the deportation of eight expatriate Witnesses. The witch-hunt atmosphere encouraged by the government prompted gangs of MCP activists to assault Witnesses in towns and villages throughout the country. By the end of November, at least five Witnesses had been murdered by lynching mobs and hundreds of Witnesses' homes had been burnt down.⁸

The 1967 wave of persecution failed, however, to crush the witnesses. They persisted in their refusal to buy party cards. So in 1972 the government decided to relaunch the movement (which now claimed 23,000 members⁹) Meeting in Zomba on 16 September 1972, the delegates to the MCP's annual convention unanimously adopted a series of resolutions, four of which virtually called for a reign of terror against the Witnesses. The convention delegates:
(a) Deplored the fact that certain fanatical religious sects which operated like the banned Jehovah's Witnesses sect hindered both the political and economic development in the country.

(b) Resolved that all the members of these fanatical religious sects employed in commerce and industry should be dismissed forthwith, and that any commercial or industrial concern that does not comply with this resolution should have its licence cancelled.

(c) Resolved that all the members of these fanatical religious sects employed by the Government should be dismissed forthwith, and that any member of these sects who is self-employed, either in business or farming, have his business or farming activities discouraged.

(d) Resolved that all the members of these sects who live in the villages should be chased away from there, and appealed to the Government to give maximum possible protection to members of the party who deal with the adherents to these sects. 10

As in 1967, the proposals had President Banda's full backing. Closing the convention, he said: 'To me, they are not even Jehovah's Witnesses... They are devil's witnesses.' 11

The MCP resolutions gave the green light for militants of the MCP and the country's two government-controlled youth organizations, the Malawi Youth League (MYL) and the Young Pioneers, to launch a nationwide pogrom against the Witnesses. Hundreds were fired from their jobs in government departments and private businesses. Witnesses' property was looted and their crops and homes destroyed. In some cases whole villages were razed to the ground.

At least fifty Witnesses were killed (some sources claim several hundred died) -- but not one of those responsible for these cold-blooded murders was ever brought to trial. 12 At Cape Maclear, for example, on the southern end of Lake Malawi, a Witness, Zelphat Mbaiko, was dragged from his home by Young Pioneers. Bundles of grass were tied to his limbs, petrol was poured over him and he was set alight. He died from his burns. 13

A direct sequel to the witch-hunt was the deportation on 1 December of Professor Ted Pinney, the American principal of the Banda College of Agriculture. Pinney had three Jehovah's Witnesses on his staff. When instructed by a local chairman of the MCP to dismiss them, he refused. Shortly afterwards their houses were burnt to the ground. The occupants fled, but were discovered hiding; two were butchered and one had his hands cut off. In another incident, a school bus in which children of the college staff were travelling was stopped by MCP youths and made to witness a scene of carnage where men and women Witnesses lay slaughtered. Pinney protested strongly over this incident to the regional Minister; a few days later he was deported. 14

As the pogrom gathered pace, thousands of Witnesses began to trek towards the border to seek refuge in neighbouring Zambia. By the end of November, 21,000 had arrived at an ill-equipped refugee camp at Sinda Misale near Chipata in Zambia's Eastern Province. 15

Many had walked for up to 300 miles through the bush, avoiding gangs of MCP thugs, foraging food from the land, eating caterpillars, roots and wild fruit. According to Dr Hugo Idoyaga, a representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) who visited the Sinda Misale camp, 'many of the refugees bore cuts and gashes apparently inflicted by pangas, the huge knives common to East Africa'. 16 Malnutrition and disease wreaked a terrible toll among the weary fugitives. 'The sight at the Watchtower camp,' reported Mr Reuben Kamanga, the Zambian Minister of Rural Development, on 30 November, 'is sad and chaotic.' Nine Witnesses were dying there a day, he said. By 18 December, 342 refugees had died at the camp. 17

Though the Zambian government must have been fully aware of the fate that would befall the Sinda Misale refugees if they were sent home, Zambian ministers arranged with the Malawi authorities for the forced repatriation of the Witnesses. According to President Banda, at least 17,660 people, including 10,653 children, were brought back in trucks to Lilongwe on 19 and 20 December. 18 The Witnesses claimed that they did not return voluntarily but had been tricked by the Zambians. They thought they were being moved to better camps in Zambia. 19 On their arrival at Lilongwe, the Witnesses were addressed by Mr Kumbweza Banda, MP, the Minister of the Central Region. Mr Banda told them to buy MCP cards and cooperate with the regime, 'or else you will be in great trouble and will be punished very much.' 20

But the Jehovah's Witnesses once again refused on grounds of conscience to join the party. The persecution began anew and 21 leading Witnesses were arrested. 21 So a new exodus started, this time to Mozambique. Up to 35,000 were reported to have settled in encampments in northern Mozambique near the Malawi border by July 1973. 22 Some, having avoided the forced repatriation from Sinda Misale, came directly from Zambia.

Two years later, in June 1975, Mozambique won its independence after a long guerrilla war led by the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo). The new government began to demand from the Witnesses the same kind of political commitment which they had left Malawi in order to avoid. Beginning on 19 August, the Witnesses were again repatriated to Malawi. 23 This time too they were lectured on arrival by Mr Kumbweza Banda, who told them to return to their villages and cooperate with MCP officials. Referring to the MYL, he said: 'My boys are here to see that you do cooperate with the party.' 24 As the Witnesses trekked home, MCP headquarters sent out circulars to local party officials ordering them to sell MCP membership cards to the returning refugees. 'We want to state clearly,' ordered Mr Kamsuli Chirwa, the district secretary of the MCP in Nkhobotoka, on 27 August, 'that if these people arrive at your homes you Area and Branch leaders should make sure, along with your village headmen, that you see to it that each one of them buys a party card. As you know, it is a very essential work that every person in your villages should buy a Malawi Congress Party card: this is the one way in which we people of this country can show appreciation to our Life Leader, the Ngwazi (Dr Banda) for developing this country of Malawi.' 25 Mr Fraser Phiri, chairman of the Blantyre Area MCP, was blunter. 'These people should not be allowed to enjoy the fruits of independence but reported to the authorities at once,' he said. Charging that they 'were a threat to peace and by their acts they bit the very hand that fed them,' he said that 'anyone found harbouring them would be dealt with severely.' 26

The witch-hunt was resumed. On 4 and 5 September, youths under the direction of local leaders of the MCP visited the homes of Witnesses in Nsambe, Kampini and other nearby villages. When the Witnesses refused to buy party cards, their belongings were stolen and they were severely beaten. The youths urinated over flour belonging
to Watch Tower members, making it unfit for food. On 29 September, a crowd of MCP officials and members took fourteen Witness men and women to the MCP branch headquarters at Tsoka village, where they were seriously beaten, one man being stripped of his clothing. On 4 September, a group of youths attacked more than 30 Witnesses in the Ncheu district. Most of those attacked were beaten unconscious. On 7 September, a group of Witnesses was taken to the local branch of the MCP in the area of Chimasongwe village. The men and women were stripped and bound together; their assailants attempted to force them to have sexual intercourse. One woman was beaten till blood issued from her mouth and nose. Body hair was burnt off at least ten men with torches. 27

In October the Malawi government issued a circular instructing police stations to round up the Witnesses. By January 1976, according to the WTBTS, up to 5,000 had been detained — some in barbed wire encampments at local police stations and others at the country's notorious detention centres at Dzaeleka, Kanjedza and Malakun. Children had been forcibly separated from their parents, and babies left to die. 28 The Washington Post reported in January that 1,900 Witnesses were serving three-year detention terms for membership in an illegal organization. 29

The renewed persecution drove thousands of Witnesses to flight yet again. Fifteen congregations reportedly fled from the Lilongwe area to hide out in the dense Dzalanyama forest on the Malawi-Mozambique border. 30 4,800 Witnesses had crossed into Zambia and found temporary refuge at Sinda Misale by mid-October. But in spite of the obvious messes had crossed into Zambia and found temporary refuge at Sinda Misale by mid-October. But in spite of the obvious difficulties encountered by the WTBTS, up to 5,000 had been detained — some in barbed wire encampments at local police stations and others at the country's notorious detention centres at Dzaeleka, Kanjedza and Malakun. Children had been forcibly separated from their parents, and babies left to die. 28 The Washington Post reported in January that 1,900 Witnesses were serving three-year detention terms for membership in an illegal organization. 29

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According to reports reaching the WTBTS in March 1976, the situation in Malawi relative to Jehovah's Witnesses is described as unstable, with prevailing conditions differing according to areas. Village headmen, members of Parliament and Malawi Congress Party officials do as they please toward Jehovah's Witnesses in the district for which they are responsible. The government itself offers no protection to Jehovah's Witnesses. Atrocities, therefore, are continuing as before, particularly in the southern and central regions of Malawi. 33 Many Witnesses have fled from severe persecution in the southern region back into Mozambique, where they have found temporary refuge in camps centred around Vila de Milange in Zambezia province. It is estimated that as many as 12,000 Witnesses from Malawi may be there along with 10,000 Mozambican Witnesses who have been brought there by the Frelimo authorities. 34

Zambia

By repatriating the Malawian Watch Tower refugees in 1972 and 1975, Zambia's United National Independence Party (UNIP) government bears at least part of the responsibility for the Witnesses' fate at the hands of the MCP. It justified its repatriation operation in 1972 by claiming that the followers of the Watch Tower sect in Zambia had 'already caused enough trouble to the Government without having more from Malawi.' 35

With over 54,000 'publishers' (active adherents of the WTBTS) in 1975, Zambia has one of the largest concentrations of Jehovah's Witnesses in the world. In 1975, one Zambian in eighty-one was a Witness — a higher proportion than in any other country in the world with the exception of the island of St Helena. 36

Though persecuted, Zambia's Witnesses have not suffered the degree of savagery inflicted on their co-religionists in Malawi. Their movement has remained legal (unlike in Malawi). And their conflict with the Zambian government has never approached the scale of the famous Lumpa insurgency of 1964.*

The WTBTS found itself at odds with the Zambian government and UNIP soon after Zambia's independence in 1964. The conflict since then has centred around the Witnesses' refusal to participate in voter registration campaigns, referenda and elections or to allow their children to sing the national anthem and salute the flag in schools. By May 1967, over 500 children had been suspended from schools on the Copperbelt and government ministers were warning that the Watch Tower movement could expect to be banned. 37 Much of the hostility was directed not so much against the parents of the suspended children, however, as against the European officials of the WTBTS, who were criticized as being alien and hostile influences, perpetuating the ignorance of Africans for their own sinister ends. In January 1968, Zambia's President, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, ordered the deportation of several expatriate Witnesses, including eight British missionaries. 38

The dispute escalated in 1968-1969. During this period UNIP activists were in a state of constant mobilization to drum up popular support for the party in the December 1968 general elections and a national referendum held in June 1969 to approve changes in the Constitution. The Witnesses aroused UNIP's ire by their refusal to register as voters and cast their votes in these two important polls. In periodic outbreaks of violence between July 1968 and January 1969, 45 Kingdom Halls (the Witnesses' meeting places) were burnt down, 409 houses were destroyed, some 50,000 kwacha of cash and property was looted, and a dozen or more Witnesses were killed. In parts of the country, as at Samfya and Mansa in Luapula Province, the dispute escalated.

* The Lumpa Church, led by the prophetess, Alice Lenshina, had wide support in the Chinsali district of Northern Province. UNIP attempts to dragoon the sect's supporters into party membership led to violent clashes in mid-1964, prompting the government to send in troops and declare a state of emergency. Two army battalions were occupied in pursuing 5000 'hard-core' members of the sect. Over 700 people were killed and Alice Lenshina was eventually captured on 11 August 1964. She was released from detention in December 1975. (Hall, Richard Zambia Pall Mall Press, London 1965 pp 229-30).
Witnesses were forced to live in the bush.\(^9\) By February 1969, some 3,000 Witness children had been dismissed or suspended from government schools for refusing to sing the national anthem or salute the flag.\(^60\)

The violence of the 1968-1969 confrontation prompted President Kaunda to spend a day in conference with the WTBTS officials. As a result of the President's intervention, the policy of religious tolerance was publicly reiterated and members of the UNIP Youth were charged on various counts of assault and arson. Over the following years the intensity of the conflict died down, but the tension remained.\(^41\) In 1972, President Kaunda used his powers under the country's draconian Public Security Regulations to sign orders prohibiting the Witnesses from house-to-house canvassing for support or funds.\(^42\) Harassment and threats continued. On 25 February, 1973, for example, Lusaka UNIP officials warned the Witnesses to stop bicker ing against the party and the government or "they would get it hot".\(^43\) The 12 March 1973 issue of the government-controlled *Zambian Daily Mail* ran an editorial calling for a ban on the Watch Tower movement if its members continued to refuse to respect Zambia's flag and anthem.

The following May, forty Watch Tower members were arrested in Katete in Eastern Province after they had refused to sing the national anthem.\(^44\) In November 1974, the Copperbelt Chief Education Officer, Mr. Melingwe Kandolo, instructed all headmasters in his province not to reinstate any Watch Tower children suspended from school until they pledged to start singing the national anthem.\(^45\)

Restrictions on expatriate involvement in the Zambian Watch Tower movement have also continued. The Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Aaron Milner, ordered six expatriate Watch Tower leaders out of the country on 4 December 1975.\(^46\) "It is certainly not surprising," commented the Times of Zambia, "that the Government is reluctantly and very late in the day purging foreign influence at the top of the local movement. The people purged should go back to their own countries and lead the religious revolt against their governments and insult their own home flags and stop children to go to school in their own countries. We should keep the religion but this part of their programme should descend to the deepest hell."\(^47\)

Six more expatriate WTBTS leaders were ordered out of the country on 24 December.\(^48\)

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**MOZAMBIQUE**

The Frelimo regime in Mozambique have also persecuted the Witnesses. Their activities are now virtually outlawed—though, as in Zambia, they have not suffered the kind of barbaric treatment meted out to the Malawian Witnesses.

'There are found in Mozambique,' explained João Chauke, a Frelimo leader in Zambezia Province, in October 1975, 'the "Jehovah's Witnesses" and other religious organizations which are allied to imperialism and try, by subversion, to struggle against the ideological line of Frelimo. They try to resuscitate the lion after he is dead. We do not tolerate this and it is our concern to pinpoint those agents of the enemy, where they have their bases. We will not accept anyone using religion against us, against our sovereignty. So that we could be what we are today, many died. We did not sacrifice ourselves to establish a religion in Mozambique, nor to create religious arrangements. We struggled to liberate the land and the people, to create conditions in which all could live in peace. We came up against contradictions, when we encounter "Jehovah's" who do not want to recognize Frelimo.'\(^49\)

WTBTS sources claim that there are about 7,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in Mozambique (not including the Malawian Witnesses who have taken refuge in the country).\(^50\) Most of them live in Gaza Province and around Maputo.

Conflict between the Witnesses and Frelimo was sparked off shortly after Mozambique's independence in June 1975 by the Witnesses' refusal on religious grounds to give allegiance to Frelimo. Thus, on 13 September, troops burst into the Kingdom Hall at Choupal near Maputo and demanded that the 300-strong congregation shout 'Viva Frelimo'. When they refused, many were reportedly beaten up.\(^51\)

On 10 October, in a speech at Massingir, Gaza Province, President Samora Machel described the Witnesses as known agents of imperialism and added that if they did not change their attitude they would suffer the same fate as Portuguese colonialism. On 11 October, at a rally in Chibuto, Gaza Province, Mr. Fernando Matavelas, the provincial governor, warned that if the Witnesses in Gaza did not 'take part in the tasks of nation-building', they would be sent to rehabilitation centres.\(^52\) But, according to *Awake!* magazine, "all of these incidents were just the prelude to the major blow to come. Within a few weeks came an official order: All of Jehovah's Witnesses in the entire country should be arrested. This order was carried out systematically and heartlessly. Frelimo followers went from house to house demanding that residents say "Viva Frelimo". Those who would not were assumed to be Jehovah's Witnesses and were taken to prison. Whole families, children included, were mercilessly dragged off."\(^53\) These are said to have been resettled in camps in the Vila de Milange area of Zambezia Province along with Malawian Witness refugees.\(^54\)

The Watch Tower movement is not, however, the only sect to have come under attack from the new Mozambican government. Other sects subject to government pressure include the Church of the Nazarene, the United Apostolic Church of Zion, the Ethiopian Church of Portugal, the Complete Church of God, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Church of Christ the Saviour, the Seventh Day Adventists and the Church of the Good Father in Mozambique. On 28 October, Frelimo accused the United States of giving financial and material support to the Church of the Nazarene to foster anti-revolutionary forces in the country.\(^55\)

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**THE WATCH TOWER TRADITION IN SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA**

The confrontation between the Jehovah's Witnesses and post-independence African regimes needs to be examined against a background of prolonged involvement by the Watch Tower movement in the political and social upheaval of twentieth century Africa. In many parts of south-central Africa, the sect is seen not so much as an alien and exotic cult imported from the United States than as a movement with a strong and long-standing local tradition.

The WTBTS was founded by Charles Taze Russell (1842-
African Watch Tower teachings were originally derived from Russell's seven-volume Studies in the Scriptures (published between 1886 and 1918), which attempted to reveal God's 'plan of the ages'. Russell's millenarian and utopian ideology hinged on the belief that the 'Kingdom of God', a theocracy administered by divinely-appointed kings, would be set up in October 1914 and that a coming 'battle of Armageddon', resulting in the destruction of Satan's powers and the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty, would usher in a glorious new world.

These ideas, despite their mystical character, were implicitly revolutionary: they predicted the downfall of the existing order and the establishment of a new one. The believers in the millennium were regarded as the elect, who, although they might be persecuted and oppressed today, would tomorrow inherit the new order upon the establishment of theocracy. Such ideas could help legitimize an attack on temporal authority in the form of the state and its institutions, which — together with the established churches — were depicted as creations of the devil. In fact, a popular target was the British Empire, which was considered to be one of the beasts of the Book of Revelations. Thus Russellism, though it preached emancipation through divine intervention rather than human action, contained many features of considerable ideological appeal to Africans living under colonial rule.

Watch Tower ideas were brought to Southern and Central Africa by Joseph Booth, an Australian fundamentalist with radical political views, who introduced a Nyasa migrant worker, Elliott Kamwana, to Studies in the Scriptures in 1908 in Cape Town. Converted to Russell's creed, Kamwana returned to Nyasaland in October 1908, where he preached among his fellow Tonga, rapidly winning a large following.

Kamwana, however, added an overtly rebellious and Africanist twist to the Russellite doctrine. The millennium, he claimed, would bring the abolition of the hated hut tax (which had been imposed by the colonial authorities to force Africans into the labour market). The inheritors of the new world would be African and those cast into outer darkness at the time of Armageddon would be European.

Kamwana was continually hounded by the colonial regime, suffering his first arrest and deportation in March 1909. But his nationalist message had a wide impact, doubtless influencing (albeit indirectly) those who participated in the January 1915 rising led by John Chilenwe against British rule. Kamwana did not take part in the revolt. But the revolt's failure led to his exile in 1915 to Mauritius and the Seychelles for over two decades. Finally released in 1937, Kamwana did not join the WTBTS but set up his own independent church, the Watchman Healing Mission (or bamulonda).

The independence of the early African Watch Tower movement from the WTBTS headquarters in New York was another of its most attractive features to Africans at the time. Unlike the white-run missions, the Watch Tower sects were led and organized by Africans. In this respect, they were similar to other 'Ethiopian' churches — such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church — which mushroomed throughout central and southern Africa and were uniformly regarded with the deepest suspicion by both the mission churches and the colonial authorities.

Many Africans also saw the Watch Tower movement as a vehicle for the achievement of literacy. In the 1920's and 1930's, the WTBTS was virtually the only source of cheap literature in African languages. In fact, up until the Second World War, the staple reading material of Africans in the compounds and villages of large parts of south-central Africa were the biblical commentaries of the WTBTS.

The extensive labour migrant system which developed with the rise of the mining industry in southern Africa became the key network for the diffusion of Watch Tower ideas. Thus Nyasa labour migrants took the Watch Tower message to the mine compounds of Southern Rhodesia, where 10,500 Nyasas were working by 1916.

Like Kamwana, the Nyasa Watch Tower prophets in the Southern Rhodesian mines articulated the nationalist aspirations of the colonized. 'Goliath was a big man,' preached one George Kunga in 1923. 'David was a small man. The white race are now powerful but it will be the same as happened to Goliath. David the small man rose up and killed him. So it will be with the white and black races. The king of the white man will cease to be king and we shall reign.' In the Bulawayo location, Lot Mumbi preached in 1924 that when the Kingdom of God was established in 1925, blacks would turn into whites and the settlers into 'amaboyos'. As the only supra-tribal association of any significance in the Southern Rhodesian mines, above all at the Wankie colliery, the Watch Tower became a kind of surrogate union movement in the decade 1915-1925. At its height in 1923, the Watch Tower at Wankie dominated African life and was a major element in one of the earliest strikes in the country.

Furthermore, from the mines, Watch Tower ideas spread to rural Mashonaland, where they had a major, though temporary, impact in the late 1920's. But the colonial government in Southern Rhodesia, seeing the movement as subversive of white authority and supremacy, tried to eradicate Watch Tower influence and arrested many of the movement's leaders and prophets. In 1927, the government adopted the Rhodesian Native Affairs Act to curb Watch Tower activities, and the movement remained effectively illegal until 1948.

Labour migrants, returning home from the Southern Rhodesian mines, carried the Watch Tower teachings across the Zambezi to Northern Rhodesia, where by the end of the 1930's nearly every part of the country was familiar with the gospel of the black millennium. Striking here as elsewhere in south-central Africa was the emancipatory message of the movement. Joseph Sibakwe, one of the most radical of the urban Watch Tower preachers in Northern Rhodesia in the early 1930's told his audience that 'because King George had been stealing the Africans' wealth by means of imposing taxes, a new and entirely African government was to be formed which would take over after a great war had been fought. England and Germany were about to renew hostilities, and in this great conflict the blacks would fight against the whites, members of the Watch Tower would fight but not die, and they alone would escape the subsequent wrath of God, as they were protected by a book which contained the secrets of the equality of black and white men, which had been deliberately hidden by the missionaries. "The country belongs to the natives, what are the white men doing here?"' The Watch Tower's success so
altered the European-run missions that in 1934 the Vatican complained to the British Colonial Office that the movement had 'had a deplorable effect on the natives, who have been taught Bolshevik doctrines and Communist songs, and thrown into a state of considerable excitement'.

Independent as it was from the WTBTS, despite its receipt of large amounts of official Witness literature from abroad, the movement spawned a multitude of autonomous sects led by local prophets. Consequently Watch Tower doctrines differed widely according to local conditions. As Bishop Alston May put it in 1925: 'The Watch Tower... is a movement rather than a sect.' The teaching is in a state of flux, changing its character according to the circumstances of time and place, and the predilections of the individual. Just as notable was the wide range of reasons for the movement's popularity in different parts of the country.

Thus in Tanganyika district, in north-east Rhodesia, it was the sudden intensification of the pressure of colonial rule and the chaos and upheaval brought by the First World War that provided a fertile ground for the adoption of Watch Tower ideas. As war broke out on the border with German East Africa, over 138,000 Africans were impressed for war work in Tanganyika district, leading to death, epidemics, the neglect of local agriculture and famine. Watch Tower leaders, who arrived in the district in October 1917 after being deported from Southern Rhodesia, rapidly built up a strong local following, focusing their fire against conscription and chiefs who collaborated with the British. The scale of the agitation finally prompted the local District Commissioner to use troops to arrest 138 Watch Tower supporters in January 1919. 66 These were subsequently jailed. Among the Kunda of Eastern Province it was the seizure of land by the settlers which aroused interest in Watch Tower millenarianism. In 1926, reserves were established in the lower Fort Jameson area and Africans were forcibly removed from their fertile grazing lands - to make way for European settlement. Again, the protests led by the Watch Tower preachers brought a quick crack-down from the colonial authorities. In May–June 1926, 91 Watch Tower supporters were arrested and the movement's local leader, Isaac Chula, was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment.

In this and other local Watch Tower protest movements, the chiefs and headmen often came in for strong attack. To the Kunda, the loss of their lands showed that the old tribal leaders were unable to provide protection from or accommodation to the colonial presence. Moreover, by virtue of the traditional leaders' increasing involvement as functionaries in the system of 'Indirect Rule' set up by the British colonial regime, the chiefs came to be widely regarded as oppressors even by the Africans. Consequently, in the absence of effective political leadership from the chiefs, there was a turning towards the authority of charismatic prophets.

In some districts of Northern Rhodesia, the Watch Tower movement won wide acceptance as a cult which fused millenarian ideas with the promise of witchcraft eradication. In this respect, it mirrored other anti-sorcery cults which flourished in central Africa at this time. The social dislocations and difficulties experienced by Africans as a result of colonial conquest gave rise to heightened fears about witchcraft; and great store was placed on the successful operation of witch-finders, who, it was believed, could expose and neutralize the malevolent individuals supposedly responsible for troubled times. The elements of cleansing people from the fears and suspicion of witchcraft were attached by several Watch Tower prophets to the movement's rite of baptism by total immersion. Malevolence, it was said, could be discerned if an individual did not 'dip' properly but 'floated'. The most notorious of the anti-witchcraft Watch Tower prophets was Tomo Nyirenda, the Mwana Lesa (son of God), who won a substantial following among the Lala who straddle the border between Katanga and what is now Zambia's Copperbelt Province. The Mwana Lesa and his associates carried out their much-acclaimed witchcraft eradication functions by killing those who 'floated' during baptism. A total of 174 people were murdered before Nyirenda was caught by the British colonial authorities and executed in February 1926.

Despite the fact that Nyirenda's methods were not adopted by any other Watch Tower prophets, the colonial regime took advantage of the sensational character of the Mwana Lesa affair to clamp down on the Watch Tower movement in general. The disclosure of the killings also drove the WTBTS to sever official connections with the entire Northern Rhodesian Watch Tower movement. But the Mwana Lesa affair proved only a temporary setback to the movement. New growth came in the 1930's. The movement won support, for example, in Barotseland. Here it appeared as an overt movement of protest, but this time not so much against the whites (whose presence in Barotseland at this time was marginal) as against the ruling Lozi elite which had succeeded in setting up a hierarchical conquest-state in the region of the Upper Zambesi following a successful invasion in the nineteenth century. When Watch Tower ideas were introduced into Barotseland, the movement's revolutionary millenialism made a direct appeal to vassal peoples like the Wiko and the Luvale. The Watch Tower preached against taxes, transport work and law enforcement, all of which were carried out by the Lozi bureaucracy and not the District Commissioners. Not surprisingly, the Lozi rulers tried to crush the movement by arresting Watch Tower followers and restricting the sect's activities.

The labour migration system spread the Watch Tower ideology throughout south-central Africa; to south-west Tanganyika, to the sugar estates of Mozambique, to parts of eastern Angola and to Katanga. But this system was important not only for its role in the diffusion of new ideas. It also widened the horizons and aspirations of the migrant worker, while subjecting him to the injustices of low wages, poor living conditions and the colour bar in the towns. Inasmuch as the ideology of the movement generated a protest against low wages and high taxes, racial discrimination and ill-treatment by compound bosses, the Watch Tower was a workers' movement. The revolutionary tenor of its teachings helped pave the way for the first modern labour protests on the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, the 'rolling strikes' of 1935.

Finally, the Watch Tower ideology provided a framework for the apparent satisfaction of the heightened social and economic aspirations of Africans with urban experience and new skills. Many Africans, particularly from Northern Rhodesia's Luapula Province (one of the most important labour reservoirs for the Copperbelt), who came in contact with Watch Tower teachings in the mine compounds, found themselves forced, especially during the depression years of the early 1930's, to return to the rural areas. They were reluctant, however, to go home to their old villages, where, they felt, the opportunities for social and economic
advancement were few. Instead many turned to mass separatism through the establishment of Watch Tower villages. Here, based on nuclear or small extended families, the movement's adherents made use of the Watch Tower's ethical precepts, with their stress on the value of skilled labour, self-discipline and individual achievement, to satisfy the aspirations for advancement which urban life had aroused. Many Watch Tower villages were set up in the Luapula Valley, with the result that today one-quarter of Zambia's Jehovah's Witnesses live in the province.

THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN AFRICA TODAY

The Watch Tower movement in southern and central Africa underwent important changes after the Second World War. Above all, it lost its revolutionary qualities and ceased to serve as a vehicle for the expression of protest by the oppressed.

There were two important reasons for this evolution. In the first place, modern nationalist parties and labour organisations arose in the post-war period, effectively displacing religious movements as plausible instruments for the achievement of change. Thus, 1944 saw the formation of Nyasaland's first nationalist party, the Nyasaland African Congress, the forerunner of the MCP, which mobilized the Malawi people in a powerful and ultimately successful struggle for independence. In like manner, Northern Rhodesia's first nationwide African party, the African National Congress, was founded in 1948 — to be followed a year later by the formation of the militant African Mineworkers Union on the Copperbelt.

Secondly, the WTBTS was allowed to organize openly in the post-war period in Central Africa, displacing many of the independent African Watch Tower sects and substituting the modern WTBTS' passivist millenarianism for the early African Watch Tower's overtly rebellious and nationalist spirit. The British colonial authorities' official recognition of the WTBTS (in Nyasaland in 1933 and in Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, Uganda and Tanganyika in 1948) played an important role in this transformation. In fact, the colonial administrations, which had previously suppressed the WTBTS' activities on account of the 'subversive' agitation of the independent Watch Tower prophets, specifically decided to grant the WTBTS official recognition and allow entry to its European officials and missionaries in the hope that they would succeed in bringing the African Watch Tower movement under control.

The WTBTS officials were largely successful — though important independent Watch Tower sects have continued to exist. These include, for example, the *bamulonda* and the followers of Jeremiah Gondwe in Zambia's Copperbelt Province. Under the influence of the WTBTS' passivist apoliticalism, the Jehovah's Witnesses in south-central Africa kept aloof from the major nationalist struggles of the fifties and sixties. As one Watch Tower leader, a European in charge of the whole Northern Rhodesian organisation of the Jehovah's Witnesses, put it in the late 1950's: 'Jehovah's Witnesses are not called to change the social structure lest they attract people who are interested in social reform rather than in the Kingdom of God.' In the 1950's, the Witnesses' assemblies in Northern Rhodesia were even segregated.

The African Watch Tower is now part of a highly organized, world-wide religious organization. The Zambia 'Branch Office', for example, is directly responsible to the WTBTS world headquarters in New York. The Branch Office, which is located in Kitwe, supervises the work of a number of 'District Servants', who in turn oversee the work of several 'Circuit Servants'. Each Circuit Servant supervises about fifteen to twenty local congregations. Congregations are centred around Kingdom Halls and are themselves subdivided into 'sections'. There is a strong emphasis in the movement on the filing of reports replete with statistical material recording the congregations' progress in their proselytizing activity. The Kitwe Branch Office distributes booklets dealing with various organizational matters and requires congregation leaders to submit monthly reports on their congregations' work.

Local congregations in Zambia today, which are run in the same way as WTBTS congregations throughout the world, are administered by 'Seven Committees'. These consist of an 'Overseer' or 'Congregation Servant' who has overall responsibility for the congregation; his Assistant who keeps detailed records and compiles reports; a 'Servant of Bible Studies'; a 'Territorial Magazine Servant' who functions as a kind of propaganda expert; a 'Theocratic Ministry School Servant' who is in charge of training members for their preaching activities; a 'Watchtower Study Servant'; and an 'Accounts Servant' or treasurer. All these officials, as well as the District and Circuit Servants to whom they are responsible, are appointed by the Branch Office in Kitwe. None are elected. The sect clearly has a tightly-organized, hierarchical structure — a far cry from the autonomy enjoyed by the early, nationalist-minded African Watch Tower prophets.

The Witnesses in south central Africa today consequently share the ideology of the world-wide movement. They believe that we are now living in the 'time of the end', which, they say, began on 1 October 1914, at the time of the inauguration of the 'Kingdom of God'. This is a theocratic government, headed by Jehovah in association with his 'co-regent' Jesus Christ and 144,000 associate kings taken from among men, having been 'resurrected and given spirit bodies'. The 'Kingdom of God' is not an earthly but an exclusively heavenly kingdom. The 'time of the end' is characterized by mounting upheaval which will culminate in the Battle of Armageddon, 'the battle of Jehovah God Almighty in which his executive officer Christ Jesus leads invisible forces of righteousness to destroy Satan and his demonic and human organization, eliminating wickedness from the universe and vindicating Jehovah's universal sovereignty'. Nobody knows when the Battle of Armageddon will come, but it will be soon. 'Soon now, God's judgements against this Satanic system of things will be executed. He will rid the earth of its wickedness and of wicked people to make way for the righteous "new heavens and new earth" that he has promised.' [2 Pet. 3:13]. God's enemies and the persistent opposers of his people "will depart into everlasting cutting-off, but the righteous ones into everlasting life". [Matt. 25:44-46]. Hence, while Jehovah's Witnesses in Malawi are undergoing terrible persecution solely because of their faith in God, they have the firm guarantee by God that they will be rewarded with the opportunity for eternal life in this new order.

At Armageddon, the 'goats' will be separated from the 'sheep'. The goats will be annihilated. Only the sheep, faithful Jehovah's Witnesses, will survive. While the
'Anointed class’ of 144,000 spirit-kings will reign with Christ in heaven, the mass of 'other sheep' will inherit the earthly paradise or ‘new world’ which will be set up at the start of the millennium, a literal thousand-year period to be inaugurated immediately after Armageddon. During the millennium, the earth will be rid of death, wars, diseases and hunger. ‘Paradise will be earthwide. Everyone will be making something good and useful. No-one will be working for another man. Each man will enjoy the fruits of his own labour and the works of his own hands...’  26 At the end of a thousand years, the Witnesses believe, Jehovah will make a final test or judgement. Satan and his demons will be loosed from the abyss in which they have been confined since Armageddon and will again try to turn mankind against God. This attempt of Satan will be a final test of obedience which everyone on earth will have to face. Those that yield to Satan's temptation will be cast into everlasting destruction, while those that remain true to God will be given the right to perfect life on the paradise earth forever.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses see themselves as the ‘chosen people’, who have been set the task of warning others about the approach of Armageddon. They are God’s theocratic organization on earth, ‘the New World Society’, and believe that salvation can come only to those who accept the faith. The Witnesses therefore place great importance on house-to-house preaching. They are expected to complete a certain minimum number of hours preaching per month and must submit regular reports of their preaching activities. The proselytizing essence of the doctrine means that considerable emphasis is placed on the need to achieve literacy and knowledge of the Bible as well as on the value of personal tidiness and organization.

In rural Zambia today, the Witnesses tend to live outside the village in rather small settlements based on a nuclear or small extended family. Some live at stores. Proportionately more of them are literate and are using the new agricultural skill; and they tend to be of higher economic status than the mass of rural Zambians. Indeed, the ethical code taught by the Watch Tower movement in south-central Africa might suppose, endear the movement to African governments.

Accordingly, in many African countries it has been the marked weakness of the nation-state, to whose symbols the Witnesses have refused to offer reverence, which has driven government ministers into conflict with the Watch Tower. ‘National unity and broad support for institutions of government,’ Ernie Regehr has written in the Christian Century, ‘are important prerequisites for stability and economic development — particularly in societies where tribal rivalries are a constant threat, and highly decentralized traditional authority is only reluctantly transferred to centralized institutions. The refusal of Jehovah’s Witnesses to recognize these authorities publicily in certain instances exposes the religious group to charges of attempting to undermine national unity and sabotage development.’ 80

In some cases, the Witnesses may also serve as a useful scapegoat for the failures of governments, particularly where these have strikingly failed to satisfy the expectations aroused by the struggle for independence. In the absence of a formal political opposition in African one-party states, the Witnesses provide a convenient target for the venting of frustrations. They are easily identifiable, socially conspicuous and sometimes apparently more successful economically than their neighbours. They are also relatively defenceless.

WHY THE WITNESSES ARE PERSECUTED IN AFRICA TODAY

Though the Witnesses’ teachings carry an anti-State message, the Watch Tower movement in south-central Africa has long lost the overtly political and rebellious image it acquired in the period 1908-1945. In fact, its apolitical, passivist millenarianism and its stress on the Witnesses’ role as ‘model citizens’ and prompt tax-payers should, one might suppose, endear the movement to African governments.

But, as Sholto Cross, who has studied the movement in depth, has noted, ‘it has been the understanding of African politicians of the goals they need to achieve which has led them into conflict with the Jehovah’s Witnesses. The attitudes of the goal they need to achieve which has led them into conflict with the Jehovah’s Witnesses. The clash and restrictions may be more accurately explained by an examination of the particular demands of the politicians... than by depicting the Jehovah’s Witnesses as highly political movements in themselves.’ 79

The Witnesses’ attitude towards governments and political parties flows from their general eschatological system. Giving their allegiance solely to Jehovah, the Witnesses quote Acts 5:29, ‘We must obey God as ruler rather than men.’ They believe that temporal authority today represents the power of Satan and that when Christ and all His hosts defeat the powers of evil in the Battle of Armageddon, temporal rulers along with the officers of the established churches will be cast into outer darkness. Since the movement views the State as fundamentally evil, it also requires its members to avoid all commitments to it other than the basic tributes of tax and keeping the peace. Thus, regarding the persecution of its members in Malawi, the Watch Tower movement explains:

‘Jesus said in the Holy Bible [John 17:15] concerning his followers: “They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world.” Hence Jehovah’s Witnesses refuse to become members of the Malawi Congress Party or any other political party, but insist on a politically neutral stand, although this position has caused problems for them in many parts of the world. Nonetheless, they are recognized as model citizens, by obeying the law, paying their taxes, willingly accepting service in community improvement programmes, but refusing to have anything to do with membership in the political party, putting their faith in a heavenly government by Jehovah God.’ 72

In rural Zambia today, the Witnesses tend to live outside the village in rather small settlements based on a nuclear or small extended family. Some live at stores. Proportionately more of them are literate and are using the new agricultural skill; and they tend to be of higher economic status than the mass of rural Zambians. Indeed, the ethical code taught by the Watch Tower movement in south-central Africa might suppose, endear the movement to African governments.

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President Kaunda’s government, for example, has placed a heavy emphasis on such symbols of ‘nation-building’ as the singing of the national anthem, the chanting of political slogans concerning national unity, and the display of the national flag at all schools and government buildings. It was precisely the refusal of the Witnesses to honour these symbols which sparked off the conflict between the Watch Tower and the government in Zambia.

In some cases, the Witnesses may also serve as a useful scapegoat for the failures of governments, particularly where these have strikingly failed to satisfy the expectations aroused by the struggle for independence. In the absence of a formal political opposition in African one-party states, the Witnesses provide a convenient target for the venting of frustrations. They are easily identifiable, socially conspicuous and sometimes apparently more successful economically than their neighbours. They are also relatively defenceless.
Besides, many African governments may feel that little is to be lost from persecuting the Witnesses. Unlike other Christian groups, the Witnesses have not provided tangible assets like schools and hospitals, since they concentrate exclusively on their evangelical work.

But most important of all, perhaps, the Witnesses have been seen by many African politicians as obstacles to the building of stable one-party regimes. By its very nature as a proselytizing sect, the Watch Tower appears to be competitive to the ruling political parties. Furthermore, in countries where open political opposition to the ruling elite is illegal, the Watch Tower has been accused by some governments (though with scanty evidence) of harbouring political dissidents.

To President Banda of Malawi, the mere existence of a well-organized religious sect that refuses to pay obeisance to the MCP is anathema. Dr Banda’s autocratic style of rule began to take shape even before independence. In 1961, for example, he was given supreme executive power within the MCP, the party’s Central Executive Committee being consigned to a purely advisory role. In 1962, a party sub-committee, set up to investigate ways of improving ‘the management of the Party as the sole ruler of this country’, proposed changes in the party’s constitution to ensure that ‘in Malawi the Party is supreme and . . . no one is above the Party.’ Dr Banda became the MCP’s ‘Life President’. The new party constitution, adopted in February 1963, went so far as to insist that ‘the Life President, as the Supreme Leader and Symbol of the Supremacy of the Party, must be respected, honoured and revered by every member of the Party, high and low, and Party members, high or low, are expected to conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner in his presence.’ The party’s ‘Discipline Rules’, written into the constitution, warned that ‘any member of the Party guilty of disloyalty, rumour mongering, deliberate manufacture of destructive stores, invidious whisper campaigns, loose talk and character assassination against any member of the Party or the Party itself . . . shall be dealt with in such manner as the President in his absolute discretion may think fit.’

Autocrat that he is, Dr Banda could say in May 1964: ‘The Malawi system, the Malawi style is that Kamuzu says it’s just there, and then it’s finished. Whether anyone likes it or not, that is how it is going to be here. No nonsense, no nonsense. You can’t have everybody deciding what to do.’

Dr Banda did not consolidate his personal dictatorship without challenge. Within a few weeks of independence on 6 July 1964, a serious rift opened between Dr Banda and some of his younger cabinet colleagues, led by Mr Henry Chipembere, one of the most charismatic leaders of the independence struggle. They resigned from the government in protest at Dr Banda’s tightening grip on the reins of power and his conservative policies. In February 1965, open fighting broke out between their supporters and forces loyal to the President. Dr Banda took advantage of the defeat of his rivals to turn Malawi into a thoroughly-going police state. New public security regulations were introduced, permitting him to detain political opponents without trial. Referring the previous January to the arrested followers of Mr. Chipembere, who had been detained in the new prison camp at Dzaleka, the President said: ‘I will keep them there and they will rot . . . they will rot. And I am going to make sure that in addition to the regular prison officers we have additional . . . warders (Youth Leaguers) who . . . will know what to do with these fools . . . they will knock sense into their heads.’

following April, Dr Banda said: ‘to maintain political stability and efficient administration, I have to detain 10,000, 100,000, I will do it. I want nobody to misunderstand me. I will detain anyone who is interfering with the political stability of this country.’ Two years later, he said that ‘Chipembere’s gang are now rotting at Dzaleka until Doomsday’. Amnesty International puts the number of political detainees in the country (prior to the detention of several thousand Witnesses at the end of 1975) at well over 1,000. Malawi’s formal adoption of a one-party constitution in 1966 did little more than formalize an already-existing situation. Again, little in practice was changed when, in 1971, to bolster the dictator’s almost monarchical role, Dr Banda was proclaimed ‘Life President of the Republic’.

The Malawian Witnesses, therefore, were merely one of the groups which fell foul of Dr Banda as he consolidated his autocratic hold over the country. It is not surprising that they provoked his displeasure. By refusing to succumb to the card-checking campaigns, mounted by the MCP to force party membership on an increasingly reluctant population, the Witnesses were an ‘example’ that could not be tolerated. They had to be crushed.

In Zambia too, the Witnesses have appeared to obstruct the ruling party’s drive to establish and defend a one-party system. The 1968-1969 clashes, for example, were caused directly by the Witnesses’ refusal to participate in the December 1968 general elections and the June 1969 referendum on the constitution, both of which were key steps in UNIP’s bid to win a popular mandate for the transition to a one-party system.

In December 1972, legislation was finally enacted to turn Zambia into a one-party state, a step that reflected the intrinsic weakness of the UNIP regime. Zambia’s rulers, dependent on a single commodity, copper, for 95% of exports (while the world copper price fluctuated wildly with the economic cycle) were unable to raise the standard of living of the mass of Zambians or to satisfy the aspirations which had been aroused by the struggle for independence; while, increasingly, popular discontent was being fuelled by the conspicuous rise of a wealthy new black elite. Political opposition to UNIP had persisted in the post-independence period, and by 1967 internal dissent and sectional conflicts within the ruling party had become serious. UNIP’s old rival, the African National Congress (ANC), had maintained its traditional base of mass support in the country’s Southern Province and had extended its influence to the former UNIP stronghold of Barotseland in 1968. Most serious of all from President Kaunda’s point of view, however, was the decision of Mr Simon Kapwepwe, a former Vice-President, to split from UNIP in 1971 with a large number of the party’s Bemba activists and to form a new opposition party, the United Progressive Party (UPP), which rapidly won wide support in the heavily-Bemba industrial centres of the Copperbelt. The threat which the UPP posed to UNIP’s hegemony led directly to the new party being banned as an ‘unlawful society’ and the detention of more than one hundred leading UPP members under Zambia’s stringent Public Security Regulations in February 1972. The following December saw the adoption of the one-party constitution.

Under these conditions, the Watch Tower sect, despite its apolitical passivism, has been seen by UNIP as a kind of surrogate political movement and a potential home for former members of the banned opposition parties. In the words of Mr Chiwale Maimisa, the governor of Katete in Eastern Province: ‘We want the Government to ban the
sect in Zambia because they pose as another political body in this country. Though no proof has been forthcoming, UNIP has repeatedly accused the Watch Tower movement of harbouring in its ranks former members of the UPP and the ANC.

In Mozambique too, a one-party system has been created. 'The People's Republic of Mozambique', states the country's constitution adopted in June 1975, 'will be guided by the political line defined by Frelimo, which is the leader of the state and of society.' Moreover, vigorous and wide-ranging steps have been taken by the new Mozambican government, in blatant disregard for the democratic rights of the mass of the population, to defend Frelimo's political supremacy. Newspapers and other media have been brought under firm government control. On 13 October 1975, the government set up an elite security force, the Serviço Nacional de Segurança Popular (National People's Security Service), with powers to 'detect, neutralize and combat all forms of subversion, sabotage and acts directed against the People's Power and its representatives, against the national economy or against the objectives of the People's Republic of Mozambique.' Those arrested can be sent to 'Centros de Descolonização Mental' (Mental Decolonization Centres) for 're-education'. There is no right of appeal. Several hundreds, almost all Africans, have been arrested and detained.

One of Frelimo's major concerns since the end of the liberation war has been to extend the party's organizational apparatus and political authority throughout the urban areas and the south of the country from which it was effectively excluded by the Portuguese during the war. To this end, Grupos Dinamizadores (Dynamization Groups) have been set up in schools, factories and neighbourhoods in a coordinated nationwide drive to project Frelimo's political and ideological line to the mass of the people. Great importance has been attached by the country's new rulers to the use of public rallies and pro-Frelimo slogans to drum up support for the party. Not surprisingly, the Witnesses, by their refusal to participate in these campaigns and to join in shouting 'Viva Frelimo!' as required by the party activists, soon found themselves embroiled in conflict with the regime.

Furthermore, Frelimo has been adamant that it alone shall have the right to 'mobilize' the people. It has consequently tried to suppress the proselytizing activities of some churches. So, again, it is little wonder that the Mozambican government soon found itself at odds with the Jehovah's Witnesses, for whom house-to-house campaigning and preaching is the essence of their religious work.

THE NEED TO HALT THE PERSECUTION

The evidence presented in this Report reveals government intolerance (and, in some cases, barbarism) which all who value civil liberties should strive to halt.

The governments involved claim to uphold freedom of religious expression. The 1966 Constitution of the Republic of Malawi states, for example, that 'the Government and the people of Malawi shall continue to recognize the sanctity of the personal liberties enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and of adherence to the Law of Nations' and that 'all persons regardless of colour, race or creed should enjoy equal rights and freedoms.' Similarly, the Mozambican constitution declares that 'the individual liberties are guaranteed by the State to all the citizens of the People's Republic of Mozambique... In the People's Republic of Mozambique the State guarantees to its citizens the freedom of practising or of not practising their religion.' These fine words should be put into practice.

But religious freedom is not all that is at stake. As I have argued above, the suppression of the Jehovah's Witnesses has been part and parcel of the attempts by various African rulers to consolidate one-party dictatorial regimes. Their persecution is therefore of importance not just to the Witnesses themselves but also to the mass of African people who have a stake in the defence and extension of democratic rights.
FOOTNOTES

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Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society Periodicals

Several articles on the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Malawi and Mozambique have appeared in the Society's two fortnightly journals, Awake! and The Watchtower. See in particular:
Educated at Balliol College, Oxford, and the University of California, at San Diego, Tony Hodges first visited Zambia as a teacher in 1966. During 1973-74 he was a staff member of the Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea, and in 1974-75 he was General Secretary of the British Hospital for Vietnam Committee. He has written widely on African affairs, and contributed articles to *The Round Table*, *the Africa Contemporary Record*, *The Observer*, *The Economist*, and *African Development*.

The photograph on the cover was taken at Sinda Misale in Zambia in 1972.

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