

Adjournment Debate

persecuted we have an obligation to stand up and say that we care, and to demonstrate that we do, by real and tangible means.

As John Donne said in 1624:

No man is an island, entire unto himself;

Every man is a piece of a continent, a part of the main.

If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less . . .

Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind;

And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee

Having heard the testimony of the Miskito people of Nicaragua, it is imperative that I should bring to this House of Commons the abuses that have been brought to my attention and to the attention of the representatives of the government, and call upon the Government of Canada to initiate an investigation at the international and at the Canadian personal level.

On March 31, 1982, I visited a refugee camp at Mocaron, Honduras. Mocaron is located in a mountainous jungle area in the vicinity of the Rio Coco in northeastern Honduras. Isolated within their highlands, aboriginals known as Miskitos have to some degree retained their cultural distinctiveness in a country that is primarily Spanish in language and culture. The refugee camp currently holds 7,200 Miskitos refugees, and the number growing at a rate of at least 150 people per day. The Honduran government, World Relief, Save the Children and U.S. Peace Corps volunteers, assisted by the United Nations, are attempting to alleviate subsistence level, sub-human conditions in the camp.

● (2215)

Miskito refugees allege that they are victims of gross human rights violations by agents of the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. They claim that 33 separate villages have been completely destroyed and homes and churches were burned to the ground; that their crops were burned, animals destroyed and many Miskito people, including the very old and young, the weak and the sick, have been killed. Some observers claim that people were thrown alive into wells; that people had their hands tied behind their backs and thrown into the river. Some were buried alive up to their necks.

Observers have specifically asked for investigation of an incident at Leimus on December 23, or December 24, 1981, where, in the presence of many witnesses, 15 people were lined up in a boat, shot and thrown into the river. A witness who escaped and arrived at Mocaron on March 29, 1982, claims that over 10,000 Miskito aboriginals are currently confined in a camp at Risco de Oro, the location of which I have given to the government, along with the names of witnesses who can be contacted for personal investigation.

It is claimed that in this particular concentration camp at Risco De Oro families are separated into groups of men, women and children and forced to labour in gold mines and on roadways. There are barbed wire enclosures with mines around the gate. There is physical and mental harassment by soldiers, with one plate of food per family, regardless of its size. Many innocent people who have not been charged or found guilty of

any crime are being held against their will, and women are being raped by soldiers.

I could go on and talk about Nicaraguan experiments with a socialist democracy, because I do have concerns about what must be happening to cause these people to flee to sub-human conditions in another country. The Nicaraguan government gives me assurances; they say this cannot be happening. That does not seem to add up, Mr. Speaker. If it cannot be happening, why are they leaving, and leaving at an accelerating rate? Obviously they are fleeing repression, like the people of El Salvador, Guatemala and other countries throughout the entire region.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote Jose Esteban Gonzalez, the head of the Nicaraguan Committee for Human Rights, who wrote recently in the *Washington Post*:

We should stop romanticizing a revolutionary leadership that has turned against the democratic promises of the revolution.

He stated that the human rights record of the Sandinistas is more repressive than that under the deplorable Somoza régime, citing the number of political prisoners and the bloody repression of the Miskito Indians. He also says:

An international campaign for Nicaraguan human rights could have a very significant impact in Nicaragua and elsewhere.

I call on the government tonight to launch an investigation, not to just say it cannot become involved. We must in fact become involved; let us see whether the government's commitment is rhetoric, or whether it will carry it through. I demand, Mr. Speaker, in the name of the freedom and dignity of individuals, and the Charter of Human Rights of the United Nations, that Canada in fact act. To do anything else would not be to play a full role in the community of mankind.

Mr. Ron Irwin (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the violations of human rights of the Miskito Indians in Nicaragua, and we have expressed our concern. We have indicated to Nicaragua that our continued aid to that country will be conditional in large part on the proper treatment of the Miskito Indians. Mr. Massé, the president of CIDA, will be there this week and will reconvey our concern. We have no right to go into another country and conduct an investigation, but we are party to many different international groups and agencies which are monitoring the situation.

Apart from what is happening in Nicaragua, many of the Miskito Indians have been forced over the border and into Honduras. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees is the agency mandated to look after refugees. It recently sent a mission to Honduras which is looking into the facilities available to the Miskito Indians. We support that mission. Mr. Massé will also be visiting Honduras to look at the camps. This particular agency is supported financially by Canada.

In 1981, as well as paying our regular dues, we have an additional \$500,000, the third highest in the world after the U.S.A. and Sweden. We will continue to monitor the Miskito Indian problem and we will continue to press our concerns.