

Adjournment Debate

think is really operative in respect of the question I asked the minister last December 17.

● (2220)

In the past we have raised our voices against persecution or discrimination. This voice has been raised whether there was religious discrimination or persecution based on religious differences within a country.

Reports coming out of Chad in the last few months of a program initiated by President Tombalbaye indicate that the president has begun a so-called cultural revolution or nationalization program the main terms of which include: first, an attempt by the government to eradicate all European influence, that is, the removal of non Chadian names including the biblical names that were given by parents as a result of missionary influence.

The second phase began in November of 1974, a so-called authenticity program, one in which all tribesmen must submit to initiation rites. In *Christianity Today* of June 21, 1974, the program as it was then visualized by the writers of the magazine was said to be as follows:

... secret ceremonies often involving sacrifice to ancestral spirits and an animistic "rebirth" ... The children of some were taken forcibly to the initiation camps. Sources say that one pastor who refused to let his sons go was shot, and that an evangelist's son who helped translate the New Testament into the Sara language was killed.

The article goes on to say also that missionaries have been expelled from Chad.

In article written for the *New York Times* by one of their correspondents, Henry Kamm, we find the following description:

... the ordeals in the camps exact a brutal physical toll. They are known to include floggings, burning with coals, scarring, sexual indignities, mock burials, drugging, and acts of humiliation. In the dispute surrounding the rites, some missionaries have been expelled and dozens of churches have been closed. Some believers have been killed, others maimed.

As I have said in my opening remarks, Canada has voiced its concern whenever discrimination took place. Both Canada and Chad are members of the United Nations, and as members of that international body both countries have signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 5 of that declaration reads:

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 30, the concluding article of the declaration, Nothing in this declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

My intent today is simply to mention to the government of Canada once again that, in my opinion, we should use our diplomatic relations and our good offices to bring to the attention of the world community and of the government of Chad that persecutions or discrimination of any type are activities that are not condoned by Canada. I do not think that we have to do this in an aggressive way. I think it can be done in a positive way.

On December 15, a day of prayer for Chad was announced by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Many Canadians, in fact approximately 1 million members belonging to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada,

[Mr. Epp.]

became involved in this day of prayer for Chad. Today I would simply like to add my voice, and request the minister and the government of Canada to use the existing diplomatic channels that are available to them to make a representation, first of all, to the world body, and specifically to Chad, that persecution and discrimination of the type that we are reading about in Chad go beyond domestic policy and are activities which we as members of the international community cannot accept.

Mr. Herb Breau (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity given to me by the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) to enlighten the House on this point.

In 1973 the Chadian government launched a movement for social and cultural revolution. The purpose of this movement is to produce an authentic "Chadian personality". Accordingly, the authorities re-established the ancestral practice of initiation termed the "Yondo". Yondo was seen by the Chadian government as an authentic indigenous rite which could serve to link all Chadians and could encourage the influential bourgeoisie, said to be copying blindly occidental taste, to return to fundamental Chadian identity.

It is now compulsory for all Chadians citizens to undergo initiation. No one, except the initiates themselves, really knows what is involved in this practice. It is thought to be a kind of survival in the bush course, accompanied by instructions in animist mysteries.

In a recent interview given to the French newspaper *Le Monde*, President Tombalbaye of Chad, who is himself a Christian, said that Yondo was not incompatible with the Christian faith and expressed the hope that the cultural movement launched in Chad would result in a new symbiosis of African and Christian values. Many missionaries have not opposed the government's campaign in favour of Yondo, and there is no evidence that Chadian authorities, in pushing Yondo, are being anti-Christian or are countenancing the alleged tortures and killings. However, some missionaries have adamantly opposed the institutionalization of these practices which, from their point of view, are immoral, and have forbidden their followers to accept initiation.

During the last month the Canadian government has been requested by a certain number of Canadian citizens to intervene on behalf of those Christians in Chad who felt the Yondo incompatible with their faith, and who are allegedly persecuted. There has also been some suggestion that the government should stop all economic aid to Chad.

The main concern of the government has been to ensure there is no threat to Canadians living in Chad. Periodic reports received from our embassy in Yaoundé, Cameroon—also accredited to Chad—indicate that Canadians are not threatened and can perform their usual duties freely. Furthermore, the information gathered by the officials of this department from a great variety of both Canadian and foreign sources is not in accordance with information dispatched to the press by the religious organizations opposing Yondo. According to the reports I have received from many quarters, there has been a gross exag-