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Deliberate and concerted confusion between sects and religions

An analysis of the situation in Europe, through the report commissioned by the PACE² from the Parliamentarian Rudy Salles, entitled, "The protection of minors against sectarian abuse."

History

FECRIS obtained its status as a participant to the Council of Europe in January 2005.

It had introduced its application in 2002.

In his remarkable book, 'Scientology, the autopsy of a cult of State', Emmanuel Fansten wrote, "The Council of Europe provides Scientology and its allies a new sounding board... the organisation deals principally with Human Rights within a wider Europe. This is an obvious opportunity for sects³ seeking official recognition.

During the 1990s, we thus observed the growing power of sectarian networks. Some parliamentarians would knowingly or not become bullet targets, choice targets in fact, for the entry tactics, first of Scientology and then others. NGOs were bought at the price of gold to form important allies (we saw an example in Copenhagen) and other minority movements, supported by certain scientologists and religious historians, formed common networks.

Their objective: To bring the debate onto the field of free religion, to position themselves as victims of attack against this fundamental freedom.

Thus in 2002 FECRIS submitted its application for status as a participant.

In normal circumstances, a few months suffice for the preliminary enquiry and for the NGO to be either approved or rejected. Hundreds of NGOs have followed this procedure.

FECRIS's application was blocked. The applications got held up in offices... or simply disappeared. Then, three parliamentarians placed their vetoes on the application and submitted a voluminous memoire against FECRIS to the Human Rights Commission.

¹ The INGO (international non-governmental organizations) Conference is the body representing [civil society](#) in the [Council of Europe](#), a European organization founded in 1949. The Council of Europe has 47 member States with some 800 million citizens and its seat is in [Strasbourg, France](#).

² Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

³ *Sect* comes from the Latin word *secta*, which means "school of thought." It may apply to a religious faith or denomination, or it may refer to splinter group. In contradistinction, the word *cult* always carries a negative connotation. Cult lobbies in international organizations have obtained that the word "cult" may not be used.

FECRIS for its part sent its own report of activities to the Council of Europe, but strangely the report never reached its destination.

It is important to note that during parliamentary sessions, everyone goes to the parliamentary hall, the offices are emptied of people and doors stay open. It is easy to enter and remove documents.

Other factors clearly highlight the lobbying powers of the sects; the lady due to report on the dossier suddenly resigned on health grounds. She was replaced by Dick Marty, Public Prosecutor for the Tessin Canton of Switzerland, who is used to dealing with problems involving the Mafia. I often met him in the parliament's bar. He admitted never having been so harassed within the context of his work.

Finally, after three years and largely thanks to Dick Marty, it was demonstrated that FECRIS met the required criteria to obtain this status. Thus in 2005 it obtained that status and I was appointed a delegate to the Council of Europe, a position which I hold since. I represent FECRIS on the Human Rights, Education and Culture, and Social Affairs commissions.

Very rapidly, and this is exceptional, the Human Rights Commission of the Conference of INGOs decided to set the day of the **28th June 2007** for research into sectarian abuse.

"Sectarian Abuse: A challenge to democracy and human rights."

The programme was co-organised by the President of the INGO Conference, Annelise OESHGER, who was aware of the danger of sects and their damaging powers, and me.

Several members of FECRIS figured amongst the speakers; Jean-Pierre JOUGLA, Tom SACKVILLE and Maxim YURCHENKO.

Some of FECRIS's detractors were also present including Jeremy GUNN, great opponent of the "anti-sect" organisations and defender of "New Religious Movements", strongly critical of France before the OSCE and friend of Eileen Barker. Also present: collaborators of Scientology.

In his statement Jean-Pierre JOUGLA declared that:

To continue dealing with the question of contemporary sects as a religious matter is to conceal the essential aspects of this phenomenon which currently involves health, well-being, personal development, psychotherapy, corporate training, science and culture, etc.

Confusing sect with religion reinforces the error behind which sects hide with even more determination than that with which they persuade their adepts of the need to 'evangelize' with their utopian message and give it body, making them militants and spreaders of propaganda for their cause.

Infact this amalgam has the objective of detracting people from thinking of the true nature of sects, because sects depend on single and totalitarian thought. Religion is just one mask, amongst many, that certain sects adopt to impress and win over their future adepts.

Pursuing the objective of making political leaders aware of the question of sects and of recalling the commitments made in the PACE Recommendation 1412 (1999) relating to the illegal activities of sects (which followed REC 1178 (1992) relating to sects and new religious movements), on 27th January 2011 the Conference of INGOs adopted the Recommendation: "Sectarian abuse and the violation of human rights".

This Recommendation recalled that Rec. 1412 placed very particular importance on the protection of those who are most vulnerable, especially children.

In order to be effective, this REC. needed to be presented to the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council, be approved by at least ten parliamentarians and then be the subject of a report to the Assembly.

Mrs OESCHGER and I thus discussed the matter with Mr Rudy SALLES, whom we knew to be aware of the subject for having raised it on several occasions during various parliamentary commissions of enquiry in France.

The MIVILUDES had already approached the Legal Affairs Commission of the European Council's Parliamentary Assembly, which took interest in the report on "The Protection of Minors against Sectarian Abuse". The Member of Parliament Rudy SALLES was appointed in September 2011, to report.

FECRIS made its contribution both directly through the report by Branka DUJMIC for the "Sectarian abuse and the violation of Human Rights "working group, and indirectly by providing various useful information to the Legal Affairs Commission, as well as by recommending certain people of importance.

We know what happened next:

A vast campaign of attacks against the report and Rudy SALLES in person, against the MIVILUDES and of course against FECRIS, was orchestrated by the sectarian lobby. Letters inundated the office of Anne Brasseur the PACE President, pamphlets circulated, a side event was organised on the 8th of April within the very walls of the Council of Europe and posters were plastered on lift walls and corridors, all denouncing, "a serious threat to religious freedom". This was supported by some unexpected personalities; an ex legal advisor of the European Court of Human Rights, an ex-member of the Helsinki Group and a member of PACE.

This was previously unheard of.

The recommendation did not get over the hurdle. The resolution suffered 58 amendments, meaning that it was quite emptied of its substance.

I will end with the recommendation by Rudy SALLES, who could not join us today, has asked me to read it out. You will clearly understand why we have chosen the conference name, "Deliberate and concerted confusion between sects and religion."

I wish you all an excellent conference.