



Acts of the conference

How Cults are Infiltrating World Institutions

17 April 2010

at the Millennium Mayfair Hotel, 44 Grosvenor Square, London W1K2HP



organised by



Advice and support
for the friends and
families of cult members

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FECRIS

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^[1] Mission Interministérielle de Vigilance et de Lutte contre les Dérives Sectaires - Interministerial Mission of Vigilance and Struggle against Cultic Excesses (Paris)

^[2] "Broyeurs de consciences: l'évolution des sectes en Belgique", André Frédéric, 18 02 2010, éditions Luc Pire

^[3] Il Libro Nero delle Sette in Italia, Caterina Boschetti, 2007, Newton Compton Ed.

^[4] Radio Télévision belge francophone

^[5] "On a tué ma mère", Nathalie De Reuck, Philippe Dutilleul, Editions Buchet-Chastel, 2010

Opening of the Conference

Tom Sackville, President of FECRIS and of The Family Survival Trust (UK):

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much, all of you, for coming. Sadly, we've lost our Italian delegation, we've almost all our Eastern European delegates. There were a lot of people sitting in airports yesterday who were not able to come because of the volcanic cloud!

Its not the first time that Iceland, this sulphurous small island, has exerted an influence over us. We've had banking crises fishing wars. But in fact, this turnout is remarkable given what we thought was going to happen, as of yesterday morning. Most of you have taken advantage of the EUROSTAR. The Channel Tunnel is of course the result of that remarkable day when Mrs Thatcher and Mr. Mitterrand decided to start digging towards each other, one from Folkestone, the other from Calais, and actually met in the same place in the middle. Given the history of our two countries, this was an extraordinary feat. So thank you all for coming, especially to the Irish contingent who, I think must have swum over.

Most of our speakers were able to be here and we have a very varied list of people from the UK from France, from Belgium, from Russia, from Italy (represented by Pietro Amati). We are sadly not going to hear Ursula Caberta from Germany unfortunately but still we have a varied conference which will cover many different aspects of the problem that we all have to deal with.

Just a few introductory remarks, before I start the conference. For me, as president of FECRIS, and also of our host organisation the **Family Survival Trust** and Audrey Chaytor, is going to speak to you in a minute, who is the person who has kept the flag flying in this country about cults for many, years. For me FECRIS is enormously important because it is a cooperation of people who are trying to put up some resistance to organisations which now have extraordinary power, in terms of their economic wealth and of their public relations possibilities: it is crucial that someone acts as the umbrella for those who try to resist the ravages of cults, whether that be the damage they do to individuals or to families. We see that some cults have had influence for quite a long time: the disgraceful incident in the early 90s in the United States when scientology acquired tax exempt status as a result, it appears, of bullying and manipulation of officials in the US government, gives a flavour ... that was some time back, and I don't think things have improved at all!

I think our institutions that are very vulnerable to the influence of cults who use, lets face it, in quite professional ways, legal and public relations expertise to get what they want. There are actually very, very few countries in the world where people have stood up to what the cults are trying to do. France of course, Germany, Belgium, Russia ... there are others, but those ones stand out. I'm afraid in this country we've never really made any headway with the official sector, over cults. A long time ago, our government appears to have decided that this was something that they didn't want to get involved with. It was too complicated, the officials concerned just wanted to shy away from it, because they saw problems about drafting legislation or definition. Whether through laziness, or incompetence or just cowardice we've had a situation in this country where Audrey Chaytor and her colleagues have really been a lone voice in trying to resist what is going in Scientology and other cults. So really, we can't in this country give you any real lessons in how this should be done. But we continue to do our best to keep the flag flying, to make sure that somebody, somebody speaks up in opposition to cults because, otherwise it all goes by default, and that is very sad, sad at a human level and at a societal level.

So with that, I'd just like to make one personal comment of my own. I've always taken the view that we should take the tough line. There are an awful lot of people around the world

who have concluded that maybe we should be polite about cults, and neither aggressive or confrontational. I don't see it like that! For me, these organisations are not in the public interest, they do nothing that is good, or that helps anyone at all. They are entirely ruthless, they are entirely selfish, they damage almost everybody who comes into contact with them: indeed there are many people in this room who have been damaged by contact with cults, either personally or in their families. Why should we not say so?

And there are people around the world that we sometimes call "apologists", many of whom are quite influential. I've never had any truck with them myself. I've always taken that line and I don't see why anything is to be gained by being tolerant of what these people do. Their activities are harmful and we should say so. I hope most people in this room would agree with that view, but we have lots of time to debate this, as we have lost one or two speakers from the programme. It would be interesting to hear your views of how people should tackle cults in our society.

It is my great pleasure therefore to introduce our opening speaker: Audrey Chaytor, who is chief executive officer of the **The Family Survival Trust**, formerly called FAIR. We changed the name when we became a charity. This charity has the very limited aims of trying to support those individuals and families who are affected by cultic abuse, with a secondary aim of providing information about what cults do: most of you will agree that the public at large, unless they have been actually personally affected, generally do not know what cults are. But we do it, as I am sure Audrey will remind you, without any help or encouragement from official sources. In this country there has always been a totally agnostic line coming across from government, both central and local. So what Audrey and her colleagues have done over the years is commendable, and outstandingly courageous.

Audrey – welcome

Thirty Years' Experience in Helping Families to Survive the Trauma of Cult Involvement: a history of the Struggle by FAIR and The Family Survival Trust

Audrey Chaytor, Chief Executive of The Family Survival Trust

I welcome you all to London and hope you will enjoy your stay here. It is quite remarkable to me, that in the late seventies, only a handful of people in the UK and Europe had experience and knowledge of present day cults and sects. The picture today is very different and thanks are due to all, who have participated and worked hard to establish FAIR and later in Europe, on the development of FECRIS. The membership still grows, and the vital elements of sharing knowledge and experience, contribute to the great European effort in this continuing field of abuse.

I recognise and thank those few politicians who have given time, understanding and help in our endeavours. The late beloved Lord Rodney, who devoted himself and made great efforts on our behalf, with his parliamentary All Parties Committee of MPs and also as our dedicated chairman. I also pay tribute to our own Tom Sackville, who not only shows great interest and understanding of the subject of cults and sects, but somehow in his exceptionally busy life, manages to find time, to be our friend and guide.

I also thank the very few clerics and ministers of religion who have given us support and understanding of the problems involved with our work.

My contribution to this conference is based on my work and experiences of thirty years which have shaped my present day thinking and observations. Latterly, my expectations of both Church and State which initially were high, have now changed and I declare that I am

unimpressed by both. In the early days my expectations were, that at least, they would try to understand the phenomenon which has swept into most parts of the world and deceived many senior politicians and clerics. Now it is obvious that efforts have not been made, either to understand or get to grips with the problem. It has been left to us, to find our own resources and to forfeit our lives in a struggle, in which they could at least, have had some input.

The lack of support in the UK has been an everlasting irritant to many of us who make great efforts to work and help. But, in fact, Government did do something. They made a gift of large amounts of taxpayers' money and presented us with the result - a consolidated package known as INFORM. Following that event one could almost feel the sigh of relief, as Church and State relaxed into a state of inertia, expecting that we, in our ignorance and gratitude for their efforts, would not only give our full support to INFORM, but would retreat and allow them some peace. In the UK, we have been forced to accept INFORM and we work with the eternal insult which began in 1988. Available money has been wasted and let me be clear, my constant concern is that in the UK, there is no money available for helping ex-cult members. There must be many struggling to survive, with no support. How appalling is that?

Indications of real understanding would have helped but in the absence of that, at least, we do know where we stand. To date there is scant recognition of the problem of cults and sects, from both Church and State, the dangers appear to elude them. Some of the most scandalous, hideous events, have failed to even raise an eyebrow. Those are not my only concerns, but both Church and State appear to have missed the vital point frequently made by us and others, that the dangers are not only that families have lost loved ones, although that is bad enough, but there is a deeper and more dangerous link. Civilization now lives under the continual threat of terrorist acts every day.

As I write this on 29th March 2010, bombs were released in the Moscow underground, killing and maiming ordinary citizens. Our concerns must be that Church and State fail to accept vital facts which are clear to us but not to them, that in many instances there is no division between the "religious" and the "criminal", a failure which is largely unrecognised. So far as I can see, Church and State are so occupied with other matters, that there is neither time nor inclination to make the "Link", in spite of well publicised disasters and dangers, from extreme and uncontrolled "faith" and/or terrorist groups. There is no limit to what can be done, by unscrupulous masters, imposing their wills upon captive members. The fine line between the "religious" and the "criminal" is concealed and deeply held faiths can easily be transformed from one into the other. We all know and understand but we still wait for Church and State to realize and make the link.

Could anything be done to help this process to move along? It would help if unquestioning and wearisome lip service to "freedom of faith and worship" could be seriously debated without the influence of the many cult apologists. A board of serious scholars together with enlightened politicians, willing to learn, could be a beginning. The subject would benefit from the appointment of a Minister for Cults in parliament, instead of being conveniently hidden away and ignored, as a small part of some Government department, as it has been for many years and is still today. That might appear to be almost too simple, but in fact, so far as I am aware it has never even been suggested.

Too much ignorance and waste of time abounds. On occasions we hear of a report, which might be interpreted as "good news", that some politicians are aware of "religious issues" but frequently they disappear before they have begun.

A recent report of new legislation, in The Sunday Times - 7th March 2010, stated that Harriet Harman, Government Equalities Minister, explained to The House, the legal implications of a code of practice of the equality bill. Ms Harman announced that religions need not be mainstream or well known, for their adherents to gain protection. She said "A belief need not include faith or worship of a god or gods, but must effect how a person lives their life or perceives the world." The new code of practice, drawn up by the Equality and Human Rights

Commission, would protect members of cults and “new religions” **such as Scientology**. It did surprise me to learn that Scientology needs protection! As one, who knows at first hand just how much protection the public needs **from Scientology**, I would challenge Harriet Harman’s abysmal ignorance of this subject. However this is just one example of how much we need intelligent politicians who understand and know what they are talking about.

Recently, I read an article by Virginia McKenna of BORN FREE fame, a wildlife activist campaigning against captivity of wild animals. She said “There will probably never be a time when there aren’t animals in cages, but there’s usually a compromise” she goes on “We didn’t celebrate our 25th Anniversary last year. The only cause for celebration would be if we were no longer needed”. That is something for us to think about and the thought really does appeal to me. **IF WE WERE NO LONGER NEEDED!**

Today in our world, the overall picture is that many who began this journey over thirty years ago, are still here. Many more have joined in the struggle. We have brilliant scholars, psychologists, psychotherapists, researchers, cult advisers and counsellors, all working away out there. The picture is of a world wide workforce, in fact, a developed job creation scheme, which helps victims and advises families. Looking at this overall impressive domain, should we accept that it is permanent? Should we be working and looking forward to a world, in which much more recognition in high places and help for victims, can be available. We need a greater awareness of the dangers and a way forward which might even result in eliminating many groups? Like Virginia MacKenna, I believe that a cause for real celebration would be, that we would no longer be needed. However, I do know that this is “Pie in the Sky” but I also know that society needs and could only benefit, from a new initiative of Church and State. In a sensible well regulated world, all church bodies, cults and sects should be required to prove their worth in order to gain tax exemption. If that could be achieved it would be a new base for an equality bill which I could support!

I accept that, probably, there will never be a time when there are no cults or esoteric groups - they have been there since the world began. But, there is no good reason to accept the situation, as it now is. It could be significantly changed and made much safer. I pose a question for your consideration. Why should we accept that it is possible for anyone, even any of you here today if you so wished, to set up a religious or esoteric group and be quite wealthy living off the proceeds of mind manipulation, which causes individuals to live in imagined cages?

Where could we begin? It would be difficult but it could begin with a Government board of experienced inspectors, who would be properly professional, discreet and with authority to inspect churches, faith groups, cults and sects, without prior warning. Existing religious bodies and esoteric groups would be tested and any group which failed to meet required standards would be closed. Those wanting to begin would need to apply for permission and submit to examination before permission could be granted. Automatic tax-free status would be abolished but could be re-granted to those groups achieving the required standards of preaching, teaching and behaviour. There would be no locked doors on churches or groups during services, meetings or teaching sessions. I am aware that these suggestions would need to be carefully researched and implemented but the present system of simply putting up a notice board, claiming to be a “church” and operating behind closed doors, is much too easy. It is equally easy to claim to be a Buddhist monk with special spiritual powers. There are many gateways through which criminals can earn an easy living by deception.

Lord Justice Denning, before he died, proposed a protection scheme in 1984 and believed that it could lead to a solution. He was convinced, that the ease with which cults and sects are allowed to operate under the present tax exemption rule, was foolish and should be stopped. I am one of the few people who supported him then and I support him now. I have been told that such a scheme would not work. I have listened to the arguments but I do not accept, that abuse of persons and underhand fraud of the tax system under the protection of

religion or faith, should be an accepted part of life in a civilized country. The privileges which now exist protect any charlatan who masquerades as a minister of religion, or leader of a group.

I recommend that this present state of affairs should not be allowed to continue. Understandably, such a move would cause an outcry, but any church or cult group would be given the opportunity to prove its sincerity, honesty, good and transparent management and if it is proved to run on clearly defined lines, there would be nothing to fear. This could be a beginning and, though very unpopular, would replace the present system of “free for all” which goes unchecked at the present time.

My memories and experiences of a long journey into “dark” places began in February 1979, when I believed that I had lost my two beloved daughters, recruited into the cult of Scientology. That was the first event in my life as a mother which forced a serious conflict between us. It was not their fault but it was mine. They became the victims of lies. I still remember, vividly, how difficult it was to believe that something of which I had never heard, could be such a destructive force. Over the years many parents have told of similar experiences. As an intelligent working mother I thought I was clever enough to know what could happen to young people out in the world. I was wrong! Completely ignorant of this dark subject I sent my children out, unarmed, into the world and they were attacked. As I began to learn the almost unbelievable facts I was transfixed and paralysed with fear. But my experience of this early lesson, of a destructive cult, has brought me to realize the folly of allowing the present system, which has no boundaries, to continue unsupervised under the guise of “new religious movements”.

Over the years I have striven to help families, who under normal circumstances, would come to terms with events and tragedies of every kind, yet when faced with having a son or daughter in a cult they can be reduced to pulp. They lose their inner confidence, resources and strength and they are filled with fear.

On joining FAIR in 1979, I heard reports from other parents, who told me that some places in the world had become hotspots for cults. There were certain cities in the USA where it was almost impossible for young students to be safe from predatory Moonies and other places where Scientology was the prime danger. At that time, it was almost impossible to be in Oxford Street in London, without meeting a very noisy crocodile of dancing, singing and drum beating Hare Krishna members. Some unaware or unintelligent passers by, thought they were simply rather amusing and charming, a colourful picture. However most of us know that their lifestyle is something other than cute and the way they treat children is appalling. Our dear friend, the late Dr. Elizabeth Tylden, very wisely said “I do not mind what anyone believes, but I do mind what they do as a result of what they believe”. We are stronger today because of Betty’s wisdom and because of our acquired knowledge over thirty years. Yet very little has changed during that time. Many destructive cults and sects are still out there, preying upon vulnerable people, causing mayhem. Sadly there is still no sign that Church and State have made any moves towards a cult education programme within schools. It seems quite absurd, even though I know the reasons why, the dangers are still unrecognised except by us.

Cults/sects attract little attention, unless they either cause a national scandal, which is good for selling newspapers, or there is some horrible disaster which cannot be ignored. Then the interest will last only a short time until another scandal comes along to replace it. This has not changed in over thirty years.

The deception continues and in many instances begins with a simple question. When I go into my nearest city, I am sometimes approached by two inoffensive looking boys, who say to me “We would like to talk to you. Do you believe in God?”. They are not aggressive and it is difficult to tell them to go away, but that is the trap, they are carefully chosen because of their mild manners. I know that I must not answer their question, as these boys are recruit-

ing for an “extreme” evangelical church which, I am sorry to say, is protected as part of the Church of England. As I watch this pair engaged in deep conversation with others, I know they could be setting up the beginning of a problem for someone, but I can do nothing. That church will continue to control. It is well attended and regarded, even by the Archbishop, as “successful”.

From time to time reports are published which raise our hopes, that “something” might be happening but then, nothing further happens. We could be forgiven for thinking that these reports are deliberately released in order to draw us down blind alleys and convince us that governments are interested. We need to ask, as in the case of Senator Xenophon’s report in Australia, will the government follow up and take it seriously? However, it appears that once again, an excellent report is “stuck”. Hopes are raised, then they crumble and fall, while the silence from Church and State is deafening and abusive groups continue to abuse. If ordinary citizens carried out many of the acts of the cults and sects they would be arrested on any number of criminal charges. But religious or esoteric groups do their worst, the Church is silent and State, the police and law enforcement, appear to be powerless.

The problem of damaged people who have spent many years in cults and sects is important to us all. The numbers of victims is unknown and there is yet no safety net for them. I assure you, in spite of my previous comments about the great spread of professional counselors, psychotherapists and psychologists who work in the field, that I have no wish to dispense with them. But it is time to move from the position we have had for the past thirty years. Church and State must be helped to recognise the problem for what it is. Financial resources should be moved from where they are now and made available, within the Health Service, for cult victims who need counselling, treatment or help. Unless victims belong to wealthy families there is no way they can afford to pay fees for professional counselling. The situation is ludicrous, with the added danger of charlatans in the business of cult counselling. The entire area of cult help and advice needs to be reviewed.

Children, taken into cult groups by their parents are vulnerable, as victims deprived of choice. When a person becomes a member of a cult or sect, at a young age, the best years of life are stolen. In time, some of these displaced persons might try to re-enter the real world without support, owning nothing. They will be lacking in confidence or qualifications and they might even be ill. How can these damaged people find the resources to pay professional fees for counselling? The system as it now stands is abominable and there is no official supporting network in place.

I will end with two heart-breaking experiences from this field of suffering. On the day of the Waco Ranch fire, I continually answered the telephone, from 7a.m. in the morning. I watched the all-day coverage on television as the ranch, which was known to be full of people being burned alive, continued to burn. The telephone did not stop that day. It rang again at 4 p.m. when my husband called out to me to leave it! However something made me pick up and the caller was a distressed man from Sheffield. He asked if I was watching the television? I asked him what he wanted to say to me and he said “There is nothing you can do, I just want to tell someone, that my wife and four daughters are in there!” The mother of those children, presumably joined David Koresh of her own choice, but her children were taken in there by her.

The second is more recent and happened only a few months ago. A woman who had been mentally, sexually and financially abused within two cults over a very long period, somehow managed to free herself and return to the UK. Because she had been abused for such a long period of time, her self esteem was nil. Her home/family situation had changed considerably and her parents’ lives had changed. They were now old and one of them was very ill, unable to help her. Then she fell into the wrong hands again, received diabolical counselling advice and arrived at our office, in great distress. Any mention of psychiatric or psychological help was met with tears and absolute refusal. So we decided to try, day by day, to help her

along the road and eventually we hoped to move her on to accept further help. But, once again, there was absolutely no money to pay for anything. Julian Chater and I, spent many hours and some of our own money doing our best to help her. We thought we were managing “not too badly” and many times we brought a smile to her face. However one sad day, the news came that she had jumped out of a fast moving train into London and was instantly killed on impact. This happened as a result of twenty years of evil followed by extremely bad cult-counselling advice.

Yet today, advice is available on the web, implying that a cult experience might simply be regarded as a kind of adventure. It states and I quote “many felt wiser for the experience....” I leave you to be the judges of that.

Promoting a European programme of vigilance and struggle against cultic excesses

George Fenech, President of MIVILUDES

I am going to speak to you in French my English not being good enough to be able to express myself in your beautiful language. Thank you, dear Tom Sackville, for inviting MIVILUDES to this important FECRIS conference. For us to be here in London today to discuss cults and cult related groups is highly symbolic.

We are an Interministerial Mission working under the auspices of the French Prime Minister and as you know he has supported our actions and that of FECRIS, materially, morally and politically. I am accompanied by my Secretary General, Amélie Cladière and a technical assistant Laurence Baour. It's therefore a MIVILUDES delegation that is here with you today.

I rejoice to see, that in spite of the problems with air space you are well represented here today and I would particularly like to say how pleased I am by the presence of some very first class people. In particular I wish to greet the Belgian Member of Parliament, André Frédéric. The action of Belgium in the field of cultic excesses is well known and recently I was auditioned, at Mr. Frédéric's initiative, by the Belgian parliament concerning a new law that is being introduced. I'd also like to greet my Belgian counterpart who has arrived discreetly, Henri de Cordes, President of CIAOSN (Centre for Information and Advice about Harmful Cultic Organisations) and we also have a representative from the Belgian Federal Police so Belgium is very well represented today. I am also very happy to see Catherine Picard, President of UNADFI and Jacques Miquel, President of CCMM, who represent the two largest French organisations helping us with our work and the directors and members of FECRIS that I now know well and other members from other countries who somehow managed to be present.

In France the fight against harmful cults has never really relented. There was always a political will behind it although we have had some very turbulent periods. MIVILDES is very much alive! It has real means and government backing and is well listened to in the whole country and well beyond France's borders because it is true, that we are with Belgium, a unique example of awareness of this phenomenon by public instances and not only by the associative sector. I retain the idea perhaps not of a Minister of cults as mentioned by Tom, but of a governmental concern of this question as we have in France and why not in the U.K. It is a wish that one can hope to attain, that in Europe, and that is the subject of my intervention, the authorities should take into account the cult phenomenon. Quite simply because the cult phenomenon touches the essential core, i.e. human dignity, human rights; it is a real issue of society, it is a combat against totalitarianism, it attacks the most vulnerable of people and

in particular children as you pointed out, Audrey. It is a real issue of society to which governments cannot remain indifferent.

We can find comfort in the fact that in some European countries this awareness has come about. I had a chance of testing this on the occasion of missions for MIVILUDES in a certain number of capitals in Europe. Germany was always extremely vigilant with regard to the cult phenomenon. It is within the German Ministry of the Family that this activity is organised and coordinated. Belgium, of course, is an example quite comparable with that of France, but there remains much to be done and that is the reason which prompted MIVILUDES to promote the idea of a European cooperation in this field.

This idea is not new when one recalls the history of the fight against cult excesses in Europe which goes as far back as 1984 and the first report on the subject presented to the European Parliament by the British MEP, Richard Cottrell and of other reports which followed: i.e. Berger and Nastase reports and certain resolutions which were voted by the European Parliament. Unfortunately, one has to admit, this question has always remained at an intended proposal level but Europe never set up a structure or initiated a programme on a European scale. Why on a European scale? Obviously cult organizations take no notice of national borders and if they are allowed to settle freely in some States and commit, what is considered elsewhere as an attack on freedom and human rights, we have a real problem. We have to be aware of this though it would be presumptuous to draw conclusions concerning certain countries. Perhaps would we be capable in Europe because we are a continent of human rights to at least agree on a minimum, a minimum threshold as it were?

That is why I went to Vienna in Austria to meet Mr. Kjaerum, Director of the The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. I realised that few people knew of this Agency, because it is recent, it is in fact the successor to the European Monitoring Centre on Racism anti-Semitism and Xenophobia which transformed itself in 2007 into the European Agency of Fundamental Rights and works within the framework of the European Union.

Let's simply start with that. What country could say "We do not want to take an interest in question of minors in cults"? In the name of what could a country say such a thing? Is there an organization in Europe whether political, denominational, religious, commercial or whatever which would be above the Rule of law? Certainly not! The rights of the child were recognized and affirmed on an international level at the International Convention of the rights of the child in New York in 1989, ratified by the Member States of the European Union and integrated in the nations' legislative corpus. In France it is the case. We do nothing more than apply the law, we require that children should be entitled to receive an education, to become free citizens capable of drawing their own judgement, able to become free enlightened citizens in society and not locked up in isolated communities.

Children also have the right to health care. It would be too time consuming to give you a list of cases. I'll just tell you about one recent case treated by a penal court in France. It concerned parents who were condemned some time ago for the simple reason that the mother followed a very strict vegan diet in the name of an ideology whilst nursing her child. This obviously weakened the child who died because the diet followed by the mother deprived him of the nutrients he needed to develop.

We know many examples like this of children who have suffered because of certain beliefs and I believe that if we join forces here in Britain today and that FECRIS backs this project, FECRIS must support this project. You are an NGO in Special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of United Nations you have the means to make yourselves heard. Contact all your members in the different countries. I called upon UNADFI and CCMM. You must also become an NGO with this European Agency of Fundamental Rights. You should at least do as well as the large cults which have managed to integrate these International institutions so as to denigrate the actions that we project. We are fighting a battle and I have no doubt that you can wage this battle. We will do all in our power to prepare a pro-

gramme at European level on minors in cults, even if it is only a basic one like the one we are suggesting. This project counts very much for me. When I was a Member of Parliament I chaired a Parliamentary Committee on Children in Cults. We estimated that 60 000 to 80 000 children were exposed to the cult phenomenon in France. This could be a first step.

I would also like to add because it's very topical that, last week, MIVILUDES submitted its annual progress report to the Prime Minister. This report has had a considerable echo in the country because we have, I believe, touched on a question about which little is known, neglected by the public authorities. The question of all those health charlatans who in the name of an ideology, of a pseudo-belief deprive an individual of a chance of survival through undue influence and interruption of medical care. We have an important witness here, Nathalie De Reuck who, courageously, made known the combat and the tragic fate of her mother: deceased because she had met the wrong people and that, when she realized what was happening, it was too late for her. She will tell you about it herself. It is important. Your testimony is essential because it strikes opinion, because these events are not imaginary: one is speaking about true, true sufferings and of true damages.

MIVILUDES published a report and the authorities, the government did not remain inactive. This has been an exceptional year in France in our field of interest, a critical point. In 2009 we passed into a higher gear, from the will to make proposals to concrete realisations.

I would like to quote three or four examples:

We created in 2009 a new specialized police cell, the CAIMADES - Cell of Assistance and of Intervention with Regards to Cultic Excesses. It includes specialised investigators: 6 civil servants (police and gendarmerie) who have the competence to investigate into cases of undue influence.

We have at last set up, within the Ministry of health, a group of experts of which MIVILUDES is a member with other public institutions, responsible for the monitoring of the many psychotherapies which flower everywhere and charged with their evaluation. To detect those which are dangerous and those which are not and to inform the citizens, because we consider that it is the authorities' responsibility to inform the citizens, after that they are free to do what they like. I tell people "MIVILUDES is neither a "thought" police nor a "health" police, we act as a thermometer, we draw the alarm bells in the name of the government, then it is up to the elected representatives, to the associations and to each individual citizen to take their responsibilities.

Finally, in 2009, we created a legal frame for the title of "psychotherapist" which previously allowed any charlatan to put up a professional plate and drag poor, insufficiently informed and trustful people, trustful in this title of psychotherapist, along with them in their madness and their ideology. Now, to become a psychotherapist in France, it is necessary to fill certain conditions, there is a control. In relation with this subject, I am very concerned by a certain number of medical practitioners who actually have recourse to unproven practises. There, I believe that we have a very strong action to carry out with the Medical Council and with the Ministry of Health to encourage them to tidy up their house.

This year we also reformed vocational training. You all know vocational training which conveys a great deal of money, 25 billion euro in France, is an entry point of cults into businesses. We therefore reformed vocational training which now has stricter controls of all the organizations of coaching, of personal development which are often are other names for cultic organizations.

As you can see we have not been inactive. When political will, true political will exists, and I must say, that in France, we are politically consensual on this question. There is no left or right ideology here as we agree on an essential topic: the protection of individuals. This topic unites us whatever political colour we belong to.

Thus the message that I came to bring you is that the will of Matignon^[1] and of MIVILUDES is to continue to support the action of FECRIS and to congratulate you, dear

Tom Sackville, to have accepted this significant responsibility, you know this subject and have had an important political office.

For FECRIS, for all those here who fight voluntarily, who give freely of their time, your presidency of FECRIS, dear Tom Sackville, is a priceless encouragement! It is extraordinary to have found someone of your quality and experience and who furthermore has the quality of being British. In this field, that has a significance and I believe, that in Britain too, some progress could be made to better protect against attacks on rights and freedoms acquired with such difficulty.

It should add also, that I need your support to carry out the ambitious project of developing a European programme. Let it be known, contact this European Agency, show them that you support this initiative. If we succeed in this together, we will have made very important progress toward the defence of freedom and fundamental rights.

Thank you once again. I wish you really a very enriching day which will mark the action that we are carrying out together.

[\[1\]](#) Official residence of the Prime Minister

Cults and Terrorism

Masoud Banisadr (UK), Author and formerly of the People's Mujahedin of Iran/
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Abstract: In this speech I will argue; first there is a difference between Terrorism as an isolated violent act committed by an individual, not related to any terrorist group, or as one of many different activities or tactics of a popular or political organisation from one hand with a Terrorist organisation on the other hand. Then I will argue that any terrorist organisation either is a destructive cult or to survive has no option but eventually to change into one. Finally I define a destructive cult and conclude by explaining that facing a terrorist organisation is completely different from facing the problem of terrorism and violence and if we are serious to get rid of this ugly phenomena we have to understand destructive cults and through that understanding face terrorist organisations.

Terrorism:

Terrorism in my view is a social disease like any other, such as murder, robbery, rape or theft; cause to its existence not only lies in social problems such as poverty or unemployment, but injustice in any form and shape. It has been with us since beginning of civilization and unfortunately will remain with us as long as there is any kind of injustice in any society.

It disgusts us to remember it, to think about it, and even more, if anyone tries to understand it and find the logic behind it.

Like any other disease; for terrorism, we either can fight symptoms, prescribing a very strong pain killer that can harm healthy part of organism as well; or we can try to understand it, to find the cause of it and seek to find a real and long lasting solution for that.

Unfortunately as usual governments have a habit of going for the former one and only when they are forced by public opinion and demands will go for the latter one. This is why most of government's policies toward terrorism are aiming to face terrorists, rather than cause of terrorism.

Well my talk today is not about terrorism in general but terrorist organisations in particular and their metamorphosis into destructive cults.

Organised crime versus isolated crime:

Importance of doctrine or cause for an isolated crime versus organised crime:

When a crime changes into an organised crime; not only it will mature and will intensify but its nature and its attributes will alter as well, sometimes into even opposite of its original form. For example if poverty and unemployment are the main causes of theft and robbery; therefore facing poverty and unemployment might diminish or at least lessen those kind of crimes; in organised crime, although still existence of these problems helps new mafias to recruit new members, but facing poverty or unemployment can not resolve the problem of organised crime, as now its strength depends to its leader and sophistication of its organisation and not original causes of its existence. Well I am sure most of you have seen the movie 'The God Father' and have enjoyed it and there is no need for me to elaborate more on this point. What I conclude is that, although cause for an isolated crime is the main reason for its existence and resolving it will diminish or at least will lessen it; in organised crime, cause will lose its importance and will not play the same decisive role in existence or non existence of the organisation.

Back to terrorism; let me give you an example: Although MEK that I was member of born with an ideology based on Islam and Marxism and recruit with anti Imperialism and anti Zionism and social justice slogans; and later after the revolution, when I along tens of thousands more students of schools and universities joined it, used any ills, any injustice or lack of freedom that existed in Iran, to recruit; but after it changed into a terrorist organisation and then into a destructive cult, its survival, its internal strength had nothing to do with either of causes of its existence, its original slogans, or what was happening in Islamic world or in Iran. To survive and to fulfil the leader's dreams, contrary to their nationalistic slogans; during Iran-Iraq war, they collaborated with Saddam Hussein and hand in hand with Iraqi army they fought with Iran. Saddam's generous assistance to MEK; financial help, free land to build their bases in, sophisticated armament etc; didn't mean that MEK will be loyal to their host, when they saw American army, they announced their readiness to help Americans and fight along side of new victorious army.^[1] All said it doesn't mean that MEK now is going to be loyal toward American; because cults are not loyal to any partner or friend, ideology, policy, slogan, agreement but only those that help their survival and their goal's advancement.

As matter of fact for me as for almost all members, after MEK's ideological revolution (the name they gave to their brain washing techniques^[2]), Iran and Islam were not important any more; or at least not nearly as important as the existence and success of the organisation and its leader. Then in a letter to the leader I explained this change in myself and other members by admitting that if they ask us to choose between happiness and success of Iranian and Muslims in one hand and victory of our leader any where around the world even if he becomes president of Zimbabwe, we all will choose the latter one. Of course then our logic was based on this assumption that if our leader finds a foothold anywhere in the world, soon he can expand his influence and can save the whole world and change the history. Yes MEK was and still is using any ills that might exist in Iran to recruit, for propaganda purposes and for legitimisation of its existence, but for its members what is happening in Iran or as matter of fact in the whole world outside, is not slightly as important as their internal relations, their absolute loyalty and obedience toward the leader.

In case of Al-Qaeda, I can claim the same thing. If the misery and hardship of Palestinians, the existing injustice against them and unconditional support of the United States for actions of Israel is one of the main causes of dissatisfaction of Muslims toward west in general and the United States in particular and as a result this is one of the main effective tools of recruitment by terrorist organisations; still in an imaginary situation, if this problem can be resolved, in my view we might be able to stop Al-Qaeda to recruit more, but we can not claim victory over the organisation. As the only way destructive cults such as MEK or Al-Qaeda

can for good leave violence behind, is either due to their victory over the whole world or their total annihilation. Cult of personality of Hitler is an example that the world has not forgotten yet.

Terrorist organisations to survive have no alternative but to change into a destructive cult:

I will call an organization a terrorist organization if its only tactic, or at least its main tactic, for reaching its goal is an act of terrorism. According to this definition, I will not call any government or popular political organizations, even if they use terrorism to deal with their enemies, terrorists because they are dealing with other problems of the society as well; terrorism is not their sole tactic or the pillar of their actions in dealing with their daily problems and objectives.

In a paper recently published by *Cultic Studies Review*^[3], I argued: ‘If the organization’s sole or main tactic is terrorism, sooner or later it must begin changing the morality of its members because it cannot match the morality of the society from which they have come. The organization must either change the member’s morality and belief system or accept factions within and defections from the group on a large scale.’ Therefore soon or late, to hold on to their members, to keep them away from emotional and moral influence of family, friends and society, Terrorist organisations have no choice but to isolate their members at least psychologically and if they can physically from wider society and start the process of mind manipulation of members under different name and pretext. This is the path toward changing completely into a destructive cult.

As an example of how morality and rule of conduct of a terrorist organisation contradicts the society’s customs, culture, faith and ideology, I can mention suicide operations of MEK that started on summer 1981, for example the killing of Ayatollah Madani, a religious representative of Khomeini in Tabriz,^[4] and another suicide operation, the killing of Ayatollah Dastghayb, a religious representative of Khomeini, in Shiraz.^[5] By the way, if I am not mistaken, these are either the first or among the first suicide operations of Muslims in modern times.^[6] Another significance of this operation at Shiraz was that, for the first time, a female operative and not a male had performed a terrorism act in a Muslim country. Other significant aspects of these operations that were totally against morals of the society, included:

- * Breaking the taboo of suicide. Muslims, like Christians, believe suicide is a great sin, and the one who commits it is worthy of going to hell.
- * Breaking the principal related to taking no action in public places. Other innocent people were among the deaths.^[7]
- * The fact that many suicide bombers killed their victims during Friday sermons, where the Mosque and any place in which people pray traditionally are considered as sanctuaries. According to the religious rulings, even churches and synagogues are safe from violence.
- * The fact that they killed a member of the clergy, an Ayatollah, an old noncombatant person—again, along with women and children, all prohibited by Islamic law and principles.^[8]

As you can see, when your tactic and strategy changes to solely terrorism, you cannot be bound by popular morals and tradition, or rules of conduct of any faith or culture. Ironically, although I can not disagree more with many of statements of President Bush and Mr. Blair, still I have to say that I agree totally with them in claiming that Terrorist organisations (but not all those who use terrorism as one of many of their tactics) are against our way of living, our democracy and our freedom. Although I have to add that terrorist organisations as well as almost all destructive cults not only are against Western values but they are against morals and values of all modern, civilized societies, to be Eastern or Western doesn’t make any difference. Of course they benefit fully from advancement of science or any existence of freedom and democracy or any avenue open to them in different societies to recruit and to

advertise themselves, as Al-Qaeda and MEK benefit fully from modern technology such as Internet, Mobile phones, ... for propaganda purposes. They might even go as far as introducing themselves as champion of modern values including democracy, freedom or equality, as MEK does. But when it comes to their internal relations, they easily show their real colour and how much do they hate these values. And if God forbid they reach to power using the same democracy as Hitler did, they will create kind of dictatorship and atrocity unseen in any civilization.

When a group due to bypassing people's moral and values, loses the support of wider society, its members and organizational supporters become more important.^[9] Then the organization faces this dilemma: What should it do with the morality and beliefs of its members and supporters? After all, they are, or were, ordinary individuals from the same society, bound by the same code of morality and beliefs, and responsible at least in front of their family and friends.

The answer for any organization at this point of transition is obvious: "Change them or lose them."^[10]

To change morality, set of beliefs, character and personality of members; terrorist organisations have no alternative but to start the process of mind manipulation of the members. Either they can do that, which in this case they will have all essential elements of being a destructive cult or they can't and they will faction, face major defections, and eventually have no choice but to change their tactics and therefore transform themselves from a terrorist organisations into something else, perhaps a political one such as IRA in Ireland or disintegrate completely like Pykar; a Marxist organisation, an offshoot of MEK that could not change into a cult and eventually had to publicly announce its dissolution.

Terrorist organisations versus destructive cults, which one is worse?

Yes in my view Terrorist organisations have no choice but to change into a destructive cult, but will they change into something better, more acceptable or worse? Which one is worse to be? A terrorist organisation or a destructive cult? In my view a destructive cult; because of two main reasons:

1- when an organisation changes into a destructive cult, it is not any more abided by any norm, morality or rule. Its doctrine and rule of conducts can change easily at any minute to serve two essential goals of the cult; survival and materialization of leader's childish dream. Therefore even if a cult forced to leave violence as its main tactic behind, as MEK disarmed by American forces had to do so,^[11] still they can switch back to terrorism at any time they can and they need to. In contrast, organisations of any type, even terrorist ones (before changing into a cult) are loyal to set of idea and principles or at least aims and objectives, as for example IRA's goal was to unite Ireland, therefore in some extent they are predictable, reachable, dialog-able and perhaps even it is possible to influence their policies and change them into more peaceful and democratic type of groupings.

2- The second reason why I think it is more difficult to face destructive cults rather than any other type of organisations is due to change of character of members of destructive cults. One of the slogans of MEK's leaders was that we have to change into an ant, learn from ant to be selfless and act instinctively as our leader wishes so without any doubt or question. If MEK's leaders openly and bluntly were mentioning and demanding this ancient desire of all tyrants from their members; it doesn't mean that those who don't mention it don't pave their way to achieve it. In my view this is the goal and objective of all destructive cults and this is why it is too difficult to face these groups.

It is very difficult for us in wider society with normal life to understand a suicide bomber In London, Madrid or New York; as it was difficult for tenth century Iranian people, Western Crusaders and rulers of that time to understand suicide actions of cult of Assassins.

Then their rationalization for Assassin's actions was that they have been narcotised by perhaps Hashish where their given name comes from. And these days I am hearing from some experts that suicide bombers kill themselves to go to paradise for perhaps beautiful Hories. In my view both are wrong; perhaps assassins were using some sort of narcotics or some modern suicide bombers think they can satisfy their sexual desires more after death than while they are alive but the main reason is that members of destructive cults change; they gradually lose their selfhood; their individuality, their instinct for self preservation and even self production; they lose their personal character, principles, and even emotions; and instead of all that, they become absolute loyal and obedient follower of the leader. And in my view this is why it is too difficult to face them and stop them. They will become like one of those shape-shifter characters of some fiction movies. One minute they are smiling, kind, happy person and minutes later they can change into an angry, violent and merciless individual, able to harm anybody and kill even innocent children. They are not predictable and recognizable. They don't have set of beliefs that we can understand them as a basis for discussion and perhaps negotiation. They don't have personal desire and weakness that can be used to change them. They seek pain, hardship, and even death therefore they can not be threatened as they welcome to be a 'victim of the wider society's atrocities and Martyr for the leader and his slogans. Therefore none of conventional method of dealing with criminals is useful in facing members of destructive cults. Later I will try to explain my answer to this problem.

Terrorism - resurrection of an ancient feature of destructive cults

Above I argued; all Terrorist organisations to survive as 'Terrorism' pillar of their strategy or their only or main activity have no choice but to change into a destructive cult. But opposite is not always true. Not all destructive cults are a terrorist organisation.

While destructive cults are not necessarily terrorists; still terrorism is not new feature of them. Perhaps the oldest one recorded in history are Zealots who fought against Romans in 48 AD^[12]. Zealots perhaps were also pioneer of mass suicide action. When Eleazar Their leader found out that there is no way that he can win, asked all members to kill themselves. Centuries later we could see repeat of their action in Waco and Jones Town. Another example or perhaps one of the long lasting terrorist cults was Thuggee; Thuggee stranglers preyed upon India until finally suppressed in the mid nineteenth century by the British.^[13]

But perhaps the most famous Terrorist cult, ancestor of MEK and Al-Qaeda are Assassins^[14], who gave us the word Assassination^[15]. As MEK and Al-Qaeda that start recruiting with anti American slogans, Assassins recruited their members with excuse of occupation of Iran first by Arabs and then by Turks in tenth century AD.

While they used nationalistic slogans for recruiting, as a cult they soon showed that nothing is important for them but the survival and progress of the cult. As MEK to survive and progress, collaborated with the enemies of Iran such as Sadam Hussein of Iraq; Assassins too, to survive and progress they were prepared to work along side any body including working with Arabs against Turks; with crusaders even 'god-less' Mongols against Arab Muslims and then easily change side again for cause of the cult and not people or country or faith^[16].

As other cults their doctrine, in this case Islam was as important for them as it was useful to recruit, and when it wasn't, they could change it in any way they wished^[17].

To change their members into a killing machine, again the same as MEK and Al-Qaeda they used only two concepts of Islam; Jihad and Martyrdom with their twisted interpretation and ignoring Islamic rules of conduct^[18]. The same as MEK and Al-Qaeda they showed they have no respect for human life and to pursue their goals they killed any body on their way, anywhere, even old religious men^[19] during pray time in a mosque^[20].

As MEK and perhaps Al-Qaeda and all other destructive cults; to brainwash their members and to alter them from an individual into a killing machine; following leader's order

instinctively, without slightest question or doubt; they had to have full control over sexuality of their members. While MEK or David Koresh ordered all members to divorce their spouses and forget about sex for life and after life; Assassins used to castrate their young suicide killers.

How do I define destructive cults?

At this point I would like briefly explain how do I define destructive cults:

Destructive cults according to my definition have four essential ingredients or elements:

1-charismatic leader:

Unlike some experts who define cults and categorise them according to their ideology or doctrine, my definition of cults starts with its leader, rather than its doctrine. This is the leader with his childish ego and Narcissist character, who cannot fulfil his unrealistic needs and materialise his gigantic ambitions in the real world that creates his toy-like mini-world in psychological or physical isolation of members from the wider society within a destructive cult. In my view cult leaders are completely different from ordinary political leader because of their attributes such as: Charisma and charm, narcissism or childlike ego, their superiority complex, their need for worshippers and their loneliness.

This is the leader, who to attract and recruit disciples, needs to have a cause, a doctrine or an ideology. Cause or doctrine for a cult leader is a mean and not the aim or objective. He or she chooses his or her doctrine according to the public beliefs, needs, injustices, existing ills of the society, or groaning of the pool that he wants to fish from. Their objective is to find worshippers, toys of their dream childish world, to create that world and unite their internal ego with the external one. What they choose as 'cause' or 'doctrine' is not important and no cult leader feels obliged to be loyal toward his primary messages or objectives.

2-Black and white doctrine, objective or cause:

Unlike some expert explaining doctrine or ideology of destructive cults, I will not name or define them according to their superficial and if I may say hypocritical common factors with popular beliefs such as Christianity, Islam or even ideologies such as Nationalism or Marxism^[21].

Therefore according to my definition of destructive cults, what they choose to call their doctrine, however they define it, and no matter how loyal they seem to be toward it, or how steadfastly they seem to observe the faith's ethics, are not as important as the common factors of doctrine in all destructive cults. Attributes such as believing in the world of black and white; their exclusiveness; (versus inclusiveness of other social groupings; who might have some dogma but their members and followers are free to do anything even though there are guidelines to observation of a few things; even dogmas of most extreme religion's followers are limited and can be numbered while destructive cults have dogma on everything except perhaps a very few aspects of life. In other words all aspects of life of a destructive cult's member are decided by the leader. The member has no freedom of choice on anything beyond a few very limited aspects of their lives. Other common factors in their doctrines are: Their stealth and deception or belief in the idea that the end justifies the means.

3-Totalistic organisation

While the organisation is not even as important as doctrine of the cult and not certainly as important as method of mind manipulation that cult leaders use to change their disciples from who they are into their ideal worshipper, and though they can easily due to size and circumstances change the shape of their organisation, still we can see some similarities between different destructive cult's organisations. Similarities such as that all are totalitarian, therefore there is no room for democracy, serious questions or doubt or criticism toward the leader and his or her orders; Ironic discipline; Hard work; autonomy from wider society; secrecy and surveillance; membership for life or closed exit doors. In case of Al-Qaeda; although it has

changed into some sort of franchise, still in every little cell of Al-Qaeda franchise we can find this common elements of the organisation of destructive cults.

4-Mind manipulation

Cult leaders, in order to build their childish world and to satisfy their tendency toward ‘all or nothing’, have no choice but to isolate themselves and their little world psychologically and physically (if they can) and find ways to change free men and women recruited from the wider society into toy like objects of their dream world. These kinds of gurus have no choice but to use some sort of method of mind manipulation if they are to keep their toy like disciples in a very narrow and absolute line, without any question, any doubt, any restraint or contradiction, any private or personal belief, principle, desire, hope, dream or thought and even emotion and feeling; to change them so they can be flexible enough for their game or their play.

Whenever we talk about mind manipulation, suddenly we face two extremes; on the one hand those who deny the existence of any such methods; and on the opposite side those who call simple influence techniques of recruiting ‘brainwashing’; they call members of any cults, even non-destructive ones ‘Zombies’ or ‘machines’. I personally don’t believe that there is any method in existence that can **totally** brainwash a person, overcoming the effects of gene or early education by parents and society that shape the core character and personality of a person. That being said, I have seen changes of my own personality and hundreds if not thousands of other members of MEK through the use of different methods of mind manipulation; therefore I am a strong believer in the existence of methods that can change character, personality, the system of beliefs and the perception of selfhood, in a person. These methods can push a person out of the driving seat of his or her own will into passenger seat, and force a surrender to the leader, almost completely. As I mentioned, I don’t believe that a person can change into, for example, a ‘Zombie’ or a ‘machine’, but at the same time I have to say that comparing those who use these kinds of words in describing cult members with those who deny the existence of mind manipulation methods, the former view in my opinion are much closer to the reality than the latter. Yes, I believe real, loyal, obedient members of destructive cults are much closer to an ‘ant’ that Rajavi wanted us to be, or a ‘Zombie’ or a ‘machine’ than the free men and women that we see in a wider society, even in a dictatorship, despite all the constraints that might exist on their free will.

To explain mind manipulation I have divided it into three different categories or phases. Firstly, use of rational and influence techniques for changing new recruit’s beliefs, as well as a tool for recruitment. After changing recruit’s beliefs, the cult leader’s main task will be how to stabilise or freeze new beliefs, and how to neutralise the new recruit’s tendency to return to his previous system of beliefs due to the pressure of his personality and his feelings toward his old way of life, family and friends. This is achieved mainly via isolation and change of behaviour that I call mind control. Next, in order to fulfil his desire to change free men and women into fully transformer-like toys that can be bent and shaped as he wishes, a destructive cult leader has to change the disciple’s individual personality into the collective cult-personality; this is carried out mainly by the use of emotion that I call brainwashing^[22].

Facing Terrorist cults is different from facing terrorism:

As I explained, when a terrorist organisation changes into a destructive cult; its original doctrine, ideology or cause is not nearly as important as it was for members when they were recruited, this is the main difference between individual terrorists, or organisations that use terrorism as one of many of their tactics in one hand and Terrorist organisations on the other hand. Two decisive elements for survival of destructive cults are: 1- the leader and 2- the system of mind manipulation. Therefore while in one hand to deal with individual terrorists and other type of organisation we can reason, educate, deal and even negotiate, in short use all

political and rational means to persuade them to leave violence and terrorism as one of their tactics behind and use political means to pursue their goals; on the other hand in dealing with destructive cults including terrorist organisations use of these means are in vain.

Again while in former ones we have to recognize their commitment to their doctrine or goal and use it as a strong and decisive base for education, reasoning, showing the contradictions, and even negotiation; in latter ones the biggest mistake is to recognize them for example as Muslim, Christian Nationalist or Marxist, especially publicly and even worse to accept them as NRM or new spokespersons of those faith, ideologies or even causes. Unfortunately this was the biggest mistake of Western politician, media and even some academics and intellectuals after 9-11 who recognized Al-Qaeda as Muslim and worse those who labelled them as Islamist or even some who equalled their propaganda and their actions with Islam. I strongly believe that these people with calling Terrorist organisations, Muslim and not a destructive cult have advocated and helped them, in a way that they couldn't even dream of it. They could gain sympathy of many Muslims who were unhappy with for example policies of west toward Israel-Palestinian conflict; Osama became the second most named of new born boys in Arab countries, and Al-Qaeda recruited as many young unsatisfied, confused Muslims as they didn't know how to educate, organize and use them. I hope one day at least those who equalled Al-Qaeda with Islam realise what have they done and how they have changed into biggest advocates of terrorist organisations and hopefully are forced at least to apologize from hundred of thousands of victims of recent terrorism around the world.

To face terrorist organisations we have to research, learn and understand their strong points, the most important of all to understand how they manipulate mind of their disciples and neutralize them. In my view the most important elements of their mind manipulations are 1-psychological and perhaps physical isolation of new recruits from wider society. And 2-use of strong emotion of Muslims in general and young Muslims in particular toward what is happening in the Islamic world.

1 - Psychological isolation: In above mentioned paper^[23] I have tried to show how destructive cults in general and Terrorist cults in particular create phobia, paranoia, hate and disgust toward outside world and in this way psychologically isolate their new recruits from wider society and dehumanise or sub-humanise none members. Unfortunately again after 9/11 Western governments, and media not only didn't try to neutralize this elements but on the contrary to satisfy public opinion that they are dealing with the problem, in a way, they even greatly helped Terrorist Organisations in isolating their members from wider society. To face these elements we have to understand, realise, and recognize that within any members of a destructive cut, there is a dying individual thirsty of a little encouragement, kindness, understanding, and helping hand to survive and to save itself. Let me give you two examples of my own. When after being awake for more than 24 hours, I was traveling from Paris to Washington; in the plane an old lady sitting beside me when saw how tired I am, showed a little kindness and understanding toward me and for example kept my lunch for me till I woke up. Another example when I injured myself by falling from a step, because of my back problem, a friend who was not a member of MEK helped me and cared about my wound. You can not imagine these two little genuine understanding and kindness how much helped me in breaking the idea of that we as members of MEK are above all and helped me to neutralize the idea of dehumanisation or sub-humanisation of outsiders in my mind. Imprisoning, insulting, beating, water-boarding, torturing, members of destructive cults, will weaken those dying individual and will strengthen his or her cultic or collective personality, making him more steadfast in whatever he or she is doing. Perhaps for the safety of general public we can not avoid random stop and search policy, perhaps we have to arrest and imprison some even by mistake, but these are not as important or as damaging as what do we do after stopping or arresting a potential recruit of a destructive cult. If we educate public in general and the police and the politician and the

media in particular that members of destructive cults are victims and not criminals, in need of psychological help and not punishment, then we can face this problem without creating new victims and martyrs for destructive cults to recruit and brainwash their members even more.

- 2- Emotion: Yes in the west we might not be able to do much about Muslim's feelings and if I may say Human feelings toward what is happening around the world, injustices, discriminations and atrocities. We cannot stop our media to show these news and if we do as sometimes our media does, in my view we make the biggest mistake of all as not only we acknowledge terrorist organisation's arguments, but we ignore our own values and discredit ourselves as free, democratic and fair society; as a result we encourage not only potential young recruits of terrorist cults toward alternative information sources, but we will push them even more toward being educated and attracted toward violent means of facing their emotions. In my view we have to be at least advocate of our own values, our liberty, our democracy, our freedom, and our fairness. We have to diminish any need for alternative terrorist or cultic source of information by giving first hand real news of injustices ourselves. We have to understand, and recognize emotion of people especially young Muslims toward injustices, discriminations, and atrocities then educate them, show them, and facilitate them toward alternative means for directing their emotions. Recently I saw a documentary in Channel Four under title of 'Britain's Islamic Republic'^[24]; in this documentary producer and presenter of the program while in my view had some right and just and correct point of view, unfortunately at the same time was trying to 'reveal' and 'discredit' those who are trying to find their voice in British parliament by arguing that they are trying to infiltrate or influence Labour party or introduce their own candidate for parliamentary election. Well I hope I am wrong and discrediting actions of those who seek to find a political avenue as an answer to cry of these young people, was not the intention of producers of that program as I believe this is exactly what we have to do, encouraging and showing young Muslims how can they direct their emotion, their feel of responsibility, their need of doing something against injustice toward peaceful and political means and prove to them that this can work and is the right path toward long lasting solution of the ills of the modern world.

^[1] In RAND report; Pages 10 and 11; it has been stated: 'The MEK insisted that it dispatched a letter to DOS (U.S. Department of State) in February 2003 declaring its intention to be a neutral party during the impending invasion of Iraq and stating that it would not fire on coalition forces, even in self-defence. It also claimed to have offered to fight on behalf of the coalition. (RAND; National Defense Research Institute; is a non-profit research organisation providing objective analysis and effective solution that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. Its report; titled: 'The Mujahedin-e Khalq in Iraq; A Policy Conundrum 2009' was sponsored by Office of the Secretary of Defense of the United States of America. The full report can be found in: [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG871/;](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG871/))

^[2] To learn more about MEK and their ideological revolution you can refer to either MASOUD; Memoirs of an Iranian Rebel; Published by SAQI Book; 2004. The unedited version of my memoirs also can be found on my website: <http://www.banisadr.info/mylifestory.htm> Or you can read 'The Iranian Mojahedin' published by Yale University press New Haven and London – 1989 written by Ervand Abrahamian; professor of history at Baruch College, City University of New York.

^[3] 'Terrorist Organizations Are Cults'; Masoud Banisadr; Cultic Studies Review, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2009, PP: 3. You can also see this article on my website at: <http://www.banisadr.info/ICSA2009.htm>

^[4] MEK's publication, Nashrieh ... December 11, 1981.

^[5] MEK's Publication, Nashrieh ... December 18, 1981.

^[6] "Suicide terror predates the modern manifestation of car bombs that began in Lebanon. It is neither unique to the modern period nor confined to any single region or religion. The early historical antecedents of terrorism include the Jewish zealots and Sicarii in the first century AD, during the time of the Second Temple until its destruction in 70 AD, The Hindu thugs in India from the time of Herodotus until 1836, the assassins of the twelfth century, anti-colonial movements in Malabar, and the Japanese Kamikaze during World War II. By examining these early examples of terrorism we can deduce certain general patterns that emerged and draw similarities between these early illustrations and the more recent phenomena. The common themes that emerge from

the early case studies provide a template of what is happening today: the role of early education in creating adherents, the appearance of charismatic and ambitious leaders, disputes over occupied territory, and the ways in which religion was manipulated to induce followers to kill in the name of God” (from *Dying to Kill* by Mia Bloom, p. 4).

^[7] Of course, whenever ordinary people were among the deaths, they used to name them as agents or spies of the regime, or Basiji (members of the mobilization teams)...” Interesting, that among their terrorist activities at the time, they claimed the explosion of three bombs close to where Khomeini used to live (MEK’s publication Nashrieh, April 23, 1982) but denied other bombs that were exploded and included casualties of ordinary people, which could not be accepted even among MEK’s own organizational supporters. They claimed the acts were done by the regime itself, (MEK’s publication Nashrieh, September 10, 1982) or by another one (MEK’s publication Nashrieh, October 8, 1982). But they were not hesitant of even killing the manager of a state agency that by law had to give a rental report for all tenancies (MEK’s publication Nashrieh, May 14, 1982), or the head of a local organization for helping farmers (MEK’s publication Nashrieh, July 23, 1982). As a matter of fact, in the view of MEK and its supporters, whoever was supporting the regime was criminal and worthy of being killed. Later they changed very much as they started considering people were either with them or with the regime; therefore, whoever is not with them is collaborating with the regime and worthy of being killed. Therefore, within one year, they killed more than 2,000 people and proudly announced it themselves (MEK’s publication; Nashrieh number 55; 24/9/1982 also in MEK’s publication Mojahed Number 163; 4/8/1983 the number of killed by MEK between 20th of June 1982 and 20th of June 1983 was announced as 2800 people.). Of course later, as they gradually lost all their supporters in Iran due to their being killed either by execution or during armed struggle, they had to send terrorist teams from Iraq; therefore, it was not so easy to target high officials, and so they started exploding oil pipe lines (MEK’s publication Mojahed, June 14, 1993) or putting bombs in places like the tomb of Khomeini, which could result in the killing of ordinary people. (MEK’s publication Boltan, October 16, 1992).

^[8] The Rules of Jihad: Muslims generally realize that Jihad has its rules and conditions. In the Quran, God has emphasized that no one should violate these rules and overrule them. Abu Baker, the first Caliph after the prophet, referring to the Quran and the prophet’s sayings, instructed those who wished to consider themselves Muslim soldiers, “Do not betray; do not carry grudges; do not deceive; do not kill children; do not kill elderly; do not kill women; do not destroy beehives or burn them; do not cut down fruit bearing trees; do not slaughter sheep, cattle, or camels except for food. You will come upon people who spend their lives in monasteries; leave them on what they have dedicated their lives...” (from *Heirs of the Prophet Muhammad* by Barnaby Rogerson, p. 162). Furthermore, Ali, the fourth Caliph, set out more rules to put a stop to killing, including safeguarding POWs. He says, “No one turning his back shall be pursued; no one wounded shall be killed; whoever throws away his arms is safe.” Ali had pardoned with goodness. The dead from both sides were buried; only captured arms and animals could be held as war booty (from *Heirs of the Prophet Muhammad* by Barnaby Rogerson, p. 298).

^[9] “[when] Mojahedin realized that the second revolution was not at hand, and so began to prepare for a prolonged armed struggle, organizational militancy now took precedence over political expediency. Hard-core militants became more important than “fair-weather friends” and “fellow travelers”; the “quality” of members more important than quantity of sympathizers, organizational discipline more important than the appearance of internal democracy, and ideological purity in the rank and file more important than frequent contacts with outside sympathizers, especially if such sympathizers could contaminate the ordinary members. Thus, the outward-reaching attitude was replaced with an inward-looking attitude that treated allies as if they were potential enemies. The new view perceived those who were not fully for the Mojahedin as being against it. Having reached those conclusions, the Mojahedin began to squeeze “half-hearted friends” out of the National Council—some former members of the National Council believe that the Mojahedin could have ironed out its differences with Banisadr and the Kurdish Democratic Party. It destroyed Iranshahr when that paper [the Mojahedin] dared to publish a series of interviews with prominent exiles mildly critical of the organization. It freely accused critics of being SAVAK agents.” (from *Ervand Abrahamian, Iranian Mojahedin*, p. 249)

^[10] *Terrorist Organizations Are Cults*; Masoud Banisadr; *Cultic Studies Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2009, PP: 164, 165

^[11] In RAND report we read: ‘After the 2003 invasion of Iraq by United States and United Kingdom and overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime; MEK was forced to surrender all its weapons. Since then the MEK claims that it formally rejected the use of violence. ‘Although there is limited documentary proof of this decision in either English or Farsi.’ (RAND report 2009: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG871/>; *The Mujahedin-e Khalq in Iraq*; P: 66) In the same report we read also that MEK’s leaders when ever they felt their relation with Americans is in good shape, they asked for return of their arms.

^[12] *Zealots*: ‘Beginning in 48 AD, the Zealots carried out terrorist campaigns to force insurrection against the Romans in Judea. These campaigns included the use of sicarii (dagger-men), who would infiltrate Roman-controlled cities and stab Jewish collaborators or Roman legionnaires with a sica, kidnap the staff of the Temple Guard for ransom, or poison their enemies. The Zealots’ justification for their killing of other Jews was that their acts demonstrated the consequences of the immorality of collaborating with the Roman invaders, and exposed

the fact that the Romans could not protect their Jewish collaborators.’ (Rex A. Hudson, 'The Sociology and psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and why?' Report prepared under an Interagency Agreement by the Federal Research Division, Washington DC: Government Printing Office, Library of Congress September 1999, 14. Cited from Mia Bloom; 'Dying to Kill; The Allure of Suicide terror'; Columbia University Press/ New York; 2007; P: 8) ‘Zealots saw themselves as revolutionary catalysts who moved men by force of their audacious action, exploiting mass expectations that a cataclysmic messianic deliverance was imminent. To generate a mass uprising, they escalated the struggle by shock tactics to manipulate fear, outrage, sympathy and guilt. Sometimes these emotional affects were provoked by terrorist atrocities which went beyond the consensual norms governing violence; at other times, they were produced by provoking the enemy into committing atrocities against his will (David C. Rapoport, University of California, Los Angeles; 'Fear and Trembling,' Terrorism in three religious traditions. The American Political Science Review, Vol. 78, No. 3 (Sep. 1984) page 670 Cited from Mia Bloom; 'Dying to Kill; The Allure of Suicide terror'; Columbia University Press/ New York; 2007; PP: 9, 10.) Zealots and the Sicarii had designed their actions to deliberately provoke a massive uprising. 'Consecutive atrocities narrowed the prospects for a political, or mutually agreeable, solution serving to destroy the credibility of moderates on both sides while steadily expanding the conflict, which enlisted new participants.’ (David C. Rapoport, University of California, Los Angeles; 'Fear and Trembling,' Terrorism in three religious traditions. The American Political Science Review, Vol. 78, No. 3 (Sep. 1984) page 672 Cited from Mia Bloom; 'Dying to Kill; The Allure of Suicide terror'; Columbia University Press/ New York; 2007; PP: 9, 10.) ‘Zealot leaders even burned the food supply of their own forces during Jerusalem's long siege as a show of religious dedication and in an attempt to force God's hand to act against the Romans. God would have no choice but to intervene to preserve his adherents. Divine intervention was not forthcoming and many of Jerusalem's residents starved to death. Josephus' position was that the Zealots' tactics were to blame for all the calamities that befell the Jewish people including their exile, expulsion, the massacres of Jewish communities in Egypt and Cyprus, and the destruction of the Second Temple. Finally, Josephus blamed the mass suicide at Masada on Zealot intransigence. When Roman general Flavius Silva decided to attack Masada at the end of 72 AD, there were 960 insurgents and refugees in the fortress including men, women, and children. Silva surrounded the mountain with the tenth Roman legion plus auxiliaries. Once the fortress' fall was inevitable the following year, Eleazar, the leader of the zealots, persuaded Masada's defenders to engage in an act of mass suicide. (Two women and their five children survived to describe the events by hiding in a cave.) The Zealots on Masada preferred to die by their own hand rather than be captured by their Roman enemies. (Josephus, The Jewish war, volume 7, 252 - 404; Paul Johnson, A history of the Jews -New York; Harper and Row, 1987- , 139-140; David Rapoport, personal correspondence with the author, April 8, 2004. – Cited from Mia Bloom; 'Dying to Kill; The Allure of Suicide terror'; Columbia University Press/ New York; 2007;P: 10, 11)

^[13] for more on Indian cults see Lung, Haha and Christopher B. Prowant. Black Science: Ancient and Modern Techniques of Ninja Mind Manipulation. Boulder, Colorado: Paladin Press, 2001

^[14] “Assassin” (Hashishins) cult founded in Persia in 1090 by Hassan ibn Sabbah (“The old Man of the Mountain”) . From his impregnable “Eagle's Nest” (Alamut) castle hidden in the mountains of Persia, Hassan loosed wave after wave of suicidal agents -spies and assassins - upon the world. Hassan’s assassin cult was the template for all secret societies, spy net works, and terrorist groups that followed - down to the present day. This was the original al Qaeda! In his time, Hassan used every conceivable tactic, torture, and tool, from magic to murder, hashish and harlots, to dazzle and dirk enemy and initiate alike into doing his bidding. For Hassan and his assassins, the end justified the means. The means are terror and treachery and the end was power. Master shape shifters, whenever expedient, the Assassins made unholy covenants with heathen Hindus and allied themselves with infidel Christian crusaders against their Muslim brethren. For Hassan, and the Assassin Grandmasters who continued his lethal legacy, Islam was but a convenient black curtain behind which to hide. Hassan's assassins ruled by subterfuge and slaughter for over two centuries, until invading Mongols broke the cult's back in Persia in 1273. ... After the destruction of their Persian HQ, the Assassins continued to survive and thrive from India to Syria, spawning "spin-off" groups and imitators, some as far -flung as Europe.’(Dr. Haha Lung; Mind Control; The Ancient Art of Psychological Warfare'; Citadel Press Kensington; 2006; P:194)

^[15] ‘ by the 13 century, the word Assassin, in variant forms, had already passed into European usage in this general sense of hired professional murderer. The Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani, who died in 1348, tells how the lord of Lucca sent 'his assassins' (i suoi assassini) to Pisa to kill a troublesome enemy there. Even earlier, Dante, in a passing reference in the 19th canto of the Inferno, speaks of 'the treacherous assassin' (lo perfido assassino); his fourteenth-century commentator Francesco da Buti, explaining a term which for some readers at the time may still have been strange and obscure, remarks: 'Assassino e' colui che uccide altrui per danari' - An assassin is one who kills others for money. Since then 'assassin' has become a common noun in most European languages. It means a murderer, more particularly one who kills by stealth or treachery, whose victim is a public figure and whose motive is fanaticism or greed. It was not always so. The word first appears in the chronicles of the Crusades, as the name of a strange group of Muslim sectaries in the Levant, led by a mysterious figure known as the Old Man of the Mountain, and abhorrent, by their beliefs and practices, to good Christians and Muslims alike. ... ‘ (Bernard Lewis; The Assassins; A Radical Sect in Islam; Poenix publication; 2003; P: 2)

'Marco Polo, who passed through Persia in 1273. Speaking of the Assassins chief; Polo wrote: 'He had caused a certain valley between two mountains to be enclosed, and had turned it into a garden, the largest and most beautiful that ever was seen ... flowing freely with wine and milk and honey and water; and numbers of ladies and the most beautiful damsels in the world, who could play on all manner of instruments and sung most sweetly, and danced in a manner that it was charming to behold, For the Old Man desired to make his people believe that this was actually Paradise So when the Old Man would have any Prince slain,' Polo continues, 'he would say to such a youth: Go thou and slay so and so; and when thou returnest, my Angels shall bear thee into Paradise. And Should' st thou die nevertheless even so, I will send my Angels to carry thee back into Paradise. ... 'And in this manner the Old One got his people to murder any one whom he desired to get rid of. (Philip K. Hitti 'The Assassins,' in George Andrews and Simon Vinkenoog -eds.-, The Book of Grass: An Anthology on Indian Hemp -London: Peter Owen, 1967-) Cited from: Mia Bloom; 'Dying to Kill; The Allure of Suicide terror'; Columbia University Press/ New York; 2007; PP: 5, 6)

^[16] 'Over the years, the Order of Assassins had, at one time or another, made pacts and treaties with (or at least had been accused of making pacts with) rival Muslims, opportunistic crusaders, and godless Mongols. ... In 1174 Sinan leader of Aleppine Assassins proposed an alliance between Christian King Amalric I of Jerusalem and the Assassins against Nur ed - Din Muslim Egyptian ruler. The Assassins would provide intelligence on Nur ed-Din's forces , as well as Assassins sappers should Amalric need them. In addition, Sinan would train a select cadre of Amalric's own troops in the tactics and techniques of the Assassins. To sweeten the pot, Sinan hinted that his branch of the Assassins sect might convert to Christianity en masse. Knowing the Assassins were fierce and fearless fighters and had the best intelligence network in Syria, Amalric agreed to the alliance.' (Dr. Haha Lung; Assassin; The deadly art of the cult of the Assassins; Citadel Press; 1997; PP: 37,40)

^[17] 'Hassan II removed Islamic ritual obligations from the Assassins sect, even to the point of permitting the consumption of alcohol' (Dr. Haha Lung; Assassin; The deadly art of the cult of the Assassins; Citadel Press; 1997; P: 36)

^[18] To know more about how this organisations are using these concepts and how far their interpretation is different with what Islam says you can see my speech on this issue 'The Use of the Philosophy of Martyrdom within Religious Cults for Acts of Terrorism' at: <http://www.banisadr.info/LSpeech050507.htm>

^[19] In Islam there is no profession as holly men or priests, instead those who are expert in the religion call themselves as 'Olama' (knowledgeable people) or 'Fagieh', those who know rules of conduct within Islam and can judge (Qadi).

^[20] Assassins broke few Islamic rules of conducts including not killing an un-combatant and unarmed old man, especially during pray time and in a Mosque that was considered as centuary as other places of worshiping; by killing of Ubbayd Allah al Khatib, a Qadi (Judge) of Isfahan, during the Friday prayers in the mosque of Hamadan. Also Qadi (Judge) of Nishapur who was murdered during the celebrations at the end of Ramadan. (Bernard Lewis; The Assassins; A Radical Sect in Islam; Poenix publication; 2003; P:57)

^[21] This is why I totally disagree with those who call destructive cults NRM (New Religious Movement), in my view The main difference between two is that a destructive cult from beginning to end is leader based whereas in a religion or a faith, or even an ideology, though its followers might at first rely more on the teacher, ideologue or messenger of that faith, idea or religion, in the end they relate to ideas rather than leaders. For them the important factor that takes precedence over all else are ideas such as the uniqueness of God, the existence or non-existence of God, Resurrection, Socialism or Capitalism, believing in transmigration or metempsychosis, struggling for social justice and an egalitarian society. They have dogma, but their dogma is idea-based rather than leader-based. On the opposite, destructive cult's dogma and their fundamental principles are leader based rather than idea based. They can change all their principles, ideas, and fundamentals but cannot change two, therefore the real principles that their followers have to adhere to, till death, are 1-survival of the cult and 2- loyalty and obedience toward the leader of the cult.

While destructive cults might have some similarities with idea based groupings, as indeed all existing phenomena have some similarities, though cults might be offshoot of an ideology or as matter of fact eventually change into a NRM, still as long as they have characteristics of destructive cults, in my view they should be called as such, and of course when they change, their categorization can change accordingly. In Farsi we say not any sphere shape object is an apple; flower of apple because it can change into apple is not apple and apple pie because it has been made or has ingredient of apple is not apple too.

^[22] If you like to know more about my view toward Mind manipulation, you can look at my speech in INFORM's seminar November 2009, at: <http://www.banisadr.info/London2009.htm>

^[23] Terrorist Organizations Are Cults'; Masoud Banisadr; Cultic Studies Review, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2009, PP: 9

^[24] Dispatches; 'Britain's Islamic Republic'; Channel four TV of UK; first of March 2010.

Awareness of the phenomenon in Belgium

André Frédéric (Belgium), Federal deputy of the Chamber of Representatives of Belgium/Chairman of the Working Group charged with ensuring the follow-up of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Board of Inquiry on “Cults/Sects”

The approach taken by the Belgian public authorities towards sects has, for a long time, been very cautious. Indeed, a stance had to be taken on the matter, and it had to be one that would involve two basic ideas: on the one hand, freedom of expression and association and, on the other, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as guaranteed by the Belgian Constitution, and in particular by article 19:

“Freedom of worship, public practice of the latter, as well as freedom to demonstrate one's opinions on all matters, are guaranteed, except for the repression of offences committed when using this freedom.”

The major tragedy of Vercors, for which the OTS (Ordre du Temple Solaire/Order of the Solar Temple – an esoteric group) was responsible, and its handling by the media will, for the first time, provoke a reaction by the public authorities in our country.

It was following these events, in 1996, that Belgium finally set up a parliamentary enquiry commission – with the powers of an investigating judge – whose aim was to develop a policy with a view to combating the illegal practices of cults and the danger they represent for society and people in general, and children in particular.

Why am I interested in harmful sectarian organisations? Because one cannot fail to feel implicated by the development of numerous organisations which, today and every day, jeopardise the physical and/or psychological health of our fellow citizens. And this is not only in Canada, France or Switzerland by the Order of the Solar Temple, or in Japan by the Aum sect. In our country, this phenomenon has reached a significant scale. Questionable shady organisations can be found close by, on our very doorstep. It is the development of Sukyo Mahikari in my region which first caught my attention. Sukyo Mahikari runs a prosperous business, in the heights of Verviers, in a temple that flouts all the rules of town planning. We should, however, also mention the Maharishi movement established at Trois Bornes, on the border of Holland, Germany and Belgium, in a hotel situated in Holland. More specifically, they plan to build a housing estate of around one hundred homes in Nil-St-Vincent, in the Brabant Wallon, another symbolic place, since it is in the geographical centre of Belgium. We must also mention Father Samuel, known all too well to the media and courts of law, but also all the other names that have now become commonplace: Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientology and even the Pentecostals, whose main interest is not merely the salvation of souls. The aim here is not to denounce these names, these organisations, sometimes far more secretive than they lead one to believe, but to show, by thorough work, that people and individuals are actually endangered: endangered physically, mentally, financially, etc.. Without going as far perhaps as the extreme tragedy of group suicides (murders?) as those of the Order of the Solar Temple(OTS), every day, men, women and children are ruined through their beliefs, and under these conditions, a free and democratic State cannot simply ignore what is happening. Our country has learnt lessons from its parliamentary enquiry and has taken positive initiatives. On a European level, Belgium is often cited as an example, along with France, for its effective fight against harmful sectarian organisations. The most tangible achievement has certainly been the setting up of CIAOSN^[1] (Centre d'Information et d'Avis sur les Organisations Sectaires Nuisibles – Information and Advice Centre about Harmful Sectarian Organisations), an independent centre linked to the SPF Justice (Service Public Fédéral Justice – Federal Public Service of Justice), whose members, appointed by the Chamber of Representatives, report to Parliament. This executive tool receives requests, informs public authorities, studies the de-

velopment of sects/cults, and informs the public, thereby ensuring effective preventative work.

Our legal system has also been given extra means: throughout the country, the federal police have set up units baptised “terrorism and sects”, and each department has its own magistrate of reference to flush out the deeds committed by harmful sectarian organisations, deeds which too often are difficult to identify when they are committed out of context.

Cults/Sects adapt to the development of society. I have therefore had the great privilege of presiding over a parliamentary working party aiming to measure the development of harmful sectarian organisations in Belgium and was struck by one piece of evidence: we are faced with an impressive diversification in the sphere of activity of cults.

Just how and why have they geared up, today taking over areas concerning spirituality, well-being, health, education, personal development and even, yet more perniciously, working in the humanitarian field?

A quick glance back at the history of religions, immediately shows us the increasing loss of influence of traditional religions at the heart of so-called modern societies. For centuries, sects based themselves on the accepted image of good and evil, an over-simplification between saved souls and souls which will perish, by using the old Jewish-Christian images of the Apocalypse. Those who believe will be raised up. The others, the sinners, will be damned. It is by playing on this ancestral fear that cults/sects have controlled men throughout history. This guaranteed an excellent commercial basis, particularly in less developed regions. But for several decades and following the decline of religions, or more precisely of religious observance, new exploitable niches have opened up. Several explanations are plausible but doubtless, the main reason lies in the increasing divide between the Churches and the faithful.

Let us take the specific example of Catholicism, with the recent extreme stances of Pope Benedict XVI in relation, particularly, to euthanasia and the case of Eluana in Italy, the rehabilitation of excommunicated bishops like Mgr Williamson who is openly negationist, not to mention the Vatican’s position with regard homosexuals. In short, there is a time-lag between Rome and 21st Century society, and it is this fact that opens up these niches into which gurus and other less charitable organisations have stepped. These openings have been created and widened by a sociological evolution that mainly started after May 1968. We have gone from a collectivist society where the common interest prevailed, where each person invested for the good of all, to what I would call “the Tapie years” (after a French businessman and MEP, Bernard Tapie), to a purely egoistical, even egocentric society, where only the interest of the individual prevails, even if it means taking the place of one's neighbour by gouging out his eyes. This individualistic society has created new needs but also new weaknesses like distress, in a world living at 200 miles an hour, society’s drop-outs, made vulnerable and pushed towards a new form of pseudo-spirituality. This distress becomes a fertile compost for recruitment and all the business underlying certain organisations which promise wonders but which in fact are nothing more than illusion.

Thus, we have evolved from the dualism of good and evil in the Middle Ages, to the saving of souls or damnation with the Apocalypse as the focal point, into overconsumption and the search for individual well-being of our post-1968 societies, we have seen an emergence of pseudo-therapists who teach their ideas to a completely disorientated, receptive public wanting only thing: to be guided by fine words, unaware in their credulity that they will alter their minds and empty their wallets.

It is very difficult to know the exact number of cults/sects and, even more so, the numbers of their followers, as several obstacles stand in the way of quantitatively measuring this phenomenon.

First of all it is characterised by a great mobility: groups are formed every day, others disappear, yet others are re-formed under new names. It is equally difficult to pinpoint the

exact moment when a group, which has been non sectarian, can change and become a harmful cult/sect. Often, it is only when a complaint is lodged that we even discover that it exists. The various branches or societies revolving around a cult/sect make their identification even more difficult.

Finally, it is almost impossible to assess the number of members of cults, because it is not easy to distinguish the user of services proposed by a cult from a follower involved in the organisation. Moreover, the cults themselves are not always in a position to precisely quantify the number of their members.

As far as the number of followers is concerned, the 1996 Enquiry Commission was unable to give a precise quantification. Nevertheless, it estimated that there are several tens of thousands of people directly concerned by this phenomenon in our country. As for the number of organisations, this same Commission actually studied 189 organisations at the time.

In fact, the Commission did not draw up a “list of sects/cults”. It established a list of movements mentioned during the auditions of witnesses or disclosed by a public service (the police, for example).

In September 2006, I therefore studied, with my working party, the follow-up on of my predecessors' recommendations.

From the hearings organised, it emerged that the activities of sectarian organisations have not diminished in our country although they have sometimes become less visible. Sectarian organisations are moving forward today in an increasingly secretive way.

To be more precise, we must stress that, since 1999, the Information and Advice Centre about Harmful Sectarian Organisations has examined the activities of more than 600 groups, of which only 94 had been mentioned during the work of the Parliamentary Enquiry Commission. Even if it is only a question of the number of files opened by the Centre following requests by the public and authorities (and not of some list or other of harmful sectarian organisations), this figure, to say the least, is a good reason for concern. The cultist scene is truly in constant evolution!

As well as the continuation of the activities of a certain number of large, well-known organisations (Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientology, etc.), we can also see the growth of small organisations with changing names, sometimes splinter groups or emanating from larger organisations, which act in a more diffuse manner and because of this are more difficult to spot.

Cultic practices can equally be the occurrence of isolated individuals who usurp the title of healers or psychotherapists.

The groups (Pentecostals, Evangelicals) descended from North American Protestantism occupy an important place now on the Belgian sectarian scene.

A first means of large-scale diversification id to take advantage of disasters

Thus, in New York, at the time of the 11th September terrorist attacks, or in Toulouse, around the AZF factory explosion, Scientologists tried to replace the psychiatrists, their enemies, and use the deep distress of the victims for their own development. Yet, nearer to home, at the time of the terrorist attacks in the London underground and also at the time of the of Ghislenghien disaster in Belgium. Through volunteer work, they recruit. The presence of Scientology volunteers in hospitals and identification centres for the victims of the tsunami disasters have also increased.

Second sector: personal development and professional training.

When talking about a harmful sectarian organisation working in the field of personal development or professional training, it goes without saying that one calls to mind the ideas of certain organisations.

The majority of companies offering such training are, of course, above suspicion. But we should alert citizens that an increasing number of organisations or small sectarian groups have a professed goal which is that a person should thrive and means of well being. Consequently, they suggest numerous unconventional practices, often not scientifically tested. The area of personal development, training courses of psychic preparation, relaxation sessions, coaching, yoga or other similar practices can thus constitute, when practised by unscrupulous individuals, activities which are auspicious for cultic tendencies.

It would furthermore appear that certain sectarian organisations specialise in professional training, often through the expedient of companies with a different name, and present various (pseudo-)training and personal development courses for businesses. It is a matter, at one and the same time, of a disguised recruitment technique and a means of investing in the economic world.

Scientology is certainly the most influential sect in the sphere of human resource management. The cult sees, in the dissemination of these methods, a means of establishing its influence in the very heart of the economic world. The reference to Scientology does not always appear clearly at first and there are many businesses which have been seduced by the commercial savoir-faire of the Scientologists. A savoir-faire which has proved itself in the field of social control.

An extremely important line: the youth sector

One of the preferred fields of action of some harmful sectarian organisations is the family and children in particular. It is a way for gurus to perniciously manipulate their believers, taking advantage of the lack of judgement of children or adolescents. It is one of the most questionable and most dangerous aspects of this diversification of the movements.

The sphere of maternity and early childhood are also highly rated targets of sectarian organisations. It is said that some, like Raël, do not hesitate to suggest techniques of reproductive cloning to sterile couples.

Beyond questioning the scientific feasibility of the operation, one must obviously ask oneself about the ethics, not to mention the media aspects, as Raël uses the media for his existence and prosperity...

As for the Scientology business, in our country it runs numerous appeals to the population, politicians and journalists. A well-orchestrated campaign aims to persuade public opinion that the Church is "a Church like any other, recognised in countries all over the world, like the United States". It wants to distribute leaflets on the damage caused by drugs and hopes to have an effect on schools without distributing directly to adolescents. What also appear frightening are the ideas elaborated in the leaflets which for several months have been distributed at school exits: the promotion of Human Rights!

A final field of development: health and "healing" sectarian organisations

Beyond the techniques of personal development, "healing" cultic organisations (e.g. Sukyo Mahikari), which talk about unconventional medicine, invest heavily in the field of alternative therapeutic practices which are not proven scientifically. In fact, the field of health has become an area of favoured action and a formidable recruitment weapon for an increasing number of cultic organisations. These organisations prioritise people who are physically and/or psychologically vulnerable, who, not always finding the hoped for help in conventional medicine, are looking for new treatments, which are supposedly more effective.

If recourse to healing by prayer, meditation, laying on of hands or other similar practices does not necessarily exclude access to medicine, some groups nevertheless work to persuade their followers of the impossibility of benefiting from the divine healing power if they

continue to follow, in parallel, conventional therapies. They advise them, indeed insist, that they should not consult a doctor outside the group, even in cases of serious illnesses, and even if this course of action could endanger their lives. Some gurus, often without any medical qualifications, present treatments, including for the most serious illnesses whose beneficial effects have not been scientifically checked or, even worse, “therapies” which have been shown to be dangerous and/or fraudulent. These practices are clearly a matter of the illegal practice of medicine.

Quid of our criminal code?

In this regard, some practitioners consider that the Belgian criminal armoury is, to a large extent, sufficient to curb harmful sectarian practices. It is true that several legal tools exist but, personally, I consider that we will only be able to fight effectively against these organisations when, like France, we have had the political courage to add the “idea of abuse of exploitation of the vulnerable” to our criminal code. I shall come back to this point.

What texts do we therefore have available to us?

Dissolution of the ASBL (Association Sans But Lucratif – Non-Profit-Making Organisation)

It is important to be able to deal with the sectarian organisation as a moral entity and not only with one or other individual who is a member of it. The institution of criminal responsibility of moral entities (law of 4 May 1999, published in the Moniteur belge (Belgian official journal) on 22nd June 1999) can be considered an indispensable part, not only in the fight against organised crime, but also against harmful sectarian organisations.

Article 5 of the criminal code specifies that “any moral person is responsible in law for infractions which are intrinsically linked to the realisation of an aim or the defence of its interests”.

Confiscation of goods

Since 2002, the possibilities of legal seizure and confiscation have been expanded. This new clause is part of an approach towards serious or organised crime, hinged on exploitation. It aims to develop a better performing system, thereby enabling better detection of the gains obtained from this type of crime and substantially increases the possibility of confiscating them.

Witness protection

This law could prove useful when taking into account the pressures and dangers of reprisals to which some ex-followers are subjected. There therefore exists the possibility for these people to witness either partially or totally anonymously.

The illegal practice of medicine

Only doctors or other health professionals are competent to practice medicine. If actions falling within the realm of medical practice are performed by an unauthorised person, this is the illegal practice of medicine, which can be punished by criminal law.

Things must go further.

I believe that for our criminal code to be truly effective, requires adding to. In fact, at present, our legislation does not allow for repression of an attack on the psychological integrity of the individual.

As the report of the Parliamentary Enquiry Commission and, afterwards, the Observatory of Sects recommended, it seems to me essential to add to our armoury a new clause in our criminal code aiming at suppressing the abuse of vulnerable people^[2].

As a reminder, France is the first European country to have adopted a law aiming to reinforce prevention but also suppression with regard to sectarian groups. At the time of the agreed examination of witnesses by the working party on the sects in the Belgian Chamber, the French Member of Parliament, Vuilque, had stressed the preventative and educational role of the About-Picard law. In July 2005, the first sentence based on this law was recorded. Thus, the appeal court of Rennes identified a guru as responsible for having abused of the ignorance and vulnerability of four people, one of whom committed suicide.

If it is important to strengthen our legislative armoury in order to allow judges to condemn the criminal schemes of sectarian type movements. It is equally as important, however, to be careful not to challenge the fundamental principles of freedom of expression, freedom of belief and of association, fundamentals of our State of Law.

Threats, intimidation and moral pressure perpetrated intentionally on vulnerable people in order to make them do something, will be punishable by law. And, of course, that does not only apply to cults/sects!

^[1] CIAOSN: Centre d'information et d'avis sur les organisations sectaires nuisibles (Centre for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organisations)

^[2] I have therefore drafted, together with my colleague Yvan MAYEUR, a private bill (*Doc. parl.* Chamber, 2007-2008, n° 52-0493/001) which provides for the setting up as an offence, the mental destabilisation of people and the abuse of vulnerable people. This bill had already been drafted under previous legislation (*Doc. Parl.*, Chamber, 2006-2007, n° 51-2935/001), but unfortunately there was not time to reach a successful conclusion. Moreover it had been started again in the form of a bill lodged by the minister of Justice at the time, Madame Laurette Onkelinx, a bill which again, there was not time to successfully conclude. This is why the initial bill was presented once again at the start of the new legislation, i.e. in December 2007.

Evolution of the situation in Italy: from the black book of Italian cults to the project Nepenthes, a film about the cultist excesses to make people aware of the problem

Caterina Boschetti, Journalist and author

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen and members of FECRIS. My name is Catherine Boschetti and I am an Italian journalist. I make a special point of thanking FECRIS for having invited me to this very important event and to allow me to tell my story with respect to the cult situation in Italy.

Many of you know that, as a journalist, in 2007, I carried out an investigation and wrote a book "The Black Book of Cults in Italy", which was sold in thousands of copies and was republished 5 times. I brought some copies here for anyone interested.

This book explains the phenomenon of destructive cults not only as seen by experts: lawyers, public prosecutors, psychologists, but also through first hand witnesses, escaped adepts and family members of victims. They vandalised my car, they tried to break into my home. I received death threats, but until now, none of my complaints met with success although we had indicated several people as suspects. Like Roberto Casarin, leader of the pseudo-Catholic movement "Universal Heart", which has been making propaganda in the whole country for years who was only recently officially excommunicated by the Church.

Recently a major breakthrough occurred at the level of the Italian media: two important episodes which led public opinion to take interested in cults.

I refer to the arrest in Bari of the leader of the organisation Arkeon, Vito Carlo Moccia. This group had thousands of followers in our country, (one estimate: 10.000 people). In 2006, for the first time, Italian television showed a programme giving information, following testimony by the adepts who managed to free themselves, but it is only recently that Vito Carlo Moccia was arrested. The crimes committed are sadly known: criminal conspiracy, fraud, illicit exercise of medicine, violence against individuals, ill-treatment and abuse on minors, applying the art of undue influence for criminal ends. All for the money, much money...

Lorita Tinelli, president of CESAP-Italy, engaged in an exhausting legal battle with this group and fortunately, emerged victorious.

Another emblematic example is the recent arrest in Rome of Danilo Speranza, guru of the Maya sect, with more than one thousand of followers. The leader was indicted for violence on minors and their mothers, and for extorting an enormous amount of money. The investigation also revealed the attempt made by Speranza to be accredited by "Islamic" Muslim associations initially working in Naples and later in Rome.

These cases only represent the point of an frightening iceberg still submerged and little known. As a journalist I am angry with the Italian media because they are afraid. The law of silence is omnipresent and everyone is afraid of his own shadow and remains silent on this problem.

It is only after resonant lawsuits and many victims' testimonies that they decided to speak of the question. On the other hand, the family associations are invested thoroughly while going to all the television programmes relating to the subject. Fortunately there are people who do not keep silence and who wish to tell of their strong personal experiences.

I refer to Maria Pia Gardini and her charges against "Scientology", who cited Mrs Gardini for 2 million euro; or to Claudia V., victim since she was 21 of a so-called magician, during ten years, after having undergone abuse and violence, she found the strength to denounce him and bring a lawsuit against him.

The "magician" was condemned on appeal to 15 years imprisonment. Claudia wrote the book "Plagiata" (Manipulated) and created, with the journalist Lisa Tormena and Matteo Lolletti, a splendid documentary on her experience entitled: "The Invisible Prison". This film, that we will show you at the end of the conference, wants to carry a message of hope.

In the past few years, I had the opportunity of appreciating the work of Italian associations that work hard every day to help in the release of victims and to inform public opinion: therefore I would like to thank FA.VIS, of which I am member, but also ARIS-Veneto, ARIS-Toscana, CE.SAP, S.O.S Antiplagio, GRIS, "Giù le mani dei Bambini" – (Hands off the children) of Aldo Verdecchia, the association "Pope Jean XXIII", as well as others: your work is invaluable, unique, irreplaceable.

It is estimated that a million people are victims of cults in Italy with more than 500 more or less known groups: I do not know if these figures are reliable, but we can certainly say that the hidden part is immense and that only a limited percentage of people - recently estimated at about 5% - actually told about what they experienced in a cult.

I present myself as the Spokeswoman of the associations to condemn the absence of the Italian State in this context; even if it did create the Anti-Cult team (Squadra Anti Sette) (it seems to represent only wind), it does not tackle basic legislation.

We ask that FECRIS, NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and INGO accredited with the Council of Europe, to express its disapproval of the continual absence of the State (s) of their duty to guarantee the safety of citizens facing alternative movements. What would occur if all private associations

or organizations operating in the sector, ceased providing information, assistance and comfort?

Would government organizations help? Would the Catholic church roll up its sleeves? A number of psychologists, policemen, simple people are not enough. It is really necessary to turn the page, one needs a true law!

I now hand over the microphone to Maurizio Alessandrini, president of FA.VIS, so that he can explain the progress on the Italian measures concerning a new law on undue influence.

Recommendations to the Italian Political Establishment on the social curse represented by the phenomenon of cults, abusive beliefs, undue influence and physical harassment.

Maurizio Alessandrini, President of FA.VIS [\[1\]](#), Spokesman of the Italian Associations ARIS Vénétie, ARIS Toscane, Ce.SAP, FA.VIS

° Lacunae in the law:

To fill the normative vacuum, which has lasted for 29 years, as regards psychological and physical undue influence and mind control. Various bills were presented: the NR. 863 and N.1644 to Parliament, and Ddl N.569 to the Senate. Next May the discussion of Ddl 569 will begin by the Commission Justice in the Senate.

° Training courses with the object of bringing legal workers, the police forces, and magistrates to a comparable level.

-Dynamics and techniques of psychophysical conditioning and their consequences, with particular reference to the psychological damage undergone by the followers, in addition to the economic damage.

-Non-respect of Human Rights and description of the offences encountered in a cultist environment.

° Information: a cultural project to prevent and inform at national level, (Home Office, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education), finalized with regard to the cult phenomenon and taking into consideration its multiple facets, to be used in institutions of higher education and universities. It will be noted that at present Italy, has not approved the recommendations of the Council of Europe in connection with cultural information and on the phenomenon of sects and abusive cults.

° The activation of a public structures (institution close to SSN) to assist victims of abuse by destructive cults, individuals (magicians, mediums, healers, etc) to reintegrate society.

° Creation of legal support centres, similar to those existing for the victims of criminal organizations and swindlers, (whose services would be remunerated according to the incomes of the victims), to help the members wishing to leave cultic organisations and who have the courage to take personal risks by denouncing the cultic organisations and imposters, although conscious of the difficulty – because of the backlog in our courts - of obtaining what they ask from the State: simply that justice should be done!

° Structures of mediation: activations of public structures of mediation with a view of a re-launching relational and emotional dialogue between members of NMRs and the members of their family not members of the cult.

°**Public recognition of the social usefulness of the associations' activities.** These associations assume, inter alia, informative and preventive work which should be primarily carried out by the State, with the objective of effectively protecting the citizens. An activity that, it should be stressed, the associations often exert in situations of economic difficulty and, very often, at their personal risk. Volunteers and associations are indeed the object of smear campaigns, intimidations, threats, illicit investigations and worse: harmful behaviour, targeted by quarrels ignited against them by sectarian organizations which do not miss an occasion to point a finger at them or use any pretext like the accusation of having anti-religious objectives.

°**The setting up of a Board of inquiry** to investigate the tax situation and assets of the so-called cult multinationals, their international financial relations, their economic demands and the influence of these organizations in economical-financial and political circles.

°**Need for a renewal of observation and monitoring of the cult phenomenon by national security services.**

With regard to this subject, the Italian secret services had revealed, as from 1998, the existence of obvious threats and important aspects considered as dangerous for national security thru' cults and pseudo-religious movements operating on the territory or of international occult groupings recording an activity of increasing propaganda and proselytism - such regroupings seem destined, in the future, to record an alarming significant growth due mainly to the ever increasing use of Internet networks. Since 2002, no investigation into the phenomenon was reported by the Services in their Semi-annual Reports on the policy of information and of safety presented to Parliament. Religious and pseudo-religious "millenium" cults await the "end of time" announced by "priests" of ancient civilizations. According to the esoteric religious theories of these latter 2012 is the time of the apocalypse, armagedon, there will be a planetary collision or the arrival of extraterrestrials who will carry the chosen followers to the new world etc. We have reasons to fear that some "Masters" victims of their own mystical madness, may encourage their own disciples to commit ill-considered gestures and auto-destruction in order "to reach higher levels of existence". During the past 20 years, we had many examples of atrocious mass suicides. To only mention the most recent ones: from '94 to '97 mass suicides of the disciples of the Solar Temple (Canada, France, and Switzerland), with 74 victims, among whom 7 children. In March '97 in the United States, in concomitance with the passage of comet Hale Bopp, the Master of "Heaven' Gate" pressed 39 people "to give up their own body" (suicide) so as to be ready to be transported in the new celestial extraterrestrial world on a vessel flying in the comet's wake.

°We ask **that European summits should be held at least once a year by the Ministries of the Interior (Home Office) of all E.U. countries** to discuss result of investigations into the cult/sectarian phenomenon in the respective countries and to propose concerted actions.

Caterina Boschetti:

Thank you Maurizio.

So if today my book, after five editions and many emails , was withdrawn from the catalogues of the booksellers, one must raise some questions. I did not receive any adequate answer, except for a banal "is not sold any more". It's a pity that people continue to ask me for it and I am sure that somebody took care to "withdraw" my books from the bookstores. I ceased asking myself questions, because when it concerns cults nothing is surprising.

For that reason I decided not to stop. Today, we are here to present an ambitious project. Paolo Doppieri, film director is here at my side, we launched the realization of a film on the phenomenon of cults.

Soon you will be able to see a few minutes of a thriller: “Nepenthes - Memories of follower”, which is in preparation - although this film does not take as a starting point any real story and does not refer to any particular cult, it aims to be an international occasion to speak with the general public about this social plague.

It is not a documentary but of a captivating black film which aims to make people understand cultist dynamics and the violence that one can undergo in cults, to inform and open the eyes of young people on the risks and dangers, but also to inform and open the eyes of families who see a beloved being changing day after day.

We hope that soon you will be able to see this film in all the cinemas of all the countries here present. Therefore, if somebody knows of people who might be interested by such a project, please introduce them to us. We would be very grateful to you. That would mean that we reached the target and touched millions of people with our film. Thank you all, Paolo Doppieri, the film producer will take over from here.

About the Project “Nepenthes”

Paolo Doppieri (Film Director), Italy

Nepenthes is a film project that aims to tell a truth as seen through the eyes of a mother and the words of a daughter. It's a very obscure truth known just by few people concerning “destructive cults”.

Although this matter represents a widespread and rife phenomenon, it's still often trivialized by cinema and television worldwide. Maybe because it's nearly unknown to the average person.

As far as I'm concerned, a short time ago I believed that cultism was all about Satanism or thereabouts, and I thought that "follower" stood for misfit kids or naive, aged people.

Then I ran into the "Black Book of Italian Cults" by Caterina Boschetti, so I understood the shocking vastness that the phenomenon has reached both on the Italian and the international scene.

I have been gathering information for months. I was looking for a good story suitable for the cinema. This story has now a name: Nepenthes.

It's named after a particularly deceitful carnivorous plant, that attracts victims thanks to its beauty and flavour. Then the plant engulfs the victims and slowly starts to swallow them just before they realize there's no escape.

Besides, Nepenthes is also an ancient Greek drug used to relieve pain and wipe out memory. That's exactly what a cult often does.

Actually Nepenthes is the story of a young English woman – Anna, who lives in Italy – who discovers that her teenage daughter – Sara – has been mentally subjugated by a powerful esoteric cult. The only way to save her is to enter her secret world.

I believe that movies should entertain the audience and at the same time open people's eyes in view of informing the new generations.

Nepenthes wants to be a modern visionary movie that drags the viewer through a spiral of uneasiness, void, doubt and tension that reflects the incredulous mood of those approaching cults for the first time.

Just like me, and Caterina before.

[\[1\]](#) FA.VI.S - Associazione Nazionale Familiari delle Vittime delle Sette, Italy

Infiltration of Scientology into the Russian System of Education

Tatiana Karpacheva, Associate Professor of Philology at the Moscow City Pedagogical University, Russia

Only few organizations are as notorious all over the world for their crimes as scientologists. And their delinquencies have been investigated deeply enough. But scientologists have set up a lot of affiliating organizations. The organisations position themselves as secular, though in fact their aim is to implement the cult into different spheres of life and win new followers to their side. They can be found in education, medicine, social sphere. The ABLE association works in four following directions: Applied Scholastics, Narconon, Criminon and The Way to Happiness. Hereafter I would like to scrutinize the problem of scientology penetrating into the system of education.

The Scientological organization Applied Scholastics, as they allege, aim at distributing “educational materials and services based on L. Ron Hubbard’s works”. Their Moscow head quarters, “Applied Scholastics in the CIS”, is a part of the “International Association of Applied Scholastics”. The organization “Applied Scholastics in the CIS” offers various courses to adults and children with tutorials based on Hubbard’s works. For example, “Guidelines on the Basics of Education”, “Learn How to Learn”, “Living and Working with Children”, “Communicative Skills”, etc. It is a well-known fact that Hubbard did not have a higher pedagogical education nor any other higher education. Actually he was expelled from the university at the 2nd year for poor progress. However scientologists consider Hubbard having discovered a technology that can answer any questions how to learn whatever one needs, i.e. any subject, at any age, with any tutorial, in any language. The truth is Hubbard’s method is about learning the meanings of words from dictionaries and making sentences with words where they are used either correctly or incorrectly. It turns out if even one word is interpreted wrongly, the entire test can be misunderstood. According to scientologists, the problem of education failure at school is caused by some words being misunderstood.

Doing a course at “Applied Scholastics in the CIS” people, in fact, start learning their native language from scratch. People get convinced that if they can not formulate a definition of a word, they do not understand it. For example, a person may be asked, “What is the definition of a book?” They know exactly what a book is but they might not be able to give a dictionary definition on the spot. So the person says, “What do you mean what is a book? Well, this is a book, for example. And that one, too.” And the answer would be, “You do not know the definition. Learn it from the dictionary.” Or, “What is a hand?” – “What do you mean what is a hand? This is a hand.” – “You do not know the word.”

And once a person is convinced they do not know their own language and made learn definition of words, it makes the task easy to convince them of whatever else. That is the way people can be manipulated at Scientological educational courses. Besides scientologists offer English courses and tuition for schoolchildren. However you would be told that if your child did one of Hubbard’s courses (it is even better if you join them, too), they would not need extra tuition any more.

The main aim of “Applied Scholastics in SIC”, as well as other centres of “Applied Scholastics”, is recruiting new followers of Scientology. And as we can see it is done as follows. In their Tutorials a special Scientological vocabulary is widely used. Mostly those are usual words with a wrong meaning. For example, “mass” in Scientology is not a physical quantity but “subjects/objects a person studies”.

Scientologists say, “We provide the mass of a subject studied”. It means they are speaking of visual aids: studying a flower you are looking at a flower, though it does not mean they weigh the flower. It is just the word “mass” is not used in a usual way but it is given another,

Scientological meaning. And of course, Hubbard is considered as having invented the method of visual aids in the training process, nobody else could think of it before him!

The main idea of Scientological training is constantly looking up words in the dictionary. That is called Clearing. It is a genuine Scientological term. A clear is a person who has come through auditing, which is also trained for at the “Applied Scholastics in the CIS^[1]”. For example, at the presentation of Hubbard’s method the lecturer, a scientologist, told a following story. She was conducting a lesson of the “Applied Scholastics” technology. Students were reading a text. When suddenly a woman felt ill, she had a hysterics. It appeared the bout of hysterics was caused by the word “whose” that she associated with unpleasant memories. When getting married she could not make up her mind whose surname to take, her husband’s or her own. I wonder if she never saw the word “whose” before. Or maybe she went hysterical every time? But the purpose of the story is clear: we can see preparation for auditing which is, though, a religious Scientological practice. During this rather expensive training a person has to answer a lot of detailed questions. The questions may be personal, including some intimate particularities. The activity is supposed to help a person get rid of unpleasant memories. Meanwhile it provides scientologists with endless opportunities to abuse the information, to manipulate and blackmail people.

In the tutorials of the “Applies Scholastics” centres we can find a specific scientological term “a dominant person”. According to scientologists any antagonist of the cult is a “dominant person” and you have to give up any communication with them. It may be a mother, a father, a wife, etc.

So being trained at “Applied Scholastics” a person is specially prepared to become a follower of the cult. Also supervisors of Scientological training centres send their staff to do the Hubbard’s courses. “Applied Scholastics in the CIS” grant their own Scientological licenses to set up new “Applied Scholastics” centres. And unfortunately such centres are open and working. The oldest of them, “Studema”, is in Yekaterinburg. In Moscow city and the region we discovered 8 “Applied Scholastics” centres. 1 of them works as a school, 2 are out of town schools, there is also 1 out of town nursery school and 4 private nursery schools. However there may be some more.

On December 9th, 2009, activity of a boarding school “Elite”, an “Applied Scholastics” centre, was stopped and legal proceedings were instituted according to article 171 of Criminal Code of the Russian Federation that is “Illegal entrepreneurial activity”. However on January 11th, 2010, the establishment resumed its activity.

The problem is parents may not realize the Scientological orientation of a school when bringing their children there, as headmasters do not like to demonstrate their connection with scientology. They usually answer the question about the schools being connected with scientology like this, “We only use Hubbard’s teaching method, we know little about scientology. Well, we hear about Hubbard having launched his own religion, too, but it is just he was a genius. So he set up a lot of things. But we are regular teachers, we are only interested in his teaching ideas”. That is a lie. Activity of all Scientological organizations is fully managed by the head organization of the cult, Religious Technology Center. The Applied Scholastics brand as scientologists allege is a trade mark which belongs to Religious Technology Center. And they grant licenses for using their trade marks, this one in particular, to the Church of Scientology International and its affiliates. Thus, we can see that “Applied Scholastics” centres are Scientological affiliates. Applied Scholastics trade mark can be seen on websites as well as on the corporate documents of schools which are “Applied Scholastics” centres. Moreover, as we have already seen, Scientological faith components (explanations about a dominant person, preparation for auditing) are included into the training courses offered by the “Applied Scholastics”.

Supervisors of “Applied Scholastics” centres deny their connection with scientology. But when I asked them directly “Are you a scientology follower” all them said Yes.

“Applied Scholastics” centres in Moscow and the region have not got the state accreditation and teaching license. Their activity is mainly registered as a private business.

The problem of scientology penetrating into education also rises in some state establishments. Maria Struve, headmaster of a public school of arts in Moscow, president of Russian choral conductors Guild, began actively promoting ideas of scientology a few years ago. She also attracts new followers of the cult among the teaching staff and the parents. Besides, special Scientological events are arranged in the school. The headmaster makes teachers attend Hubbard’s courses. There they are trained with help of various tutorials, among them there is a book “Teaching instruments for tutors” with a subheading “based on the works of Ron L. Hubbard”. Narconon, a pseudomedical scientological organization, carried out lectures for the high school students. At the lectures children were given Hubbard’s brochures “The Way to Happiness”. At the same time I would like to mention the fact that methods of Narconon as well as any other methods connected with Hubbard were prohibited according to the decree of Minister of Health Care on June 19th, 1996.

Now a few words about some private centres of “Applied Scholastics”. The oldest “Applied Scholastics” centre in Moscow, “Edelweiss”, was founded in 2000. Marat Said-Galiyev, the founder and supervisor, tells us on his website that he was born in 1970 in Tadzhikistan, studied at a university, though it is not mentioned which one and whether he graduated from it. Then he was a P.E. teacher, after that in the late 90s the future headmaster was a market vendor, then he opened 2 shops and moved to Moscow in 1999. And in 2000 he suddenly opened the training centre “Edelweiss”. I can not help being surprised at this swift shift of interests and activity in his biography!

“Edelweiss” centre, though having no appropriate license, acts as a children’s school. Children spend there all day from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. “Edelweiss” signed a contract with a Moscow school and the “Edelweiss” children are registered in that school as student externs. They also do final tests in that school and get a high school diploma from it. Nevertheless the children are taught by scientologists in strict compliance with Hubbard’s method. And all their education is managed by the head centre of “Applied Scholastics in CIS”. Now there are about 35 students trained in the centre on a permanent basis. That is beside those attending tuition courses. Also in the centre there is a so called “Life improving course” including the same programs as in the “Applied Scholastics” centre. They are “Guidelines on the training basis”, “Learn to learn”, “Communication skills”, a booklet “Ethics and morale”, “Supervisor’s minihat” – by the “hat” Scientologists mean the job position and correspondent duties.

Some time ago a WISE^[2] centre was open at the school. WISE is another Scientological organization of businessmen using Hubbard’s method of running a company. Hubbard’s trainings in “Edelweiss” are far from being cheap though they are held in quite modest conditions. Currently the monthly fee makes about 790 USD. While there is no separate building (the centre is situated on the ground floor of a dwelling house), nor a playground as well as a nurse’s room. And little children spend a whole day there.. Scientologists consider it unnecessary. According to them if a child has a stomach- or headache that is because they do not understand a meaning of a word. If they are explained the word or, what is even better, make it out of plasticine, the pain will go. That is a favourite scientological method: they make the subject discussed out of plasticine. Children’s meals are not the school authorities’ concern either. You can bring home food, or have a meal at home if you live nearby, or order a meal at school and warm it up in a school microwave for an extra fee. Compared to that in usual, non-scientology certified private schools in Moscow children can have the following services for approximately the same price: education, a separate school building, security, regular meals (with child’s food allergies taken into account), medical care at school, a school psychologist, swimming pool lessons. Thus, sending their children to the “Edelweiss” centre the parents risk both children’s psychological and physical health while financing the cult of scientology,

an organization which is far from being poor. Some years ago its revenues made 3-4 mln USD per day.

The educational process in Edelweiss looks like this: children of different grades (for example, the 4th, 9th, 10th and 11th grades) learn in the same room. I had a chance to visit one of Russian classes there. Students of the 4th grade were sitting together and reading a fairy tale with a teacher. High school children were sitting separately and doing tests for a final exam supervised by another teacher. The beginning of the class was bewildering: they had a kind of warming up which is called “a gasp of the present” (???) in scientology. The teacher gave orders: “look at the ceiling”, “then at the floor”, “touch any desk around you”, “clap your hands twice”, “touch your back”, “then the forehead”. Everything would be said very quickly.

During the class there is no educational process as it is. The teacher does not explain anything. Children learn the material on their own with help of so called control sheets. There is a special course in the “Applied Scholastics” centre, “How to make control sheets”. Every child has a control sheet with certain tasks. On every sheet of paper there is the above mentioned trade mark of Applied Scholastics in the left top corner. Below there are words “Applied Scholastics centre” printed. And further down there are words “Edelweiss educational centre” printed. Thus, the connection between Edelweiss and the Scientological headquarters is obvious.

An important thing is that a person can not be hired to “Applied Scholastics” centres without mastering Hubbard’s method. According to the employers’ rules an educated experienced specialist first works as a trainee. So it looks like they do not need state diplomas but are orientated at the cult leader’s method. Rules for hiring staff say inexperienced applicants are preferable at “Edelweiss”.

A boarding school “Wonderlands” is situated in a settlement nearby Moscow and takes a three-storey cottage with a 5-hectare plot. An inspector (tutors are called so here) works with 7- to 14-year-old children instead of teachers specializing in particular subjects. Just like in the “Edelweiss” school they do not explain any material but supervise children mastering it on their own with help of the above mentioned control lists made in the “Applied Scholastics in the CIS” centre. If a child stops to do something else the inspector’s task is to find out which word they misunderstand. According to the headmaster 80% of learning time is given to “clearing up words”. In 1.5 hours children “clear up” about 20 words. I wonder when and how they learn there. All children of different age sit in the same room with their control sheets, which is supposed to replace school education for them. There is no blackboard or any other traditional accessories. It is important that in the contract parents sign nothing is said about providing children with educational services by the school. Thus we can see an obvious fraud committed by the founders towards the parents. To get a job in the “Wonderlands” boarding school an applicant has to do three courses in the “Applied Scholastics” centre.

And now a few words about a private nursery school “Nastyusha”. From the very beginning it became notorious with parents. In one of Internet forums you can find a following reference from a parent concerning the school. “Dear parents! If you do not wish your child to degrade both intellectually and spiritually, by no means send your children into that establishment supervised by Ms Zhanna Tsymbal. It is a scientological nursery school!” The contract parents sign up says the following: “All arguable questions are to be solved through clearing up the clauses of the contract”. “Clearing up clauses” is the same as clearing up words. So in the contract we can see elements of scientological terminology. If necessary a representative of Applied Scholastics is invited to help. A monthly fee in the nursery school is about 840 USD including meals. Once I had a chance to see what the children eat. They got dumplings of quite a low quality. At the same time children get vitamins glorified by scientologists but not approved by Ministry of Health Care of the RF. Almost all children walk around barefoot, and the teacher, too. It is called conditioning to the cold. On that occasion

two of the children complained about a headache and a girl fell asleep on the floor in the bathroom. The teacher explains this attitude to children like this: they consider children should not be pitied, otherwise other children will notice the heightened attention paid to an ill child and will feign illness. They consider a child should be praised for their achievements while illnesses should not be mentioned at all. You must not say “Do not hang with your head down. You are going to have a headache”. Children incited by scientologists call it a “postulate” (one more example of a word used in a wrong way). They mean if you say this you are sure to get a headache. In the documents attached to the contract this position is grounded for the staff and the parents: “Our nursery school is good. If we consider it good, it will be good!” Here we face the principle of positive thinking (as if a person can manage a situation with help of his thoughts) that is characteristic of scientology as well as a lot of other cults.

There is no nurse’s room in the school. It is typical of Scientological schools. They do not hire a psychologist on principle, either. As we know, scientologists do not recognize psychology. According to them their children are the best, the cleverest, the smartest. So they have no problems.

But there is one. It is a problem of involving children, parents and teachers into the cult of scientology, one of the most destructive and dangerous totalitarian cults in the world. And they get involved through the educational system.

The bad news is that scientologists from all over the world collaborate and exchange experiences. For example, in 2008 the public school of arts signed a collaboration agreement with a private school Greenfields, Great Britain, using the methods of “Applied Scholastics”. Deputy headmaster of Greenfields visited Moscow in 2007, 2008 and 2009 and conducted a number of workshops on Hubbard’s method in Moscow and St. Petersburg. In 2007 Mr. Martin Runov, the founder of “Studema”, a private school of “Applied Scholastics” in Sweden, conducted a seminar in the “Edelweiss” educational centre. Scientologists from “Wonderlands” are guided by a Danish Applies Scholastics centre. On the website of Wonderlands there is an article How To Get Along With a Rebellious Child by Hanna Himmingscholt. Half of the article is given to explaining (or “clearing”) simple words. The author is trying to give definitions to words like “to subordinate”, “confrontation”, “hostility”, “love”, “stable”, “discuss”, “safe” and the like. As a result the article looks inadequate. Either the author does not know meanings of the words herself and is trying to understand them or she considers the readers stupid. In both cases her opinion is unlikely to be authoritative in pedagogy. While she positions herself as an expert there.

In conclusion it is necessary to mention that scientology is considered a destructive religious organization (totalitarian cult) in a number of Russian official papers and its activity is inadmissible in the system of education:

1. A regulation of State Duma “State Duma and Federal Assembly address President of the RF concerning some religious organizations effecting dangerously the health of society, family and citizens in the RF”, on December 15th, 1996;
2. An instructive letter of Mrs. Chepurnykh, Deputy Minister of Education in the RF, sent to all educational bodies in the RF, where scientology is rated among organizations inadmissible in educational establishments. And it is mentioned that it is necessary “to prevent unconventional religious organizations from penetrating into educational establishments of the RF”;
3. In the guidelines for headmasters and teaching staff “About preventing unconventional religious organizations and destructive cults from penetrating into educational establishments”, 2000.

However neither Russian executive nor legislative powers are likely to be authoritative enough for scientologists.

Any educational establishment using Hubbard’s method, as we can see, is sure to be connected with the cult of scientology. And accordingly its activity is inadmissible in the sys-

tem of education in the RF. That is what we proclaimed to the Department of Education in Moscow and Ministry of Education in the RF. Nevertheless the jeopardy of Scientological ideas penetrating into the system of education is great. The problem is acute. Looking for new effective teaching methods parents, children and tutors take risk being involved into a dangerous destructive cult.

^[1] Community of Independent States

^[2] World Institution of Scientology Enterprises

Film about the investigation on the death of Nathalie de Reuck's mother, who, under the influence of pseudo therapists, refused medical treatment

Philippe Dutilleul, RTBF^[1] JOURNALIST

Throughout the world, modern society must take up the challenge of health charlatans, mind corrupters, and aberrant self-proclaimed "therapists". This applies to both Europe and other continents.

It is about real predators who, often with great impunity, use their consummate skill to manipulate minds, for which they subsequently require payment. Intellectual deception (indeed brainwashing) to all intents and purposes. Family units are divided, and "patients" are totally subjugating to their esoteric theories and their sectarian practices. If you do not think like them, you are "condemned", you cannot escape!

I shall put my point of view as a documentary (investigative) journalist and director of RTBF (Public French-speaking Belgian Radio Television). In other words, the challenge is as follows: how to make television viewers aware of the danger that these con men - who often work together within a network - represent?

For at any given moment in our lives, any one of us could be made vulnerable due to a setback caused by work, family, emotional difficulties or a health problem. To a greater or lesser extent, this can have serious repercussions on our psychological and mental well-being. Consequently, we become potential targets for these clever predators who know all too well how to adapt their grasping talk to our current circumstances. And this is all too clearly the case with regard to certain medicines described as "mild", "parallel" or "alternative". These are now highly fashionable, as opposed to classical medicine which is accused (by the charlatans) of all evils.

Media in general, but television in particular because it reaches the greatest number of people at any one time, has an important role to play in exposing sectarian deviances in general, but in particular those relating to people's health. We must teach, raise awareness of and, in short, perform a useful task by energetically and effectively exposing these potentially dangerous individuals. Which assumes that one is aware of the problem or danger oneself and is prepared to expose it.

If I limit myself to television, the media form in which I work, an example of a situation can be symbolically represented through a fictitious scenario – a film made for television, for example – on the subject in order to raise public awareness. But this risks the story – even if well made – possibly appearing (somewhat) removed from reality. There is therefore a risk that the aim to expose and arouse awareness in the television audience will partly fail.

This is why, as far as I am concerned, I have chosen to make the most powerful documentary possible in the very competitive world of television (an essential consideration nowadays); a world which does not always look for quality in its broadcasts, provided that there is a large number of viewers...

That is also the reason why I waited almost two years before managing to find just the right example (the case of Nathalie De Reuck's mother, which Nathalie herself will be explaining in detail shortly). This was after a friend who was very aware of such people, and himself fell victim to these aberrant therapists within his own family, made me aware of the problem.

Three conditions are necessary to produce such a film which will expose the sectarian phenomenon and bring it to the attention of a large number of people.

- 1) A reliable source or indeed reliable sources of information, resulting in a mutual atmosphere of trust is certainly the most difficult prerequisite for a journalist to obtain. I would particularly stress this point before this audience. Without suitable original, unpublished information, without rigorous documentation, without witnesses ready to speak, there can be no reports or documentary films exposing these sectarian phenomena. I have had the opportunity to meet well-informed and concerned people who have collaborated wholeheartedly with my work, without criticism. They have provided me with some interesting pieces of information.
- 2) One example, one case, which is striking through its fervour, its content – which provokes discussion and reflection, through its exemplary nature – everyone feels concerned and understands the stakes. In the chosen example, I had the use of both human and audio-visual material (sound archives, photographs, amateur films). This allowed the audience to become attached to the characters and us to tell a very realistic story (on which Nathalie De Reuck, the victim's daughter, will be expounding, together with the relevant consequences), arousing emotion and promising questioning.
- 3) The complete collaboration, either of the victim (if he is still alive and willing to bear witness), or of his family (if the victim has died) in the making of the report or film documentary. That has been the case with Nathalie De Reuck for the film that we produced together about her mother who died three months before shooting began (film title: “mort biologique sur ordonnance téléphonique“ - “organic death by telephone prescription”).

In my humble opinion, in order to reinforce the impact of such a production, the journalist/producer must not try to teach, moralise or explain how to think. It is the story itself, told, shown through its content, which must convince the viewers and make them aware of the sectarian danger. Not an ideological speech but concrete examples which encourage reflection, discussion and a defence reflex if you are one day faced with a situation of this type. This, in any case, was my approach in making this film.

In addition to the three conditions I described previously, other obstacles also arise for a TV journalist (not so much for someone working in written press or on the radio) producing a report on this theme. There must be pictures! And their impact and reliability are a key factor. Very often, you need to resort either to a hidden camera (because therapists and sectarian practitioners do not generally look favourably upon the arrival of a TV team to film their group/individual training or manipulation sessions), or allow the people being interviewed to remain anonymous, either for their own safety, or for personal reasons. If not, you have nothing and there can be no film!

These two constraints are very common in these types of environments and investigations. You must therefore surround yourself with as many legal safeguards as possible for the broadcasting of the report. The tiniest error will be exploited by these predators/manipulators to obtain compensation through the courts for damages suffered by them and/or a ban on broadcasting. The right to use images is becoming more and more restrictive and the law is very unpredictable in this matter. In all situations, circumspection is essential and recourse to the opinion of competent lawyers, desirable.

In the film we are discussing, the sound recordings made by the victim (Nathalie De Reuck's mother) with her therapists (without their knowledge), although not in themselves constituting legal evidence, remain an important element of credibility which show the victim

in a favourable light, to the detriment of her guru/therapist, thus reducing the possibility of going to court.

When the audio-visual production is finished and ready for broadcasting, the journalist/producer is still far from winning the campaign. He must persuade the channel directors to show the film in good broadcasting conditions (day, time, frequency) so that it is seen by the largest number of viewers possible. And let us not forget that competition is fierce between both public and privately run television channels. This type of film, even if its content is powerful and interesting, will not necessarily be programmed for prime time television or bought by other channels.

I must add that, directly or indirectly, through certain popular or more targeted transmissions on radio or TV, acting very skilfully, certain pseudo-scientific and sectarian theories have gained the right to be heard and are spoken highly of, either by unconcerned organisers or by therapists themselves acting freely and with complete impunity. On the Internet, the situation is even worse. It is a privileged and prized place for these charlatans to spread their false theories. But at the same time a source of information for us!

That is the reason why, when in possession of a file of research material and a series of other pieces of information suitable for disclosure, there can be no hesitation – even if it requires a great deal of work – in accompanying the film with a book or a series of articles in the written press. Which has been the case in this situation with the publication of a book called "My mother was killed!" published by Editions Buchet-Chastel. The book recaptures elements present in the film but goes much further in exposing these therapists/charlatans, going into the history of it, into the information divulged, all the while remaining accessible to the public at large.

To conclude, I would say that this investigation (which is not finished because, with the help of Nathalie, a further report on this theme is being considered) has taken a great deal of time and energy but the ends justify the means. However, no cause, however justifiable it might be, is won in advance. Especially this one. For you can never prevent someone from going to consult this type of therapist or prevent them from becoming convinced by them. (Everyone is free to care for himself as he wishes) especially if, moreover, there is a judicial impunity in serious cases. The case developed in the film and book is equally a good example from this point of view since the victim's daughter (Nathalie De Reuck) has bravely decided to lodge a complaint (few people do so, through lack of evidence generally, money or support) with the Public Prosecutor in Brussels. Let us hope that the police and judges do their job correctly....

Philippe Dutilleul

January 2010.

Tournai. Belgium

^[1] Radio Télévision belge francophone

My Mother's story

Nathalie De Reuck, journalist and author, led the personal investigation into her mother's death culminating in the publication of the book « They killed my mother” and the film “Death by telephone prescription”

I agreed to come and testify before you, in the same way as I agreed to tell my story in the broadcast ‘Death by telephone prescription’ by Philippe Dutilleul and in the book. For just one reason: to keep the promise that I made to my mum on her death bed, to expose the facts and bring the problem into the public eye.

It is a battle that I am fighting on several fronts:

- Firstly through the report that was broadcast on Radio Télévision Belge (Belgian Radio Television) in December 2009
- By means of a second documentary that Philippe Dutilleul and I are producing together, and which, unlike the first, which specifically told the story of a victim, Jacqueline Starck, my mother, will instead take a focus on Total Biology and New German Medicine
- Through the complaint, lodged with the Public Prosecutor in Brussels in September 2009. I have spent a year working on this in order to strengthen and consolidate the case, so that it can serve as an example and be effective .
- And finally, through the book 'On a tué ma mère' (Medical charlatans killed my mother), distributed in France and Belgium by Buchet/Chastel which, because of media reception, allowed this sectarian problem to be exposed.

It was at the end of 2005 that mum first discovered a tiny lump in her left breast. It was invisible to the naked eye and could only be detected through feeling. Her osteopath who had been treating her for about ten years, a friend of my parents, explained that it was simply the manifestation of a conflict. Her left breast, according to the law of laterality, corresponds to a problem with my father. Nothing to be alarmed about. On the contrary. It means that the conflict is resolving itself. We all develop cancers several times a year, which shrink by themselves if you ignore them, he claims.

A gynaecological friend explained to me, on the other hand, that this lump was dangerous, and could grow quickly. My mother, however, who had immediately agreed to undergo medical tests, changed her mind under the influence of her osteopath and decided to follow his diagnosis.

She made contact with Mme Brigitte, a kinesiologist, dowser, homeopath, cartomancer, geobiologist, ...whatever you like, in any case not a doctor, and on her advice, with a certain Willy, a Belgian living in the Auvergne, working with energies, a specialist in removing spells. The three of them share in mum's "treatment".

The osteopath drains the lymphatic system through body massages, looks, with her, into possible causes in her past, using Family Constellation Therapy and Psychogenealogy, recommending Bach flowers whilst using kinesiology. Mme Brigitte prescribes small homeopathic pills with the aid of her pendulum, cleans and decontaminates the apartment by working on terrestrial energies and practises kinesiology from a distance. Willy raises the psychic and body energies and fights the evil eye. So, the two of them go about prescribing elixirs and other remedies, in short, "caring for" mum for a year WITHOUT ever having met her face to face.

Each extra physical manifestation is considered as extremely positive and adds to their argument. She loses blood, her lymph glands ooze, her tumours and arm swell up: that is all fine, her body is simply cleaning and purifying itself. It is eliminating and responding correctly to the drainage system.

They claim one and the same thing: ALLOPATHIC MEDICINE KILLS and consequently chemotherapy and radiotherapy also.

One must avoid hospitals, which harm and mutilate patients. Surgical procedures and medical treatments, according to them, serve only to line the pockets of pharmaceutical companies.

From then onwards they get down to finding the origin and causes of the conflict. Her past is dug up. Everything is questioned. Her relationship with my grandmother who, they maintain, did not want her to be born. With my grandfather, authoritarian and psychologically rigid. With her elder sisters, jealous of this last little one. With her former relationships, envious and greedy. With her husband, a torturer and a tyrant. With me, her daughter, manipulative and dictatorial.

The frequency of telephone contact increases as does her pain. From once a week, they increase to several times a day! Willy implies that he is now working 24 hours a day on mum, flushing out the cause of her conflict and battle against the extremely violent magic attacks. He fights the magicians of Sardinia, where my parents lived when they were younger and which he says is the birthplace of black magic. And he cleanses the whole neighbourhood of sorcerers. He even breaks up a whole USSR network.

To 'help' them in their arduous task, they recommend a group of therapists: an iridologist, a kinesiologist, an expert in Chakras energy, a psychogenealogist, some geobiologists. The latter demanded 350 euros for an hour spent cleansing the apartment!

Mum, conscientious, inquires about their references and their certifications.

She certainly does not want to risk falling into the hands of a charlatan. She wants professional, competent people.

The money slips away, time passes and her condition deteriorates at a tremendous rate. Violent arguments break out between mum and me. I try to persuade her to go to hospital but, convinced that this would bring about her death, she accuses me of being a bad daughter. She is beyond any reflection or logical reasoning, completely dependent on these healers. I have the impression that they are pulling the strings of a puppet that they manipulate at will. When we speak, we are each in a different world and on occasions I wonder about the reality and truthfulness of their arguments.

It is terribly demanding and distressing to find oneself confronted with such an unlikely argument that is actually supported by a multitude of different people. All the more so because some of them are from a medical background.

To try to convince my mother I contact a homeopathic doctor with a diploma who is on the register of the medical association. A register which, clearly, should be free from charlatans. At least, that is what I thought. Since for his only diagnosis, he accuses me, as an only daughter, of being responsible for his patient's illness and exhorts me to help my mother find the conflict dividing us.

It is only after making some enquiries that I then discovered he was the right hand man of Claude Sabbah in Belgium and main director of BTEV, the Belgian Institute of Total Biology of living beings.

In despair, I try to alert the police and emergency hospital services but none of them could help me at all. The law allows its subjects to choose whether or not they want to be treated. They could not intervene in any situation. It is pointless to state that I had not told anyone about the situation. For two reasons. Firstly because Jacqueline, influenced by the therapists who were isolating her from her friends and relatives, ordered me not to, and then because I simply did not know where to go to for help.

January 2007, her left arm and hand have now doubled in size. Hard, swollen and rigid, they made her back bend because of the weight.

The breast has shrunk into a solid mass under the armpit. The nipple has been replaced by a gaping wound about twenty centimetres across, oozing blood and purulent. There is a continuous discharge of a mixture of pus, lymph and blood. One evening, mum wonders where this nauseating smell is coming from which seems to follow her around...she realises that it is emanating from her own body. The right breast starts to enlarge and redden. The whole of her thorax and neck is covered with tumours and purple ruptured veins. A constant feeling of suffocation prevents her from breathing properly. She moves with difficulty, hampered by the physical manifestations of the cancer which is gnawing away at her and the ever-present shooting pains.

In the face of the grisly picture of Jacqueline and the yells of pain that she can no longer contain, the gurus tell her to selflessness and acceptance.

Willy recommends putting onion on the wound; he specifies warm green clay for the arm, and...to leave dad. Mme Brigitte prescribes tincture of Calendula to gently dab on, a few

drops of lemon to disinfect, floral elixirs and small homeopathic pills for the pain and...to leave the apartment.

The osteopath admits to her, in February 2007, that he is very proud of her. She is much better off dying at home than surrounded by vultures in a hospital. Mum starts to be afraid, frightened by what he is saying! It is not a question of dying but of being cured; that is what he has been telling her for more than a year. Angry with him, disorientated by this turn-around, she refuses to see him again.

On 17th April 2007, Jacqueline finally agrees to go to hospital. The therapists have 'left' her, accusing her of basically wanting to be ill, to act the martyr. "You need to be ill". That is what they throw at her shortly before she dies.

It is when she was informed of the result of the biopsy that mum understood she had cancer. Her eyes showed no sign of fear or panic, like someone who has discovered this diagnosis, but rather stupor. Until that precise moment, she had never doubted the charlatans who had assured her that she did not have cancer, merely the symptoms.

She immediately spoke to me of the K7 audio on which she had recorded some of the conversations. She wanted them to be used to lodge a complaint and prevent other ill people from coming under the influence of these conmen.

I should specify. Jacqueline had not recorded these dialogues with the intention of harming them. It was a practice that she had been adopting regularly for about thirty years with doctors, after some other health concerns from which she suffered. It allowed her to analyse and study the therapeutic terms and medicinal references.

Mum passed away on 13th June 2007.

During the weeks after her death, I drifted along on a wave of incomprehension. Was mum mad? Or was I? On the internet, my research initially focussed on psychiatric illnesses. I was trying to understand what had led my mother to refuse to be treated. I could see no reason other than madness.

After many steps trying to shed some light on this, I came across the Association pour Victimes de Psychothérapeutes auto proclamés (Association for Victims of self-proclaimed Psychotherapists). It was a real relief to be heard and understood. A release.

Afterwards, I listened to the recordings of some of the telephone conversations between Jacqueline and these charlatans. Esotericism was subtly mixed with pseudo scientific ideas. Steadily-growing arguments that allowed me to trace the increasing level of manipulation.

With the aim of compiling a dossier of the complaint, I sifted through and transcribed about twenty telephone conversations. I grouped names together, established links, archived their arguments. I made enquiries on the internet to find out the basis of their theory.

And then a volunteer in the association put me in contact with Philippe Dutilleul, allowing me to gain more in-depth knowledge. I discovered a frightening world. In order to get them to reveal themselves and drop the official mask, we had no choice other than to resort to the use of hidden cameras. There is a huge gulf between the syrupy, sterile arguments adopted with the sole intention of demonstrating a willingness to collaborate with traditional medicine, and the arguments that they uphold in private consultations.

On approaching Josie Kromer, Jean-Jacques Crèvecoeur and other defendants of Total Biology, in referring to a cancer or other illness, I saw myself ardently recommended to stop all allopathic treatment or else die of it. It is clear that these therapists believe that they are in possession of the only truth, and that consequently, to follow any paths other than theirs is an inescapable route to death.

Which therefore establishes that in actual fact, they dictate the contrary to what they claim – that they collaborate with traditional medicine – as this is simply absurd and impossible.

Frightening when we consider that the participants at their costly training courses include people basically stemming from the medical environment: doctors, kinesiologists, osteopaths, nurses, or, of course, the sick. People suffering from Parkinson disease, AIDS, multiple sclerosis who hold onto these wild hopes.

All the more appalling when we discover that, unlike what they inculcate into their patients, they themselves rush to hospital to benefit from leading treatments should they personally succumb to illness. As proof of this, when Jacqueline's therapist discovered that he had a brain tumour, he rushed instantly to the famous Clinique Universitaire Bruxelloise (University Hospital of Brussels).

'I wonder to what degree your mother might have transmitted her cancer to me' he said, when I met him, before informing me that Jacqueline owed him a considerable sum of money for his services.

As for Brigitte, she maintained, with an unconvincing smile, that Jacqueline had died of a cancer that had, actual fact, cured her and that her astral body had thus been liberated. She would return, relieved of her conflicts.

The osteopath continued to maintain that we all develop several cancers a year, which spontaneously shrink, and that if Jacqueline had died it was her personal choice. She had deliberately refused to resolve her conflict.

Machiavellian to the end.

True to themselves, they followed the precepts of the Total Biology or Hamer method. Astounding, woolly-minded but oh so profitable.

Since the film 'Organic death by telephone prescription' has been broadcast, and in particular since the publication of the book 'Medical charlatans killed my mother', dozens of victims have contacted me. To express their relief in realising that they are not alone and in particular to understand the manipulative process of which their relative was a victim. Perhaps a first step in the slow process in relieving their sense of guilt...

There are a great many calls for help. Most of them do not know where to turn to for psychological and practical assistance, or what to do to expose the facts.

Which allows me to suggest that we must not only quickly establish a centre to guide victims and compile a register of them, but also act to prevent this from ever occurring? It is a matter of public health.

Analysis of the Legal Difficulties of an International Affair Spanning South West France and Oxford: a Family under the Influence Forced by a guru into Reclusion and Ruin.

Daniel Picotin, Lawyer at the Bordeaux Bar

In December 2001 just after Christmas, a well known aristocratic family living in the Bordeaux region (Aquitaine – France), withdrew from the world and shut itself up its home known as Martel's Castle, in the district of Monflanquin, in Lot-et-Garonne.

Three generations of this family, 11 people, from Guillemette de Vedrines (born Adhemar), then 89 years, to the youngest member, 16-year old Diane de Vedrines, purely and simply withdrew from the world, dropping jobs and usual occupations, breaking with their relatives and friends and, one of them, with her spouse.

This extraordinary situation was all the more remarkable that the family is well known and socially integrated not only in the region, but also in Bordeaux where Doctor Charles-Henri de Vedrines, a reputed 50-year old gynaecologist-obstetrician, was a candidate on the Mayors' list (former Prime Minister, Alain Juppé) in the 1995 local elections.

All their family and friends reacted with amazement and incomprehension.

The media devoted several reports to this mystery under the heading «The Recluses of Monflanquin».

Before the human climax of this complex affair was reached in 2009, more than eight years after the beginning of the event, many obstacles were placed in the way of those who sought to release them and encourage legal intervention.

I. The incomprehension of the justice system and of the entourage.

It was at the beginning of 2004 that Jean Marchand the husband of Ghislaine de Vedrines, contacted me and explained this amazing case.

It was immediately quite clear to me that this could only be a case of undue influence.

Taking into account the quality of the people victims of this situation, of the fact that they were all members of the same family spreading over three different generations, the case imposed itself as of exemplary academic interest, to my knowledge, unprecedented in Europe.

It is a difficult situation to explain to the general public but also to professionals since in this case, the judicial system remained practically blind for eight years, in spite of several attempts by the local branch of ADFI (Association for the Defence of the Family and the Individual) and me, the lawyer of the party instituting civil action proceedings.

There had been an attempt to place the grandmother, Mrs Guillemette de Vedrines under curatorship, but the psychologist and the judge of responsible for the protection of certain categories of adults^[1] considered that the latter was in complete possession of her faculties.

As for various court referrals by the "gendarmerie", they encountered absolute incomprehension under the pretext that once a person has reached her majority they can live as they wish and withdraw from the world if they want to...Certain members of the friendly entourage of the family even considered that: "they looked very happy ..."

An investigation ordered in the interest of the families on request of a friend to verify the situation of Christine de Vedrines, proved that it had not been treated seriously enough since the interested party was auditioned in the of presence of another member of the family clan under influence...

Rather quickly, however, it became evident that the family's change of attitude was related to the arrival, in their midst, of a murky character, Thierry Pascal Tilly (TPT), who had met Ghislaine de Vedrines, wife of Jean Marchand, when she was Head of a secretarial college, Lille Street in Paris, "The lady Secretary".

This slippery character, implicated in at least ten different bankruptcies, barred from managerial tasks for ten years by a Commercial Court sentence and furthermore with a deferred prison sentence for abuse of social goods.

II. FRENCH LAW INADEQUATE

The first complaints by Jean Marchand were hardly treated seriously by local justice (Lot-et-Garonne).

Even the complaint made in his capacity of President of the Association "Music in Guyenne^[2]", bearing on the embezzlement of approximately 20 000 Euros of public money found in manipulator's bank account, was not followed up.

When I was consulted on this case, I suggested to my client that we should meet the Public prosecutor of Agen^[3] in March 2004.

In spite of the goodwill of this magistrate, we found ourselves up against a legal fact due to a vacuum in the law concerning undue influence.

Indeed, the French Parliament had hesitated to introduce, but had finally decided not to introduce, the concept of undue influence into the Penal code, as had originally been proposed by the MP, Eric Dolige and, only an offence of abuse weakness and ignorance, article 223-15- 2 of the Penal code, (law of June 12, 2001), was introduced; the difficulty of this choice is that the victim has to introduce a complaint, whereas, in this type of case, "the follower under influence" apparently seems to accept his non enviable fate... This is precisely how undue influence operates!

Consequently, the Court declared itself incompetent in a situation when adults from one day to the next decided to radically change their way of life.

The situation was all the more disconcerting for the authorities that Thierry Tilly did not live with the people under influence who remained sometimes several days locked in their castle, all shutters closed...

Indeed, it was later disclosed that the guru acted mainly by telephone and especially by Internet, requiring that all the members of the group, who had all lost track of time because all watches and calendars had been confiscated, should report to him daily through e-mail.

Among the originalities of this case, therefore is brought to light a new way of exercising undue influence: "undue influence through net surfing" by an individual with a rare talent of persuasion able to confuse his victims by exploiting their force and their weakness all at the same time.

The Public Prosecutor was content to launch a financial investigation which in the course of five years would follow step by step the litany of one sale after another of the great majority of the de Vederine's family possessions. The total damage can be estimated at 4. 5 million Euros...

Thus, we looked on, totally helpless though completely conscious of the situation, the long descent into hell of this whole family, which as time went by found itself ruined: psychologically, materially, professionally...

The concept of undue influence would also deserve to be treated by the Civil Code, as a particular facet of the "*vice de consentement*"^[4] which would allow, in civil contracts to reconsider contracts that have already been passed, in particular on the sale of property.

I introduced, in March 2010, an action before the Bankruptcy Court of Agen^[5], demanding the annulment of the sale of Castle Martel owned by the de Védrines family for several centuries and which constitutes the cradle of the family.

The latter was sold under incredible conditions, several members of the family were forced to go without food or sleep for days and the most abused was Christine de Védrines whose consent was obtained after she was tortured over ten days.

This lawsuit accuses the Notary who regularized the acts, and those who bought the Castle very cheaply. It will undoubtedly not be easy to plead since the purchasers are not the torturers, and it will be interesting to see how the Courts will react to this case of figure, because of the deficiencies of the legislation on the matter.

The psychological gurus and other manipulators are often a step ahead of the social sciences, there is therefore a need for the Napoleonic Civil Code to evolve with its times.

III. THE DIFFICULTIES OF INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION:

The transmission of the case to three different examining magistrates first in Agen and then in Bordeaux, made it impossible for this case on money laundering to progress in spite of the fact that two members of the family had succeeded in extirpating themselves in January 2008, but were so exhausted psychologically that they were unable to face a legal battle.

Philippe de Védrines, had in fact been called by the Court in the capacity of "assisted witness" and not as a victim.

Finally, we had to await the telephone contact which I managed to have directly with Christine de Védrines and managed to convince her that she should flee England and Tilly and lodge a complaint in France; indeed, she had recuperated her identity documents to allow her to work in Oxford (90% of her wages and those of the other members of the family group, were taxed by the swindler).

Only after the arrival in Bordeaux of Mrs C. de Védrines, who left behind in England her husband, her three major children, her sister-in-law and nephews, and her mother-in-law, did it become possible for justice finally to take this case into account.

Indeed, this time, we had a plaintiff for abuse of weakness and fraud who furthermore revealed the tortures she had undergone in January 2008 and the six months spent in isolation locked in a room. This acted as an accelerator for the case. The facts being qualified as criminal, they could incur a prison sentence which could go as far as life imprisonment for the supposed guru, pronounced by the Penal Court.

The examining magistrate, Stéphane Lorentz, after having received Christine de Védrines' action for civil damages in a criminal case, delivered an international arrest warrant as of mid-April 2009.

Without taking into account a number of new difficulties which again caused the case to stagnate for seven more months and this, in spite of the warning reporting the damages that people may suffer on recuperating their personal freedom after such an event, reported by the psychoanalyst and the criminologist specialised in victim response who were working with me on this sensitive case.

Indeed, it so happens that the U.K. has not signed the Schengen^[6] agreements, but mainly that European legal co-operation is based on a decision dating from June 13, 2002, which requires a transposition in the legislation of each country.

In this case, the examining magistrate had, on several occasions, to reformulate, requests for co-operation with British justice and this, without success, for several reasons.

- Ø The situation wherein French citizens were being denied their freedom by another French citizen did not seem to be applicable in the U.K.
- Ø The offence of "abuse of weakness" in French law does not exist in English law.
- Ø The examining magistrate was not even authorized to penetrate on British soil, if only to take part in a legal search, since he was asked beforehand to present a detailed list of documents or other elements which were sought ...
Difficult to guess what the guru's safe might contain, knowing that the latter had used many murky legal constructions and combinations in the ten years since the case started!

In the end, a different legal logic, the practice of the common law, a lack of comprehension or even of goodwill, completely gripped the machinery, with the result that the European arrest warrant delivered by the French Judge, could never be used in the United Kingdom!

Even when the examining magistrate brought the case file to the Eurojust Commission in The Hague, British justice was not convinced and it was finally thanks to the guru's carelessness that Tilly was arrested on the occasion of a trip he made to Zurich in October 2009.

This time, as for the film producer Polanski, Swiss justice applied the international arrest warrant, by arresting the party in question at once, in Zurich; the latter gave up the possibility of recourse and agreed to be extradited to France, where he was charged and imprisoned at the Prison of Gradignan (Gironde) since this date.

Even the real and recurring efforts of the Judge liaising between France and England had not made it possible to overcome the difficulties between the French and British legal systems.

Admittedly, each legal system has its legitimate logic, but in practice we have to come to terms with the fact that the European legal co-operation in this case did not function in spite of the “human” distress of the victims.

The arrest of the guru finally obtained, I was far from relieved in this difficult case because seven people still remained under the guru’s undue influence in spite of his being finally out of the way in prison.

IV. ISOLATION AND LACK OF SUPPORT OF THE EXIT COUNSELLING MISSION

"The retrieval" of the seven French nationals who were still in England after the incarceration of Tilly required two five days operations on the spot in November and in December 2009, prepared upstream by specialised psychologists.

At the beginning, we had planned to practice “exit counselling” ^[7] under cover of the examining judge who would have crossed the Channel to question each one of the victims, which would perhaps have allowed us to intervene.

In the days which followed, several television reports convinced us that in fact, the family members, six who were living in Oxford and one in Bristol, were all in the same frame of mind with respect to their mentor.

The various requests for assistance which we had made to the British legal authorities being unsuccessful, I took the responsibility of accompanying the family members who had left the group (best placed to render the situation comprehensible) with a team specially composed for the circumstance of a psychoanalyst and a criminologist specialised in victim response.

This first mission in November 2009 was therefore privately funded.

However, as I wanted this exit counselling operation to be official, I informed Miviludes, the French consular authorities and the French embassy in Britain of what we were undertaking.

On the spot, we encountered a recurring problem since the recluses did not want to see their family and threatened to complain of “harassment”. Threats which were firmly taken into account by the local police thus blocking our attempts of resuming contact.

This was therefore an exhausting experience and a very risky one nervously and humanely speaking.

In spite of these difficulties, we succeeded, on November 11, 2009, to free a member of the family from the undue influence which had fettered him and the latter was to return immediately to France where he constituted himself as civil party to the case, validating all that his mother had been able to indicate on the tortures she had suffered and adding other important criminal offences.

Encouraged by this first success and in spite of the total absence of official support (with the exception of the French Consulate-general in London), I took upon myself to contact the leaders of local government in my area where I preside the association INFO-Sectes Aquitaine.

They all granted their immediate financial support, whether Alain Juppé, Major of Bordeaux, or the President of the Aquitaine region, Alain ROUSSET or the President of the General Council of Gironde, Philippe MADRELLE.

Thanks to this financing, I was able to set up a new even more operational mission, using all the members of the family who were now out of the cult and bringing, in addition to the team of psychiatrist, a driver specialized in this type of operation.

It was out of question, for me, to intervene outside the framework of my professional deontology, and this operation which we called “Bow Windows 2” endeavoured to respect French and English law.

In this respect, I make a point of specifying that contrary to the defamatory assertions of certain Internet sites by cult apologists, exit the counselling which we practiced, has nothing to do with “deprogramming” operations which would try to persuade a subject by the use of force!

The whole operation was undertaken with humanity, in the respect of the people, quite simply to help them back into reality.

This time, the operation was crowned with complete success since we managed to come into contact, on 11 - 12, December, 2009, with the seven remaining members of the family who finally accepted to look at their true situation, and immediately constituted themselves as civil parties to the case.

Thus the first act of the case known as of the “RECLUSES OF MONFLANQUIN” was fortunately completed without suicide, nor violence...

Now however, is the time of psychological, professional and human reconstruction which requires more important means than we have.

The worst moment for the victims is over, however now begins legal time with psychiatric psychological evaluations both of the guru and his victims.

This affair has not finished delivering its secrets and will certainly have new developments.

The Civil suit for the annulment of the sale of the Castle but especially the criminal procedure before the Criminal Court of Gironde will constitute an exemplary procedure on undue influence in Europe.

I hope, for my part that this lawsuit will make public opinion and the press aware of the interest that there would be to make French legislation evolve and also improve European legal cooperation.

To unravel such a case constitutes a true challenge, enthralling certainly, but risky too; to succeed, the first condition is to truly understand what constitutes “undue influence”.

“It is necessary to know how to know to understand, and to understand to act” SPINOZA.

^[1] Because of either their physical state, or of their mental state some [majors](#) are the subject of a mode of protection which derogates from the principle fixed by article 488 of the Civil code which declares fully [able](#) people of the one and other sex having reached age the 18 years.

^[2] **Guyenne** (French pronunciation: [\[ɡujjɛn\]](#); [Occitan](#) *Guiana* [\[giːano\]](#)) is a vaguely defined historic region of south-western France. The **Province of Guyenne**, sometimes called the **Province of Guyenne and Gascony** was a large province of pre-revolutionary France.

^[3] **Agen** (French pronunciation: [\[aʒɛ̃\]](#)) is a [commune](#) in the [Lot-et-Garonne department](#) in [Aquitaine](#) in south-western [France](#).

^[4] “vice de consentement” is the fact that a contractor was mistaken on an element determining his assent or was constrained to contract.

^[5] **Agen** is a French [commune](#) in the Department of [Lot-et-Garonne](#).

^[6] 25 European countries are members of this zone without borders. Britain and Ireland opted out.

^[7] **Exit counselling**, also termed **strategic intervention therapy**, **cult intervention** or **thought reform consultation** is an [intervention](#) designed to persuade an individual to leave a group perceived to be a [cult](#). It is distinguished from [deprogramming](#) by the fact that it's a voluntary procedure, that the follower is treated with respect, can leave any time, and that the decision to stay with the group or leave it is wholly up to the follower and will be accepted as it is by the exit counsellor.