

## Roland Planchar, journalist

Ladies and Gentlemen,

André FREDERIC, the Belgian personality associated with "anti-cultism", was scheduled to speak to you today. He is a Member of Parliament and Vice-President of the Belgian House of Representatives.

Unfortunately, a leg injury made it impossible for him to be with us today. It is I, a simple journalist, who will try to fill the void. I have been familiar with the subject for many years. In 1988, the cult Ecoovie settled in Tilff, the village where I live, 110 km South-East of Brussels. Not long afterwards, the newspaper "La Libre Belgique" revealed the presence of this cult, a criminal investigation was launched. The guru was in prison for several weeks before being expelled from our country.

I wish to clarify that if I recently became Vice President of CIAOSN, whose director Eric Brasseur, spoke to you earlier and whose President, Luc Willems is also present here. It is not in this capacity that I am speaking today, but rather as a journalist and, to a lesser extent, as secretary of the nonprofit association Aviso (Aid to victims of cults). I base myself on journalistic information. Do not be surprised: this is pointillism. I'll draw the picture I wish to show you, rather than by a classic development.

Ah, yes : you will sometimes hear me echoing André FREDERIC.

Another 30 seconds before coming to the point, to situate the major Belgian progress achieved in this field.

When, in 1996, the justice of my country learnt that one of the three leaders of the OTS, the Order of the Solar Temple, was a Belgian, the scandal of the massacres (74 dead, spread across France, Canada and Switzerland) generated much discussion in Brussels.

It was because of this scandal that the House of Representatives set up a parliamentary committee of inquiry on the subject (1996/1997). In its report of 28 April 1997, the Committee noted that nothing or almost existed to deal with such an event in the general guidelines of the State, or in the services likely to be concerned about cults.

The State had reacted but the event was quickly forgotten. We all know that this happens often. So much so that in 2004, Parliament noted this lack of interest and created a working group, Chaired by André Frédéric, to check the progress made with regard to the numerous recommendations of the defunct committee.

And to discover that only one recommendation had been enacted: the creation of CIAOSN. Since then, nothing ... except the important law on abuse of weakness, passed, thanks to André Frédéric, in late 2011. It makes it easier for the courts to incriminate those who, like gurus, abuse, subjugate, enlist or defraud fragile people...

With the exception of legal happenings, we are in expectation of a very important trial against the "church" of scientology, and the sharp increase of some disturbing groups (in Belgium, namely neo-Pentecostalism, health and welfare), nothing to report in this general framework ...

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<sup>1</sup>Belgian Parliamentary Report on Sectarian organizations - 1996, pg.279 (Enquête parlementaire visant à élaborer une politique en vue de lutter contre les pratiques illégales des sectes et le danger qu'elles représentent pour la société et pour les personnes, particulièrement les mineurs d'âge)

Ah yes, the "scientology" trial will be based on an indictment delivered by the Belgian federal Prosecutor, in September 2007, against 14 defendants (including the "church" as a legal entity) for the following prejudices :

- extortion
- fraud
  - illegal practice of medicine
  - interference with medical practice
  - failure to assist a person in danger
  - violations of trade laws
  - violation of privacy laws

and, *last but not least*,

- conspiracy
- forming a criminal organization.

But time flies, and as I'm well aware, the cultist world continues its slow and insidious offensive on the world of politics and public affairs. Parliamentary experience, pressure, lobbying and infiltration in the institutions are on the menu.

In Germany, as Mr. Carlhoff has just told you, we know that in some Länder the "church of scientology" made attempts to infiltrate the state apparatus. It is a well known fact. Similar complicity by the so-called church seemed to exist within the French judicial establishment - remember how some files mysteriously disappeared ... and Mr. Hirooka just mentioned how the Soka Gakkai, had founded a new political party with the Japanese socialists at the end of the last century.

However, it is not generally known that when the Brussels police conducted a raid on scientology, at the end of 1999, they were staggered to find that a senior officer, of one of the "top five" and the largest Belgian police service, was listed among the followers! No one remembers that the Belgian parliamentary deputies had discovered in 1997, that "in some cases, there are links between political and cultist groups".

And again, to quote the Belgian Parliament :

- 1 - a number of cultist groups are actively exerting political influence and more or less openly constitute themselves into a political party;*
- 2 - Some other groups attempt to infiltrate the political environment with a hidden agenda;*
- 3 - Some groups are accused of benefiting of political support".*

It has also been forgotten in Belgium, that in the '90s, a supposedly cultist group, "The Movement" had created the "Humanist Party" - a party which encouraged the "blank vote". In 1994, the newspaper "Le Soir" accused a number of MPs of offering this "party" the opportunity to present itself on the parliamentary lists, including for the European elections - against all odds and against all logic. How and why ? Mystery!

Also apparently forgotten, that the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (Transcendental Meditation) group, created the "Natural Law Party (NLP)". What was their programme in my country? Introduce meditation - Transcendental of course ... in the school curriculum, in the public sector services, etc. and, but that is my opinion mainly echoed by the general press, a scam to access the new "followers" wallets!

Forgotten, too, that Charles Boniface Ozdemir - who calls himself "Father Samuel" and with his image of very, very dissident priest-healer, rallies followers of what one must really qualify a cult - had presented his own list in the municipal elections of 1994 and later in the 1995 elections under the name of "SAMUEL Party", targeting nothing lower than the Senate.

SAMUEL, who has for years has been at odds with the law and is still in process (for sex crimes and at least one financial crime) is definitely close to the political world. Thus, in 2001, after he bought for 400,000€ (thanks to a subterfuge and abuse of the former owners, the Franciscan Fathers!) the St. Anthony of Padua Church in the Charleroi region (60 km South of Brussels), some apparently unsuspecting politicians unaware of his sulphurous character, were present at the inauguration of his new church.

Incomprehension of the population, when Jean-Claude Van Cauwenberghe, Richard Fournaux and Jacques Van Gompel ostensibly posed for photographers with SAMUEL. The first was President of the Executive of the Walloon Region or geographic half of my country. The second was the Mayor of Charleroi, a city of 200,000 inhabitants and the third was the Mayor of Dinant, a town known world-wide as the birthplace of Adolphe SAX, father of the saxophone. All three are members of the democratic parties at present in power in Belgium. How did SAMUEL manage it? Mystery!

This mystery is even more difficult to understand that SAMUEL, subsequently it is true, obtained the backing of the extreme right: the leaders of the Belgian "Front National", an fact discovered by a magazine<sup>2</sup> and never denied by the far right.

You think that nothing else has happened since? Wrong! Unknown or known, sparring matches are common. Thus, the Belgian press revealed the existence of this little report of the State Security - the main Belgian intelligence service - which usually does a good job. According to a newspaper headline in "La Dernière Heure" of January 17, 2013, the report stated, that "*Scientology infiltrates the Belgo-Congolese community.*" Objective: To expand its activities in the Congo from Brussels.

Let me introduce the four people mentioned, knowing that they have all denied it:

Bertin Mampaka, Member of the Brussel's regional Parliament - we have many parliaments in Belgium - and member of the Social Christian Party's "bureau", in power at present.

Gisèle Mandaila, also Member of the Brussels Parliament, she was Secretary of State, i.e. "junior minister" in the Belgian federal government, when Guy Verhofstadt was Prime Minister.

Pierre Migisha, a former journalist, also a member of the Brussels Parliament, but also a local councilor.

Finally, Justine Kasavubu, daughter of the first President of the Congo, was Minister of Public Services in the first government of Laurent-Désiré Kabila. She has also been Congolese ambassador to Belgium.

Four contacts ? Four politicians...

In the meantime, we had also noticed a closeness to say the least, with personalities of the extreme right. See the two examples below.

At the inauguration of scientology's new European headquarters in Brussels, in January 2010, a "Vlaams Belang" (Flemish nationalist far right party, represented in Parliament), Senator Hugo Coveliers had openly addressed the participants, making his "coming out" as a scientologist. Similarly, Juan Ferreiro, Deputy Director for Religious Affairs in the Spanish Ministry of Justice and Ms Katalin Szomor, a member of the Drugs Committee of the Hungarian Parliament, had done the same. All politicians ...

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<sup>2</sup> RésistanceS.be.

I should also point out that these European headquarters of scientology are not negligible, with some 8,000 m<sup>2</sup> of living space, two cinemas, a chapel, a huge exhibition hall, classrooms, a library etc. I mention this because it is part of the declared strategy of scientologists to dig deep roots in Brussels, the capital of the European Union. And never mind that there are only 2 or 300 Belgian scientologists: they receive reinforcements from France and elsewhere.

Second example: in April 2008, in an article I wrote in the "La Libre Belgique", I revealed that Johan Demol, police commissioner excluded from the force for having long concealed his membership in the "Youth Front", which was a Belgian neo-Nazi organization in the '70s and '80s, was very active on the Internet. In a scientology promotional video, he highly praised Narconon, as you know, a scientology recruitment programme focused on addiction. Why was this a problem?

Because Johan Demol was, at the time, head of the Brussels Vlaams Belang, a political group!

Back to Parliament. In its 1997 report it considered that *"cultist organizations try to approach politicians without revealing their identity. Thus the "church of scientology" attempts to influence certain institutions through a number of organizations it has created: NCLE (National Commission on Law Enforcement and Social Justice) which acts(acted)against Interpol,(...)the European Human Rights and Public Affairs Office, which scientology tries to infiltrate in the European institutions"*.

Still in Belgium, since it is from its Belgian HQ in Tilff and Brussels, that the cult Ecoovie had attempted to infiltrate government agencies, and it had almost succeeded, through the World Association of Twin Cities and to the amazement of the great majority of its honest members, who had, too late understood the scam.

Whether yesterday or today, small or large groups, political and institutional infiltration remain a "must" among these people! In fact, not for everyone. Jehovah's Witnesses refuse all links with politics. They can only work for the Kingdom of God, and not for the temporal authorities. Which, incidentally, does not prevent them doing a little lobbying in the EU institutions now and then.

Let's talk about the EU. How does it react on the subject? I asked the assistant of a Belgian MEP, Marcel Conradt who is a historian, specialist of questions of lobbying, he even wrote a book about them in 2008: "Le cheval de Troie. Sectes et lobbies religieux à l'assaut de l'Europe". His answer to my question was as short and clear: "The cult: it is simply a "no" concept for the European Union". Why ? Because the Union is blocked by Article 17 of the Treaty of Lisbon, which states that it is not competent for matters of beliefs or non- beliefs. This is the competence of each individual State !

Yet , again , what we call cults, are present on the fringes of political institutions such as our ("big thingy") meaning the European Union institutions . It is no coincidence that the "church of scientology" bought a luxury building at 91 , rue de la Loi , Brussels, in September 2003. It has its "European Office for Public Affairs and Human Rights" (Human rights with a scientology flavour, of course) . But this "office" is a stone's throw from the heart of Europe and its Parliament , in short, what we call the " European District".

I'm pushing through an open door, the European Parliament recognizes a large number of lobbies within its walls. Some of the movements in question are present in the same way as food lobbies, pharmaceuticals, petrol, etc., even though, in the specific case of such groups the EU, uses the term "partners" rather than "lobbies", they have become *de facto* partners.

This is true for the raelians and scientologists, which are the most obvious and some charismatic movements. But they are not alone, among many others, i.e. Jehovah's Witnesses

or Mormons, sometimes individual cases occur when specific contacts are taken with one or other parliamentarian.

Does all this explain that in the '90s, a parliamentary report on sectarian groups has simply never been presented to the MEP's vote?

I'll speak of the experience of André Frédéric, remember he is a member of Parliament, he was head of the working group on "cults" and that he is Vice-President of the Chamber of Representatives, a very high office. He knows what pressure or harassment mean.

For example, when he headed the parliamentary group, he received a variety of messages/packages of foul origin, including a book of scientology propaganda. He had returned this to the sender, with a message: *"Stop bothering me with your cultist propaganda."* The very next night, and for many other nights, when he was at home there were very unpleasant phone calls, with disturbing rumblings and other loud noises. Finally things calmed down.

Another time, it's Andre Frédéric speaking: *"During question time, after a lecture I gave in 2010 in the Wallonian Brabant, two well known scientologists accused me of lacking scientific precision because I had spelled Ron Hubbard's name with a single "b" in my PowerPoint presentation! A ridiculous detail, but one of these guys sought me out in the in the conference hall and threatened me: "Now, Mr. Frédéric, we'll take care of you!". I must admit that this did not have serious consequences, but such methods are not reassuring"*.

I quote André Frédéric again: *"I also note", he told me, "that several members of the Belgian Parliament receive apparently neutral phone calls, just to invite them to speak about religious freedom within the framework of recognized religions, but when they follow up the invitation they discover that their interlocutors only speak about scientology. Another unscrupulous method!"*

Another of André Frédéric's anecdotes: *"When one enters the Belgian Federal Parliament, expected to be the most secure spot in the country, there are about 150 boxes for the members' mail. This is a protected area that is accessible to a handpicked few and to the parliamentary ushers. One day in 2011 however, we were unpleasantly surprised to find the 150 mailboxes have been stuffed with scientology's propaganda.." How did they manage? How did they have access? Mystery?*

Finally, having failed its infiltration attempts into politics as completely as it wished, scientology attacked. And to do this it used a relay already contaminated.

André Frédéric: *"Strangely one of two attacks against the law on abuse of weakness that I was carrying before the Parliament of my country, was made through a former colleague, a member of the Flemish Liberal Party."*

Through a politician...

A last and brief return to the report of the Belgian Chamber of 1997, in conclusion it had noted that: *"It is clear that several harmful sectarian organizations share totalitarian ideas that can be considered undemocratic, as can be seen from the review of the basic texts of the following movements: the Angel Albert, Rael, the Universal White Brotherhood, Sukyo Mahikari, the church of scientology, New Acropolis, Jehovah's Witnesses."*

Examples? In his writings, Hubbard attacked the way democracy works: *"There is no place for the weak, there cannot be any. The strong must be the leaders and if the weak do not follow, there can be no place for them."*

The Raelian Movement prefers a "Geniocracy" to a Democracy: *only those* whose IQ is higher by more than 50% *to the* average would be eligible. As for the sick and victims of malformations, they are, and I quote once more, "*the symbol of failure and therefore unbearable for the 'creators'. They should be excluded*" How?

New Acropolis, said the Belgian commission report, "*spreads a totalitarian doctrine. This movement has a rigid pyramidal and military structure (...) It uses (... internally ...) a series of symbols belonging to Nazi symbolism (eagle, axe, and even the Roman salute).*"

Hence I shudder - we may all shudder! - at the idea that such movements seek to befriend policymakers, whoever they may be. And that, too often, they succeed.

Ladies and gentlemen I have had my say!