



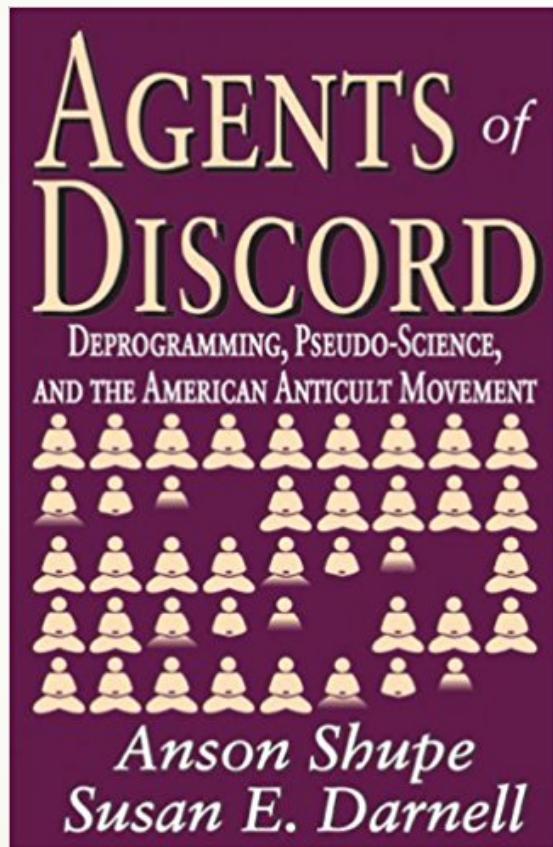
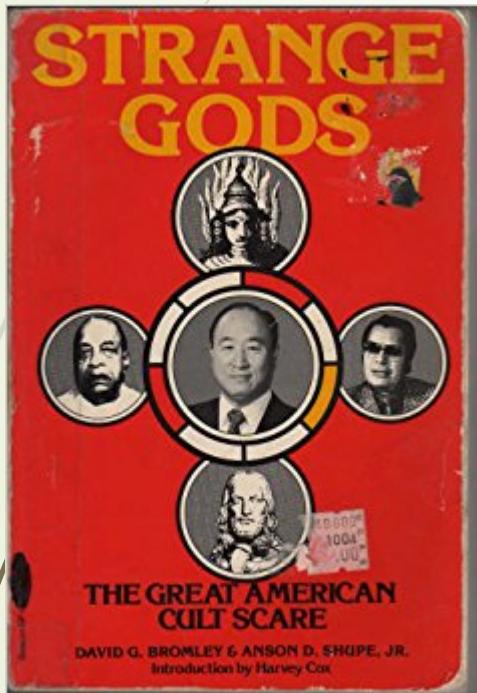
# Cult Wars in Odessa

The Applied Sciences Association and the Anti-Cult Movement

Massimo Introvigne

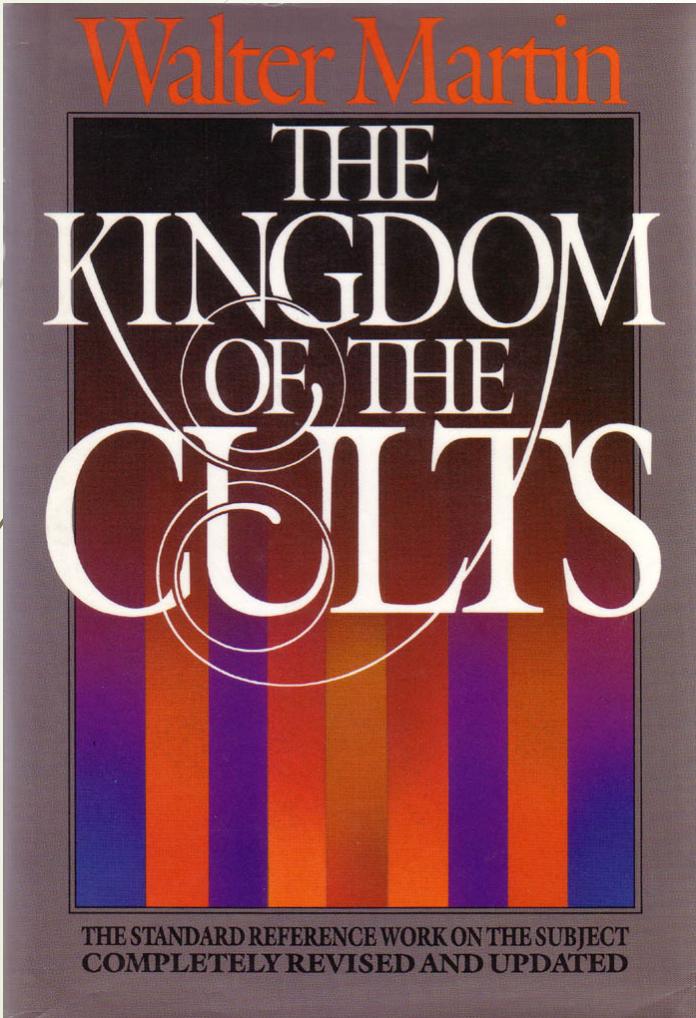
European Association for the Study of Religion Annual Conference  
Leuven – September 19, 2017

# The Anti-Cult Movement



- ▶ The anti-cult movement is one of the topics most studied by scholars of new religious movements, particularly during the “cult wars” of the 1970s and 1980s. Academics criticized its notion of “cult,” based on what they believed was a pseudo-scientific notion of “brainwashing”

# Anti-Cult and Counter-Cult



- ▶ In 1993, I suggested that there were in fact two different oppositions to “cults.” A Christian counter-cult movement criticized cults for their “heretical” doctrines, while a secular (and sometimes openly anti-religious) anti-cult movement claimed it was not interested in doctrines but only in the anti-social behavior of “cults.” The distinction was widely adopted by scholars

Left: In 1965, Walter Martin (1928-1989) published one of the first Christian counter-cult books

# The Crisis of the Anti-Cult Movement

- ▶ In the West, “cult wars” ran out of speed long ago. In recent years, the anti-cult movement (ACM) experienced a crisis for several reasons:
  - after 9/11, many governments focused their interest and resources on radical Islam rather than “cults”;
  - the main targets of the ACM either declined (The Family) and became less visible, at least in the West (Unification Church, ISKCON), or proved very capable of resisting in court to official and ACM action (Scientology);
  - a “judicialization of religious freedom” (as sociologist Jim Richardson called it) led courts to recognize the rights of controversial “cults” in several jurisdictions and, from 1990 on, the ACM lost a number of key court cases

# ACM Strategies: 1. Finding New Targets



- ▶ As old targets either proved formidable opponents in court, or became less newsworthy because of their reduced visibility, the anti-cult movement needed new targets to prove its continuing relevance
- ▶ It found a treasure chest in the long lists of “heretics”, prepared in various countries by Christian counter-cultists, and quickly extended to them the accusations of brainwashing

## 2. Playing the “Save the Children” Card

# ENSLAVED BY THE CULT OF SEX

**BORN** into an evil cult – called the Children of God, sisters Celeste, Kristina and Julianne Jones were abused from the age of three. Torn from their parents, their childhood was dominated by the warped cult leader David Berg, who – from his death in the Daily Mail in 1994 – still exists. While their father, the son of a British Army officer, is still in the cult, the three sisters have escaped. Now they are telling all. By CELESTE JONES, 32, a clinical psychologist, who lives in Somerset with her eight-year-old daughter, giving a harrowing account of life in the grip of a sinister madness.

**T**HERE is an old, grubby home in my childhood which I sometimes sit down to watch and which never fails to make me shudder. It starts innocently enough. I am six years old, a small, curly-haired child dressed in pipe music for the camera. But this is no ordinary family movie.

As the camera focuses, you can see that I am naked. And I am quite well aware of it. I remember filming the video as if it was yesterday. I was told to stand there, it made me to rub my bottom and to wobble for the camera.

The tragedy is that already at that age I had been sexually assaulted. Quite often, sexual grooming was an everyday part of my life. I was born to ordinary, middle-class English parents and had a perfectly normal childhood. But my parents – a former public schoolboy and rather naive young woman – had joined the cult of David Berg, the leader of the Children of God cult, in which adult children were considered the highest expression of love.

David Berg, the cult leader David Berg, or ‘Mo’ as he called himself, claimed that God wanted everyone to become part of a sexual experience. The result was a childhood of abuse and pain.

It should have been different. My father, Christopher Jones, was born in Devon in 1938 and joined the Children of God in 1972. My mother, Rebecca, was born in 1937 and had a secure upbringing in the south of England. Her father was a civil engineer and her mother a housewife. Rebecca was recruited during a visit to her school by the Children of God who were staying at the same hotel. She was pregnant and married. Berg’s wife was pregnant too. They married a year later in 1974.

My parents’ first child, Kristina, was sent to join a commune in Bombay which was part of the cult, and where she stayed until she was 18 months later.

Months later, Berg decreed that sex was the highest expression of love and giving it was called ‘sharing’.

People would stand and staring their bodies with others, but after the birth of my brother, David, in April 1978, Mum became pregnant again.

When she met another family member, Joshua, she decided to return to England with Kristina and David. But I

was naked in his bedroom. ‘You’re so sexy!’ he would say.

One man, Manuel, helped teach us our dance routines. As I slept in a campsite, he would pull me up and wake me, pulled down my pants and started fondling me.

‘This is what adult women do!’, he explained. I was about seven years old at the time. I tried to scream, but nothing came out. When I watched the adults having sex, they were doing it like animals.

Once a week, our commune would gather for a dance night, and the adults would have sex in front of us. I would cry and scream during the day, everything would stop for so-called ‘Cuddle Time’ – a euphemism for group sex.

I also witnessed the sexual clutches of my teacher, Johnny Appleseed (some of the cult members took surnames of fruit). He and other adults were having sex around us. When he was fondling me, he said a prayer as I lay in terror.

In June 1981, my half-sister Julianne was born. My parents’ marriage had moved to a commune and during one sermon, the leader stripped off his clothes. Everyone, including the children, obediently followed.

Everyone sat together naked, arms were crossed over their heads and were instructed to take a sip from the communion cup and pass it on to the next person. I was so shocked by the wine come round, my adult partner took hold of my mouth and forced his mouth on mine. It was disgusting.

In the commune, I was often accused of being a bad influence and punishment. Once, when I angered the leader, Paul, he forced me to stand and stare at him, telling me to hold out my hand and

**Her parents were utterly middle class, yet for 25 years they allowed this girl to be abused by a secretive and bizarre cult. Now, free of its clutches, she reveals**



**Victim:** Celeste, nine, and, above, her parents, Rebecca and Christopher Jones

found another affidavit, which Kristina had written, claiming she had been abused from the age of three by grown men including her stepfather. I felt that I knew instantly that she wasn’t lying because I had suffered the same abuse. I was determined to leave The Family – it was the only world I knew.

Over the next year and a half, I appeared on a number of television programmes, including the BBC’s Newsnight and the BBC, to deny the stories my mother and Kristina were openly telling.

After a few days, I flew back to the cult. I was pregnant and I wanted to leave. But I wanted to go back to that, but I was so indoctrinated that I didn’t know how to leave.

It was to be several years before a life-changing event made me realise I had to escape. I fell pregnant by a

- ▶ The ACM also realized that in our society there is a widespread alarm about sexual abuse of both adult and children, and emphasized that “cults” should be fought in order to save their “victims” from being “enslaved by cults of sex”

### 3. Find New Allies

- Third, while it once despised Christian counter-cultists as bigoted “heresy hunters,” the struggling anti-cult movement now realizes that it should reach out and find allies among Christian counter-cultists, the more so because the latter in some countries have more money and power than the secular anti-cultists ever dreamed of



Above: Russian Orthodox counter-cultists meet anti-cultists, some of them self-styled atheists, in Sakhalin, Russia (2014)

# The Russian Connection



- ▶ In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it became clear to Western anti-cultists that Russia was devoting unprecedented resources to the fight against “cults.” In 2017, the Supreme Court in Russia confirmed the “liquidation” of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Steps were taken towards a similar “liquidation” of several other “cults”

# Russian Counter-Cultists



- ▶ Although the Russian state is allegedly secular, it relies heavily for defining and persecuting “cults” on the counter-cultists of the Saint Irenaeus of Lyons Centre, which represents the Russian Orthodox Church. Its leader, Alexander Dvorkin, became the president of the Justice Ministry’s Expert Council for Conducting State Religious Studies Expert Analysis, a key actor in the campaigns aimed at banning “cults”

## FECRIS and Dvorkin



In 2009, Dvorkin became the vice-president of the European anti-cult federation FECRIS. As economic support to FECRIS by other countries is drying out, Russian hegemony on European anti-cultism is a concrete possibility. It is also paradoxical, because most European anti-cult organizations are deeply secular, while Dvorkin represents a radical faction of the Russian Orthodox Church

# Political Connections

## “ЧЕРНЫЙ” PR

### Александр Невеев

кандидат психологических наук  
член The American Society for  
Training and Development

#### Целью

такой деятельности может быть либо уничтожение бизнеса, либо подрыв деловых связей.



#### Черный PR

как целенаправленное распространение негативной информации, касающейся какого-либо неодушевленного или одушевленного объекта.

#### Площадки для размещения:

- \*Сетевые СМИ
- \*Форумы
- \*Блоги
- \*Гостевые книги



- In Russia, counter-cultists have tried to deepen their connection with politics, without hiding their religious background. A leading critic of “cults” and associate of Dvorkin, psychologist Alexander Neveev, is part of a project for an “Academy of Orthodox Politicians”

# Finding New “Cults”

- ▶ Western anti-cultists, confronted with economic problems and decreasing support by governments, may have a mythical image of Dvorkin's group as almost omnipotent in Russia. This is not the case. Dvorkin has also critics in Russian political and religious milieus, and needs to remind the public opinion of his relevancy by continuously finding new “dangerous cults”





## The Applied Sciences Association

- ▶ It is this background that explains the belated “cult wars” episode that happened in Odessa in 2014-2016. The group under attack as a “cult” was not a new religious movement. The Applied Sciences Association is an umbrella organization for three research institutes founded by Oleg Maltsev: Fate Analysis, a center for studying and teaching martial arts and weapon handling, and the Memory Institute

# Origins of the Movement

- ▶ Oleg Maltsev (b. 1975 in Odessa in a Jewish family) graduated in 1992 at Moscow Cadet Corps under Viktor Pavlovič Svetlov (pseud. of Avraam Michelsohn, 1919-2002), whom he regards as the true founder of these associations. In the same year 1992, Maltsev established in Moscow TOROSS (Complex Territorial Analytical Consulting Agency), followed in 1998 in Vienna by an organization called The Russian Science in Europe and in 2009 by The Crimean Research Base in Sevastopol. He moved to Odessa in 2014, with several key disciples, before the Russian occupation of Crimea



# The Doctrine of the Pedestal



- ▶ The key concept of the Applied Sciences Association is a doctrine Maltsev calls “Pedestal” (постамент) and claims he learned from Svetlov. It teaches: “do what you have to do and control your future.” “Pedestal” offers the tools to implement one’s tasks, achieve results, and determine one’s own future. It is not competitive, Maltsev claims, as “everyone has his or her own way to the top of achievements”

# Three Main Areas

- There are three main areas of what Maltsev prefers to call “scientific research” rather than theory or doctrine: psychological, physical, and spiritual. Having left the Russian military, Maltsev traveled throughout Europe and encountered the theories of Leopold Szondi (1893-1986), a Hungarian Jewish psychoanalyst who survived Bergen-Belsen and proposed a third way of deep psychology and memory studies, between Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961)



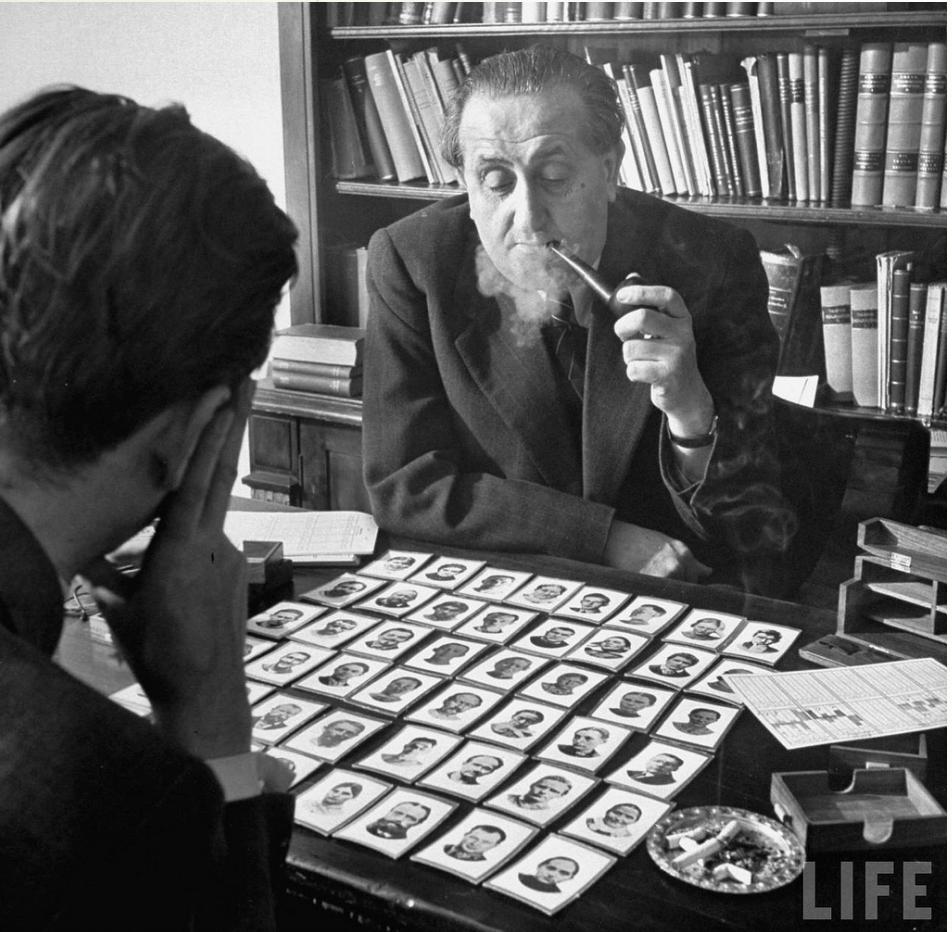
Maltsev visiting the grave of Szondi in Zurich

# 1. Psychology: The Szondi Connection

- Szondi, befriended and esteemed by both Freud and Jung, was never as successful as they were, although his "Szondi test" is still used. Pictures of people suffering from mental disorders and "deviants" are shown to the patients and their reactions noted. Szondi became well-known when he tested the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962) with his test



# Fate Analysis

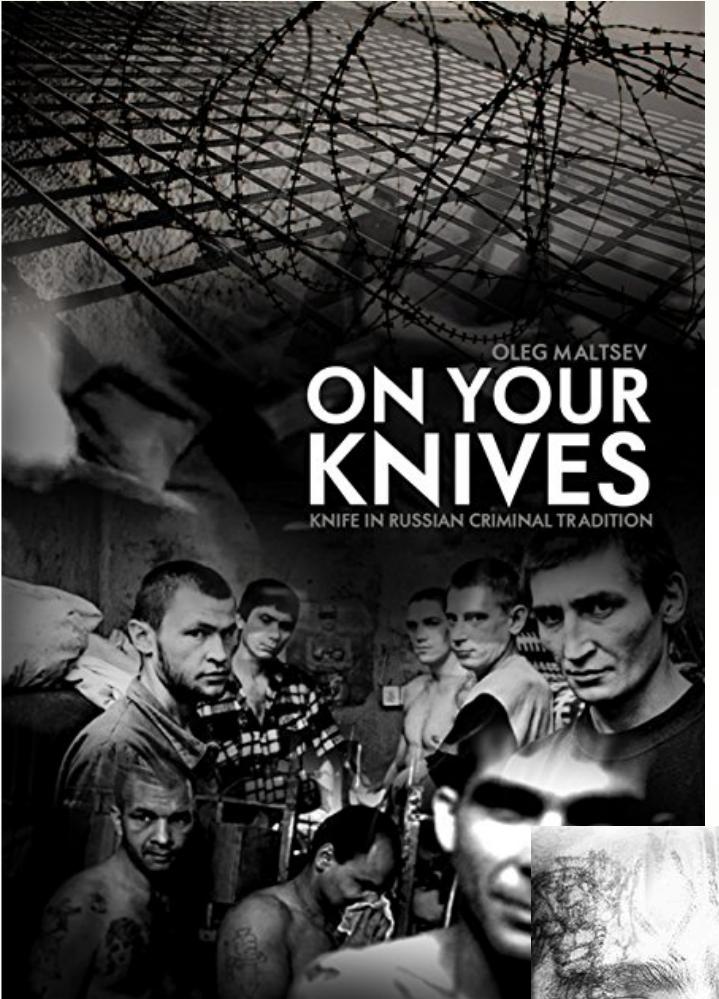


- ▶ Freud focused on the individual unconscious and Jung on the collective unconscious. Szondi privileged the family unconscious, claiming that the genes of our ancestors of many generations are also present in our unconscious. In a way, our ancestors are there and determine many of our choices. However, when we realize this, we can also change our fate and not be totally determined by our ancestors' presence in our psychical field. For Maltsev, the practical importance of Szondi's "Fate Analysis" lies in the promise that we can change our fate

## 2. The Body: Martial Arts

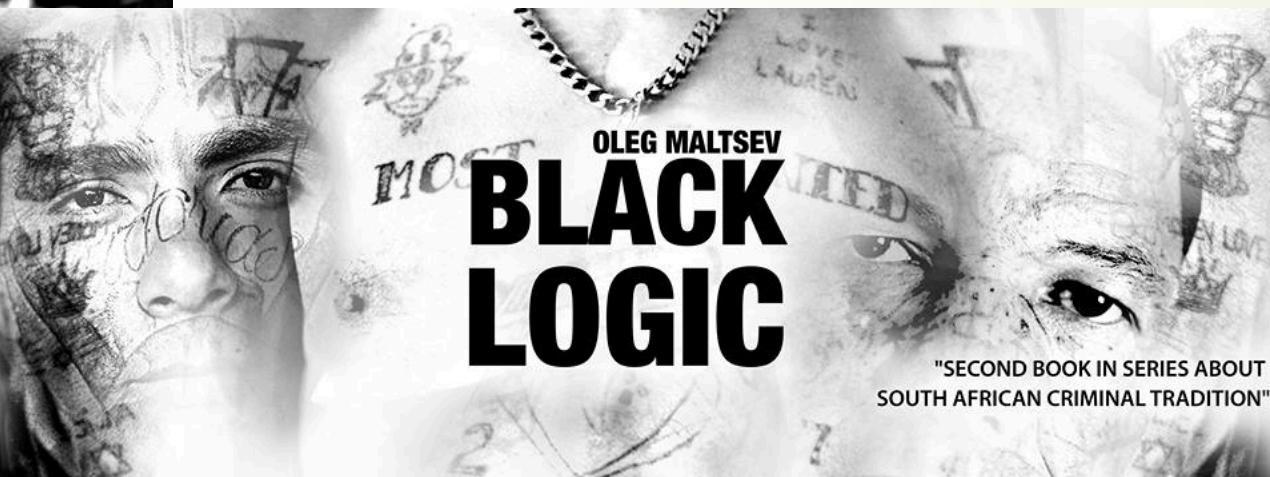
- ▶ The second area where the Applied Sciences Association operates is related to martial arts and weapon handling. Maltsev is particularly interested in certain particular weapons, whose mastery, he believes, is more psychological than a matter of force. Such are the Italian weapons popular in the Renaissance, including the Venetian stiletto





## Criminal Traditions

- ▶ Maltsev believes that an ancient and lost wisdom about weapon handling survives where it is rarely sought: in the criminal traditions of several countries, from South Africa to Russia, Italy, Spain, Mexico, the Philippines. While obviously not condoning their uses for criminal purposes, Maltsev carries on expeditions all over the world to reconstruct traditions of weapon handlings and use in the criminal underworld



### 3. Memory and Spirituality

- ▶ Techniques for handling some weapons, Maltsev claims, were also developed by certain religious and chivalric orders in the Renaissance and before, and were connected to their secret spirituality. In his later writings, although he had abandoned organized religion, Szondi concluded that faith is necessary for integration and elaborated a theory of spirituality. Maltsev believes that the study of memory may offer a solid theoretical basis for this theory



# An Esoteric View of History



- Maltsev's quest for spirituality also includes a hermetic view of history, and the persuasion that a good part of history taught in schools has been lost or fabricated. His search for hidden secrets in history does not make Maltsev popular, particularly because he often exposes the wrongdoings of organized religion, including the support offered by some in the Orthodox Church (such as monks at Mount Athos) to Nazism and anti-Semitism

# A Law Firm and a Newspaper



- ▶ Maltsev is persuaded that the pedestal doctrine and its tools can offer new insights in a wide variety of human fields, including science, history, business, journalism, and the practice of law. He received a Ph.D. in psychological sciences in 2017 but he is also a law graduate and lawyer, and founded with lawyer Olga Panchenko (left) the Redut law firm. He also inspired the creation of the *Unsolved Crimes* online newspaper, originally devoted to murder cases and now quite active in fighting anti-cultists and other critics of Maltsev

# Anti-Cult Attack



- ▶ In 2012, a lady called Maria Kapar attended one of Maltsev's courses. She said she was unhappy with the course and its cost, while the Applied Sciences Association claimed she tried to use the group's name for illegal activities in Odessa. As the conflict escalated, in 2014 Kapar contacted Neveev (left – and presumably Dvorkin), who (apparently without having performed any search on the group) confirmed that she had been the victim of a typical “cult”

# Standard Accusations

- ▶ Happy to be able to add a new “cult” to their list, Neveev and Dvorkin posted Web pages against Maltsev’s “Odessa Templars” (a name he never used). They accused the group, inter alia, of connections with the medieval Order of Knights Templar, setting up a military organization, brainwashing, fraud, and sexual improprieties, all standard accusations they use against dozens of “cults” in Russia



NEVEEV

Neveev

Sapientia est potentia

Сладкая ложь несуществующего академика



# Contacting the Media

- ▶ The Russian counter-cultists also suggested that Kapar contact the local media in Odessa. She found some journalists particularly hostile to “cults” and others interested in sensational news, including Maria Kovalyova, Dmitry Bakaev, Vyacheslav Kasim, Evgenii Lysyi, Oksana Podnebesna. Some, such as Oksana Podnebesna, had reasons of hostility against the Redut Law Firm because of criminal cases (unrelated to Maltsev or “cults”) the firm won on behalf of defendants the reporters regarded as guilty



# The Yalovaya Case



- ▶ The most serious incident involved Yulia Yalovaya, a 20-year old employee of the Redut Law Firm, also working for the *Unsolved Crimes* newspaper. Her mother read the reports against the Applied Sciences Association and got in touch with the Russian counter-cultists who, according to her daughter, had her pay \$ 12,000 for financing Yulia's "rescue"

# Confrontation in a Police Station



- The mother then asked policemen to bring Yulia to the police station for questioning, claiming a “cult” was recruiting her into a “prostitution ring”

# Resisting Counter-Cultists

Центр религиоведческих исследований во имя священномученика Иринея Лионского

Центр создан по благословению Святейшего Патриарха Алексия II, занимается проблемами новых религиозных движений, сект и культа.

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[Главная](#) » [Оккультные](#) » [«Академия славянских прикладных наук» \(новое название - «Академия альтернативного знания»\)](#) » В Одессе тоталитарная секта устроила травлю журналиста

### В Одессе тоталитарная секта устроила травлю журналиста - 28.05.15



В Одессе тоталитарная секта имени «шамана» Олега Мальцева выпускает видеоролики клеветнического и оскорбительного характера в отношении журналиста «7 телеканала» Марии Ковалевой.

Представитель СМИ вместе с группой телевизионщиков в своих программах раскрывают преступную деятельность Мальцева, рассказывая, как одесситы по своему неведению попадают в рабство сектантам.

А недавно Мальцев начал заманивать молоденьких девушек под предлогом кастингов начинающих актрис. Одесситкам с ходу предлагают роли 2-го плана, но с одним условием – чтобы девушка прошла учебу в некой школе актерского мастерства. Через время несостоявшиеся кинозвезды оказываются под

влиянием секты, уходят из семьи и перестают общаться с друзьями.

Dvorkin and Neveev may be powerful in Russia, but their friends in Odessa were less well-known and could receive but a limited help by their Russian counterparts, if not through articles posted on the Internet. Dvorkin himself was forbidden to enter Ukraine since 2014, because of his positions on the Donetsk issue. Yulia Yalovaya was released thanks to the efforts of the Redut Law Firm and the journalists who had spread the anti-cult narratives about the Applied Sciences Association were hit by lawsuits. Some, such as Dmitry Bakaev, lost their jobs

# Protect Your Dignity



- Unsolved Crimes produced a docudrama movie, *Protect Your Dignity* (left), about the Yalovaya case, who had favorable reviews internationally and further damaged the case and the reputation of the anti-cultists. Their propaganda against the Applied Sciences Association is being kept alive on the web, but does not seem to disturb the progress of the group

# Martial Arts Feuds

## Why HEMA Should be Concerned



LIQUIFIED IGNORANCE - ALTERNATIVE DESTREZA · DOMENICA 16 LUGLIO 2017

Many of you are aware of the postings in various HEMA forums / groups by Oleg Maltsev. Oleg is part of a group that has been labelled the “Odessa Templars”. The Russian Orthodox Church have accused them of a number of things including fraud, kidnap, sexual assault and threatening behaviour.

- ▶ Martial arts are a field not less contentious than spirituality, with groups and masters liberally trading accusations of inauthenticity and forged credentials. It is not surprising that Maltsev has been involved in these controversies. What is more unusual is that Russian counter-cultists have tried to exploit these conflicts, contacting those who have reasons of hostility against Maltsev and trying to export their narrative about “cults”

# What Did We Learn?



Sociologist James T. Richardson interviewed by *Unsolved Crimes*

- ▶ During the Odessa cult wars of 2014-2016, the Applied Sciences Association contacted several Ukrainian and international scholars of religions, asking suggestions on how to understand and confront the anti- and counter-cultists. Although it is not a religion, the controversy had the positive effect of attracting the attention of scholars on a group with a unique worldview none of them was familiar with

# Anti-Cult Developments



- ▶ Scholars also learned something about the current status of anti-cultism. The incident was further evidence of the cavalier approach to the issue of “cults” by Dvorkin, Neveev, and their Russian colleagues. On the surface, they simply suffer, compared to more sophisticated “cult awareness” organizations in the West such as the International Cultic Studies Association (who are also in dialogue with academic scholars), of a lack of understanding and information



## No Homework

- ▶ Russian and Ukrainian anti-cultists also failed to study the (admittedly complicated) theories and activities of Maltsev in the fields of history, psychology, and martial arts. Their criticism was reduced to a few isolated quotes, without depth or context

## Did You Say “Cult”?

- Less charitably, one can also note that, in order to assert their relevance (and, if one believes Yulia Yalovaja, make some quick money), these counter-cultists were prepared to stretch the use of the word “cult” beyond the limits not only of their knowledge, but of ridicule. Even a law firm, Redut, was called a “cult”!



# The Orthodox Connection



- ▶ More in depth, I personally believe that criticism by Maltsev about the historical wrongdoings of the Orthodox Church was an important factor in explaining what happened. When, because of martial arts quarrels or other reasons, the Russian Web attacks against the Applied Arts Association were used in other countries, the paradox of contemporary Western anti-cultism became apparent

# The Anti-Cult Paradox



- ▶ Anti-cultism was born as a secular business but, because of the political and financial prominence in its organizations of well-funded Russian Orthodox religious opponents of “cults,” many in the anti-cult world today dance to the tune of Russian personalities. But the latter’s agenda protects in the first place the interests of some sectors of the Moscow Patriarchate and Russian politics



► For further information: [maxintrovigne@gmail.com](mailto:maxintrovigne@gmail.com)