

Odessa : No parking for the « cults »

By Massimo Introvigne

CESNUR (23.07.2018) – http://www.cesnur.org/2018/mi_odessa.htm
– In June 2018, The Journal of CESNUR published a special issue on the Applied Sciences Institute, an organization founded by Dr Oleg Maltsev and headquartered In Odessa, Ukraine. On July 13, 2018, it was involved in a bizarre incident, which deserves some attention.

The principles of the Applied Sciences Institute apply to a variety of fields, including the practice of law, and their network of organizations and companies include a law firm called Redut. Outside the law firm, there is an area that belongs to it. They believe they have a right to put there devices preventing persons not authorized by the law firm from parking, which they did. The City of Odessa thinks otherwise, and they asked the law firm to dismantle the devices.

They refused, and the following day they sent 20 municipal guards in camouflage plus 20 plainclothes agents to forcibly dismantle the devices, which employees of the law firm protested. Journalists of the “Unsolved Crimes” newspaper, which is located nearby and is also part of the larger Applied Sciences Institute organization, came to film the scene. The municipal guards used tear gas to disperse the protesters, and both the journalists and one attorney were beaten with rubber clubs. One journalist, according to his own account, was taken away in a Municipal Guard car, beaten again, and thrown away on the road.

The spokesperson of the Deputy Mayor of Odessa issued a press release, where he justified the Municipal Guard’s activities by claiming that the Guard was attacked with a gas pistol

(which is denied by the Redut law firm) and that those beaten belonged to the "Maltsev Cult." This reference is crucial, as it shows that the disproportionate use of force in connection with a trivial administrative incident reflects the hostile attitude of the Municipal Guard and other Odessa authorities against groups designated as "cults."

This is somewhat surprising, considering that in Ukraine in general a critical attitude prevails against anti-cult activities in nearby Russia, and attacks on the Applied Sciences Institute originated from Russian anti-cultists such as Alexander Dvorkin, who has been declared persona non grata in Ukraine and prevented from entering the country.

See videos at http://www.cesnur.org/2018/mi_odessa.htm

Chronology of events July 12-13, 2018

July 12, 2018

Unsolved Crimes (23.07.2018) – At about 12.00 in a parking lot on the Nekrasova street #1: two employees of the Department of the Municipal Guard and one "Municipal Guard" car. About four people were in a camouflage type of clothing and three others in civilian clothing.

There was a dispute which lasted 15 minutes regarding the illegality of their actions for dismantling. Opinions differed. Attorney Panchenko said that she will call the police, let them sort things out and that there should not be any action taken before the arrival of the police.

Despite this, at about 12.15 – 12.30 pm the employees of the "Municipal Guard" tried to start dismantling constructions that belonged to a law company. Two security officers of the company tried to prevent them. "Municipal Guard" outnumbered them. The obstacle of the Law company was in the following: one person picked up a coil with a wire from an electric saw, which was connected to the power unit found in the car of the

“Municipal Guard”, and simply tried to put it aside. At this point he was attacked by 2 people from the “Municipal Guard”, a fight ensued, Law Company employee was struck twice in the groin. While turning he touched one of the attackers with his elbow, as a result of which his cheekbone area was cut open.

The director of LC (Law Company) called the police several times, but no one came.

After the scuffle ended, the deputy chief of the MG (Municipal Guard) arrived, as well as 2 more cars with their employees. He refused to show his identity card and to give his name. He behaved defiantly and ordered to continue dismantling.

At around 13.00-14.00 the patrol police arrived. The police asked for the document on the basis of which the dismantling was being carried out. They were provided with a poorly made copy of some document which didn't have neither signatures nor stamps. The police began to demand the original document, but the others did not have it. The police told everyone to go to the Primorsky police station, but the MG staff who arrived refused to go and said that they will continue to dismantle. The police blocked them from doing so by placing their car along the parking lot of the LC, an investigative group was called.

Before the arrival of the operative-investigative group, those who arrived abruptly got into their cars and fled.

On the same day the LC filed a complaint to the police.

The journalists that were there on this day: Konstantin Slobodyanuk, editor-in-chief of the “Unsolved Crimes” newspaper; Stas Dombrovsky, journalist of the “Kakogo” newspaper were phoned and informed by their acquaintances from the cafe opposite from LC parking lot about the incident; Darina Karuna, editor-in-chief of the “Obshestvennyi Priboi” newspaper – made the report the same evening and gave an editorial task to 3 journalists to visit the place the next

day and interview the employees of the LC.

July 13, 2018

At around 10.00 am, LC lawyers Panchenko and Tarasenko, as well as lawyer of LC Kuzmenko were having coffee in a cafe opposite to the parking lot of LC "Redut" (which is located 5 meters from their office). There was a journalist Slobodyanuk. The journalist of "Obshestvennyi Priboi" Anatoly Poryadko was in the same cafe, speaking before the interview with an employee of LC Evgeniy Belousov.

At this point, about 15 people in civilian clothing came to the parking lot. The attorney Panchenko was surprised at this and started filming on her phone. After those who arrived realized that they were being videotaped, they divided into 2 groups and dispersed in different directions.

About 10-15 minutes later the car of the "Municipal Guard" came to the parking lot. One man came out of the car and started doing something in the trunk. Simultaneously, 2 journalists from the OP and 2 LC employees approached the parking lot and the journalists began interviewing LC employees on video cameras.

At that moment two more cars showed up, people came out in the uniform and rushed to the LC parking lot to dismantle the constructions that are the property of LC. Director of LC attorney Panchenko ran up and began demanding so that people introduce themselves, show documents, but no one reacted. A member of LC who saw several attackers used a pepper spray. Several people began beating him with clubs, they were beating him even when he was already sitting on the sidewalk and had his hands on his head. At the same time, the MG began to use tear gas and beat the journalist Miroslav Bekchiv with clubs. Bekchiv states that he was in the parking lot and saw people in uniform that were rushing at him, he was pushed in the back, there were about 10 attackers, he was frightened for his

own life and for the life of the LC employees who were beaten up clubs, and in order to stop the people from being killed he sprayed gas cartridge. After that, he was beaten up, he was chased after in the parking lot and on the street, as a result, three employees of the MG caught him, grabbed him by the throat, two men were holding his hands, and a third man sprayed the tear gas right into his face from a distance of less than a meter. After that, despite attorney Tarasenko trying to stop them, four men pushed him into the car, and took to the district department, he was beaten up on the way (in the car). Journalist Tkachenko was also beaten up because he was filming, he was beaten by several people, somebody tried to snatch his video camera from him and insulted him. From the force of impact, the journalist Tkachenko's one shoe flew out. The journalist Slobodyanyuk, who at the time of the attack was sitting with lawyers in a cafe, saw what was happening, turned on the video on his phone and approached the incident. He did nothing except tape things on his phone. He shouted that he was a journalist so that all participants could be heard, moreover, the day before these events, he personally showed his ID to the head of the MG which is on the video. To ensure that Slobodyanyuk was unable to record the faces of the attackers at a close range, he was sprayed with gas in his face, he was beaten with clubs and fell to the ground. At the moment when Slobodyanyuk was already lying on the ground and covered his head with his hands, one of the MG employees hit him with a club while he was on the ground.

All in all , there were about 40 people attacking. They were led by a local city official – Deputy Director of the Department of the Municipal Security of Odessa City Council – Savchenko Yuri Alexandrovich. This local official also prevented the attorney Tarasenko, who was trying to stop the violence against the journalist Bekchiv and also tried to stop people who pushed him into the car. Savchenko made her a footboard, then pushed her away from the journalist Bekchiv.

More videos about the incident:

- Kidnapping of the journalist Miroslav Bekchiv: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qX1iNDSeay0>
- The journalist Vitaly Tkachenko was beaten up by the employees of Municipal Guard: https://youtu.be/Nga0bv_QYvo
- By blood or in a normal way. Working principle of Odessa "Municipal Guard": <https://youtu.be/3A9BVndSHC0>
- The journalist Vitalyi Tkachenko was beat up by Odessa City Council representatives: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE_-wsk9t_Y
- The journalist Miroslav Bekchiv was attacked by tear gas: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VL0ZCv4YKKw>
- The editor-in-chief of "Unsolved crimes" newspaper has been attacked: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdkEBD5cFo0>
- Interview with Ruslan Forostyak: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hmzt7e070Hs>
- Interview with the deputy of Odessa City Council – Vadim Tereshchuk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3XrcFAPxy0>
- The interview with a former representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office – Massimo Introvigne on the situation in Odessa: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YlFHCgIOQ7k>