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## **FRANCE: FECRIS falsifies the program of its 2017 Conference at the Belgian Parliament**

**FRANCE: Scandal: FECRIS falsifies the program of its 2017 Conference at the Belgian Parliament in Brussels**

***The purpose is to hide that a fanatical Russian anti-Ukrainian lawyer was among their speakers. Alexander Korelov claims “former Ukraine” is still “part of my country, the USSR.” FECRIS retroactively changed the program of their 2017 conference to eliminate Korelov’s name and speech. See the scanned documents in the article of Bitter Winter. The event was then hosted in the Belgian Federal Parliament by FECRIS’ new president André Frédéric who is also the president of the anti-cult group AVISO. He is as well a former member of the House of Representatives (1999-2018) and he is now President of the Regional Walloon Parliament. See here the details of his 14 mandates and positions as well as his incomes. (Subtitle by HRWF)***

*by Massimo Introvigne*

Bitter Winter (08.05.2023) – Readers of “Bitter Winter” know the lunatic Russian lawyer, Alexander Korelov, who in 2022 ridiculously claimed that the Jehovah’s Witnesses were preparing a coup to overcome the Putin regime. As a lawyer, Korelov regularly advises or represents leading Russian anti-cultists such as Alexander Dvorkin or Alexander Novopashin when they are accused of defamation by groups they stigmatize as “cults.” In 2017, Korelov introduced himself as “lawyer of RATsIRS,” then the Russian branch of FECRIS.

Currently, FECRIS has a new list of member associations “recognized at the General Assembly held in Marseille on March 24, 2023,” which does not include its former Russian affiliates. However, there is no mention that the Russian anti-cult groups have been formally expelled, and their obnoxious ideology repudiated. And while FECRIS claims that the associations not included in the March 2023 list can no longer declare that they are part of FECRIS, as of today Novopashin ignores these instructions and keeps on his website a statement that his organization “represents FECRIS in Russia.”

It is also interesting that even after the Marseille assembly FECRIS lists among its members the Bulgarian organization C.R.N.R.M. – Center for Research of New Religious Movements, whose website before disappearing in 2022 evidenced their close cooperation with Novopashin and his group, and the Ukrainian F.P.P.S. – Family and Personality Protection Society, listed as “dormant” because of the war. A leading member of this Ukrainian group is or was Vladimir Nikolaevich Rogatin, who became notorious for launching as early as 2014, through Russian media, the ideas that Ukraine was plagued by Satanism and that the Maidan anti-Russian revolution and the defense of Crimea against the Russian invasion had been infiltrated by Nazis and neo-Pagans, both key tools of Russian anti-Ukrainian propaganda (in the latter article, Rogatin was introduced as “a correspondent member of the FECRIS”).

However, there is worse in FECRIS’ behavior about Russia. Much worse.

On May 19, 2017, the Secretary General of the MIVILUDES, the French governmental anti-cult mission, Anne Josso, shared the stage in Brussels with Korelov, as did other FECRIS luminaries, at a conference organized at the Belgian Parliament by the same FECRIS.

We denounced the ramblings of Korelov in October 2022. We obtained a magical effect. Conference programs are sometimes changed at the last minute—but we never heard of programs of conferences changed “after” they had been held. Yet, this is precisely what happened with the FECRIS conference of May 19, 2017. Before the “Bitter Winter” articles exposing Korelov, his paper was duly listed in the program of the conference. After our articles, Korelov “magically” disappeared from the program, as if he had never participated in the event.

*The program of the 2017 conference on FECRIS’s website before and after the “Bitter Winter” articles. The detail shows how the paper by Korelov has been eliminated. Click to enlarge.*

The paper by Korelov was also available on FECRIS's website before our criticism; now, it has disappeared.

We are accustomed to the erratic behavior of FECRIS when it comes to slandering new religious movements, but this is something entirely different. Only in Stalin's Russia old pictures of Bolshevik leaders were manipulated to excise the images of those no longer in the good graces of the tyrant. Now FECRIS cuts from the program of one of its most important conferences a speaker who has become an embarrassment for it, thus creating a fake conference program and trying to retroactively change history. Does the French government, which publicly supports and finances FECRIS, have anything to say about this scandal and this fraud?

One who would probably not complain about the use of Soviet strategies is Korelov himself. On May 4, he gave an interview to the website of fellow anti-cultist Alexander Novopashin to answer, somewhat belatedly, Bitter Winter's criticism. In fact, he did not answer anything, and limited himself to insults. He calls our articles "typical example of frenzied Western propaganda." He insists that "attacking Father Alexander Novopashin is a sign of a small mind and a lack of elementary culture," a statement that, as it appears on the site of the same Novopashin, readers can surely accept as independent and impartial. Speaking of the undersigned, Korelov insists that "Introvigne does not burden himself with arguments, his judgments are unfounded and not based on facts. This person does not want to see what is really happening on the territory of the former Ukraine."

This is precisely FECRIS' problem with Korelov. It is not that he offends Bitter Winter, something FECRIS would perhaps gladly do as well if it would not be deterred by Western laws on defamation. It is the reference to "former Ukraine." And there is worse. In the interview, Korelov tells us something about himself. "I consider myself a Soviet person of the Orthodox faith, he says. I grew up in the USSR, I love our big

country, I remember with warmth the best years of the Soviet Union. And Orthodoxy is my spiritual path.” How he can reconcile the atheistic Soviet Union with Orthodoxy is something he can perhaps explain in his next interview.

It seems that Korelov lives under the delusion that the Soviet Union still exists. He continues by proclaiming that “Ukraine, now former, is a part of my country. My country is the Russian Empire, this is the USSR... The fact is that the sovereign state of Ukraine does not exist. This is an administrative region of the USSR, our land and our people... Ukraine is part of the USSR. So the military conflict is an internal affair...” Having allied themselves with the West, he laments, the Ukrainians are “sold into slavery, they are subjected to wild medical experiments. The modern ‘collective West’ is the greatest criminal for whom nothing is sacred.”

Korelov has “no doubts about the victory of Russia” in the present war, but that will not be the end of its conflict with the West. “The satanized political West will not just calm down. No wonder they are preparing a new viral attack on our planet. More dangerous than the notorious coronavirus. And we should not forget about the upcoming conflicts in Poland and Taiwan.”

I don’t know about any upcoming conflict in Poland, although I understand Korelov hopes there will be one in Taiwan. However, interpreting the incoherent words of a madman in the end is not a useful exercise. It is much more interesting to focus on the fact that the madman, the “Soviet person” who believes that “Ukraine does not exist” was a honored guest of FECRIS and invited to speak in the parliament of a European Union country. And on the unbelievable attempt of FECRIS to hide the evidence of its past dealings with Korelov—something that in the world of modern Internet is impossible, as the earlier versions of modified pages can always be recovered, but that should show to its sponsors what kind of disreputable organization they continue to support.

## More reading

### Deep concerns about the infiltration of FECRIS' Russian branch in Belgium

*Human Rights Without Frontiers is deeply concerned by the infiltration for years of pro-Putin and anti-Ukrainian propagandists in Belgian politics, including in the federal parliament of Belgium. HRWF (07.12.2022)*

*Photo: Alexander Korelov. From Telegram.*

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**Massimo Introvigne** (born June 14, 1955 in Rome) is an Italian sociologist of religions. He is the founder and managing director of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), an international network of scholars who study new religious movements. Introvigne is the author of some 70 books and more than 100 articles in the field of sociology of religion. He was the main author of the *Enciclopedia delle religioni in Italia* (Encyclopedia of Religions in Italy). He is a member of the editorial board for the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* and of the executive board of University of California Press' *Nova Religio*. From January 5 to December 31, 2011, he has served as the "Representative on combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, with a special focus on discrimination against Christians and members of other religions" of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). From 2012 to 2015 he served as chairperson of the Observatory of Religious Liberty, instituted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to monitor problems of religious liberty on a worldwide scale.

**Further reading about FORB in France on HRWF website**

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