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## **USA: Anti-cult activist assaulted a synagogue and Scientology church**

**USA: Anti-cult pro-Russia and pro-China activist assaulted a Scientology church and a synagogue**

*The interesting story of Randi Nord opens a window on the American and international ramifications of bigotry*

*by Massimo Introvigne*

Bitter Winter (10.05.2023) – On May 3, 2023, Royal Oak,

Michigan, 44th District Magistrate Donald Chisholm charged a woman called Randi Nord with ethnic intimidation and vandalism. Royal Oak is a suburb of Detroit, and is where Nord defaced a synagogue by painting a Nazi swastika on its wall. She also painted swastikas on a baby stroller and a car belonging to Jewish families, and was arrested on May 1 with the cooperation of the FBI.

Randi Nord is a woman with a very interesting story. According to media reports, she is the founder of Geopolitics Alert Independent World News. The pompously named media outlet deals often with Yemen and publishes anti-Israeli and pro-Venezuelan articles. Nord has also echoed Russian positions on issues such as Internet governance, and routinely republished Chinese propaganda on various subjects. She even claims that Cuba's medicine is so advanced that they have developed a cancer vaccine.

Nord is also an anti-cult activist. Her website published an article (since taken down) calling Falun Gong a "Scientology-like cult" and accusing it of having invented the organ harvesting narrative for its own anti-Chinese purposes.

She also attacked "the criminal and cult-like aspects" of Scientology, although just to be ecumenical she added that, "Most Christian mega-churches are not that far off from the Church of Scientology—they are companies in the business of ripping people off based on fear. The mega-churches are just a little less cult-y."

The problem with Randi Nord is that she does not limit herself to writing. She also acts upon her bigotry. Before assaulting the synagogue, in March 2023 she was involved in an arson attack against the Church of Scientology of Farmington Hills, another suburb of Detroit. According to Chief Jeff King of Farmington Hills police, Nord "was charged with two different felonies and given bond that included a tether" for the anti-Scientology attack. She had cut her tether since.

And there is more. She painted together with a swastika the word “Azov” on the wall of the Royal Oak synagogue. The immediate interpretation of the media was that she wanted to glorify Ukraine’s Azov Battalion, often referred to as “neo-Nazi” (although, as readers of Bitter Winter know, its story is much more complicated). This looked strange, given Nord’s political inclinations.

Eventually, she confessed to the police that it was the other way around. She hoped that her crimes would be attributed to pro-Ukrainian activists, and wanted to generate anti-Ukrainian and pro-Russian feelings. According to the Royal Oaks detective who received her confession, “She said she planned to do as many hate crimes as possible and blame them on AZOV [Battalion].”

When she tried to set fire to the Church of Scientology in Farmington Hills, she had just returned from Serbia, where she spent two years. What she did there is unknown, but certainly the country hosts very active pro-Russian (and anti-cult) organizations.

Nord deleted her Twitter account in 2022. She opened a new one in May 2022, with no posts but an old Soviet poster “Visit the USSR.”

### **HRWF: More reading**

The Detroit Jewish News

Macombdaily

CBS News

*Photo: The Woodward Avenue Shul was defaced April 28 – The Detroit Jewish News Credit*

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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 on HRWF website**

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**content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1268**

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**content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1269**