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## On the Issue of a Destructive Cult Leader's Personality (Criminological Aspect)

*The article examines moral and psychological characteristics, nature and attitudes of persons (founders and managers), committing crimes under the auspices of destructive religious and social organizations. The analysis of the criminal personality in this case enables to detect and assess the initial social preconditions that have affected the onset of antisocial attitudes and motivations of a distinct person. Such sets and motivations influence the following criminal behavior.*

**Key words:** criminal personality, leader of a destructive organization, personality traits, charismatic personality.

The analysis of a criminal personality enables to detect and assess the initial social preconditions that have affected the formation of antisocial attitudes and motivations of a distinct social group. Such sets and motivations influence the following criminal behavior in different spheres of the life activity. Today we can certify a growing criminological interest in respect of the identification of the moral and psychological qualities, characteristics and attitudes inherent to the destructive leaders of religious and social associations, committing crimes under the part 1 of the article 239 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation ("organization of association encroaching to personality and rights of citizens").

Considering the personality of the founders and heads of the destructive associations, we should primarily keep in mind, that the difference in functions between these individuals, made by the Russian legislation, does not always necessarily will be observed in practice. Namely, the person who has created the destructive organization can be at the same time its immediate head. The real separation of the aforementioned functions is possible in respect of the associations that have developed structural organization. To this end the main center and subordinate centers should be located in different territories. For example, the main centre of religious organization "Children of God" is located in Zurich, and Russia's "branch" – in Novosibirsk [4]. It is exactly the case when the original founder and manager will be different people.

Moreover, very often a real founder of a destructive association deliberately stays in the background for the participants (and even for the managers) and for the law enforcement agencies. The necessary degree of neutralization of criminal prosecution has been reached by the isolation of the creator from the managers and association members.

So, in this article we will try to analyze the personality of the leaders (founders and heads) of the respective associations. Of course, some differences between these persons exist in the religious and public associations. However, the creation of all destructive associations has one significant common feature. Namely, they always ap-



pear in the most controversial periods of social development, when traditional social mechanisms are unable to cope with the emerging challenges that the individual has to solve alone [7].

Analyzing the phenomenon of a leadership as such (regardless of a specific social association), the researchers point out personality traits, which in turn have determined the formation of the leader personality in one or another social context (religious, political, financial and etc.). Of course, it is impossible to give an exhaustive list of such traits that would be typical, firstly, for each and every leader, and, secondly, would have been specific to the leaders of destructive associations. However, it is possible to dwell on the most significant of them. [3; C. 130].

The managers and creators of any religious or social association (not necessarily destructive one) have a charismatic personality. They are known for their inimitable magnetism, determination, and self-confidence with which they are promoting something, whether it is faith, certain ideas or specific products [10]. The concept of "charisma" has its roots in ancient Greek language and it is translated as a special "mercy", "divine gift" or "grace" [11].

However, charisma as a personal quality exists without regard to the external form and inner content of the activity. The sole presence of the charisma, magnetism and a strong will is not a prerequisite for the creation of associations encroaching on personality and rights of citizens. Possession of such abilities is, in turn, fraught with the potential abuse. The leader is able to use them for both public friendly and anti-social purposes. This is the main difference between the leader of a destructive public or religious association and that of operating within the law [8].

The leaders of the destructive associations have an intuitive ability to feel and anticipate the needs of their followers. Then they use this information in their speeches and policy documents (leaflets, brochures, methodical recommendations). They give promises of a rapid (in most cases immediate) fulfillment of exactly those desires for which the followers actually have come [10] (remarkable recovery of all, including incurable by traditional medicine, diseases, spiritual healing, rapid career or financial growth, stable family relations).

According to T. P. Korolenko and N. V. Dmitrieva, in the analyzing of the personality of a destructive association leaders we should pay attention to the fact that they possess an ability to recognize and understand the internal psychological processes such as the process of an uneasiness or fear. They also make the best use of the understanding of these processes for their own purposes (for the phobias and complexes formation and, mainly, for the dependence on the leader) [6].

Leaders of the destructive associations apply practices of a veiled manipulation of human emotions, feelings and actions. They act so in order to ensure that individuals exposed to such manipulations are not even aware that they have been actually governed externally. Dynamic suggestion to the participants of a faith in the leader's powers (spiritual, religious, intellectual, financial) predetermines the possibility of full control over the followers. E. N. Volkov argues that the «phenomenon of the destruc-



tive cults is the criminal realization of the modern possibilities of a practical psychology, irrespective of whether the leaders of such groups have acquired a formal psychological education or not. In addition to the intuitively and self-made implementations of the cult resocialization systems, massive use of the achievements of psychological science and practice against the individual is obvious in many cases»[2].

According to other researchers[7], many of the modern destructive associations have become a platform for the former military psychologists. These persons have worked on the psychological warfare techniques and as a result possess the latest technologies of brainwashing and mind abuse. However, such leaders often suffer from inferiority complex and derive strength from the absolute obedience of their followers. In such a way they mask the process of internal conflict.

The managers and founders of the destructive religious associations insist on their divine origin and (or) super-human strength, demanding on this basis absolute obedience and reverence from their followers. There are several options for interpretation of the divine "presence": the leader has "received" a revelation from God, or considers himself as God's envoy on Earth, or become "a living God." The leaders enjoy telling their followers about the experiences of paranormal nature (meeting with God or angels).

The members of the destructive religious associations perceive the leader as a divine figure of a "super-father or super-mother", "possessing super-possibilities of salvation, putting on the right track, and so on. For example, S.A. Torop, a head of Bessarion Church, «received» message from God in 1990. At the same time Jesus Christ «transplanted» in the body of M. Tsvigun, which became afterwards the Mother of the World Maria Devi Christos[9; C. 65].

Decisive authority of the head of religious association stimulates in the participants a strong dependence in all life spheres: spiritual, family, social, political[3]. For example, it is well known that the Jehovah's Witnesses have no right to marry persons who do not adhere to their religion. They are also prohibited to use blood transfusion in the course of medical procedures[9].

Various anti-social taboos exist in a number of other public and religious associations. The study conducted by the expert of the Belarusian State University is an evidence of the decisive authority of the leaders of the destructive religious organizations. For example, most followers of the MOSK, "Sahaja Yoga", and "Vessarion Church" (up to 100% of responses) chose as a particular social ideal a charismatic personality from their association [1]. These indicators, in turn, illustrate the absolute dependence of followers on the leader in all areas of public life. Such choice shows that the leader's acts are not being evaluated critically by the followers.

The authority of the head of a destructive social association is achieved by scientific and pseudoscientific manipulation of the facts and events, by the convincing statements that the leader has found the only and best way for financial prosperity, inner peace, and recovery from all diseases. For example, the creator of such organizations as the "Educational League", "The Cradle of Siberia" and "Novosibirsk Com-



mittee of peacemaking" T. Akbashev tried to introduce his "educational methods" to the public education system. He constantly has been calling himself a "scientist" and his activity – a "science". But the „scientific character" of his activity was limited exclusively to the use of certain concepts and terms from physics, chemistry and psychology [5].

Leader's unquestioned authority allows to make demands, that for any other person (not a participant of the destructive association) would be illegal and offensive [7].

The investigation of the leaders of the destructive associations that operated and are operating currently in the U.S.A. revealed the fact, that among the nowadays leaders there are many people who previously participated in the destructive organizations and groups. As it has been noted above, many leaders suffer from different complexes of inferiority and set themselves against the rest of the world. The early years of such people run in seclusion and isolation. In most of the cases, such persons wish, first of all, to obtain attention that was not enough in the childhood, rather than material values. Mastership carries the risk of abuse. At some point these people will feel that the "volume" of power that they possess is insufficient [9].

Summarizing the analysis of the personality of a destructive association leader, it should be noted that the world-view of that people was shaped during the crisis of the 1990's. Critical turn experienced by Russian society undermined confidence in the existing order of things and made many people extremely vulnerable to the latest changes. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that many who have not found a place in the new reality, but possessing the above mentioned qualities and abilities have decided to create or join the modern religious or social associations employing destructive practices.

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