

Collection Summary

ID Number: CS 538

Title: Order of the Solar Temple

Extent: 2 Folder(s)

Span Dates: 1994-1997

Language: English

Geographic Location: Various

Abstract: This collection consists of clippings and articles about the community.

Historical Notes: Order of the Solar Temple, in full International Order of Chivalry Solar Tradition, small New Religious Movement that was founded in Geneva in 1984 and is best known for the murder-suicide of 74 of its members in 1994 to 1997. The Solar Temple was founded in Geneva in 1984 by Luc Jouret, a homeopathic physician and New Age lecturer, and Joseph De Mambro. Its headquarters was later moved to Zürich, where a leadership council of 33 members presided, and regional lodges were set up to perform initiation ceremonies and other rites in Switzerland, Canada, and elsewhere. The Solar Temple traced its history to the revival of the Knights Templar (a military-religious order founded in the 12th century that was suppressed by papal command in 1312) in the years after the French Revolution. In 1805, Bernard-Raymond Fabré-Palaprat, claiming to be the head of the Knights Templar, attempted to re-create the order. His group split into many factions, some of which developed a belief in the imminent end of the world. Before founding the Solar Temple, Jouret had belonged to a descendant of one of these factions, the Renewed Order of the Temple. Integral to the teachings of the Solar Temple was the belief that the Earth would face a worldwide catastrophe in the mid-1990's. In anticipation of this apocalyptic event, members believed it was necessary to enter a higher spiritual plane. On October 4-5, 1994, 53 members of the Solar Temple in Canada and Switzerland were murdered or committed suicide, and the buildings in which they died were set on fire. A year later another 16 members killed themselves, and 5 more died similarly in March 1997. The Solar Temple was one of several 20th century New Religious Movements whose ends occurred in acts of murder-suicide. The apparent affluence of the temple's membership challenged the prevailing conception of such incidents as the product of deprivations experienced by members and suggested a more ideological causation. The group seems to have survived the tragic events of the 1990's, and in the early 21st century it was believed to have between 140 and 500 members. **Sources:** [Order of the Solar Temple](#)

Selected Search Terms

Subjects: Cults; Templars; Ordre du temple solaire; New Age movement; Mass murder; Mass suicide

Administrative Information

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Contents	Date	Container	Folder	Location
Riding, Alan. "48 From Sect Dead After Mass Ritual in Switzerland." New York Times, October 6, 1994: pgs. A1, A12	1994	Filing Cabinet	Folder 1	Filing Cabinet 16-D
Post, Tom and Linda Kay. "Mystery of the Solar Temple." Newsweek, October 17, 1994: pgs. 42-44	1994	Filing Cabinet	Folder 1	Filing Cabinet 16-D
"Five Found Dead in Fire Were Part of Suicide Cult." Evansville, IN: Evansville Press, March 24, 1997: pg. 6	1997	Filing Cabinet	Folder 1	Filing Cabinet 16-D
Introvigne, Massimo and J. Gordon Melton. "The Solar Temple: A Preliminary Report on the Roots of a Tragedy." Paper Presented at Oneida, NY: 1994 Annual Communal Studies Conference	1994	Filing Cabinet	Folder 1	Filing Cabinet 16-D
"Scholars to Study the Solar Temple."	n.d.	Filing Cabinet	Folder 1	Filing Cabinet 16-D
"50 Cultists Perish in Fires." Unidentified Newspaper, October 6, 1994, pgs. A-1, A-9.	1994	Filing Cabinet	Folder 1	Filing Cabinet 16-D
"Body of 1 Cult Leader is Identified." Chicago Tribune, October 10, 1994: pg. 18.	1994	Filing Cabinet	Folder 1	Filing Cabinet 16-D
"The Sunburst Sacrifices." Time, January 8, 1996: pg. 45.	1996	Filing Cabinet	Folder 1	Filing Cabinet 16-D
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