

cooperation with child-care clinics and schools, also provided advice to youth members who left Aum Shinrikyo. To develop a comprehensive system for dealing with Aum Shinrikyo returnees, the National Police Agency created a special Adjuster for Return Measures for Members of Aum Shinrikyo and the Concerned position in December 1995 to deal with these cases.²⁷

There were also some arrests made abroad. In July 2000, for example, Russian police arrested Dmitri Sigachev, ex-KGB and former Aum Shinrikyo member, and four other former Russian Aum members, for stockpiling weapons in preparation for attacking Japanese cities in a bid to free Asahara. Indeed, Aum's most successful recruitment spree had occurred in Russia. In 1992, Asahara and an entourage of several hundred Japanese members made a salvation tour to Russia. In the 18 months following Asahara's tour, the group's Russian membership surged. Over a three-year period, the group attracted between 30,000 and 40,000 Russian followers.²⁸ Aum used its tremendous wealth to gain access to high-ranking officials, including the Russian vice president, the head of the Russian parliament, and the secretary of the security council. Some reports estimated that Aum paid "\$12 million in payoffs to well-placed officials" in Russia.²⁹ Russian press reports claimed that Aum's overall investment in Russia "amounted to some \$50 million."³⁰

Legal Measures

Prior to the 1995 attacks, Aum Shinrikyo was able to escape police scrutiny partially because of legal barriers against religious prosecution. In 1951, the Japanese government passed the Religious Corporation Law (*Shukyo Hojin Ho*). It strengthened constitutionally guaranteed religious freedoms by relieving any organization that could be identified as "religious" of tax obligations and by providing these groups with

²⁷ NPA (1996, p. 24).

²⁸ Parachini (2005, p. 29).

²⁹ Kyle B. Olson, "Aum Shinrikyo: Once and Future Threat?" *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, Vol. 5, No. 4, July–August 1999, p. 515; Parachini (2005, p. 29).

³⁰ Kaplan and Marshall (1996, p. 206).