Soviets disband Krishna group, magazine reports

By Alison Smale

MOSCOW — Authorities have broken up a Hare Krishna sect here and have punished two of its leaders, a weekly magazine reported yesterday. It warned other citizens of the officially atheistic Soviet Union not to dabble in such "ideological diversions."

The report in Nedelya magazine was the first word that a Hare Krishna group had been set up in the capital and also marked a rare official acknowledgement that some Soviets have been attracted to Oriental-style mysticism instead of communism.

According to Nedelya, the sect here was started under the guidance of an American, Robert Campaniola, whom the magazine described as a "former CIA man" specializing in ideological propaganda.

After the group was uncovered, the magazine said, members Vladimir Kritsky, 32, and Sergei Kurkin, 25, were tried and convicted of propagating "strongly anti-communist teachings." Nedelya said they were sentenced but did not say what the punishment was.

The article ended with a call for an "uncompromising struggle" against "ideological diversions" like the Hindu-derived ideology espoused by the Hare Krishna sect.