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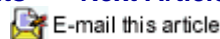
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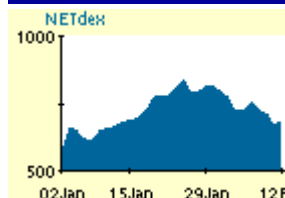


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Scientology loses domain battle

Internet arbitrator gives name to Freie Zone, a splinter group of the church

JOHN PARTRIDGE
The Globe and Mail
Friday, July 14, 2000

The controversial Church of **Scientology** has lost a fight over an Internet domain name to a renegade sect that swears allegiance to **Scientology** founder L. Ron Hubbard but split from the church nearly two decades ago.

An arbitrator operating under a new international system set up to resolve fights over Internet monikers has refused to award <http://www.scientologie.org> to the Religious Technology Center (RTC). Based in Los Angeles, RTC's roles, its Web site says, include protecting the church's copyright and trademarks, and monitoring and enforcing the "purity" of how its doctrines are taught.

Instead, in a decision made late last month, the arbitrator ruled that the disputed Web address should stay in the hands of its current owner, Freie Zone E.V. -- Free Zone Association -- because it has a legitimate right to the name and has not behaved in bad faith.

Freie Zone, based in Germany, registered the domain name in 1995, but has not been able to use it since September, 1996, when the registrar put it "on hold" at RTC's request, the decision says.

The decision says Freie Zone appears to be a "renegade group of the Church of **Scientology**" that was founded in about 1982 by " 'Captain' Bill Robertson, apparently the 'right arm' of L. Ron Hubbard at the time." The decision quotes the association as saying it split from the church in 1982, when RTC took over the organization and "thousands" of Scientologists either left or were expelled.

Freie Zone's stated goal is to support Mr. Hubbard's philosophies. However, it explicitly disassociates itself from the church's "official and unofficial" organizations because it disagrees with its practices and interpretation of Mr. Hubbard's works.


In a complaint filed in May, RTC accused Freie Zone of being an "underground" organization whose purposes include interfering with the centre's activities and those of its affiliates. It alleged that the association had no legitimate right to use the disputed domain name and had instead set up the site in bad faith to attract Internet users away from legitimate **Scientology** sites.

However, the decision says that in its submission, Freie Zone contended it set up the site to sell reprints of a German book called *Scientologie -- Wissenschaft von der Beschaffeneit und Tauglichkeit des Wissens* (**Scientology** -- Science of the Constitution and Usefulness of Knowledge), which was published in 1934. The association said it had obtained exclusive rights to the book from the heirs of its author, Dr. Anastasius Nordenholz.

The arbitrator, Bernard Meyer-Hauser, a Zurich lawyer, said in his decision that the book appears to be based, at least partly, "on the same or similar philosophical sources as L. Ron Hubbard's own philosophy when developing the Church of **Scientology**." However, he added that: "On the other hand, it was L. Ron Hubbard who seems to have first used the word '**Scientology**' to describe his philosophy in 1952."

While ruling that <http://www.scientologie.org> is "confusingly similar" to some of RTC's trademarks, Mr. Meyer-Hauser found that the rights to the

Nordenholz book had indeed been licensed to Freie Zone and "these rights appear to be even older than the complainant's trademarks." He also found that using the Web site to disseminate information about the book and its underlying philosophy "appears to be a legitimate interest in itself."

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