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FRANCE: MIVILUDES: Bailiff compels Georges Fenech to pay his debts to Scientology

FRANCE: MIVILUDES, from tragedy to farce: Bailiff compels Georges Fenech to pay his debts to Scientology

Former MIVILUDES chief and member of its Orientation Council had € 5,000 plus interests seized from his bank

account.

Version française

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MIVILUDES from Tragedy to Farce: Bailiff compels Georges Fenech to pay his debts to Scientology

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To avoid judicial proceedings by Scientology, the MIVILUDES republishes its annual report

82 Ukrainian scholars denounce to Macron a supporter of Crimea's annexation

How MIVILUDES and French anti-cultists invented a cult

By Massimo Introvigne

Bitter Winter (19.05.2023) – We noted some days ago the curious relationship between the French governmental anti-cult agency MIVILUDES and the beautiful city of Caen, which is becoming synonym of bad luck for the controversial organization. Earlier this month, to avoid a hearing at the Court of Caen, MIVILUDES had to republish its latest yearly report including an answer by the Church of Scientology.

Confirming Marx's famous dictum that history often repeats itself twice, the first time as a tragedy and the second as a farce, something in the air of Caen confused again the MIVILUDES in the person of its former chief and now member of its Orientation Council Georges Fenech. He is known as an

arch-anticultist, and an occasional tourist to Crimea, where he went to applaud Putin for his illegal annexation of this Ukrainian territory.

On September 12, 2014, Fenech was interviewed by the radio network Europe 1 and stated unequivocally that Scientology was guilty of the crimes (including the "abus de faiblesse," the French version of brainwashing) for which it was on trial in Versailles. This was a case where a prosecutor regarded as objectionable that a local company had organized for its employees courses (on non-religious subjects) with teachers who were members of the Church of Scientology. In all democratic countries, there is a principle called "presumption of innocence." Every citizen has a right of being considered innocent until declared guilty by a final decision by a court of law.

In 2014 the Versailles case was pending. It is still pending today. On January 23, 2017, Caen's Court of First Instance sided with Fenech, finding him not guilty. However, on December 18, 2018, the Appeal Court of Caen reversed the first decision and concluded that Fenech had violated Scientology's right to the presumption of innocence. The Appeal Court noted that Fenech's behavior should be judged more severely than if he were just a common citizen. As a former magistrate and former president of the MIVILUDES, those who listened to his interview might have found his statements as especially authoritative and believable.

Fenech was thus placed under an injunction not to further violate Scientology's right to the presumption of innocence, and sentenced to pay Euro 5,000 to Scientology, including damages and legal expenses.

Fenech presents himself as a champion of the respect of the laws of the French Republic, and constantly accuses the "cults" of breaching them. The laws of "la République" are clear: court decisions should be obeyed, even if one disagrees

with them.

Fenech, however, did not respect the decision of the Caen Appeal Court. For four years, several reminders notwithstanding, he did not pay his debt to the Church of Scientology.

In the end, it happened to Fenech what happens to debtors who are delinquent in their payments. A bailiff enjoined him to pay. He didn't, and the bailiff seized the money from his bank account, plus Euro 1,139.51 as interests. The money was transferred on the account of the Church of Scientology on April 26, 2023. A copy of the file is in possession of Bitter Winter.

France gave to the world the pochade and the vaudeville, and the French are generally admired for the levity with which they enjoy a good laugh. This time, they can laugh at the expenses of George Fenech, a custodian of the laws who, not content with having breached the law once on the presumption of innocence, decided to breach it twice by not paying what he was sentenced to pay. Unavoidably, in the end he had his money taken from his bank account, as a common delinquent debtor.

Photo:Fenech's interview of September 12, 2014, for which it was sentenced. Screenshot.

Massimo Introvigne (born June 14, 1955 in Rome) is an Italian sociologist of religions. He is the founder and managing director of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), an international network of scholars who study new religious movements. Introvigne is the author of some 70 books and more than 100 articles in the field of sociology of religion. He was the main author of the *Enciclopedia delle religioni in Italia* (Encyclopedia of Religions in Italy). He is a member of the editorial board for the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* and of the executive board of University

of California Press' Nova Religio. From January 5 to December 31, 2011, he has served as the "Representative on combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, with a special focus on discrimination against Christians and members of other religions" of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). From 2012 to 2015 he served as chairperson of the Observatory of Religious Liberty, instituted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to monitor problems of religious liberty on a worldwide scale.

Further reading about FORB in France on HRWF website

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