

LOVE-TUG CASE JUDGE ATTACKS CORRUPT' CULT

By GUY RAIS

THE Church of Scientology was condemned as "corrupt, sinister and dangerous" by Mr Justice LATEY in the High Court yesterday.

The judge described the practices of the Californian-based sect, founded by its "messiah," Ronald Hubbard, as "both immoral and socially obnoxious."

The actions of Hubbard and his helpers were grimly reminiscent of the torturing and bullying of Hitler and his henchmen.

Mr Justice Latey, giving judgment in open court after a private hearing ordered a scientist father to hand over his 11-year-old son and eight-year-old daughter to their 28-year-old mother, who had fought for most six years to be re-united with them after she, herself, broke away from the cult.

The judge ordered the cult to stop intimidating and harassing the mother, warning them that failure to do so would be dealt with, with the "utmost severity".

Giving his reasons for taking the children away from the father, 32, who has since remarried, the judge said Scientology was corrupt "because it is based on lies and deceit, and as its real objective, money and power for its founder, his wife and those close to him at the top.

"It is sinister because it indulges in infamous practices, both to its adherents who do not toe the line unquestioningly, and to those outside who criticise or oppose it.

"It is dangerous because it is out to capture young people, especially children and impressionable young people, and indoctrinate and brainwash them so that they become the unquestioning captives and tools of the cult, withdrawn from ordinary thought, living, and relationships with others."

Great Courage

He described Hubbard, who went into hiding in 1980 and whose whereabouts are a mystery, and his wife, Mary, as "charlatans and worse." To escape from their clutches, as the mother had done, called for "great courage and resolution," because "the stranglehold is tight and unrelenting, and the discipline ruthless."

The children were at a school controlled by scientologists, whose objectives were to capture the child and its mind. The "baleful influence" of the cult was ever present, and to leave the children with the father would be to leave them "gravely at risk."

But in giving the mother custody, the judge directed that they should not be cut off from their father, "who loves them as they love him." They should be allowed to visit him regularly.

Indicating that he had given his decision in open court as a "warning to others," the judge made a scathing attack on Hubbard.

To promote the cult he had falsely claimed he was a war hero, wounded in action and decorated with the American Purple Heart.

"He was not wounded and he was not so decorated." He had also falsely claimed he had been crippled and blinded in the war, and then cured by techniques practised by cult members.

Hubbard had also claimed he was sent by US Naval intelligence to break up a black magic ring in California. He was not. He was himself a member of that occult group and practised ritual sexual magic in it.

The judge said Hubbard had now disappeared and was being sought by police in America.

Constant threats

Outside the court, the mother, holding back tears, said she was "overjoyed" at the decision. "I am looking forward to a new life with my children. It will be nice to be freed from Scientology.

She was planning a new life in Australia where she hoped to remarry soon.

The children currently live with their father in East Grinstead, West Sussex, where the Scientologists have their British headquarters, and attend a school run principally by the sect.

After the hearing, Mr Michael Garside, who described himself as public affairs officer of the sect, said: "It is an extraordinary judgment, like Alice in Wonderland."

In a statement later, the Church of Scientology said it "regretted" the judge's criticism.

"The church was not a party to the action and therefore had no opportunity to be represented or give evidence.

"The judge was therefore given a one-sided statement and outdated picture, and his finding of facts about the church are substantially inaccurate."

No. 40,154. LONDON, TUESDAY, JULY 24, 1984

Printed in LONDON and MANCHESTER

The Daily Telegraph