

NEWS

ADVERTISING AGE

# Scientology fires ad barrage at 'Time'

By Scott Donaton

The Church of Scientology International last week unleashed an estimated \$2 million media blitz against *Time* in response to the magazine's May 6 cover article labeling the church a "cult of greed."

The organization on May 28 broke a series of page color ads in Gannett Co.'s *USA Today* accusing *Time* of giving favorable coverage to Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, LSD and Prozac.

Although the use of advertising for rebuttals isn't uncommon, rarely are such campaigns as prolonged and pricey.

The ads, created in-house, are

headlined "What magazine gets it wrong in 1991?" The Mussolini ad says, "the same one that was wrong in 1940—*Time*."

The ad reads, in part, "In that year, *Time* heaped praise on Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini as 'still a virtuoso of politics, a wizard with economic and military gadgets, an athlete, a leader of men.'"

The ads are scheduled to run daily in the national newspaper, culminating with an advertising supplement in the June 14 issue.

The Rev. Heber C. Jentzsch, president of the Church of Scientology International, said the organization decided to launch the campaign after its attempts to

correct what it calls a mistake in the *Time* article were met with "arrogance."

"We decided to use this particular venue to set the record straight, not only on *Time* magazine but to tell the story of Scientology, really to tell the whole story behind this issue," he said.

*Time* spokesman Robert Pondiscio said: "*Time*'s article on Scientology speaks for itself, and *Time* stands behind the article in its entirety. If Scientology chooses to put its story before the public through advertisements in *USA Today* that is, of course, its privilege."

He said *Time* doesn't plan to respond to the ads.

The *Time* article charges that

the church's detractors are often the target of lawsuits and other forms of harassment. The article also claims that Scientology, founded in 1954 by the late writer L. Ron Hubbard, bilked believers out of millions of dollars by persuading them to sign up for costly counseling sessions and to buy the organization's high-price books and other products.

Scientology first responded to the article by printing an 80-page booklet titled "Fact vs. Fiction" that was distributed to political and business leaders and media outlets.

The Rev. Jentzsch wouldn't discuss whether there will be other elements to the ad campaign, say-

ing only that "we have other options left open to us."

Steve Anderson, manager of public relations for *USA Today*, said each ad is being reviewed by the newspaper's legal department and some have already been returned "for rewording and re-vamping, primarily for libel concerns."

*USA Today* has no qualms about running the ads, Mr. Anderson said, noting that Scientology "has the right to purchase advertising space to express its opinions, and we will treat them like any advertiser." □

Steven W. Colford contributed to this story.