

■ GERMANY

# Country battles to keep out Scientologists

They say it's no religion, it's a menace

By Colleen Barry  
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BERLIN — American musician Chick Corea was able to perform at the Burghausen Jazz Festival this spring only after a fight among Bavarian officials about whether the state should fund an event in which a Scientologist participated.

In the past, Corea was kept out of German festivals because of such fund-withdrawal threats by government officials.

This time the concert went on because Bavarian Culture Minister Hans Zehetmair made an argument rarely heard in Germany: "Chick Corea is appearing in Burghausen not as a preacher, but as a musician. Should we demand from every artist a written declaration that he only belongs to a recognized church?"

The troubles that Corea and other Scientologists have experienced in Germany were raised in letters five members of Congress wrote to the U.S. State Department recently. They have asked the U.S. government to raise the matter with German officials.

In Germany, it has become a matter of general consensus that the Los Angeles-based organization has aims that endanger democracy.

Labor Minister Norbert Blum says Scientologists should be barred from government and teaching jobs. Scientologists have been banned from all major political parties and many trade organizations.

But just how the group poses a threat is a question rarely raised and never fully answered.

The German Foreign Ministry said Friday it had no public comment on the latest letter sent Wednesday to Secretary of State Warren Christopher by Rep. Benjamin A. Gilman, chairman of the House International Relations Committee.

Four other congress members have also sent such letters. Germany's treatment of Scientologists has been criticized in human rights reports by the U.S. State Department and the United Nations.

Yet German officials dismiss questions about the government's anti-Scientology pamphlets and investigations. The government accuses Scientology of conducting a



AP  
American jazz keyboardist Chick Corea was almost denied admittance to Germany because he is a member of the Church of Scientology.

smear campaign against it.

In May, the East German Postal Workers union announced they would rather not deliver mail addressed to Scientologist centers. The group gave no reason.

Germany's 16 states are studying whether to place Scientology under observation as an extremist organization.

Claudia Nolte, the federal minister for family affairs, set the tougher tone in January by launching what she called an information campaign.

"Scientology aims for world domination and the destruction of our society," she told a news conference.

When asked the grounds for her belief, Nolte responded: "The founder of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard himself, said, 'To hell with this society. We'll build a new one.' He speaks of the creation of a new people and a new world."

The Church of Scientology denies any political goals. "We have 30,000 members, just 0.04 percent of the population. How could we take over society?" asks Scientology Germany spokeswoman Gisela Hackenjos.

As of 1992, Scientology was recognized as a religion in 68 countries, according to the latest edition of the Encyclopedia of American Religions.

"What is totally different in Germany is that individuals are experiencing discrimination on a broad scale," said the president of Scientology in Germany, Helmuth Blobaum.

"What's happening with Scientology now — members being dismissed from their jobs, people not doing business with Scientologists — I find there is no other comparison but to the Nazi era," said Blobaum.