Does Scientology Believe in Brainwashing?
The Strange Story of the *Brain-Washing Manual* of 1955

Massimo Introvigne (CESNUR)
Antwerp FVG, January 25, 2014
The Church of Scientology today is happy to quote scholars who criticize anti-cult brainwashing theories.

Yet in 1955 L. Ron Hubbard published a booklet called *Brain-Washing*, implying that brainwashing was practiced with some success in several countries.

Did Hubbard believe in brainwashing? In order to answer this question, we need first to study Hubbard’s attitude towards Communism.
Hubbard’s Pulps: No Sympathy for the Czar

- In *The Cossack* (1935) the Czarist Duchess of Novgorod [sic] is a murderer who ends up as a prostitute (falsely) accused to be a Communist and lynched by a mob in nationalist China, where «the beard-curling cry of “Communist!” was enough to send these peoples into swirling mobs of fiendish activity»

- «Although we hardly approved of Nicholas II [right] as a ruler, we needed a head for the state we thought we could form, and the best marionette we could find would be Nicholas» (American agent Stuart in *The Price of a Hat*, 1936)
In *Red Death Over China* (1937) pilot John Hampton flies «the only plane Mao possessed»

While initially he works only for money, Hampton experiences a religious conversion of sort – in a temple – and willingly sacrifices his life for the Maoist cause.

«It was not power which Mao and his men craved, but freedom. In their domain the peasants could own their own land – a fact which was not equaled in all of China.»
«Consider the U.S. support of China’s totalitarian regime headed by Chiang Kai-shek. While we weakly spoke of freeing the Chinese from the yoke of imperialism, we poured huge sums of money and war material into the hands of a government which practiced the very principles we spoke against! When this government finally fell there was no one ready to teach the Chinese the human way of life. [...] Somebody was there with a propaganda aimed directly into the desires of the people who want just a tiny taste of freedom. Russian agents were there» (Dianetic Auditor’s Bulletin, July 1951)
The Threat of Soviet Mind Control


- «We make the brain perfect before we blow it up [...]. No one whom we bring to his place ever stands out against us. Everyone is washed clean [...]. By the time we had finished with them, [...] there was nothing left in them except sorrow for what they have done and love of Big Brother» (George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 1949)
Edward Hunter and Brainwashing

- In 1950 Edward Hunter (1902-1978, left), an OSS and later CIA agent whose cover job was that of reporter, coined the word «brainwashing» in an article of the Miami Daily News. In 1951, he published Brain-Washing in Red China.
- Hunter claimed to have found the word in Chinese sources (hsi nao) but in fact he created it based on Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four.
Hubbard and Pain-Drug Hypnosis

- «There is another form of hypnotism which falls between the surgical operation and straight hypnotism without physical pain. It is a vicious war weapon and may be of considerably more use in conquering a society than the atom bomb. This is no exaggeration. It required dianetic processing to uncover pain-drug-hypnosis. Otherwise, pain-drug-hypnosis was out of sight, unsuspected, and unknown»

(Hubbard, *Science of Survival*, 1951; pain-drug hypnosis, according to Hubbard, was practiced by the Soviets)
In one of the lectures delivered at the Games Congress in Washington, D.C. in 1956, Hubbard called Hunter’s text on brainwashing «a fascinating book».

Consistent with his idea that the Chinese Revolution started from legitimate claims, and was later infiltrated and controlled by the Soviets, Hubbard insisted that Hunter’s book confirmed that brainwashing techniques were imported into China by Russian Communists.
Hubbard praised Hunter for showing «how all of Pavlov’s experiments on dogs could be applied to human beings in order to produce a certain given result».

At the Games Congress of 1956, Hubbard also claimed that the secret of brainwashing was revealed in a mysterious «book written by [Ivan] Pavlov [1849-1939] for Stalin and which hitherto has never been outside the doors of the Kremlin».

«That book never left the Kremlin». But now «I have that book», Hubbard announced.
One of the most controversial portions of Hubbard’s biography is his association in 1945-1946 with the Agapé Lodge of the occult organization Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) led by Cal Tech scientist Jack Parsons (1914-1952, left)

Parsons at that time was sexually involved with Sara Elizabeth «Betty» Bruce Northrup (1924-1997), his wife’s half-sister

Sara’s father, Burton Ashley Northrup (1872-1946), who worked for the U.S. intelligence, investigated Parsons and discovered that he had joined a secret Communist cell in the 1930s
Hubbard and Sara

- Hubbard fell in love with Sara Betty Northrup, and the two broke with Parsons and were married on August 10, 1946. Since Hubbard was not yet divorced from his first wife, Polly Grubb (1907-1963), the marriage was legally invalid.

- The marriage quickly deteriorated, and Sara found a lover in one of Dianetics' early associates, Miles F. Hollister (1925-1998). After a bitter divorce with Hubbard, she married Hollister. Hubbard attributed both his marital difficulties and problems within Dianetics to Communist infiltration and mind control techniques.
Communism vs Dianetics?

- Hubbard reported to the FBI that Sara had been subject to Communist mind control techniques and that a Communist cell had tried to infiltrate and destroy Dianetics.

- Suspect Communists in the early Dianetics group included, according to Hubbard, Miles Hollister (left), Sara’s lover, and Gregory Hemingway (1931-2001), the son of the famous writer Ernest Hemingway (1895-1951), a transsexual medical doctor who later changed his name into Gloria (right).
September 4, 1955: Hubbard sends to his publisher a booklet to be printed «on a hurry-emergency basis»

Brain-Washing: A Synthesis of the Russian Textbook on Psychopolitics is released shortly thereafter
Official Reactions

- FBI
  The authenticity of this booklet seems to be of a doubtful nature since it lacks documentation of source material and communist words and phrases. Also, there are no quotations from well-known communist works as normally would be used in a synthesis of communist writings. In addition, the author himself admits that he cannot vouch for the authenticity of this booklet.

- National Security Council: «If the booklet is a fake, the author or authors know so much about brainwashing techniques that I would consider them experts, superior to any that I have met to date»

- Edward Hunter: «The book is a hoax, and what it has mostly achieved is to fool people who think they are getting my Brain-washing in Red China which was based on first hand sources, and put the word into the language»
1956: The Book is Withdrawn

- January 1956: Hubbard withdraws the booklet from circulation and asks that all copies should be returned to Scientology, following, or so he claims, «the friendly opinion of the government»

- August 15, 1956: Hubbard tells his publisher he is writing a new book on Russian brainwashing since he has «Pavlov’s secret that was never before out of the Kremlin» – but it will never be published
A Speech by Beria?

- The Manual claims to be a synthesis of books that were in circulation in the Soviet Union, originating from Lavrentiy Pavlovich Beria (1899-1953), the chief of Russian’s secret police NKVD until he was arrested and executed for treason in 1953.

- The booklet opens with a speech Beria allegedly gave to the «American students at the Lenin University».
Pain-Drug Hypnosis as Brainwashing

«It is in the interest of Psychopolitics that a population be told that a hypnotized person will not do anything against his actual will, will not commit immoral acts, and will not act so as to endanger himself. While this may be true of light, parlor hypnotism, it certainly is not true of commands implanted with the use of electric shock, drugs, or heavy punishment.»

(Brain-Washing: A Synthesis of the Russian Textbook of Psychopolitics, 36)
Soviet Brainwashing in the West

- The *Manual*, published by Scientology when it was starting its international campaign against psychiatry, explains that Soviet agents have infiltrated the West, where brainwashing is disseminated through psychiatrists.

- In the US, Soviet agents work against American individualism and single out certain religions, including «that terrible monster, the Roman Catholic Church», Christian Science and Scientology.
Kenneth Goff

- Kenneth Goff (1909-1972), a former Communist turned right-wing Christian activist, claimed to have compiled the Manual based on Communist internal documents.


- Goff’s earlier versions of the Manual were published without date, and there is no evidence that they pre-date the Scientology publication of 1955. Differences between the two versions are minimal.
For anti-cultists, it is quite obvious that the Manual is simply a figment of Hubbard’s imagination.

Anti-cultist Bent Corydon (above) claimed in 1987 that Hubbard’s son Ron DeWolf (1934-1991, below) stated that «Dad wrote every word of it». After Hubbard’s assistant John Sanborn (1922-2011) had recommended to discredit psychiatry by connecting it to Communism and Soviet spy rings, «you could hear him [Hubbard] dictating the book», DeWolf claimed.
Hubbard’s Story

- «Fortuitously, in Phoenix [Hubbard’s home, right] there came into our hands two manuscripts [...] they were left there at the front desk with the request that they be mailed back to their owner» (allegedly «Charles Stickley», «supposed to be a professor at Columbia University in New York City»), and «we are not sure exactly from whom these came» (Hubbard, Operational Bulletin no. 9, 1955)

- There are other, slightly different versions, but this is Hubbard’s story. No professor Charles Stickley has been traced, in New York or elsewhere.
Paul Feldkeller?

- «Some of the mystery concerning the manuscript on brainwashing which came into our hands in Phoenix was resolved when it was discovered that a book called Psychopolitics (spelled with a K) is in the Library of Congress. It is in German. It was written by a man named Paul Fadkeller, and was published in Berlin in 1947. Although I may be misinformed and I definitely do not read German, this book [the Manual] is probably the Russian translation»

- Hubbard mentioned again «Fadkeller» (i.e. German philosopher Paul Fedkeller, 1889-1972) both in public and in private correspondence. Fedkeller’s book, however, shares with the Brain-Washing Manual only the word «psycho-politik» in the title – and the meaning it’s not even the same
Why Does It Matter?

- Scientology critics such as Stephen Kent (right) and the authors of the Australian Anderson Report (1965) claim that the Brain-Washing booklet is important because it was later used as a manual in order to practice brainwashing within the Church of Scientology.

- They claim that Hubbard admitted this in a Technical Bulletin dated 22 July 1956, where he wrote that «we can brainwash faster than the Russian (20 secs to total amnesia against three years to slightly confused loyalty)». 
In fact, Hubbard’s works denounce brainwashing as something that epitomizes everything that Scientology finds reprehensible in modern psychiatry and should not be practiced.

According to Hubbard, Scientologists «know more about psychiatry than psychiatrists» (Technical Bulletin, July 22, 1956) and «can» replicate their evil techniques, including brainwashing, but should not do it, otherwise their «moral sense» would be as low as the psychiatrists'
A second reason for Scientology not to practice brainwashing: it doesn’t work

Brainwashing is not effective. It does not do a job. It’s a hoax. The communist can’t brainwash anybody. It’s one of these propaganda weapons. They say, “We have this terrific weapon called brainwashing”. But there is practically not a person in this room that would be permanently harmed by brainwashing except as it related to being starved and kept under conditions of duress. In other words, if you put a guy into a military stockade and fed him poorly for two or three years he’s going to be in secondhand condition, isn’t he? Well, that’s just exactly the effect brainwashing had on them. It had no more effect than this.

Hubbard at the Games Lectures, Washington D.C., 1956
Hubbard: Two Meanings of Brainwashing

- First meaning: techniques that resort to the use of drugs and physical violence in combination with hypnosis: «pain-drug hypnosis». This «brainwashing» does exist, but may only reduce a victim to an empty shell rather than changing the person’s worldview.

- Second meaning: religious indoctrination processes using powerful mind control techniques. This «brainwashing» for Hubbard does not exist, it is simply a false argument used by critics in order to discredit Scientology and other religions.
So, Who Authored the Manual?

- Both Hubbard and Goff stated that they wrote or dictated the text, but they claimed to work on the basis of Communist sources available to them.

- The Manual may be a figment of Hubbard’s imagination. But
  - the style is somewhat different from all known Hubbard writings
  - why did he insist for years that Feldkeller’s book (easily available and written in German, not exactly an exotic language) was the source?
  - Goff’s friends, including Mohr, insisted that Goff compiled it: there is no evidence of this, but Goff was describing Soviet «conditioning» in similar terms before 1955.
An alternative scenario is that a governmental agency (other than the FBI, possibly the CIA) prepared one or more manuscripts derived from a number of sources: Soviet and American Communist tracts, textbooks on psychopolitics in general, Hunter's writings. The agency then forwarded the manual, more or less anonymously, to the Church of Scientology, and possibly to Goff's group and others.
An Enduring Legacy

- Whoever originated it, the Manual campaign was successful. The booklet was reprinted in dozens of editions by right-wing organizations and kept in print to this very day.

- Even too successful. After the end of the Cold War, right-wing extremists claimed that the U.S. Government, rather than the Soviets, was now brainwashing its citizens in order to enforce the sinister New World Order.

- This was claimed by Operation Vampire Killer 2000, a booklet by Jack McLamb which reprinted portions of the Manual and inspired the terrorist of the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995 Timothy McVeigh (1968-2001). And there is now an Operation Vampire Killer 2012. The story never ends…