

# Los Angeles Times

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## Church Claims U.S. Campaign of Harassment

Scientologists Advance  
Charge as Rationale  
for Aggressive Policies

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The Church of Scientology contends that for more than 20 years it has been the target of a systematic campaign by the United States government, together with "vested-interest pressure groups" such as the medical professions, to "suppress the church's spiritual practice and expansion."

The church advances this accusation as the fundamental rationale for its aggressive policies of defense-by-attack against individual critics, private groups and government agencies perceived as "harassing" Scientology.

Church spokesmen, moreover, expand upon the allegation of systematic persecution to suggest that the church's chronic state of conflict with the U.S. government, among others, symptomizes an erosion of democracy of the kind that presaged the rise of Fascism in Germany in the 1930s.

"Genocide didn't begin with gas chambers, it began with the suppression of a single organization," Jeffrey A. Dubron, a spokesman for Scientology's principal United States church in Los Angeles, said repeatedly during interviews with two Times reporters.

Heber C. Jentzsch, the church's chief West Coast spokesman, adds: "Religion is under attack. We're not alone . . . It could result in vast devastation of an entire society if allowed to proliferate."

In an effort to substantiate its charges of persecution, the church says it has filed more than 1,000 formal requests with federal agencies and nearly two dozen lawsuits under the Freedom of Information Act since 1973—and that by this means has amassed some 200,000 pages of internal government papers and correspondence from private citizens to government agencies that refer to Scientology.

Yet a close examination of the papers the church has culled from this mass of material and made available to Times reporters as evidence fails to reveal any explicit or unambiguous expression of interest on the part of any federal agency to "suppress" or "harass" Scientology, alone or in collaboration with any other agency or private group.

The documents do contain, as the church contends, abundant speculation and rumor about Scientology's motivations and activities, although the gossip in the government's files was usually labeled for what it was.

Overall, the papers reflect widespread skepticism that Scientology was a bona fide religion. But at the same time, government agencies ap-

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# U.S. Harassment of Scientologists Claimed

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peared disinclined to regard it as subversive or dangerous.

As one informational memo circulated within the Central Intelligence Agency put it, L. Ron Hubbard, Scientology's founder, "appears to be a shrewd businessman who has parlayed his Scientology 'religion' into a multimillion-dollar business by tak-

**This is the last in a series of articles on the Church of Scientology.**

ing advantage of that portion of society prone to fall for such gimmicks."

The church considers this typical of the damaging false information that it says has plagued Scientology from its inception.

Another CIA memo says, however, that the agency "has had no relationship with Hubbard or with the movement, nor is there any evidence available that would suggest political or subversive overtones."

During 11 hours of interviews, Dubron and Jentzsch began with the position that the government agencies such as the FBI and CIA had engaged "systematic harassment" of the church, in large part by circulating false information about the church's beliefs and practices to other agencies

and to foreign governments.

As the evidence of intent was discussed, the two spokesmen shifted to a position that "individuals" in the FBI, the Internal Revenue Service and other agencies had acted on their own volition to suppress the church.

Still later, Dubron asserted that papers obtained under the Freedom of Information Act "at the very least demonstrate gross incompetence" on the part of agencies handling matters relating to Scientology—ranging from the church's requests for tax exemption to visa applications from foreign Scientologists.

"We feel we will be able to prove intent (to harass)," Dubron said, adding in reference to the material obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, "we feel certain it is in there."

If such evidence does not emerge, Dubron said, it may be that it is hidden in additional files the government has refused to surrender under exemption clauses in the act. Or, he said, federal officials may have destroyed such evidence to avoid embarrassment or never committed their intentions to paper in the first place.

This hypothesis is not implausible,

but it does run counter to the success that other controversial organizations have had in prying deeply embarrassing documents from federal agencies by means of the Freedom of Information Act.

There are, for example, the volumes of documents brought to light beginning in 1974 that exposed a 15-year campaign by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to disrupt organizations ranging from the Communist Party to the Black Panthers to New Left groups opposed to the Vietnam war.

In one such document, a May 10, 1968, memo from the FBI's "Cointelpro" campaign that conveyed the bureau's intentions unequivocally, the late director J. Edgar Hoover ordered his agents to "expose, disrupt or otherwise neutralize" the New Left movement.

The FBI "must frustrate every effort of these groups and individuals to consolidate their forces or to recruit new or useful elements," Hoover wrote.

The Church of Scientology, which includes the FBI on its list of agencies alleged to have harassed the church, does not appear on published lists of organizations the FBI targeted in its

now-defunct Cointelpro campaign.

More important, disclosure of the Cointelpro documents showed that in the 1950s and 1960s—precisely when Scientologists say they were under concerted attack—federal officials did commit to paper their intentions toward other groups, kept the paper and later surrendered it.

The file of papers bearing on Scientology which the FBI has released under the Freedom of Information Act consists almost entirely of citizen inquiries about Scientology; responses from the FBI to the effect that as an investigative agency it could offer no comment; and internal memos on Scientology evidently written for the guidance of FBI offices in handling public inquiries.

The memos consistently, from the 1950s into the 1970s, assert that the FBI has not investigated the Church of Scientology or its founder, Hubbard.

Three inches thick, the FBI file covers 34 years, from 1940 through 1974. It begins with a May 16, 1940, letter from Hubbard himself to the FBI, in which Hubbard accuses the steward of the Knickerbocker Hotel in New York of Nazi sympathies.

The FBI promptly opened a file listing Hubbard as an "informant," then closed it two weeks later after an FBI agent, seeking more information from Hubbard, found that he had moved from his apartment and left no forwarding address.

Last year, the Church of Scientology published a paperback book containing what its spokesmen describe as the essence of available evidence for government harassment of the church. Entitled "The American Inquisition," the \$5 book opens with a claim that in 1950 "the government was excited by the possibility of monopolizing L. Ron Hubbard's work and sought to force him into classified government service."

"When Mr. Hubbard declined," the book continues, "the government

threatened him—and the war between Scientology and the government was on."

It was, by all indications, a peculiar war. The next year saw Hubbard visiting FBI offices on March 7, 1951, to discuss his then current marital difficulties, pass along the names of associates he believed to be Communists, and advertise dianetics—his theory of the human mind's operation—as a means of combatting communism.

The FBI's summary of the interview, released under the Freedom of Information Act, notes that Hubbard "declined to elaborate on how this might be done."

By 1955, FBI memos indicate, the bureau had ceased acknowledging Hubbard's correspondence.

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## Church Suppression Claimed

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According to the church's book, the next major incident occurred in the spring of 1958 when then Vice President Richard M. Nixon was alleged to have dispatched two U.S. Secret Service agents to the Founding Church of Scientology in Washington, D.C., to upbraid its staff for a slighting reference to Nixon that had appeared in the church's magazine Ability.

"The agents further demanded that all copies of the Ability issue be recalled, that no further copies be issued, and that Nixon's name never again be mentioned in the church magazine," the book asserts.

The Secret Service has told the church that it has no record of such a visit. The substantiation the church offered in its book is a letter written by a former Washington Scientologist 16 years later, in November, 1974. The letter says in part:

"A rumor somewhat circulated through the organization that we had been visited by the Secret Service on behalf of Vice President Nixon," but the author leaves open the possibility that, "I am misidentifying it with other visits from the FDA or the IRS."

Agents of the Food and Drug Administration did visit a Scientology office in the Washington, D.C. area in 1958. They seized 20,000 pills of a vitamin mixture the church called "dianezene." The FDA said the pills were misleadingly labeled "Special Anti-Radiation Compound" and were advertised as conferring protection against radioactivity. According to the FDA, the seizure was "uncontested" and the tablets were destroyed.

Five years later—in an action the church considers one of the leading government transgressions against it—the FDA returned to seize 100 of Scientology's "E-meters" in Washington, charging that Scientologists were using the electronic devices (which resemble simple lie-detectors) in a counseling context that implied curative powers for illnesses.

The church fought the FDA for the next 10 years and finally won the right to use its E-meters in religious counseling so long as it imputed no therapeutic value. But government documents the church made available to The Times appear to conflict with, rather than support, its view that the 1963 raid was part of a larger effort to suppress Scientology.

In a 1968 letter to the British Ministry of Health, for example, the FDA said, "Our seizure action of the Hubbard E-meters was directed solely against the device, based on objectionable statements in various materials which served as labeling."

The Church of Scientology also contends that it was included on the White House "enemies" list drawn up during the Nixon administration and that it has been the target of a vendetta by the Internal Revenue Service.

"It is not insignificant that the Church of Scientology was one of the organizations named in the infamous Nixon 'enemies' list," Washington church vice president Kendrick L. Moxon said in a federal court affidavit filed May 6, 1976.

But a review of the "enemies" list and associated memos that presidential counsel John Dean disclosed in June, 1973, reveals no mention of the church, its founder or its other officials among the more than 250 organizations and individuals singled out explicitly for retaliation by the IRS and other federal agencies.

The church does appear on a list the IRS drew up in 1969 of organizations that—the agency said in an attached memo—"by their very nature can be expected to ignore or

wilfully violate tax or firearm statutes."

The memo makes no mention of "enemies" or any form of retaliation or harassment. The context is that of an effort to consolidate files and eliminate repetitive and overlapping field investigation on groups believed likely to evade tax laws.

In the mid-1960s, the IRS revoked the tax-exempt status of two principal Scientology churches, in Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles. The California case is yet to be resolved, but in 1969 the U.S. Court of Claims upheld the IRS action in the Washington case, ruling that the church had "failed to prove," as the law requires, that no part of the church corporation's net earnings inured to the benefit of Hubbard, his wife or family.

Suspicion within the Internal Revenue Service that the Church of Scientology and its numerous subsidiary organizations was actually a "profit-making scheme of a nonreligious nature" is reflected in an internal memo dated March 27, 1967. Based on unspecified "investigative information," the memo contends that since the early 1950s a "sizeable amount of untaxed income has been going to Hubbard generally via one of the (his) controlled organizations, through English or Swiss banks."

Discussing ways of taxing this income, the memo suggests imposing a 30% withholding tax on monies flowing out of the United States to Scientology groups abroad. But it notes that "this would net little tax and not reach the real tax target—Hubbard."

Jentzsch, the church's chief West Coast spokesman, said he took this remark to mean that "they don't care about the money—they want to get Hubbard."

One of the major themes weaving through Scientology's complaint of government harassment is that the FBI, among other agencies, deliberately circulated false and damaging information about the church and its founder within the U.S. government and also passed it along to other governments from Australia to Europe to Africa—thereby coloring official attitudes toward Scientology around the world.

"Well-poisoning," is the phrase that Kenneth J. Whitman, president of the Church of Scientology of California, uses.

To support this view, the church compiled and gave to The Times several hundred pages of documents the U.S. government has turned over to the church. The papers include internal memos, correspondence, State Department cables and requests for information from several foreign governments including Canada and Britain.

These papers, among others obtained independently, do demonstrate that the FBI—having not investigated the church—culled much of its information from uncomplimentary newspaper and magazine articles, distributed it freely to U.S. agencies and infrequently to foreign governments—but not to the public.

The papers also indicate that throughout the govern-

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ment, rumor and speculation linking Scientology to hypnosis and the use or smuggling of drugs were common. (The church has consistently denied any such associations and in January of 1976 federal drug officials said in a court proceeding there was no drug investigation under way.)

(It is impossible to tell, on the basis of papers the church has made available, whether, or to what extent, such gossip weighed against the church in its dealings with governments.)

There is no indication, however, that U.S. agencies (including the FBI) attached particular credence to the melange of rumor and news clippings circulated by the FBI—or that they relied on such material as a basis for regulatory decisions affecting the church.

A case in point is the so-called "Foley memorandum," which the church regards as one of the most egregious examples of damaging false information yet unearthed from government files by the Freedom of Information Act.

Written by one Shirley Foley of the U.S. Labor Department in November, 1967, the memo is a nine-paragraph summary of a conversation with two IRS attorneys written for his files.

When it was written—and, the church says, distributed later to other federal agencies—the Labor Department was considering whether to issue alien employment certificates routinely to foreign Scientology ministers under rules that apply to "bona fide" religious groups. The certificates were necessary for admission to the United States.

The memo notes that the IRS had tentatively revoked

the church's tax-exempt status in Washington, D.C., and California. It then makes passing reference, without elaboration, to "evidence" that the Church of Scientology makes wide use of LSD, uses electric shock in an initiation ceremony and that "members of several families" have allegedly been "shot but not killed by unknown persons because they objected to their teen-age children becoming members."

(Scientology spokesmen say categorically that the church has never condoned the used of drugs, does not shoot people and has no initiation ceremony. As one of the basic tenets of its doctrine, Scientology opposes the use of electroshock therapy by the mental health professions.)

Church officials say that during the late 1960s and early '70s a number of foreign Scientology ministers were denied entry to the United States—and that they are convinced the Foley memo was responsible.

"You have one memo like this sent to 52 government agencies and it creates havoc for a religion, church spokesman Jeffrey Dubron said. "The Foley memo was sent to the Immigration and Naturalization Service to help in judging whether Scientologists should be let in. Scientologists were not let in. That's an exceedingly small logical jump to make."

Missing from this deduction, however, is any evidence that the nine-paragraph memo did in fact contribute to the Labor Department's denial of alien employment certificates—or, if it did, that the gossip in it was a deciding factor.

Apart from a 1975 letter of retraction the church had de-

manded from the Labor Department, no other document in the mass of material the church supplied to The Times refers to Foley, his memo or the allegations in it.

On the contrary, in subsequent letters to the Immigration and Naturalization Service—written long before government officials had any reason to expect that such correspondence might be made public through a Freedom of Information Act—the Labor Department explained that its denial of alien employment certification was based on two grounds: the IRS' revocation of some Scientology churches' tax exemption and the fact that the National Council of Churches did not include Scientology in its directory of some 200 "recognized" religious groups.

In 1975, the Labor Department reviewed the status of the church, parts of which had by then won or regained tax-exempt status, and declared it to be a bona fide religious group. At the church's demand, the department also affirmed that the Foley memo was "irrelevant, unverified, and based on hearsay" and removed it from the files.

On at least one occasion, one of Scientology's own public relations campaigns appears to have backfired on it, leading to what it now decries as false information in government files.

The alleged falsehood, which crops up in a variety of government documents in the 1960s, is that Scientology involves the study of a "Russian textbook on brainwashing."

One such memo, written by the security chief of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, in 1961, indicates that a Scientologist's security clearance had been denied partly on this ground.

The church acknowledges circulating what it called a "Russian textbook of psychopolitics," in 1955 but insists that it did so as a "public service" and did not subscribe to its contents.

This message appears to not have been universally understood, however, for the pamphlet's distribution evoked

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a number of letters from the public and from at least one U.S. senator (Strom Thurmond, a South Carolina Republican) to the FBI asking whether Hubbard, Scientology or his Dianetics Research Foundation had Communist ties.

The FBI, according to internal bureau memos released recently under the Freedom of Information Act, looked the psychopolitics pamphlet over, declared it to be of "doubtful authenticity," and said it was "apparently a thinly veiled attack upon mental health programs along the line that such programs are part of the worldwide Communist conspiracy."

The notion that communism and the mental health professions were somehow related appears to have coincided closely with Hubbard's own views, although he has not acknowledged writing the pamphlet.

In July, 1955, however, in one of his letters to the FBI Hubbard averred that "attacks" upon his various organizations during the previous five years had "found psychiatry and Communist-connected personnel very much in evidence and both active with defamation and very unreasonable—and unsuccessful—attacks."

The letter does not mention the pamphlet. But six months later in another letter to the FBI he enclosed a copy of it, along with a note that read in part:

"This was compiled from Communist sources for use of our research department and people."

"It may be that we will also use this in anti-Communist campaigns," Hubbard said. "We have been seriously hurt by Communists and communism and we see nothing wrong in our using their tactics against them."

Six years later, in mid-1961, a new edition circulated around the country, but evidently not under Scientology's name. Among the letters of complaint received by the FBI was one from the Founding Church of Scientology in

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Washington, D.C., addressed to the late director Hoover.

"Dear Mr. Hoover," the May 16, 1961, letter says. "Enclosed is some Communist literature received in the mail by us. Gads! How sickening!"

The FBI concluded that it was the same Russian brainwashing text of doubtful authenticity that Hubbard had submitted in 1955.

In a statement the Church of Scientology hand-delivered to The Times on Aug. 19, after having discussed at length with reporters its allegations of government harassment, Whitman, the church's principal national spokesman, said:

"The FBI cast the first stone at us even as we were becoming a religion nearly three decades ago.

"Now at last we can prove their intentions and their methods, and we can prove that our difficulties were part of a campaign of bloodless genocide."

Whitman offered no new material to support his statement.

Perhaps the most compelling explanation for Scientology's accusations of persecution—and for the church's intensely combative responses—appears in the December, 1971, report of an official British inquiry into the "practices and effects" of Scientology.

The inquiry was conducted by Sir John Foster, a Conservative member of Parliament, three years after Britain had imposed a ban on foreign nationals seeking entry to study Scientology. Foster was not unsympathetic to the church, and recommended, in effect, that the ban be lifted (it was not).

In his preface to a chapter entitled "Scientology and its

Enemies," Foster wrote:

"The reactions of individuals and groups to criticism varies from grateful acceptance, or amused tolerance, at one end of the scale to a sense of outrage and vindictive counterattack on the other. Perhaps unfortunately (especially for its adherents) Scientology falls at the hypersensitive end of the scale.

"Judging from the documents, this would seem to have its origin in a personality trait of Mr. Hubbard, whose attitude to critics is one of extreme hostility."

It could be said, Sir John concluded, that:

"Anyone whose attitude to criticism is such as Mr. Hubbard displays in his writings cannot be too surprised if the world treats him with suspicion rather than affection."