

they deviated from course.”

Meanwhile we learn from *The Times*, (November 4), that the Canadian Department of Mines and Technical Surveys is currently tracking the movement of the magnetic North Pole, (last heard of between 12 and 20 miles north, and 4 miles east of the southern tip of Bathurst Island.) Apparently we are not alone in this respect, for, according to the same newspaper (November 10), Jupiter too has problems with its magnetic poles. In fact, the giant planet “wobbles”, adjusts its axis, and sends out signals! The news item reads:

“An adjustment of the planet Jupiter to its magnetic axis was put

forward today as an explanation of the radio signals which it transmits to the earth, with a period of rotation significantly faster than that of the planet itself.

“Mr. Glenn Berge and Mr. David Morris of the California Institute of Technology, observed two years ago that the planet’s radiation belt shifted by 18 degrees about every 10 hours, the planet’s period of rotation. They have now discovered that the planet itself ‘wobbles’, probably because its magnetic poles are significantly distant from the true poles. The magnetic axis passes about 35,000 miles from the centre of Jupiter, which has a diameter of about 85,000

miles.

“The radiation zone, like that of other planets, is held in Jupiter’s magnetic field. The radio signals which come to earth appear to be generated in the radiation zone, and the intermittency of their reception depends on the adjustment of the magnetic poles into the proper position to direct the signals to the earth.”

It makes one wonder whether or not the Canadian Department of Mines and Technical Surveys has checked to see if our errant magnetic poles have transmitting licenses. There is no knowing *who* may be listening!

A Contact Claim

By Jerome Clark

ANTONIO RIBERA, in his study of the Fatima “miracle” (see March/April 1964 issue of the *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW*), suggests that UFO occupants may present themselves in terms familiar to “contactees”, usually as divine manifestations. This point seems to me quite well taken, and indeed it is one which I have considered myself for some time. However, Ribera does not follow his reasoning to its logical conclusion, which I believe would result in the discovery of some significant clues to the UFO mystery in general and the contact problem in particular.

I

The 1897 “airship” affair parallels Unidentified Flying Object reports of today in many ways—even in some of its ramifications. Included in the stories that flooded newsdesks and excited Americans in April of that year were even several contact claims, surprisingly enough. In this latter area, however, we find a number of major differences between the older and the newer stories that may prove highly important, as we shall soon see.

The “airship” was first reported over the Midwestern states of Nebraska and Kansas during the last week of March, then over Illinois in early April. Hereafter its appearances seem to have become somewhat scattered, suggesting that more than one ship was involved. (In at least one instance, two of the machines were seen flying side by side.) A contemporary account describes the machine in an article headed *Is it all a fake?* The writer proceeds:

“Is this air ship business a conspiracy of newspaper fakirs or have we at last solved the question which brought morification and bruises to Darius Green? From a hundred different places come dispatches with apparent credibility, noting the sighting of the airship. Men who have never been known to lie declare that they have seen the ship and talked with the inmates. When the ship first appeared about Kansas City (Missouri) the dispatches announced that it had been seen by hundreds of citizens. Later it was seen distinctly, so say the dispatches, by many people in Omaha (Nebraska). The dispatch gives the names of well known and reputable people who are willing to swear that they saw the ship, and who give a detailed description of it. A few days ago the ship landed near Springfield, Illinois, to repair the electric motor with which it is propelled and two farmers made affidavits to the statement that they had talked with the passengers, two men and a woman. All the descriptions of the ship tally. The Omaha description is that the supposed ship has a long steel body, shaped like a cigar, about 40 feet long and six to 10 feet in diameter, with wing-like attachments on the sides, while fore and aft appear wheel-like devices similar to the steering apparatus of a steamship. The top is capped with a balloon-like bag, oblong and seemingly attached. The headlight is similar to that of a locomotive. Most of the observers also claim to have distinguished a red light in the rear of the apparatus. Sometimes the car is seen to move rapidly at the rate of 50 to

60 miles per hour and at a distance of about 1,000 feet above the earth; at other times it is seen to move slowly and at moments not at all.

"In hundreds of places and by thousands of people the strange aerial body has been distinctly seen, or at least is so reported. The Associated Press—a news organization which is slow to take up with fakes—is sending accounts of the movement of the ship.

"John O. Preast, an eccentric but scholarly German who lives at Omaha, has been known to have been working for over a year on an airship. It has been noticed that little has been seen of him lately. Mr. Preast denied that the ship is his, but his neighbours think it is, and honestly believe that he has mastered the problem which first occurred to D. Green, and which made him famous.

"The *Argus-Leader* neither admits nor denies. It doesn't pay to be too dogmatic about what men can do, or cannot do. He is a brave man, who in this age of man's increasing mastery over nature would bluntly say that anything is impossible."

It is significant that the machine was almost universally thought to be an aircraft built by Americans who, for reasons of their own, did not want themselves to be identified. *Le Figaro*, a French publication, comes as close as anyone in implying another explanation: "Americans are no further advanced in the science of aeronautics than the French, and to accept the statement of an airship travelling one-hundred kilometres an hour we must admit the discovery of a new force or a new application of a force hitherto known to the extent of three or four times greater than any

existing."² Still, the *Figaro* suggestion clearly favours the terrestrial-origin hypothesis.

In this light we examine the "contact claim" of April 15. According to the Associated Press, two Springfield, Illinois, farmhands, Adolph Winkle and John Hulle, came upon the airship, which was resting in a field two miles north of Springfield. Three occupants—two men and a woman, all of them apparently quite normal in appearance—emerged and explained to the witnesses that they had flown from Quincy in 30 minutes and that they were repairing the machine's electrical apparatus and searchlight mechanism. They would, they said, make "a report to the government when Cuba is declared free." The news article notes that "the farmers' description (of the craft) is similar to descriptions heretofore given."³

Then, two days later, a 12-year-old boy named Daniel J. Schroeder and a friend of his made a most interesting discovery: an alleged message from the airship. Passing through the old sanitation building in Lincoln's Park in Chicago, they noticed a package wrapped in brown paper hanging from the branches of a tree. "When unwrapped a pasteboard box was disclosed containing the remnants of a luncheon, while attached to the box was a card on which was printed the following inscription: 'Dropped from the airship Saratoga, Friday, April 16, 1897.'

"The card was folded and had an embellished front page. In the upper corner were printed the words 'Air Ship' and below them was a gilded ensign of a boy standing on a pair of outstretched wings. It was something like a dance programme,

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION

Covering the meetings of the British Association Conference at Southampton, the Science Correspondent of the *Daily Sketch* wrote on 1st September of the scientists' conclusions that "bug-eyed mosters", only a year or so ago unfashionable, were now quite "U" and "biologically acceptable". He went on to report the savants' discussions of the possibilities of there being superior insect-like types, or even men made of tin or silicon. The Science Correspondent then devoted some paragraphs to recalling the claims of George Adamski, Professor H. Oberth, Marius de Wilde and Joe Simonton, who actually claimed to have met humanlike space beings of various sizes. "We scoffed at their stories then," he writes, ". . . but now they may have the last laugh!"

of fine cardboard and apparently expensive. Besides the printed words there was written on the third page of the folded card, in blue pencil, in lines printed for the entry of memoranda, the words:

“9:41 p.m.—Due NW, 2,000 ft.; 61 N. Lat., 33. Long. Descending. Dense fog. Drizzling . . .”

“There were no names or other useful information on the card, but it is expected that by it the persons operating the aerial navigation scheme may be located. The lunch box was either dropped from the airship and lodged in the branches of the tree or was placed there to hoax people. In any event the parcel was in a spot where it was certain to be found, as many persons pass near the old sanitation building.

“Many persons looked at the strange find of the boys’ yesterday. It was not generally denounced as a hoax, because, as some observing men pointed out, anyone who had fancy airship cards printed was going to unnecessary expense to carry out a joke, while the package could just as well have been placed in some busy thoroughfare.”⁴

Finally, about this time another alleged message from the airship was found, this one near Astoria, Illinois. What its contents were we are unable to determine, but we do know that it was addressed to the famous American inventor Thomas Alva Edison and signed by a “C. L. Harris.”

Edison, however, denied any knowledge of the affair. “You can take it from me that that is a pure fake,” he told reporters. “I have had several men named Harris in my employ, but I know nothing of C. L. Harris.” Apparently not content with a mere denial, the “Wizard” (as he was slavishly called at the time) felt compelled to add, “I have no doubt that airships will be successfully constructed in the near future, but . . . at best, (they) would only be toys.”⁵

II

I believe that we can safely dismiss the possibility that the airship was constructed privately by ordinary human beings. Even if we ignore the similarity between the craft and certain types of modern UFOs, we must concede that a secret of such magnitude, involving what would have to be the first airplane, could hardly have been hidden for very long; moreover, all those suspected of having constructed the machine vehemently denied any connection, and there is no reason to doubt their word even today.

That its occupants were human in appearance, on the other hand, seems to have been fairly well established. *Le Figaro*, in a contemporary article discussing the mysterious craft, reports that “with a telescope a human being was observed in the machine.” In one instance and possibly two,

human voices were heard emanating from inside the object.⁶

Furthermore, it is evident that someone was interested in reinforcing the widely-held belief that the airship was of mundane origin, and apparently it was the UFO beings themselves. If Winkle and Hulle were telling the truth—and their story appears to have been almost universally accepted—we might conclude either that the extraterrestrials (we shall call them this for want of a better term) were engaged in some unknown activity in which they did not want their real identity made known, or that they chose to prove their existence realizing that the comparative unsophistication of nineteenth century Americans would not permit them to accept the interplanetary answer. This parallels the behaviour of the apparent extraterrestrial in the Fatima incident or, as in Ribera’s example, “the white explorer who presents himself to backward natives as ‘the great white god.’”

What bearing, then, has this on the so-called contacts of the “flying saucer” era? We shall examine this question on a future occasion.

NOTES

¹Sioux Falls, South Dakota, *Argus-Leader*, April 17, 1897.

²Quoted *Ibid*, April 19.

³*Ibid*, April 15.

⁴*Ibid*, April 21.

⁵*Ibid*, April 22.

⁶According to the *Chicago Record* for April 3, “People of Galesburg (Michigan) saw a brilliant white light approach from the southwest . . . It hovered close to the earth. Reporters state that they heard human voices from aloft . . . from the airship!”

The *Argus-Leader*, in a badly written news story in its April 17 edition, discloses that the ship had passed over Vermillion, South Dakota, the night before, and had been sighted by about 20 witnesses. “Stories were rife on the streets this morning and no doubt before night would have developed into an image with two lights and men and women’s voices as the general description is given.”

Readers are referred to the New Zealand “airship” flap of 1909, an account of which appeared in the November/December 1964 issue of the *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW*.—ACTING EDITOR.

PERSONAL COLUMN

UFO BOOKS BOOKS, bought and sold. Current list 4d. Miss S. Stebbing, 87 Selsea Avenue, Herne Bay, Kent.

BOOKS WANTED IN NEW ZEALAND. UFO books and book-lists sought by New Zealand Postal Library. *The Coming of the Spaceships* by Kenneth Arnold, *Behind the Flying Saucers* by Frank Scully. The Apollo Verein 1958, Box 27, Otahuhu, New Zealand.

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