

Things are hotting up in the Antarctic

By Dan Lloyd

READERS of the *Daily Express* must have wondered at the small news-item that appeared on the front page of that newspaper on July 7, 1965. It said: "British, Argentine and Chilean military and scientific personnel in the Antarctic yesterday watched an unidentified 'curious celestial body' for about 20 minutes. The Chilean Air Force said it was 'glowing with a white light'. The British station described it as zig-zagging and 'yellow changing to green'."

The *Express* was careful not to use the term "flying saucer". It called the "curious celestial body" a "Zig-zag mystery in the sky". Two days later, however, *Daily Mail* readers, running their eye down a column headed "The ghost riders fly in Antarctic", discovered a little more about the mystery. Chile's Defence Department was quoted as saying that "it is the second time in 18 days that the object has been reported". And one of the base commanders, while denying that it would be true to say that "all of us saw a flying saucer", commented: "However, it was something real, an object that moved at amazing speed, manoeuvred quickly and gave off a blue-green sheen. It also interfered with the electro-magnetic apparatus of an Argentine base which is facing ours." A Chilean corporal, the *Mail* story went on, had photographed the object, but the colour film could not be developed until the men were back on the mainland in eight months.

Here was something a bit more juicy. "Ghost rider" the weird object might be to the sub-editor of the *Mail*, but the discerning reader would have been forgiven for asking how "something real" could be described as a "ghost". What kind of "spirit" could "spook" electro-magnetic apparatus? If the *Mail* sub had been aware of the hundreds of reported instances of "weird aerial objects" interfering with car transmissions, TV, radio and similar electrical appliances, and of the countless number of occasions on which high-speed, highly-maneuvrable, glowing bodies had baffled the observer with their acrobatics, he would have paused before choosing such a spectral definition.

It was not long before we received more detailed information about the mystery. From reader Sara Maxwell came a cutting from *El Mercurio*, Val-

paraiso, Chile, datelined July 7, 1965, and from the REVIEW representative in Brazil, Nigel Rimes, we received a cutting from *O Estado de São Paulo*, date-lined July 8, 1965. When the tireless Gordon Creighton had translated them, a much clearer picture emerged of the strange happenings in the skies of Antarctica.

The story can best be told in the words of these two papers. *O Estado de São Paulo* began:

"For the first time in history, an official communiqué has been published by a government about the 'Flying Saucers'. It is a document from the Argentine Navy, based on the statements of a large number of Argentine, Chilean and British sailors stationed in the naval bases in Antarctica.

"The communiqué declares that the personnel of Deception Island naval base saw, at 19 hours 40 minutes on July 3, a flying object of lenticular shape, with a solid appearance and a colouring in which red and green prevailed, and, for a few moments, yellow. The machine was flying in a zig-zag and in a generally western direction, but it changed course several times and changed speed, having an inclination of about 45 degrees above the horizon. The craft also remained stationary, for about 20 minutes, at a height of approximately 5,000 metres, producing no sound.

"The communiqué states moreover that the prevailing meteorological conditions when the phenomenon was observed can be considered excellent for the region in question and the time of year. The sky was clear and quite a lot of stars were visible.

"The Secretariat of the Argentine Navy also states in its communiqué that the occurrence was witnessed by scientists of the three naval bases and that the facts described by these people agree completely. It is understood that the photographs taken by a photographer at one of these bases will be made public after they have been analysed by scientists."

El Mercurio takes up the story with this account by the Commandant of the Chilean Air Force's Antarctic Base, Don Mario Jhan Barrera:

"It is rash to say that we all saw a flying saucer, like those in Science Fiction. But nevertheless it was something real, an object travelling

at a staggering speed, that performed evolutions and gave off a bluish-green light and caused interference in the instruments of the Argentine Base lying on an island that is near to and right opposite our Base. This is the second time in less than a month that we have seen these celestial bodies. The first time was on 18th June, and then again this Saturday, at 1920 hours. It was on this latter occasion that the whole personnel of the Base saw the object, while they were engaged in the daily job of taking atmospheric measurements."

The following point was stressed by Commandant Barrera, which he considered to be of the utmost importance:

"Corporal Uladislao Durán Martínez quickly found his camera and took about ten pictures which, in view of his experience in that department, are perfect. And he not only took photos direct, but also through a theodolite and high-power binoculars, so as to get a more perfect view. Unfortunately we have no laboratory at the Base here for developing colour films, so we shall have to wait till next March when we are relieved. Only then shall we be able to make a more complete study of the matter."

When asked whether in his opinion the object he saw was a flying saucer, Commandant Barrera emphasised:

"It is very rash to give an opinion in the matter, but what we observed was no hallucination or collective psychosis. We are at this Base here for scientific tasks, and what we see we try to analyse from this point of view. But I can say that it was not a star, for it had a very rapid and continuous movement. As far as I am concerned it is a celestial object that I am unable to identify. That it could be an aircraft constructed on this Earth, I do not believe possible. I belong to the Air Force, and to my knowledge the machines built by man fall far below this, in respect to shape, speed, manoeuvrability in the air, etc."

Commandant Daniel Perisse of the Argentine Base backed up his Chilean colleague by declaring that the appearance of the discs was no hallucination or mirage seen by the personnel of the Deception Island Base. His description of the object's performance tallied exactly with that of Commandant Barrera.

The whole personnel of his base saw the object, except the radio-operator who was at his post. He was able to record on the "magneto-bariometer" the magnetic tracks left by the craft, and Commandant Perisse stated that, as proof, he is relying

solely on these magnetic tapes, as he does not think the photographs taken will be of much value, owing to the great distance of the object and the small degree of light.

Whether the photographs will be of value or not, it is as well to bear in mind what happened in 1956 when NICAP asked the Chilean Government about the 1,200 ft. of colour film of UFOs taken in the Antarctic in the spring of 1950 by Commander Augusto Vars Ortega, of the Chilean Navy. The Chileans told Major Keyhoe that the film was classified and could not be made available. It will be interesting to see whether history repeats itself. Officialdom can be relied on to release nothing about UFOs unless they can be "explained away". Those magnetic tapes are going to take some explaining away.

However, an attempt to explain away the erratic behaviour of the electro-magnetic instruments has come from Stanley, in the Falkland Islands, headquarters of the British Antarctic Survey. Could Sir Vivian Fuchs have originated this cable, dated July 12, sent to the Scott Polar Institute, Cambridge?:

"Deception Island now report 'Argentine Base observed a moving coloured light on June 7, 20 and July 3. Chilean Base made similar observations on the latter two dates. Flickering red, green, yellow lights observed from British Base 2300Z July 2 due North. It had moved in two waves quickly from the West, then reversed along this course for a short distance before returning again to the North whence it remained stationary for about 20 mins.' Argentines report talking on radio July 4 to Stonington Horseshoe about coloured nacreous cloud seen on 2nd. At this time magnetic instrument was giving trouble and this info possibly passed on in general news natter. Listeners-in could have wrongly associated the two points. Instrument trouble resulted from accidental disturbance of variometer during normal midwinter adjustments and took two days to settle down."

It seems a remarkable coincidence that the "accidental disturbance of the variometer" should have coincided with the appearance of the UFO. Perhaps the recording of the magnetic tapes was also due to a faulty mechanism. Perhaps everyone in those Antarctic Bases had a simultaneous mental aberration. And perhaps the camera, if it reveals anything at all, will only do so because of a defect in the mechanism.

What price sanity?

Is Venus inhabited?

By Charles A. Maney

Dr. Maney, Emeritus Professor of Physics and Mathematics at The Defiance College, Defiance, Ohio, U.S.A., makes a welcome return to the columns of the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW.

VENUS has often been referred to as the twin planet to the earth. The two bodies differ very little in size; the earth has a mean diameter of 7,900 miles and the diameter of Venus measures 7,700 miles. Surface gravity on Venus is a little less than on the earth. A youngster weighing 100 pounds on the earth's surface would tip the scales at 86 pounds if transported to the surface of Venus. Both planets have an abundance of atmosphere. However, the Venus atmosphere is continually wholly blanketed with thick clouds, whereas the earth's atmosphere is usually only partly cloud-covered. This difference could be very significant; the daylight on Venus due to the dense cloud covering is probably not much brighter than daylight on the earth, even though Venus is somewhat closer to the sun.

Because of features resembling those of the earth, the planet Venus poses an intriguing question. What lies under that almost uniformly dense white blanket in the planet's upper atmosphere? In astronomical history Venus has not been accorded the same prominence as has been given the planet Mars, because Venus, unlike Mars, has no mysteriously varied and changing surface markings to challenge the scientific curiosity of interested observers. However, recent reliable scientific studies of the atmosphere of Venus by both Soviet and American astro-physicists have disclosed information about this planet which should now place it in the limelight of scientific and popular interest as never before in astronomical history.

The arguments pertaining to the nature of the planet Venus fall into three categories: (1) What may be deduced by consideration of certain simple laws of physics; (2) information by Soviet scientists on the content of the Venus atmosphere secured by spectroscopic analysis of the dark light of the planet; and (3) information secured recently at Johns Hopkins University by the eminent American astro-physicist Dr. John Strong and co-workers. This latter group succeeded in getting remarkably accurate data relative to the planet's upper atmosphere and cloud-covering through the

agency of a large telescope with instrumentation attached, hoisted 16 miles above the ground by a helium balloon.

(1) Since Venus moves around the sun in an orbit between the paths of Mercury and the earth, comparisons of conditions affecting these two planets with those affecting Venus can be helpful in trying to analyze conditions on Venus.

The relative distances of the three planets nearest to the sun in astronomical units are Mercury .387 A.U., Venus .723 A.U. and the earth, 1.000 A.U. The inverse square law shows that the planet Mercury receives 3.5 times as much solar radiation per unit of planetary surface as does the planet Venus. Also, Venus receives very approximately twice as much radiation from the sun per unit area as does the earth. When we take into account the percentages of absorption and reflection of this radiant energy from the sun on the three planets, the situation becomes greatly modified. The reflecting power of radiation known as the albedo, for the planet Mercury is 6 per cent, about the same as for our moon. On the other hand, 59 per cent of the sun's heat and light striking the upper atmosphere of the planet Venus bounces off into space. We do not have any good figure for the earth's albedo, but it certainly is far less than that of Venus, a planet which is continually covered by a complete cloud layer.

Therefore we can state that although Venus receives twice as much radiation on its cloud surface as does the earth, much less than twice as much solar radiation gets below the outer atmosphere of Venus to reach the ground surface. Upon this basis of reasoning one might conclude that the surface of Venus could have temperatures comparable with those of the earth's surface. But, of course, the relatively larger quantity of carbon dioxide recognized as being present in the Venus atmosphere could conceivably trap the sun's heat to a greater degree than is the case on earth.

Now to look at this same question from comparison with the planet Mercury, much nearer to