

A WEIRD TALE FROM THE VIENNA WOODS

Gordon Creighton

A fifty-year-old Austrian named Josef Wanderka has sent us a lengthy account of several UFO sightings he claims to have had at various times and, in particular, of a close encounter that allegedly took place in August or September of 1955. Herr Wanderka's style is verbose in the extreme, and on top of that he is afflicted with a dreadful inability, so it seems, to write anything without lacing it generously with left-wing political propoganda. Should the reader find it queer that this gentleman has preserved total silence — as he claims — for 23 years about his UFO experience, one can but quote Herr Wanderka's own explanation, which is that he has never wanted to have any dealings with individual investigators or with UFO research groups in Austria because these folk — every man jack of them — “are all Nazis.” (A proposition which I find myself quite unable to believe and I don't think many other people believe it either.)

Nevertheless we have this man's weird story, and, FSR being a forum for discussion, it seemed to me worthwhile to make a précis translation of those passages in his German article which bear upon our subject of UFOs, while omitting the sections in which he gives rein to his obsessive political rantings. As regards the tricky problem of the reliability of this story, Herr Wanderka's address is given below.¹ Perhaps some of our friends and readers in Austria will be good enough to go and see him and let us know in due course what opinion they have formed regarding his claims.

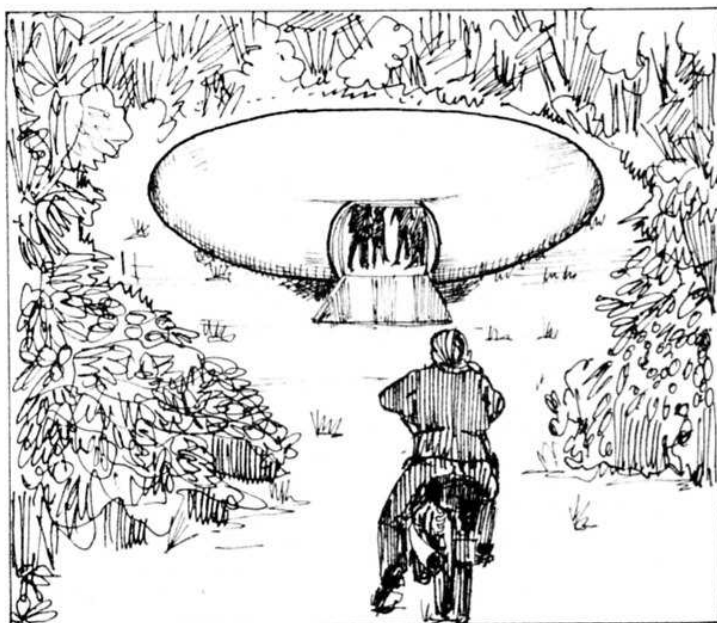
Before we come to his close encounter of 1955, a few words may be in order about another sighting that Herr Wanderka claims to have had one summer evening a year earlier, that is to say in 1954.

Josef Wanderka owned a powered cycle, and was extremely fond of making little excursions on it through that delightful country-side which lies so close at hand just outside Vienna. He claims that on the occasion in question he observed a powerful illuminated, silvery, cigar-shaped object flying slowly across the sky over Vienna, at approximately the speed of a small sports plane, as he estimated it. He thought the craft was possibly about five kilometres distant from him, and possibly more or less of the size (in terms of 1978) of a modern airliner. So far as he could detect, the thing seemed to be totally silent. He dismounted from his cycle and stood in a field beside the road to watch it, and got into conversation with a group of Russian soldiers² who were stationed nearby. The soldiers told him that they had often seen this silvery cigar. And one of them, “half seriously and half in jest,” added that it was of course a new Soviet secret weapon.³

We come now to the encounter, which Herr Wanderka says took place about 2.00 or 3.00 p.m. one day at the end of August or beginning of September in 1955. He was again on his powered cycle and was riding along a path through a belt of woodland about 25 kilometres to the south-west of Vienna, when suddenly his attention was drawn to something of a dull metallic colour among the trees. So he rode off along a side path towards it, and suddenly found himself only 20 metres or so from a disc-shaped craft standing in a clearing. It was about ten or twelve metres wide and 2½ metres high, with no external signs of portholes or, seemingly, of any undercarriage or legs, as it was sitting directly upon the grass. There was however a roughly rectangular opening on the side of the machine facing him, with a ramp about four metres long and two metres wide running up to it.

The whole appearance of the craft was that of a completely plain, smooth, squat metallic machine, with no exterior embellishments or trappings. Through the open door he could see that the interior seemed to be illuminated by a pleasant sort of light, and he got a sudden inspiration to ride straight up the ramp and into the disc. He did so, and at once found himself surrounded by five or six people about 1 metre 80 cms. in height. (He gives his own height as 1 metre 78 cms., and says he remained there, seated in his saddle throughout the experience.)

Herr Wanderka says the beings had beautiful



Wanderka's encounter: heading for the ramp.

faces, with no blemish "...faces like those of children between the ages of six and ten among us."

The beings were wearing dull grey one-piece overalls without pattern and, so far as he could discern, without seams or openings. Their shoes were incorporated into the one-piece garment, but reveal no toe-outlines. On their hands they had large undifferentiated gloves, finger-less, (known in England as mitts). Their figures seemed to be very slim and the one-piece suits hung quite loosely on them. so that he could detect no sex characteristic (for example, as he explains, the outline of female breasts, had any of them been females).

Their necks emerged, he says, from what he could only describe as a sort of inflated silken "ruff." Their hair was fair, of medium length, and seemed to be secured under a sort of coif at the back of the head.

With regard to the internal lighting of the machine, Wanderka describes it as pleasant, yellowish, indirect, and casting no shadows. "The sort of thing we are aiming at today, twenty years later, as the ideal type of illumination for creating an 'intimate' and cosy atmosphere in living quarters."

The inside walls of the UFO were smooth, like the exterior, and curved to follow the outer shape. But what at once struck Wanderka as rather extraordinary was that nowhere could he discern any signs of instrumentation, or control levers, or other equipment, or indeed any seating arrangements for the crew, though he adds that this may have been because the crew, standing so closely around him, made it impossible for him to get an unfettered view of everything.

Wanderka says he told the entities his name and explained where he lived, apologizing for having burst in upon them so unceremoniously on his cycle. To this the entities replied with the remarkable information that they themselves hailed from the top point of *Cassiopeia*.

Astonished at their fluent German, Wanderka enquired how they came to know his language. They replied simply that they "had learnt it." He likens their voices to those of adult women among us, very clear, and with a slight accent. "They pronounced the individual syllables rather in the way that an Englishman does when talking German."

Herr Wanderka next decided to give his friends a summary account of the conditions prevailing upon our planet, delivering himself of a splendid and heated left-wing harangue well larded with all the usual clichés, and directed primarily against inequalities and privileges. Maybe the visitors found this a trifle boring, for after a while their attention seemed to rivet on to the odour of warm oil coming from his little motor. So he found it necessary to give them a brief account of how the combustion engine works. But before long he was back again on his favourite subject, the iniquity of the fact that on our planet we do not all appear to be precisely equal or to live in precisely the same conditions or surroundings, whereupon his visitors all burst into tears.

They then proceeded to intimate to Herr Wanderka that *he* would have to be the chosen one to change all this, and be the *Leader*⁴ of a movement designed to do away with every form of privilege or inequality on earth.⁵

The interview was now at an end. Wanderka waved briefly to them and said "Good day!" while the UFOlings bowed to him ceremoniously "in Far Eastern fashion." Then, turning his cycle effortlessly through 180°, "as smoothly and easily as on a surface of ice," Herr Josef Wanderka rode off down the ramp and back to his home in Vienna.

Comment

I must again emphasise that we know nothing about the gentleman who provided this account, so we hope somebody in Austria will be able to secure further information for us. It may however well be felt that this odd story, dating from so early in the UFO business as 1955, has a certain "ring of truth" about it, particularly if one notes its absolute *absurdity* — a notable element in all UFO stories. When I say "a ring of turth" I am not thinking of what we call "reality," for it ought by now to be patently clear to everyone that whatever the nature of a UFO experience may be, it certainly does not take place inside any sort of everyday reality known to us.

The reader will note that the story contains a remarkable number of features that have cropped up in other UFO stories. The simple answer may well be that Herr Wanderka is a UFO buff and has read all the books. But, should this story *really* go back to 1955, one might ask oneself how much of the UFO literature had found its way into Austria and into the German language at that time? (Herr Wanderka tells us that he knows no foreign languages.) My guess would be that by 1955 very, very, little indeed of the UFO literature had found its way to Austria. That country, like Germany and all the rest of Central Europe, was very late in becoming aware of the UFO enigma, obviously owing to the traumatic effects of the Second World War and the grim necessities of recovery and survival.

NOTES

1. Josef Wanderka, Jorgerstrasse 51, 2/8, 1170 WIEN
2. Part of Austria was under Soviet occupation at that date.
3. Evidently the Soviets, alert to the obvious advantage of the idea that anything seen belting rapidly through the skies *simply had to be theirs*. This work of propaganda has borne excellent fruit, for there are probably still hundreds of thousands of people today in Europe and Africa and Asia (but maybe not so many in the USA!) who are quite sure that every UFO is a secret Russian machine, the product of a perfect and unrivalled technology. By their fatuous policies and attitudes the western governments have also done much to foster this idea. You don't have to be very bright to see who is the sole beneficiary from such ineptitude.
4. But, dear me, this doesn't sound very democratic or egalitarian, does it!
5. This sounds like bad news for the men of the Kremlin!

THE GATWICK AIRPORT SIGHTINGS

John Judge

GATWICK AIRPORT is situated in West Sussex, roughly half way between London and Brighton. It is the capital's second airport, being the starting point for many overseas charter flights as well as a large number of scheduled international services. It is therefore one of the major airports in the United Kingdom.

News of the happenings there was broken by the Independent Television News on Tuesday, August 8, 1978, and the Brighton *Evening Argus* for that date. The reporter, John Ellis, had researched the story and, when contacted by Alastair Prevost, was very helpful. When Alastair was put in touch with the original sources that day, he too found them of great help, often putting through calls to staff who were on duty on the day in question. However, it seems that as soon as the story was made public a clamp down was enforced. In his original story "A close look at those Close Encounters," Mr. Ellis had quoted a Ministry of Defence spokesman as saying "Every possible explanation will be looked into. It is a long and involved process. Trained investigators will want to study the position of stars at the time, the weather conditions and the possibility of an aircraft or balloon being mistaken for a UFO." This was, not without some justification, termed a "government investigation" by the press. When I came to pick up the pieces about a month later I found that not only was no real assistance forthcoming, but that John Ellis had also encountered deadlock in his efforts to discover what the "government investigation" had concluded.

It seems that the main event occurred on Saturday, August 5, 1978, at 12.57 p.m. Mr. G. Potter was the Air Traffic Supervisor at the airport that afternoon, having come on duty shortly before that time. The A23 road runs north from the town of Crawley, a mile or so from the airport. To the right (i.e. south east of the airport) is an elevated area known as Pound Hill. The occupants of several cars, some with caravans heading to or from holidays on the south coast, saw a strange object appear over the hill and travel quite slowly on a north westerly course, virtually right over the airfield, and heading towards Dorking, Surrey (8 miles west north west). It was described as a black cigar with an intensely brilliant white light in the centre. The object was descending slowly and was finally lost to sight behind trees. There was no sound.

Unfortunately, nobody at the airport seems to have taken details from any of the witnesses, although it is known that one man was named Mead. He estimated that the object at its closest was little more than a quarter of a mile away. Although

Jenny Randles, in her capacity as Secretary of UFOIN, writes:-

"On Tuesday, August 8, 1978, the national news was filled with stories of some amazing happenings in the vicinity of Gatwick Airport. A government enquiry was promised — then, as so often happens, all went quiet. Squadron Leader Alastair Prevost was on to the affair immediately for UFOIN, and did a good deal of the necessarily speedy follow-up. Sadly it was his last case, as he was already seriously affected by his terminal illness. John Judge picked up the pieces and completed the investigation but we owe a great debt to Alastair Prevost, who knew how important it was to act right away. Despite an often painful situation, he was willing to work on to the end."

Alastair could obtain no details, he was told that Air Traffic Control staff at the airport did see the object.

