

# THE BUFORA AND ICUR MEETINGS AT HIGH WYCOMBE

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THE Third International UFO Congress\*, held at High Wycombe, August 27-29, 1983, was characterized as having provided a broader than usual platform for expression of opinions and theories about the UFO phenomenon. Topics ranged from the conventional 'nuts and bolts' of extraterrestrial manufacture coming here from some cosmic Cape Canaveral to the highly unconventional concept of UFOs coming to us from within the Sun. In between, discussions focused on ball lightning, radar returns, hypnotic regression, psychic aspects, earthlights and other lights, and commentaries on "the state of the art".

Fortunately missing, in my opinion, were the "doomsayer" papers portraying UFOs as messengers of dire events, and papers heavy with pseudo-religious interpretations of the UFO phenomenon. In short, it was a scientifically oriented UFO Congress.

Of the fourteen papers presented, only six dealt, all or in part, with UFO events; five were UFO-related (research techniques, UFO theory, sociological aspects of UFOs) and three might be called "situation" papers (research attitudes and principles). The first are more easily described than the others: Dr. Harley Rutledge presented, in an informal manner, the story of the field work which became the basis of his book, "Project Identification"; Stanton Friedman expounded his favorite theme, "*Flying Saucers are Real*", emphasizing more than in the past the spectre of government "cover-up", which made his talk even more vivid than usual; Peter Day showed and discussed his now famous movies of a truly unidentified ball of light traversing the daylight sky and which is being investigated with renewed interest; Paul Norman, from Australia, brought up to date the many circumstances surrounding the mysterious disappearance of the pilot, Frederick Valentich, over the Bass Strait off the south coast of Australia (the conclusion remains that both his disappearance and the sightings of UFOs at that time by others than Valentich remain a total mystery); and Jenny Randles' paper, "*Opening Up the Windows*" dealt with the areas of the earth which seem to be centers (windows) of UFO activity. Such windows may be real or artificial, in that a given area may truly be an avenue of "ingress" for UFOs or in that an area may have one or more avid UFO investigators who attract UFO reports once their interests are known in the community, UFO events which would have otherwise gone unsung. Randles speculated on the possibility that some witnesses to UFO events may themselves have acted as a window and on the extent of "contagion", or the flow of reports (not all genuine)

caused by media exposure of one or more spectacular cases in an area. Randles' paper, one of the more critical and thoughtful of the papers presented, also dealt with the "Oz Factor" or the paranormal or altered state of consciousness aspects of the UFO phenomenon.

## The "Hessdalen Lights"

Perhaps the most dramatic presentation, and the most impressive visually, was the description of "*Project Hessdalen*" by Jan Fjellander of Sweden. Over a considerable span of time, utterly mysterious coloured lights have appeared in the skies over Hessdalen in Northern Norway, bright enough to photograph and resulting in some truly spectacular colour reproductions shown as slides. A plea was made for assistance in further research on this phenomenon. Later, a Hessdalen Scientific Advisory Board was created to guide such investigation and some financial support was pledged.

The five UFO-related papers were extremely varied in content. Peter Warrington, as a non-professional analyst of radar techniques, was critical of many of the claims of radar detection of UFOs. This was met by criticism from the floor, in particular from a professional radar operator of many years' experience.

No UFO conference these days is complete without some mention of abductions and hypnotic regression, and in view of the rising prominence of this aspect of the subject it is surprising that there was only one presentation. Harry Harris provided this, accompanied by a video presentation of a hypnotic regression.

## Theory of Life in the Sun

Without doubt the most controversial paper was given by Ali Abu Taha who, with the aid of standard formulae of physics and chemistry, sought to establish that conditions at a definite layer within the Sun would be hospitable to physical life and that this, in turn, might be responsible for UFO sightings.

## Earth-line theories

Another theory of UFO sightings, Earthlights, or lights purported to be associated with geologic fault lines and stress patterns, was presented by Paul Devereaux. Despite the authoritarian manner in which the paper was presented, the audience was not

inclined to accept its conclusions without reservation.

Hilary Evans' paper, *"The Liars and Lunatics, and What we can Learn from Them"* was in a sense a comedy relief to the serious proceedings, but it was a levity with a serious message; only by assessing the lunatic fringe and the "con" artists can we "calibrate the system" and establish the value of the content of Ufology.

The three papers that were directed toward assessing the present status of Ufology were those by Per Andersen, Bertil Kuhlemann, and Allen Hynek. Andersen presented the results of a survey of Danish scientists on their attitudes towards UFOs. The results were comparable to the survey of American Astronomers made several years ago by Professor Sturrock of Stanford University: the majority expressed scientific interest in the subject. When, however, they were asked about the nature of the UFO phenomenon, only 3% voted for the extraterrestrial solution while 32% held out for "natural phenomenon" and 30% for "man-made". (All of which, in the writer's opinion, shows how little scientists in general know about the complexity of the UFO phenomenon!)

Bertil Kuhlemann dealt at some length with what things could be measured and classified in UFO research and those things it would be difficult to quantify. He urged that standards and reference frameworks be set up. "Measure what is possible to measure, and make possible the measurement of that which has not been possible", quoting a statement made by an 18th century scientist; this represents a fair summary of his thesis.

### An Overview of Ufology

Hynek attempted an overview of the status of ufology, stressing the strong move away from the simplistic hypothesis of visitors from outer space coming here over vast astronomical distances and the growing prominence of the more "esoteric" theories. Tracing the changing attitudes of the public and of ufologists over the years, largely in terms of his own involvement in the subject, he pointed out that the main stumbling block to obtaining serious attention from the scientific community and from policy-making and funding groups in society was indeed the extraterrestrial hypothesis which, for reasons considered entirely valid, they rejected out of hand, having confused the UFO phenomenon with that particular interpretation of the phenomenon. Hynek feels, with Vallée, that the solution to the UFO problem will

prove to be far more exciting than merely space travel.

### PICUR becomes ICUR

The day before the formal opening of the Congress, an event of great potential significance for global ufology took place. The *Provisional Committee for UFO Research (PICUR)* convened, and although attended by only a few of its international members, and, working well into the night, worked out a formal Constitution, elected officers, reaffirmed the aims and objectives outlined in previous meetings of the Committee.

It was felt that after four years the Committee was now sufficiently well established to be able to dispense with the "P" for "Provisional"; the organization is now officially *ICUR*. Bertil Kuhlemann was named Chairman, Hynek President (Honorary), Robert Digby, Treasurer and Bjarne Hakensson, Secretary.

In addressing the Committee, Kuhlemann described the manner in which cooperation between *ICUR* and *WUA* (World Ufological Association) could be conducted. Since *ICUR* is an association of various countries, represented by delegates from member UFO organizations in a given country, and *WUA* is to be an organization of qualified individuals regardless of organizational affiliation, Kuhlemann pointed out that *WUA* members would be the logical persons to be invited to work with *ICUR* on various projects, especially those of an international character. Some of the first projects *ICUR* hopes to initiate are translation services, adoption of classification and procedural standards, and the establishment of communication links between organizations in member countries.

In its formal meeting, *ICUR*, recognizing that much information is lost to the world community because it is published in many different languages, strongly recommend that articles in journals published in member countries have short abstracts in English. Such abstracts could later be published in a newsletter, thus facilitating the exchange of information among international ufologists.

\*There ought to be some international commission that assigns numbers to "International" UFO Congresses. There have been "First" and "Second" and "Third" International Congresses in several countries. Most such Congresses are not truly international. Expense of air travel largely limits representation to countries close to the host country. At the present Congress, however, there were seven countries represented.

# NEWLY DISCOVERED "AIRSHIP" WAVES OVER POLAND

Thomas E. Bullard

This article concerns a wave of "phantom airship" sightings over Russian Poland in 1892, and the recurrence of similar phenomena over that same region in 1913. Mr Eddie Bullard, of Bloomington, Indiana, USA, states that, so far as he knows, he is the first investigator to have drawn attention to these interesting reports. — EDITOR

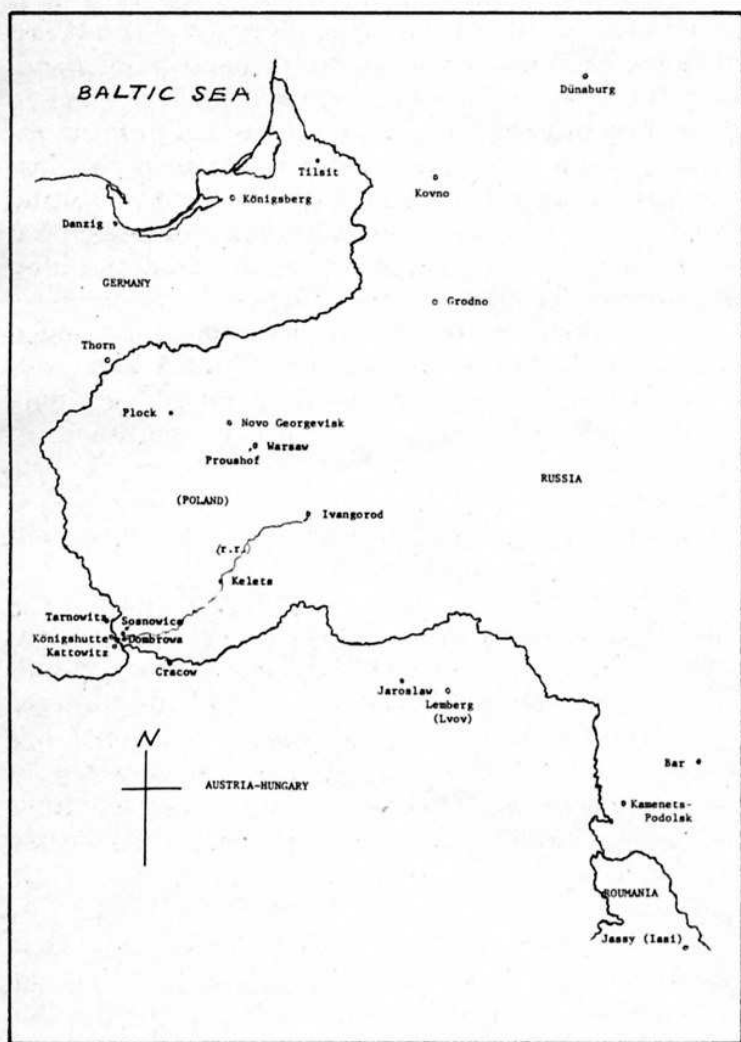
Phantom airships mark a turning point of abiding interest in UFO history. For the first time reports assume a distinctively modern tone with their description of structured aircraft appearing in wide-spread waves and displaying recurrent features, most notably the brilliant searchlight which settled in as standard equipment during the waves of 1896-97, 1908-10 and 1913, and continued as a hallmark of phantom airplanes in the World War I era and again during the "ghost flier" activity of the 1930s. Just when the age of airships began still remains a mystery. True, researchers have tracked phantom flying machines back as far as 1880, but the familiar cigar-shaped dirigible with a searchlight seems to have risen full-blown into Californian skies in November of 1896 and persisted with

few changes for decades. The question of antecedents is clearly an intriguing one for ufologists, and here I offer evidence to backdate the appearance of airships in the familiar mould by four years, to a substantial wave over Russian Poland in 1892.

## The sightings of 1892

The chronic border tension between Russia and Germany grew so intense during the late winter and early spring of 1892 that a war seemed assured. Newspapers claimed a build-up of as many as 850,000 Russian troops in Poland, and while the Russians denied having anything more sinister in mind than spring manoeuvres for defensive manpower, correspondents read significance into the fact that the men drilled constantly in spite of hardships caused by the lingering snow. Russian anxiety over military secrets ran high at this time too, as indicated by accusations that Jews were spying for the Germans and again by reports of an even stranger nature, which claimed that the Germans had intruded directly over Russia in steerable balloons.<sup>1</sup>

On March 26 the *New York Tribune*, *New York Times* and *Manchester Guardian* printed Russian dispatches which stated that a large balloon had floated above the fortress at Kovno a few days earlier. The balloon came from the direction of the German frontier and soldiers opened fire on the intruder, but the occupants used glasses and continued their investigations undisturbed. After hovering for considerable time the balloon returned to Germany and appeared to travel under perfect control.<sup>2</sup> These same dispatches repeated a notice from a Warsaw newspaper about an earlier sighting far removed from Kovno.<sup>3</sup> On March 7 a balloon approached the south-western border town of Dombrova, again from the direction of Germany, and headed to the north-east along the Ivangorod-Dobrova railroad against a strong northeasterly wind. About 5.45 p.m. the balloon disappeared behind some clouds and reappeared 45 minutes later with a light burning, at which time the invader retraced its earlier course.<sup>4</sup> The *Frankfurter Zeitung* passed along information from Polish sources in this border region that back-and-forth flights over Sosnowice, Dombrova and Stremeszice were almost daily events. Flights commonly began about 9 p.m.



Area of the "airship waves" of 1892 and 1913.