

An evaluation of

Aimé Michel's study of the Straight Line Mystery

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I HAVE CHOSEN to comment on the recently published work of the French scientist, Aimé Michel, *Flying Saucers and the Straight-Line Mystery*.^{*} Before I enter upon this discussion I want to pay tribute to the non-profit research organisation of New York City responsible for the English translation of this work from the original French, the "Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York." I am proud to be associated with this group as an honorary member and to publicly congratulate the Research Division of this organisation for their significant contribution to the cause of truth in the study of UFOs.

There is much in this book by Aimé Michel that deserves to be studied and analysed with careful reflection from various angles. And I include in this remark also, reference to the "Appendix on the Latest American Sightings" by my esteemed friend and co-investigator, Mr. Alexander D. Mebane, of New York City. I therefore want it understood that my present remarks are more in the nature of a tentative evaluation of the book's content and also to represent but a partial study. The book is outstanding not only for its various analyses, especially of course in the thesis of the straight-line mystery, but it is also an excellent source book of information concerning the sightings in France during the late summer and early fall of 1954.

^{*} *Flying Saucers and the Straight-line Mystery*, by Aimé Michel, published by Criterion Books, New York, 1958.

To Aimé Michel, the historian of the development of UFO science must credit the discovery of orthoteny, a term suggested by the discoverer himself. Michel found that the localities in France from which UFO sightings were observed for a given day, when plotted on a map of France, had a very decided tendency to lie along a straight line. When sightings for a given day were unusually numerous, several such alignments could be discerned. Michel also discovered that these alignments tended to meet at common points of intersection and that extraordinary sightings were associated with those localities where the alignments met.

by Professor

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Actually, as Michel points out in his book, there were thousands of sightings in France within a period of approximately ten weeks. But for the purposes of his alignment study, precise data as to the date and time of the sightings were needed, as well as reports that bore various evidences of reliability. And so his analysis covers upwards of three hundred selected sightings which are also described as separate incidents in the book. Through the use of maps showing the straight-line character of the observations the author presents an able argument to the effect that the geometrical pattern of the sightings not

only proves the reality of the UFO phenomena, but that it also proves the presence of intelligent design back of these happenings. It would be quite difficult indeed to interpret these sightings in any other way.

Michel's careful analysis of these French sightings is so comprehensive that further effort at extensive analysis serves little useful purpose. But one might be pardoned in making a few additional observations. Taking data from three maps of the book labelled Numbers 4, 5 and 6, covering the week beginning September 23, 1954, and ending September 29, and plotting it in *one consolidated chart* produces a configuration of lines emanating from the vicinity of Rixheim in extreme north-eastern France and fanning out westward over the entire country. As Michel points out, a huge cigar-shaped object accompanied by small satellites was observed at this focal area during the night of September 27-28. In this same connection it might be pointed out that *Mebane's map of American sightings* on November 6, 1957, shows a similar fanning out toward the east from a locality a little south of the southern shore of Lake Michigan. *Michel's map No. 7*, utilising thirty-one sightings for the single date of October 2, 1954, shows a multiplicity of lines, actually nine orthotonic lines intersecting at Poncey, a little north-east of the geographic centre of France. And again, as Michel points out, on the night of October 2 a vast illuminated cigar was observed at the intersection, at Poncey. It would seem to be a plausible interpretation of such unique geometric alignments that a well-organised programme of exploration of features of the area of France were being carried out by some extra-terrestrial intelligences.

Extra-terrestrial probe

Michel points out that "until October 10, almost all the observations fall on straight lines," but that "after that date approximately the number of cases which fail to fit on a line increases every day." This latter tendency could be construed to correspond to the needs of the concluding period of a survey, wherein incomplete data left over from the original systematic mapping programme could be checked upon in a follow-up programme covering miscellaneous details. In short it would appear that these extra-terrestrial scientists or engineers were bent on securing certain types of detailed information pertaining to the geography of France.

Just what type of information was being secured, of course, remains a mystery. That this particular survey appears to have been in the main unconcerned with the inhabitants of France themselves is substantiated by the usually apparent indifference to the French people manifested by the occupants of the UFOs. In some twenty instances persons had seen and in two cases had experienced physical contact with the strange creatures associated with some of the UFOs which had actually landed.

But before discussing the intriguing subject of the contact incidents, two matters having to do with already recognised characteristics of these phenomena might be briefly, though significantly, noted. I refer to two types of phenomena, both of which have been the subjects of studies published in issues of the *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW* of London, England. One^o of these studies had to do with the encountering of the so-called angel hair in connection with sightings; the other[†] summarised certain phenomena referred to as electromagnetic effects associated with the close approach of UFOs.

Angel hair

The *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW* study of angel hair lists seventeen incidents of the appearance of this material. That article covers the period from October 17, 1952, to October 27, 1955, and refers to instances then known to the author, and occurring in various different parts of the world. In fourteen of these listed cases, the angel hair was associated with UFOs. In nine instances the material was described as volatile, usually evaporating with the warmth of the hand. Michel's book adds five more instances of the phenomenon of angel hair, which with the seventeen above mentioned makes a total of twenty-two. It should be noted, however, that since the publication of the original study, many other instances of angel hair phenomena from various parts of the world have been noted in addition to these twenty-two. Thus this unexplained phenomenon of angel hair at times associated with UFO appearances, becomes recognised as a reality, definitely a part of UFO sightings.

The *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW* study of electromagnetic disturbances such as the stopping of

^o *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW*, Nov.-Dec., 1956, Vol. 2, No. 6.

[†] *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW*, May-June, 1958, Vol. 4, No. 3.

automobile motors and the dimming of headlights associated with the close approach of UFOs notes eighteen instances of this type of occurrence, thirteen of which took place in North America between the dates November 2 and November 14, 1957. Michel's book lists seventeen additional cases, bringing this total to thirty-five instances. Those listed in the book include nine reported by Michel, eight of which were in France in 1954. The other cases were noted by Mebane including additional instances for November, 1957, not mentioned in the original study. This total of thirty-five cases, it should be pointed out, is far from being a complete listing. Thus there is again the establishment of a second phenomenon definitely associated with many appearances of UFOs, namely electromagnetic disturbances of various types.

Among the three hundred sightings described by Michel are twenty accounts, including nineteen in France and one in nearby Germany, in which reference is made to contacts with the occupants of these outer space craft. The contact reports are included within the time interval of thirty-nine days between September 10 and October 18, 1954, and thus average one contact for each two days of that period. By reason of the unusual frequency of this type of sighting and their confinement to a geographic area relatively limited in extent, there is some logical basis for assuming that the phenomena as a group relate to the same mission from outer space. Being a single adventure the group of extra-terrestrial personalities involved in all likelihood belonged to the same race or type and originated from the same extra-terrestrial source. Thus it would seem that an effort to glean from these twenty reports a sort of composite of this extra-terrestrial being would be worth while.

Contact claims

The status of publicised accounts of UFO contacts is certainly the most confused of all UFO problems. It is therefore with some misgivings that the speaker addresses himself to a consideration of this probably most controversial field of one of the most controversial subjects of the day. However, the problem of identification of the very elusive intelligences that navigate these UFOs in their numerous travels throughout terrestrial skies is one that continually haunts the thinking of students in this field. It is difficult to conceive of anyone who has conscientiously spent years in the study of the many well-documented cases available who is not convinced of the

objective reality of these phenomena. Such an individual must ever be aware within his consciousness of the question of the identity of the super-scientific minds piloting and directing the marvellous movements of these outer space craft.

No doubt the greatest factor in producing this confusion in the public mind concerning the reliability of contact reports is the large volume of reports by misguided claimants. These claimants publish books, give lectures, appear on television networks, and, because a non-discerning public fails to note the many inconsistencies in their fantastic tales of intellectual contact with outer space personalities, enjoy lucrative profits in capitalising upon their stories. Were the general public a little more informed on principles of elementary physical science there would be much less confusion and those whose claims are actually without valid foundation would have to resort to other less fantastic ways of earning a livelihood. Most of the misguided claimants the author has investigated devote large portions of their testimonies to elaborations of a pseudo-scientific character and in so doing commit themselves to obvious contradictions of well-known facts of astronomy and physics.

Sincere exceptions

A very obvious basis by which a contact claimant could establish the truth of his claims would be the securing of some artifact or gadget from extra-terrestrial sources. Or even the submission of some intellectual plan, a new scientific experiment or a new mathematical formula, in fact anything which by test by competent scholars could be shown to be new to this world, would serve to validate the claims of a contactee. Up to the present no evidence of this kind has yet been presented to competent terrestrial authority. Thus it is that there are few if any investigators of UFO phenomena of scientific background who recognise the claims of the present-day crop of contact claimant businessmen.

This description of the typical profit-seeking contact claimant does not constitute a sweeping indictment of all persons who believe they have established intellectual contact. No doubt there are many sincere persons who by their experiences, real to them, if not to others, actually do believe that they have had intellectual contact with extra-terrestrials. The difficulty is that such persons seem to have no way of proving the reality of their own experiences to others.

Before commenting in detail upon the descriptions of the extra-terrestrials as revealed through the stories of the French contactees I wish to quote from Michel's book his own summing-up of the appearance of these beings. The typical extra-terrestrial is described as follows:

"An apparently living being, about three and a half feet tall, described as dressed in a transparent or translucent 'diving suit'; broad in the body, walking with a swaying, waddling, or jerky gait. Those witnesses claiming to have seen the creature himself through his transparent covering spoke of a broad and low 'head' and of dark complexion. Some witnesses declared that, associated with this being, or with the object (space craft) described above (in the book), or with both together, they saw another being, of human appearance and stature."

It should be borne in mind that it is entirely within the realm of probability that visitors from space could come from different places and be quite unlike in physical appearance. Moreover, visitors from the same locality in space could conceivably also be very different in appearance. Thus the type of person encountered in Michel's book must not be thought of as being the only one existent. The various possible types certainly do not exclude many human-appearing beings like ourselves.

Contacts usually at night

In Michel's book:

(1) The observers of the UFO occupants, or more properly the contactees, comprise all together a variety of persons, ranging in age from young children to adults of all ages. They represent different walks of life, children of pre-school age, youths of various levels in school, men and women travellers, farmers, mechanics, merchants, and professional people. The contact experiences of all of these persons were manifest surprises, as was clearly evidenced from the manner of their reactions to what they encountered.

(2) For the most part the contacts occurred at night in unlighted localities, away from populated areas. In fifteen of the twenty instances the hours were between 6.30 p.m. and 10.45 p.m. There were no cases of contact within four hours before or after midday. Because of darkness the visibility was not good and clear description of the visitors was hardly possible. One could also surmise that the visitors might not have wanted to be seen. If they had tried to make contact one could conjecture that they would have appeared in broad daylight. Moreover, they would also

have given evidences of effort to meet human beings. As a matter of fact the incidents gave every sign of being surprises to the UFO visitors themselves.

(3) The mental or emotional reactions of the persons encountered when description was given could be summed up as coming under the category of fear, varying from extremes of terror to stunned amazement. One wonders if these strong emotions of human beings could have been brought out by some subtle attitudes on the part of the visitors which in some strange way conveyed to the contactees that in this out-of-the-world experience they found themselves in the presence of personalities of superhuman potentialities. Interestingly enough the least startled of all were the child contactees. The recorded accounts give no evidence in any case of fear emotions displayed by the visitors.

(4) Although the visitors did not display evidence of fear at the sight of human beings, they did respond at once in protective fashion to any attitude or movement on the part of a contactee that could possibly be interpreted as a threat. In six instances a temporary paralysis was inflicted upon the contactee. In the case of the metal worker who encountered two of the visitors at Quarouble on September 10, when he tried to get hold of one of them he was blinded and paralysed by a light. In the incident occurring on September 27 near Prémanson where four children playing in a farmyard about 8.30 p.m. encountered two creatures, the oldest of the children, a boy of twelve years of age, shot a rubber-tipped arrow at one of them. The arrow seemed to have no effect. But when the lad then went up to touch the visitor, he was "flung to the ground as if by an ice-cold invisible force."

(5) On the matter of estimates of the heights of the visitors there is relatively good agreement in the stories. Five estimates of approximately three feet were given, and three estimates of the order of four feet. The other estimates were non-numerical but the descriptive terms used were "little," "small," or the "height of children." The two exceptions, "average," and "a little below average," probably referred to a different type of visitor resembling an ordinary human being.

Two types

(6) With respect to body proportions or general physical appearance, two types seem to emerge. The more common type is described in terms that suggest rather marked dissimilarities from the terrestrial human. Such terms as "wide in the

shoulders," "legs small in proportion to height," "larger than human eyes" occur. It should be noted, however, that descriptions of the physical appearance of the visitors were given in only six of the fragmentary accounts. As noted above, in two of the twenty instances the two visitors did not appear different from terrestrial humans.

(7) On the matter of garb or wearing apparel where such is described, the expressions "diver's suit," "dressed like a diver," or similar phraseology, appear in every instance. There are six such references. One could surmise from this consideration that the original home of these visitors is some locality having a different atmosphere from that of the earth. In fact, the probability of some foreign planetary abode being identical in physical environment to the planet earth is relatively small. The presence of divers' suits on these visitors in the Michel accounts is what one would expect to find. The usual publicised contact story does not describe any such garb.

(8) In enumerating features of these contact incidents the description would be incomplete were mention not made of two instances of gestures of friendliness. On September 17 not far from the town of Cénon a cyclist encountered a little creature, much smaller than a man. It was 10.30 and quite dark and this stranger, appearing like a silhouette in the night, came toward the cyclist and touched him on the shoulder. He "uttered a sound" described as "unknown and incomprehensible," then moved toward his space craft and "disappeared."

The other instance occurred on September 10 near the town of Mouriéras in a wild and backward part of France. A farmer was on his way homeward about 8.30 p.m. and suddenly found himself face to face with a peculiarly-dressed person of average height. The stranger approached the farmer making gestures that gave impressions of friendliness. He came forward with one arm above his head, the other arm extended, making low bows and peculiar gestures. He shook the hand of the farmer and pulled him right up to him, drawing his head against his helmet. The stranger made no reply to the farmer's words of "good evening." The stranger then left and the farmer presently saw his craft disappear into the sky.

(9) The lack of any semblance of intellectual contact is apparent in all of the instances related by Michel. This contrasts with the complete ease of communication experienced in the cases of

most American contactee claimants. Could not one expect astonishing revelations of information of one kind and another from these representatives of an order of civilisation or life centuries beyond us in advancement in fields of science, arts, and modes of living? When and if the human race ever becomes introduced to such knowledge, one could well judge it as being truly out of this world.

A final word of comment needs to be made with respect to the analysis attempted in the preceding paragraphs. It must be borne in mind that the subject itself is an elusive one. The reality of UFO phenomena is not yet accepted by the majority of the uninformed public. I use the adjective "uninformed" because I feel sure that any intelligent person with an open mind who takes the trouble to thoroughly examine a considerable part of the generally recognised evidence, will be convinced of the reality of the phenomena. Now with the acceptance of the reality of sightings it requires but little additional understanding to realise that back of the many varied gyrations of these space craft there are directing intelligences. It would be strange indeed if among the literally countless numbers of well-reported sightings from every part of the earth there would not be a few instances of glimpses, as it were, of the personalities behind the scenes.

In the above discussion the particular source of information on contact cases is material collected by a French scientist. This material, in the opinion of the author as well as in the expressed judgment of other conservative investigators, is the best available at the present time. It would, of course, be desirable to have data of a more objective character. But since that is not yet possible we simply do as well as we can with what we have at hand. The fact that Professor Aimé Michel was able to use this very same material to discover an important principle, named by him as orthoteny, lends some weight to the reliability of other deductions arising therefrom.

On this very elusive phase of a very elusive subject I have endeavoured to extract some possible conclusions. The value of these might lie in the consideration that with the gathering of more facts of a similar character in the future on waves of sightings yet to reach us we will in time gradually, step by step, learn more about our visitors from outer space.

But—even though there is no basis yet known for such a prediction—it is possible they will make themselves known to us suddenly at some moment of their own choosing!