

# New theory makes IFOs of UFOs

By MICHAEL PYE

LONDON — Shortly before midnight on December 30, 1978, a freight plane took off from Wellington, New Zealand, for a regular newspaper delivery run to Christchurch. The pilot and co-pilot had unusual company — a team from a local TV station. The last time the plane had flown this route, the crew had spotted brilliant lights that seemed to follow their flight path, sometimes hovering motionless and then speeding furiously, sometimes reflecting off the sea or illuminating the land like searchlights. The TV team hoped to capture these unidentified flying objects on film.

About 25 minutes out of Wellington, the lights appeared, brilliantly lighting the sky. At the same time, radar screens at Wellington recorded mysterious blips, as though something was flying in tandem with the plane. The TV film showed later that the other light sources in the night sky — city reflections, rising stars — were far less bright than the objects which the radar operators described as "weird."

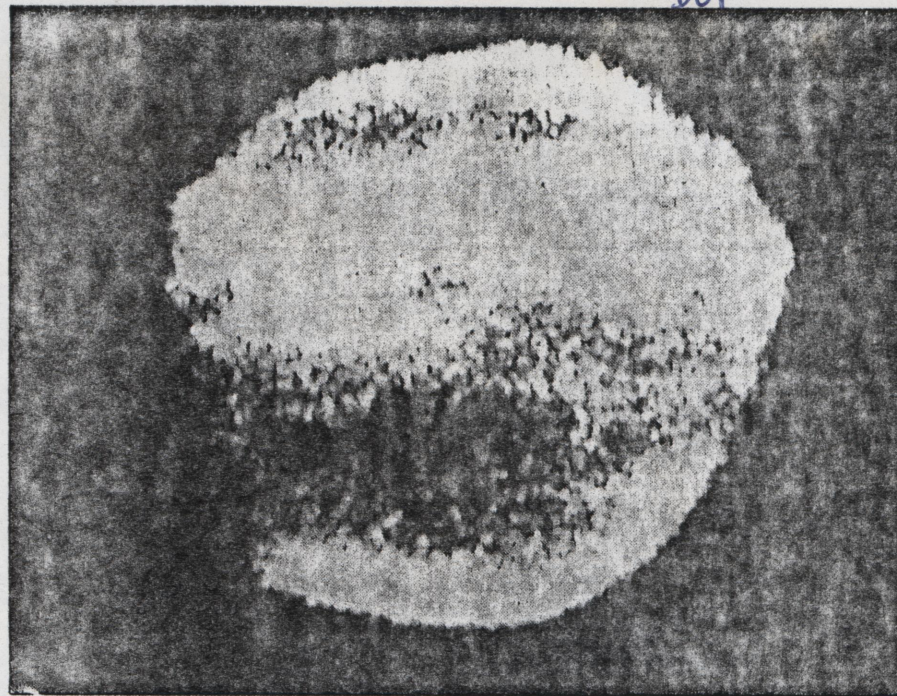
The Wellington UFO might have remained a mystery, but for an intriguing encounter between psychologists and physicists which has now produced the first work-

able general explanation of UFOs. The mystery lights in New Zealand, can be explained, not as visitors from outer galaxies, but as products of a mysterious process on earth which physicists are just beginning to observe and understand.

Psychologists at Laurentian university in Canada who were studying odd and unpredictable phenomena began searching for links between such events. Their computer studies showed a statistically significant correlation between unidentified flying objects and minor earthquakes. In their hunt for an explanation, the psychologists contacted the U.S. Bureau of Mines in Denver, Colorado, where Dr. Brian Brady was studying underground rock-bursts.

When quartz-bearing rock broke up, he noticed balls of light — short-lived, but as intense as lightning. The luminescence from a single crack under a laboratory glass would last only for micro-seconds, but in that time it might streak away, hover and then move again following the energy source, in the rock-break. What Brady was watching could have been tiny UFOs.

Brady points out that cracks in rock like quartz — whose structure



One of the alleged UFOs spotted over New Zealand in 1978

is not perfectly symmetrical — can produce an electromagnetic field around the electrons and ions, "a kind of magnetic bottle which give shape to the light." Rock becomes ionized like the air during a thunderstorm, so that electricity can travel through what is usually a barrier. And energy in its "bottle" can move and even grow, as long as there is a source, like the spreading fractures along the great fault-lines of the earth. The resultant light-ball can spin as it moves, which might account for the characteristic dome-shape above and below the UFO which led to the name "flying saucers."

The theory is plausible, and it is

more than conjecture: physicists have seen the light caused by rock breaks, and they know that electromagnetic fields do form on the surface of earthquake areas. Spectacular UFO sightings are reported from California, which is split by the San Andreas Fault.

Brady looked again at the New Zealand sightings, just to see if his theory would explain them. He laid geological maps alongside the flight-path of the freight plane, and realized that the plane had been flying parallel to one of the earth's great fault lines, the Alpine Fault.

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CR. Tim Tokarjke