

MAINLAND MYSTERIES

UFO UPDATE

By Paul Dong

On November 13, 1978, China's leading newspaper, the *People's Daily*, published an article entitled "UFOs—An Unsolved World Puzzle." It was the first of its kind ever to appear in the Chinese press. The author, Sheng Heng Yen, is an editor at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Almost a year later China's next-largest newspaper, the *Guang Ming Daily*, published a second article about UFOs. Written for the paper's science column, the article pondered the question, Do flying saucers exist? Its author, Chow Hsin Yen, is science-group editor of TV broadcasting at the Peking Central Broadcasting Bureau.

Chow reported that a group of scientists on an expedition in Hupeh Province had seen unidentified flying objects. This sighting was later confirmed by members of the Chinese Liberation Army who, at the time, were on maneuvers in the area. The article also reported other sightings throughout the provinces of China.

It wasn't until May 12, 1980, that the *Guang Ming Daily* again published an article on UFOs. This article, by me,

featured detailed reports of pilots, scientists, and other professionals throughout the world who had seen UFOs.

These articles aroused public curiosity throughout mainland China. Several hundred letters written to *Aerospace Knowledge* magazine asked the Chinese government to launch a study of the UFO phenomenon. Publication of this request in the magazine drew enormous response from China's provinces, leading the government to sanction a probe under the auspices of the university in Wuhan, central China. Thus the Chinese UFO Studies Association was born. This organization, the first of its kind in China, maintains branches in the cities of Peking (China's capital city), Shanghai, and Guangdong. Other branches are located in the Guangxi region and four other provinces. It publishes its own journal, *UFO Exploration*, and it comprises workers, students, teachers, journalists, doctors, and researchers in the sciences. Although the association was founded in May 1980, it wasn't until December 4 of that year that the official New China News

Agency publicized the group's creation.

Two important events prompted Peking to permit a serious scientific evaluation of UFOs. One summer evening in 1965 Peking, with a population of 8 million, had its airspace violated when two bright, disc-shaped objects flew overhead. Two years later a similar incident occurred near the outskirts of the city. A bright, globe-shaped object with flashing red lights was observed by thousands of people as it raced across the night sky at fantastic speeds, stopped suddenly, paused, and then resumed its speedy flight until it disappeared beneath the horizon.

Because of this second violation of security, many observers surmised that the object was a prototype vehicle or weapon from Taiwan or some other country. Speculation led to more speculation among the population, who suggested a multitude of sources for the events. To alleviate the growing fear that these unexplained phenomena threatened the country's national security, the Peking authorities sanctioned the establishment of an academic UFO study group. Another contributing factor in China's decision to evaluate UFOs was the frequency of reports converging upon the authorities in Peking from the provinces during the 1970s.

A different opinion on this subject came from Ching Tao, a science editor for the *Guang Ming Daily*. In footnoting my article of May 12, 1980, he stated, "Far too much clamor has resulted from the latest interest in UFOs in the area of research. Within the context of scientific involvement, UFOs are just part of a broad spectrum of study and investigation. Without a formal study, UFOs cannot be dismissed as being the product of delusional minds."

Concurring with this viewpoint, Hsieh Chu, editor of *Aerospace Knowledge*, commented, "One cannot deny that UFOs exist, owing to the large number of sightings that have been recorded thus far in this country."

Aerospace Knowledge and *Science and Life* have published reports of UFO sightings in China. One sighting occurred on an autumn afternoon in 1970, when Chen Yufu, a worker in a coal-washing

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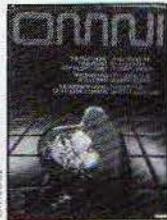


Rare UFO photo taken in 1942 by street photographer in Tientsin, the People's Republic of China.

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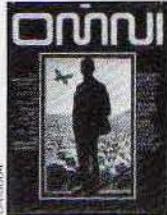
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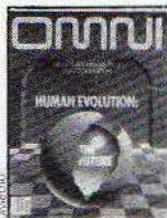
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UFO

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factory in Shanxi Province, spotted a luminous, round, ringlike mass in the sky. The object, which appeared to resemble a washbasin, was trailed by a vaporous exhaust as it was observed in flight west of the factory's transformer substation.

Six years later, on September 9, 1976, at about 6 P.M., a group of employees from the Jiangxi Second Chemical Factory and a few residents of Yichun City, in Jiangxi Province, observed a metallic, copper-colored object shaped like facing cymbals that was spinning on its vertical axis. Eyewitnesses declared that the object was in full view.

The following year, Zhang Zhousheng, an employee of the Yunnan Astronomical Observatory, saw an unidentified flying object over Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, in southwest China. Some people who lived within 180 kilometers of the sighting also witnessed the event.

One final account described a huge, rectangular UFO that appeared over an airport in Gansu Province at 8:40 P.M. on October 23, 1978. Its altitude was estimated at between 6,000 and 8,000 meters, and it was estimated to be 1,000 meters in length.

This random sampling of UFOs is indicative of the types of reports that have been brought to the attention of the central authorities during peak periods of UFO activity. The observed phenomena can be divided into three groups: (1) 80 percent appear to be round, dish-shaped objects; (2) 10 percent are large and rectangular; (3) 10 percent appear as nebula-shaped bodies.

Although China strives to acquire a contemporary perspective on UFOs, reports date back to 1947, while much of the country was still under Nationalist influence. From then until the present, many people have witnessed UFOs. One such person is Chu Fook Tsang, editor of *World Book Monthly*, who, having allegedly witnessed a UFO, has since tendered his support for a program to study UFOs.

To gain a better understanding of these phenomena, China has afforded its people accessibility to information regarding UFOs. Educating the masses about this subject is an important objective of the Chinese government. Some recent steps in that direction were Chinese television's screening of an American-made film, *UFOs Are Real*, and the publication of books and periodicals on UFOs.

One clear evidence that progress is being made toward this end is the establishment of the China UFO Research Organization, an official unit of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. With the granting of government approval for studying the UFO phenomenon, those members of the Chinese scientific community in whose sphere of interest these studies lie will not, one hopes, fall victim to the clichéd cult mentality that permeates UFO research in the United States today. □

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