

In war time people get rather nervous, a fact which isn't particularly surprising. How these war nerves manifest themselves might have a bearing on the pre-World War I phantom airship scares. With these thoughts in mind I consulted Barbara Tuchman's book 'August 1914' The Macmillan Press Ltd., London & Basingstoke, pbk, 1980 (orig. pub. Constable and Co. Ltd., May 1962). The following pieces of information are to be found in this book;

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114. On August 2 1914 German newspapers reported that the French had made aerial bombings in the neighbourhood of Nuremberg. There was no substance to these reports but the Germans were able to use them in order to justify their ultimatum to Belgium and later, to declare war on France.
126. German Ambassador in Paris, Baron Wilhelm Eduard Schoen, delivered the declaration of war which stated, 'French acts of "organized hostility" and of air attacks on Nuremberg and Karlsruhe and of violation of Belgian neutrality by French aviators flying over Belgian territory...' were causes for war.
- 176-175. On August 6 German Zeppelins bomb Cologne to force Belgian co-operation
198. As a result of invasion scares on the night of August 5, the British send only 4 instead of 6 divisions to aid the French. Soldiers sent to defend the east coast.
207. August 4, in Frankfurt rumours arrive claiming Cossack brutalities in East Prussia. German General Staff are thus distracted from their concentration on the Western Front.
246. Germans mistakenly believe the British (BEF) disembarked at Ostend, Calais and Dunkirk on August 13, due to false reports from cavalry reconnaissance.
- 319-320. A seal is mistaken for a periscope inside Scapa Flow, causing Admiral Sir John Jellicoe to send the entire fleet to sea - leaving the North Sea free to the Germans 'had they known it'.
- 374-375. German Taube bomb Paris for first time on August 30, daily they returned providing 'excitement to compensate for the Government's prohibition of absinthe'.
- 377-379. Thousands of Russian troops are rumoured to be arriving in Britain to reinforce the Western Front. 'A Scottish army officer in Edinburgh saw them in "long gaily-coloured coats and big fur caps", carrying bows and arrows instead of rifles and with their own horses "just like Scottish ponies only bonier" - a description that exactly fitted the Cossacks of a hundred years ago as they appeared in early Victorian mezzotints.'

Perhaps from these rumours it becomes clear that the anticipation of fearful events, can have a dramatic effect on what really happens. The threat of an assault on British shores reduced our support to the French, in a similar way the Germans diverted their resources towards the East in fear of the Russian hordes. It is a sickening thought that the British Lion could have been slaughtered by the innocent activities of a playful seal! Also it is interesting to see how rumours of aerial attacks were used by the Germans to support their legitimacy of their war mongering, and how they used aircraft to intimidate their enemies. Another factor involved in these stories, is how wished for apparitions miraculously appear, as in the case of the Russian appearances in Britain, and the mistaken observation of British landings in Ostend.

Such factors might not be so dramatically apparent during peace time, but some aspects no doubt could be discovered in the pre-1914 waves in the light of the above responses to a frightening situations. In the last bulletin we looked at how social, economic and political factors might act as a trigger for airship scares, in the same way that fear during war time generates such scares. However, Carl Groves states 'I remain sceptical about theories that UFO waves can be caused wholly or in significant part by combining social factors. The problem is that I cannot think of many places in the world which have not undergone social upheavals or crises in recent centuries so that given a UFO wave one can always point to some source of psychological tension and find symbolic connections with UFOs. Moreover, the mechanism which translates social tension into a multiple-witness UFO sighting is never described; nor is it clear why many aspects of UFOs (rapid acceleration, right-angle turns, ...etc) should be invariant across different waves.' While I think of an answer to that, any help or comments should be sent to: Nigel Watson, Westfield Cottage, Crowle Bank Rd, Althorpe, South Humberside, DNI7 3HZ, England.