

Flying Saucers—Symptom Of World Fear

The reports of flying saucers seen in the United States, Denmark and Sydney show how unreliable the average person is an an observer.

Whether there was any foundation for the original reports remains to be seen, but it is becoming increasingly obvious that large numbers of people all over the world are seeing what they unconsciously expected to see.

Behind the facade of ordinary, superficial day-to-day living there is another world of feeling. Each person carries with him in his unconscious mind all kinds of hopes and fears. Some of these are shared with most of his fellows, and these mass fears are what cause panics.

Just now, millions of people probably are unconsciously fearing and expecting a revelation of what they believe has been going on behind the scenes in various countries—the preparation of secret weapons or atom bombs.

A report that a mysterious flying object had been seen would bring all these fears to the surface, and millions of people would be in the frame of mind to interpret something seen in the sky or thought to be seen as one of these new weapons.

Scientific Explanation

The man with a trained mind would look for an ordinary explanation of such phenomena. Professor Cotton, of Sydney University, suggested that the movement of red blood corpuscles

of Sydney University, suggested that the movement of red blood corpuscles across the retina of the eye would give the effect of white objects moving across the sky if you looked at one spot for a time.

His students proved that this was so

The fact that some observers have described a skeleton framework to these flying "machines" and a propeller at the top illustrates the tendency for the human mind to dot the "i's" and cross the "t's."

The mind abhors a vacuum. Few people can report an unusual sight objectively, especially if it fits in

with their fears or expectations. Any four-legged animal would be called a horse, although it might be a zebra or a new species.

Men besieged in a fort have taken prowling animals for a line of horsemen coming to their relief.

When something seen, heard, or smelt is changed into something else by the mind it is called an "illusion," but if there is no sensory basis at all it is an "hallucination."

Most of the flying saucers would appear to be illusions, but no doubt many people have produced them out of imaginations highly stimulated by fear, or suggestion. These would be hallucinations.

Spots Before Eyes

Many people suffer from time to time from spots before the eyes, probably connected with digestive troubles. Occasionally they are caught napping and think they see an aeroplane, but a second's reflection puts them right. But if an aeroplane at that moment would be a most significant matter the reflection might never occur

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started in the United States during the war from a broadcast play, based on Wells's story of the Martians attacking the earth. Somebody in the play probably shouted, "The Martians have landed!"

A man who was unconsciously expecting a German landing at any moment might have heard only those words, changed by his excited mind to "The Germans have landed." He may have rushed out in a panic.

In two minutes a hundred people could have taken the play for an authentic news broadcast and acted accordingly.

Where strong feeling is likely to take charge of the observers' mind he is quite capable of seeing anything from pink elephants to an angel with a flaming sword.

During the war when I was in the Newcastle District Control Centre I received a message that a number of unidentified aeroplanes were flying over an area in the north of the State. At least two messages described their appearance and their course, so the first report was probably checked at least once and possibly other observers gave a similar report. It was a considerable time before the final message came identifying the objects as birds.

You may remember that an unidentified aeroplane was fired at over Sydney during the war and it was presumed that it came from an enemy submarine. Probably it did, but there were other unidentified planes in the same locality that the public never heard about, and I am certain they did not all come from submarines.

This fallibility of the average human mind under feeling is well-known in many walks of life. The police will tell you how unreliable evidence of identification can be.

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There was the case of Adolf Beck. A criminal named Smith was making a living by defrauding women. Beck, a Norwegian business man of good standing, was accosted in the street by one of these women and accused of having defrauded her. Other women identified him and he was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude.

Soon after he was free he was arrested again on the same charge and was awaiting sentence when Smith fell into the hands of the police and the whole miscarriage of justice was revealed.

These waves of "mass hysteria" or "collective illusion," as Professor Martin, of Sydney, calls the present tendency to see flying saucers on the slightest provocation have their serious side.

For one thing, their appearance within a few days in Sydney and Denmark shows we have already achieved "one world" so far as the possibilities of panic are concerned.

For another, it shows the dangerous results of the failure to outlaw war. Great strides have been taken in the difficult job of international collaboration for peace. Involved in this is determined opposition between two groups of nations headed by Russia and America.

The world has little faith in all that has been accomplished. Millions probably see only that opposition, and imagine that beneath the diplomatic surface determined preparation for a clash is going on.

This may be true, but if it is going to obscure all the good that has been accomplished and make people pessimists, the outlook is very serious.

—OLIVER HOLT.