

Whatever the explanation for them, Unidentified Flying Objects exist — and ridicule is not going to make them go away. Such was the main conclusion of what claimed to be the biggest international UFO conference, in Acapulco, Mexico.

The conference marked something of a watershed in the history of UFOlogy, as devotees call the science.

The subject, said the experts, has passed from the realms of ridicule and cartoons to a degree of serious acceptance.

The problem now is to urge national and international authorities to devote greater efforts to the phenomenon.

With this end in mind, the conference endorsed a call by Sir Eric Gairy, Prime Minister of the Caribbean island of Grenada, for the United Nations to set up some sort of psychic research institute to look into the Bermuda Triangle — an area of the Carib-



bean where ships and planes have disappeared mysteriously — and related problems such as UFOs.

Sir Eric offered Grenada as the site for another international conference to act as a follow-up to Acapulco, probably in 1979.

Scientists and others interested in the subject claim the world cannot see the wood for the trees — that the signs are all there if we interpret them correctly. But the trees themselves are suspicious.

Inevitably, UFOlogy attracts more than its fair share of cranks, and many of the theories on the existence of UFOs drift into wild speculation though retaining a degree of credibility.

Most experts on the subject (who include a liberal sprinkling of

liberal sprinkling of scientists and astrophysicists) agreed that the evidence of UFO sightings was overwhelming.

But their explanations varied from the popular extra-terrestrial theory (that the

UFOs come from other planets) to parapsychology (according to which there is a parallel universe capable of materialising in ours) to arguments that Einstein's theory of relativity may need revising.

There is also a personality clash between those who present themselves as scientists and investigators and those who have had UFO experiences and bring to the subject the fervor of revivalists of a fanatical religious cult.

The theme of UFOs as the new religion is likely to be heard a lot this year. A new film

...
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spectacular on flying

saucers directed by the director of the alltime box office smash "Jaws" is to be released in the US later in the year.

The theme given most coverage in Aca-pulco was that of extra-terrestrial visitations.

"The odds are overwhelmingly in favor of the existence of life elsewhere — but not necessarily life as we know it", said American astrophysicist Dr Allen Hynek.

But, warned Hynek, "the problem is much more complex than we first thought; we used to think the explanation must be extra-terrestrial or nothing —

that's rubbish. And our basic assumption was that we were looking for life as we knew it,

connected to flesh and blood".

Now, says Hynek, UFOlogy is forcing its way into the ranks of accepted sciences virtually by a process of osmosis, as did acupuncture. But appeals for aid to further scientific research by organisations such as Hynek's own Centre for UFO studies have been turned down by the Ford and Guggenheim Foundations because of the possibility of ridicule.

Statistics presented by Hynek and other experts such as French

astrophysicist Jacques Valle, showed remarkable similarity. Contrary to popular belief, for example, UFO sightings are not reported mainly by those who are a little weak in the head or had been drinking, but by all age groups and by people from all walks

people from all walks of life.

Again, most UFOs are reported not just by one person but by groups of people. Most sightings occur in isolated regions of the world, and many near military installations — especially in North America.

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From ROD CHAPMAN,
in Acapulco, Mexico

Those flying saucers — Unidentified Flying Objects in official parlance — exist and ridicule is not going to make them shove off. So decided the UFOlogists at their international conference in Mexico. A Gemini News Service correspondent who was at the conference filed this report.

ARE THEY FOR REAL?

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Equally disconcerting is the fact that many sightings have occurred just before world wars or, according to Latin American experts, just before earthquakes (such as those in Nicaragua and Guatemala).

Practically every American space mission has a UFO sighting and among those who spot flying saucers most regularly are air force pilots throughout the world.

If some of the UFOlogists' explanations sound a little far-fetched, so do official explanations discounting the sightings (such as "it was a reflection of the sun" or "the instruments were faulty"). Even so, a quarter of the sightings recorded by the US Air Force are unexplained.

While experts in Acapulco included US

Acapulco included US UFOlogists like Ray

Stanford whose "Operation Starlight" in Austin, Texas, is a massive UFO monitoring operation — and Jim Lorenzen, director of the Aerial Phenomena Research Organisation, they also included debunkers of the extra-terrestrial theory.

Prominent among these was US writer and journalist John Keel, who claimed UFOlogy had become a dangerous new religion whose exponents were leading the world into "a new Dark Age".

Keel does not deny phenomenon, but links it with a magnetic force which has existed throughout history and caused mass hallucinations — sightings of objects like witches, the veti and ghosts as well as of flying saucers.

The force, he said,

The force, he said, was able to create a mass manipulation of

the human mind. Those with UFO experiences tended to exhibit symptoms of trances and recite their experience as is programmed. Instead of chasing flying saucers, he urged scientists to "find the source of this mischief."

James Hurtak, another "debunker" spoke of an extended form of consciousness, levels of universal intelligence which are beyond ours and capable of controlling the human mind.

Costa Rican Jesuit Priest Salvador Freixedo likened the phenomenon to the existence of forms of intelligence in the upper storeys of a house of which Man occupies the ground floor.

Another topic for debate at the conference

DATE AT THE CONFERENCE
was the possible cover-
up of UFO investiga-
tions by intelligence
agencies such as the
CIA.
