

Psi in the sky



EVER SINCE Eve ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge, there have been humans trying to expand their powers beyond what are normally considered man's natural limitations.

Andrija Puharich seems to be familiar with most of them. The powers, and the people who acquired them.

"They call me the elder statesman of the parapsychologists," he told *The Jerusalem Post* in an interview this month, "mainly because I've lived longer than most of them." Puharich, who was in Jerusalem for Forecast 84, a multidisciplinary conference on prognostication which attracted para-

prognostication which attracted parapsychologists, astrologers, kabbalists, palmists, healers and clairvoyants from around the world, is no stranger to Israel. He claims to have discovered Uri Geller. It is probably true to say that if it weren't for Puharich, Geller would still be an obscure nightclub entertainer, unknown outside the borders of this country and dismissed by many of his fellow countrymen as a magician and a fraud.

At 66, Puharich, who says he has no special powers of his own, seems to have more than enough of the conventional energy. With twinkling blue eyes, a trim moustache and a haircut that is different enough to be unconventional but not freaky, he speaks with disarming reasonableness and humor about flying saucers, messages from outer space and winning wars by using telepathy.

With the same good humor he relates that his house has been burned down several times and that a number of secret services have tried to kill him. Asked who, he laughs: "All of them, the CIA, the British MI 5, the Mossad, etc."





BORN IN CHICAGO to Yugoslavian parents, he was raised in what he describes as a "tough neighborhood". When he completed high school, he was all set to go out and work as a laborer when a judge who knew him and took an interest in him persuaded him to go to university, where he studied philosophy.

Because he didn't see how he could support himself through philosophy, he switched to medicine. In addition to his MD, he also has a PhD in physiology. At some point towards the end of his studies he began to take an interest in telepathy and other paranormal phenomena. Using a Faraday cage, he set up an experiment to establish that thoughts could be transmitted telepathically, from mind to mind.

The next step was to determine whether mind could influence matter. If only he could find someone who

could move a match just a millimetre under glass, he told himself. Soon afterwards, he heard of Uzi Geller

afterwards, he heard of Uri Geller and came to Israel to see him.

"I got to Tel Aviv and saw some crazy kid in a nightclub. It was very low level. Everybody was sitting around smoking and drinking, and he was doing his thing. But it got my interest. Geller snapped a gold ring in someone's clenched fist, and I sent the ring off to my colleagues at Stanford to have the break examined in a lab.

"Thousands of people can bend metal today and stop and start watches, but Uri was the first," says Puharich.

Puharich, who extended his stay in Israel for almost five months, says his visit was arranged by an Israeli intelligence officer. When Puharich realised that Geller could be of use to Israeli military intelligence, he spoke to Aluf (res.) Aharon Yariv, then head of military intelligence, about the Israeli wonder. Geller was tested by the military authorities and, according to Puharich, correctly guessed the number of Migs in the various Arab air forces.

At the same time, Puharich overcame Geller's resistance to being hypnotised. The researcher reasoned that, under hypnosis, Geller would be able to reveal the source of his powers — "the big power in the sky", as Puharich calls it in semi-jest.

THROUGH the hypnotised Geller, Puharich started talking to what he is convinced is a power from outer space. Among the messages was one



Andrija Puharich claims to communicate with intelligences in outer space, using a code based on the Hebrew alphabet. HAIM SHAPIRO reports.

saying that the Egyptians were planning to attack Israel on December 27, 1971. The information was passed on to Israeli intelligence, says Puharich;

to Israeli intelligence, says Puharich; Israel let Egypt know it was aware of the plans and the attack was averted.

“Uri has worked with various intelligence agencies for the last 12 years, which is really funny because everybody in Israel thinks that Uri Geller is the biggest schmuck alive,” says Puharich.

Asked why, if Geller prevented war in 1971, he did not do so in 1973, Puharich says that in October 1973 he was in Germany with Geller when the latter got a message that Egypt was going to attack. The Israelis were informed; but this time, apparently, Israel had to go through the war, to teach a lesson to the whole world. The lesson came, he says, when the Arabs cut off their oil supplies to the West.

Puharich adds that he has trained many people to work for military intelligence, using the same techniques as he used with Geller under hypnosis. In the US, as in the Soviet Union, he remarks, psychics are used by the military. One psychic warned President Reagan that he would be shot — three days before James Hinckley tried to kill him. Despite the stepped-up precautions, the president was shot, but not killed, just as the psychic had prophesied, Puharich says.

He maintains, with a good-humored smile, that he is under constant surveillance. “I can’t talk on the phone

veillance. "I can't talk on the phone because it is being tapped by five different nations."

When he visits Israel, he says, the police always find his name on their "black list" and detain him until the word comes from the authorities to let him go.

"In Israel, of course, they would never admit to using psychics," he says. "Too many religious fanatics would object and other countries could use such information."

The psychic powers, he says, can be used for "good or bad". It is possible to kill at a distance, he says — "the Soviets like that kind of thing". There



are psychics who specialise in stopping tanks. "You don't have to stop the whole mass, it would take far too much energy. All you have to do is move one little fuse."

In America, he says, the first contact with military intelligence came when he was doing tests with Geller at the Stanford Research Institute. A military computer on a different floor of the same building began to go haywire and the intelligence people came down to find out the source of the trouble. Shortly afterwards, he says, the US intelligence services began to

the US intelligence services began to work on psychic phenomena, while at the same time conducting a public campaign to discredit it.

The climax of the campaign was a large spread in *Time* magazine "exposing Uri Geller as a charlatan". Now, Puharich says, the intelligence establishment in America has done an about-turn, and treats the psychics seriously, in public as well as in private. Once again, he says, *Time* has been called into action, this time to support their claims.

But it is doubtful whether any paper not devoted to psychic subjects would take seriously Puharich's account of his first encounter with life from outer space.

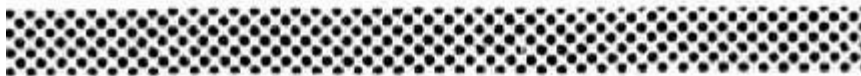


BEFORE describing the encounter, perhaps one ought to recall that Aldous Huxley was so impressed by Puharich's first book, *The Sacred*

Puharich's first book, *The Sacred Mushroom*, that he called him "one of the most brilliant minds of parapsychology".

Colin (*The Outsider*) Wilson writes (in *Mysteries*) that "Puharich's chief contribution to parapsychology can be found in his book ... *Beyond Telepathy* (1962), a balanced account of experiments in telepathy conducted by well-known psychics like Peter Hurkos and Eileen Garrett. It is also an attempt to create a 'physics' of paranormal experience based on 'psi plasma' . . . Puharich suggests that we become good telepathic senders when we are in states of anger, fear and aggression, and good receivers when we are in states of relaxation and serenity . . . The theory caused considerable discussion, and *Beyond Telepathy* quickly became a classic in its field."

But when Puharich met Geller his credibility received a tremendous battering. This is how Wilson describes it: "If *Beyond Telepathy* buttressed Puharich's reputation, his next book came close to destroying it. It was called: *Uri: A Journal of the Mystery of Uri Geller* (1974). This is a straightforward narrative of Puharich's three-year investigation of Geller; yet it ends by producing total



confusion and bewilderment . . . Puharich's meeting with Geller . . . occurred in a Jaffa discotheque in August 1971. Geller's feats of telepathy and precognition impressed Puharich; and if the book was restricted to describing these feats, it would undoubtedly impress most open-minded readers. But at this point . . . 'extra-terrestrials' . . . enter the story, and it turns into a chronicle of marvels and improbabilities. Placed in a trance, Geller described how, at the age of three, he had fallen asleep in a garden opposite his home, and awakened to see a huge shining figure standing over him and a bright, bowl-shaped object floating in the sky overhead. And while Geller was still hypnotised, a mechanical voice began to speak from the air above his head, explaining that 'they' (the 'space intelligences') had found Geller in the garden and had been 'programming' him ever since. Puharich, the voice said, had been programmed to take care of Uri."

A "relentless succession of miracles" fills the rest of the book. "Objects are always disappearing and then reappearing. UFOs are sighted. The car engine stops and starts again for no reason. Puharich's camera bag is miraculously 'teleported' three thousand miles from New York to Tel Aviv . . . [All this] leaves the reader bewildered and exhausted

the reader bewildered and exhausted and curiosity finally turns into a kind of punch drunk indifference."



NOW FOR Puharich's description of his first encounter with a UFO. Sitting in his Hilton Hotel room in Jerusalem, Puharich recalls that he was with Geller in Tel Aviv in the early 70s when the latter suddenly told him that they must get into a car and drive around. Geller insisted that Puharich drive, although the American had no knowledge of the area.

They drove at random for about half an hour. Then, says Puharich, they came to "a sand embankment in East Tel Aviv" and Geller ordered him to stop. They climbed the embankment and saw a round, saucer-like object with something resembling a strobe light. Geller entered the object while Puharich waited outside and photographed it. When Geller emerged, he

graphed it. When General emerged, he took Puharich's camera and held it for a while and the film vanished. The rest, as the saying goes, is history, recorded in the annals of the Society for Psychic Research.

Puharich believes he has now perfected a system of communicating regularly with intelligences from outer space. He goes to sleep and leaves on a tape recorder, and when he wakes he finds a mechanical voice has been recorded.

Other communications come through his watch, which starts and stops for no apparent reason. By noting down the times at which it stops and starts, and using a code based on the Hebrew alphabet, Puharich gets his "messages". He tells me he had prior warning of the floods and droughts that have recently been plaguing the planet. This phase will end in 1984, apparently, and will be followed by something worse — sporadic freezing spells of two or three days.

"Somebody is screwing around with the planet," he says, explaining that he means extra-terrestrials.

IN ORDER to check his and other people's prophecies in a methodical manner, he has suggested setting up an Institute for Prophecy in Jerusalem, where people can send in their predictions up to a year in advance.

“We’ll set aside those who are wrong and concentrate on those who are right,” he says.

He appears amused at being told of the Jewish saying that since the destruction of the Temple, the gift of prophecy has been given to fools and babes.

“I think we have entered a new age of prophecy,” he counters. “It began in 1947. That was when flying saucers were first reported in large numbers, that was when the UN voted to partition Palestine, and that was when Uri Geller was born”. □

