

were. Night flying was still rare and daring in 1934. Conventional aeroplanes were equipped with landing lights very similar to automobile headlights. These would not have been bright enough to provide a satisfactory explanation for the brilliant UFO lights. Customarily, landing lights are not kept on while the plane is aloft.

Instrumental and navigational aids were also crude in 1934. Only a few hardy pilots dared to venture into even a mild rainstorm in those days. Most of the planes then in use were clumsy biplanes with open cockpits. They were short-ranged and quite inefficient machines. Airborne radios were not widely employed, being heavy, expensive and cumbersome to handle by a single pilot in a small plane. Nevertheless, the ghostfliers were equipped with radios and their broadcasts were intercepted throughout Scandinavia. Some of the planes described by the witnesses were obviously larger than any known aircraft of the period, with the exception of the China Clipper which was then in the early stages of development.


Unlike conventional pilots, the ghostfliers were seemingly fond of operating in impossibly difficult weather. One even circled over New York City during a heavy snowstorm on Tuesday, December 26, 1933. The New York *Times* devoted nearly a full column to the story on December 27, naming witnesses and giving the full details.

The plane was first heard circling above Park Avenue and 122nd St. at 9.30 a.m. Numerous witnesses began to call the National Broadcasting Company. Reports continued until 2.25 p.m., meaning that the mystery plane had circled low over Manhattan in a blinding snowstorm for five full hours. An amazing endurance feat, if nothing else. "All airports were notified," the *Times* said, "and at Newark Airport the radio operators from the Department of Commerce and airlines joined in offering what help they could. Beacons on the field were lighted and searchlights flashed through the white smother of snow. . . . All fields in the Metropolitan district reported there had been no flying during the day, and no stray plane had dropped down from the snowy skies."

There were other puzzling incidents of this type. Researcher Charles Flood found the following item in the Portland, Oregon, *Oregonian*, February 15, 1936:

"MYSTERY PLANE BATTLES SNOW—Cody, Wyoming, Feb. 14 (AP). An unidentified airplane tonight battled a raging blizzard and 20 below weather over Cody as residents here attempted to guide it to the local airport, about three miles from town.

"The ship was heard roaring over the city at about 6 p.m. (Mountain Standard Time). After it circled several times, the sound of its motors faded and it was not heard again for almost an hour.



Timothy Green Beckley's 50¢

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simply been too blatant to be meaningful. In December 1969, the citizens of St. Louis, Missouri, were upset because a mysterious aeroplane, grey and sans markings or lights, twice flew under the recently erected Gateway Arch in that city (Associated Press dispatch, December 22, 1969). The mystery plane first performed this hair-raising manoeuvre on Friday, December 12. It returned on Wednesday, December 17, to repeat the performance.

One of our earliest mystery aeroplanes chose to indulge in nightflying directly over New York City in 1910. Like similar craft of later years, it performed hazardous manoeuvres at tree-top level over crowded Madison Square Park. According to the *New York Tribune* of August 31, 1910, "It was heard before it was seen. The whirring sound of a motor high in the air caused many necks to be craned toward the Metropolitan tower at 8.45 o'clock when a long black object was seen flying through the air toward the tower. The vague bulk, as it came into nearer view, took on the semblance of a biplane. It swung past the tower, then turned and described one graceful circle after another around the illuminated structure, its outlines standing out clear in the lights from the many windows."

The *Tribune* went on to describe how the object executed a "series of swooping circles . . . and dipped down so that it seemed to brush the tops of the trees."

The next night, Wednesday, the aeroplane returned to the very same park at 9.00 p.m. and repeated the manoeuvres. In a lengthy story on September 1, 1910, the *Tribune* discussed the whereabouts of all the known pilots and planes in the vicinity, and concluded that none of them were the culprit. Indeed, the primitive open biplanes of that day could hardly risk fighting the dangerous updraughts around Manhattan's towers and few pilots were willing to attempt nightflying at all. "Persons who saw the flying mystery last night differ as to the number of lights it carried," the *Tribune* reported. "Some say it carried two red lights, others lean to the three green theory."

Apparently the phantom flier of Manhattan was never identified despite the *Tribune's* wishful "if he comes again tonight the aviator may drop his name to earth in an otherwise empty bottle."

Three weeks later, on Wednesday, September 21, 1910, "a fleet of balloons" passed over New York City in broad daylight. The *Tribune* noted (Sept. 22, 1910): "Some persons said they must be at least five thousand feet in the air, and few thought they could discern two or three passengers in each. Others said they were just toy balloons used as advertisements. These latter proved to be right as to size, but, if the balloons were used for advertising purposes, there was nothing in their appearance to show it. The last of the balloons passed over the lower city about 5 o'clock, floating in the direction of Long Island. While the spectacle lasted, the police had their hands full keeping the streets and sidewalks clear."

The next evening Mr. Dennis Ready, an engineer at the Dunkirk Waterworks, reported to the police that he had seen "a large cigar-shaped balloon hovering over the lake, about two miles from shore. . . . The balloon appeared to be unmanageable. It gradually disappeared and he believes it dropped into the lake." A fishing tug was sent out to search for it. The story appeared in the *New York Tribune* on September 23, 1910. Dunkirk, N.Y. is on the shores of Lake Erie, approximately 500 miles northwest of New York City. It is about 25 miles west of Sinclairville, N.Y. and Cherry Creek, N.Y., sites of UFO landings and low level activity in 1965-66 . . . a very active "window" area.⁷

The Snow Phantoms

On Tuesday, August 24, 1909, "an unknown controllable airship" caused great excitement in the Estonian city of Tallinn (Reval) as it circled twice before disappearing in the direction of Finland. A report published in *Dagens-Nyheter* of August 25, 1909, stated that "the population is frightened and is urging the formation of a defensive air fleet." Newspapers speculated that the object was "probably Swedish" even though no such craft existed in Sweden at the time.

Exactly one month later, on Friday, September 24, 1909, a winged object passed over the Castle Forest near Gothenburg, Sweden, at an altitude of about 100 metres. Earlier in the day, a "dirigible" of the "Percival type" flew low over the eastern part of Grason and Osthamar. It came from the northeast, and disappeared in a westerly direction.

We now have a number of mystery aeroplane and unidentified dirigible reports from northern Europe throughout the 1920s and 1930s. We also have a few interesting subsidiary mysteries to research and contemplate. On Friday, December 21, 1923, the French dirigible *Dixmude* vanished somewhere over the Mediterranean or the Sahara desert. Extensive searches failed to locate any debris or any sign of the 52 passengers.

One of the first ghostflier reports to appear in *Dagens-Nyheter* (Stockholm) in 1933, came from Kalix on December 24, 1933. It stated simply: "A mysterious aeroplane appeared from the direction of the Bottensea at about 6.00 p.m. Christmas Eve, passed over Kalix, and continued westward. Beams of light came from the machine, searching the area."

These "beams of light" became a familiar feature in the 1934 reports, just as they are common in modern UFO descriptions. The beams were often described as "blinding." They illuminated the ground over which they passed "like daylight." Such searchlights were also reported in the flaps of 1896-97, and 1909.⁸ Arc lights had come into use in the 19th century but these required heavy, powerful energy sources. Any flying craft using an arc light would have necessarily been overloaded with batteries or a large generator. We tend to forget now just how primitive the flying machines of the 1920s and 1930s

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Five Shillings



Aerobatics in a blizzard

MYSTERY AEROPLANES OF THE 1930s

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MYSTERY AEROPLANES OF THE 1930s

Part 2

John A. Keel

THE first flight over the North Pole was made on May 8-9, 1926, by the then Lt./Commander Richard E. Byrd, and aviation pioneer Floyd Bennett. They took off from Kings Bay, Spitsbergen, and made the Arctic circuit in 15½ hours in a Fokker trimotor. The flight made headlines worldwide, and photographs of the plane were widely published throughout Scandinavia. Two years later, Sir Hubert Wilkins and Carl Ben Eielson made the first trans-arctic flight when they flew from Point Barrow, Alaska, to Spitsbergen. That same month (April 1928), Captain Hermann Koehl and Captain James Fitzmaurice attempted to fly from Dublin to New York City but they crashed on Greely Island, Labrador, and were rescued.

The flight of Byrd and Bennett in 1926 inspired one of the most persistent myths in ufology, for a radio operator claimed to have received a message from the expedition describing a forested land beyond the pole populated by large animals. This purported message has become a key piece of "evidence" for the popular theory that the earth is shaped like a doughnut, with a big hole at the North Pole.¹ Actually, anomalous intelligent radio signals have always been with us, and some of them have created outrageous hoaxes. In 1899, Nicola Tesla claimed to have received such signals with his apparatus in Colorado . . . *at a time when there were no known radio stations in existence.*^{2,3} Marconi commented on the mysterious signals his company received during and after World War I. Such signals became common in the 1920s, and their source remained inexplicable.³

In the early 1960s, Frank Edwards published the sensational details of an anomalous broadcast received at various amateur receiving stations equipped to monitor Soviet space shots. These broadcasts lasted for several days and were supposedly from orbiting manned satellites at a time when the Soviet Union was simply not prepared to make such flights.⁴

The U.S. manned space programme has been plagued with these inexplicable signals. The manned Lunar shots of 1969 featured several incredible interruptions, with strange voices and sounds being received, by the Houston space Center, from outer space (definitely) and *not* from the American space craft.⁵ During the search for the lost submarine *Scorpion* in 1968, radio signals were received and triangulated by the Navy, coming from a spot far from where the *Scorpion* had actually gone down. These signals employed the very low frequencies (VLF) reserved for nuclear submarines and utilised the top secret naval code. Rescue planes and ships rushed to the spot immediately and found nothing.⁶

Our unidentified radio hoaxers seem to have superb and expensive equipment of a rare, hard-to-obtain, type. It is highly probable that the Byrd broadcast of 1926 was really their handiwork. During the 1934 "ghostflier" wave, anomalous radio signals were received throughout northern Europe and added greatly to the consternation created by that wave.

Diversions tactics form a fundamental pattern in the UFO mystery. Evidence of a false and misleading nature is frequently sown in the path of the objects. Elaborate diversionary events are often staged to support various frames of reference, and to obscure the real activities and purposes of the UFOs. Since 1896 this pattern of "psychological warfare" has become apparent in every major flap. Direct contact was (and is being) established with random witnesses to circulate new rumours and nonsense, and to lend weight to the popular theories.

I suspect that while an aerial phenomenon definitely exists, it consists mostly of camouflage and deception, and has falsely represented itself to us.

Perhaps the plan is a very long range one so that contrivances such as the 1926 Byrd broadcast can, forty years later, become "evidence" for the hollow earth believers. Acknowledged hoaxes of one year become a "fact" in later years. Contactees have been told (by "them") of flying saucer crashes. These stories have been picked up and repeated until they became a "fact" to many ufologists. The best example of this might be Frank Scully's *Behind the Flying Saucers* in which he repeated contactee hearsay. Today many UFO researchers still write to the Air Force and ask about Scully's "little men" supposedly pickled in bottles in the Pentagon. In his books in the 1950s, Donald E. Keyhoe, it seems, also escalated hearsay and second-hand information to the regal status of "fact".

The Spitsbergen Hoax

The island of Spitsbergen, 400 miles north of the Norwegian mainland, is the site of another persistent UFO legend. In the early 1950s, a European tabloid, noted for its devotion to fictitious scandals, published a phoney story about a flying saucer crash on Spitsbergen. The article named non-existent Scandinavian scientists and military officials and went into graphic detail about the construction of the object, including such bits of intelligence as a description of a power plant which was "surrounded by a nucleus of plutonium". A translation of the story was published in *Fate* magazine in 1954. Frank Edwards picked it up from there and turned this piece of fiction into a "fact" in his book, *Flying Saucers—Serious Business*. In 1966, I visited the

Swedish Consulate and ran a check through the available reference books. We were unable to locate any of the names mentioned in the article. Meanwhile, Brad Steiger asked his Scandinavian researchers to try to track the story down. They came up with a blank. More recently, a Finnish movie producer, Mr. V. Itkonen, launched a search of his own. He discovered that the newspaper generally credited with the origin of the story had not even existed at the time. We can state categorically that the celebrated "Spitsbergen flying saucer crash" was nothing more than a cheap journalistic hoax.

As near as we can reconstruct it, a writer on vacation may have heard tales of a wartime incident: this then formed the nucleus for his plutonium-loaded flying saucer. This incident was mentioned (rather pointedly) in the 1953 Robertson (C.I.A.) Panel Report. Quote: "It was the opinion of Dr. Robertson that the 'saucer' problem had been found to be different in nature from the detection and investigation of German V1 and V2 guided missiles prior to their operational use in World War II. In this 1943-44 intelligence operation (CROSSBOW), there was excellent intelligence, and by June 1944 there was material evidence of the existence of 'hardware' obtained from crashed vehicles in Sweden." Hollywood eventually produced a spy thriller, *Operation Crossbow*, based upon that intelligence operation.

Like Scully's pickled little men, the Spitsbergen UFO never existed in the first place. But the blatant hoax has been elevated to "fact" in book after book and article after article.

However, there was one other incident which is not so easily explained. It may have served as a prelude to the 1934 flap.

Object on the Ice

In 1925, the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen took off for an attempt to fly to the North Pole and back. His expedition was equipped with two twin-engined Dornier-Wal aircraft. As they neared the pole, one of the planes crashed. The other one landed nearby and the crews of both were missing for three weeks until they managed to clear a runway, squeeze into the remaining plane, and fly back to Spitsbergen. Later Amundsen and Lincoln Ellsworth became the second team of fliers (after Byrd and Bennett) to reach the North Pole by air. (Amundsen was also the first man to reach the South Pole overland in 1911.)

In 1928, Amundsen organised another North Pole flight and this one ended in a fatal disaster. His twin-engined Latham aircraft was never seen again. It went down somewhere far north of the Arctic Circle.

Three years later, the dirigible *Graf Zeppelin* carried a group of scientists on a photographic reconnaissance of the Arctic Circle. When the expedition returned, one of the scientists, Professor Paul Moltschanow, was surprised to find that he had photographed an object which no one had noticed. The object was shaped like an airplane and was resting on the snow and ice on the southeastern part of the far north island of Nova Zembla (also called Novaya Zemlya). The New York *Times* carried several items on this discovery in August, 1931. A confusing debate quickly arose.

"The plane was lying on a strip of snow," Professor

Ludwig Weickman said (NY *Times*, August 22, 1931). "It is a monoplane with sharply rectangular wings and can be seen clearly. It is a two-seater and undamaged.

"It seems impossible that it could be Roald Amundsen's plane, because he had a two-motor Latham. We have no idea so far what it might mean."

Captain Walter Bruns founder of the Aero-Arctic Society which sponsored the *Graf Zeppelin* expedition, was quoted in an Associated Press dispatch datelined Potsdam, Germany, August 20, as stating that it was "extremely unlikely" that the plane belonged to Amundsen. Amundsen's plane did not carry enough fuel to reach the remote island, he said. But, he added, "there is no record of any other plane ever having come to grief in that territory".

A dispatch from Berlin, dated August 22, 1931, stated: "The airplane photographed by Professor Paul Moltschanow from the *Graf Zeppelin* lying in the snow in Nova Zembla was identified today as a Dornier-Wal seaplane. Experts who determined this dispelled all possibility that it might have belonged to Roald Amundsen.

"It is assumed that the machine is one of two sent to the Arctic by the Russian Government for exploration around Lake Cara. The other one was sighted by passengers on the *Graf Zeppelin* as they passed over Dickson Island.

"It is also held impossible that the plane could have been one abandoned by Amundsen near the North Pole on his first polar air expedition, because it could not have been blown so far south."

A few days later, officials at the Dornier works in Friedrichshafen, Germany, revealed that two Dornier-Wal planes had been sold to Russia in 1930 and were being used along the Siberian coast. "Dornier officials consider that the plane shown [in the photograph] contrary to one theory, would not likely be the Dornier abandoned near the North Pole by Roald Amundsen, lost explorer, because the Amundsen plane was left afloat when the party moved south and in all probability was crushed by pack ice unless driven ashore." (NY *Times*, August 27, 1931.)

There were no further items on this incident and we have been unable to locate a reproducible copy of the photograph. However, the few facts that are known make it unlikely, if not impossible, for the mystery plane in the photograph to have been Amundsen's or the Russians'. It remains an unidentified airplane sitting on the snow of a very remote spot in the far north. How it got there, and to whom it belonged, will remain in the realms of mystery.

The State of the Art of Flying—1930

Aviation progressed slowly between the two world wars. In the early 1930s, the Soviet Union was still underdeveloped and had no plane-building industry worth mentioning. As already mentioned, Russia had purchased two planes from Germany in 1930. Aeroplanes were still a rare sight in most parts of the world. Most Americans got their first glimpse of a genuine aeroplane in the 1930s when a troop of barnstormers would pass through, carrying passengers aloft briefly in crude bi-planes, most of which were frayed survivors of World War I.

Germany was forbidden by the Versailles Treaty to construct war planes of any kind, or to establish an Air Force. After Adolph Hitler came to power in 1933, he began—secretly at first—to build the Luftwaffe. But, and this is an important point, neither Germany nor the Soviet Union had an appreciable Air Fleet in the early 1930s. In 1933, Germany had a reservoir of about 300 pilots, mostly veterans of World War I.⁷ Hitler would not and could not risk this meagre force in a reckless and pointless adventure over Scandinavia in 1933-34. We must also consider the fact that the Great Depression was at its worst in those years and the problem of equipping, launching and supporting an aerial invasion of Scandinavia would simply have been too expensive for Russia and Germany.

Great Britain and the United States were also badly hit by the depression and, again, neither nation had the motivation for a furtive aerial survey of Norway, Sweden and Finland. Such an operation would call for extended lines of supply, the establishment of well-hidden bases to maintain the aircraft, and vast numbers of trained personnel to keep the operation going. The distances covered by the "ghostfliers" of 1933-34 were so great that the best available planes of 1933 would have needed landing fields all over Scandinavia for refuelling and maintenance.

The only alternative to land bases would be to operate from aircraft carriers. Crude experimental carriers were used in World War I, but the court martial of General William Mitchell in 1926 had set back U.S. development of military aircraft and carriers. The American carriers of the early 1930s were hardly fit to sail the rough seas of the Arctic Ocean, and they were capable of launching only a few short-ranged biplanes. Many of the aircraft sighted over Norway and Sweden in 1934 were described as twin-engined machines. Even in 1942, General Jimmy Doolittle was able to launch only a few twin-engined B-25s from a carrier in his raid on Tokyo. The planes could not return and land on the carrier but had to fly inland to China.

Only Japan was left as a possible culprit. But Japan was totally engaged in the war with China in the 1930s and did not have the reason or the resources to perform an extensive aerial reconnaissance of Scandinavia, half-a-world away.

If any nation had risked such an expedition, a mistake or accident would have exposed their identity and, in all likelihood, involved the unthinkable risk of war.

Nevertheless, a large number of people throughout northern Norway, Sweden and Finland, saw large grey aeroplanes night after night, sometimes even flying in formations of threes. They came from the north, from the general area of Spitsbergen, swooped along the coast of northern Norway, turned east into Sweden, passed over Finland and then headed north again. Some flights can be traced southwards along the same routes night after night, covering all of Sweden and aimed for Denmark.

The "ghostfliers" came back again and again to the same areas in 1935-36-37. Unlike an ordinary secret military operation they did not attempt to maintain radio silence but chattered back and forth across the airways for all to hear.

We hardly need mention the fact that people living in the northern latitudes are very familiar with mundane phenomena such as the Northern Lights, comets and meteors. They were not likely to mistake a falling star for a blinding aerial searchlight. They were not likely to mistake a bolide for a twin-engined plane. And there were not many weather balloons floating around that thinly populated sector of the world. It was too cold for swamp gas.

When the various reports had been correlated it became apparent that at least *six* machines of conventional aeroplane configuration were aloft simultaneously. These were generally of the two and three-engined type. The logistical problems of supporting an air fleet of this size in the inhospitable northern latitudes were monumental. If Japan or the U.S.A. was behind this project (they are the only two nations which could be even remotely suspect), it would have been necessary to maintain a steady supply line of ships to some hidden northern base. Such a supply line could not have remained undetected for very long. The only other possible suspect, the Soviet Union, was in no position in those days to afford such an operation. In any case, the Soviets would have faced the same logistical problems and they did not possess the necessary ships or planes to carry out the aerial survey.

Early in the flap the Scandinavian press offered an alternate solution. It was suggested that the "ghostfliers" were smugglers of some kind. But official Swedish and Norwegian investigators quickly dropped this idea. If the planes represented mere smugglers, they had to be part of a tremendous, well-financed organisation. No such organisation was known to exist anywhere in the world.

It has been necessary for us to deal at length with all these factors and possibilities before we can begin to explore some of the many sightings of 1934 so that you can comprehend our first basic point. That point is: the 1934 mystery airplane wave was *impossible*. No known nation or organisation had the facilities, resources and, most important, *the motivation* for carrying out an aerial survey of northern Scandinavia.

The First Sightings

The bulk of our data was located by Mr. Åke Franzen of Stockholm. Mr. B. Hogman found confirming reports of the same events in the newspapers of Gothenburg. UFO historian Lucius Farish and his American team have located other confirming items in the American press of the period. This flap has been vaguely touched upon by other ufologists over the years. Edgar Sievers mentioned it in his book, *Saucers Über Sudafrika*, referring to an article which appeared in the German religious journal *Christ & Welt* in 1955. The magazine *Space Probe* carried a brief summary of a couple of the reports in September 1959.

Mr. Franzen found that many of the items were wire stories which were repeated in several newspapers. Our main sources are the following publications: *Dagens Nyheter*, *Stockholmstidningen*, *Vasterbottenskuriren* and *Norrbottnens Allehanda*. Unfortunately, Mr. Franzen did not include specific source references for wire stories which appeared in these newspapers. But we will give the full citations for the exclusive stories which appeared

during the period. Our major source is *Dagens Nyheter*. Mr. Franzen translated this material into English. In the interests of readability we have modified his translations, but have carefully retained the full facts and meaning of each item. This research project was launched late in 1968 and has taken over a year to complete.⁸

Item number 44 in our catalogue is of special interest because it provides the first clue that the "ghostfliers" were active over Sweden in 1932 and the summer of 1933:

44. Jan. 22, 1934. Pitea. The permanent curate in Langtrask has reported that he has been seeing mysterious airplanes in the area for the past two years. Last summer the ghostflier passed over the community 12 times, following the same route, southwest to northeast. On four different occasions the plane appeared at very low altitude but no marks or insignia were visible.

Once the plane's altitude was only a few metres above the parsonage. For a few seconds two persons were visible in the cabin. The machine was greyish in colour and single-winged.

The curate had not reported this earlier because he thought the flier had been reported by the coastal population.

This was also one of the several occupant reports. In these, the pilots were always described as apparently normal human beings, sometimes wearing hoods or cowls and, on one occasion, goggles (even though the pilot was in an enclosed cabin).

In Part One of this series we reprinted the first known published report of 1933 . . . the flight over Kalix, Sweden, on December 24. It hardly seemed worthy of the fuss which followed immediately. We must assume that Swedish officials received a rash of unpublished reports that week, for on December 28 the following announcement was widely published:

3. December 28, 1933. Tarnaby. The ghostflier will be hunted by the Flying Corps Number 4 in Ostersund. Saturday the Flying Corps received orders by telegraph to make contact with the police in the area.

The flier was reported Saturday, visible over Tarnaby, and this report was very interesting because the weather was clear.

The head of the Air Force received a telephone call on Saturday from the generalpostgovernment (?) asking for help in searching for the mysterious flier in Norrland.

Information and detailed descriptions will be collected about the suspicious smuggler-flier.

At 6.0 p.m. Saturday evening the ghostflier passed over Tarnaby. People saw it cross the Norwegian border, turn over Joesjo . . . the place where he disappeared Friday evening. The last sighting was eastward towards Stensele.

Across the Swedish-Norwegian border, the ghostflier was also being watched on the same day as the above sighting:

4. December 28, 1933. Langmo Vefsn, Norway. An airplane was observed at high altitude over Langmo. Three lights were visible on the machine but no other details were discernible because of the distance. This sighting is comparable to earlier observations from Hattefjallsdalen. [We have no data on those "earlier observations".]

The mystery was now rapidly gaining momentum all over Sweden and Norway. On December 30, 1933, *Norrbottnenskuriren* carried the report of two automobile drivers who watched a low-flying aeroplane pass over a highway at Muoijevaara, two miles north of Gällivare, Sweden. They estimated that it was at an altitude of

about 150 feet. "No ambulance planes or military craft were in that area at that time, authorities said," the newspaper noted. "There is no doubt that the machine is a stranger."

Search and Censorship

On January 1, 1934, the *New York Times* carried its first report on the affair:

7b. Stockholm, Dec. 31, 1933. Swedish army aviators have been ordered to chase a mysterious airplane which has been sighted for many weeks over Lapland. It is believed to land among the mountains, making flights at night.

The pilot was recently heard flying toward Norway in a heavy snowstorm. It is thought he is a smuggler.

The New Year began with a bland grumble from the head of the Swedish Air Force.

6. January 2, 1934. Sorsele. The head of the Air Force, Major Von Porat, refused to speculate on the phantom flier except to confirm that he did exist. "Specific details on this affair can't be published," he said.

As late as Sunday morning a large grey aeroplane, bigger than any army plane, was seen in Sorsele. The machine flew in big circles over the railway station and vanished in the direction of Arvidsjaur.

Mr. Olof Hedlund, a reliable man with a good reputation living in Vilhemina, watched the mysterious flier Sunday evening.

Mr. Hedlund was visiting in Sorsele over the weekend and was taking a walk at 3.45 a.m. when he suddenly heard an engine roar from above. There was a full moon and visibility was very good. He saw the aeroplane come in over Sorsele from the west, flying on a course which took it directly over the railway station. The machine turned three times over the area in big circles and then took off towards the north, following the railway tracks. Mr. Hedlund said the machine was about 400 metres up and was in sight for about 15 minutes. It was single-winged and enclosed, like a passenger plane, and was equipped with pontoons or some sort of skis.

No marks or insignia were visible to the naked eye. The engine stopped during the turns over the village. The noise seemed to emanate from the propeller. The machine was similar to a one-engined Junkers.

Mr. Hedlund is the first Swedish witness who was absolutely positive of what he had seen.

Sievers mentions another New Year's sighting by a policeman in Stensele, Ture Gustaffson, who reported "nine sharp balls of light" in the sky. We have no further information.

The Hedlund report contains a number of interesting elements. There were fewer enclosed single-engined monoplanes in use in 1933-34 than there were open biplanes of the World War I type. The manoeuvres described by Hedlund indicate that the pilot could have been trying to get his bearings, indulging in the then-common practice of navigating by following railroad lines. However, and we must emphasise this point, it was almost suicidal to cut the engine and circle at such a low altitude. Yet in case after case our mystery airplanes have done this; not only in the 1934 sightings, but also in many of the modern ones. We have commented on this puzzling aspect in other articles.⁹

Swedish and Norwegian authorities took a sober view of the situation because the low-flying planes were obviously locating and circling forts, military and railway installations, and were boldly buzzing restricted areas of strategic importance. This pattern alone suggested that the ghostfliers were engaged in a hostile military

operation. Standard operating procedure demanded that the authorities clamp down on the release of information while they tried to figure out what was going on. The major newspapers were also taking the flap seriously and reporters were being rushed into the isolated northern regions. But after a flurry of stories in January 1934, the published accounts suddenly diminished sharply. Follow-up stories appeared throughout 1934, however, and indicated that although press coverage had lessened the sightings were continuing at a high rate.

Major Von Porat reported to General Virgin on January 3, 1934: "Many people of good reputation have seen the mysterious aeroplane with searchlight rays playing over the ground. Among the witnesses are two military men from the 4th Flying Corps. The "Flying X", one of the many names for the ghostflier, has been coming over Norway, crossing the Swedish border, and following a course over the lakes, particularly over the villages of Storuman, Tarna, Sorsele and Stensele."

The newspaper *Vasterbottenskuriren* commented on January 4: "Hundreds of reports are circulating in Vasterbotten about mysterious aeroplanes, ghostlights and swooping searchlights over villages, lakes and wooded areas." The paper discussed assorted theories, including mass hysteria, stars and moonbeams, but noted that "there were also reports of aeroplanes with low-powered engines which sent beams of light into the sky. . . . There are so many contradictions we don't know what we shall think about this."

It is amusing to find that these 1934 newspaper articles indulged in all the wearisome debates of witness reliability and alternate theories which would be repeated over a decade later in the "ghostrocket" flap of 1946 and the "flying saucer scare" of 1947. It is also plain that official behaviour and reactions were identical in all these flaps widely separated by time. "Aviation experts" also appeared in 1934 to pontificate for the press and offer a variety of solutions to the mystery, ranging from the ludicrous to pure warmongering. The *New York Times* led the pack in the latter:

19. January 11, 1934. Alvkarleby. The ghostflier is still mocking his pursuers and seems to be growing bolder. At the moment there are reports about a greyish aircraft from Alvkarleby.

An observation of the ghostflier over the fort of Boden caused a sensation. A military guard also saw him over other nearby forts.

The Minister of Defence, Vennerstrom, was informed about the incident, but after a telephone conference with the military commander in Boden he denied the rumour.

"We are dealing with more than one machine," General Virgin said. "There's no doubt about it."

Military headquarters refused to say anything further on the matter.

The weather in the northern regions was severe and the flimsy biplanes of the 4th Flying Corps had a difficult time operating at all in the windy, snowy mountains. Two of the planes crashed early in January. Fortunately there was no loss of life. The anonymous "experts" were telling the press about Russian and Japanese "spies" but the Scandinavian papers were not taking them seriously. The *New York Times* was giving these theories a bigger play than the Swedish press.

According to the *Times*, February 4, 1934, ". . . the newspapers have interviewed aviation experts who state

the mystery fliers show exceptional skill, undoubtedly superior to that of the northern European aviators. According to one expert's theory, the first of the 'ghost' aviators was a Japanese scouting the Arctic regions whose activities caused the Soviet to dispatch airplanes to watch the Japanese. The Soviet authorities, however, refute this theory. . . . The appearance of a mysterious airplane over London has strengthened belief that the flights constitute an extensive scheme to explore aviation possibilities for a future war."

On February 2, 1934, the *London Times* had reported:

"Much attention was attracted last night by an aeroplane which flew continuously for two hours in circles over the city and Central London. From the heavy note of the engines the machine was a large one, and its altitude was sufficiently low for its course to be clearly traced by its lights. At the Air Ministry it was stated that nothing was known of the reason of the flight. In reply to inquiries at a number of civil aerodromes around London it was stated that no civil machine had been chartered for a flight over the Metropolis."

Four days later Sir Philip Sassoon, Under-Secretary of State for Air, offered this explanation: "The aircraft to which my hon. friend evidently refers was a Royal Air Force aircraft carrying out a training exercise in co-operation with ground forces. (In the heart of London? —J.K.) Such training flights are arranged in the Royal Air Force without reference to the Air Ministry."

That seemed to settle that. But on Monday, June 11, 1934, two mystery aeroplanes appeared over London, according to the *London Times*, June 12, 1934:

"The sound and sight of two aeroplanes circling above the city late last night aroused interest and some curiosity. The machines were low enough for their outlines, as well as their navigation lights, to be clearly visible against the sky. At the Air Ministry, it was stated that although night flying was frequently practised by R.A.F. machines, and several were up last night, service pilots were forbidden by regulations to fly over London at less than 5,000ft. The identity of the machines in question was not officially known."

Returning to the puzzling Scandinavian search, the 4th Flying Corps gave up officially on January 18, 1934, and withdrew. Captain Zackrisson, the squadron commander, told the press that he was unfamiliar with the theory that Russian military planes had established a route over the mountains of northern Sweden.

Army search parties continued to wade through the mountains on skis and snowshoes, and military investigators swarmed over the areas interviewing witnesses in depth. The ghostflier spread his activities to Finland and the Finnish authorities were also launching searches and investigations.

51. January 27, 1934. Helsingfors, Finland. According to official sources, a very important message about the ghostflier has arrived at headquarters.

The situation is such that the people in authority cannot reveal the information at this time without jeopardizing a solution to the mystery.

Large three-engined planes were sighted over Finland, and two army planes were stationed at Kemi, prepared to track them down . . . if possible. Eventually the Swedes turned out 24 land-based planes, two seaplanes and a number of ships in a massive search. Norwegian ships and planes were also scouring the Arctic waters and remote islands for some clue.

The ghostflier continued to ply regular routes, usually choosing periods of snowstorms when the military searchers couldn't even get their planes off the ground.

A bailiff in Uppsala, Sweden, Åke Ponten, investigated many of the reports in Uppland and passed them on to Stockholm. "So far as I can determine, some kind of aeroplane has passed over specific areas in our province," he said in an interview with a reporter from *Dagens Nyheter* on February 14, 1934.

Early in February the lid began to come down. While some high officials confirmed the mystery, others began to issue denials.

65. February 10, 1934. Helsingfors, Finland. The majority of the reports of unknown aircraft which have been published in the newspapers are explained as follows: These objects have no connection with airplanes.

Although there are many reports of flying strangers over Finnish territory, there is no assurance of their existence until the reports are compared with each other.

On March 3, 1934, *Dagens Nyheter* announced: "There had never been any ghostflier at all! The search for the mysterious aeroplanes and other strange objects has been terminated, since the investigations proved futile."

"... other strange objects ... ?"

A week later, a dispatch from Oslo, Norway, said, "Both the Swedish and Finnish Air Forces have stopped searching for the mysterious ghostflier but the Norwegian

General Staff is still looking for him. In Troms Fylke, a mysterious plane has been seen at high altitude and the Air Force has been informed."

Irrefutable military logic had been applied to the problem. No bases, secret landing fields, or lines of supply had been discovered. The planes were operating under impossible conditions, carrying out dangerous low-level manoeuvres beyond the capabilities of known machines and pilots. Therefore the thousands of witnesses were obviously wrong. The ghostflier could not possibly exist. But, like the bumblebee who doesn't know that his wings can't support his body, the ghostflier continued to fly anyway.

END OF PART TWO

NOTES

- 1 Palmer's *Flying Saucers*, December 1959, also *The Under-People* by Eric Norman, Award Books, 1969, Chapter Eight.
- 2 *Enigma Fantastique* by Dr. W. Gordon Allen, Health Research, 1966. Also see footnote 3.
- 3 *We Are Not Alone* by Walter Sullivan, McGraw-Hill, 1964, Chapter 13. It should be noted that Mr. Sullivan chose to make certain deletions in his documentation to bring it in line with his general theme.
- 4 *Flying Saucers—Serious Business* by Frank Edwards, Lyle Stuart, 1966, Chapter 8, pages 204-5.
- 5 American television viewers heard several of these incidents during live telecasts of the space shots, but the anomalous signals were not re-aired in the taped excerpts broadcast later on news programmes. A few newspapers mentioned the incidents briefly but they have never been fully discussed publicly. During the Apollo 11 moon flight a voice uttering what sounded like an Indian war whoop cut into the UHF channel reserved for the lunar-bound astronauts, prompting ground control to ask the now familiar (to patient American rocket watchers) question, "Have you got a friend up there?" For a brief summary of earlier mystery transmissions of this type see FSR, July/August 1967, page 21. Also, *Strange Messages from Outer Space* by John A. Keel, *Saga*, November 1968.
- 6 Widely discussed in U.S. news media.
- 7 *The First and the Last* by Adolf Galland, Henry Holt, 1954.
- 8 This material is summarised in *UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse* by John A. Keel, G. P. Putnam's, 1970.
- 9 See footnotes to Part One of this series.

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