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## Dr. J. Allen Hynek Speaking at the United Nations, Nov. 27th 1978

Dr. J. Allen Hynek

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**Summary:** *I am delighted to have been invited by Sir Eric Gairy and the Grenada Mission to speak to this committee on behalf of many of my scientific colleagues about the subject of Unidentified Flying Objects.*



J. Allen Hynek, Ph.D.  
author's bio

Mr. Chairman:

I am delighted to have been invited by Sir Eric Gairy and the Grenada Mission to speak to this committee on behalf of many of my scientific colleagues about the subject of Unidentified Flying Objects. Many years ago, in conversation with His Excellency, U Thant, I was informed by him that protocol demanded that a member nation first bring a subject up in the General Assembly before any action on that subject could be initiated.

Now, many years later, one of the smallest nations on the Earth has courageously introduced the perplexing subject of UFOs to the General Assembly, and thus made possible this meeting today. I commend the initiative his excellency Sir Eric Gairy has taken; he has trod where mightier nations have feared to tread.

Mr. Chairman, there exists today a world-wide phenomenon... indeed if it were not world-wide I should not be addressing you and these representatives from many parts of the world. There exists a global phenomenon the scope and extent of which is not generally recognized. It is a phenomenon so strange and foreign to our daily terrestrial mode of thought that it is frequently met by ridicule and derision by persons and organizations unacquainted with the facts. Yet, the phenomenon persists; it has not faded away as many of us expected it would when, years ago, we regarded it as a passing fad or whimsy. Instead, it has touched on the lives of an increasing number of people around the world.

I refer, of course, to the phenomenon of UFOs... Unidentified Flying Objects... which I should like to define here simply as "any aerial or surface sighting, or instrumental recording

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(e.g., radar, photography, etc.) which remains unexplained by conventional methods even after competent examination by qualified persons.

You will note, Mr. Chairman, that this definition says nothing about little green men from outer space, or manifestations from spiritual realms, or various psychic manifestations. It simply states an operational definition. A cardinal mistake, and a source of great confusion, has been the almost universal substitution of an interpretation of the UFO phenomenon for the phenomenon itself.

This is akin to having ascribed the Aurora Borealis to angelic communication before we understood the physics of the solar wind.

Nonetheless, in the popular mind the UFO phenomenon is associated with the concept of extra-terrestrial intelligence and this might yet prove to be correct in some context. Surely it would be a huge joke on all of us should it develop that evidence for extra-terrestrial intelligence was right here under our noses all the time while great effort was spent searching for it elsewhere!

But I repeat and emphasize, Mr. Chairman, that the global phenomenon of UFO reports, reports frequently made by highly responsible persons, is not yet understood. Yet it is a phenomenon that has claimed the interest and attention of millions of people. In the United States alone, the Gallup Poll has not only shown a remarkably high awareness on the part of the public of the UFO subject, but indicates that 57% of the U.S. population... thus well over a hundred million persons... believe that UFOs are real and not a figment of the imagination.

The terms Flying Saucers and UFOs now appear in the dictionaries of many countries... itself a sure sign of the popular awareness. Thus we have the terms:

O.V.N.I.-Objetos Voladores Non Identificados in the Latin American countries and Spain Soucoupe Volante in France Fliegende Untertanen in Germany Letaiici Talire in Czech And so on in a host of other languages.

The subject is truly in the minds of many peoples. Indeed, according to our records UFOCAT UFO reports have been assembled from 133 different countries! as you probably already have noted from the material furnished you.

I must also emphasize here, Mr. Chairman, that were it so that these reports, albeit their global nature, were solely generated by irresponsible and ignorant persons, I should not be here this morning. The facts are quite otherwise: UFO reports in significant numbers have been made by highly responsible persons, to wit: astronauts, radar experts, military and commercial pilots... many, many of these... officials of governments, and scientists, even including astronomers!

We have on record many tens of thousands of UFO reports. Even granting that by no means all of these are of high quality, they include extremely intriguing and provocative accounts of strange events experienced by highly reputable persons... events which

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challenge our present conception of the world about us and which may indeed signal a need for a change in some of these concepts... a point brought out some time ago in a radio broadcast to the French nation by the then Minister of Defense, M. Robert Galley, stressing the importance of investigating the truly unknown.

In a radio interview on Feb. 21, 1974 he stated:

"I must say that if your listeners could see for themselves the mass of reports coming in from the airborne gendarmerie, from the mobile gendarmerie, and from the gendarmerie charged with the job of conducting investigations, all of which reports are being forwarded by us to C.N.E.S. (National Center for Space Studies), then they would see that it is all pretty disturbing. My view about the gendarmerie is that they are serious people. When they draw up a report, they don't do it haphazardly. But I must tell you that in fact the number of these gendarmerie reports is very great and they are greatly varied. The whole thing is, of course, still very fragmentary but I must emphasize that, in this UFO business, it is essential to preserve an extremely open mind."

Much of the UFO data are "hard", not necessarily as that term would be used by the physicist, but certainly "harder" than much of the data used in the social sciences and in the practice of law.

Perhaps the hardest data we possess so far are the so-called Close Encounters of the Second Kind, otherwise known as the Physical Trace cases. These are the cases in which it is reported that concomittant and simultaneously with the occurrence of a UFO event, there appears physical evidence of the immediate presence of the UFO. This can take the form of immediate physical effects on either animate or inanimate matter, or on both. Thus, physiological effects on humans and animals and plants have been very reliably reported, as have the interference with electrical systems in the immediate vicinity and the appearance of disturbed regions on the ground also in the immediate vicinity of the reported UFO event. Now over thirteen hundred physical trace cases are on record.

Mr. Chairman, any phenomenon which touches the lives of so many people, and which engenders puzzlement and even fear among them, is therefore not only of potential scientific interest and significance but also of sociological and political significance, especially since it carries with it many implications of the existence of intelligences other than our own. I will confine my remarks, however, to the scientific aspects of the subject. Dr. Vallee will, I believe, address himself more directly to the sociological, and hence, likewise political aspects of the phenomenon.

Speaking then for myself as an astronomer, and I believe for many of my colleagues as well, there is no longer any question in my mind of the importance of this subject. It is my considered opinion, based on many years of study, both as Scientific Consultant to the U.S. Air Force, and in recent years, as an involved scientist, that the UFO phenomenon whatever its origin may turn out to be, is eminently worthy of

study.

And I am by no means alone in this opinion. There is today a growing community of scientists, from many countries, who have declared an interest, either privately or openly, in pursuing the challenge presented by the UFO problem, and who are gathering and analyzing the relevant data.

This appears to be especially the case in France and in the United States, though this conclusion may simply arise because I know more about the situation in these two countries. I do have knowledge that France has assumed a leading role in the scientific approach to UFOs. Acting under instruction the French Gendarmerie diligently undertook the investigation of many UFO reports. Their investigations in turn provided material for further study by a scientific group headed by Dr. Claude Poher, of CNES, called GEPAN. This group comprised specialists from many disciplines, not only those of physical science but in psychology and the social sciences, and in law and medicine as well. The work of this group was reviewed by an independent scientific board from the parent organization, CNES, and the group was given instructions to proceed on an expanded and well-funded basis.

This further work, I understand, has not materially advanced and, it is further my understanding from reliable sources that its initial results comprises work done on cases of high strangeness and high credibility. Only one of the cases was found, I have been told, to have a conventional explanation. The others were "Close Encounter" cases, that is, UFOs reportedly occurring within approximately 200 meters of the witnesses, and two of these were re-reported to be Close Encounters of the Third Kind... that is, those in which the presence of intelligent beings is reported. It has also been reported that the care with which the measurement of directions, distances, and maneuvers, as well as the evaluation of psychological factors involved, were carried out was exemplary and far superior to the previous studies in other countries.

For most of the cases carefully studied, it was concluded that the UFO report involved a material phenomenon that could not be explained as a natural phenomenon or a human device. If my information is correct, then the implications for science and the public at large of this French investigation are profound. The history of science abounds with unlooked for benefits resulting from the investigation of the unknown.

Who can tell what benefits might accrue from the study of UFOs? It might well lead to the solution of many pressing problems facing man-kind today.

But we need not base our opinions or actions solely on the French investigations, as competent as they may have been. Similar conclusions have already been drawn independently by scientists with whom I have been associated, many of whom, however, have been reluctant to express their opinions openly. There is a surprisingly large number of individual scientists who have expressed to me, privately and personally, their involved concern with the challenge of the UFO phenomenon, and who entertain opinions consistent with those of the French report. These scientists are in many cases associated with large

and prestigious scientific organizations, both government and private, which, as organizations are silent or even officially derisive about the UFO phenomenon. The individuals within these organizations who have intimate knowledge of the UFO phenomenon are restrained by organizational policy to remain officially silent about their interest and in private work with UFO matters.

There are many others, not so restrained, who are independently, or in small groups, quietly studying the subject with whatever means they have at hand.

It is the scientists and specialists in both these categories that are the main concern of my address to you today, Mr. Chairman. These persons have no means by which they can share the results of their researches with other workers, or pool them for the benefit of others, as is standard practice in scientific matters. There is for them nothing remotely resembling the World Health Organization or the World Meteorological Organization through which they can pool and share the results of their researches and learn what colleagues are doing in the field. Nor is there any non-governmental organization to serve this purpose. Collectively, these scientists possess information and results which, in my opinion, are important and should be shared with their colleagues elsewhere. I stress that all that is needed is a mechanism whereby such interchange can be accomplished; the actual investigative and analytical processes remain the responsibility of the scientists in their respective countries.

I am not, therefore, Mr. Chairman... and I emphasize the "not"... asking that the United Nations organization create its own commission to conduct researches into the UFO field, but merely one to provide a means whereby work and investigations already carried out and accomplished by scientists in their own countries can be expeditiously disseminated to their colleagues in other countries.

Specifically, then, Mr. Chairman, I ask, on behalf of my colleagues in this and other countries, that you recommend through appropriate channels, that there be devised a mechanism within the United Nations Organization whereby scientists and other specialists in member nations can bring together and interchange their ideas and their investigative work with colleagues in other member nations. Mr. Chairman, I seek your advice and help on how such a procedure might be brought into being without financial burden to the United Nations Organization and without disruption of the many other vital activities of this organization.

Such a mechanism, Mr. Chairman, would also facilitate the immediate exchange of information about current UFO activity in member nations.

Thus, for instance, and solely as an example, there appeared a short while ago a brief news item about a UFO sighting made in Kuwait by a number of highly qualified engineers.

It is obviously important that concerned scientists in all parts of the world be informed whether, there is any merit whatever in such a report, and if so, to assist in the investigation and

analysis of the reported events. Enormous amounts of UFO data at present remain in the "newsclip" status, and data of high potential significance to science and the world is continually being lost for lack of a means to prevent its loss.

The creation of such a mechanism would also provide means whereby concerned scientists in member nations can become known to each other, and can therefore furnish each other with their already completed research work or with progress reports thereof.

Mr. Chairman, we are dealing here with an unexplained phenomenon which has been reported so far from 133 nations, and which has aroused the concern, and often the fear, of significant fractions of their population. Virtually all 133 countries are member states of the United Nations. It is a phenomenon which therefore has great possible sociological and political implications, as well as scientific potential. It is surely within the purport of the United Nations Organization to seriously consider this request that I make on behalf of my scientific colleagues everywhere.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let me once again clearly state that it is my considered opinion, as a scientist who has devoted many years to its study, that the UFO phenomenon is real and not the creation of disturbed minds, and that it has both grave and important implications for science and for the political and social well-being of the peoples of this Earth. It is therefore, in my opinion, worthy of cognizance by the United Nations Organization, and worthy of study as a phenomenon. I distinguish sharply here, as do my colleagues, between any given theory of the UFO such as, for example, that they originate in some specific solar system, and the phenomenon itself, a situation which would put the cart before the horse.

Mr. Chairman, I have not always held the opinion that UFOs were worthy of serious scientific study. I began my work as Scientific Consultant to the U.S. Air Force as an open skeptic, in the firm belief that we were dealing with a mental aberration and a public nuisance. Only in the face of stubborn facts and data similar to those studied by the French commission... have I been forced to change my opinion. I recognize, Mr. Chairman, that an opinion, no matter on what insights or experience it is based, still does not constitute positive proof. The creation of a mechanism within the United Nations to facilitate the exchange and translation of UFO reports and studies made in various member nations will, I firmly believe, hasten the day when this opinion will be translated into firm scientific knowledge.

The UFO phenomenon, as studied by my colleagues and myself, bespeaks the action of some form of intelligence... but whence this intelligence springs, whether it is truly extra-terrestrial, or bespeaks a higher reality not yet recognized by science, or even if it be in some way or another a strange psychic manifestation of our own intelligence, is much the question. We seek your help, Mr. Chairman, in assisting scientists, and particularly those already associated with the many formal and informal investigative organizations around the world, by providing a clearing house procedure whereby the work already going on globally can be brought together in a serious, concentrated approach to this most outstanding challenge to

current science.

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