

The

Eagle River Incident

A NEW CONTACT CLAIM

ALTHOUGH landing and contact claims have to be treated with suspicion, to ignore them completely might be as unwise as to accept them without reserve. The following account is taken from two issues of the *Milwaukee Journal* of April 23 and 24, 1961. (Credit to our reader, A. Heuel).

Mr. Joseph Simonton, aged 60, is a chicken farmer who lives four miles from Eagle River, Wisconsin, U.S.A. He claims that on Tuesday, April 18 at approximately 11 a.m. he was attracted to his yard by a noise outside and he saw a saucer-shaped object gleaming silver—"brighter than chrome"—which had "landed," though Mr. Simonton later said that he thought the saucer was hovering close to the ground without actually having touched down. The object was about 12 feet from top to bottom and about 30 feet in diameter.

Mr. Simonton went on to say that a hatch opened about five feet from the ground and he could see three men in the machine. One of the men was dressed in a black two-piece suit and he held up a jug which seemed to be made from the same material as the saucer. The man motioned as though to indicate that he wanted water. Simonton took the jug and hurried back to the house to comply with the unspoken request, and returned it to the visitors. He judged that the men were about 5 feet in height and weighed about 125 pounds. He said they were smooth shaved and appeared to resemble Italians.

He did not recall hearing the men speak either to each other or to him. When he looked into the interior of the space-ship it appeared black, "the colour of wrought iron." He said he could see several instrument panels and he could hear a slow whining sound, like the hum of a generator. He added that "it appeared one of the men in the ship was frying food on a flameless grill of some sort."

Offered cakes

Simonton then described how he made a motion to indicate interest in the food that was being prepared and one of the men, also dressed in black but with a narrow red trim along the trousers, handed him three of the small cakes. Later, Mr. Simonton handed one of these cakes to a local official, Judge Carter who had in turn sent it for analysis to Major Donald E. Keyhoe, Director of the National Investigating Committee on Aerial Phenomena, in Washington. Simonton said the cake that he ate tasted like cardboard. The cakes were described as about three inches in diameter and perforated with small holes.

The whole visit did not seem more than five minutes. He said that the large hatch snapped shut and that it must have been machined so smoothly he could scarcely detect where the hatch was when it was closed. The ship took off rapidly to the south and caused a blast of air that bowed some near-by pine trees. Mr. Simonton recalls that along the edge of the saucer he noticed

exhaust pipes six or seven inches in diameter.

"When it took off, it really went," he said. "It went up, slow and even, about 15 feet, and then in two seconds it was so far away I couldn't see it."

Sheriff Schroeder, who has known Simonton for fourteen years, sent two deputies to the scene after the incident had been reported. They could not, however, find any corroborative evidence. Sheriff Schroeder affirmed that Mr. Simonton obviously believed the truth of what he was saying and that he talked most sensibly about the whole incident. The Editor of the *Vilas County Review* remarked that "if you took a vote round here, most people would say Simonton's story is authentic." On the other hand, a number of people had telephoned to ridicule the whole story.

A remarkable story

At the moment of going to press, we do not know what the result of the analysis of the cake disclosed, but, apart from this piece of evidence, there is only the farmer's word in support of the whole remarkable story. If it were a hoax, it would seem to be peculiarly motiveless: as the visitors did not speak, there can be no question of any "philosophy" mongering and as far as we can gather from the newspaper reports there was no attempt to cash in on the incident. Although the sceptics may claim that Mr. Simonton must have read about the other

landing and contact claims and was borrowing details from them, the more open-minded may prefer to compare the description of the saucer with those alleged to have been seen by Fry, Adamski, Bethurum and others.

While it is true that at one time base motives might be ascribed to contact claimants, it should be admitted that now-

adays very little by way of profit or notoriety attaches itself to witnesses like Simonton. The sensation value has diminished considerably during the last ten years and we doubt whether Mr. Simonton will be invited to write books and undertake lecture tours on the strength of his alleged experience: nor is there the slightest suggestion that he

has attempted to establish a cult. It should also be noted that while he did refer to the saucer as a space-ship, he offered no theory as to its place of origin. And, unless something further transpires, we feel that the incident will remain unexplained and finally fade away except, possibly, as part of the local folklore.

THOSE RUSSIAN SAUCERS

THE *A.P.R.O. Bulletin* for March, 1961, refers to the reports coming out of Russia and remarks that the flying saucer "contact cult" fad has caught on, despite attempts to discourage such activities by the government. The *Bulletin* goes on to remark: "The cultists (after all, this is a common phenomena [*sic*] in itself) seem to manifest themselves as soon as the opportunity presents itself, and Russia is no exception. It may be that a lot of Russians are looking for a salvation of sorts, also."

This is a most extraordinary comment. In the first place, we have no information that the landings which, it is alleged, have taken place in many districts of

the Soviet Union have brought with them any offers of salvation. The accounts we have read seem to be of the "little men" variety—not at all the evangelical type to which the *Bulletin* is referring. Furthermore, the commentator is adopting a most unscientific approach to the problem. Had the landings in Russia really resembled those which are claimed as having occurred in California and elsewhere, then logic would demand that the new incidents went some way to support those which had occurred earlier. After all, mass hysteria in America can hardly have spread behind the rigid barrier of the Iron Curtain. It is easy to suggest that fear has produced the illusion of friendly

visitors from other worlds anxious to save us from ourselves, but there is not one scrap of evidence to show that any of the contact stories have in fact been prompted by the "wish-to-be-saved." What has been suggested is that some at least of the contact stories have been invented as a means of promulgating a salvationist message—a very different matter and a much more plausible explanation for those who do not wish to believe. The *Bulletin's* comment is really just another piece of nonsense and an example of how this extraordinary subject can affect the reasoning powers. It is not only the opponents of saucers who are tempted to write before they think.
