

A BULLETIN FOR RESEARCH ON THE PROBLEM OF SURVIVAL AFTER BODILY DEATH  
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## A MEETING ON PARAPSYCHOLOGY IN MOSCOW

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An international meeting on research in parapsychology, organized by E. K. Naumov, Director of the newly-organized Department for Technical Parapsychology, was held in Moscow on June 24-25, 1968. Because of unexpected complications, the gathering proved to be one at which only a limited amount of technical information could be exchanged, but the foreign visitors had an excellent opportunity to learn at first-hand about the interest of Russian scientists in parapsychology. Official pressure was brought to bear against the plans for the meeting, probably in connection with the political moves against liberalization in all intellectual fields.

The day before the meeting started Mr. Naumov told a group of visitors that 200 papers were offered for the program when he first announced the ESP symposium throughout the U.S.S.R. But it had become necessary to restrict the schedule, and the plan at that time was to hold the meeting for two days. A total of 30 papers was to be presented, divided approximately evenly between Russian scientists and foreign visitors.

More than 100 people were present at the first session. In his opening remarks Mr. Naumov referred to a critical article condemning parapsychology that had appeared that morning in *Pravda*. Specifically, the article attacked a special subject in Leningrad who had been investigated by a few Russian scientists. *Pravda* was scornful of their report that objects moved in the presence of this subject without any direct contact or any other discoverable normal means.

This official criticism of parapsychology did not, apparently, specifically mention the meeting in Moscow. Nevertheless, the article discouraged some of the Russians from taking an active part, and it put

those who did do so under considerable strain. For the foreign visitor the meeting provided a rare opportunity to observe at first-hand how scientific exchange may be influenced in a culture where such matters are largely controlled by official opinion. In fact, the opportunity to observe the reaction of Russian colleagues in parapsychology to such pressures was more valuable than the limited amount of technical information that could be communicated under the circumstances.

Approximately a dozen foreign scientists were present, and the countries represented were Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Switzerland, United Kingdom, U.S.A., and Yugoslavia. Most of the visitors had not expected to present papers, but the chairman insisted that everyone should do so. Among the Russian papers, approximately half were from scholars with academic positions in the natural sciences or in mathematics, and the others were from people who had participated in ESP experiments that had been carried out in Russia and reported through the mass media.

On the second day, the meeting was held in one of the embassies in Moscow where facilities were available for projecting scientific films. Although this session lasted only two hours, it proved to be the high point of the conference. One film was concerned with a special subject in Czechoslovakia who apparently produces unexplained physical phenomena (such as the turning of a pointer balanced on a needle when completely shielded from the persons near it and the generating of an attractive force between nonmagnetic objects).

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Another film was about the special Russian subject criticized in *Pravda*. It showed how she worked while seated at a table with an assortment of objects spread out upon its surface. At the beginning of the session, the subject concentrated with circular motions of her hands and with a fixed stare upon the needle of an ordinary compass. After a short time the needle started to swing in wider and wider arcs until it was shown eventually spinning around on its pivot. This, we were told, was only an exercise by which the subject could judge when she was ready to exert her efforts in the direction of other objects. Then the film showed her attempting to cause various nonmetallic and non-magnetic objects to move on the table without contact: wooden matches, an empty match box, a glass, a plastic pen cap, and the like.

When the objects were in motion the investigators inverted a Plexiglas cube over them, and the film showed the objects continuing to move under this cover. A neurophysiological investigation of the subject was made while she was influencing the objects. Electrodes were attached to the head, and strong waves were recorded while the objects were moving. The scientist reporting on the investigations stated that the amplitude of the waves from the back of the head (visual projection area) at these moments became 50 times greater than normal.

Afterward, Mr. Naumov asked me what I thought about the film. I answered that it was not possible to reach a scientific conclusion on the basis of a single movie record, but I thought that the subject

## PHILADELPHIA HAUNTING<sup>1</sup>

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An old, three-story house in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, has been the scene of a series of ostensible haunting incidents. The disturbances, as experienced by the occupants, Mrs. Chen (pseudonyms are used), her five children, her mother, and a boarder, have been occurring since they

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clearly deserved further investigation. He said that he was of the same opinion. He had shown the film to hundreds of Russian scientists in research institutes throughout the country, and approximately half of those who had seen it had expressed the same view as we shared. The other half said that what the film appeared to show was obviously impossible and therefore it must be a fraud.

Among the many impressions that the visitors formed about parapsychology in Russia, there were a few outstanding ones upon which all of them would likely agree. One is the fact that there is widespread interest in the field in the U.S.S.R. not only among the general public but also at the scientific and intellectual level. Another observation is that the group of workers organized by Mr. Naumov forms a closely knit and highly motivated corps of investigators and scholars in the field. The basic orientation of Russian scientists toward this field is one of investigating psychic phenomena to discover the special energies or conditions in living things that will account for aspects of behavior that the known principles of science cannot explain. This is, of course, exactly what parapsychologists in the West are attempting to do, but there is no indication as yet that Russian scientists are willing to consider the hypothesis that the aspects of personality they are investigating could possibly exist independently of the living organism. In other words, Russian investigators in parapsychology are not concerned with the survival problem which is of primary interest to readers of THETA.

moved into the house in June, 1967. An exploratory investigation of the case was done August 16-18, 1968. Mr. Daniel R. Altschuler, an electrical engineering student at Duke University, assisted in the study.

At the time of our visit, Mrs. Chen's mother and the boarder were no longer residing in the house, and one grown son was away at school. Of the remaining family, Mrs. Chen (age about 40), and

her daughters, Mary (21), and Lisa (22), had witnessed most of the disturbances. The other son (around 14) had also been present during some of the occurrences and Mrs. Chen stated that her two-year-old daughter had reacted to some of them. The disturbances consisted in several sightings of an apparition, in hearing footsteps, and in a few movements of objects. For instance, early one morning in the spring of 1968, Lisa, who was in bed with the lights out and her door open, heard steps on the front stairs and saw someone go past her open door on the way to the empty bedrooms at the front of the house. After some time, the figure returned. She did not recognize it and screamed. The others came to her aid, but found no one. Lisa said there was a light associated with the figure which she thought was too diffuse to come from a flashlight.

Another morning in the same period, Lisa felt the covers being pulled from her bed and saw a man beside her with one leg up ready to get into her bed. He seemed at first to be unaware of her presence and then appeared to be shocked to see her. He stood beside her bed for some time and she was too frightened to make a sound. Lisa said that she saw him clearly as he stood there: lights seemed to come from within him, his skin was clear and unwrinkled, his hair was blond and very thick, he had prominent ears, and was wearing pajamas with a blue-striped top and grey bottom. After some time she was able to call out to her sister who was in the next room. Mary saw the man through the adjoining doorway and ran toward him with the idea of knocking him out of the way with her elbows, but went through him into her sister's arms. The man disappeared. Although Mary did not get a good look at his face, she agreed with her sister in the other descriptive details.

Since the encounter in her bedroom, Lisa has seen the same man in the library at various times, wearing either a brown or blue suit.

Mrs. Chen determined from neighbors that the house had belonged to a Dr.

Harding, who had lived there from 1891 to his death in 1937 at the age of seventy-eight. The house was vacant for ten years afterwards. Mrs. Chen went to the public library and found Dr. Harding's obituary which contained his picture. Both Lisa and Mary claim the picture resembles the man they had seen in the house. Lisa, who had seen him most often, found the resemblance particularly striking.

A few physical incidents have also been reported. Lisa once saw a plastic orange rotating by itself in a bowl of artificial fruits on the dining room table, the other fruits remaining still. She called her mother and sister and they all watched as the orange continued turning without apparent cause. While looking at television late one night, Lisa saw an ashtray rise about six inches above the table in front of her and then fall back down.

During the investigators' stay in the house, no unusual occurrences were observed or reported—with one possible exception. On the evening of August 17, the visitors and the family were sitting around the kitchen table in the hope that there would be an occurrence. The ashtray and the fruit bowl, which had been involved previously, were placed on the table. After some time, a clump of artificial fruit rolled out of the bowl. The family attributed this to a normal cause. However, there is some uncertainty about this conclusion, because the writer had previously stacked the fruit to prevent it from rolling out of its own accord and had then shaken the bowl to check whether the pieces of fruit were firmly lodged. He was the last to touch the bowl and there were no perceptible breezes or vibrations in the room at the time of the incident.

The reliability of the information supplied by the family has not been established to any degree of certainty. However, they give the impression of being honest and intelligent people with no apparent motive for perpetrating a fraud, and apparently they neither seek nor want publicity. It is planned to continue the investigation.

## LUND SEMINAR ON PARAPSYCHOLOGY

Following the convention of the Parapsychological Association in West Germany, to be reviewed in the next THETA, a one-day "Parapsychological Seminar" was held at Lund University, Sweden, on September 13, 1968. The program, arranged by Mr. Martin Johnson of the Psychology Department at Lund, included members of the Department and four visiting parapsychologists, Dr. J. Keil of the University of Tasmania, Drs. K. R. Rao and B. K. Kanthamani of Andhra University, India, and Mr. W. G. Roll. The main topics were the relationship of ESP to personality as explored at Andhra and Lund and the psi field theory.

The dinner address on "Parapsychology and the Survival Issue" was given by Mr. Roll. He outlined the main findings suggestive of survival such as those obtained

through studies of mediums and so-called haunting and poltergeist incidents. As in other parapsychological studies, the basic observations concern ESP and PK effects, that is, respectively, information about events not obtained by the known senses and physical occurrences not produced by known means. If we are to determine whether or not deceased (theta) personalities sometimes are the agents for such effects, we need a better understanding of ESP and PK. Roll said that current studies indicate ESP and PK processes can be understood in terms of energies and fields which obey laws comparable to those governing other processes in nature. If this is true, it should be possible to ascertain whether the source of this energy is sometimes beyond the known world of living things and material objects.

## FRIEND OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY DIES

Mr. Chester F. Carlson, a long-time supporter of parapsychology, died on September 19, 1968, at the age of 62. Mr. Carlson was the inventor of xerography, the electrostatic copying process employed by the Xerox Company for machines which are now used in offices in most parts of the world.

Mr. Carlson's interest in parapsychology was supported by his wife, Dorris, and stimulated by her psychical experiences. He gave a large part of the income from his invention to the field.

Among the projects he supported at the Parapsychology Laboratory of Duke University was the study in 1958 of "The Seaford Disturbances," printed in the *Journal of Parapsychology* (Vol. 22, 1958, pp. 79-124), by Dr. J. G. Pratt and Mr. W. G. Roll. This was the first detailed report of a "poltergeist" investigation in the United States conducted by professional parapsychologists. It was also one of the few times Mr. Carlson's aid was acknowledged in print. He was as modest as he

was generous and preferred to give anonymously.

Mr. Carlson was a member of the Board of Directors of the Psychical Research Foundation from 1961 to 1965. In 1963 he supported an investigation in Mexico of the physical medium, Luis Martinez, which, unfortunately, did not substantiate the claims made for this medium. When Mr. Carlson resigned from the Board, pleading pressure from his many other duties, he remained in contact with the Foundation through Mrs. Carlson, who had joined the Advisory Committee.

Mr. Carlson's interest in parapsychology was not only that of the physicist and inventor confronted with puzzling problems in need of solutions. He saw psychical processes as bonds that connect man with his social and physical environment and which extend beyond death. An understanding and acceptance of these unities would, he believed, help man overcome the divisive forces which disrupt and, ultimately, may even destroy human society.

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