

population. The famous example of Orson Welles's fictional program taken literally by radio listeners in 1938, wreaking tremendous havoc in one region of the United States, may have influenced the reaction of U.S. military personnel vis-à-vis the Roswell incident in 1947. The disinformation campaign was skillfully conducted, since it has muzzled the media for 30 years. Panic, which is accompanied by considerable human chaos (suicides, people fleeing on the roads, riots, and vandalism, etc.) would cause any government for which peace alone is a wealth and stability factor for its power to shrink back.

- Mistrust: the fear of seeing accurate information divulged and repeated with obvious irony is also a deterrent to openly mentioning UFO questions. This posture is at the core of the disinformation and confusion in which public opinion is steeped with regard to what is true and what is false. It can only be dreaded by decision-makers.

- Fear of ridicule: although ridicule has no longer killed for some time, it is nonetheless often difficult to overcome.

- Manipulation: the media can be manipulated by lobbies or pressure groups for sectorial purposes (for example, push politicians to create an anti-UFO SDI [Strategic Defense Initiative]) and could thus become the unwitting spokesmen of a disinformation campaign or a destabilization attempt.

#### **14.2 What Attitudes do the Media Adopt?**

- For the tabloids, anything is good if it sells. The public's curiosity is great and its demand generates enticing and often phony articles. Although they become the relayer of incredible theories, it is, on the other hand, thanks to the tabloids that the latest revelations concerning Roswell made by old witnesses have begun to become known.

- For the major newspapers, irony or aggressiveness are most often a manner of broaching a taboo subject that no one has a handle on. But the press can also spread the news about an extraordinary phenomenon when, as in the case of San Carlos de Bariloche, dozens of people were witnesses to it. It sometimes also makes a good presentation of the UFO case.

- For television and movies, the subject is in vogue because it can be dealt with as fiction, and there nothing checks the imagination of the producers. The bizarre fashion adopted by Channel +, a French television station] for its "*Nuit des Extraterrestres* [*Extraterrestrials Night*]" does not prompt one to take this subject seriously. However, tribute should be paid to several serious and well-documented broadcasts, like that of "Arte" in March 1996.

#### **14.3 What Should Be Done?**

The future of our planet lies in space. Whether it be overpopulation, a spirit of adventure, the search for other raw materials, a liking for conquest and colonization, or other, more or less altruistic, motivations, everything is pushing toward humankind's expansion. Will we one day be the extraterrestrials for other planets? When our probes orbit around more and more distant worlds and film them, what might hypothetical inhabitants think of them?

We must prepare ourselves for this prospect, and the media can help educate the masses.

A strengthened SEPRA could usefully dedicate its efforts to the training of journalists and could create a documentary site on the Internet.