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HOAX, OR CONSPIRACY?

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IT has always been the policy of this REVIEW to bring to the notice of its readers details of items which we have published, which have subsequently become suspect, or which have been shown to be false. Here — as so much time has elapsed since publication — are details of affairs which have fallen into one of those categories.

On February 8, 1966, the Spanish newspapers published a report sent to them by the CIFRA Agency to the effect that, at about 8.00 p.m. on the previous day, an orange-coloured flying saucer had landed briefly in the grounds of a house in the Madrid suburb of Aluche. Two witnesses testified to having seen the object, and an area of burnt ground was said to have been found at the site. One witness said his name was Vicente Ortuño, but the other would not at first reveal his name for fear of ridicule.

An account of the event was sent to FLYING SAUCER REVIEW by Antonio Ribera, who said that in its issue of February 16, 1966, the magazine *Porqué* carried an article by special correspondent J. L. Pimental who had located and interviewed the other witness, a Sr. José Luís Jordán. Antonio Ribera and his colleague Eugenio Danyans followed up the lead. Sr. Jordán wrote to them in great detail, and described the approach of a disc-shaped luminous object, its brief touchdown and departure. Sr. Jordán, an engineer, had been driving past the grounds of the house, and saw the quaintly-curved three-legged landing gear; he told also of markings)|(on the underside of the object which, as it rose “. . . vanished as though it had suddenly ‘gone out’ like a light.”

Antonio Ribera’s article “The Madrid Landing” was published in FSR Vol. 12, No. 3, May-June 1966.

One year and four months later, in the evening of June 1, 1967, another close approach of a disc-shaped object was claimed to have been observed, and photographed, by a witness who said that at the time he was taking photographs of his girl friend in an open space bordering the Extramadura Highway close by the housing estate of San José de Valderas. The photographer failed to reveal his identity, and left the negatives at a photographic laboratory for Sr. San Antonio, photographic reporter of *Informaciones*. It should be noted that for this incident Sr. José Luís Jordán, his appetite whetted by Aluche, had now turned investigator.

A second photographer, who stated that he had been standing near the young couple, also took some shots of the object, and sent two prints to Barcelona writer Marius Lleget, whose address had been given in a book on UFOs which he had published. This second photographer signed himself “Antonio Pardo” — roughly the equivalent of “Bill Brown” in English — but gave no address and proved untraceable.

Antonio Ribera and his colleague Rafael Farriols seemed to have been happy enough with their investigation to publish a book with the confident title *Un Caso Perfecto*; FSR carried an article on the case by Sr. Ribera in its issue for September-October 1969 (Vol. 15, No. 5). The prints of the photographs which accompanied the article were so enlarged that it could be seen that the grain structure had not been tampered with. The object was tilted in some of the pictures to show the)|(sign of 1966 with the addition of a cross bar to give some

resemblance to a symbol in the Cyrillic alphabet. A further point dealt with in the article was the alleged discovery of artifacts where another UFO was said to have landed at Santa Mónica. These consisted of a number of small sealed metal tubes, and the press evinced great interest when a circular letter was received by business people from a "Henri Dagousset", in which a reward of 18000 pesetas was offered for each tube sent to his secretary at a Madrid P.O.Box number. A part of a tube was recovered from a boy, at a small price, by none other than the elusive "Antonio Pardo" who sent it, and the plastic strip it contained, to Sr. Lleget, from whom it was forwarded to Srs. Ribera and Farriols. The strip had embossed on it a similar type of sign to that seen on the belly of the San José de Valderas saucer. The items were sent for analysis to the Spanish National Technical Institute for Aeronautics and Space, and the results were surprising to say the least: the metal was nickel of ". . . an extraordinarily high degree of purity, while the plastic strip was polyvinyl flouride, a type of plastic at that time not available commercially. . . and which, up to that time, had been manufactured only by the American firm Dupont Nemours."

"Was it an extraterrestrial craft?" asked Sr. Ribera. While he was not sure on that point, he reiterated that "the object 'was there' all right. . ."

With the benefit of hindsight it is easy to see that alarm bells should have been ringing about the photographs. There was another matter engaging our attention, however, and that was the matter of the UMMO documents which had been circulating for some years; indeed we had been "sitting on them" for a long time, and continued to do so for several years. The whole matter was very perplexing, but when the San José de Valderas photographs turned up one thing was paramountly obvious, and that was that the sign on the underbelly of the photographed object was of the same configuration as the "seal" to be found on the "authentic" UMMO documents which were being distributed around the globe.

After much heart-searching, FSR published a summary of the UMMO events and papers, by Antonio Ribera, with no outlandish claims being made (in all conscience the contents of the documents were sufficiently outlandish!). It is interesting to note that in one of his conclusions Sr. Ribera proposed a hypothesis that ". . . some unknown *terrestrial* agency is trying to discredit the whole business of 'flying saucers' and 'extraterrestrials' and is launching this complicated manoeuvre which, when the opportune moment comes, will be exposed, thus bringing the most fearful ridicule upon all those who have taken seriously the existence of 'Ummites'." He thereafter refers to the secret clause, 4a — which was uncovered by the late Dr. James E. McDonald — added to the recommendations of the Robertson Commission of January 1963, in which the CIA called for the debunking of saucer reports by the services.

The five-part UMMO article finally appeared in FSR Vol. 20, Nos. 4 & 5 (1974) and Vol. 21, Nos. 1, 2 & 3/4 (1975). In FSR Vol. 20, No. 5, Gordon Creighton made "A brief comment on the 'UMMO' affair" in which he pointed out that it had been claimed that ". . . it all began in France in 1950 when the 'Ummites' allegedly made

their first landing at a place near La Javie (Department of the Basses Alpes)." Apparently the French authorities were very concerned — as well as, over the years, some leading French researchers — and helicopters were used in a search for the lonely farmhouse where the interlopers allegedly had made their first base. The previous owners of the dilapidated farm were discovered living in great opulence in fine villas on the French Riviera, and were keeping their mouths shut like clams.

One was forced to concede that if UMMO were a hoax, then it must be a pretty massive undertaking.

In 1977 a bulletin put out by the Center for UFO Studies, edited by Mrs. Mimi Hynek, carried an analysis by Dr. Claude Poher of the San José de Valderas photographs, and of the UMMO documents, which latter, he stated, were part of a monstrous hoax — which according to our information at the time seemed to be something of a 'U-turn.'

Dr. Poher pointed out that 50% of the information in the UMMO documents is correct, while the rest is manifestly false; that the level of scientific knowledge required to create the documents. . . is about that of the first year of graduate study of the sciences; that there seems little probability that the affair could have been created by only one person. . . and that the background necessary for such a hoax, if it was a hoax, exceeds the capabilities of a private group. As for the San José de Valderas photographs, Dr. Poher had conducted a study on them over several months using the impressive facilities of the National Centre for Space Studies at Toulouse. He concluded ". . . that the photographs are a hoax, produced by using a small model of translucent plastic on which the insignia was drawn in ink. This model was suspended for the photographer by means of a very fine line, great care being taken not to let the 'fishing rod' appear on the negatives. This explains the normal line of sight. Dr. Poher felt highly suspicious of the part played by the "much-too-omnipresent Sr. Jordán," and states that ". . . the entire UMMO affair is tied up with these sightings [Aluche and San José de Valderas photographs] and all of it collapses altogether."

Dr. Poher's findings on the photographs were confirmed by a further report in the bulletin under the signatures of William Spaulding (Director of Ground Saucer Watch, Western Division) and Fred Adrian (photographic consultant GSW) who performed a computer photographic analysis of the San José de Valderas photographs. Among their conclusions we read that ". . . the object measures less than eight inches in diameter; the camera was positioned 'low' on the ground to give the illusion of 'object' height and distance; edge enhancement revealed a linear structure representing a definite supporting thread above the unidentified object.

Unfortunately the picture reproductions in the bulletin which accompany Bill Spaulding's analysis do not lend themselves to further reproduction in FSR. In the circumstances, as FSR had published the photographs long before the Center for UFO Studies existed, and as Mr. Spaulding had already had an article on his computer experiments published in our journal, we expected the analyses would be sent to us in due course: they were not. As time passed, publication of even these basic details was put aside and overlooked in face of other problems.

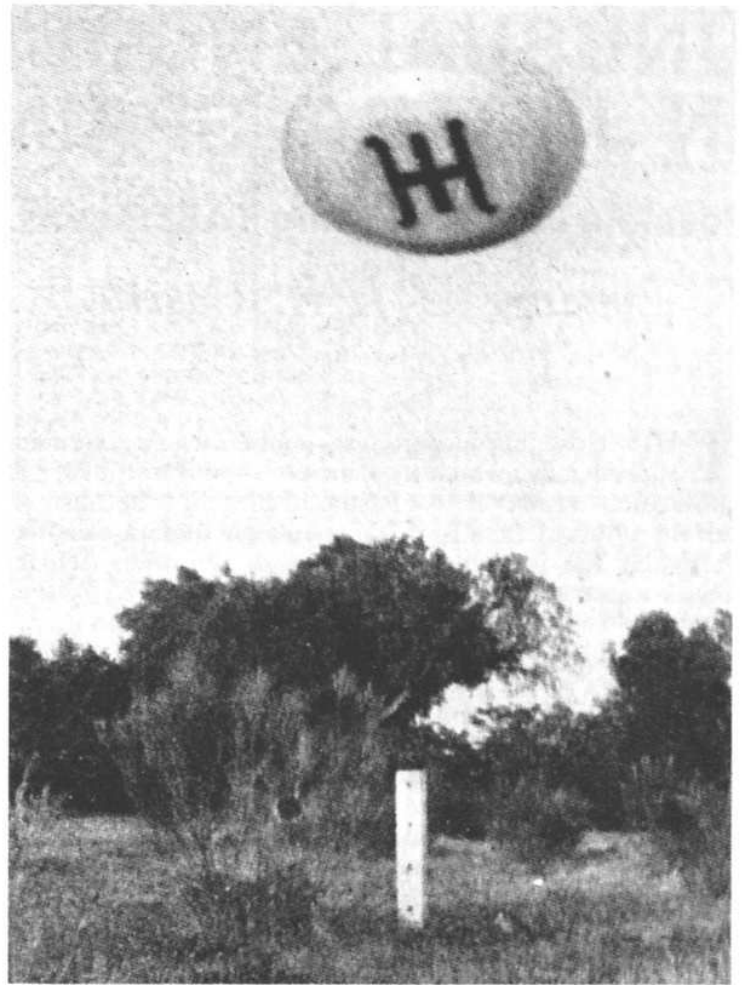
We accept then that the San José de Valderas photo-

graphs were the result of an elaborate hoax, and that there *may* have been some tie-up between them and the Aluche sighting. However, we cannot agree that the UMMO house of cards comes tumbling down because of the faked photographs. The alleged connection between the photographs and the UMMO affair is the symbol — which some say is like a letter in the Cyrillic alphabet. But UMMO documents were in circulation long before the appearance of the faked photographs, and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the hoaxer could have got the idea for the symbol painted on the underbelly of his model from the “seal” on an UMMO document.

As for the statements contained in the UMMO documents, the quality of most of these seem to be about par for the contactee message course. So who could have been involved in an undertaking of the size of UMMO? Could it have been a terrestrial agency bent on bringing ufology into disrepute? Could it have been such a conspiracy? Reading between Dr. Poher's lines (“...background necessary for such a hoax, *if it was a hoax,** exceeds the capabilities of a private group”) we suspect that either he may have learned something about some covert official involvement, or that he was tired of the affair and wished to have done with it. Antonio Ribera's hints about the CIA were quite open and, despite that Agency's protests that it had closed its UFO files in 1952, papers revealing its continued interest in the subject were recently winkled out of it by William Spaulding and his Ground Saucer Watch in a Freedom of Information lawsuit.

So was there a debunking conspiracy? If it was engineered by some terrestrial agency then it misfired, for the UMMO process “ground exceeding slow” and, as far as we can tell, the ridicule didn't result in nation-wide rib-splitting mirth in Spain, let alone in the rest of the world.

*Editor's emphasis; Dr. Poher adopts a different stance here from that of a few paragraphs earlier in the Bulletin article, when he made the bald statement that the whole thing was a “monstrous hoax.”



One of the San José de Valderas hoax photographs.

As far as we can see it seems unlikely that any terrestrial agency was involved.

Which leaves us wondering whether or not the stimulus for the wretched UMMO business may have come from something else. Something with a vested interest in sowing confusion among the ranks of those caught up in the UFO mystery.

PRICE INCREASE

Inflation, which to us means increases in the cost of printing, paper and envelopes, postage, telephone charges and so on, has forced on us another increase in the price of *Flying Saucer Review*.

With effect from this issue the cover price will be £1.00, and the subscription £5.70 per annum. The prices of back numbers have also been adjusted.

This, and the continuing rise in the rate of exchange of the pound against the US dollar means a further revision in the dollar price. This will now be US\$2.45 per copy, with a subscription rate of US\$14.00. While these figures are calculated to cover banks' exchange commission on personal cheques, readers in the United States, and indeed in all countries overseas, are still recommended to remit the above-stated British Sterling amount by bank draft or money order, which means the subscriber doesn't pay more than he or she needs to pay, and we receive the correct amount.

UNUSUAL ENCOUNTER IN JARABA, SPAIN

Possible CE III involving TASTE sensation by the witness

F. Louange & J. L. Casero

THIS close encounter case could only be studied superficially, which in principle should not justify a publication. However, we hasten to present it because of certain unusual details in the witness's report, and in particular the involvement of a *Taste* sensation, which makes it potentially interesting for research.

The witness

This is a man around fifty, in the public eye, presently assuming official functions in Spain, who was pursued for his leftist ideology during the past regime. He had only mentioned his experience to one very intimate friend, having no interest in making it known in his professional entourage. It happened that this friend was also a friend of the co-author, J. L. Casero, and that during a conversation between the latter two on ufological research, this case of "close encounter of the third kind" was mentioned. It took the authors several months of patience, of phone calls through the common friend, as well as a long reassuring letter, to obtain from the witness a telephone interview, during which J. L. Casero could take note of the sequence of events.

Later, after new approaches, a short meeting was organized between the witness and J. L. Casero in a madrilenian bar. There, they re-read together, corrected and completed the written notes taken during the telephone interview. The witness drew a few sketches, but refused to give them away, so that nothing from his hand would remain from this first and last meeting; J. L. Casero had therefore to copy the sketches in the bar.

These details — which sound like an espionage novel — are only reported here in order to show to what extent the witness was little inclined to talk about his experience, accepting only under his friend's insistence. They explain why, now, the expectation of any additional cooperation can be excluded. On the other hand, the witness's personality and behaviour plead in favour of a high credibility.

The following report reflects all bits of information provided by the witness, without additions or deletions.

The experience

It took place around mid-October 1978 in Jaraba (province of Zaragoza, Spain) in the "Camino de la Hoz Seca," near "Pena Palomera," at the entrance of a canyon. Around 7 or 8 a.m., the witness was on his way to photograph nests of "Milopas" (a variety of eagles) with his *Canon* camera equipped with a 200 mm objective and

Dr. Louange, a French scientist, is computer manager at the satellite tracking station of the European Space Agency operating near Madrid from whence "... the IUE satellite is controlled, a telescope in geosynchronous orbit manoeuvred from the ground which down-links images representing ultraviolet spectra." J. L. Casero works for a Spanish company which is under contract to ESA, and he is head of the photo lab which is part of the computer division headed by Dr. Louange.

EDITOR

loaded with Kodachrome film. The continuous cawing of crows could be heard. Suddenly, all became silent. He goes on walking, then positions himself between fences near a post for rabbit hunters. He mounts his camera with the teleobjective on the tripod, and focuses on the supposed nest. Surprised by reflections in the view finder, he looks around himself but does not notice anything abnormal. He then starts to hear a weak buzzing ("fusssss") which disappears suddenly, and turns once more to focus his camera.

After a while, he feels uneasy, with an impression of "metallic teeth" and the hair at the nape of his neck stands on end. The camera and his watch seem warm. He turns around and sees, at a distance of around 20 metres, a seemingly ovoidal object surrounded by small "antennas," for which he estimates a diameter of 5 metres by comparison with a *Dodge* (see fig. 1). There

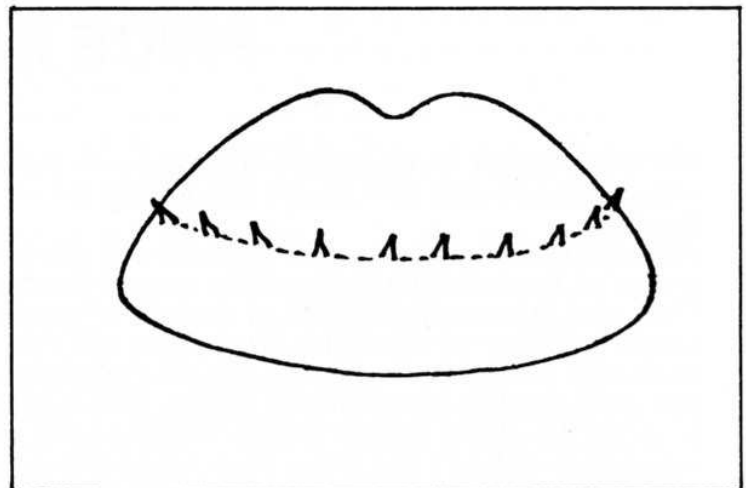


Figure 1: The object on the ground.