

AN "ARMY OF HUMANOIDS" STATED TO HAVE LANDED IN SPAIN

Ignacio Darnaude

Translated from the Spanish by Gordon Creighton

THE scene of this extraordinary case is a farm known as *Los Lunarejos* and owned by Lt. General Gabriel Tassara Buiza. It lies about two kilometres from the town of Aznalcóllar, and about 40 km. from Sevilla, Capital of the State of the same name in Southern Spain. A region of high-quality soil, it produces cereals and spring crops. There are many artesian wells upon it, and it is also watered by the small river known as el arroyo del Pilar Viejo. Not far distant, at Aznalcóllar, are the world's largest deposits of iron pyrites, now being exploited by the firm of Andaluza de Piritas S.A., but there is a certain lack of minerals in the land of the *Los Lunarejos* farm.

At the time of the episode the field in question was planted with a crop of melons, owned jointly by the proprietor and two brothers named Pérez Miranda, nicknamed "Los Chicharos."¹

As regards the precise date of the episode, we have not yet managed to establish this. It was in September 1971, so much is certain, and most probably on the 11th, 12th or 13th day of that month, as it seems that the local population were engaged in festive celebrations at the time, and the regular dates for the local saint's day festivities (*romería*) are those three days.

The eyewitness, Juan Rodríguez Domínguez, better known in Aznalcóllar by the nickname of "Juan el de la Palmareña," is 82 years old, and lives with his only son, who is married, in the calle Martín Ruiz. He is a former miner and stone-quarry worker, but for some years past he has been employed as an agricultural day-labourer. We ourselves know him well, as it so happens that, about fifteen years ago, he worked for us as a shepherd. He is an excellent worker, reliable and thorough, who likes everything to be straight-forward and properly ordered. He likes to hum the *flamenco* airs, and he is extraordinarily fond of hunting and of his beloved shotgun. He is illiterate, with only the most rudimentary of intellectual capacities, and the neighbours will assure you, with a touch of malice, that he is "as dumb as a heap of wheat on the threshing-floor."

He is a shy, solitary type of old fellow, who has few social dealings with anyone, and known to be quite bad-tempered. We will wager our own right hand that he is totally incapable of inventing a story so sophisticated as the one he told us, a story so completely alien to the narrow sphere of his daily life.

In September 1971, old Juan was giving a helping hand with the melon crop of the Chicharo brothers, and he was staying there in a hut on the farm at nights, in order to act as nightwatchman.

On the night in question, the two brothers, Antonio and Felipe ("*los Chicharos*") were sitting enjoying the evening air at the entrance to the bar known as *El Letra*, on the outskirts of Aznalcóllar and beside the road which leads into town from the *Los Lunarejos* farm. Suddenly they were amazed to see old Juan, who appeared before them, "all shaken up and a-sweating like a duck," as the Spanish peasants say, with a handkerchief round his neck, a slice of bread in his hand, and in a lather of great excitement. The conversation between the Chicharo brothers and old Juan ran more or less as follows:—

Q: "What's the matter, Juan? Has someone been pinching the melons?"

A: "No. It's just that I'm looking for you! A huge great thing landed out there, as big as a *Pegasus* bus.³ And people started coming down out of it, and they shone a light on me, and I just came here stumbling across the fields..."

Q: "What's that you say? Why, you just took scared. You've been sleeping, and then woken up sudden, and you saw the lights of the tractor of old Don Juan,⁴ or maybe you saw the stubble being burnt off over there on the hill at Cerro el Be!"

A: "No, I tell you. It wasn't that! What I saw were like the *Viajero*.⁵ And they put down a party of 'em. And they shone the light in my eyes. I saw the men. I saw 'em, walking about on the ground!"

To all this the reaction of the Chicharo brothers was naturally one of total incredulity. They thought old Juan had been dreaming, or had been hallucinated, or maybe he was going senile, or possibly simply he was going out of his mind. Not the slightest degree of curiosity did they feel; not the slightest apprehension that perhaps somebody might be stealing their melon crop. And at that late hour they certainly had not the faintest intention of going to the field and checking up on old Juan la Palmareña's crazy talk.

Subsequently, when the story had become known around the town, nobody else paid any heed to old Juan either, and nobody took the trouble to verify his extraordinary tale.

The details of the case

It was still daylight, and just before nightfall. Old Juan de la Palmarena was in his little hut out on the melon-field. At a distance of some 350 meters from the hut, and close to the stream, was one of the artesian wells. It was a fairly deep one, about 60 cms. in diameter, fitted with a steel pipe, and it was used for irrigating the field. (Actually the well had been yielding little water of late, and so the steel pipe had been removed and put into another well that was giving a better yield. Consequently all that there was at the time in question at that spot was the old well-hole, now filled with mud.) Not far from the well there was a natural hollow⁶ in the field. The well itself was on a fairly high part of the field, so that from it one had a good view around over the property.

Old Juan was busily humming one of his tunes when he suddenly saw a great machine touch down close by the well, and from it he saw a number of "persons" descending. Their number was indeterminate. But they were *very numerous*, as old Juan tells us. Maybe over fifty.

In stature and appearance they were "normal," and apparently they presented no special distinguishing features. They were all wearing blue "uniforms," and wore no hats or helmets. They were advancing in formation. Possibly on account of their "uniforms," and on account of his own memories of bygone days in the Spanish Army, he has never spoken of them other than as "soldiers." Indeed, he calls them "The Force."

By now they were heading for the artesian well, and shortly after that he lost sight of most of them, from which we can assume that they had gone down into the depression in the field, the bottom of which depression could not be seen from the site of the artesian well. Five or six of their "chiefs" (as he called them) had remained behind however on one of the slopes, and were looking towards him. These "chiefs" got out something which he said looked like a lamp, and shone its light into the old watchman's eyes. Juan thereupon took refuge from the troublesome light by hiding behind the well. But when he ventured to show himself again, the "chiefs" shone the "lantern" on him once more.

By this time it was quite dark, and, from the way things were going, old Juan, thoroughly scared, felt that he had better betake himself into the town. So, stumbling and falling, he set off through the darkness. Two of the "chiefs" followed him with their "lantern" until he was very near to the outskirts of Aznalcóllar, where he finally arrived as described in a thoroughly dishevelled and wrought up state, and his story about the "regiment of men who had landed" was of course simply taken as a sign that he was mad.

Old Juan knows not a thing about extraterrestrials, and he has admitted to us, in private, that he thought it must all be "some secret military operation that was being hatched up; some ambush, or some political plot against the Government."

The following days

On the days following upon his experience, old

Juan kept returning time and again to the scene of the landing, and, everytime he did so, he came back saying: "Let them who want to go and look at the marks they've left!"

Though it seems incredible, neither the Chicharo brothers nor anybody else took the trouble to walk that brief distance of a few metres which separates the melon field from the well and see for themselves the marks on the ground about which old Juan was constantly talking. Not a soul took him seriously. Indeed, on the contrary. They started making fun of him, and trying to make him change his mind about what he had seen. But they soon had to desist from this, by reason of old Juan's extreme irritability. For he went so far as to draw his knife on them when they mocked and opposed him and tried to convince him that he had seen nothing at all.

All the time, however, old Juan was now scared. And he constantly kept his shotgun close at hand. Things reached such a point that finally, fearing he might "drill a hole in somebody," the Chicharo brothers decided to take away his cartridges.

As regards the question of the Spanish Authorities, old Juan told his story, "informally and unofficially," to the Guardia Civil personnel who were on duty at the barracks nearby, but they too thought that he "had a screw loose," and they too shrugged their shoulders. No official statement was drawn up by them for him to sign.

The Investigation

Shortly after that, during the gathering of the olive crop in September, 1971, we saw the Chicharo brothers daily, but they said nothing to us about the affair. Nor did any of the other workers mention it, which is further proof of how little heed had been paid to the "tale" told by old Juan de la Palmarena.

The "first whiff" of the affair reached us only two-and-a-half years later, in the spring of 1974, during a night vigil which was held in Aznalcóllar. The first interview with the witness was conducted by Manuel Osuna and Felipe Laffitte, and the last-named has the taped recording of it.

Then, on April 19, 1974, Manuel Osuna and I went to the spot with old Juan and the latter's nephew. A few days later, we again went over the *Los Lunarejos* farm with Antonio el Chicharo, and took a statement from him. Then Pedro del Prado, the Justice of the Peace in Aznalcóllar, interrogated the other brother, Felipe el Chicharo, who made a statement which corroborates in all respects the declarations made by his brother Antonio.

Notes by translator

- 1 Sr. Ignacio Darnaude states that the Chicharo brothers enjoy a very good reputation locally as decent, honest folk.
- 2 Once again the witness is an aged rustic, which reminds us of the recent case of Ventura Maceiras in Argentina. (See the article by Pedro Romaniuk in FSR Vol. 19 No.4 (July/August 1973).)
- 3 This, as Sr. Darnaude explains, is the type of coach used on the local bus-service between Sevilla and Aznalcóllar.)
- 4 Sr. Juan Tassara, owner of an adjoining piece of land.