

EL LUGAR DE LOS HECHOS: Se trata de una finca rústica dedicada a cultivos cerealistas o de primavera, el cortijo "Los Lunarejos", propiedad del teniente general Gabriel Tassara Buiza, situada a unos dos kilómetros de la localidad de Aznalcóllar y a unos 40 km de Sevilla capital. Es una gran planicie de tierra agrícola de excelente calidad, con numerosos pozos artesianos, cruzada por el Arroyo del Pilar Viejo. El subsuelo carece de minerales, pese a la proximidad de los ricos yilones de Aznalcóllar (la mayor reserva de piritas del mundo), según nos ha manifestado Juan Manuel Turmo, ingeniero de Andaluza de Piritas S.A., empresa que explota los cercanos yacimientos del Banco Central. En aquella época este haza se encontraba sembrada de melones, en régimen de aparcería con los hermanos Pérez Miranda, de sobrenombre "Los Chicharos", gente sobradamente conocida en Aznalcóllar por su seriedad y solvencia moral.

FECHA DEL SUCESO: No ha podido ser determinada con precisión. Ocurrió en Septiembre de 1.971, probablemente entre los días 11, 12 y 13, ya que al parecer el pueblo estaba en fiestas y éstos son los tres días de la Romería local.

EL PROTAGONISTA: Juan Rodríguez Domínguez, más conocido en Aznalcóllar por "Juan el de la Palmareña", de 82 años, vive con su único hijo casado, en la calle Martín Ruiz, junto al cuartel de la Guardia Civil. Antiguo minero y peón de cantera, desde hace años vive "de lo que sale" como bracero agrícola. Lo conocemos bien porque casualmente hace unos quince años trabajó con nosotros como pastor de ovejas. Es un buen trabajador, serio y cumplidor, poco amante de los llos. Suele canturrear flamenco, y es extraordinariamente aficionado a la cacería, su novia no es la guitarra como cantaba su admirado Manolo Caracol, sino la escopeta. Es un operario iletrado, con escasas facultades intelectuales, sus paisanos aseguran con sorna que es "bruto como esa parva de trigo". Es un hombre arisco y solitario, con pocas relaciones sociales, con bastante mal genio, "cuando se cabrea es capaz de pegarle una hostia a Dios". Nos jugamos la mano derecha a que está absolutamente incapacitado para inventarse una historia tan sofisticada como la que ha contado, tan fuera del angosto recinto de su experiencia cotidiana. En Septiembre de 1.971 prestaba servicios auxiliares en el melonar cultivado por los Chicharos, y solía quedarse como guarda nocturno en un chozo de "Los Lunarejos". Aunque le gusta poco el pueblo, la noche que quería dormir en Aznalcóllar.

PRIMERA NOTICIA: Aquella noche hacia las diez los aparceros y compañeros Jaena de Juan Palmareña, Antonio el Chicharo (vive en la calle Lepanto nº 3) y su hermano Felipe, se encontraban tomando el fresco en la puerta del bar "El Letra", a la entrada del pueblo viniendo desde "Los Lunarejos". De pronto se quedaron estupefactos contemplando a Juan, que "venía destrozao, sudando como un patito, con un pañuelo amarrado al pescuezo y un cacho de palo en la mano", en un estado de gran excitación y nerviosismo. La conversación entre ellos se desarrolló más o menos en los siguientes términos:

- "¿Qué coño pasa, Juan?. ¿Han robao los melones quizás?".
- "Na. Aquí vengo a buscarlos. Allí se ha apossao una cosa mu grande como un Pegaso (el autobús de línea Sevilla-Aznalcóllar), se ha empezao a bajar gente, me han hecho así con una linterna y me he tenido que veni pacá por esos cerros pegando tumbos".
- "Anda ya. ¿Qué estás diciendo?. Tú lo que estás es cagao. Estabas dormio, te has despertao y has visto los faros del tractor de D. Juan (Don Juan Tassara, un propietario vecino) o rastros ardiendo en el Cerro el Be (promontorio que se divisa a lo lejos desde "Los Lunarejos")".
- "¡Que no, coño!. Era como el Viajero (el autocar Pegaso), se ha abajao una fuerza y me echaban la luz en los ojos. Vi yo los hombres en el suelo."

La reacción de los Chicharos fue de total incredulidad. Creyeron que había tenido un sueño o alucinación, que estaba chocheando o se había vuelto loco. Ni siquiera les picó la curiosidad o el temor de que alguien estuviera robándoles la cosecha de melones, y a aquellas horas de la noche no estaban dispuestos a acercarse a la plantación a comprobar "las tontás" que decía Juan. Posteriormente, cuando se esparció la noticia por el pueblo, la gente "no le echó cuenta" a Juan, y nadie se tomó la molestia de verificar su extraño relato.

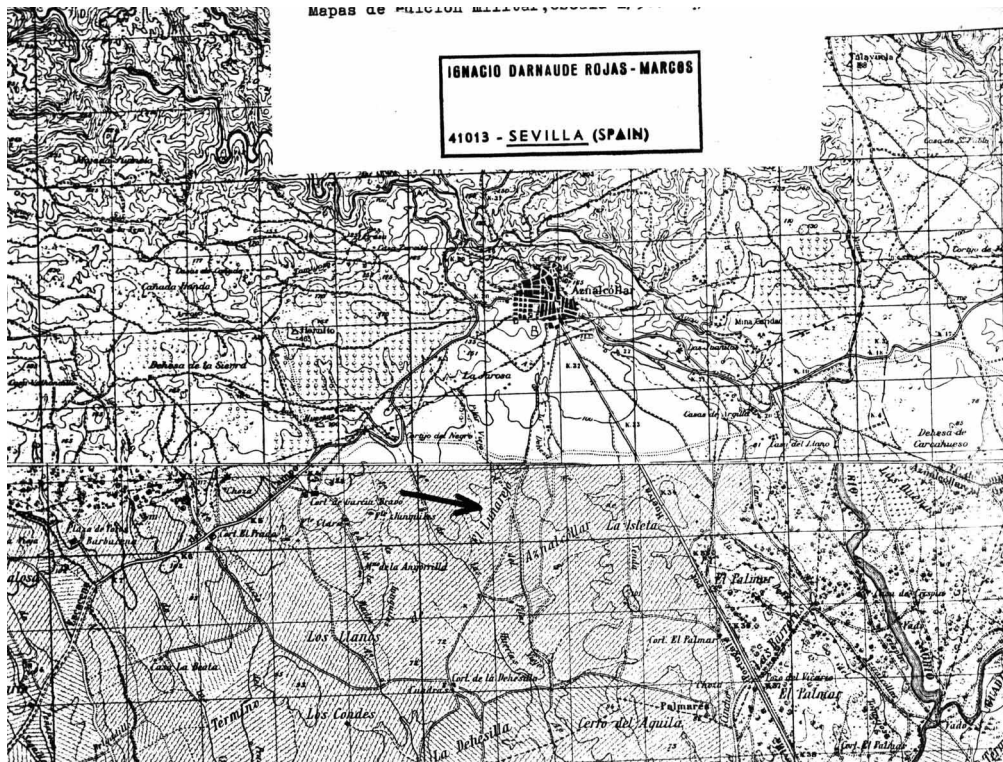
melonar, preparándose para pasar la noche. A unos 550 metros del chozo, en las inmediaciones del Arroyo del Pilar Viejo, estaba uno de los pozos artesianos de "Los Lunarejos", bastante profundo, de unos 60 centímetros de diámetro, entubado verticalmente con una conducción de acero, utilizado para el riego de la finca. (La escasa producción de agua motivó que después le extrajeran el tubo para aplicarlo en otro pozo más caudaloso, y en la actualidad no existe más que la antigua cavidad rellena de fango). Adyacente al pozo había una hondonada natural a la que él mismo y los Chicharos llamaban "La Alberca". El chozo ocupaba una posición elevada, y desde él se divisaba una gran extensión de terreno.

Juan estaba canturreando cuando de repente vio cómo en las proximidades del pozo tomaba tierra un gran aparato, del cual descendió un número indeterminado de "personas", **MUY NUMEROSO**, por lo que cuenta Juan quizás superior a 50 individuos. Su estatura y aspecto eran "normales", sin nada especial que aparentemente los distinguiera. Vestían "uniforme" azul, sin casco ni sombrero. Avanzaban en formación, en fila, y no hablaban ni hacían gestos entre sí. Quizás por lo del uniforme y por su vieja experiencia en el servicio militar el testigo siempre se ha referido a ellos como soldados, los llama "la fuerza". Los "militares" se dirigieron hacia el pozo artesiano, y poco después Palmareña perdió de vista a la mayoría de ellos, por lo cual es de suponer que habían descendido a "La Alberca", cuyo fondo no podía verse desde el chozo. Cinco o seis "Jefes" (literal) se quedaron fuera en un ribazo, mirando hacia Juan. Los "Jefes" sacaron algo parecido a una linterna, cuya luz estuvieron proyectando hacia los ojos del guarda. Juan se ocultaba detrás del chozo para evitar el molesto rayo, pero, cuando otra vez se asomaba, de nuevo los "Jefes" volvían a enfocarlos con la "linterna".

A todo esto era ya de noche, y Juan comprendió asustado que tenía que volver a Aznalcóllar en vista del cariz que tomaban las cosas. Tropezándose y cayéndose en la oscuridad emprendió el camino del pueblo. Dos de los "Jefes" lo siguieron con la linterna hasta muy cerca del casco urbano, donde llegó "descompuesto" contando lo del "regimiento" y fue tomado por loco. El Palmareña no sabe nada de extraterrestres, y en la intimidad ha confesado que creyó se trataba de alguna operación militar secreta, que "estaban tramando algo, un atraco o un complot político contra el Régimen".

LAS JORNADAS POSTERIORES: En los días siguientes Juan el de la Palmareña solía recorrer la zona del aterrizaje, y volvía asegurando: "El que quiere que vaya allí y vea los rastros que han dejado". Aunque parezca increíble, ni los Chicharos ni ningún otro se molestaron en recorrer los escasos metros que separaban el melonar del pozo artesiano para comprobar las huellas en el terreno a las que continuamente se refería su compañero. No lo tomaron en serio, y por el contrario empezaron a darle bromas llevándole la contraria sobre lo que había visto. Tuvieron que cambiar su actitud, dada la extrema irritabilidad del Palmareña, que llegó incluso a sacar la navaja cuando le contradecían y se reían diciendo que no había visto nada. Tenía miedo, y no se separaba de la escopeta, a tal punto que los Chicharos, temiendo "que pudiese sacudirle a alguien", optaron por quitarle los cartuchos. De manera informal y extraoficial Juan relató los hechos al Guardia Civil de turno en el vecino cuartel, y una vez más las fuerzas de seguridad volvieron a enojar a los hombres pensando que estaba chiflado, sin formalizar un atestado oficial.

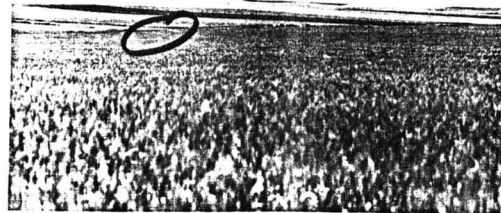
LA INVESTIGACION DEL SUCESO: Pocos días después, durante la recolección de la aceituna de verdeo en Septiembre de 1.971, veíamos a diario a los Chicharos, pero no nos contaron nada, ni se corrió la voz en la cuadrilla de trabajadores, señal de que no habían dado importancia alguna al "cuento" de Palmareña. La "primera onda" de lo ocurrido nos llegó dos años y medio más tarde, en la primavera de 1.974, durante un velatorio nocturno que tuvo lugar en Aznalcóllar. La primera entrevista con el testigo único fue llevada a cabo por Manuel Osuna y Felipe Laffitte, y éste último conserva la cinta magnetofónica de la misma. El 19 de Abril de 1.974 Manuel Osuna y el autor de estas líneas fuimos al lugar de los hechos en compañía de Juan el de la Palmareña y su nieto. Unos días después volvimos a recorrer "Los Lunarejos" con Antonio el Chicharo, tomándole declaración. Posteriormente el Juez de Paz de Aznalcóllar, Pedro del Prado, interrogó a Felipe el Chicharo, que coincidió en todas sus afirmaciones con su hermano Antonio. Sevilla, a 23 de Julio de 1.974



Antonio el Chicharo en el emplazamiento del chozo.



El área del pozo artesiano, desde el lugar donde estuvo el chozo del melonar.



El pueblo visto desde el chozo.



La zona del chozo, vista desde el pozo artesiano.



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

Ignacio Darnaude

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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 (*coferías*) 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 Bel!"

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 hollow 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 agin 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 Darnaudé 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. Darnaudé 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.