

THE ATTITUDE OF THE SPANISH AUTHORITIES TOWARDS THE UFOS

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(Translation from Spanish)

Over the course of the years, we have been collecting material regarding the statements, publications, and lines of conduct of our national authorities as regards the Unidentified Flying Objects, and recently we have gone more and more deeply into this. In fact, one of the Authors (J. Plana Crivillén) has been specializing, within the orbit of his ufological activities, in developing his contacts with Spanish officialdom regarding this question. These contacts have involved virtually all the military and police establishments of the country, the result being a voluminous correspondence of great documentary value.

We have thought that the preparation of a chronicle of official Spanish attitudes concerning the UFOs would be a contribution of unquestionable historical value, and the present work is the material fruit of such motivation on our part and we hope that readers will find it of interest. Out of all the information that we have gathered, we shall highlight successively the various "landmarks" or moments of greatest significance, over the past eighteen years, as referred to in the Government material.

In this way, for the first time, the real situation of the UFO theme at the official level in Spain will be documented, to the benefit of students and historians. — THE AUTHORS

Chronology

March 16, 1968. First public communication by an official Spanish organ concerning the UFO problem. Issued by the Air Ministry (Ministerio del Aire) it is disseminated via most of the newspapers. It states that a Fokker aircraft of the SPANTAX COMPANY, on a flight from Las Palmas to Vilacisneros, had been followed on both trips, there and back, by an unknown light "without any abnormality being caused at any moment in the flight, or the slightest alarm aboard the aircraft". (Newspaper *La Vanguardia Española*, 17/3/1968.¹)

May 4, 1968. In connection with the UFO investigation by the University of Colorado, the latter also carries out an international enquiry, and the American Embassy in Madrid sends the following text to the State Department in Washington: "Official Spanish sources inform us that no studies on UFOs are being carried on in Spain." (Aerogram A-650, document 4-6540650-68. *Mundo Desconocido*, No. 35, May 1979.)

June 1968. Spanish Air Force Captain Pedro Antonio Clavero Fernández publishes a lengthy article entitled "UFOs" in a magazine put out by the Air Force, in which he outlines the history of the phenomenon, together with statistics, cases, hypotheses, notions of Astronomy, etc, showing the interest that the Air Ministry takes in the subject of UFOs. (*Revista de Aeronáutica y Astronáutica*, No. 331, June 1968.)

September 6, 1968. The press office of the Air Ministry states, in an informative note put out through numer-

ous newspapers, that the strange object observed the previous day in the sky over Madrid could be "a sonde balloon for the study of the lower atmosphere", and that it had been picked up by two military radar posts as well as being seen by the pilots of two fighter aircraft who were taking part in an air exercise. (*La Vanguardia Española*, September 9, 1968.)

December 5, 1968. A communication is put out by the press office of the Air Ministry, informing any possible eyewitnesses of UFOs as to how to proceed in such sightings, and this was published in virtually every Spanish national newspaper. Basically, eyewitnesses are requested to communicate their sightings to the nearest Air Force authorities. (*Communication* dated December 12, 1968.)

December 31, 1968. The Headquarters of the Air Force establishes procedural norms for the notification and investigation of UFO sightings in Spanish air-space, the same being issued to the various Air Force authorities. (*La Vanguardia Española*, October 19, 1977.)

October 21, 1970. The press office of the Air Ministry issues a communication warning the public of some calibration trials to be carried out at the satellite-tracking station at Robledo de Chavela (Madrid), which will involve an aircraft with a powerful light, in view of the fact that, on previous such occasions, certain people had taken the aeroplane for a UFO. (*Ya*, October 22, 1970.)

February 23, 1972. First (known) reply by the Police (Guardia Civil) regarding a UFO case. the Captain

commanding the Guardia Civil at Villamartín (Cádiz) informs the CEONI UFO Investigation Group (directed by V.J. Ballester-Olmos), that "on the basis of the information received, there are no reports of any supposed landing of a strange object at the place in question". (The reference is to an alleged landing at Puerto Serrano on September 22, 1968.) Subsequently, on his own initiative, he confirms the phenomenon that took place at Morón de la Frontera two years earlier.) (A.V.S. to C.E.O.N.I.)

January 1974. The procedural norms laid down by the Air Force Command on December 31, 1968 and governing the official attitude of the Air Force authorities in cases of UFO sightings are brought up to date. (*Boletín Oficial de las Cortes Generales*, Senate, No. 157, May 1985.)

January 8, 1975. The press office of the Third Air Region, located at Zaragoza, publishes a statement in which it is indicated that, "due investigations having been made, no proof has been found such as might indicate that UFOs have recently flown low over, and have landed on, the Las Bardenas Reales Firing Range in Navarre". The note states that the lights seen there at a low altitude on January 2 were due to "optical effects produced by the halo of the Moon and the light of the stars seen through the belt of mist covering the region". (Newspaper *ABC*, January 9, 1975.)

August 27, 1975. In statements made to a newspaper, Lt.-General Carlos Castro Cavero, Commander of the Canary Islands Air Force Region, says that "officially, my belief is that of the Ministry — however, in my private capacity, I believe that the UFOs exist, and that they are not of terrestrial origin ... The Air Ministry examines carefully every report received and studies it seriously, with a view to ascertaining how much truth there is in each one of them ... and, when the investigation has been completed, the Ministry issues an official report on it, explaining those phenomena that have been proved to be completely normal. But no report is issued on those that are still inexplicable". (Newspaper *Diario de Las Palmas*, August 28, 1975.)

October 20, 1976. Lt.-General Felipe Galarza, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, gives the journalist J.J. Benítez, on a private basis, twelve Air Force reports on UFOs from the Air Ministry Archives, these being subsequently reported by the journalist J.J. Benítez in newspapers, magazines and, finally, in the form of a book. (Book: *Documentos Oficiales del Gobierno Español — Official documents of the Spanish Government* — published by Plaza y Janés, Barcelona, 1977. Also *Mundo Desconocido*, No. 35, May 1979.)

February 25, 1977, and April 21, 1977. Enrique

Rousselet Delgado, head of the press office of the Air Ministry, and the Air Minister himself, Sr. Carlos Franco Iribarnegaray, deny categorically, in letters to Spanish Ufologists, having ever recognized officially the existence of the UFOs. (Enrique Rousselet Delgado and Carlos Franco Iribarnegaray to Luis Hernández Franch.)²

May 20, 1977. Air Force Comandante (Major) Antonio Munaiz Ferro-Sastre, Judge-Informant of the Canary Islands Air Force Region, tells the newspaper *Diario de las Palmas*, apropos of UFOs, that "of the cases analyzed by this Air Force Region only one measures up to the description of 'UFO', inasmuch as it was the only one that yielded a positive radar return. As regards the others, despite the intensity of the radar sweeps, no such contact resulted, so that they could only be considered as "UEF" — unidentified aerial phenomena. According to the Comandante, the one case classified as a "UFO" occurred on November 24, 1974, over the Canary Islands, adding that it "was not possible to verify its source or origin." (*Ya*, May 20, 1977.)

September 29, 1977. The newspapers in Valencia receive a notification from the Third Section of the Headquarters of the Third Air Force Region (Zaragoza), via the Civilian Government authorities and via the Provincial Office in Valencia of the Ministry of Culture, reminding the public of the statement of December 5, 1968 regarding the procedure for the reporting of UFO sightings. A virtually identical statement, bearing the signature of the Civil Governor of Barcelona, is also published in the *Boletín Oficial (Official Gazette)* of the Province of Valencia, and is subsequently also reproduced by the local press. (*Las Provincias*, October 21, 1977.) (*B.O.P.*, October 13, 1977.) (*La Vanguardia*, October 19, 1977.)

December 1978. A high-ranking Air Force General, acting in a confidential and personal fashion, gives the journalist J.J. Benítez two new Air Force reports on sightings of objects presumed to be UFOs. (*Cambio-16*, No. 372, January 21, 1979.)

March 3, 1979. The Joint Chiefs of Staff decide to treat matters relating to UFOs as "reserved material", in compliance with legislation at present in force. (*Boletín de las Cortes Generales*, Senate, No. 157, May 1985.)

March 14, 1979. According to sources in the General Headquarters of the Air Force in Madrid, the military authorities in the various Air Force Regions of Spain initiate a routine investigation whenever a UFO phenomenon is observed. When the investigation has been completed, and after they have gathered up all the testimonies and proofs considered necessary for arriving at a logical explanation of the matter, the

final report, together with the proofs, is sent to the Space Section of the Operations Department of the Headquarters of the Air Force, which then decides whether or not the conclusions reached in the investigation can or cannot be published, all such reports having in fact been kept classified until now. (*La Vanguardia*, March 15, 1979.)

April 3, August 10, and October 9, 1979. Lt.-Col. Jaime Aguilar Hornos and Colonel Emilio Dáneo Palacios, of the office of information, publicity, and public relations of the Air Force Headquarters in Madrid, in reply to requests for information made by various Spanish Ufologists, state that the subject of UFOs has been graded by the Joint Chiefs of Staff as classified material. (J.A.H. to *Mundo Desconocido* No. 35, May 1979, and to A.J. Ales and J. Madrid: *Alerta, OVNI, UVE*, Madrid, 1979. E.D.P. to Roberto de Jorge.)

May 14, 1979. Colonel Emilio Dáneo Palacios, head of the office of information, publicity, and public relations of the Air Force, informs the National Radio that, as regards objects seen in the Spanish skies, "in 98% of the cases the cause of the UFO phenomenon is discovered, and in approximately 2% no explanation is found". (*Pueblo*, May 15, 1979.)

November 14, 1979. The subject of UFOs being 'outside of his province', the Under-Secretary of State for Civil Aviation forwards to the Ministry of Defence the documentation relating to the presumed sighting of a UFO that caused a passenger liner of the TAE (Spanish Air Transport) Line to land at the Manises (Valencia) Airport during the night of November 11, 1979. The military authorities thereupon proceed to make their own official enquiry into the facts of the case. (*El País*, November 14, 1979.)

September 29, 1980. Parliamentary Deputy Enrique Múgica Herzog of the Socialist Group (Spanish Congress) tables three questions to the Government regarding (1) the type of machine that caused the TAE Company's *Caravelle* to make the emergency landing; (2) regarding the presence of three "unknowns" in Spanish air-space for a duration of more than four hours, and, (3) concerning the take-off of an Air Force *Mirage F-1* aircraft from the Los Llanos Base at Albacete in pursuit of the "unknown" objects in question. (*La Vanguardia*, September 30, 1980; *Mundo Desconocido*, No. 52, October 1980.)

November 10, 1980. General Andrés González de Suso, head of the office of information, publicity, and public relations in the Ministry of Defence, states that the subject of UFOs is still regarded by the Joint Chiefs of Staff as classified material, "inasmuch as the conditions and characteristics of the phenomenon suggest the advisability of such a policy". (General A.G.S. to J. Plana Crivillén.)

November 25, 1980. In connection with the sightings of what were presumed to be UFOs, by pilots of various commercial aircraft over Cataluña and the Mediterranean, the Joint Chiefs of Staff draw attention to the fact that the subject of UFOs is classified, due to the possibility that it might affect the national defence and security. (*La Vanguardia*, November 26, 1980.)

February 5 and November 16, 1982. Colonel Emilio Dáneo Palacios, head of the office of information, publicity, and public relations in the Air Force, states, in a reply to private requests for information, that "in 1979 the Joint Chiefs of Staff, by virtue of the authority vested in them by article 4 of the Official Secrets Act 48/78, declared that all information concerning to UFOs was classified" and that consequently, "so long as this classification remains in being, the Air Force is not authorized to issue official statements regarding any aspect of this question." (E.D.P. to J. Plana Crivillén, and to ASEDES.)³

November 4 and November 12, 1982, and February 1, 1983. Major Angel Luis Ruiz Yravedra, head of the press office of the Headquarters of the Police (*Guardia Civil*), replying to private requests for information, states that the Headquarters of the Guardia Civil has no information relating to UFOs at its disposal. (Major Yravedra to J. Plana Crivillén, and to ASEDES.)⁴

January 31, 1983. Replying to a letter from a Ufological group, the newly elected President of the Government, Sr. Felipe González, states that "at present the new Government has no plans in mind" for the launching of any commission dedicated to the study of UFOs. And he adds that the subject "seems to him to be an interesting one", and he asks the writer of the letter to contact the President of his Parliamentary Group in the Congress with a view to the latter's "studying the possibility of doing something at the parliamentary level". (President Felipe González to ADEFEX.)

April 7, 1983. Lt.-Commander Eduardo Montero Romero, head of the public relations office of the Admiral Commanding, Naval Headquarters, states that the latter "has no knowledge of any UFO case" involving ships of the Spanish Navy. (Lt.-Cmdr. E.M. Romero to J. Plana Crivillén.)⁵

April 7, 1983. Replying to a request for information, Lt.-General Emilio García-Conde Ceñal, Chief of the Air Force Staff, refers to "the total lack of any basis for judgement, on the part of many civilians, as to any classification or withholding of data by the Air Force in respect of UFO phenomena in Spanish air-space." (Lt.-General Ceñal to Andreas Faber-Kaiser, *Fuera de Control*, pub. by Planeta, Barcelona, 1984.)

May 2, 1983. Lt.-General José Luis Aramburu Topete, Chief of Police (*Guardia Civil*), replying to a request for information about UFOs, states that "there is no documentation on this matter in the archives of this Force, as it is the Air Force that looks after it." (Lt.-Gen. Aramburu Topete to Andreas Faber-Kaiser, *Fuera de Control*, pub. by Planeta, Barcelona, 1984.)

September 29, 1983. Replying to questions tabled by Congressional Deputy Gabriel Elorriaga (Popular Group), on July 19, 1983, the Spanish Government admits that on July 12, 1983, an unidentified flying object crossed through Spanish air-space, and puts forward as a possible explanation "that it was a meteorite that penetrated into the Earth's atmosphere and disintegrated, or that it was the remains of some man-made space vehicle which, going out of orbit, had re-entered the Earth's atmosphere." The statement goes on to say that "the Air Force keeps a record of all existing information relating to UFO sightings", and that "statistical material is being recorded and studied, although, at the present time, no definite conclusions have been reached either in Spain or in any other country." (Secretary of State for Liaison with Parliament and Legislative Co-ordination, Office of the President of the Republic.)

October 14, 1983, and September 25, 1984. General Andrés Cassinello Pérez, Chief of Staff to the Police Force Headquarters (*Guardia Civil*) supplies a report giving summaries of 25 presumed cases of UFO sightings received by the *Guardia Civil* since 1953. (General A.C. Pérez to Andreas Faber-Kaiser, *Fuera de Control*, pub. by Planeta, Barcelona, 1984, and to J. Plana de Crivellén.)

December 15, 1983. Roberto Dorado, Chief of the Presidential Cabinet, informs a UFO study group that "the interest of the Government" in the subject of UFOs "is based on reasons of Security and the need to guarantee the inviolability of Spanish airspace." (Roberto Dorado to ASEDES.)

September 28, 1984. Major Angel Luis Ruiz Yravedra, head of the press and public relations office of Police Headquarters (*Guardia Civil*), admits that he possesses information about the UFO phenomenon, but that it is "not precise and not sufficiently well verified to be able to give it to you", and indicates that the Police have no standardized procedure for dealing with reports of UFO sightings, as the reports do not usually go beyond the level of the various Provincial Police Headquarters. (Major A.L.R. Yravedra to J. Plana Crivillén.)⁶

May 10, 1985. Replying to questions from Senator F. Serrano Pino (Popular Group) concerning Govern-

ment control of the investigation of UFOs, the Spanish Government states that "already in December 1968, the staff of the Air Ministry, as it then was, published certain guidelines establishing the procedures to be followed and the steps to be taken, by the respective branches of the Army and of the Air Force, in cases of the possible appearance of UFOs in our air-space. These guidelines were brought up to date by the Air Ministry in January 1974, and are still in force." The statement finally goes on to say that "the investigation of and control of everything connected with UFOs is the task of the Ministry of Defence." (*Boletín Oficial de las Cortes Generales*, Senate, No. 157, May 1985.)⁷

May 23, 1985. Joaquín Ruiz-Jiménez, in a written reply, states that, having studied a complaint about the lack of public access to official records concerning UFOs, he "sees no reason for intervention by us". (Joaquín Ruiz-Jiménez to ASEDES.)

May 28, 1985. Replying to the request that the authorities permit the free consultation of the UFO reports kept in the Ministry, the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, Gustavo Suárez Pertierra, states that "the request has been studied by the Air Force Headquarters and by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and that it has been decided that the present grading of material relating to the UFO phenomenon as 'classified' shall be maintained." (Gustavo Suárez Pertierra to V.J. Ballester Olmos.)⁸

May 31, 1985. Apropos of the UFO phenomenon, Luis Reverter Gelabert, head of the general office of information and public relations of the Ministry of Defence, states that "when there is a sufficiently clear and sufficiently investigated report on the subject, it can be published. To publish it while the investigations are still going on could, however, lead to serious mistakes and cause the public to believe things of which there is no certainty; and it is better to be prudent before giving out a version that later may not prove to be correct." (Spanish National Radio, live.)

September 6 1985, and November 7, 1985. Major Fernando Rodríguez Suárez, head of the public relations section of the Army Staff, states that he has "personally made enquiries among various organizations dependent on the Army, in an attempt to ascertain whether any of them had among its duties the task of gathering and recording of UFO reports, but with completely unfruitful results, inasmuch as none of the bodies consulted holds any information on the subject in question". (Major F.R. Suárez to J. Plana Crivillén.)⁹

* * * * *

Conclusions

Herewith a summary of our conclusions derived from our work completed in December 1985, in documenting the attitude of the Spanish authorities to the UFO phenomenon:

1. The Spanish Air Force have been concerned with the subject since 1968. Specifically, it is the Air-Space Section of Operations Division of the Air Force (Ministry of Defence) which has the responsibility for collecting, analyzing, and keeping a statistical record of the UFO reports reaching them via official or private channels.
2. The reason why the subject of UFOs is today regarded as *classified* is due to the imprudence of a journalist who made commercial use of confidential reports given to him by a General. The Official Secrets Act (Law No. 48/1978 of October 7) provides that "all matters, actions, documents, reports, data, or objects, the knowledge of which by unauthorized persons might damage or place at risk the security and defence of the state, can be declared to be *classified material*". (B.U.E., October 11, 1978.)
3. Military aircraft, missiles, etc., of foreign powers occasionally enter Spanish air-space, sometimes surreptitiously, and are taken for UFOs. For the Government to identify publicly the true nature of craft producing this state of affairs would be tantamount to admitting that there has been a flagrant violation of the national air-space, and this implies something that is eluding control. In our opinion, this is the basic reason why the question of UFOs is retained under the present classification. Involved in it also are two other reasons, namely, firstly, the sensitive situation resulting from admitting that there are certain sightings for which the Air Force have no conventional explanation; and, finally, another reason of a logistical nature, namely that, in this fashion, the Ministry of Defence is able to avoid having to cope with what could be a mass of requests for information and for details of sightings, etc., such as the Ministry is probably quite unprepared to cope with.
4. Already since the Socialist Government came into office, both the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the Headquarters of the Air Force have confirmed this *classified* status for the subject of UFOs. This decision was given by them in response to com-

munications from one of the authors of this Report. (V.J. Ballester Olmos.)

5. The authors of the present Report are not seeking publication of those cases that affect the National Security. Nothing is further from our minds. We seek, as investigators and analysts of the UFO evidence (as to the nature of which we do not venture to prejudge, but which calls for the application to it of a strict scientific methodology) to be able to have access to those reports that involve no military or defensive implications, so that we may incorporate them into our present data banks and subject them to rigorous study. We are simply requesting the Ministry of Defence and the Government to reconsider their positions, and permit us, as students of this subject, to consult this material — *we refer strictly to the non-secret material* — to which end and purpose we suggest that the archive material in question should be consigned into the keeping of a scientific institution and not of a military one.

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FOOTNOTES numbered 1 to 9 in Authors' Manuscript.

Photostats of all these important official Spanish documents, which we are unable to reproduce here owing to lack of space, are on file with us at FSR. — G.C.

COMMENT BY EDITOR, FSR. This excellent report from our Spanish colleagues shows clearly that the situation in Spain — *tight Government control of all information about UFOs* — is *precisely the same as it is everywhere else*. We think, however, it is nonsensical to suggest that the existence of this censorship is in any way due to any indiscretions by journalists, and we doubt very much indeed whether there can be any such thing as "non-secret UFO material." Yes, "national defence" is involved, naturally, just as it is involved everywhere else in our world. But "national defence" (as between one terrestrial state and another) probably no longer has the slightest meaning, in the face of the massive phenomenon and threat posed by the UFOs. THIS IS WHAT THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE WORLD DARE NOT REVEAL TO THEIR PEOPLES, BECAUSE THEY KNOW THAT THEY ARE UTTERLY IMPOTENT. THEIR POLICY IS THEREFORE A TOTALLY WISE ONE. TO IMAGINE THAT GOVERNMENTS ARE GOING TO OPEN UP THEIR FILES IS CONSEQUENTLY A NICE LITTLE PIPE-DREAM! — G.C.

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A BRUTAL "TOUCH-DOWN" ...

Jean-Louis Forest (Toulon, France)

(Translation from French by M.B.-D.)

I give below a detailed account of a case which occurred one night in 1971 in the Département of Var in the extreme south of France and which has never been revealed before. The witness has requested that his name shall not be divulged, and I am respecting his wish. Each detail of the affair should however be studied carefully, having its own particular importance.

THE witness, a French technician, employed in the Arsenal of the French Navy at Toulon, was residing in Toulon with his parents, but made the trip several times weekly in his *Citroen D.S.* car to visit his fiancée, who was on a training course in Nice, and back again from Nice to Toulon.

He would finish work in Toulon at 5.15 p.m. and set out on once for Nice, arriving there at about 7.30 p.m. He would then depart from Nice at midnight, reaching Toulon at about 2.00 a.m., in order to be ready to start his work again at 7.00 a.m.

On one of these evenings, as he was returning from Nice, he was on R.N. (National Highway) No. 97, and driving out of the little town Puget-Ville and towards Cuers. In that place the road runs very near to the Cuers Military Airfield.

"The Orange Ball"

The time was about 1.30 a.m. He was listening to the *Paris-Inter* programme "Route de Nuit" on his car radio. Suddenly the radio began to crackle, and then it died. But his engine continued to run. He switched off the radio, thinking it was defective. After passing under a railway bridge of the SNCF just before entering a straight stretch of road which runs parallel with the Airfield, and about two kilometres from it as the crow flies, he perceived an orange ball in the air just in front of the bonnet of his car. His immediate thought was that it might be some night-exercise by the Air Force, and he drove on.

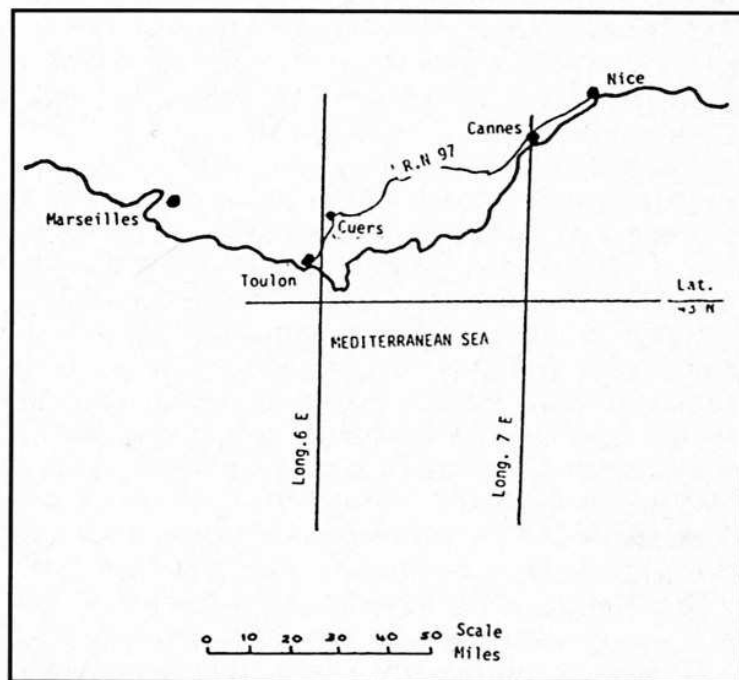
Then his engine started to misfire, and it seemed to him that the car was moving only very slowly now. In fact his speed had dropped considerably, and meanwhile the "orange ball" was growing bigger and bigger and had come, as he reckoned, to a distance of only about 50 metres ahead of him.

He was now frightened, still thinking that it might possibly be an aircraft in difficulty that was attempting to land on this very straight piece of road instead of one of the runways of the Military Airfield.

A "Bungled Delivery?"

Seized now with panic, he jammed on the brakes sharply, but they seemed not to be working at all, even after his engine had stopped. Nor was that all he had to worry about either, for he suddenly realised that he *was no longer on the road*.

In fact the "orange ball", now some 15-20 metres from him, was lighting up vividly the whole country-



side round about, including the interior of his car, with its powerful glow, and the road itself as well ... ah ... the road ... *but the road was below him! That is to say, he and his car were up in the air!*

At what height? He explained later that it was "about as though I was on the roof of a coach ..." There was total silence ... that huge orange light was there, just ahead of him, encompassing him and holding him. Then suddenly the orange light goes out, and the car falls back on to the road.

The night is pitch-dark. That's all.

The motorist is a bit "groggy", to use the English term. He gets out of the car to survey the damage.

The spare wheel (located under the bonnet) has come loose from its moorings, has thrown open the bonnet, and is lying on the road some metres ahead of the car.

The vehicle is standing at an angle to the centre of the road ... The driver's seat has collapsed, the back of the seat is twisted, and the car lies there well and truly "flattened" ... and other cars are arriving, for it is a much frequented major route.

Other cars stop, and he doesn't know what to say ... and nobody understands a thing. How, they are all wondering, can this car have got into such a state on this long, straight stretch of road running through vineyards and with no trees bordering it? Finally, one of the other motorists agrees to give him a tow, and