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Photo courtesy of Jacques Vainstain

## FRENCH MINISTER OF DEFENCE SPEAKS ON UFOs

For text of his broadcast see page 3

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NEWS from France is that work proceeds quietly on the collection of UFO reports and related data, and the channelling of this information from its sources to Dr. C. Poher at the Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales by way of the gendarmerie and the networks of well-established investigatory groups.

We know that in France, as in the rest of the world, they do not profess to understand the UFO phenomenon, but they no longer deny its reality, or grab at every chance to laugh at witnesses. There is in France, it seems, a welcome determination to get to grips with the problem and establish a true scientific study.

Something of the same nature is seen to be happening in the United States. According to our information, Dr. J. Allen Hynek's Center for UFO Studies is busily accruing funds, and is building up its organisation.

In the United Kingdom, so often, in the past, proud of its leadership in new thinking, the choice instead is to lag behind the times, for there seems to exist here a "will-not-to-think" about this subject. This we know to our cost, for, through many of its near 20 years of existence, *Flying Saucer Review* has endeavoured to give a lead in this subject, but although it has occasionally received encouragement from abroad, at home it is invariably a case of having to face up to calumny and ridicule, and the will-not-to-think.

That this negative attitude is officially encouraged is an open question, for it seems that it is an attitude which, for example, pervades the fields of television and radio broadcasting. It is to be expected that the broadcasters will have failed to have taken note of the recent splendid example of the French with their *Radio-Inter* series, and will continue to get hold of the wrong end of the stick, or to seek a merry diversion at the expense of the subject's lunatic fringe.

And the subtle propaganda against the subject will continue, as witness the *James Burke Special* programme broadcast by BBC-TV 1 on June 6, 1974. This was an interesting presentation in which Mr. Burke launched into a digest of the possibilities of the existence of other civilisations in our galaxy. Note however that at the outset he had set the seal on his purpose by asking his studio audience if any of them "believed there are UFOs." Some did, and one or two tried to explain why. So it came as no surprise that the pattern of the programme developed into a summary of the utter remoteness of the possibility that denizens of any of these postulated 10,000,000 civilisations would find us here on Earth, or that we would find them, let alone communicate with them (for example, the principles of the old Project Ozma idea were discussed). Mr. Burke demonstrated that it would be incredible if even *once a year* an exploring extraterrestrial spaceship were to locate us out here on our limb of the galaxy.

were to locate us out here on our limb of the galaxy.

Which all added up to a gentle debunk, in the nicest possible manner, of UFO reports and reporters, and of *believers* in UFOs. All this neatly instilled in the minds of millions of uncommitted viewers the idea that UFO reports are nonsense...except for the few who might have seen through the neat little deception. It is easy enough to debunk something if one works from an unbelievable premise. Mr. Burke introduced the assumption that UFOs are *spaceships* from distant advanced civilisations although, as astronomer Dr. Hynek has stated — and he should know, after serving for twenty years as Scientific Consultant on UFOs to the US Air Force investigatory projects — UFOs have never been recorded entering the Earth's atmosphere from outside. (Carefully ignored too was the possibility that, given that UFOs might be the product of very advanced distant civilisations, their controllers might well be privy to very advanced ways of getting here, or perhaps of projecting images of themselves and their craft into our presence, non-physically and maybe even with psychic overtones. But to have speculated along such lines, or to have suggested that UFOs may originate closer to home, would have

upset the desired debunking effect of an exercise which required the assumption that UFOs are spaceships, and that those spaceships operate within the confines of terrestrial "nuts and bolts" science of the 3rd quarter of the 20th Century.)

It comes as a welcome breath of fresh air to learn that in their nightly series of broadcasts in February and March of this year — referred to earlier in this article — the French laid before a large audience most of the known aspects of the UFOs. M. Robert Galley, the Minister of Defence, declared that there had been considerable official interest in UFO reports ever since 1954 — the year of the great wave.

Let us wish the French success in their good work, for over here we are falling farther and farther behind the times, with debunkers and fun-pokers still being given the large audiences. It remains for FSR, and a handful of others, to continue to record the reported facts from all over the world, and hope thereby to encourage in our country a rational study of the persistent and perplexing UFO problem. At least we can rest happy in the knowledge that our work is being used, and our words quoted, in other countries where they keep up with the times.

## REPORTING UFOs ON FILM

On Sunday, December 15, 1974, there will be a coast-to-coast TV broadcast in the United States, in which an hour-long serious documentary film on UFOs is to be featured. The film will be shown at 10.00 p.m. Eastern Time. The title has not been communicated at the time of going to press.

During his recent visit to the United Kingdom, Dr. J. Allen Hynek told me that he has been one of the advisers on the script, and that a number of recent cases are to be presented and discussed. Included among these are some which Ted Phillips and he, Dr. Hynek, have investigated. Mr. Phillips, a MUFON field investigator, will be remembered by readers for his contributions to FSR publications, and particularly his *Landing Report from Delphos*, which appeared in *FSR Case Histories*, Supplement 9 of February 1972.

Representatives of NICAP and APRO also appear in the film, and the theme is the "changing attitude of the public and scientists towards UFO reports."

Dr. Hynek also revealed that a second important documentary film, *UFOs, Past, Present and Future*, is being prepared to follow in the wake of the first film.

That is good news. It remains to be seen whether or not these films will get a showing in the United Kingdom. In France, and in the United States there does indeed appear to be a changed, or changing attitude on the subject. In Britain, however, it seems almost as though serious presentation and discussion of UFO reports in the press, or on TV and radio, is thwarted by something not unlike a "D-notice" situation. There is no gainsaying the fact that this country lags so far behind the times in these matters that the spirit of the fourth, and secret, "Debunk at every opportunity" recommendation of the American 1953 Robertson Committee\* (supported more recently by the conclusions of the late Dr. Edward U. Condon) still prevails.

CHARLES BOWEN

\* The existence of the fourth "debunking" clause was revealed when the Report, at the end of the statutory twelve year period, was de-classified. At that time the late Dr. James E. McDonald called at Project Blue Book's office to see the report; when, later, he asked to see it again, he was told that it had been re-classified.

# FRENCH MINISTER SPEAKS ON UFOs

Text of a radio interview given on February 21, 1974.

Translated by Gordon Creighton

THIS is a translation of a taped recording of an exclusive interview given by Monsieur Robert Galley, Ministre des Armées, to Jean-Claude Bourret, reporter of *France-Inter*, and broadcast on February 21, 1974, at 8.30 p.m., in one of the series of thirty-nine programmes devoted to UFO research by *France-Inter* between Monday, January 28, 1974, and Friday, March 22, 1974. Widely reported next day, with big headlines, in such newspapers as *France-Soir*, *Le Parisien Libéré*, *L'Aurore*, and *Le Figaro*, this important news item was apparently totally ignored by all the British media.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Jean-Claude Bourret:** "Monsieur le Ministre, you have granted to *France-Inter* an interview which will certainly be epoch-making, as I think it is the first time that a French Minister of Defence has agreed to talk about the UFO problem. Can you please tell us now whether you are in possession of information that will enable you to reply now to the listeners' questions — information which would otherwise be unknown to us?"

**Minister:** "I don't know if I can do that, because I have been engaged for a relatively limited time on this question, though it has always interested me. Consequently however I am not in a position to know all that has been said in the course of your transmissions, but I do know that certain people in the Ministry of Defence are following the series closely. My own profound belief is that it is necessary to adopt an extremely open-minded attitude towards these phenomena. Man has made a certain amount of progress by the fact that he has sought to explain the inexplicable. Now, as regards these aerial phenomena, these visual phenomena (I won't say more than that) which we have gathered together under the term of "UFO," it is certain that there are things that we don't understand and that are at present pretty well unexplained; I will indeed go so far as to say that it is an irrefutable fact that there are today things that are inexplicable, or poorly explained.

"In 1954 a department was set up in the Ministère des Armées (Ministry of Defence) for the purpose of collecting and studying eyewitness accounts of these apparitions of unidentified objects. I have read through a certain number of these eyewitness accounts (some fifty or so) covering the period up to 1970. One of the earliest of them is the account of the personal sightings, dated November 20, 1953, by Lieutenant Jean Demery of Air Force Base 107 at Villa-coublay. In addition there are reports by the gendarmerie. There are, too, other sighting reports from pilots, from the commanding

personnel of various Air Force centres, with quite a lot of details all of which agree in quite a disturbing manner — all in the course of the year 1954.

"I think therefore that the attitude of mind one must adopt towards these phenomena must remain an open one — that is to say, our attitude is not one of a *priori* denial. Our forefathers in past centuries denied all sorts of things that today appear completely elementary to us, for example such matters as piezo-electricity, say, or static electricity, not to mention a whole lot of phenomena to do with biology. In fact the whole development of science consists in the fact that at a certain point in time one realizes that, fifty years before, we knew nothing, we understood nothing, as regards the reality of certain phenomena."

**J-C.B:** Monsieur le Ministre, have there been cases in which *Mirage* aircraft have pursued UFOs over France?"

**Minister:** "I don't think actually in France, on the basis of the considerable number of reports that I have read through. But we have had a certain number of radar sightings. In particular, we had one radar sighting in Aquitaine in the 1950s. For ten minutes we were receiving a radar echo that was inexplicable at the time and remains inexplicable today. On the other hand there have been other radar echoes that were thought mysterious at the time and that have later been explained as what we call *brouillage*, that is to say, interference. All the same, when all is said and done there remains a small residue of radar sightings that remain totally unexplained. And there are similar phenomena reported in other countries. These are well known. They have had phenomena in the United States. And there is the recent phenomenon at Turin. But, to give a precise answer to your question, the number of UFO reports from French Air Force pilots is relatively modest compared with the situation we encounter in other countries. All the same there are even some that are classified."\*

**J-C.B:** "Are you in touch, Mr. Minister, with other military bodies abroad on the matter?"

**Minister:** "No. Since 1970 we have sent on the whole of our collection of reports to the Group for the Study of Aerial Phenomena (Groupement d'Etudes des Phénomènes Aériens), and every time something

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\* For details of the Turin incident, see *The Italian Scene Once More*, by Gordon Creighton, on page 27 [EDITOR]

extraordinary occurs this is what we continue to do. These are sightings by pilots, or investigations by the gendarmerie. Since 1970, in fact, the Air Force has taken the view that the UFOs represent no sort of danger — and so the job of studying these phenomena at the scientific level does not fall within their sphere. We consider that this is a job for the National Centre For Space Studies (Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales), where people like Monsieur Poher are doing what seems to us to be extremely interesting work. So we have no direct contact now in these matters. But, I repeat, every time something strange crops up, we send the report on it to this National Centre For Space Studies, whose work is of importance for the whole country."

**J-C.B:** All the same, Mr. Minister, unidentified space phenomena in the skies over France are, it would seem, still of concern to the National Defence authorities?"

**Minister:** "Oh yes, it concerns the National Defence and this is why we are studying this problem, in an attempt to see whether we can establish some correlations. Personally, I am for example very interested in this phenomenon, which Monsieur Poher has been describing, of the relationship between the variations in magnetic fields and the passage of unidentified flying objects. All this business presents a whole lot of quite disturbing phenomena which may of course one of these days be explained satisfactorily as not being due to the passage of some specific object or other, but simply as magnetic phenomena. But, so far as the present moment is concerned, we are forced to admit that here is something that escapes our comprehension.

There has also been the extremely impressive increase in the number of visual sightings of luminous phenomena, sometimes spherical, sometimes ovoid, travelling at extraordinarily high speeds. All these are phenomena that call for a certain degree of attention. But, and I must repeat this, in the Air Force we don't take the view that these matters appear to involve our national air defence."

**J-C.B:** "If you were asked to make the military radar sightings available to the scientists, what would be your reply?"

**Minister:** "If anomalies were registered on the national aerial defence radars, there would be no reason why we should not communicate such sightings to the scientists. In fact that is precisely what we are already doing at the present time. I get all the reports that are coming in from the Air Force, and from the gendarmerie, and we send them on directly to the scientists who are dealing with these matters."

**J-C.B:** "Mr. Minister, you have mentioned the gendarmerie. Now, our listeners on *France-Inter* have heard, several times in this series, the conclusions reached in the investigations conducted by your gendarmes — spectacular conclusions: when a witness declares that he has seen a saucer land and that he has seen small humanoids near the saucer, very frequently the gendarmes reach the conclusion

that the witness is speaking the truth. What do you yourself think about this?"

**Minister:** "Well, of course I should no doubt be a great deal more cautious. But all the same I must say that if your listeners could see for themselves the mass of reports coming in from the airborne gendarmerie, from the mobile gendarmerie, and from the gendarmerie charged with the job of conducting investigations, all of which reports are being forwarded by us to the C.N.E.S. (National Centre For Space Studies), then they would see that it is all pretty disturbing.

My view about the gendarmerie is they are serious people. When they draw up a report, they don't do it haphazardly. If there were only one or two such reports, one might indeed think that perhaps the gendarmerie's good faith had been deceived. But I must tell you that in fact the number of these gendarmerie reports is very great, and they are very varied. The whole thing is of course still very fragmentary but I must emphasise that, in this UFO business, it is essential to preserve an extremely open mind. On the one hand one cannot doubt the good faith of eyewitnesses who are clearly entirely sincere. And, at the same time, it is at present still far too early to draw the least conclusion from it at all."

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