

THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT OPENS ITS FILES

Beginning of an interesting new development?

Gordon Creighton

AT the recent International Congress on UFOs (April 1977) in Acapulco, Mexico, the Spanish investigator Andreas Kaiser, who edits a magazine in Madrid called *Unknown World*, said that the Spanish Air Force had begun to open up their files and release reports, and had even promised to be "more and more open on the subject." We already knew of this, having seen various Spanish press reports about it over the past six months.

Coming after the revelations of the French Minister of Defence in the *France-Inter* radio series in February 1974, this new development is clearly of the very greatest importance. It is a real milestone on the long road over which we have travelled since 1947.

In this connection, I would draw attention to the little piece¹ which I wrote recently about the important statement made on June 28, 1976 by the Spanish Air Force General Carlos Castro Cavero, Officer Commanding the Canary Islands Air Force Zone, because it seems, from the phrasing of his words, that General Castro Cavero already knew that his government was contemplating some sort of loosening-up process such as we are now seeing.

Both of these Spanish developments came of course too late for mention by Charles Bowen or myself in front of the BBC television cameras last year when the recent documentary film *Out of this World* was being prepared, but in any case we would probably be fully justified in thinking that, had either of us mentioned them, no word about them would have reached the British viewing and listening public. (After all, we did both speak before the cameras about the vitally important statement by the French Minister of Defence. And not a word of what either of us said on that score got through to the viewers and listeners.)

Returning to the matter of the Spanish Government, I am now in a position to give an account of what took place in the Air Ministry in Madrid last autumn.

Senor Juan José Benítez is a reporter on the staff of the newspaper *La Gaceta del Norte*, in Bilbao, in the Basque region of northern Spain. In addition to this, he is a very live wire among the UFO investigators in that country, and one of his articles has already appeared in *Flying Saucer Review*². It seems that for some time past he had been in correspondence with the Air Ministry in Madrid, hoping to induce them to reveal some of their secrets. Suddenly, to his vast astonishment, he received an invitation to present himself at the Ministry and there, at noon on October 20, 1976, he was ushered into the office

of an Air Force Lieutenant-General and Chief of Staff (whose name so far has not been revealed). Then, in an extremely cordial interview, *strictly off the record*, as was impressed upon him, this officer handed him a file of 78 folio pages containing the full documentation of the Spanish Government on no less than twelve of their most remarkable UFO cases.

While the whole thing was being handled on this purely "unofficial" and personal basis (Benítez was permitted to bring no cameras or tape-recorders into the Ministry) it was nevertheless made clear to him that he now had *carte blanche* to publish these cases, and that there could be more to come. Benítez has lost no time in getting them into a book, and it is to be hoped that my translation of this book will be available in this country before long. Clearly it is a book that will rank for importance with Dr. Hynek's *The UFO Experience* and Jean-Claude Bourret's French book which I have also translated, and which has been issued by Messrs. Neville Spearman under the title of *The Crack In The Universe*.

In the meantime, before the full text of the Air Ministry's release had reached me, I had already received from Spain a digest of one of its most remarkable chapters, with permission to translate it for FSR. As readers will note, this case is not unknown to us, inasmuch as we had already published one short press item about it.³ But a semi-official governmental release is a very different thing from mere press-clippings in the "World Round-up" column. That the Spanish Air Ministry has endorsed the details of this case clothes it with an altogether different kind of importance. Furthermore, it is now supported by remarkable photographs, and it contains many important details which we did not know before.

The digest of this case came to me in a letter dated April 30 this year from Sr. J.M. Sanchez of A.A. *Ovnis* Investigation Group at Portugalete in the Basque Province. This is the district where Sr. J.J. Benítez lives and works but he tells us he is not associated with the group. Sr. Benítez has been told we are printing Sr. Sanchez' article and he has been good enough to obtain the colour enlargement which we have used for our front cover illustration.

My translation of the document follows. (*see p.4.*)

Notes

1. *Important Statement by Spanish Air Force Chief.* FSR Vol.22, No.3, p.2.
2. Benítez, J.J. *Benacazón Landing and Two Humanoids.* FSR Vol. 22, No. 1, p. 21.
3. *Onion Phobia?* In "World Round-up," FSR Vol. 22, No. 4.

CANARY ISLANDS LANDING: OCCUPANTS REPORTED

J. M. Sanchez

Señor Jesus Maria Sanchez, to whom we are greatly indebted for this contribution, is the director of the A.A. Ovnis Investigation Group* of Portugalete in the Province of Vizcaya in northern Spain. The report, first published by journalist J.J. Benitez, received the endorsement of the Spanish Government and was supported by photographs. It is a detailed report of the remarkable "onion phobia" affair which appeared in one of our "World Round-Up" columns (FSR Vol. 22, No. 4). Translation from the Spanish by Gordon Creighton

ON OCTOBER 20, 1976, acting in a personal capacity, a Lieutenant-General in the Spanish Air Ministry in Madrid handed to the Bilbao journalist Juan José Benítez a thick file bearing the label "Report on UFOs."

This most unusual document, while it does not constitute an *official* statement on the part of the Spanish Government — as has been somewhat precipitately claimed in some quarters — nevertheless represents a quite exceptional new development in the whole field of UFO research in Spain.

The 78 folio sheets which compose this Report contain the documentation drawn up by Spanish Air Ministry personnel on twelve UFO cases, the majority of which cases are also vouched for by Air Force personnel as witnesses. The documentation is backed by numerous pieces of photographic evidence and also by a number of pieces of film taken by pilots of Spanish fighter aircraft, as well as by details of certain cases in which the UFOs were registered on the radar.

The summarized account of the sightings begins with a case in the Province of Sevilla on March 20, 1964, and concludes with the case of June 22, 1976, in the islands of Fuerteventura and Gran Canaria, Canary Islands.

The last-mentioned of these twelve cases, in the Canary Islands, was already known in Spanish UFO research circles. A report on it appeared in issue No. 26 of *Stendek*, journal of the C.E.I. (Spanish Centre for Interplanetary Studies, Barcelona). In our present Report we confine ourselves to this particular case.

In that report published in *Stendek* No. 26 mention was made of the fact that "somebody" with sufficient "pull" had attempted, at the time when this case happened, to "request" the principal eyewitness to say nothing about the affair, as a result of which intervention the C.E.I.'s own correspondent in the Canary Isles had been prevented from reporting on the details of the case at first hand.

The divulging of some of the official documentation on this case, carried out as it now has been in pretty sensational fashion, has thrown fresh and

definitive light upon the case, namely in the conclusions reached by the Air Ministry. Among these documentary materials now made available are important new eyewitness statements — additional to those previously known — plus the revelation of the existence of a big series of coloured photographs of the UFO.

The features of this case, plus the large number of witnesses and the high qualifications of the latter, plus the other pieces of corroborative evidence, and plus the fact that we can guarantee that it emanates from the Ministry — all these factors go to make this Canary Islands landing case one of the most important ever recorded in the course of UFO investigation in Spain.

Events of the night of June 22, 1976, over the Canaries

I. The Testimony

The UFO passed literally right across the whole of the Canary Island group, from East to West. The main concentrations of reports from witnesses who saw it come from three basic areas (See Map):—

- i) Area to S. of the Island of Fuerteventura.
- ii) Grand Canary, principally the northern part.
- iii) The islands lying further westwards: namely Tenerife, La Palma, Gomera, and Hierro.

Let us take them in order.

A: Here is a reproduction of the actual text of the despatch, file no. "01/76" dealing with this case, in the dossier handed to Sr. Benítez by the Lt. General from the Ministry. This relates to the first of the Canaries sightings (which had remained unknown until the Ministry released these documents):—

"At 21.27 (Z) hrs. on June 22, 1976, the corvette *Atrevida*, of the Spanish Navy, positioned at 3 NM, at 180 degrees from Punta Lantilla, on the south-eastern coast of the Island of Fuerteventura, observed the following phenomenon, as described by the ship's personnel, including the Commanding Officer (Captain) and the Ship's Ensign (witnesses numbered B-07 and B-08 respectively):

" 'At 21.27 (Z) hrs. on June 22, 1976, we saw a

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