

THE GENDARMERIE AND THE UFOs

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IN France, one of the bodies responsible for the defence and wellbeing of that historic and splendid realm is the *Gendarmerie Nationale*—what might, I suppose, in other countries be called the “National Guard” or something similar. There are no doubt still some British schoolboys and schoolgirls we think (as I in my earlier years long thought) that “gendarme” is just another word for “policeman”. Those who know better, however, realise that a gendarme is a gendarme and a policeman is an *agent de police*, or more simply an *agent* (or *un flic* if one is feeling rude); that their functions are entirely different; and that a gendarme is likely to be highly offended if taken by the foreign tourist for a mere policeman.

All of which means that the *Gendarmerie Nationale*, recruited as they are from former soldiers, and trained and armed as a military body, are a pretty tough, efficient and hardbitten lot of fellows who are not likely to be fooled so easily. And they are in touch with France and her people right down to the grassroots in the remotest of hill villages, for it is a rule that the *Gendarmerie* visit every commune in France, by day and by night, several times in a week. Their men patrol everywhere, and in all weather. They know everybody, and they know about everything that is going on and everything that is being discussed. Who could possibly be more qualified to investigate UFO reports, and at the source?

All of which, in turn, is by way of preamble to presenting an interesting item of news which appeared in the French newspaper *L'Aurore* for April 27, 1971, where we read, under banner headlines: NATIONAL GENDARMERIE DECLARE THE SAUCER-HUNTING SEASON OPEN.

The author, André Vigo, stated that the *Gendarmerie*'s own Journal for the first quarter of 1971 contained an article to the effect that the *Gendarmerie* now took the question of “Flying Saucers” very seriously and was going to investigate all reports.

The *Gendarmerie*'s journal, *La Revue d'Études et d'Informations de la Gendarmerie Nationale* (in this case No. 87, Premier Trimestre 1971) is, as we subsequently discovered, their own private internal publication and not generally available for members of the public. But we were able in due course to obtain a photostat of the article, thanks to the good offices of the French reader who had first drawn our attention to this interesting development.

The authors of the nine-page article are Captain Kervendal and Charles Garreau, a well-known journalist who, as will be recalled, was, with Aimé Michel, one of the pioneers of UFO research in France, and who is still engaged in private investigations on this subject. Their article, based largely on material that has

appeared in *Lumières Dans La Nuit*, gives an excellent résumé of the phenomenon, including outlines, illustrated with sketches, of various cases such as Valensole (July 1, 1965); Marliens (July, 1967); Illinois (July 20, 1964); Evilliers, Doubs (May 22, 1967); Palatine Lake Eurich, Illinois (May 12, 1969); Malataverne, Doubs (March 14, 1969); and Menessaire, Côte-d'Or (October 30, 1968). There is a general outline of the concept of orthoteny, of observed UFO manoeuvres, secondary effects, etc. And the writers emphasise that although Dr. Condon proved in 1968 that there is no evidence for the existence of “Flying Saucers”, it is very curious, to say the least, that the Soviets should also have been engaged in studying the UFO Phenomenon and that, in post-Condon times, the American sanction of a ten-year gaol sentence and a \$10,000 fine still remains on the statute books for use against servicemen who discuss their sightings with unauthorised parties.¹

That the French *Gendarmerie* do not share Dr. Condon's views is made clear. The authors continue:

“What can we of the *Gendarmerie* do about this business? By virtue of the *Gendarmerie*'s presence throughout the whole national territory of France, by virtue of its knowledge of places and, above all, of people; by virtue of the integrity and the intellectual honesty that are characteristic of its personnel, and also by virtue of the rapidity with which the *Gendarmerie* can be on the spot, they are well placed indeed to serve as a valuable auxiliary in the search for the truth about the UFOs . . . Something is going on in our skies . . . something that we do not understand. If all the airline pilots and Air Force pilots who have seen UFOs—and sometimes chased them—have been the victims of hallucinations, then an awful lot of pilots should be taken off and forbidden to fly . . .”

In the face of such a mystery, the authors continue, definite action is called for. “Should the existence of extraterrestrial craft be admitted, we should then find ourselves confronted by the biggest happening of all time.”

Whether or not other responsible quarters recognise these phenomena or merely ignore them, that is their affair. But the *Gendarmerie*, for their part, feel called upon to play a capital role. The very existence of our species might in fact be at stake.

¹ Shortly after the publication of the Condon Report, I wrote to the United States Air Force authorities enquiring as to the fate of these regulations. The only reply received to date has been a conspicuous silence. It would be interesting to know whether anyone else who enquired got different results?

A comprehensive questionnaire completes the article, showing the points upon which an investigating gendarme should concentrate. Above all, explain the authors, the gendarme must know how to be a good listener, capable of interrogating witnesses without displaying personal prejudices, *and able to welcome sympathetically the collaboration of qualified investigators working on behalf of serious recognised bodies engaged in unravelling the UFO mystery.*²

Section II of the Questionnaire deals with UFO landings. The gendarme investigator is advised to pay especial heed to the reported shape and appearance of the craft, any noise emitted by it, effects allegedly felt by witnesses (heat, pricking sensations, air-blast on take-off, and any physical perturbations, particularly of vision). The behaviour of all animals in the vicinity is to be studied and noted most carefully, and in any case where any animal has died in mysterious circumstances or after a UFO appearance, an autopsy is to be made, an analysis of the blood performed, and a search made for possible effects of radiation.

As regards the alleged occupants of UFOs, their size, shape, appearance, clothing, headgear, etc., are to be carefully recorded. Also the general behaviour of the beings, the gestures they made, and whether they were carrying any objects, whether the witness was observed by the entities, etc., etc.

In section III of the questionnaire, provision is made for a thorough investigation at the alleged landing site,

² My italics. During the UFO "flap" in Britain in the autumn of 1967, television viewers enjoyed the spectacle of the Chief of Police of a certain county "putting his policemen right" and briefing them to say that what they had seen the night before was of course not a "flying cross" after all, as they had thought, but simply our old friend Venus. Some of the subordinate members of the British Police expressed themselves sharply regarding blatant insults as to their powers of observation and their general commonsense, and crude attempts at "brainwashing" to make them give the required answers.

One wonders therefore what would be the attitude of the British Security Services and higher Police authorities if, like the French Gendarmerie, they suddenly found themselves called upon to "welcome sympathetically the collaboration of qualified investigators working on behalf of serious, recognised bodies engaged in UFO research." Perhaps the simplest way out would be to rule that they themselves (as at present?) are the only qualified investigators.

with emphasis on securing any traces left by the craft and on obtaining samples of soil and vegetation. These samples are to be submitted for scrutiny by the nearest agricultural research station, where particular attention is to be paid to the state of the *roots* of the plants.

Likewise, special watch is to be kept for all "anomalous effects" on ants and other insects, slugs, snails, etc. The level of radioactivity at the alleged landing-site is to be recorded and compared with readings for spots 100 metres distant from it. And in particular the investigator *should not forget to photograph the site vertically, from a height of 10 metres, using infra-red film. For this operation, the investigating gendarme is advised "to call for a helicopter."*

As André Vigo observed in his article in *L'Aurore*, this image of the French Gendarmerie pursuing the elusive UFO by helicopter is certainly the most surprising feature to appear so far in 1971!

According to the Editor of *Lumières Dans La Nuit*,³ the news of the intention of the Gendarmerie Nationale to investigate UFOs "burst like a bomb" in France, producing intense surprise in all quarters and being widely discussed by the national press and the radio stations.⁴ In the view of the LDLN, "all this seems to indicate that we have reached a turning-point, and that this vigorous inducement to research, supported by precise directives, will be borne well in mind. Will it perhaps be France that, with all these media teamed up in combination, will finally bring to light the truth about the UFOs? There is indeed a real possibility of this, provided that a general *tabula rasa* be made of all preconceptions, and that it is the *facts, and the facts alone*, that are permitted to speak. As for ourselves, our only desire must be to assist with all our strength in this tremendous task, contributing to it, as hitherto, always with lucidity.

³ *Lumières Dans La Nuit*, No. 112 (June, 1971).

⁴ It would be interesting too to know whether any mention whatsoever of these new official duties of the French Gendarmerie ever appeared in any of the British news media? The French Section of the BBC (Overseas Broadcasting) did at any rate admit that they knew about it, and it is in fact possible that this new development in France prompted them to suggest participation in another discussion, in French, on the UFO theme (the second time in their French Service), which was broadcast in June of this year.

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author has not had access to the 600 reports mentioned by Mr. Jonsson.

³ *Invisible Residents* by Ivan T. Sanderson, World Publishing Co., 1970.

⁴ See FSR, March/April 1970, page 32, for recent reports.

⁵ See *A Search For Amelia Earhart* by Fred Goerner, Doubleday & Co., 1966. Mr. Goerner describes his visit to a remote Pacific island harbouring a large, expensive and very secret U.S. Military installation. The symbol of the Office of Naval Research was imprinted on all the vehicles there and the base was occupied by Orientals dressed in coveralls. He was told that it was a training school for spies who were to be sent to the Chinese mainland.

See also Sanderson's *Invisible Residents*.

The two-part series, *Ghost-Bombs Over Sweden* by Björn Överbye, FSR March/April 1969 and FSR May/June 1969, describes the 1946 "ghost rocket" wave, concentrating on the reports from more densely populated southern Sweden. But, again, many of the places named in Mr. Överbye's articles were also named in the 1934 reports, including Skellefteå, Kalix, Umeå and Karlskrona. It is apparent that the 1934, 1946 and 1967 waves all shared certain common geographical factors. The author is currently trying to assemble "airship" reports from Scandinavia in 1909 and earlier, and these, too, followed the same geographical patterns.