

# THE TERRIBLE DEATH OF JOÃO PRESTES AT ARAÇARIGUAMA

*Prof. Felipe Machado Carrión*

Translated from the French by Gordon Creighton.

IN September 1971 I took part in the Fourth Brazilian Conference on Unidentified Flying Objects and the Second National Symposium on Extraterrestrial Civilisations, both held in São Paulo under the presidency of Professor Flávio A. Pereira, president of the Brazilian Institute of Astronautics and Space Sciences, and with General Moacyr de Mendonça Uchôa serving as President of Honour.

The gatherings in São Paulo gave me the opportunity to be the first investigator to learn of the event described below. It was reported to us in the course of a special and private interview which we had with the dental surgeon Dr. Irineu José da Silveira. Dr. Irineu explained that it would be some months before he could complete his report and send it on to us.

This he has now done, as promised, and I now give the text of it below, supplemented with such details as we had already learned regarding this incident:

**Date of Incident:** Shrove Tuesday, in February, 1946.†

**Place:** The small town of Araçariguama, in the administrative region of São Roque, State of São Paulo, Brazil.

**The Victim:** João Prestes Filho, Brazilian citizen, married, a farmer and businessman, resident in that district, who was 40 years old in 1946. A physically robust man, enjoying excellent health.

**Principal Witness Interrogated:** Aracy Gomide, at present aged 64, Brazilian citizen, married, native of São Roque. Aged 39 in 1946. At that time he occupied the post of Fiscal Inspector of the Prefecture of São Roque. He possessed much practical knowledge on the subject of illnesses, being charged with the task of caring for patients in that region who were suffering from common ailments, for there was no doctor there, nor even anywhere near there. Later on, he became treasurer of the Municipality of São Roque. He has always been very highly regarded in local circles.

**Present Investigator of the Incident:** Dental Surgeon Dr. Irineu José da Silveira.

**Persons Present When Witnesses Testified:** Sr. Guilherme da Silva Pontes, businessman; Sr. Jonas da Souza, businessman; Sr. João Gennari, broker.

Here are the facts:

It was during the peaceful year of 1946, at Araçariguama, a few kilometres distant from the Rio Tietê (river). The poor little town possessed no electric light at that time, and no telephones, and lay far from the main traffic arteries. A small isolated place of the Brazilian Interior, it consisted simply of an unpaved open space surrounded by a few small old houses and a historic Diocesan Church (Igreja Matriz). A rural region,

Felipe Machado Carrión, President of the Gaúcho UFO Investigation Group (GGIOANI), Porto Alegre, Brazil, is Professor of Cosmography at the Colégio Júlio de Castilhos in the State of Rio Grande do Sul. He is the author of numerous articles on the UFO problem, published in *Phénomènes Spatiaux* and elsewhere, and notably of an excellent book, *Discos Voadores: Imprevisíveis e Conturbadores (Flying Saucers: Disconcerting And Disturbing)*, published in Porto Alegre in 1968. This is unquestionably the best book yet written in Brazil on the subject, and it is to be regretted that no English translation of it exists so far. We understand that Professor Carrión may recently have brought out a second and expanded edition.

The present article (written in 1971) is translated from the French version given in *Phénomènes Spatiaux* No. 30 (December 1971) and our acknowledgements and great appreciation are accordingly due to both Professor Carrión himself and to Monsieur René Fouéré, Secretary-General of G.E.P.A. and Editor of the journal, who states that this story has never been published before.\*

GORDON CREIGHTON.

devoted entirely to the primitive culture of cereal crops, with nothing to indicate future developments of progress.

The whole past history of the place consisted merely, in fact, of the slow succession, day in, day out, of the same old habitual doings, repeated, identical.

Except, however, for one single feature: At night, strange lights were to be seen moving about in the sky, describing, by great leaps and bounds, irregular trajectories above the mountains and forests of the region, giving rise to varying expressions of opinion among the populace whenever they congregated together in the humdrum gatherings of their existence.

In a word: there was something new, something surprising, something mysterious. . . .

\* Address of *Phénomènes Spatiaux*: 69 Rue de la Tombe Issoire, Paris 14, France.

I understand that since this article was published by M. Fouéré, accounts of the Prestes affair have appeared in the Brazilian newspapers. One of these was the *Notícias Populares* of October 23, 1972, which stated in addition that the French Government has requested the bones of the unfortunate victim for test purposes—EDITOR.

† Note by the Editor of *Phénomènes Spatiaux*: According to our calculations, Shrove Tuesday, a movable feast of the Church, which falls 47 days before Easter, occurred in 1946 (as also in 1957) not at the end of February, but on March 5.

## Shrove Tuesday

João Prestes Filho had invited his friend Salvador dos Santos, then aged 39 and still alive today, to go fishing with him in the Rio Tietê. He told his wife to take the children to see the Carnival celebrations in the town, and also told her to make sure to leave one of the windows of their house slightly open so that he could get in when he returned from fishing.

Prestes and dos Santos spent a happy, peaceful day, fishing on the banks of the Rio Tietê.

At about 7.00 p.m. they returned from the river. There was a slight general mist, but the sky was clear enough, not stormy, and so in no way conducive to the formation of lightning or ball-lightning.

They parted at the cross-roads, and each went home, their houses being quite far apart and in different sections of the town.

An hour later, Prestes, absolutely terrified, rushed into the house of his sister Maria, shouting incoherently that when he had tried to open the window (or French window) of his house, he had been struck by a silent beam of light, coming from outside of the house. He had put up both hands to protect his head and eyes against it. Stunned, he had then fallen to the ground for a few moments, though without losing consciousness. Then he had picked himself up and fled into the centre of the town in search of help, his movements still apparently quite normal.

His sister's neighbours, including Sr. Aracy Gomide, were at once called. Prestes meanwhile was repeating his story over and over again.

Interrogated today, Gomide states that he kept his eyes riveted the whole time on Prestes. The latter's hair, head, eyes, clothing (he was wearing a short-sleeved shirt, rolled-up trousers, no shoes or hat) showed no trace whatever of any burns, either deep or superficial, nor any anomalies, and neither did any of the parts of Prestes' body that were protected by his clothing. His eyes however were dilated with terror, his voice distraught.

But before very long, the scene rapidly began to turn to one of horror.

Prestes' insides began to show, and the flesh started to look as though it had been cooked for many hours in boiling water. The flesh began to come away from the bones, falling in lumps from his jaws, his chest, his arms, his hands, his fingers, from the lower parts of his legs, and from his feet and toes. Some scraps of flesh remained hanging to the tendons, and none of those who were present dared to touch them. Soon every part of Prestes had reached a state of deterioration beyond imagination. His teeth and his bones now stood revealed, utterly bare of flesh.

Prestes meanwhile vigorously refused the food and water that were offered to him. **But at no time did he appear to be feeling any pain.**

Now his nose and his ears fell off, sliding down his body on to the floor.

A terrifying spectre of progressive dislocation and mutilation. His eyes bulging with terror. His speech already distorted, in a mouth that had collapsed. Nothing more was to be heard from him now but sounds, the meanings of which were utterly lost.

Amid scenes of general confusion, what remained of the body of Prestes, now nearing dissolution, was placed aboard a cart, to be taken to the nearest hospital, the Santa Casa at Santana de Parnaíba.

But, no more than six hours after Prestes had been struck by the beam of light, a corpse was brought back to Araçariguama. He had died en route, without ever reaching the hospital.

Right up to the last moments of his life, guttural sounds continued to come from his mouth, or rather from his teeth, for his mouth now ended at his teeth. Was he still trying to tell the story of his horrifying experience?

Since there had been no medical examination, the death certificate, signed by several wholly ignorant witnesses, recorded simply: "Died of generalized burns." Words that are totally incapable, indeed, of conveying any understanding of that terrible manner of death, so utterly unknown to our present-day science, inasmuch as the symptoms, plus the overall picture of the happenings, taken together, do not correspond to the sort of lesions such as might have been produced by either natural electricity (lightning, etc.) or artificially generated electricity, or by any form of radiation known to us.

The Police made some enquiries, which yielded nothing that might be validly added to what is on the death certificate.

No marks or traces were found at the spot where Prestes was struck by the light; nothing was found either inside or outside the house. Nevertheless we cannot exclude the possibility, although it is unverifiable, that a strange something or a strange somebody may have been inside the house. But, if there was anyone there, it was certainly nobody known in the district.

Subsequently there were further sightings of the lights in the air, lights performing capricious, unexpected, inoffensive evolutions in the night skies over Araçariguama.

**A record of the AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) symposium, held at Boston, Mass., in December, 1969.**

## **UFOs — A SCIENTIFIC DEBATE**

**Edited by Carl Sagan and Thornton Page**

Contributors also include:

Robert M. Baker, Frank D. Drake, Lester Grinspoon, Wm. K. Hartmann, J. Allen Hynek, James E. McDonald (dec'd), Donald H. Menzel, Philip Morrison and Franklin Roach.

Published by  
**Cornell University Press**  
Ithaca, N.Y., and  
2-4 Brook Street, London  
W1Y 1AA.

Price: £5.65  
(\$12.50 USA)

# ON THE NEED TO PUBLISH UNPLEASANT REPORTS

*René Fouéré*

WE have stated that we, personally, are *not*, as it were, ever on the look-out for the sensational, but that we are bent upon making an objective and scientific study of a problem. And we will even add that we are greatly opposed to the array of horrors, literary or photographic, in which publications of a certain type engage without restraint, at the risk of producing traumatic results upon young minds. Consequently we offer no excuses to our readers for publishing this terrible story, which finds a place in the columns of our Journal only because it belongs within the framework of the investigations which we and our fellow-Ufologists are conducting into a subject that merits our attention by virtue of the possible gravity that it may entail for all Mankind.

It has been said, and rightly it seems, that reality surpasses fiction. And it must be admitted that, for horror, this Brazilian incident (even though involving no struggle between one individual and another) exceeds anything that the fiction-writers specialising in the literature of the horrific have succeeded in imagining, and this latter point in itself already constitutes an interesting indication.

It is true that we had certainly never expected that one day we would publish so horrific an account. But in fact the relation is more than merely horrific, and we would hope that our readers will do as we have done, and turn their attention away from the purely terrifying aspects and direct it primarily towards the *biological significance* of the story. For, so far as we are aware, the physical lesions recorded therein (lesions described by witnesses whose good faith we have no grounds whatsoever for suspecting, more particularly as the principal testimony comes from a man who was himself an actual eyewitness of the facts) are of an absolutely stupefying nature and, so it would seem to us, fall without any question right outside the framework of the scientific knowledge of our times. We are utterly at a loss to know what physical agency could have caused them and could also have produced the remarkable condition of anaesthesia which seems to have accompanied them. And, may we add, we would be grateful to those of our readers, such as doctors, biologists, or experts on the biological effects of radiations, who might be able to give us any suggestions in this respect, or indicate to us what precise questions our Brazilian friends and correspondents might usefully put to the surviving witnesses.

When we read the books of one whole group of authors who have written about flying saucers we are given the impression that the occupants of these machines have come from the depths of Outer Space to bring help to mankind, to protect mankind from itself, and to bring it back on to the road of not only physical salvation but of spiritual salvation too.

Other writers, on the other hand, believe that the extra-terrestrials are animated only by the worst intentions towards us.

So far as we of G.E.P.A. are concerned, we shall continue in a posture of prudent expectancy, while at the same time not failing to warn our readers of the possible perils that might result from approaching too closely to a flying saucer, perils which Frank Edwards has emphasised (just as we ourselves have) on the cover of the American edition of his book *Flying Saucers: Serious Business*.

With regard to the Araçariguama incident related by Professor Felipe Machado Carrión, may we be permitted to quote here what we wrote on page 27 of *G.E.P.A. Bulletin* No. 6 (Second Quarter of 1964) on the subject of the case at Monte Maíz, Argentina, in which the witness, Eugenio Douglas, was burned by a beam of light emanating from an unknown type of craft:

"The effects produced on us by actions perpetrated by beings from Space, beings who could be very different from us, are not necessarily a valid criterion of their real intentions towards us. This remark might well apply to the Monte Maíz incident.

"Nothing of what occurred there permits us to affirm categorically that the mysterious beings encountered by Eugenio Douglas actually wished to maltreat him. They might have wanted simply to throw some light on him because they could not see him properly. The beam of light that they directed on to him was perhaps—by their standards—no more than the equivalent of a beam from one of our own electric pocket-torches. Even though it burnt Douglas, it might have been without effect on *their* bodies."

This same observation might well apply in the incident at Araçariguama.

Our friend Paul Misraki, to whom we are greatly indebted for his help in translating Professor Carrión's article from the Portuguese, points out that the horror of this Araçariguama affair (already a very old case, since it happened in 1946) does not appear to have been repeated, and that we might therefore perhaps take the view that the lesions suffered by Prestes could have caused the Extraterrestrials to realise how dangerous the "light" used by them would be for human beings. The death of Prestes might thus have been the result of a mistake, of a lack of experience on their part. After all, it is possible. . . .

It should moreover be borne in mind that, although strange lights had indeed been seen in the sky in that part of the country prior to the incident, we have on the other hand no proof whatever that the beam of light that struck Prestes came from an unidentified flying object or from a device used by occupants of such an object, and at this point we are to a certain extent in

*(Continued on page 17)*

# BOOK REVIEW

## BEYOND THE FRINGE

**Can You Speak Venusian? A Guide to Independent Thinkers.** By Patrick Moore. (David & Charles, 1972.) £2.75.

IN this splendid and altogether hilarious book by Patrick Moore we see him at his best, dealing, with his gentle humour and inimitable touch, with a whole host of way-out theories from beyond the fringe about flat earths, hollow earths, solid skies, frigid suns, Pyramidology, Atlantis, Lemuria, Hörbiger, Bellamy, Ignatius Donnelly, the "artificial moons" of Mars, Kazantsev and the Tunguskaya Meteorite, and all the rest of the wild, mad fringe. For Ufologists the highlights of the book are the chapters on Warminster and Mr. Arthur Shuttlewood and his co-workers, and on the Aetherius Society of Mr. (pardon me—the *Reverend Doctor*) George King.

Patrick Moore always writes well, just as he speaks well, and here he is at his best, and lucidest and funniest. The book is a *must* for the shelves of every Fortean and every "Ufologist."

On the matter of UFOs, while Mr. Moore takes a poke, as was to be expected, at those in our field who he thinks have laid themselves open to ridicule, it is noteworthy that nowhere does he make any reference to *any* of the serious UFO investigatory groups and publications like FSR, nor does he tilt at *any* of the various well-known and respected researchers around the world. This is a fact of considerable importance.

From the many giants of Independent Thought who figure in this book it is difficult to say who takes the prize. But for me, who am interested in languages, the hero is unquestionably Mr. Bernard Byron, of Romford, England, who, as Mr. Moore says, is one of the very few Earthmen privileged to speak, and write, languages of other planets. Mr. Byron makes me feel a colossal failure in this field, for whereas I have never even tried to make a start on one of the simpler exo-languages (like, say, Lunarian), *he is fluent in Venusian, Plutonian, and Krugerian.*

For the ignorant among you, I had better add that Krügerian is the tongue employed by the people who live on a planet moving around the faraway red dwarf star Krüger 60.

GORDON CREIGHTON.

## ON THE NEED TO PUBLISH UNPLEASANT REPORTS (Continued from page 16)

agreement with the ideas presented by J-M. Dutuit in paragraph 3, page 8, of his article in *Phénomènes Spatiaux* No. 29.

All that one can say is that, since the effects of the light beam at Araçariguama possess no common measure with the effects of any recorded natural beams or with the effects of beams from the most perfected instruments that our science could have conceived of and constructed in 1946 or since, the beam in question must have emanated from a source that is apparently alien to all those to be found on our planet and that, since it pertains to a science that is not ours, that science may well be assumed to be extraterrestrial.

# BOOKS FOR SALE

**MYSTERIOUS BRITAIN** by Janet & Colin Bord. 260 A4 size pages, 247 large illustrations £6.10

**UFOS—A SCIENTIFIC DEBATE** edited by Dr. Carl Sagan & Thornton Page. 310 pages £5.80

**SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF UFOS** directed by Dr. Edward Condon. 1,080 pages—90 of photos. £4.40

**BIGFOOT** by Dr. John Napier. 240 pages £3.05

**THE EARTH WATCHERS** by Brian Ford £3.00

**HARMONIC 695** by Capt. Bruce Cathie £2.85

**THE UFO EXPERIENCE** by Dr. J. Allen Hynek £2.62

**THE ETERNAL MAN** by Louis Pauwels & Jacques Bergier. 246 pages, illus. £2.62

**THE ETERNAL SUBJECT** by Brinsley le Poer Trench. 200 pages, illus., index £2.62

**FLYING SAUCERS ARE REAL** by Donald Keyhoe £1.50

**TAMING OF THE THUNDERBOLTS** by C. M. Cade £1.00

## Paperbacks:

**VIEW OVER ATLANTIS** by John Michell 85p

**UFOS, OPERATION TROJAN HORSE** by John Keel 70p

**PATTERN OF THE PAST** by Guy Underwood 60p

**MORNING OF THE MAGICIANS (Dawn of Magic)** by Pauwels & Bergier, 303 pages, illus. 58p

**RETURN TO THE STARS** by Erich von Däniken 46p

**CHARIOTS OF THE GODS** by Erich von Däniken 42p

**FLYING SAUCER STORY** by Brinsley le Poer Trench 42p

**GODS AND SPACEMEN IN THE ANCIENT EAST** by W. Raymond Drake 42p

**NOT OF THIS WORLD** by Peter Kolosimo 42p

**WE ARE NOT THE FIRST** by Andrew Tomas 42p

## PRICES INCLUDE POSTAGE AND PACKING

Free Lists: 100 UFO-related titles in stock

LIONEL BEER (73/2)  
15 FRESHWATER COURT  
CRAWFORD STREET  
LONDON W1H 1HS