

A SURVEY OF FRENCH UFO RESEARCH GROUPS

by Jacques Vallée

The UFO controversy in France has produced a situation unusually rich in contradictions. *Private* interest among professional scientists, engineers and military men is possibly greater there than in any other country. On the other hand, there has never been any effort on the part of the French government to promote active research on unusual aerial phenomena. The official reason, of course, is that the U.S. Air Force has already done this, and has found little significance to the whole question. This being the general attitude, some officials, in typically French fashion, behave in apparent contradiction to it. It is not rare to see two or three truckloads of gendarmes arriving within hours on the site of a reported landing, soon followed by intelligence specialists who gather samples, take photographs, then vanish: the 'fact sheet' of Project Blue Book is one thing. But somebody in Paris is not taking any chances.

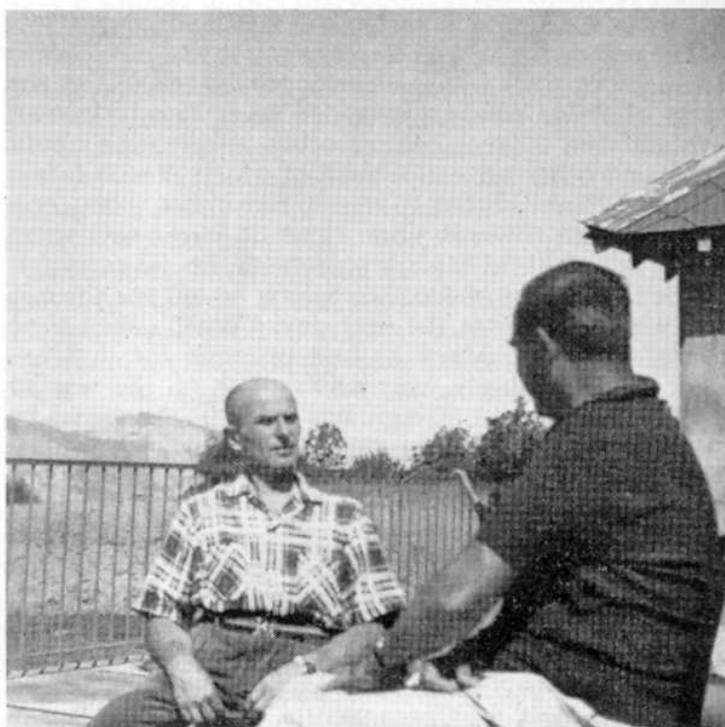
Under the current conditions, however, it is doubtful whether the official follow-up to such cases as the Valensole or the Bar-sur-Loup landings, which were carefully investigated by the French, is anything more than routine. There is a precedent for this: immediately after the 1954 wave, public pressure was such that the French Air Force did create a temporary clearing house for sightings of aerial phenomena made by its personnel. Although the reports centralised by this organisation were numerous, they were sketchy and poorly documented. They were never submitted to a scientific panel. From what this writer has seen, the reliability of the observers was generally above average. The reports came from control tower operators, pilots, meteorologists in France and the territories of Africa. Most witnesses were on duty on military airfields at the time of the sightings, but there was no follow up, and no organised research. A few elementary studies of the report frequently were included in the files, but the overall scientific value of the entire operation was less than sophomoric.

Fortunately, several groups of serious amateurs exist in France, and they have saved from oblivion much valuable data. Their contributions are marked by bold, original attacks on the problem. In recent years, there has been a strong re-activation of the controversy, and therefore it may be useful to review the background, motivations and objectives of the groups and individuals who have kept UFO research alive in France, despite official neglect and journalistic ridicule.

Ouranos

Until the early sixties, one organisation had dominated the scene. It is a group called *Commission Internationale d'Enquêtes Scientifiques Ouranos*. It is often known only by its initials C.I.E.S.O. or by the name of its magazine, OURANOS.

The group was founded in 1951 and may be the oldest UFO group currently in operation (in the United



Aimé Michel (left) at his home in the beautiful French Alps with the Editor, Charles Bowen

States, the oldest group, APRO, was created in 1952). It had published twelve issues of its journal before booming into a major organisation when the 1954 wave swept the country. Directed by an extremely able researcher, M. Marc Thirouin, and actively served by a popular science-fiction writer, Jimmy Guieu (himself the author of two early books on UFOs), OURANOS set a standard that few publications in this field have approached. Professionally edited, dynamically written and enjoying a perfect presentation, the magazine was packed with results of field investigations carefully conducted by such people as Charles Garreau, Jimmy Guieu and Thirouin.

After its issue No. 25, published early in 1960, OURANOS felt severely the impact of the censorship of the national press and of the negative publicity given to the observations. The French public lost interest in the problem, and until recently it seemed that Marc Thirouin was courageously fighting a losing battle. There was a long eclipse in the distribution of OURANOS after its number 31, published in 1964. Efforts are currently being made to start the magazine again on a regular publication schedule. The group itself is still alive and has a network of about a hundred correspondents and investigators in France and abroad.

Gepa

At the end of 1962, a group of engineers and other persons interested in starting a new organisation held a series of meetings in Paris and decided to publish a



General Lionel Chassin

bulletin. They placed their organisation under the leadership of General Lionel Chassin. Popular composer Paul Misraki (Paul Thomas), the author of *Flying Saucers through the Ages*, became one of the Vice-Presidents. This group took the name *Groupement d'Etude de Phénomènes Aériens*, or GEPA.

The new organisation had as secretary a very active researcher, M. René Fouéré, who emerged as the driving force of the group. The first issue of the *Bulletin Phénomènes Spatiaux* was published in 1963. Today the GEPA organises regular meetings in Paris and appears to be growing both in popularity and experience. A definite effort has been made to separate fact from theory and to include in the pages of the Bulletin nothing but scientifically sound material. The current presentation of the publication is of very good quality, and it is without question the best reference on the UFO Phenomenon available in the French language.

LDLN

A third journal whose creation was essentially the work of one man, but which is not connected with a tightly-organised group, is Raymond Veillith's *Lumières dans la Nuit*. It was published in a mimeographed form until the end of 1962, then became a neatly-printed journal. It has been issued bi-monthly since 1964 with remarkable punctuality. It contains valuable information on current sightings, because Veillith devotes much attention to incidents which have received little, if any, coverage in the national press; articles by Aimé Michel and Serge Hutin, an authority on Hermetism, have appeared in its pages.

Raymond Veillith created his journal because he had long been aware of the failure of the press to fulfil its mission of factual information. As he wrote to the author of this survey: 'It seemed to me that the major newspapers were worthless to the man who placed all his soul in the search for the truth.' When he first heard

of flying saucers, Veillith was convinced that they were nothing but known phenomena. The great European wave of 1954 made him change his mind. After a meeting with Aimé Michel, the UFO problem became one of his major interests. The first number of LDLN appeared in February 1958 and 85 issues have been published to date (free complimentary copy on request).

A major achievement of Veillith is the network of magnetic detectors (see map), an idea which he launched in 1963, and which will be discussed below.

C.I.

Another publication which has linked UFOs with traditional ideals is the organ of the Mondialist Movement which has its headquarters in Geneva (Switzerland). The journal is called *Le Courrier Interplanétaire* and is directed by one of the earliest European students of UFOs, Alfred Nahon. Nahon is an authentic pioneer of the cause of world peace and has long advocated the creation of a Federation of all nations under a single planetary government.

The journal started as a monthly in 1955. It is now published quarterly (see address below in the summary) and has about one thousand subscribers.

CEREIC

In 1965 and 1966 several articles by Guy Tarade and André Millou of Nice appeared in Paris magazines. They were announcing the creation in Provence of a private group called *Centre d'Etude et de Recherche d'Eléments Inconnus de Civilisation*. This is an organisation with no open membership, whose primary interest is not the UFO problem itself, but its possible connection with the history of early human civilisations. They claim, for example, that Extraterrestrial visitors may have occupied South America before the Christian era and may have left throughout the Earth the traces of their visits. This theory has long been studied by a brilliant Soviet writer, Alexander Kazantsev; Guy



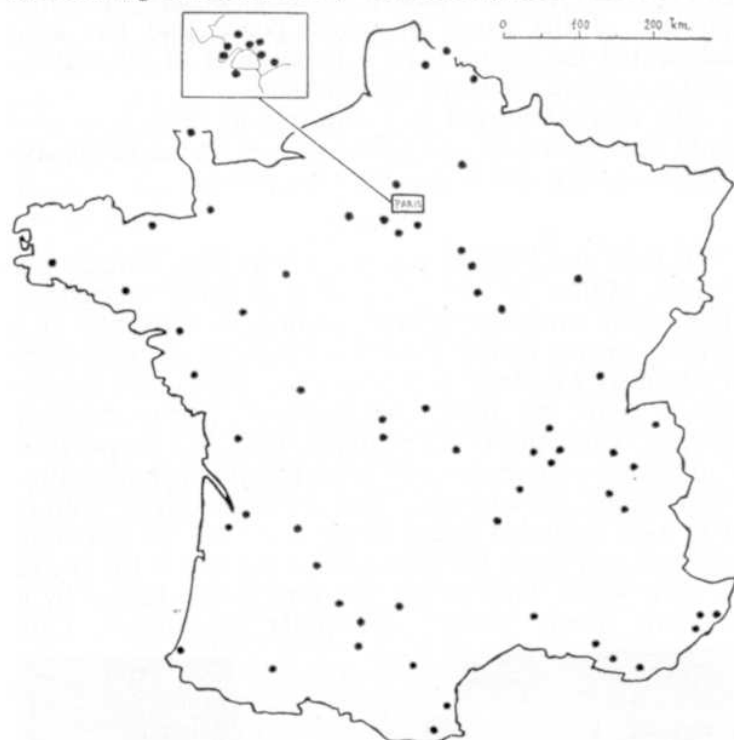
M. Marc Thirouin, the founder of *Ouranos*

Tarade proposes to extend these researches and try to find a link between these civilisations of the past and the UFO Phenomenon.

Conclusion

The five major organisations we have mentioned represent the nucleus of a growing movement of

interest in the French public towards the UFO problem. This renewal of serious interest is also reflected in the establishment throughout the country of a network of magnetic detectors, shown by black dots on the attached map. At the time of the compilation of the survey, there were 75 such detectors in operation. The number has now reached over one hundred. The network was organised by Raymond Veillith, of LDLN, and is maintained by volunteers. Veillith periodically reviews the results in his journal. The creation of this network in 1963 is an interesting and original contribution made by the French amateurs, and it indicates their determination to approach the UFO question as a scientific, rather than a philosophical or metaphysical problem. It may permit to submit for the first time to a practical test the many hypotheses that have been put forward concerning the secondary electromagnetic effects con-



The French network of magnetic detectors

nected with UFOs.

Generally speaking, the author of the present survey has consistently found better investigations and a more scientific attitude in the *GEPA Bulletin*, while LDLN and the C.I. were of interest due to the large number of reports they publish, very often in translation form. Most of these translations have been made by M. Christian Vogt for the C.I. and by M. Jean Vuillequez for LDLN.

If we take an historical view of the French situation, then OURANOS emerges as an extremely interesting group. Even in the earliest issues of the magazine we find the significance of the landings fully recognised, the correlation with Mars seriously studied. We find that foreign sightings share the pages with the investigation of local incidents. Even annotated bibliographies of current articles and books (a luxury which is only appearing now in the American UFO journals) were kept up-to-date: all this combined to give a very fine publication.

To summarise our impressions, French UFO re-

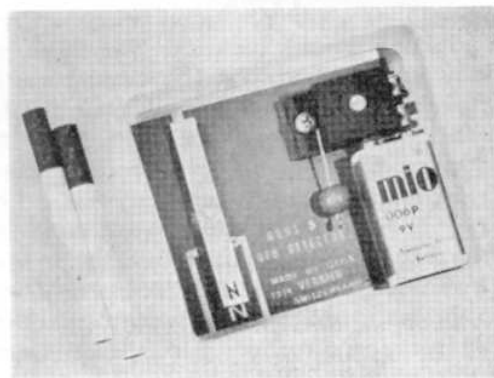
search is original in two respects. The first of these is the amount of scientific and technological talent which has been brought to bear on the problem, and the number of professional scientists who have taken an active, if often anonymous, interest in UFO observations. These scientists were primarily responsible for encouraging the formation of civilian groups dedicated to active research. Considerable work is done by private researchers (Aimé Michel first among them) who are not identified with any particular group and exchange their findings through informal channels.

The second is the unanimous rejection of the 'contactee' myth. While in Anglo-Saxon countries an important fraction of the public tends to put credence in stories of alleged meeting with 'The Space Brothers'—even sometimes in rumours of 'crashed saucers'—the French researchers (who have in their files the largest number of landing reports) have generally rejected such views, claiming that science, not personal revelation, held the key to the mystery. They continue to regard with considerable scepticism the prophets of the 'New Age'.

ADDRESSES

- OURANOS M. Marc Thirouin
51 rue des Alpes, VALENCE (Drôme) 26
No fixed schedule, mimeographed, 30 pages
8½ x 11
Yearly subscription: 30 F.
- GEPA M. René Fouéré
69 rue de la Tombe-Issoire PARIS 14
Quarterly, 34 pages 6 x 9½, excellent letterpress
printing, photographs.
Yearly subscription: 30 F.
- LDLN M. Raymond Veillith
Le Chambon-sur-Lignon (Haute-Loire) 43
bi-monthly, printed, 16 pages 10 x 12½
Yearly subscription: 14 F.
- C.I. M. Alfred Nahon
Fereny-Voltaire (Ain) 01
Bi-monthly, printed, 4 pages, 12 x 18½
Yearly subscription: 6 F.
- CEREIC M. Guy Tarade—no official address.

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THE EXETER INCIDENTS

by Jean Fuller

Our contributor, who lives in Texas, is relatively new to the subject of UFOs, having approached it by way of Dr. Jacques Vallée's books and the **FLYING SAUCER REVIEW**. Mrs. Fuller is not related to the author of the book which she analyzes so brilliantly in her article.

THE correspondence from *Aviation Week* on the plasma theory¹, and the **FLYING SAUCER REVIEW** editorial on "explanations"², prompted me to take a second look at *Incident at Exeter*³ by John Fuller, since I understand that Mr. Klass (of *Aviation Week*) used the book to help work out his plasma explanation of the UFO problem. Mr. Fuller interviewed some sixty witnesses before writing his book, and described some twenty-one of these cases in detail. I have made a summary of these twenty-one cases, and I imagine readers of the **REVIEW** might be interested in the results.

Most of the sightings were made in the vicinity of Exeter, New Hampshire, in the late summer and the fall of 1965.

Muscarello Sighting

September 3. A huge red glowing object was seen to follow a car prior to the sighting, which occurred around 2 a.m. when an object 80ft to 90ft in diameter dived from the sky towards the witness, backed off, and hovered over a house. Later, when officers Hunt and Bertrand observed it with Muscarello, it was seen to rise from behind trees. One hundred feet in the air, the length of a football field away, it was observed as a huge red glow with lights around the rim which pulsated in a 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, pattern. When it left, it flew towards Hampton, where a badly frightened man only minutes later reported that a flying saucer came right at him. Said police officer Bertrand: "In fact, the first reaction I got was that it was a huge red fireball. But then I could immediately see that it wasn't. It was a huge, compact, round thing, with lights going back and forth." Said Patrolman Hunt: "... it was definitely a craft—a big one. . . ."

Smith Sighting

September. At 11 p.m. a white glow with a red light was seen to come out of the sky and pass over the car four times. About $\frac{1}{4}$ mile in the air, larger than a B.52. Sighting lasted 15 minutes, ended as object "zoomed right off".

Shipman and Kalogeropoulos Sighting

On a foggy morning at 4 a.m. two boys were badly frightened by object which came in from over the ocean, buzzed their car, and "shot off out of sight". Sighting investigated by Coast Guard.

Davis Sighting

September. At 2 a.m. witness thought she was observing an aircraft until one small green light changed to a large red light "too big for a plane". Sighted from a hill three miles distant, object travelled from south-east, hovered, changed direction. Observed from five to eight minutes.

Spinney Sighting

September 27. Object seen at 10 a.m. on a clear day one mile away, nearest approach 200-300 feet. Described as "definitely

metallic", no wings, no glow, about 30 ft in diameter, 200 ft in the air. It flew slowly, hovered, then "went furiously off" upon departure.

Hale Sighting

October. At 6.25 p.m. witness observed bright, dome-shaped object, flat underneath, with a tail or fin, twice the size of a B.47. Came in slowly from over the Atlantic, hovered over the house at distance only three times the height of the chimney, then left at great speed. Kept in sight nearly twenty minutes.

Pearce Sightings

1. October. Seen at night at treetop height, object with dome, fins, appearing to be of hammered metal and of "enormous span". Had small lights all over it, red lights around rim, and square white lights, or ports, on the bottom. Big as a jet, it hovered 8 ft to 10 ft above the car, illuminating pavement. Several witnesses present in car, and one witness present in another car, who saw it over the first car.

2. July. Object "big as a car" with bright red lights, seen hovering below treetop level beside road, 30 ft from witnesses (2) as they approached, thinking it was a wreck. Seen to take off.

3. September 17. Object with red, green and white lights seen hovering over house for two or three minutes, during which time its lights went out twice as jet passed over, to come on again as plane passed by. Seen to depart. Several witnesses.

4. October. Seen by a neighbour of the Pearces. Object with two white lights the width of a wingspread crossed the road, dipped, flew over the car, and went up into the sky.

Healey Sighting

September. At 6.15 p.m. witness and her husband observed large, round, red object with several "silvery things hanging down from it". High in the sky at first, it came down towards power lines, hovered just over them, as plane circled area. Upon departure it "moved away—fast".

Jalbert Family Sightings

1. September. At 6.45 p.m. a bright glowing object the apparent size of the full moon, with several silverish things hanging down from it, was seen in the sky, later departed slowly. It was seen for 30 minutes by the Jalbert family. It occurred the same evening as the Healey observation.

2. September or October. At 10.45 p.m. an object "as big as a car", with red lights and white lights, "like a house window when its lit", came from the end of the power line in the distance, going over trees. It was seen to go up over a large tree in its path.

3. October or November. Reddish, cigar-shaped object seen in the air, from which emerged a small reddish disc. Approaching from a quarter of a mile away to within a few hundred feet of the witness, it hovered over power line, extended a silvery, pipe-like protrusion which touched the wires, remained in contact with them for one minute, and