

but he did remark that when the craft departed, the grass stood straight up, then returned to its normal position.

The interest of this sighting, apart from its strangeness, lies in the visible traces left on the vegetation and, namely, on an amaranth bush, the tips of whose leaves, which had completely dried up, led one to think that they had been subjected to intense electrical fields. However, despite short time delays before intervention, the sampling conditions and then the storage of the sample did not permit this hypothesis to be verified definitively. Based on an earlier study on the behavior of plants subjected to electrical fields, it emerged that:

- the electrical field, which was what probably caused the blades of grass to lift up, had to have exceeded 30 kV/m,
- the effects on the amaranth that were observed were probably due to an electrical field that had to have far exceeded 200 kV/m at the level of the plant.

## **Chapter 5 - Counterexamples of Phenomena That Have Been Explained**

The cases reported in the preceding chapters have remained unexplained, despite the richness of their data. Such cases are in the minority. Many sightings of aerial phenomena made in France that the witnesses could not understand and reported to the gendarmerie have been explained after a short investigation by the gendarmerie and/or GEPAN/SEPRA: the causes of these have been the moon, planets, aircraft, weather balloons, reflections from automobile headlights on clouds, etc., and, very rarely, hoaxes. Sometimes the investigation yielded more unusual explanations. We will give two examples.

### **5.1 A Strange Object Crosses a Highway (September 29, 1988)**

#### *GEPAN/SEPRA investigation*

An auto mechanic driving on the Paris-Lille freeway saw an enormous red ball cross the road a few dozen meters away from him and roll down below the road. Casting reflections of light and enveloped in dense smoke, it finally came to a halt in a field. Troubled by this disturbing observation, the auto mechanic apparently reported it to the highway gendarmes. On the chief's orders, the gendarmerie then sealed off the freeway and a zone several kilometers around the object. The principal witness and his family were taken to the hospital, where they underwent a series of examinations. Civilian and military security officers went to the site of the incident, equipped primarily with Geiger counters. At that time, in fact, they were waiting for the Soviet satellite *Cosmos 1900*, which was equipped with a nuclear power generator, to fall, and precise instructions had been given. When consulted, CNES very quickly informed them that *Cosmos 1900* was overflying the Indian Ocean at that very moment. Did the red ball come from space? Advancing with caution, monitoring their nuclear radiation detectors, the security specialists drew near a sphere approximately 1.50 m in diameter. Under the bright light from the searchlights, they saw that it bore no sign of the considerable heat build-up or mechanical effects that atmospheric reentry would have produced. It appeared to be intact, and small mirrors covered its surface. No smoke or radioactivity were detected near it.

It was later learned that this sphere, which was intended to serve as a decoration at a Jean-Michel Jarre concert, had fallen from the truck that was carrying it to London. The