

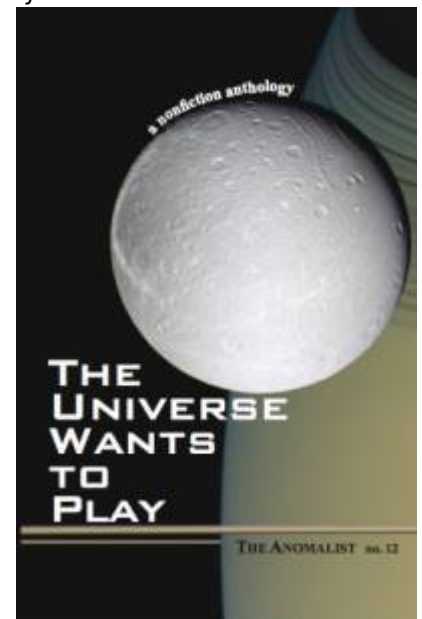
# Rudi Schneider or the Elusive Telekinesis

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In 1924, following the tragic death of Dr. Geley in an airplane crash, Dr. Eugene Osty became the second director of the Institut Métapsychique International, the French equivalent of the Society for Psychical Research founded in England. In 1929 and 1930, Osty conducted around 90 controlled sittings with the then well known Austrian medium Rudi Schneider. For the first time in the history of psychical research, Osty's experiments were not simply seeking to convince others of the reality of psychic phenomena, on the basis of the testimony of famous and honorable scientists or writers, but rather attempting to build an accurate system in order to produce scientific data, and to protect against, and possibly uncover, potentially fraudulent behavior.



By the end of the 1920ies, Eugène Osty was far from his first experiments in so-called "objective" psychic research (the French term "métapsychique objective" was coined by the famous French scientist Charles Richet in his volume *Traité de Métapsychique*, to label the studies of physical phenomena occurring during the Spirit trances). In 1926, Osty had already invited the Polish medium Jean Guzik at the Institut Métapsychique International to carry on a new series of séances. Osty thought necessary to continue the works of his predecessor Gustave Geley, as the controversy about the "Manifeste des 34" and the séances at the Sorbonne in 1923 had left many outstanding questions and aroused a number of frustrations among the specialists. More than that, in 1925, bad news came from Poland : during séances held by the Psychic society in Cracow, a picture had been shot without Guzik's knowledge. The picture showed him with his left hand freed - from any bond - hovering over the table. So, if Guzik ever was a genuine medium, he nevertheless lost his power and had to cheat in order to satisfy the scientists. Was Guzik only a fraud having succeeded in deceiving several French important persons, thus implicated in a great sham? Eugène Osty wanted to get to the bottom of it. Between

March and May 1926 he therefore organized new séances with the Polish medium. Osty succeeded in convincing a physicist, who wished to remain anonymous, to work at the elaboration of a system of photography by ultraviolet rays, so as to seize the phenomena on the spot, in darkness, without upsetting the medium during the séance.

Unfortunately, Guzik's stay in France ended between the séances of demonstration and the settling of the first – inconclusive – tests on the device. Guzik, as a family man, had to get back to Poland because of political disturbances. Anyway, out of the forty or so séances carried out, Osty considered about twenty of them to be “good”, especially the ten first. Unfortunately, they happened to be the “let us see what happens” séances, during which Guzik was only controlled by his hands and legs, and always by two persons, which might have enabled him, just like in Cracow, to get one of his hands free. After those two months and some days of séances, Osty nevertheless claimed to be convinced by the “ideoplastic” phenomena of Jean Guzik, even if he was careful not to bring them out as scientific truths :

*“Guzik left Paris on May the 20th, our projects having not been carried out. Nothing can thus be changed in the public opinion. People will keep on believing or not believing the reality of Guzik's phenomena from the same information. What I was able to witness has confirmed me in the opinion that Guzik, put in a position where he cannot cheat and in adapted conditions is likely to produce paranormal action over matter, but I have no scientific proofs whatsoever enabling me to try and communicate my beliefs to other people.”*

The relative failure of those experiments on a scientific perspective did not discourage the new headchief of the IMI. For some time, he had been hearing about the alleged exceptional séances held by two young Austrian brothers, Willy and Rudi Schneider. In 1923, Baron Von Schrenck-Notzing observed Willy Schneider's gifts in his laboratory and gave a positive echo of them. In 1929, during a lecture at the IMI, the British metapsychist Harry Price gave out the results of several séances organized with the youngest and most discreet of the boys, shy Rudi. It was very probably right after this lecture that Osty decided at his turn to invite Rudi at the Institut Métapsychique to work with him. But before coming to the details of the experiments, one must get a view of the works and personality of Harry Price, whose part would prove essential in what was to soon become “the Schneider Case”...

## **Rudi Schneider and “Uncle Harry”**

Born in London in 1881, Harry Price was first of all enthusiast with occultism, conjuring, and ghost stories. He gradually gathered an impressive collection of works on those subjects : at his death, in 1948, the collection he left to the London University consisted of no less than 18,000 volumes! In 1908, Price married a rich heiress and was then able to completely dedicate himself to his passion, visiting alleged haunted places and meeting spiritualist mediums. He turned famous, thanks to his skeptical enquiry about the well-known spiritualist photographer William Hope, whose pictures showed faces of dead people around the portraits of persons he photographed. Price succeeded in showing that Hope used photographic plates first exposed in order to produce these out-of-the-grave apparitions.

In 1920, Price became a member of the Society for Psychical Research, then he founded in 1923 an independent scientific entity, the National Laboratory for Psychical Research. There he organized séances with a young nurse, Stella Cranshaw, an English emulator of Eusapia Palladino. The table was lifted up on several occasions, sometimes in a violent way, but more than that, from the reports of the fearless researcher, the medium managed to switch on an electric connector placed under a glass bell, pompously named the télékinétoscope. Price appealed to the press without hesitation, often inviting journalists to take part in his enquiries or in the séances held in his laboratory. This kind of constant self-promoting did not suit the leaders of the SPR who considered the NLPR as a kind of rival society, and Harry Price as a researcher who, despite his obvious knowledge, preferred the headlines of newspapers to scientific publications.

In 1929, Price published a long article in the NLPR review, in which he expressed his wish to see all psychic societies gather together on the same ranks and of which, no need to say, he would become the leader. In order to achieve this project, he got in touch with nearly all the European researchers in activity, including Eugène

Osty in Paris, who politely turned down his proposition, as did all the other researchers. The same year, Price made young Rudi Schneider come to London for a series of séances. In order to avoid any attempts at fraud, he had designed a device of electrical control, simple in its principles but complicated in its functioning, from an idea he borrowed from a certain Karl Krall, a fellow worker and friend of Schrenck-Notzing. During the séance, the people taking part had to put on metallic gloves and slippers so tight they were very hard to take off afterwards. The slippers had to be put on metallic bars fixed to the ground, and each person held the hands of their two immediate neighbors, thus enabling the running of a feeble electric current in the circle formed by all of them. As soon as one of them let go a hand or moved away a foot, the circuit would break and a light would signal their position on a control panel. Of course, young Rudi was himself submitted to this control, as well as Harry Price who was alone in charge of the physical control : Facing Rudi, he seized his hands, and stuck his knees between in own legs. The physical control by a single person also allowed to prevent the already famous fraud consisting in having a single hand controlled by two persons, one holding the wrist and the other the fingers of the same hand without knowing it.

In those conditions of control, but almost in darkness, Price got several impressive phenomena inside and around the spiritualist cabinet, while Rudi was placed at a certain distance from this cabinet, near the spectators. As with Eusapia at the beginning of the century, the curtains waved violently, some spectators felt sudden gusts of wind and chilly draughts. On several occasions, a "pseudopode", a kind of half-shaped hand, emerged from the curtains to seize objects lying on the ground. A lean whitish figure, the size of a man, was even observed moving behind the curtains, as Rudi Schneider was still firmly held by Harry Price.

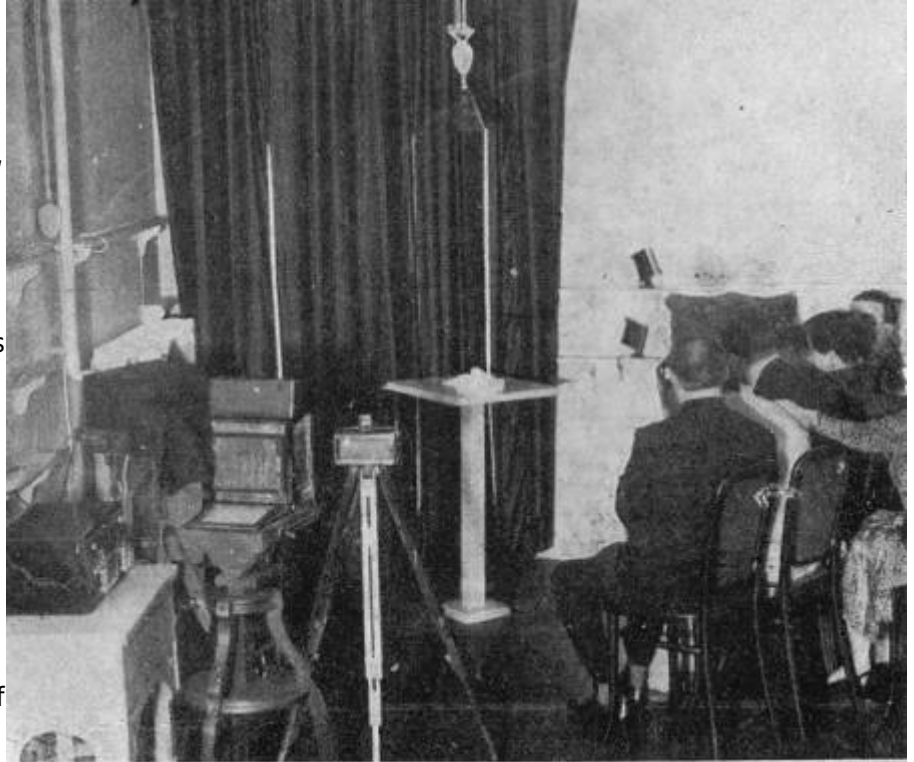
The electrical control system, as ingenious as it seemed, had nevertheless two major defects. On the one hand, it was impossible to the people present to make any gesture without breaking the circuit, making them powerless spectators of the scene. On the other hand, an electric lead would sometimes break or someone would inadvertently move a foot, causing each time a break of at least fifteen minutes necessary to fix back the circuit, with the light back on, causing Rudi to escape from his trance. This system, even if giving the certainty that Rudi could not move his hands or feet, made the séances particularly laborious. Besides, the whole experiment was founded on the supervision and the control of Harry Price alone.

In 1930, after 27 séances, Harry Price published *Rudi Schneider, a Scientific Examination of his Mediumship*. The publication of the book got a nice media coverage, Price having invited journalists to attend the experiments and having challenged the British illusionists : a thousand pounds were to be given to anybody who could reproduce the phenomena certified by the NLPR, under similar circumstances. Nobody took up the challenge, and more than that, in 1929, the illusionist Will Goldston, founder and head of the Magician Club, declared to the Sunday Graphic after having attended one of the séances : *"I am convinced that what I saw was not a fraud. None of my magician fellow workers could have achieved such effects, considering the compulsory conditions."*

It was a media triumph for Harry Price, of which Rudi Schneider certainly did not understand the full extent. Aged barely twenty when he first came to England in 1920, he could not speak a word of English and seemed to particularly shy. He nicknamed the English researcher "Uncle Harry" and trusted him entirely. Besides, he left London just after the publication of the book, to join Eugène Osty in France.

## **The infra-red device build up by Osty**

He arrived in Paris on October 10, 1930, bathed in his Londoner glory, but probably fearing to arrive once again in a country of which he could not speak the tongue. The head of the IMI had developed a radically new method of control for the Austrian medium. With the help of his son Marcel, an engineer, he had designed a device composed of infrared rays, reflected and directed by little mirrors coupled with cameras. The rays surrounded a little table on which were laid various small objects that Rudi would have to move thanks to his alleged telekinesis power. If the medium tried to seize an object with his hand, the infrared rays, invisible to the naked eye even in obscurity, would be suddenly cut, causing a shot to be taken. The great interest of his method lied in the fact that neither the medium nor the



spectators had to be controlled during the séance, which spared the tedious electric control used by Harry Price. This device also allowed to focus the attention on a very precise experimental zone, limited by the rays, with the assumption from the beginning that no peripheral phenomenon would be taken into account.

Some months earlier, Osty had the opportunity of testing the efficiency of his system at the expense of a Polish medium, Stanislaw Popielska. In darkness, as the medium was announcing that the conjured ghost was about to produce a phenomenon, Osty pressed on the shutter release on his camera. The picture showed Stanislaw, freed from her bonds, stretching her arm over the table to seize the object her medium power was supposed to levitate! The picture of the medium caught in the act was later published in the November-December 1930 issue of the *Revue Métapsychique*. It was published with the account, by Osty, of the reactions caused by the discovery of the fraud. A good friend of the medium, who came along with her to Paris, begged of Osty that he did not publish the picture for it would "cause prejudice to psychic research" and because the medium's husband, a convinced skeptic, could get the idea of murdering his wife if he came to know about the fraud! The husband, left in Poland, far from harbouring ideas of murders, gave his own explanation of the picture, summed up by the Osty in these words :

*"If a hand was seen out of the bonds, it is because the bonds happened to have dematerialized, a phenomenon he [the husband] was convinced that eminent Polish psychics could attest the reality of, and that he would ask the Court to take these psychics as arbitrators."*

## First séances with Rudi Schneider at the IMI

The séances with Rudi Schneider started on October, 11, 1930, on the day after his arrival in France. Before entering the room, Rudi was undressed and dressed with pajamas bearing fluorescent stripes on the sleeves and trousers. He then sat facing Eugène Osty, hands and feet controlled by him, just like with Harry Price the months before. Next to them, some people present were sitting in a line. On a high table, about one meter distant from Rudi and behind him, a white handkerchief, a flower and a bell were laid. During the first séances which point was to "see" how the medium "worked", the table was not yet covered by the infrared rays. The point was mainly to observe Rudi's behavior. A weak adjustable orange-coloured light, coming from the ceiling covered the table and its surroundings. Osty told Rudi to intercede with "Olga", the spirit meant to inhabit his body during the trance, in order to make her seize the objects. To follow her movements in the darkness, the

usual curtains of the spiritualist cabinet were adorned with fluorescent stripes on their borders and little bell at the bottom. Because of translation problems, Osty did not judge necessary to explain to Rudi the exact nature of the controls. The young Austrian only knew that he was again the subject of concern of scientists wishing to witness strange phenomena.

Rudi was then inhabited by the spirit of "Olga". At times, she said she was Lola Montes, an adventurer who had her hour of glory in America, performing episodes of her own life on stage. But whenever asked precise questions about Lola Montes, she was never able to give the right answers, as Schrenck-Notzing had noticed before. According to Osty, it could only be a real spirit, but rather a second personality emerging thanks to the séances, issued from what he called the "cryptic conscience" of Rudi.

The difference of mood and personality was obvious between Rudi, a very shy young man, and his double Olga, quite an inconsiderate lady, resembling Eusapia's "John King". She used to ask the people present to create a joyous atmosphere, to have fun, to hum songs or to talk of this and that. She sometimes stopped the séance to demand people to change places. She even sometimes asked people she disliked to leave. Olga usually required a break after a fifteen or twenty minutes wait, so as for Rudi to take some rest before turning to more serious issues. Then, an entire hour could pass before anything happened, waiting with songs and Olga's regular promises for the appearance of phenomena.

During the trance, Rudi's physical and nervous state gradually transformed. His trance turned into a very intense, quick and automatic breathing, until the end of the séance. His breathing was often compared to the noise of a train engine. During the séance, Rudi remained prostrated, leaning against his controller. He was sometimes shook by sudden nervous moves and streaming with sweat. At the beginning of the twenties, during the body search at the end of the séances, Schrenck-Notzing reported finding seminal liquid inside the young boy's pants. But Osty did not make any particular comment on that strange matter.

The first séances with Rudi at the IMI led to a mixed result, very far from the brilliant medium display observed so far, even if some discreet phenomena happened anyway. During the third séance, the people present observed what looked like a "dense grayish fog" coming out of the curtains on the floor, then reaching the table before disappearing quickly. During the fifth séance, the table was moved a distance of about twenty centimeters under the eyes of the persons present who also heard it creaking. During the tenth séance, the curtains softly undulated, making their little bells ring. At the twelfth séance, they moved again, then swelled until they reached the table, pushing it and eventually knocking it over. Finally, during the thirteenth séance, the curtains moved lightly again. Nevertheless, Rudi remained perfectly visible in the red light, sitting on his chair, in his fluorescent outfit. For Osty, this was a high disappointment. The objects on the tables were never moved, despite Olga's constant assertions that "the Force" was about to seize them. The shy moves of the curtains were nothing compared to the violent gusts attested by Schrenck-Notzing or Harry Price. What was wrong with Rudi? The archives of the IMI show a correspondence between Osty and the Austrian Gera Walther, who was Schrenck-Notzing's secretary until his death in 1929. Gerda knew Rudi and his family very well. On November 28, 1930, Osty wrote :

*"It is true that Rudi Schneider, in a bad period of mediumship, has given the Institut only two positive séances (a telekinesis, a vision of a mass the aspect of fog, the moving of a table). But they were enough, considering the seriousness of the control, to give me the complete assurance that Rudi S. is really gifted with the powers of a medium. I claim this with my mind perfectly at ease. Photographic records of the phenomena, by the way of invisible rays, have not been made yet, for we wish the medium to get acquainted to the place and things, and because the phenomena have been too rare."*

## **Occurrences of the "Invisible force"**

Osty decided to send Rudi back home in Braunau, Austria, for the Christmas and New Year celebrations. Before he left, probably upset by the head of the IMI's disappointment, the young medium insisted to carry on a new séance on the 10th of November. None of the classical phenomena happened, but, for the first time, Osty set his infrared rays and cameras control system. A new high table was set, screw to the floor, with only the white handkerchief on it. The séance started at 10.35 pm. At 10.45, Olga announced that she was about to create a phenomenon that could be photographed. At 10.48, she said that "the force" was "going from the cabinet to the table". A moment later, the first flash of magnesium was lighting the room. Olga explained that the sudden light prevented her from lifting the handkerchief, and asked for Rudi to take a rest. The séance started again at 11.30. At 11.52, Olga told the assistance that the séance would have to go on, whatever state of tiredness Rudi experienced. A second flash of magnesium. Some minutes later, Rudi came out from his trance and the séance was put off.



When Eugène Osty developed the two clichés, he faced very ordinary scenes. The people present were on their seats, Rudi was visible, prostrated, his back facing the table, the mirrors reflecting the rays were in their right place... and the handkerchief was still on the table. What then made the cameras work at the precise moments when Olga was stating that "the Force" was about to act? Osty suggested a possibility:

*"As soon as the people were gone, we checked our devices to look for the reason of possible spontaneous degradations of the magnesium. We found nothing. The whole system, very well put to the test before the séance, seemed to be perfectly working after the séance. We are thinking that Rudi, in his most of the time useless efforts to lift objects by a psycho-physical work, might exteriorize a substantial kind of energy - what he calls "the Force" - too subtle to be photographed, and which presence in the infrared rays absorbs enough of their radiance to trigger the automatism leading to the deflagration of the magnesium."*

On the following day, a new séance took place, but this time, in order to avoid being interrupted by sudden flashes of magnesium, the rays were associated with a bell, very much like the ones used on phones at the time. The ringing was set to be working as long as the rays would be "absorbed" - that is to say as long as their intensity would lower under at least 30 percent of their initial value. Osty kept the control on the cameras thanks to a switch.

The séance started at 3.45 p.m. Nine minutes passed before the phenomenon of the day before came back. When Olga announced that the Force was coming close to the handkerchief, the bell rang. At the second ringing, Osty took a picture. The séance started again at 4.19. The bell ring again many times, up to 44 seconds in a row, and always whenever Olga was telling that the Force was coming to or from the table. After a while, Olga offered that the table be unscrewed, promising that she would be able to lift it. The séance started again at 5.30. It was arranged with Olga that she would warn the audience herself as to when to take the picture.

- 5.41 : Olga-Rudi : "The Force is coming out." Ringing for 5 seconds, then brief pauses during 27, 3, 12, 18 seconds.)
- Olga-Rudi : "I will try to lift the table." The ringing goes on for 100 seconds, while Doctor Osty awaits the agreed sign to deflagrate the magnesium.
- 5.46 : Olga-Rudi : "Hold tight with the chain of hands, the Force is about to become quite big." At once, a 52 seconds ringing. New announcement of coming out of Force, new prolonged ringing. As, while the bell is ringing, the subject is groaning in an exceptional way, with strong shaking, he is asked whether it is the

time to take a picture, in case he has forgotten. He answers yes, quite weakly. A flash of magnesium. The ringing is at once less strong, but only stops 2 seconds after the flash.

- Olga-Rudi : "The Force cannot resist the light, it suddenly goes in the cabinet then out of it."

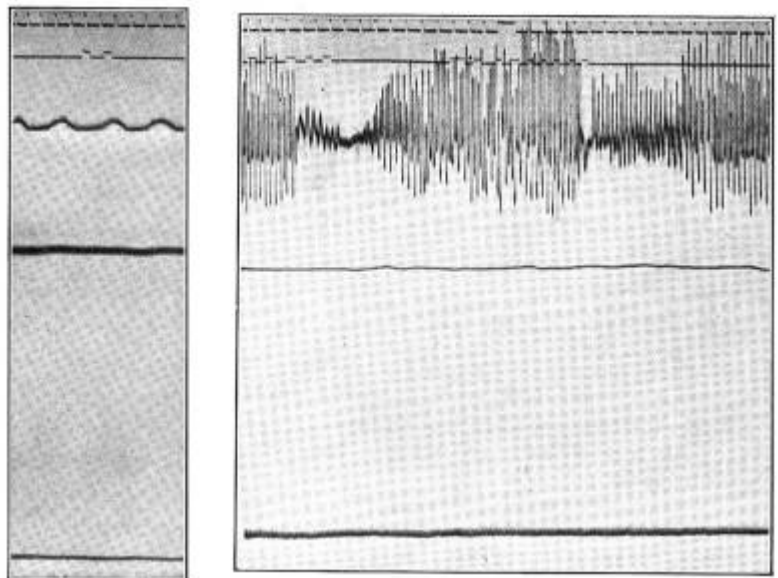
On this day, the table did not levitate. Neither during the 77 séances that would follow from January 1931. Nevertheless, Eugène Osty thought he had revealed the famous "psychic Force" observed by Crookes about sixty years before, in the meantime renamed "telekinesis" by Charles Richet. Even if not visible on photographs, the Force could anyway absorb infrared rays it went through when coming out of the spiritualist cabinet curtains. According to Osty, the discovery was all the more convincing since young Rudi ignored the nature of the control he was submitted to. On November, 4, 1930, Rudi finally came back from Austria. On January, 12, 1931, Gerda Walther wrote to Osty :

*"Between Christmas and the New Year, Rudi gave some very lovely séances in Braunau, which I witnessed. I am sending you a report of two of them, written for the Austrian paper Das Neue Licht. After my departure, there was a Farewell séance for Major Kalifius who happened to be in Braunau for some days. I was told that this séance was impressive. So I hope that the new séances in Paris, starting now, will be much stronger than the ones of last year."*

During the whole year 1931, Doctor Osty carried on his séances with Rudi Schneider. He performed 77 of them, amounting to no less than 93, considering the first ones that were not recorded and during which the "psychic energy" was revealed. It is probably the longest series to which a medium has ever been submitted to. Wishing to be sure that the Force was clearly confined to a place, Osty then made modifications in his system, creating two independent sources of rays instead of a single one. One of the rays came in front of the table, the other behind. Under those conditions, several séances allowed to check that, for example, when Olga announced that "the Force is coming out from the curtains and to the table", it was indeed the ray closer to the curtains that was absorbed, and not the one in front of the table.

Then, Osty interested himself to the maximum rate of absorption by the ray when the Force crossed it. He obtained a maximum value of 70 to 75 percent of the initial intensity. The infrared ray was then never completely cut, as it would have been if a solid and opaque substance had crossed it. It rather seemed to be stopped by a vaporous obstacle, a kind of gas or invisible smoke, condensing or expanding following Olga's directions. It was also noticed that a smoke as dense as a cigarette smoke was needed to repeat a similar absorption.

During the following séances, Osty's efforts mainly focused on Rudi's physiological state. He first noticed that the occurrences of the psychic Force always came with strong muscular tensing ; then he took some interest in Rudi's hyperpnea, this abnormal increase in the depth and rate of breathing, recalling a steaming engine or the frantic panting of an animal. While in normal state, Rudi breathed about twenty times a minute. While in trance, he could reach as quick as 350 breathings, and was able to keep this rhythm for almost one hour. Hyperpnea, by a sudden flow of oxygen to the brain, causes dizzy spells and fainting fits. But for Rudi, the hyperventilation lasted for a very long time, and he finally got used to it after a few minutes.



In order to study the link between this atypical breathing and the emission of the Force, Osty placed an extensible cloth belt on Rudi's chest, linked to a cylinder-shaped Marey drum, so as to obtain precise graphics of his respiratory amplitude. During the same séances, the absorptions of rays were recorded on other graphics. Osty found out that the Force was changing in strength, following Rudi's breathings. Its intensity, at its strongest just after the inspiration, went down during the exhalation. Then the possibility of a narrow link between

overoxygenation, a constant muscular tension, and the coming of the Force. These observations led Osty to consider three hypotheses :

*“Considered as a whole, the human body is a tank and a transformer of surrounding energy. When a being like Rudi Schneider produces a form of energy of an exceptional biological kind, one has to think that he is doing nothing else than operating an exceptional transformation of his inner energy. From which part of his body does it come? This will have to be answered in order to reach the truth as soon as possible, starting from hypotheses suggested by facts, and judging of their value by means of experimentation. The recordings made during the séances raised three main hypotheses :*

- *The energy coming out is issued from the central nervous system put to a functional overexcitement by the hyperpnea, and so the abnormal muscular activation is only a sign of the excessive nerve impulse.*
- *The muscle structure in a body is the biological factory supplying the matter brought back to elementary forms of energy by the mind, sending it out in new forms adapted to unusual purposes.*
- *The third hypothesis puts together the two previous ones, considering that the cryptal consciousness uses the hyperpnea to bring the central nervous system to an overexcitement able to produce the release of usable energies in the muscle structure, these energies usable outside the body.*

Thanks to his observations on Rudi Schneider, Eugène Osty is probably one of the first psychic researchers to have tried to model telekinesis, and find a rational explanation to it. The law of the universe says that nothing is created, nothing is lost, everything is transforming. Is it possible that the “psychic force” is issued from an enigmatic nervous or muscular work producing enough energy for apparently incredible phenomena? In the beginning of the thirties, this way of research initiated by Osty seemed promising. Unfortunately, the never-ending controversies about psychic research would soon come back to light and seal the end of an era.

At the approach of Summer 1931, Rudi Schneider went back to Austria once again. He was meant to come back to Paris in October, Osty wishing to go on with the séances in order to better understand the link between the medium respiratory rhythm and the absorption of the infrared rays. During his stay in Braunau, Rudi held several séances with Gelda Walther and Harry Price. At this time, Osty had already published the results of his experiments in the *Revue Métapsychique* and Harry Price had already heard about them. On August 31, 1931, Gerda Walther wrote to Osty to inform him that “two very nice séances” had taken place in Braunau with Price among the attendants. The English researcher apparently offered Rudi to go to England:

*“Rudi does not seem very eager to accept Mr. Price’s invitation to go to London in September; it is then highly improbable that he will go. I hope you have made some lovely improvements with your report of the experiments with Rudi and that you will have nice phenomena when he comes to Paris next October.”*

Rudi indeed went back to Paris for some new séances until December. At the beginning of 1932, Osty and his son presented their work in a book entitled *Les pouvoirs inconnus de l’esprit sur la matière. Premières étapes d’une recherche.* (The Unknown Powers of Mind over Matter : First Steps of a Research). But at the same time, the Institut Métapsychique had to face important financial problems. The support of Rudi Schneider for a whole year had cost a lot of money and the donors and sponsors were beginning to be hard to find. In the last issue of 1930 of the *Revue Métapsychique* an article entitled “Help us” was calling for the readers’ generosity to put up the money for new equipment. In January 1932, Eugène Osty had to tell Rudy – who had been in Austria for the New Year – that the IMI would have to stop the study of his mediumship, because of money problems. The following month, Rudi met up his “Uncle Harry” in London.

## **Rudi Schneider Exposed!**

Before Rudi’s arrival, Harry Price had received a confidential letter from his French fellow researcher. In May and June 1931, Miss Mitzi Mantl (or Mangl), Rudi’s young fiancée, took part in some séances during which no noticeable phenomenon was recorded. Nevertheless, the ambiguous behavior of the young woman had quickly become suspicious to Osty and his colleagues. On January 15, 1932, Eugène Osty warned Harry Price:

*"If I remember correctly, you had the idea of making his girlfriend come to London to. It is because of this recollection that I am writing this letter, asking you that it remains confidential. I would like to give you the advice of not letting the young lady attend the séances. When there are no phenomena, she will try to provoke them and will. You could meet some disappointment and unpleasant incidents. She was in Paris in May and June. We did not want her to come in October. I nearly told Rudi about the danger there was for him to make such a compromising person attend the séances. In the end, I thought I might upset him and so I did not. Was I wrong? But I wanted to warn you so that you would be able to take potential measures. Rudy is an honest boy whose control is very safe and who accepts every kind of control. The girl has tried to make us take some of her cheatings for real phenomena, which was quite useless because we were only relying on what was happening within a space where cheating was impossible."*

From February to May 1932, Harry Price organized 27 new séances with Rudi Schneider, in a room of his National Laboratory for Psychical Research. But despite Osty's warning, he chose to invite Rudi's fiancée to attend those new séances. This time, Schneider's coming was largely covered by the British papers. The séances consisted in a reproduction of the infrared rays system invented by Osty. The system was then perfected by Professor C. L. Gregory, the Head of the Department of astronomy of London University. Out of the new séances, eight turned out to be completely fruitless, but during the nineteen others, the attested phenomena were similar to the ones reported by Osty. Then again, the infrared rays were interrupted at the precise moment when Olga-Rudi announced the actual action of the Force.

Cameras placed at several places in the laboratory took pictures very much like the ones Osty had taken the previous year. Some of them even showed the handkerchief placed on the high table at the moment when it was clearly sliding on it - as if pulled or pushed by an invisible force...

By this time, The Society for Psychic Research, having taken interest in the young Austrian since the publication of Osty's results, got in touch with him to hold new séances, independently of those organized by Price. This invitation did not please the latter, who had known for some years about the severity with which the SPR members judged the whiff of scandal of his public stands. In 1931, once again, Price had tried in vain to convince the SPR members to merge their society with his national Laboratory. He also now had some reason to bear Eugène Osty a grudge too. Not only had the head of the IMI politely declined his offer to merge the two societies in 1929, but also, since Osty's discovery of a psychic force emanating from Rudi's body, Price's previous works with the medium had been put behind the scenes.

From May 1932, a controversy broke out between several searchers of the SPR and Harry Price himself in the columns of the Times about the recent séances at the NLPR. At the same moment, Price sent several letters to Rudi's father in Austria to make him persuade his son to turn down the invitation of the members of the SPR. In a "personal and strictly confidential" letter he addressed to Rudi himself, Price went as far as explicitly threatening him: *"You would regret it all your life"*.

In spite of those insistent warnings, Rudi agreed to work with the SPR. New séances were organized between October and December 1932 under the protection of Lord Charles Hope. They confirmed again, even if less obviously, the strange phenomenon of absorption of the infrared rays. But the publication of these works in the Proceedings of the SPR followed a sensational article, written some weeks before by Harry Price in his own review, on March 5 1933.. in such haste that he even chose not to warn the other members of his society about this article!

In this text, Price disclosed an incriminating picture, taken during a séance on the 28th of April 1932. Rudi's left arm, freed from its controller, was stretched behind his back, as if the medium was trying to seize the handkerchief on the table! But the picture was quite hazy and the circumstances in which it was taken seemed very strange. According to Price, it looked like a double exposure, two pictures printed on the same glass plate, because of a functioning problem of the camera at the time of the shot. The figures were indeed doubled, including Rudi's, clearly visible in his pajamas, leaning toward his controller... being Price himself.



Another strange detail: as for Rudi's hand, it could not be seen emerging from his sleeve. On his stead was a black patch in which the border of the sleeve seemed to have merged. Yet, nothing hid the border of the sleeve and no shadow seemed to explain this blind patch... Furthermore, Price explained that on this day, the camera broke down and he could not get a second picture of the same scene, as he did for every other picture at the time. Finally, the "proof" was only published one year after the séance, at the moment when, by chance, the results of the series of experiments at the SPR were disclosed. Yet, in the meantime, Price took a stand several times to defend the excellency of his séances with Rudi Schneider, without ever mentioning any doubt on the quality of his control.

Anita Gregory, a historian of the SPR who wrote a whole book on The Rudi Schneider case, was not mistaken. She expressed serious doubts about the authenticity of the picture, raised questions as to the circumstances of the shot, and about the exact part Price wanted it to play. Checking the records of the researcher in the library of the university of London, she has discovered among others, the original print of the famous cliché, far sharper than the copies shown in papers in 1933. She also raised a very singular detail about Rudi's feet : their position did not match the rest of his body. According to her, Price had deliberately tried to make a forgery from several existing pictures so as to discredit his protégé and to damage the reputation of the SPR...



Could Harry Price give up Harry Schneider for such a petty goal, in a complete fabrication? This hypothesis is not as absurd as it seems, considering that Price was suspected of forgery in another case. In 1929, the psychic researcher had made an enquiry about a haunted monastery in ruins allegedly haunted, the Borley Rectory. When he came back on the scene with a journalist fifteen years later, in 1944, he wrote a book about the enigma of this famous haunting. During their visit, a mysterious "flying brick" was photographed by the journalist. It would come to light later, that Price, hidden behind a half shattered wall, had thrown the brick himself!

So apparently Harry Price did not hesitate to give some help to facts according to his interests. His disconcerting way of accusing Rudi Schneider could account for the fact that he might have forged the incriminating picture himself. Nevertheless, the secret reasons of this accusation were far from being as obvious in 1933 as they would be later on. At the time, the discovery of a photograph "proving" an attempt at cheating by the most famous medium led European psychic research in a series of controversies in media, that it would have avoided with pleasure. In April 1933, Eugène Osty published in the "Revue Métapsychique" a long article entitled "The Strange Behavior of Mr. Harry Price", in which the head of the IMI, usually so diplomatic, did not hide his feelings toward Price anymore.

*"As long as Mr. Price was unmasking false mediums and established hoaxes, I thought it a duty to back him in the Revue Métapsychique, as I am one of those people who think that mythomaniacs have to be put out of our way, and that psychic research has nothing to fear of those repercussions. But today, I cannot bear to see a genuine medium, submitted to the most rigorous controls being the victim of a mania of exhibition and of a childish hatred toward the Society for Psychical research."*

Osty joined a note to his article, written by Professor Jules Bois, who was at the time head of the National

Laboratory for Psychical Research founded by Price. Bois made clear that no member of the NLPR was consulted before the publication of the upsetting picture, which was by the way completely unknown to them. Price acted alone, without a preliminary consultation of the directing committee. Besides, several members of the organization who attended the séance of the 28th of April 1932, took a stand against Price in the English papers. They claimed to have no recollection of the event witnessed by the questionable shot and could not explain Price's so sudden change of mind, as he had until then always defended the authenticity of the phenomena and the quality of the controls on Rudi Schneider during the NLPR séances.

The young Austrian was put to the test by the SPR a last time between October 1933 and March 1934. This time, the 54 séances revealed entirely negative. Not once were the rays troubled, in spite of Rudi-Olga's allegations on the action of the psychic "Force". As often in the study of mediums, when there are no results, the failure was explained by the gradual disappearance of the medium's psychic talent, a very convenient but less convincing explanation. The same year, during séances held in Austria, the SPR investigators were able to admire some impressive phenomena of telekinesis with the same Rudi...

The controversy around Rudi Schneider, Harry Price's complex personality, Eugène Osty's perseverance (nearly a hundred séances were organized in one year!), his questionable but nevertheless upsetting study of the "Psychic Force", all these elements were emblematic of the situation of psychic research in the beginning of the 1930ies. Rudi Schneider was the last of the "great mediums" on whom researchers had placed so many hopes. After him, European research seemed to mark time, as if exhausted by controversy and deceived hopes.

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- Extracts of personal letters by Gerta Walther and Eugène Osty are taken from the Archives of the Institut Métapsychique International of Paris.

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