

Carnival ball sets off satellite alert

Paris
A BIG silver ball sparked an alert in northern France that a rogue Soviet satellite had plunged to Earth — but it turned out to be just a fair-ground decoration.

Firemen in radiation-proof clothing yesterday rushed to examine the object, which was found by a garage owner in a field, and police closed two main motorways for about an hour.

But the alarm was called off when it proved to be a polystyrene fairground ball.

"It was a large polystyrene ball about two metres in diameter which had fallen from a

lorry," a gendarme said at the scene near the intersection of the Paris-Brussels and the Paris-Lille motorways.

Authorities were initially convinced that the object was part of the Cosmos satellite as France lies on its possible re-entry path. The satellite has been drifting around the Earth for several months.

French scientists, who have been monitoring the satellite from a tracking centre in Toulouse, have predicted the satellite will fall about Thursday.

The Soviet Union has denied there will be any danger of radiation from the satellite. — NZPA-Reuter

Dominion (Wgtn., NZ) 2/10/88

P. Hassall