

# THE CASE OF THE TIN FROM CAMPINAS

BY DR. ROLF WEBER

Dr Weber is a native of Basle, Switzerland. He graduated in Chemistry and Physical Chemistry in 1940 at the University of Berne. He then undertook a number of research assignments in various Swiss laboratories. Included among these was research in the technology of plastics and in the chemical conditions of schizophrenia at the Mental Hospital at Basle. During the last few years he has been a member of a chemical research group at the University of Basle and adviser on problems of physics, technology and mathematics.

In this article Dr Weber issues a challenge and asks a number of pertinent questions. The FLYING SAUCER REVIEW is willing to open its columns to anybody who can answer his questions satisfactorily and is as anxious as Dr Weber to be able to put forward such an incontrovertible piece of evidence before the most critical of scientific opinion.

IN an article by an anonymous writer entitled "The Proof we Waited for" (the REVIEW, in its issue Vol. 3, No. 5, 1957) readers were told of a special kind of tin which had showered down on earth from a UFO and which was later—so it is stated—analysed by the scientists. This was indeed something we had waited for! But nothing ever came out of it. Why?

There is the possibility that the report in the REVIEW was inexact and, if so, I have to apologise here and now for the rather serious accusations I am going to raise against the persons involved. But if the story did happen the way it was described it truly represents a test-case of how a pseudo-scientific diletantism may become the cause of missing one of the best occasions we ever had to prove the extraordinary origin of material, said to have fallen out of a flying saucer! But let me recapitulate. We were told that near Campinas, in Brazil, a shower of molten metal fell to earth from a UFO. Some of the material was collected on the spot. It looked like tin, partly burned into oxide. The metal was analysed and pronounced to be tin indeed, but of extreme purity and, on top of this, of a specific weight differing from the specific weight of ordinary tin (10.4 instead of the normal 7.2).

The fact that the metal came down from a

UFO is in itself very remarkable; but in this article my only concern is with the power of proving the extraordinary origin of these scraps of metal. As to the extreme degree of purity, this is no longer a valid proof, since in recent years we have learned how to produce metals of utmost purity. But, *a piece of metal, identified as tin, yet possessing a specific weight of 10.4* would be something entirely new and unheard-of, even in our epoch of nuclear physics and isotopes. The very existence of such a specimen might well be called "impossible" by conventional science, as "impossible" as the assumption that there *is* anti-gravitation or that our moon's hidden side is green and habitable.

Therefore, the fact of the higher specific weight of the metal found at Campinas might—in connection with all other data—indeed represent almost an objective proof for its extra-terrestrial origin, although we may be sure that some people would try hard to conventionalise such evidence. But beyond any doubt we had (and missed) with the Case of the Tin from Campinas a possibility to bring it to the knowledge of the scientific public which would have been very important. And the particular communication could have been made *without any mention of flying saucers*, still suspected to be a phenomenon caused by mass hysteria.

If such a correct and clever approach had been made the metal would have been tested in some scientific laboratory. And such a report coming from a reliable source, describing scientific research carried out with this metal, would have had to be accepted and published by important periodicals such as *Nature* or *Science*. The impact of such a report would have been great indeed. And there would have been no immediate need to mention where the tin had come from: the scientists' interest would have turned automatically towards outer space for the simple reason that there is no other place to turn to when dealing with metal of a differing specific weight.

No such scientific report ever appeared. And this is why we feel we have the right to question the procedure of this case. Did the persons involved do their very best with this first-rate and golden opportunity? We were told in this article that the metal's purity was put to the precipitation test. This is a test-tube experiment every chemist knows and which may be carried out in any school laboratory. With the precipitation test a relatively rare purity of any material can well be established, but to make the statement that its purity is of an exceptional degree one would need a far more modern process, such as spectrographic analysis. No clear statement was made in the article of such a test ever having been carried out, whereas the simple chemical tests were explained in some detail.

The testing of the specific weight of any material can easily be accomplished with a simple laboratory outfit. Every teacher of chemistry knows how to do it. After having checked his first findings he would for safety's sake carry the test through a second time, and if he obtained the same result as before *he would then know beyond any doubt that in front of him on the table was a curiosity which might well prove to bring about a scientific revolution*. This piece of metal could not possibly exist within the sphere of our present knowledge.

If the man was a normal scientist, endowed with the usual professional learning, intelligence and honesty, and also with some scientific integrity, he could not but try everything in his power to inform the scientific world about this complete novelty. He also would soon realise the urgent need for further tests and research work on the piece of metal which he himself would not be able to fulfill. Co-operation between specialised laboratories would be organised, for example an attempt should be made to establish the atomic weight of the specimen with the means of a mass spectrograph. In this way the

tiny piece of metal would open the gates of many otherwise inaccessible research institutes to the investigator. Furthermore, if the man was only moderately well informed about the UFO research story he would know better than to hand out all his material to any other person; in all probability he would also provide by legal action that he was entitled to receive a full scientific report from any further investigator.

If the Campinas case happened just the way it was described nobody could spare the persons involved the reproach that they had made a mess of a very fine opportunity. Indeed, if somebody had deliberately wanted to harm UFO research he could not have done much better than, first, to apply the described dilettantism in dealing with the investigation and, secondly, to publish the story in UFO publications only, read by a handful of people without any influence in the scientific world. Even if the first-hand publication in the REVIEW was intended to give UFO enthusiasts a treat it would have been much more important to our common aim to influence the report's publication in periodicals of accepted scientific standard, such as *Science*, in the U.S.A., *Nature*, in Britain, *Naturwissenschaften*, in Germany, and *Experientia*, in Switzerland.

Finally, I want to put some questions to all persons involved in the investigation of the tin from Campinas:

1. What other tests than those described in the REVIEW article were carried out with the metal scraps?
2. Was there difficulty in trying to get the metal tested by spectroscopic means, X-rays or other means of analysis?
3. Was it difficult to get the test results and to use them for publication in scientific periodicals?
4. What quantity of the tin is still available and in whose possession are the samples?
5. Would the present owners of such samples prefer:
  - (a) to make the effectual steps in order to have them submitted to a thorough scientific investigation and to look after proper publication of the result obtained?
  - (b) to let the Editor of the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW act as a trustee and to put in his charge the proper conduct of the investigation?
  - (c) to keep the samples to themselves?
6. Did the holders of the samples encounter obstruction when trying to publish the results obtained?