

# "VON DÄNIKENITIS": A TONIC FOR SUFFERERS

Janet & Colin Bord

## THE SPACE GODS REVEALED

by Ronald Story. Published in the UK by New English Libraries, 1977.

IN our younger days, the history that was taught at school consisted principally of the political manoeuvres of the British nobility and the rise and fall of successive monarchs. Any mention of other countries was largely coincidental, and the early civilisations and enigmatic remains in various parts of the world were generally ignored by the teachers, and therefore unknown to the pupils. It may be because of this educational background that such writers as Erich von Däniken have been able to thrive, offering an ill-digested mishmash of misleading and inaccurate information, wild speculations and unfounded assumptions to a readership eager for knowledge but ignorant of the most fundamental discoveries and researches.

Ronald Story sets out to restore the balance in this detailed analysis of von Däniken's Ancient Astronaut writings, basing his arguments mainly on von Däniken's first book *Chariots of the Gods?* In chapters 1-13 he methodically dismembers von Däniken's vapourings, devoting whole chapters to such subjects as Ancient Astronauts and the Bible, the Piri Re'is Map, the Nazca Lines, Easter Island, Egyptian Pyramids, the Palenque 'Astronaut', and other favourite hobby-horses of Erich's. He also quotes an article from *Der Spiegel* magazine in which the South American explorer Juan Moricz stated flatly that in his book *Gold of the Gods* von Däniken had lied about him and about their visit to vast underground caves. In this same article local archaeologists were quoted who testified that the fabulous ancient gold artifacts discovered by von Däniken were actually recent native work and made of brass.

Throughout his careful analysis, Story answers von Däniken's speculations point by point, showing how the simple but ingenious solutions of earlier men could solve problems that von Däniken states could only have been solved by superhuman space gods.

Although the arch-advocate of the Ancient Astronaut theory, von Däniken has never taken any interest in the contemporary UFO scene,+ and so chapter 14 in Story's book seems to be an entirely gratuitous exercise in UFO debunking. Perhaps after such sterling efforts he wanted to ride one of his own hobby-horses (or perhaps the publishers asked for more material to pad out what is still a fairly slim book). Whatever the reason, the UFO phenomenon is dismissed after a cursory examination of some early contactees and other "cultists," though his final paragraph allows that an open mind with scepticism should be maintained.

The really interesting aspect of the whole von Däniken phenomenon is examined in eight brief pages at the end of the book. This is not the question of what von Däniken wrote, but how he was able to

achieve such a huge effect with such a load of old hogwash. The whole phenomenon of the Ancient Astronaut theories and writings could provide a fascinating thesis for some aspiring Ph.D., but that of course would be another book. None the less, Ronald Story has done an efficient and convincing job in his exposure of the von Däniken myth. His text is supported by a foreword by Carl Sagan and numerous photographs and diagrams, and there is an index and a list of source notes. As his central argument is founded on the fact that too many people know too little about ancient cultures, a comprehensive book list guiding his readers to reliable sources of information would have been appreciated by many, though admittedly there are a few useful books mentioned in the text. Valuable reading for all those who are convalescing from von Dänikenitis.

+ This is a strange aspect of many writers on the Ancient Astronauts theme - one wonders why, if they accept visits from "space gods" in the distant past, they seem reluctant to countenance such visits today. Could it be that current UFO reports don't confirm their "gods from the sky" theories?

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