

The Loch Ness Monster

AN OLD FRIEND

THE Loch Ness Monster will need no introduction to students of flying saucers: it used to be dragged in by the sceptics as a sort of gigantic red herring to disprove the reality of the UFOs. The argument went something like this: "Eye-witnesses are totally unreliable. They say they have seen the Loch Ness Monster (which doesn't exist) and now they claim to have seen flying saucers. Therefore, flying saucers don't exist." It is, in fact, the logic that doesn't exist and, in any case, the premise is at fault. Who could say with finality that Loch Ness contained no strange animal? All the evidence pointed to the fact that there was such an animal (or could it be a machine?).

The latest of several publications about the elusive monster has just been published. It is by Tim Dinsdale and has been issued by Routledge (21s.). The book contains a still from the film taken by the author and shown on B.B.C. T.V. It showed a rhythmic splashing forward, which is strongly suggestive of powerful paddles in action.

The book was reviewed in the *London Observer* on May 28 and a very fair review it is. Its conclusion is worth quoting. Here is what it says: "If I am correct in believing that science has more to do with an attitude of mind than with a body of dogmas or even of knowledge, then I will go further and say that there is more hope for science in the enthusiastic amateurism of Dinsdale and their like than there is in the institutionalised professionalism, the petrified respectability, the abject deference to authority, the unreasoning fear of Press ridicule, the tender regard for tenderer reputations, and the yearnings toward the nomination lists at Burlington House which have kept zoologists well away from Loch Ness this last thirty years. There is no shame in honest investigation; there is, in the present context, more to commend in Mr. Dinsdale's errors than there is in all the zoological establishment's learning. I am sure that Bates and Belt, Gosse and Darwin and Wallace would have agreed with me, and I am quite positive that the founders of the Royal Society would have."

Brave words and true. And they were written by no mad heretic. The writer of the review from which we have quoted was Denys W. Tucker, D.Sc. The case against orthodox science could

not have been better stated. And all Mr. Tucker's words apply equally well to the subject of UFOs.

The publicity given to our old friend produced a series of letters in the *London Daily Telegraph* on the subject of the Loch Ness and other monsters. Professor C. E. Carrington, Professor of Commonwealth Relations, on June 17 contributed a most interesting dissertation on the question of belief and disbelief. "When I look into my own mind," he wrote, "I observe a strong desire to believe in these monsters, however impossible, if I possibly could. On the other hand, I notice that some of my friends are equally inclined to disbelieve, and for them any kind of pseudo-rational explanation will serve. Why, they say, it's a floating log or a mass of decayed vegetation or a family of otters or anything that will evaporate the mystery and reduce it to dull matter-of-fact. All the positive accounts I have read from Loch Ness are weak by the rules of evidence, but the counter-blasts are much weaker. The explanations explain nothing. What we have here is a psychological problem. The believers and the unbelievers move along parallel lines which never meet. . . . The other group is that of professional zoologists who timidly keep their fingers out of the pie. How distressing it would be if there were some creature in the loch which they have been ignorant of. Why are they *not* interested? This, too, is a psychological problem. . . . I am not writing about Loch Ness, but about credulity. I might have written a similar letter about flying saucers or wolf-children or poltergeists."

We cannot be expected to pronounce any expert opinion on the Loch Ness Monster or, for that matter, on wolf-children or poltergeists. What we can say with confidence, however, is that the positive evidence in support of flying saucers is not weak and is infinitely stronger than that in favour of the Loch Ness Monster—and we mean no disrespect to our old sub-aqueous friend. With Professor Carrington's other remarks, however, we heartily agree, and we congratulate him on reaching the heart of the matter. If only the "experts" were not so timid we might the sooner be able to solve many of the unexplained mysteries which continue to tantalise mankind.

MYSTERY AT JODRELL BANK

STARTLING ADMISSIONS

OUR story begins with the news which appeared in the London *Sunday Times* on May 21 that the Jodrell Bank radio-telescope had received signals which might have come from the emergency transmitter carried in Russia's Venus probe. According to calculations, this probe had passed within 60,000 miles of the planet. The rocket was launched on February 12, but on March 2 Moscow announced that radio contact had been lost, possibly because the main radio equipment had been damaged by collision with a meteorite. The Jodrell Bank announcement caused widespread interest and the news was reported in the press in nearly every country in the world.

At the time of the announcement it is important to remember that Jodrell Bank scientists were positive that the signals had come from the right direction and on the right frequency. The reception was poor and the signals could not be positively identified, but Jodrell Bank must have been impressed that the sounds were coming from somewhere near Venus, for they recorded them on tape and sent a copy to Russia.

Russians impressed

When the Russians had listened to the tape-recording they, too, must have been impressed: while their experts could not, of course, decide where the signals were coming from, they must have considered that the "message" resembled the code used by the emergency transmitter. As a result, Professor Alla Masevich, the Russian woman astronomer, decided to accept Jodrell Bank's invitation to come to England and listen for herself.

On June 16, the London *Times* carried a detailed account of the results of this investigation: "The two Russian experts, Professor Alla Masevich, woman head of the space tracking network, and Dr. Khodarev, an authority on the Venus project, will return to Moscow by air from London on Saturday convinced that the rocket has been diverted from its course and is not answering to signals from the earth." In the attempts to pinpoint the signals, Jodrell Bank co-operated with scientists in Russia who were trying to contact the Venus probe by means of ground commands.

The *Times* report then quotes Professor Mase-

vich's explanations as to why the rocket may have been diverted from its course. During the course of a press conference, the following highly important announcement was made. The *Times* continues: *

"The transmitter in the rocket had been set to send signals for 90 minutes at five-day intervals, Professor Masevich explained. These would consist of 17 minutes of unmodulated signals followed by 17 minutes of coded messages passing scientific information. The only signals picked up at Jodrell Bank which bore any resemblance to the Russian code were found to be of local emission, possibly the work of a radio 'ham' in the area whose signals were picked up when the telescope was leaned over to its farthest angle towards the horizon. Professor Masevich did not completely discount a theory that some radio signals may have been emitted from Venus itself."

After reading this account in the *Times* the Editor of the FLYING SAUCER REVIEW telephoned the Public Relations Officer at Jodrell Bank, but without disclosing his connection with the magazine. The first question that the Editor put evoked the reply that there was no doubt that the messages were man-made (i.e., they were not due to natural causes). The next question produced an assurance that the word "local" meant local to the area of Jodrell Bank (i.e., not just from somewhere on this earth, but from a source in the Manchester area). The third comment produced a surprising reply. The Editor then asked: "As you are certain that these signals were 'man-made,' then would you agree that Professor Masevich admits the possibility that the signals could have represented intelligent messages from Venus?" There was a significant pause before the reply was given. The Public Relations Officer agreed that the "logic was impeccable." He then added that the English scientists had been startled by Professor Masevich's statement. In response to a further enquiry as to whether the English scientists also admitted this possibility, the Public Relations Officer stated that before committing himself he would have to consult with Sir Bernard Lovell, Director of the station. The reason for his hesitancy was that "they did

* The italics are ours.—Editor.