

who used to work for the Aeronautical Inspection Board, near Uxbridge, Middlesex, was walking with his dog in the neighbourhood about a week before the event described above made the following statement when interviewed: "I saw this bright bluish-white light, about the size of a golf ball flying directly ahead of me. It travelled quite slowly in a steady horizontal direction. It definitely wasn't an aeroplane. The whole thing struck me as very peculiar. The light appeared from the north, crossed Sandling Road, where all these strange things have been seen, and headed out for sea."

Sceptics then got busy with explanations which ranged from magnesium flares to poachers flashing

torches to hypnotise the birds.

The local rector, the Rev. E. E. Stanton, when asked his opinion, replied: "It definitely isn't a hoax. Several youngsters have told me about the strange things they have seen. All were very frightened. Obviously they have seen something out of their normal experience."

Some adherents of the ghost theory recall the legend that Slaybrook Corner was the scene of a bloody battle centuries ago. Others declare that the ghost of William Tournay Tournay is the culprit. Tournay was an eccentric who was buried at his own request on an island in the middle of a lake on the estate.

# WHAT HAPPENED AT FÁTIMA?

by ANTONIO RIBERA

The strange events at Fátima in 1917 have led to controversy which persists to the present day. In presenting this resumé, it is necessary to warn investigators into the UFO problem that attempts to rationalise the mysterious are not by any means confined to the saucer sceptic. Those who accept the interplanetary saucer may themselves fall into the same error. To these people the flying saucer has become so acceptable and even so commonplace that by explaining the miracle at Fátima in terms of the UFO it is possible that we may be trying to simplify an occurrence connected with a mystery of divine profundity. In fact, it could be that the UFOs themselves are more "miraculous" than many of us would care to admit.

Two points of interest can be made. Unexplained in terms of present UFO knowledge is the fact that date of the miracle at Fátima was predicted with remarkable accuracy some weeks before the event.

SOME years after the turn of the century—in 1917 to be exact — when war was still raging, there happened in Fátima, a small village in the district of Leiria, at some 62 miles north of Lisbon, Portugal, a series of strange things which at the epoch were interpreted as "miracles" but today, scrutinised through a UFO "lens" — to quote Mr. W. R. Drake — they look very different and full of new meaning.

## A visitation?

Fifty years ago Portugal was a very backward country and the strange happenings which took place in that remote corner of it, among illiterate

peasants, were apt to receive a "religious" explanation, more so in times of superstition, as was the condition which existed in the Portuguese countryside in 1917. Those happenings were currently interpreted as an apparition of the Holy Virgin, but two thousand years ago they could have been interpreted as the coming of the gods upon the earth . . . referring in both instances to some visitation by extra-terrestrial beings, very real in fact and neither "godlike" nor "miraculous." M. Agrest, Professor of Physics and Mathematics in Armenia and well-known science author in the Soviet Union, has published a very interesting article in the

*Literatournaya Gazeta* about the possibility of the planet Earth having been visited in the remote past by "cosmonauts" coming from other planetary systems. As evidence, he puts forth the Temple of Baalbek and its huge platform (a launching site?); the strange paintings from the Tassili (Hoggar, Sahara), discovered by Henri Lothe, with the "big Martian god." He quotes from the Bible, and stresses his well-known theory about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorah by a nuclear explosion. He refers to the tektites, found in several parts of the globe (Libya, India and Australia), the remains of ancient knowledge found in old traditions, such as the Maya calendar, the knowledge which the African Dogons possess about the black companion of Sirius. He also mentions the knowledge of the tenth Pleiad, invisible to the naked eye, which the Mediterranean peoples possess; he refers to Mars (the dry planet) and to Venus (the planet with an ocean); to the two satellites of Mars, quoted by the Dean Swift in *Gulliver's Travels* (Phobos and Deimos were officially discovered by Asaph Hall in 1877), and also by Voltaire in the *Micromegas*.

It seems, therefore that a more recent fact ought to be added to the list compiled by Professor Agrest. And this fact corroborates this law: the same facts are apt to receive different explanations or interpretations according not only to the time they took place, but also to the cultural background against which they took place.

### Six sightings

Reducing the Fátima happenings to our modern concept of the UFO, we could say that the sightings took place from May 13, 1917, to October 17, 1917. All together there were six sightings. The witnesses were: Lucia de Jesús, aged ten, and her cousins Francisco Marto and Jacinto Marto, aged nine and seven, shepherds. (The fifth sighting had several hundred witnesses. For the sixth sighting, the witnesses were 70,000).

These children's sightings would today be included among the "contact claims," for contacts they were: in all the six instances reported, the children met a "celestial being" in the Cova da Iria, an enormous creek, roughly circular in shape, which lies at 2.5 kilometres from Fátima. In that place, while the three children were collecting their sheep about noon, they saw a flash in the heaven. Some minutes later, a white, bright figure appeared near a small oak tree. Now we must bear in mind the general law quoted above: how a space being could have looked to three ignorant, illiterate children from

a Catholic country of fifty years ago? As the Holy Virgin, naturally. As they said later, "the wonderful Lady looked young. Her dress, white as snow and tied to her neck by a gold band, wholly covered her body. A white cloak, with a golden edge, covered her head (this could be a globular, translucent helmet like a saint's halo). Near her hands (not in them), there was a Rosary of pearly white grains (remember the belts of beings from space, with flashing lights, quoted by Oscar Linke, Siragusa and other modern contact claimants). The face was circled by a golden halo." Now there began some sort of telepathic dialogue between the "Lady" and the three children. This dialogue was evidently very religious in its essence, but again we have to remind ourselves of the mentality and background of the three children and their country at the time. They simply could not be addressed in modern, scientific terms. (Remember also the white explorer who presents himself to backward natives as "the great white god" in order to win their reverence and to convey to them some simple ideas and truths). On the other hand, there does seem to exist some mysterious link between flying saucers and religious belief; the Bible, as my friend Eugenio Danyans, the biblical expert, could prove, is full of unexplained links of this kind, beginning with the name "galgal" itself, applied to Yahve and which means "wheel," or "circular movement" in Hebrew, and finishing by the Sinai "contact claim" which resulted in the Decalogue. This is not to deny God; according to Danyans, He could have employed messengers or angels.

This was the first "contact." The second took place on June 13 and it was very similar to the first. This time the "Lady" said that She would like the three children to learn to read.

The third "contact" or "apparition," as the Catholic Church termed it, took place exactly a month later. Many clergymen, among them the Rector of Fátima, the Rev. Manuel Marques Ferreira, were sceptical or openly hostile to the sightings. The Rector even thought that it could be the Devil himself who was tempting the children. Such was the fanaticism of the time that the three poor children were even put to prison for several days. On the occasion of the third contact the Being said for the first time to the children that in October She would perform a great miracle in order to convince everybody.

The fourth sighting was to have taken place on August 13, but the children were delayed and taken to Vila Nova de Ourem in a car by Arturo d'Oliveira Santos, mayor of Vila Nova, a Free-

mason and an atheist, who submitted the children to interrogation and threats before kidnapping them. This will give the reader an idea of the atmosphere of the times. After fresh "brain-washing" by Senhor Santos, the children were permitted to go to Cova da Iria on the 19th, but this time they met the Being in an unexpected place, in the Valinhos (Little Valleys).

### Many witnesses

On September 13 the witnesses were very many, and they could even see the "ship" in which the Being came to the meeting place. According to the Rev. General Vicar of Leiria, who was one of the witnesses, the Lady came in an "aeroplane of light", an "immense globe, flying westwards, at moderate speed. It irradiated a very bright light." Some other witnesses saw a white Being coming out from the globe, which several minutes later took off, disappearing in the direction of the Sun. For their part, the three little shepherds also saw the Lady, who said again that in October She would perform a miracle for everybody to see. This time the phenomenon was accompanied by a classical happening in UFOs sightings: "angel hair" falling from the skies (*filis de la Vierge* in French) "as snowflakes, which melted away upon falling on the ground."\*

But the most important "sighting" had still to take place. It happened, as promised by the celestial Being, on October 13, and it was seen by thousands of witnesses, since the news had spread all over Portugal that something "big" was going to happen on that day.

The features of this sighting were even more strongly reminiscent of the modern Saucer. Since early morning, all the roads and lanes that led to Fátima were crowded by "pilgrims," fanatics or the simply curious and even atheists (there were a large number of non-believers at the time in Catholic countries like Spain and Portugal), who went there to ridicule the others. Unfortunately, the day dawned cloudy and wet. At 11.30 a.m. between 50,000 and 70,000 people were assembled in Cova da Iria. Among them there were many reporters sent by periodicals from Lisbon and Porto. At midday, the *solar prodige* began: the sun shone through the clouds (it was

raining heavily at the time) and began its dance.

But let the sighting be explained by one well qualified witness: the Professor Almeida Garrett, distinguished scientist, professor at the Coimbra University, who was among the crowd: "It was raining hard, and the rain trickled down the dresses of everybody. Suddenly, the sun shone through the dense cloud which covered it: everybody looked in its direction . . . *It looked like a disc*, of a very definite contour; it was not dazzling. I don't think that it could be compared to a dull silver disc, as someone said later in Fátima. No. It rather possessed a clear, changing brightness, *which one could compare to a pearl . . . It looked like a polished wheel . . .* This is not poetry; my eyes have seen it . . . This clear-shaped disc suddenly began turning. *It rotated with increasing speed . . .* Suddenly, the crowd began crying with anguish. The sun, revolving all the time, began falling towards the earth, reddish and bloody, threatening to crush everybody under its fiery weight . . ."

### A local phenomenon

When the disc, rotating all the time, descended towards the crowd, many people felt a *tickling sensation* and heat. From a place situated at 12 kilometres from Fátima, some other witnesses saw also "the dance of the sun." But the astronomical observatories all over the world had not noted anything abnormal on that day . . . This means that it was a local phenomenon; a phenomenon which took place at a very low altitude (some hundreds of metres, probably), and was meant only *for the people assembled in Fátima*, in order to impress them.

Today, in a very different spiritual climate, when much evidence points to past visitations to the Earth by beings not of this world (not supernatural beings, but beings that may be like ourselves, but empowered with intelligences and techniques beyond our own), the strange happenings of Fátima can be looked at in a different and more revealing light. Maybe Fátima was one of *their* last attempts to contact us on a large scale; maybe they are patiently waiting until the time when we can stand at their side as equals (or like disciples), and no longer resemble backward natives confronting "the great white gods who have descended from Heaven . . ."

\**Las maravillas de Fátima*, by L. Gonzaga da Fonseca, S.I.



# NEW LIGHT ON ANCIENT TRACKS

by J. GODDARD

IF a traveller on one of today's roads looked out of his car window and saw a clump of trees on a hilltop, he would probably think nothing of it. However, if he had taken his journey in prehistoric times these trees would probably have been vital to him, for clumps like them are signposts on what must be the oldest route system in the world. These are the "leys," old straight tracks stretching for miles over the English countryside, rediscovered in 1922 by Alfred Watkins, an amateur Herefordshire archaeologist. Though they are forgotten by scientist and traveller alike, and the system has long fallen into disrepair, their ancient marks can still be seen by those who know what to look for.

## Things to look for

Ley points are always of prehistoric origin, showing that these tracks were in use long before the Romans came to Britain. Such things to look for are standing stones, stone circles, tumuli (burial mounds), clumps of trees on hilltops (the descendants of earlier clumps) and other artificial prehistoric landmarks. Even churches are acceptable, because the ancient ones were almost invariably built on older pagan sites. A ley is found by aligning as many as possible of these "mark points," and once you have discovered it you will continue to find marks as far as you care to continue the line, and on most leys there are pieces of straight track following the alignment at various points.

But this is not all. When you start plotting these leys you will find that a remarkable pattern will begin to emerge. The alignments found converge on certain points, sometimes ten or more of them, and at these "centres" there is usually a more important prehistoric landmark. The sites at Stonehenge and Avebury both have over ten leys going through them, and there are a great many with over six.

Sometimes, though not very often, roads of today converge on the ancient centres. Sunbury Cross, a very busy road junction, is one such example, and though the modern highways soon take their twisting routes away from the old

straight tracks, the site of the crossing point has been the same since earliest times.

There are a few centres without marks, though these are in the minority and it is always as well to go to the spot to see if there is something not marked on the map. Once, when on an expedition with the Ley Hunter's Club, an organisation recently set up for the investigation and indexing of Watkin's discoveries, I went to a centre which I had previously thought had no mark. You can imagine how surprised and pleased we were to find a small unmarked farm called Leylands Farm! This shows how essential fieldwork is in the study of the tracks.

## A vast system

The system is so vast that it cannot possibly be accounted for by coincidence. Before a ley is accepted there must be at least seven points in exact alignment, exclusive of stretches of straight track, and a centre must have at least three of these lines running through it (there are so many leys running in all directions that it is inevitable that there should be many cases of two leys crossing. These crossing-points are not centres, and never have a monument). Even under these stringent conditions, however, a great number of leys and centres can be found on any ordnance survey map.

As you will see from the Leylands Farm incident, place names play a very important part in the finding of the leys. Obviously the word "ley" (sometimes "lye") has this significance; Cross Leys and Lyewood Common are two examples. Other words to look for are "cold" (or "cole") as in Coldharbour, "dodd" as in Doddington, and "Black" as in Blackley. The word "cross" usually denotes a centre, and "mark" as in Keston Mark and Markbeech is also important. Leys have also affected the etymology of our language in other ways. It is still commonplace to talk of "taking the lay of the land," and if an ancient traveller was "delayed," or wandered off the straight track, it could add days to his journey.

Watkins surmised that the alignments had been formed by the ancient people to take their bearings from when on a journey. I have no doubt that they were used thus, as it is evident that when the leys were in use at least one mark point was always in view, but I am equally sure that these primitive

\* A few copies of THE OLD STRAIGHT TRACK are available from the John M. Watkins Bookshop, 21, Cecil Court, London, W.C.2. at 9s. per copy (postage, 1s. 6d., paid).