

# Letters

## French UFO's

In "Photographic sky coverage for the detection of UFO's" (14 June, p. 1258), Thornton Page said that no telescope or observatory has taken a picture of a UFO. Jacques Vallee, astronomer and mathematician at Northwestern University, states in his book that two images were recorded by the trajectory analyzers at Forcalquier Observatory in France on 3 and 4 May 1957 (1). The photographer was Roger Rigollet, a French astronomer who is a specialist in meteor studies for the French National Center for Scientific Research.

On the evening of 3 May 1957, two of the French cameras were put into operation and left unsupervised. Two small but definite dots showed on the negatives. They were not defects in the emulsion because both cameras had recorded them. The shapes were different because one of the cameras was rotating and the other was stationary. Analysis of the photographs showed that some luminous object had been in the field of the instruments at 22:38 and another object, or the same one, had given an image at 22:41. The negative from the fixed camera showed a luminous protuberance on the underside of the object. Between the two exposures, the object (if it was the same one) must have been dark. The trace left by the unknown source was radically distinct from that of a meteor, a lighted balloon, or an airplane.

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## Reference

1. J. Vallee and J. Vallee, *Challenge to Science: The UFO Enigma* (Regnery, Chicago, 1966).

I am well aware of inconsistencies in UFO reports; two were noted in references 1a and 5a to my article. My efforts in teaching a course on "Flying Saucers" and organizing (with Carl Sagan) a "Symposium on UFO's" at the AAAS meeting in Dallas on 27-28 December 1968 are directed toward

more objective data. The photographs described by Vallee and W. T. Powers (also at Northwestern University) do not fit the hypothesis of extraterrestrial bodies entering our atmosphere at 5 to 7 miles per second. It is this "extraterrestrial hypothesis," of course, that raises legitimate scientific interest.

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## Deterrent Value of CB Research

In their letter (21 June), Allen, Emerson, Grant, Schneidman, and Siekevitz roundly condemn the majority resolution of the American Institute of Biological Sciences for jointly sponsoring two symposia with Fort Detrick. The authors proclaim that the issue is a moral one, and take the position that since, by their lights, chemical and biological warfare, and research activities pertaining to it, are immoral, no life scientist, let alone members of the AIBS, should take part in any symposium, however worthwhile it might be, which could be construed as honoring Fort Detrick.

Morality is a sometime thing. It changes, for example, attitudes towards sex, and to take a moral stance is perhaps the last refuge of the scoundrel. It is also a pretty weak one. We know that the Russians, and no doubt the Chinese, are engaged in research in this area, and if we are to insure that Chinese and Russian weapons of a chemical or biological character are not some day used on us, it is elemental wisdom to have our own ready to reply. At least, deterrence has shown that it works.

Perhaps the strongest argument for research in this area is not the obvious one of offense, but of defense. For if we do not know the potential of a given biological or chemical weapon, we cannot protect our country or its popula-

tion against it. I do not wish to ascend to clouds of morality, as the authors do, to justify my position. I just look at the world as it is, and although I wish it were not so, I feel it is necessary that the United States carry out a vigorous research program on chemical and biological weapons. If called upon, I shall contribute what I can to the program.

Finally, scientific symposia, irrespective of the sponsor, do have value. Even the authors might have learned something from the one they proposed to block.

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As representative of the American Society of Plant Physiologists to the governing board of the AIBS, I would certainly have joined Allen and his colleagues in opposing the AIBS cosponsorship of the Fort Detrick symposia for exactly the reasons they gave. I have been away for a part of this year, and therefore asked the president of the plant physiology society to designate an alternate for the board meeting which voted to approve AIBS cosponsorship. His apparently affirmative vote no more represents the will of the Society than my negative vote would have. This point is made only to remind readers that some American botanists oppose the present military use of herbicides in Vietnam, despite the failure of any speakers at the Fort Detrick defoliation symposium to boycott the meeting, as did their colleagues in the companion symposium on the introduction of foreign DNA into cells (News and Comment, 19 Apr., p. 285).

Since my arrival in Britain in January 1968, I have given a number of talks and interviews and have become aware of a widespread disapproval of our chemical warfare policies in Vietnam among scientists, students, and lay people. . . . These experiences have convinced me that there is an additional reason for altering our present CB policy: not only are we likely to damage the ecology of Vietnam, we are also likely to estrange even more of our friends abroad and deplete still further our reservoir of goodwill, which, as any traveler can report, is far below peak level.

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