

contacts. Astronomers have attempted contacts via message transmission and radio listening in the "SETI" and "MEGASETI" programs. Although some enthusiasts have suggested futuristic ideas to "bypass" the vast expanse, such as, for example, the use of "black holes," the crossing of interstellar distances by possible extraterrestrials has elicited much skepticism and the majority of astronomers reiterate that "*to date there has been no UFO case that is sufficiently well established to imply that it came from an extraterrestrial civilization.*"

Two professional astronomers, Jean-Claude Ribes and Guy Monnet, have, however, proposed a scenario in our future in space that includes plausible interstellar voyages. In this scenario, which is summarized in Appendix 4, they envision the establishment of large communities in verdant "*islands in space,*" enormous artificial structures orbiting the earth, as described by the physicist O'Neill, and even inside large asteroids, where an abundance of different materials, including water and oxygen, as well as ready protection against meteorites and cosmic radiation, are found. Later on, when our descendants have mastered the production, storage and use of antimatter as energy, they will utilize it to propel some of their habitats to another solar system. They will settle in an asteroid belt, start families there, and then visit the planets of the receiving system aboard craft that are perceived by any possible natives the same way we perceive UFOs today.

This scenario, which in essence relies only on laws of physics that are currently well accepted, gives the extraterrestrial hypothesis a certain degree of plausibility; it is possible to imagine that a civilization that came from somewhere else colonized the region of our asteroid belt and used it as a staging base to our planet. Current progress in the conquest of space and physics reinforces this idea.

We should point out that some people envisage another hypothesis, which is very controversial: the UFOs do belong to a civilization located in the asteroid belt, but this civilization itself comes from our planet. Older than any known terrestrial civilizations and highly advanced, it supposedly disappeared from earth (nuclear war, radioactivity, pollution, etc.) but resettled in the solar system.

Both hypotheses have to their credit the fact that they place the UFO problem outside the realm of the paranormal and promote thought about the future of our planet.

## **Chapter 9 - Organization of the Research Abroad**

### **9.1 Organization of the Research in the United States**

The subject of UFOs is presently very popular in the United States. This is evidenced by the number and success of fiction films such as *Independence Day*, *Men in Black*, and *Contact*, which deal with this topic. A survey conducted in June 1997 for *Time* magazine showed that nearly one American in four believes that an extraterrestrial craft crashed at Roswell (New Mexico) at the beginning of July 1947. A professor of psychiatry at Harvard, Dr. Mack, treats the problem of the temporary abduction, whether real or imagined, of his fellow countrymen by UFOs very seriously. In view of the public's expectations, what are the authorities doing?

They deny that the UFO phenomenon poses *a threat to national security*, or that it is evidence of an extraterrestrial origin. This position has been taken almost continuously by the Air Force, which was tasked with the study of UFOs from 1948 to 1969 within the