

advanced civilization, or at least for what we thought would be of benefit to them? Changes of opinion and attitude toward us could occur over time. Wouldn't groups of people be one day tempted to consider themselves our equals, because we did not remain inaccessible? Protest movements would consequently arise and revolutionary cycles would no doubt be set in motion, as a result of which we, as well as our Herodian allies, would suffer. Our global policy would then be compromised and we would have to consider making our contacts less frequent and, possibly, withdrawing onto our ships and retreating. We would then have the time necessary to review our policies, based on techniques still unknown from our catechumens.

The discovery of new worlds could enable us to enter into contact with civilizations just as developed as our own and even far more advanced. Nothing allows us to rule out the possibility that, why not, we would encounter explorers from other more distant worlds. Under these hypothetical conditions, it is permissible to imagine that we might have been discovered in space first. It would be our turn then to experience - at least in part - the psychological effects and the political and religious implications that we have described. What would be the policy of local governments toward us? Would they welcome us peacefully or would they prudently keep us at a distance? Should we fear seeing nuclear space weapons or other weapons aimed at ourselves against, for example, the bases that we had attempted to establish or had succeeded in establishing in an asteroid belt close to one of their worlds?

What would be the results of such encounters? What relations could we establish and what influences would we exert on these different types of civilizations? Anything is conceivable. Having come full circle, we thus return to our concerns and our current questions.

Chapter 14 - Media Implications

As was stressed earlier, it may seem extravagant that sensible people, scientists moreover, are interested in unexplained - and for the time being still inexplicable - phenomena at the risk of appearing ridiculous. But, as this report tries to demonstrate, there are enough questions regarding tangible evidence to justify the scientific interest generated by these issues. What separates our approach from the media's approach is the researcher's curiosity with respect to the research to be conducted in order to solve the enigmas posed to his sagacity even if science has not reached an adequate state to answer them fully, as opposed to the curiosity of the press regarding a subject with regular sudden new developments that are likely to produce marvelous scoops, which generally are not characterized by scientific precision.

It is not a question of criticizing the press; its aid is often most valuable. But these fleeting events are supported in part by human testimonies, which are all the more flimsy since they come from people who are affected by their encounter with "the unknown" and since they elude the usual benchmarks. The press has a tendency sometimes to either ridicule the facts reported or to make itself look ridiculous because of the excess of information extrapolated from the elements described by the witnesses.

14.1 What Can a Government Fear From the Curiosity of the Media?

- Panic: the media broadcast terrifying information liable to sow panic among the