

THE TIMES DIARY

What will lunar rocks reveal?

DR. ROBERT JASTROW, an American physicist, has an especial interest in the first moon landing next month by Apollo 11. As director of the Goddard Institute of Space Studies in New York, he is one of a team of scientists who will analyse and interpret the samples of rock and other matter brought back from the moon.

"By working out the ratio of lead to uranium in the rock it will be possible to tell how far back the moon's record goes", says Jastrow, who is on a brief visit to London. "If any part of the rock turns out to be about 45 hundred million years old it will provide invaluable information on the early years of the solar system and will provide clues on what conditions here on Earth were like when life first began. The moon is our only opportunity of finding out what Earth was like before there was life."

It may also be that the rock specimens will contain molecules that are the missing link between life and non-

out river beds and this has reinforced a growing conviction that the Earth is not the only inhabited planet."

Dr. Jastrow, who is 43, first became fascinated by physics at college when he was forced to understand calculus in order to study psychology. He turned from theoretical nuclear physics to planetary and space science in 1956. He is most concerned that the layman should realize that space exploration is not just a private competition with the Russians but has important social and economic values. His latest book, *White Giants and Red Dwarfs* (a child's guide to evolution), has sold 100,000 copies in the United States and has recently been published here as *Stars, Planets and Life*.



Dr. Robert Jastrow.

life and will give clues to the origins of life on Earth. "Photographs taken in preparation for the moon landing have shown what appear to be dried