

# ITALIAN UFO REPORTER

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ITUFOR-6 is mainly consisting of the English language abstracts of C.I.S.U. "UFO Information Review" ("UFO - RIVISTA DI INFORMAZIONE UFOLOGICA") No. 4, December 1987, and should be read with a copy of "UFO" at hand, since several meaningful illustrations in the journal may help understanding issues (especially in E. Russo's, P. Fiorino's and P. Toselli's articles).

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## WHAT DO ITALIANS BELIEVE ABOUT UFOs? The CISU-Doxa Opinion Poll by Edoardo Russo

In the spring of 1987 CISU engaged the Doxa Institute (Italian Gallup associate) to conduct an opinion poll on UFOs to be released during the "First National UFO Information Week" in June.

Such poll was specially important because:

- it allowed us to estimate the "UFO belief" diffusion in Italy;
- it allowed a comparison in time with the only previous Italian poll (by Doxa in 1979);
- it allowed a comparison with similar polls in other countries;
- it asked people (for the first time in Italy) how many saw a UFO (thus indicating the hidden part of the sightings iceberg);
- it was the very first national opinion poll in the world conducted on behalf of a private UFO organization.

The poll was conducted in May, 1987 through direct interviews (in their own houses) of 1850 men and women above 15 years old, they being a representative sample of the Italian adult population.

Three questions were asked, the first two ones being the same as those already asked by Doxa in 1979.

### DO UFOs EXIST?

The first question was: "Have you ever heard of UFOs or flying saucers? If so, do you believe they really exist or are they just a figment of people's imagination?".

19% answered UFOs exist, 53% didn't believe so, 24% were uncertain and only 4% never heard of UFOs (a very low figure for any opinion poll, we were told). The existence of a UFO problem is thence known to the virtual totality of Italians (probably thanks to the media), but a skeptical attitude prevails.

Younger (24%) and higher class people (27%) are easier to believe than older (16%) and lower class (13%), thus contradicting that only uneducated people believe in UFOs: on the contrary, it is shown that

people more informed about UFOs believe more, since age and class distribution of believers is exactly opposite to that of "never heard of" answers. Disbelievers and uncertain are evenly distributed as of age and class. As of sex, males (20.8%) are a little more prone to believe than females (18.1%), are less uncertain (22% vs. 25%) and less frequently ignorant (3.2% vs. 5.5%).

As for geographical distribution, Central regions believe the most, while Southern and Northeastern regions believe the least; South and Isles gives the greater percent of "never heard of". Such data are consistent with the hypothesis that UFO belief is depending on cultural "consumption" and so is lower in poorer and agricultural areas vs. urban and richer ones.

#### WHAT ARE THEY?

The second question was asked only tho those answering "Yes" to the previous one, and it read: "What do you think these UFOs/flying saucers may be? Are they coming from our own planet or from other planets (Mars, Venus, etc.)? And are they piloted (planes, rockets, etc.) or not (eg. natural phenomena)?"

70% of those believing in UFOs think they are of extraterrestrial origin, 15% prefer an earthly one, and 14% don't answer. No great differences exist as of sex, age, region and class. 60% believe they are piloted, 17% natural phenomena and 24% are agnostic. In conclusion about 10% of adult Italians believes UFOs are real, alien crafts.

#### WHO SAW A UFO?

The third question was asked to all interviewed people: "Did you ever have the impression to see a UFO, flying saucer or something similar in the sky? If so, are you sure or not?" [please note that wording of questions was done by Doxa, who rejected our proposals].

An average of 6.5% answered they saw something, that is a projected 3 millions witnesses, with higher percentages for younger, males, large towns and higher class. Regional distribution is also uniformly around 7% except in the South (5.7%). These results show that there exist no region "preferred" by UFOs, and confirm the hypothesis that the uneven distribution of sightings collected by ufologists depends on socio-cultural factors (population, propension to report such experiences) or information dynamics (number of local newspapers, of active ufologists in the area, etc.).

It should be added that if you limit yourself to those witnesses "sure" to have seen a UFO, they are uniformly 2.5%, independently from any socio-economic variables, this seeming to indicate the real and objective nature of the UFO phenomenon.

#### EVOLUTION IN TIME

The first two questions were exactly the same as asked by Doxa in 1979. In 8 years the percentage of UFO believers has strongly decreased from 35% to 19%, while disbelievers have increased from 32% to 53% and uncertain remained virtually constant (33% in 1979, 28% in 1987), as well as ET believers (from 63% to 70% of believers) and "piloted" believers (60%).

The real surprise of the poll was the halved percentage of UFO believers: it seemed reasonable to assume that they would have been more (or at least as) numerous in 1987 as in 1979, and that disbelievers would have been less numerous, since UFOs have since become sort of an "accepted" argument in Italy following the great waves of the late '70s. Such diminution may have been influenced by the lower number of UFO

sightings in our country since 1979, so that media gave the argument only reduced coverage. Moreover, the 1979 poll followed the greatest Italian UFO wave of 1978, while the 1987 poll fell in a slow period.

#### GEOGRAPHICAL COMPARISONS

In February 1987 a similar poll was conducted in the USA by Gallup (telephone interviews with 527 adults 18 or older). The first difference is that 12% Americans have never heard of UFOs: so Americans in general are seemingly less informed than Italians on the UFO theme! Anyway American UFO believers sums up to 49% (it was 57% in 1978), that is the double of the Italian percentage; but most believers are 30-49 years old, that is those who were in their teens when UFOs were a "in" argument there. UFO sighters in the USA are also more numerous: 9%.

A similar Gallup poll in Great Britain in 1986 gave: 19% of believers and 7.5% sighters.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Waiting for a more complete analysis (presently being in progress) we point out the following:

- an unexpected strong diminution of UFO believers in Italy since ten years ago, which is clearly connected to less media UFO information;
- an apparent correlation between such belief and some socio-economic variables, especially those connected with education and culture;
- an independence of UFO sightings from social variables, thus confirming the objective nature of UFO experiences;
- the great number of UFO sightings never collected by UFO organizations, greater than what expected: only about 10,000 reports are filed at CISU headquarters, that is 0.3% of the projected 3.5 millions.

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#### HUMANOIDS AT BOLOGNA

A Classic case of CE-III

by Paolo Fiorino & Gian Paolo Grassino

The following CE-III report has been known since 1962 but no investigation had ever been made and indeed there was no hope to trace the witness down. Only in 1986 our investigators finally found and could interview him. We cannot tell how his testimony may be accurate but at least we can now offer greater details about the facts. We think that such old sightings (especially high strangeness ones) are events on which it is possible to investigate and collect information, and that it is even more interesting if you think these are the "classic" facts, upon which ufology has based upon until yesterday.

#### THE CASE HISTORY

The first and only original source for the case was the weekly "Settimana Incom" of December 30, 1962: a journalist interviewing another CE-III witness in Milan was shown a letter from a "Antonio Candau" which reported a similar sighting of his own at Bologna on December 9, 1962. No address was given in the letter.

On this only base the CE-III was reported in UFO books and journals even abroad, since J. Vallée included it in his catalogue "A Century of UFO Landings".

The only previous attempt to find the witness in 1976 was unsuccessful (also because the witness real name is slightly different,

and is now withheld on his request). In 1986 Paolo Fiorino finally found the man, who showed himself willing to meet ufologists and tell them what he had never told anybody in 24 years. Several interviews followed with P. Fiorino and R. Cabassi, amounting to several hours of tape-recording, on-the-spot investigation and a beautiful series of computerized graphic reconstructions of the sighting.

#### RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CASE

On the evening of December 9th, 1962, at 8.15 p.m., 27 years old Antonio Candau, driver and servant, went out to go to the cinema, then changed his mind and went instead walking on the hill along Codivilla Street, an isolated road crossing a park, near to where he had served in the Army. It was 21.45 when he heard a hissing sound and saw, beyond the park railings on his left, an inverted saucer-shaped object hovering 8 meters above the ground, with a dome where several multicolored lights were turning. He hid himself behind a tree while the craft came down to a meter from the ground, less than ten meters from him.

#### THE DISC

It was 9 meters in diameter, and looked like metallic grey; no portholes or other features were visible. Suddenly a door opened down and two "persons" could be seen outcasting against an internal light. A stairway came down and the two beings descended to the ground.

#### THE BEINGS

They were human-looking, 1.7 mt. tall, had a dark complexion (as visible from their faces and naked hands), short and dark hair (they wore no hat) and shining eyes. They were wearing close-fitting yellow overalls with a dark belt and a small rectangular box at their side.

They came down the stairway with synchronous movements and stood on the ground. The witness moved and they noticed him: one of them talked to him in an unknown language while pointing at him with his stretched arm and fore-finger.

Then they looked at each other and turned back to the object, always moving synchronously, got up the stairs and entered the craft.

#### END OF THE SIGHTING

The door closed and the object took off with a hiss, without affecting the surrounding trees. When it rose to 50-100 meters above the ground, it moved horizontally towards SW and disappeared: the witness ran across the road but could no longer see the object.

The whole sighting had lasted less than two minutes and half. He then walked back to the bus stop and returned home, but could not sleep because of the strong emotion.

On the following day he told what he had seen to his employer, who suggested him not to tell anybody for fear of ridicule. Antonio kept reading the newspapers for some week, hoping to find some corroborative witness, and in the December 30 issue of the weekly "Domenica del Corriere" did he find news of a similar sighting in Milan, where night-watchman Francesco Rizzi was being ridiculed for he saw a landed "flying saucer" and its occupants. Candau wrote to Rizzi telling of his own encounter and expressing his sympathy, but got no reply.

Since then, he never told his experience to anybody else (except briefly mentioning it to his wife when he later married), but he often came to think of it at night.

After a week or so, he went back into the park and found a small

area of flattened grass where the entities were standing; a month later this "trace" was no longer visible. Anyway Mr. Candau could not tell whether it was connected to his sighting or simply due to some people walking over the place.

#### EVALUATION

As for any single witness report, the case evaluation rests upon the witness evaluation: both investigators agree he is a sincere man who never looked for gain or notoriety (he asked to remain anonymous) and was very cooperative. He doesn't show any physical or psychological deficit and only got an extremely emotional involvement in the case [the investigators' interest stimulated him to think again of his past experience, which seemed to disturb him, as if when showed R. Cabassi's reconstruction of the entities].

An on-the-spot investigation revealed that the place is a park very near to a hospital, some Army barracks and several houses: it is surprising that nobody else saw anything (we can't exclude there were other witnesses, but we can no longer hope to find them after 24 years).

Besides a positive evaluation of the man, several features look strikingly similar to other reports of those years. The impression remains of a very close relationship between percipient and experience, which had no existential or religious aftermath but certainly affected deeply his personal life.

#### LANDINGS IN TOWNS

Several close encounters took place in Italy between the spring of 1962 and early 1963. A common feature of many reports is that they occurred in densely populated areas, often inside large cities like Milan, Rome and Bologna.

#### THE RIZZI CASE

On December 13, 1962 at 2.30 a.m., nightwatchman Francesco Rizzi was on duty in a courtyard when he heard a hiss and saw a disc-shaped craft hovering a few meters from him: it was metallic and had a dome with portholes all around. The sound stopped and a door opened in the object, whence a strange being lined out, three feet tall, a black head and fluorescent overalls. The entity pointed the right forefinger at the witness and gestured him to come closer, but he was paralyzed with terror. A second entity emerged from the bluish light emanating from the opening, and called the first one back by gestures. The door closed, the sound was heard again and the craft took off while the witness could move again. After newspapers published the report, several people told they too saw a mystery object above Milan that night.

#### LANDING IN A ROME PARK

On January 4, 1963 at 00.30 a.m. a psychiatrist walking through a Rome park noticed something similar to a "fair booth" resting on the ground. Getting closer, he saw it was an odd metallic craft like a "giant hat": a dome with round portholes upon a cylinder with three legs. After emitting a whiff which swept the gravel away, it suddenly took off slowly and then sped away. The following day the witness found the landing gear traces and the shifted gravel.

## REPEATING FACTS

On April 9, 1962 at 11 p.m. a young couple saw a lens-shaped metallic craft, 15 meters in diameter, surrounded with a green halo, landing on a lawn near Rivoli (Turin). A door opened and two human shaped descended, walking around for some minutes; then one pointed at the woods and the other walked away in that direction and disappeared among the trees, while the first one returned on board and the disc took off, triggering a small fire on the spot.

Two days later, on April 11, at the same hour 11 p.m., two couples of fiancées in their cars near Rescaldina (Varese) noticed a "dark mass" hovering above them and illuminating them with powerful white beams: it was lens-shaped and suddenly descended towards them and repeated this manoeuvre three times, finally nearly hitting one of the cars. Then it went away silently.

On January 14, 1963 at 11.30 p.m., a peasant in San Pietro Vernotico (Brindisi) got out from home because of his horses whinnying and pawing in the stable, only to find a low manoeuvring object with a lighted dome and human shaped visible in it. Once again, the craft took off silently.

## A SOCIAL STEREOTYPE?

Striking similarities in the objects and entities descriptions and behaviors may be noted. Moreover all these sightings took place in areas where the "flying saucers" should have been seen by others. It is to be added that in those years newspapers were showing a growing interest in the subject and UFO serials by journalists Bruno Ghibaudi, Renato Albanese and Peter Kolosimo in the weeklies were often accompanied by beautiful color paintings illustrating the sightings (especially the first Italian contactees' stories).

For a better understanding of the surrounding reports and environment it would be useful a detailed study of contemporary media treatment, the social context and also ufologists' microcosm.

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## THE IBERIAN LANDINGS

How to do a "UFO Close Encounters Encyclopedia"

by Vicente-Juan Ballester Olmos

The articles summarizes Ballester Olmos' monumental work of collecting and studying CE cases in Spain and Portugal: the original catalogue co-authored with J. Vallée, Olmos' first book, the new research project in 1980 to re-investigate and evaluate all reports, updating files and the computerized catalogue: six years of hard work are reviewed, showing plans, research done, contents of the new book, conclusions reached and perspectives.

(The text is a condensed version of the first chapter of Ballester Olmos' new book: "Enciclopedia de los encuentros cercanos con OVNIs", Plaza y Janés, Barcelona 1987.)

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## AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL OBJECT OVER ITALY?

The UFO flap of June 6, 1983

by Paolo Toselli

On June 6th, 1983 at about 11 p.m., a trailed "cigar-shaped" UFO

crossed the sky of several Italian regions in a few seconds, and on the following days all Italian newspapers gave the news a wide space.

After a few years, we can correctly summarize a previously confused situation. Several eyewitnesses were directly interviewed, a complete press coverage was examined and interesting data was collected from amateur astronomers who also saw the phenomenon.

The involved area comprises all Northern Italy regions: Valle d'Aosta, Piemonte, Lombardia, Veneto, Trentino, Friuli, Emilia and also Toscana and even Sardinia, for a total of 155 collected testimonies.

Foreign reports also came from Southern Switzerland, Southeastern France and Northeastern Spain [we are still interested in receiving any report from that date - Ed.], for a total of 35 more testimonies.

#### SHAPE AND COLORS

Several different shapes were described: cigar, plane fuselage, fire ball, missile, rounded craft with portholes, torpedo, cluster of lights, flying train, couple of luminous points [see the composite sketch of about 30 shapes - Ed.]. All descriptions may be grouped into just a few classes:

- 61% of witnesses reported a "cigar" or similar shapes, and most of them also described lights either as luminous portholes within a dark shape (33%) or as smaller lights outside the main luminous body (12%); the remaining 15% didn't notice any feature;
- 15% called it a "ball of light";
- 20% referred to a varying number (2 to 10) of non-structured lights, usually white or yellow-orange;
- only five testimonies reported a single white light source.

As for the additional lights, they were usually red, yellow or white (only two witnesses said they were bluish).

Such differences may be explained by different viewpoints and also by subjectivity linked to the "interpretation" each witness chose to give to the sighting. In fact the stereotype of "cigar with portholes" was very frequent in the newspaper accounts (49%) and less in ufologists interviews (30%): those who thought they were seeing a spaceship did see it, while on the contrary the amateur astronomers who saw it thought at once it was a meteor and only described unstructured luminous sources. And the four military testimonies released by the Italian Ministry of Defence were all reporting a missile-like object!

The subjectivity role is evident when people who were only a few meters apart (and so surely saw the same phenomenon) gave totally different descriptions.

#### THE TRAIL

A feature reported by virtually all witnesses was the long trail, which remained visible in the sky for a few long minutes after the object had disappeared. Nearly everybody described it as luminous and white in color. Several people likened it to jet-plane condensation trails or smoke. It disappeared gradually after slowly broadening. Two young astronomers near Turin were able to watch it through a telescope: it looked like formed by four parallel streaks, and was about 40' (arc minutes) in width. A picture taken by an amateur astronomer near Milan shows the trail and also luminous sub-traces (thus confirming more than one light source).

#### DIMENSIONS AND DISTANCE

A very large object was described by most witnesses. Only few reports gave an estimated apparent dimension, and this went from Venus

to twice the full moon.

Equally varied was the estimated altitude: 25% reported 1000-1500 meters above the ground; 25% suggested 600-900 meters; 20% reported it as low as 200 meters. But we also got some 30-40 meters guesses and even one who said it "came up from behind the nearby trees".

Of course distance and dimensions of a night-sky phenomenon are actually impossible to evaluate by a single witness. Indeed we can demonstrate that all the above-mentioned altitudes are largely underestimated: an Air Malta airliner flying at 11,000 meters above Nice (France) told the control tower they saw it pass at more than 13,000 meters. Calculations by astronomers triangulating on 20 testimonies containing angular elevations gave an even greater altitude: 95 km. at the beginning and 70 km. at the end, according to Alberto Latini (Gruppo Astrofili Lariani, Como); 120 km. and 50 km. by Sergio Latini (Sun Observatory, Locarno).

#### DIRECTION AND PATH

Nearly all witnesses described a linear path from SW to NE; only three reported the object stopped for awhile, then restarted its course. We have got azimuth quantitative data from about ten investigated reports plus twelve astronomers' testimonies and so we can correctly estimate the actual path, even correcting calculations by the afore-mentioned astronomers, because we have more data: the correct path was established by ufologists Marcel Delaval and yet better by Paolo Toselli [see map with plotted paths - Ed.].

#### TIME AND DURATION

Most witnesses reported a time comprised between 22.55 and 23.00 (legal summer time); but as many as 42% testimonies gave different times between 22 and 23.45. A graphic distribution is included and shows a typical normal Gauss' curve, as it is to be expected if data further from the central peak were due to errors (confused memories, uncorrect watches, poor attention or interest for the event, late investigation).

We can determine the exact time thanks to the transcribed conversation between the Air Malta plane and Aix-en-Provence Air Traffic Control, which gives us precise time data: it was 22.56 o' clock.

Very varied was also the estimated duration of sightings: a greater majority is comprised between 5 and 20 seconds (with a peak around 10"); but fifteen testimonies reported even longer than a full minute. The same causes as for time guesses may explain such variance [moreover, witnesses tend to over-estimate very short durations - Ed.].

Much longer visible was the trail: most witnesses said 3 to 15 minutes (averaging around 10'), but again we do have shorter than 1 minute or longer than 20 minutes guesses.

#### HYPOTHESES

As early as June 7th, most interviewed astronomers suggested a meteorite or, alternatively, a satellite or rocket re-entry.

Unusually, the meteor identification was proposed by ufologists themselves: in a press-release by the Turin group on June 8 (published in 30% of Italian newspapers), it was claimed that "a first analysis of testimonies suggests a bolide, that is a particularly bright meteor, crossing south to north the Italian skies at 22.56 on June 6th" [please note accuracy of time].

Some researchers did however exclude the meteor because of the duration, the trail description, the small descent angle: ufologist Marcel Delaval and astronomer Alberto Latini preferred a satellite re-

entry as hypothesis. But no re-entry was confirmed by either the NASA or NORAD "Spacewarn Bulletin". French ufologist Perry Petrakis suggested a missile launch from a submarine, but data were inconsistent with such theory.

As always, even more fantastic hypotheses were also offered: the Sezione Ufologica Fiorentina claimed it could have been a Remotely Piloted Vehicle; newspaper "Corriere della Sera" suggested a ball-lightning; an Air Force meteorologist even claimed it could be a German weather balloon!

#### WHAT HAPPENED IN REALITY ?

On June 6th, 1983 at 22.56 several hundreds of witnesses over an area as large as 500,000 square kms. noticed the sudden appearance in the sky of a group of a few (3-5?) luminous bodies (variously colored: red, yellow and white), moving rapidly along a nearly horizontal path, and followed by a whitish trail which remained visible for several minutes.

The phenomenon probably crossed over the Alps towards Austria [does anybody have got news of local sightings there? - Ed.].

No sound was heard, except in three newspaper reports (a "rustling", a "low-frequency continuous sound like an organ note" and a "strong air displacement hitting some people").

The event took place at a very high altitude, higher than any witness' guess, and that explains why it gave no radar return. Approximate speed should have been between 13 and 50 kms. per second (47 to 180 thousands kms. per hour) and it covered more than 700 kms. of path.

Summing it up, we can affirm it was probably an actual extraterrestrial body entering our atmosphere: but it had no little green men on board, since it was only a spectacular bolide.

An important fact is that we could arrive to such conclusion thanks to eyewitness testimonies, their imperfections notwithstanding: that means that if you've got a great number of testimonies of one event and if you collect them methodically, an accurate analysis and evaluation of these subjective data is possible and can bring positive results.

Of course "deviant" data are also present: if we had chosen to isolate the "strangest" reports (as ufologists often do) and to ignore the others as due to "another cause", we would now be talking about what kind of alien spaceship it was.

#### UFOs AND METEORS

An editorial box was included in the above article, explaining what meteors are, what is their appearance and behavior, and how it is often difficult to distinguish bolides from satellite re-entries. Anyway we need not explaining that to our foreign colleagues, of course.

Bright meteors have often been reported in Italy as "UFOs". They usually produce hundreds of sightings over a large area in a very short time span ("flaps").

For example, the two single busiest days in the 1954 wave were a dark cigar with flaming outburst all over Italy on October 14th, and a trailed fireball passing over the Central regions on October 25.

Three other famous meteor/UFO flaps took place on August 10, 1968 (meteorite fragments were also recovered), on September 14th, 1978 (the so-called "Pegasus flap") and on November 11th, 1980 (the "green UFO").

As for satellite re-entries, the best known was a Soviet Cosmos on July 18, 1967. Some of the above-mentioned events were also witnessed from other European countries, and we would be interested in exchanging data about them.

Another box in the article was devoted to the "Airship Effect": a gestalt-psychology phenomenon making several separate points becoming a unique shape and thus most meteor sightings like "portholed spaceships". No need again to abstract this part for you informed readers.

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#### INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS IN TURIN

##### 1947-1987: Towards a Scientific Approach to the UFO Phenomenon

For the 40th anniversary of Kenneth Arnold's "historical" sighting, the Italian Center for UFO Studies (Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici, CISU) organized a varied series of public education initiatives, called "First National UFO Information Week" (June 20-28th, 1987), following the MUFON example in the USA. Several conventions, photo exhibitions, conferences, public debates, interviews in newspapers, radio and TV were held during that week, the central event being the International Congress held in Turin on June 20 and 21, on the theme "Forty Years of UFOs: for a Scientific Approach to the Phenomenon", which represented the first attempt to present the Italian public with a ufology different from "chasing the little green men".

The two days had two distinct themes, the first one being "The Scientific World Confronting the UFO Problem". Such approach interested several scientific researchers who accepted to attend.

Dr. Marcel Delaval, a Belgian informatics engineer at the European Community Nuclear Research Center "Euratom", reviewed the main characteristics of the UFO phenomena through a systematic classification and a large statistical analysis on the 1977 Italian UFO sightings [see ITUFOR-5 for a detailed abstract of that].

#### HUMAN SCIENCES AND UFOs

Bertrand Méheust, professor of philosophy in France, underlined the need for an anthropological study of the highest strangeness testimonies: UFO abductions. Aside from the alleged physical reality of abductees' experiences, their recurrent motifs are also typical of other kinds of encounters with the "otherworld" in folklore as well as of mythical and religious experiences. The point is not whether the UFO experience is "explainable" as Jacques Vallée's "folklore in the making", but using tools of human sciences to study accounts having strong symbolic contents (eg. morphological analysis). Unfortunately, the anti-scientific aura of UFOs prevents even anthropologists and ethnologists from approaching an abductee while paradoxically travelling thousands of miles for studying a Papua shaman's ecstasis.

Psychiatrist Dr. Alessandro Meluzzi (University of Turin) presented Alvin Lawson's experiments with "imaginary abductees" and reviewed recurrent symbols and concepts from our subconscious mind which such experiences may elaborate on.

#### THE PHYSICAL SIDE

Dr. Enrico Bernieri, physicist at the National Institute of Nuclear Physics, should have talked about M. Persinger's Tectonic Strain Theory, but couldn't attend because of an unforeseen travel abroad.

Another researcher not physically present was Austrian psychologist Dr. Alexander Keul, who anyhow submitted a written paper presenting his "Project Anamnesis". Both these items are well known to English-speaking ufologists but were totally new for the Italian public.

Science-fiction writer and journalist Dr. Danilo Arona submitted a paper about the UFO imagery in the SF cinema, examining both UFO literature influence on cinema and SF cinema influence on the public image of UFOs.

A round-the-table debate closed the first day on the theme "Science facing the UFO Phenomenon", with the participation of the above authors and also of scientific journalist Dr. Piero Bianucci, informatician Renzo Cabassi and physicist Dr. Roberto Farabone.

#### STATE OF THE ART

On the second day, it was the ufologists themselves who presented "Forty Years of Ufology: Results and Perspectives": Gian Paolo Grassino reviewed reasons for ufologists passing from the mere "public education" activity in the '50s to the present "agnostic" attitude considering the existence of a phenomenon we haven't yet explained and its scientific study; Maurizio Verga talked about physical evidence and trace-landing case histories, pointing out the ambiguity and elusiveness of the phenomenon; Paolo Fiorino explained the problems with the CE-III reports, a "borderline" class of events which often requires different methods and tools than the rest of cases; Paolo Toselli presented the Doxa opinion poll [see elsewhere in this issue]; Edoardo Russo talked about the growing "skepticism" of ufologists, who no longer identify themselves as flying saucer believers but comprise a full range of different opinions.

#### THE MEANING OF A CONGRESS

The Congress got a wide treatment in the local and national media: newspapers and TV emphasized the rigorously scientific approach of UFO research today.

This was indeed the purpose of the Congress: using the 40th anniversary in order to present a "different" image of UFOs and ufology to several "addressees": to the general public (still having a false idea of the problem); to journalists and media-men (who often treat it as a humorous item); to ufologists themselves (who should accept a new kind of public education, not trying to persuade but explaining are we're studying UFOs); and last but not least, to the scientific milieu (who needs to know it is possible to seriously study UFOs).

From the Congress it may be concluded that: a serious and prepared ufology exists, which is moving within scientific methods without looking for acknowledgement but only searching for advice. Secondly, human sciences, physical sciences and information sciences not only may be of great utility for UFO research but they themselves may get a useful feed-back from their application to a "borderline area" like ufology is, where a profoundly (and perhaps unique) interdisciplinary approach is needed.

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#### CLOSE ENCOUNTERS IN ITALY Recent investigated reports

Short summaries are taken from investigation reports by CISU members of some interesting close encounters of the last few years. Not all such case histories have already been evaluated.

## EFFECTS ON THE VEGETATION

Investigators: Massimo Nebbia & Alberto Garino

On July 21, 1983 at about 9 p.m. a few vacationers at Rubiana (Turin) were on a house balcony when they saw a white circular object as large as the full moon, visible against the background of the wooded mountain in front of them, where no road exists. At the same time, a power blackout took place.

A 35 years old man decided to climb the mountain to get closer to the light but nobody accepted to go with him, so he left alone with a electric torch and a stick. While walking up along a path in the woods, he lost sight of the light, then he could see it again from a clearance and he noticed four-six smaller lights around it. Finally he did arrive where the light should have been, but he could not see it through the trees, so he signalled his position with the torch and began returning back, while it was growing darker and he had to use his torch in order to see the road.

Suddenly he saw a big branch strongly swinging as if moved by a strong wind, but there was no wind and all other trees were motionless, as well as the other branches of the same tree. He tried to stop it by touching it with his stick, but the whole tree began shaking. Frightened, he ran down to the town, from where the light was still visible. People began discussing his story and nobody noticed how the light disappeared.

Investigators trying and bending that same branch found that it soon regained its position, after no more than one movement, while the witness insisted it was repeatedly swinging up and down.

## CE-III NEAR FROSINONE ?

Investigators: Sergio Bianchi & Luigi Di Ruzza

At 17.30 on December 13, 1985 a 33 years old veterinarian was driving with his girl-friend between Canneto and Settefrati (Frosinone) when the woman called him to look at a light in the sky, which seemed to get closer in jerks, as if coming down by steps. It was very bright and intense. He slowed down the car and noticed the light was shaped like an inverted saucer and also had two side beacons projecting light-beams into the dark. At first he thought it was a falling plane, but the object slowed down and hovered above the trees: he could clearly see the interior of the "craft" through what looked like a large glass, behind which he saw two very tall "persons" outlined against the lighted background. Suddenly the whole thing disappeared as if moving away at great speed and without any sound. The sighting lasted about ten-fifteen seconds in all.

It should be noted that at the same time hundreds of people watched a bright meteor-like object with a trail crossing the sky of Central Italy.

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## THE GEOPHYSICAL HYPOTHESIS UFOs as a Natural Phenomenon? by Chris Rutkowski

M. Persinger's and P. Devereux' theories are presented and criticized by the author.

(The text is translated from English, having originally been published as a chapter "UFOs as Natural Phenomena" in the book "UFOs 1947-1987", edited by Hilary Evans and John Spencer, Fortean Tomes, London 1987.)