

ITALIAN UFO REPORTER

Newsletter of the Italian Center for UFO Studies
C.I.S.U. - Corso Vittorio Emanuele 108 - 10121 Torino - Italia

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ITUFOR-9 is divided in two parts: in the first one you may read an update of the Italian UFO scene in 1988.

The second part is consisting of the English language abstracts of C.I.S.U. "UFO Information Review" ("UFO - RIVISTA DI INFORMAZIONE UFOLOGICA") No. 6, December 1988.

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THE ITALIAN UFO SCENE: 1988 UPDATE by Edoardo Russo

The year 1988 was more quiet than 1987, at least as of sightings as well as of public interested in UFOs.

SIGHTINGS

It's difficult to give the exact figure of how many UFO/IFO sightings were reported in Italy in 1988, because of two reasons: a flap in August and a "window" repeater case in September. Apart from these, C.I.S.U. filed 60 sightings.

As for the flap, it took place on August 17th, at 22.15: a bright object with a trail was seen by thousands of people all over Northern and Central Italy, heading North to South. Actually it was a bolide but we were inundated by hundreds of "UFO" sightings over eleven different regions.

A bit stranger was the recurrent red light seen by many people in Torriglia (Genova), a place known to ufologists because there happened the celebrated abduction of nightwatchman F. Zanfretta in 1978. The UFO was seen hovering by many motorists in the second half of September, some of them describing a real close encounter with it. The sightings took place for several evenings. No explanation has been found as yet.

Beside these two series, the single most interesting report of the year was an alleged trace-landing case at Costeggiola, near Verona, on September 20th, just after midnight: an anonymous caller alerted police and the local newspaper of a UFO taking off from a field, where three circles of burned grass (forming a nearly perfect equilateral triangle) were indeed found by investigators. Our own field investigation as well as the chemical analysis of soil and grass pointed strongly towards a hoax. [See full report in the following abstract of "UFO" issue No. 6, December 1988]

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

U.S. best-sellers, W. Strieber's "Communion" and B. Hopkins' "Intruders", finally arrived to Italy in early 1988, but both had very little success and impact over the public. While "Intruders" was published by a small house, "Communion" was launched by one of the biggest publishers in our country, Rizzoli, which owns newspapers and magazines who gave the book a lot of space. Indeed most reviewers [mis-]understood that the book was a novel, and not all of them connected it with UFOs.

The most relevant effect of "Communion" was a hoax entity photo prominently featured on the cover page of one of Rizzoli's weeklies, in order - we guess - to better advertise the book.

As for "Intruders", we succeeded in having C.I.S.U. address and phone number published in it: as of present, we've only got 4 reports of "missing time".

Usual stuff as of UFO publications in Italy: apart from 3 or 4 local groups' bulletins, the CISU has the lion's share with its journal, the newsletter, the newsclipping service and as many as five local branches editing their own newsletter. A new CISU publication was launched in 1988: "Rassegna casistica" (Case Histories), consisting of field-investigation reports by our members and published three times per year by Alessandro Cortellazzi (Trento).

RESEARCH AND ACTIVITIES

A good deal of new research projects were launched at C.I.S.U. in 1988:

- a study group was created on "Effects from UFOs", coordinated by Stefano Innocenti (Rome);
- a new file/catalogue of "pre-UFOs" (i.e. Italian sightings before 1900), by Umberto Cordier (Savona);
- a study group on "Hypnosis and Ufology", headed by Renzo Cabassi (Bologna) which took us to a working liaison with the Society of Medical Hypnosis;
- SCIENCE.CAT, a catalogue of articles relevant/useful for UFO research and published in scientific journals/books, was released in November by Paolo Toselli (Alessandria);
- a book service for CISU members, operated by Alberto Lazzaro (Salsomaggiore).

In November, five members of CISU attended the First European Congress on Anomalous Aerial Phenomena, hosted by SOBEPS in Bruxelles, and presented no less than three papers. As a consequence, CISU was asked to take part in the International Committee on UFO Research, and to indicate a national representative for MUFON.

MEDIA COVERAGE

A lot of TV space was allotted to UFOs this year, with no less than ten different broadcasts on national networks. The best one was on April 22nd, in the popular midday RAI-1 talk-show "Mezzogiorno è...", who devoted a full two hours to a debate on UFOs and extraterrestrial life: the most unusual feature was that ufologists guests (all CISU members) divided between believers and disbelievers!

The worst one was on November 4th, when RAI-3 allowed well-known contactee Eugenio Siragusa to speak for two hours and a half while waiting for flying saucers to land on Mt. Etna, where TV cameras were installed for the event: it smelled of cultist folklore twenty years old!

It should be added that also this year C.I.S.U. members kept the

usually high level of conferences, radio/TV and press interviews: more than 40 all over the country.

As a last item, an Italian branch of CSICOP was formed in October, in order to confront the growing occult/psi media interest. A good news for us was that the Italian debunkers are not interested in UFOs, so they would not interfere with us.

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ABSTRACTS OF "UFO - RIVISTA DI INFORMAZIONE UFOLOGICA" ISSUE No. 6

DO WE NOW HAVE TWO UFOLOGIES?
by Jenny Randles

A guest-editorial, translation of an article published in the "MUFON UFO Journal" No. 240, April 1988, as well as in the "BUFORA Bulletin" No. 30, November 1988.

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THREE BURNED GRASS CIRCLES
UFO Landing or Hoax near Verona?
by Gian Paolo Grassino

At 2.30 a.m. on September 20, 1988 an anonymous caller informed the Carabinieri that a field was on fire at Costeggiola, a small township near Cazzano di Tramigna (Verona). Policemen arrived to find nothing. Around the same hour an unidentified caller called Verona newspaper "L'Arena" telling the same story. At 5 p.m. a third phone call was placed, at the newspaper office again. The anonymous informant told he was driving near Costeggiola at 0.15 a.m. when he saw a blinding light hovering above a nearby field, with flames underneath, that soon rose up to the sky. On the following morning he had got back on the spot and found three burned circles in the field. He didn't want to tell his name but promised to call again.

Reporters went to Costeggiola, found and photographed impressive ground traces: three circles of burned, blackened grass (1.85 mts. in diameter) placed in a nearly perfect equilateral triangle (12 mts. in side) [see photos and plans in the main journal, "UFO"]. No burning smell could be felt but just a vinagre-like odor. A lot of local people had already heard of the traces and a 75 year old woman told that she was lying in her bed just after midnight when she had noticed a bright light from outside, which shed didn't bother to check.

The main witness called back twice again that same day but refused to meet the newsmen. Full-page titles were published in the September 21st edition as well as in the following days', and hundreds of people from all around the region began the usual pilgrimage to the "UFO landing site".

INVESTIGATION

Field investigations were undertaken by Carabinieri, the Fire Brigade and the Chemical Unit of the Environmental Protection Agency (checking no radiation and sampling the soil and grass).

The newsmen themselves called the CISU headquarters asking for advice, so on September 22nd a field-investigation was completed by Gian Paolo Grassino and Fabrizio Dividi (driving 300 kms. from Turin), and a

supplement by Alessandro Cortellazzi (from Trento) and Federico Della Corte (Verona) on September 24: measures, photos, soil sampling, interviews with land owners and alleged witnesses, as well as journalists and Carabinieri.

THE TRACES

The field is along a provincial road, but is hidden by a wooded hill. The traces were a few meters from the trees. One of the circles was less prominent (some grass was still green and live within it) and more irregular than the others, which were nearly perfect circles where the grass was completely burned: yellow stubbles among blackened areas and remains of ash showing that an actual combustion took place. No imprint or pressure sign was visible. The field owner was sure no trace was visible up to September 19 at 8.30 p.m. An interesting feature was that some grass was only partially burned: only the part of it falling within the circle, thus showing the well-delimited effect of burning. Only the surface was burned: 2 cms. below there was no more sign of heat exposure.

The old lady witness actually showed us her bedroom facing on the opposite direction than the field. No other witness was found, except another old lady in Costeggiola who heard dogs barking at 0.10 and saw some headlights-like lightness in the dark from her window.

HYPOTHESES

Three hypotheses were examined as possible causes for the traces: a hot body, irradiation, or a hoax.

The anonymously-described hovering UFO with flames underneath is inconsistent with the neat delimitation of traces; moreover, a power line is nearly directly above the traces, thus rendering hovering difficult.

Microwaves or other radiation beam sources is contradicted by the irregular combustion of grass and the vinagre smell, which undoubtedly is a clue to the real cause.

Indeed the "nearly" perfect dimensions and distances of the circles are strongly suggestive of an artificial source, but a not-so-precise one as a landing-gear or a collimated beam would be.

A hoax would seem the best fitting hypothesis: even the vague testimonies would be consistent with that. The superficial burning wouldn't have needed a lot of energy; the field is easily accessible and not visible from the nearer houses; a certain care in measuring and some delimiting device, plus some inflammables would suffice.

Let's add that ashes and a torch were found in the nearby wood during our site examination.

Chemical analysis first searched for solid fuels but found none. Anyway, the vinagre smell was the right track, since the E.P.A. analyses found organic solvents in the ground, which are highly inflammable and do typically contain ethilene acetate.

Indeed we only had here some odd ground marks, with no investigationable testimony. What sounded like an impressive trace-landing CE-II revealed itself something very different after proper investigation and evaluation.

As a last note, we should add that "Dr." Corrado Malanga, "scientific consultant" of Centro Ufologico Nazionale (C.U.N.) also arrived on place on September 25 (after the field was heavily irrigated) and later claimed that the grass was "more than burned looked like pressed by a hot body (...) like three hot metallic half-spheres" of Adamski's scoutship!

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CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH VALLEE
A Confrontation with the "Father" of Paraphysical Ufology
Interview by Linda Strand

Translation of an article published in the "MUFON UFO Journal" No. 241, May 1988, followed by a shorter item:

VALLEE IN BRUXELLES
Interview by Edoardo Russo

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CE-III PHOTOS IN ITALY
by Paolo Fiorino

Humanoid photographs are very rare all over the world. Out of 431 Italian CE-III's we've catalogued, as many as 13 are photographic reports. But only one is worthy serious attention (the Mount Bondone case, detailed in the next article). As for the other ones, we may group them as follows:

1) HOAXES

These on turn may be divided into:

A) "Classic" Hoaxes

The best known one is still often reported abroad as authentic: it's the seven pictures of a landed saucer and humanoid allegedly taken by Giampiero Monguzzi on the slopes of Mt. Scherschen (Bernina Massif, province of Sondrio) on July 31, 1952. Indeed as early as 1952 did he admit hoaxing the photos, and explained how he did it. Also one of his friends later admitted having helped him. A recent phone call to Monguzzi led to no more details.

A less known event took place on February 4, 1963, when 21 years old painter Mario Salmaso allegedly managed to get four photos of a humanoid beside his landed UFO at Piove di Sacco (Padova). The pictures were shown to local journalists but were never published. The witness later told that his father had destroyed them because of the following harassment by the media and the public. In 1985 he admitted to us having hoaxed the photos, and a local journalist told us he had also helped him (it took place at a moment of high media interest for UFOs).

B) "Goliardic" Hoaxes

In 1982 a group of readers of the occult monthly "Giornale dei misteri" sent a detailed story of a CE-III with two night-time photos of a humanoid. After the magazine published the story, they wrote telling it was just a hoax aimed at showing how gullible "ufologist"s would be.

C) Advertising Hoaxes

In 1988 the Italian weekly "7" gave its full cover page to a blurred color photo of a "UFO Occupant" allegedly taken by an anonymous university professor in Pavia. Inconsistencies in the published story as

well as other details are clearly pointing to a hoax by the magazine itself in order to advertise the publication of W. Strieber's "Communion" (by the same publisher as "7").

2) PHOTOS BY CONTACTEES

Italian contactee Antonio De Rosa claimed to have photographed two Venusians on board of their spaceship at Piana di Megolo (Novara), on August 16, 1972. As may be clearly seen [see photos in the journal "UFO"], the picture wasn't but a reproduction of a scene from an Hungarian SF film.

3) PHOTOS BY UFO BUFFS

A peculiar fact is that as many as 6 humanoid photos were taken by UFO buffs, and no less than 4 by members of the "Gruppo Osservazioni e Ricerche Ufologiche" (GORU) in La Spezia, which have been doing a lot of sky-watching activity since 1972, having literally thousands of personal sightings and several psychic-like experiences. They held a theory that UFOs were "ex-terrestrials" coming back from the future through an "invisible dimension", and often showing through "secondary manifestations" (odd noises, uneasiness, odd silence, mystery fogs, sudden rise in radiation bearings, etc.). When GORU "instrumentation" (a magnetometer and a Geiger counter) signalled a "presence", the group members took pictures all around; on the developed, enlarged photos, they often "found" images of flying lights, landed saucers and also entities!

Similar experiences were also shared by other UFO buff groups at that time, and another un-seen entity "found" on picture was photographed at Podere Marniano (Firenze) in 1975 by another skywatching group of C.U.N. members from Prato. A Turin UFO buff also found a "landed disc and humanoid" in a family photo album of the '60s, in 1973.

Only three of GORU CE-III photos are of the "invisible" kind. The fourth photo is quite different and was widely reported both in the Italian and international media at the time. It was taken on January 13, 1976, at 8.30 p.m. Three members of the group were in their usual skywatch station on Mt. Verrugoli (La Spezia) when the air got still and oddly silent. They saw a (perfectly visible, this time) "person", 1.6 mts tall, wearing a black overall and a metallic helmet, seemingly "gliding" among the bushes and suddenly disappearing before they could reach "him". The scene was repeated in identical fashion three more times, each time at a closer range, and a photograph was taken from a distance of 3-4 meters. The most probable hypothesis is an exercise of Navy incursors from a nearby base (the name of the photographed trooper was even told to us).

CONCLUSIONS

- 1) Very few cases (13) of photographic CE-III's were reported in Italy.
- 2) Half of these (6) are outright hoaxes.
- 3) All non-hoax cases but one (Mt. Bondone) were taken or found by UFO buffs; 5 out of 6 were taken during sky-watches.
- 4) Of the sky-watchers' photos, all but one were "invisible" beings whose image was found (with some fantasy work) on the pictures after development.
- 5) We are left with only one case of photos intentionally taken of a visible entity, seen by a casual witness during a UFO sighting.

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THE MOUNT BONDONE CASE
by Alessandro Cortellazzi

This CE-III took place on September 18, 1978 but was never published before. We came upon the photos by chance in 1980, and a first investigation was conducted by member Lorenzo Fratton. A more detailed field investigation by Alessandro Cortellazzi took place in 1981.

A 35 year old clerk was driving back home from a funeral when, shortly after 7 p.m., he noticed what he thought to be a fire reflecting above the wood trees. As a photo buff, he got off the car and walked into the wood holding his camera, hoping to photograph a fire. He was soon aware of sounds like a rhythmic, metallic ticking. He had a sensation of being watched and turned back: he saw a human-like figure leaning out from behind a tree at about 5 meters from him. He instinctively took a photo without even caring to correctly frame, then a second one when the entity put itself out. For a few moments, he looked amazed at the seemingly equally amazed being for about 30 seconds, then he tried to get closer but the entity fled by fast steps and jerks, while he tried to get a third picture (but the film was over).

The witness described the entity as follows: it was 1.5-1.6 mt. tall, stocky and fattish; it had strange pointed ears and a "tube" coming out from the mouth. He couldn't see the legs; the hands wore like gloves; the eyes were large, deep, almond-shaped and dull, and seemingly emitting an odd light. He also smelled a camphor-like smell.

After regaining himself and returning to his car, he drove on but once again he noticed the fire-like light among the trees on his right. He got off again and walked to the assumed fire place, where he found a circular trace, 3 meters in diameter, where the grass looked flattened and withered and the ground was warm.

He finally drove home but told his wife nothing till he had the photos developed (only the second one was successful). He is a well known professional and social worker and had no need to look for notoriety (which he didn't look for: he asked to remain anonymous). The negatives are presently lost somewhere among the thousands he's got in his house. The only unclear points in his story were why he had a very sensitive B/W 400 ASA film loaded (which he admitted was unusual for him) and why he chose to drive home through a longer road (tens of miles longer than the shorter one).

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THE BRUXELLES CONGRESS
Meeting with European Ufology
by Edoardo Russo

A detailed overview of the "First European Congress on Anomalous Aerial Phenomena - Physical and Psycho-social Aspects", hosted by SOBEPS (Société Belge d'Etudes des Phénomènes Spatiaux) at Bruxelles (Belgium) on November 11-13, 1988. You should already know everything about it: speakers from ten European countries attended, including such well-known researchers as Hilary Evans (UK), Michel Figuet, Denys Breyse, Claude Maugé, Pierre Lagrange (France), Auguste Meessen (Belgium), Enrique De Vicente (Spain) plus Walt Andrus, Richard Haines and Jacques Vallée from the USA and Vladimir Rubtsov from the USSR. Full proceeding (in English) of this really outstanding congress are available from: SOBEPS, Avenue Paul Janson 74, B-1070 Bruxelles, Belgium (190 pages, 900 Belgian Francs).

As for the Italian papers (by Edoardo Russo & Gian Paolo Grassino, Maurizio Verga, Paolo Toselli), they were all published in ITUFOR-8.

A personal comment may be of interest: apart from confirming our

own analysis of the current differences between American and European ufologies, we really noted a profound "communion" with European fellow researchers, most of them sharing CISU critical approach to ufology.

We also appreciated that the French socio-psychological "new skepticism" is got over; it is now a part of the European UFO cultural background, and it takes no longer to negating the phenomenon's reality. What remains is a critical view of past errors, but ufology goes on with renewed enthusiasm.

It's also interesting that "critical ufology" is the dominant ideology in Europe and it is the establishment of the national organizations themselves, in France (AESV), UK (BUFORA), Belgium (SOBEPS), Germany (CENAP, GEP), Spain (CdU) as well as in Italy (CISU, of course).

Such meetings are useful for contributing to the slow, yet continous improvement of theoretical and methodological tools which not only are the true common ground of European ufology, but mostly its strenght.

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WHO'S WHO IN ITALIAN UFOLOGY

Here we are with another of our presentations:

Dr. Roberto Farabone lives in Milan, where he got a university degree in physics, has worked as a software trainer and is presently working in audio-visuals.

He has been active ufologically since 1973. He was instrumental in forming CNIFAA (Comitato Nazionale Indipendente per lo studio dei Fenomeni Aerei Anomali), and since 1976 he has been editor of "UFO Phenomena - International Annual Review" (UPIAR), the first refereed journal devoted to scientific ufology.

In 1979 he became Director of the Scientific Committee of Centro Ufologico Nazionale (CUN). He also chaired the First UPIAR Colloquium on Human Sciences and UFO Phenomena, held in Salzburg (Austria) in 1982, and edited the Proceedings.

A founding member of Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici (CISU) in 1985, he was elected President in 1988.

All ITUFOR abstracts, translations and mistakes are by Edoardo Russo.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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