

THE ITALIAN SCENE ONCE MORE

Gordon Creighton

AS most people probably know, the great French UFO Wave of September-December 1954 spilled over, logically enough, into Italy, and produced a similar mass of sightings and landings there. From a pile of press clippings which we have recently received from Dr. Roberto Pinotti, Vice-President of CUN (the Italian Ufological Centre, CENTRO UFOLOGICO NAZIONALE, of Via Vignola 3, Milano), from Frl. Lou Zinsstag of Basel, Monsieur Jean Bastide of Aix-en-Provence, and Miss Jane Thomas of Buenos Aires, it looks as though, after a period of several years of relative silence and "clamp-down" in the Italian press, the current French Wave has also carried on into Italy and the accursed subject has once more erupted into the headlines there.

Caselle Airport aerial encounter: radar confirmation

This Italian phase seems to have started around November 30, 1973, and to have embraced a good many areas, notably Torino (Turin). A number of photographs have allegedly been secured and have appeared in the press, particularly spectacular being a series taken on November 24 by a student, Franco Contin, of Susa. These pictures were given a tremendous front-page splash in the *Domenica del Corriere* of December 16.

Other papers have given wide publicity to sightings over the Caselle airport (Torino) on November 30 by the pilots of three aircraft. One of these, Riccardo Marano, was about to land in a *Piper Navajo* light plane when the control tower advised him that a UFO was 400 metres above the runway. He made towards it, and has described it as a luminous ball, emitting a gamut of colours changing from violet through sky blue to dark red. He said: "But when I got closer and had a better view, the object at once made off, flying in a most irregular fashion, manoeuvring in a way I have seen no plane do, making fantastic lateral deviations, and sudden vast jumps to and fro, as if it enjoyed playing hide-and-seek... When I gave up the chase it was going towards Genova. Its speed was as high as 900 km. per hour."

Other highly reliable witnesses confirmed Marano's story, one of these being Colonel Rustichelli, commandant of the Caselle military airfield. He said that he had seen the UFO on his own radar screen. (Was this wise on his part?—G.C.) Said he: "It was something solid, lit-up, like a plane on my radar screen, and giving the same sort of return as a DC-8 would give. It looked to me much like a star. When we got it on the radar screen it stayed firm. Soon after that, it headed off westwards."

The other two professional pilots who also saw this object over Caselle were both Alitalia Air Line

men. The first, Commander Tranquillo, was on his way from Torino to Rome with a DC-9. His colleague, Commander Mezzalami, also in a DC-9, was coming in from Paris.

Commander Tranquillo called to the control tower: "I see a shining thing giving out intermittent flashes of light, four miles from me. I dare not approach. I give way."

Commander Mezzalami, with ten years of service as a military pilot and eight in civilian flying, said: "I was able to observe the object, which was notified to me by the control tower just as I was about to touch down. I had a good view of it. It was bright, but much less so than a star, and also less bright than an artificial satellite. I can offer no theories as to its significance, and can only say that it was something very strange indeed." (Statements in article in *La Domenica del Corriere*, December 16, 1973, of which Dr. Roberto Pinotti kindly forwarded the full text and Frl. Lou Zinsstag kindly furnished an English translation.)

According to the *Domenica del Corriere*, he it noted, the student Franco Contin took his photograph on November 30, and it was of the same object that was seen by the three pilots at Caselle. Dr. Pinotti informs me, however, that this date is incorrect, and that the UFOs in question are hardly likely to have been identical, as Contin took his photo on November 24 as stated above, and not on November 30.

From the indications in our possession it seems that there may now be some alarm in official circles in Italy. The taboo subject which had been pretty successfully kept out of the press for so many years has raised its ugly head again. No doubt it is felt to be unfortunate that the knowledge of the radar sighting got out, for we know how "sensitive" the authorities are in the USA and Britain about radar (remember the blatant misrepresentations in the Banbury TV programme!). This policy may strike one as peculiarly pointless, since Russian astronomers stated in their own press years ago that in Russia UFOs have regularly been captured on radar.

Anyway, the clamps are now on in Italy, and Italian Air Force personnel have suddenly gone just about as mute as that Ole Brer Rabbit. And American Air Force investigators (from USAF bases in Europe?) have been going around interviewing the Italian witnesses.

The few details given above make it clear that we are far from having a full picture yet of what has been happening in Italy. CUN will shortly put out a special giant issue of their journal, *Notiziario UFO*, which will be devoted to the present Wave, so before long we should be better informed. What is at any rate certain is that lately very large numbers of Italians have been seeing things again. "UFO Plague

Over Turin," a headline in the *Buenos Aires Herald* (English-language newspaper) of December 5, 1973, seems to sum it up.

We at FSR are not greatly interested in "lights in the sky" and no doubt most readers agree with us that the weird and "way-out" contact and close-encounter stories are both more fun and more informative. We hope we shall find plenty of these in the CUN survey. In the meantime, I give below details of the only two cases which I have found so far in the current press-clippings.

Contactee La Rosa

The first of these stories was included in a generally sceptical article in the illustrated weekly *Gente* (December 21, 1973). It contained an interview with Dr. Pinotti, in which he outlined his ideas on the UFO problem, and mentioned en passant that radar sightings were nothing new. But the author of the article, Giuseppe Randazzo, was careful to see that the headlines and the first part of the piece were devoted to an exposition of the views of Signor Giovanni Rosa, director of the Caselle airport, who was able to explain everything.

("It was just a meteorite!") Then, no doubt as the *coup de grace* which should satisfy all readers that UFO contact stories are uniformly hogwash, he ended with the account of an Italian radio "ham" of Gravellona Toce, in the province of Novara. This young man, Giovanni La Rosa (no relative, we assume, of the Caselle airport director!) apparently claims that, one day in 1973, while he was busy with his receiving/transmitting set, he heard a most peculiar kind of interference, a noise such as he had never heard before. Listening for a few moments he picked out "metallic voices" which were speaking in Italian. He at once gave his own wave-length, his position, and his name. Speaking very distinctly a voice replied:

"Promise that what you experience from this moment onwards will remain a secret between us and you. Do not speak of it to anyone. We are not inhabitants of your world. We are beings who come from Space. We have no intention of doing any harm to your fellow-men."

La Rosa said he retorted that he did not believe a word of it but: "If it is indeed as you say, then give me some sign or other so that I *can* believe you!" He says they thereupon made an appointment to meet him, a week from then, in a small wood near his home.

He went on: "I know all this sounds unbelievable. But I swear to you that it happened to me, that I saw them, and that I talked with them. When they landed, preceded by an intensely vivid light, I was so scared that I wanted to run, but I just remained there, watching, as though petrified. Their machine was a circular-shaped thing from ten to fifteen metres wide. A small door opened in the front of it, and out came a ramp resembling a portable ladder. Then three people came out, of normal height, all

wearing suits of asbestos, and with antennae on their helmets. They seemed to be men like us."

Giovanni La Rosa was experiencing a domestic tragedy at the time. His little daughter was gravely ill, and all the doctors who had visited her had diagnosed the case as one for which nothing could be done. He spoke to the "Extraterrestrials" about it, and they promised that they would return and cure the child. "But they never came back, and I am very upset about it. They did not seem to be bad people."

(Did they fail to come back because he had broken his promise and talked?—G.C.)

Giuseppe Randazzo, author of the *Gente* article, surely chose La Rosa's story because: "It is the least probable of all the UFO tales that have been current in recent days in Piedmont...La Rosa is in fact the only person who maintains he has *talked* to extraterrestrials. The others who claim to have seen flying saucers have confined themselves simply to describing glowing objects skimming through the skies."

These remarks show how little Giuseppe Randazzo evidently knows about the history of the UFO Problem in his own country, for the Italian papers were chock-a-block with such cases — many of them far more fantastic than this one — *ten years ago*. And I was translating them for FSR.

Indeed one wonders how many FSR readers would find any feature of La Rosa's story wildly improbable? To me it has a ring of truth about it.

The globular "approximate human"

The other recent Italian encounter story reached me in a clipping from the Buenos Aires paper *La Cronica* (November 23, 1973) for which I must thank the eagle-eyed Jane Thomas.

It seems that two Italian youths, Cosimo Brigida, aged 16, and Giovanni Lonoce, aged 17, of Martina Franca, a small town down in the far south-eastern tip of Italy, told the police that they had watched "a ball of fire" land near the railway station. The glow of the object then went out, and they found themselves looking at a globular something, "approximately human", with a white face and two eyes, and little red and yellow lights on its head.

The boys fled and hid behind a wall, but apparently the visitor liked company and followed them there. So they pelted it with stones. The deterrent worked, and they were able to make a very speedy get-away to the nearest police post.

However the policemen who went and examined the spot were able to find no traces of the globular humanoid with coloured lights on his head.

Dr. Franco Di Giorgio, the local magistrate, heard the case in court, and carefully perused the dossier which the police laid before him. Torn between his own personal scepticism and his duty, as a magistrate, to weigh the evidence, Dr. Di Giorgio concluded the proceedings by issuing an order that, should the globular entity show himself again in those parts, he should be apprehended forthwith and lodged in the cells.

We had heard of sheriffs in the USA and rural

magistrates in France issuing instructions for the detention of Martians, but so far as we know this is the first such court-order to be handed down in Italy.

* * * * *

As for the *truthfulness* of this story, I must confess that twenty-six years of reading UFO reports from all over our world seem to have undermined my will-not-to-believe, if one may use Waveney Girvan's excellent term. After all, what is there in this Italian case that strikes us as in any way "new" or "far out"? What about the affair at Prémanon,* in France, on September 27, 1954, when four children and their dog came face to face with a "square tin ghost" whose gestures of friendship the children repaid by pelting it with stones, while their dog did his bit by barking loudly at it? Prémanon, it seems, has been well investigated, and the story has not been discredited. So, on the whole, why not accept the story of the two lads of Martina Franca? If we can have *square* entities, then why not *round* ones too?

* Case 23 of Jacques Vallée's *The Pattern Behind The UFO Landings* in *THE HUMANOIDS* (Neville Spearman, London, 1969). See also Aimé Michel's *Flying Saucers and the Straight Line Mystery* (Criterion Books, New York, 1958).

NOW AVAILABLE!

The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz: Anno 1459

New edition of original Foxcroft translation, first published in English in 1690.

Tells in magnificent pictorial language, of a unique initiation journey undertaken by the founder of the Rosicrucian Movement.

Price: £1.65 (including postage and packing) in UK, \$4.40 (including postage and packing, and exchange) overseas.

Remittances payable to Geoffrey Orson, London House, Ruardean, Gloucestershire, England.

UFO AND SPACE AGE PUBLICATIONS

UFOs HERE & NOW, by K. Gosta Rehn. Presents new positive evidence by well-known scientists including Dr. Hynek and Arthur C. Clarke. Eyewitness accounts reviewed and analysed; methods of propulsion effects of UFO radiation etc. Illust. Publication 17/10/74 **£3.20**

REALITY OF OCCULT, YOGA, MEDITATION, FLYING SAUCERS by Rex Dutta, B.A. F.Z.S. Each subject has contributions from specialists on parapsychology which presents causes behind supernatural phenomena. **£3.70**

WHISPERS FROM SPACE, by John W. Macvey. The author, a distinguished astronomer, makes the soundest case so far for the epoch making news that man has received 'signals' from intelligent life in space. **£3.20**

URI, by Dr. Andrija Puharich. The life and work of UFO contactee, Uri Geller. **£3.20** Paperback **62p**

ROMEO ERROR, by Dr. Lyall Watson. Latest book from the author of *Supernature*. **£3.60**

MORE THINGS, by Ivan Sanderson. Mystery occurrences in nature. **60p**

UFO CONTACT, by Major Hans Petersen. Illustrated and professionally published magazine on UFOs, science, space and parapsychology. **50p**

THE TAMING OF THE THUNDERBOLTS, by C. Maxwell Cade. Few copies only **£1.65**

TO RULE THE NIGHT, by Apollo 15 astronaut, Col. Jim Irwin. Describes lunar mission, ESP experiences, changes in consciousness while in space. 3 copies only **£2.75**

APOGEE, Illustrated newsletter by astronaut, Jim Irwin. Unites religion, science and parapsychology. **15p**

FLYING SAUCER OCCUPANTS, by Jim and Coral Lorenzon. Few copies only **50p**

STRANGERS FROM THE SKIES, by Brad Steiger. Read astonishing documented facts. **36p**

PASSPORT TO MAGONIA, by Jacques Vallée **£1.95**

UNINVITED VISITORS, by Ivan Sanderson **£1.70**

THE MYSTERIOUS UNKNOWN, by Robert Charroux **65p**

THE BIBLE AND FLYING SAUCERS, by Barry Downing **£2.00** Paperback **50p**

FLYING SAUCERS: startling evidence of the invasion from outer space, by Coral Lorenzon **52p**

GODS AND SPACEMEN IN THE ANCIENT EAST, by W.R. Drake **47p**

Prices include postage inland. Overseas 10% on hard cover titles. Lists 6p. Free with order. Insurance on parcels up to £10.00 (England and Eire only) 5p.

Make cheques payable (sterling or dollar) to:

Miss S. R. Stebbing, 87 Selsea Avenue,
Herne Bay, Kent CT6 8SD.

£1.00 = approx. 38p.