

THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND UFOs

SIGNS OF A NEW ATTITUDE FOLLOWING UNEASY STEPS FORWARD

Roberto Pinotti

Dr. Pinotti, who here makes a welcome return to our pages, is Vice-President of the Italian National UFO Research Centre (C.U.N.), which has its Headquarters at Via Vignola 3, 20136, Milano. Dr. Pinotti lives in Firenze (Florence).

AS Gordon Creighton has reported in FSR,¹ three helicopters of the Italian Army's Light Aircraft Corps (Aviazione Leggera Esercito) had a close sighting of an "orange circle" over the military airfield at Elmas (Cagliari) on the Italian island of Sardinia on October 27, 1977.

The Commandant of the Elmas Air Force Base, Colonel Mario D'Angelo, sent a detailed report to the Italian Minister of Defence, and as a result we now have details of the first *official* military investigation which the Italian authorities admit to ever having made into a UFO sighting by military pilots.

I give below a résumé of what has happened in this case, following on from what Mr. Creighton has already reported.²

The case received wide publicity from the Italian media, but the reaction of the Ministry of Defence was at first one of total silence about the affair.

In an attempt to break through the screen of silence, our research group, C.U.N. (Italy's most important and most authoritative group) made a thorough enquiry of our own into the case, and we managed to secure a number of confidential reports on it which showed clearly that the business was very mysterious and certainly did not involve an aircraft.

We then launched a vigorous campaign, writing letters to numerous newspapers, urging the Minister to make an official statement, and these letters were all published.

Finally, on January 5, 1978, the Italian Defence Department put out an *ad hoc* press release in an attempt "...to answer the citizens who had been writing to the press." This press release stated that the UFO had been identified as "an aircraft operating over Sardinia in the course of an ordinary flight mission," but which the Air Force Personnel at Elmas had been unable to identify at the time "owing to particular weather conditions during twilight."

This vague and quite ridiculous statement, totally disavowing the earlier military reports, was promptly refuted by us in a letter which we (C.U.N.) sent to the Minister of Defence. In this letter we reminded him of the evidence that had already been given by the various eyewitnesses at the Elmas Air Force Base,

and we made a request for a serious, confidential exchange of information and data with the Ministry on the Elmas case, and also on the UFO problem as a whole.

The remarkable result of all this was that in due course we received from the Ministry of Defence, on March 31, 1978, a file containing details of six un-classified UFO sightings by Italian military personnel during the year 1977. These included the Elmas case, plus two repetitions which had taken place at Elmas on November 2 and November 5, 1977, *neither of which had been revealed until then.* In both these repeater cases, the report of the sighting came from the personnel of the control-tower at the Elmas Air Force Base. Moreover, in the case of the sighting on November 2, the eyewitnesses also included Italian Air Force pilots who were flying over the area at the time and the pilots of two German Air Force F104G jet interceptor aircraft from the German Forces detailed for operation at the NATO Base on the Island of Sardinia.

In all three cases at Elmas, the eyewitnesses had described the UFO as a circular or elliptical "ball of fire" flying at tremendous speed.

When the Air Ministry released these six cases to us at C.U.N., the issuing official in the Ministry misunderstood his instructions, and, instead of sending the material only to C.U.N. (as established and authoritative National Civilian UFO Research Group of Italy) he also sent a copy of it to another small research group, CNIFAA, who were once part of C.U.N. but broke away from us in 1973. They are doing good work and still collaborate with us closely. But the official also sent a copy to a third group which employs the resounding title of *International Centre for Study and Research on UFOs* — but only consists of two teen-agers. The two teen-agers passed the material, plus the Ministry's covering letter, to the press, with the result that before long, *IL Lavoro*, a socialist newspaper published in Genoa, published the whole story and poked fun at the Air Ministry for having "a couple of teen-agers as its UFO consultants."

This unfortunate turn of events caused the personnel of the Ministry of Defence to take affright and

try to back-pedal. So they started to try to belittle the whole affair of the Elmas sightings. In an interview with journalists, a Ministry spokesman explained that there is no secrecy whatsoever in Italy about UFO sightings and UFO reports, and that such trifling "journalistic events" are quite unimportant and are unclassified. (Article in newspaper *La Nazione* of May 27, 1978.)

Clearly the whole affair had been a source of much embarrassment all round, and before long the Air Force seemed to feel it necessary to justify their attitude over the Elmas case and other cases. So, on May 27, 1978, the Air Force issued a statement, through the ANSA Press Agency, regarding a UFO sighting which had occurred on March 9, with multiple witnesses. This statement made it clear that, while the Air Force had no theories as to what the object might have been (witnesses had variously described it as red or green, and they included the crews of four foreign airliners and two Italian military aircraft), at least it was definitely no conventional aeroplane and was definitely very mysterious.

But here again, something odd occurred, making it look as though some sort of censorship of UFO reports was indeed in operation. For, although it had been released to the press, this Air Force hand-out only got published in two newspapers – and even in those it was in a mutilated form which misrepresented its meaning. We at C.U.N. were able to secure a copy of the full text of the release from the ANSA Press Agency.

This curious chapter of comedies and errors and imbroglios ended with our writing again to the Ministry of Defence and emphasising that it had all come about through the irresponsible behaviour of their personnel, and requesting them to act more responsibly in future and to release UFO reports only to ourselves as the established Centre.

The important results of all this are very clear. The Italian Ministry of Defence has begun to show a change of attitude, and this follows upon the signs of similar changes by both the French and the Spanish authorities. This seems to indicate that, after years of a "policy of silence" – imposed by the USA and USSR³ in collaboration – UFO investigation in the countries of Europe is now destined to play an important role, and we at C.U.N. are happy to be playing our part in these developments and glad to see that our contribution to the general cause of UFO research has been useful, as these developments indicate.

When Dr. Hynek was here in Italy recently, we took the opportunity to give him, for his Center, a copy of the complete file received by us from the Italian Air Ministry.

And, in conclusion, I would like to emphasise that the photostat reports on the six cases sent to us by the Air Ministry are *on the standard Italian Air Ministry's UFO reporting form, which had never been revealed before*. Its title in Italian is: *Relazione*

(Concluded on page 18)

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AN EERIE HUMANOID IN SAITAMA

ALARMING EXPERIENCE OF JAPANESE RADIO "HAM"

Jun-Ichi Takanashi

Our contributor, whom we welcome once again to the pages of *Flying Saucer Review*, is Chairman of the Modern Space Flight Association of Osaka, Japan.

ONE of the most popular television night programmes in Japan is "11 PM" (yes, it is pronounced literally in English "Eleven P.M.") which is presented each night from Monday to Friday, from 11.15 p.m. to 0.25 a.m. From time to time this programme features UFOs, the paranormal and the occult. On November 6, 1978, "11 PM" featured an account of an eerie encounter with a weird humanoid on the top of a mountain near Sayama City, which is in Saitama Prefecture, Japan. The unfortunate witness is a Mr. Hideichi Amano (29) who is an amateur radio operator, and the date of the incident was October 3, 1978.

The use of the description "unfortunate" will be appreciated as the account unfolds.

For his livelihood Mr. Amano runs a snack bar called "Juri" after his baby daughter, and on the night of October 3 had driven in his mobile unit car to the top of a mountain near Sayama City so that he could get unobstructed transmission and reception of radio waves while communicating with his younger brother who lives far away in another part of Japan, in Yamanashi Prefecture. The conversation began at about 8.30 p.m., and after they had finished, Mr. Amano chatted around with a few of his local "ham" friends before he decided — as he had two-year-old Juri with him — that it was time to go back down the mountain. It was at that point that the interior of the car became very bright.

The surprised Mr. Amano turned swiftly to look at the back seats, above which he had fixed a fluorescent light to replace the normal car interior light. The interior was illuminated by a brightness tens of times more intense than he normally had from the fluorescent light. Puzzled, he stuck his head out of the side window and tried to locate the source of the light. He was flabbergasted to find that the ultra bright light was restricted to the interior only of the car, and that *no light was leaking out from the car windows!*

Turning his head back inside the car he was aghast to find that young Juri, who moments before had been standing on the driver's seat beside him, was now lying on the seat foaming at the mouth.

At almost the same instant he became aware of a strange, round orange-coloured light illuminating the

area of his stomach. Numbly he looked back along the path of the beam which was causing this; it was coming through the windscreen from a point in the dark night sky. It was at the moment he made this discovery that he sensed a metallic object being pressed against his right temple. The pressure increased and in a state of mounting fear he looked sideways and saw a weird, unearthly creature standing there! A pipe-like device was projecting from its mouth, and it was this that was pressing against his head, communicating something incessantly to his brain by way of voiceless high-pitched noises which sounded for all the world like a high-speed play back of a recorded tape.

The humanoid

The eerie creature's face was round, but there appeared to be no neck. There was a depression on the forehead in the shape of a triangle, and the creature's ears were big and sharply pointed on the upper edges. It had two eyes, very small and motionless, which were glowing in a bluish-white like miniature lamps, while its mouth which was either projecting into a pipe, or holding the pipe (which was pressed against his temple), was more or less obscured from him as he strained to see sideways. He could see no sign of a nose in the creature's face.

Shocked and terrified, Mr. Amano wanted to flee from the place but when he tried to start the car the engine did not respond properly, and he found the headlights did not come on when he applied the switch. All the time the crazy "space message" continued to flow into his brain and he was immobilized, sensing all the time that his brain was gradually becoming more and more vague.

After an estimated four or five minutes of this continuing state of affairs, the figure of the creature began to dim out gradually until it had vanished; the round orange light on his stomach disappeared while the fluorescent interior light also returned to its normal brightness. Then, suddenly, all the things he had switched on began to work: the headlights came on, the car radio and stereo began to play. (Later Mr. Amano's watch was found to have stopped at 9.37 p.m.)