

UFO ALERT AT A NATO BASE IN ITALY

(Translation from Italian) *Antonio Chiumiento*

The author, who lives in Pordenone in North-Eastern Italy, and therefore very near to the NATO Base mentioned in this report, has been for some years past the most active member of the Governing Board of C.U.N. (Centro Ufologico Nazionale, the Italian National UFO Research Centre) and earlier this year he became its Vice-President. The President of C.U.N. is Signore Mario Cingolani, who lives in Rome, and our old friend Dr Roberto Pinotti of Florence (Firenze) is in charge of the External Secretariat of the Group and the Documentation. Antonio Chiumiento is now also the Vice-Director of the Committee responsible for C.U.N.'s Bulletin, *the Notiziario—UFO*.

FSR 28/25, 28/6 and 29/1 have contained interesting examples of Signor Chiumiento's investigative work — the encounter with the "Little Oriental Airman" near San Giorgio di Nogaro, and the "Encounter with 'Rat-Faces'" near Gallio. — EDITOR

THE scene of this important event, which took place during the night of June 30/July 1, 1977, is the NATO Base at Aviano, one of the most important NATO centres in the north-eastern Italian zone known as TRE VENEZIE (THREE VENETIAS). Aviano, a populous town, lies at an altitude of 159 m. above sea-level, at the foot of Mount Cavallo, and on the edge of the Pordenone Plain.

By July 1st, the news of the occurrence had already spread throughout the entire Aviano region, and we received details of the matter, not only through trusty local sources but also, in a very particular fashion, through a number of indirect witnesses of the event, and especially, from a certain N.C.O. in our own (Italian) Air Force, whose name for obvious reasons we do not disclose, although full details about him are recorded in our files. On the day following the episode he collected together conversations and interviews which he had had with personnel of the NATO Base and compiled this Report of which we give a digest below.

A Flying Saucer Over the "Victor Alert" Area

On June 30, 1977, the NATO Base had been closed to air traffic as the final preparatory work was being carried out for the Air Parade due to be held on the following Sunday — namely on July 3. The episode occurred during the night of June 30 to July 1. At about 3.00 a.m. on Friday, July 1, a soldier of the United States, James Blake, noticed that, above the reserved area of the air-field and precisely above the

area called "Victor Alert" where there were two military planes kept under guard in huts, there was a "light" of a remarkable size. It was stationary at a height of about 100 m. Once the Commandant of the Base had been notified, the first security detachments were rushed to the spot.

Furthermore the radar-operator of the Base — who was not on duty that night (because the airport was closed and no air traffic — either of transit or of close approach — was therefore anticipated) was called back into service. It should also be mentioned that the radar subsequently did register the presence of the UFO over the Base, but nevertheless it must be emphasised that the whole of the air-field's instruments were 'dead' for a certain period of time, and consequently it is presumed that those in the control-tower were 'dead' too.

Seen By Many

The object was observed by the large numbers of military personnel who came rushing up immediately after the sounding of the alarm. The deployment of the forces was kept at a safety distance from the area concerned, which was lit up by the "thing". The UFO was about 50 m. in diameter. It looked like a "spinning-top" or a "disc". It had a dome on its upper part, was spinning round on its own axis, and was emitting varied colourings of light, changing from white to green and then to red. Furthermore it was emitting a humming noise like the sound of a swarm of bees in flight.

The "disc" was vertically above the huts, in the so-called "Victor Alert" zone, the most strictly reserved area of the Base, and not more than a hundred metres from the ground as already stated. It remained there for about one hour.

NATO Headquarters in Brussels Informed?

Subsequent sources made it clear to us that even the NATO Headquarters in Brussels was advised of the matter during that night. However, such statements, even though confirmed for us by military personages whom we regard as the most reliable, are to be treated as entirely provisional indications and assertions and unfortunately not confirmable at an official level.

The Obligatory Explanation. And Our Dissent

Anyway, the following official declaration was, it seems, issued about the occurrence: "*The phenomenon must be attributed to a reflection of the Moon on some low clouds*".

Well, here are the factual meteorological data for the place where the sighting occurred:

1. Temperature: (*in loco*): max. 26°
min. 15°
2. Wind Moderate, from West.
3. Sky, little cloud.
4. Humidity: about 75%.

So the minimum temperature (15°) was too high in relation to the percentage of humidity (75%) for conditions to be such as to permit the formation of clouds at such a low altitude (about 100 m.)!

As for the Moon, it must be mentioned that from about 3.00 a.m. to about 4.30 a.m. (statutory time) on July 1, 1977, it was already low on the horizon (far towards the West) and was setting. Indeed it set at 5.18 a.m. (statutory time).

Well then, it could not have been, at the time of the sighting, almost vertically above the observers!

Consequently, basing himself upon the principles of Meteorology and of Astronomy, the writer disagrees strongly with the apparent official statement.

Developments in the Inquiries

The extension of our inquiries brought to our knowledge some marginal reports about the occurrence.

On the Sunday following upon the sighting — that is to say, July 3, 1977, the day of the Air Parade — the wife of our informant, the Air Force NCO, took part in the visit to the Airfield by a party aboard a military motor-coach, in which there were several important personages and relatives of personnel serving on the Base. On this occasion the lady in question learned that certain other people had witnessed the unusual happening with the UFO. During the days following upon the sighting, even in the local town, Aviano, the report of the affair was the subject of common interest and discussion. Notwithstanding all of this, nothing about the episode was ever made public. The same lady mentioned above was approached several times by acquaintances wishing to see whether she did not know more about it. So it is in our opinion certain that an inexplicable aerial phenomenon affected the NATO Base at Aviano that night, and as proof of this there are several collateral pieces of testimony gathered by witnesses who are in no way connected with the personnel of the Base. We therefore report below what seems to be the most important among these accounts.

The "independent" Witness

Signor Benito Manfré, born in 1940, a night-watchman by calling, was living at Castello d'Aviano (to be precise, a hamlet pertaining to Aviano) at the date of the occurrence.

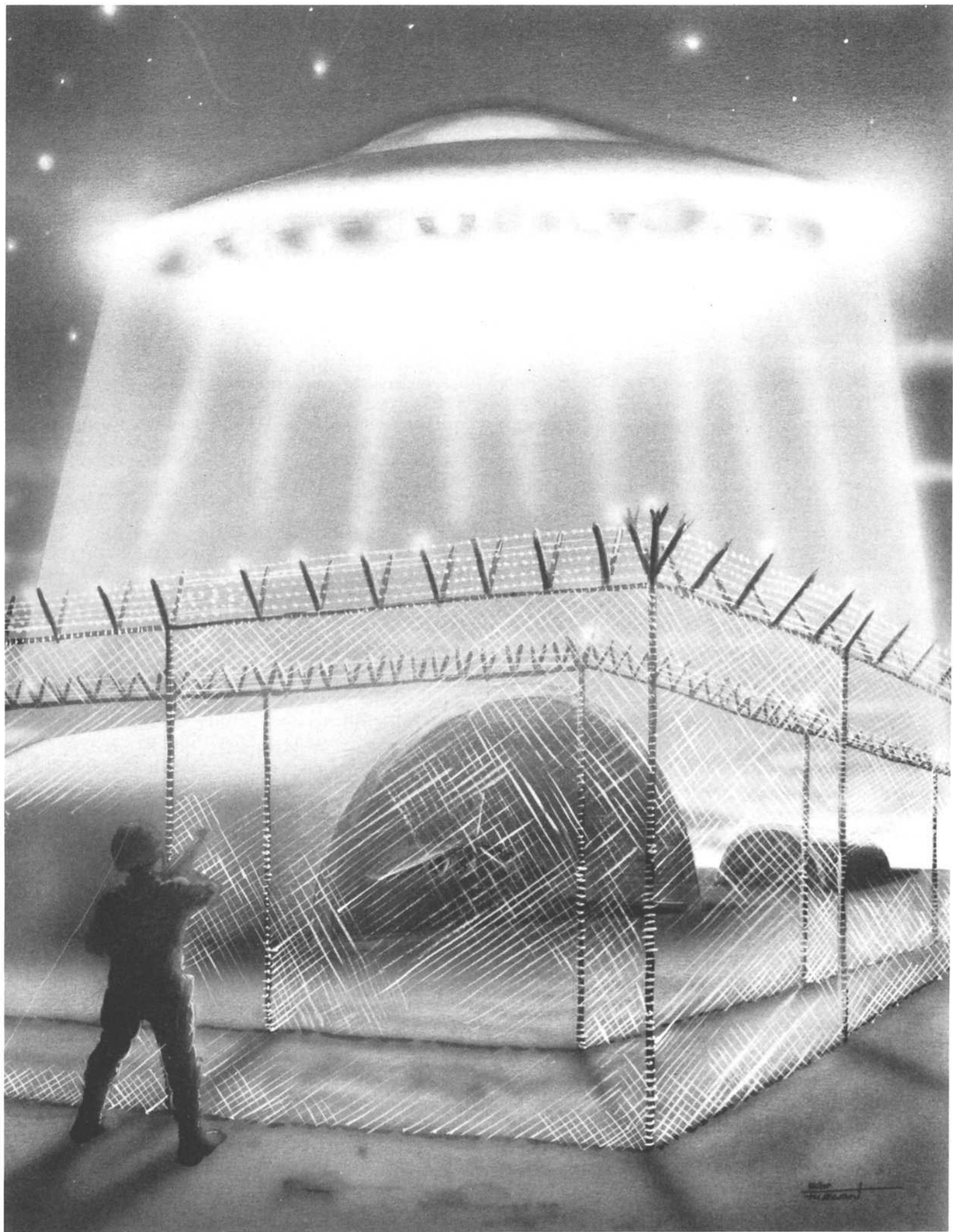
On the night of June 30/July 1, 1977, he was off duty, and was therefore at home. In the middle of that night, even though his sleep is generally so deep that it can only be interrupted with difficulty, he was awakened by the intense, prolonged, and furious barking of his Belgian sheep-dog. Here, however, is a passage from his statement:

"He barked so furiously that it made me think there was somebody out on the road, maybe some thieves. So, as a precaution, I didn't switch on the light, and went out on to the veranda of my first-floor apartment armed with my pistol. The first thing I noticed was that the airfield of the NATO Base, no more than 1½kms. as the crow flies from where I was, was completely dark. Besides which, there was nobody on the road. It had never happened to me before that I saw the Base totally and entirely without any lights, but what particularly aroused my attention was the presence of a "mass" of stationary light low down over a certain spot on the Base itself. (Note by Author: when the witness did a sketch for us, he placed the luminous "phenomenon" as observed by him above that area of the Airfield which does in fact correspond precisely to the strictly reserved zone known as "Victor Alert"). "Immediately after seeing that mysterious 'jet' of light, I shouted loudly to my wife, without of course breaking off my observation, to tell her to come and see that strange 'thing'. But she shouted back, alas, that she was dreadfully drowsy and that I should therefore let her sleep on. So I remained there alone, watching that 'thing' which still looked like a glowing disc. After about five minutes or so the 'jet' of light slowly moved away from the point where it had been and, without a sound, climbing all the time as it went, passed beyond the mountains near Aviano.

"Ten seconds or so after the mysterious object had left the Base, the Base's lights came on again. I must also add that my dog only stopped barking when the luminous 'disc' had left the area. Finally, I must confess that I remained pretty disturbed by the episode. For that reason I didn't go back to bed at once and so, about half an hour later, I was able to note a certain amount of movement of vehicles of the American Military Police."

The E.T Hypothesis

In this episode at Aviano on July 1, 1977, we have an aerial phenomenon which — in our opinion — defies any easy explanation in terms of our present-day



science and technology. Moreover, the unidentified object in question implies the suspicion of an intelligent control or of a cybernetic equivalent, to such a degree that for the present writer it is difficult to see any sensible alternative to the hypothesis that, at the core of the UFO question there are extraterrestrial devices which are engaged in some sort of surveillance of us. *This is the hypothesis that our study of the so-called 'UFO Problem' induces us to consider the most likely within the framework of the information that we possess at the present time.* Like all scientific hypotheses, it is a working hypothesis, to be accepted or rejected only on the basis of a prolonged investigation.

The facts ascertained by us up till now do not, in any case, constitute incontestable proof of the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis.

What appears to us scientifically disappointing is that, while a great many 'ufological' indications *seem* to point in only one direction, the extraterrestrial hypothesis, the implications of that eventuality are nevertheless not given careful consideration by the scientific community with a view to forming a judgement about it, seeing that the whole question is in essence considered to be a 'paradox', *unworthy of diligent attention.* In our view, these mental attitudes *vis-à-vis* the problem of the UFOs have been caused almost entirely by scientists and others who *in actual fact have never carried out any real investigations within the compass of the question on which they hold forth so resolutely.*

Hence, in our opinion, Science should stop behaving in such a fashion in regard to the 'ufological' problem.

In sum, does not a case like that of July 1, 1977, at Aviano deserve something more from the scientists than a simple shrug of the shoulders?

Note

We wish to make it clear that where we have reported the account of Benito Manfré we have been at great pains not to adulterate in any way the content of this possible UFO report. We have in effect substituted for a few adjectives and a few verbs and terms and so on employed by the witness other words and terms of *analogous meaning.* We did this in order to avoid disagreeable cacophonies or sentences or words which would be repeated with wearisome insistence, either as grammatically incorrect forms or errors in syntax. But we want to emphasise that in all this we have proceeded without changing in the least the 'genuine' content of the witness's account. — A.C.

COMMENT BY EDITOR, FSR

What Antonio Chiumiento is saying in his footnote is that the country folk in Italy, like country people in many other lands, have colourful and expressive *dialects* (and may they long remain!), and that it is often

◀ Artist's reconstruction by Ugo Furlan.



necessary to reduce a passage to *standard Italian* before going on to translate it into any other language.

As regards our Author's comment on the attitude of the scientists, I wish I could say that I thought the problem was as simple as he suggests. *I suspect, however, that the truth is far more complex and far more alarming — namely that alien beings are capable of bringing powerful telepathic influences to bear upon us, and especially upon our scientific community, in order to prevent them from even thinking about the UFO Problem and what it might represent. In the final analysis, most of mankind still remains totally unaware of a terrible threat that may possibly be hanging over it because (1) mankind itself does not want to know the truth; (2) the Governments certainly do not want them to know; and (3) the aliens themselves do not want them to know either!* — G.C.

NOTICE

Owing to an error at the printers, we find that a few copies of FSR 29/6 are defective. We shall be glad to send a replacement to any reader who reports such a defective copy.

VANISHED? — THE VALENTICH AFFAIR

RE-EXAMINED

W. C. Chalker, B.Sc.

In FSR Vol. 24, No. 5 (1979) we published the author's first article on this case, *The Missing Cessna and the UFO*. Bill Chalker is a Director of UFO Research and lives at Lane Cove, New South Wales, Australia.—EDITOR.

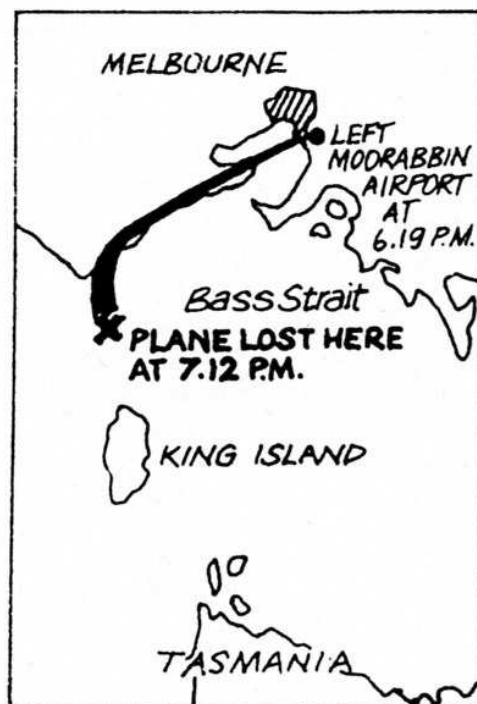
FOR more than five years now, what has become known as the Valentich mystery has endured as an insoluble enigma. The crux of the mystery is just what happened to a young Australian pilot named Frederick Valentich and his 182 Cessna light aircraft — VH-DSJ (*Delta Sierra Juliet*) — during the evening of October 21st, 1978. The circumstances behind the total disappearance of both pilot and plane have since been elevated into one of the premier mysteries of aviation and for many one of the most intriguing elements of that controversy we call the UFO phenomenon.

The fact that the mystery has lasted so long is a direct result of the incredible aspects at the heart of the affair. Simply put (as the public story is familiar to most *) the young pilot, 47 minutes into what should have been a routine 69-minute flight from Moorabbin, Victoria, to King Island, reported an unidentified "aircraft" near him. From 1906 to 1912 hours Eastern Standard Time, October 21st, 1978, Frederick Valentich described to Melbourne Flight Service Unit controller, Steve Robey, what has been called a "radio encounter of a weird kind".†

The sequence of events described, in the officially released transcript of conversation (in itself an extraordinarily unprecedented action), revolved around the apparent observation of "a large aircraft" which had "a long shape", "a green light", ostensibly bright metallic lustre and four bright lights, travelling variously at high speed, approaching the Cessna, apparently hovering in a stationary manner and also "orbiting" above the plane.

At 7.12 p.m. and 28 seconds, immediately in the wake of reporting engine trouble and the object hovering on top of the plane again, Valentich uttered his final words: "*Delta Sierra Juliet, Melbourne . . .*", which were followed by some 7 seconds of transmission during which time "a long and loud metallic sound" was heard.

Assuming maintenance of his lodged flight plan, Frederick Valentich's last transmission would have ostensibly occurred when his aircraft may have been about 50 kilometres SSE of Cape Otway, or about 70 kilometres NNW of King Island. This puts it close to the reported position of "the outline of a submerged aircraft" allegedly sighted at 12.31 p.m. on November 21st, 1978 (a month later) by the pilot of a Cessna 337 from Hawk Flying Service. He located the "outline"



The route taken by the Cessna.

some 77 kilometres (48 miles) north of King Island. The pilot circled the area but on the second run was unable to confirm his observation. Aviation authorities dismissed the sighting because seas were rough and the water too deep (some 30 fathoms) for anything to have been seen on the sea floor from the air.

The account of the flight controller

In the absence of Valentich, we have only one other witness, albeit indirect, to this "radio encounter of a weird kind", namely Steve Robey. In the *Melbourne Herald* (December 9th, 1980), he is quoted as saying:

"Last light was about 12 or 13 minutes past seven; (Valentich) was at 4,500 feet, so he would not have been in darkness, although beneath him would have been deepening twilight."

Of his conversation with Valentich, Robey recalled:

"I think at first he was a little concerned about this other aircraft flying around him, and of course I had to assume that it was another aircraft until it developed and became a little mysterious."

"Towards the end I think he was definitely concerned for his safety; I considered that he would have had to have been a good actor to have put it all