

ITALIAN UFO RESEARCH IN FACT AND FICTION

A DOCUMENTED REBUTTAL OF ROBERTO PINOTTI'S CLAIMS AT THE 1987 MUFON SYMPOSIUM

by Gian Paolo Grassino & Edoardo Russo

At the 1987 MUFON UFO Symposium, Italian ufologist Roberto Pinotti presented a paper titled "The Italian Scene, 1947-1987: a Roundup". In the paper, Pinotti attacked and insulted heavily the Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici (CISU) and in particular "Mr. Grassino and Mr. Russo", and presented a completely untrue image of the Italian ufology, both past and present.

The present text is a rebuttal of Pinotti's false claims, and its purpose is not only to give our own version but also to let foreign colleagues understand something more about polemics and divisions of the Italian UFO community.

We acknowledge that lying is always easier and faster than rebutting lies, and that rebuttals are annoying to read: we beg your pardon for that.

RE-WRITING HISTORY

Pinotti's whole paper was built in an instrumental way, so to leave readers with an over-emphasized impression of him and the Centro Ufologico Nazionale (CUN). In doing so, he deliberately falsified historical and documented facts about the past, re-writing history in a convenient manner.

Facts and situations have been invented, modified or hidden and people mis-quoted and mis-represented, as anybody able to read Italian may verify in old and recent publications.

According to Pinotti's writings, the CUN was born in 1966 against contactee-oriented groups and meant to take seriousness on the Italian scene, while all others were not serious researchers. According to Pinotti, non-serious groups and people did not merge into CUN: contactee- or Fortean/ancient astronaut-oriented clubs, skywatchers and cultists are quoted.

Let's state facts correctly: in the mid-'60s Italian ufology was only made by buffs who collected newsclippings and did nearly no investigation: they were all persuaded UFOs were visiting aliens, and there was no clear demarcation between ufologists and cultists groups.

That may help understand why, contrary to Pinotti's claims:

- it was the "Fortean/ancient astronaut" Centro Studi Clipeologici (CSC) who launched the proposal of a National Unique Center in 1965;
- the CUN embarked exactly all and any of the people mentioned by Pinotti as not entering CUN: Centro Studi Clipeologici (whose Secretary was no other than... Roberto Pinotti), Contact International "sky-watcher" Paolo Di Girolamo (who even was a CUN Council member); "contactee oriented" Alberto Perego's CISAER (CUN first President was CISAER member Mario Maioli; and contactee-oriented Arduino Albertini was one of CUN founding members); and the "cultist groups" "Alaya" (telepathically in contact with Ashtar Sheran) was one of the originally adherents;
- no wonder that "Fortean" Gianni Settimo (editor of "Clypeus" and the only Italian ufologist who was anti-contactee in the '60s) chose

personally not to become a member, even if often publically asked to do so;

- and no wonder that another important group of Italian ufologists decided to guard its independence: Sezione Ufologica Fiorentina (SUF) which never was nor is the "Florence Branch of CUN", as Pinotti wrote (to the indignation of SUF President, Solas Boncompagni): indeed the decade-old polemics between CUN and SUF are well known in Italy, to the point that each group has worked separately for years on the 1954 wave analysis, without exchanging data (see published, different catalogues in "Notiziario UFO", december 1977 issue, and the book "UFO in Italia - vol. 2");

Thus Pinotti's image of the early CUN as a serious anti-contactee group is false: CUN was just one of those periodical "mergings" among Italian groups quoted by J. Vallée.

Moreover, you may see that CUN life was characterized by a high level of polemics since the very first years, contrary to the univoque image Pinotti is interested in presenting.

There was also another group of people who at first was in the CUN but later left it: between 1971 and 1973 the CUN reached a high quality level of research and publications, as may be seen from "Notiziario UFO" issues professionally edited by Renzo Cabassi in that period (as opposed to the previous two years Pinotti's mimeographed issues mainly consisting of newspaper clippings, George Adamski, piramids on the Moon and orthoteny). In 1973 a controversy developed between R. Pinotti (who pointed towards divulgation in popular occult magazines) and R. Cabassi's group (who preferred to concentrate on research issues). As a consequence, the first CUN secession took place and half-destroyed CUN because the whole editorial team left, as well as whole regional branches, forming a new group: CNIFAA.

So was CUN really "completely controlling" the Italian UFO scene in the early '70s? Not at all, as reported by a long-standing CUN member and former Council member, respected Italian ufologist Pier Luigi Sani, when he wrote in the Introduction to the book "UFO in Italia" (first volume, 1974):

"CUN purpose was (...) to collect and coordinate Italian UFO groups (...) [but it] failed to all practical purposes: centripetal attraction of other groups was nil (...). It is certain that personal ambitions, little rivalries and mostly presumption played an important role: these same factors have affected the very internal life of CUN, to the prejudice of continuity and concreteness of UFO research. It remains that CUN cannot be considered, today, the federation of groups it was meant to be: it isn't but "one" center among others".

Indeed, the largest national organization at the time was a network of literally hundreds of UFO buff groups made of teen-agers who read the news-stand occult & mystery magazines, like "Il Giornale dei Misteri" (G.d.M.) and "Gli Arcani". And they were coordinated through the pages of "GdM" by the Sezione Ufologica Fiorentina (SUF), which thus acquired a very large file of investigation reports and local newsclippings, many times larger than CUN.

The new-CUN policy in the following years tended to attract these groups away from SUF influence (thus exacerbating rivalries), by accepting them as local branches of CUN, so to replace the CNIFAA people.

And what about CNIFAA? Renzo Cabassi, Roberto Farabone, Francesco Izzo and a few others launched "UFO Phenomena - an International Annual Review" (UPIAR) in 1976: probably the most important Italy's contribution to scientific ufology. It is false that "their purpose was to obtain the support of the Italian academic world and failed": UPIAR purpose was to promote a scientific study of UFOs on a world-wide basis by giving it a refereed forum, and its success is demonstrated by its

imitators and continuators.

It is false that it didn't attract university people: it was CNIFAA, not CUN, to collect 32 scientists and researchers signing a request to the Italian Government to release its UFO files for scientific study in 1979 (see UPIAR Vol. III, 1979). And indeed CUN came back to look for them when a "CUN scientific committee" was needed in 1979, and its President was R. Farabone (see "Notiziario UFO", August 1979, p.4).

It is false that UPIAR "had to disband" and that "today's UPIAR is better known abroad than in Italy": CNIFAA became "UPIAR Cooperative Society" in 1982, held a successful International Colloquium on Human Sciences and UFO Phenomena (which was the first European Congress of its kind), launched a new publication "UPIAR Research in Progress" directed by V.-J. Ballester Olmos, and finally was instrumental in creating CISU, where former CNIFAA members presently hold key-positions (Roberto Farabone is CISU President) and took their precious long-time experience; UPIAR Cooperative is presently publisher of CISU journal "UFO" (the only present nationally-distributed UFO journal).

As of CUN, its really great moment was 1978: on the wake of the greatest Italian UFO wave ever, it succeeded in launching its own journal "Notiziario UFO" on a national distribution in newsstands, thanks to the invaluable effort of Claudio Gallo (MUFON Italian representative, but conveniently "forgotten" because he too left CUN in 1980 after a personal controversy with Pinotti). It was monthly, glossy 64 pages with color photos and quality articles. This attracted virtually all smaller, local Italian UFO groups and CUN became for the first time in its life the largest UFO organization in Italy, thanks to a new generation grown up in the '70s as local groups, which has been the back-bone of CUN for more than 5 years, when CUN was actually the Italian ufology.

But the sudden and unexpected growth produced a crisis in CUN managers, who were not prepared and were unable to run the new organization: one by one they all resigned and left it to the new breed. The only surviving member of the old Council was indeed Pinotti (as CUN President). He was not a manager, only a writer, but he had a deep personal interest in CUN, which he considers to be his own creature.

So "Notiziario UFO" folded as soon as Claudio Gallo went away, and it was the Turin branch (Mr Grassino and Mr Russo) who managed to publish it again up to 1983, when another publisher was found, but once again Pinotti made it fold again because of his managing inexperience.

Meanwhile, in 1980 CUN secretary, files and publications were all moved to Turin, where it was the local branch who virtually made CUN go on, coordinating investigators and research projects, creating a newsclipping service, a newsletter for members, and other information tools. Pinotti now says our "research" was "only computerizing the CUN data Archives", but that only shows how he never was interested or involved in any research activity. Indeed his favourite sentence at the time was: "You are the researchers, so do the research job and let us 'politicians' do the political job".

In the early '80s the separation between the "political soul" and the "practical" one became unbearable. Pinotti and his followers kept on insisting that only the military had the right data and CUN role was to pressure on politicians and military: not for obtaining those data, but in order to let the Air Force create an Italian "Project Blue Book". Such attitude only revealed Pinotti's discomforts at managing a Center while CUN membership needed an effective leadership to cope with grass-roots everyday activities like field-investigation, analysis and research, which were left apart and only coordinated by a handful of volunteers who naturally became the national reference point.

As you may see, it was not a personal controversy: it was two

opposite viewpoints on Ufology: begging for an useless acknowledgement from authorities, vs. building a working, investigative, scientific-minded, national center.

CISU AND THE PRESENT POLEMICS

A general criticism began growing towards such a short-sighted behavior, which paralyzed CUN investigation and research activities in favour of decade-fruitless and failure-due efforts. But Pinotti was insufferent to criticism and, fearing he might lose his influence, he tried to eliminate his most vociferous critics. In doing so, he showed no ethical scruples: it's better not talk of the so-called "democratic elections", with new supportive members approved the day before a night-time General Meeting whose agenda was changed on-place, and similar tricks, too shameful to be quoted here.

Disgusted, most active members met and decided to leave: we didn't like UFO politics, so preferred to create a new organization, in order to avoid continuing bloody polemics: CISU was born in late 1985 and since then we never engaged in any polemics any more, hoping each one could go on by his own road.

But Pinotti didn't stop his personal war at us, fearing CUN role and his own one could be diminished (as they did). An insulting campaign was launched at the same time as CISU was formed: in all and any CUN publication since (and there were few of them) CISU and its members have been and still are being viciously attacked for one reason or another.

We can understand such verbal violence since CUN is no longer the largest Italian organization, having lost most of his active members. Indeed as a first reaction Pinotti said he had finally got rid of a dead weight, and claimed it was all just a personal affair with "Mr Russo and Mr Grassino", as he tried to make MUFON Symposium believe. But it was and is false: CISU founding members do constitute the "Who's who" of Italian ufology: Marco Bottaini (Bibliobank), Renzo Cabassi, Dr. Antonio Chiumiento (CUN Vice-President and foremost field investigator), Dr. Marcel Delaval (Euratom), Dr. Roberto Farabone (UPIAR editor), Paolo Fiorino (CE-III Project Coordinator), Gian Paolo Grassino (CUN Secretary and Files Manager), Massimo Greco (editor "UFO News-flash"), Dr. Massimo Pigliucci (editor, "Documenti UFO"), Dr. Edoardo Russo (Foreign Relations Director, former Council member, and "Notiziario UFO" editor in chief), Gianni Settimo (editor, "Clypeus"), Paolo Toselli, Maurizio Verga (Computer UFO Network and Italian Catalogue of Landing Reports).

So he changed his mind and now menaced all CUN members from becoming CISU members since "membership of both organizations is obviously incompatible" ("Notizie CUN", November 1985) and even prohibited CUN members from sending CISU their investigation reports or newsclippings and giving CISU "any kind of formal support" ("Notizie CUN", January 1986). The only result was that CUN members had to choose, and they chose CISU en masse: 75% of active CUN members left and are now CISU members.

All those activities and projects Pinotti reduces to "computerizing data" moved away from CUN to CISU: catalogues/files of Italian trace-landing reports and of CE-III, regional case history files, "Operation Origins" (research in old newspapers), bibliographic work, computer networks, video-service, book-service. And all publications were continued by CISU as before: the journal, the newsletters, the newsclipping service, the research monographs.

As for the quality of our own work, it is testified not only by our own publications, but also by the several contributions of our members to UFO journals and congresses all around the world.

Since 1986 CISU has been the largest and most active Italian

organization, as is evident to anybody glancing over our publications. It's peniable to read Pinotti writing CUN prefers quality and CISU quantity: we have a two-level membership allowing us to keep a highly selective choice of members.

As for CUN, you may evaluate it yourself from its publications: only a five newsletters were published in the first two years since, while they were 12 in 1984; "Notiziario UFO" is a but pale shadow of the beautiful journal it was: 12 or 16 photocopied pages, mainly consisting of newscippings or re-hashing already published articles.

Yet another of Pinotti's false claim is that we adopt a "systematic and destructive criticism of everybody and everything in a Monnerie-like style", trying to present us as sort of disguised debunkers. He fails to explain how a CSICOP-like Center could succeed in attracting virtually all active Italian ufologists and in keeping a national organization alive. In fact, we're not skpetics at all, and we do not feel "Monnerie's sons"; we'd rather like to be considered as Allan Hendry's disciples as method, but surely CISU includes members having all kind of opinions, and several of them are openly pro-ETH.

Pinotti also wrote: "CISU new magazine seems to be devoted mostly to IFO cases and their exposing in the light of their definite 'socio-psychological' approach". He evidently never read it through, but our foreign colleagues can judge by themselves by reading the English abstracts published in our "Italian UFO Reporter".

Another recurrent target of Pinotti's attacks has been Antonio Chiumiento, a Council member since 1979 and the most active Italian field investigator, whose reports have been broadly published abroad (J. Allen Hynek called him a "serious and meticulous investigator" and his reports "examples of straightforward investigative reports", see: IUR, June 1983). Now Pinotti says he's "unreliable", too much committed to the Extra-Terrestrial Hypothesis and "exhibitionist", but we suspect the cause may be found in Chiumiento becoming CUN "spokesman" since 1983, finally taking CUN to the public notoriety it never had before, but unfortunately taking a role Pinotti has always pretended for himself. Isn't it ridiculous that Pinotti attacked CISU leadership in Italy by accusing us to be ETH supporters, and at the same time abroad by accusing us to be too skeptical?

Another line of attack has been that we robbed CUN files away and had been sued by CUN: both claims are false and once again we challenge him to show elsehow: we stole nothing and no law-suit has ever been filed to us for such files, even though Pinotti has repeatedly written it had already been, since 1985.

More recently he even arrived at hinting that CISU founders might have been a victim of Italian secret services manipulations in order to destroy CUN, as well as it might have been the case in 1973 with CNIFAA and in 1980 with Claudio Gallo: all of us being just "dupes" of higher forces (see: "G.d.M.", January 1987, p.14). Can we call him paranoid?

Pinotti's paper was literally full of errors, omissions, falsifications and lies. We cannot hope to answer them all in this rebuttal, so we will limit ourselves to two examples: his quoted data on Italian UFO reports, and the Italian Air Force involvement with UFO research and CUN.

SIGHTINGS DATA

We have to claim that Pinotti's quoted data on Italian CE-III and CE-II were indeed stolen by him from CISU: the CE-II's are taken without quotations from Maurizio Verga's "TRA-CAT" (Catalogue of Trace-Landing Reports), and the mentioned CE-III's statistics are those by Paolo Fiorino's "Progetto Italia 3" (Humanoid Study Group Catalogue,

published by CISU in 1985), as Pinotti privately admitted to Fiorino.

His lack of constraints may be seen by his quotation of Dr. Marcel Delaval's analysis of 1977 Italian sightings as if it was Pinotti who contributed: Delaval is a CISU founding member; his research monograph was published in 1987 by UPIAR (yes, Virginia, we still publish research papers) and CISU, and the only ufologists acknowledged for their help are Renzo Cabassi and Edoardo Russo.

Isn't that amusing: he cries "thiefs" and at the same feels free to sack our own work.

Indeed, also all other statistical data about Italian sightings are not CUN data, since they were obtained from Sezione Ufologica Fiorentina files, through a SUF member, Giuseppe Stilo (who was also a CUN member at the time, though now left CUN for CISU: another one).

Indeed it's always been Pinotti's speciality to seize and live upon someone else's work. He's often asked those who were researching to send him their work; then he used it himself taking credit and merit of it. Examples would be too numerous (whole chapters in Pinotti's book were "borrowed" from "colleagues" without any reference): let's report only those verifiable by you all.

Did you ever notice the CUFOS round-up of the 1978 Italian UFO wave (IUR, October 1979)? Pinotti was thanked for it, but the home-work was done in 1979 by "Mr Grassino and Mr Russo" and others (a 48 pages-long catalogue), as correctly referenced in G. Eberhard's monumental "Bibliography" (item 10203).

If you need something more authoritative to testify on the quantity and quality of our own work at CUN, please refer to J. A. Hynek's comment on his visit to Turin in 1984: "I was astonished at the scope of the work being done in Italy, the organization and, above all, the relatively small volunteer staff that accomplishes so much (...). [They] are to be congratulated for the excellent work they have done and are doing" (IUR, June 1984). So, how can you believe Pinotti when he claims it was Hynek (now dead, cannot deny) who gave him the "sad advice" to fire us in ... April 1984?

We also found amusing Pinotti's confused argument to show we don't know how to do our own work: he claims that CISU claimed number of filed reports is too high, if compared with CUN (let's say: SUF) data. He concludes that ours is raw data containing rubbish and enabling us to justify our alleged skepticism.

Actually, it only means that our own investigators network and files are larger than SUF (or CUN, if you prefer), as we've always claimed! Of course it is raw data, we never said it was "true UFOs": every teenage UFO buff should know 90% of sightings are probably IFOs, so what? The 6,000 plus SUF sightings are raw data themselves (mostly newsclippings and teenagers' investigation reports, as we said)! And also CUN "provisional catalogue of 1978 sightings" were raw data, as we should know since it's us who compiled it.

ITALIAN AIR FORCE AND UFOs

And what about Pinotti's attention for the Italian military?

He has always been fond of all that smells "military", so he gives Air Force UFO involvement too great an importance. He has a right to think so, of course, but we cannot let him lie on that: he claims CUN is "accredited" as collaborating with the Italian Ministry of Defence, was exclusively given UFO documents and that as a consequence of such ongoing data exchange he was asked to contribute UFO articles to the Italian Air Force official journal "Rivista Aeronautica".

Nothing of that is true.

The Italian Air Force is not interested at all in studying UFOs: they are only involved inasmuch as defense concerns are: possible

violations of territorial integrity. When they are satisfied it was no hostile craft, their interest has finished, and the Air Force repeatedly stated so. Their "UFO bureau" is a room where sighting questionnaires are filed (and no research done) when they receive reports from military witnesses or from Carabinieri investigations.

Some documents are "classified" because they contain data not to be disclosed (e.g. radar or base positions), elsewhere you may obtain copy of it, if you ask. In fact, the "famous" military reports released to CUN in 1978 "as a consequence of CUN's serious image" were also sent to CNIFAA and also to a teenager-buff-group! Under A. Chiumiento's pressure, in 1984 the MOD released (to all interested parties, not to CUN) a short catalogue of all collected reports since 1979, which was updated in 1985. From it we even discovered they classified newspaper reports at face value and did no investigation on some sightings we had investigated ourselves! By the way, the "new" Air Force "radar-optical questionnaire form" was not released to Pinotti but to "unreliable" Antonio Chiumiento.

As for CUN "accreditations" the Ministry of Defense repeatedly denied them. For example, in a letter dated April 7th, 1987, they wrote: "We inform you that no civilian [UFO] specialists or organizations are accredited at the Defense [Ministry]"; and a telegram dated April 27, 1987 by the Minister Chief of Cabinet read: "We inform you that the Defense [Ministry] maintains no regular collaboration with Centro Ufologico Nazionale".

As for the "Rivista Aeronautica", suffice it to say that you need not to be an "accredited collaborator" to write in it, as is demonstrated by published articles about anti-gravity devices and even a pro-George Adamski article by a member of an Italian contactee/cultist group (Pinotti is indeed in good company).

SOMETHING PERSONAL

At this point, you might rightly ask: how could all that happen? Who's that man?

As a matter of fact he never was a investigator or researcher, his main contributions being books and articles re-hashing foreign opinion and case histories. That gave him a notoriety he seems to appreciate a lot and a "position" within CUN he did everything to "defend".

We also find amazing that he successfully tries to credit himself as a long-standing "scientific-oriented" ufologist (even building up a scientific background he definitely does not have): if you read his published books and numerous articles since 1966 on, you will easily discover his approach has been not only un-scientific, but often anti-scientific.

Once again, examples abund, so let's limit to a few: in the same year 1966 when CUN was born, Roberto Pinotti was merrily writing about "secret subterranean bases of our extraterrestrial friends" that "surely exist" in several Italian and foreign locations (a list followed) and called Italian contactee and cult-leader Eugenio Siragusa an "apparently honest and intelligent man" (see: "Flying Saucers", January 1966).

Since 1967 he's been one of the few Italian ufologists who actively tried to lend credence to George Adamski (he often boasted he had a correspondence with), both in articles and in books, as late as a 1973 all-too favourable "Appendix" to the Italian edition of "Flying Saucers Have Landed".

Only in recent years he had to update himself, because of the prevalent scientific-minded Italian ufologists' new generation.

It is false that we criticized dialogue with scientists, for the simple reason there was no such dialogue: we needed scientific consultants but the half dozen scientists Pinotti always mentions were

only used as a button-hole flower in public appearances (conferences, interviews) and were never asked for their professional advice. Please remember that CISU has among its fathers the UPIAR people: is it credible to accuse R. Farabone or R. Cabassi of opposing to scientists' involvement?

Indeed we could (and perhaps should) get to a personal comment on the man Roberto Pinotti, but we don't want to descend to his own level of ad hominem attacks (in his MUFON Symposium speech, he talked of our "unsolved generational and psychological problems and needs" and "unconfessed psychological situation" [sic], which shows fairly well what arguments he is used to).

Let's only state some significative facts: he presents himself as a "sociologist" and also as an "employee in Italian Aerospace industry". He is neither. His formal education arrived to a B.A. in Political Sciences in 1972, and he's always presented himself as such, until 1985, when he suddenly "became" a sociologist.

As for his work, he's been (and still is) a commercial employee of motorcar "Fiat-Lancia" industry, which is not exactly Aerospace.

You will agree that his real status looks somewhat less impressive than an Aerospace sociologist, so that may explain why the claimed improvement suddenly appeared.

When a man arrives at lying about himself, he shouldn't be allowed much credibility anyhow, should he.

IN CONCLUSION

Do you need more? It's enough for us and we wasted too much time on such silly polemics. We can document every claim of ours and demonstrate several other pieces of Pinotti's "dis-information" campaign are false.

Such variable, contradictory accuses on his part were so clearly unfounded and ridicule that we have never answered before, hoping he will soon get tired of playing his personal war alone. But at the MUFON Symposium he tried to find some resonance abroad, which he no longer has in Italy. Indeed he desperately needs international "accrediting" (he is APRO-MUFON-CUFOS representative in Italy, isn't he?) in order to deceive those few ufologists who still follow him and to present himself as "number one".

In doing so he disqualified the whole Italian ufology, so we are now forced to reply, even if we are fully aware that it will let our foreign colleagues with a bad image of our country's UFO scene, and at the same time our rebuttal will fuel him again.

We can only promise you this is the first and last time we go into such kind of unpleasant matters, and from now on we will once again ignore Pinotti and his false claims, as we hope you will do, too.

We call him an outright liar, and we claim he has clearly shown his only interest in ufology lies in being the "forefront man". He is the single man who did the most to destroy unity and credibility of Italian researchers in several occasions.

The choice of their Italian representatives by American UFO organizations have often been unfortunate, but that is understandable since they are far away and often unable to read Italian. If they could, they'd probably have no doubt that choosing Roberto Pinotti as Italian representative surely didn't and doesn't give either MUFON or CUFOS a good image in Italy.

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Any further information or documentation may be obtained from:
Gian Paolo Grassino, Casella Postale 82, I-10100 Torino, Italia