

**A STATISTICAL SURVEY AMONG ITALIAN
ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORY**

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ABSTRACT

This statistical survey was performed between the years 1977 and 1978, among the most important 14 astronomical and astrophysical observatories in Italy. It had the purpose to probe the opinion of a major slice of the Italian scientific community about the UFO subject and to know whether the staff of some observatories had directly sighted some UFO phenomena. This informative test did not supply us with new and unexpected information. However it is a clear document emphasizing the mediocre standard of information and sensibility of the scientific environment upon the UFO question.

Such an investigation, if addressed to other scientific circles too and regularly repeated, could be a suitable way to assess time to time possible developments of the scientific opinion about the UFO subject.

KEY-WORDS

Information, Informative Test, Observatories, Questionnaire, Survey

INTRODUCTION

On suggestion of a member of our Scientific Committee, the Operative Team of Milan provincial division of "Centro Ufologico Nazionale" started this survey in May 1977. The work was completed in June 1978 in coincidence with the answer of the last Observatory that accepted the initiative.

From the very beginning we assured all Observatories that we would not have divulged the papers they had filled it. This in order to render their expression as serene as possible. Thus the original answers of the Observatories are not reproduced in this report. Here we shall confine ourselves to describe under a statistical form the gathered information.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Observatories probed

We addressed this informative test only to those fourteen Italian Observatories which might be regarded as active ones at the moment, on indication of a CUN astronomical consultant. They are as follows:

- 1.- Observatory of ARCETRI - L.go E.Fermi 5, Firenze
- 2.- Observatory of ASIAGO - Asiago (Vicenza)
- 3.- Observatory of BOLOGNA - Via Zamboni 33, Bologna
- 4.- Observatory of BRERA - Via Brera 28, Milano
- 5.- Observatory of CAGLIARI - Via Ospedale, Cagliari
- 6.- Observatory of CAMPO DEI FIORI - Campo dei Fiori (Varese)
- 7.- Observatory of CATANIA - V.le A.Doria, Catania
- 8.- Observatory of COLLURANIA - Collurania (Teramo)
- 9.- Observatory of CAPODIMONTE - Via Molariello 16, Napoli
- 10.- Observatory of MONTE MARIO - Monte Mario, Roma
- 11.- Observatory of PALERMO - Palermo
- 12.- Observatory of PINO TORINESE - Pino Torinese (Torino)
- 13.- Observatory of TRIESTE - Via Tiepolo 11, Trieste
- 14.- Observatory G.HORN D'ARTURO - Via Montebello 4, Bologna

Questionnaire used

The survey was based on a one-sheet simple questionnaire (Fig.1). No previous types of questionnaire existed to which we might refer. Also we were not aware of how many Observatories would have paid attention to our initiative. So we decided to use a really elementary questionnaire, that might have a good chance to be favourable welcomed by its addressees. In the questionnaire the following nine questions were reported. All questions generally required a "yes" or "no" answer only.

- 1.- Are you acquainted with UFO phenomenon?
- 2.- Do you know astronomers who witnessed alleged UFO phenomenon?
- 3.- Did some among your colleagues witness an alleged UFO

- phenomenon at your Observatory?
- 4.- Do you know whether other Observatories witnessed such a phenomenon?
- 5.- Did your Observatory receive some reports of alleged UFO sightings?
- 6.- Do you regard some among the reports you received as reliable ones?
- 7.- Do you usually convey the received reports to some official bodies?
- 8.- What explanations of the following ones do you think to be reliable?

Natural phenomenon
Psychic phenomenon
Parapsychological phenomenon
Extraterrestrial machines
Secret terrestrial machines
Known terrestrial machines
Hoaxes
Machines of another time
Machines of another dimension (Hyperspatial phenomenon)
Something other (specify)

- 9.- Do you like to know the results of this survey?

A blank appeared at the bottom of the questionnaire where to put the date of compilation, the signature and possible suggestions and/or criticism addressed to our Center.

Dispatches to the Observatories

The first letter to the Observatories dates back to May 14, 1977. Two reminders were then forwarded to the Observatories which had not answered yet, within the dates July 25, 1977 and September 1, 1977. All the three times we sent the following material:

- a.- a letter of introduction where our project was explained and where we stated in a full and clear way that the UFO phenomenon has to be looked upon as a phenomenon the nature of which is still unknown and has not to be pre-conceivedly associated with any premature explanations;
- b.- informative papers about the activity, the organization and the aims of our Center;
- c.- the statistical questionnaire (Fig.1);
- d.- a pre-addressed envelope for the return of the filled-in questionnaire.

On June 1978 we sent a copy of the report in which we summarized the result of the survey to everyone of the 14 Observatories involved (also to those who gave no answer or those who stated they were not interested in the result of the informative test).

RESULTS

Respondent Observatories

Ten only among the fourteen probed Observatories joined the survey. The Observatories No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13 (according to the list shown under the chapter "Material and Methods") gave us their answers, whereas the other 4 Observatories did not take part in our enterprise.

Answers

The histogram produced in Fig.2 illustrates both the number of positive answers (positive Y-axis) and of negative ones (negative Y-axis) coming from ten Observatories about the questions No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 contained in the questionnaire. As we can see in the same histogram, some Observatories did not answer (or they did not it with the necessary clarity) the questions No. 1, 6, 7.

The histogram produced in Fig.3 illustrates which of the possible explanations listed in question No. 8 was the most frequently expressed by the Observatories. Two Observatories did not answer question No. 8, but the other ones pointed out from 1 to 5 possible explanations of UFO phenomena.

DISCUSSION

The results of this inquiry suggest 4 important comments:

1.- The Italian Observatories are not acquainted with the UFO phenomenon.

Also Observatories stating they have a good acquaintance with the phenomenon (question No. 1) assert they have no good knowledge upon any UFO sightings in which some professional astronomer had been involved (questions No. 2 and 4). Conversely we know very well that many cases of this kind exist. The only Observatory answering in a positive way the questions No. 2 and 3 was on the contrary referring to the sighting of a balloon.

2.- The Italian Observatories function like gathering centers for sightings reports.

It should be noted that the maximum index of positive answers concerns the question No. 5. But these reports, which are seldom regarded as reliable ones, owing to the mediocre sensibility of the Observatories too (question No.6), are systematically lost, because they are never conveyed to anybody able to examine them closely (question No. 7).

3.- The Italian Observatories do not acknowledge the reality of the UFO phenomenon (considered as unknown phenomenon triggering the sightings reports).

Answers to question No. 8 are assembled around the natural and psychic phenomena, the conventional aircrafts and the hoaxes. Few Observatories showed to have some doubts.

4.- The Italian Observatories are not interested in the UFO matter.

Many astronomers willingly speak about the UFO subject when newspapers, broadcast and television stations ask them for it, but only 8 Observatories out of 14 appeared to be interested to know the results of this work and two Observatories explicitly stated they did not want to know them (question No.9). This fact, the mediocre standard of information about which we talked at point No. 1 and the reminders we had to forward them, testify the scant interest of our Observatories in the UFO matter.

In spite of this still disconsolate picture, some astronomers are step by step approaching the UFO problem more seriously. Maybe within some years another informative test of this kind shall bring to the light a most comfortable situation!

centro ufologico nazionale

per lo studio della fenomenologia U.F.O.

Sezione di Milano

operazione ASTRO

QUESTIONARIO STATISTICO

MATERIALE RISERVATO

ad uso del solo nucleo operativo

osservatorio di _____

- si | no
1. Siete documentati sul fenomeno ufologico? si no
 2. Astronomi di vostra conoscenza sono stati talvolta testimoni di presunti passaggi UFO? si no
 3. Qualcuno di voi ha assistito a presunti passaggi UFO dal vostro Osservatorio? si no
 4. Vi risulta che da altri Osservatori siano stati effettuati simili avvistamenti? si no
 5. Il vostro Osservatorio ha ricevuto qualche segnalazione di presunti avvistamenti UFO? si no
 6. Ritenete attendibile almeno qualcuna delle segnalazioni che avete eventualmente ricevuto? si no
 7. Comunicate solitamente a qualche Ente ufficiale le eventuali segnalazioni che ricevete? si no
- ENTE _____

8. Quali spiegazioni del fenomeno vi sembrano le più attendibili?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> fenomeno naturale | <input type="checkbox"/> ordigni terrestri conosciuti |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fenomeno psichico | <input type="checkbox"/> montature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fenomeno parapsicologico | <input type="checkbox"/> ordigni di un altro tempo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ordigni extraterrestri | <input type="checkbox"/> ordigni di un'altra dimensione |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ordigni terrestri segreti | <input type="checkbox"/> altre (specificare) _____ |

9. Desiderate conoscere i risultati di questa nostra statistica? SI NO

FIRMA DEL COMPILATORE _____

DATA _____

* Vi saremmo molto grati se poteste specificare nello spazio riservato alle note i nominativi completi e le date relative ai casi in questione.

NOTE (eventuali comunicazioni al Centro Ufologico Nazionale).
(utilizzare eventualmente anche il retro del foglio).

fig. 2

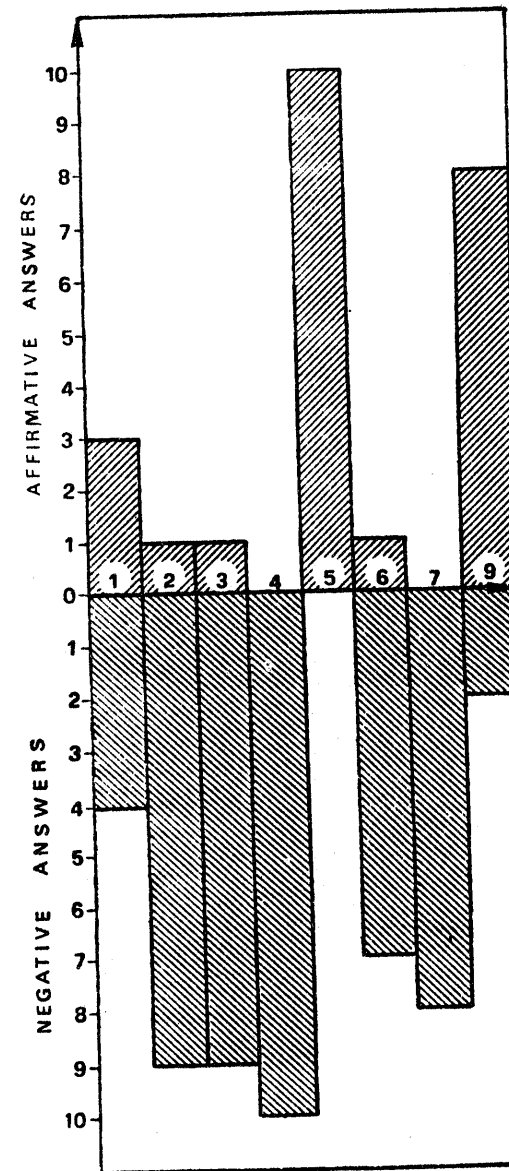


fig. 3

