

# L'AFFAIRE BOTTA

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## INTRODUCTION

A single witness, Enrique Botta, or Enrico Bossa, or Enrico Carotenuto Botta, claimed that on May 10, 1950, while driving in an isolated region of Argentina, he came across a disk-shaped UFO resting not far from the highway. The witness climbed into the craft, where he found three small dead humanoids. He departed, drove back to his hotel, and the next day he returned with two friends, only to discover that the craft was now a pile of ashes. However, two other UFOs were circling overhead, and somehow Bossa managed to obtain two photographs.<sup>1</sup>

## THE BASIC VERSIONS

As provided by Richard Heiden, numerous references for this case exist, but curiously enough not a single one is from Argentina. In fact, we have here a classical example of "circular references", i.e. all sources are traced back to original letters written by the observer.

Of all the sources, those based on the original letters written by Bossa were selected for this study:

i) The version provided by Coral Lorenzen, dating from the summer of 1955.<sup>2</sup> This version is apparently based on a first account appearing in *EL UNIVERSAL* of Caracas on May 7, 1955.

ii) A straight translation into French of a letter by Enrico Bossa, published in a Swiss magazine.<sup>3</sup> This second version, dated November 1, 1955, is more detailed and embellished than the first.

## DISCUSSION

Each narrative contains internal contradictions, and moreover, there are some interesting discrepancies between them, to wit:

(a) In version (ii), Bossa indicates that at the time he was "living in the City of Bahía Blanca, capital of the province of La Pampa". The City of Bahía Blanca is in the province of Buenos Aires, and of course it is not the capital of La Pampa. It is inconceivable that an educated person alleging to have lived in the area for several months could make such an error.

(b) The lighting inside the craft was dim, and Bossa could not determine the color of the eyes of the crew (version i). Yet, Bossa kept his green tinted glasses on! In version (ii), the glasses are not mentioned.

(c) In version (i), Bossa found the object at a distance of 75 km from "his hotel", while in version (ii) he was either 280 km from Bahía Blanca (province of Buenos Aires), or 200 km from the city of General Acha (province of La Pampa). He also established his geographical coordinates as 68 degrees west and 37 degrees south. All of this information is inconsistent.

(d) No time is given for the encounter, although Bossa is very detailed in providing the time of his departure (apparently from General Acha) with two friends the next day. In version (ii), they started at

dawn; in version (i), rain prevented them from departing until the afternoon.

(e) The names of the friends are not provided. In fact, when one thinks about it, we know of Bossa and his personality only through the letters he wrote and the information provided by Horacio González, a Venezuelan ufologist now deceased. Coral Lorenzen indicates that she talked with Bossa by phone in 1957, and Leo Stringfield may have a third letter from him, obtained through the good services of Horacio González (see Ref. 1 p.84) and "written in wretched English". Bossa's profession is variously described as an architect, an aeronautical engineer or an architectural engineer (whatever that may be) by those receiving his letters.

(f) Coral Lorenzen puts a great deal of emphasis on the fact that Bossa could not have read Scully's book (published in 1950) before his experience. In this book, detailed descriptions of landed UFOs and their occupants are provided<sup>4</sup>. But Bossa could not have read it only if the incident took place in May of 1950 as alleged, and since the two friends remain anonymous, their assertions about date and place are void. *It could very well be that Scully's book in fact inspired Bossa — a real or imaginary character — to pen his letters.*

(g) A minor inconsistency between the two versions is the difficulty experienced by Bossa when trying to start his car on the run. No such problem is listed in version (i). A second minor discrepancy is on the dates. According to version (ii), the incident took place on May 15, 1955, while in other versions, including a letter written to Stringfield (Ref.1, p.82) on October 25, 1955, the date is reported to be May 10, 1955.

(h) Last but not least are the behavioral inconsistencies. If we believe what we are told, Bossa was an educated man and kept his cool while inside the craft, where he remained about 5 minutes. Yet, having the best opportunity to remove some item from what he had recognized as a spaceship, he did nothing of the kind! Also, while first approaching the landed craft (notice, it was NOT demolished), he tells us that when he was at a distance of 50 metres he thought it was a

plane that had crashed. He then proceeds to describe the saucer in terms totally incompatible with the way a crashed plane would look! In spite of his short stay inside the craft, his description in version (ii) is extremely detailed, in fact, too much so if we consider that after a few minutes he became uneasy and left. In version (i), Bossa had no problems entering the craft; in version (ii), he had to do some acrobatics to accomplish it.

Moreover, it is rather hard to believe that knowing what was waiting in the fields, he opted for not returning immediately. This site was practically adjacent to the road, and even if the area is not very populated, it is hard to conclude that no one would pass the place for many hours, probably a day, since the bodies were stone cold.

### CONCLUSIONS

There are two, and only two, possibilities.

i) the story is true, in which case it becomes necessary to find a satisfactory explanation for the anomalies listed above; and

ii) the whole thing is a clever hoax, perhaps developed by an educated man for his own entertainment, or by a not so well educated man for financial gain, in which case, Bossa perhaps never existed.

If he was as well known as González wants us to believe, it should be a simple matter to find material proof of his visit to General Acha or to Bahía Blanca in May of 1950.

### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Stringfield, Leonard H., SITUATION RED: THE UFO SIEGE, Doubleday, 1977.
- <sup>2</sup> Lorenzen, Coral E., The reality of the little men, FLYING SAUCERS, December 1958, p.26.
- <sup>3</sup> Flachaire, M., Un atterrissage d'astronef en Argentine, LE COURRIER INTERPLANETAIRE, No.15 (Pâques 1956), Lausanne, Switzerland. Alfred Nahon, Director.
- <sup>4</sup> Scully, Frank, BEHIND THE FLYING SAUCERS, Henry Holt and Co, New York, 1950.

### NOTE BY EDITOR, FSR

It is certainly to be hoped that — even at this late date — some of our friends and correspondents in Argentina or Venezuela or elsewhere in South America will be able to give conclusive answers to the very evident questions posed by Dr. Willy Smith.

The Botta case has been mentioned several times in FSR — particularly in our Volume 1, No. 4 (1955), and in our Vol. 28, No. 6 (1983). For a tentative bibliography of the whole "Crashed Saucers" argument, see the footnotes accompanying the article, *Top U.S. Scientist Admits Crashed UFOs*, in FSR Vol. 31, No. 1 recently. See also the immediately following item, below, which is the latest material that we have received in this particular debate.

As regards FSR's own account of this case (FSR Vol. 1, No. 4, Sept./Oct. 1955, page 5), we would take this opportunity to point out that *our* understanding — and that is how we gave it — was that it had first appeared in *A.P.R.O.'s Bulletin* already in 1955 (or earlier). Mrs. Lorenzen's article in FLYING SAUCERS, entitled "*The Reality of the Little Green Men*", quoted by Dr. Willy Smith, only appeared, however, in December 1958.

Moreover, in the A.P.R.O. version which we have, it was not "*two other UFOs*" that Botta found on his return to the spot next day, but "*a cigar-shaped object and two discs.*" The A.P.R.O. account goes on to say that one of the two discs was hovering at a height of some 2,000 ft. and that Botta, who thought it might be some 30 ft. or so in diameter, took six photographs of it, only two of which, however, showed it with any degree of clarity. The account goes on to say that the two discs shortly afterwards "*shot up and merged with the cigar, which, after travelling horizontally for a short distance, disappeared into space at a colossal speed.*"

Incidentally, as regards the "*heap of ashes*" that Botta and his friends were supposed to have found lying at the site, our impression here at FSR has always been that this was to be taken to indicate that a *cremation* of the bodies might have taken place, and not, as Dr. Willy Smith seems to have read it, that "*the craft was a now a pile of ashes*".

My own interpretation of the story has consequently always been that, if Botta and his friends found no crashed disc lying there any longer, but only a pile of ashes, this meant that the disc had been recovered by its owners. — G.C.

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## THE UFO CRASH REVELATIONS: AN INTERESTING NEW DEVELOPMENT

Dear Mr. Creighton,

In a recent issue of *Flying Saucer Review* (Volume 31, No. 1, 1985) your article entitled "*Top U.S. Scientist Admits Crashed UFOs*" indicated that it was first to Jerome Clark that Dr. Robert I. Sarbacher revealed his knowledge of crashed UFOs. Well, Mr. Clark was not the first. Mr. William Steinman in recent months has provided me with the following information:

"I first became aware of Dr. Sarbacher when I read notes of Wilbert B. Smith regarding his interview with him on September 15, 1950. I had obtained the notes from Wilbert Smith's widow, Murl. She obtained them out of Wilbert's own research diary, which is in the possession of Wilbert's son. Dr. Sarbacher remembered the interview when I sent him