

WHY I DON'T BELIEVE THE CLAIMS OF THE JUDICA-CORDIGLIA BROTHERS

A new book and a separate video documentary on the space signals monitoring activities of two Italian brothers (Achille and Giambattista Judica-Cordiglia) in the 1960s both raise old questions, and quote me in places. To make clear that I still believe NONE of their stories, here is a detailed summary statement.

March 1, 2007: Prepared statement by James Oberg on the activities and claims of the Judica-Cordiglia brothers on Russian space flights

1. In November 2006 I took part in an interview for a production of a documentary called 'Space Hackers', that detailed the claims of two Italian radio amateurs – the Judica-Cordiglia brothers --in the 1960s concerning secrets of Soviet space missions. The brothers, in Turin in northern Italy, operated an amateur radio receiving facility called 'Torre Bert'. This statement for the record is an effort to insure an accurate public disclosure of my true assessments of these claims.

2. The video is now available (in Italian, Pirati dello spazio), see http://www.zenit.to.it/eng/prod_doc_pirati_dello_spazio.html
Information and contacts: Massimo Arvat arvat@zenit.to.it
It has been listed as a French video, Les pirates de l'espace / Space Hackers, Christine Le Goff, Massimo Arvat, Per Diem Films.
As of this spring, **SPACE HACKERS**, a documentary by Alessandro Bernard, Enrico Cerasuolo, Paolo Ceretto, co-produced by Zenit Arti Audiovisive, ARTE France, Studio International, was to have been screened at cinema Pathé in Torino on the 13th of May 2007. Italian TV première was scheduled on the 18th of May 2007, 9.00 PM, History Channel Italy (SKY channel 406). Info at www.historychannel.it.

3. I had a pleasant time with the documentary producers. I congratulated the brothers for publicizing the way that amateur radio listeners could contribute to investigating space secrets. The worldwide publicity around their claims in 1961-1962 encouraged many other radio amateurs to attempt their own 'space eavesdropping', sometimes with spectacular success. See for example the story of Britain's "Kettering Group".
<http://www.svengrahn.pp.se/trackind/getstart/oldcyts.htm>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoffrey_Perry

4. I also stated clearly that none of the more sensational Judica-Cordiglia claims of secret discoveries were confirmed, and in hindsight, all records, memoirs, artifacts, and interviews are totally inconsistent with any of the stories being true. No space historian today believes that any of these claimed events actually happened.

5. I first wrote about these claims, and why I found them unworthy of belief, in my 1975 report, 'Phantoms of Space', that assessed all the rumors of secret Soviet space casualties in the previous decade. That original report is online here:

<http://www.astronautix.com/articles/phaspace.htm>

6. Late in November 2006 I received a copy of the brothers' new book, provided by the generosity of Giovanni Abrate, one of the loyal supporters of the brothers claim. I appreciate his generosity.

7. The title is DOSSIER SPUTNIK: "... questo il mondo non lo saprà..." -- I translate the title as the alleged quote from a stranded cosmonaut, "Else the world will not find out about it." ISBN: 8890202785; publisher: Mariogros, Edizioni Vitalità. See <http://dreamharbour.wordpress.com/2007/06/13/questo-il-mondo-non-lo-sapra/> and http://www.unilibro.com/find_buy/product.asp?sku=12355795&idaf=0

8. Armed with some basics of Italian and pretty good Latin and French, I surveyed the book's claims. I gradually became more and more dismayed with the contents.

9. The book apparently makes no mention of the consensus of space historians that the sensational claims were not credible, and the authors give no replies to criticisms published over the past thirty years. Instead, it appears to continue the pretense that such criticisms and refutations do not exist.

10. I could not find any new independent confirmation of any of the most interesting claims, except second-hand assertions from the authors that other people did receive some of the same signals -- but I could not find any statements directly from such alleged witnesses.

11. The book makes no mention (that I could find) that more than a generation of Soviet-era and post-Soviet revelations about their cosmonaut program provide not a single supportive datum of evidence concerning 'secret lost cosmonauts' on actual space missions. In fact, the massive disclosures, interviews, memorabilia sales, and other avenues of access all establish quite conclusively that the claims (and names) of such dead cosmonauts have no reality.

12. The book provides no verifiable evidence for claims that signals directly from the Vostok (Yuri Gagarin) spacecraft in 1961 were actually received by the brothers, especially since the orbit of the spacecraft was at all times out of range of Italy and during the

minutes of closest approach, on its way back to Earth, the spacecraft was undergoing deceleration and plasma blockage of radio. Voice signals recorded earlier and relayed by news agency transmitters or even hams may have been received, but I have no reason to believe the claim that the brothers picked up authentic live transmissions. See the map in the Wikipedia article on Gagarin, here: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/1/13/Vostok_1_orbit.png/375px-Vostok_1_orbit.png

13. The book provides no verifiable evidence that signals directly from the Mercury-6 (John Glenn) spacecraft in February 1962 were actually received by the brothers, especially since the orbit of the spacecraft was at all times far out of range of Italy. The claim that they determined the secret radio frequency from a photograph of an antenna is not convincing since the antenna they refer to is a post-landing rescue beacon, not even deployed or activated until after the capsule was in the water. See map of Glenn's orbital path and location of tracking sites (inside maximum range circles) here: <http://history.nasa.gov/SP-6/p15.jpg>

14.. I am disappointed by the misleading attempt on page 258 to present a Soviet drawing of Luna-3 (the backside imager flown in 1959) as a reliable representation of Luna-4 (1963), which was an entirely different design that had no in-flight imaging capability -- an inconvenient fact regarding their claim to have received moon images from Luna-4 (purportedly shown in the book). What is now known about the Luna-4 spacecraft -- from its builders, from its documentation, from its factory museum -- is that it had no intent or even capability to take lunar surface images on route to the moon, and the photograph released by the brothers must have come from some other origin that I decline to guess. For info on Luna-4 see <http://www.astronautix.com/craft/lunae6.htm>

15. The new book provides no verifiable documentation about the claimed 1964 meeting at NASA headquarters (where they report their work was endorsed) except one poor photograph of the brothers in front of the 'NASA' sign on the sidewalk in Washington, DC -- a photograph that any tourist could make. No photograph of them with any NASA official is shown. No official named by the book has ever been located (well, it WAS more than 40 years ago).

16. I am astonished by the poor quality and small size of the book's illustrations (typically the picture occupies perhaps 20% of a page that is otherwise blank), especially those (such as logbooks and maps) that if readable might have presented corroborative evidence

to support the claims. But as shown in the book's pages, no decipherable information can be extracted from them.

17. I am tempted to conclude that the purpose of the book is nostalgic glorification of the 'legend of Torre Bert' with no attempt at presenting a fair, full, and credible discussion of the controversies over the claims. It appears to be nothing more than a lengthy self-indulgent fantasy, and one that is not as honest as the alleged significance of the claimed events demand.

18. I communicated these concerns to Mr. Abrate in late November 2006, but he was unable to provide any additional evidence enhancing the all-too-low credibility of the original claims.

19. I note that on Mr. Abrate's website, he publishes Russian space photographs that show figures who were erased from one group shot to another version, later also published. These are the scenes that I personally discovered and first published in connection with my investigations of candidate cosmonauts who never made space missions for a variety of prosaic explanations. The website claims copyright on these images originally obtained, without acknowledgement, from my own published work.

20. I realize that some US military veterans remember believing that they had tracked secret cosmonauts before Gagarin's flight (April 1961), and I realize that this interpretation was widespread within the US intelligence community at the time (this specifically refers to the test flights of 'Vostok' capsules with dogs between August 1960 and March 1961). SF author Robert Heinlein alluded to these stories in conversations. In hindsight those real-time guesses have clearly turned out to be mistaken, but some of these veterans for whatever reasons prefer believing the initial mistakes over the subsequent clarifications (which most of them never saw). They do make better 'war stories'. In any case, these stories are inconsistent with the contemporary claims from Torre Bert – so even if true (and NO modern spaceflight historian believes them), they are not supportive evidence of this book's claims.

21. I offer no explanation of the gap between these claims and what seems to be an authentic consensus of historians and of every other space radio expert in the world. I did note references to how Italian journalists would 'camp out' at the Torre Bert facility in the mid-1960s just waiting for yet another sensational revelation of Soviet space secrets that the Italian brothers, first in the world, kept discovering. I can imagine how their presence would put pressure on the team to satisfy their appetites.

22. Two websites devoted to advocating the authenticity of the claims are:

<http://www.lostcosmonauts.com/> and

<http://www.judicacordiglia.com/>

I note again that the 'Lost Cosmonauts' site declares a copyright on Russian space photographs with cosmonaut forgeries, that I discovered and published in the early 1970s.

23. A good overview of the controversy can be found in Jeff Scott's 2005 article at

<http://www.aerospaceweb.org/question/conspiracy/q0235.shtml>

Another good discussion is at

<http://www.astrosurf.com/luxorion/qsl-torre-bert.htm>

A technical analysis by one of the world's leading amateur 'space radio listeners, Sven Grahn of Sweden (a veteran of the worldwide 'Kettering Group' led by the legendary, late British schoolteacher Geoffrey Perry), is at

<http://www.svengrahn.pp.se/trackind/Torre/TorreB.html>

All of these sites and others provide overwhelming evidence and argumentation that the Torre Bert claims are unworthy of belief.

24. The birth of the 'Space Age', to which as a youth I was a direct witness, was accompanied by imaginative misinterpretations, deliberate government distortions, and self-aggrandizing personal boasting unconstrained by 'reality checks' for a new arena of human endeavor that was strange, easily misunderstood, and poorly explained. It should be no surprise that torrents of misinformation, disinformation, honest mistakes, deliberate pranks and satires and other fruits of human excitement and bafflement, all showed up and echoed down the years. Modern spaceflight historians have learned to winnow out this noise and find the reliable signals. Their consensus, which I share, is that the work of the Judica-Cordiglia brothers was not among these reliable signals.