

FT 45

TIMES, New York, NY - Jan. 31, 1985 CR: D. Schultz

# A 'Green Cloud' Adds to Soviet U.F.O. Lore

By SETH MYDANS

Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Jan. 30 — Witnesses say it first appeared as a yellow light, then as a white ray. Then, it became a green cloud that turned into something resembling a plane.

It was the latest example of a phenomenon that has caught Russians' imagination — sightings of unidentified flying objects.

The witnesses were the passengers and crew of Aeroflot 8382 on a night flight from Rostov to Tallinn and ground controllers who had seen unexplained blips on a radar screen. And their audience was a member of the

Academy of Sciences, who solemnly declared that the sighting must have been of "what we call a U.F.O."

The report, carried today in the labor union newspaper Trud, was one of a number that have appeared over the years in a nation fascinated by unexplained phenomena such as Abominable Snowmen, the Bermuda Triangle, Loch Ness monsters and the search for the lost city of Atlantis.

In 1967, the Soviet Air Force set up a commission to investigate U.F.O.'s, though its findings have not been made public. And Trud carried an appeal from a Commission on Anomalies asking for more reports of sightings.

The newspaper account emphasized

the sobriety of the crew, giving the names, educational backgrounds and flight experience of its four members.

The second pilot, Gennadi Lazurin was quoted as having said during the flight, "Of course, they are going to say we are not normal."

But it seemed from Trud's account that, on the contrary, they were being taken quite seriously.

According to the account, the adventure began at 4:10 A.M. on a clear night some 75 miles Minsk when crew members saw a bright yellow light that shot a thin white ray toward the ground.

They watched, transfixed, as the ray turned into concentric cones of light, and then dissipated into a green cloud

that crossed their flight path and began to take on the shape of a plane.

Passengers asked anxiously what was going on.

"Tell them it is some sort of cloud," the captain, Igor Cherkashin, is said to have told the flight attendant. "Say the yellow thing is a reflection of city lights, the green thing of polar lights."

But ground controllers in Riga and Vilnius confirmed the presence of a cloudlike plane next to the Aeroflot airliner.

After landing in Tallinn, the crew learned that ground controllers had seen not one but two blips following the Tu-134 across the radar screen.

Nikolai N. Zheltukhin, a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, ruled out weather as an explanation and said a genuine U.F.O. was involved.

He said his Commission on Anomalies had made a study of U.F.O.'s, and he called the sighting a valuable documentation of the transformation of an unidentified flying object.

Not all newspaper accounts have taken U.F.O.'s seriously. A television documentary in 1981 derided them, along with underwater monsters, snowmen and the rest.

In 1976, an underground document attributed to a professor at Moscow's Aviation Institute referred to 300 U.F.O. sightings over the years. The report was not confirmed, but its author did not publicly refute it.

Some of the purported sightings have become classics. These include a 1976 U.F.O. said to have hovered for 36 hours over Naichik; a flying saucer that purportedly appeared above a railroad crossing near Moscow in 1961, stalling engines for 45 minutes, and an object that, like the one reported today, trailed an airliner from Yarkutsk all the way to Omsk.

The document drew a sarcastic rebuttal in the youth newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda, deriding U.F.O.'s "and humanoid everywhere, in trolley-buses and in palaces of culture," as Russians call their community centers.

Komsomolskaya Pravda even managed to blame the Americans. It said the Pentagon was using the U.F.O. scare to justify more military spending, calling flying saucers the "secret weapon of the Bolsheviks."