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If it's weird, wild or alien, America's tabloids want you to read all about it

It's those Martians again

If you were under the impression the Washington summit last week was purely about arms control, think again.

Gorbachov was really telling Reagan all about the lost city of Atlantis, and invading aliens who are making a nuisance of themselves by dumping nuclear waste in the Bermuda Triangle.

In fact, according to a newspaper bought by 1.3 million Americans, the Russians have just "solved the world's greatest mysteries and delivered their findings to world leaders for global action".

According to the exclusive revelations of the weekly *World News*, Professor Anatoly Shalnev and his team found Atlantis 400 miles off Portugal.

It was a hi-tech city built by extra-terrestrials who are still around, though they have "made it clear that human beings are inferior to them and hardly worthy of consideration". The *News*, as it is known to its readers, is one of a handful of weeklies, most of them edited in Florida, which report those current events that, for some reason, the nation's mainly grey and solemn press chooses to ignore.

For good measure, the *News* also recently reported the discovery of a "miracle pill" that cures everything from cancer to arthritis.

The grandfather of the so-called "supermarket tabloids" is the *National Enquirer*, a journal with a 4.5 million circulation. But the *News* and its sister publications, the *Sun* and the *National Review*, make more interesting reading for anyone who wants to keep up with the weird, the wonderful, the extra-terrestrial, the long-since dead, medical discoveries, the future and British royalty.

Readers of one recent edition of the *News* could learn, for example, that the Princess of Wales has been meeting her grandfather's ghost, that space aliens have cured a crippled teenager, and also find out "how to tell if your neighbour is a werewolf. Unless you know what to look for, they are impo[illegible] to identify".

Other slices of life only noticed by the tabloids have recently included the case of the man who drowned three wives in his waterbed, the story of the 26-stone nun who has become a roller-derby queen and the "man who dreamed he was a bird and woke up on a telegraph pole". The weeklies, bought heavily by New Yorkers and Californians, according to the publishers, are particularly strong on science and human abnormalities.

"Two-headed man sings in stereo – dual-domed wonder set to tackle showbiz world" was one informative *Sun* headline a few weeks ago.

The sub-headline is the bit that gives you the useful information. For example, the *Sun* recently ran "Rabbit-faced baby has 10-inch ears – bucktoothed mom chomped carrots while pregnant". Animals feature large in the interests of the tabloid readers, especially big versions of usually small ones. "Superbees" are said to be terrorizing the west. "Supercats" are wreaking havoc among the dogs of Georgia. A top-secret report from China in the *National Examiner* revealed the horrifying existence of "frog-like monsters with eyes bigger than rice-buckets". But the "enraged camel" which, according to the *Sun*, recently "reduced a rapist to little bits" was, it seems, only average sized.

The weeklies also have a passion for the mundane. One report told of Miss Sarah Burns, who summoned the soul of a departed nun and got Attila the Hun instead. "It was a horrible case of mistaken identity," commented a family member. And Attila was not happy to be disturbed. "He threatened to rape and kill us." Among other revelations, Lieutenant-Colonel Oliver North, according to the *News*, is the re-incarnation of Teddy Roosevelt.

Above all, the popular tabloids specialize in reporting the activities of UFOs and space aliens. Among headlines of the past three months: "Aliens helped write the constitution", "Airforce captures UFO", "Trucker in hospital after UFO horror", "I was pregnant with alien baby" and "Space alien bodies found on Mount Everest". But nothing could compete with the *News's* scoop on the secret Soviet discovery of those long-suspected links between UFOs, Atlantis, the Abominable Snowman and the Bermuda triangle.

While their leaders decide what to do, world governments have declined comment, the *News* said, with the exception of the French. André Lafleur, a French foreign ministry spokesman, told the *News*: "The Soviets beat the world on this one. What else can I say? It's truly a scientific coup."

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