

Hot News From Tass: Tourists From Space

By ESTHER B. FEIN

Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Oct. 9 — Everyone seems to be coming to the Soviet Union these days: entrepreneurs in search of joint ventures, actors looking for stage sets, heavy metal musicians, arm wrestlers, even aliens.

The official press agency Tass says towering extraterrestrial creatures with little knobby heads have landed in the Russian city of Voronezh, joining the flood of foreigners who have invaded the Soviet Union in these days of glasnost and perestroika.

"Scientists have confirmed that an unidentified flying object recently

landed in a park in the Russian city of Voronezh," Tass said in a straight-faced news report. "They have also identified the landing site and found traces of aliens who made a short promenade around the park."

'Overwhelmed With a Fear'

It was only a matter of time before aliens discovered the appeal of Soviet chic that has brought plane-loads of tourists to the Soviet Union and made Soviet watches and breads all the rage in sophisticated stores like Bloomingdale's.

But while Soviet citizens usually embrace foreign visitors with enthusiasm, Tass reported that the people

in Voronezh who saw the aliens "were overwhelmed with a fear which lasted for several days."

The authorities in Voronezh, some 300 miles southeast of Moscow, could not be reached tonight for comment. A spokesman for Tass, reached by telephone tonight, said the report was neither a hoax nor a joke. "It is a serious dispatch," the night duty officer at the agency said.

The press agency has seemed to undergo a bizarre metamorphosis in the last year or so. In addition to its traditional role of dutifully reporting the

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comings and goings of Soviet leaders, and often condemning those of American officials, Tass has taken to writing supermarket-tabloid sensationalism with all the seriousness due a superpower summit meeting.

Along with a steady flow of U.F.O. sightings, Tass in recent months has carried reports on a man who, while sitting in a bathtub, can create a huge soap bubble, get inside it and remain there for 10 seconds; a "flamboyant" six-legged bull whose two extra appendages grow upward off its back (coincidentally, also from the Voronezh region); the elusive, mysterious creature called the yeti, and a Tibetan doctor's sex tips, advising that winter is the best time for amorous activity and summer is the worst.

People in the Soviet Union have long been attracted by the mysterious and the occult, and lately the authorities seem to be feeding this interest. Two of the hottest programs on state-run television these days are psychic healers who promise to cure everything from obesity to leukemia, in person or via the airwaves.

There seems to be a particular fascination here with outer space — quite apart from the Soviet obsession with the American "Star Wars" pro-

The visitors are said to take a stroll in the park.

gram — and in February 1984 the authorities here set up a Commission Into Abnormal Phenomena after a "flying cigar" was spotted near the city of Gorky, east of Moscow.

A much talked about report last summer in the newspaper Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya told of a milkmaid's encounter with a stubby-legged alien in the Perm region of Central Russia.

One Report Is Debunked

This summer Tass reported on a U.F.O. hovering over a hill in the Soviet Far East, showering the area with over 30 pounds of debris that included mysterious, tiny golden hairs.

The agency also debunked a report in Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya this summer that asserted that a spaceship landed near southern Moscow, leaving behind a huge scorched

patch. Tass reported that firefighters believe that a haystack caught fire and singed the ground.

All of the sightings, and even the "re-evaluations," are earnestly reported.

Indeed, tonight's report was presented with a straight face and with technical descriptions worthy of a major scientific discovery. Genrikh Silanov, head of the Voronezh Geophysical Laboratory, said in an interview with Tass that the landing site was identified "by means of bilocation."

According to Soviet reference books, bilocation is an extrasensory method of tracking objects or people invisible to the human eye.

'Mysterious Pieces of Rock'

Mr. Silanov described the landing spot as being about 20 yards in diameter, with four small prominent dents "situated in the four points of a rhomb." He said scientists also found "two mysterious pieces of rock" that resembled deep-red sandstone, but "mineralogical analysis" determined that the substance "cannot be found on earth."

Tass said Voronezh residents reported that the aliens visited the place after dark at least three times. They arrived in a large shining ball, or disk, and emerged through a hatch, accompanied by "a small robot," and went for a "short promenade about the park."

Tass also reported that witnesses claimed to have seen "a banana-shaped object in the sky and a characteristic illuminated sign." It said such descriptions had been reported in the American magazine *Saga*, a regular in barbershops and bowling alleys.

And to dispel any notion that the Voronezh witnesses had been influenced by reports in *Saga*, Tass said "it is unlikely residents of Voronezh could have read the magazine."

The Tass report does not indicate what brought the alien visitors here. Perhaps they had seen advertisements, which are now displayed on the outside of Soviet spaceships.

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