

COUD-1

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Tass: Towering UFO aliens with tiny heads spark panic

It was a close encounter of the Communist kind.

Towering, tiny-headed humanoids from outer space landed their UFO in the Russian city of Voronezh, 300 miles southeast of Moscow, and walked around the park, spreading fear among residents, the official Tass news agency said Monday.

Tass, contributing to a string of weird tales that have crept into the once stuffy Soviet-controlled media, said Soviet scientists vouched for the UFO's landing.

"Scientists have confirmed that an unidentified flying object recently landed in a park in the Russian city of Voronezh," Tass said. "They have also identified the landing site and found traces of aliens who made a short promenade about the park."

A Tass duty officer, contacted Monday night by telephone, refused to identify the reporter who sent the dispatch from Voronezh, but stood by

the story. "It is not April Fool's today," he said.

In Buffalo, N.Y., Paul Kurtz, chairman of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, said: "We're extremely skeptical of this claim."

The Soviet media has hyped incredible stories recently — a rash of UFO accounts, sightings of abominable snowmen, and a tale of a young mystic who goes into a trance and flies about the cosmos. Mystics and ESP artists have invaded state TV.

Tass, in its latest report, said Voronezh residents saw a large shining ball or disk hover over the park, then land, and up to three creatures similar to humans emerged, accompanied by a small robot.

"The aliens were three or even four meters (9-12 feet) tall, but with very small heads," witnesses said. "They walked near the ball or disk and then disappeared inside."

The report resembled a summer story in the newspaper Socialist Industry about a "close encounter" between a milkmaid and an alien in Central Russia's Perm region.

In that report, milkmaid Lyubov Medvedev said she met an alien creature "resembling a man, but taller than average with short legs." She said it had "only a small knob instead of a head."

Tass, which did not date the Voronezh "landing," said onlookers were "overwhelmed with a fear that lasted for several days."

Genrikh Silanov, head of the Voronezh Geophysical Laboratory, said scientists found a 20-yard depression with four deep dents, and two pieces of strange rocks.

"At first glance, they looked like sandstone of a deep-red color. However, mineralogical analysis has shown that the substance cannot be found on Earth," he said.

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