

A Soviet twilight zone?

Tass says scientists confirmed UFO sightings

ENQUIRER NEWS SERVICES

MOSCOW — 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 and emerged for a promenade around the park, spreading fear among residents.

At least that's what the official Tass news agency said Monday.

Tass, contributing to a string of weird tales that have crept into the formerly

stuffy, state-controlled media in recent months, said in a straight-faced report that 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."

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The report resembled a story last summer in the daily newspaper *Socialist Industry*, which carried an alleged "close encounter" between a milkmaid and an alien in Central Russia's Perm region.

The Tass report, which did not give the date of the purported landing in Voronezh, 300 miles south of Moscow, said onlookers were "overwhelmed with a fear that lasted for several days."

Genrikh Silanov, head of the Voronezh Geophysical Laboratory, told Tass that scientists investigating the UFO report found a 20-yard depression with four deep dents, as well as two pieces of unidentified 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," Tass quoted Silanov as saying.

Kurtz, a professor of philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo, said the Tass account "has all the characteristics of science fiction."

Kurtz said, "If this were true, I think chairman (Mikhail) Gorbachev would call a press conference and proudly announce that, with everybody attempting to get out of the Soviet Union, at long last here are some extraterrestrials in that Union."

Aliens

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A Tass duty officer, contacted Monday night by telephone, stood by the story: "It is not April Fool's today."

The Soviet media, unleashed by the Kremlin's policy of *glasnost* — greater openness — might feel free now to hype incredible stories that seem more at home in the supermarket tabloids of the West.

Recent examples from Tass:

■ 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 story on a "flamboyant" six-legged bull whose two extra appendages grow upward off its back (coincidentally, also from the Voronezh region).

■ Sightings of abominable snowman-type creatures.

■ A tale about a young mystic who goes into a trance and flies about the cosmos.

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. It's not the first one (in the Soviet media). There's many. There seems to be a rash of reports, largely uncorroborated."

According to Monday's Tass report, a large shining ball or disk was seen hovering over the park by Voronezh residents. They saw the UFO land, and up to three creatures similar to humans emerged, accompanied by a small robot, Tass said.

"The aliens were three or even four meters tall (almost 10 feet to slightly more than 13 feet), but with very small heads," the news agency quoted witnesses as saying.

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The Cincinnati Post, Thursday, October 12, 1989

Soviet TV shows child's UFO picture

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Soviet TV viewers Wednesday night had a chance to see the aliens that created a cosmic sensation with their reported landing in the town of Voronezh — but only in a child's scribbled drawing.

The Soviet news program "Vremya" broadcast a report from Voronezh showing the spot among yellow-leaved birches where, according to the official news agency Tass, scientists confirmed an unearthly craft had touched down.

The picture, by a child who claimed to have witnessed the landing, showed a glowing two-legged sphere with a smiling stick figure inside.

Tass made a worldwide splash Monday with its report on towering, pin-headed aliens who emerged from a spaceship that landed in a park in Voronezh, 300 miles southeast of Moscow.