

Soviets spice up news fare with tales of UFOs, aliens

By Carey Goldberg
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MOSCOW — It was a close encounter of the communist kind.

Towering, tiny-headed humanoids from outer space landed their UFO in the Soviet 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 reported yesterday.

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 sci-

entists 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 yesterday evening 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.

The Soviet media, unleashed by the Kremlin's policy of glasnost — greater openness — feel free now to

hype incredible stories that seem more at home in the supermarket tabloids of the West.

Recent examples have included other accounts of UFOs, sightings of abominable snowman-type creatures, and a tale about a young mystic who goes into a trance and flies about the cosmos. A rash of mystics and ESP-artists also has invaded state television.

According to yesterday'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 emerge, accompanied by a small robot, Tass said.

"The aliens were 3 or even 4 me-

ters [9 to 12 feet] tall, but with very small heads," the news agency quoted witnesses as saying. "They walked near the ball or disk and then disappeared inside."

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.

In that report, milkmaid Lyubov Medvedev was quoted as saying she encountered an alien creature "resembling a man, but taller than average with short legs." The creature, she said, had "only a small knob instead of a head."

The Tass report, which did not

give the date of the purported UFO landing in Voronezh, 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 Mr. Silanov as saying.

Mr. Silanov said the landing site and path taken by the aliens was con-

firmed using the "biolocation" method of tracking. The agency did not explain what that was.

Further confirmation came from witnesses in Voronezh, 300 miles southeast of Moscow, who were not told of the experiments and whose accounts coincided precisely with the scientific findings, Tass said.

In July, Tass deflated a report in Socialist Industry quoting a UFO specialist, A. Kuzovkin, as saying a 26-foot-wide patch of burned ground near southern Moscow was probably caused by the landing of a UFO.

Not so, Tass reported. In the opinion of firefighters, a haystack simply caught fire and scorched the ground.