

UFO stories weren't fiction, says Soviet news agency Tass

Police lieutenant confirms sighting

ENQUIRER NEWS SERVICES

MOSCOW — It is not a joke, nor a hoax, nor a sign of mental instability, nor an attempt to drum up local tourism by drawing the curious, the Soviet press agency Tass insisted Tuesday in discussions of what it called an extraterrestrial visit to southern Russia.

Residents of the city of Voronezh said that lanky, three-eyed extraterrestrial creatures had indeed landed in a local park and gone for a stroll and that Monday's seemingly fantastic report about the event was absolutely true.

"It was not an optical illusion," said Lt. Sergei A. Matveyev of the Voronezh district police station, who said in a telephone interview that he saw the landing of the UFO on Sept. 27.

Matveyev confessed that he had not actually seen the aliens, but said he saw the spaceship and "it was certainly a body flying in the sky."

Matveyev said he was a little skeptical himself, at first.

"I thought I must be really tired," he said. "but I rubbed my eyes and it didn't go away. Then I figured . . . anything is possible."

But as the bizarre saga of the space invasion of the city of Voronezh unfolded for a second day, a scientist whose words were used to buttress the first published report voiced doubts, and said he was, in part, misquoted.

"Don't believe all you hear from Tass," Genrikh Silanov, head of the Voronezh Geophysical Laboratory, cautioned in a telephone in-

It came from outer space

A report Tuesday in the newspaper Sovetskaya Kultura provided more details of the supposed alien landing in Voronezh:

Two boys and a girl from a local school — Vasya Surin, Zhënya Blinov and Yuliya Sholokhova — were playing in a park on the warm evening of Sept. 27 when suddenly, at half past 6, "they saw a pink shining in the sky and then spotted a ball of deep red color" about 10 yards in diameter.

A crowd rushed to the site, and through an open hatch saw a "three-eyed alien" about 10 feet tall, clad in silvery overalls and bronze-colored boots, and wearing a disk on his chest.

The creature disappeared, then landed again.

Two creatures, one apparently a robot, exited. A boy screamed with fear, but when the alien gazed at him, with eyes shining, he fell silent,

unable to move. Onlookers screamed, and the UFO and the creatures disappeared.

About five minutes later, they reappeared. The alien had a "pistol" — a tube about 20 inches long, which it pointed at an unidentified 16-year-old boy, making him disappear. The alien went inside the sphere, which took off. At the same time, the boy reappeared.

"Children and eyewitnesses of the abnormal phenomenon have been questioned by police workers and journalists," wrote *Sovetskaya Kultura's* Voronezh correspondent, E. Efremov. "There are no discrepancies in the description of the sphere itself, or the actions of the 'aliens.' Moreover, all the children who became witnesses to this event are still afraid, even now."

It gave the names of only three witnesses, all youngsters.

terview with The Associated Press from Voronezh. "We never gave them part of what they published."

'Difficult to explain'

Monday's report spawned rumors in Moscow, including one that the aliens told Voronezh residents the Earth would be destroyed by the year 2000 if people didn't stop polluting it.

Nonetheless, a Communist Party newspaper whose avowed mission is to write about culture was the only major national daily to print anything Tuesday about the UFO, indicating more authoritative newspapers like *Pravda* thought the topic too hot to handle.

Sovetskaya Kultura said its coverage was motivated by "the

golden rule of journalism: the reader must know everything."

"Of course, it's hard to believe in what happened in the town," it reported from Voronezh. "It's even more difficult to explain."

Scientists from a nationwide group that investigates "abnormal phenomena" were looking into the landing, the newspaper said.

Silanov, who said he belongs to the group, cast doubt on the Tass report that quoted him as saying the aliens left behind two rocks resembling sandstone of a deep red color that cannot be found anywhere on Earth.

"The rock they described as extraterrestrial is in fact a piece of iron oxide which could easily have originated on Earth," he said.

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