

# The UFO went thataway

by David Ljunggren  
Voronezh

SOVIET investigators opened a commission of inquiry yesterday to try to verify a reported landing in central Russia by huge, three-eyed aliens.

But most of the children who in the past few days have enthralled the country with their tales of spaceships, robots and gun-toting extra-terrestrials in this industrial city of 900,000 were not allowed to testify.

"The parents want their kids to be left alone," said Slava Martinov, a member of the Commission for the Investigation of Abnormal Phenomena, meeting in full for the first time.

The head of the commission, Genrykh Silanov, holding a copper rod to try to divine traces of the aliens, took his team to a glade where several children claimed to have seen the spaceship land. He walked up and down a patch of soft earth for five minutes, twirling a bent piece of copper tubing.

"This is called biolocation — it helps me sense where the aliens walked," he told a large group of Soviet journalists.

The team, most of whom are confirmed UFO enthusiasts, have already conducted preliminary interviews with the children about an alleged spaceship landing on September 27 in a Voronezh park.

Lurid accounts in newspapers and the official news agency, Tass, have depicted 10ft creatures with three eyes landing in a luminous sphere. According to the reports one of the aliens, silver-suited and accompanied by a robot, strolled through the park before firing an unusually large gun at a 16-year-old boy, who temporarily vanished. He reappeared when the spacecraft left.

Silanov said it had been hard to trace this youth, who witnesses said had been temporarily vaporised by the aliens, and that tests had proved that mysterious rocks found at the site were of earthly and not extra-terrestrial origin as first thought.

On Friday Pravda criticised local authorities for not clamping down on the rumours.

The incident has provoked a spate of articles in national papers and on Friday the local television station devoted the first 15 minutes of its main evening news bulletin to the story. During the broadcast the two star child witnesses admitted to being avid science fiction fans but denied they had made up the story.

"For once, people here have forgotten about the lack of meat and soap and are talking only of this. You can see it in their faces — they are more alive, enthusiastic," said a shop assistant.

Adult witnesses remained obstinately elusive, but virtually everyone questioned had their own theories about the incident and said they knew of someone who had seen something unusual at some stage in their life.

"I am sure the ship came from Venus. I did not see it myself, but my grandmother's cousin once saw a space ship attack a train in Siberia," said a technician.

"You tend to get the best UFO sightings in the places where there are the worst shops," commented a Soviet journalist. (Reuters)