

RICHARD HEIDEN *via* COUD—1

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Soviet scientists say there are no UFOs

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In an effort to quell growing public fascination with UFOs, the Soviet Union has published an explanation of the Petrozavodsk phenomenon — perhaps the most famous Soviet UFO incident.

The group of UFO experts who conducted the analysis concluded that Petrozavodsk, like “most” other UFO sightings, actually resulted from public misinterpretation of a rocket launch.

The 1977 incident involved the appearance of a huge bright star that approached Petrozavodsk, an industrial city about 150 miles northeast of Leningrad.

After reaching the city, it expand-

ed into a glowing object that witnesses said resembled a jelly fish. The object then emitted fine, ray-like beams of light that poured onto the city like rain. The object later assumed a circular shape and moved off in the early morning darkness toward nearby Lake Onega.

The incident caused widespread public concern. There were reports, for instance, that not one but a cluster of more than 30 UFOs had been sighted.

The analysis was published in Science in the USSR, the official journal of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. The Academy is Russia's most prestigious scientific organization, the rough counterpart of America's National Academy of Sciences. It

sets the course of Soviet science and funds scientific research.

In a commentary on the analysis, the Academy criticizes scientists for contributing to the Soviet public's belief in UFOs and other paranormal phenomenon.

“The concept of glasnost in science can hardly be interpreted as ‘anything goes,’” it observes. The commentary says that UFO research has been of poor quality, unsuited for publication in legitimate scientific journals.

Yet it says that the results have been eagerly accepted by the Soviet press, and given “sensationalized” coverage that could mislead unsophisticated readers.

The most recent episode occurred

in September, when Soviet news media reported the landing of a flying saucer in Voronezh, a city about 300 miles southeast of Moscow. Knobby-headed extraterrestrial creatures supposedly emerged from a hatch and, accompanied by a robot, strolled through the city park.

A rash of other Soviet UFO reports have appeared this year. One flying saucer, for instance, showered an area of the Soviet Far East with mysterious “golden hairs.” The stubby-legged alien piloting another molested a milkmaid in the Perm region of central Russia. Another UFO scorched the ground just south of Moscow.

In some instances, local scientists have been quick to declare the sight-

ings legitimate, reporting detection of extraterrestrial minerals and other objects left behind by aliens.

The analysis of Petrozavodsk incident includes a lengthy discussion of the dramatic visual effects that can result from rocket launches. It concludes that visual effects from the launch of the Cosmos 955 satellite on September 20, 1977, produced the Petrozavodsk phenomenon.

American space authorities had suspected a link between the object and Cosmos 955.

But the new analysis provides evidence from a network of ground-based cameras that actually photographed the incident. The cameras, supposedly installed to study the

northern lights, “eliminate all doubts as to the physical nature” of the Petrozavodsk incident, according to the report.

With the photographs, researchers were able to correlate events along the Cosmos 955 trajectory with the changing appearance of the object over Petrozavodsk. The jelly fish shape of the object and its rays, for example, actually represented jets of exhaust gas and jettisoned fuel that spread at high altitude during separation of two stages of the rocket.

The report also examines and debunks claims about magnetic and other aberrations found at supposed UFO landing sites.

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