

FANTASTIC

SCIENCE FACT & FICTION

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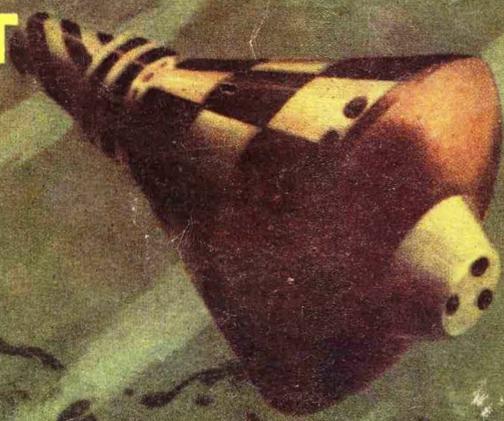
FACT FEATURES

IVAN T. SANDERSON:

**THERE IS
AN ABOMINABLE
SNOWMAN**

SAM MOSKOWITZ:

**TO MARS
AND VENUS IN
THE GAY
NINETIES**



THE MYSTERY OF THE MARTIAN SATELLITES

by

Dr. I. S. SHKLOVSKY

THE OPINION of the Soviet scientists is a mixed one. Academician L.I. Sedov, Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences V.L. Ginzburg, Professors V.I. Krasovsky, A.I. Lebedev, K.P. Stanyukovich and others have taken a sympathetic view of my hypothesis. On the other hand there are some Soviet scientists, notably Academician V.G. Fesenkov, who are skeptical about it. They have advanced a number of objections which seem to me to be groundless.

The American scientists have received the article in your newspaper as a belated April Fools' Day joke. As Gerard P. Kuiper, well-known American astronomer and Head of the Department of Astronomy at the University of Chicago, has said, "Shklovsky may have said all this so as to see what the newspapers would do with it. . . . He cannot seriously believe in such nonsense." Doctor Slyfer, a prominent astronomer, has been even more outspoken by calling my hypothesis "science fiction nonsense."

I guess the explanation for such decided, though not well-reasoned opinions, lies in the fact that the people who hold them have learned about my hypothesis from more or less free translations of the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* article without taking the trouble of pondering over my arguments. It is quite possible that American scientists are accustomed to jokes on the pages of reputable newspapers. Besides, it may be added that before giving such a categorical answer to a hypothesis, one should read it in a scientific presentation rather than

Recently the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* carried an interview with I. S. Shklovsky (Ph. D. in Physics and Mathematics), on his hypothesis of the origin of the Martian satellites. Using some abnormalities in the movement of one of the two Martian satellites as a starting point, the Soviet scientist had suggested they were of artificial origin. In another meeting with the scientist a *Komsomolskaya Pravda* correspondent asked Shklovsky to tell of the response his hypothesis has evoked among world scientists. The above is the statement, translated from the Russian.

base one's opinion on a newspaper article.

My scientific arguments are based, among other things, on the observations by American scientists of the acceleration of Phobos. In my broadcast for American listeners early last May, in which I argued with Dr. Kuiper, I said in particular that should the further observations which had not yet been published nor known to me show the Phobos was not accelerating, I should certainly abandon the hypothesis. If there are no such reports, the objections must be swept away as groundless.

The question whether Mars' satellites were artificial was attracting the attention of world opinion all during May. Some American astronomers had to admit that my arguments were correct. To cite one example, a spokesman of the Naval Observatory, the largest in the United States, said: "Shklovsky has absolutely correctly computed that if this (Phobos' acceleration) is true, the Martian moon should be hollow, as it cannot both have the weight of a natural body and behave as it has been described." Professor Singer, a prominent American scientist, said that "if the figures

Shklovsky has used are correct, his conclusions are irrefutable. If Phobos accelerates its motion, as has been reported, this moon must be a hollow shell the 'skin' of which is not more than 8 inches thick, while its diameter is 10 miles."

It will be seen that the stand taken by the American scientists recently differs radically from what it was originally, and there is no trace left of an ironic attitude toward my hypothesis.

On the other hand, Gerald M. Clemence, a well-known American scientist, a few days ago said that George Wilkins of Greenwich Observatory had questioned the validity of the data on the acceleration of Phobos. Wilkins had not yet published his studies, but was going to, Clemence said.

We shall wait for the studies by Wilkins or anybody else to be published. If it is true that Phobos does not accelerate, there will be no strictly scientific argument to substantiate the artificial origin of the Martian satellites, and the question of their origin will remain open—though it is quite possible even in that case that they are of artificial origin.

AN EDITORIAL ASIDE —

Fred Brown should need no introduction to science fiction readers and I will attempt none. I will simply say this that I have been searching for a possible serial for *Fantastic Universe* since both *FU* and *The Saint Mystery Magazine* were taken over by GAP. I feel I have found this serial, with the warmly human qualities in it that distinguishes the writing of Fredric Brown—a quality which I believe you will respond to. **THE MIND THING**, which begins next month, is *not* "space opera"—that will come later this Summer. It is the story of an alien mind's ventures among us and our reactions to it. I think you will agree with me—once you are finished with **THE MIND THING**—that this is Fredric Brown's most distinguished novel in this field.