

MORE SOVIET ENCOUNTERS

UFO UPDATE

By E. Lee Spiegel

Another piece of "evidence" has recently been added to the already-voluminous UFO literature. *Observations of Anomalous Atmospheric Phenomena in the USSR* was published "by decision of the Section of General Physics and Astronomy, Presidium Academy of Sciences, USSR." Dated 1979, the document, a statistical analysis of 256 Soviet UFO sightings, was first received by GEPAN, France's official UFO research organization. A copy of it eventually found its way to Dr. Richard Haines, a visual-perception specialist at NASA's Ames Research Center, in California. Believing the document to be significant, Dr. Haines had it translated in the Ames technical library.

The report was compiled by L. M. Gindilis, D. A. Menkov, and I. G. Petrovskaya, of the Shternberg State Astronomical Institute, the Moscow Engineering Physics Institute, and the Institute of Space Research, respectively. No additional information is offered on the background of these individuals, quite possibly because this paper was intended as an internal memorandum, not for public release. It is interesting that the authors of the Soviet document deliberately avoided the word *UFO*: "We consider the previously used term *UFO* to be less than adequate for such work, since it contains a definite interpretation of the phenomena observed."

Here are some highlights:

- The majority of incidents (76%) occurred in 1967. A sharp increase in the number of sightings that year occurred apparently in response to a Central Television broadcast in which all Soviet citizens were encouraged to report any UFO sightings.
- Of the 130 witnesses who listed their occupations, at least 66 percent had impressive qualifications: scientists (25%); pilots (11%); engineers (17%); servicemen (6%); and lab workers (7%).
- Two thirds of the cases involved multiple witnesses, with 15 percent listed as "mass observations."
- The objects described were as diverse as the people who reported them. Among

the shapes observed were discs, stars, crescents, ellipses, and cigarlike objects.

- In many instances the observed UFOs demonstrated marked irregularities in their motion and velocity. Under a section of the report entitled "Flight Path of Objects," "for 122 objects . . . significant peculiarities were noted: abrupt course changes, hovering and maneuvering of the objects, rotation, and unusual flight paths."

- Like so many UFO reports, the majority of the Russian cases "apparently occurred silently; the rare cases when the phenomenon was accompanied by sound require special analysis."

This is the whole point of the report. The researchers come to no conclusions. They take no stand. Gindilis, Menkov, and Petrovskaya say more data are needed before definite conclusions about these "atmospheric anomalies" can be reached and that further studies should utilize all scientific specialties: "In our opinion, the Soviet and foreign data accumulated so far justify setting up such studies." This doesn't mean that the Soviet Union is actively involved in UFO research. It does

show that three reasonable-sounding researchers have compiled reasonable-sounding statistics. It is interesting to note here that the statistics correlate with data collected worldwide.

Earlier this year the Soviet Union's official news publication *Pravda* denied rumors that the Academy of Sciences was engaged in UFO research. It is curious that a document surfaces in apparent contradiction to the *Pravda* news story. And the Soviet report is now available to the public through the Center for UFO Studies, whose director, J. Allen Hynek, says, "The fact is that *Pravda* doesn't know what the Academy of Sciences is doing. . . . It's not just a rumor; we've got 'em red-handed."

A statistical analysis is only as good as the reliability of its raw data. In the case of the Soviet report, all the UFO observational data were supplied by Dr. Feliks Y. Zigel, professor of astronomy and cosmonautics at Moscow Aviation Institute. Dr. Zigel, you may recall, is viewed by some Western UFO skeptics as "the reigning czar" of the Soviet UFO cult (see *UFO Update*, July 1980). He has been criticized for having questionable credentials and heading a Soviet UFO rumor factory.

"If you look at the publications that Dr. Zigel has prepared over his career," Haines observed recently, "the great majority are good, sound, technical, well-founded, scientific articles. The reader has to judge for himself what that stands for."

As one of the instructors to cosmonauts, Zigel wrote numerous articles about space and aeronautical sciences. In 1966 the Soviet magazine *Science and Religion* printed an article entitled "Telepathy: A Science of the Future," by Zigel, indicating his interest in ESP research. One other noteworthy fact about Zigel is that he steadfastly refuses to grant interviews. His fear of being grossly misquoted, at least in the United States, was well founded.

Zigel has never been so fringy as to claim personal contact with UFOs, nor has he been associated with any stories involving UFO occupants or landings. Even as early as 1967, according to a



Infamous jellyfish UFO over Petrozavodsk, USSR.

UFO

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

special news dispatch to the *New York Times* (December 10, 1967), Zigel insisted that the UFO problem would have been solved already "had not sensationalism and irresponsible antiscientific assertions regarding 'flying saucers' interfered with it."

Yet references to Soviet UFOs have cropped up in the most unusual places. Until recently a textbook entitled *Introductory Space Science, Vol. 2*, was required reading in the physics department of the U.S. Air Force Academy. In one of its chapters, "Unidentified Flying Objects," some of the material covered bears a marked resemblance to a report of the USSR Academy of Sciences: "On 24 July 1957, Russian anti-aircraft batteries in the Kuril Islands opened fire on UFOs. Although all Soviet anti-aircraft batteries . . . were in action, no hits were made. The UFOs appeared luminous and moved very fast."

Most of this now-deleted chapter further identifies shapes, behavior, effects, and expert witnesses, all of which share elements of the Soviet report.

In the closing months of 1967 both the United States and the USSR had scientific commissions investigating UFOs. Then, in 1968, the American committee was disbanded and the Russians announced that UFOs didn't exist. In February 1968 critical statements regarding UFOs appeared in *Pravda* and Soviet ufologists went underground, as did many of their American counterparts. It was during the pre-1968 period of official support for UFO research that Zigel collected the data for the current Academy of Sciences report. And therein lies its significance. Zigel's witnesses were of the highest caliber. They reported observations of aerial phenomena, many of which still cannot be explained. Even the U.S. Air Force's Project Blue Book ended by admitting that, at the very least, some UFOs were indeed unexplainable.

The fact remains that UFO reports continue, and 30 years of study has resulted in virtually no progress. With the current rate of 100 sightings per day, new parameters of research must be developed to investigate a global phenomenon that won't go away.

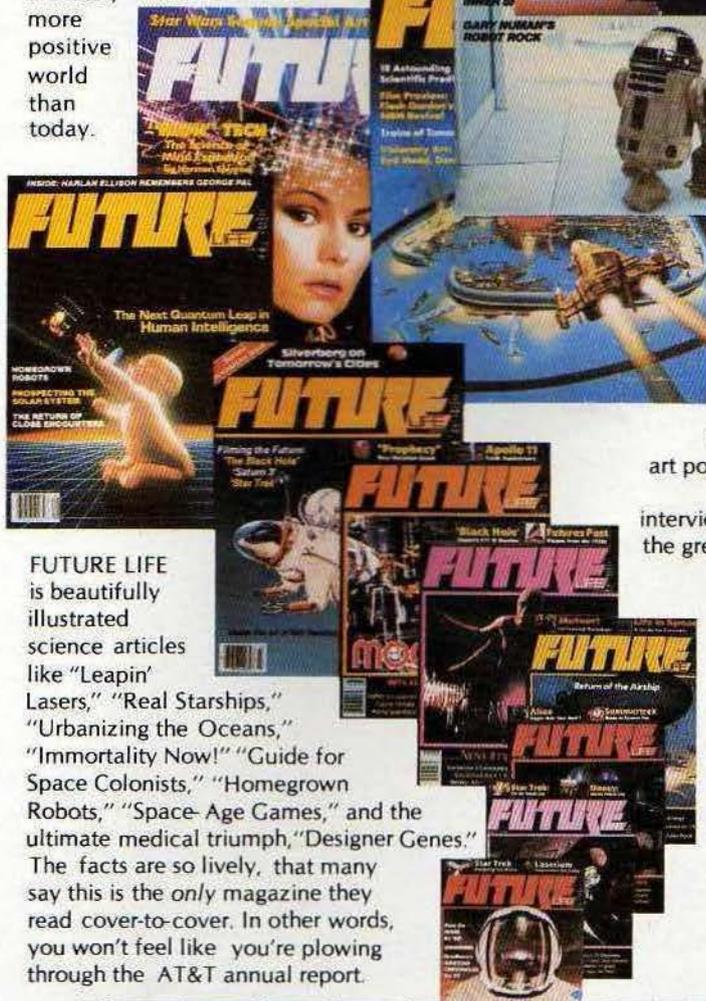
Although the UFO debate can be settled only by an international consortium of serious scientists, such global cooperation is fraught with practical problems. Considering that UFOs have been reported in at least 130 countries, the translation problems alone seem insurmountable. The way to proceed is through an existing international network with translation facilities, such as UNESCO. Some interest has already been voiced from this body. Let's not allow the data to pile up for another three decades. **OO**

E. Lee Spiegel produces a series on unexplained phenomena for NBC radio.

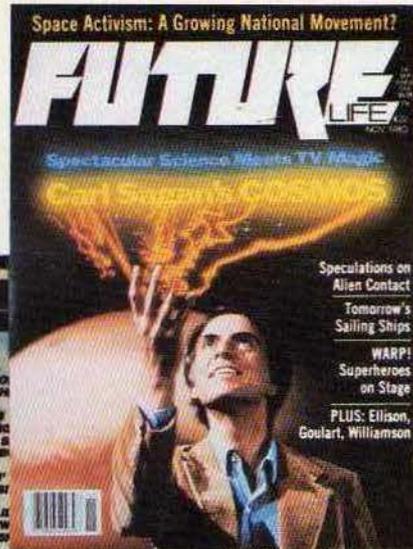
FUN!

. . . that's what distinguishes **FUTURE LIFE** from all the other magazines that have followed us toward tomorrow.

FUTURE LIFE is a young, energetic staff of researchers and writers—filled with excitement, loaded with wit, and brimming with curiosity. Each issue they create a colorful crystal ball that shows you the world of the future—a better, more positive world than today.



FUTURE LIFE is beautifully illustrated science articles like "Leapin' Lasers," "Real Starships," "Urbanizing the Oceans," "Immortality Now!" "Guide for Space Colonists," "Homegrown Robots," "Space-Age Games," and the ultimate medical triumph, "Designer Genes." The facts are so lively, that many say this is the *only* magazine they read cover-to-cover. In other words, you won't feel like you're plowing through the AT&T annual report.



Speculations on Alien Contact
Tomorrow's Sailing Ships
WARP! Superheroes on Stage
PLUS: Ellison, Goulart, Williamson

FUTURE LIFE is science fiction authors and book reviews, incredible art portfolios, music and media trends. It's interviews and articles by the greatest minds of our planet (including Harlan Ellison's regular column) with words of warning about our present and words of inspiration about the wonders of tomorrow. In other words, it pleases your eyes and teases your imagination.

Get in on the FUN of science fact and fiction—pick up **FUTURE LIFE** at your favorite magazine counter or enjoy a tremendous savings by subscribing at this special rate.

One year (8 issues) \$13.98
Includes the Special Anniversary Issue
(newsstand price: \$18.70)

FOREIGN (Surface Mail)
One Year (8 issues) \$20.00

Send cash, check or money order:

FUTURE LIFE—FUN!
475 Park Ave. South
New York, NY 10016

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

Please allow six-week processing before first issue will be mailed (in protective cover)