

Omni

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ARMAGEDDON

THE END IS NIGH (AGAIN)

**PERSONALITY:
DO GENES DETERMINE IT ALL?**

SEEKING THE ARCTIC DINOSAURS

**RUTHLESS SELFISHNESS:
THE SECRET TO GENETIC
IMMORTALITY—DAWKINS**

**ARMO PENZIAS:
WHEN COMPUTERS BECOME
MORE HUMAN...**



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Under reduced repression and censorship, a vigorous UFO culture has recently blossomed across the USSR. ♪

ANTI MATTER

Thirty years ago the Soviets gave the world a new word for "space traveler": *kosmonavt*, Angloized as *cosmonaut*. They are now trying to do it again with the word *enfonavt*, only this time the travelers are not human. The enfonauts (or UFO-nauts, as we would say) are aliens from space. And they've landed in the USSR.

Although the Soviets have come to the UFO arena fairly late in the game, they are making up for lost time. Take the story recently publicized around the world by the Soviet news agency Tass. This past October, the



agency announced, scientists confirmed the arrival of 9- to 12-foot-tall extraterrestrials with tiny heads. The aliens allegedly strolled around a park in the city of Voronezh. Many Westerners don't know it, but this isn't the only Russian UFO story. In July 1988, Tass reported, a shining globe landed and disintegrated in eastern Siberia, leaving metal fragments behind. On April 15, 1989, a Moscow photographer allegedly shot a fleet of glowing objects. One expert called the objects "living, intelligent matter" and said they could dodge planes. And on June 6, four children in the Vologda region supposedly saw hovering globes, one of which disgorged a humanoid without a head. The Academy of Sciences, the story goes, investigated with a four-man team.

During the past year and a half, under the reduced repression and censorship of *glasnost*, a vigorous UFO culture has blossomed across the USSR. Nowhere is this movement more striking than at the Cosmos Pavilion, a

gargantuan, dusty old building full of depressing relics from the dawn of Soviet spaceflight. The building's main rotunda has been closed for years because the roof is collapsing and has never been repaired. Walk through a side door in the pavilion's central hall, however, and you'll see a brighter milieu. With its clean walls, cheery illumination, and colorful models, the exhibit on psychic powers and aliens attracts throngs of visitors. After all, they find the message upbeat: There is more to Soviet reality than this dilapidated old building and the grim world right outside.

Many of the alien enthusiasts, in fact, have joined official and unofficial UFO groups from Moscow to Leningrad to Tomsk—all across the USSR. What's more, real space travelers have joined the throng. Veteran cosmonaut Yevgeniy Khrunov attended a UFO roundtable in Leningrad. Pavel Popovich is deputy head of a UFO commission with the Academy of Sciences. Even the world's first man in space, Yuri Gagarin, has been posthumously enlisted. According to one recent newspaper article, his colleagues recalled how fascinated he had been by UFOs prior to his 1968 death.

This enthusiasm has not been lost on Soviet editors. Most of the Soviet news media, compelled by *perestroika* to attract readers rather than harangue them, have discovered what Western tabloids knew all along: Flying saucers and bizarre-looking aliens from space sell newspapers. —JAMES OBERG