

the gentleman assures us is "the world's largest truck sale," though he throws that claim off with no documentation from the Guinness Book or any other source. Another will be an announcement of what is supposed to be some momentous event involving funny cars at a place called Raceway Park. Well, I guess my station tries to

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convince me that the events at the opera are spectacular also, but they do it quietly. On Evelyn's station most of the announcers sound like they have just had 37 cups of black coffee or the equivalent in street drugs. These announcers must live by themselves or are married to women who are hard of hearing. The same guy does ads for Crazy Eddie on her station and on mine, but on my station his style is quiet and mellow. He is much less laid back on her station. Now Evelyn claims she doesn't pick her station for the commercials. That doesn't cut it with me. First of all, the ads are reason enough for me to want to be out of the room when her station comes on. There is little the station could play for music to justify having to hear the ads. Secondly, if a station plays those ads, what must they think of their audience? Let me put it this way: You may think that your weekly news magazine may be best suited to your news-reading needs, but you ought to have second thoughts if it comes with a picture to color.

2. And now, hot off the AP wire:

FN- AP NEWS File 258

AU- IMS, JOHN ; Associated Press Writer

SH- International news

DE- Soviet-UFO

PD- <Original> 891009

PD- <Translated> October 09, 1989

GL- MOSCOW (AP)

TM- 0758PDT

PR- Urgent

TI- The official Tass news agency said today that scientists have confirmed the landing of an alien spaceship carrying giant people with tiny heads.

TX- The report was the latest strange tale in the official Soviet media, which under the policy of glasnost, or "openness," have

recently told of other sightings of unidentified flying objects and alien creatures. "Scientists have confirmed that an unidentified flying object recently landed in a park in the Russian city of Voronezh," Tass said in a dispatch from the city, 300 miles southeast of Moscow. "They have also identified the landing site and found traces of aliens who made a short promenade about the park." Tass said Voronezh residents saw a large shining ball or disk hovering over the park. They reported that the UFO landed and up to three creatures similar to humans emerged, accompanied by a small robot, Tass said.

"The aliens were three or even four meters (9 to 12 feet) tall, but with very small heads," the news agency quoted witnesses as saying. "They walked near the ball or disc and then disappeared inside." The report was similar to a story last summer in the daily newspaper Socialist Industry, which told of a purported "close encounter" between a milkmaid and an alien in Central Russia's Perm

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region.

In that report, Lyubov Medvedev was quoted as saying she encountered an alien creature "resembling a man, but taller than average with short legs." The creature, she said, had "only a small knob instead of a head." The Tass report, which did not give the date of the purported landing in Voronezh, said onlookers were "overwhelmed with a fear that lasted for several days."

Genrikh Silanov, head of the Voronezh Geophysical Laboratory, told Tass that scientists investigating the UFO report found a 20-yard depression with four deep dents as well as two pieces of unidentified rocks. "At first glance, they looked like sandstone of a deep-red color. However, mineralogical analysis has shown that the substance cannot be found on Earth," Tass quoted Silanov as saying. "However, additional tests are needed to reach a more definite conclusion." Silanov said the landing site and path taken by the aliens were confirmed using the "biolocation" method of tracking, but Tass didn't explain what that was.

Further confirmation came from witnesses, who were not told of the experiments and whose accounts matched precisely the scientific

findings, Tass said. The Tass report said residents also reported recent sightings of a "banana-shaped" object in the sky. In July, Tass disputed a report in Socialist Industry quoting a UFO specialist, A. Kuzovkin, as saying a 26-foot-wide patch of burned ground near southern Moscow was probably caused by the landing of a UFO.

Tass said firefighters believe a haystack simply caught fire and scorched the ground. [-end of AP story]

3. "Da! Da! Inquiring mind want to know! Haz de Union of Soviet Socialist Republics bean invaded? And vhere is Prince Alexander Nevsky now that ve r_e_a_l_l_y need him?" No, the news article in the previous item is not my invention. As far as I have been able to ascertain Tass really did publish the story. I guess in the spirit of restructuring, Tass has gone from stories about successful five-year plans for barley production to grocery-line journalism. But I wonder if you notice that there is a subtle propaganda twist on the above, perhaps as strong as in the five-year-plan articles. How so? When I was small the flying saucers always came to Washington D.C. Think about T_h_e_D_a_y_t_h_e_E_a_r_t_h_S_t_o_o_d_S_t_i_l_l and E_a_r_t_h_v_s._t_h_e_F_l_y_i_n_g_S_a_u_c_e_r_s. If there were enough saucers to go other places too, the main force would go to Washington. Then in the early 1960s I saw B_a_t_t_l_e_i_n_O_u_t_e_r_S_p_a_c_e, a Japanese science fiction film in which there is a mass invasion of Earth by alien craft, but the mothership goes to Tokyo. At the time I thought that was a very funny piece of Japanese egotism. Why would the mothership go to Tokyo? Today, unfortunately, it makes a lot more sense and is not nearly as funny. Tokyo seems like a much more

logical destination than it did in the early Sixties. A friend who just returned from Japan tells me even in the very smallest towns bookstores are carrying technical books about super-conductivity. Let's face it--we'd all like to be the country that would attract aliens for reasons that have nothing to do with aliens. So is it really surprising that Tass just wants the Soviet Union to win the alien-attracting race with the West and also probably wants to win the grocery-line race with UPI.

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...mtgzx!leeper

A heretic is a man who sees with his own eyes.
-- Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781)

THE SNAKE OIL WARS by Parke Godwin
Doubleday Foundation, 1989, ISBN 0-385-24772-9, \$18.95.
THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT by Victor Koman
Avon, 1989 (1984/1987c), ISBN 0-380-70557-5, \$3.50.
Two book reviews by Evelyn C. Leeper
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Unlike Matthew Harrison Brady, neither Parke Godwin nor Victor Koman can be accused of "looking for God too high up and too far away." To Godwin, God is just an alien student left behind on Earth after a particular rowdy graduation party; to Koman He is part of a collective delusion foisted on us by a theocratic/political conspiracy.

Godwin's S_n_a_k_e_O_i_l_W_a_r_s is the sequel to W_a_i_t_i_n_g_f_o_r_t_h_e_G_a_l_a_c_t_i_c_B_u_s. In that book, two stranded aliens, Barion and Coyul, "uplift" prehistoric primates and then have to block the marriage of Roy Stride, the neo-Nazi product of several million years of evolution, and Charity Stovall. You see, Roy has the megalomania and Charity has the brains; their child could destroy the human race. In S_n_a_k_e_O_i_l_W_a_r_s, Coyul (a.k.a. "the devil") is trying to bring humanity's emotional level up to their intellectual level, Barion (a.k.a. "God") having been shipped off to solitary confinement for his unauthorized actions. The lack of subtlety Godwin displayed toward television evangelists and fundamentalism (of any religion) in the first book is even more evident in this one, in part because much of this book is a trial between Coyul and Lance Candor, who attempted to assassinate Coyul (a fairly meaningless act in the afterlife, where people can reconstruct themselves, but so it goes). Coyul decides to sue Lance for mistaken identity, invasion of privacy, etc. Of course, the trial has very little to do with all this; it is rather a trial of religion. In this regard it reminded me of I_n_h_e_r_i_t_t_h_e_W_i_n_d: note that my quote from the beginning is from this, and in fact Godwin has Coyul go to Clarence Darrow for advice.

Godwin does a variety of tricks (only gradually letting the reader know who the two pseudonymous lawyers are, and having Coyul's lawyer call Jesus to the stand), but the trial setting, with its lawyers' speeches and semi-Socratic dialogue, make this much more of a set piece than W_a_i_t_i_n_g_f_o_r_t_h_e_G_a_l_a_c_t_i_c_B_u_s. (I_n_h_e_r_i_t_t_h_e_W_i_n_d was based on a real trial; this is not.) Though for the most part I think Godwin tries to be even-handed with the fundamentalists, all the idiots and hypocrites do seem to be on that side. In fact, in general the characters are two-dimensional (better than one-, but not quite three-) and the plot almost non-existent. I give this book a recommendation, since the dialogue and speeches are enjoyable to read as examples of rhetoric, but I can't say that as a novel it holds up.

Where Godwin's book is full of witty repartee, Koman has written a hard-boiled detective novel. Well, Dell Ammo is not so much a detective as a hit man, and it seems that the Reverend Zack wants to take a contract out--on God.

I wish this book had lived up to that very promising premise (a bit of alliteration there). But about halfway through it got bogged down in the concept of God as a mass, shared hallucination projected from a satellite, said hallucination being promoted by a cabal of religious leaders who actually secretly ran the world. It's not clear how this was managed before satellite technology.

The main focus of T_h_e_J_e_h_o_v_a_h_C_o_n_t_r_a_c_t seems to be the dialogue between Ammo and God. Dialogues between man and God, or between man and Satan, are not new in literature. And the ideas expressed here are not new either and in fact verge on the trite ("Why create Man with a certain nature and then punish him for following that nature?"). For example, much of the dialogue (including the preceding question) in this exchange is similar to that found in A. J. Langguth's J_e_s_u_s_C_h_r_i_s_t_s, which was published twenty years ago.

While Koman's solution to all this (the Goddess, rather than the God) may appeal to some readers, others may find it a bit too simplistic and sexist. Certainly I am not entirely convinced that all the world's troubles can be blamed on the fact that we worship a male entity instead of a female one. It seems to me we had wars and conflict back when the female deities were the major ones also.

Koman also throws in a few irritating asides. For example, at one point Ammo is offered aspartame for his coffee and is surprised, because "aspartame had been banned shortly after the discovery that its use resulted in increased intelligence." Now perhaps I'm being inconsistent in accepting the idea of a contract on God, and then claiming t_h_i_s is unrealistic, but that's the way it goes. Koman also refers to "Judeo-Christianity" as a religion, another annoyance (at least to me). Later in the book, he has Ammo flipping (broadcast) channels on the television and finding programs on both channel 3 and channel 4. It doesn't work that way; adjacent channels are not assigned in the same area. (Well, with a really good antenna one can pick up both New York's channel 4 and Philadelphia's channel 3 if one is located half-way between them, but

Ammo is in a major city where this would not be the case.) That's why
you can have the channels 3/4 switch on a VCR to select an _ u _ n _ u _ s _ e _ d
channel to use.