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by Jack Finney

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MARXISTS ON MARS

A RECENT issue of the *Spectator* contained an article by Maurice Goldsmith on 'Soviet SF' which many members may have missed.

Mr Goldsmith commences his article with a short history of the form, which he divides into SF (Science Fiction proper, which, he argues, must be scientifically accurate and be concerned with 'the effects on society of the introduction of new science') and SiF (Science-in-Fiction, 'sex in space-suits, bug-eyed monsters . . . interplanetary wars with atomic blasters'). Early Soviet Science Fiction, he says, was poor SiF, but in 1929 SiF gave way to SF. He goes on:

'A most successful and most prolific writer was Alexander Belyayev, sometimes described as the founder of Soviet SF. In his *The Leap Into Nothing* he used the space-flight theories of Tsiolkovski—one of the pioneers of astronautics—to describe the flight of a rocket-driven missile into space. The facts about the Galaxy and the theory of rocket propulsion were so authentic that Tsiolkovski himself contributed an introduction.

'The plot is strictly Party line. Alarmed by fears that the Red Flag will soon be flying in triumph all over the world, a group of millionaire capitalists attempt to escape to Mars. Unfortunately for them, the mechanics on the ship are young German Bolsheviks. *En route* to Mars, the ship stops at Venus. The mechanics learn there that a World