

Look to Mars for the truth on global warming

The Deniers -- Part IX

Lawrence Solomon, Financial Post

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Climate change is a much, much bigger issue than the public, politicians, and even the most alarmed environmentalists realize. Global warming extends to Mars, where the polar ice cap is shrinking, where deep gullies in the landscape are now laid bare, and where the climate is the warmest it has been in decades or centuries.

"One explanation could be that Mars is just coming out of an ice age," NASA scientist William Feldman speculated after the agency's Mars Odyssey completed its first Martian year of data collection. "In some low-latitude areas, the ice has already dissipated." With each passing year more and more evidence arises of the dramatic changes occurring on the only planet on the solar system, apart from Earth, to give up its climate secrets.

NASA's findings in space come as no surprise to Dr. Habibullo Abdussamatov at Saint Petersburg's Pulkovo Astronomical Observatory. Pulkovo -- at the pinnacle of Russia's space-oriented scientific establishment -- is one of the world's best equipped observatories and has been since its founding in 1839. Heading Pulkovo's space research laboratory is Dr. Abdussamatov, one of the world's chief critics of the theory that man-made carbon dioxide emissions create a greenhouse effect, leading to global warming.

"Mars has global warming, but without a greenhouse and without the participation of Martians," he told me. "These parallel global warmings -- observed simultaneously on Mars and on Earth -- can only be a straightline consequence of the effect of the one same factor: a long-time change in solar irradiance."

The sun's increased irradiance over the last century, not CO2 emissions, is responsible for the global warming we're seeing, says the celebrated scientist, and this solar irradiance also explains the great volume of CO2 emissions.

"It is no secret that increased solar irradiance warms Earth's oceans, which then triggers the emission of large amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. So the common view that man's industrial activity is a deciding factor in global warming has emerged from a misinterpretation of cause and effect relations."

Dr. Abdussamatov goes further, debunking the very notion of a greenhouse effect. "Ascribing 'greenhouse' effect properties to the Earth's atmosphere is not scientifically substantiated," he maintains. "Heated greenhouse gases, which become lighter as a result of expansion, ascend to the atmosphere only to give the absorbed heat away."

The real news from Saint Petersburg -- demonstrated by cooling that is occurring on the upper layers of the world's oceans -- is that Earth has hit its temperature ceiling. Solar irradiance has begun to fall, ushering in a protracted cooling period beginning in 2012 to 2015. The depth of the decline in solar irradiance reaching Earth will occur around 2040, and "will inevitably lead to a deep freeze around 2055-60" lasting some 50 years, after which temperatures will go up again.

Because of the scientific significance of this period of global cooling that we're about to enter, the Russian and Ukrainian space agencies, under Dr. Abdussamatov's leadership, have launched a joint project to determine the time and extent of the global cooling at mid-century. The project, dubbed Astrometry and given priority space-experiment status on the Russian portion of the International Space Station, will marshal the resources of spacecraft manufacturer Energia, several Russian research and production centers, and the main observatory of Ukraine's Academy of Sciences. By late next year, scientific equipment will have been installed in a space-station module and by early 2009, Dr. Abdussamatov's space team will be conducting a regular survey of the sun.

With the data, the project will help mankind cope with a century of falling temperatures, during which we will enter a mini ice age.

"There is no need for the Kyoto Protocol now. It does not have to come into force until at least 100 years from now," Dr. Abdussamatov concluded. "A global freeze will come about regardless of whether or not industrialized countries put a cap on their greenhouse-gas emissions."

Lawrence Solomon@nextcity.com

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- Lawrence Solomon is executive director of Urban Renaissance Institute and Consumer Policy Institute, divisions of Energy Probe Research Foundation. www.Urban-Renaissance.org

CV OF A DENIER:

Habibullo Abdussamatov, born in Samarkand in Uzbekistan in 1940, graduated from Samarkand University in 1962 as a physicist and a mathematician. He earned his doctorate at Pulkovo Observatory and the University of Leningrad.

He is the head of the space research laboratory of the Russian Academies of Sciences' Pulkovo Observatory and of the International Space Station's Astrometry project, a long-term joint scientific research project of the Russian and Ukrainian space agencies.

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