

Assignment: America

The Great Saucer Mystery

By Kenneth L. Dixon

WASHINGTON, July 9—(INS)—Just how long it will last is anybody's guess, but right now the number one subject of conversation in the nation's capital is the ubiquitous "flying saucer" which seems to have cropped up everywhere in the country.

And, while there are as many opinions as there are conversations, it is pretty generally conceded that the mysterious now-you-see-them-now-you-don't missiles are direct descendants of the atomic bomb—either physically or psychologically.

And there is the point where the two schools of thought part company. . .

Out on Capitol Hill, there's a lot of muttering in congressional boards these days, for a surprising number of the solons are (quite anonymously, of course, until they know something) taking the mystery with deadpanned seriousness.

They believe there definitely is something to the spreading stories, and that the flying saucer is some sort of new secret weapon. Some believe that our Army, Navy or scientific experts know all about

the mystery—and simply aren't letting Congress in on the secret yet. That's what hurts!

Others think it's some sort of Russian secret weapon and, needless to say, that hurts much worse!

The official Army and Navy attitude, of course, is quite definitely negative on the subject. And it may well be that in the upper echelons of military brass the boys are quite sure that they know nothing whatever about the spinning platters in the sky.

But the average Army or Navy officer you talk to is in the same boat as the average civilian. He doesn't know. At first, he smart-cracks about the mystery and gives out with the hearty laugh. Then, when sure that no one will start kidding him, he begins to discuss the subject quite seriously.

The scientific response about town is as uniform as the official military attitude. Atomic experts and leading physicists say that the saucers certainly aren't an American secret weapon—as far as they know, and they think they'd know if they were.

Dr. Vannevar Bush, president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, who was in charge of all the nation's wartime scientific developments, says the saucers simply don't fit into any current scientific experiments. Therefore, he doesn't take them seriously and thinks they must be illusions.

Ditto Dr. Merle Tuve, director of the Carnegie Institution's department of terrestrial magnetism—the guy who had a lot to do with the development of America's jet plane.

If any such scientific didos were going on, Dr. Tuve is quite sure he'd know something about it. . .

"But," says the wee, small voice of the non-scientific citizenry, "how do we know he'd tell us if he did know?"

Which is where the saucers become at least the psychological offspring of the atomic bomb.

Leading psychologists tell you that one of the greatest shocks ever handed the American people was the sudden realization that the terrifying atomic bomb was developed in almost perfect secrecy right here in our midst.

"Long after Hiroshima and Nagasaki—long after the war was over, in fact," one psychologist said recently in a public meeting, "the effectiveness of that secrecy continued to prey on the mass mind."

For that reason, he added, the average skeptical citizen today puts little if any credence in the official denials of Army, Navy and atomic experts, such a frame of mind would make it a cinch for a purely mythical secret weapon to excite and frighten millions of citizens who would feel there was almost no one to whom they could turn for the truth. . . .

And in the midst of all the capital chatter and confusion on the subject, the jokesters still hold forth.

"This," said one in mock dismay, is what we get for bouncing those light rays off the moon. We made somebody mad up there and now they're throwing things back at us!"

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