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Calling Washington

By Marquis Childs

"Russian Hail"

STOCKHOLM — The most extraordinary phenomenon of post-war Europe is the reports of flying bombs or rockets that are now beginning to come from widely separated areas. If they are real, then we have a small sample of what the next conflict will be like. If they are mere illusion, then we have an example of the uneasy state of mind of the people who live on this troubled Continent.

The rockets were first reported in numbers from Sweden, where you would assume that the cautious and even-tempered population, untouched by the direct tragedy of war, would not be subject to random nightmares. Next were vague reports of fire bombs over Athens at the time of the visit of the aircraft carrier Franklin D. Roosevelt. More recently, rockets have been reported over Italian cities and the Italian government has ordered an investigation.

I have talked to many people here about the flying bombs. Some put the whole thing down to post-war hysteria. Others take a serious view of what they call, half in jest, "Russian hail."

One thoroughly reliable American observer with whom I talked saw a flying bomb in broad daylight over this city. It was a cigar-shaped object which streaked across the sky with great speed and seemed on the point of shooting earthward. Careful Swedish observers have seen what they believed to be rockets.

Official opinion is that nothing is really known about the phenomenon, which has now more or less subsided. Recently, at any rate, very few reports of bombs have been received. If the government has found any fragments, that fact is being kept a careful secret.



THE SOUNDEST opinion seems to me to be this: The Russians on the island of Peenemunde, off the German coast in the Baltic, are probably experimenting with televised rockets. They must send them over a fairly long distance in order to make an adequate test.

It could be embarrassing to shoot them into British or American zones. Sweden has large forest areas with sparse population. This is therefore a good tar-