

"FLYING saucers" are back in the news.

From New York comes a report that Captain Jack Adams, pilot of the Chicago and Southern Airlines, radioed that he and a co-pilot had crossed the path of a large flying saucer, with lighted windows and a peculiarly coloured blinking light on top and travelling at about 600 m.p.h. over Arkansas.

This was followed by a news cable from Lisbon: Scores of flying saucers reported by coastguards of the North Portugal coast flying in line and other formations and moving west "faster than tracer bullets."

So the 1950 "saucer season" seems to have opened early.

First report of these strange craft came on June 25, 1947, when a Mr. Dahl of Tacoma, Washington, noticed a circular flying machine, like a silver doughnut, cutting capers over his back-yard.

Presently he saw five more "planes" rotating round a seventh.

Speculations

The centre craft then began to shed metallic rain. Most of it fell seawards, but one piece landed in Mr. Dahl's yard.

On July 4, the first photograph of a "flying saucer" was taken by a Seattle coast-guard. The snap revealed a small white oblong, set against a dark grey background.

The U.S. Navy said that the descriptions fitted its new wingless plane—the "Flying Pancake"—but there was only one of these, and it had never ventured outside Connecticut.

A meteorologist suggested that solar reflections on low cloud would produce similar effects, and a Los Angeles scientist talked about "transmutation of atomic energy."

A letter to a San Francisco newspaper hinted at an inter-planetary solution.

The San Francisco correspondent was soon to find his idea carried a stage further.

Mr. Mead Layne, publisher of an occult magazine, pro-

duced an article in which he claimed to have received a message, via a medium, that there were people aboard the "saucers."

They came from another planet, and wished to try living on earth.

In Britain "saucers" were reported over Brighton beach, and another was seen by a clergyman's wife at Sandwich.

Back in America President Truman compared the rumours to the scare of over a hundred years ago, when word got around that there were men and bats living on the moon.

The neatest "flying saucer" quipping came from Mr. Gromyko at U.N. headquarters.

"Some," he said, "attribute them to the British for exporting too much whisky to the U.S., others that it is a Russian discus thrower training for the Olympic Games who does not know his own strength."

The first flying saucer fever died down under sheer weight of explanation, but reports still came in.

Spain suspected

In May, 1948, a U.S. Air Force intelligence officer opined that the "discs" were the work of ex-Nazi scientists in Spain.

During Franco's 1938 siege of Madrid his German allies had tried out a circular missile, with an explosive centre and four engines around the circumference.

The experiment had failed, but in 1944 the Germans had repeated it, using jet engines.

It was believed that the scientists responsible had escaped from the Russian zone, through France, and were now working for the Spanish Government.

In December, 1949, the official body which had been established in America to probe the "saucers" was disbanded. It had been in operation for two years, and had investigated 375 incidents.

It said that the phenomenon was caused by: (a) misinterpretation of various conventional objects; (b) a mild form of mass hysteria; (c) hoaxes.

And there, one might have imagined, the story would have ended. But the "flying saucers" refused to be grounded.

Fellow travellers?

The present phase of flying saucerisms reached its climax on March 9, when a U.S. business man, travelling in Mexico, claimed to have seen a streamlined "disc" in which a 23in. tall pilot had perished.

A Mexican denial immediately followed publication of the story, but not before Denver, Colorado, had reported that a similar "saucer" had come to grief near by and three little men had been discovered inside it.

The Defence Department of the U.S., repeating its denial of "flying saucers," said: "If these saucers start landing, and little men with radar sticking out of their ears climb out, we shall have to do something about it."

"Flying saucers" have now been seen in pretty well every country of the world. They have been chased by jet planes, and observed by scientists and have baffled all attempts to explain them away.

Are they sheer fantasy, or is there a grain of truth in the accounts? Your guess is as good as mine.