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BOMBS OVER SWEDEN

Sweden, Scandinavia's historic neutral, has long avoided war and the appurtenances of war. It is part of the irony of modern history that that country should now find itself in the disagreeable, foreign-elected position of providing a national laboratory for a vast war experiment. For rather more than a month the Swedish air has been filled with increasing quantities of rocket bombs. Characteristically, the missiles, various in type, possess long luminous tails similar to meteors.

So evident is the likeness, indeed, that originally it was officially—and even popularly—supposed that the phenomena were nothing more or less than a remarkable excess of meteors. However the projectiles have increased in number from 100 daily to as many as 200 a day; and last Sunday night what was described as a "swarm" of the robot bombs passed over Stockholm itself.

Ominous as the manifestations are, it appears from scientific examination that the projectiles are in themselves harmless and non-explosive. Nor, fortunately, have the fears of possible damage if the missiles were to land in a densely populated area materialized. Nonetheless they are not pleasing phenomena, and despite the reported calm of the Swedish public, it is probable that some alarm has been occasioned.

Some dismay at the phenomenon is readily understandable, altogether apart from any inherent danger. Officials have been entirely correct, consistently refusing to speculate on the possible source of the rockets. However the general direction which they take—southeast to northwest—indicates an origin along the Russian-controlled Baltic coast of Germany, within the former Baltic States or even from the U.S.S.R. itself.

The Swedes are determined not to imagine that the spate of bombs indicates military preparations against their country. At the same time the psychological effect of the "mysterious" bombing has been considerable and has opened unexpected wells of speculation. Unofficial opinion appears to be pessimistic, believing that the robots are merely unusual preliminaries to political demands from a neighboring state. The optimists, however, are certain that there is some normal explanation, even though none has been given for the month of silent bombing that has made of Sweden one vast experimental target for an unknown bomber.

All Sweden and all civilization will hope—even against hope—that the bombs are indeed accidents; that they are not the military prelude to a new machiavellian diplomatic policy in Northern Europe.