

FOO FIGHTER

If it was not a hoax or an optical illusion, it was certainly the most puzzling secret weapons that Allied fighters have yet encountered. Recently, night fighter pilots based in France told a strange story of balls of fire which for more than a month had been following their planes at night over Germany. No one seemed to know what, if anything, the fireballs were supposed to accomplish. Pilots, guessing that it was a new psychological weapon, named it the "foo-fighter."

Their descriptions of the apparition varied, but they agreed that the mysterious flares stuck close to their planes and appeared to follow them at high speed for miles. One pilot said that a foo-fighter, appearing as red balls off his wing, stuck with him until he dived at 360 miles an hour; then the balls zoomed into the sky.

Sceptical scientists, baffled by the whole affair, were inclined to dismiss the fireballs as an illusion, perhaps an after-image of light which remained

after-image of light which remained in the pilots' eyes after they had been dazzled by flak bursts. But front-line correspondents and arm-chair experts had a field day. They solemnly guessed— (1) that the balls of fire were radio-controlled (an obvious absurdity, since they could not be synchronized with a plane's movements by remote control; (2) that they were created by "electrical induction of some sort," (2) that they were attracted to a plane by magnetism. The correspondents guessed that foo-fighters were intended—(1) to dazzle pilots; (2) to serve as aiming points for anti-aircraft gunners; (3) to interfere with a plane's radar; (4) to cut a plane's ignition, thus stop its engine in mid air.

Some scientists suggested another possibility: that the fireballs were nothing more than St. Elmo's Fire, a reddish, brush-like discharge of atmospheric electricity which has often been seen near the tips of church steeples, ships' masts and yardarms.

On boarding the train, the bride and groom tipped the porter generously to keep their newly-wedded

ously to keep their newly-wedded state a secret. The pair then retired to their sleeper. Next morning, conscious of the knowing glances cast his way, the angry groom called the porter to account.

“Goodness, mister,” he replied, “I dn’t tell anybody. Some people ask-me if you two was married and I ys no, they’re just good friends.”