

SYNOPSIS

Uninhibited Flying Objects is a spoof on conspiracy theories by creating a world that demonstrates their improbability, difficulty in executing, and the near-impossibility of covering them up. To bring about this world I make only minimal changes in postwar history, adhering to its “plot” as closely as possible. I start with a little known fact: American pilots and aircrews on long-range bombing missions over Germany late in World War II observed UFOs. Called “Foo Fighters” because they disappeared when chased, they became a matter of concern to the Air Force in the postwar era. In the novel, consultants misinterpret data and unwittingly convince the CIA that flying saucers are real. As better technology comes on line, the consultants discover their error, but keep mum about it for fear of losing future contracts.

President Eisenhower and CIA director Allen Dulles are accordingly more worried about aliens than they are about the Russians. For them, the Cold War is a convenient cover for getting Congressional appropriations for military research and development, undertaken in the hopes of catching up with alien technology. To Dulles’ horror, newly elected President Kennedy proposes to ask Khrushchev at their 1962 Vienna summit. In Vienna, the two leaders argue and threaten one another in a meeting room they know is bugged, They pass handwritten notes back-and-forth via their translators in which they agree to manage the Cold War between them and cooperate in confronting whatever threat aliens might pose.

Kennedy and Khrushchev stage and manage the Berlin crisis with the help of a few officials on both sides who are in on their plan. Their goal is to look good in the eyes of important constituencies without raising the risk of war. Like many conspiracy theories, this one appears to offer a more rational explanation of what actually happened in Berlin. Khrushchev’s opponents find out about his collaboration with Kennedy and stage a coup against him two years before he was in fact removed from power. The CIA and military are furious with Kennedy for collaborating with Khrushchev and for refusing to consider intervention in Vietnam and attempt to assassinate him. Their first three attempts fail – as did in the real world their six plots to kill Castro. The CIA are shocked when the

President is shot by Lee Harvey Oswald, an unknown, lone wolf. They invent and spread conspiracy theories to direct attention to themselves in the mistaken belief that nobody would believe such far-fetched tales.

There are indeed aliens in my story. They are rather endearing insect- and marsupial-like postgraduate students from another star system observing Earth since the late 1930s from a cloaked spacecraft. They have come to study a civilization at the cusp of a great leap forward or extinction due to war and environmental disaster. They have followed all the mandated protocols to keep themselves from being observed and have made no contact with humans. They are baffled by numerous reported UFO sightings and struggle to understand why people see things that are not there and why others believe them. Chungma, the insect-like graduate student, monitors an American family for more than a decade, becomes emotionally involved with them, develops an interest in sports, and ends up “going native.” Developments on Earth and on his home planet encourage him to “jump ship” and seek a new life as humanoid baseball player.

Kennedy and Khrushchev aside, my key characters are an American engineer and his partner, later wife, who is a journalist for the *Boston Globe*. They interact with the White House and, indirectly, with the aliens, in amusing ways that drive the plot forward in unanticipated ways to its amusing but significant denouement.