

Oppenheimer, R.

THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

May 19, 1950

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

Thank you for your good note of May 16th. You sent me a letter to you from Mr. Schultz and some mimeographed material from the Borderland Sciences Research Associates; and you asked me what I knew about it. The only honest answer is that I know nothing whatever. Neither the Borderland Associates, nor the men who comprise it are known to me, even by reputation.

The papers all deal with an attempted explanation of the "flying disks"; and they all start with the assurance that there were such things. This, of course, I do not believe. Some very solemn attempts were made to see whether there were any physical happenings corresponding to the many reports of flying disks. It has been reported in the press that the Air Forces made such an investigation. There is not any credible evidence; and certainly the kind of explanation proposed by the Borderland Associates does not lead one to believe in the phenomenon they are trying to explain.

There is perhaps one thing one can learn. It is not just that men, and even their accounts of what they see and experience, are fallible and subject to error; it is that arriving at the truth can often be a more difficult and troublesome thing than we like to think. During the war, very shortly before the test of the first atomic bomb, people at Los Alamos were naturally in a state of some tension. I remember one morning when almost the whole project was out of doors staring at a bright object in the sky, through glasses, binoculars and whatever else they could find; and nearby Kirtland Field reported to us that they had no interceptors which had enabled them to come within range of the object. Our director of personnel was an astronomer and a man of some human wisdom; and he finally came to my office and asked whether we would stop trying to shoot down Venus. I tell this story only to indicate that even a group of scientists is not proof against the errors of suggestion and hysteria.

With every warm good wish,

Robert Oppenheimer
Robert Oppenheimer

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt
The Park Sheraton Hotel
202, 56th St.
New York 19, N. Y.

Dear D. Oppenheimer

Thank you very much
for your letter. I was highly
amused by your story about
shooting down Venus!

Incidentally the son of a
friend of mine, Francis
Low has a fellowship at
Princeton & is extremely
happy to be working under
your direction.

With every good wish
I am