**Dr. Wernher von Braun**, the superstar of the modern space age!

Fig. 1. Wernher von Braun, German and American designer of space technology. In fact, during WW-II he was the director of the V-1 and V-2 (A-4) rocket project at Peenemunde Proving Grounds on the Baltic Sea for the Wehrmacht, which were lobbed on London, killing some 10,000 civilians, maiming another 30,000 people in and around the British capital. His American keepers just forgot to deliver him to the Nuremberg Trials, the brain-drain replete; the American Goth remaining the Grand Assimilator he was by origin, or trait gained along the Eurasian Diaspora trek riding on the Mongolian pony all the way from the Flatlands of the Ganges to the slippery banks of the Five Gothic rivers in the West: Rhine, Seine, Themes, Hudson and Potomac.

At the very end of the war, von Braun, just like my acquaintance, Ger. Rhinehard Ghelen (the DNB chief), packed 11 trucks of Peenemunde rocket base records, running like bat out of hell in front of encroaching Russian troops turning himself in to the Americans… He became the Superstar of American rocketry, heading the Redstone project at Huntsville, Alabama, designing the Redstone, Saturn-1, and Saturn-5 boosters… Of course, he was amnestied by US Army senior staff, the killer he was, and never appeared at the Nuremberg Trials in 1946, despite the fact that he was the head of German Rocket Forces. However, in an interview years later, the dean of American journalism, Drew Pearson, asked him once in a private conversation at White Sands Proving Ground in New Mexico:

"How about you conscience, Dr. von Braun? As director of the Peenemunde Project, your birds killed one helluva lot of Londoners. How do you feel about it now as director down there in Huntsville?" He was so shocked, that he had started stuttering in his heavy German accent:

"Aaahhh!... But, why do you ask that now? I am a scientist not a killer!?”
"Yes, of course, you are... But all those dead Londoners who died from the pomegranates you dropped from the sky?" Pearson tried it again; he had no hair on his tongue, as the continentals here would say.

"But that was wartime..." Von Braun replied.

"Yes, it was... I know, yet you started building the rocket in 1937, precisely for its 'killing' effect, knowing perfectly well it would kill all those Londoners?"

"I was not a soldier, I was a civilian... We worked under Hitler's orders, just like I'm working here in America under orders."

"But you can resign... You could have resigned at Peenemunde!"

"No, I could not... I would have been shot," his final comment. Of course, he failed to explain to the journalist and the American public that it was his idea, and initiative, and accolades he received from the Fuehrer for proposing and heading the Peenemunde Proving Grounds!

The difference between Sergei Korolev and the 'killer' von Braun was very simple: one of morality. Consciously, the Russian rocket scientist moved away very early on in his career as head of the missile program from the killer SS military versions of ICBMs to space vehicles, developing those more humane systems for space-faring purposes... Hence, the question remains open: whether he died from a conscious scalpel during an operation in January 1966? Though the recognition he enjoyed while still alive was under communism but nowhere as much he has been applauded in these democratic times of Russia (read the tribute I offer in the next and final chapter 32). He spent years in the Gulag, while Dr. von Braun enjoyed fame Stateside?!

![Fig. 2. Uniformed Korolev was appointed by the Ministry of Weaponry, as the Chief Designer of missiles, August 9, 1946.](image)

Of course, Korolev was uniformed, when he was amnestied in 1945, immediately departing for Peenemunde and other points in Red Army occupied East Germany to dismantle and ship the rocket systems manufacturing know-how and launch facilities for reconstruction at Kapustin Yar. He also knew in person some of von Braun's colleagues and coworkers and hunted for them all over the prison camps and hiding places to bring them to Russia. Every time he could manage it those individuals were brought over as civilians, even if they had military ranks, for humane reasons first out of productivity...
second: a free man on a typical payroll, enjoying civil rights of an expert, would be much more productive, instead of laboring as a POW. On the other hand, there were many scientists who were POWs, captured by the advancing Red Army units, and they were treated differently, sequestered in tents and Quonset huts, while the civilian status German personnel enjoyed full rights, even though secrecy was strict, the Kapustin Yar location being so exposed to American surveillance from Turkey, agent infiltration precautions, etc.

The overriding problem for our American intelligence in the early postwar years in gaining technical intelligence, crucial to assessment of the already avowed adversary's capabilities—hence, adversely affecting our interests in the region and a real danger in the long run to our national security—the closed Soviet society and the extensive controls imposed on movement and access, because clandestine operations launched from the outside were quickly foiled, the agents summarily executed by the army units protecting such top secret facilities as the Kapustin Yar testing range. For example, by 1949 the nuclear issue was paramount on the minds of our policy-makers, when the Russians detonated their first A-bomb. Therefore, it had become a number one priority to penetrate the missile proving grounds to access the capability and nature of the delivery systems. The Pentagon knew very well that it was only a matter of time before the A-4 (V-2) from Peenemunde would extend its range of 300 km to 3,000 km and beyond, or so preached Dr. von Braun and his R&D team. The good doctor of virtuosic science knew that he was no match for one Sergei Pavlovich Korolev and his team of rocket forces, based on the prewar association with Soviet scientists and engineers exchanging papers and going to closed-door conferences across the Mason-Dixon Line between the two ‘friendly’ totalitarian regimes, birds of a feather...one black the other red, eh! Especially, after the Brest-Litovsk Non-Aggression agreement signed between the two nations by foreign ministers Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop and Comrade Vyacheslav Molotov in 1938, giving the two rivals an opportunity to divide Poland and the Baltic states, etc.

![Fig. 3. S. P. Korolev (left) and Fig. 4 (right). V.P. Glushko (right), decorated by the postwar Soviet government for their proclivity in ICBM development, on October 23, 1953 were elected as Corresponding Members of the Academy of Sciences of USSR.](image-url)
Fig. 5. Memorial cards, plus a revealing Fuhrer statement... With the fortunes of war slipping fact, Hitler made this apology to Dornberger: "I have had to apologize only to two men in my whole life. The first was Field Marshal von Brauchitsch. I did not listen to him when he told me again and again how important your research was. The second man is yourself. I never believed that your work would be successful."

– Apology to Major-General Dornberger, from Adolf Hitler, July 8, 1944

Fig. 6. In the early morning of July 7, 1943, Dr. Ernst Steinhoff flew Wehrner von Braun and Major-General Dornberger in his Heinkel He-111 to Hitler's Führerhauptquartier "Wolfsschanze" headquarters and the next day Hitler viewed the film of the successful V-2 test launch (narrated by von Braun) and the scale models of the Watten 'bunker' and launching-troop vehicles: Jozef Garliński, Hitler's Last Weapons: The Under-ground War Against the V1 and V2. (New York: Times Books, 1978, p. 73, 74.

Fig. 7. Pres. Kennedy and Dr. Wernher von Braun Sept. 11, 1962. Rare photograph of JFK riding in his open top limo with von Braun during a tour of the Marshall Space Flight Center. He was determined to beat the Russians to the Moon, hence the pressure on the military-industrial complex with personal presence in the field whenever possible to accomplish the mission. From Nov. 1961 to Nov. 22, 1963, when he was assassinated, reports from our Siberian bunker went directly to JFK With the news of his death, I cancelled the reports; the new Prez. LBJ, didn't qualify nor did he relate to the Kishlak, other than requests through official channels.
Fig. 8. Wernher von Braun walking with President Kennedy at Redstone Arsenal May 19, 1963.
Wernher von Braun was one of the most important rocket developers and champions of space exploration from the 1930s to the 1970s. Von Braun's enthusiasm for the possibilities of space travel was kindled early on by reading the fiction of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, and the technical writings of Hermann Oberth. It was Oberth's 1923 classic *Die Rakete zu den Planetenräumen* (By Rocket to Space) that prompted the young von Braun to master the calculus and trigonometry he needed to understand the physics of rocketry.

At age 17, von Braun became involved with the German rocket society, Verein für Raumschiffahrt (VfR), and in November 1932 signed a contract with the Reichswehr to conduct research leading to the development of rockets as military weapons. In this capacity, he worked for Captain (later, Major General) Walter Dornberger – an association that would last for over a decade. In the same year, under an Army grant, von Braun enrolled at the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität from which he graduated two years later with a Ph.D. in physics; his dissertation dealt with the theoretical and practical problems of liquid-propellant rocket engines.

Some of von Braun's colleagues from the VfR days joined him in developing rockets for the German army. By 1935, he and his team, now 80 strong, were regularly firing liquid-fueled engines at Kiummersdorf with great success. Following the move to Peenemünde, von Braun found himself in charge of the A-4/V-2 project. Less than a year after the first successful A-4 launch and following a British bombing raid on Peenemünde, mass production of the V-2 was switched to an underground factory in central at Nordhousen in Central Germany. Von Braun remained at Peenemünde to continue testing.

When, by the beginning of 1945, it became obvious to von Braun that Germany was on the verge of defeat, he began planning for the postwar era. Before the Allied capture of the V-2 rocket complex, von Braun engineered the surrender to the Americans of scores of his top rocket scientists, along with plans and test vehicles. As part of a military plan called Operation Paperclip, he and his rocket team were whisked away from defeated Germany and installed at Fort Bliss, Texas. There they worked on rockets for the US Army, launching them at White Sands Proving Ground.

In 1950 von Braun's team moved to the Redstone Arsenal near Huntsville, Alabama, where it built the Army's Jupiter ballistic missile. In 1960, von Braun's rocket development center transferred from the Army to the newly established NASA and received a mandate to build the giant Saturn rockets. Von Braun was appointed director of the Marshall Space Flight Center and chief architect of the Saturn V. He also became one of the most prominent advocates of space exploration in the United States during the 1950s. In 1970, he was invited to move to Washington, D.C., to head NASA's strategic planning effort but less than two years later, feeling that the US government was no longer sufficiently committed to space exploration, he retired from the agency and joined Fairchild Industries of Germantown, Maryland.
Like many of his fellow German rocket scientists and science-fiction writers of the time, von Braun believed that an orbiting space station was a crucial first step toward manned interplanetary travel. In the March 22, 1952 issue of *Collier's* magazine (see *Collier's* space program), von Braun and other scientists contributed articles describing and advocating construction of an American space station. Illustrated by space artist Chesley Bonestell and others, this issue publicized the wheel- or doughnut-shaped design that became the most popular image of the space station. Later it was memorably depicted as Space Station V in Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).

Nothing illustrated the burgeoning collaboration between space scientists and the creators of science fiction better than the March 22, 1952 issue of *Collier's* magazine, whose cover was graced by this also Bonestell painting of von Braun's three-stage launch vehicle. It became the cover jacket of 1952 hardcover volume illustrating an Earth-to-Orbit flight to the Space Station, a hand-some well-illustrated large format volume which this writer a teenager bought and treasured; it was a collection of essays by various space writers including Dr. Von Braun. Somewhere in one of my libraries Stateside the volume still survives; the German-cum American space ace was hero to the budding space-bugs youth... little did we know those days about Nordhausen killing fields nor about space designer's role in the military space industry of wartime Germany... I remember ravishing the various shorts of the space wheel and imagined what life would be all about in orbit. In those days Star Trek Sci-Fi series was only a gleam in the eye of such people as Gene Roddenberry, whom I came to know personally, and other famous creators of books, TV series and films I would cherish as an adult in the years to come. Nor did I ever dream then that I would chase Russian missile silos bases and launch site all over Siberia and Central Asia. When President Kennedy tried to discuss the subject – the anti-aircraft SAMs and ICBMs, regardless (despite my youthful reading and dreaming of such systems) I was a babe in the woods, and never said a word to JFK in our confab at the Oval Office, i.e. that I was a Sci-Fi buff, etc.
Fig. 12-13. Young Wernher von Braun with his Nazi overlords; kind of incongruous frame, if it's not a fake, though he was within the Nazi officer corps infrastructure, otherwise he would not have been in charge in of R&D of V-2 at Peenemunde, the rocket base on the Baltic Sea, North-East Germany, the Wehrmacht, its Western genetic and racial brethren.
Evidently the US Army recovered such archives, hence these and similar photos of Dr. von Braun with his Nazi overlords are authentic, and why should they not be; he was probably a very enthusiastic Hitler Yungen back in the early 1930s, and later, as he said himself, he was engulfed in the R&D work of the V-2 never giving it much thought where the nation was headed, while he wanted to prove himself. In my own opinion, he failed to tell the truth—to American public at least—that he knew very well what was going on with the labor force and how many civilian victims were slayed by the military rockets he kept producing to the last minute of the war. In fact, it has been said that at Peenemunde it was thought that the devastation and “for whom the bell tolls,” i.e. the dead in the killing fields of the Western enemy were much much larger. Most of all I would blame the good doctor’s Overlords, the American brethren elite, that made a hero of German space ace instead of giving him the boot once his “work well-done” was over, as the Russians did in fact their Helmut Groettrup, whose obvious input in the Russian space program was perhaps just as crucial if not initially much more productive!

Fig. 14. The young Wernher von Braun, who had just joined the German rocket program – 1932.
Dr. Wernher von Braun: from front lines broken arms in WW-II, as a defecting Nazi scientist, to meteoric high-tech fame as blueblood brethren of the American elite.

Fig. 15-17. This bedlam and mayhem and death (left) and below perpetrated on wartime Amsterdam, as well as London, by V-2 direct hits was overlooked (above) vis a vis the accolades expressed for a job well done in US rocketry in Huntsville, Alabama.

...Despite the obvious carnage caused by Dr. Braun's direct contribution to Nazi military science?!
Fig. 18. The V-2 creating death and bedlam on a crowded Antwerp street in the fall of 1944. Since it reached the target at supersonic speeds there was no warning as with the buzzing V-1, hence the population was caught unawares – the death toll very high indeed compared with the V-1.

Fig. 19. *Raketenkonstrukteur* par excellence, here guest on an American nuclear attack submarine… He ran silent, he ran deep within the interstices of a different much more aggressive and perfidious Human Condition; he was the “right stuff” as the Yankee brethren labeled their astronauts, German progeny, in the American space program.
Fig. 20. Von Braun’s major rocket designs, which placed him ahead of his peers in military and space probe vehicles. From left: A11, 1946; A12; Mars project, 1948; Colliers, 1952; Mars, 1956; Super-Jupiter, 1957; Saturn I and Saturn II for Project Horizon, 1958.

Fig. 21-23. V-2 on display at Freeman Field, 1945 Freeman Air Museum. Two V1’s are on either side.

THIS kind of an invention as most virtuosic of the ‘creative acts’ of man was never laid to rest – not to this very day!
If fact, the unmanned vehicle above, beyond its ballistic nuclear missile application, became a genuine spaceship of present day space travel. It was the German know-how which bequeathed this 'creative act' of machine over man to the betterment of the Human Condition, albeit despite it's tumultuous entry in the affairs of man – warfare.
