

# Imagining Outer Space

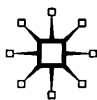
## European Astroculture in the Twentieth Century

Edited by

Alexander C. T. Geppert

*Emmy Noether Research Group Director  
Freie Universität Berlin*

palgrave  
macmillan



Editorial matter, selection and introduction © Alexander C. T. Geppert 2012  
Chapter 6 (by Michael J. Neufeld) © the Smithsonian Institution 2012  
All remaining chapters © their respective authors 2012

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2012 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978–0–230–23172–6

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12

Printed and bound in Great Britain by  
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne



# 6

## ‘Smash the Myth of the Fascist Rocket Baron’: East German Attacks on Wernher von Braun in the 1960s

*Michael J. Neufeld*

Late in 1962, a West Berlin correspondent of Wernher von Braun (1912–1977), the world-famous Director of NASA Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, sent him a series of hostile articles that had just appeared in East Germany. They turned out to be excerpts from the forthcoming book *Geheimnis von Huntsville: Die wahre Karriere des Raketenbarons Wernher von Braun* (Secret of Huntsville: The True Career of Rocket Baron Wernher von Braun).<sup>1</sup> Written by a popular East-German author of non-fiction spy books, Julius Mader (1928–2000), *Geheimnis* heralded a Soviet-bloc attempt to destroy von Braun’s reputation by unmasking the depths of his involvement with the Nazi regime, the SS and its concentration camps. Von Braun had certainly been a tempting target for communist press attacks – the United States’ leading rocket specialist was an ex-Nazi who led the development of one of Hitler’s terror weapons, the V-2 ballistic missile, before changing sides literally overnight at the end of the war. But little effort had been expended in the Warsaw Pact in uncovering and propagating the details of his service to the National Socialist regime. Mader threatened to change all that.<sup>2</sup>

It is well to remember how famous and popular Wernher von Braun was at the time, especially in the United States and West Germany. Already well known in the mid-1950s because of his efforts to sell spaceflight through books, magazine articles and appearances on Walt Disney’s TV program, he became the vindicated prophet of astronautics after the Soviets orbited Sputnik on 4 October 1957. Less than four months later he ascended to the status of national hero in those two countries after his US Army team launched the first American satellite. Several Hollywood studios immediately wanted to make a ‘biopic’ about him; the winner, Columbia Pictures, took over an already existing West German project, leading to the co-produced *I Aim at the Stars*. It premiered in Munich in August 1960, sparking protest over his connections to the Nazis and to nuclear weapons. Ultimately the movie bombed at the box office, at least in the United States, because it was so mediocre. But judging by the ongoing hero-worship in the America and West-German press in the 1960s, not to mention that of less-friendly countries like France, *I Aim* had little lasting impact on his role as an icon of the Cold War Space Race against the Soviet Union (Plate 5).<sup>3</sup>

During the 1950s, von Braun, his associates and the US government had largely neutralized his Nazi problem through a selective use of history and through a conspiracy of silence about his SS officer status and the V-2 program's extensive abuse of concentration camp labor.<sup>4</sup> Those were certainly two things that Mader tried to expose; his book became a big seller throughout the Warsaw Pact. *Geheimnis von Huntsville* went on to spawn a major East German motion picture, which opened in spring 1967 with the otherwise unnamed 'Rocket Baron' (von Braun was in fact a Prussian baron) as one of the central villains. Several months later, a West-German court opened a trial of three SS men from the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp, which supplied the labor to the underground V-2 plant. Although this proceeding was not about von Braun, the East-German co-counsel ultimately succeeded in having him called as a witness, presumably with the primary intent of embarrassing him. That marked the third East German attempt to undermine the rocket engineer.

Yet these attacks ultimately failed to make much of an impression on von Braun's reputation in the West. Major contributing factors appear to be: first, the relatively small resources East Germany invested in this effort compared to campaigns against West-German politicians; second, the primary focus on shaping East-bloc opinion rather than Western attitudes; third, the bitter German division, which built a high wall in the West against East-German propaganda; fourth, fear of lawsuits, which hindered export of the movie to the West, and perhaps also the book; fifth, the US government's successful classification of damaging documents and their unavailability to the East-German secret police; and, sixth, the great value Western governments and the media placed upon von Braun because of his Space Race role. As a result, the Mittelbau-Dora camp and his SS membership remained largely unknown, especially in America, until the US declassification of damaging information about the German rocketeers in 1984. The East-German assault on von Braun thus ironically only reinforced the incompatible discourses about him and the Nazi rocket program on either side of the Cold War divide. Because of his Third Reich past, von Braun remained a contested figure even in the West, but on quite different terms than in the East, where he was vilified as a Nazi war criminal.<sup>5</sup>

## I Julius Mader's attack on von Braun

By the time Mader published his article series in 1962 in the organ of the East German communist youth group, he had become a covert officer in the Ministry of State Security (the Ministerium für Staatssicherheit or MfS), the secret-police and foreign-intelligence agency colloquially known as the 'Stasi.' Thus a key question about Mader's book is whether it was the opening round in an East German state campaign against von Braun. In the sense that everything Mader did was an official action, as he needed approval from his Stasi superiors and all his publishers, who were owned by the state, the ruling party, or its organs, certainly yes. But it may also be possible that Mader as a successful author possessed significant autonomy to choose the subject of his works and that he campaigned without

extensive support. Unfortunately, the Stasi files about Mader, at least those discovered so far, are just too thin to be much help in deciding the degree to which the anti-von Braun initiative was suggested by his superiors and pushed by them beyond supporting the research for his book.<sup>6</sup>

Born in 1928 into a lower middle-class German family in Czechoslovakia, Mader had been a junior Hitler Youth leader. Departing the Sudetenland immediately after the end of the war, together with so many other expellees, he had helped organize an 'antifascist Front' in a Saxon town and had joined the new liberal party in the Soviet occupation zone at age 18. That party was soon forced into a National Front dominated by the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands or SED), as the Communist Party renamed itself in 1946 after it absorbed the Social Democrats in the East. But Mader left the liberals after a year and did not join the SED until 1961. His career track leaves the impression of an opportunist, but he steadily rose as economic administrator, then as a journalist and editor for economic organizations, as well as a trade union leader in the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR) formed in October 1949. By 1960, his activist record and propagandistic publications leave the impression that he had become a true believer.<sup>7</sup>

Mader's connection to the Stasi arose from his research for his 1959 anti-CIA book *Allens Gangster in Aktion* – Allen being Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles (1893–1969). The British intelligence historian Paul Maddrell rates it as part of the Stasi propaganda campaign connected to Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's attempt to pressure the Western Allies out of West Berlin in 1958–59. Mader's cooperation with the Stasi began in 1958 when the ministry heard he was working on the book. The Stasi took him on board as a paid covert collaborator (*inoffizieller Mitarbeiter* or IM) of the Agitation Section as of 1 January 1960, allowing him to quit his editor's job and pose as a freelance journalist. He followed that book with *Die graue Hand* (The Grey Hand) in 1960, an attack on the West German intelligence service as a nest of ex-Nazis (which in fact many of its leaders were). In a late 1961 evaluation of Mader leading to his appointment as an officer, two section chiefs praised him highly for his contributions to 'MfS-organized agitation campaigns – unmasking enemy plans and attempts at provocation, unmasking Bonn Nazis [Bonn was the West German capital], [and] unmasking the activity of enemy secret services.' On 21 April 1962, Mader was sworn in as a captain, with the designation 'officer in special service' (*Offizier im besonderen Einsatz* or OibE) for the Agitation Section. He maintained his independent office and front as a journalist.<sup>8</sup>

The origin of Mader's decision (or that of his superiors) to go after von Braun is unknown, but it seems likely to have been stimulated by *I Aim at the Stars*, which was released in West Germany in a dubbed version, *Wernher von Braun: Ich greife nach den Sternen*, in fall 1960. The first trace of Mader's researches is a letter he wrote to von Braun in Huntsville in July 1961, under the pretext of researching an article on Otto Skorzeny (1908–1975), an infamous SS commando, including his alleged connection to the manned version of the V-1 cruise missile. Von Braun could assert that he had no responsibility for that project and directed him to the

Western biographical and V-2 literature then available in English and German. By the fall, it was clear that Mader was researching him and his family, as von Braun exchanged letters with his father over the Mader missives both had received. Wernher von Braun advised no further correspondence because 'one never knows with these chaps what's behind it all.'<sup>9</sup>

Von Braun finally found out when Mader's articles arrived in Huntsville in late 1962. He described them to his West Berlin correspondent as 'lies, fabrications and grotesque distortions [...] in part skillfully linked to facts.' He had a point. The book (like the excerpts that preceded it) had two openings. First, a preface describing Huntsville, based on West German newspaper articles, which emphasized von Braun's secluded personal life and the protective attitude that the city took toward him. It included false details like rockets launching from the Army and NASA area – an impossibility given the local geography – because Mader had no chance to visit the place, and simply made things up. More egregious was the prologue, a completely invented scene of a summer 1931 meeting with key members of German Army Ordnance at von Braun parents' country house in the Silesian hills of eastern Germany (now Poland). Mader used it to underline the engineer's roots in the reactionary Prussian aristocracy and army officer corps. Out of this meeting allegedly came the then-university student's work for the army on rockets as weapons; in fact it would be another year before von Braun had any serious contact with Ordnance.<sup>10</sup>

Several less fictional, but equally heavy-handed sections of the book betray its often crude, propagandistic character. With access to the Humboldt University archive in East Berlin, Mader was able to use von Braun's doctoral records to make it look like the army forced the university to give the rocket engineer a physics degree without proper review or qualifications. In another case, Mader depicted the exclusion of Hermann Oberth (1894–1989) and Rudolf Nebel (1894–1978), two rocket pioneers in the Weimar Republic, from active participation in the army program as persecution of the real pioneers of the technology. The fact that both were ill suited to a serious rocket-engineering program and extreme right-wingers sympathetic to the Nazis were facts that Mader probably knew, but left out in the interests of propaganda. A final, particularly egregious example: late in the book, Mader depicts engineers Klaus Riedel (1907–1944) and Helmut Gröttrup (1916–1981) (the latter the eventual leader of the German rocket group that went to the Soviet Union) as persecuted too, notably in the case of their brief arrest by the Gestapo in March 1944. Yet nowhere does he mention that von Braun was arrested with them.<sup>11</sup>

Still, there was enough dynamite in Mader's work to make it potentially devastating to von Braun's career. From the Stasi's Nazi files used to investigate, blackmail or embarrass individuals in East and West, Mader received a couple of documents about Wernher von Braun's SS memberships. He had the enrollment sheet (pictured in the book) that showed that the engineer joined the *SS-Reitersturm* (riding unit) in Berlin on 1 November 1933, while a student at the university (and secretly working for the army on rockets). An SS officer list from the Second World War showed von Braun's promotion to *Sturmbannführer* (major)

in June 1943. Lacking the SS officer record that had fallen into American hands and been classified, plus the secret declarations that von Braun had made to the US Army in 1946–47, which showed that he quit the *Reitersturm* in mid-1934 and only rejoined the SS in spring 1940 under indirect pressure from military commander Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945), Mader was able to depict von Braun as a committed SS man throughout almost the whole history of the Third Reich. Even if one did not accept that reading of the evidence, the mere fact that he had been an SS officer was a revelation, as it was essentially unknown to anyone except his German colleagues and the US officials who had been his superiors or who had worked on his case. Thanks to a shared desire to protect von Braun, no one talked about it, and he certainly was not foolish enough to mention it.<sup>12</sup>

Equally potentially damaging was Mader's discussion of the scandal of concentration camp labor in the V-2 program, most notably at the underground Mittelwerk rocket factory near Nordhausen and its associated Mittelbau-Dora camp. Although the survivors of that place had certainly not forgotten the beatings, the hangings and the hellish conditions that led to the deaths of thousands of prisoners, in less than two decades after the war the camp had been virtually written out of history, especially in the West. All the memoirs of the key participants in the program like von Braun and his military chief, General Walter Dornberger (1895–1980), either barely mentioned the place or completely ignored it. Western journalists followed their lead, basically because they knew little about the V-2 story, but they also were motivated to protect the rocketeers who were now Cold War assets. So Mader's account was potentially a revelation, even if it was freighted with communist rhetoric. As specific evidence against von Braun, Mader produced the affidavits of two prominent East-European survivors, who swore that they saw him in the tunnels, sometimes in a brown uniform, that he had to have walked by the piles of dead bodies at one tunnel entrance, and that he witnessed prisoner hangings in the tunnel using the overhead crane that lifted the rockets into position for testing. Most of these assertions are almost certainly untrue, but at a minimum, it was hard to deny that von Braun had been in the tunnels several times, had been in a responsible position, and was aware of the murderous conditions.<sup>13</sup>

Thus *Geheimnis von Huntsville*, which finally appeared in June 1963, threatened to become von Braun's worst nightmare. On the dust jacket was an accurate drawing of him in a black SS-*Sturmabführer's* uniform, skull and crossbones on his cap and the Knight's Cross around his neck that Hitler had awarded him in late 1944 (Figure 6.1). Von Braun decided to studiously ignore Mader – a strategy he had already announced to his German correspondents in winter 1962–63. However, late in 1963, he was shaken enough by a letter from a German-American correspondent finally to bring it to the attention of his Washington bosses. Shortly before Christmas, NASA chief James Webb (1906–1992) wrote von Braun: '[Deputy Administrator Hugh] Dryden, [Associate Administrator Robert] Seamans, and I have discussed the subject matter of our conference on December 17th, namely, the series or articles and book published in East Germany by a communist writer which represent your activities in Germany in the past and now in the





Figure 6.1 This illustration from a pre-publication leaflet for Julius Mader's anti-von Braun book *Geheimnis von Huntsville* has the probable jacket cover of the 1963 first edition.

Source: Courtesy of the American Institute of Physics, Niels Bohr Library.

US as militaristic and bloodthirsty.' Von Braun had particularly sought his counsel regarding 'the letter that you had received from Peter L. Krohn of Easton, Pennsylvania, referring to a radio broadcast repeating some of the East German allegations.' The implication of Krohn's letter – that the story could break out in America – obviously disconcerted the rocket engineer. The NASA Administrator counseled him not to respond unless publicly questioned, in which case he was to answer that 'everything related to my past activity in Germany [...] is well known to the US Government.' He had become a citizen and therefore was 'not disposed

to enter into discussion of events of many years ago.' Webb thereby confirmed von Braun's no-comment policy.<sup>14</sup>

Von Braun and Webb must have breathed a sigh of relief in 1964, when the story went nowhere outside the Soviet bloc. A rare exception was a very short, unrevealing and inaccurate *Washington Post* report in August that the official Moscow newspaper *Izvestia* had attacked him for the treatment of prisoners in an 'underground Nazi rocket base in Poland.' This assault was likely connected to the translation of Mader's work into Russian. For the United States and its Allies, and in much of the rest of the world, von Braun's heroic, quasi-official biography remained intact; indeed, several new books in the mid-1960s only reinforced it. The incompatible discourses about von Braun and the V-2 in East and West remained firmly in place, anchored by the competing ideologies and little effective two-way penetration of press and publications across the 'Iron Curtain.'<sup>15</sup>

Whatever the impact of Mader's book in the West, in the Warsaw Pact it was, like his earlier works, a major success. A Hungarian excerpt appeared in 1963, a full Czech edition in 1964, and the Soviets apparently printed 365,000 copies in Russian, 15,000 in Latvian and 10,000 in Ukrainian in 1965. His DDR publisher issued two more editions in 1965 and 1967. The last's jacket states that 438,000 copies had been issued by then (including the Soviet translations, apparently) and that excerpts had appeared in ten languages. We do not know how much Mader's propaganda shaped the opinions of ordinary people in the Soviet bloc – a very difficult thing to know in any case – but he had successfully created an alternate, communist history of von Braun and the V-2, one that survived to the end of the Soviet empire.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly the Stasi and other party and state authorities supported Mader's research and the dissemination of his work, but does it deserve to be called an official campaign against von Braun? It is somewhat a matter of definition. The tactic of campaigning against individuals in the West by digging up damaging information about their Nazi pasts – with the exception of this case, almost exclusively prominent West Germans – had taken on a new form and dimension in the late 1950s, as the DDR not only worked in concert with Soviet objectives but also sought desperately to defend its legitimacy, notably to its own population. Until the backdoor to the West was slammed shut on 13 August 1961 with the construction of the Berlin Wall, hundreds of thousands of East Germans left to escape the SED's dysfunctional, bureaucratized economy, not to mention its secret-police repression and relentless ideological control. The primary means to DDR self-legitimization was to depict the West German Federal Republic as Nazism and militarism reborn, a threat to world peace, a creature of giant capitalist monopolies and launching pad for American imperialism, whereas the DDR was the true heir to the antifascist resistance, of course always led by communists. As part of that propaganda campaign certain high West-German politicians, administrators, judges and generals were targeted as ex-Nazis, with some success. In a few cases, these campaigns escalated into carefully staged news conferences, document releases (occasionally including papers faked by the Stasi) and even trials

in absentia. Albert Norden (1904–1982), the SED Politbüro member responsible for 'West work' took a leading role in steering these campaigns.<sup>17</sup>

Mader's attacks on von Braun were clearly built on this model, but by comparison seem small-scale. Publishing, plus occasional opportunities to speak on East-bloc radio and television, were his only outlets. There is no indication that Norden or the party leadership took any interest in von Braun.<sup>18</sup> Nor is there any indication of a serious attempt to penetrate Western, especially American, opinion about him. No English translation was ever published, unlike Mader's *Who's Who in the CIA* (1968), which gained some currency in the Third World. Historian Paul Maddrell concludes that Mader's 'writings were principally aimed at public opinion in the DDR and the rest of the Eastern Bloc.'<sup>19</sup> *Geheimnis* was probably hard to obtain in the Federal Republic, as the barrier between East and West was then so complete. Fear of a von Braun lawsuit may have also blocked publication of the book in the West, since such considerations played out in the motion picture that was to come out of it. In short, Mader's attack was a significant success – but only in the Soviet bloc.

## II *Frozen Lightning*

In the DDR, *Geheimnis von Huntsville* certainly stimulated new interest in the history of the V-2 and Mittelbau-Dora. By the end of 1963, Professor Walter Bartel (1904–1992), chair for modern history at the Humboldt University and a communist leader in the underground resistance group at the Buchenwald concentration camp, formed a special student cooperative to begin studying the topic. The industrial dimensions of the rocket program and Dora seemed to allow ample opportunity to prove the Marxist-Leninist 'state monopoly capitalism' thesis that giant 'monopolies' (corporations) were the controlling interests in the Third Reich. Several pioneering, if jargon-laden, theses and dissertations came out of that group in the 1960s, at a time when no scholarly work appeared on the topic in West Germany. Mader's book probably also contributed to the creation of a small concentration camp memorial at the old camp site outside Nordhausen. It opened in 1964 and focused predictably on the heroes of the camp resistance led by the martyred communist leader Albert Kuntz (1896–1945), while ignoring all politically incorrect dimensions of the story, such as the culpability of the local population or how much the Soviet rocket program had profited from occupying the underground V-2 plant next to the camp.<sup>20</sup>

But by far the most expensive by-product of Mader's book came out of the East German official film studio DEFA: a major motion picture about the V-2. The initiative came from the director, János Veiczi (1924–1987), and the screenwriter, Harry Thürk (1927–2005), of a recent smash hit in the DDR, *For Eyes Only* (original title in English). It was a film in the spirit of Mader's earlier and later work: it dramatized the 'worrying facts about the war preparations of the West German and American secret services' against the East. Looking for their next project, late in 1963 they found Mader's book and immediately saw its film potential. As a model they also had in mind the huge Second World War epics then appearing in



Figure 6.2 Julius Mader's 1963 book provided the basis for a major East German film about the V-2, *Die gefrorenen Blitze* (Frozen Lightning), which was released in spring 1967.

Source: Courtesy of Bundesarchiv Berlin, 'Die gefrorenen Blitze,' image 14498, and DEFA-Stiftung.

the West, like *The Longest Day* (1962). The name they hit on was one of Mader's chapter titles: *Die gefrorenen Blitze* (Frozen Lightning) – the name locals gave to the mysterious zigzag contrails that appeared in the sky after the first V-2 launches from the Baltic-coast rocket center of Peenemünde (Figure 6.2).<sup>21</sup>

A fundamental question from the outset for the two, and for DEFA's *Dramaturge* for this project, Dieter Wolf, was how central would be the objective of 'smash[ing] the myth of the fascist rocket baron.'<sup>22</sup> A handwritten concept document from winter 1963–64, probably in the handwriting of Veiczi (a Hungarian who had been a forced laborer in Nazi Germany), calls von Braun a 'key figure in special weapons production for Hitler's Germany, who today as a US citizen continues his devilish and self-willed task with undiminished energy'; that is, the development of rockets as weapons of mass destruction. The proposed movie

would be 'the counter-film' to *Wernher von Braun: Ich greife nach den Sternen*. But a purely negative movie did not make a credible concept, nor did it serve the ideological purposes of the SED. Wolf's February 1964 position paper stated rather that '[o]ur theme is the international resistance fight against a weapon of mass annihilation.' Through a series of dramatic links the film would implant 'the basic concept of international solidarity in the antifascist liberation struggle.' Picking episodes from Mader, that meant scenes of resistance activities in Germany, France and Poland, British intelligence' discovery of the V-weapons, and ultimately, sabotage in the underground plant by prisoners led by Kuntz, ending in their martyrdom.<sup>23</sup>

Still, von Braun was central to the first draft script completed in June 1964. Their picture of him in many ways inverted reality – although I suspect that Veiczi, Thürk and Wolf, good communists all, actually believed that picture to be true from their reading of Mader, Ruth Kraft's successful DDR novel about Peenemünde, *Insel ohne Leuchtturm* (Island Without a Lighthouse), and whatever else came to hand. Central to the plot was the relationship between von Braun and a fictional Dr Grunwald, who dreams of spaceflight and is apolitical at the outset. Von Braun (who in real life was the space-travel obsessive) attracts him to Peenemünde early in the war to work on engines, but tells him, 'somewhat bemused' by his interest in spaceflight: 'In order to prevent misunderstandings: here in Peenemünde our objective is the development of a weapon. And we need it *before* the war is over.' If they got their rocket, 'there won't be any more enemies' – then they could go into space. Several pages later von Braun waxes enthusiastic about the potential annihilation of London; on screen, the cratered moon morphs into the cratered moonscape of the British capital – a scene soon discarded.<sup>24</sup>

As the war progresses, Grunwald gradually becomes more and more disillusioned, eventually secretly cooperating with the prisoner resistance in the Mittelwerk. Von Braun, on the other hand, is comfortable with concentration camp labor and is chummy with the SS leadership. The arrest of Gröttrup, Riedel and von Braun in real life becomes the arrest of Grunwald in the film because he will not watch the hanging of prisoners from the overhead crane, and von Braun, who does watch, is the one who gets him out because he is useful, telling the SS that he is a 'dreamer.' In fact Gröttrup – because he led the German group in the USSR – was the film-makers' heroic model for Grunwald. In contrast, the filmic von Braun is shown at Los Alamos in the closing scene watching a movie of the first A-bomb test, and is practically rubbing his hands with glee at the prospect of putting nuclear warheads on his missiles.<sup>25</sup>

As the film evolved, the fundamental characterizations of von Braun and Grunwald did not change much, but the film-makers dropped von Braun's name from the script, as well as that of his diplomat brother Sigismund, who played a subsidiary part in the (fictional) secret negotiations to bring Wernher over to the Americans. Wernher von Braun instead became 'the Doctor,' and in the final version 'the Rocket Baron,' although his true identity was transparent. The reason was the desire to export the film to offset its great expense, combined with a fear of a libel lawsuit by the von Braun family. On 10 June 1965, Veiczi and Wolf met

with the famous East German lawyer, Friedrich Karl Kaul (1906–1981), who acted as co-counsel and representative of East-bloc plaintiffs in West German war crimes trials. He advised the film-makers that the chances of a suit in the East were zero, but that in the West there had been precedents created by other DEFA films. They had two choices: give up on exporting to the West, or take out the names of real people and put in a disclaimer about all characters being fictional. So they did the latter.<sup>26</sup>

By 1965–66, the film-makers' ambition to make a Second World War antifascist epic issued into rapidly escalating costs and delays, causing controversy inside the DEFA. There were technically demanding sets and special effects needed to show rocket development, V-2 launches at Peenemünde and missile production in the underground plant, plus scenes to be filmed in English, French, Polish and Russian, featuring actors from those countries in intelligence and resistance roles. There were over 100 speaking parts. Extensive support was needed from East German and Polish institutions and the Soviet Army in the DDR.<sup>27</sup>

There was also pressure from several quarters to increase the antifascist dimension of the film. In late 1964, Bartel's students studying the Dora camp met Veiczi and Wolf and criticized the first script as not being appropriate to the 'honor and the reputation of the resistance fighters.' Among other things they reacted prudishly to sex scenes, including one set in a bordello. Veiczi was furious. In 1965 a prominent Polish documentary-maker more substantively argued that the script was still dominated by the anti-von Braun theme, and that such a negative purpose did not make for a very good movie. The pressure continued to the very end, when the Ministry of Culture's review committee asked the film-makers, shortly before release of *Die gefrorenen Blitze* in spring 1967, to add even more documentary footage featuring the Soviet Army in the Second World War in the interludes between scenes.<sup>28</sup>

The result was a film that cost 5.1 million DDR marks – one of the most expensive films ever made in that country. It ran for three hours, including an intermission, was loosely structured and sometimes hard to follow. Several scenes were brilliantly realized, however, and it remains the best feature film ever made on the V-2 program, although given competition like *I Aim at the Stars*, that is not saying much. When it premiered in East Berlin on 13 April 1967, the East German press greeted it with significant coverage and restrained enthusiasm. By mid-August, it had sold over 632,000 tickets in the DDR (a country of only 17 million people) and several Soviet bloc allies bought film rights. Still, it appears likely that it lost a lot of money.<sup>29</sup>

One reason was the failure to export much to the West, largely because the anti-von Braun theme again came back to haunt the film-makers. Late in editing *Die gefrorenen Blitze*, as they struggled to finish it and rationalize its form to DEFA review bodies, Veiczi, Thürk and Wolf again played up the movie's value in undermining the 'myth' (*Legende*) surrounding Wernher von Braun – as did some press articles after its appearance. Dramaturge Wolf indignantly noted an opinion survey among West German youth, who rated von Braun as a hero and role model on a par with Albert Schweitzer, the sainted Swiss missionary doctor in Africa, no doubt because West Germany's press continued to run fawning profiles of the

rocket engineer. But when the East German Ministry of Culture sent it for legal review regarding Western export, the lawyer again noted the dangers of a lawsuit by the von Brauns, particularly in West Germany; eliminating their names from the movie had apparently not been enough. He could only justify it if 'professional historians confirm the predominantly historically correct presentation in the film of events around Wernher von Braun.' Not willing to take the risk of losing precious hard currency fighting a legal action, the ministry banned export of the film to the Federal Republic, which cast a pall over attempts to sell it elsewhere in the West.<sup>30</sup>

There is a curious postscript to this story. Two years later, the DEFA did manage to convince French state television to buy the rights, but that led to an incident when the network, to protect itself, showed it to the new West German ambassador to France – who happened to be Sigismund von Braun. He naturally objected to several scenes, including the entirely fictional ones involving him, and sent notes about the movie to his brother. The network cancelled the broadcast scheduled for March 1969. After a press controversy, the Parafrance film company did run the re-titled film in its 40 cinemas following a prestigious Paris première, but only when DEFA made a bowdlerized version. Dieter Wolf, in a July 1969 critique, noted that the shortened version was technically accurate, tighter and more suspenseful, but politically gutted: 'Episodically only an anonymous chief of the rocket project turns up, one who is, however, not politically engaged, but apparently only fulfills orders. He no longer takes part in the liquidation of prisoners in concentration camp Dora, and his presence at Führer headquarters and his decoration [by Hitler] are suppressed. All disagreements between him and the humanistic scientist Grunwald have been cut,' as was the closing scene of von Braun in Los Alamos. Moreover, the communist resistance role was ironically diminished through other cuts. Effectively *Die gefrorenen Blitze* became 'two completely different movies' in Eastern and Western Europe, the Western one stripped of its anti-von Braun content. That further guaranteed that, just like the Mader book, it would have very little influence on his reputation in the West.<sup>31</sup>

### III The Dora trial in Essen

Just as DEFA was preparing the film's première in spring 1967, DDR 'star attorney' Kaul geared up for a new trial – the first one in nearly two decades on the Mittelbau-Dora camp. After multi-year preliminary investigations typical of West German trials, leading to sometimes justified DDR complaints about the slowness and inadequacy of the Western judicial response to Nazi crimes, prosecutors in the Ruhr industrial city of Essen filed charges against three individuals: Helmut Bischoff (1908–1993), an SS and Gestapo officer and chief of security for the V-2 program; Ernst Sander (1916–1990), an SS sergeant in the Gestapo under Bischoff; and Erwin Busta (1905–1982), a camp guard infamous at Dora as '*Stollenschreck*' (the 'terror of the tunnels'). Kaul failed to get appointed to the trial as prosecuting co-counsel (*Nebenkläger*) for the family of the martyred Albert Kuntz, as he could not produce specific evidence that any of the accused were involved, but soon

reached that position on behalf of East-bloc survivors who became plaintiffs. As always, Kaul coordinated his activity through the SED leadership, with the primary objective of fighting another battle for the recognition of the DDR, which the West formally did not acknowledge. There were ideological objectives as well: 'effectively supporting the struggle against neo-Nazism in the Federal Republic' and demonstrating that the same giant corporations that allegedly controlled it were involved in Nazi crimes. In East Berlin a 'Dora Working Group' was formed to coordinate support, including a representative of the Stasi and two graduate students of Bartel who joined Kaul's law office.<sup>32</sup>

Kaul's participation in the trial thus had nothing to do with attacking von Braun, but he eventually found a way to embarrass the rocket engineer with marginally more impact in the West than Mader or the movie. Soon after the trial opened in fall 1967, the lawyer filed a motion with the three-judge panel to call as witnesses von Braun, former Armaments Minister Albert Speer (1905–1981) and three key Speer deputies. The primary objective was to demonstrate the role of the 'monopolies' in the V-2 program, including the use of slave labor, but that was all too transparent, and the chief judge eventually rejected the motion as having no demonstrated relevance to the guilt of those charged. Kaul also tried to drag the President of the Federal Republic, Heinrich Lübke (1894–1972), into the proceedings, as he had been a leading manager in Speer's Peenemünde construction group, which had used forced labor. The DDR had launched its campaign against Lübke back in 1964 (although Mader had already attacked him in *Geheimnis* in 1963), the last and largest one against a West German politician. The attacks eventually wore down Lübke, who resigned from office a few months early in mid-1969. Kaul had no luck with the President, however, but finally succeeded in getting Speer called as a witness in October 1968, because he might shed light on Bischoff and Sander's role in prisoner executions resulting from sabotage in the factory. Speer's testimony caused a minor press sensation in Germany and led directly to the court's decision in early November to grant Kaul's motions to call Wernher von Braun and his former military chief, General Walter Dornberger, as witnesses too.<sup>33</sup>

Von Braun was very unpleasantly surprised when, in the midst of the preparations for Apollo 8's historic first human trip around the moon, he received an airmail letter dated 6 November 1968 from the chief judge, offering him dates to testify immediately before Christmas or after New Year. If he could not come to Essen, his testimony could be taken through the help of an American court. But that meant von Braun might have to speak publicly about the Mittelwerk issue, which he had so far successfully avoided despite two or three scares in the mid-1960s, including the one about Mader. The NASA General Counsel at the time, Paul Dembling (1929–2011), relates that von Braun was definitely 'troubled' by this letter, 'certainly didn't want to go back to Germany,' and was 'afraid they were going to do something to him.' The Marshall Director was particularly worried about the impact on US public opinion regarding the postwar use of ex-Nazis. Concern about the fall-out for NASA's programs was also on his mind. When von Braun answered on 22 November, he declared that he could not come to Germany because of his obligations to the US space program. Moreover, he had nothing to



do with running the Mittelwerk or the Mittelbau-Dora camp, only visited the former on several occasions and had little to offer as a witness. If they still thought he was useful, however, the court should contact his center's Chief Counsel.<sup>34</sup>

Negotiations began. Dembling recalls getting an angry call from someone in Essen about von Braun's absence. In conjunction with the State Department, NASA then proposed that testimony be taken at the West German consulate in New Orleans. That site was chosen, according to Arthur Konopka, the Headquarters lawyer assigned to the case, precisely because it was off the US media's beaten track. Despite their efforts, on 4 January 1969 a wire service report from Essen revealed that the court had called von Braun as a witness, an item that appeared in newspapers across the United States. Two days later, NASA offered 6 February in New Orleans as a meeting date, later postponed to 7 February because of a conflict in von Braun's schedule. A week beforehand, the State Department conveniently denied Kaul a visa, thus keeping the East German from joining the chief judge and the defense attorneys on the trip, but NASA was still nervous about bad publicity.<sup>35</sup>

By the time Konopka accompanied von Braun to the consulate, however, he felt that the Marshall Director was no longer worried, but clearly did not like answering questions about prisoner mistreatment, feeling that it was not his responsibility. Von Braun's 7 February testimony, which was not made available to the press, shows a very clear memory of the Mittelwerk and of the key people involved, but not only did he deny any personal involvement, he also denied ever having received a report of prisoner sabotage – although von Braun cleverly phrased it as an *official* report of sabotage so as to leave the false impression that he had hardly heard of sabotage at all. Afterward, von Braun gave a short statement on the consulate steps in which he declared he had 'nothing to hide, and I am not implicated.' The West German press featured his assertion of a 'clear conscience.' Most of the American media either ignored the statement or remained in ignorance, as neither NASA nor the State Department had informed them of the testimony. But in answering questions on the steps, von Braun lied: he denied there had been any concentration camp prisoners in Peenemünde – a story that indeed did not come out for decades. Afterward, according to Dembling, he was pleased that the matter had turned out so well – certainly they had controlled the US publicity problem. Ten months later, von Braun wrote Dornberger: 'In regard to the testimony, fortunately I too have heard nothing more.' The retired general and aerospace executive had been questioned after him in Mexico, where he had begun wintering.<sup>36</sup>

In Germany, one surprising aspect of the press coverage was how much it was a Western phenomenon and how little attention the Eastern newspapers paid to it – yet another example of the disconnected media discourses in East and West. The SED's official organ, *Neues Deutschland*, ran an article on 1 February 1969, 'SS Leader Wernher von Braun Will Testify as Witness,' but it was a small item on page three, and there is no evidence of further stories in that newspaper. Despite Kaul's close connections to the party leadership, and his occasional requests to run certain stories in the press to bolster his position, it is apparent that the DDR's ruling elite simply did not see much propaganda value in playing up the Essen trial or von Braun's testimony. When Julius Mader wrote a member of the SED Central

Committee in late March asking that *Die gefrorenen Blitze* be broadcast on DDR television in July 1969 as part of a massive campaign against the Apollo 11 moon landing, with one of the aims being the 'unmasking of the Nazi von Braun, who is celebrated as a Prometheus in the USA and West Germany,' he got nowhere. Presumably there were many other issues the SED leadership thought of greater importance.<sup>37</sup>

This disinterest was likely connected to an important transition in inter-German relations. The DDR dropped the Lübke campaign in fall 1968 as soon as he announced he would leave office, and the tactic faded away. With the election of Willy Brandt's Social-Democratic-led government in fall 1969 came *Ostpolitik* (Eastern policy) and an easing of tensions, leading to the four-power Berlin treaty of 1971 and the mutual recognition of the two German states. The bitter Cold War rivalry continued, but in less overt forms. Mader published occasional press attacks on von Braun in the early 1970s, but after the American lunar success and the fading of the US-Soviet Space Race, his fixation must have seemed increasingly pointless to Eastern editors. It is telling that, when Wernher von Braun died prematurely from cancer at age 65 in June 1977, the DDR official news agency issued only a short, one-paragraph announcement, shorn of any propaganda content other than a perfunctory mention of his Nazi career.<sup>38</sup>

Kaul's success in calling von Braun as a witness thus only had an impact in the Federal Republic, as a part of the Essen trial's influence on the memory of the V-2 program, reinforced by a generational change in West German attitudes to the Nazi period. A subtle but noteworthy sign was the relative honesty about the horrors of Mittelbau-Dora that journalist Bernd Ruland inserted into his hagiographic, authorized von Braun biography that appeared shortly after Apollo 11. In fall 1969, Speer published his memoirs with further, if self-justifying, information about Dora; in 1970–71 came the first Western scholarship about the camp. The rocket engineer picked up on the shifting attitudes; in late 1971 he told the leader of the West German ex-Peenemünders that their plans for publicly celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the first successful V-2 launch on 3 October 1942 were ill advised. It was a wisdom notably lacking 20 years later, in a unified Germany, when the old rocketeers and their new allies, ex-East-German Air Force officers at Peenemünde, blundered into an international controversy over their celebratory plans for the fiftieth.<sup>39</sup>

By then, attitudes to von Braun and the V-2 had been fundamentally altered, especially in the United States. Thanks to changing public knowledge of the Holocaust, in 1979 Congress authorized the creation of an Office of Special Investigations, a 'Nazi-hunting' unit in the Justice Department. One of its early investigations was the connection between the German-American rocketeers and Mittelbau-Dora, leading to a case against one of von Braun's closest associates. In 1983 Arthur Rudolph (1906–1996), who had been production manager in the underground plant, signed an agreement to leave the United States for Germany and denounce his citizenship rather than contest a denaturalization hearing. He did so in spring 1984. When the Justice Department issued a press release in October, it set off a worldwide echo, and opened the doors to revelations about von

Braun's record as well. Investigative journalists used the relatively new Freedom of Information Act to get copies of classified documents from his Army security file – notably regarding his SS membership and his relationship with Dora, but also the US government's behind-the-scenes battles in the late 1940s over his immigration status. Until then the Western media, especially in the United States, had studiously ignored, or simply remained ignorant of, information that Mader had often published two decades before. In the aftermath, von Braun's posthumous reputation was greatly damaged.<sup>40</sup>

#### IV Divided discourses

Why, then, was the East German campaign against Wernher von Braun – if it merits that description – essentially a failure in the West? The key DDR actors in this affair, namely Mader, Veiczi, Thürk, Wolf and Kaul, clearly would like to have destroyed his reputation on *both* sides of the Cold War divide. Given the glaring omissions for the Nazi years in von Braun's quasi-official biography, not to mention the outright falsifications in *I Aim at the Stars* and other popular representations, one can understand that their outrage was not simply motivated by ideology. But whatever hopes they may have had for their impact in the West were largely frustrated by the depth of the chasm between the public and media discourses on the two sides and by limitations, both national and specific to the case, that hampered their ability to bridge that chasm.

Beyond the bitterness of the German divide, the manifest bankruptcy of a regime that had to build a wall to prevent its own population from running away meant that any propaganda coming from the East in the 1960s was almost automatically dismissed in the West. Only against a few Western politicians, notably Lübke, did the DDR score some successes when it could produce credible Nazi documents and invested much effort into bringing that information to the attention of the world press. In von Braun's case, Mader had the support of the Stasi, but he had no major party/state campaign behind him, plus he had very few documents from the Stasi archives that substantiated von Braun's links to the SS and to Dora's horrors. That was in part because of luck – the Western Allies captured the bulk of the Party and SS central membership files in 1945 – and partly due to a deliberate policy of secrecy on the part of the United States government, which kept damaging information about von Braun's past classified in order to protect one of its key technical assets. The Western media shared that motivation with their governments; in the United States and West Germany particularly, von Braun was a hero, and in the latter also a symbol of the alliance with the United States.

The film-makers of *Die gefrorenen Blitze* faced another East German limitation: fear of a libel lawsuit making it impossible to export the movie to the Federal Republic. Behind the Ministry of Culture's decision lay an unsolvable economic problem for a Soviet-bloc economy, the shortage of convertible Western currency and the resulting scramble to earn more money to carry out necessary trade and activities outside the Warsaw Pact. Exporting DEFA films was one way. The studio's

requirement for foreign earnings stoked the ambitions of Veiczi, Thürk and Wolf in their desire to shoot a Second World War epic that Western audiences might watch. Yet fear of hard-currency losses in fighting a lawsuit, as had happened to earlier DEFA films, ultimately won out over the desire to make money. When the studio eventually did sell the film in France, it found it could only do so by gutting *Die gefrorenen Blitze* of anti-von Braun content. It would not be surprising if similar legal considerations had earlier hindered the publication of *Das Geheimnis von Huntsville in the West*.

In the end, only Kaul's motion to call Wernher von Braun as a witness had any impact at all outside the Soviet bloc, and then only in the Federal Republic, where war crimes trials contributed to a gradual shift in public attitudes toward responsibility for the Third Reich. It is noteworthy that in the West Germany of the 1970s there was more discussion of Mittelbau-Dora than in the United States, although von Braun's heroic reputation was still eroded only around the edges. But to conclude by emphasizing the failure of Mader, Veiczi, Thürk, Wolf and Kaul would in many ways leave a false impression: their primary efforts were to bolster 'antifascist' public opinion in the East by instilling distrust and fear of the Western powers who had made an ex-Nazi weapons designer into a hero. Their attacks on von Braun were perhaps less an orchestrated campaign of the East German state than a loose collective effort of well-known, even famous East Germans with significant autonomy to pursue the objectives of the SED Party state in their own way, but they succeeded in creating, or at least greatly fortifying, an alternate discourse about the rocket engineer in the Warsaw Pact, one that aired many of the scandals of his past 20 years before almost anyone did so in the West.

## Notes

© Smithsonian Institution. Portions are modified from Michael J. Neufeld, *Von Braun: Dreamer of Space, Engineer of War*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.

1. Julius Mader, *Geheimnis von Huntsville: Die wahre Karriere des Raketenbarons Wernher von Braun*, Berlin(-East): Deutscher Militärverlag, 1963 (2nd edn 1965, 3rd edn 1967). Wernher von Braun (hereinafter WvB) to Lehmann, 11 December 1962, in file 417-10, US Space and Rocket Center, Huntsville, Alabama, Wernher von Braun Papers (hereafter WvBP-H); and WvB to Weiss-Vogtmann, 14 January 1963, in 418-2. The series was in *Forum: Organ des Zentralrats der FDJ* 16 (1962), *wissenschaftliche Beilagen* to issues 36-49 (microfilm copy, Yale University Library). See also Julius Mader, 'Die Karriere des Wernher von Braun,' *DDR in Wort und Bild* (July 1963), 32-3, copy in National Air and Space Museum, WvB bio. file.
2. A partial exception is Horst Körner, *Stärker als die Schwerkraft: Von Werden und von den Zielen der Raumfahrt*, Leipzig: Urania, 1960; see also his note to Mader in *Geheimnis* (1963 edn), 378-9.
3. See Neufeld, *Von Braun*, 252-78, 284-90, 323-7, 346-53, 408-10.
4. Michael J. Neufeld, 'Creating a Memory of the German Rocket Program for the Cold War,' in Steven J. Dick, ed., *Remembering the Space Age*, Washington, DC: NASA, 2008, 71-87.
5. On the history of the V-2 program and Dora, see Michael J. Neufeld, *The Rocket and the Reich: Peenemünde and the Coming of the Ballistic Missile Era*, New York: Free Press, 1995;

and Jens-Christian Wagner, *Produktion des Todes: Das KZ Mittelbau-Dora*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2001. For the best example of the earlier apologist literature, see Frederick I. Ordway and Mitchell R. Sharpe, *The Rocket Team*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1979. For the muckraking literature after 1984, consult Linda Hunt, 'US Coverup of Nazi Scientists,' *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 41.4 (April 1985), 16–24; Linda Hunt, *Secret Agenda: The United States Government, Nazi Scientists and Project Paperclip, 1945 to 1990*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991; and Tom Bower, *The Paperclip Conspiracy: The Battle for the Secrets and Spoils of Nazi Germany*, London: Michael Joseph, 1987. Erik Bergaust's hagiographical *Wernher von Braun*, Washington, DC: National Space Institute, 1975, may be contrasted with Rainer Eisfeld's critical *Mondsüchtig: Wernher von Braun und die Geburt der Raumfahrt aus dem Geist der Barbarei*, Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1996, and Neufeld, *Von Braun*.

6. Mader's primary Stasi file is at the Berlin central archive of *Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (abbreviated BStU), his 'cadre file' (*Kaderakte*) is MfS-ZAIG 25335/90. Mader's career is thoroughly evaluated by Paul Maddrell's 'What We Have Discovered About the Cold War is What We Already Knew: Julius Mader and the Western Secret Services During the Cold War,' *Cold War History* 5.2 (May 2005), 235–58. Maddrell focuses on Mader's primary work as a propagandist against Western intelligence agencies.
7. Mader file, MfS-ZAIG 25335/90, BStU; Maddrell, 'What We Have Discovered,' 236–40.
8. Halle and Gleißner 'Beurteilung,' 18 December 1961; and Mielke order 207/62, 1 April 1962, signed by Mader 21 April 1962, 15, 46–8, MfS-ZAIG 25335/90, BStU. All translations are mine.
9. Mader to WvB, 8 July and reply, 21 July 1961; and WvB to Magnus von Braun Sr., 29 October and reply, 7 November 1961, in Nr. 85, N1085 (Nachlass Magnus von Braun Sr.), Bundesarchiv Koblenz. WvB's letter to Mader is reprinted in the foreword to *Geheimnis*, 12–13. WvB's Mader file has disappeared from the WvB Papers in Huntsville. Its existence is revealed in the list of personal and 'sensitive' files attached to Ruth von Saurma's note to WvB, 22 August 1973, in file 607–15, WvBP-H. Most files on this list relating to Mittelbau-Dora are missing too.
10. WvB to Lehmann, 11 December 1962 (and WvB-edited R. v. Saurma draft 27 November), and Lehmann reply, 16 January 1963, in file 417–10; and WvB to Weiss-Vogtmann, 14 January 1963, in 418–2, WvBP-H; Mader, *Geheimnis*, 5–39.
11. Mader, *Geheimnis*, 72–96, 344–6, 350–1.
12. *Ibid.*, 69, 92–5; WvB SS-Reitersturm-Stammrollenblatt, 28 February 1934, and SS officer list, 1943, former MfS Nazi archive, now Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (hereinafter BArch Berlin) SS file card for WvB, former Berlin Document Center records (BArch Berlin) and microfilm, National Archives College Park, hereinafter NACP; WvB 'Affidavit,' 18 June 1947, Accession 70A4398, RG330, NACP. For further information, see Michael J. Neufeld, 'Wernher von Braun, the SS, and Concentration Camp Labor: Questions of Moral, Political, and Criminal Responsibility,' *German Studies Review* 25.1 (February 2002), 57–78; and Neufeld, *Von Braun*, 63–4, 120–2.
13. Mader, *Geheimnis*, 285–325. The definitive work is Wagner, *Produktion des Todes*. See also André Sellier, *A History of the Dora Camp*, Chicago, IL: Ivan Dee, 2003.
14. Webb to WvB, 20 December 1963, copies in HRC 2563, NASA History Division, and in Box 3.16, Ms. 147, Dryden Papers, MSE Library Special Collections, Johns Hopkins University.
15. 'Thought Police,' *Washington Post* (6 August 1964); Dieter K. Huzel, *Peenemünde to Canaveral*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962; James McGovern, *Crossbow and Overcast*, New York: William Morrow, 1964; Ernst Klee and Otto Merk, *The Birth of the Missile: The Secrets of Peenemünde*, New York: Dutton, 1965 (first published as *Damals in Peenemünde: An der Geburtsstätte der Weltraumfahrt*, Oldenburg: Stalling, 1963); David Irving, *The Mare's Nest*, Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1965.

16. Bibliographic research by Professor Mark Kulikowski, SUNY Oswego, given in two e-mails to me, 16 and 19 November 2006, and in mailed copies of East-European bibliographies. Mader, *Geheimnis* (3rd German edn 1967), rear book flap. Interestingly, this edition (I do not have the second) has a different book jacket, one less inflammatory than the SS drawing. I do not have the first edition book jacket, but it is pictured in an advance book announcement, 'Raketenboy Nummer 1,' copies of in WvB's FBI File 105-130306, 434-5, in RG 65, NACP, and in folder III./153, Samuel Goudsmit Papers, Niels Bohr Library, American Institute of Physics, College Park, Maryland.
17. Michael Lemke, 'Kampagnen gegen Bonn: Die Systemkrise der DDR und die West-Propaganda der SED 1960-1963,' *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 41.2 (April 1993), 153-74, and 'Instrumentalisierter Antifaschismus und SED-Kampagnenpolitik im deutschen Sonderkonflikt 1960-1968,' in Jürgen Danyel, ed., *Die geteilte Vergangenheit*, Berlin: Akademie, 1995, 61-86; Hubertus Knabe, 'Die missbrauchte Vergangenheit: Die Instrumentalisierung des Nationalsozialismus durch SED und Staatssicherheitsdienst,' in Manfred Agethen, Eckhard Jesse and Ehrhart Neubert, eds, *Der missbrauchte Antifaschismus*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2002, 248-67.
18. I searched electronic finding aids of the Bundesarchiv's SAPMO (*Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR*) records of the 'Büro Alfred Norden' in record group DY 30, BArch Berlin, and found only one reference to Mader, not related to von Braun.
19. Maddrell, 'What We Have Discovered,' 237, 240 (quote).
20. The records of the Humboldt University 'Forschungsgemeinschaft Dora' ended up in the papers of Professor Dr Friedrich Karl Kaul; see Nr. 268-285, N2503, BArch Berlin; for group origins, see files 275 and 280; for correspondence with Nordhausen, 279. On the latter, Jens-Christian Wagner kindly gave me his unpublished lecture 'Remembering the Nazi Camps in East and West Germany: The Case of the Mittelbau-Dora Camp.' On the German contribution to the Soviet program, see Matthias Uhl, *Stalins V2*, Bonn: Bernhard & Graefe, 2001; Asif Siddiqi, *Challenge to Apollo*, Washington, DC: NASA, 2000; and Boris Chertok, *Rockets and People*, vol. 1, Washington, DC: NASA, 2005.
21. On the film, see Thomas Heimann and Burghard Ciesla, 'Die gefrorenen Blitze: Wahrheit und Dichtung. FilmGeschichte einer "Wunderwaffe",' *Apropos: Film. Das Jahrbuch der DEFA-Stiftung* (2002), 158-80. Archival records are found in DR 117 (DEFA files), BArch Berlin, and in Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg's Mediathek, Bestand Dieter Wolf (hereinafter UOM/BDW), particularly the Produktionsakt (production file) for *Die gefrorenen Blitze* (hereinafter *DgB*). The quote comes from the latter file, Wolf to Sorin (Kiev), 27 June 1966.
22. Quoted in Heimann and Ciesla, *DgB*, 161 ('die Legende um den faschistischen Raketenbaron Wernher von Braun zerschlagen'). They do not footnote it and I have not found it in original documents, but do not doubt its veracity. The WvB 'Legende' is mentioned frequently in the movie-related documents, especially in 1966-67.
23. '1. Konzeption J. Veiczi,' 1963-64, in Produktionsakt *DgB*, UOM/BDW, 2; Wolf, 'Stellungnahme zum Fahrplan "Gefrorenen Blitze" von H. Thürk u. J. Veiczi,' stamped 28 February 1964, in vorl. BA(I)3671, DR 117, BArch Berlin, 2-3; 'Autor, Regisseur und ein neuer Titel: Gespräch mit Harry Thürk and János Veiczi,' *Neues Deutschland* (21 November 1964), Beilage Nr. 47, 'Die gebildete Nation.'
24. *DgB* Rohrdrehbuch, 19 June 1964, vorl. BA(I)3564 (Part 1) and BA(I)3565 (Part 2), DR 117, BArch Berlin, quotes from Part 1, 24, and moon morphing, 36; Ruth Kraft, *Insel ohne Leuchtfeuer* [1959], Berlin: Vision, 1994. Interesting light on the film's prehistory is cast by a mid-1966 controversy between Kraft, Mader and Wolf; see Wolf to Kraft, 12 May, Mader to Kraft, 19 May, and Kraft to Wolf and Veiczi, 7 July 1966, in Produktionsakt *DgB*, UOM/BDW.

25. *DgB* Rohrdrehbuch, 19 June 1964, vorl. BA(I)3565, DR 117, BArch Berlin, quote from Part 2, scene 181; Gröttrup entry in address list, 1964, in Produktionsakt *DgB*, UOM/BDW; Heimann and Ciesla, '*DgB*,' 163, 168–9.
26. Wolf minutes of meeting with Kaul on 10 June 1965, film summary, 1966, and film summary, 25 October 1966, in Produktionsakt *DgB*, UOM/BDW; 1965 scripts, vorl. BA(I)469–72, DR 117, BArch Berlin; Heimann and Ciesla, '*DgB*,' 178–9.
27. Heimann and Ciesla, '*DgB*,' 164–77; Schneider to Wolf, 20 March 1965, in Produktionsakt *DgB*, UOM/BDW.
28. Jerzy Bossak 'Bemerkungen für Regisseur Veiczi,' c.May 1965, Goßens/Defense Min. letter, 7 July 1965, and other correspondence in Produktionsakt *DgB*, UOM/BDW; minutes of meeting, Veiczi and Wolf with Dora student group, 24 October 1964, in Nr. 275, N2503, BArch Berlin; 'Sitzung des Filmbeirates,' Min. of Culture, 16 March 1967, in Nr. 133, DR 1-Z, BArch Berlin.
29. Heimann and Ciesla, '*DgB*,' 159, 164, 177–80; copies of press clippings on *DgB*, 1967, in Universität Oldenburg's Mediathek, HFF 'Konrad Wolf' – Pressedokumentation; DEFA statement of attendance and sales, 14 August 1967, in Produktionsakt *DgB*, UOM/BDW (listing total earnings, including foreign rights, of about 1.6 million marks).
30. Wolf, 'Stellungnahme zum Rohschnitt,' 29 November 1966, and Hauptdirektor Bruk, VEB DEFA, 'Stellungnahme,' 10 February 1967, in Produktionsakt *DgB*, UOM/BDW; DDR press clippings cited in previous note; Staats to Wagner/HV Film, 22 February 1967 (also in Produktionsakt *DgB*, UOM/BDW), and May–June 1967 correspondence on foreign export, in Nr. 133, DR 1-Z, BArch Berlin; Heimann and Ciesla, '*DgB*,' 179. On West German hero worship, see Neufeld, *Von Braun*, 323–4, 349, 409–10.
31. Heimann and Ciesla, '*DgB*,' 179–80 (quote, 'two . . .,' 179); 'Französische Minister sahen DEFA-Premiere,' *Neues Deutschland* (15 June 1969), clipping in Produktionsakt *DgB*, UOM/BDW; and Wolf memo, 14 July 1969 (quote), in latter. A veiled reference to the French broadcast issue appears in Sigismund von Braun to WvB, 18 March 1969, in file 403-10, WvBP-H. Von Braun's file on the issue, entitled 'Notes on East German film "Die gefrorenen Blitze, 1969",' probably by Sigismund, is noted in Ruth von Saurma's list to WvB, 22 August 1973, in file 607–15, but the file disappeared like the Mader file, hence it is impossible to say when WvB first heard of the movie.
32. Kaul's Dora trial files are in Nr. 239 to 247, N2503, BArch Berlin, and newspaper clippings in Nr. 414; trial records in Ger. Rep. 299, Nordrhein-Westfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf, Zweigarchiv Schloß Kalkum (hereinafter NWHSA/ZSK). For the origins of Kaul's participation and the Dora working group, see Kaul's meeting with Foth and Fassung of the Oberste Staatsanwaltschaft of the DDR on 2 February 1967 (quote on neo-Nazism), Kaul to Norden, 3 February 1967, and Noack report on meeting, 8 March 1967, in Nr. 239, N2503, BArch Berlin. On the East German recognition issue's centrality, see the excellent study by Georg Wamhof, *Geschichtspolitik und NS-Strafverfahren: Der Essener Dora-Prozeß im deutsch-deutschen Systemkonflikt*, MA thesis, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 2001.
33. Abschrift of Kaul motion, 4 December 1967, and Kaul to Pötschke/ZK SED, 11 November 1968, in Nr. 243, N2503, BArch Berlin, decision 29 b Ks 9/66, c.S.1968, and Kaul motion, 11 June 1968 (WvB and others), in Nr. 242 and Kaul 'Betr.: 'DORA'-Prozeß,' 3 January 1969, Nr. 244; Wamhof, 'Geschichtspolitik,' 125–46. On the Lübke campaign, see Lemke, 'Instrumentalisierter Antifaschismus'; and Hubertus Knabe, *Die unterwanderte Republik: Stasi im Westen*, Berlin: Propyläen, 1999, 121–52, 461–70; Mader, *Geheimnis*, 103–5, 122, 206–9, 313–14, 402, 407.
34. Hueckel to WvB, 6 November 1968, and reply, 22 November 1968, in Ger. Rep. 299/160, NWHSA/ZSK; Dembling phone interview, 29 July 2004. After Mader, the most important previous scare was in 1965–66, when *Paris Match* received protest letters from French Dora survivors over a flattering profile of von Braun and his center. See Neufeld, *Von*

- Braun, 408–9, and the sources cited, notably von Saurma to WvB through Slattery, 2 May 1966, in file 227–8, WvBP-H.
35. Dembling phone interview, 29 July 2004; Konopka phone interview, 5 October 2004; ‘Betty’ to Paine, 3 January, re: Dembling call, and Dembling to Paine, 7 February 1969, in Box 32, Paine Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division; ‘Von Braun Evidence in Nazi Trial Sought,’ *New York Times* (4 January 1969), 24; Guilian to Hueckel, 6 and 21 January, Pauli telegram to Hueckel?, 28 January, and Kaul to Hueckel, 31 January 1969, in Ger. Rep. 299/160, NWHSa/ZSK. Kaul anticipated rejection and planned to exploit it propagandistically: ‘Betr.: “DORA”-Prozeß,’ 3 January 1969, in Nr. 244, N2503, BArch Berlin.
  36. WvB deposition, 7 February 1969, in Ger. Rep. 299/160, 69–80, NWHSa/ZSK, and West German newspaper clippings, 8–10 February 1969, in Ger. Rep. 299/104; ‘War Crimes Trial Hears Dr. Von Braun,’ *Chicago Tribune* (8 February 1969), (‘nothing’); WvB to WD, 8 December 1969, in WvBP-H, 423–4 (quote). No February 1969 testimony stories were found in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* or four other American newspapers available at the Smithsonian on Proquest. But the West German press did respond; see the clippings in Ger. Rep. 299/104, NWHSa/ZSK, and Nr. 414, N2503, BArch Berlin.
  37. ‘SS-Führer Wernher v. Braun wird als Zeuge vernommen,’ *Neues Deutschland* (Republik-Ausgabe) (1 February 1969), in Nr. 414, N2503, BArch Berlin (a similar article ran in the *Berliner Zeitung*); Kaul to Pötschke/ZK SED, 12 December 1968 and 4 February 1969, in Nr. 244, N2503, BArch Berlin; Mader to Lamberz/ZK SED, 25 March 1969 (quote), in UOM/BDW, Produktionsakt DgB.
  38. J. Mader, ‘USA-Prometheus mißbrauchte Arbeitssklaven,’ noted in Abt. Agitation document, 12 January 1972, in Teil 2, 549, MfS-ZAIG 10227, BStU, and ‘Strippel belastet W. von Braun,’ 26 July 1973, in Teil 1, 224–5 of same; ‘Wernher von Braun gestorben,’ *Neues Deutschland* (18/19 June 1977), in Nr. 414, N2503, BArch Berlin (the same ADN story ran in the *Berliner Zeitung*).
  39. Bernd Ruland, *Wernher von Braun: Mein Leben für die Raumfahrt*, Offenburg: Burda, 1969, 233–7; Albert Speer, *Erinnerungen*, Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1969, translated as *Inside the Third Reich*, New York: Avon, 1970; Manfred Bornemann and Martin Broszat, ‘Das KL Dora-Mittelbau,’ in Martin Broszat, ed., *Studien zur Geschichte der Konzentrationslager*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1970, 154–98; and Manfred Bornemann, *Geheimprojekt Mittelbau*, Munich: J. F. Lehmanns, 1971; WvB to Grösser, 18 November 1971, in file 427–7, WvBP-H. On the 1992 controversy, see Johannes Erichsen and Bernhard M. Hoppe, eds, *Peenemünde: Mythos und Geschichte der Rakete 1923–1989*, Berlin: Nicolai, 2004, 10–12. Grösser and WvB also corresponded about a two-part television play broadcast on the ZDF network in August 1971, but it is not clear how critical that film was.
  40. Neufeld, *Von Braun*, 474–5; ‘German-Born NASA Expert Quits US To Avoid War Crimes Suit,’ *New York Times* (18 October 1984), A1; ‘Road to Departure of Ex-Nazi Engineer,’ *Washington Post* (4 November 1984), 1; Hunt, ‘US Coverup of Nazi Scientists,’ and *Secret Agenda*; Bower, *Paperclip Conspiracy*.





COLUMBIA zeigt:

**CURD JÜRGENS**  
**VICTORIA SHAW**

in der CHARLES H. SCHNEER-F. A. MAINZ-PRODUKTION

# • WERNHER VON BRAUN •

»ICH GREIFE NACH DEN STERNEN«

mit **GIA SCALA • HERBERT LOM** und **JAMES DALY**

Drehbuch: JAY DRATLER nach einer Idee von GEORGE FROESCHEL, UDO WOLTER,  
HEINZ-WERNER JOHN • Regie: J. LEE THOMPSON • EIN COLUMBIA-FILM

FOTOPRATZ HEIDELBERG

Plate 5 The West German version of *I Aim at the Stars*, released in fall 1960, probably sparked East German author and Stasi collaborator Julius Mader's (1928–2000) research into Wernher von Braun's Nazi past.

Source: Courtesy of Columbia Pictures. 'I Aim at the Stars' ©1960, renewed 1988. Columbia Pictures, Inc.