

The map at left outlines the occupation zones of Germany. The white rectangle corresponds to the map below, showing the Harz Mountains area, where the Nazi missile secrets were found.

How I found the Nazi missile secrets

MAP BY HERB WILEN



BY VLADIMIR SHARINSKY

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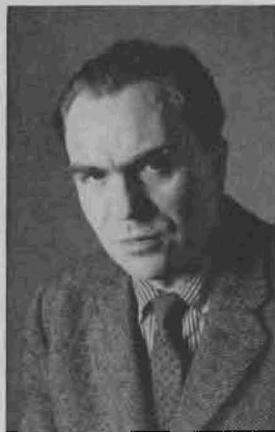
At that time, I was a lieutenant colonel in the Red Army. I was working in Berlin for the "Special Committee" of the Soviet Government. Formed in late 1944 and headed by Georgi Malenkov, the committee was charged with removing factories, manufactured goods, raw materials, livestock, farm machinery, fertilizer, crops, laboratories, libraries, museums, scientific archives, engineers and scientists from all of Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union, after years of devastating war, was in desperate need of such items and experts. It also wanted to make sure that Germany would never again be a military and industrial power.

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How

MAP BY HERB WILEN

I found the Nazi missile secrets



Vladimir Shabinsky

By VLADIMIR SHABINSKY
as told to
ELLSWORTH RAYMOND

A onetime electrical superintendent of a Leningrad shipyard, Vladimir Shabinsky served three years as a Soviet reparations officer. In 1947, he fled across the iron curtain. He is now an American citizen and an editor-writer for Radio Liberation, which broadcasts to iron-curtain countries.

Ellsworth Raymond is an associate professor of government and U.S.S.R. area specialist at New York University. He served on the staff of the U. S. Embassy in Moscow and is the author of numerous articles on Russia.

A LOT OF PEOPLE were surprised when Russia hurled its *Sputniks* into space ahead of America. I was not. Twelve years ago, before escaping from the Soviet zone of Germany, I had watched Russia get a head start in the race for long-range missiles. I still can't understand why America stood by while Russia gained rocket superiority.

Driving deep into the Third Reich at the close of World War II, the U. S. Army captured the provinces of Saxony and Thuringia. Several

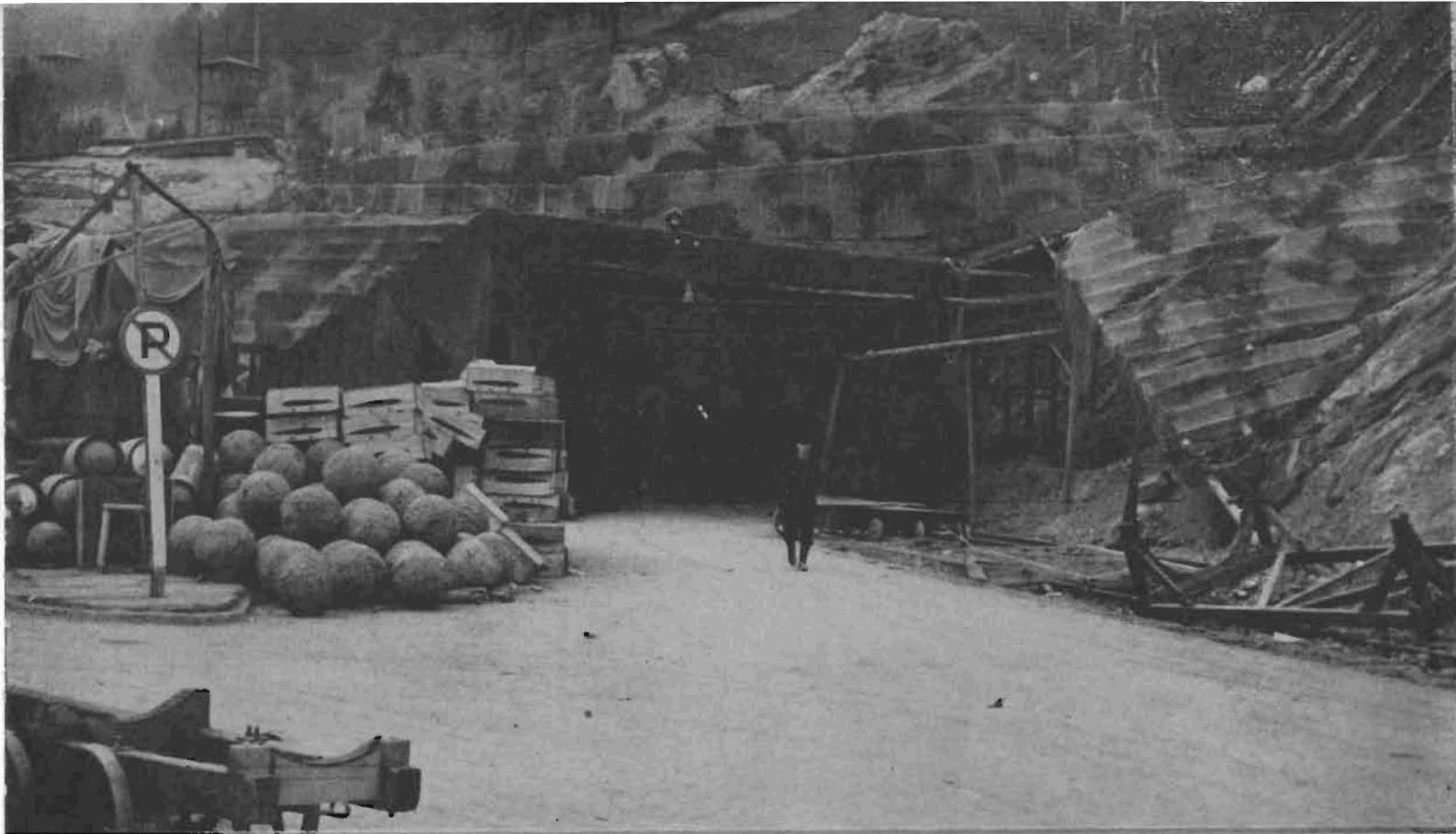
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When the Americans left Saxony and Thuringia, the Berlin staff of the Special Committee ordered me to evacuate a cement plant from the city of Nordhausen. Since the committee had 70,000 greedy agents operating in East Germany, I moved fast to claim this plant for my branch, the Ministry of Building Materials. I entered Nordhausen on the heels of the withdrawing Americans. My reparations team consisted of a major, a first lieutenant, my chauffeur, Nikolai, and myself. We spent the first night in Nordhausen. The next morning, we drove four miles north to a hamlet called Dora, where the cement plant was located. The plant was disappointing, almost too small to be worth shipping to Russia. Nikolai and I decided to drive around Dora while the major and the lieutenant inventoried the machinery. We rounded a bend and suddenly came upon 100 steam shovels in the shadow of a mountainside. This was a real find, since Hitler had sent most German excavators westward late in the war to build the "Atlantic Wall." Russia needed steam shovels desperately. I knew Moscow would reward me for discovering these scarce machines.

The steam shovels were parked near the mouth of a large tunnel, into which ran a railroad track and motor road. We drove in, and saw other tunnels leading off to the side. Suddenly, our auto headlights revealed railway flatcars loaded with what appeared to be enormous naval torpedoes. These silver cigars were about 45 feet long and more than five feet in girth. Upon closer inspection, we realized they were not torpedoes. By accident, we had blundered into the Nazi arsenal for V-2 rockets.

In a side tunnel, Nikolai found a partly assembled V-2. Curious,



Entrance to underground V-2 factory was discovered by author accidentally. A U. S. Army photographer took this photo ten weeks before Shabinsky arrived.

he poked into its maze of electric wiring. I shouted: "Don't touch it! Maybe it's mined. We could be blown to hell! Let's get out of this trap!"

packed in boxes labeled: "U.S.S.R. To the NKVD of the Volga-Don." Many workers and engineers of the rocket plant were found around Nordhausen

Outside, a major turned to me. "It's stranger than the most secret German weapon, and the Americans left it for us. Americans are not bad fellows, but somehow too trusting." I recalled the Soviet orders for looting West Berlin: "Don't leave our allies a bed to sleep on!"

Picking up the major and lieutenant at the cement plant, we drove to Nordhausen at top speed to tell the Soviet commandant our exciting news. He seemed stunned by our report.

That evening, Nordhausen's mayor entertained all Russian officers in the city. He told us that the Dora factory was the sole V-2 assembly plant in Nazi Germany. American and British bombers had flattened wartime Nordhausen, trying to curb V-2 production. They never found the cave factory from the air. But when U. S. troops arrived, they discovered and explored the underground arsenal.

Next morning, the Soviet commandant and all 20 Special Committee officers in Nordhausen toured the cave. Local Germans served as guides. The factory had two parallel main tunnels, each a mile long, connected by 62 smaller side tunnels. In all, there were 12 miles of wide underground passages. The cave was two to three stories high in places. In one main tunnel, the Nazis had manufactured V-1 ram-jet missiles; in the other, V-2 rockets. No bombs could harm this arsenal; it was 1,000 feet underground.

I counted more than a thousand machine tools for rocket production. Everything was in complete order, as if the plant had shut down for the night. Storehouses were filled with spare rocket parts, alloy steel, copper sheets and the most intricate radio-directional equipment. Contrary to my fear, nothing had been mined by either Americans or Germans. A Soviet colonel laughed and said: "The Americans gave us this. But in five or ten years, they will cry. Imagine when our rockets fly across the ocean!"

While we toured the underground factory, Soviet police troops arrived. Evacuation of "secret armament" was their responsibility, and they were none too happy about our inspection. Fortunately, I was allowed to remain at Dora to remove 30 of the steam shovels, so I saw the V-2 plant depart for Russia. Every piece of machinery, every spare part, every scrap of raw material, every rocket (complete or incomplete) was carefully

supervised the operation, said the Americans had left almost a complete set of V-2 blueprints in the cave, plus designs for larger rockets, including the intercontinental A-9/A-10.

Meanwhile, in the city of Suhl, the Americans had struck a truly ironic note. Though sparing the Dora rocket plant, the withdrawing troops had blown up the Sauer hunting-rifle factory. In wartime, the plant had manufactured nothing more deadly than army revolvers.

A Major Dobronravov, on my reparations team, gave me a party-line explanation: "Americans blew up this little factory because its product, a famous hunting rifle, is in sharp competition on the world market with British and American hunting arms. V-2's are not sold on the world market, and therefore are not competitive goods. The main thing in the West is trade."

Most of the top German rocket scientists left Nordhausen with the U. S. Army. Yet by combing East Germany, the Soviet police found some space experts. Others were shanghaied from West Germany by bribery, blackmail, threats or outright kidnapping. I saw a Nazi rocket expert leaving Berlin for Russia. He, his wife, children, mother, dog, cats, furniture and belongings were carefully loaded on a Soviet plane, as if he were a Red VIP. At first, German rocket specialists were sent to a Leningrad suburb named Sestroretsk. There, the chief German scientist received a free house, free food, a private automobile and the ruble equivalent of \$2,500 per month. As early as 1946, many V-2's were being fired in the U.S.S.R. And the Soviet war ministry was boasting that Russian long-range rockets would be "tremendous in a future war." "Russian" rockets? I could not help connecting the boast with the plans for Hitler's intercontinental rocket that the Americans had left at Dora for Russia's use.

Returning to Berlin, I attended a Russian military party. We drank toasts to the capture of the V-2 plant. And a lieutenant colonel named Taranov shouted: "What fools these Americans are!"

For the story on how the United States let the missile secrets get away, turn the page.

How we let the missile secrets get away

By PETER VAN SLINGERLAND LOOK Staff Writer

A SERIES of fuzzy directives is to blame for America's costly blunder in letting the Soviet Union get Germany's missile secrets. The Communists did not get all of the basic German research on missiles. But what they got was enough to contribute perhaps 15 to 20 per cent to the launching of their *Sputniks*.

With hindsight sharpened by a dozen years' developments, it is now clear how we bungled. Here, carefully gathered from the best sources, is the sequence of events that allowed the missile secrets to come under Russian control.

Early on the morning of April 11, 1945, tanks of Combat Command "B" of the 3rd Armored Division rumbled through the heartland of Germany toward the town of Nordhausen. Their goal was a meeting with the Red Army on the banks of the Elbe River. Meanwhile, Col. John C. Welborn, heading the northern element of the Combat Command, got a report that alerted him to "expect something a little unusual in the Nordhausen area." What he and Col. William B. Lovelady, commander of the southern element, found was indeed unusual. At a spot four miles north of Nordhausen, Lovelady says, they came across the entrance to a tunnel in the side of a hill. Nearby were "a lot of V-2's stacked up." Lovelady questioned some civilians, who told him that the Germans were working on "fantastic things in an underground factory." The two officers notified Col. William A. Castille, their intelligence chief. He passed the word

through channels to Ordnance Technical Intelligence teams working behind the front lines.

A few miles away, men of Combat Command "B" discovered the remains of Nordhausen concentration camp. Colonel Castille recalls that "bodies were stacked up like cordwood." Some of the 700 survivors (the camp once held 22,000) reported that the inmates had served as a slave-labor force building the V-2's. Their factory was the tunnel. The subterranean arsenal was not only the sole plant in the Reich assembling the weapons that had terrorized London, but also the laboratory where new and more fearful missiles were being developed. The prisoners who had worked on the new weapons had all been "liquidated" to insure their silence before the arrival of the American spearhead.

Sgt. Frank Woolner, of the public-information section of the 3rd Armored, took a closer look at the interior of the underground factory. He describes what he saw as "amazing." He adds, "It was rather crude, not well appointed like other factories. There was a regular labyrinth of tunnels. Some were assembly lines; others, machine shops, laboratories and drafting rooms. That project was supersecret, and it looked as if it had just been abandoned."

In fact, it had just been abandoned—by some of Hitler's top scientists. The story of what they were doing in Nordhausen begins in late January, 1945. They had come from Peenemünde, the rocket-testing station on the Baltic coast, where the V-2 was born. Throughout the war, theirs had been an uncertain lot. Beginning as early as 1930, they had developed a series of guided missiles under the auspices of the Army Weapons Department. Privately, their aim was to build an operative spaceship. Officially, their objective was the construction of the "ultimate weapon," a successor to both the cannon and the bomber. In 1943, before any airplane had flown at supersonic speeds, they were hard at work on project A-9/A-10, a combination supersonic rocket glider with an ultrasonic rocket booster. Of this project, Dr. (then General) Walter Dornberger, chief of Peenemünde, wrote in his book *V-2*, "With our big rocket motors and step rockets, we could build spaceships that would circle the earth like moons at a height of 300 miles and at a speed of 18,000 miles an hour. Space stations could be put into permanent orbits around the earth." This description, written five years ago, fits the first of the Russian *Sputniks* almost exactly. While the first stage was still on the drawing boards and the second stage was undergoing tests, work on the A-9/A-10 was suspended. Hitler ordered the scientists to concentrate on the missile that ultimately became the V-2.

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How Germany's planned super-rocket compares with U. S. missiles*



*According to best available estimates



Slave laborers from the Nordhausen V-2 plant pose for Signal Corps photographers on the day following their liberation.

Partly assembled V-2 in underground plant was left standing thus when German scientists fled.

away. The Germans' work and, in fact, their lives were in jeopardy. They admitted that the war was lost and that they had best surrender to the Americans. They packed everything that was portable, including machinery, models, plans and other documents, and poured highly inflammable rocket fuel on whatever could not be moved. Then 4,000 of them, with wives, children and belongings, left their charred laboratory and started for Nordhausen. They arrived in early February and set up headquarters in the nearby village of Bleicherode Ost. As the war drew to a close, they waited impatiently for the American Army.

Just five days before the 3rd Armored arrived, the SS ordered the scientists to burn all their papers and withdraw to Hitler's last-ditch "Alpine Redoubt." Rather than destroy years of work, Dr. Dornberger and his assistants, including Dr. Wernher von Braun, hid their papers in secret caches throughout the Harz Mountains. Then the SS took 400 key men to the Allgäu Alps at gun point, leaving their families and associates behind.

The 3rd Armored stayed in Nordhausen about 48 hours, then continued its eastward thrust. Right behind the combat troops came Maj. James P. Hamill of Ordnance Technical Intelligence, with a three-man team. Acting on instructions from Col. Holger N. Toftoy (now a major general and commandant of the Redstone Arsenal at Huntsville, Ala.), Major Hamill had a delicate mission: "We knew about the Nordhausen plant long before we took it. The written orders I received indicated that Nordhausen was to be in the Russian zone and that all plans and equipment were to be left for the Soviet. These orders originated at a very high level. Unofficially and off the record, I was told to remove as much material as I could, without making it obvious that we had looted the place."

The question of what was to be done with German industry had been the subject of high-level discussions over a period of years. At the Quebec Conference in September, 1944, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill debated the so-called "Morgenthau Plan" for "pastoralizing" the Reich. In November, 1944, a decree to be issued after the war was drafted by the European Advisory Commission, made up of Russian, British and American representatives (Ambassador John G. Winant rep-

industry as indemnity for the destruction Russia had suffered. There is no record that Roosevelt or Churchill agreed to Stalin's demand. But at Potsdam in August, 1945, the Russian leader spoke of it as a settled matter.

Those were days of crucial bargaining. Russia was bombarding the Western Allies with a series of unfriendly notes accusing us of attempting to negotiate a separate peace so that we could grab a large section of the Soviet zone of Germany. The war was not over, and we were most anxious for Russian intervention in the Pacific. Therefore, we sought to avoid an international incident at all costs.

On April 26, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued order 1067. The order directed General Eisenhower to "preserve from destruction and take under your control records, plans, documents, papers, files and scientific, industrial and other information and data belonging to... German organizations engaged in military research." It was left to Eisenhower's discretion what steps would be appropriate.

Leading rocket scientists credit Major Hamill with a good job, considering the limitations under which he worked. Even though he lacked an accurate parts list, he managed to pack up 100 nearly complete V-2's, together with a large collection of plans, manuals and other documents. He did not, nor could he under his orders, remove everything from the plant. In late May, he shipped 300 carloads of material from Nordhausen to Antwerp. From there, he accompanied his booty back to the U. S.

In June, another team, this one from the intelligence center at Garmisch, paid a last visit to Nordhausen. Their mission was to evacuate the remaining scientists and their families before the Russians arrived. They had barely 24 hours in which to do so. In the process they discovered additional caches of plans, including five trunks filled with Dr. Dornberger's notes, hidden in abandoned salt mines. Later, a civilian member of the team said: "We probably got a complete set of plans, but the Russians probably got a nearly complete set too. You know, with things like plans, you always make copies." Before leaving Nordhausen, they debated blowing up the plant, but since they lacked the authority, they felt forced to leave it to be captured by the Russians a few hours later.

resented the United States).

The decree was signed in Berlin on June 5, 1945, by Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower. It stated: "All factories, plants, shops, research institutions, laboratories, testing stations, patents, plans, drawings and inventions . . . will be held intact and in good condition at the disposal of Allied representatives for such purposes as they may prescribe." The decree did not state *which* "Allied representatives," yet it is known that at the Yalta Conference in February, 1945, Stalin had demanded 80 per cent of German

Dr. Dornberger says some of the machine tools left in Nordhausen were unique in the world. And it is his estimate that the plans for the A-9/A-10 may have helped 15 to 20 per cent in building the *Sputniks*.

Other scientists agree with this estimate, but all warn that we must not underestimate Russia's tremendous engineering achievement. We, too, captured an equal share of the German scientific data, they say; but it was the use to which the Russians put their share, the organization of Russia's scientific resources on a crash basis, that explains their successes.

END

