
The Round Tablette

Founding Editor: James W. Gerber, MD (1951–2009)

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Welcome to the second March session of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.

Tonight's speaker is Brian Crim, author of *Our Germans*. He will discuss the postwar transfer of German scientists and technology that advanced the U.S. weapons of war and eventually led to our advances in the Space Race of the 1960s.

The dark side of science and technology, developing innovative and devastating tools of destruction in World War I (poison gas, submarines, tanks, radios, aircraft, and strategic bombing, ...), was vastly exceeded in World War II. The stunning development of nuclear weapons most particularly stands out. The Third Reich was the greatest innovator in a large number of modern weapons (ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and jet aircraft). Both the Soviet Union and the United States made capturing and exploiting the German scientists and engineers responsible for such advanced weapons a major priority as the European war ended. The advent of the Cold War lent impetus to the rival powers capturing as many specialists as they could. While Nazi war criminals would face judgement after the war, Nazi scientists, however compromised, were made treasured citizens of the United States.

The story of Wernher von Braun and his rocket team's harrowing escape from the collapsing Third Reich into the warm embrace of a former enemy is one of the more exciting and significant moments from the final days of World War II. As the Red Army approached the Peenemünde complex on the Baltic coast, the SS, who assumed control of the V-2 program in late 1944, evacuated personnel and material into the interior of the country. Fearing the SS would rather liquidate him and his elite team of scientists and technicians than allow them to fall into enemy hands, von Braun and his inner circle disappeared into the Bavarian countryside and patiently awaited contact with American troops. It was the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship.

More than the freighters full of equipment and caches of documents recovered from caves and hastily abandoned warehouses, the "German brains" who designed and built the V-2 rocket along with dozens of other weapons in various stages of development

proved invaluable to America's emerging military-industrial complex. The program known as Project Paperclip concluded in September 1947, but its successor programs continued for decades. Between 1945 and 1962, approximately fifteen hundred German and Austrian scientists and technicians, along with their families, came to the U.S. for long-term "exploitation" and eventually employment in the military services, civilian agencies, and related defense industries. Ninety percent of the so-called "Paperclippers" remained in the U.S. permanently.

One thing both proponents and critics of Project Paperclip could agree upon was Wernher von Braun's transactional worldview. Whether he wore an SS uniform or bore NASA credentials, von Braun's agenda was transparent when it came to developing rockets: "We felt no moral scruples about the possible future use of our brainchild. We were interested solely in exploring space. It was simply a question with us of how the golden cow could be milked most successfully." The emerging U.S. National Security State showered the rocket team with the unlimited resources the Third Reich could never sustain during total war. Fortunately, for von Braun, the U.S. military was willing to overlook Nazi connections for results. The US was actively preparing for the next war and seemed perfectly willing to promote the captured Germans over the American scientists who had just delivered victory.

The decade between the end of Paperclip's acquisition phase in September 1947 and the launching of Sputnik in October 1957 seemed to vindicate the German scientists program. The contentious immigration issue and parade of embarrassing revelations related to Paperclip dissipated in the wake of increased Soviet aggressiveness in Europe, the testing of a Soviet bomb, and, most significantly, the surprise invasion of South Korea in June 1950. As the National Security State mushroomed, exemplified by the return of limitless defense spending, the cadre of German scientists working across the spectrum of scientific endeavor assumed enormously influential positions in both the private and public sectors. Now citizens of their adoptive country, the Paperclippers skillfully negotiated the confines of the National Security State armed with security clearances, civil service contracts, and highly paid positions in the burgeoning defense industries.

If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns – contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or coldpatton@yahoo.com

Von Braun's rocket team is certainly emblematic of this trend, but hundreds of other Paperclippers capitalized on their unprecedented access courtesy of forgiving and generous clients. No longer "Prisoners of Peace" living in a state of glorified military custody, the Paperclippers spent the first decade of the Cold War overseeing advanced research and development projects and cultivating the role of the scientist as advocate, a position many found familiar after performing similar functions in the Third Reich. Von Braun's obsession with space exploration required accommodation with both the Wehrmacht and later the U.S. Army. Von Braun excelled at promoting himself, his team, and a space program capable of both expanding humanity's horizons and guaranteeing American military supremacy over a technologically advanced foe.

The justification of US National Security facilitating a blind eye towards research "tainted" by having taken place in an atmosphere of war crimes is a sensitive issue in the present day. Some scientists the US worked with, like Imperial Japan's Lt. General Shirō Ishii the notorious leader of Unit 731 in China, clearly had blood on their hands. The V-2 scientists, while not directly operating Nazi concentration camps like KZ-Dora, nonetheless are tainted by association with Nazi forced labor camps. Conversely are the scientists of the Manhattan Project correctly viewed as accessories to mass murder? The moral conundrums of these events lack clear resolution.

Further Readings:

Brian Crim, *Our Germans: Project Paperclip and the National Security State*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018.

Douglas M. O'Reagan, *Taking Nazi Technology: Allied Exploitation of German Science After the Second World War*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019.

Monique Laney, *German Rocketeers in the Heart of Dixie: Making Sense of the Nazi Past During the Civil Rights Era*, Yale University Press, 2015.

Wayne Biddle, *Dark Side of the Moon: Wernher von Braun, the Third Reich, and the Space Race*, W.W. Norton & Company, 2009.

Michael Neufeld, *Von Braun: Dreamer of Space, Engineer of War*, Vintage Books, 2007.

Michael B. Petersen, *Missiles for the Fatherland: Peenemünde, National Socialism, and the V-2 Missile*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Hans H. Amtmann, *The Vanishing Paperclips: America's Aerospace Secret, a Personal Account*, Boylston, Massachusetts: Monogram Aviation Publications, 1988.

Jim Eckles, *Pocketful Of Rockets: History And Stories Behind White Sands Missile Range*, 2013.

Annie Jacobsen, *Operation Paperclip The Secret Intelligence Program That Brought Nazi Scientists to America*, Little, Brown, 2014.

Announcements:

Vietnam War Roundtable – *Fall of Saigon* (zoom) – May 2021 –

World War I Roundtable (zoom) – 14 Apr. 2021 –

Post-9/11 Roundtable (zoom) – 26 Apr. 2021 –

All: – rdietrich@mnmilitarymuseum.org

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table – 18 May 2021 –

The State of Civil War Roundtables - www.tccwrt.com

- info@tccwrt.com

St. Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - TBD - 715-

386-1268 - rossandhaines@comcast.net

Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble

- TBD - sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com

Civil War Symposium -3 Apr. 2021 -

info@tccwrt.com

Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000

Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345 - 320-616-6050 -

<http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>

Minnesota Air Guard Museum - 612-713-2523 -

www.mnangmuseum.org

8th AF Historical Society of MN, KC Hall

Bloomington, Wednesdays at 1130 -

<https://www.8thmn.org>.

Friends of Ft. Snelling - www.fortsnelling.org

World Without Genocide - 651-695-7621 -

<http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/>

Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN -

Air show - 2022 - 320-564-6644 -

<http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>.

Wings of the North Airshow - Eden Prairie – 24-25

July 2021 - 952-746-6100 - www.wotn.org

Winston Churchill Book Club -

lin.hopkins@hotmail.com

Alliance Francaise 612-332-0436 - www.afmsp.org

Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - 651-338-2717 -

crazyjerry45@hotmail.com

CAF - Commemorative Air Force - 651-455-6942 -

www.cafmn.org

Selim Center for Life Long Learning, UST,

<https://www.stthomas.edu/selimcenter/>

Western Naval Historical Association

info@wnha.net

MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk VA,

<http://www.macarthurmemorial.gov>

National World War II Memorial, Washington DC,

<http://www.wwiimemorialfriends.org>

We need volunteers to drive our veterans to and from meetings. Please contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or coldpatton@yahoo.com

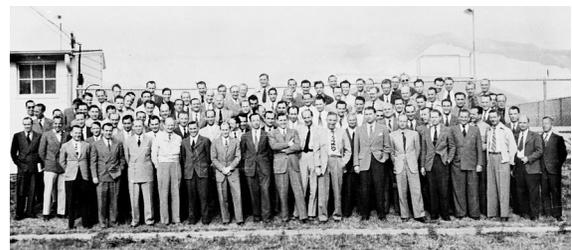
Round Table Schedule 2021

13Apr The Tragedy of Poland: Nazis; Soviets

11 May The "Mighty Eighth" and Victory in Europe

The Round Table is a 501.c.3 non-profit.

We would greatly appreciate your supporting the HCDWW2RT.



104 German Rocket Scientists at Ft. Bliss



First rank, from left to right, General Dr [Walter Dornberger](#) (partially hidden), General [Friedrich Olbricht](#) (with Knight's Cross), Major Heinz Brandt, and Wernher von Braun, [Peenemünde](#), March 1941



Von Braun, with his arm in a cast, [Walter Dornberger](#) (on the left) and [Bernhard Tessmann](#) (on the right) surrendered to the Americans May 3, 1945