

A12/A13 rocket system  
which launched the first  
Earth satellite on 20.12.47.

# OUT OF REITSCH ?

OUT OF REITSCH was published in four parts in 1997 and issued with consecutive copies of ORBIT, a journal specialising in space stamps, postcards and covers dealing with a space theme, hence my numerous illustrations of the spacecraft and protagonists portrayed as fantasy stamps. I have introduced the four chapters with a PROLOGUE. This story was published in ORBIT in 1996 under the title REITSCH FOR THE SKY, and is a natural lead to the circumstances which ensue in OUT OF REITSCH. The basic plot of putting four dwarves into orbit around the Moon is embroidered by my humorous references to the nefarious activities of the secret services of France, Great Britain, Russia and the United States of America. There are a few esoteric allusions, appreciated by ORBIT readers, and V2 rocket enthusiasts, which will undoubtedly be obscure to the uninitiated for which I apologise. All the illustrations are executed by myself.

John Berry, March 2002.

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# Prologue

In 1996 Jeff Dugdale, editor of ORBIT, the journal of the Astro Space Stamp Society, asked me to research, write and illustrate his contention that if German rocket development at Peenemünde had continued for another dozen years after the end of WWII, not only would a satellite have been launched, but a manned craft would have been put in orbit by the end of 1957. I believe that such was the dedication and enthusiasm of the Peenemünde cadre that these hypothetic considerations would have occurred within Jeff's proposed schedule; and the diminutive Hanna Reitsch would have been the Number One choice to be the pilot of the manned spacecraft. This didn't happen; booty and rocket scientists were removed mostly to the United States of America and Russia, and you know what happened...

So this is a fairy story...



In order for the Peenemünde rocket-makers to continue their work in situ, it was essential that World War Two did not finish in April 1945, so that research and construction could continue for a dozen years. So I have to formulate "What if?" scenarios.

A stalemate in the war had to occur - a set of circumstances whereby the Allies held back the final annihilation of Nazi Germany for fear of reprisals of catastrophic dimensions. Two possibilities for this have occurred to me - the spread of deadly germs in Great Britain, France, the USA and Russia for which there wasn't any known antidote or clandestinely constructed atomic bombs located in secret sites in the capitals of those countries, which could be immediately detonated unless The Allies desisted in their "nut-cracker" invasion of Germany.

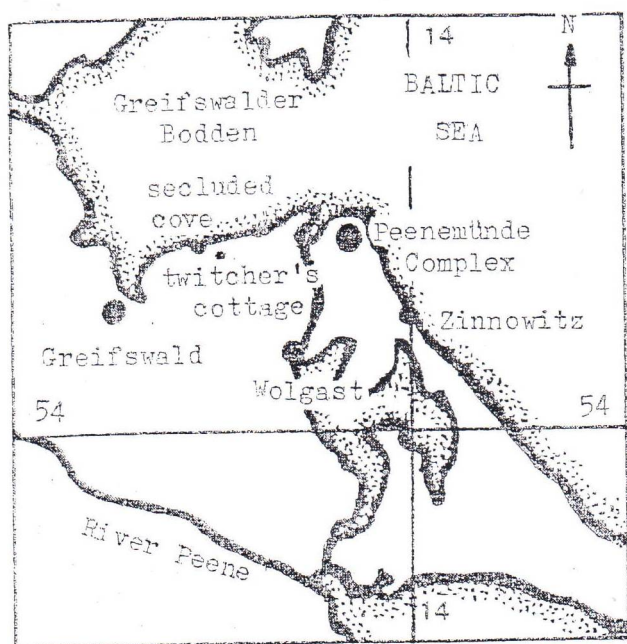
But wouldn't it have been beneficial and wonderful to the whole human race if The Allies had stopped to consider the implications of peaceful rocket development? Just suppose - just suppose they concluded that the Peenemünde area should have been isolated maybe even in a separate state - a sort of condominium, supervised and administered by The Allies and Dornberger and von Braun and their colleagues permitted to develop rocketry with the stigma of militarism removed from the equation....

This latter proposal was the catalyst.

After numerous hurried meetings behind closed doors, the notion to make Peenemünde a separate entity gained strength, backed as it was by the USA, although the Russians demanded that their senior general should be the first Governor, other wise they might decide to take over the territory, as it abutted their part of divided Germany. Sabres were rattled until the Americans intimated that they presently held the hundred most experienced Peenemünde scientists and engineers whom they



would speedily ferry to the USA if a decision was not quickly made. Then, very suddenly, as if the upper echelon of each of the countries had usurped their intermediaries, Peenemünde was declared a State, the boundaries being the Baltic Sea to the east, the river Peene flowing to the west, close to the 54th parallel, then northwards through Greifswald to the Greifswalden Bodden, this coast being the northern boundary. The administrative capital was Wolgast



Map of the Peenemünde area formerly part of East Germany, but across the last 700 years depicted on maps as a part of The Duchy of Slavania, of Pomerania, of The Holy Roman Empire, of West Pomerania, of Prussia, of The German Empire and finally of Germany, as it is again today in 1996.

The Peenemünde staff were now safe from marauding Russians, who agreed that they would not cross the Peene, although a mysterious military vehicle bearing the white stars of the US Army was noted on reconnaissance in the area for several days before the date of the official declaration of Peenemünde's abstract independence. Photographs of the driver and passengers of the vehicle were taken by a British Secret Service agent who had surreptitiously parachuted into the area and moved about for several days before anyone from any Allied country was to enter the area. One of the passengers of the vehicle was identified as being Sergei Pavlovich Korolev, a Russian rocket designer. Also, the Russians complained men in white trench coats and dark glasses had entered Wolgast and booked all the best hotels, paying in US dollars!

Dornberger and his cohorts were promised unlimited finances but given a strict timetable to which they had to work: they had to launch an artificial satellite before the end of 1950. A senior





officer from each of the four countries occupying the rest of Germany would take charge of Peenemünde for a three month period in rota, the Russians being the first controllers. All details of the development at Peenemünde were to be given to each of the four occupying countries, who, the Russians insisted could use the data for military means, if they wished to. Britain was the only one of the four countries who stated they weren't interested in rocketry. But it was emphatically stated in The Declaration of Peenemünde that the new state was totally dedicated to the peaceful research of outer space.

Dornberger had been a Major General in the German Army and the first action of the Russians in their initial period of control was to demilitarise the base, promoting civilian Wernher von Braun to Base Controller, subordinating Dornberger to Officer i/c Stores and Supplies.

The armies of the four liberating countries sent in their engineers to rebuild the complexes, making new roads and reconstructing on-site housing.

Von Braun was keen to show his efficiency and immediately commenced a new Planning Department and was given every assistance to develop, the Russians considering that he needed expert assistance and co-opted Korolev as his second-in-command with the rank of Field Marshall.

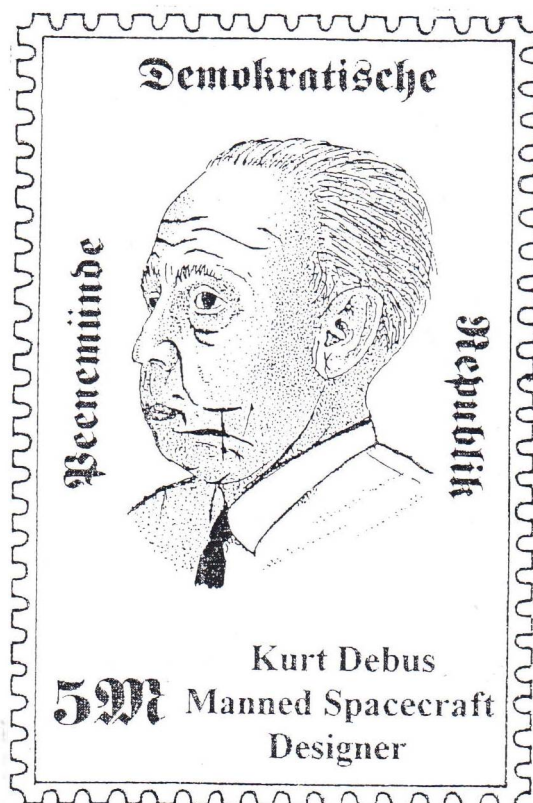
The first postage stamp of the new State was issued on 31st October 1954, a 2 mark commemorative showing the full face of Wernher von Braun,

In January 1946, further major planning alterations took place: Korolev was placed in complete charge of the rocket site and two different Planning Committees were formed. Von Braun was in charge of the Satellite Launching Programme and Kurt Debus was controller of the new Manned Spaceflight Centre. Debus immediately asked for Hanna Reitsch to be seconded to him and she would be required to flight-test a glider version of the projected re-entry vehicle. Korolev agreed to this, provided she was "de-Nazified".

A second commemorative stamp was issued on 1st March 1946 showing Korolev in pensive mood, obviously delighted with his rapid promotion. As befitting his rank, it was a high value 15 Mark value (as illustrated.)

When France took over its three month's tenure, gendarmes appeared on the streets of Griefswald and Wolgast. They looked quite exquisite in their embroidered pill-box hats, striped trousers and ostentatious lanyards. British bobbies refused to perform a similar duty when Britain took over: their representative pointed out that no overtime was on offer or time-off in lieu for extra duties!

Von Braun decided to use his A10 configuration as the basis for his satellite launcher. He and his team had worked on it during 1943 and he resuscitated the plans. A10 was the first stage, using 62 tonnes of nitric acid and diesel oil; when the A9 was activated it would ignite its rocket motor and reach 10,000 km/hr. The new rocket was designated the A11 but von Braun



decided not to construct it, but to proceed with the A12 which would be able to reach a speed of 17,000 mph required to put the A13 satellite weighing a quarter tonne into orbit.

Within one year of commencement the A12/A13 combination sat on the launch pad, the culmination of von Braun's original work in 1943, representing a huge financial commitment by the four occupying countries.

At 6.36 am on 20th December 1947 the great moment came. A specially constructed grandstand was erected a mile from the launch site with the flags of the four countries rampant at the rear of it (as well as on the rocket.) Korolev sat at the centre of the front row of high-ranking spectators, but due to an administrative oversight, Field Marshall Sir Bernard Montgomery, Chief of the General Staff of the British Army had not been allocated a seat and had to watch the launch from a military vehicle parked five miles away.

The launch was a magnificent sight: everything went to perfection, the A13 KOMET slipping nicely into earth orbit where it circled the earth for three weeks before disintegrating over Florida. *The Times*, however, described the satellite as "The Flying Dustbin."

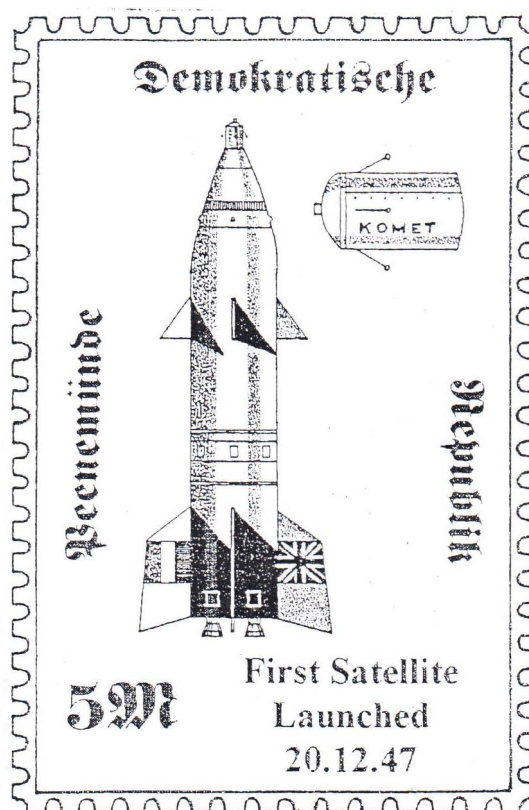
On the following day, the third commemorative stamp was on sale, a 5 mark issue depicting the A12/A13 spacecraft.

Meanwhile, a fantastic spying coup was organised by MI6, the British Secret Service. During the British period of command, MI6 agent Miles Faversham was given a vital administrative role: he collected all the plans issued by von Braun and Debus and sorted them into four piles, one pile for each of the governing countries. He had previously prepared a highly confidential letter to von Braun and Debus over the forged signature of Korolev telling them *not* to sequentially reference their submitted plans. Thus he was able to remove some of the highly important plans from the Russian pile, with them having no facility to be aware of the abstractions. At the same time some of the plans given to the Russians were amended, minor but vitally important changes being made to chemical formulae for propulsion units.

"This is a magnificent example of British espionage techniques, which I was very proud to sanction," stuttered the Head of the Russian Section of the MI6 Kim Philby, who at the moment, unknown to the British, was actually a full colonel in the K.G.B.

After the success of the A13 launch, more transfers of staff took place. Hermann Oberth was re-introduced to the Peenemünde clique and took over from von Braun to continue development of the A13 to launch more satellites. Oberth was now officially known as Timothy Perkins. No one knew why, but after a time he answered to the name without too much hesitation.

Von Braun was transferred to the Manned Spacecraft Centre (MSC) to take over the development of the newly-designated





A14. Debus was totally responsible for the manned capsule designated A15A. (A 5 Mark commemorative featuring Kurt Debus was issued 10th May 1950.) This craft was designed according to Hanna Reitsch's measurements - Hanna being a petite woman. Initially, it was thought that the capsule (the A15) should be small and the world's first astronaut would be crouched for the entirety of the planned eighteen hour flight with her knees almost touching her chin.

The decision whether or not to adopt the small circular capsule was the subject of a fierce debate at a special meeting of the entire staff of the MSC. Sir Hector Smyth, the most senior British representative averred loudly that to have the astronaut so confined was... "unthinkable, tantamount to causing a foetal accident."

No one knew what he meant and as he opined later, "My thuperb pun was losht in the tranthlation" (Did I forget to say he had a lisp?) But he won the day: an overwhelming vote was accepted to have the astronaut seated, which meant that von Braun was required to repower the A14 and he decided to add four boosters to the body of the rocket, between the fins, redesignating the rocket to A16 status.

A one-third size mock-up of the capsule was constructed and carried aloft on the top surface of an RAF Short Stirling in June 1952, Hanna lying prone. It was launched from 30,000ft, performing perfectly, landing at the end of the runway on a 19 wheel skid, which was lowered just before landing.

Seven more successful flights were made over the next two years and on the recommendation of the Stirling pilot, the British awarded Hanna Reitsch the Distinguished Flying Cross, presented to her by Queen Elizabeth II in July 1954 at Buckingham Palace. (Also on this date a 10 Mark commemorative was issued, showing Hanna Reitsch).

Von Braun's first flight of the A16 in October 1955 was a total disaster as it actually turned somersault on the launching pad spewing out clouds of black smoke, causing considerable damage, but fortunately no casualties. Oberth was called in and suggested altering the positions of the boosters. Six months later the A16B performed perfectly, attaining near orbital speed.

Meanwhile the full-size capsule was completed in April 1956. Hanna was delighted with it, and without authority had the legend "Mein Führer" painted on the side of it in large black gothic script. Tremendous controversy ensued, Hanna stating that she would not pilot the capsule if the words were removed but the introduction of the petite French pilot Claudine Sashay as a substitute soon made Hanna change her mind especially when photographs of Claudine showing the hems of her silk stockings as she posed leaning against the capsule were featured on the front pages of the world's newspapers. After consultation, Hanna accepted the capsule should be named "Valkyrie" and this was duly painted on the side of it.



required and seven months later, the great day arrived. It was 14th June 1957. Another grandstand was erected, holding one thousand important personages from all over the world. Once again Korolev sat front centre, black balling the British Prime Minister who with considerable chagrin, as he knew he was honour bound to attend, was smuggled into the grandstand (after a dedicated MI6 operation) disguised as a Lance Corporal in the Pioneer Corps, showing people of less importance than himself to their seats.

At last the moment came. One thousand breaths were held in suspended animation as the count-down finished and a huge plume of grey smoke bubbled under the A16B and it gradually lifted, arching ever so slightly northwards, according with the rotation of the Earth. Soon it was a mere speck, but presently over the loudspeakers it was announced in four languages that Hanna was in orbit.

When she landed, the Russians immediately announced that Hanna Reitsch had been awarded the Order of Lenin...

The last commemorative stamp of the series was issued on 15th June 1957, as shown, featuring the A15A and A16B combination, and the July 1954 10 Mark Hanna stamp was also also re-issued at the same time with a red overprint, with the legend "First Orbital Spaceflight 14.06.57" in each of the four languages of the occupying nations. The French overprint has proved to be particularly scarce, so if you see one, buy it !



# OUT OF REITSCH ?

**A SCI-FI NOVELLA WITH FANTASY STAMPS  
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED  
BY JOHN BERRY**



## **Part One**

# **The Birth of Project Nibelung**

Published with ORBIT, the Journal of the Astro Space Stamp  
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# The Birth of Project Nibelung



VALKYRIE astronaut  
Hanna Reitsch.

The tremendous success of the first manned spaceflight, by Hanna Reitsch in the VALKYRIE capsule on 14th June 1957 was expected to be the climax of operations at Peenemünde. The requirements of The Allies, as set out in the Peenemünde Declaration in 1945 had been triumphantly completed on schedule. Besides also creating the world's first orbiting satellite on 20th December 1947, research had also been carried on successfully to design, construct and build other questing satellites under the direction of Hermann Oberth. The four supervising nations had also received a considerable amount of information about all aspects of rocketry, an absolute mountain of documentation, which the Americans and Russians used to construct Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles of various ranges and massively lethal potency. These nations realised that the work at Peenemünde had been of great economic significance - instead of each nation having to individually create its own rocket programme, the admittedly huge financial layout at Peenemünde by the four nations had thoroughly prepared the requisite basics, permitting the USA and USSR to concentrate on their individual militaristic requirements for upholding their idealistic stances: "Freedom in the West," "Communism in the East."

It seemed that Great Britain and France realised that if the USA was going to provide the West's umbrella, they would condescend to accept this status quo, and therefore amble along the path of rocket development without any priority ambitions whatsoever. Britain's Blue Streaks and Black Knights were merely gestures...."Well, yes, we could build superb rockets, but why compete against the Americans ? Let them do all the work, and pay for it, and we'll purchase their strategic ICBMs and save us lots of time and money."

These, then, were the major considerations under review when a Conference was held in London on 4th/5th February 1958 to decide whether or not to close the Peenemünde base, dismantle everything, a sort of second Carthage, sans salt, a utilitarian consideration, not vengeance, before turning the territory over to East Germany and thence Russian domination.

British Government and Opposition representatives, military and civil representatives of the four occupying countries, and Germans Wernher von Braun, Kurt Debus and Hermann Oberth were present as were the Burgomasters of Griefswald and Wolgast, at their special request. Chairman was The Lord Chief Justice of England, who announced at the start that Field Marshall Korolev had influenza, perchance, it was hinted, something more serious and had suddenly flown back to Moscow. The German experts found it difficult to suppress their wide smiles but these evaporated into clench-teeth scowls when His Lordship opined that perhaps Korolev would be the last Base Commander. "Gentlemen, that's what we are to discuss," he stated, adjusting his over-hanging grey wig with a probing left thumb, a sign appreciated by regular High Court attendees as a signal that he intended to "run a tight ship" - to quote the then current vernacular.

After much discussion it seemed that the consensus was that The Allies wished rocket development to continue, with the firm aim of a Moon-Landing by the end of 1963. If that objective could not be guaranteed, they wished to withdraw from the occupation



of Peenemünde. At this juncture the two Burgomasters vigorously voiced their request for The Allies to continue to occupy the Peenemunde redoubt, because life was good there, and their citizens did not wish to join the austerity of East Germany. A U.S. Senator stated that the U.S. Government firmly wished for an American to be in charge of the base, as the Russians had had a very long, albeit successful tenure. Everyone was surprised that the Russians didn't overly object; surely there had to be a very good reason for this ? Events then moved swiftly to the final vote on occupancy and continued financial support for a further period of six years under existing regulations, when the British and French Governmental spokesmen caused a furore by stating that they would only vote affirmatively if a British and French astronaut were permitted to fly to the Moon in the projected spaceflight.

Hurried consultations took place, spurred on by the L.C.J. when von Braun asked to speak. He stated that the spacecraft was would therefore have to be designed for four persons. The assembly grew quiet as his voice throbbed with emotion,

"It has always been my ambition," he said, "to fly to the Moon, but I will relinquish this desire if my work can be continued at Peenemunde. After all, if the flight is unsuccessful, and the crew cannot return to Earth, I require to be at Peenemunde to plan a flight to Mars by 1985."

He sat down to scattered applause and the "ayes" had it by a huge majority.



The new Base Commander, was Admiral Jake T. Witherspoon III, U.S.N. (Retired,) who certainly wasn't a rocket man, but he oozed personality and enthusiasm and obviously had his orders from the U.S. Government.

He agreed to have a Russian woman as his personal assistant, a sop to the Russians, who were quite happy when she was accepted. She was called Tamara Rakoff and had jet-black hair, full red moué-type lips, a gorgeous face, her high cheek bones accentuated by having her hair tightly knotted at the back. Posing her 38-18-34 figure in bare feet (which she did quite a lot of actually,) she measured 5 foot 4 inches. In short, she was obviously a KGB "honey plant."

Miles Faversham, the M.I.6 agent on site, approached the Admiral with the latest device made by Peter Wright, M.I.5's best scientist - an infallible portable bug finder, to be honed over his office every morning to ensure the Russians ("...or the devious French, Admiral,") hadn't planted a bug during the night. As a test, the C.I.A. had planted their best bugging device in a paper-weight on the Admiral's desk and it buzzed loudly as the Admiral passed the device over his desk. He expressed delight with it, and thanked the British for their co-operation. Actually the British device contained a bug and the British Secret Service monitored every word spoken in that room for several years, voices frequently interspersed with heavy breathing.....

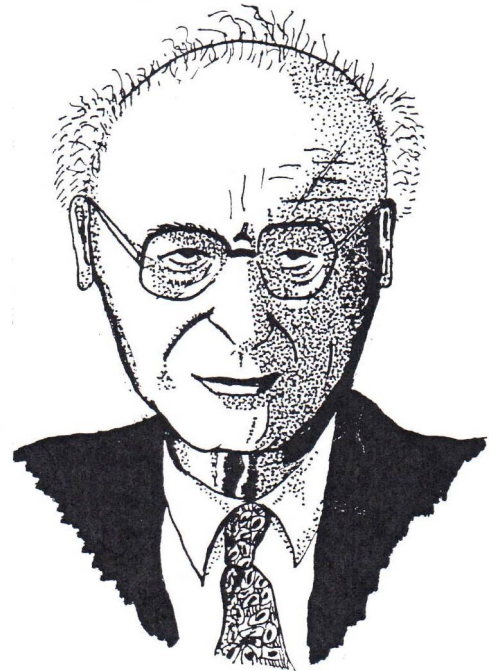
It was fortunate for the British that many of the Top Secret discussions between the German rocket builders took place with the Admiral in his office, although the British did not claim to have unique possession of the facts, as Tamara took shorthand notes of all the conversations.

The Germans were very worried about the strict requirement that they had to take four people to the Moon.

Von Braun was emphatic. "It cannot be done, Admiral. The mass versus power unit



Wernher von Braun  
addressing the London  
'Peenemünde' Conference,  
4/5th February 1958.



Peter Wright, M.I.5.  
Scientist and Senior  
Intelligence Officer.

proviso is on a downwards curve. Four men cannot be carried."

A pause.

"How about four thin women," suggested the Admiral.

"Impossible, Jake," said Kurt Debus, "Four women, in one spacecraft, a recipe for disaster. Moreover they would be too heavy. That's the whole point."

"Gentlemen, it must be done. Think, what is the alternative?"

"Admiral," said Tamara, her voice sounding as if she was sipping honey, "suppose you send up four *dwarfs*?"

"Say," drolled Witherspoon, "that's a real cute idea. I like it! It's...kinda dinky!"

"Yeeees," responded von Braun drily, "it might just work..."

"But, we need a groovy name for the Project," went on the Admiral ignoring Von Braun's comments.

Von Braun, Debus and Tamara almost instantaneously and in unison, chorused delightedly, "NIBELUNGEN !!!"

"Nibble longly," philistined Witherspoon "Gee, that's Great, GREAT!" adding a few seconds later, "But, say, - - - WHY?"



Two weeks later, the national newspapers of Great Britain, France, America and Russia carried advertisements asking for English-speaking adult persons interested in becoming astronauts - "No experience necessary!" being the joke slogan, provisos being that both sexes could apply; they had to be between 3 foot 6 inches and four feet in height with IQs of at least 150 and superior prehensile dexterity.

This was a rather ironic twist compared with the articles and photographs which had previously appeared in the world's newspapers when the news of the promised Moon Landing was announced. Male and female models posed in studies beside 5-ply rockets - the men tall, broad, bronzed with bulging trousers and the women rather like Amazons, scantily clad, with stitches and buttons straining, eyes full of promise, space helmets casually looping their hands.

Two British academics, Professor William Smart and Dr Charles Chipperfield, who were experts on human physiology were drafted in to advise the panel. They explained, and they had to because few people knew much about "midgets," that there were two fundamental types of the condition, achondroplasia and pituitary dwarfism. The first involved stunted limbs, a large trunk, small face and relatively large head. Such individuals, it was explained, are typically mentally alert, sexually normal and physically strong. Their condition was due to congenital failure of bone formation for which there was sadly, no treatment.

Pituitary dwarfs have glands which do not produce enough growth hormone but they have normal or better than normal intelligence and lead healthy lives of good or better than average length. Such people are often referred to as "midgets," or



Admiral Witherspoon  
contemplating the  
significance of 'nibble  
longly.'



"pygmies" and some did "grow" out of it a little if treated with hormones made from human pituitary glands, but such substances were very expensive to make.

The conclusion of the specialists was that neither type of dwarfism was an obstacle to spaceflight, although aesthetically there was a preference for those with "pituitary" characteristics, a view strongly supported by the Germans. Smart and Chipperfield did recommend, however, that each candidate be classed "A" or "P" to help in team selection.

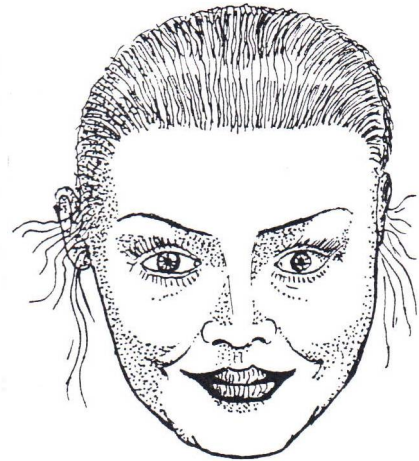
Surprisingly enough, there were very few applicants, but those who applied were vetted by the Allies and files and photographs of the acceptable would-be astronauts were sent to Peenemunde for the final decisions to be taken.

After her successful orbital flight in June 1957, Hanna Reitsch had made it quite clear in an article in the *BERLINER ZEITUNG* that she was not interested in going to the Moon, even if her old friend Wernher asked her. She wanted to continue breaking world gliding records, and the subtle tenor of her announcement seemed to indicate that the return journey might be problematical.

The absolutely gorgeous Claudine Sashay made her move when she read of Hanna's refusal to "go Moon". She was a very close friend of the elderly but apparently virile French General Louis Le Croix, in charge of Peenemunde from 1st April to 30th June 1958. He had promised her that he would ensure, without doubt, that she would be the French representative flying to the Moon. When the pronouncement was made that the four astronauts would be dwarves she became hysterical and was going to telephone the General's wife, but he played his Master Card, saying he would make Claudine Officer in charge of Dwarfs (O.D.) She would select two teams of four and train them, to ensure that in just a very few years' time they would be ready to make the historic journey.

Claudine was delighted with this elevated position, making her a world figure, the world's press her plaything - show them a shapely calf and an ostentatious cleavage and she was on every front page.

M.I.6 instructed Miles Faversham to make contact with Claudine, and take over her affections from General Le Croix, who was in intensive care at the hospital in Wolgast, following a bout of high blood pressure soon after the announcement about Claudine's promotion. Her appreciation of his gesture had been quite effusive.



The gorgeous Claudine Sashay (O.D.)

Miles waited unobtrusively outside her hotel in Zinnowitz, and when he saw her leaving he walked casually past her and dropped his handkerchief. She called him back and handed to him the red and white spotted glory.

"Oh, ta, awfully," he announced, eyes wide in surprise, "my deah, that was my late father's hankie. I would have died if I'd lorst it."

He told her seductively that he would like to buy her a drink later. This was extremely fortuitous for Claudine Sashay, too, because the French Secret Service had asked her to use her charms on Miles Faversham. Somehow, they told her, the Brits were getting Top Secret information about activities at Peenemunde, that no one else could obtain.

"You know what to do," they told her. "He'll know. He's the senior M.I.6 agent on site."

Meantime, Kim Philby had contacted the KGB to inform them that the Americans considered he was a security risk and would not pass secret information to M.I.5 and



M.I.6 unless he was not permitted to view future secret source material. He told them he knew that Miles Faversham had a secret contact he didn't know about and suggested putting Tamara on to him. This direction was duly passed to Comrade Rakoff.

The first principle in spying, and indeed even acknowledged by confidence tricksters, is to appear to have no interest in the target and rebuff advances so as to imply an utter lack of interest, so that the target does not consider itself compromised...gently reel the line in, as it were.

So one evening, Tamara accidentally dropped a small heavily-scented pink and white handkerchief in front of Miles. He picked it up and handed it to her with a flourish - not for her the accepted subtlety of approach.

"Aren't you Miles Faversham, M.I.6 ?" she asked in impeccable English.

"Yes," he blushed, "er, I think I know you. Aren't you the Admiral's, er, assistant ?"

She nodded, eye lashes fluttering.

"Every Sunday morning I go swimming *au naturel* in a little cove I've found on the Baltic Coast. Would you care to drive me over Sunday, and join me ?"

"Oh no," he said in horror, "Mater never allowed me to do that with the opposite, er, people."

Then, out of the blue, came a phonecall from Claudine. "Miles," she said, "I've made the final selection of eight astronauts. Would you like to check my decisions on the English dwarves. I've something else to ask you. Please come to my office now; no one else is about and the Admiral is in traction."

She showed him photographs of eight dwarves, four men and four women - "Although I might not nominate the French girl" she confided, "as she is much too frivolous" - he confirmed her choice of the British astronauts, "Look at this photograph of Olga Gromykin," she said, tapping it. "It reminds me of someone and I cannot think who it is ?"

His heart started to pound and not because of her ministrations.

"Linda Darnell, the American film star," he breathed.

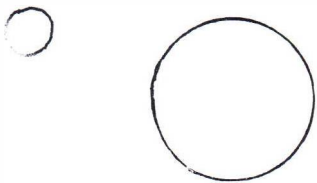
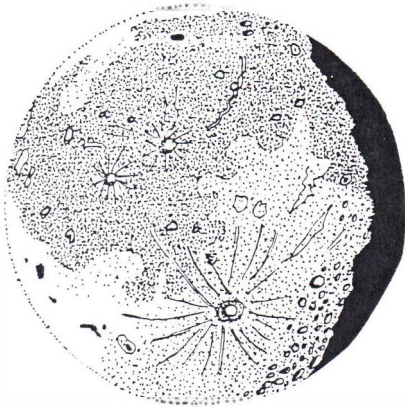
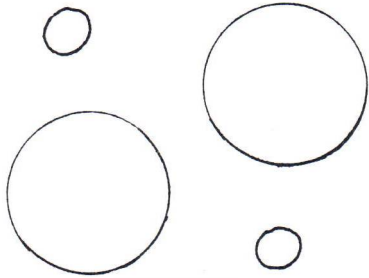
"Yeeees," she said slowly, "Yes, I see what you mean. Thank you for your help. Must you go ?"

"I've got an urgent appointment," he panted, adjusting his dress and leaping for the door.

On the 26th June 1958 a photo-session was held at Peenemunde when the eight astronauts, dressed in pink suits or dresses by Gerald of Mayfair sat with Wernher von Braun, who held a forced smile, teeth clenched, as the shutters clicked.

At the press conference after the photo-shoot, he confirmed that now that he had the vital statistics of the dwarfs he would calculate the weight/propulsion ratio and construct the three-stage rocket, whilst Kurt Debus and Alexander Lippisch designed the unit which would land on the Moon in four years' time.

"And then we go to Mars," he added, proudly.



Training the astronauts commenced. They were measured for space suits, given lectures on all aspects of spaceflight and prepared to take gliding lessons and instruction in powered flying from Hanna Reitsch.

Miles Faversham sat in his hotel room and pondered deeply on his next move....he had recognised the Olga Gromykin look-alike....it was more than a mere resemblance....Nature had taken away the girl's physical attributes but had compensated by giving her a beautiful face....he wondered why Claudine hadn't noted the obvious likeness....was it his suspect's sister, half-sister, cousin ?

One thing was for sure. He would have to sacrifice himself and go nude swimming with Tamara Rakoff !



One of the American astronauts, Kelvin Porter (a Class A dwarf) had glider and powered single-engine pilot experience, so Claudine Sashay and Hanna Reitsch marked him down immediately as the probable pilot for the Moon ship. Full English speakers among the eight chosen were Harriet Pearson and Mark Allenbury of Britain, Kelvin Porter and Virginia Rusack of the U.S.A. ;Olga Gromykin and Emile Retrouse were reasonably adept at conversational English...Jean-Paul Mureau had passable knowledge of the language but required further lessons whilst Sergei Pushkov was limited to "yes" and "no," not always exhibiting correct usage.

A Course Conference was held, chaired by Von Braun and he indicated that the instructors had four years to produce two crews, from whom the final selection would be made...this prolonged period should ensure they were trained to the peak of optimum efficiency.

The astronauts were all extremely keen, especially when informed of their monthly salary and expenses and all of them performed their training with commendable enthusiasm.

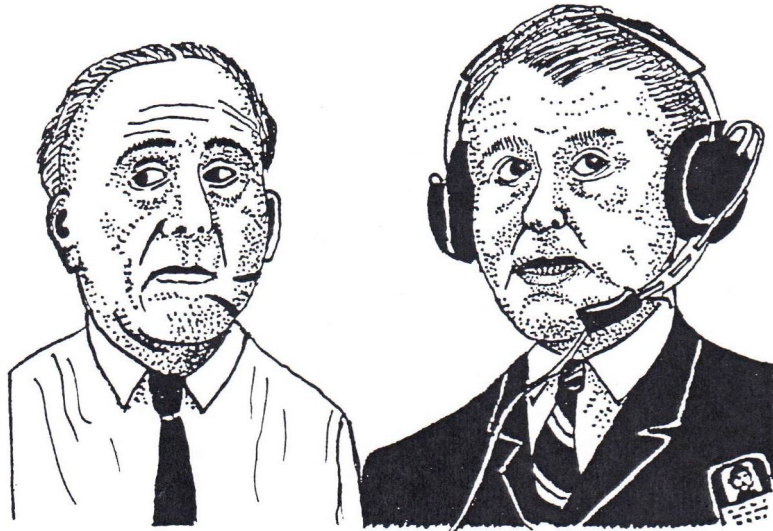
Miles Faversham went on leave to his mother's country estate in Kent, and during this period went up to London and received detailed instructions from M.I.6 masters that he had to conduct liaisons with Tamara Rakoff and Claudine Sashay, both of whom held important positions within the upper echelon of administration at Peenemunde.

Alexander Lippisch and Kurt Debus were joint heads of the design team for the Moon Landing Vehicle (MLV.) Lippisch had worked with Hanna Reitsch at the glider testing organisation - the D.F.S. in the Thirties and he also studied rocket propulsion in the Twenties. He worked on the tail-less Messerschmitt Me 163, the glider version of which had been tested by Hanna. The 60-year-old professor was selected as Chief Designer because of his belief that in aircraft design the body of the flying machine should incorporate up to 30% lift, permitting a corresponding reduction in the wing area. The MLV was based on this concept. During periods of inactivity before the selection of the astronauts, the Design Team had decided that the MLV would orbit the Moon and then gradually descend to the flattest landing area by reverse thrust. After the astronauts had landed and performed minor tasks, the MLV would blast upwards, using little power in the air-less state, then orbit the Moon before leaving its gravity field to return to Earth. None of the designers wanted the MLV to land by parachute, instead requiring the craft to land on a specially lengthened air-strip at Peenemunde.





Wernher von Braun, Hermann Oberth and other recently recruited ex-V2 technicians prepared six designs for the launch vehicle and second stage A17, A18, A19, A20, A21 and A22 - all featuring various numbers of rocket engines and boosters, the final decision to be made when the weight of the MLV and its required performance was known.



Kurt Debus and Wernher von Braun  
Peenemünde, 1958

In other words, as Admiral Witherspoon opined as he was wheeled into his office one morning, "everything's coming up roses." And, of course, we all know from bitter experience that in such completely euphoric circumstances, frustration is forever lurking in the background. Miles Faversham was soon to create a world-wide sensation and upset the delicate equilibrium of Project Nibelung by revealing a devastating subversion that rocked the Peenemunde Administration.



Miles was trolling in the bar of Tamara's hotel at Zinnowitz when she came into the bar in a revealing outfit and crossed over to him. There was a sudden silence as she did so and the chink of glasses and ribald conversation only recommenced when she sat down facing Miles.

He tossed down a couple of double whiskies. "My deah," he drawled, "is the swimming offer still open?"

"Of course, day after tomorrow....can you make it?"

"Yes, I'll pick you up in my jeep at, say, eight thirty."

"Sure, and listen Miles, don't bring anything. I'll supply the hamper, and remember, no bathing costume is required. O.K.?"

"O.K.!" He downed another double.

"Shall we discuss further details in my room?" she breathed into his ear.

"Nunno, Tammy, see you Sunday morning."



She came out of the hotel exactly on time. She carried a bulging army rucksack and in accordance with the cold wind from the East she wore a heavy pullover, but the wind blew her hair about and she gave Miles a look that would have set off an unexploded bomb. He drove twenty miles northwards and finally she directed him onto a track that turned right at a sandy cover. He stopped on the hard, wet sand.

"Isn't it too cold to swim ?" he asked, hopefully.

"No, this is absolutely exhilarating !"

She stood outside the jeep, quickly divesting herself of pullover, trousers and unmentionables and raced across the sand, leaping aggressively into the huge white-topped freezing waves. She waved encouragement to Miles. Well, he had his instructions.....he slowly disrobed, hands held protectively across his groin and staggered towards the sea. He dipped in a questing toe. Christ ! He thought it had been amputated. He slowly waded in...."the things I do for England"....he shivered...and suddenly a huge leering wave hit him full frontal and threw him on the beach where lay quite inert.

Two Peeping Toms in the sand dune with high powered U-boat binoculars looked at each other, one opining that the body on the beach looked like something that had fallen out of starling's nest.

"Here *she* is, regular as clockwork," said the other and binoculars assumed the horizontal position. She looked down at Miles, whose ribs looked like twin blue xylophones. She feared he was dead, so she lay astride him and pushed his chest in and out. She gave him a prolonged kiss-of-life and suddenly he moved, opening his rheumy eyes,

"Are you Olga Gromykin's sister ?" he asked. He did not know why he said it. He didn't even know where he was, but the thought had been uppermost in his mind for weeks. Her reaction was swift and violent.

"Schweinhund !" she screamed and hit him hard across his gaunt face. She ran to his jeep, pulled on her pullover and trousers and drove rapidly away southwards.

The two observers walked across the dunes to the prostrate body of Faversham and bent over him. They carried blankets with them, used to protect themselves from the cold easterlies whilst "twitching." One of them wrapped his blanket around Faversham whilst the other forced schnapps through his purple lips. Faversham sat up and asked where he was. He was a fluent German speaker, having won a gold medal at Cambridge for his thesis on Germanic Eighteenth Century novelists. Gradually he recovered from incipient hypothermia, which was stilled by schnapps and then put into reverse. He recalled his accusation and the Russian girl's spontaneous report - in German. The veneer had slipped and it all suddenly became very clear to him. The men told him they lived three miles away and he found his strength and accompanied them, swathed in both blankets, rather like a pale Ghandi. It took almost an hour and a half to reach their rural abode, a tumble-down brick cottage with no other residence in view over the fields. He asked one of them to make a telephone call for him - it was two miles away cross country - to dial a number in Wolgast and say that Faversham wanted them to come immediately to their home. Whilst his colleague was away doing this, the other man made Faversham a brownish soup and gave him a hunk of hard thick-crust bread. Faversham told him that when his escort arrived he would give both men 500 West German marks for being so helpful. He felt better and lay back in the uncomfortable armchair, eyes following a mouse running round the periphery of the room; he worked out his tactics.



Tamara Rakoff, Admiral Witherspoon's Personal Assistant.

It took almost two hours for the Volkswagen to arrive with two junior M.I.6 men. They looked at his blanket attire, with a bare leg poking through it, with furrowed brows. He told them to get 1,000 marks from the emergency fund (under the VW's seat) and gave it to the smirking German ornithologists.

He sat on the back seat of the vehicle as it negotiated the narrow roads to the Peenemunde main road eastwards and relayed a message for the front seat passenger to get through to the U.S. Military Police at the Peenemunde base, although he knew if he was correct it was already far too late:

"Arrest Tamara Rakoff and Olga Gromykin as suspected East German spies. Stop all flights to Russia and East Germany. Inform the Admiral of these actions. He will get a full report from me as soon as possible."

He was bathing and dressing at the Wolgast safe-house when the U.S. Military Police telephoned him:

"Both persons missing. Leased Dakota with Russian markings left for East Berlin at 1.17 p.m. with two casualties on stretchers for urgent treatment. Admiral wishes immediate contact."

Reporters from all over the world besieged the Admiral's office the following day and he arranged a Press Conference at 8 p.m. at which he read from a prepared script:

"Due to the efficiency of the British Secret Service, it was revealed yesterday that a prominent administrator, Secretary to myself, no less, and one of the Russian astronauts, Olga Gromykin, were East German spies. It seems that the East German government wished for one of its citizens to fly to the Moon. Their reasoning could be that their territory was being used for Moon Landing operations, most of the senior technicians are German citizens and giving the Project a Wagnerian name was just not enough. The two missing women were sisters from Dresden. The Russian authorities are astonished and mystified by this "nefarious deed" and state that they were "tricked" by the East Germans and I accept this unequivocally. The Russians wish a replacement to be admitted to the astronauts' course and I shall be taking advice on this matter from higher authorities as soon as possible."

Von Braun himself then addressed the reporters, his face was ashen and he licked his lips frequently. He also read a statement:

"I wish to make it abundantly clear that none of the German rocket experts employed at this base had any knowledge of these heinous activities and they wish me to state that they are all dedicated to the planned Moon flight in 1963 with the present astronaut trainees and wish to thank the four occupying nations for permitting design, research and construction to take place at Peenemunde, under my direction."

Urgent telephone conversations ensued between high ranking officials in London, Paris, Moscow and Washington D.C. and it was agreed at 06.38 hrs on the following day that the Russians were blameless in the affair and could substitute a new trainee, subject to acceptance by the O.D., Sashay.

Everyone knew that that this was a pack of lies, but with Russian troops conducting operations on the southern Peenemunde frontier it was thought wise to be circumspect. After all, the Russians had lost face and their cooperation at Peenemunde was required. So within one week of the incident, it was once again "all systems go" at Peenemunde.



Admiral Witherspoon proudly announcing the discovery of a major spy conspiracy at Peenemunde.



(One year later, Miles Faversham was at Buckingham Palace to receive a Knighthood from H.M. The Queen. He wished to be known as Sir Miles Faversham of Sevenoaks.

The Queen stood on the dais and Faversham was called forward. She smiled and said she knew he was in M.I.6 but just how had he trapped the spies ?

"I'm terribly sorry, Ma'am," he replied, "but that is classified material. Documents will be released in thirty years' time and then Your Majesty will be able to read all about it."

Later, he realised he had made a terrible blunder but he stressed he had been instructed. DO NOT TELL ANYONE - ANYONE - ABOUT THIS ACTION.

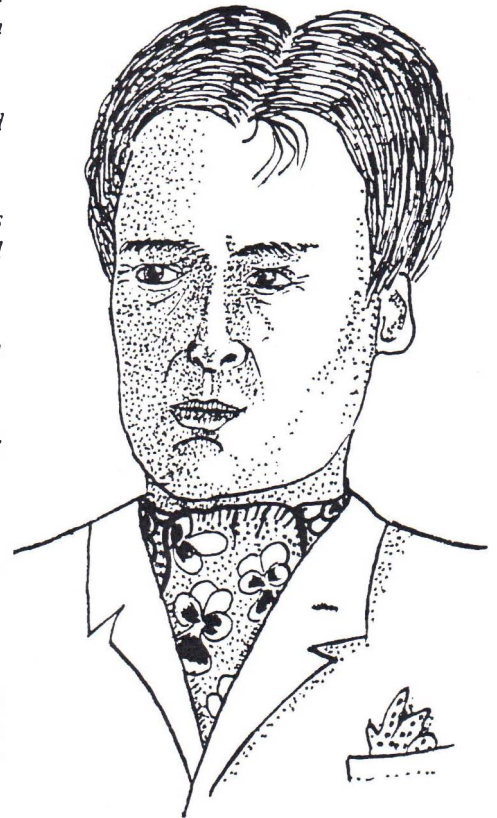
H.M. The Queen was not amused. It was quite plain to see. Her eye hardened as she tapped him heavily on both shoulders with the Sword of State.

"Arise, Sir Miles Faversham of Skelmersdale," she ordered.)



The arrival of the giant B 52 U.S. Air Force bomber at Peenemunde in July 1959 caused considerable speculation to the Peenemunde workers who were not privy to the latest development associated with the "wheel out" of the "Kebus Lippisch IC" (KL-1C) as the vehicle was now dubbed.

Photographs published in the world's newspapers and magazines showed the prototype Moonlander with the designers, Von Braun, Hanna Reitsch, Claudine Sashay with Kelvin Porter sitting on the stubby wing...and incidentally this date 15th July 1959 was the issue date of the 10 M commemorative stamp, showing the KL-1C.



Sir Miles Faversham,  
M.C, M.I.6.



On 26th July 1959 early in the morning, the B52 stood at the end of the runway (still being extended) and underneath it was the KL-1C with Hanna Reitsch at the controls, Kelvin Porter on her right. The giant bomber slowly trundled along the runway, gaining speed, and once in the air wheeled right over the Baltic Sea.



Hanna, veteran of many prototype glider flights checked instrumentation and was in permanent touch with Peenemunde Control, giving readings and other data.

Kelvin Porter had cushions strapped against his body and knowing he was probably the MLV pilot, he noted Hanna's every action, noted her calmness, how she was completely unruffled. He observed how she suddenly crouched forward over the controls when the B52 dropped the KL-1C at 30,000 feet.

She put the craft into an almost vertical descent, rapidly gaining speed, quickly reach 500 m.p.h. and then slowly and it seemed to Kelvin, too slowly, she levelled out. He noted the sweat on Hanna's face and the minute white scar lines, souvenirs of many crashes.

He was alarmed to see her wrestling with the controls, and she put the KL-1C into another dive, obviously, it seemed to him, to build up speed to avoid stalling. She was speaking to Control in German, instead of her pedantic English and soon he saw the green fields of Peenemunde approaching at alarming speed. Hanna shot him a wink and a forced smile. He knew they were approaching the runway too fast. Expertly, she placed the nineteen wheel skid exactly at the end of the runway and scuttled along it. She punched the parachute release and the craft slowed down, imperceptibly at first and he realised she wouldn't be able to stop the craft before they reached the end of the runway. They left the concrete and travelled over the levelled soil awaiting its concrete overcoat, the wheels churned in mud pools and eventually stopped, before tipping gently onto a strengthened wing tip.

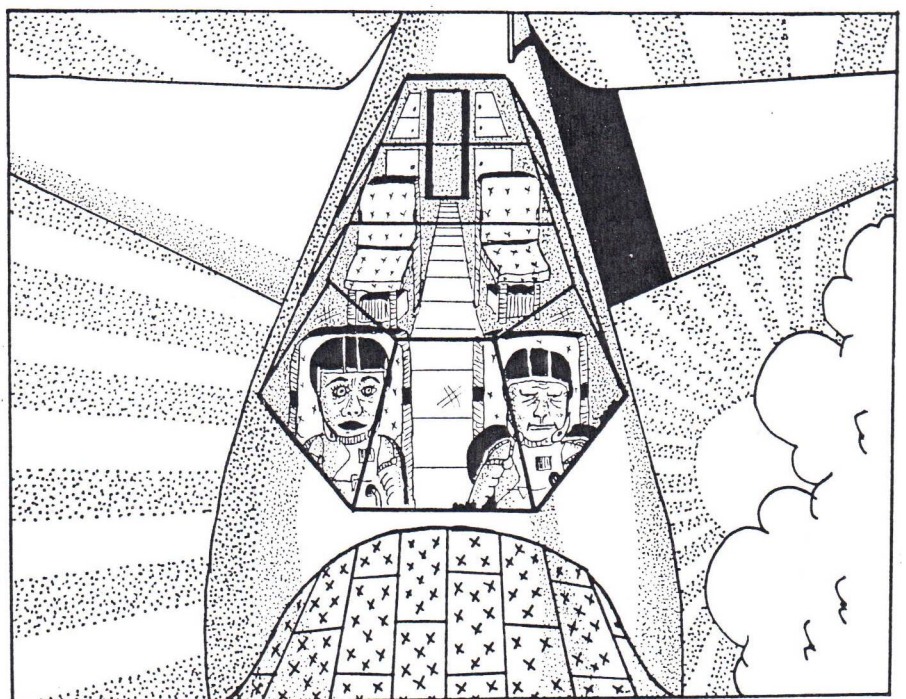
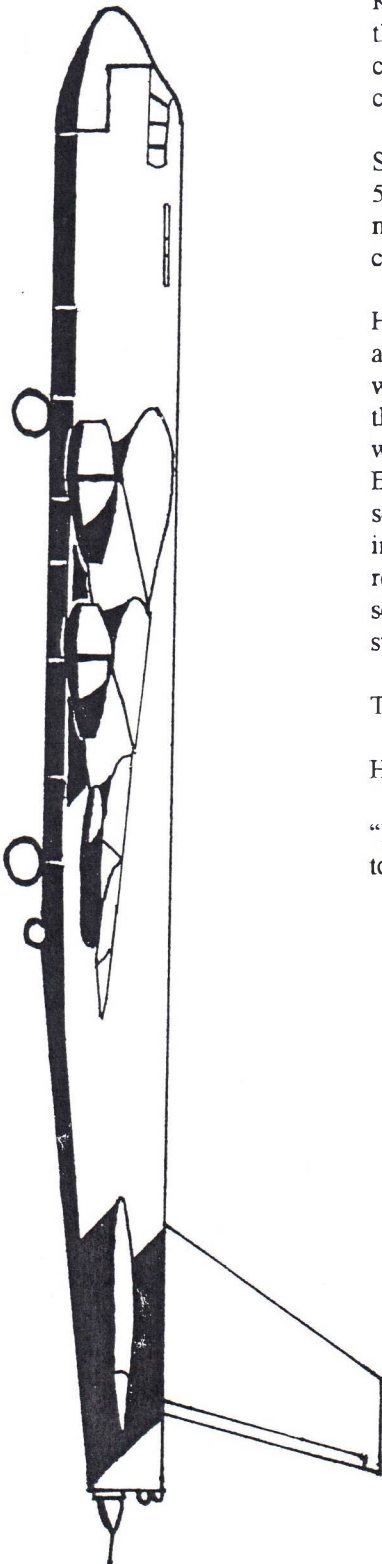
They were unhurt, but Kelvin was drenched in sweat.

Hanna turned to him as the emergency vehicles drove towards them.

"I must make a priority appointment with Herr Debus and Herr Lippisch," she said to him laconically in English.

TO BE CONTINUED

B-52



# OUT OF REITSCH ?

A SCI-FI NOVELLA WITH FANTASY STAMPS  
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED  
BY JOHN BERRY



## Part Two Major Minor Key Personnel

Published with ORBIT, the Journal of the Astro Space Stamp  
Society for March 1997

## 2. Major Minor Key Personnel

*THE STORY SO FAR: Operation Nibelung is to take four dwarves to the Moon by 1962, one from each of the occupying nations, but a major spy scandal involving Tamara Rakoff has been exposed by our hero Miles Faversham. Hanna Reitsch has tested the Moon vehicle dropping from 30,000 feet and is not altogether pleased.....*

No minutes of the stormy meeting between Hanna Reitsch, Kurt Debus and Alexander Lippisch have been traced, but suffice it to say that Hanna was the world's most experienced woman pilot (and very few men had her experience) and undoubtedly she would have put her criticisms in a forthright fashion to the two engineers. Debus was extremely experienced in rocket construction and design - he had been a senior V2 man - but he would have deferred to Lippisch, who at that time was the most forward-thinking designer of manned re-entry space vehicles, a rather unexplored field.

Hanna was concerned with the extreme difficulties she had encountered from keeping the KL-1C from dropping like a stone and would claim that only her vast experience prevented a tragedy.

However, Lippisch could aver that the KL-1C was a prototype, it was entirely new technology - nothing like it had been built before and he appreciated that only Hanna could have landed the craft and been in a position to explain its design faults.

Hanna and Emile  
Retrousse gliding in  
Scheibe Bergfalke-III

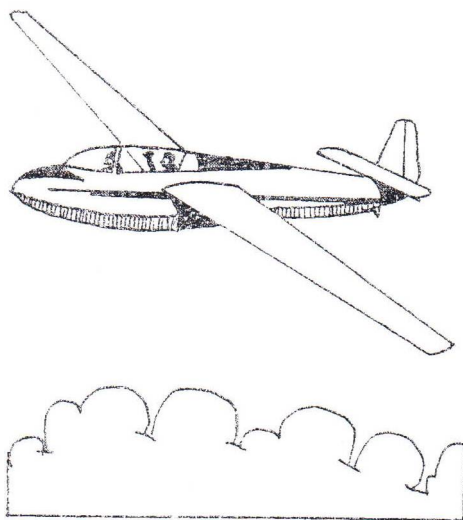
Debus would have concluded by taking the middle road. He had worked with Hanna on the A16B VALKYRIE A15A combine which had put her in Earth orbit; ergo, with Hanna's vast experience and Lippisch's unequalled knowledge, the problem would be solved, or as the cliché expresses the situation so succinctly, it was literally "back to the drawing board" !

Whilst the elderly Lippisch and his team were working an eighteen-hour day on the new design, Hanna was in her element, taking each of the astronauts for long glider flights, including the new Russian dwarf Igor Pavlovich Makarov, three inches over the height requirement, but a qualified ANT 14 bi-plane pilot, and a reasonable English speaker with a vainglorious personality.

The astronauts all speedily obtained their Elementary, General and Advanced glider pilot licences and as Hanna devotees would expect, she broke three world records for altitude, endurance and distance in the new Scheibe two-seater on 5th October 1959. Her passenger was Emile Retrousse. (It will be noted that Claudine Sashay had not selected a female French dwarf !)

"The thermals were there, the best I've ever encountered and I had to take advantage of it - and Emile was keen to be featured in the record books." Emile was not available for comment, as he was receiving treatment for high blood pressure.

Another special day was the 3rd January 1960 when the A22B rocket was launched. It was a complete success. It had twelve boosters and four main rocket engines; six boosters dropped off after forty five seconds, the second half dozen after one minute





and fifteen seconds and it was fuelled by liquid oxygen and hydrogen.

At a hurriedly-called Press Conference, von Braun announced that with a third stage it and an MLV would have been placed in Earth orbit, prior to blasting off to the Moon. "Everything is on line for a 1963 Moon Landing," he announced to loud applause, and a 15 Mark stamp, in vertical format, was issued the following day.

However, Von Braun's confident proclamation had been made in his full knowledge that problems in every department indicated that it could not possibly take place.

His engineers were still the best in the world at space technology, but America and Russia were gaining considerable expertise in the construction of ICBMs. And with America's sophisticated miniaturisation of instrumentation balanced with the construction by Russia of huge rockets, gradually the Peenemünde lead was being whittled away.

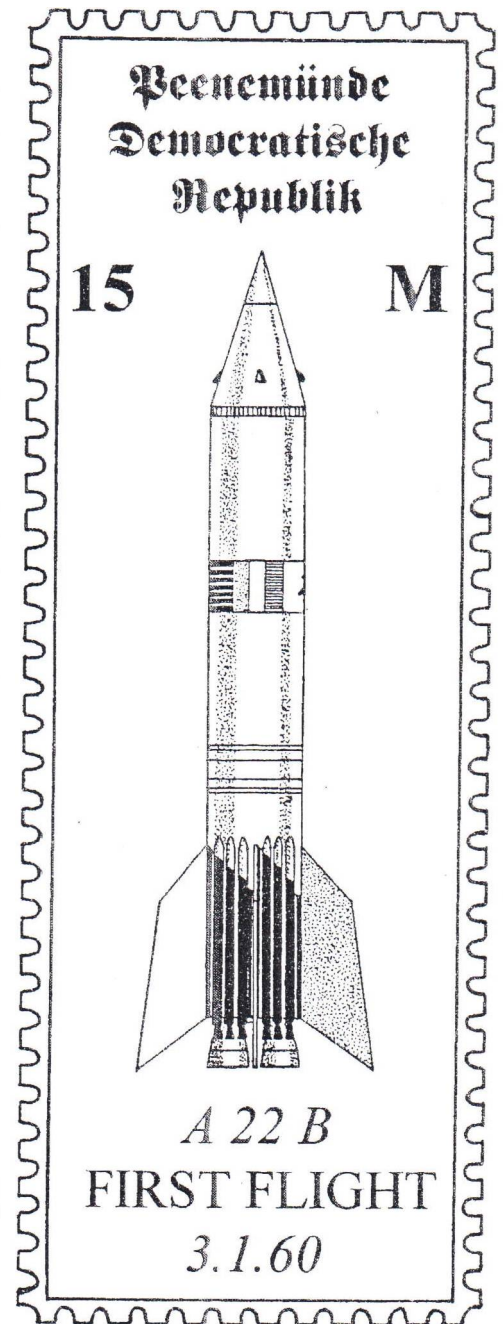
A week later, Von Braun sought a private interview with Admiral Witherspoon. No minutes were taken. (The Admiral now had a new secretary, a French titled lady almost sixty years of age, extremely competent and the Admiral's strained vertebrae had returned to normal within three weeks of Tamara's disappearance.)

However as usual their conversations were monitored by M.I.6 and this is the written account of what was said:

Von Braun	Jake, bad news, I'm afraid
Admiral	Jesus, not another spy scandal !
Von Braun	No. My engineers have reported there isn't the slightest possibility of being able to launch a Moon landing on the date proposed.
Admiral	Listen, Wernher. Suppose we bring in some of our whizz kids from the States. We all know you're the best, but new ideas might assist your.....
Von Braun	(interrupting) Not possible. We did not permit sufficient time for development. We need a least another three years. The dwarfs in retrospect were also a mistake - mine, I admit. You can take miniaturisation too far. Sorry, a bad joke. But I think we can <i>orbit the Moon</i> once and get a sling-back from the orbit and return to Earth. We'll take the four dwarfs and we can do it by '63.
Admiral	This is a definite guarantee ?
Von Braun	Absolutely

PAUSE

Admiral	Best thing to do is to wait six months and continue your work and development, then we'll call a Press Conference. A "good news/bad news" scenario. I'll give 'em the bad news, then you hit with the "good" stuff.
Von Braun	Very good - excellent



Admiral Wernher - not a word outside this office.

Von Braun My team are sworn to secrecy and I am the only person with knowledge of the entire position.

# CLINK OF GLASSES

Admiral To a round-the-world Moon trip in '63.

Von Braun Prosit !

M.I.6 was thrilled with its exclusive top secret information regarding every facet of activity at Peenemünde. Six knew that the secret service organisations of France, USA and the USSR thought that the British had someone as a source almost as high as the Admiral. Indeed, could it be the Admiral ? And yet, Six's knowledge was equally succinct whoever had the three-month guv'norship. Faversham sometimes winced at the way Six flaunted its knowledge, because he knew that he was thought to be the font of it all and it just might be dangerous. The whole world knew that the British Secret Service had been infiltrated by the KGB and at last, via the bugged anti-bug, proof positive existed that at least one unit of Six had not been impregnated. They teased other nations' security forces by frequently announcing little snippets of pure gold dust, in espionage terms.

For example, two days after the secret von Braun/Witherspoon meeting, Hansard reported the following questions and answers at Prime Minister's Question Time:

Mr Kelly, Labour, Sparkbrook:

Will the Prime Minister please report to the House on the present situation at Peenemünde, bearing in mind that the British Tax-payer is contributing £20M annually. Are we getting value for money ?

Mr Gaitskell, Prime Minister

I thank the Hon Member for this enquiry and I am pleased to state that my information shows that four of the astronauts presently in training will go to the Moon in 1963, one of the crew being a Briton.

Mr Kelly

Whilst I wish to pay my personal tribute to the Peenemünde engineers, and I'm sure the whole country will echo this I would further ask 'Is the Prime Minister aware that Professor von Braun does not believe that the publicised schedule can be met ?'

Prime Minister

What the Hon Member prognosticates does not come within the ambit of my information.

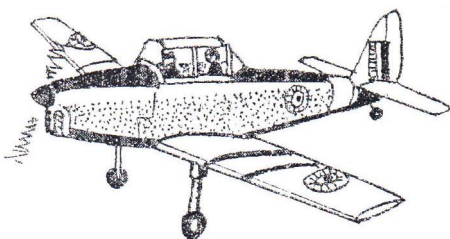
Mr Kelly Thank you.

Meantime the astronauts' training carried on remorselessly. Hanna took them through their initial flying training, using Chipmunks supplied by the RAF, such trainers being very easy to fly. The seats in the planes were heavily padded to incorporate the trainees.



Prosit !

Royal Air Force  
Chipmunk





Faversham met Debus, Oberth and Lippisch monthly to collect their plans and one day, for the first time, he saw Lippisch smiling although he looked haggard

"We'll soon see the B52 again, Miles," he laughed.

The trainees had to make two parachute jumps, one from a tethered balloon, one from a Dakota using a static line. Claudine Sashay was the senior instructress, having performed 247 jumps whilst with the French Air Force. The dwarfs had parachutes made especially for them by the Quilter company.

Every Thursday fortnight, a Mess dinner was held in the Officers' Mess at Peenemünde and Claudine had inveigled the seat next to Miles. He was overly cautious at her presence. She put a hand on his left arm.

"Miles," she laughed in her beautiful accent, "how would you like to join me in the second greatest thrill a man can experience?"

"Actually, my dear. I don't even know what the first is," he grunted.

"Oh, how tremendously witty," she laughed. "We shall have to do something about that. No, how would you like to do a parachute jump from a Dakota with the astronauts - say, tomorrow - how about it?"

He agreed, but he thought it to be an unusual request. Why ask him? True, he liked parachuting and had told Claudine about his course with the Parachute Regiment eight years previously, when he'd got his parachute wings for eight jumps.

At 11 a.m. next morning, he met Claudine and the eight trainees inside the hangar where they were collecting their parachutes and fitting them. Claudine told him rather snappishly that he was late. (Actually he was on time to the second) and handed him his parachute. He looked it over - it looked perfect - but was there any deviation from the norm *inside* the pack?

Claudine spent a few moments with her back to Miles, trying to fit Igor's parachute: the little Russian stood there with eyes rolling as she adjusted the straps between his legs. Faversham picked up *her* parachute from a nearby table and replaced it with his own, before struggling into it. Claudine returned, a wide smile on her face and picked up her parachute.

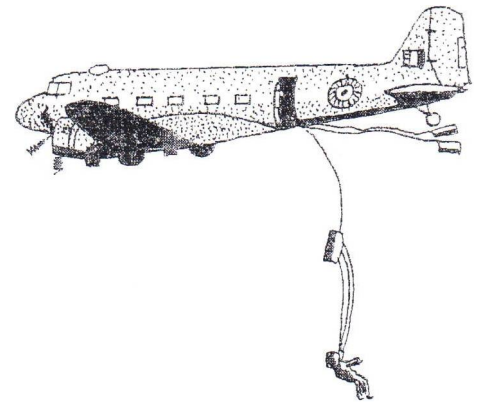
"Claudine, me dear," he said earnestly, "I'm afraid I've picked up *your* parachute by mistake."

"No problem," she smiled and climbed into the harness. They staggered the short distance to the Dakota and at the bottom of the steps leading to the entrance door, she sank to her knees. The trainees and Miles shuffled over to her.

"What's wrong, Claudine?" asked Miles, acting like mad to appear concerned

"I, er, feel queasy," she said, "it's one of those things. Would you go with them for the jump? There's an RAF instructor to assist. The trainees are fully prepared and know what to do."

"Of course I will, Claudine. Go and see the doc." They stood in the Dakota and fixed their static lines to the wire traversing the length of the inside fuselage. The RAF instructor checked each attachment to the wire. Miles beamed at them.



Trainees parachuting from an R.A.F. Dakota



Igor Makarov obviously enjoying the second greatest thrill a man can experience.



"Everything Okay ?"

"We're looking forward to this, Mr Faversham," smiled Mark, the English male astronaut and the others nodded agreement. The instructor told Miles to go first and after ten minutes' flying time the red light came on over the empty doorway and the others queued up behind him. They looked like school children, he thought, then the green light came on, the instructor nodded and Faversham jumped. He loved it, he remembered the instructions, body slack, knees together, roll on your back upon hitting the grass, thump the box on your chest to release the parachute.

They all landed nearby, picked up their chutes and waited for the truck to take them back to Peenemünde. Faversham complimented them on their prowess, then a horrible thought suddenly struck him. It didn't happen, but suppose Claudine had tried a double bluff and thinking he may have been suspicious turned her back to enable him to take the other chute and then he would have had the duff chute...if it was a duff one. It was probably all in his mind, but Six had warned him, "They're out to get you, Faversham."

The roar of reverse thrust was heard within several miles of Peenemünde heralding the 7.33 a.m. landing of the B52 on 4th April 1960. TV cameras and newspaper reporters had crammed the local hotels the day before as the result of information from Professor von Braun, who was due to reveal the brand new design, the KL-2A, a drastic re-design of the notorious KL-1C, using advice proffered by Hanna Reitsch. The main structural differences were the addition of low aspect ratio wing stubs behind the cabin and a large single fin replacing the small twin fins of the KL-1C.

Once again publicity photographs were taken of senior members of the Peenemünde administration standing by the side of the new craft, only this time Hanna was seen shaking hands with the new Russian astronaut Igor Makarov, who von Braun told the media was to fly the new craft on the morrow with Hanna Reitsch.

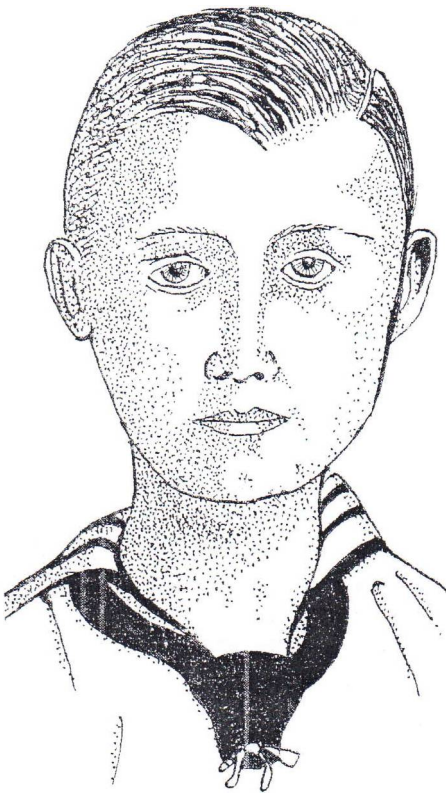
Kelvin Porter and the Russian were revealed as pilots of great ability and an open controversy continued as to which of them would pilot the Moon Landing craft. Russia and France backed Igor, whilst Great Britain and the USA supported Kelvin Porter. Britain knew, of course, that a Moon Landing was off the menu but it remained a positive objective to most commentators. Hanna was asked outright in an interview she did in March 1960 with *AVIATION MONTHLY*. She praised both of them and would not commit herself to a definitive choice, even though it was an open secret that she would make the selection. "We will see how they progress next year in the Earth Orbit phase," she concluded.

This was a "cat out of the bag" since in her replies to deft questioning she had unwittingly usurped von Braun's authority; it was he who always made the most important announcements. He was asked to confirm or deny that Earth orbit phases were the next development of the astronauts' training.

"Miss Reitsch should confine herself to the activities in which she is recognised as the world's master. Nevertheless, it is seen as a rational development of their training; it is a fact that I have planned two Earth orbital flights, one piloted by the American Porter, the other by the Russian, Makarov. The most efficient members of both crews will then be selected for the Moon Mission. That is all I have say," concluded von Braun.

(Note how the "Moon Landing" had now become the "Moon Mission.")

At 8 a.m. on 6th April 1960, the B52 thundered southwards into the wind and thence



Wernher von Braun,  
aged twelve, in 1924.

left over the Baltic Sea: at 25,000 feet the KL-2A was dropped. Hanna once again maintained a continuous flow of information as she piloted the craft; she spoke in her strict English idiom, occasionally transposing a German word, as she had done before in the KL-1C.

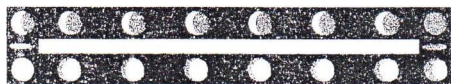
The craft glided much more efficiently and she permitted the extraordinarily keen Russian to temporarily control the ship, which she could not possibly have done with the KL-1C. She tested the craft by putting it into an almost vertical dive; she was very surprised when it suddenly shuddered, but this aberration was brief as the craft levelled out. Her voice had an edge to it as she relayed the event to Control, once again using German vernacular.

She came in from the North, caressing the exact end of the runway with the wheeled undercarriage. She indicated to Igor to punch the parachute release and the craft slowly stopped, tipping over on a wing tip about half a mile from the end of the runway which it must be pointed out had been continuously extended since the KL-1C overshoot.

As they climbed out of the craft, long-range photography showed Hanna continuously hugging the Russian and pushing his right hand up and down as if she was at the village pump. Observers reckoned she had just tipped the balance towards the Russian camp.



A 10M stamp was issued on 7th April 1960, depicting the KL-2A



Whenever a new personality arrived at Peenemünde, the routine was for the Resident Controller to hold a cocktail party for that person: the Russians were not too keen on the protocol, but the three other countries felt it was essential to mould the nations together and show there was a vibrant social aspect to be considered whilst the hard work was maintained.

Sir Percival Appleby, D.S.O., M.C. and Bar, a Major in the Coldstream Guards during World War II was to be the new Controller and on 27th May 1960 forty leading Peenemünde notables met in his spacious office at 3.30 p.m. The dwarfs were present although forbidden to touch alcohol, even though bottles of champagne were being opened with abandon by the Hon Rupert Black-Angelfield, Appleby's aide-de-camp, who thought it great fun to ensure that the champagne bottles were shaken sufficiently to cause minor explosions as the hourglass-shaped corks were put into orbit above the heads of the guests, to cries of "Whoops - there goes another one !!"

Appleby and Professor von Braun were chatting amicably when the Master of Ceremonies, a Staff-Sergeant of the Cheshire Regiment, with a wide red sash bisecting his body, announced the arrival of "Erik Puffkov, Russian Press Attaché, late of the Kirov Ballet."

Puffkov swayed forward and bowed as he shook hands with Sir Percival, "and Erik, permit me to present that famous space engineer, Professor Wernher von Braun."

A handout in the four languages explained that Puffkov had badly injured his groin whilst performing what he hoped would be the world's highest entrechant in *Swan Lake* and despite the immediate application of cold compresses and the best medical treatment available in Russia, he was unable to continue as Russia's premier male dancer. The Russians realised that a man of his international prowess should not be wasted and he took a crash course in journalism and photography and here he was at Peenemünde to let the populace of the vast Soviet Union know how well the Russian astronauts were doing, realising that it was entirely probable that Igor would be the MLV pilot.

Puffkov was tall, muscular, walked gracefully, with his long blond hair parted in the middle, hanging either side of his face rather like yellow race-horse blinkers. Rupert took Puffkov to meet all the guests and eventually he was introduced to Miles Faversham. "Erik," said Rupert proudly, "in a few weeks' time the Queen is knighting Miles; he'll soon be Sir Miles Faversham."

Erik's pale blue eyes opened wide as he surveyed Miles who wore a white linen suit with a blue silk scarf tucked round his neck, with yellow pansies embroidered on it, looking rather like a colour photograph of Pekinese pooches at Crufts.

"Awfully charmed," muttered Miles, trying to avoid Erik's appreciative gaze; they shook hands and Miles struggled to release his fingers from Puffkov's two-handed grip.

"Miles," asked Erik, "do you ever go to the ballet?"

"My mother took me to Covent Garden when I was at school," admitted Miles.

"Mmmmm," mused Erik, "I'm a few years older than you are. Perhaps you saw my *Nutcracker* at Covent Garden - early fifties?"

"Cannot recall," said Miles.

Rupert led Erik away to meet the dwarfs, but as he turned, Erik pushed his hair to one side and muttered a delicate "See you later" to Miles.



Hanna visited Kurt Debus and Alexander Lippisch in their office and detailed the slight shudder she had experienced when pulling out of a dive.

"It's back to the wind tunnel," observed Lippisch, "but this time it will be a short job. If we move the front wings back another metre and apply five percent anhedral and then I believe the craft will perform perfectly." Hanna queried how long the adjustments would take and they promised it would be ready for the middle of July, but she'd heard that before.

Miles visited an antique shop in Wolgast as his mother was accompanying him to The Palace to see him knighted and he wanted to take home to her a special present. He had previously noted an amber brooch about an inch and a half in diameter, with a sort of mosquito trapped inside it, the amber surrounded by silver. He asked the assistant if he could examine it and as he peered at the fossilised insect a seductive French accent greeted him.

"Sir Miles," purred Claudine, "I think you are a nasty man following me around."

"I I I didn't know you'd be here," he stammered, "I'm buying a present for my mother."

"When you come back from London, please come to my hotel room at Zinnowitz and listen to the LP I've brought from France of 'Bolero.' You've told me you adore classical music." She sank her teeth into his left earlobe whilst saying this.

"I'm afraid you might *chute* me," he said, pretending to be playfully stern, "I shall have to *unRevel* your devious mind."

"Come and see me after you've seen the Queen and tell me all about it," she said. He watched her high heels beating a staccato on the pavement..." Two more of my puns have died a natural death, as always," he sighed.



The modified craft, now "KL-2B" was rolled out of the hangar on 24th August 1960 to accompany the usual photographic opportunities.

Von Braun told the press that the Boeing B52 would arrive at Peenemünde on 3rd September 1960 and the two female astronauts Harriet Pearson and Virginia Rusack would fly with Hanna Reitsch. She knelt in front of the KL-2B and put her arms around the girls, (both of whom incidentally were always top of the written exams within a mark or two because they said they studied together.)

"Professor von Braun has permitted me for this one flight only to have the legend **Rhine Maidens** painted on the side," declared Hanna. Everyone clapped, two of the trio hoping the odd one out did not realise that the title was something of a misnomer.

On the 31st August 1960, Professor von Braun flew to New York to feature on a coast-to-coast TV programme with Admiral Witherspoon, who had returned to the USA after his tenure as Controller, Peenemünde.

Denn  
was auch immer auf  
Erden besteht/  
besteht durch Ehre  
und Treue.  
Wer heute die alte  
Pflicht verrät/  
verrät auch morgen  
die neue.

Altbert Stifter

Printed card handed out  
by Hanna: Faversham  
was a recipient.

It translates,  
What earthly things  
prevail, do so through  
honour and truth:  
whoever today betrays  
the old duty, next day  
betrays the new.

A ten minute film documentary, before the interview, showed World War II V2 launches, shots of von Braun with his injured arm "smiling cheerfully because he had escaped from the Russians," and also reporting his arrest and interrogation by the Gestapo, thus making the audience of many millions decidedly pro-von Braun. The rest of the documentary consisted of shots of important activities during the twelve years of the Peenemünde Democratic Republic, featuring Hanna Reitsch's earth-orbit flight on 1957, the selection of the dwarfs ("our Kelvin Porter is most likely to be the first choice for pilot of the Moon Landing Vehicle.") and the successful rocket flights. There was also a brief mention of the dastardly East Germans who tried to infiltrate Project Nibelung until discovered "by the C.I.A." With stirring music from the Richard Strauss "Don Juan" tone poem, the commentator stated that von Braun and Admiral Witherspoon were now going to discuss the "proposed" Moon Landing in 1963.

The Admiral was superb. Twice he wiped his eyes as he described how, some months previously, von Braun, a worried man, had asked for an interview with him.

"Professor von Braun told me that the eight potential astronauts were of very high calibre, especially the two Americans Kelvin Porter and Virginia Rusack. But he told me he was concerned about the timetable he had accepted...he felt that even with the superb engineering skills at Peenemünde he could not unreservedly guarantee the lives of the astronauts if the Moon Landing went ahead. There would be a risk, which he frankly could not countenance - he was dealing with American lives.

I pressed him further and he admitted to me that the Moon Landing *could* take place in 1963, as promised, to appease the occupying nations, to whom he paid tribute for their unstinting encouragement both material and financial but he was worried about the pace of progress at Peenemünde. To justify the accepted timetable meant some corners had to be cut, but the lives of the astronauts were more important than prestige and blind adherence to a timetable. I told him to wait for six months and re-assess the situation. I told him in no way was I prepared to jeopardise one life to maintain an abstract schedule.

Last week Professor von Braun telephoned me and asked me to appear on this programme; he is to make an important announcement, but he wished me to confirm it had not been made spontaneously. Professor von Braun, what do you have to say to the world ?"

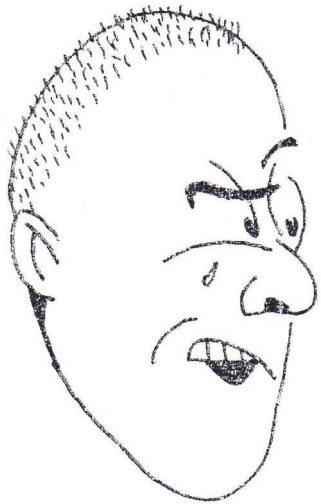
Von Braun cleared his throat and ran his fingers through his greying hair.....

"The Admiral has very accurately recounted our discussion which we had some time ago. Now I find that a Moon Landing cannot be made in 1963. We *could* do it, but at unacceptable cost. However, during the next two years we commence Earth-orbital flights with different crews before making a final selection for the most amazing space spectacular in 1963, possibly late '62 ! At this time I cannot give details, but I'm sure the whole world will be thrilled, amazed and excited with the achievement of four of the astronauts in training; one person from each of the occupying nations will be in the crew. Er, I can definitely state that none of the eight astronauts has any German blood connection."

He gave a wry smile at this superb joke and its hidden implications and the Admiral crossed to him, put an arm round von Braun's shoulder and they laughed heartily.

"So," said the Admiral, "you are confirming that we do not have a 1963 Moon Landing, but instead an outstanding space achievement of almost equal importance."

Von Braun nodded and the TV programmes concluded with the two men showing considerable camaraderie, arms round each other's shoulders with a blasting V2 superimposed as the screen cleared and an advertisement for toilet rolls commenced.



Admiral  
Witherspoon  
adroitly introduces  
Professor von  
Braun to announce  
the decision to  
abort the Moon  
Landing.

After his investiture, Faversham visited Six H.Q. in London and was instructed to visit the Head of Six in his sanctum.

"Our Moscow men have checked out Erik Puffkov," he said, laying aside the unfinished *DAILY MIRROR* crossword, "and by good fortune, our senior Military Attaché is a ballet enthusiast, and was a great fan of Puffkov - the real Puffkov I might add. Our man has discovered that Puffkov Mark One is riddled with arthritis and is staying in a dacha on the Crimea. The Puffkov Mark Two at Peenemünde is quite obviously a KGB man - but what does he want? It's got to be vitally important. So, er, Faversham, for the sake of your country, do what you have to do, to find out." He abruptly removed Faversham with a dismissive finger. As Faversham closed the door, the Head of Six shouted after him, "Oh and Miles, watch your back - literally and metaphorically!"

Upon his return to Peenemünde, Faversham found that his elevated status had given him entree to select little groups of cultured people of all nationalities, string quartet ensembles, poetry readings, discussions on ballet masterpieces etc.

He also found numerous congratulatory messages, including a card he treasured. It was white, with gold crimping round the edges, and a little gold V2 in the top left corner. Also in gold lettering was printed "Professor Wernher Freiherr von Braun." The inked message, in bold upright writing read, "With warmest good wishes, Wernher."

Faversham was having morning coffee in his plan-sorting office in the Peenemünde complex when Erik swayed in without rapping the door and flopped down in a chair opposite Faversham. "Duckie," he preened, "can I come and have English tea with lemon and toasted muffins with you on Sunday afternoon?"

A subtle perfume wafted across the desk and climbed up Faversham's nostrils. "Absolutely delighted, my dear Erik," he forced himself to say, "couldn't be more thrilled." Erik's eyes were the colour of faded bluebells.

"Wonderful, because Sir Miles, I want to give you something you'll never forget." He stood up and held out his hand which Faversham nervously grasped.

"Don't forget the muffins, Sir Miles." He deserved an ovation for his flowery exit.

At 11.35 a.m. on a beautiful, clear day on the 8th September 1960, Hanna and the two female dwarfs, Harriet and Virginia, holding hands to calm down each other for the KL-2B flight, climbed into the craft which was then slung under the belly of the B52. The two girls sat behind Hanna, strapped themselves into the seats designed for small astronauts and held their respective breaths as they watched the wide spread of the B52 above them as it roared down the runway and lifted them over Peenemünde en route to the Baltic Sea.

At the optimum height of 30,000 feet the B52 deposited its load. Hanna dropped the nose to build up speed; she reported to Control how responsive the craft was; the two passengers shrieked with delight as they saw the curvature of the Earth, and the thrill of another steep dive - no shudder, perfect control and a swoop to the end of the runway.

Three parachutes had been installed to slow the pace down the runway, but it still took three-quarters of its length to stop. The three females climbed out of the craft and kissed and hugged each other, telling Hanna how marvellous it had been. Lippisch



Head of M.I.6 -  
Britain's Secret  
Intelligence Service,  
realising that he  
cannot finish the  
*Daily Mirror*  
crossword puzzle.



came over in one of the rescue vehicles and he and Hanna congratulated each other, eyes agleam with the realisation that the craft was now totally space-worthy.

Faversham's two juniors wanted to go to a local football match and he was alone in the Six house in Wolgast when Erik arrived with an unexpected guest on the Sunday afternoon. He held the door open and asked Igor Makarov to enter and he introduced him and Faversham bent down to shake hands.

"This is the famous English gentleman - Sir Miles," said Erik, "you must always refer to him as 'sir' !"

"Of course not, Igor, please call me *Miles*."

The little astronaut selected the most comfortable chair and settled in it like a brood-hen on her eggs. "Is it true that you are a British Secret Service agent, Miles ?" he asked with what Faversham thought was rather undue familiarity, seeing they had only just been introduced.

"I do security work for the British Government on this complex, Igor, but it's really routine. I don't carry a gun, or sneak about in disguise."

"Miles," smiled Erik sweetly, his teeth white and squared like a row of tombstones, "I've told Igor that we Russians always believe that in the afternoon English gentlemen sit in their conservatories and drink tea with lemon in it and eat toasted muffins. Igor didn't believe me and he asked me if he could visit you and partake of these delicacies ?"

"An absolutely brilliant idea," said Miles, with relief, "but of course Igor it is totally untrue. However, here is the tea, your slices of lemon : the muffins are piping hot and the butter is melting - hope you aren't too disappointed."

Igor wolfed down a muffin. "Your mother lives in a castle, doesn't she?" he went on. "If I go to England can I go and stay in it ?" Faversham had to admit the rumours he had heard about Igor were correct; he certainly didn't appear to suffer from an inferiority complex.

"I'm sure Mother would be delighted, especially when you've been to The Moon," answered Miles carefully.

"Do you think Igor *will be* the Moon pilot then ?" asked Erik, wiping a little dribble of butter from his lower lip.

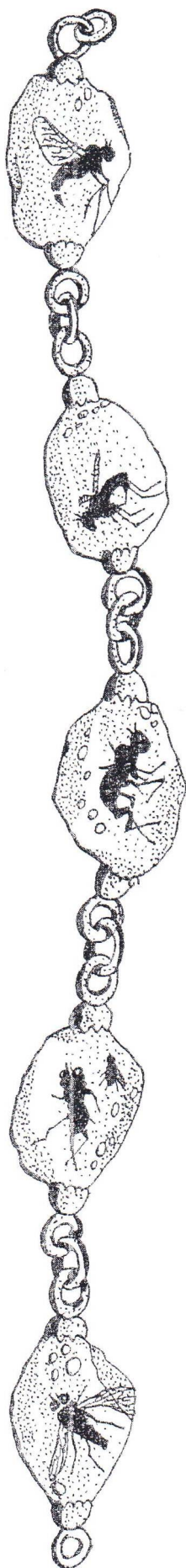
"Well, he has a fifty percent chance, hasn't he ? Anyway, from what I hear, he will definitely pilot an Earth orbit flight next year or early in 1962."

Whilst Igor carried out a sustained frontal attack on the muffins, Erik pulled a long blue suede-covered box from his jacket pocket. "This is for your Mother, Miles," he said, "and give it to her with my kindest regards." Miles was flabbergasted: he opened the box and saw nestling in blue silk an amber necklace and in each of the rounded brown orbs a fossilised insect, one or two with legs askew, but it was a most wonderful object.

"This is gorgeous Erik, but I simply could not accept it."

"Any more muffins ?" queried Igor.

"I'll go and make some for you. I'm really delighted that you like them."



He went into the kitchen and Erik followed. Miles cut the muffins in half and put them under the toaster grill.

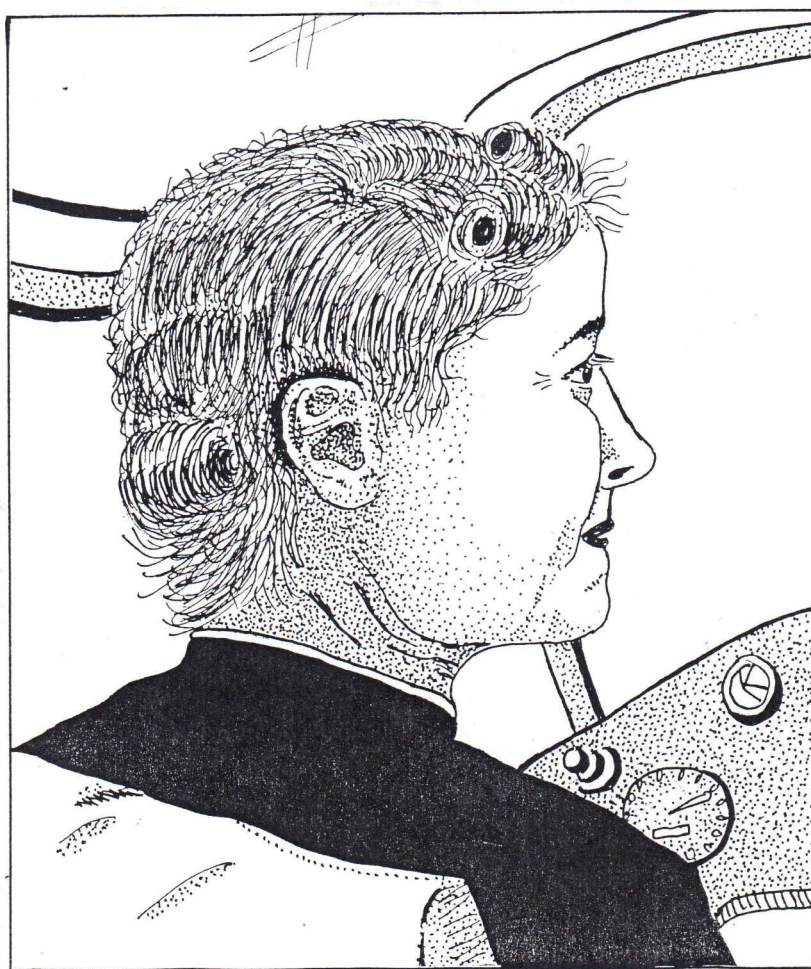
"Would your Mother not like the present, Miles ?" asked Erik and Miles noted tears forming in each exquisitely pale blue eye.

"Of course she would but if I do accept it on her behalf, I must certainly reciprocate."

Erik smiled and took the knife from Miles and buttered the muffins.

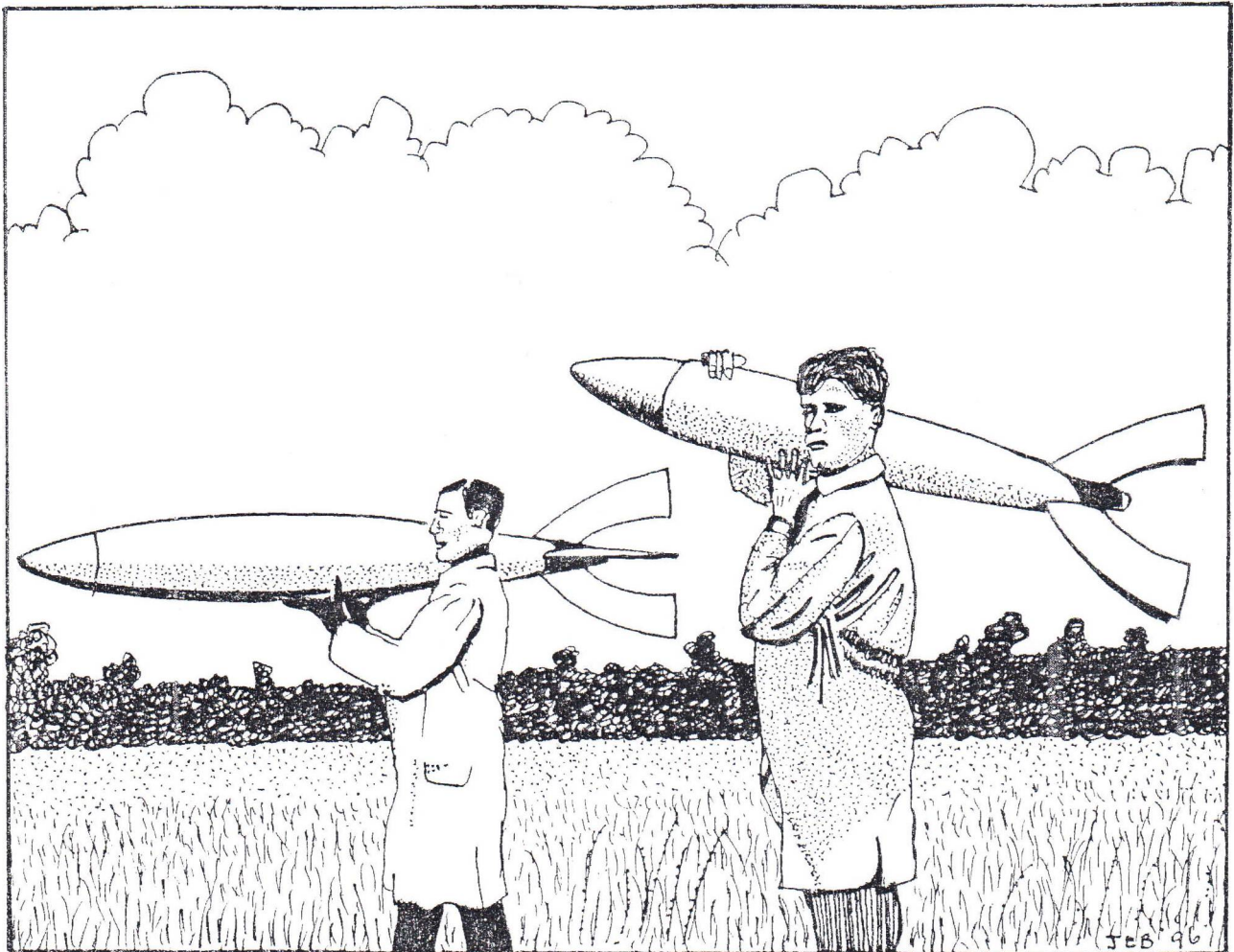
"We shall see," he said enigmatically and handed the plate of muffins to Igor who asked for another cup of tea and suddenly realisation hit Faversham like a physical blow.

TO BE CONTINUED



HANNA REITSCH  
TESTING A GLIDER  
DURING WWII

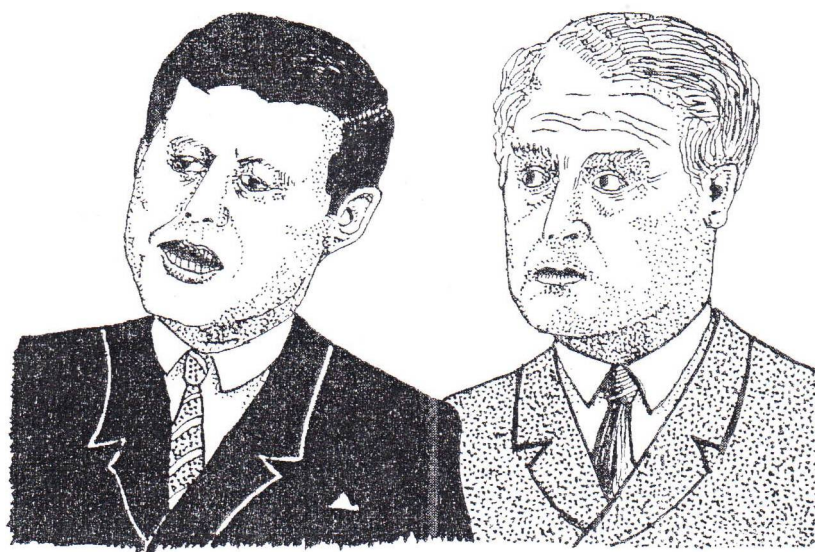
Rudolf Nebel and Wernher von Braun carrying *Repulsor* rockets at the Raketenflugplatz, Berlin-Tegel, in 1932





# OUT OF REITSCH ?

A SCI-FI NOVELLA WITH FANTASY STAMPS  
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED  
BY JOHN BERRY



The historic "Ich bin ein  
Peenemünderer" announcement at Main  
Hall, Peenemünde, made by President  
John F. Kennedy, pictured here with  
Wernher von Braun on 7th May 1961.

**Part Three**  
**Miles Ahead...**  
**And Behind !**

Published with ORBIT, the Journal of the Astro Space Stamp  
Society for July 1997

### THE STORY SO FAR

Subterfuge continued unabated at the Peenemünde rocket base. Sir Miles Faversham, British spy on site, considered that French sex-kitten Claudine Sashay had doctored his parachute. He adroitly avoided death by exchanging chutes with her. She wouldn't use her replacement. New space vehicle testing and dwarves training were on schedule and the Russians introduced KGB agent Erik Puffkov in an attempt to get Russian dwarf Igor Makarov selected as Moon Pilot. Wernher von Braun realised that a Moon Landing was not possible within the time limit but promised "a Moon Spectacular." As part of his plan, Puffkov cleverly compromised Sir Miles with an expensive present for his mother....

## 3. Miles Ahead...and Behind !

Faversham returned home after a hard day at the office trying to doctor the Russians' share of the space plans to which they were entitled, not realising that, alerted by Kim Philby, they were actually getting their plans from the printers, as the first copies off the printing press.

He was reading *The Times* and reached for the buzzing phone.

"Miles Faversham ?" said a throaty Germanic female voice. "Hanna Reitsch here....I'm having a soiree at my flat this evening. Would you like to attend ?"

"Awfully thrilled," he replied.

"I don't understand you. Does that mean 'yes' or 'no' ?"

"I would be delighted to attend."

"Good. Say 7.30," and she rammed the receiver into its cradle.

Hanna's flat was on the complex. He parked his jeep nearby and walked up the drive. Once again he was attired in his white linen suit; it was quite a warm September evening, the East wind temporarily dormant.

She let him enter with a cursory smile. The fourteen guests looked at him, rather rudely, he thought. Von Braun crossed the room and shook his hand.

"Good evening, Faversham," he said cordially, in German. Faversham realised this was not deprecatory but the accepted greeting by an aristocrat. Faversham smiled and wished the Professor a reciprocal "Good evening."

Klaus Riedel clicked his heels and bowed sarcastically. Everyone laughed.

"Sorry, I forgot my monocle," said Faversham in German. No-one laughed.

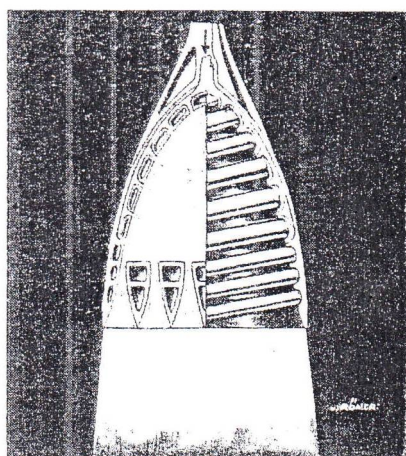
"Sir Miles," said Hanna "this is a German-speaking evening, do you mind ?"

"Certainly not," said Faversham, "I like the language except for those ultra-long nouns. I mean in English, you would be termed a test pilot. So precise, yet in German you are a *wieder-verwertbare Raketenflugzeug*."

"I understand you got a Gold Medal at Cambridge for a thesis on German literature," interrupted Oberth

### Die Rakete

Zeitschrift des Vereins für Raumschiffahrt E.V., Breslau



Breslau 15. Juli 1927

Von Braun, Oberth and Riedel were members of the VfR; illustrated is the front cover of the first issue of *The Rocket* published on 15.7.27



"I'm delighted to confirm that, Mr Perkins," said Faversham.

Lippisch gave a really snide grin.

"I understand British spies educated at Cambridge are homosexuals," he sneered.

Faversham did not know that Claudine was a fluent German speaker.

"Miles is definitely heterosexual," she breathed, straining the fabric on her gownless evening strap. "He's trying to seduce me, all the time."

Faversham was slow in wording a response whilst another surprising German speaker, Erik Puffkov interposed; his hair was combed in the middle and brushed back.

"That's very bad news," he smirked, and everyone laughed.

"You see," said Hanna, "we Germans do have a sense of humour." She handed him a glass of sherry.

"Cheers," he said and sipped it. This was high quality drink, the sort his mother had in the cellar. "However, having actually studied the German language and literature for many years, I am not aware of any German novel a quarter as funny as *Three Men in a Boat*."

Von Braun interrupted. "We didn't come here for a lecture on German literature, Faversham. We wish to hear Hanna's brief talk about her gliding experiences."

Faversham felt the quite noticeable hostility overpower him like a block of Bruckner's symphonic music. He realised that it was not because he was English, or because of his title - they obviously considered he was a British spy and had embarrassed von Braun by reports in the world's press as a result of the Hansard questions.

Hanna sat on a wooden hard-backed chair and everyone gathered around her. Faversham admitted to himself that her discourse was interesting. She asked if anyone had any questions? Faversham felt he should take the initiative.

"Hanna," he observed, "when the French found a camera in your aircraft when you landed on a military airfield in 1935 when you said you didn't have one, were you on a spying mission?"

She pursed her lips like cat's anus and said it was a preposterous suggestion. A few of her acolytes then asked pleasant questions and after a short fidgety silence, Faversham asked her,

"Hanna, you say you sometimes landed on a football pitch whilst a match was taking place. Were you ever sent off by the referee?" No one laughed.

"No, but I was once credited with missing a penalty - I killed the player who was taking one!" Everyone roared with laughter.

After an hour, the guests dispersed and although Miles had had a disastrous evening, von Braun asked him if he would like to go to his house for a drink.

Von Braun accepted a lift from Faversham to his house in Zinnowitz. It was magnificently decorated, the walls of the expansive lounge being covered with World



Erik Puffkov, K.G.B. Senior Russian  
Presse Attaché, Peenmünde



War Two photographs of V2s and Peenemünde and the personalities working there.

He gave Faversham another sherry.

"Miles," he said in German, "that wasn't a Third Reich anniversary whatever you thought. Oberth, myself and other guests hated Hitler."

"I didn't think it was," said Faversham, "and Wernher, I wish to apologise for the stories emanating from London about the Moon landing being cancelled. I give you my word as an English gentleman that it was surprising news to me when I read it in the newspaper."

He had told the truth: the data from the anti-bug bug was automatically transmitted to the Six house in Wolgast and taken to London by the juniors.

"I accept that," said Von Braun. "Now this is what I wanted to talk to you about. I know you have influence with the British Government - please use it to persuade your contacts in London to back the American Kelvin Porter to be Moon orbit pilot."

"If this is important to you, Wernher, because of my respect for you, I'll pass on your request."



"My ultimate objective at Peenemünde is a manned landing on Mars within the next twenty years."

Wernher von Braun in 1960

Von Braun persuaded the United States Air Force to permit the B52 to stay at Peenemünde until he had concluded numerous planned KL-2B flight from the bomber, so that all the trainees could get the required experience and permission was readily granted for this to take place.

On 26th September 1960, in the late afternoon (the normal morning operation being cancelled because of a strong wind,) Hanna carried Frenchman Emile Retrouse and Briton Mark Allenbury to 30,000 feet and gave them the thrill of a lifetime as she carried out a dive from the B52 which seemed unending, before swooping for a perfect landing on the nineteen wheel skid.

The remaining two unflown trainee astronauts, Russian Sergei Pushkov and Frenchman Jean-Paul Mureau were taken aloft on 10th October 1960 and dropped from 35,000 feet and Hanna reported "the KL-2B performed magnificently - as easy as flying the new Scheibe glider."

For the next flight on 29th October, Hanna took Kelvin Porter next to her in the front seat, with Virginia Rusack and Mark Allenberry sitting behind. Actually Harriet had pleaded with Hanna to let her fly with Virginia, but Hanna told her sharply that she didn't require a chaperon. She permitted Kelvin to pilot the craft throughout its flight, watching him closely, but not taking any part in controlling the flight. He didn't hit the end of the runway and but for extensions still taking place, he might have overshoot it, as Hanna had done although in an untested craft. But she knew he had learned his lesson - always aim for the lip of the runway - there wasn't any opportunity to fly another lap.

Faversham was rebuked by Six for not organising a spontaneous affair with Claudine which they wished him to pursue as a matter of urgency. The basic problem was that Faversham's mother had insinuated in his mind that the girl for him was a delicate species, addicted to *petite point*, or pressing flowers, and the less voluptuous the better. He felt inadequate when in the presence of Claudine, with her flaunted womanly attributes. However he had instituted a multi-lingual Six female operative as a waitress in the hotel at Zinnowitz where Claudine stayed. The waitress was

called Margot, and everyone thought she was German. She reported that Claudine's most frequent dinner partners were Erik Puffkov and Louis 'Lew' Fennell, the new U.S. Security Advisor, performing the same duties as Faversham and therefore by implication in the C.I.A.

Margot usually served them at dinner and one night they ask her if she could speak French ? What did they mean she said in German ? Thereafter they spoke in French and one evening they did so in her presence and she recorded one sensational conversation.....

- Claudine ..and if the United States is secretly planning to send a man to the Moon, why not used Kelvin Porter ? He is a competent pilot.
- Fennell ..if he is so good, why do you want our space agency to have him ?
- Claudine ..because he is already trained for the job and if you have the rocketry technology available you might even beat the von Braun mission
- Fennell ..then I'll pass on your suggestion, but I don't understand why you are so keen to give us your best test pilot..
- Claudine ..because we've another one who is almost as good
- Fennell ..you mean the Russian Makarov ?
- Claudine ..yes, I do
- Fennell ..so I get your point...you really think we could get there first with a trained astronaut ?
- Claudine ..exactly, I want the Americans to get there first
- Fennell ..that is good thinking, darling

Faversham got the transcript to Six in London with alacrity.

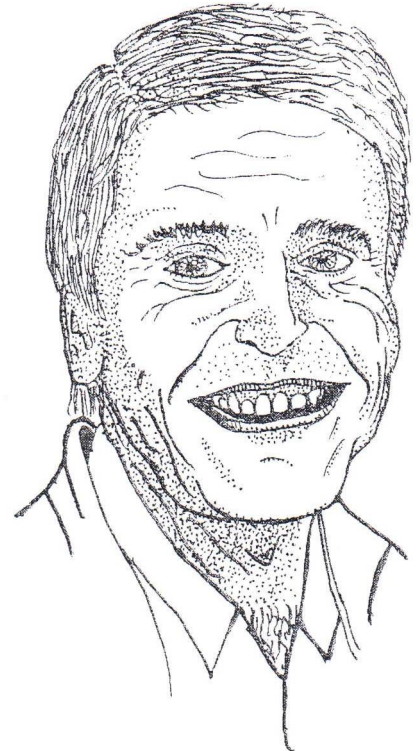
Everything seemed so good at Peenemünde with the pre-space flights; only two more crew permutations to go and every indication was that good fortune would continue.

Hanna took aloft Pushkov, Harriet Pearson and Retrousse; they dropped from 40,000 feet, purposely accepting a slight wind on the ground. This was at 11.10 a.m. on the 7th November 1960. As usual she drove steeply in a dive, almost reaching 600 mph with a magnificent landing with a cross-wind somewhat stronger than anticipated

Finally on 19th December, again at 11 a.m. on a clear but very cold day, Hanna dropped from the B52 with Mureau and pilot Makarov. She permitted him to fly the craft from 40,000 feet and once again did not require to intercede. He was a most excellent pilot, perhaps even too cocksure, without fear, pulling out beautifully from a 650 mph dive and hitting the runway within a yard of the start of it.

The B52 flew back to the U.S.A. on 20th December and the year had concluded triumphantly, exactly on schedule.

The trainees were given six weeks leave, and told to report back to base on 4th February 1961.



Louis "Lew" Fennell,  
C.I.A.



The Baltic area was snow bound for three weeks at the beginning of February and consequently three of the dwarfs were several days late in returning to the Peenemünde base...the two Russians and Porter, additionally snowbound in their own countries.

Von Braun and Claudine Sashay were not particularly concerned about this initially, because the four Earth-orbit flights planned for 1961 and early 1962 were dependent upon a successful launch of the A22C, another variant of the A22 design, this time having four wider boosters instead of the twelve thin ones on the A22B.

A test flight was planned for 23rd March and was unfortunately one month late. However, the launch at 3.25 p.m. on 24th April went superbly.

The schedule was planned to commence with the A22C/KL-2B flight, the KL-2B having slightly wider seating, changeable, tailored to each individual dwarf.

Hanna and Claudine (who was still OD) had long discussions regarding which of the two pilots would accompany Hanna on the first of the new Earth-orbit missions. Both pilots were considered to be equally capable and eventually it was decided to flip a coin, because every argument Hanna put up, Claudine countered it. For example, Hanna suggested Porter on the first flight, but Claudine said this would annoy the Russians, suggesting that Igor was inferior. "So," was Hanna's riposte, "send Igor first."

"Ah," considered Claudine, "But if Igor goes in to Earth-orbit first, it will mean he is second choice for the 1963 spectacular and don't forget, Hanna, we do not make the choice of pilot for this flight."

Hanna and Claudine took their problem to von Braun. He appeared to be somewhat troubled, as if he was also dubious about the possible effects of the Russian or American annoyance if their man wasn't first. He knew it was a stupid situation, but he also knew that the present animosity between East and West was like a powder keg close to a spluttering fuse. He asked the Resident Controller, the redoubtable General Le Croix, to contact the American and Russian representatives, who did agree to accept the toss of a coin. But then the question was "Who would flip it?" It had to be a person of considerable international repute.

The resultant coin-tosser exceeded everyone's expectation.

President John F. Kennedy was shortly to fly to Moscow from Washington DC for high level talks with the Russian President. Louis Fennell got the C.I.A. to put the proposition to President Kennedy : would he land at Peenemünde to refuel and perform the rite ?

YES...word came from Fennell that the President would be delighted to attend.

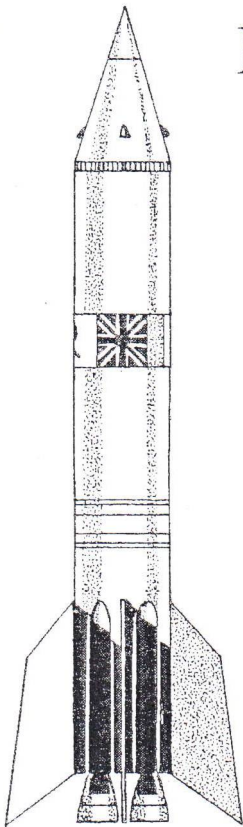
ON 7th May 1961, the Presidential Boeing 707 landed at Peenemünde and President Kennedy was escorted to the stage in the main hall of the complex. The four be-medalled Controllers and their wives were VIPs, then, in order of priority was Von Braun, Hanna Reitsch, Mr Perkins (Hermann Oberth,) Kurt Debus, Alexander Lippisch and Klaus Reidel, and their wives, where applicable.

A police brass band was flown in from East Berlin and they played the American National Anthem with vigour. President Kennedy received prolonged applause and shook hands with the dignitaries and then made a short but telling speech. He was obviously angry....

Peenemünde  
Democratisehe  
Republik

15

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A 22 C  
FIRST FLIGHT  
24.4.61



"It is great pity," he said looking at the expectant masses as he spoke, "that even a relatively minor decision such as to who is the first man to go into Earth-orbit, an American or a Russian, has become a matter of international prestige. After all, Hanna, a German, has already been there...surely it could be expected that the matter could be satisfactorily settled with common sense on both sides. The deplorable situation is that the only way out of this impasse is the toss of a coin. ISVESTIA, I am told, wants to know why an American is tossing the coin ? I say this. I will not toss the coin. Here I have two gold Queen Victoria sovereigns, shrewdly given me by the British ambassador last night. I will now call forward Kelvin Porter and Igor Makarov or in case that statement was controversial, Igor Makarov and Kelvin Porter."

The President seemed surprised at how small they were, but he shook hands with both of them, gave each of them a sovereign, asked them to cup it in their hands and place it on the back of their hands

"Now, do you both understand what is going to happen ? It's the children's game of 'Odd or Even.' Igor, your shout - odd or even ?"

"Even, Mr President," he said.

"Remove your hands from the coin."

He looked at each of them, and, for humorous effect, did a classic double-take.

"Even it is," he shouted.

Everyone in the audience clapped and cheered to see true democracy at work. Igor cupped his hands over his head and scuttled round the stage in triumph. Kelvin Porter didn't look too displeased, having already worked out it would increase his chances of being pilot for The Spectacular.

The applause for President Kennedy was tremendous, prolonged, rafter-trembling and after accepting their unbounded enthusiasm for some moments, held up his hand for silence. He called von Braun over to him, shook his hand firmly, wiping an apparent tear from his eye and declared,

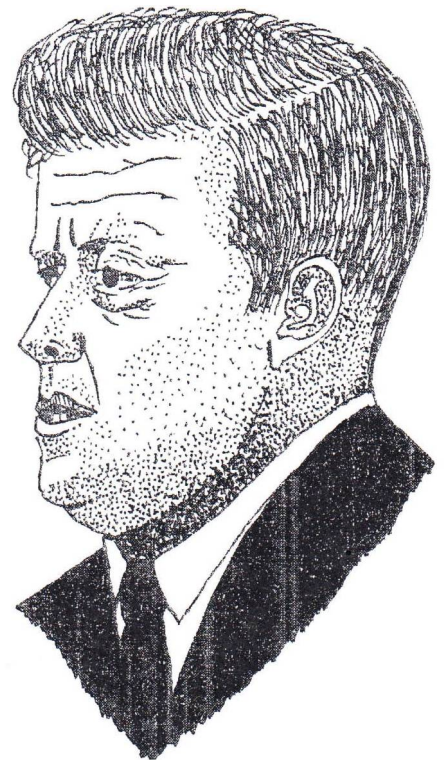
"When the history of Twentieth Century scientific achievement comes to be written I want to say as a free man there will have been no prouder boast than the words - 'Ich bin ein Peenemünderer !'"

The microphone was still functioning as he bent down to talk to Igor, who was pulling at his trousers.

"Mr President," he screamed, "can I keep the sovereign ?"



Faversham had become quite worried after Christmas when he noted slight traces of blood in his urine. He didn't want to report 'sick' for numerous reasons because of the possibility of being replaced if the condition was serious. He didn't feel ill or out of condition and he hoped it was temporary. He sought advice from an aged doctor in Wolgast, telling the man, in German, that he was making the enquiry for a close friend.



"Even it is," shouted President Kennedy.

The doctor laughed. "Tell your friend to drink copious amounts of liquids and learn to play the piccolo."

On 13th June 1961, at 9.25 a.m. almost four years to the day since Hanna Reitsch's first Earth-orbit, the huge A22C throbbed on its pad whilst the two white overalled astronauts were taken up in the lift to the KL-2B.

Once again the world's media was present, hundreds of TV reporters, journalists and photographers, focussing on the two figures, rather like mother and son, waving from the top of the lift before taking their places in the capsule. The count-down was broadcast and on the 'one' clouds of white smoke fizzed from the bottom of the rocket and so sloooooowly at the first, the rocket rose from the pad, boosters roaring defiance....it arched North-Westwards....a white blob....then it was announced that all the boosters had been jettisoned and soon, to everyone's great relief, came the booming message,

"Hanna and Igor are in orbit and Igor is working to her instructions."

Guests with tickets were admitted to the main hall where tables were laid with sandwiches and cakes and biscuits and tea, coffee and lemonade were served. Von Braun and his cohorts were obviously the centre of attention, receiving congratulatory handshakes and re-assuring pats on the back.

Faversham edged towards Lew Fennell...they had nodded to each other frequently but the animosity between the British and American secret services was deep-rooted, because of numerous instances where supposedly top MI5 and MI6 agents were also in the KGB....obviously Fennell had been told to keep away from Faversham.

However, Faversham thought it was time to hit Fennell and the CIA with the actuality of the situation at Peenemünde.

"Hello, Lew," he said with a big smile.

"Hi," answered Fennell, jaws clamped like a sprung bear trap.

"None of my business, Lew, but my advice is - don't take Kelvin Porter for your Moon-Pilot - train your own astronaut," observed Faversham.

"How the hell did you know about the Moon-shot?"

"We've landed one of your top NASA men," lied Faversham.

Fennell reached in an inside pocket, pulled out a leather-bound hip flask, poured the contents into his lemonade, causing the contents to fizz overboard.

"nother thing," drawled Faversham, "totally ignore Sashay, no matter what she says to you. She wants Makarov on the Moon Spectacular. I'm surprised you didn't know that the French are backing Russia."

"Jeeze," said Fennell, his mouth dry. He took another swig and emptied the glass.

"Sashay tells Puffkov everything, and I mean *everything*, I hope you haven't told her too much."

Fennell tapped pockets as if looking for a vagrant heart tablet.

"Cheers !" sneered Faversham, "I don't require any information from you...we know everything."

Puffkov was in his element. He was the official Russian Press Attaché and he supervised the Russian Press Corps, swooping on guests at the reception and Faversham suddenly saw to his horror that he had been surrounded and captured. He knew much more about the Russian language than was revealed in his personal file and consequently what Philby had passed on as information to the KGB was "Faversham has only a schoolboy knowledge of Russian."

Puffkov thrust a large microphone in his face, looking like a vegetable marrow wearing a pullover. His translator was a dark beautiful girl, and, Faversham quickly noted, with a slim figure, not one of the busty girls who frightened him. Flash bulbs were ruthlessly exposed in his face.

"Sir Miles is a personal friend of mine," he told the vegetable marrow, "and Igor and I have visited him socially." He gave Faversham a look which suggested he was now paying for his mother's necklace. "Sir Miles, what do you think of our National Hero, Igor Makarov?"

"He is a likeable chap," answered Faversham, "and he has a good appetite."

The girl translated accurately. Erik pondered for a second.

"Er, what do you think of his prowess as a space pilot, Sir Miles?"

"The fact that he is now in orbit with Hanna Reitsch speaks for itself."

"Is it true that you have invited him to stay at your mother's castle in the English countryside?"

"He did express a wish to visit the castle and I did tell him that my mother would love to see him, providing that she has sufficient warning to stock up the larder."

The translator laughed, but Erik didn't. Instead, he attempted a final plunge.

"Sir Miles, would you say that the Soviet People should be proud of Igor Makarov?"

"Oh definitely...he has been selected from two hundred million people and I have been told that he is a brave and clever pilot and a credit to his country."

Erik left Faversham hurriedly whilst he thought he was ahead...the translator gave Faversham an absolutely ravishing smile and a raised right eyebrow as she was swept along in the tide of propaganda.

"Now this is more like it," he said to himself, "this is the sort of gal I would like to take home to my mother!"

After three orbits, the KL-2B landed at the runway lip at a very fast speed, but the three parachutes ignored the command to release and even the vastly extended runway was insufficient to cater for the vast speed of the spacecraft, which eventually raced through a fence and into a field of growing wheat before stopping. The multi-wheels were embedded in the soil and did the craft did not fall over onto a wing tip.

The two astronauts were not physically injured. Indeed, Hanna had seen it all before, but Igor had blotted his copybook, requiring an urgent change of clothing before the hurried Press Conference.





A 20 M stamp to commemorate the second Earth-orbit was issued on 15th June (They thought about it for twenty four hours.)

The space craft was towed into a corner of the main hangar and a worried group of engineers surrounded it.

"Everything was treble-checked," said Debus. "The parachute release is actually the easiest thing to operate - it was especially designed to be astronaut-proof. It definitely should have functioned. All that happens is a sharp push with the base of the palm activates it and out they should come, like this."

He hit the red knob with the white parachute painted on it and to everyone's complete shock and bewilderment, the three parachutes shot out enveloping several nearby engineers.

Everyone looked at Hanna.

"It's obvious," explained Reidel, "that instead of pushing, it was pulled...hence...nothing happened."

"I can see that now," fumed Hanna. "He made a really superb landing in the circumstances, but I was so concerned with the speed we were rushing down the runway that I shouted 'parachute...quickly...quickly...quickly' but I did not look down to see if he had operated it. He was really tense, but I take full responsibility."

"No damage has been caused to my beautiful spacecraft," observed Lippisch, now prepared to make a joke out of it, "all we have got to do is to get the mud and vegetation removed from the wheels on the skid."

"I shall take him to the cabin simulator for a quarter of an hour every day," promised Hanna, "but he *was* superb!"

On 29th August, Hanna and Kelvin Porter posed for the TV cameras and answered interviewers prior to the last Earth-orbit flight with Hanna as instructor.

This time the U.S. media circus flocked to Peenemünde and sought out suitable interviewees. They looked to Lew Fennell to introduce them to notable personalities and Faversham presumed this would immediately categorise him as being persona non grata so he was surprised when a group of microphone-bearing reporters rushed across to him and thrust the microphones up his nostrils.

"Are you the limey lord?" asked one cigar chewing and smoking reporter, who looked about about as shy and retiring as Genghis Khan.

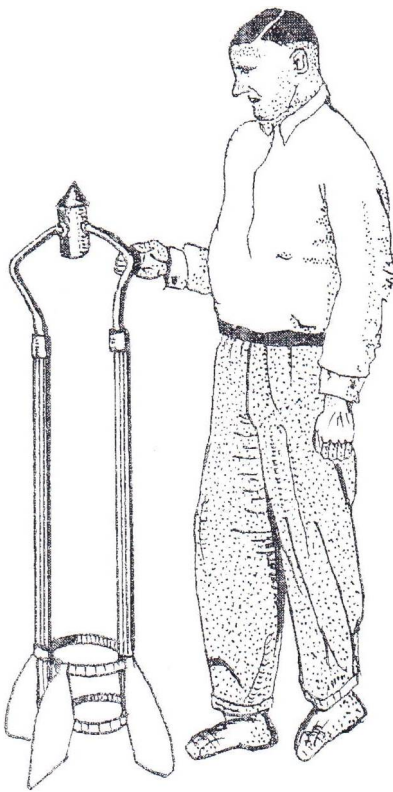
"No, Frank, come over here, I can see that Kurt Debus is free," shouted Fennell, but the posse continued to harangue Faversham.

"What do you think of our guy Porter, your lordship?" he asked giving Faversham absolute proof of the reporter's halitosis problem. Faversham chose not to correct the title confusion.

"Kelvin is a pleasant chap and a clever pilot," answered Faversham, trying to hold his breath.

"D'ya think he'll fly to the Moon in next year's Spectacular?" the reporter persisted.

"Ours or yours?" queried Faversham. The man's eyes seemed to cross in perplexity. Fennell dragged the man away finally, snarling "Bastard" at Miles under his breath.



Klaus Riedel with the Zweistab REPULSOR II rocket, launched on 25.5.31, reaching a height of 61m, and landing 600 m away

and the entourage followed but not before he heard one of them mutter to his colleague, "What did the limey mean?"

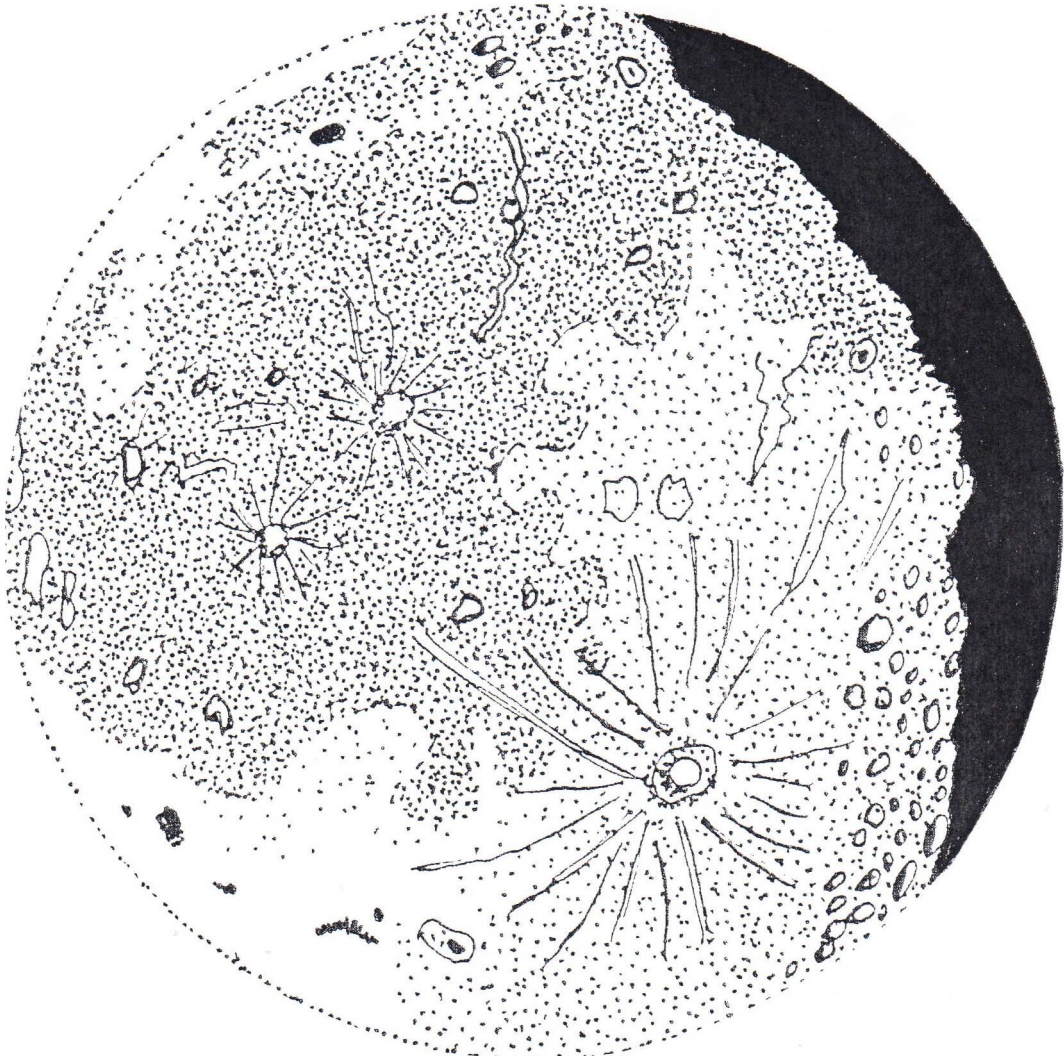
The blast-off at 10.05 was faultless, and followed the usual pattern. Hanna and Kelvin Porter were in orbit and refreshments were available in the main hall of the complex.

Faversham went there, looking for the Russian press people, particularly Katrina, as he had discovered the beautiful interpreter's name to be, but obviously they had no interest in the American pilot's space flight.

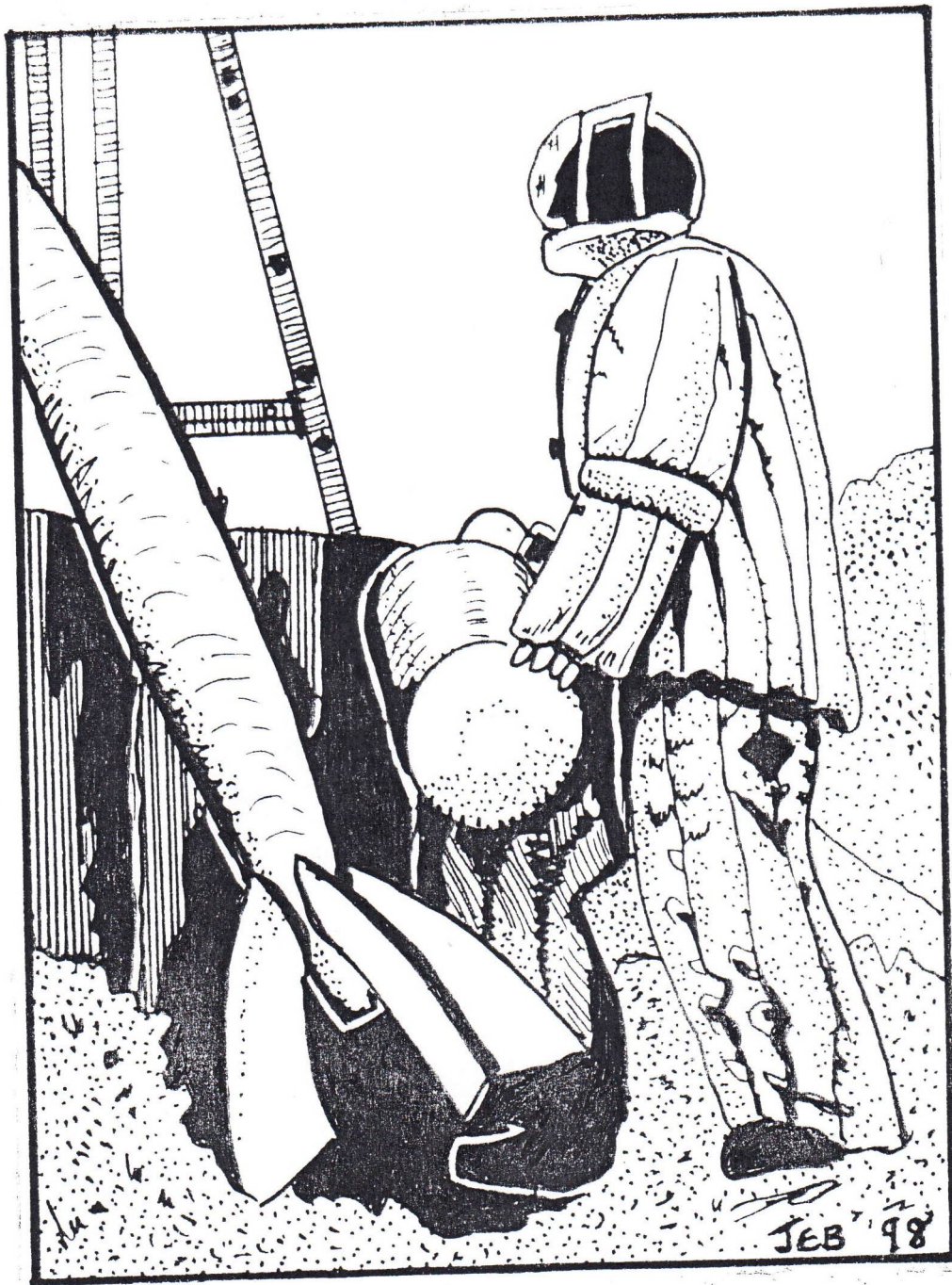
He was permitted to enter a tight security area near the landing area and parked his jeep two hundred yards from the runway and exactly at the promised time he saw the little dot in the distance, reflecting the sun, coming from the North into the slight wind, getting larger all the time, and then the capsule landed on the runway, the three parachutes this time faultlessly opening with a crack and radically slowing down the KL-2B which tipped over when it stopped. The hatch opened and two fliers in white waved their arms aloft in triumph.

On the 30th a 20M stamp was issued, featuring the two astronauts.

TO BE CONCLUDED





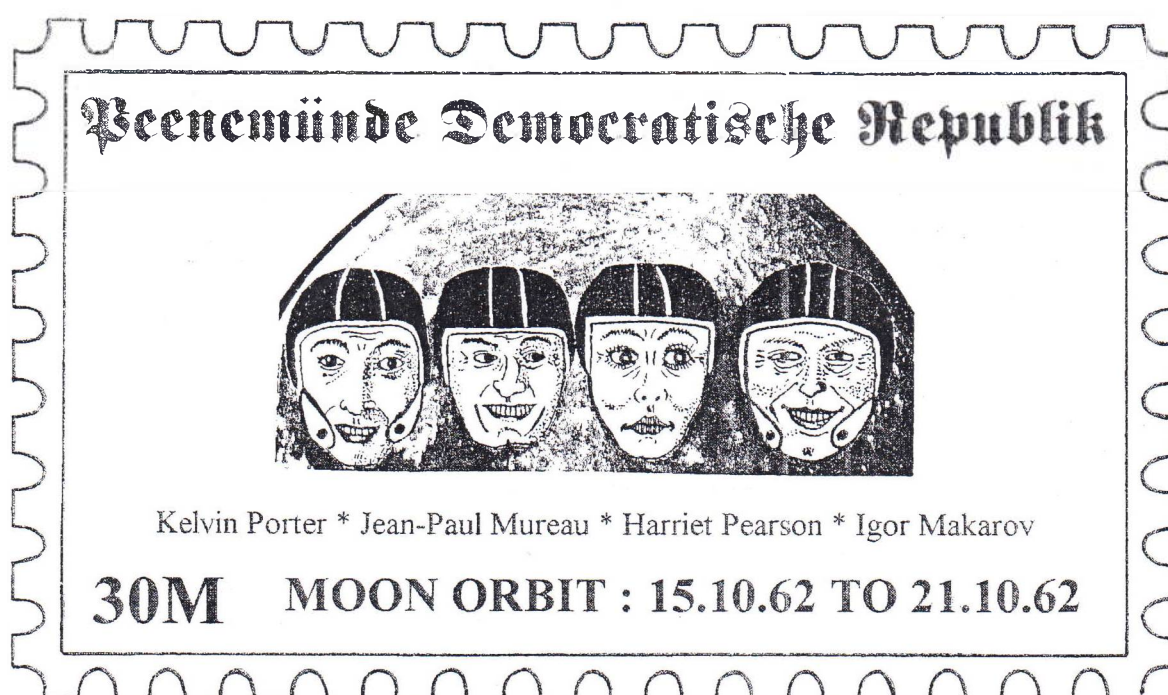


ROCKET REFUELLING  
BERLIN  
1932



# OUT OF REITSCHE ?

A SCI-FI NOVELLA WITH FANTASY STAMPS  
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED  
BY JOHN BERRY



## Part four The Sickening Denouement

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# 4 . The Sickening Denouement

## THE STORY SO FAR

*Tension grew at Peenemünde as nations took sides as to whether an American or Russian dwarf was to be the pilot of the first Earth-orbit mission with Hanna Reitsch. It required the tact and diplomacy of President Kennedy to decide the matter with a coin-flip, Russian dwarf Igor Makarov winning the toss. Sir Miles Faversham had discovered French duplicity and informed CIA man Lew Fennell, who had unfortunately taken Claudine Sashay into his confidence. The first Earth-orbit flight was successful, except that Makarov had failed to hit the parachute release, causing a runway over-run. Faversham fell in love with a Russian female translator. The second Earth-orbit took place, with American Kelvin Porter at the controls. During a media interview regarding this flight, Faversham purposely exposed the top secret revelation that the USA was also in the Moon-landing race.*

Everyone at Peenemünde from Von Braun to the runway labourers (yet another one hundred metre runway extension after the Makarov overshoot was deemed necessary) noted the gradual build up of tension in the complex. Years of planning, designing, construction, training, testing and flying, not to say scheming, was hopefully coming to fruition. A newsletter, circulated fortnightly throughout the complex had a message from von Braun, thanking everyone for their efforts. "And now," he wrote, "we have three more space flights to prepare. Two Earth-orbit flights are planned - one taking place quite soon - whereby the eight trainee astronauts, piloted by Makarov and Porter will orbit the Earth ten times. When these flights have been successfully completed, we shall hold a ceremony where the astronauts, now fully fledged, will receive their wings. Other presentations will also be made. Then, towards the end of 1962, the promised Space Spectacular will take place...we will not land on the Moon, but we will orbit it and commemorate the occasion by practical momentos being deposited on its surface. I will not give details at the moment. I therefore ask everyone at Peenemünde to continue their unselfish endeavours to make the space flights successful...and, who can tell, The Allies might fund Peenemünde so that in a year or so, say in 1964 or 1965, we will land on The Moon."

Margot, the MI6 agent insinuated as a maid, reported to Faversham that Lew Fennell and Claudine Sashay had a blazing row at dinner in Zinnowitz, resulting in hot onion soup being deposited in Mr Fennell's lap. He screamed, "You lying bitch," at her and she called him "Mr Faversham's lap dog." Faversham was delighted with the success of his ploy to reveal Claudine's duplicity, supporting Russia, obviously on the instructions of the French Government, but giving Fennell and the CIA the impression that she was pro-American. If the CIA had accepted her premise that Porter would be advantageous to their secret Moon-Landing plans, Makarov would have represented Russia's greatest space achievement, being the pilot for von Braun's much vaunted Space Spectacular. He was less pleased with Margot's news that when she booked out of her hotel, she gave the taxi driver an address in Wolgast quite close to the Six safe house.

On 23rd November 1961, the crew for the first astronaut-trainee Earth-orbit flight was announced. The pilot was Igor Makarov and the crew comprised Virginia Rusack, Mark Allenbury and Jean-Paul Mureau. The launch was scheduled for 3.30 p.m. on 1st December 1961, thus permitting the landing some eighteen hours later to be in daylight.

Makarov spent almost every working day being instructed by Hanna Reitsch and at the conclusion of each training period she shouted at him "You PUSH the parachute release !"



Faversham felt that everyone had become bored with Press Conferences and photo-shoots, because there had been so many of them, but he sensed, as everyone did, that this was distinctly different, an atmosphere having built up and when von Braun sat on the stage in the main hall, with the four astronauts sitting two either side of him, the day before the launch, the appreciative applause was thunderous.

Von Braun introduced the astronauts, said how wonderful they were, how hard they had worked, and how successful they were going to be. He said that obviously they were going to be extremely busy on the morrow, but the Press could take as many photographs as they wished and then the astronauts would answer a few questions before retiring.

Whilst photographs of the group were being taken by the frenzied media, Faversham noted Katrina sipping coffee at a table at the back of the hall. She was completely alone as her duties as translator were not yet required.

Faversham sidled over to her, his heart beating at the sight of this gorgeous Russian girl, who fulfilled not only his mother's requirements, but his as well...she was so slender, so utterly feminine, certainly not blatantly oozing sexuality, like Sashay did, she was just a nice girl.

"Hello, my deah," he breathed, "I'm frightfully glad to see you again."

She looked at him, her very large brown eyes appraising his somewhat delicate features. She leaned forward and kissed him on both cheeks, and whether or not she intended to do it (and we know she *did*) she stuck her warm wet tongue in his ear. He suddenly felt very strange.

"Wonderful to see you, Miles," she breathed, "what a perfect gentleman you are, so considerate, so very respectful to women and so very handsome."

Faversham was quite taken with her assessment of him, which, quite frankly, he thought to be amazingly accurate.

She put her arms round his neck, and her warm tears mingled with his. This is awfully romantic, he thought, dare I put my arms round her? He did so, quite tentatively, and she thrust her body forward tightly against his and he was quite taken aback with her rather forward but awfully nice manoeuvre.

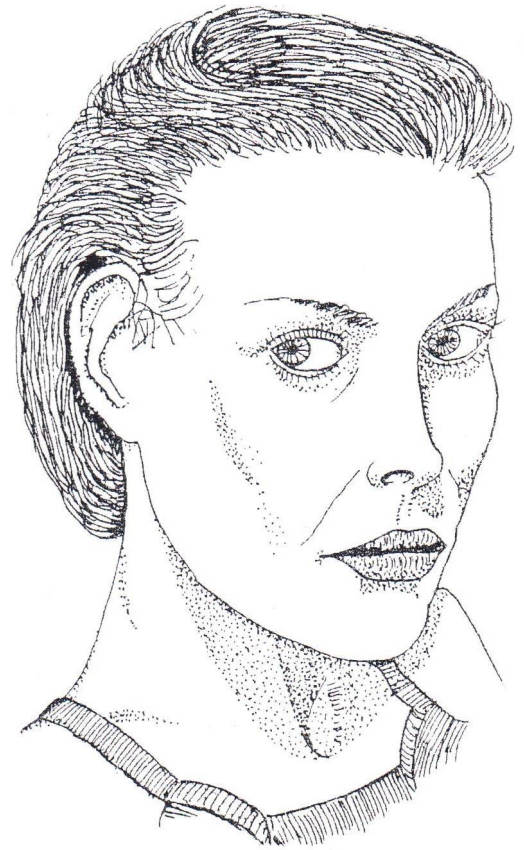
A loud voice from the stage announced that interviews were now taking place.

"I've got to go, my darling," she sobbed, "but I'll see you again soon. If you can get political asylum for me in England, I'll tell you all about the top secret Russian Moon Mission."

A microphone was passed to each of the astronauts on the stage. One British reporter asked Virginia if she was happy with Igor as pilot and what she thought of the crew selection. She said she had great faith in Igor's ability but she would liked to have had her great friend Harriet as companion - "Sisters in Space," as she put it.

Makarov oozed confidence, rather undiplomatically averring that during training, Hanna had urged him to 'Punch the parachute release!' so much that he just wanted to punch Hanna.

"A joke," he laughed, but von Braun threw him what *THE TIMES* categorised as "a venomous glance, with the corners of Mr von Braun's lips turned down in a grimace of sheer distaste."



Katrina Likova, translator  
with the Russian Press Corps,  
Peenemünde



Mark Allenbury modestly affirmed that he was the best photographer in the crew and had joyfully swapped his 'Box Brownie' for the latest Hasselblad camera.

Jean-Paul Mureau reckoned weightlessness was better than sex, but he hoped the opportunity would arise when he could give his opinion on the joint experience.

"No chance on this trip, buddy," shouted Virginia Rusack.

When the interviews had concluded, Faversham, who had maintained his vigil at the back of the hall, rooted to the spot of that colourfully romantic interlude, waited anxiously for Katrina to rush towards him, arms outstretched, to tell him all about the Russian Moon Mission, but instead he saw Erik grip her arm and ease her through the milling throng of excited newsmen. He tried to follow them and as he burst through the crowd outside the hall, he saw a taxi race from the pavement and he saw her look despairingly through the back window, eyes wide, a look of terror on her beautiful face.

He drove his jeep to Erik's hotel in Zinnowitz and waited a short distance away. He had to keep the engine running for warmth as he saw a glistening prelude to a frosty night. Faversham was patient, and was quite happy with his own company, although on this occasion, as was to be expected, he was very tense.

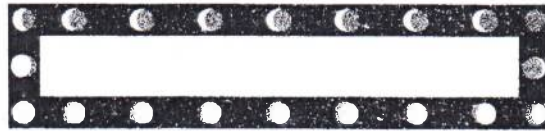
Three hours later, he saw Erik emerge from a taxi and hurry into the hotel.

Margot had given Faversham Erik's room number so he climbed the stairs three at a time and rapped Erik's door.

Erik opened it and did not seem surprised to see Faversham, who put his foot in the doorway, prepared to shoulder his way into the room, even though Erik was bigger, heavier and more athletic, but before Faversham could speak, Erik held up an admonishing hand.

"She's en route to Moscow, Sir Miles," Erik sneered. "We cannot have our innocent females falling for the charms of a ruthless British secret agent, can we ? Never know what she might tell you."

The door was slammed in Faversham's face.



Exactly on time to the very second, the A22C / KL-2B combine blasted off from its Peenemünde pad.

Before this, the rocket and capsule had looked tremendously high, like a New York skyscraper, with the four white space-suited astronauts waving to the media from the bottom of the gantry, before entering the lift. It was, of course, a false picture, because of the small stature of the astronauts, nevertheless it was a truly magnificent sight as the rocket seemed to ponder for a second or two, as if trying to make up its mind, before the huge boosters literally blasted their authority on the rocket, which surrendered meekly to the violent and unrelenting anti-gravity force.

Igor was in permanent touch with Control, enumerating readings in English without any panic or stress in his voice, reporting the disposal of the first stage over the Baltic

after two minutes with the second stage lasting for over three minutes before it slung the KL-2B into orbit.

The four astronauts reported that they felt fine and Allenbury hoped he'd brought sufficient film on the flight.

It was an eighteen-hour flight and the astronauts rested in their variable-angle couchettes and sampled their space food. The three men reckoned they could last the eighteen hours without recourse to the lavatory, save only to use the portable adjuncts for urination and indeed, they had taken tablets to delay natural bodily functions, but Virginia complained about the lack of privacy, although Control pointed out forcibly that she had agreed with the cabin layout a year previously and gave her the enigmatic command, "Get on with it!"

She made another similar complaint after the seventh orbit and Hanna's voice could be heard quite angrily telling Virginia that her complaints, "Perhaps assist the anti-feminists amongst the planners to decide not to send you or Harriet on the Moon Shot next year." Virginia then started to sob and stated she couldn't get the privacy she required because the men were looking at her.

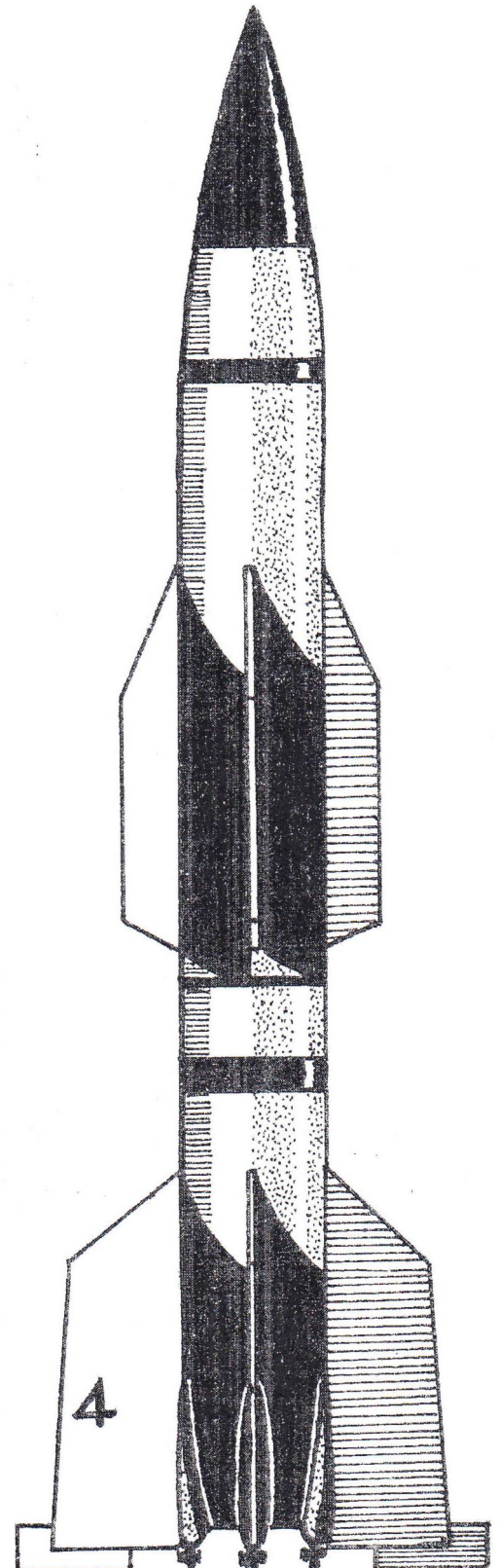
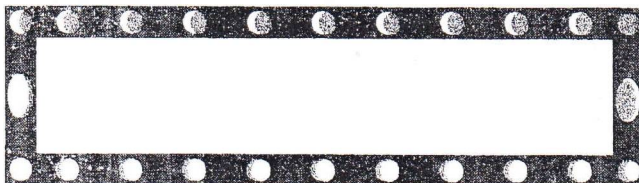
Jean-Paul Mureau's French accent could be heard averring that he had a postcard of Marilyn Monroe taped to the ceiling above his head and that afforded him complete satisfaction.

It was during the eighth and ninth orbits that Mark Allenbury persuaded the others to sign twenty blank postcards, on which he promised to mount photographs taken during the flight and then get them franked at Peenemünde on 2nd December 1961, their landing date. He promised each of them a card which, if they didn't wish to retain as a souvenir could be sold for a considerable amount of dollars to stamp dealers in the U.S.A.

(The Peenemünde authorities had not thought of this development, even though they had frequently issued high-value stamps and decided to permit the second crew to sign twenty postal items, if they wished to, whilst in space.)

Faversham was at his ideal location near the runway and scanned the north Eastern horizon for the incoming capsule. He was tuned to Control, who reported con-trails high in the atmosphere. He checked his watch and seven seconds after the stated landing time he saw the spacecraft approach like a homing pigeon and bounce several times on the 19-wheel skid as it landed (which the design permitted) before the three parachutes were ejected on the last bounce.

The rescue vehicle raced alongside it, and crossed to it as it tipped on its wing. Three astronauts climbed out, punching the air in excitement as they realised that they were now winged-astronauts. Rescuers climbed into the hatch and carried out the prone fourth astronaut, which binoculars confirmed was Virginia Rusack. Faversham chuckled to himself as he thought of his mother's dictum: women were not meant to be astronauts, only the mothers of astronauts.



Hermes A-1  
United States  
V2 Development





The 30 Mark stamp commemorating the space flight was on sale at 12 noon at the Peenemünde Post Office. The woman who laundered the astronauts' clothing was first in the queue, and purchased twenty stamps, "for Herr Allenbury."

Christmas seemed to rush upon the Peenemünde people, who had been so busy and the astronauts and administration staff were permitted to have leave of absence for one month, from 15th December 1961 to 16th January 1962; the planners for the second Earth-orbit were merely permitted a few days over the Christmas period. The R.A.F. were going to fly Faversham and one of his juniors to London for the holiday and on the day before his departure he was surprised to receive a phone call from von Braun, who asked him to call at his house at 7.30 p.m.

Von Braun ushered him in to meet his wife and children and gave Faversham a shot of potent schnapps; Faversham tried to make a joke and asked if the Professor hadn't got the bottle mixed up with rocket fuel? Von Braun smirked, to prove that Germans did have a sense of humour, then took Faversham to a book-filled room, obviously his inner sanctum. He opened a drawer and gave Faversham a small box, which he opened, to reveal two 22 carat gold cuff links with a V2 motif with 'WF' top left of the design and 'vB' bottom right.

"For you, Miles," he said, "the British Government hasn't given me any trouble since 1945 which I attribute to your favourable reports."

Faversham was deeply touched and they shook hands firmly, Faversham holding back tears of joy.

"Wernher," he muttered, breaking a brief but telling silence, "that is an absolutely wonderful present, which I shall always treasure. It will become a family heirloom....er...do you know that the Russians are working on a Moon shot?"

"This is not news to me, I'm sorry to say. My countrymen in the U.S.A. and in Russia have notified me of these happenings. I believe we are three years ahead of them, we have fully trained astronauts, whilst they have only semi-trained ones, and are dependent on the reports I issue." He laughed.

"Miles, you are not the only person to cheat with the reports. We sometimes issue two reports of a circumstance, one very slightly but importantly inaccurate...the printers get the inaccurate one."

"Touché," muttered Faversham for that moment he was stumped for words.

"So, Miles, I want you to urge your Government to give me three more years to land on the Moon...a Britisher will be in the crew. I don't want this extension for a financial reason. I could get three times my salary here if I went to NASA. I want the Moon Landing to be a Peenemünde operation."

"I will certainly do that, Wernher," and they muttered Yuletide greetings as Faversham made his exit, a very happy and proud man.

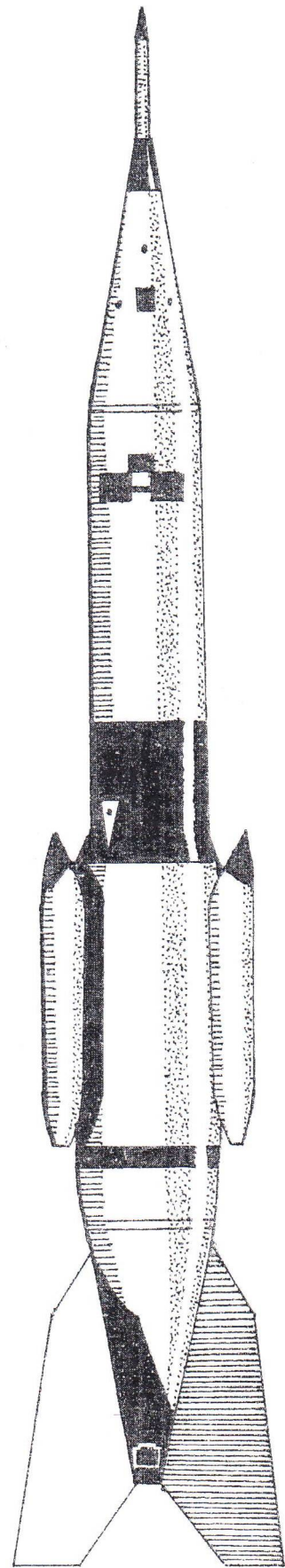
It was obvious there was a new impetus at Peenemünde in 1962; a second successful ten Earth-orbit flight would mean that the vibrant energy being initiated by the leadership had but one aim - a Moon Landing. If both flights were totally successful, and the first ten-orbiter certainly had been, then von Braun could throw himself upon the mercy of the Occupying Powers to request another three years to perform the fantastic feat that the whole world was waiting for... men, and perchance a woman, stepping in the dust on the Moon.

Whilst on Christmas vacation, Faversham informed Six that von Braun was in contact with expatriate German rocket-builders in the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. and receiving information from them. Six told Faversham that they knew this, and had informed the C.I.A. that rocket secrets, particularly as regards new chemical rocket fuels, were being leaked by paper-clippers in the States and by devious means from Russia. The C.I.A. said this was ridiculous, their Germans were totally dedicated to the American space programme but in answer to Six criticism they did admit that the paper-clippers were not being supervised socially and their post and telephone calls were not checked. Faversham wasn't bothered, because he really liked being in Peenemünde and would be delighted with another three years' extension and in fact had kept his word to von Braun and sent in a report recommending the required extension period of three more years.

The second ten-orbit flight was provisionally scheduled for 26th April 1962; the pilot was of course Kelvin Porter with the three astronauts who hadn't flown a ten-orbiter, Harriet Pearson, Sergei Pushkov and Emile Retrousse.

It was common gossip at Peenemünde that Virginia Rusack had caused higher echelon planners to decide that taking a female round the Moon would be a retrograde step, and Harriet Pearson was obviously aware of this, declaring loudly that she would not have any inhibitions about intimate matters during the flight and this did cause friction between the girls who did not appear to be as friendly as before and had commenced to study independently.

Once again, on 25th April 1962, the media circus was set in motion, much photography, many interviews. The launch took place at 2.30 p.m. next day, Earth orbit was attained, no trouble during the ten orbits, no postcards signed...the landing was excellent and this time four enthusiastic astronauts climbed out of the hatch and presented themselves to the world as one triumphant entity.



V-2-A  
Russian V2 development





Another commemorative stamp, also of 30 Mark value was on sale in Peenemünde on 27th April 1962.

(Mark Allenbury was the only philatelist amongst the dwarfs and he bemoaned the fact that cards had not been signed during the orbital flight and considered that a great opportunity had been missed. He sought an interview with Faversham, who spoke to Professor von Braun on Allenbury's behalf and von Braun reluctantly agreed to sign twelve cards if Allenbury would produce them. The eight astronauts were each given a card, duly signed, then von Braun handed the other four cards to Administration for disposal to the highest bidder. It is understood they obtain \$25,000 each in the U.S.A. as funds for the Complex.)

The much vaunted ceremony to present astronauts' wings, as promised by von Braun took place on 17th June 1962. The hall was packed at 7.30 p.m. and was in a state of much anticipation. The eight astronauts sat on the stage, in pure white overalls, with von Braun and his clique also centre stage, awaiting the very prominent mystery guest who was to make the presentations.

Someone shouted "It's landed" and the U.S.A.F. Hercules stopped on the runway, a black limousine awaiting the passenger and he and his party were driven to the hall. Long spontaneous applause greeted the Mayor of West Berlin, Herr Willy Brandt, as he walked onto the stage.

Obviously he had been primed by von Braun, because he said that before presenting the astronauts' wings and 'other most prestigious awards' he had to point out that Britain, France, Russia and the United States were duty-bound to finish the job....Peenemünde had been operational as a separate republic under the aegis of the Four Powers since 1945 and the greatest achievement ever undertaken by homo sapiens was within reach...."waiting to be plucked from the tree of opportunity"....a landing on the Moon, created by German engineering skills, magnificently sponsored by the Allies, enabling an Englishman, a Frenchman, an American and a Russian "to leave their little footprints on the dusty Moon's surface."

"Please, Britain, France, America and Russia - grant the three years extension."

It took some time for the hall to become hushed. Von Braun stood up and asked the eight astronauts to pass by a table where Mayor Brandt would give each of them three trophies...upper arms overall patches, astronauts' wings to wear on their chests and silver Peenemünde medals and ribbons.

Sanity prevailed and the two females were pushed reluctantly to the front whereupon Brandt bent forward and gave them their well-earned momentos, kissing the girls and shaking hands with the men. Von Braun clapped long and loud as the astronauts bowed to the audience before finally sitting down, clutching their trophies.

Then Mayor Brandt announced that the West German Government had been proud to present The Great Cross of Merit to von Braun, Hanna Reitsch, Kurt Debus, Mr Perkins, Alexander Lippisch and Claudine Sashay.

"I'm rather worried about the award to Mr Perkins because no one in West Berlin has ever heard of him, but I have been told this evening that it is an alias for Hermann Oberth, who already has this most important award, so this is the first time one man has earned the award twice."

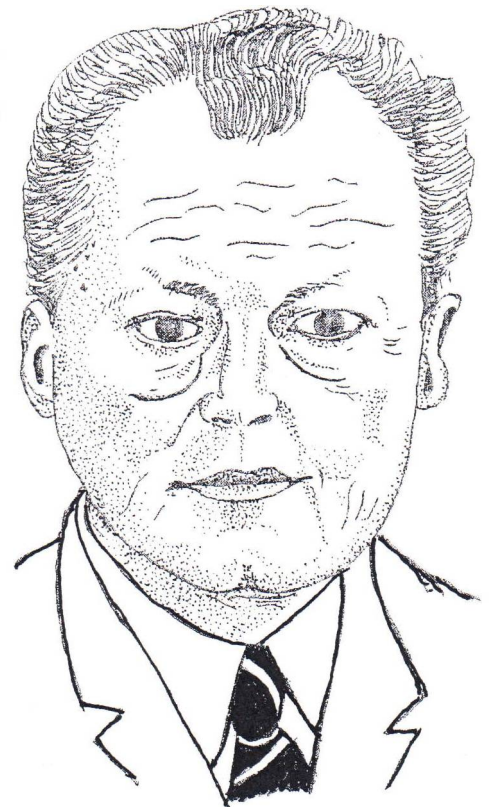
Almost everyone in the hall was bemused by the Mayor's observation, but Oberth laughed, and then von Braun laughed and soon the audience participated too, somewhat spasmodically, it must be admitted.

Brandt hung the decorations round their necks, warmly congratulated each recipient then he raised a hand for silence...he paused dramatically, and the audience craned forward, almost afraid to break the spell.

"To the Moon Orbit in October 1962," he shouted, almost screamed "and a Moon Landing within three years!"

Training commenced at fever pitch as soon as the astronauts returned from the Christmas break. The simulation centre was permanently in use, keeping the astronauts ensconced in the mock capsule for longer and longer periods to get them used to being confined. The vast number of checks on dial readings on the capsule console and monitored by the two pilots and thence passed to Control were exhaustively practised. Psychiatrists studied the personal records of the eight dwarfs to try and reach an acceptable cohesion of four minds to last seven and a half days together in close confinement. The first name crossed off their lists, for obvious reasons, was Virginia Rusack...she was revealed as being petty, self-opinionated and obstreperous. 'Why wasn't this discovered at the initial selection process?' they asked. The other seven astronauts seemed quite pleasant and cooperative in each other's company, even when they didn't know they were being secretly observed. The consensus from the Psychiatric Board was that they did not expect any problems, no matter who was selected for the crew of four.

These reports, and others from the instructors, including personal assessments from Hanna Reitsch, who had taught them to fly gliders, aeroplanes and had taken them around the Earth, were considered by a Committee chaired by von Braun and also consisting of Secretary Claudine Sashay (O.D.) Technical Assessor Hanna Reitsch and four senior members of the Occupying Powers who had served as Controller at various times. According to the terms of reference, accepted by everyone, von Braun had the significant Casting Vote.



Willy Brandt averring that no one in West Berlin had heard of Mr Perkins



"Ladies and Gentlemen," he commenced, "our task is to select a crew of four, one from each nation of Great Britain, France, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. I recognise this is perhaps going to be extremely difficult because of international prestige, but you have all been given copies of the astronauts' files to study and you are therefore aware of their strong points and weaker aspects. We do not have any problem with the U.S.A., as it is the unanimous opinion of the assessors that the only way Virginia Rusack could go to the Moon is if she travelled alone. Please cross her off your list. However, she will continue full training. Now, we have to select the Pilot."

Sashay revealed that all the rumours were true about her and her country's affiliations by firmly suggesting Igor Makarov. She stated that she was Chief Instructor, and O.D. and as a result of her observations and comments by other instructors and after many highly successful physical and mental aptitude tests, he was obviously the dwarf to pilot the Moon Craft.

The Russian General, Vladimir Kudesedov, with thirty seven medals on his tunic applauded energetically but the first Controller in charge at the start of Operation Nibelung, Admiral Witherspoon, just smiled benignly,

"Claudine, you have missed the logical point. Because Virginia Rusack has been eliminated from consideration, Porter must go as he is the only other American, and he is a pilot."

The British representative, who had been Controller three times, Air Vice Marshal Sir Francis DuBarry, with five medal ribbons earned during World War One said that in order to appease America and Russia, why not send up two pilots ?

"You imply, Sir Francis, that one pilot takes control from launch to half way round the back of the Moon and the other then takes over and brings the Moon Craft back to earth and the landing ?" said von Braun.

The Air Vice Marshall nodded, his short greying moustache hairs erect and uncompromising.

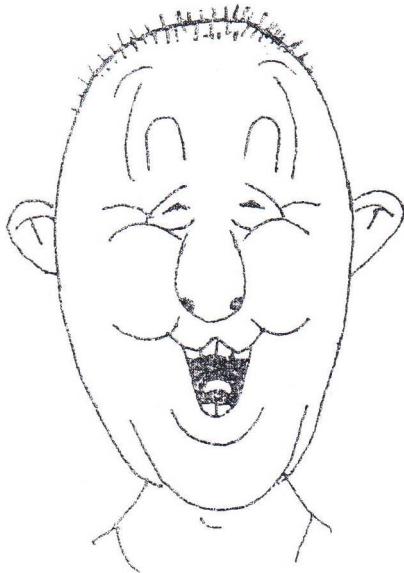
This was discussed for three hours, during lunch and numerous strong black coffees and then an impatient Chairman asked for a vote.

The British, Americans and Hanna Reitsch voted for two pilots sharing the flight, whilst the Russians, French and Claudine voted for Makarov. Von Braun smiled triumphantly and using his Casting Vote, he ordered that Porter and Makarov would both pilot the craft.

"No further arguments please, the matter is settled. You should all be pleased because prestige has been satisfied."

The next subject to discuss was which of the two British astronauts should go to the Moon ? They all agreed that Mark Allenbury was an excellent photographer, his shots taken during this ten-orbit flight having been published in magazines and newspapers all over the world, Peenemünde getting due royalties for their publication and obviously a skilled photographer was required for example to photograph the previously unseen rear of the Moon.

The males seemed pleased that, if Allenbury was chosen, this would mean an all-male crew but Hanna and Claudine demanded that a woman should be in the Moon crew, Claudine pointing out that Pearson was an excellent astronaut, and actually, her percentage in written examinations covering all subjects was 96.45, two percent higher than Virginia whilst Allenbury's percentage was 79.22.



Admiral Witherspoon succinctly defining the logic of Porter's requiring to fly to the Moon.

After much discussion, another vote...Hanna, Claudine and the Air Vice Marshall for Harriet, with France, Russia and the USA for Allenbury "A professional photographer is an absolute necessity" growled Witherspoon.

"In that case," said von Braun, "I give my Casting Vote to the British girl. We will send her on a photography course for two weeks. Can the R.A.F. manage this, Sir Francis ? Good ! Then that is settled. Now we come to the final choice, which Frenchman shall we send. Claudine, have you any recommendations ?

The O.D. said she liked both men; they were cheerful, witty...examination results were really not that important for a normal crew member. However, Retrouse had a higher percentage than Mureau. The merits of the two men were discussed. Both were described as valuable crew members who were not unduly upset during stressful times and the consensus was after some further discussion that the Chairman should make the choice and others would concur without a vote being taken.

Von Braun studied the files for a few more moments and said he would select Mureau.

The announcement of the prime crew was made to the world's press the following day, together with the date of the Moon orbit - 15th October 1962. All the astronauts would continue with full training so that any position could be filled by a back-up in case of illness or other eventuality.

Harriet Pearson was a surprise arrival at the R.A.F. Research Establishment at Farnborough, Hampshire, England, where the specialist photographer had to cram her with photographic skills which normally would require a long apprenticeship. He was surprised at her appraisal of important photographic techniques and she could give precise answers to many questions he posed. This, however, was the theoretical factor and after the two-week-long course, he stated that she was above average but he qualified that by stating that she was 'routinely adequate.'

Fortunately, he suggested to her that during the Moon orbit she should take lots of photographs of everything several times ("take lots of film with you, dear, and don't be afraid to use them up") with slight adjustments of exposure, etc, and the Laws of Average meant that she was bound to obtain a number of shots of photographic merit.

Naturally, on the days approaching take-off, every word and every action taken by the selected crew was world news and Harriet's remarkable transition from a novice to a supposedly professional photographer in two short weeks caused amazement and her photographs were keenly sought for publication, at any cost. She mostly specialised in portraits of her fellow astronauts. Today, the technique of soft focus on the face, with a very sharp background is recognised as a legitimate photographic technique (although many professional photographers think it should be the other way round) and researchers opine that this dubious skill first originated in 1962 in a province of north Germany !

Came the great day...9.30 a.m. on 15th October 1962...the astronauts were strapped in their reclining couchettes, pilot Kelvin Porter on the left and supporter Igor Makarov on his right; both were completely happy with the piloting arrangement and promised to give the other every possible assistance. The huge A22C with the KL-2B atop pulsed on the launch pad and at the conclusion of the 5-4-3-2-1 count down the rocket lifted gently and slowly but then rapidly accelerated, Porter giving and receiving required readings, Makarov pointing to the different instruments in sequence so that Porter was able to move his eyes rapidly without searching for the dials.



The first stage was dropped into the Baltic Sea after two minutes.. the second stage was jettisoned at 108 miles height and the third stage put the capsule into Earth orbit and at a signal from Control, Porter pushed the KL-2B rocket engine button for four minutes and twenty seconds to get the capsule past 24,200 miles per hour, the velocity necessary to leave the Earth's orbit.

Porter was perfectly controlled at all times, giving situation reports and then came the fantastic message - "All systems go for the Moon."

Three days almost to the minute after leaving the Earth's orbit, they approached the Moon, huge in their capsule windows. They were all tremendously excited, no one more deliriously happy than Harriet, who stood up, loosely strapped, her Hasselblad against the cabin window. Mureau was heard to tell her not to use up all her films, she was recording history and would require to detail everything.

Porter, in a professional matter-of-fact tone, which totally belied his excitement, described the Moon's surface, how grey it was, extremely pock marked, very large craters..."but don't worry, Control, Harriet will do it justice. Er, Harriet are you sure you've taken the lens cap off? Er, that was a joke, Control !!!"

Once behind the Moon, the deposits, as promised by Professor von Braun were carried out. Boffins at Peenemünde had designed four football sized rubber globes with the national flags of the four nations.. these expanded to ten feet in diameter when lobbed from the capsule, their pressure fuses being actuated by the vacuum condition.

The astronauts were invited to have a small personal object jettisoned onto the Moon's surface. Kelvin Porter chose his grandfather's gold watch engraved, 'To my grandson Kelvin on 4.11.50.' Igor's choice was a small brass bust of Joseph Stalin, whilst Harriet selected a framed photograph of Virginia Rusack, signed with the message, 'Thanks, Harriet, dear, I knew I'd land on the Moon.' The final selection by Jean-Paul Mureau was his autographed photograph of Marilyn Monroe signed 'To Jean-Paul from Marilyn...come and get me !' although Retrouse had confined to Kelvin Porter that he had seen the postcard a few days previously and it been unsigned.

Von Braun had surreptitiously slipped a little item in one of the breast pockets of Kelvin's space suit just prior to his departure with the whispered comment, 'Kelvin, please get this memento jettisoned with the other items.' It was a set of his V2 cuff-links. Hanna Reitsch had called to see Harriet the previous evening and asked her to inveigle an item into the deposit box, her Iron Cross First Class presented to her by Hitler in 1941.

Mureau was given the job of stuffing the items in the airlock and depressing the button which rained the items on to the Moon's surface sixty miles below.

Another little chore they performed whilst being occulted (perhaps specified at this time to distract them from pondering on possibilities of disaster) was to handstamp one hundred postcards which they had already all signed, with a space on the left for a cachet of the Moon's surface taken by Harriet (they hoped !). They would be permitted to retain three cards each, the remainder having already been sold to a West German stamp dealer for a considerable amount of money to swell the Peenemünde account.

For thirty minutes when they were behind the Moon, all contact was lost and as the re-appearance phase came within seconds, and no response, a chill fear gripped Control, but fifteen seconds later they heard Makarov shouting, "I'm in charge !"



The KL-2B swung around the Moon, was released from its gravitational attraction and headed towards..."the iridescent blue, white and green ball" as Porter succinctly described it.

What could have been a gradually accelerated crisis occurred on the Earthward run, as one by one, the astronauts began to feel ill - "queasy" was the word Harriet used. Control told them to rest, only to move about if it was absolutely necessary, to try and sleep, eat frugally, take tablets as described from the First Aid box.

Von Braun's voice filled the capsule, "Hold on...not too far to go...the whole world is praying for you...wishing you well...you are all space heroes...you have a tremendous reception...you'll be invited...to countries all over the world as Guests of Honour...Heads of State have asked me to pass on their best wishes...just hold on...only thirty more hours to go and you'll be home."

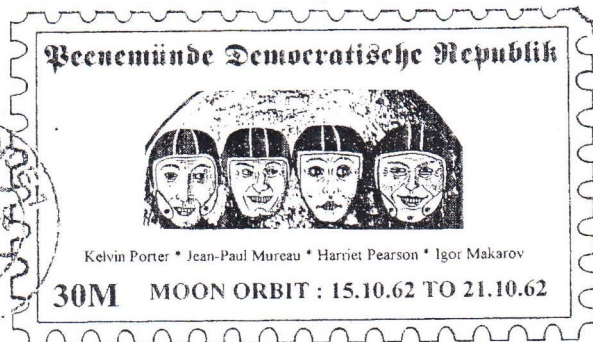
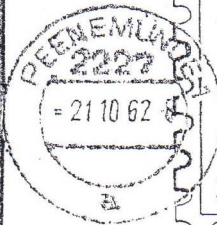
Harriet lifted up her head from a vomit bag and said she didn't think he should have mentioned the bit about another thirty hours to go. The others ensured Igor had tablets to enable him to sleep and relax and when he awoke he said he felt better and could handle the landing, "if Kelvin will help me."

# MOON ORBIT : 15.10.62 - 21.10.62



## FAR SIDE OF THE MOON

Photograph by H. Pearson 1962  
© P.D.R. Gesellschaft



*Harriet Pearson*  
*Kelvin Porter*  
*Jean-Paul Mureau*  
*Игорь Макаров*



**Poste Restante  
Peenemünde**



Once again Faversham was sitting in his jeep close to the runway; his companion was Lew Fennell; who had thanked Faversham for his information about Sashay's duplicity.

They scanned the morning sky westwards on the 21st December and both spotted the craft hurtling towards them, and as it got closer they could see through their binoculars that there were black stryations on the front of the space craft.

"The ablative shield has burnt off," exclaimed Fennell, but the craft curved from the West, landed gently on the runway with but two small hops and the ejecting parachutes performed the braking task.

The KL-2B came to rest three quarter of the way down the runway and rescue vehicles raced down the runway and across the grass, blasting their sirens and horns and Faversham popped his horn and joined the joyous cacophony.

The upper hatch opened on the craft, a weary hand waved, then Makarov's faced emerged and he shouted in English, "Any more vomit bags ?"

The End - Fin - Konen - das Ende

