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## Nazis' Scientists Planned Sun 'Gun' 5,100 Miles Up

By **GLADWIN HILL**

By Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

PARIS, June 28—German scientists, a high United States Army ordnance officer declared today, were soberly working on a project of contriving a platform 5,100 miles in the air from which, within a matter of fifty or 100 years, it was believed, it might be possible to harness the sun's rays to demolish nations at will and rule the world.

"Fantastic" is the only word that comes to mind for this project. Yet "fantastic," officers here avow on the basis of the caliber of the scientists involved and the cold, sound method of their work, is a classification into which the project definitely cannot be put.

"We were interested," ordnance officers said after exhaustive interrogation of the scientists, "with their practical engineering minds and their distaste for the fantastic." They had even figured the dimensions of a mirror that would be necessary up 5,100 miles to focus the sun's rays for the purpose — three kilometers [1.86 miles] square.

These are some of the scientists who devised so recently the inconceivable buzz-bombs and the V-2 rocket bombs. They are some of the scientists who, it was disclosed today, had virtually perfected, in addition to the previously revealed secret weapons, a method of launching V-2 rocket bombs from submarines 300 feet under water that might have blasted New York as London was blasted.

They are scientists who, on the basis of their amazing rocket work, take it for granted that transatlantic mail rockets are a development of only a few years hence and that forty-minute transatlantic passenger rockets are

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# NAZIS' SCIENTISTS PLANNED SUN 'GUN'

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probable in fifteen to twenty-five years.

It was disclosed further that a number of these scientists—there were about 100 leading rocket researchers and around 1,100 others—are so dedicated to their researches and so aware that there is no hope of pursuing them in Germany during their lifetime that they are putting science ahead of nationality and volunteering to move to the United States and Britain to continue their work. Plans are under official discussion for a center in the United States to exploit their discoveries.

How many of these discoveries have been disclosed to the Japanese is not known, but an intelligence officer at Supreme Allied Headquarters said last week that the Germans had withheld some secrets from them.

The man who made these astonishing revelations and the fullest report yet on German weapons at a press conference today is Lieut. Col. John A. Keck, chief of the Ordnance Service's enemy technical intelligence branch in the European theatre. Colonel Keck is a retired Pittsburgh engineer whose home is in Greensburg, Pa. A World War I veteran, he went to London in April, 1943, when his branch was organized to work with a similar British hush-hush bureau.

## Spies Traced Germans' Work

Colonel Keck indicated that there was a regular traffic of Allied spies in and out of Germany, and said that through undercover activities the Allies had been able to keep virtually day-to-day information on the work at the Germans' main rocket-development base at Peenemuende on the Baltic, making possible the famous Royal Air Force bombing attack there during a conclave of scientists, which inflicted hundreds of casualties and is believed to have set rocket development back a fatal six months.

The sky-platform project was based on a belief that 5,100 miles above the earth's surface the force of gravity dwindles to zero and that it would be possible to construct a "space station." The scientists had not figured out how the platform could be put there, but were so certain that enough methodical research over decades would yield an answer that they had formulated a definite program of successive objectives.

The first was to build a reflector—possibly of metallic sodium in the absence of air and other corrosives—to focus the sun's rays on a receiving station off the shore of the Continent to produce steam and electric energy. The concentration of heat, it was calculated, would be sufficient to set the ocean boiling and to burn large land areas in a flash.

This led to the next objective, acknowledged by the scientists to be "a terrible thing"—to use a "heat gun" to subjugate the world.

The final contemplated objective was to launch projectile vehicles from the sky platform into interstellar space.

Despite the weird nature of these notions, the scientists were described by the Allied examiners as "men of extremely practical and keen minds," Colonel Keck said.

## Scientists Talkative on Ideas

One hundred and fifty rocket and other scientists were found by the Allied forces soon after the German surrender at a research center in Hillersleben, pondering their projects and waiting to discuss them. British officers have participated in the interrogations, which still are going on. The British War Office automatically receives copies of all American reports in this field, and Colonel Keck said the Russians had interrogated some of the same scientists and that it was intended to share German scientific information with "all the Allied nations."

The submarine V-2 project was developed in Toplitz Lake, in the Austrian Alps, by Dr. Heinrich Determann and fourteen assistants, who were arrested by the Eightieth Infantry Division after a small boy and an old shoemaker in the lakeside village of Gossl had told the Americans of "big metal fish jumping from the water into the air" and of "undersea boats that shot out fiery comets."

It transpired that the experimenters have started by shooting Nebelwerfer rocket field guns from a few feet under water and by last January had worked up to shooting from a depth of 300 feet a rocket that, once in the air, traveled like the V-2.

By the time the troops arrived the apparatus had been sunk in the lake and the records destroyed. Dr. Determann remarked: "Who

knows? Perhaps German victory lies under Toplitz Lake." It is hoped the work can be reconstructed.

## New Anti-Aircraft Weapon

Another of the secret weapons that Colonel Keck said the Germans had "practically perfected" was a rocket-propelled missile capable of exploding within ten yards of a plane ten miles in the air.

"It is generally conceded that the Allies urgently need a more effective anti-aircraft weapon, and it is expected that the rocket will replace all other types of anti-aircraft guns," Colonel Keck said. "The German scientists' contribution to the rocket field in the last decade was unique and a great engineering accomplishment."

The speed attained by the V-2's—which, it had been previously disclosed, the Germans were developing not only to fire across the Atlantic, but also as far as from Britain to Japan—would get them from Europe to the United States in less than an hour, Colonel Beck said, and, in the light of progress up to now, the question of slowing them down at the end of the trip to make them feasible for mail and passengers is a relatively "minor problem."

The consensus of German scientists was that Adolf Hitler likely lost the war by the diversion of much research into the development of "screwball and scare" weapons. Although a number of these might have been worked out in time—possibly even a curved-barreled gun to shoot around corners, of which the ordnance men have found an experimental specimen—many, like a mammoth 200-ton "mouse" tank, which they did not even bother to bring back from Germany, simply represented a propaganda effort to produce "the biggest in the world."

## Some German Innovations

Colonel Keck reported these innovations by the Germans:

"Probably the biggest gun in the world," a 32-inch railroad gun that shot a 16,450-pound shell 81,000 yards against the Russians at Sevastopol.

A 38-centimeter rocket projector on a Tiger tank body, which hurled a 760-pound missile six miles—used for about six rounds against the Ninth Army.

A chainlike projectile of a number of rockets hitched in line, weighing 5,000 pounds at the start, with a range of 100 miles.

A 21-centimeter [eight-inch]

mortar, experimental and very inaccurate.

A 28-centimeter railroad gun without rifling, making it 31 centimeters, firing a fin-stabilized shell—used against us in Verviers, Maastricht and Luxembourg as a "scare" weapon.

Five hundred and forty and 600-mm self-propelled mortars firing one-ton projectiles upward of 6,000 yards.

Rocket-assisted shells—regular shells with a rocket charge attached behind—giving heavy artillery 50 per cent more range.

## Scientists Here Are Skeptical

The dreams of German scientists evoked only scoffing and skepticism here.

Dr. Bergen Davis, Professor Emeritus of Physics at Columbia University, said there is no place at 5,000 miles, to his knowledge, where gravity is "neutralized." He said he did not understand the space-platform idea referred to by Colonel Keck. For a body to maintain itself at that height it would have to be moving very rapidly in the fashion of a satellite of the earth, Dr. Davis said.

A colleague on the Columbia University physics faculty said the statement about gravity's being neutralized did not have any practical significance. He felt that the whole project was "absurd."

Both men agreed that, for practical purposes, no air exists at 5,000 miles and that an artificial atmosphere would have to be supplied within a closed receptacle of some kind.