

HEINZ HILTEN

12 August 1971
Huntsville

I came to Peenemunde in 1939, following a year as chief of the artillery office - Berlin architect. After the invasion of Poland, I was released from the architect for whom I worked. In fall 1939, I became Generalbauinspektor fuer die Reichshauptstadt (Building inspector for Germany) under the direction of Albert Speer. I was in charge of supplying all the important factories for airplanes and other factories (Arado, Heinkel, Messerschmitt) for war production.

Somehow I have the feeling he went into the wrong direction - misled by Hitler. He was a very sensitive architect. He was not what he later was supposed to do. I was quite surprised that he had turned 180° from where I knew him.

So in 1939 I made my first trip to Peenemunde with Heinrich Lüpke (President of Germany later on) in a management position of this organization. I didn't know what was there, just that it was a fresh new facility that needed to be built up. There wasn't even a place to stay so we had to return to Wolgast where we stayed in a hotel.

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There was quite a requirement to build Peenemunde up. There was ~~quite~~ ^{large} a group living close to the officer's club, where we had meals. We went to our bedroom area - covered with weed - ten minutes away from the officer's club and ½ minute from there where we worked. And all this was surrounded by barbed wire. I worked on the facility (assembly hall etc) test stands, and Siedlung Karlshagen.

Everything was under lock and key. You had one badge which allowed you through one gate but not the next - some let you in a little farther. So everyone had only his own work area in which he could move around freely.

This work was impressive. We ~~could~~ ^{could} see the test stands. I knew vaguely what was going on from the dimensions we were given to design. ~~We knew what it weighed empty and what it weighed filled with what we call kartoffel Schnapps.~~ Well, for instance, if you design a building with a gate 40 meters high and some

HILTEN - 2

meters wide - you could guess a little bit that this must ^{accommodate} ~~be~~ quite a cigar. We saw ~~these~~ ^{launched} things from the Oie - but we didn't know what they were. Sometimes we just heard a rumble and looked out of the window - and sometimes it was too late to look. ~~we also saw the tests they made at a nearby airport. We knew that~~ Kroegeer, Cerny and Riedel III were important people but we just couldn't talk to ^{key people.} ~~them~~. Everybody's mouth was locked. This was very hard to understand at this time.

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The ~~bombing~~ ^{bombard} of Karlshagen was while I was in Berlin. I just saw the results later - all the damaging of all the assembly halls and I thought that this could never happen again - that this operation ~~could~~ work. But it was - trailers were immediately set up.

(Then drafted 1942 - in July, underwent training as schijaeger - a soldier on skis for ~~the~~ East Prussia. Then received medical discharge - released to be a soldier again.)

A ^{came out -} ~~request at that time.~~ People were asking - from where, no one knew - for mathematicians, certain specialists in radio, skilled ^{workers} with high degrees. One day I received orders to travel - I didn't know where to go - only to be at a certain train at a certain time - and to see where it goes. Finally, at ~~the~~ terminal station, I ~~was~~ ^{found myself} standing in an area that ~~was~~ quite familiar to me - it was the station at Wolgast. We first had to sleep in barns and haystacks, were then screened for our backgrounds and then assigned to different batteries - and shared life with farmers.

So, as a soldier, I was trained ~~xxxx~~ ^{for} in the V-2 in Poland. From the launching site we lived in a small village, approximately 20 km away - Debicna. Every morning we traveled by bus to the firing position. | F10

We had to make absolutely sure that the missile was perpendicular using ~~(via theodolites. gives miniature explanation)~~ ^{using}. We were only given the direction in which to fire. No ^{body} really knew when it went - only the number of degrees from where we were. Most

HILTEN - 3

Then we were told the results. We had the feeling that one shot to London would put the whole city into ashes. It was tremendous, considering not only the impact but the fuel and the Knalltueten effect of the tanks - the same result when you pop a paper bag against your ear.

In Guelzow, east of the Oder, while training on the V-2, nothing happened because none of the V-2s entered the atmosphere, holding up the Einsatz (Deployment). In order to keep us in a good mood, we had a talent show. This also helped us to show our gratitude to the villagers where we were staying. I was working as a sidewalk artist - it was so successful that we had to repeat the whole thing the next evening. ~~THIS~~ This made me known as knowing how to draw - holding a pencil in my hand. Then, one day, I was called into the office of the commanding officer and asked to draw the instruction material with different perspectives. I suggested to use bird's eye views from the position of the supporting set. The whole operation was improvised firing positions, hit and run. So I drew a nice meadow somewhere with all the different cars which had to supply the oxygen and fuel and the other positions - few kilometers away from it which had to guide the V-2 into the firing position by sending two different discs of radio beams. Between these two discs was the guided missile. These drawings were so well accepted that all the other batteries also got the same material. This took a lot of time and it was Top Secret. Finally I suggested to have this printed - in some place other than in the village. For it was top secret and the printer was not allowed to see this material - he had never seen a missile - it was hidden under camouflage and canvas, being armed guards. So I ~~got~~^{was} ordered to Peenemunde to get the job done. But meanwhile, there was not much of Peenemunde left after the British bombing of Karlshagen. In a hotel in Kolpinsee (1944) I saw ^{Hann} Luehrsen. There was a printer ^{there} who was also ^{had a} ~~under~~ Top Secret ^{clearance} ~~at~~ ^{North Shore} so he could do it. (Luehrsen) didn't know what I was doing and I didn't know what he was doing. It took us a while to realize that we were working on the same project. When we lifted our mutual secret, Luehrsen went to his superior saying - This is the man we need. ^{and the idea was accepted.} ~~So it went to some general in Schwedt. I~~

meanwhile I had to report back.

After two weeks, we were blasting stumps as a training course in blasting in the air. While we were loading several sticks of dynamite under a stump, I was called to General _____ who asked me if I wanted to go to Peenemunde - there was nothing to do here. I got orders to go there almost the next day. I got a permitance to take off the uniform, but I still had my military pass and we still had training once a week.

~~It~~ It was a crazy idea really. None of the people believed in a successful (Ja - it could have happened) - whether this would help to decide the outcome of the war. I had the feeling all of them were working waiting for the end - this way or the other way.

Firing was like treasure hunting - dig and you'll find something that was already established. ~~W~~ Everything was so secret that not even the people in France knew where the next shot was going to be fired. It was a hit and run firing. People came together in a certain position, fired and then had to go away and fire the next shot from somewhere else.

(Meanwhile, the Organization Todt built bunkers on the West Coast. Describes briefly - much too heavy for wartime. The inability to mobilize quickly coupled with the development of chain bombing by the British allowed the enemy to inflict irreparable damage. "So we had to dream up other things" (use of quarries, submarine firing

Back in Poland: The rocket went up 1.50 meters, came back, jammed the whole table into the ground, fell down with its explosive warhead. We were buried in trenches waiting for the explosion. We finally left and at two that night, there was a tremendous rumble about 20 km away. The next morning, the whole area was burned to the ground because of the heat of the blast.