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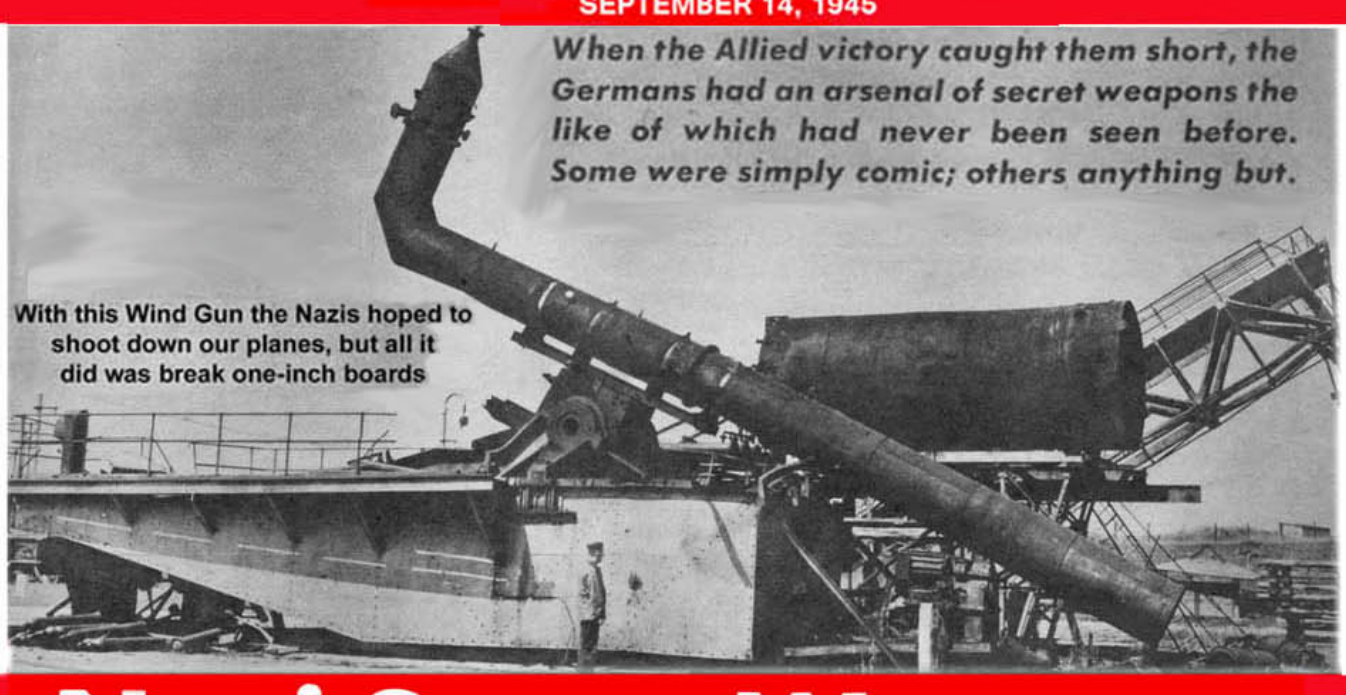

When the Allied victory caught them short, the Germans had an arsenal of secret weapons the like of which had never been seen before. Some were simply comic; others anything but.

With this Wind Gun the Nazis hoped to shoot down our planes, but all it did was break one-inch boards

Nazi Secret Weapons

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WASHINGTON—With almost his last breath the late Dr. Goebbels promised the late Third Reich "secret weapons" that would stop the Allies in their tracks and change the course of the war. Not long after Dr. Goebbels passed belatedly into oblivion, Allied scientists came up with the atomic bomb, a secret weapon to end secret weapons. The Germans, it was revealed, had also been working on an atomic bomb, but on this score their scientists were considerably behind our own, diverted perhaps by work on those other "secrets" at which Dr. Goebbels had darkly hinted. Were these really super-weapons—or merely the last flight of fancy of Germany's ace liar?

Officers of the American Army's Ordnance Technical Intelligence Branch have been seeking the answer—at the rocket experimental station at Peenemuende on the Baltic, in numerous German factories, at the giant proving grounds at Hillersleben and at many other spawning grounds of German ordnance. More than 200 American technical experts drawn from U. S. industrial firms, universities and Government agencies have also been making on-the-spot investigations, while German scientists themselves, eager to ingratiate themselves with the conqueror, have been sounding off at a great rate. Scores of experimental specimens and models of novel weapons have been captured and are still being subjected to close study.

"People are generally scared by the most fantastic weapons," according to a lieutenant colonel in the Ordnance Technical Intelligence Branch here, "but usually these are the least practical as far as winning a war is concerned." A brief tour of an imaginary German arsenal of advanced weapons, chiefly of the screwball and scare variety, should make this clear. The arsenal, remember, doesn't exist, but the weapons are all real.

To the left as we enter is a curious affair called the Wind Gun. This experimental specimen was discovered at the Hillersleben Proving Grounds. In theory, the Wind Gun, looking like a factory whistle mounted on the end of a long barrel, was designed to shoot down our planes with plugs of air fired at high velocity—a missile that must have appealed on grounds of economy.

In practice tests, however, the success of this gadget was strictly limited. The Wind Gun managed to break one-inch boards at a distance of 200 yards, but it had no effect on aircraft at normal ranges. German scientists interviewed since the war claim that the gun got a try-out in the battle for the Elbe River, but its purpose was somewhat altered. The Germans now assert that they didn't hope to down Allied planes with air pellets, but merely planned to utilize the gun's power to distort a target image. They used it, they say, to prevent pin-point bombing of an important bridge. Actually, no trace of the weapon was found at the Elbe or on any other field of combat.

Over here we have an experimental little number called the "Viper." The designer of this small rocket plane appears to have had in mind a cross between a buzz bomb and an interceptor. It's a mid-wing rocket-propelled monoplane, with a single—and probably uneasy—seat for a pilot whose chances for a safe return are somewhat less than good. The general idea was that the Viper, with the great advantage in speed that rocket propulsion would give over the usual interceptor, would plunge into bomber formations. The pilot would have the option of ramming enemy planes or attacking with rockets. Originally, the Viper was to be considered expendable, with the pilot given a chance to escape by means of an ejecting device. Improvements were added to later experimental models to permit the salvaging of the entire rear half of the fuselage, together with the expensive rocket unit, by means of parachute. So far as we know, the Viper never reached the combat stage.

On this side we have an experimental model of a curved rifle, a device worked out by German science to enable krauts to fire around corners without sticking their necks out. This odd instrument, of which several specimens were found, is in fact an ordinary German rifle to

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which a special barrel attachment and periscopic sights have been added. The end of the barrel is curved on a radius of approximately nine inches. The sighting arrangement enables the firer to hold the weapon at a 32-degree angle and get a rough idea of what goes on around the corner. The invention is not regarded by Ordnance authorities as a world-beater but might well be useful in brushing off annoying enemy soldiers in the dead area surrounding a tank.

Next we have an item which the Germans call *Die Luftfaust*. This means air-fist, and the chances are that this one-man rocket launcher does indeed pack a significant wallop. The weapon is a nine-tube projector which electrically discharges two successive rocket salvos—four rounds on the first and five on the second. Its chief purpose is to make it hot for low-flying planes. The rockets are of 20 mm. caliber.

If it's distance you want in a shell and you aren't too fussy about where it lands, the rocket-assisted shell in this corner is your number. It leaves a 28 cm. railway gun in the usual fashion, but 19 seconds after its discharge from the muzzle things begin to happen. A time fuze in the nose of the projectile goes into action, igniting a charge of rocket powder. As a result of this extra acceleration, the shell stretches its range from 38.5 miles to 52.9 miles, a gain of 37 percent. The hitch is that you can't figure that more than half the shells you fire will fall anywhere on a given line 2,430 yards in length. In other words, you can count only on every other shell landing within 1.3 miles of the target.

It takes this whole hall to house the battered remains of *Der Gustav Geschutz*, which is the Germans' pet name for what has been called the biggest gun in the world. According to PWs interviewed by our Ordnance Technical Intelligence officers, only two specimens of this giant were constructed. This one was found on the Eastern Front. Gustav's tube is 95 feet long, and he is capable of firing a 16,540-pound shell a distance of 51,400 yards, or 29 miles. This "scare weapon" was tentatively tried out against the Russians at Sevastopol—but the Russians weren't scared, like the lumbering 200-ton tank known as the *Maus*. Gustav is notable chiefly for his size—another of those propaganda efforts that German scientists now complain they had to produce in order to satisfy the Nazi chiefs that they had the "biggest in the world."

Over here we have the complicated X-4. In two factories at Bielefeld, our men found specimens of this wire-controlled glide bomb. X-4 is a winged rocket missile, designed to be fired from fighter planes bucking a heavy bomber formation. It is guided to the target electrically by means of insulated wires connecting the missile's controls with a control unit in the parent aircraft. After its high explosive charge has been delivered, the wires are cut and the parent craft —in theory—proceeds on its merry way.

Our arsenal museum is necessarily very incomplete. In addition to exhibits which are being kept under wraps at least for the time being, there are others that cannot be shown for the simple reason that they are either still in the blueprint stage or, if actually produced, still to be located by our investigators.

In this category is the submarine V-2, with which the Germans were experimenting on Toplitz Lake in the Austrian Alps. This was a pet project of a Dr. Heinrich Determann, who, with 14 assistants, was arrested by men of the 18th Infantry when a shoemaker informed the Americans that he had seen "a big metal fish jumping from the water into the air" and "undersea boats that shot out fiery comets." Dr. Determann destroyed his apparatus before our troops arrived, but according to a New York *Times* account, he had made considerable progress. The claim is that, fired from a depth of 300 feet beneath the surface of the lake, his rockets on reaching the air proceeded to travel like V-2s.

Another batch of blueprint weapons was reported by Lt. Col. John A. Keck, chief of the Ordnance Service's Enemy Technical Intelligence Branch in the ETO. In an exhaustive press interview, Col. Keck touched lightly on such gems as a 5,000-pound chainlike projectile composed of a series of rockets, each going off in turn and successively setting off the next in line, and a "practically perfected" rocket-propelled missile designed to explode within 10 yards of a plane, thus greatly increasing the chances of a hit.

For a rare combination-flavor of Jules Verne, *Popular Science* and those Class-B Hollywood productions in which Boris Karloff plays the mad scientist, none of the instruments mentioned so far can touch the plans for the so-called "Sun Gun." This project would perhaps not be worth discussing as a secret weapon if it had not been

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soberly reported by our Ordnance officers as the work of those same men who produced V-1 and V-2—German scientists "with their practical engineering minds and their distaste for the fantastic."

Briefly, the Sun Gun, which the Germans are reported to have believed might be ready somewhere between 1995 and 2045, was planned as a reflector three kilometers square. That's 1.86 miles. Probably to be made of metallic sodium, this gigantic mirror would be so placed as to focus the heat of the sun on an area marked for destruction by the Nazis of the 21st century. Once exposed to this super-super-weapon, the doomed areas would shrivel instantly, the waters around it, if any, would come to a high boil, and in the twinkling of a sunbeam all life would crumble into ashes.

Where would this world-conquering reflector have to be situated? That's simple—on a "space platform" some 5,100 miles above the surface of the earth. At that distance, some physicists believe, the gravitational pull of the earth, and the centrifugal force of an object—that is, the force with which it is thrust upwards from the earth—would cancel out. The result of this balance is that the "space station," instead of tumbling down to earth or drifting off through space, would circle around the earth like a satellite. With relation to any particular point on the earth's surface it would be stationary, and its crew would no more feel themselves being whirled through space than we groundlings do here below.

One more question remained: How to get out to this point in space and haul along the necessary materials for building the platform? The German scientists' answer was—rockets. Talking glibly about their pet project, they were still not clear as to how they would go about achieving this enormous distance (maximum distance of the V-2 is 300 miles) but they appeared to be confident that in 50 years it would be entirely possible to work out the necessary technique.

American scientists have been quick to point out serious flaws in the Sun Gun nightmare, and a few have dismissed the notion as completely crackpot. Some deny that gravity is neutralized at 5,000 miles, others emphasize the enormous difficulty in reaching that distance, and still others point out that light to be brought to a sharp focus must be reflected from a sharp-pointed light source, which could not be done by reflecting the huge disc of the sun through a mirror more than a mile square.

DESPITE the Ripley quality of Wind Guns, Sun Guns and semi-circular rifle barrels, American Ordnance men are not inclined to underestimate the achievements of German scientists in the second World War. According to press reports, the Reich's scientists themselves complain that Nazi bigwigs compelled them to waste time and energy dreaming up "scare" weapons of little practical value, but it cannot be forgotten that these scientists developed the V-2, which before the revelation of the atomic bomb was frankly described by one U. S. Ordnance officer as "the greatest technical feat of the war."

V-2 itself is far from being a secret weapon at this late date, but efforts to improve its performance constituted one of the chief preoccupations of German science. Primarily, the problems were to increase the range of this rocket bomb and at the same time increase its deadliness. The first of these objectives involves the development of a new fuel—one that would provide greater energy at a lower weight. Given such a fuel, the second problem might more easily be solved. The more efficient the fuel, the more space and weight that can be spent on the business-end of the missile.

The Germans, exploring new forms of energy, particularly atomic, were extremely hopeful about the future of rockets. Some of those interviewed since VE-Day talked about post-war prospects and predicted transatlantic mail-carrying rockets within the next few years. They also predicted that 15 to 20 years from now there would be rockets to carry passengers across the Atlantic in 40 minutes.

It is generally believed that warfare of the future, if any, will see a tremendous and deadly development of three principles first applied in this conflict: jet propulsion, atomic energy, and missiles guided by remote control. The Germans made considerable headway in all three, but, as all the world now knows, our own Ordnance kept well ahead of the game. The Sun Gun of Dr. Goebbels' dream was no match for the "secret weapon" that fell on Hiroshima.