

Was He a Great American
Hero or a Nazi War Criminal?

Rockets To Fame, Rockets To Infamy...

Wernher von Braun, the father of modern rocketry, invented rockets that put man on the moon... and that killed thousands of civilian men, women and children in London and other cities during World War II. His breakthroughs in ballistic missile technology came at the expense of tens of thousands of slave laborers in one of the most brutal Nazi labor camps. Read about the dramatic escape of von Braun, and dozens of other Nazi scientists, from the clutches of the Russians as the war was coming to an end, and the subsequent whitewashing of their pasts by the American government.

- By Yaakov Astor

July 20, 1969. 4:18 PM EDT.

Commander Neil Armstrong radios NASA's Mission Control Center: "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed." The "Eagle," code name for the lunar landing module of Apollo 11, has landed on the moon. Mission control erupts in celebration.

10:56 PM EDT.

Armstrong, in his space suit, steps outside the lunar landing module. He slowly backs down the ladder. He reaches the bottom rung. More than half a billion people are watching the momentous event live on television. Never before have so many people been attuned to one event at one time.

Finally, Armstrong puts his foot on the surface, and then utters words that will become famous: "That's one small step for man... one giant leap for mankind."

People of all races, ages and creeds across the globe cheer, clap, jump and watch in silent awe. The impossible has come true. A human being has walked on the moon.

Perhaps no one on planet Earth is more proud than the American scientist most responsible for the development of NASA's Apollo rocket, the man who personally handed America victory in the Space Race, Wernher von Braun. He had spent his entire life dedicated to this. Now the magical moment has arrived – and the world stands with him in awe of his triumph.

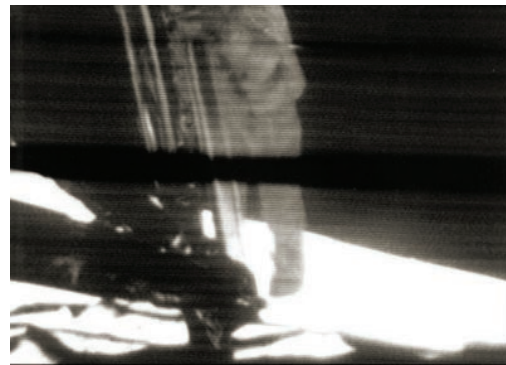
It is indeed a magical moment.

However, there is something wrong with this picture. For the great American hero, Wernher von Braun, has a dark past – a secret that most are not aware of, and that those who are aware of will not discuss. Von Braun was not only a member of the Nazi Party, but a major in the dreaded SS. And not only that, but von Braun's celebrated Apollo 11 craft that has just landed a man on the moon is based on the most dreaded weapon of World War II, one that he designed and that killed thousands of civilians. Perhaps most galling of all, this weapon was developed in one of the cruelest Nazi concentration camps.

Wernher von Braun. Visionary? Great



Front page from the *New York Times* reporting the historic moon landing.



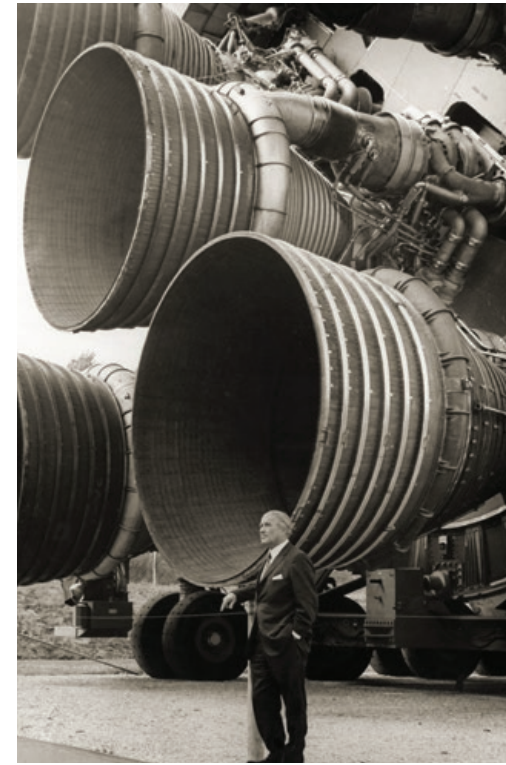
Neil Armstrong about to take his first step on the moon: "That's one small step for man... one giant leap for mankind."

American hero? Or a Nazi war criminal who sold his soul to the devil?

The Top-Secret Mission

In the final months of the Second World War, elite groups of Allied agents and commandos infiltrated Germany. Their top-secret mission was to hunt down Hitler's so-called "wonder weapons" and the scientists who built them. Who would be the first to round up Germany's scientists: the Americans, the British or the Russians? The stakes could not be higher. The winners would be able to develop Hitler's wonder weapons to control the postwar world.

By the end of 1943 the superiority of German military equipment was acknowledged by Allied intelligence. Yet, even those admissions were based on astonishing *underestimates* of German advancements in the science of war. German industrialists, engineers and scientists were constantly



Wernher von Braun, standing in front of the monstrous Saturn V engines he designed that sent men to the moon.

innovating and producing superior weapons.

One such weapon was showcased in 1945, as the Third Reich experienced its death throes. A squadron of American B-17 bombers moved into position over Germany, ready to unleash its payload. Suddenly, out of nowhere, six unidentified objects dove around them at 700 miles per hour, 150 miles per hour faster than any Allied fighter plane. Within minutes, 14 of the B-17s were destroyed, victims of the first attack by jet-powered fighter aircraft, the Messerschmitt 262. Not only did these fighters fly faster than anything the Allies had, but each was armed with 60 air-to-air missiles that could be fired while still out of range of the bombers' machine guns. The Allies possessed no equivalent.

One American intelligence report at the time concluded: "Occupation of German scientific and industrial establishments has revealed the fact that we have been alarmingly backward in many fields of research.

If we do not take the opportunity to seize the apparatus and the brains that developed it and put the combination back to work promptly, we will remain several years behind while we attempt to cover a field already exploited."

Perhaps the most prized "wonder weapon" was the V-2, a supersonic rocket, capable of massive destruction. With a range of 200 miles and the ability to carry a warhead of 2,000 pounds, the nearly 50-foot-tall rocket was the weapon that Hitler hoped would turn the tide of war. Even more than the damage and death it dealt to thousands of civilians in cities such as London and Antwerp, the psychological blow it delivered was worse. The world had never seen anything like it, and it caused people to wonder if these Nazis super-weapons could swing the momentum back to Hitler's side.

The V-2 was clearly a major military breakthrough, and the Allies were desperate to learn how to make one. The trouble was that they knew absolutely nothing about it: how it was manufactured, how it worked and who was behind it. Getting their hands on a V-2 of their own, as well as finding the man behind this technology, was a major priority.

By March 1945 the US army had fought its way into the heart of Nazi Germany. The newly captured city of Cologne lay in ruins. Two years of



The Messerschmitt 262, world's first jet-powered aircraft fighter, shocked Allied pilots and devastated their bombers when they first encountered them in battle.