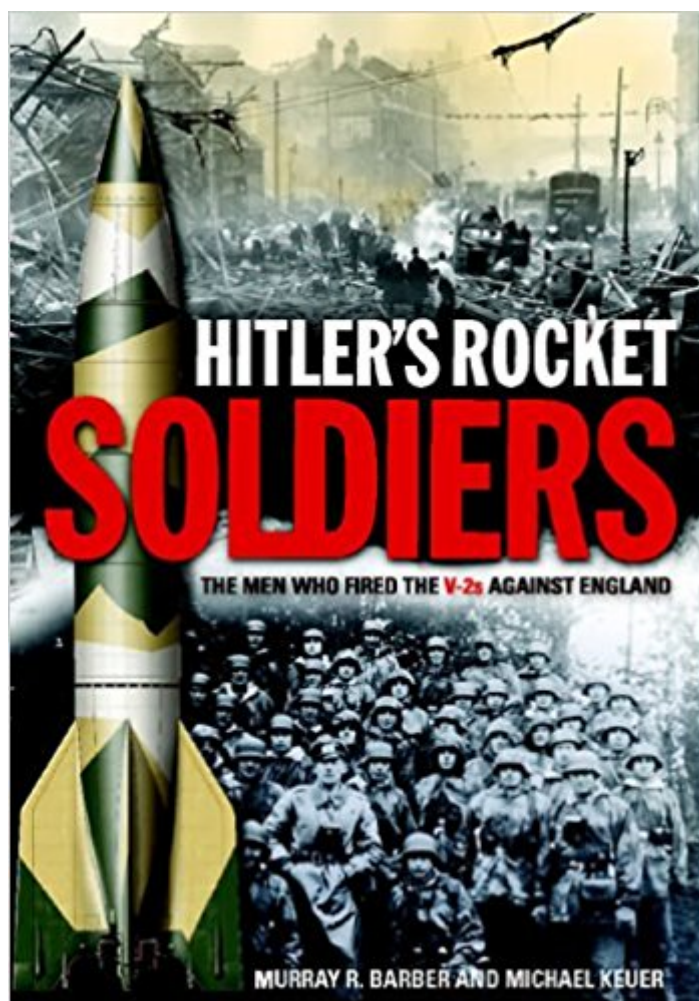


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# Hitler's Rocket Soldiers: Firing The V-2s Against England



## Synopsis

In the final, desperate months of World War Two, at a time when the German war machine was considered by the Allies to be an almost spent force, Adolf Hitler unleashed a new weapon against England and western Europe that fell from the silence of the Earth's upper atmosphere and the edge of space. It was a weapon that struck fear into the hearts and minds of wartime civilians; it came without warning and defense was impossible. This was an unseen threat that fell at supersonic speeds, leveling suburban streets to dust in seconds, terrorizing the residents of London and Antwerp – this was the V2 Rocket. The V2 – Vergeltungswaffen Zwei (Vengeance Weapon 2), designed by the rocket scientist and engineer, Wernher von Braun, and his colleagues at the secret Nazi research center at Peenemünde, was the most sophisticated weapon developed in Europe during the war. Following the end of hostilities, von Braun and many in his team transferred their allegiance to the United States and subsequently went on to design the mighty Saturn V that took the Americans to the moon. The experiences of von Braun's rocket team are well documented, but somewhat surprisingly, some aspects of the V2 story remain largely uncovered. This is especially true from the German perspective and more specifically, the view of the men who formed the firing teams for this formidable weapon that embraced supersonic technology. From September 1944 to early 1945, V2 launch teams fired more than 3,000 rockets, each with a high-explosive one-ton warhead, at targets in England, France, Belgium, Holland and even within Germany itself. Many rockets were fired from mobile launch sites in The Hague and from concealed wooded areas hidden from Allied aircraft, using fleets of modern, purpose-built transporters and trailers with sophisticated ancillary and support vehicles. For the first time, this book tells the story of the V2 through the eyes and experiences of the men who not only fired the missiles at targets such as London, Norwich, Antwerp and Paris, but also of some of the military scientists and technicians involved in its development. The authors have spent many years tracking down and interviewing the few surviving veterans of these little-known and secretive units and have unearthed new and rare information from firsthand accounts. These are the unique recollections of the Rocket Soldiers who have spoken candidly to the authors about their wartime duties. The accounts show that, mostly, they were not stereotypical and ideologically indoctrinated Aryan warriors, but very ordinary soldiers and technicians living through extraordinary times, handling the most sophisticated weapon ever developed in pre-nuclear Europe. The book also describes the development of German rocketry following the end of the First World War and the technology embodied within the V2. The veterans tell of their first encounters with the awesome new rocket and how, having survived the devastating

RAF raid on Peenemünde, training was dispersed to test sites in Poland. They recall the move to forward firing positions, gun battles with the Resistance and the start of the rocket offensive. In truth, the more battle-experienced veterans knew that the V2 was a waste of valuable human and material resources – a last-ditch hope to save a desperate regime. Conversely, the book illustrates how inexperienced troops drafted directly to the V2 units from basic training, vainly hoped and believed that the fortunes of war would turn in Germany's favor. The veterans tell of their desperate experiences when the inevitable defeat came, as they were rushed to the east to defend Berlin where so many Rocket Soldiers lost their lives. Yet while some V2 troops ended the war with tears of regret for a robbed youth, others shed tears of frustration, knowing that they would never live through such extraordinary times again. Hitler's Rocket Soldiers forms an important new contribution to our understanding of the German war machine and its technology. Using never-before tapped resources, this book will be a revelation and valuable resource to all military historians and those with an interest in rocket development.

Murray R. Barber F.R.A.S., was born in 1956 and is married with two children. He lives in Devon, England where he pursues several business interests that are related to astronomy. He has developed and written curriculum support information for the teaching of astronomy and also on the history of ancient Egypt that is in use in planetariums worldwide. Since his schooldays he has always been interested in the history of World War Two and in particular its aviation. The V-2 rocket represents a crossover of his two main interests – the wartime V-2 being the very first man-made object to enter space and which was to lead, ultimately, to vehicles traveling beyond Pluto. Through the International V-2 Research Group he met Michael Keuer and, following visits to see the remains of the Peenemünde research and development establishment on the Baltic coast, they decided to research, together, the history of the V-2 rocket. It was to fill the void of firsthand accounts of the operational use of the weapon, that the idea for this book was born. Murray R. Barber is a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society. Michael Keuer was born in 1959 in Hannover, Germany and is a senior software developer in a veterinarian pharmaceutical supply company. He has always had a keen interest in historical technical developments and the personalities behind scientific advancement. Following the reunification of Germany, he was able to visit the previously restricted area of Peenemünde to see the remains of the development works from where the V-2 rocket was created and launched. During World War Two his grandfather worked as a technical skilled worker at Peenemünde and indeed Michael's father was born just 32 kilometers away from the cradle of modern space science. As his interest grew, he met Murray Barber and the two decided to research the reminiscences of the last few remaining men involved in the military development and employment

of this extraordinary weapon of war. REVIEWS | a marvelous book to read, and one which gives a fascinating insight to these soldiers | The two authors have done an excellent job in not only finding those prepared to talk about their experiences after all these years, but also to put it together in such a readable book. •Military Modeling.com

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Michael Keuer was born in 1959 in Hannover, Germany and is a senior software developer in a veterinarian pharmaceutical supply company. He has always had a keen interest in historical technical developments and the personalities behind scientific advancement. Following the reunification of Germany, he was able to visit the previously restricted area of Peenemunde to see the remains of the development works from where the V-2 rocket was created and launched. During World War Two his grandfather worked as a technical skilled worker at Peenemunde and indeed Michael's father was born just 32 kilometres away from the cradle of modern space science. As his interest grew, he met Murray Barber and the two decided to research the reminiscences of the last few remaining men involved in the military development and employment of this extraordinary weapon of war. Murray R. Barber F.R.A.S., was born in 1956 and is married with two children. He lives in Devon, England where he pursues several business interests that are related to astronomy. He has developed and written curriculum support information for the teaching of astronomy and also on the history of ancient Egypt that is in use in planetariums worldwide. Since his schooldays he has always been interested in the history of World War Two and in particular its aviation. The V-2 rocket represents a crossover of his two main interests - the wartime V-2 being the very first man-made

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Found this book an interesting read. Did go on a bit in some parts. Would have liked more technical information. As always I find the photos and diagrams are difficult to really see clearly on the kindle. despite this still enjoyed this book.

Brand new and sent promptly..I have only read the preface so far, but it looks like it's written very well and will be a pleasure to read.

When Murray Barber of England and Michael Keuer of Germany met through the International V-2 Research Group, they realized that they shared an interest in researching and documenting the history of the V-2's tactical deployment in the waning days of World War II. Their years-long collaboration resulted in "Hitler's Rocket Soldiers," an extraordinary volume filled with first-hand reminiscences of the last few surviving men who developed and fired the world's first practical ballistic missile. This fascinating and historically significant book fills a void in the story of the "Vergeltungswaffe-Zwei" by showing how the troops in the field used the rocket weapon developed at Peenemünde by Wernher von Braun's technical team. Through advertisements that Messrs. Barber and Keuer placed in German newspapers, 11 former Wehrmacht rocket troops eventually contacted the authors and agreed to be interviewed--a process that took place over a period of seven years. These veterans' stories make up the bulk of "Hitler's Rocket Soldiers," 206 pages out of a total of 284. These are far more than traditional "oral histories," though. Each chapter features the story of one of the 11 soldiers, but goes far beyond simply relating their personal reminiscences by presenting their experiences in broader historical and technical contexts. These tales of life "in the trenches" are fascinating indeed. But there's much more to "Hitler's Rocket Soldiers" than a bunch of bierstube banter. The first section of about 40 pages covers the V-2's genesis, development and testing at Peenemunde, a detailed description of the rocket, and the formation of the organizational infrastructure put into place to deploy the weapon. The "end matter" includes 11 appendices containing such things as V-2 technical specifications, a map of the August 1943 Allied

bomber attack on Peenemünde, drawings of V-2 storage and firing positions, and much more. Plus there are several maps of V-2 operations in Europe and 97 black-and-white photos, many of which I've never before seen in print, in two inserts totaling 32 pages. The amount and quality of information in "Hitler's Rocket Soldiers" is remarkable. To my knowledge, this story has never before been told, and certainly not to the depth and breadth that authors Barber and Keuer do in this volume. I offer only one caveat. The print in "Hitler's Rocket Soldiers" is small--very small. It looks to me like about a six-point font. I've posted a few photos to show this. The small text in no way detracts from the importance, value and appeal of the book, and you can fix the "problem" by positioning a strong light source over your shoulder. That minor nit aside, "Hitler's Rocket Soldiers" is one of the most fascinating, best-produced and interesting books I've read in many years. I enthusiastically give it my highest recommendation.

I've had a long interest in the history of the V-2 spurred by a copy of General Dornberger's book when I was in high school, at that time probably the only book about the project. Since then (over the past 50 years) I've read and collected most of the books written on this as well as the V-1. The strength of this book is the chapters of the various personnel who worked with the field operations of the V-2 are certainly worth reading. What prevents me from giving this book 5 stars is its numerous errors, grammatical as well as technical. Such are small such as their prolific use of exclamation marks where a period would work better; the constant capitalization of the word "Rocket" when it's not a specific name; the lack of hyphens between the V designations (they should be A-4, V-1, V-2, and V-3); and others. Then there are numerous technical errors. On page 27 they call liquid oxygen a fuel. It isn't. It's the oxidizer. On the same page they call ethanol (ethyl alcohol) "Ethanol alcohol" which is incorrect. Then on page 29 they erroneously state that the V-3 was to use hydrogen peroxide to "progressively accelerate" a projectile. According to every history I've read, the gun was designed to use explosive charges along the barrel but the few successful firings used solid rocket motors for this purpose. Also, on the same page, they confuse pulse jet and ram jet. The pulse jet requires a certain velocity to maintain the process of combustion and re-opening the vanes but at no point does it or could it become a ram jet. Again, these may be small errors to some but ones that could have easily been avoided by more careful reading of their subject matter and if the small things are incorrect, how can the larger ones be trusted. I advise potential readers to skip the first two chapters. A better book on the history and development of the V-1 and V-2 is Dieter Holsken's "V-Missiles of the Third Reich."

An excellent book. I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in the V-2 program. One of the few book with first hand accounts from the soldiers operating the V-2 systems.

Excelent!! recomend it!

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