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Author: Mrs. Marsha Freeman  
21st Century Science & Technology, United States

A 1946 PROPOSAL FOR A CHINESE ROCKET PROGRAM

**Abstract**

In the Spring of 1946, while waiting for an offer from the United States to come to America to work on rocket technology, German space pioneer, Krafft Ehricke, along with fellow Peenemuende veteran, Friedrich Erdmann-Jesnitzer presented a proposal to the Chinese military mission in Germany for the development of a rocket program for China. Until 1939, China had had extensive contact with the German military.

The 87-page "Proposal for the Development of the Construction of Modern Rockets," was drafted on April 5th. This previously unpublished proposal outlines, in great detail, how then-unemployed German rocket experts could educate and train Chinese professionals who would come to Germany. Together with the German experts, they would work on technical improvements to the variety of rockets the Germans had developed during World War II, and then German manpower and technology would be transferred to China. The proposal details what would be required to establish a rocket research and development program, and then a serial rocket production industry in China.

After reviewing the history of Chinese powder rockets back to the 16th century, the proposal reviews the characteristics of the small anti-aircraft Taifun rocket, the larger anti-aircraft missile, Wassefall, and the A-4 (V-2), recommending a step-wise progression from the smallest to the most capable rockets, as the pathway for the Chinese development program. The proposal describes the test facilities, laboratories, equipment, and manufacturing facilities that would be required.

In order to bolster their case, the authors remind the Chinese military representatives that a number of other nations are also interested in German rocket technology, including Yugoslavia, Argentina, Brazil, Switzerland, and Norway, in addition to the well-known interest in the U.S., Russia, England, and France.

It is fascinating to imagine what the outcome would have been, had this proposal been brought to fulfillment, and a group of former Peenemuende rocket experts had indeed moved to China, (with their wives, as specified) to carry it out.