Paper ID: 67318
oral

56th IAA HISTORY OF ASTRONAUTICS SYMPOSIUM (E4)
Scientific and Technical Histories (2)

Author: Dr. Wolfgang Both
Germany

THE HITLER-VALIER CONVERSATION ON ROCKETRY

Abstract

The missile development program of the German Third Reich“ went through several ups and downs. Priority levels were approved and then withdrawn. Supposedly, this was due to Hitler's skepticism about the rocket as a weapon. Still in May 1942 Hitler's adjutant Gerhard Engel wrote in his diary: Führer, as we all know, thinks nothing of the whole matter and has already earlier blatantly rejected all attempts of the ObdH to get further funds for it. He could not fit it into his arsenal of weapons alongside tanks, cannons and aircraft. His first knowledge of rockets was imparted to him by his Munich acquaintance Max Valier (1895 - 1930). Already in the spring of 1929 they came into conversation. Valier was able to tell him about his experiments with powder rockets and rocket car rides with Fritz von Opel. His plans extended to the rocket plane and the crossing of the English Channel. Hitler tried to support Valier, promoted several articles in the weekly Illustrierter Beobachter“ and honoured him with a three-page obituary in May 1930. But when Hitler was shown the state of development of the rocket engines in March 1939 by General Becker, Lieutenant Colonel Walter Dornberger and Wernher von Braun, he remained strangely unaffected. During lunch at the officers mess he called Valier a dreamer“. Dornberger and von Braun felt their performance was a failure. That was a bad sign to the German Army's Ordnance Office because they hoped for more support by the Führer. By means of new documents, the exact date of Hitlers secret visit to the Kummersdorf firing range could now be determined. The political environment of those days, with the crises surrounding Czechoslovakia and the Memel region, explains his lack of interest in the latest developments in weapons technology, which did not change until 1943 and caused a delay in German rocket development.