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## **Peenemünde Interviews Project: Walter Haeussermann 1/24/1990 (Tape 1 of 2) B**

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<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: ...[he] was desiring, on his side, to be as firm in electrical engineering, in electronic engineering, as in mechanical engineering. He educated himself continuously, in this respect. And he used this opportunity to learn from the various individuals employed at Peenemünde. And he wanted to grasp whatever was possible, and to explain, to get explained phenomena which he could not see directly a solution to - he wanted to see how we consider this and how we draw conclusions from the charts, from the results of the investigation, and why we make certain recommendations afterwards, and he was not satisfied until he understood this completely. That impressed me.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: So he was, both extremely willing to immerse himself in the details...and able, and sort of intellectually able to keep up...all the time.

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: —Oh, yes. —Correct, correct.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: To what extent was he involved in actual solutions that you produced in those years for guidance and control...of problems?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: —Of course, he himself, just by questioning, he asked, "Why don't you do it this and that way?", to round out the picture for his own understanding, and this way he very often generated additional ideas which we worked out.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Part of this, part of why I'm asking this is to try to get a picture of just what, how in a sense, how close or how distant his intervention and role in this is. I mean, it's harder for you to judge the other question, which is, how much he was involved more in guidance and control issues than other issues? I've been told essentially that he felt that Thiel was competent to deal with propulsion, he was not nearly as personally involved in that area as he was involved in the business of BSM and electrical engineering, guidance and control and so forth. Do you think that was, think that's true? I mean you can't, it's hard to judge all this...

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<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: That's hard to judge. But from later years, especially here in Huntsville - I only can say, he stayed interested in all the areas, and wanted to know why we are doing certain things, why we didn't have other solutions. Or he asked for other solutions and asked, "How do you compare these solutions? And why do you give preference to the one or the other?" And very often he had, like just later on the simulation for the first Explorer, he had suggestions why I, or he requested to know why we didn't have more cumbersome equipment simulating mathematical behavior better than he had assumed and that we had presented to him?

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: So did he stimulate you to produce a better simulation at that point?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: At least he wanted to know why...

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: —what were the limits—

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: ...we gave ourself certain limits and what assurance we could get from the limited test we made, in comparison to the more complex test he had thought would help.

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And he really wanted to know... [[what ?]] so confidence that you can do this and be successful?

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: And what were the limits as to what actually could be done?

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Just from the standpoint of style or so forth of von Braun - it's always an interesting question about his management style and personality - would you say that he, in his appearance, in his language or whatever, appeared aristocratic? Did he have an aristocratic background?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: No, not at all. My feeling has always been, he was speaking as an engineer to an engineer.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: And in that sense then...you never felt...

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: —I never had any other feeling.

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: ...in that sense, it did not enter your mind at all that it was even an issue?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: No, never. Never.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Because I gather he could use that with army officers, it seems to me, that he had the right kind of attitude, style and so forth, that he would be impressive to all different kinds of people, that he could speak to whoever he's speaking to at their level?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: He was for me just another engineer, in this high position whom I admired because of his personal capabilities and wide field of interest.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Now, to complete this sort of management and personality kinds of questions --

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You had much contact with at that time Colonel Dornberger?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: Not at all.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: So the military administ-- From the standpoint of...

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: —of course I knew him very well from, let's say, meeting him in the officer's club or so, but from a technical viewpoint, I had no impression of him.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: He was just a distant leader, a boss figure from Berlin, largely, that's where he spent most of his time. Or any other officers like Colonel Zanssen, or those people?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: I had no personal impression of those in the field in which I had been working.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: So, and sometimes I'm just interested to see where - what people are in daily contact with, and on what basis does the military administration side have contact with the research and development laboratories.

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But as far as you are concerned, the army officer or the fact that this was a military installation was only a kind of external feature.

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: Right.

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Which didn't have much to do with your daily...

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: —our daily work.

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: ...daily work.

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<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: Of course, from time to time they visited our laboratory, and we showed them what we had achieved or so, with respect to the dynamics or the simulation and so, but that was all.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: From a social standpoint, when people would meet on weekends or parties or so forth, and evenings - it would largely be the scientific engineering personnel together at the officer's club or in other places? Or there was a very limited mixing with, say Dornberger and so forth?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: Frankly, I cannot remember that we had in this respect any contacts. It was a time of war, and we had only our development in mind, and parties and so on, I don't recall a single one.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: So it was largely an academic atmosphere, wouldn't you say, in some ways?

<i>WALTER HAEUSSERMANN</i>: Right. Definitely. Definitely, yes.

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: In the laboratories...and...



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