

Opponents of space program on a rampage

by EIR Staff

Since the successful repair of the Hubble Space Telescope by astronauts aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour in December—a feat which thrilled most of the world—opponents of the U.S. space program internationally have intensified their attacks, accusing the space pioneers of being spendthrifts, Nazis, and mass murderers.

The British magazine *Nature*, famous for its anti-scientific witchhunts, zeroes in on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, trying to undermine the increased support NASA has received due to the Hubble victory. Astronomer Thomas Gold, former director of the center for space research at Cornell University, in an article entitled “Is NASA an Expensive Failure?” argues that “the succession of NASA failures cannot be ignored.” The Shuttle had proved enormously expensive, while the \$1 billion Mars Orbiter project had been inexplicably lost, and an Earth-mapping satellite is now floating uselessly in some unknown orbit. According to Gold, this violates the guidelines worked out in the early 1970s, when he was a member of two key committees, for a “cautious, step-by-step approach before any big expenditures.”

The London *Sunday Times* reported on the *Nature* article Jan. 16, in an article entitled “It Cost NASA \$1 Billion to Take This Picture, But It Is America’s Space Program that Needs a Sharper Focus.” The paper highlights other “doubting voices” as well, the various “distinguished commentators” who think that NASA’s “big thinking” is at the root of many of its problems, and who claim that the agency has “deliberately pursued mega-projects that appealed to the public’s imagination, but for which neither the science nor the engineering were adequately developed.”

What *Nature* and the *Sunday Times* are trying to destroy, is the kind of perspective expressed by NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin, who is quoted “joyfully” responding to the success with Hubble: “We are a can-do agency. We are not going to be afraid to reach out. The question now is, how far could—or should—that reach extend? Will it mean a revival of dreams of the journey into space, returning to the Moon and visiting Mars or beyond?” This view is shared by other NASA officials, “who talk of such possibilities and have long maintained that the current manned space endeavors are a necessary prelude to manned exploration of the planets,” the *Sunday Times* commented.

Meanwhile, in Germany, in an effort to discredit the scientists who developed the rocket technology that made the U.S.

space program possible, the Lutheran Academy of Tutzing and the U.S. government’s Smithsonian Institution held a seminar on the theme “Destruction through Progress,” near Erfurt Jan. 15-16, with a focus on Peenemünde, where Germany’s rocket development effort proceeded during World War II. Leading German rocket scientists came to the United States after the war, and formed the core of the U.S. rocketry program under Wernher von Braun, as Marsha Freeman recounts in her new book, *How We Got to the Moon: The Story of the German Space Pioneers* (Washington, D.C.: 21st Century Science Associates, 1993).

Peenemünde scientists slandered

Speakers at the Erfurt seminar included Michael Neufeld of the Smithsonian Institution, who tried to portray the work of Wernher von Braun and his team as an outflow of German nationalism and post-Versailles political romanticism, a kind of compensation for Germany’s defeat in World War I. Neufeld at least conceded what other speakers contested, namely that the theoretical work done by Hermann Oberth and von Braun was serious, but he proceeded to dismiss the rocket project as something that served no positive purpose in the end and just became a tool in the hands of the Nazis.

Prof. Rainer Eisfeld of Osnabrück University portrayed the project at Peenemünde as a romantic fixation that led directly to the 1943-45 creation of the SS extermination camp complex “Dora” and the underground “Mittelwerk” facility for production of the V-2 rocket, all serving Hitler’s *Wunderwaffen* myth, which was, Eisfeld charged, adopted by the Americans for their own aims of achieving superiority after 1945, when the Cold War broke out. Eisfeld—a sociologist who displayed his ignorance of natural science—is a senior member of the Mittelwerk Dora Memorial Foundation, which works closely with the U.S. Justice Department’s Office of Special Investigations (OSI) and Linda Hunt, who wrote a scurrilous book-length attack on German rocket scientist Arthur Rudolph (see *EIR*, Sept. 13, 1991).

Eisfeld said in his presentation that the 1929 German movie “Woman on the Moon,” for which Oberth was the scientific consultant, typified the mix of authoritarian ideology with romanticist aggressiveness that overshadowed the end of the Weimar Republic and paved the way for the Nazi march to power. Eisfeld slandered the entire Moon-landing project launched by President John F. Kennedy as a pure Cold War product, serving no other purpose than to demonstrate the potential of the military-industrial complex. Kennedy spoke of the Moon program as a propagandistic tool to capture the world’s attention, while he was fixated on closing the “missile gap” against the Soviets, Eisfeld said, and there was never anything else to the Apollo program.

The keynote by Rolf Hanusch of the Tutzing Academy, likened the technology of the rocket to the Biblical tower of Babylon, which stood as a symbol of man’s over-rating of his own powers, in the effort to become equal to God.