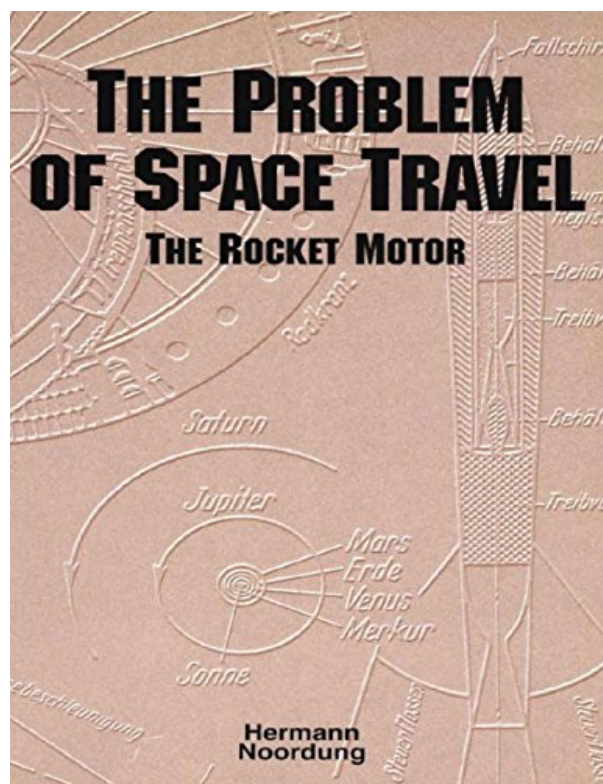
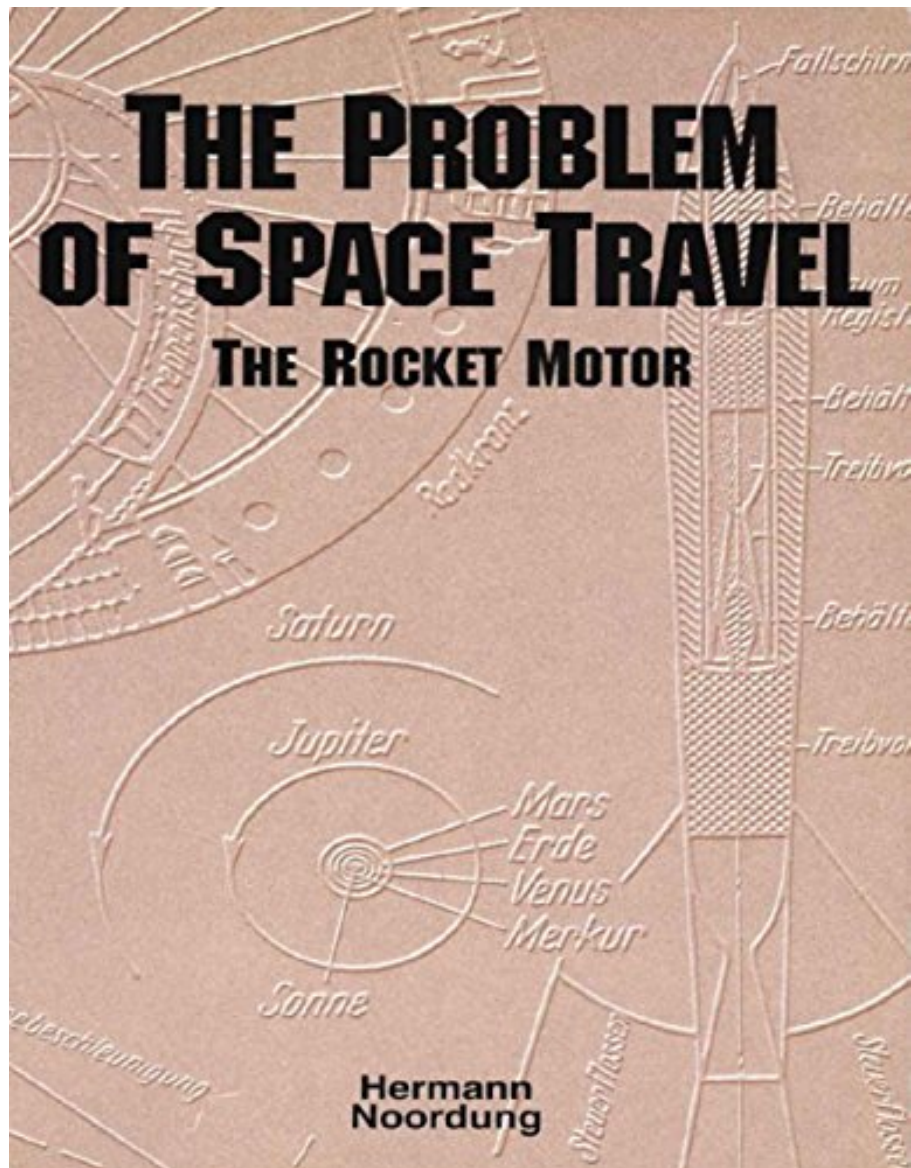


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About the Author

J. D. Hunley was chief historian of NASA Dryden Flight Research Center before his retirement in 2001. Besides working as a historian for the United States Air Force and NASA during his lengthy career, Hunley has also taught at Allegheny College and served as a Ramsey Fellow at the National Air and Space Museum.

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THE PROBLEM OF SPACE TRAVEL: THE ROCKET MOTOR BY HERMANN NOORDUNG, HERMAN POTOČNIK POTOČNIK PDF

This is an English translation of Noordung's 'Das Problem der Befahrung des Weltraums'. It is a part of the NASA History Series. The book provides Noordung's insight as to how a space station might be constructed. Hermann Noordung's *Das Problem der Bejahrung des Weltraums*, published here in English translation, was one of the classic writings about spaceflight. Its author, whose real name was Herman Potocnik, was an captain in the Austrian army who became an engineer. He was born on 22 December 1892 in Pola, the chief Austro-Hungarian naval station, located on the Adriatic in what is today Croatia.

After engineering school he did become interested in the spaceflight movement. He corresponded with Hermann Oberth (1894-1989), whose book *Die Rakele zu den Planetenraurnen* (*The Rocket into Interplanetary Space*, 1923) essentially launched the spaceflight movement in Germany and laid the theoretical foundations for future space efforts there.

Oberth encouraged Potocnik to express his ideas about rocketry and space travel in a book, which he completed with its 100 illustrations in 1928. Potocnik's gratitude to Oberth and the enthusiasts around him in Germany led the still young but ailing engineer to assume the pen name of Noordung (referring to the German word for north, Nord) in honor of the fellow space enthusiasts to his north. He published the book with Richard Carl Schmidt & Co. in Berlin in 1929, only to die soon afterwards in 1929 of tuberculosis.

Potocnik's book dealt, as its title suggests, with a broad range of topics relating to space travel, although the rocket motor that forms the book's subtitle was not especially prominent among them. What makes the book important in the early literature about space travel is its extensive treatment of the engineering aspects of a space station. Potocnik was hardly the first person to write about this subject. The idea in fictional form dates back to 1869-1870 when American minister and writer Edward Everett Hale (1822-1909) published "The Brick Moon" serially in *The Atlantic Monthly*. The German mathematics teacher, philosopher, and historian of science Kurd Lafsswitz (1848-1910) followed this up in 1897 with his novel *Auf zwei Planeten* (translated into English as "Two Planets" in 1971), which featured a Martian space station supported by antigravity.

Space historians have suggested that Potocnik's book formed the basis for a plotless short story entitled "Lunetta" that Wernher von Braun wrote in 1929, describing a trip to a space station.

If correct, this hypothesis would suggest an important link in the evolution about ideas for a space station. As is well known, von Braun - technical director of the German rocket development center at Peenemttnde that developed the V-2 ballistic missile during World War II and later director of NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center while it developed the Saturn V rocket - wrote an article for the popular *Collier's* magazine in 1952 in which he described a space station at least superficially similar to Potocnik's. This article, others in the eight-part *Collier's* series of which it was a part, and a Walt Disney television series, *Man in Space*, in which von Braun, Ley, and others appeared, helped establish the American popular image of a space station and of space exploration as well as a vision of a space station that, in Howard McCurdy's words, "would continue to guide NASA strategy through the decades ahead." As McCurdy also stated, "More than any other person, von Braun would be responsible for clarifying in the American mind the relationship between space stations and space exploration. " Thus, if Potocnik indeed influenced von Braun, through the latter he must also have influenced the United States and NASA.

168 pages; over one hundred photos drawings, illustrations and charts.

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About the Author

J. D. Hunley was chief historian of NASA Dryden Flight Research Center before his retirement in 2001. Besides working as a historian for the United States Air Force and NASA during his lengthy career, Hunley has also taught at Allegheny College and served as a Ramsey Fellow at the National Air and Space Museum.

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Excellent Summary of 1920's Space Flight Theories

By John R. Keller

This book, written by Hermann Noordung in 1929, was first published in German. Many years later, it was translated into English and published by NASA in 1995. Its NASA designation is NASA SP-4026. Some readers may find this book very difficult to read, since it contains engineering formulae and assumes the reader knows some basic scientific principles. Furthermore, all the figures are labeled in German and only contain English translations in the Figure title blocks.

While the title of the book indicates that it focuses on the rocket engine, only a modest portion of the book actually deals with the rocket motor and most of the book is dedicated to presenting the current knowledge and theories (in 1929) on space travel. The book opens with discussing gravitational attraction and the difficulty in escaping Earth's gravity field. The book then leads into the physics of the rocket motor and different types of the launch vehicle configurations, such as balloon assisted launches, rocket planes and multi-stage rockets. After these opening sections, the books contains numerous paragraphs on space based research and construction. For example, the author examines space station, the potential effect of weightlessness on the human body, space science, airlock designs, solar power and many other topics that are still being debated today. Even spaced based weapon designs were shown.

As a technical person, I found this book to be very interesting. I was amazed so see that many of the problems associated with space travel were addressed and conceptual designs were presented in the 1920's. Some of these concepts were ultimately incorporated into our nation's space vehicles. For example, the design for the NASA's International Space Station Airlock bears a striking resemblance to the Noordung's Space Station Airlock shown in his book. On the flip side, reentry heating was only given a very modest overview, even though this effect had proven to be one the most difficult problems to solve for the Space Shuttle.

While I thoroughly enjoyed this book, I feel that those readers who do not have a technical or scientific background may find this book overwhelming.

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Four Stars

By Jeffrey L. Smith, PE

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