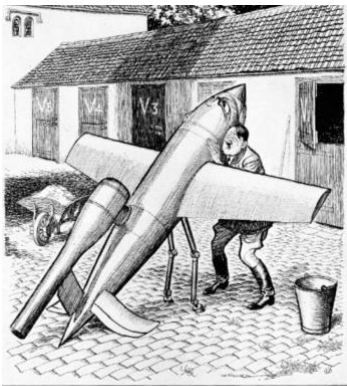
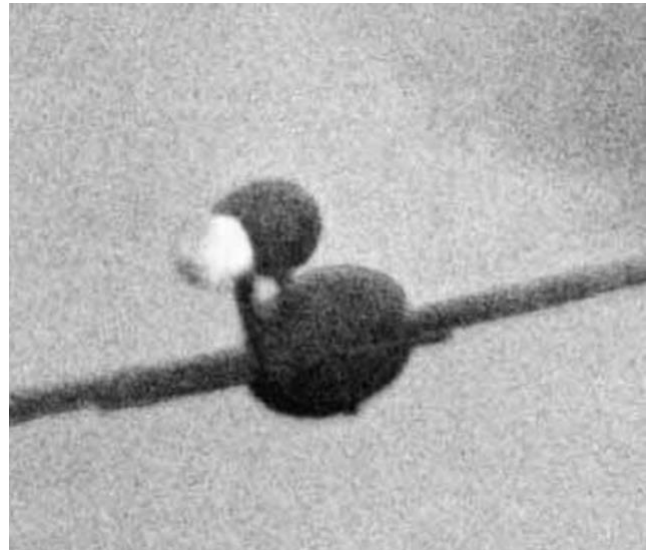


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Issue 3 - 2026

Images from: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/rebdeodhistory/>



Best served cold?

Vergeltungswaffe eins was the first of Hitler's revenge or retribution weapons. The project's name was '*Kirsch kern*' (cherrystone), its manufacturer's designation was Fi103 and its military name was *Flakzeilgerat* (FZG) 76 - an ambiguous term, falsely suggesting it was a target drone. To bomb disposal it became known as 'FLY'. To those who lived under its flightpath it was the 'Buzz Bomb' or 'Doodlebug'. To the Royal Observer Corps, the codename for its arrival over Britain was 'Diver'; and in the region of 7000 flying bombs crossed the English Channel successfully. Those attacks resulted in approximately 24,000 casualties: more than 6000 of which were fatalities.

The V1 was not known as a particularly reliable weapon; but the number to arrive 'on-target' yet fail to detonate was exceptionally small. This is, of course, not to suggest it did not challenge bomb disposal - or that the hazard it posed in the 1940s is now entirely a thing of the past . . .

Of necessity

The V1 was the result of a collaboration by the Argus company - manufacturers of a novel low-cost pulse-jet engine - the Fiesler aircraft company and a third firm called Askania. Developed in the 1930s by Dr. Paul Schmidt (designer of the 'Schmidt Duct'), the pulse jet reemerged to fill a capability gap in the mid-1940s: specifically, the need to bombard Britain in the absence of (a.) an overwhelmingly powerful Luftwaffe bomber force and (b.) a reliable V2 rocket. It also fuelled Hitler's agenda of heaping retribution on the Allies whilst generating significant propaganda for the Nazis. The Germans had anticipated sending several thousand V1s each month against targets within its range of 163 miles (later extended to 250 miles). The weapon flew at approximately 400 mph and carried a warhead with charge weight of either 850kg or 454kg. It could be made by relatively unskilled labour, it consumed few strategic materials and it ran on low-grade fuel. Despite flying *straight and level*, its size and speed made it a challenging target for British fighters and anti-aircraft guns. After D-Day, it also brought 'revenge' to several European cities.

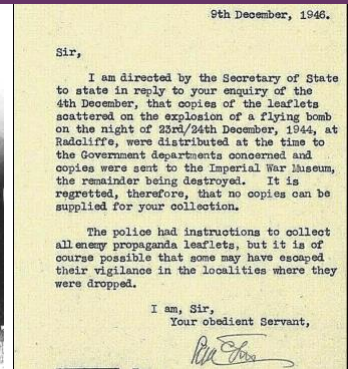
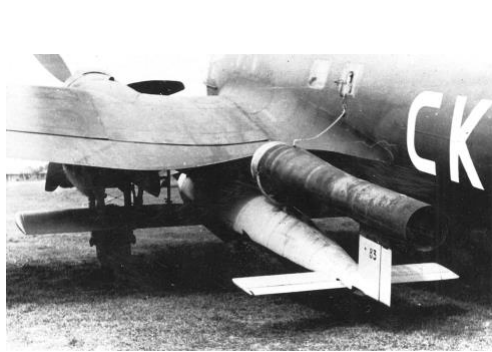
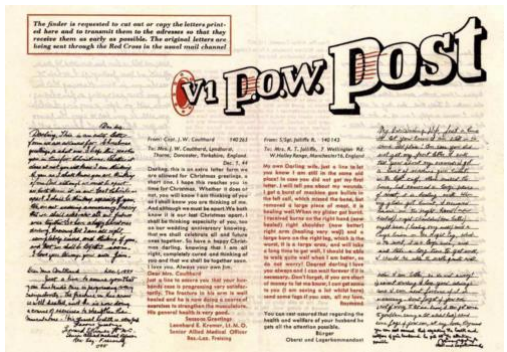
By 1943, the existence of a 'robot' plane had been suspected by British intelligence for some time; but the true significance of the known details had, initially, been difficult to comprehend. As a clearer picture emerged, bomber activity and fighter-sweeps against the 150 known launch sites caused notable disruption to bombardment plans. Fighter interceptions, anti-aircraft guns and barrage balloons also destroyed many V1s in flight; but still almost 50% of those arriving from France reached London or other urban targets in England.



Images from IWM and REDBEOD History Group) show: a Spitfire attempting to 'tip' a V-1 in flight; a damaged wingtip from the 'tipping' aircraft of Pilot Officer Paul "Pino" Leva, of 350 (BE) Squadron; a V1 'snared' by balloon cables; and Polish troops examining a destroyed launching ramp after D-Day.

Less than a week after D-Day, a V1 detonated in London; and the first near-intact FLY was inspected by Major John Hudson RE, on 23 June. His diligent work was undertaken at some personal risk from the weapon itself but also from the novel radiographic process used to inspect the fuzes. Additionally, the need to use acid to reduce the thickness of the bomb's metal covering (allowing it to be cut by knife and avoiding the vibration of sawing) risked causing an immediate explosive reaction. Following the stern instruction he was given - to do *whatever was necessary* to retrieve the V1 intact - the bomb disposal operation commenced on 24 June and took 7-days. The valiant efforts of Major J.D. Hudson and civilian experts Dr. J.A.T. Dawson and Mr. R. Hurst, confirmed the presence of a self-destruct timer, whilst establishing the absence of a boobytrap mechanism.

Intelligence gathering (and a modern sting in the tail . . .)



The images above show one example of 'V1 P.O.W Post', an airborne-launched V1 attached to a He.111, and an official letter concerning police activity to collect V1 propaganda leaflets quickly.

As Europe was liberated, the fixed ramps in France were overrun. This led to the development of airborne launches. In turn, this meant more northerly English targets, such as Manchester, suddenly came into range. A small number of these later V1s also carried propaganda leaflets - including copies of letters from British prisoners of war. Their purpose was to prompt a written reply from people at the scene, thus giving the Luftwaffe some indication of where V1s were impacting. (This was something the Nazis had achieved previously by scrutinising death notices in British newspapers!)

As a corollary to earlier observations about the V1 *not* presenting a significant challenge to bomb disposal officers, it is worth drawing reference to an incident reported in the Netherlands in 2020. Roadworks had unearthed a suspected WW2 bomb. Closer investigation established it was a very well-preserved V1, and a significant EOD effort was required to make it safe. That successful render-safe procedure undoubtedly benefited from the work, completed under very different circumstances almost 80-years earlier, of Major Hudson, Dr. Dawson and Mr. Hurst.



The images above are from a post on the REBDEOD History Group. [For those wondering, the requirement for PPE was driven by the hazardous decomposition products generated by 70+ years old explosives.] See also: <https://nos.nl/artikel/2326009-eod-klaar-voor-ontmanteling-v1-bom-bij-deventer-dit-is-echt-de-categorie-speciaal>

ASD 16 May 2026 v1.0